

BEM for Caversham resident in New Year's Honours

Caversham resident Pam Reynolds received the British Empire Medal for her work with SSAFA - the military charity - and in particular for helping Gurkha women to integrate into British society. She has been a SSAFA case-worker for over seven years working at Brock Barracks alongside military personnel to provide help and support for ex-service personnel in the Reading area.

Pam said: "It's not an award for me; it's an award for the whole team. My name just happens to be on it. There are 32 of us and we all work to help these women who have come to be part of our society."

The Gurkhas have been part of the British Army for 200 years; they are utterly dedicated to Britain. They love the Queen and this country. In the autumn of 2011 life in the Reading SSAFA office became more hectic as the first retired Gurkha ex-servicemen and their families started to appear. The ladies, usually widows, looked bewildered and would sign their claim for assistance forms by using a thumb print. It became clear that most of the ladies had little or no English and many were illiterate in their own language. As a former teacher Pam offered to teach them - and that was when her life changed!

The first class was planned and work was prepared for 10 ladies, but 60 turned up. Although it is possible to do a 'chalk and talk' approach, this really would not be in the interests of the new students, who often had poor eyesight and hearing and most were at least 60 years old. There were no suitable text books and there was no equipment.

As well as equipment and books, more help was needed. Pieces were written for the Caversham Bridge, Reading Voluntary Action and the Reading Chronicle. Soon volunteers began to appear and donations of books and materials were gratefully accepted. The ladies were divided into groups to make working with them a little easier. Elderly hands, like little hands, do not find it easy to hold pens and pencils, so boxes of thick felt pens and some individual whiteboards were purchased and work began. Numbers increased to such an extent that two classes per week had to be arranged.

Holding a pen was the start, then recognising and forming letters. This took some time since the volunteers had to deal with increasing numbers, the lack of confidence and shyness of the ladies and poor presentation materials. At this point one of the volunteers wrote to Joanna Lumley to tell her about the work. Joanna responded at once and started to take an interest in the project. With her help we purchased a projector and interactive whiteboard, which made presentation of material clearer, more effective and much more fun. Oxford University Press agreed to supply a First Dictionary and Workbook at a huge discount. Each lady was supplied with these two books - of which they were very proud. The College of Estate Management in Reading donated masses of surplus paper and card and 'Subway' of Reading contributed throughout with support, catering and entertainment.

The ladies were gaining in confidence. They were learning basic vocabulary and were able to recognise and write most letters of the alphabet. They were taught left and right via the *Hokey Cokey*, and all the old faithfuls like *one finger, one thumb, I can sing a rainbow, Old Macdonald, Head, shoulders knees and toes* were used to teach parts of the body, animals, colours etc. They loved this and entered into the actions and singing with great enthusiasm.

While literacy was part of the aim, integration into UK society was also a very important target. The team took them to village fetes, and each year arranged a popular day trip. The first trip was to Portsmouth to visit HMS Victory and the Marine Barracks. They met the Mayor and admired her impressive chain of office. Many of the ladies, with no previous experience of the sea touched and tasted the Solent! They picked up pebbles and shells to take home to enjoy and remind them of their day out. This was followed by a cruise up the river Thames on the

Caversham Princess for a visit to Mapledurham House. Then a visit to Hampton Court was greatly enjoyed and gave them an opportunity to learn lots of new words. However a pre-trip presentation about Henry VIII met with much tutting at his treatment of his wives. One of the ladies later said "Madam - him no good!!". In 2016 they visited Windsor Castle and the difference in their confidence and grasp of English was marked.

Some of the ladies couldn't see or hear very well, so the short term solution was a box of varying strength jazzy specs from Poundsavers. The local Boots gave us a list of the questions asked in an eye-test and they were taught how to respond. Reading Healthwatch took this forward and the ladies were encouraged to have hearing and sight tested and remedied. The TB nurses from the Royal Berks visit and make presentations so that the ladies are aware of symptoms of TB and know where to go for assessment. The Community Police Officers come in and talk about personal and road safety. In cooperation with health professionals and funded by Reading Borough Council, a booklet *Your Health and Well-being* was produced to help the ladies and their health professionals.

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Pam Reynolds with some members of the SSAFA Reading team

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Caversham Clergy

ANGLICAN

St Barnabas

Rev'd Derek Chandler, 20 St Barnabas Road.

Tel: 947 8239.

www.saintbarnabas.org.uk

St Andrews

Rev'd Nigel Jones, St Andrews Vicarage,

Harrogate Road. Tel: 947 2788

www.standrewscaversham.org

St Peter, St Margaret, St John

Rev'd Mike Smith, The Rectory, 20 Church Road,

Caversham RG4 7AD Tel: 9479505

rector@ctmparish.org.uk

Rev'd Marion Pyke

Tel: 947 5834

Rev'd John Dudley Tel: 9470265

Rev'd Penny Cuthbert Tel: 07825 331810

Rev'd Judith Ryder Tel: 9473783

Riverside Church (Reading)

www.riversidechurchreading.co.uk

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Secretary: Dr Alison Johnston

Tel: 0118 947 5152

METHODIST TEAM MINISTRY

Rev'd Jenny Dowding, 72 Highmoor Road.

Tel: 947 2223

Rev D Jenkins Tel: 0118 327 1592

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH

Transitional Minister Rev'd Jonathan Edwards

Church office tel 954 5353

Email Secretary: sue.cantwell@cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk

GRACE CHURCH

(formerly Caversham Hill Chapel)

Crispin Fairbairn tel 9474529

ROMAN CATHOLIC

Fr Paul Martin, The Presbytery,

2 South View Avenue.

Tel: 947 1787.

Deacon: Hugh Ancombe

Fr Paul Rowan

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD

Rev'd H R Gayle Tel: 946 3009 (contact)

The newspaper produced by the members of the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Free Churches of Caversham and Mapledurham for the local community.

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The Editors wish to make it clear that the views expressed in this newspaper do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the board.

The Editors also would like to bring to readers' notice that the inclusion of advertisements in this paper does not mean an endorsement of the products or of the services offered.

Published by Caversham Christian News Ltd, Church Street, Caversham, Reading RG4 8AX Tel: 0118 947 1703.

Typeset and layout by RP Character Graphics,

Tel: 07949 980 982

Printed by Newbury Weekly News (Printers) Ltd, Newspaper House, Faraday Road, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 2DW.

TALKING POINT

by Derek Chandler

Digital Reformation 2.0

What will the Church of the future look like?

In the face of continuous change this question is becoming evermore prominent to those churches that do not wish to have their backs to the future. In an insightful article by Carey Nieuwhof in 'ChristianWeek', Carey writes of a 'seismic shift' taking place today that is parallel to the conversion of the pagan Roman Emperor Constantine to Christianity in the fourth century, or the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century.

The latter had a direct influence on the Reformation of the Christian Church in Western Europe which began 500 years ago in 1517 when the German monk and theologian, Martin Luther, nailed his 95 theses to the door of All Saints Church in Wittenberg. The theses were a response to the practice of selling 'indulgences' to absolve sins. It is arguable that Luther would easily have disappeared into history and the Reformation never have begun without the invention of printing to quickly disseminate his ideas.

Although the original Reformation is now consigned to history the Christian Church could be on the cusp of a 'Digital Reformation 2.0'. This is not due to any malpractices within the Church but simply because of the revolutionary development of information technology since the arrival of the internet. Carey's article '10 predictions about the future Church and shifting attendance patterns' does imply this. For example Carey's second prediction says:

"...many individual congregations and some entire denominations won't make it. The difference will be between those who cling to the mission and those who cling to the model. When the car was invented, it quickly took over from the horse and buggy. Horse and buggy manufacturers were relegated to boutique status and many went under, but human transportation actually exploded. Suddenly average people could travel at a level they never could before. The mission is travel. The model is a buggy, or car, or motorcycle, or jet. Look at the changes in the publishing, music and even photography industry in the last few years. See a trend? The mission is reading. It's music. It's photography. The model always shifts....moving from things like 8 tracks, cassettes and CDs to MP3s and now streaming audio and video. Companies that show innovation around the mission (Apple, Samsung) will always beat companies that remain devoted to the method (Kodak). Churches need to stay focused on the mission (leading people into a growing relationship with Jesus) and be exceptionally innovative in our model."

Anyone who is familiar with the Acts of the Apostles in the Bible will know how much the model of the apostles' faith had to change in order to engage with the missionary journey they were led to undertake through God's Holy Spirit. If they never had changed the model, the journey would never have begun and Christianity would probably have disappeared as a sect of Judaism. Today, as the internet matures and becomes part of our 'normal' experience it is becoming increasingly evident that a seismic shift is happening within our human cultures, particularly in relation to communication. Some questions to leave you with:

- What are the models that need to change, or be 'reformed', within the Christian Church in order for the Gospel to resonate with today's generation without distorting the message?
- Dare the Christian Church change or reform in a meaningful way for a generation that has been taught within public education systems to interact and question the information they receive in a way previously unparalleled?
- Dare we not?

Rev'd Derek Chandler is the parish vicar for Emmer Green and Caversham Park and a blog writer at www.cyberfizz.com



CAVERSHAM GOOD NEIGHBOURS

Are you a people person?

Caversham Good Neighbours is a group formed to offer essential transport to the elderly and disabled in our neighbourhood. If you would like to give to the community by joining us as a volunteer driver or helping in our office, then please do get in touch with us.

www.cavershamgoodneighbours.org.uk

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Church House 59 Church Street Caversham RG4 8AX

SUNDAY SERVICES

ANGLICAN

St Peter's, St Peter's Hill

8.00am Matins 1st and 3rd Sundays

Holy Communion 2nd and 4th Sundays

9.30am Holy Communion 1st, 2nd and 4th Sundays

6.30pm Evensong

St John's, Gosbrook Road

9.30am Holy Communion 1st, 3rd and 4th Sundays

9.30am All Age Worship 2nd Sunday

Fifth Sunday Services as advertised

St Margaret's, Mapledurham

11.15am Morning Worship 1st Sunday

Holy Communion 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sundays

St Andrew's, Harrogate Road

8.00am The Eucharist

10.00am Parish Eucharist (Sung)

First Sunday, Family Eucharist

11.30am The Eucharist first and third Sundays

only, first Sunday BCP

6.30pm Evening Prayer (as announced)

St Barnabas, Grove Road, Emmer Green

8.00am Said Communion (BCP)

9.30am Parish Communion

9.30am COGS for all ages (1st Sunday of Month)

RIVERSIDE CHURCH (READING)

Meeting at Hemdean House School, Hemdean Road, Caversham

10.00am Morning Worship & Teaching

CAVERSHAM PARK ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP

Meeting at Caversham Park School

11.00am Holy Communion (1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays)

Morning Worship (2nd and 4th Sundays)

All Age Worship (at Festival Times)

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8.00pm House of Prayer (praise and prayer) -

2nd Sunday each month

3.45pm Messy Church - for all the family

Fourth Sunday of the month

GRACE CHURCH Old Peppard Road

10.30am Worship and Ministry, Children's Church

6.30pm Prayer Meeting

THE METHODIST CHURCH IN CAVERSHAM

Caversham Heights, Highmoor Road

9.00am (first Sunday), 10.30am

6.30pm (second and fourth Sundays)

Gosbrook Road

10.30am

Woodcote Parish Church

9.45am (second Sunday)

ROMAN CATHOLIC

Our Lady and St Anne's, Southview Avenue

Saturday 5.30pm,

Sunday 10.00am and 6.30pm

Mapledurham House 6.00pm Mass (last Sunday of the month)

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (Quakers)

Church Street, Reading

10.30am

(House study groups Sept-June Tel: 9475783)

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD

Church Street, Caversham

9.30am Sunday School

11.00am Divine Worship

6.00pm Evening Service

Caversham Bridge

Contributions for the March 2017 issue should be sent to Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham Parish Office by **Monday 30th January**. The date for the April 2017 issue is **Monday 6th March**. Email address is secretary@ctmparish.org.uk

Advertising copy for the March 2017 issue should be sent to Mr A Wright, Twigmoor, Upper Warren Avenue, Caversham by **Friday 27th January**. The date for the April 2017 issue is **Friday 3rd March**.

PARISH OFFICES

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Church House, 59 Church Street, Caversham RG4 8AX

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BEM for Caversham resident in New Year's Honours

All the ladies can now write their names and quite a lot more. Their vocabulary and understanding has increased and they have started to build words. Each week, they are 'block taught' for a short period and then the new work is re-enforced in the groups. Many are starting to read and we have purchased a reading scheme. Their spoken English will never be fluent, but their understanding has greatly increased. They love writing and take great pride in being able to do so. Their motivation is phenomenal and their sense of fun boundless.

At the end of term we were able to present around 15 ladies with the SSAFA Reading Certificate in English - Stage 1, with many more preparing to take the test. The test is very basic, but it will be the first time that many of these wonderful women will have ever had any recognition of their ability. It has not been easy for them to learn a new language and culture at quite an advanced age, but they have grasped the opportunity with both hands and are standing outside the classroom long before the class is due to start. The volunteers are magnificent, they love the work we do with these ladies, which we consider a privilege. They also greatly value their friendship.

We will continue to take them forward, to increase their skills in English and to make them feel welcome in the UK where they have chosen to live. Without Joanna Lumley's support and the support of businesses and individuals in the community this project would not have been possible - we cannot thank them enough.

The project always welcomes new volunteers and recently there have been many requests from Gurkha men for language lessons. In order to fulfil this need more male volunteers are required. Training is given and materials and support is provided. If you would like to join the project please contact pamreynolds@talk21.com. If you are interested in SSAFA and its work visit www.ssafa.org.uk



Audrey Asquith and Melinda Crosfield with their group of Gurkha ladies

Bible Friends

Simeon and Anna

Jesus was just a little baby when Joseph and Mary took him to the Temple. (The Temple was a big building where people went to worship God, a bit like a church.)

Joseph and Mary wanted to say thank you to God for their beautiful baby boy.

At the Temple, a man called Simeon saw them coming. Straight away Simeon knew that Jesus was God's special Son.

Simeon held baby Jesus up in his arms and shouted and sang a great big thank you to God.

Then a very old woman called Anna came into the Temple. Anna saw Joseph and Mary with baby Jesus. Straight away, she knew that Jesus was God's special Son. She was so happy! She went all round the Temple telling everyone about Jesus.

Simeon and Anna were both so happy to see the special baby who was God's Son, Jesus.

Luke 2:22-38



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Changes Proposed to Residents' Parking Permit Scheme

A raft of changes to the Residents' Parking Permit scheme is being proposed by Reading Borough Council following a review of the operation.

A Task and Finish group was established in June 2016 to take an in-depth look at parking pressures in the town and the obvious impact on local residents. Reading's Residents Parking Scheme is now 40 years old and the cross-party group looked at how it currently works and how it could continue to operate in the future.

A number of recommendations are now being made, including the introduction of a charge for the first parking permit, expanding the areas which could be considered for inclusion in the scheme and a tightening of the eligibility of applicants.

There could also be a number of improvements for permit holders, such as upgraded IT to allow residents to manage their parking permit requirements online, improved enforcement of permit zones and more flexible visitor permits.

The proposals were reported to the Traffic Management sub-committee (TMSC) on 12th January, who were asked to recommend the changes to the council's Policy Committee for consideration four days later (16th January).

Unlike many other local authority areas, residents in Reading have never been asked to pay for their first parking permit since the scheme was introduced in 1976. The recommendation is that a first permit charge should now be considered to cover the costs of running and enforcing the scheme.

Savings totalling £65 million have been made by RBC since 2011. A further £42 million in savings need to be identified by 2020.

Most other local authorities who run residents' parking schemes - including West Berkshire, Wokingham and Slough - already charge for a first permit.

Members are being asked to consider a number of charging

options for the price of a first permit, ranging from £25 to £50. The potential income generated from the charges for first and second permits range from £357,750 to £552,360, depending on the option chosen. A new set of charges are also being proposed for a range of discretionary permits which are also currently free.

Other options to be considered are changing the rules for permit allocations to schools so they are dealt with on a case by case basis, stricter controls on proof of vehicle ownership and more discretion for households in newly created permit zones.

Improvements could include an upgraded online permit application process, increased parking attendance presence in permit zones, a new tool to report illegal vehicle parking, renewal of visitor permits without the need to re-apply and online booking of visitor permits by session rather than AM/PM.

Councillor Tony Jones, who led the cross party Task and Finish Group, said:

"A lot has changed since Reading's

residents' parking permit scheme was first introduced 40 years ago. As demand for parking continues to grow, more and more households are asking for their streets to be included in residents' permit zones to allow them to park near to their homes.

"The level of demand means it is no longer sustainable to issue first vehicle permits free of charge, which is why we are recommending a charge is introduced to cover enforcement and administration costs. This would bring Reading into line with neighbouring councils like West Berkshire, Wokingham and Slough, and London boroughs which face similar pressures on limited parking spaces.

"The review has also identified a number of other areas where changes could be made, including expanding the areas which could be considered for inclusion, making it easier for residents to manage their parking permit requirements online, improved enforcement of permit zones and more flexibility with visitor permits and permit allocations for local schools.

Reading Bach Choir 50th Anniversary Concert

Reading Bach Choir will perform JS Bach's *Mass in B minor* on 11th February at 7.30pm at Reading Concert Hall, Blagrove Street, Reading, RG1 1QH.

The choir will be accompanied by Orchestra Con Amici Barocco, and the concert will be conducted by the choir's musical director Matthew Hamilton.

The soloists will be soprano: Susanna Hurrell, mezzo soprano: Ciara Hendrick, tenor: Thomas Hobbs and bass: Edward Grint.

To mark their 50th anniversary, the Reading Bach Choir returns to the 25th January 1967, the date of their first concert. On that Wednesday evening they attracted an audience of over 1000 to Reading Town Hall to hear the *Mass in B Minor* - a remarkable achievement! That ambition has continued throughout their 50 year history and to mark the anniversary the choir perform the *Mass* once more, in the same place and within a few days of that first concert date.

All the details are on the choir's website: www.readingbachchoir.org.uk

Tickets cost £25, over 60 and students £20, under 18 £5.

To purchase tickets, E-mail tickets@readingbachchoir.org.uk, phone 0118 947 8097, go to www.wegottickets.com (booking fees apply), or <http://www.readingarts.com/tickets-reading>

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CHURCHES

St Barnabas Church

Two notable events will be taking place this month. The annual Fish and Chip supper will be held on the 18th February in the Church Hall at 6.45pm for 7.00pm. As ever the emphasis will be on fellowship, food and fun.

The following day the 19th February a Fellowship Sunday service is being organised at 9.30am. This will be presided over by the vicar with input from lay members of the congregation. A warm welcome is extended to all.

Our Lady and St Anne

A survey of the building of Our Lady and St Anne's church with the Shrine of Our Lady of Caversham showed damp and other problems with its fabric. After much discussion it has been decided that complete refurbishment must be undertaken. The parish needs to raise a substantial sum towards the cost, and a refurbishment fund has been set up.

Several events have already taken place but the latest one is Father Paul's 'Slim for Mary'. He intends to do a walk between various shrines of Our Lady during the coming year and needs to get fitter and slimmer before he does so. To this end he started on a slimming regime for several weeks before the beginning of Advent. He lost considerable weight and has raised about £2000 for the fund in sponsorship money.

Caversham Park Church

On the fourth Sunday of each month Caversham Park Church holds a bring and share lunch beginning at approx 12.30pm [after the morning service]. An open welcome awaits ANYONE who would like to join us in Caversham Park school on Queensway, Caversham Park. You don't have to come to the service, although you would be most welcome. You don't even need to bring anything other than yourself. Don't be lonely, come and join us.

For more information phone Dr Alison Johnston on 0118 947 5152, Christine Viney on 0118 947 4585 or Dorothy Abrey on 0118 988 6224.

Organ Recital by Christopher Cipkin



Come and enjoy an afternoon recital by Christopher Cipkin at St Peter's Church, Caversham on 18th February at 4pm. Christopher is a past organist at Reading Minster, Reading University and Wesley Methodist Church and a solo organ recitalist throughout the UK. He will be presenting a selection of music inspired by the Town Hall organ tradition.

From an age when regular solo recitals were a popular feature of cultural life, this recital will feature a selection of pieces arranged specifically for the organ and designed to demonstrate the skills of

the organist and the capabilities of the organ. This is the third in a series of recitals on the church's new organ which was installed in 2015 after a fund-raising effort and plays an important part in the worship at St Peter's, supporting the 30-member choir.

The programme will include pieces by Mozart, Handel, Sullivan, Best and Elgar. Refreshments will be available during the interval.

For tickets costing £5, call 07999 023825 or the Parish Office 0118 947 1703.



We are starting to plan this year's 'Holiday at Home', to be held at Caversham Heights Methodist Church on Tuesday 30th May to Friday 2nd June inclusive.

From small beginnings, the success of 'Holiday at Home' has been shown by the increase in guests and our vision is to continue this growth – serving both our local community and the Caversham Church community, especially welcoming guests from other churches.

To fulfil this commitment we need additional support with catering, organisation and transport. We would love to hear from you if you can help in any way.

New ideas are always welcome and if you would like to be involved in the planning group please let us know on 01491 628 493.

We look forward to hearing from you.

St Peter's Christmas Market

A wonderful Christmas Market was held in St Peter's Church on December 10th, attended by a large crowd, including many after buying Christmas trees from Caversham Court. A stall selling hot mulled apple juice proved very popular as the weather was chilly and wet!

There was a variety of stalls selling Christmas foods – puddings, pickles, biscuits and cakes – Christmas greenery – wreaths, table decorations and mistletoe – and a craft stall selling delightful handmade items, made during the year by the St Peter's craft group.

Traditional games were enjoyed, including Treasure Island, Lucky Dip, Hoopla and Buzzwire, and children could have a go at decorating Christmas biscuits. Seasonal refreshments were enjoyed and many prizes were won in the Raffle and Tombola.

The event raised £2,267 for Christian Aid's Refugee Crisis Appeal.

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CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

NATIVITY LIVE -

The most notable event during the Christmas season in Caversham has to be *Nativity Live* when in excess of 400 people took part on Christmas Eve.

Starting at the Baptist Church, Mary – heavily pregnant – and Joseph with two donkeys, Buffy and Solomon (*perhaps the second one was to carry their possessions*) made their way to the nearest inn, The Clifton Arms. Mary was in labour and they desperately needed a place to rest and for Mary to give birth. There was no room at the inn. They found a stable and Mary gave birth to her first born son, Jesus.

Carrying their new baby they made their way – followed by 350 people, many dressed as angels, shepherds and kings – to the recreation ground by Westfield Road where they found shepherds waiting with two sheep and two goats who were enjoying the fresh grass. People walking by with their shopping or dog walking just joined the crowd. A short carol service was held there before moving onwards, along Gosbrook Road, up Washington Road and into Southview Avenue and then into Ardler Road to Caversham Methodist Church where they were

joined by the three kings. From there the whole procession moved to St John's Church where they were welcomed by the Revd Penny Cuthbert who led them in a short service. The church was packed with very little room to move around.

Refreshments of mulled wine, teas, coffees, squash, mince pies and cakes, some of which were donated by Caversham

Methodist Church, were served by the ladies from St John's with help from others. A plate was left out for donations which amounted to £297.40. A cheque for this amount has been sent to Christian Community Action.

As people left the church everyone was given a card with the words 'Christmas starts with Christ'.

Thanks must go to those who organised

the event, the 'actors', those who brought the donkeys, sheep and goats, the numerous 'marshals' in their 'Hi-Viz' jackets trying to keep all the walkers off the roads and on the pavements – probably worse than herding sheep! Also to those who provided the refreshments and to St John's for allowing the use of their lovely church for the finale.



1. Outside Caversham Baptist Church



3. Follow the star ...



4. Walking along Gosbrook Road to the recreation ground by Westfield Road



2. Little donkey, little donkey ...

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CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

CHRISTMAS 2016



5. Shepherds and angels abiding in the fields



6. Crowds gathering in the recreation ground



7. Well behaved animals in St John's church

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Christingle

Christingle services drew more worshippers than ever to the Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham Parish churches this year.

With 100 or more enjoying Christingle at both St John's in Gosbrook Road and St Margaret's Mapledurham, and a total of more than 740 at the two St Peter's services, attendance was 7% up on last year.

And the generosity of Caversham also increased. Christingles raise important funds for The Children's Society and this year saw donations at the St Peter's services increase by a tenth, benefitting the work of the charity by more than £1600.



The congregation gathering for Christingle at St Peter's church

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CHOOSE
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Brownies raise £681 for Reading Family Aid

In November, the 5th Caversham (St Peter's) Brownies got busy with cloths, brushes and Hoovers, spending one hour on a sponsored polish of St Peter's Church to help with the preparations for Christmas. They polished all the pews and panelling, cleaned glass, polished the brass eagle lectern, hoovered all the carpets and under all the pews and much more and had a fabulous time doing it. Never has cleaning been so much fun. Their efforts earned £681 in individual sponsorship plus a further £140 from church members to sponsor the whole unit.

Then on 29 November they spent a busy hour in Toys R Us spending their hard earned funds on toys, games and gifts. These were all donated to Reading Family Aid's Toys and Teens Appeal (<http://www.readingfamilyaid.org/>)



The Imps six with their trolley of goodies



Two Brownies polishing the eagle lectern

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Caversham Court Christmas tree sale

The Christmas tree sale organised by local conservationist groups, Econet and BBOWT took place at Caversham Court Gardens Saturday morning 10th December. The trees were taken from an area of local heathland which is being actively managed to restore the wildlife of 100 years ago on the heath including the silver studded blue butterfly [see photo].

There were stalls with cards and gifts by RSPB, Fair Trade, and Reading Beekeepers, also a local willow worker and BBOWT who provided wreaths of local materials also holly, mistletoe and fir cones from sustainable sources.

After over 10 years of holding this event there were lots of return visitors, which made it a friendly social occasion, and also plenty of new customers. Nearly all of the trees harvested were sold, the money going to help support local conservation

groups. The harvesting of these trees also helps the wildlife on the heath, particularly these little silver studded blue butterflies.

For details of the conservation work in this area, visit the website www.econet-reading.org



Photo by Rachel Paton



Photo by John Lerpiniere

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2nd February

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16th February

Speaker: Janet Offord Subject: 9 years in Kenya

2nd March

Speaker: Valerie Keating
Subject: Network Fellowship Olympics

16th March

Speaker: Graham Horn
Subject: The Isle of Wight

30th March

Speaker: June Hardcastle
Subject: Scenes from Village Life

13th April

Speaker: Rev'd Jenny Dowding
Subject: Maundy Thursday Communion – led by Jenny

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Mapledurham playing fields proposal for new school approved

Councillors decided at a meeting on Tuesday 20 December to approve the plans to build a new school on Mapledurham Playing Fields. The third and final proposal to build a new primary school on the playing fields has been accepted by councillors.

The plan was put forward by the Education Funding Agency and assessed by Reading Borough Council at a meeting at the civic offices in Bridge Street on Tuesday, December 20.

The Mapledurham Fields Trust sub-committee were unanimously in favour of the proposal which would see the school built on a site occupying 1.231 acres near the Woodcote Road entrance to the playing fields.

This is a significant milestone in the project, which has been running for more than two years.

However, campaigners have vowed to continue to fight the plan, insisting the land should not be built on.

Robin Bentham, chairman of the Warren and District Residents' Association (WADRA) told the meeting: "[The proposition] is still weak and incomplete, showing no substantial benefit to the beneficiaries to outweigh its significant disruption and disadvantages. A two-storey school building, surrounded by two-metre fencing, would physically dominate the playing fields, dwarfing the pavilion and nearby houses. School traffic would be

the most obvious effect of a school on MPF and would change the character of the neighbourhood very significantly."

The EFA was told to choose an exact location for the school by the The Heights Primary School sub-committee in October, when its highly controversial plans for an undefined 1.23 acre section of the field were approved 'in principle'.

Revised plans showing exactly where the EFA wants to build – between Hewett Avenue and the tennis courts – were revealed in December.

The EFA is offering to pay £1.3 million to the sub-committee, which acts on behalf of the charitable trust that owns the land.

A Question of Trust

Reading Borough Council (RBC) has been sole Trustee of the Mapledurham Playing Fields (MPF) Trust charity, called Recreation Ground Charity No. 304328, since 20th September 1985. As such all RBC councillors are trustees, as reconfirmed at policy committee on 31 October 2016. The object of the trust is 'provision and maintenance of a recreation ground for the benefit of the inhabitants of the parish of Mapledurham and the borough of Reading'. The Warren and District Residents Association (WADRA) members generally accept the need for a primary school in North Caversham, but taking charity land is contrary to the terms of the Trust Deed. It is regrettable that our local councillors have declined to acknowledge their duty as trustees 'to uphold the object of the Trust'.

On October 31st 2016 RBC policy committee, following substantial pressure from WADRA, changed the misleading name of 'The Heights Free School Sub-Committee' to, more appropriately, 'The Mapledurham Playing Fields Trustees Sub-Committee'. For two years, since 4 December 2014, it had implied that the council's policy was to put this school on MPF and the general view seemed to be that there was almost a done deal between RBC and the Educational Funding Agency (EFA) to put the free school on MPF.

A 2002 WADRA survey had 93% in favour of restoring the Pavilion, 50% against selling land. In 2006 RBC found that moving Caversham Primary to MPF had only 17% support; sale of land to fund a pavilion rebuild 9% approval; re-provide changing rooms only with no sale of land 71% agreement. In June 2016, 81% of our members still favoured keeping MPF intact if possible.

The EFA have proceeded at a snail's pace. Since their ill judged purchase of an unsuitable site at High Ridge it took until July 2016 for them to put together a rather preliminary and vague bid to MPF trustees to purchase a prime part of MPF and significantly impinge on the rest, throughout school hours in term time. No details of fencing or pupil protection have yet been specified, but are sure to come. RBC's response to EFA requests has been weakly compliant rather than robust.

WADRA remain in active dialogue with RBC and local councillors, and in touch with the EFA. The £180,000 funds available from WADRA, Festival Republic and RBC for Pavilion refurbishment were already enough to make a start and secure the building. We shall continue to hold our funds ready for the refurbishment until it is formally agreed that work is about to commence. We would ask Councillor Ballsdon and others to take cognisance of the above facts when making any future comments.

WADRA December 2016

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ENVIRONMENT

THE CEDARS OF LEBANON

In my wanderings, I often have recourse to the Ordnance Survey Explorer maps. They have symbols to show the difference between deciduous woodland, coniferous woodland, and mixed woodland. Expert botanists say that there are only three coniferous trees native to the island of Great Britain – the yew, the juniper, and the Scots pine.

Though they might technically be coniferous, the yew and the juniper don't produce cones, and according to some experts, the Scots pine, which most certainly does produce cones, is native only in the Caledonian Forests of the Scottish Highlands. Apart from obviously planted Scots pines, none of these natives is common in the wild. This means that the other pines, the firs, the spruces, the redwoods, larches and cedars came later, and are known to have been deliberately introduced by people.

The conifers certainly do add a variety of colours and shapes to our woodlands, parks, arboretums and cemeteries. They make them look more interesting, especially in winter, and they also provide habitats for birds such as goldcrests and coal-tits, which we might not otherwise see. The extensive and monotonous commercial coniferous plantations, mainly in the northern parts of the island are a different matter.

There are three species of cedar we occasionally see in this country. They are closely related, but come from different parts of the globe. The Lebanon Cedar was introduced, as you might expect, from the Middle East, in 1683. The Indian Cedar, or Deodar, came from the western Himalayas of northern India in 1831, and the first records of the Atlas Cedar in Great Britain date from 1840. It comes from the Atlas mountains of Morocco.

The Lebanon and Atlas Cedars tend to be more spreading and flat-topped, with multiple trunks, with the Atlas having particularly bluish leaves. The Indian Cedar tends to have a single straight trunk, and to be more or less conical in outline. When looking at the old trees in the Reading Cemetery by Cemetery Junction, I was told by my guide of a way of distinguishing them – based on the letters A, L and D. The Atlas Cedar has ascending branches, the Lebanon Cedar has level branches, and the Deodar, or Indian Cedar, has drooping branches.



All the cedars have separate male and female flowers, and here we see the male flowers of the Cedar of Lebanon, shedding their pollen, to be carried away

on the wind to female flowers which hopefully will develop into cones. I took the photograph last winter in Whiteknights Park, where there was a tree with conveniently low branches. On Caversham Heights there are several Deodars which flower in December, shedding their yellow pollen. Although all three species produce cones, they very rarely seed themselves in this country.

Cedar wood was highly prized – many will remember the advertisements for Hall's anti-rot cedarwood garden sheds and greenhouses. It is also used in pencil-making, and for making into little wooden balls which you put in your wardrobes and chests of drawers to repel clothes moths. And even more notably, it was used in the building of Solomon's temple and palace, as recorded in the First Book of Kings, Chapter 5.

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Probus

Members were joined by their wives and other guests at the December meeting of the Reading and District Probus Club. The speaker was John Webster who presented a talk entitled 'Grandma flew Spitfires', the story of the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA).

ATA was set up in the early days of World War II, largely due to the efforts of Gerard d'Erlanger, a director of British Airways. Many pilots were too old for operational work, but were still capable of providing flying support. ATA was set up at White Waltham, and began the job of ferrying aircraft around, from factories and storage depots to operational airfields. ATA was a civilian organisation, and eventually bases at Hamble and Cosford became all-women sites.

Aircraft were divided into several classes, and pilots were allowed to fly classes of aircraft depending on their experience and training. Class 1 was single-engine, then operational single engine, light twin engine, heavier twin engine, four-engine bombers up to class 6, flying boats such as the Catalina and Sunderland. Initial training was done on single engine planes. A big scheduling problem was matching pilots and their skills to the aircraft to be moved.

Initially ATA was staffed by British people, but after a while Americans and others, such as Polish and Spanish, were recruited, and also people with no flying experience. ATA had its own fleet of taxis, such as the Avro Anson (the 'Faithful Annie') and Fairchild Argus, used to ferry personnel around, to take them to the aircraft which had to be moved, and to fetch them back afterwards. ATA was involved in all sorts of activities, but its bread and butter was moving aircraft from factory to maintenance unit, where guns radios etc were added, and then delivering them to RAF or RN airfields, and to fly aircraft back for maintenance.

There were more ground staff than flying crew, even 16 year old cadets were employed.

Pauline Gower MBE was the founder of the ATA women's women's section. The first eight women were employed in 1940 at Hatfield, of whom the youngest was 15 years old. Previously women had not been allowed in ATA stations.

Pathe newsreel did a report, stating that ATA employed 1246 aircrew, of whom 168 were women, including four flight engineers. Seventeen women, including Amy Johnson, were killed in ATA service. Some ladies made careers in aviation after the war. During its years of operation, ATA ferried 309,000 aircraft, moving 990 a week on average, including over 50,000 Spitfires.

ATA finally closed in September 1948 with a closing pageant at White Waltham. Veterans badges were belatedly awarded in 2008. There are ATA memorials at Hamble and at Elvington. There is a display of ATA memorabilia at the ATA gallery at Maidenhead Heritage Centre. For more information visit the website www.atamuseum.org

Probus is a club for retired men, who enjoy a meal once a month in the congenial company of like-minded men. Lunch is followed by a talk, which may be on a variety of interesting subjects. The club meets at the Caversham Heath Golf Club. For further information visit the club's website www.probusclub-reading.org.uk If you are interested in joining, please contact the secretary David Laird on 0118 947 0709.

Caversham and Chiltern Flower Club

The first club meeting in 2017 will be on February 8th and will be the AGM followed by a presentation by club member Irene Manson 'One two buckle my shoe'. On March 8th Emily Broomhead will interpret her title 'In Print' with flowers and foliage. The club meets on the second Wednesday of the month at the Caversham Heights

Methodist Church, doors open at 6.45pm and the demonstration begins at 7.30. Visitors are always welcome.

Reading Gardeners

Our two meetings of Reading Gardeners this month are as follows.

February 8th. Julie and Stuart Akkerman will tell us about the origins and development of a beautiful and imaginative garden 'Cae Hir, a Welsh Garden with a Dutch History' which their family set up in 1983 and still runs.

February 22nd 'How to use Willow in the Garden' is the title of a talk given by Christine Brewster, well-known locally for her creative basket-making.

The meetings are held in Caversham Primary School at 7.15 for refreshments, 7.45 for the talk.

For further information see our website readinggardeningclub.org.uk

The Caversham Heights Society

The Caversham Heights Society ended 2016 with two very different types of meeting. Usually the December meetings end with some sort of concert with a Christmas theme followed by a bring and share Christmas party. In 2016 however the concert and party preceded the final lecture. On December 7th Anne Moore and her musical ensemble entertained us with Christmas music played on clarinets and bassoons, interspersed with carols and humorous stories, after which the assembled gathering enjoyed some festive fare.

Then two weeks later, on the 21st, Roger Shaw enthralled and intrigued us with his illustrated talk about the Oregon Trail in the mid-1800s which went from Independence in Missouri to Washington State on the edge of the Pacific Ocean, a journey of over 3000 miles. The worst part was crossing through the Wyoming Pass. Apparently in 1804 Thomas Jefferson requested that a route should be found through the mid-West to the Pacific Coast of the USA and the Federal Government urged people to 'open up the West' to ease the burden on many settlements in the East. Over 500,000 migrants made the journey westwards but it was the Oregon Trail that began in 1843 that really made the headlines because of the sheer size of the wagon trains and the numbers involved in the migration. Over 80% of those who started the journey were farmers but even they could not have anticipated the conditions of the Great Plains, the deep rutted tracks, the cold and the droughts, the lack of fuel and water. The longest train was one of 1600 wagons, or 'Pacific Schooners' made by Studebakers, and pulled mainly by oxen since the horses collapsed under the strain. Because of polluted water 57 people died in one day.

Over 10 million cattle were driven westwards though we have no knowledge of how many died nor of how they fared with traversing the lands occupied by between 20 and 30 million buffaloes. The two advantages for the migrants were that buffalo meat was nutritious and buffalo dung was highly flammable. The westward migration was so important to the history of America that, as Roger Shaw pointed out, many films about the Wild West have been made but few have any real understanding of the conditions experienced by those early pioneers.

The next meeting of the society is on 1st February when David Copley will give a talk on the Kennet and Avon Canal. For more information about the society please go to our website cavershamheights.org or speak to either Carol Cozens on 0118 946 1509 or Jill Hodges on 0118 959 5307

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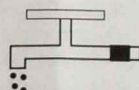
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