



# POST OFFICE ON THE MOVE

People in Caversham Heights may soon be going to a different location to buy stamps or post a parcel.

The Post Office is proposing to relocate its services from one convenience store, Woodcote Way News, to another, Conisboro Stores in Conisboro Avenue, with significantly longer opening hours. It would be a modern open-plan branch with Post Office services provided from a till at the retail counter. If the move goes ahead it will happen in March or April.

The plan is the subject of a public consultation process which started in November and ends early this month. Customers are being asked for their views on the proposal and whether they think there are any community issues. Their comments will be considered before a final decision is taken on the proposal.

Customers can make contact by Freepost Your Comments to Post Office Ltd, by email to [comments@postoffice.co.uk](mailto:comments@postoffice.co.uk) or by phone to the helpline on 03457 223344. They can also share their views online through the quick and easy questionnaire at [postofficeviews.co.uk](http://postofficeviews.co.uk) with the branch code 148939.

Will Russell, Post Office regional manager, said: "We understand how important having a Post Office is to residents in this area of Caversham and we are confident that this new modern Post Office service will meet the needs of the local community and secure services for the future. This modernisation is part of a major investment programme, the largest in the history of the Post Office and marks a commitment to no more branch closure programmes."

At the new branch services would be provided seven days a week throughout the stores' opening hours: Monday to Saturday 7am to 9pm, Sunday 8am to 8pm.

This is an extra 50 hours a week of Post Office service including opening earlier and closing significantly later, making it more convenient for customers.

All the usual services will be provided including postage, banking, benefits, travel money, home shopping returns and Local Collect. It is understood that major changes will need to be made to the shop interior and some alterations to the frontage.

The proposed relocation, which is with the current Postmaster's agreement, is part of a major modernisation programme across the Post Office network designed to make it easier for customers to do business, through longer opening hours and modern open plan environments.

With over 11,500 branches, the Post Office network is the biggest retail network in the UK, with more branches than all the banks and building societies combined. Almost all branches are run with retail partners on an agency or franchise basis.

The Post Office provides services central to people's everyday lives – 99.7 per cent of the population live within three miles of a Post Office – and 17 million customers visit a branch each week, including a third of the UK's small businesses.

It states: "We offer the UK's largest fee free cash withdrawal network through our 11,500 branches, an additional 2,500 cash machines and 99 per cent of UK bank customers can access their accounts at the Post Office. We sell 170 different products and services spanning financial services including savings, insurance, loans, mortgages and credit cards; Government services; telephony; foreign currency; travel insurance and mail services."



The Woodcote Way shop where the Post Office is at the moment



Conisboro Stores, the proposed new site

**A Happy New Year to all our readers**

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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

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Caversham RG4 7AD Tel: 9479505

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Rev'd Marion Pyke Tel: 9475834

Rev'd John Dudley Tel: 9470265

#### RIVERSIDE CHURCH (READING)

Rev'd Ray Coates Tel: 07894 545603

Email: ray.coates@ntlworld.com

#### CAVERSHAM PARK ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP

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Tel: 0118 947 5152

#### METHODIST TEAM MINISTRY

Rev'd Jenny Dowding, 72 Highmoor Road.

Tel: 947 2223

#### CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH

Transitional Minister Rev'd Jonathan Edwards

Church office tel 954 5353

Email Secretary: sue.cantwell@cavershambaptist

church.org.uk

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(formerly Caversham Hill Chapel)

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#### ROMAN CATHOLIC

Fr Paul Martin, The Presbytery,

2 South View Avenue.

Tel: 947 1787.

Deacon: Hugh Anscombe

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.

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## TALKING POINT

By Colin Ferguson

Welcome to the New Year. What do you hope it has in store for you and what resolutions have you made? I am looking at a year which I know is going to bring many changes and as I get older there will be some I do not want. Perhaps my youngest son was right all those years ago when he asked me if I had a New Year's revolution.

There are always going to be times we do not want when we must change our lives because of circumstances beyond our control, the most dramatic of which is death of a loved one, or serious injury to oneself when the whole of our life expectation changes in a moment. Most things are in our control and we can plan ahead for things like moving home or retiring from full time employment. You will notice that I have avoided saying 'from work' because God always has work for us to do. Our roles in life may change such as when we get married and have children and again when those children leave home. I have known so many people who have had great difficulty in letting their roles change, especially on retirement. To feel you are no longer of value is a terrible thing to think. You are always of value but you do need to re-imagine your life and that is not always easy.

We are not too dissimilar to the people of Christ's time on earth. We are obsessed with position in life and we stereotype other people without knowing them. Wealth is seen as status and achievement while poverty is seen as failure. It was to the poor that Jesus spoke most lovingly, it was the rich and powerful who failed to meet his standards of love and justice. What he did was to make everyone re-examine their life style and to see that they all had value in God's love for them. He challenged them to change their lives, to raise the self-esteem of the poor and to make the rich aware of their responsibility to the needy.

I often wonder what would Jesus say to us today, but I think I have some idea.

It is easy to make half-hearted resolutions of the negative kind, "I must give up chocolates once I have finished my Christmas boxes!" We say "I must give up this or that", knowing that the chance of doing so is quite unlikely. We have all done that, me included. But what does 2016 hold for you? Is there an event you can be prepared for or is there something you have always wanted to do?

As a Christian I ask myself what would God want me to do? Especially I think how I might be a more loving and joyful person, and more able to stand for peace and justice. How can I re-imagine my life by doing something else or as I get older, not doing so much? I had a taste of this when my car was off the road for a week and the difficulty of relying on a car became a real problem. How could I imagine not having a car at all? I calculated that I could afford at least three taxi trips a week with what I saved, plus my bus pass and my legs. Walking after all is one of the healthiest things we can do.

So, enjoy your chocolates but aim to have a healthier life style during the year; don't go mad on it because God loves you as you are, he just wants us all to be the best we can be. What would you need to do? What would you want to be? Imagine yourself as the person God would like you to be and start the revolution.

*Colin Ferguson is a lay preacher in the United Reformed Church and chairman of the Caversham Bridge board*

## 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 3rd Sundays  
Morning Worship 4th Sunday  
6.30pm Evensong

#### St John's, Gosbrook Road

9.30am Holy Communion 1st, 3rd and 4th Sundays  
9.30am All Age Worship 2nd Sunday  
9.30am 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  
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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  
First 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 February 2016 issue should be sent to the Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham parish office by **Monday 4th January**. The date for the March 2016 issue is **Monday 1st February**. Email address is secretary@ctmparish.org.uk

Advertising copy for the February issue should be sent to Mr A Wright, Twigmoor, Upper Warren Avenue, Caversham, by **Friday 1st January**. The date for the March issue is **Friday 29th January**.

### PARISH OFFICES

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# Remembrance service and parade

On a pleasant, dry morning this year's remembrance service took place at our war memorial in Christchurch meadows. Ex-servicemen and women, the Red Cross, the Scouts, Cubs, Beavers, Guides, Brownies and others assembled in the meadow and made their way to the memorial where they were welcomed by the branch president, Ron Jewitt.

The service was conducted, for the first time, by Father Paul Martin of St. Anne's church in Caversham, the joint branch chaplain of Caversham Royal British Legion. He was assisted by Deacon Hugh Anscombe, also from St. Anne's.

Father Martin addressed the assembled crowd of 1500 with profound words as to how much we owe to those who did, and still are, defending our freedom. He also mentioned how, when he was in Bicester, he felt when he saw the funeral procession of a young man who had been killed in Afghanistan – the realisation that war brought so much sadness to so many especially to those who had only just started out on life.

After hymns played by the Lower Earley Salvation Army band, the lesson, the ode to the fallen and two minutes silence followed by the kohima epitaph and reveille, wreaths and personal tributes were laid at the memorial.

Lieutenant and Staff Sergeant Dan and Jamie Boyd from the 9th platoon Caversham army cadet force assembled and marshalled the parade, accompanied by the police, back through Caversham, where the salute was taken by Ron Jewitt, Father Paul Martin, and war veterans on the library steps.

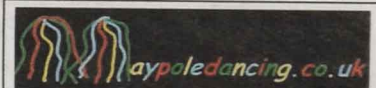
Twenty seven wreaths and personal tributes were laid at the memorial – as always Caversham cares.



The procession marches through Caversham centre



The official party takes the salute on the library steps



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# CHRISTMAS FAIRS SPECIAL

## Caversham Heights Methodists

On a very wet Saturday morning in November Caversham Heights Methodist church opened its doors and despite the weather the crowds came in to peruse the stalls, buy the goods and raffle tickets and enjoy the lunches and light refreshments provided by Viv, Myra and Mamie and other members of their team.

Stalls included plants, bric-a-brac, books, and home-made preserves. There was a tombola, a raffle and a competition to guess the weight of a Christmas cake which was won by Ena Horner.

The event was in aid of the Racecourse Community School in Mindolla, Zamba



A good supply of home-made bread.

## Gosbrook Road Methodists

A cold blustery day encouraged Gosbrook Road Methodist Church to open a little early for its Christmas fair and a good number of customers came through the doors. All the usual stalls were well supplied with toys, books, bric-a-brac, and home-made cakes and jams.

Catherine Scott from Catherine's Cakes provided a large Christmas cake for the raffle which was won by Margaret Simpson.

Some of the money raised will go towards paying for the new heating system at Gosbrook Road, which is essential with all the activities that take place each week. Other money will be earmarked for a Christmas charity.



Refreshments are always welcome



A cuddly toy with the knitted goods



All smiles on the cake stall

## Fun and games at St Andrew's

What can you do on a windy, rainy Saturday in November? Many people decided the best thing was to go to St Andrew's Autumn Fair, which was run jointly by the church and pre-school. The outdoor activities had to be cancelled, but indoors it was warm, busy and there was plenty to see and do – and of course eat! The cake stall was popular as usual, and people crowded in to the cafe for cakes and refreshments.

It is always a wonder how everything comes together on the day: the bunting was up, there were crowds around the bric-a-brac stall and the raffle, and the children turned up to run their games. We welcomed a number of visiting stalls, including Stella and Dot, with their beautifully designed and versatile jewellery, Forever Living's health-giving aloe vera products, and the attractive Phoenix Cards. Caversham Good Neighbours were there to tell people about their services locally, and to seek volunteers.

With the help of so many people – donating goods for sale, helping or attending – we are proud to have raised £1375 which will be divided between St Andrew's Pre-school and Launchpad, Reading's homeless support charity.

We'd like to thank the many local businesses who supported the fair through donations: Bridges, Caversham Health and Fitness, Caversham Heath Golf Club, Conisboro Stores, Forever Living, Grey's Court National Trust, House of Cards, Lewis and James deli, Marparts, Phoenix Trading, Stella and Dot, Terry's, Tesco Express Caversham, The Fisherman Cafe, Warings Bakery, Woodcote Way News, Waltons.

## Women's World Day of Prayer

Come and join us for the Women's World Day of Prayer service at St Peter's church Caversham on Friday 4th March at 7.30pm. This year's theme is *Receive children; Receive me*. This theme reflects St Mark's gospel, chapter 10 vv13-16. All are welcome; young, old, men, women and children.

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## Caversham confirmation service

St Peter's was the host church for the Caversham-wide Confirmation service in November. A large congregation was in attendance, including families and friends of the candidates. The service was led by the Bishop of Reading, the Rt Rev Andrew Proud, who was supported by a number of the Caversham clergy. Ten candidates were confirmed, and others re-affirmed their baptismal vows or were received into the Church of England.

It was a wonderful service, just one of many across the diocese, welcoming Christians making their personal commitment to Christ. In his sermon, the bishop, who had previously been based in Ethiopia, where he was the area bishop for the Horn of Africa, drew on his experiences in that country. He had made many long journeys to visit different churches, often finishing them on foot, to make parallels with the Christian journey on which those being confirmed were embarking.

Following the sermon, the Paschal candle was lit, and the candidates expressed their allegiance to Christ, before they and the bishop moved to the font during the singing of the hymn 'Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here'. One person renewed her baptismal faith and another was received into the communion of the Church of England. The bishop addressed each confirmation candidate, saying "God has called you and made you His own". He laid his hands on the head of each, saying "Confirm O lord your servant with your Holy Spirit" before anointing them with the oil of Chrism. He invited the congregation to pray for all those on whom hands had been laid.

After the confirmation section of the service, the newly confirmed took their first communions. While the congregation received communion, the St Peter's church choir sang the anthem *Ave Verum* by William Byrd.

When the service was over, there was an opportunity for photographs. The picture shown is of the newly confirmed standing with the Bishop and the Rev Marion Pyke.

Dozens of friends, family and supporters shared in refreshments, many chatting with Bishop Andrew, to help the candidates celebrate this important day in their lives.



Confirmation candidates and others with the Bishop after the service

## Toy service at St Peter's



The gifts on display in front of the altar.

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A toy service was held by the Parish of Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham at St Peter's church on Advent Sunday, 29th November. This was a parish-wide service, which was led by the rector, the Rev'd Mike Smith, and the large congregation included many members of all three churches in the parish. There were no services at either St John's or St Margaret's that day. It was also a parade service, and in attendance were members of the St Peter's Scout group and Brownie pack, who paraded in with their flags at the start of the service. The sermon was given by the Rev'd Rachel Ross.

During the service members of the congregation presented gifts of toys, to be distributed in time for Christmas to those in need. The gifts were laid in front of the altar. The distribution was organised during the following weeks by Reading Family Aid. More information on this charity can be seen at their website [www.readingfamilyaid.org](http://www.readingfamilyaid.org)

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# 2015 – what a hectic

Last year was a momentous one in the history of the Caversham area and will go down as one of many significant changes.

We saw the completion and opening of the first bridge across the Thames for many years. The as yet unnamed pedestrian and cycle bridge from Christchurch Meadow to the south bank created a short cut to the town centre and the station. There was also some controversy about how safe it is for pedestrians.

There was much greater involvement by residents in local affairs, a situation to be welcomed. The biggest issue was undoubtedly the search for a permanent site for the Caversham Heights free school. The selection by the Education Funding Agency of Mapledurham playing fields ran into fierce opposition and its supporters were equally vociferous. This one is likely to run and run, especially as Reading council is in favour but has other responsibilities as trustees of the playing fields charity.

Plans for the much needed sprucing up of the St Martins shopping precinct in Caversham centre were announced and

generally well received but are now having to be redrawn after Waitrose withdrew its expansion scheme.

A public consultation started about the future of Caversham library, reminding us how much it is valued and needed. Priory Avenue GP surgery was put into special measures, mainly because of a shortage of doctors, then taken out again after improvements were made. The latest development is a suggestion by Rob Wilson, MP for Reading East, that the surgery needs new, purpose built premises.



Sadly the Lions club of Goring, Woodcote and District closed during the year. This was one of their last presentations



Corpus Christi procession in the sunshine by the Church of Our Lady and St Anne at Mapledurham House

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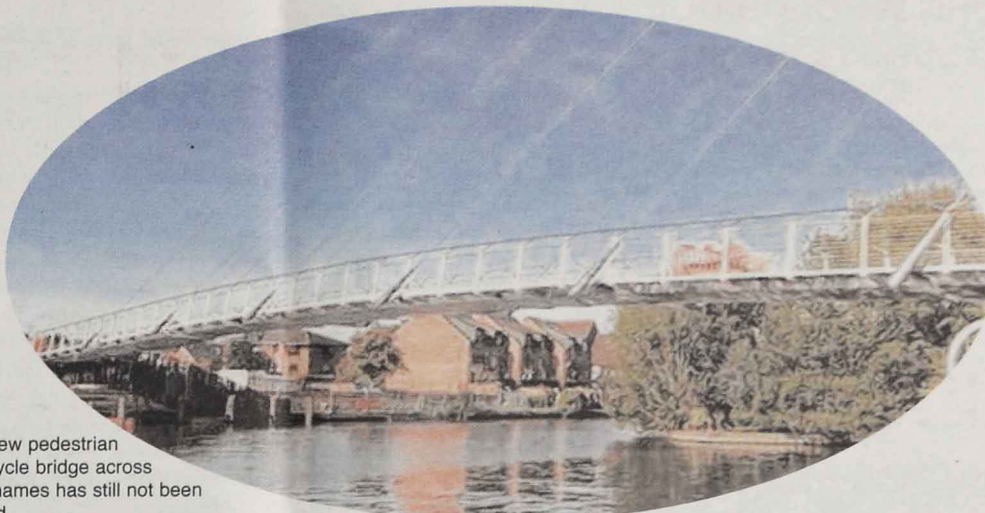
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Reading bridge underwent a £25 million repair programme to allow it to be used as a major traffic artery for the foreseeable future. It was closed for two weeks but disruption to traffic was much less than expected.

A much valued shop in Prospect Street –

Wordplay books and toys – closed and was followed by the Crystal Dragon and Caversham Kebab House. They will all be missed. There were several other retail changes. A review of some of the events of the year in photographs is printed on these pages.



The new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the Thames has still not been named.



Meetings on local issues were well attended. This one was on Sharing Our Streets



Procession through the streets at Easter organised by Churches Together in Caversham ended at Caversham Court Gardens



Bill Vincent — one of those we lost in 2015

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Reading bridge seen while it was closed and under repair

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# Your Health Service needs you!

By Paul Myerscough

The NHS is rarely out of the news. Since the days of Blair and Brown there has been a continuous programme of change. In those early days much money was injected into the service with a view that concurrent improvements in efficiency and effectiveness would multiply the benefits of the extra cash.

This gargantuan organisation which employs one in 18 of all UK workers and consumes the largest part of the Government budget, however, is not an easy patient when it comes to the medicine of change. The problem is compounded by successive governments that design new organisations and structures and assume that benefits will follow automatically. This is not the case – if you do not change the way you do things you cannot expect to deliver something different.

So the key is to change the processes, organisation changes then follow! Implementing change is a difficult job which requires specialist skills and above all leadership. Two of the key philosophical aspects of the organisational changes made in recent years are to open up all parts of the health service to public scrutiny, and to move some decision making down to a local level.

There are many actors in the NHS. In our area the most obvious are the GP surgeries, the Royal Berks Hospital, and the Berkshire Healthcare Trust. The latter is less well known, but with over 4500 employees it runs 100-plus different services including most of our community health services, the out-of-hours doctor service (Westcall), community mental health, Prospect Park Hospital, and several community hospitals. Public health is largely the responsibility of the local authorities and many of these outsource services to yet other organisations.

This complex web of health support is either funded directly by central government or indirectly through local authorities and local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). CCGs are a relatively new layer of local organisation through which GPs can choose services and set priorities by allocating local budgets and contracts.

To oversee the operation of these there are yet more actors. The Care Quality Commission reviews all players from care homes to hospitals to assess the service delivery – including patient satisfaction, and safety. The results are published on their website. Monitor reviews the governance and financial performance and planning of organisations. The Health and Wellbeing Board is promoted as a strategic local forum for local authorities, CCGs, and other stakeholders; in practice they have little capability to drive policy.

Healthwatch is a network of local organisations that solicit information from the public about their experiences and concerns about healthcare. At the most local level a Patient Participation Group (PPG) is organised in many GP surgeries to enable a level consultation with patients. (See *Caversham Bridge* September edition for more on PPGs).

So how can you get involved? Public scrutiny is designed into the organisation of NHS trusts. Become a member of your local trust and you will be eligible to vote for public governors. The Council of Governors is responsible for reviewing strategy and finances and overseeing the operation of the Board of Directors. Trusts are bound to consult the public in their local constituency when setting direction and priorities and they achieve this by engaging with their pool of members.

Residents of Berkshire including Reading should be members of the Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (BHFT); Reading residents should also be members of the Royal Berkshire Foundation Trust (RBFT).

Members are the first port of call for contributing to advisory panels, to research projects, and to activities like 15 Steps visits to services – a quality improvement process which uses input from non-medical eyes to record first impressions of a service (named after a parent who said “I can tell what kind of care my daughter is going to get within 15 steps of walking onto a ward”). And of course governors are elected from the pool of members.

How much time is involved? Many members are happy just to belong and to receive the quarterly newsletter and do not commit any time at all to this activity. Others just attend the trust annual general meeting to hear the executives speak.

For those who are more fascinated by the health service, the CCGs hold quarterly governance meetings which are open to the public. In addition they are keen to consult the public on behalf of the GPs they represent. The quarterly Health and Well Being Board meetings at the local council offices cover subjects of common interest.

Foundation Trust Board meetings are held monthly and are open to the public as are the quarterly Governor Council meetings.

No-one can doubt that our NHS must change. Demand is burgeoning as the population ages. We have to deliver more with less. It is important that the public, the customer, is involved in the debate and provides some balance to the special interest groups – the employees, the unions, the politicians, and the press – who seem to have so much to say.

The current round of reductions in spending on social care through local authority budgets will have a dramatic and escalating effect on demand for health services. Housing is another pressure point where public policy is intimately linked with health. If you care about the future of the health service you should get involved now!

Paul Myerscough is a public governor at Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust. For information or comments please contact him at [governor@berkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:governor@berkshire.nhs.uk).

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## ENVIRONMENT

# THE CLAPPERS

Soon after arriving in Reading as a young man, I discovered The Clappers, or thought I had, but now I'm not so sure of exactly what they are. Let me explain.

The English Place-Name Society's volume records The Clappers between Caversham and Reading from a document in the National Archives dating back to 1603. It says that the name denoted bridges.

The scholars compiling the Oxford English Dictionary didn't find the word with this meaning at all in their first edition, but in a supplement recorded the word clapper meaning a rough plank bridge. They said it was local.

Joseph Wright, in his English Dialect Dictionary, found the word clapper, meaning a rough bridge, used in Cornwall, Devon and Berkshire. This seems a bit odd, because of Somerset, Wiltshire and Hampshire in between.

If you look at the photograph, taken around 1875, a rough plank bridge is what we are looking at. The picture, taken by Henry Taunt of Oxford, is reproduced here with the permission of Reading Borough Libraries.

It seems likely that the word was connected with clap-boarding, the planks used as a cladding for buildings. They would be clapped tightly together, to keep out the cold and wet, and were often used on water-mills in this area. Caversham Mill was like that, and Sandford, on the River Loddon, still is.

The story becomes more intriguing when you look in Major B. Lowsley's *Glossary of Berkshire Words and Phrases*, published by the English Dialect Society in 1888. He says that clappers are the shallows in a river, and that "the Clappers between Reading and Caversham are known to all upper Thames boating men." So I am tempted to think that The Clappers were originally not the bridges between Caversham Lock Island and View Island, but the shallows in the river, a menace to boatmen, which were there before the weir - especially since the bridge meaning seems to belong to the West Country and not to the Thames Valley.

Whatever The Clappers might originally have been, the walk over the river is always a pleasure, and the fact that you are actually allowed to do it in this safety-conscious age sometimes surprises visitors. You might meet the odd angler, cyclist and dog-walker, and the odd person out for a stroll.

In the past, it must have been rather busier than now. It must be a very old right of way, and the standards of now disused corporation gas-lamps here and there along the approaches to it tell of its importance in days gone by. Before Reading Bridge was opened in 1923, it would have been a long walk from Reading to Lower Caversham, if you'd gone by Caversham Bridge.

Even after all these years, I'm still surprised when I walk over the weir: below it and above it, the river seems so placid. Then as you approach, a growing thundering noise assails your ears, and on the weir itself, you become aware of the elemental force of all those millions of tons of tumbling water. Somehow the river, and its water-birds, its wild flowers, its strength and seeming permanence, always seem to do me good.

Happy Wanderer



## Waiting expectantly

This was the title of an Awayday held by the Methodist churches in Caversham at St Katharine's Priory, Parmoor, on Saturday 28th November.

Having found our way there by negotiating the winding lanes of Buckinghamshire, 45 participants were welcomed with a hot drink. Coffee and teas were available throughout the day and a lunch of roast lamb with all the trimmings was provided by our hosts.

The day began with an introduction by Stella Bristow, a leading light in Methodism and known for her worship displays and her leadership of reflective days. From fabric, pebbles, night lights and a small statue she created a shimmering waterfall falling from four coloured candles on which to focus our thoughts on the journey of Advent.

Using different pictures done by a Chinese artist, Stella helped us focus on different aspects of Advent and what it means to us. What are we waiting for and are we prepared for it? Having a child out of wedlock was considered adultery and Joseph could have abandoned Mary and Mary could have been stoned. But Joseph married her and none of this happened. Why did God make things so difficult for Joseph and Mary? The Jews were looking for a Messiah but Jesus slipped in almost unannounced.

It was comforting to many of us to be told that God never gives up on us, however old we are. He has never finished with us and He often uses older people for his purpose, for example Zachariah and Anna.

Waiting can be a difficult time - it can be painful and anxious and we often ask ourselves "Where is God in all this?" But we should use it productively.

The talks were interspersed with various workshops and we were free to choose what we did and we could move from one to another if we wished. These workshops included discussion, art and craft, writing, dance and music groups. There was a time for recreation - a walk, jigsaws and board games or just a chat. There was also a quiet room for anyone who needed a comfortable space for reflection.

The thoughts, ideas and prayers from the whole day were brought together in an act of worship to which several people contributed what they had been working on in their workshop sessions, dance, singing, paintings and a poem written as if by Joseph. A prayer tree of night lights was added to the display and prayers were said for world and personal concerns.

It was a happy, relaxing time of fellowship enhanced by an uplifting and spiritual experience.

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## Blessing of the Graves

Father Paul, parish priest at Our Lady and St Anne's church, and other priests from Reading parishes, gathered at Henley Road cemetery in November to bless the graves.

They were joined by many people whose friends or relatives are buried there. The clergy visited graves as they were led to them and prayed for those buried there, sprinkling the graves with holy water.

The following Sunday Deacon Hugh and a small number of people visited Victoria Road cemetery to pray there. Among the graves blessed were those of Father Millard and his parents, of an early parish priest and of the first Reverend Mother of the Visitation Convent with one of the nuns.

A parishioner was delighted to locate her grandparents' grave which was also blessed.



Maureen beside the grave of her grandparents

## St John's Christmas Fair

The weather was appropriately chilly for St John's Christmas Fair in November, but fair-goers got a warm welcome from the stall holders, and the Caversham Community Cafe was on hand to provide cups of tea or coffee. The cake and toy stalls were very busy and there were homemade chocolates on sale on the Guides' stall.

The tombola was popular with scores of prizes to be won, and a raffle was held for a beautifully iced Christmas cake. Decorations for the tree and handmade cards were just some of the items on offer on the Christmas stall. Other stalls included jewellery, jams and marmalade, books, crafts, and there was a raffle with many prizes including a splendid hamper. The fair raised more than £1100 for church funds. Thanks to all who helped.



The Guides' stall with homemade chocolates

**Bible Friends**

## A message for the shepherds

One night, some shepherds were on the hillside outside Bethlehem. Suddenly, there was a dazzling light and an angel appeared. The shepherds were very scared. "Don't be frightened," the angel said. "I have brought you some wonderful news. God's Son has been born tonight."

Lots more angels appeared in the sky. They sang, "Praise to God in heaven. Peace to everyone on earth."

When the angels had gone, the shepherds said to each other, "Come on, let's go and find this special baby." They left their sheep. They ran down the hillside to Bethlehem. They found baby Jesus lying on a bed of straw, just as the angels had said. The shepherds told Mary and Joseph all about the angel's message.

The shepherds were so excited they told everyone they met the good news, "God's Son has been born!"

Luke 2:7-21



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## Caversham Heights Society

The society held two meetings during November. In the first, members were enthralled by Gavin Henderson's story of how the John Lewis Partnership started with the first John Lewis training as a draper and expert in haberdashery in Liverpool before moving to London and joining forces with a Peter Jones in Oxford Street in the 1850s.

In 1864 he branched out on his own in a converted town house in Oxford Street and by 1885 he had five adjoining houses still largely trading as drapers and haberdashery merchants based on four principles which are still in place today -- value, assortment, service and honesty. Meanwhile Peter Jones had diversified and expanded and had moved into premises in Chelsea.

In 1906 John Lewis and Peter Jones merged. Lewis family members were all part of the business which soon split into retail and buying. It was in 1911 that the idea of a partnership between staff and managers sharing ideas and information first began. By 1929 a trust had been established and a constitution was developed out of which came the idea of distributing the profits on a percentage basis, a principle that has helped to develop the company into what it has become today.

The Waitrose part began in 1908 and merged with John Lewis in 1937 although the first supermarket did not open until 1955. In 1940 the company took over 23 Selfridge provincial stores and has continued to expand until today there are 300 Waitrose branches and the John Lewis Partnership operates in 33 countries via the internet, which accounts for one-third of its sales. There is a John Lewis Heritage Centre in Cookham, open only on Saturdays, where further information can be found.

To mark the Queen and Prince Philip's 68th wedding anniversary the society invited Barbara Askew to talk about *Royal weddings past and present*. Barbara, who grew up in Eton with a view of Windsor Castle from her window, is a Blue Badge guide and a renowned expert on royalty, running Windsor Heritage Talks and Tours with her husband Roger. The couple were invited to the wedding of Prince Charles to Camilla Parker Bowles in 2005. Her personal snapshots of that day at Windsor Guildhall were among the intimate gems that stood out in Barbara's exploration of royal marriages since the time of George III. Society members learned about royal wedding dresses, the marriage venues, wedding presents and honeymoon destinations. We even learned how soon after the royal nuptials the first child was born!

We saw a photograph of the first meeting between the 13-year old Princess Elizabeth and the 18-year old Philip of Greece, taken at Dartmouth's Royal Naval College in 1939, when the young couple were said to have fallen in love. We also saw the first photo of Queen Victoria and her beloved Albert after their marriage in 1840 -- the first wedding of a reigning monarch for 300 years -- with the young bride staring adoringly into her groom's eyes.

Though royal marriages are still governed by the Act of Settlement of 1701, which bans Catholics from ascending the throne, and the Royal Marriages Act 1772, which requires the monarch's permission before any royal marriage can take place, these acts are nowadays less stringently applied. Most recent royal marriages have been made for love, despite divorces, but in the past they were a useful way of forging political alliances although, as today, not all of them were successful. Barbara showed us a portrait of Caroline of Brunswick, a woman so unappealing to her new husband George IV that he got drunk and spent his wedding night asleep in the bedroom fireplace.

The society meets on alternate Wednesday evenings at 7.30pm in Caversham Heights Methodist Church Hall. Further details can be obtained from Jill Hodges either via irishjill@southcote.net or by phone on 0118 959 5307. All are welcome.

## Rosehill WI

President Margaret Pyle welcomed members and visitors to the November meeting. She reported that they are looking for someone to be a delegate at the NFWI annual meeting in Brighton in June, also if anyone wished to be an observer at this event. Secretary Mary Robinson drew attention to several forthcoming items: bursaries for Denman courses, something old, something new workshop and voting slips for the WI resolutions which were in the November issue of WI Life.

We were pleased to welcome Janet Smith to our meeting as she has been quite ill of late and hope she will continue to improve. Margaret reported that Mary Richings was out of hospital following her back operation and we wished her a speedy recovery.

There were two scrabble afternoons in November. The knit and natter group had a few more attendees in October and we hope this will continue. There was one walk in October down to Caversham riverside and across the new bridge. The cinema group had a successful first outing to see *Suffragette* and hopes to see *The Lady in the Van*, based on Alan Bennett's book and starring Maggie Smith and Alex Jennings, later.

Margaret introduced the speaker, Gillian Franklin, talking about apples, their history and varieties. Gillian said apples had been introduced to Britain by the Romans over 2,000 years ago. They are full of vitamins and minerals and very good as part of a healthy diet. Many different varieties have been developed over the

years. There has been a fall in recent years of the number of orchards in the UK, mainly due to EU regulations and subsidies given to foreign farmers.

After the talk, a cup of tea and biscuits were followed by the raffle. Proceeds from the bring and buy were donated to the purchase of items for the RBH emergency packs.

We meet on the first Wednesday of each month at 2.00 pm at St Barnabas church hall, Emmer Green and make visitors very welcome.

## Caversham Heights Townswomen's Guild

The talk in November by Sue Nike about our Houses of Parliament was full of history and sayings, such as "Toeing the line", and "It's in the bag". The social studies group enjoyed one of Ray Goodman's talks and slide shows, this one about the Baltic capitals.

Then the Christmas celebrations began. We enjoyed two Christmas lunches, one at Boaters cafe, the other at Mapledurham golf club. We went to Bristol for the annual carol service, attended by guilds from all over the south of England.

Our local federation held a Christmas meeting with carols, home grown entertainment and seasonal refreshments. Our own Christmas meeting had mulled non-alcoholic wine and mince pies, with entertainment by Rebecca Holmes.

The scrabble and the luncheon club continue to be well attended. The Amblers haven't ambled far these last few months, but a cinema club has been launched. So instead of wandering through woods and fields in the wet, we go to the pictures.

There is no meeting in January. The next meeting will be on 18th February at 7.30pm at Caversham Heights Methodist Church hall. Jean Dyer will be speaking about the history of dolls.

Any ladies wishing to join or visit us will be very welcome.

## Caversham WI

London was the destination for members at their November meeting. The speaker was Alan Copeland with slides of Eccentric London -- all the weird and wonderful statues, buildings and other odd sights. We will certainly be looking up on our next visit to London.

The competition for a souvenir of London was won by Monica McMaster with Sylvia Myszor and Romagne Flight runners up. Reminders were given for the Christmas meal and party in December.

## Probus

The speaker at the November meeting of the Reading and District Probus Club was Neil Stewart, whose subject was *Beating about the bush*. Neil, who is a member of the Newbury Probus Club, recounted his experiences on a photographic safari to the Kruger National park in South Africa.

The safari was led by a wildlife photographer, and comprised six people travelling on a Land Cruiser, which is a vehicle ideally suited to wildlife photography. Neil took many pictures of wildlife on two separate days journeying into the park, each trip taking up a whole day, starting at 5am, since early morning and late evening are the best time for photography as the light is more suitable.

Most of Neil's talk consisted of showing the pictures he had taken, and recounting some of the characteristics of the creatures shown. There were pictures of large animals, such as hippos, elephants, cape buffalos, lions, cheetahs; reptiles such as crocodiles, snakes, including cobra and python; and birdlife, which is prolific in the area, including eagles,

vultures, hornbills and bustards.

This was a very enjoyable talk lavishly illustrated by superb photographs.

Probus is a club for retired men, who enjoy a meal once a month in congenial company. 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](http://www.probusclub-reading.org.uk) If you are interested in joining, contact the secretary David Laird on 0118 9470709.

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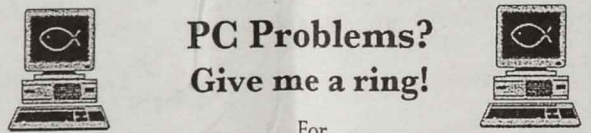
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