



HOLY DOOR AT ST ANNE'S CHURCH



Father Paul before the door

Pope Francis has declared the liturgical year beginning in Advent 2015 a Special Holy Year of Mercy, to be celebrated throughout the Catholic Church. Holy doors will be declared in cathedrals and in special historic churches, and the Pope has declared that these doors will become Doors of Mercy, through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons and instils hope. In the diocese of Birmingham the church of Our Lady and St Anne, with the Shrine of Our Lady of Caversham, has been chosen to be one of sixteen churches to have a Holy Door.

On 8th December, during the mass of the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the

Blessed Virgin Mary, the door was officially opened. A special prayer was said before the shrine and then the priest sprinkled the congregation with holy water as the *Asperges me Domine* was sung.

The congregation was augmented by visitors from surrounding parishes. All were invited to share refreshments in the Cenacle after mass.

A jubilee is a special year of remission of sins and universal pardon. The tradition dates back to 1300, when Pope Boniface VIII convoked a holy year, following which ordinary jubilees have generally been celebrated every 25 or 50 years; with extraordinary jubilees when needed. Christian Jubilees, particularly in the Catholic tradition, generally involve pilgrimage to a sacred site, normally Rome. The

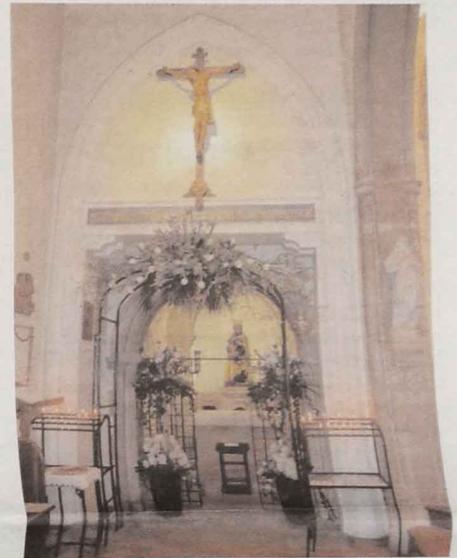
Catholic Church has declared an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy for 2015–2016.

The most distinctive feature in the ceremonial of the Jubilee is the unwalling and the final walling up of the holy door in each of the four great basilicas in Rome which pilgrims are required to visit. The doors are opened by the Pope at the beginning of the Jubilee and then sealed up again afterwards. Holy doors in other cathedrals and churches taking part in a jubilee will also be opened and closed.

The previous jubilee was the 'Great Jubilee' of 2000, which was especially marked by a simplification of the rites and the requirements for achieving the 'indulgence', as well as a

huge effort to involve more Christians in the celebration. [An indulgence is the remission before God of the temporal punishment due sins already forgiven]. The Jubilee was closed by the Pope on January 6, 2001, by the closing of the holy door of St Peter's in Rome and the promulgation of an Apostolic Letter outlining the Pope's vision for the future of the Church.

The Pope's new book 'The Name of God is Mercy' published in January to coincide with the Jubilee Year, ends with the message that Christianity is about 'embracing the outcast, the marginalized and the sinner', a message that he is seeking to send out across the world in the Catholic Church's Holy Jubilee Year of Mercy.



The flower bedecked door in front of the shrine

St Anne's school wins gardening prize

Just before the end of the Christmas term, members of the 'Reading in Bloom' committee joined teachers and pupils of St Anne's school, Caversham for a morning assembly. The school had won the prestigious first prize Gold award in the 'Schools in Bloom 2015' and Mrs Sale, Canon Brian Shenton and Mrs Carol Wheeler came to present to some of the Gardening Club children the impressive engraved cup, a certificate and a cheque for £100.

The judges were very impressed with the use of the school grounds, how the children had the opportunity to get their hands dirty, and how the gardening activities were used to help in many different lessons. The money will be used for the school garden next year.

A huge thank you was extended to all the children, staff and parents who had contributed to make possible such a brilliant result.



The presentation assembly



Gardening club members with the prize

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Caversham Clergy

ANGLICAN

St Barnabas

Revd Derek Chandler, 20 St Barnabas Road.

Tel: 947 8239.

www.saintbarnabas.org.uk

St Andrews

Revd Nigel Jones, St Andrews Vicarage,

Harrogate Road. Tel: 947 2788

www.standrewscaversham.org

St Peter, St Margaret, St John

Revd Mike Smith, The Rectory, 20 Church Road,

Caversham RG4 7AD Tel: 9479505

rector@ctmparish.org.uk

Revd Marion Pyke Tel: 9475834

Revd John Dudley Tel: 9470265

RIVERSIDE CHURCH (READING)

Revd Ray Coates Tel: 07894 545603

Email: ray.coates@ntlworld.com

CAVERSHAM PARK ECUMENICAL

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Secretary: Dr Alison Johnston

Tel: 0118 947 5152

METHODIST TEAM MINISTRY

Revd Jenny Dowding, 72 Highmoor Road.

Tel: 947 2223

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH

Transitional Minister Revd Jonathan Edwards

Church office tel 954 5353

Email Secretary: sue.cantwell@cavershambaptist

church.org.uk

GRACE CHURCH

(formerly Caversham Hill Chapel)

Crispin Fairbairn. Tel: 947 4529

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

Revd 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 Rachel Ross Smith

'Gut: the inside story of our body's most under-rated organ' may not seem like the most obvious reading material for pre-Lent preparation.

But browsing through its pages in the bookshop one day I found myself gripped with excitement as I recognised, in the author, a fellow champion of 'why it's important to discuss things we find embarrassing'.

I have been a fan of this approach since my early days in ministry when three male members of the congregation, week by week would discuss with me their painful digestive ailments and the immense impact on their lives.

The book, in its direct and amusing way, highlights the profound two way link between our gut, our mental health and our ability to be who we are called to be. This, in the weird way my mind works, led me thinking of Luke's and Matthew's Gospel accounts of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness!

Jesus was in the wilderness to prepare himself for the life to which he was called. We learn that Jesus was tempted when famished, tempted to prove his identity as the Son of God by giving into the devil's wishes. Each time, Jesus resisted showing a radically different character of God to the one given by the devil.

Resisting temptation, living up to our calling is hardest when life is hard.

We are tempted when we are hungry, stressed, anxious, overtired or sick. Will we respond with anger towards others when we are irritable or tired? Will we take the time to listen to someone who is hurting when we are in a hurry? When we are financially struggling will we continue to give? Will we be the honest and loving people we are called to be?

Churches too are tested when they face financial problems, internal disputes or external threats. How will we handle disagreements? How will we spend our money? Will we respond like other intuitions by protecting ourselves and our corporate interests?

If as individuals or as churches, we choose the path of sacrificial love, like Jesus we will at times be hungry, we will be tempted to lose faith and reach for power.

My reading suggests that our gut doesn't rumble because we are hungry. Rather, the noise is from our gut's inbuilt cleaning agency, the gut equivalent of 'mollymaid'. But this cleaner, necessary for our gut and therefore our mental health wellbeing, will only get to work when there is sufficient space between food to do its job. So our gut reminds us that just as Jesus needed space in the wilderness with God to resist temptations and to prepare for the work ahead, we too need to take time and space to look after ourselves properly in order for us to take on the challenges and temptations of this life and be the people we are called to be.

May this Lent be the time and space you need.

Revd Rachel Ross Smith is chaplain of Queen Anne's School and an associate priest in the parish of Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham



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SUNDAY SERVICES

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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
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 (see our website)

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 2016 issue should be sent to Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham Parish Office by **Monday 1st February**. The date for the April 2016 issue is **Monday 29th February**. Email address is secretary@ctmparish.org.uk

Advertising copy for the March 2016 issue should be sent to Mr A Wright, Twiggmoor, Upper Warren Avenue, Caversham by **Friday 29th January**. The date for the April 2016 issue is **Friday 26th February**

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LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

We have received the following two letters on the subject of the article on the front page of the January issue which reported on the proposed location of the Post Office facilities from Woodcote Way Post Office to Conisboro Stores:

As a long term subscriber to Caversham Bridge I was somewhat angered by your January 2016 front page which presented the Post Office's propaganda and very dubious case for transferring post office services from the Woodcote Way store to Conisborough Avenue, and giving the impression through your headline that this was already a fait accompli.

No doubt the Post Office may see it that way though there is supposedly a period of consultation before it takes place. I am one of perhaps many who do not see any advantage in providing postal services at a retail counter along with normal retail business rather than, as now, at a dedicated double post office counter, notwithstanding the promised longer opening hours. I feel your failure to present any counter argument to that of the Post Office, which is clearly set on a cost cutting operation by abolishing the salaried postmaster in favour of a franchise, to be biased and outside the principles of good journalism. I trust you may present counter arguments for the change in your next issue.

Alan Haugh

We are absolutely appalled by your leading article in the last edition, covering the 'Post Office on the move'.

You write as though this is a foregone conclusion-a decision already made!

Are you aware of the huge protest against this proposed change of facility made by the awful Post Office?

We can only assume that you have inside information concerning this matter.

I am particularly angry because for the past few years my wife has helped with the distribution of your paper. I shall endeavour to persuade her not to. The least you can do is to offer an apology in your next issue - for this assumed move.

This proposed move will affect a lot of people, many of them elderly and unable to access the 'new' premises.

David Nicholls

Editor's response

The article was written by our contributor before it became apparent to them that there was some considerable opposition to the proposed move (the last date for submission of articles for the January issue was in November). The article clearly states that this is a proposal, and is the subject of a consultation process which started in November and ended in January. By the time this is published the outcome of the consultation may well be known.

If any of the objectors to the proposed move wishes to write an article detailing the reasons for their opposition, we will be happy to consider it for publication.

Bible Friends

Deborah

Deborah was a leader of God's people. One day, God gave Deborah a message for a man called Barak. He was in charge of the army.

"Barak," said Deborah. "Enemies are coming to hurt us. We will have to fight them. But God will help us. We will win."

"I don't want to go without you," said Barak. "Will you come too?"

"All right," said Deborah.

So Deborah led the army. Soon they met the enemy army. But when their enemies saw God's people, with Deborah leading them, they did not know what to do! They tripped over one another. They rode their horses the wrong way. And then they all ran away!

So Deborah and God's people did win. Thanks to God.

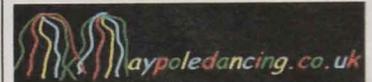
Judges 4:1-10,23-24



89th Scouts Christmas Post

Just two years ago the Scout Christmas Post service that the 89th Reading (Milestone Wood) Scout Group had been running for nearly 30 years appeared to be in terminal decline. In 2013 we handled under 2,000 cards and raised less than £500, causing us to consider whether the service had had its day in the face of competition from e-cards etc. The service was revitalised in 2014 with a new team and in 2015 it was better still with over 3,000 cards collected, sorted and delivered, raising over £900 for the Scout Group. Proving that 'proper' Christmas Cards are alive and well and that the Scout Post service is used and valued by the local community of Caversham and Emmer Green. It was great to see so many Beavers, Cubs and Scouts out delivering cards with their parents/carers giving the community a visible, positive impression of Scouting.

The 89th Scout Group would like to thank everyone who helped to make the Scout Christmas Post 2015 such a success: the various locations for hosting the post boxes, the Beavers, Cubs and Scouts and their parents/carers who got the post boxes out, collected, sorted and delivered the cards, and most of all the people of Caversham and Emmer Green for using the service. The Scout Christmas Post service will be back again in 2016.



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From the Lookout Post

Caversham businesses

Changes continue in Prospect Street with the retirement of both Evelyn Burt at the Crystal Dragon and Ara Genjelian at Caversham Kebab House. Podiatrist Evelyn Burt founded the Crystal Dragon as the Caversham Clinic in 2000, but expanded due to her interest in alternative medicine and healing crystals.

Over time, facilities expanded to include different therapies, including massage, tarot card readings, yoga and meditation with a meditation garden. Its services have been very popular and they have received many nominations for Reading Retail Awards. When the Caversham Festivals were held on the Westfield Triangle, Evelyn was the driving force for several events. She has done a lot for Caversham folk and we wish her well for the future.

Ara Genjelian set up the Caversham Kebab House 27 years ago. He and his wife Nora have served countless hungry folk and made a lot of friends. They now have decided to retire and the business closed in November. We wish Ara and Nora well for the future and look forward to news of their successors.

We hope there will soon be news of which parts of the redevelopment of the Church Street precinct can proceed, ending the uncertainty which is so difficult for local independent businesses.

WEA

Some years ago Reading University announced the closure of its School of Continuing Education. A campaign including many Caversham residents began to try to persuade the university to change its mind, but to no avail. So a group of volunteers contacted the regional office of the Workers Educational Association (WEA), and after several meetings, a committee was formed to resurrect the then defunct local branch. Local residents Paul and Carole Kingston had a central involvement; Paul was appointed chairman of the branch and Carole took on much of the administration.

A varied programme of short and one day courses was established, on both topical and historical subjects, including many of particular local interest. The Reading branch grew steadily and is now one of the largest in the country.

Until recently, many courses were held at Hamilton Road. When this ceased to be available, many transferred to New Directions in Caversham – a boon to Caversham residents who no longer have to cross town, though it adds to the complexity of branch administration. The website, <http://weareadingadulteducation.org.uk/> gives details of the current courses and how to book as well as opportunities to support the branch in its work.

Paul Kingston recently handed over the post of chairman to John Beale, while Carole continues to handle much of the administration. We congratulate both Paul and Carole on their continuing hard work and enthusiasm which has been central to such a popular and successful programme.

Conservation areas

In November, the Strategic, Environment, Planning and Transport Committee heard a report from Historic England and from the various community groups who have raised concerns about the deterioration in local conservation areas. The Russell Street/Castle Hill conservation area has experienced very severe problems and our local St Peter's conservation area has a range of problems in need of attention. In general, across Reading, there is a need to build awareness and local involvement and to put better measures in place to protect the special character of each area. Historic England are keen to promote community involvement and will be working with the council and local groups. If you would like to support this process, please email helen.lambert@cadra.org.uk.

Reading Abbey

It was announced before Christmas that the *Reading Abbey Revealed Project* had secured funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The project will enable the re-opening of the nationally important Abbey Ruins site to go ahead and its hidden heritage to be revealed.

The £1.77 million HLF grant will be matched by a contribution of £1.38 million by the council. The project, totalling £3.15 million, will see an extensive programme of conservation works to the Abbey Ruins and Abbey Gateway. Accompanying this will be interpretation across the Abbey Quarter, a new display at Reading Museum and an exciting programme of activities extending beyond the opening of the site.

The current timetable for the project begins with the procurement of contractors for the conservation and interpretation works in March. Work on site will begin in September, taking up to two years, with the site opening to the public in summer 2018. As a result of the project, three new specialist roles will be created and an abbey volunteering programme will recruit 35 new volunteers to help with activities. The successful HLF award means the accompanying activity programme will continue beyond the opening, until the end of 2020.

You can find more information at www.readingabbeyquarter.org.uk, www.facebook.com/ReadingAbbeyQuarter or <https://twitter.com/RdgAbbey>.

Reading Prison Archive

Berkshire Record Office has been awarded a grant of £25,000 from the Wellcome Trust to preserve the historical archive of Reading Prison. The trust was keen to support the conservation because of the archive's importance for studying historical health care in a custodial environment.

The oldest document in the collection is a small volume dating from 1787, from the original gaol on the Forbury site. It contains notes made by the Berkshire magistrates who inspected the gaol. The book will be re-sewn and its cover recreated to match the original binding.

The biggest conservation challenge is to repair a register of prisoners admitted between 1892 and 1894, so severely damaged by damp it cannot currently be opened. The grant will allow each page to be repaired and strengthened before the book is re-sewn into a new cover. Conservation work is planned to begin in April, and it is hoped that all the repairs will be complete by January 2017.

Reading Borough Council budgets

In December, we learned that local services in the coming year could be further squeezed by funding cuts after the government gave Reading Borough Council and the other Berkshire councils a much worse financial settlement than expected. This may be as a result of the higher proportion of income from council tax and business rates.

The council estimates it now has to save an extra £5m in 2016-17, on top of the £39m of cuts it has made to its budgets for 2016 to 2019. The council has only until February 23 to decide how to make the £5m savings and agree its budget for 2016-17.

Please look out for consultations on how the additional cuts may be implemented at www.reading.gov.uk/consultations. A more detailed report on local library services is expected.

End of life care

The public is being asked to give evidence on what kind of end-of-life care people receive in Reading. The group 'End of Life Champions' aims to break the taboo preventing many people discussing with friends and family how they want to live the final part of their lives. A local event to coincide with *National Dying Matters Awareness Week* will be held in May.

The group is seeking evidence – both good and bad – to help identify gaps in care as well as contribute ideas and preferences. They would like to hear from individuals, families and community groups, as well as organisations and professionals with an interest in end of life care; such as doctors, health care professionals, funeral directors, lawyers and spiritual and faith groups.

If you have an interest in this area and would like to get involved or be updated on progress, contact Jan Caulcutt on 0118 937 3358 or 07834 801338 or email Jan.Caulcutt@Reading.gov.uk

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CHURCHES

Nativity Live



Live, both Methodist churches in the area and St John's Church were involved. This year, for the first time, Caversham Baptist Church was enthusiastically and ably on board too. The event is one which attracts local families who may have no particular church affiliation, but who very much look forward to being part of what feels like a very joyful event.

The starting place was the Baptist Church car park. A short distance away was the inn where Joseph and Mary were refused admittance until Joseph's pleas at last secured them the stable. Able actors, suitably dressed, from the local churches kept the action moving, with short carols at occasional stops along the way. The large crowd of two live ponies, two people in a camel costume, children dressed as donkeys and other characters from the Nativity story followed a flashing star held high for us all to follow. Shepherds, complete with sheep, were gathered in a nearby park until, confronted by angels they, too, moved on to the next location.



Eventually, outside St John's Church, the very rare phenomenon of as many as three wise men in Caversham were together, speaking of the journey they had been on, coming to its conclusion via nearby Star Road. The final resting place was Caversham Methodist Church where a short but significant act of worship took place followed by refreshments. The worship began with a tableau involving all actors and all who had dressed up for the occasion.

With interest from the Reading

In three years the number of people participating in Caversham's Christmas Eve event 'Nativity Live' has grown to around 300. When Methodist Deacon Becky Lovatt originally launched the first Nativity

Chronicle and Radio Berkshire, good publicity, able acting and musical provision, fine catering, careful detailed planning over the year, safe stewarding, and effective communication the event looks set to continue gathering momentum. Look out for it on Christmas Eve this year!

Mothers' Union Advent Service

The Reading Deanery of the Mothers' Union held their Advent Service at St John's church, Caversham at the end of November. The service was led by the Rector, Revd Mike Smith, assisted by Revd John Dudley. Tea and a selection of cakes were enjoyed afterwards.

The picture shows, left to right, Alison Bennett, who will take over as diocesan leader on Lady Day 2016, Margaret Cameron from St John's Mothers' Union, and Gillian Johnson, the present diocesan leader.



Some items from the craft stall

Treasure Island, Hoopla and new this year Buzzwire! Children enjoyed making crafts and there were some lovely prizes in the raffle and tombola.

Refreshments were enjoyed in the Vanderstegen Chapel Cafe and over £2000 was raised which will all support the Christian Aid Refugee Crisis Appeal. A very special event enjoyed by all.

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St Barnabas Church

A 'nearly-new' sale will be held at St Barnabas Church, Grove Rd, Emmer Green on Saturday 20th February from 10am to 12noon. Items for sale will include furniture, new/good second-hand clothes and shoes, new jigsaws, books and bric-a-brac. Entry will be by donation.

St Peter's Christmas Market

A wonderful Christmas Market was held in St Peter's church on December 5th attended by a large crowd of visitors who were queuing to enter before opening.

There was a variety of stalls, selling Christmas foods - puddings, pickles, biscuits and cakes; Christmas greenery - wreaths and table decorations; and a craft stall which was particularly popular selling handcrafted quality items, like those shown in the picture. The craft stall will feature in the summer fete at Caversham Court.

Traditional games were also enjoyed including



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CHURCHES

Follow the Star



A pair of binoculars, a battered old suitcase, a garden water feature and a set of saucepans are not exactly what you would expect to find in a church.

At Caversham Heights Methodist Church just before Christmas, we were encouraged to think about the journey of the Wise Men, and these visual displays were all there as we walked round the church.

The Bible was open at St Matthew's gospel chapter 2 where we first learn of the story. We looked through the binoculars at the star picture on the wall and the writing became clear – were we willing to go on a journey – to find the truth? Would we find it if we really looked? The second station was the suitcase demonstrating that a long journey needs careful planning. We were prompted to take a stone representing a worry or a guilt from the case, and throw it in the bin thereby asking God to take it away and lighten our load.



The water feature reminded us of an oasis which the wise men would have needed to find on their long, dusty journey. We need times of refreshment too and a glass of water drunk slowly speaks to us of this.

Centrally was the manger with the infant Jesus. We were invited to sit in God's presence for a while, make a box representing our gifts and put it in the manger just as the wise men did. There were other signs and symbols on the way round the church.

The wise men had to take another route home for safety and we were reminded to pray for God's protection in troubled times, not only for ourselves but for all refugees, remembering that Joseph and Mary were refugees.



Finally we returned home. After an uplifting experience, both for us and the Wise Men, the old Celtic attitude of making even the kitchen saucepans special is worth remembering.

Our thanks are due to Revd Jenny Dowding, our minister, for master-minding the meditation and to all the helpers. Providing a quiet space to ponder the meaning of Christmas was certainly successful.

Jumble Sale

A jumble sale will be held on Saturday 20th February at 2pm at Caversham Hall, St John's Road, Caversham. Caversham Hall is close by the Church. Come and buy bric-a-brac, books, cakes and refreshments! The proceeds will assist St John's church with the costs of flower arrangements throughout the year.

Christmas at St Peter's

The special Christmas services held at St Peter's church again proved extremely popular.

On the Sunday before Christmas, the church was filled to capacity for the Carol Service, which followed the traditional 'lessons and carols' format. During the singing of the carol 'O little town of Bethlehem', the Bethlehem Peace Light was brought in by children of the church and placed on the high altar where it remained throughout the Christmas season.

On Christmas Eve, two Christingle services were held, with the Church being full each time.

A special collection was made at both services, which together raised over £1200, plus £200 in gift aid, for the Children's Society. Many families appear to treat the Christingle services as the beginning of their Christmas celebrations.

The church was again full for the traditional Christmas Eve midnight mass, and the Christmas morning service was also very well attended.

The attendance at these five special Christmas services totalled over 1500, and it was good to see the church full on so many occasions.

On Monday 21st December 'Carols in Caversham Court' drew a large crowd to this popular annual event, in which the carols were led by St Peter's choir, accompanied by Reading Central Salvation Army Band. Mulled wine and mince pies were sold at the kiosk, raising a considerable sum in aid of a number of local charities.

The Christmas season ended with an Epiphany carol service early in January

Winter ramble

An intrepid sextet braved the heavy rain to embark upon the the St Peter's winter ramble. Plan B was implemented due to the downpour and the group traversed the new footbridge over the Thames, wandered over Caversham lock, remarked upon the refurbishment of the open-air swimming pool, looked at diving cormorants in the nature reserve and returned to St Peter's along the north side of the river in wintry sunshine. Seasonal refreshments in the church were followed by recitations of winter poetry in front of the Christmas tree, including much from Betjeman.

The spring ramble will be led by Karen Meenderink and will take place on the wetland marshes on the south side of Reading.



Left: three ramblers admire early daffodils; right: refreshments afterwards

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St Peter's has a new organ – come and hear it !

We are delighted to announce that the new organ for St Peter's has been installed and commissioned.

The plans for the new organ were described in the June 2015 edition "Countdown to the New Organ at St Peter's". We are now pleased to report that the building works were completed in July and the organ installed and commissioned on schedule in late October.

The installation went smoothly although the supplier, Viscount Classical Organs, had difficulty removing the massive



Bringing the new console into the church.

speakers at the west end and had to cut them up in situ to remove them!

The new speakers are virtually invisible unless you look very hard for them. There are 10 speakers at high level under the eaves in the Lady Chapel plus a bass speaker at ground level; two speakers in the chancel to support the choir and the organist and two high up towards the west end to give more support to the congregation if required. The new main speaker location in the Lady Chapel provides much more natural support for the choir.

The console is shorter than the previous one, but still weighs over 250kg. Fortunately it slides relatively easily over the tiled floor and has concealed lifting handles

The instrument is fully electronic, as shown in the console photograph (right), but it sounds like a traditional pipe organ!

After installation there is a certain amount of tuning or "voicing" of the instrument to adjust every note and stop to best suit the acoustic of the building. This is all done from an electronic key pad mounted in the console as well as by



Voicing the instrument after installation

using a sophisticated program from a laptop computer.

One of the additional advantages of moving the main speakers is that the west end window is visible again, and we will be considering how we can best use this space in the future. Over the Christmas period it was a good location for a Christmas tree!

The organ was dedicated by the Bishop of Reading, the Rt Revd Andrew Proud, at the Confirmation service on November 22nd. We will be mounting a brass plaque on the rear of the organ to recognise this dedication and the very generous donations that made it possible to buy the instrument.

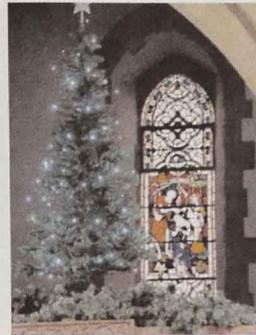
The purchase of the new organ was overseen by the organ committee (Richard Larkin, Revd Mike Smith, Ian Westley, Nigel Smith and Mary Tucker) who would like to thank everyone who so generously contributed to the £60,000 cost of the new instrument.

The organ committee is planning two events to celebrate the music at St Peter's;

- **Saturday February 27th 3.00pm:**

Organ Recital by Philip Aspden (former Director of Music at Reading School), followed by tea.

- **Sunday March 13th: afternoon rehearsal for 6.30pm service. Come-and-sing Fauré's Requiem at our Sunday evening service. Please put these dates in your diaries.**



West window exposed again!



The electronic wizardry inside the organ console

More details are available on our web site: www.stpetercaversham.org.uk

Richard Larkin - Chairman, Organ Committee

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Reading Beekeepers

All are welcome to the Reading Beekeepers annual beekeeping day, which will be held on Saturday 19th March between 10.30am and 4.30pm at Trench Green Village Hall near Mapledurham, RG4 7UA. Entry is free.

This follows on from Reading & District Beekeepers Association's successful Beginners' Beekeeping Course held at Denefield School in January.

The event, which will give a fascinating insight into 'everything bees' for the whole family, kicks off the beekeeping season.

Find out about the importance of bees for our environment and how to house and protect them, whether you are someone who just wants to learn about bees and beekeeping or an experienced beekeeper.

There will be illustrated talks and demonstrations by prominent beekeepers between 10.45 am and 3.45pm. Topics will include 'have your best ever season', 'making products from the hive', 'skep making', and 'if Heath Robinson was a beekeeper!'

Visitors can meet the beekeepers, learn about honey bees, and take part in honey tasting. There will be exhibition stands of information and beekeeping equipment, where visitors can find out about becoming a beekeeper. There will be a section for children all about bees. Homemade cakes and refreshments will be available.

For more information visit the web site www.rbka.org.uk

Reading Bach Choir

Bach, Buxtehude and Sven-David Sandström are the composers featured in Reading Bach Choir's concert in the splendid setting of Douai Abbey, Upper Woolhampton, RG7 5TQ at 7.45 pm on 6th February. From the baroque to the contemporary, the programme promises a wonderful evening.

The choir, conducted by Matthew Hamilton, will perform *Singet dem Herrn* and *Komm Jesu komm*, two of Bach's motets and some of his most perfect compositions. Extraordinarily complex and dense, they call for great virtuosity and sensitivity from all the performers. They are a cornerstone of the choral repertoire, and of the Reading Bach Choir's identity.

Buxtehude is the most highly regarded composer of the generation before JS Bach. As a student, Bach walked hundreds of miles to hear Buxtehude play the organ. *Eins bitte ich vom Herrn* is a particularly charming and intimate example of his cantatas.

The Swedish composer Sven-David Sandstrom has a great affinity with the works of JS Bach and has written his own series of six motets reclothing the original text in his own musical language. The choir will sing *Komm Jesu Komm*, written in 2005, and the dark and brooding *Es*

ist genug, which uses the same text as the *Eins bitte ich vom Herrn* by Buxtehude, which is also in the concert programme.

The choir will be accompanied by Con Amici Barocco, a baroque ensemble led by Amanda Babington, and will be joined by soprano soloist Gwen Martin, who has recently completed a year-long mentoring scheme with The Sixteen and has just been selected as a Monteverdi choir apprentice.

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Helping Reading's ex-Gurkha community get better care from their GP practice

GPs in Reading have produced an appointment card in both English and Nepalese which aims to help members of the Nepalese-speaking ex-Gurkha community receive a better experience when using their GP surgery.

The handy credit-card sized card is designed to be shown to GP receptionists who will arrange for an interpreter for a current and / or subsequent appointment.

The card has been produced in response to a recent Healthwatch Reading report which recommended that Reading's two clinical commissioning groups should consider providing ex-Gurkhas and their families with an information card that they can show NHS staff to indicate that they wish to have an interpreter arranged for appointments.

Reading is home to around 700 ex-Gurkha households estimated to represent around 3,000 individuals. Healthwatch's report says that many lack the language or cultural skills to engage effectively with

health services.

Dr Andy Ciecierski, Clinical Chairman for North and West Reading CCG and a GP at Emmer Green Surgery, said: "We are committed to engaging as widely as possible with the various communities in Reading and recognise the need to provide improved communications for the Nepalese community. We are pleased that members of this community had their say on the content and design of the card and we hope it enables ex-Gurkhas and their families to benefit from a more tailored experience from their GP practice."

Healthwatch Reading chief executive, Mandeep Kaur Sira, welcomed the CCGs' actions in responding to what the ex-Gurkha community had said they needed: "Our project found that 85% of this community found it difficult to explain their symptoms to health professionals, and 81% were not routinely offered an independent, professional interpreter. This new card will ensure that members of the ex-Gurkha

community get help to overcome language barriers, and do not have to resort to bringing English-speaking friends, family or even acquaintances to appointments to informally translate - which we found sometimes prevented people from raising medical issues of a very private nature."

Cllr Graeme Hoskin, Reading's lead member for health, said: "The ex-Gurkha community in Reading is well established but there is still the on-going challenge of providing them with the skills and knowledge they need to access the basic services many of us take for granted. I am pleased that these cards will go at least some way towards helping this community access the help they need at an earlier stage."

At GP practices in Reading, the NHS funds interpreters for patients, via the Borough Council interpretation and translation service.

The appointment cards are available from Reading GP practices and libraries, and the civic offices of Reading Borough Council.

Remembrance in Caversham

The people, tills and traffic came to a standstill to mark Remembrance at 11am on November 11th. Service standards were lowered outside the Caversham Working Men's Club and after the Ode to the Fallen and the Kohima Epitaph, Jason Todd from the Lower Earley Salvation Army Band sounded the Last Post and the two minutes silence was observed before reveille was sounded.

Afterwards, people were invited into the club to celebrate the 70th Anniversary year of the end of World War II.

Co-operative Funeralcare Services in Caversham sponsored an event for ex-Service people, and others who wished to attend, in the club by kind permission of the club's committee.

The Bina Tandoori in Caversham served well over 60 curries in the club - with linen tablecloths and china plates - no mean feat!

Co-operative Funeralcare Services also paid for a singer to entertain people, and the sound of singing both from Lynne Turner, the professional singer, and others was heard throughout the club for well over an hour.

The Co-op also provided a ceramic poppy from the Tower of London, and this, together with other donated gifts, was raffled. The proceeds of the raffle, a magnificent £518, was donated to Caversham RBL's Poppy Appeal.

A thank you for all of this must go to June Johnson, a former employee of Co-

op Funeralcare in Caversham, for organising the sponsorship for this event, and to all those who donated.

The Poppy Appeal organiser for Caversham thanked everyone for supporting the raffle, and for helping to fill the poppy collecting tin in the club - she also said that while there was still a lot to be counted, it looked as though Caversham was well on the way to matching, if not exceeding, the £50,000 that was collected in 2014.

Christmas Tree Sale

The local conservation group ECONET held their annual tree sale at Caversham Court Gardens on December 6th. ECONET carry out local conservation work on various sites in and around Reading, see www.econetreading.org.uk, and funds collected go towards the costs of tools and insurance.

The trees (Scots pines) are harvested from a local heath land clearance project. If the trees are left the heath land would turn into woodland, and we are very short of natural heath land with its unique wildlife.

For this year's event, ECONET were joined by BBOWT (Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust), RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) and the local beekeepers association. There were successful sales of trees, wreaths, willow work, honey, candles, bird food, calendars etc

Thank you to Will [head gardener] for his help and support, and it was good to see all our regulars who have supported us over the years. We will be there again next year. Also we will be there on Saturday 23rd April for Bean Pole Day, our environmentally friendly gardening event, when lots of local stalls will be present.

East West Kids Connect

Reading East MP Rob Wilson joined Caversham-based charity East West Kids Connect at their weekly Meditation and Mindfulness session for families on Saturday 5th December.

The charity provides a range of preventative education services which benefit the mental health and well-being of children, adults, families and senior citizens through training in meditation and mindfulness techniques and related practices. The practical workshops help to deal with behavioural problems and relapsing conditions, such as stress, anxiety, anger, low self-esteem, pain, addiction and depression which can often lead to alcohol, illicit drug and medication dependency. Meditation also unites all faiths and non-faiths alike. The workshops have benefited hundreds of children and families over the past 10 years and the charity's goal is to get this simple and effective practice on the National Curriculum to benefit all young people and families in the UK.

For more information visit www.eastwestkidsconnect.org.uk

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ENVIRONMENT

HALCYON DAYS

'Halcyon' was the Greek name for a kingfisher. I discovered this at the age of about ten, whilst staying with my uncle. Uncle Joe was on the co-op committee – the board of management of the local co-operative society – and his house was full of the products of the Co-operative Wholesale Society. Some of these had unusual names – I can remember Shieldhall coffee, Crumpsall cream crackers, Waveney tinned beans, Pelaw polish, and Spel washing-powder. 'Halcyon' was the co-op's brand of paint.

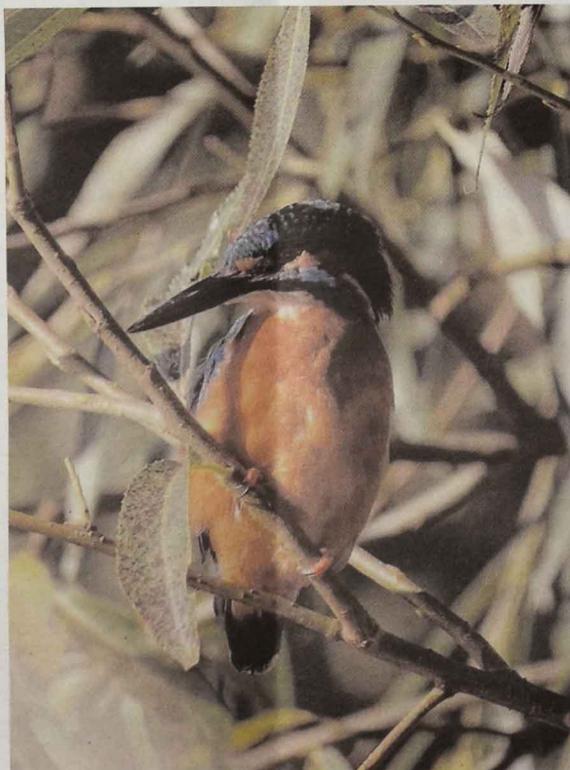
Not only was Uncle Joe a co-operator, he was also the secretary of the local football club. This meant that he had a telephone, a typewriter, and a dictionary – things we didn't have at home. The typewriter and the dictionary were the beginning of my literary career! I consulted the dictionary to find out what 'halcyon' was, and found out that in Greek mythology it was a kingfisher. The 'halcyon days' were a period of fine, calm weather about the time the kingfisher was sitting on its nest – but it wasn't our kind of kingfisher, because its nest floated on the sea! From there, the meaning of 'halcyon days' moved from a period of fine weather, to a period of prosperity and happiness.

Though people will tell you that kingfishers are not as plentiful as they once were, they are still to be found around the Thames and the Kennet and neighbouring flooded gravel-pits. When I've mentioned kingfishers to some friends – the kind of friends who like me enjoy going for walks – I've been surprised to hear them say that they haven't seen one for years – or that they've never seen one. Just a few times a year I tend to see the brilliant greenish-blue as one flashes by, and they're quite unmistakable.

You don't have to go far to find them. When I worked in the middle of town, I could catch sight of them through the office window, as they sped along the Holy Brook. I'm told that they still patrol this stretch of the brook: someone in the Central Library told me that they'd had one fly in by mistake last summer. It managed to find its way out, unharmed.

It's a resident, spending all year round in this country, though some of them migrate to the coast in severe weather. With the mild winter we've had so far (I'm writing this on Christmas Day), it seems likely that they'll still be around.

The bird in the photograph obligingly perched on a willow



branch by the Kennet and Avon Canal last September. It was a pity it didn't have a fish in its bill, and the sun wasn't shining on its iridescent feathers, but I was lucky inasmuch as it seemed not to notice me for several minutes, and gave me time to take the picture. For me, this was indeed a halcyon day, in both the literal and figurative senses of the word!

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Caversham Heights Society

As experts squabble about how to repair the crumbling Houses of Parliament - at a cost of £7 billion at the last count - what of the man who designed its soaring Gothic interiors and the iconic tower of Big Ben, Augustus Pugin?

Pugin was born in the same year as Dickens and did much to shape Victorian Britain, yet few of us know anything much about the man. Our speaker for the Society's meeting on 2nd December, John Brearley, put much of that right when he delivered his illustrated talk on 'The Life and Work of Augustus Pugin', a man who married three times, was imprisoned for debt and who, sadly, eventually lost his mind, and was dead at 40.

He was the London-born son of a French draughtsman who followed in his father's footsteps with his love of Gothic architecture and who, during his lifetime, championed the ornate style in everything he designed, be it theatre scenery, cathedrals, churches, stately homes - his first being the imposing Scarisbrick Hall in Lancashire - to the highly decorative furniture, tiles, panels and doorknobs which can still be seen at Windsor Castle and in both Houses of Parliament.

A devout Roman Catholic, Pugin designed literally dozens of churches in Britain and Ireland, including St James's in Reading in 1837 - and even built a medieval-style home for himself near Salisbury. Thanks to his close relationship with the Earl of Shrewsbury, a fellow Catholic, he was commissioned to work on the family seat at Alton Towers, but it was his relationship with Sir Charles Barry which brought him the job for which he is best known. After the destruction of the original Houses of Parliament in 1834 Barry won an architectural competition to design a new Palace of Westminster. Pugin was given the task of designing all the Gothic interiors, including wallpapers, for which Barry gave him no credit. Towards the end of his life, Pugin supplied detailed drawings for his final design: the iconic Palace clock tower, officially dubbed the Elizabethan Tower, but more popularly known as Big Ben. John Brearley believes that it was Pugin's tremendous workload - undertaken despite the constant criticism of his contemporary, John Ruskin, and with many of his designs never executed - that led to his final breakdown. He died in Ramsgate in September 1832.

Still on the Victorian theme, the Society's last session of 2015, on December 16th, was a series of dramatized readings from Charles Dickens' most famous novels. Entitled 'Dickens at Christmas', Vera Hughes and David Weller of Chester House Productions enthralled us with extracts from 'Oliver Twist', 'Great Expectations', 'Nicholas Nickleby', 'Pickwick Papers' and inevitably 'A Christmas Carol'. Afterwards the assembled gathering moved into the church hall to enjoy their usual Christmas repeat, made all the more special because this year saw the celebration of 40 years of the Caversham Heights Society.

Meetings are held on the first and third Wednesday of the month at 8pm, following coffee, in the Caversham Heights Methodist Church in Highmoor Road. New members are always welcome. Inquiries should be made to Jill Hodges either via irishjill@southcote.net or by 'phone to 0118 959 5307.

Rosehill WI

President Margaret Pyle welcomed everyone present (members and visitors) to our December meeting. She thanked Margaret Seal for the table flowers - a beautiful Christmas basket. Margaret also announced that the record of the November meeting was available for anyone who wished to read it.

Secretary Mary Robinson reminded us that the form for the 2016 resolutions was in the latest issue of WI Life. The items being considered are (in no particular order): *ban the microbead; British fruit - reviving our heritage; free sanitary protection for homeless women; prevention of sudden cardiac death in young adults in the UK; first aid to save lives; mind or body - equal funding for care; avoid food waste, address food poverty*. Completed forms were to be handed in at the January meeting.

Treasurer Doris Goddard announced that the 2016 subscription envelopes were available and she would be grateful to receive payment. Doris also announced that 328 hospital toiletry packs had been sent to RBH so far, and it was hoped to reach 350 by the end of 2015.

The afternoon continued with a very enjoyable programme of Yuletide Tales by Vera Hughes and David Weller from Chester House Productions.

Finally, there was a cup of tea with Christmas refreshments (mince pies, sausage rolls, cheese straws, shortbread and fancy cakes) provided by members, after which the raffle was drawn.

The meeting closed with our president wishing us all a Merry Christmas.

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month at St Barnabas Church hall, Grove Road, Emmer Green at 2.00pm, and would be pleased to see any visitors.

Chazey WI

The last few months of 2015 were very enjoyable for Chazey members. The summer outing was a river trip from Wallingford to Caversham followed by lunch at a local hostelry. For the September meeting we were back in the Caversham Heights Methodist Church Hall to listen to a very enjoyable illustrated talk from Corry Stirling on the story of Mapledurham Mill, the last working mill on the Thames. The 16th of September was the centenary of the WI with celebrations around the country.

In October we enjoyed an informative talk from Martijn Gilbert of Reading Buses.

During these two months Chazey WI manned the kiosk in Caversham Court Gardens, two sessions of four days each time, thanks to those members who volunteered.

November's meeting was a craft evening with instruction to make a small box and a greetings card. Most members managed, with cries of "who has the sellotape?". All good fun!

December saw the members being entertained by Vera and David of Chester House Productions with Yuletide Tales, followed by the Christmas party, food brought by members, and gifts and crackers on the tables.

Throughout these months coffee mornings and lunches have taken place in and around the area. Thanks to our President, Hilary Morrison, for organising them. Thirty members attended the Christmas lunch which was very good. We welcome people to come and join us. We meet on the first Tuesday in the month at Caversham Heights Methodist Church Hall, Highmoor Road, Caversham at 7.45pm.

Caversham WI

Members met to celebrate both Christmas and the Institute's birthday and were joined by guests from other institutes. Mr Brook, the speaker, kept us well entertained with Christmas poems and readings both serious and humorous. There was even a potted version of 'Cinderella', with the president well typecast as an 'ugly sister'. This was followed by a delicious bring and share supper and a slice of Jill Wright's lovely iced cake. A super raffle ended a delightful evening.

For the February meeting the subject is cats. All visitors are welcome.

Reading Gardeners

We have two meetings in February:

On February 10th, Wolfgang Bopp, who was the curator of the National Botanic Garden of Wales and is now in charge of the Harold Hillier Garden, will talk on '63 Years of the Harold Hillier Gardens: from the beginning to the redevelopment of the Centenary Border'.

On February 24th, Lia Leendertz, a regular correspondent for various newspapers and magazines, will talk about 'The History of Allotments'.

Our meetings are held in Caversham Primary School hall at 7.30pm

See our website: readinggardenersclub.org.uk

Probus

The speaker at the December meeting of the Reading and District Probus Club was Patrick Moren. His subject was 'The 1914 Christmas Truce'. Patrick, who is a member of the club and the club's speaker secretary, introduced the film 'Peace in No Man's Land', a documentary made in the 1980s. The film featured three soldiers who were present in the first world war trenches along the Western Front at the time, and so had personal recollections of the events. One of the three soldiers was Patrick's father, who survived the trenches, but was seriously injured later in the war; he recovered after ground-breaking reconstructive surgery, and lived to the age of 99.

The truce was not planned, it just happened spontaneously, and covered several miles of front-line trenches. It started on Christmas Eve with some German troops erecting lights and Christmas trees, and singing the well-known carol *Stille Nacht* (Silent Night), being applauded by the British troops, who responded with their own carol, and it all escalated from there. Eventually some troops emerged from their trenches and met in no man's land, being joined by others, then exchanging gifts, posing for photographs, and some even had an impromptu kick-about (not an organised game of football). Patrick showed us a small metal box containing cigarettes which his father had been given at the time.

The ceasefire allowed both sides to bury their dead comrades, but it was not universally enjoyed along the whole of the front, with fighting continuing in a number of areas.

This was a very interesting film, featuring the personal

reminders of the three soldiers.

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, then contact the secretary David Laird on 0118 9470709.

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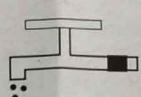
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