

Caversham Bridge

No 718

www.cavershambridge.org

December 2024

Community Celebrations

by **Martyn Strong, Jodie Anderson and Tricia Marcouse**

THERE WILL be plenty of opportunities this month to join with others to enjoy the build up to Christmas and the New Year.

On Friday 6 December, *Cavmas*, the late-night opening event organised by Caversham Traders, will see many shops staying open until 20:00. At the top of Prospect Street, there will be alpacas at The Last Crumb, then a reverse Santa at Fourbears Books, and an indoor craft market in Caversham Baptist Church. Enjoy live music and DJ sets at Pop Classics, and choirs and other entertainment through the centre of Caversham, with hot street food available. You can join in with wreath making and visit some of the regular Sunday market traders in the precinct. For the latest information see www.facebook.com/Choosecaversham

The following day, Saturday 7 December, finds the annual Green Christmas Tree Sale in Caversham Court Gardens, as well as St Peter's Christmas Fair in the church. In addition to Scots Pine Christmas trees, harvested as part of the management of local lowland heath, there will be a range of natural decorations for sale, Fair Trade goods for Christmas gifts, local honey and beeswax candles, wood tree decorations and turned bowls, and a whole range of homes and food for birds from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, as well as cards and calendars (*details p9*).

On Christmas Eve, Churches in Caversham will retell the Nativity story, as the Holy Family, accompanied by an angel and two donkeys lead the way through the streets of the village. Caversham Methodists, St John the Baptist Church of England Church, and Caversham Baptist Church join for



Nativity Live. The walk starts at The Fox and Hounds pub car park, with Mary and Joseph seeking a room at the Inn. The Nativity story will then be told at various points along the Caversham streets and parks, as the Nativity characters and animals are collected along the way.

The walk ends with a short time together in St John's Church, including refreshments to warm everyone up! All are welcome to join the walk and, if you wish, please do

Singing in St Martin's Precinct

photo M Aparcar

come dressed as a shepherd, sheep, angel, camels or one of the Three Wise Men.

The event is Christmas Eve, starting at 15:30 from The Fox and Hounds ending by around 17:00 at St John's Church (*details p2*).

A good read for the dark evenings

by **Phil Chatfield**

THIS MONTH much of our content has a seasonal theme, as we approach Christmas and the New Year. Some of our forthcoming community events are highlighted in our lead article (*above*), but there is a lot more going on in our area over the next few weeks. Caversham's Candlelight Concert is just one of the musical events planned this month (*p8*), and many of our churches will be hosting carol concerts and special services through Advent (*p4*).

Happy Wanderer looks at the tradition of Christmas Mummers (*p7*), and our wordsearch and puzzle on the same page are also inspired by the season. The book reviews from Alex Forbes have a Christmas theme (*p5*), and Roslyn Weaver reflects on Christmas trees and trees of Caversham Court Gardens (*p2*). Our Talking Point (*also p2*) considers the excitement of the Christmas message of 'good news of great joy', and the feelings of those for whom it is an incredibly painful season.

The Local Scene article has Janina Maher's drawing of the Lebanese Village this month (*p13*). Les Cooper provides seasonal advice for gardeners, and we have the second part of Dick Sawdon Smith's memories of growing up in Caversham during World War II (*p10*). The Creative Caversham spotlight falls on musician Peter Bernard, who regularly plays the organ at Caversham Heights Methodist Church (*p12*).

We hope you have enjoyed reading the Caversham Bridge in this, our 60th year of publication, and hope you will do so for many more years. We wish all our readers a peaceful Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.

You can contact us by email at editors@cavershambridge.org or by post, c/o Church House, Church Street, Caversham, RG4 8AX with your comments or contributions.

INSIDE



**Pop
Pride of
Reading**

p3



**Programme
of Piano
Perfection**

p4



**First Impressions
Matter
A December Checklist**

p14

Emmanuel – God with us, always



Talking Point

by Revd Penny Cuthbert

HAPPY CHRISTMAS! The greeting most of us will hear and say numerous times this month, and mostly we will mean it and mostly we will want to hear it! We all want and hope for a happy Christmas for ourselves and others, time spent with family and friends, time off work (unless you are a vicar!), times of giving and receiving gifts, times of eating, drinking and being merry, and perhaps a time of indescribable excitement if you are a child expecting a visit from Father Christmas! I can still remember that almost uncontainable feeling of excitement on Christmas Eve and waking in the early hours of Christmas Day to find a pillowcase stuffed with presents. I have many joyful memories of Christmases Past.

But in recent years some Christmases have been more poignant – like 2018, when we knew that, barring a miracle, it would be my husband Simon's last Christmas with us, and 2019 when his chair was empty. Many of us will know people – and some of us will be those people – for whom this Christmas might not hold the usual expectations of joy and laughter. For those who are lonely, grieving, or separated from loved ones for whatever reason, Christmas can be an incredibly painful season. More than once parishioners have told of their plans to spend the day under the duvet.

So where is the "good news of great joy" for them?

The angels told the shepherds that the good news they were declaring was for "all" people. Really? Even for those who have had a rubbish year, or who fear they are facing a rubbish year to come? What is there to be joyful about when the chips are down, and our world is falling apart?

For me, the good news is that in Jesus God came – and still comes – to be in it with us. Emmanuel means 'God with us'. Whatever is going on in our lives, whether we are full of joy or in deepest darkness, God's strong desire is that we know his presence in our lives, his comfort, his grace, his peace. Jesus left all the glory and majesty of heaven to be born in a stable on a dark night, and he is still in the business of coming to meet us where we are, no matter how great the chaos in our lives or the darkness in our hearts. His presence can ease the pain and strengthen us for the future, whatever it may hold. We are not alone.

May you know the warmth of his love, and the brightness of the light he offers you this Christmas. Happy Christmas.

Revd Penny Cuthbert, Associate Vicar St John's Caversham.

"The Longest Night" service at St Peter's Caversham at 19:00 on 21 December, is a service specifically for those who, for whatever reason, find it hard to celebrate Christmas. You are not alone. All welcome.



Caversham Court Gardens

0 Christmas Trees, from Caversham to other Continents

text and photo Roslyn Weaver

NOT ALL OF us can afford to travel around the world, but for one weekend in September Caversham Court Gardens hosted its own version of globetrotters who visited during the Heritage Open Days. Home to plants from almost every continent, the Gardens showcased specimens from Australasia, Europe, and the Americas. They also contained some trees that are synonymous with this time of year – conifers.

As far as Christmas tree aficionados go, I fall into the fickle camp, having tried artificial and potted previously, then Nordmann Fir and Norway Spruce more recently, with the annual anointing of the winner an eagerly awaited event (by me at least, if not by the tree). However, by mid-autumn this year, that event still seemed too distant, so I decided to revisit the Gardens, Tree Trail leaflet in hand, to find an honorary Christmas tree to admire to tide me over. The intercontinental conifer contenders included the Wellingtonia sequoia (biggest species

in the world and tallest in this garden), yew, and Bhutan Pine. If those aren't Christmassy enough, the leaflet helpfully noted that mistletoe grows in lime trees.

The Christmas tree tradition is said to be a relatively new import from Germany that gained popularity in the 1800s and, as such, they are entirely absent in the book most associated with this season – the Bible. However, much more famous trees can be found within its pages, for example the tree of life, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and an unnamed tree becoming a wooden cross. The Cedar of Lebanon appears, too, just as it does in Caversham Court Gardens – although there, the Tree Trail leaflet suggests it could in fact be an Atlas Cedar, its close relative. But my ultimate winner of honorary Christmas tree in the Gardens was yet another specimen – the Blue Atlas Cedar from North Africa. Its wintry blue hue gives the appearance of frosted magic. Fickle as I am, however, that winning choice may change if I'm back in the Gardens for one of the usual seasonal events, such as carol singing or the Christmas tree sale on Saturday 7 December.



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Pride of Pop Classics



Damian with the award

photo M Apcar

DAMIAN AND MARTINA Jones scooped up the prestigious Entrepreneur of the Year trophy at the 20th anniversary Pride of Reading Awards, held on Friday 25 October at the Voco (Reading Stadium) Hotel. The couple, who own and run the Pop Classics record shop in Caversham, were also nominated for Independent Retailer of the Year,

by Adrian Raffill

but won the Entrepreneur category, sponsored by Caversham's Rabbits Vehicle Hire.

"It means so much to us," said Damian, "As it's a recognition of all the hard work we've put into the shop since opening in September 2023." It came as a surprise to find they'd been nominated when news reached them in July, but the shop was described as an 'exemplary candidate' due to its 'spirit of community and cultural enrichment'.

The annual event celebrates the achievements and contributions of community groups and individuals in the area, with 23 awards handed out on the day. "It was great to learn about all of the amazing things people are doing in our town," said Damian, "And it was a star-studded extravaganza to be a part of." Damian and Martina were delighted to mingle with local celebrities Chris Tarrant, Sangeeta Bhabra and former Reading FC stars such as Aidy Williams. "But the highlight for me was meeting Rudolph Walker from Eastenders!"

The trophy takes pride of place at the shop in St. Martin's Precinct, something to share with their customers. Pop Classics has become a vital part of the Caversham community's music and wider arts scene. They sell and buy records and music memorabilia, as well as hosting regular live events and promoting local artists. Damian and Martina Jones are at the beating heart of this community, and their Pride of Reading award is a well-earned acknowledgment of their contribution.



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Scout Christmas Post

by Elaine Rae

Delivering the Christmas post

photo 89th Reading (Milestone Wood) Scouts

AS REPORTED last month, the 89th Reading (Milestone Wood) Scouts are again providing a Christmas Post service for Caversham and Emmer Green. They have been running this service for over 40 years, raising funds for the Scout Group and providing a great service to the local community. Last year they raised just over £800, which was spent replacing some of their ageing tents. This year they are hoping to raise money for a new workshop for Branching Up, a service providing work experience placements for adults with learning disabilities.

At 40p per card it's less than half the price of a stamp – and your Christmas cards will be expertly delivered by Caversham Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, and Explorers. You can post your cards (cash only please) from Saturday 29 November until Thursday 19 December, and they will be delivered over the weekend of 21/22 December.

...spreading Christmas cheer...

You will find the Scout post boxes at Caversham library, Budgens in Emmer Green, Woodcote Way Stores in Caversham Heights, Henley Road Co-op, Balmore Park Surgery, Emmer Green Surgery and at St Andrew's, St Barnabas, St John's, St Peter's churches and the Methodist churches on Highmoor Road and Gosbrook Road. The Scouts deliver cards across the area, but please bear in mind they cannot deliver south of the river or to Kidmore End, Tokers Green or Sonning Common. "We are excited to be offering our Christmas postal service again this year," said Robin Kent, the 89th Scout Leader. "It's a great way for us to serve the community and allows the Scouts to take part in spreading some Christmas cheer."



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Special Christmas Services for December 2024 at



St Andrew's, Albert Road	
Sunday 22, 17:00	Carols by Candlelight
Tuesday 24, 15:30	CHRISTMAS EVE – Nativity Service
Tuesday 24, 20:00	CHRISTMAS EVE – Christmas Night Service
Wednesday 25,	CHRISTMAS DAY – 8:00 and 10:00 Christmas Day Eucharist
St Barnabas, Emmer Green and Caversham Park	
Saturday 21, 18:00	Blue Christmas
Sunday 22, 11:15	Pop-up Nativity
Sunday 22, 16:00	Nine Lessons and Carols
Tuesday 24, 16:00	CHRISTMAS EVE - Christingle Nativity service
Tuesday 24, 23:30	CHRISTMAS EVE - Midnight Mass
Wednesday 25, 10:00	CHRISTMAS DAY - Christmas Family Communion
Full details at www.saintbarnabas.org.uk/whats-on	
St John the Baptist, Gosbrook Road	
Sunday 15, 16:00	Christingle Service
Wednesday 18, 19:30	Carol Service
Tuesday 24, 15:30	CHRISTMAS EVE – Nativity Live!
Be part of the drama of Christmas starting at the Fox and Hounds!	
Tuesday 24, 23:30	CHRISTMAS EVE – Midnight Service
Wednesday 25, 9:30	CHRISTMAS DAY – Christmas Morning
Sunday 29, 9:30	Parish wide service
St Margaret, Mapledurham	
Sunday 15, 17:00	Carol service
Tuesday 24, 16:00	CHRISTMAS EVE, Christingle Service
Tuesday 24 23:30	CHRISTMAS EVE, Midnight service
Wednesday 25, 11:15	CHRISTMAS DAY, Christmas Morning service

St Peter	
Sunday 1, 18:30	Advent Carols
Saturday 21, 19:00	Longest Night Service
Sunday 22, 18:30	Carol Service
Tuesday 24,	CHRISTMAS EVE, Christingle Services: 15:00 & 16:30
Tuesday 24 23:30	CHRISTMAS EVE, Midnight service
Wednesday 25, 9:30	CHRISTMAS DAY Morning service
Grace Church Caversham (formerly Caversham Hill Chapel)	
Sunday 8, 10:30	All age service
Sunday 15, 18:00	Carol service
Tuesday 24, 23:30	CHRISTMAS EVE – Midnight service
Wednesday 25, 10:30	CHRISTMAS DAY – Christmas service
Caversham Baptist Church	
Sunday 15, 10:30	Morning Worship – with Nativity Play
Sunday 22, 18:00	Carols by Candlelight
Wednesday 25, 10:30	CHRISTMAS DAY – Morning Worship
Caversham Methodist Church	
Sunday 22, 10:30	Shared Carol Service at Caversham Heights
Wednesday 25, 10:30	CHRISTMAS DAY – Shared Service at Caversham Heights
Our Lady and St Anne	
Tuesday 24	CHRISTMAS EVE: 17:00 – Children's Mass
Wednesday 25	19:30 – Christmas Carols • 20:00 – Mass of Christmas Night [sung]
CHRISTMAS DAY: 8:00 – Mass of Christmas Dawn	
10:00 – Mass of Christmas Day	
Caversham Park United Reformed Church	
Tuesday 24, 11:00	CHRISTMAS EVE service followed by a bring and share lunch



Scaffolding around the tower

photo F Smith

Repaired, refreshed and returned

AFTER EXTENSIVE repair and refurbishment work, the congregation of the Roman Catholic Parish of Our Lady and St Anne was able to return to the church for services on 9 November. Saturday evening and Sunday morning masses were said in the school hall of the adjacent St Anne's School in Washington Road while the repairs, which involved scaffolding both around the tower and inside the church, were carried out.

The inside of the church has been redecorated, and a new carpet laid. We hope to have photos of the interior in our January edition. **The Editors**

Nativity Live


The story of Christmas told on the streets of Caversham

Christmas Eve 3.30pm

Walk the Christmas story through Caversham.
Starting at The Fox & Hounds pub, RG4 8BN.
Then celebrate with carols and refreshments
at St. John's Church, St. John's Road, Caversham, RG4 8EB.

If you wish please come dressed as shepherds, sheep or other nativity characters
and children please bring a parent or guardian with you.

A joint initiative between the churches of Caversham Baptist, Caversham Methodists and St. John's C of E



Piano Perfection



by Phil Chatfield

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST Church was filled with an audience anticipating a programme of great piano music from David Jenkins on Friday 25 October, and they were not disappointed. David's original date with the Steinway piano at the church, which we previewed in our September Creative Caversham article, was postponed because he contracted Covid-19.

David performed a set of sixteen pieces for the piano, ranging from Grieg and Beethoven to John Williams and Lennon and McCartney. The programme also featured several of his own compositions, including Morning Cloud (from The

Salisbury Suite) and June and August from The Seasons. David provided an introduction to each of his pieces – often amusing, and provided an insight into the reasons for his choices and the inspiration for each of his own compositions.

David's passion for a perfect performance shone through (volunteers from the church reported he had arrived much earlier in the day to polish his performance) and, to the delight of the audience, he performed an encore.

The recital had been organised to raise funds for Christian Community Action (CCA) and their Caversham Drop-In, which runs every Wednesday at the Baptist Church. More than £1,000 was raised, so in every way it was a successful afternoon!

For more on CCA see <https://ccam.org.uk>

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by Alex Forbes

Welcome to Fourbears Books reviews, where we pick a couple of books to write about each month. As I write this we are preparing for Christmas, getting the books out, and of course for our Reverse Santa on Late Night Shopping where children give Santa a gift instead. Santa collects books and toys (new or as new) to redistribute to less fortunate families around Reading for Christmas via Reading Family Aid. We will be collecting up until 7 December.

WE HAVE two Christmassy books this month, perfect for snuggling up in the cold and getting in the Christmas spirit. We have a Christmas mystery for the adults, The Christmas Jigsaw Murders by Alexandra Benedict. It begins with renowned puzzle setter and Christmas sceptic Edie receiving a jigsaw on 19 December with a message saying: 'Four, maybe more, people will be dead by midnight on Christmas Eve unless you can put the pieces together and stop me'. Conveniently, Edie's nephew is a DI in the police, but they quickly reach a dead end, so Edie steps in to help. This book is a lot of fun for a Christmassy take on a typical murder mystery which is well written and will keep you guessing throughout.

Our other book choice is a fantastic children's trilogy called The Christmas Carrolls. The Carrolls are a family obsessed with Christmas, who

celebrate it 365 days a year. But when they move house and Holly starts at a new school, her Santa fascination is causing odd looks, and no one joins in her morning carol singing. Is the world's most Christmassy girl about to lose her festive spirit? This is a funny read. Aimed at age 9+, there are three books to get lost in. Author Mel Taylor-Bessent is full of energy, and fun as a person, and this shines through in her writing. You can't help but have a huge smile on your face when you meet the family of Carrolls. One to get your child into the Christmas spirit!

Do check out our website for latest events, including Robert Thorogood coming in January to discuss his series the Marlow Murder Club. Robert is perhaps better known as creator of BBC hit Death in Paradise. We hope to see you in the shop soon.

Happy reading!



Has anyone seen my friends?

photo A Forbes



Tessa Venuti Sanderson at the book launch

photo Z Venuti Sanderson

by Elestr Lee

LOCAL AUTHOR, Tessa Venuti Sanderson, was delighted to launch her latest book at Fourbears Books in Caversham – in fact, her second book launch there this year!

Dr Sanderson has made it her mission to help adults and children feel better about themselves, helping them make the most of their bodies and their lives. Initially Tessa did research in a rheumatology department and became interested in improving the well-being of those with rheumatoid arthritis; and this led to her teaching yoga. After having children she concentrated on her yoga teaching, offering classes to pregnant women as well as writing books for both girls and boys covering the issues of growing up – “These are important issues, but I try not to make it overwhelming,” she said.

“I am also really focussed on helping building community, and reducing isolation, and I love the idea that there could be a ‘circle’ where people could get together on every street corner!” Tessa enthused. Her latest book, Circle Holding – a Guide to Facilitating Talking Circles, published by Singing Dragon, is a guide to empowering people to help each other out. “For example, someone I know is a carer and she said she would love to get together and form a carer’s circle,” Tessa told us.

Copies of Tessa’s books for adults and children can be found at Fourbears in Caversham.

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What's On

IF YOU have an event planned, please send details to whatson@cavershambridge.org. We need to receive these no later than the 10th of the month before the event for inclusion in the printed paper. Later submissions can be included in our online What's On, which is updated regularly. To see what has been added check: cavershambridge.org/archives/category/around-caversham. Please note, we have moved the listing of baby and toddler groups to a new feature on page 8. For details of more concerts this month, see page 8

Caversham Library – 09:00-17:00 Tuesday and Friday, 13:00-19:00 Thursday and 10:00-15:00 Saturday. Regular events include: *Rhymetimes for the little ones* – popular, so please book first! Every Tuesday at 10:15 and 11:15.

Games Club, Friday mornings 10:30-12:00. All adults welcome – refreshments!

Sit and Stitch 17:30-19:45, on 2nd and 4th Thursdays every month. Refreshments – come and be inspired. Tel: 0118 937 5103 or see reading.gov.uk/leisure/all-libraries/caversham-library

Geo Café – *Artists Against Homelessness*, an ongoing and changing exhibition of art by local artists at Geo Café, Prospect Street. For each sale the artist makes a donation to Launchpad Reading. Open every day.

Mondays – **Caversham Park Bridge Club** – at the Milestone Centre, 19:15 for 19:30 start. Phone Lin 0118 3348195 for further information. bridgewebs.com/cavershampark

Tuesdays – **Rivarate Choir** – Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmoor Road. 19:30 in term time. Enjoy singing together. For details see rivarate.com

Wednesdays – **Caversham Writers** – Welcoming enthusiastic hobbyists and aspiring authors alike. Meeting weekly in person or via Zoom. Free to all. For details: meetup.com/CavershamWriters or [@CavershamWriter](https://twitter.com/CavershamWriter) on Twitter (X)

Wednesdays – **Light on the Hill Café** – 19:30-21:30 at Grace Church, 119 Peppard Road, RG4 8TR. A wellbeing café for adults 18+. Come as you are for tea and a chat. Please see: www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk

Wednesdays – **The Waltham St Lawrence Silver Band** – Neville Hall in Waltham St Lawrence RG10 0JJ. 20:00-22:00. Free and friendly club for brass instrumentalists. Email: waltham.band@gmail.com

Thursdays – **Friendly Over-60s Social Club** – 10:00-13:00 at Milestone Centre, Caversham Park Village. Hot lunch, quizzes and the chance to chat. Contact Cheryl at 07964 750182 or Trina at 07477 570541

Thursdays – **Weller Centre Craft Group** – 13:00-15:00. Be creative with friends. For details contact Pam Chatfield at pamch32@gmail.com Mobile 07986 905784 or Weller Centre 0118 947 5828

Thursdays – **New Caversham Heights Bridge Club** – 14:00 at the Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmoor Road. For details contact Duncan Knight on 0118 947 5544 or email duncan.knight@googlemail.com

Fridays – **Warm Welcome Space** – 10:00-13:30 at Caversham Baptist Church, South Street, RG4 8HY. All welcome, just drop in for free refreshments, including hot soup from 12:00. Tel: 0118 954 5353 www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk

Saturdays – **Keep Caversham Tidy** – A local charity dedicated to eliminating litter and improving public spaces in Caversham. Free to join and no ongoing commitment. Families welcome! Email Keepcavershamtidy@gmail.com, FB Keep Caversham Tidy

Sundays – **Caversham Artisan & Farmers Market** – Caversham Precinct, 10:00-15:00. See www.facebook.com/CAFMarket

Sundays – **Nordic Walk (or just walking)**. Free to all. Tel: 07931 754096 or email Pat at Wirralbird@hotmail.com

Sundays – **Readifolk Song and Music Club** – 20:00-22:30 in the Community Hall, Watlington House, RG1 4RA. £8 admission for performances, £3 on singing nights. See www.redifolk.co.uk

20 November 2024 to 01 January 2025 – *Exhibition of original artworks by local artist Christabel Forbes* – Caversham Picture Framers, Church Road – see cavershampictureframer.co.uk/events

Sunday 1 December – **Silchester Walk (SU636629) 10.0 Miles** – 10:30. Park in the car park for the Roman Town (nearest postcode RG7 2HJ). The walk is in two parts and is either 6 or 10 miles. Pang Valley Ramblers. One of a programme of regular walks in the area – see <https://pvramblers.org.uk/walks-programme>

Tuesday 3 December – **Caversham Women's Institute** – 19:30 at Church House, Caversham. www.thewi.org.uk or Tel: 0118 947 5176

Wednesday 4 December – **Rosehill Ladies** – 14:00 at St Barnabas Hall, Emmer Green. Tel: Sue 0118 947 7570 or email suegreen@hotmail.com

Wednesday 4 December – **Christmas Celebration with entertainment from local choir Rivarate** – 20:00 at Caversham Heights Methodist Church Hall, Highmoor Road. The Caversham Heights Society. To learn more visit cavershamheights.org or email: contact@cavershamheights.org

Friday 6 December – **Bereavement Café** – 14:00-15:30 at St. Barnabas, Emmer Green. A safe place to find others who have had their own loss and can appreciate something of your experience. Further information call Gill on 0118 947 8772

Friday 6 December – **Chazey Women's Institute** – 14:30 at St Andrew's Church Hall. Tel: 01189 470964, or e-mail rowena@primology.com

Friday 6 December – **Late night shopping in Caversham** – 17:00-20:00 See www.facebook.com/Choosecaversham for further information.

Saturday 7 December – **Christmas Fair at St Barnabas Emmer Green** – 14:00-16:00 at St Barnabas Church Hall and Parish Centre, Grove Road, Emmer Green. All proceeds to their African charities. More information: Wendy Howell 07929 874191 or see www.saintbarnabas.org.uk

Saturday 7 December – **Green Christmas Tree Sale** – see page 9 for details

Wednesday 11 December – **Caversham Court Gardens. a talk from Linda Humphreys Evans and Christmas Social** – 19:30. Caversham Baptist Church. Caversham Horticultural Society. For details, see www.caversham-horticultural.org.uk

Thursday 12 December – **An evening of Christmas Cheer with the Reading Haydn Choir** – 19:00. St William of York RC Church, Upper Redlands Road, Reading RG1 5JP. Reading Haydn Choir. Tickets £5 on the door, children free. Retiring collection in aid of Launchpad.

Saturday 14 December – **Artists & Makers Fair** – 10:00-16:00 at Caversham Methodist Hall, Gosbrook Road. Local artists and craftspeople display their work for sale. Free entry. For further information phone Jean at 07808 966928 or visit www.cavershamcrafts.co.uk

Saturday 14 December – **Performance of Alan Bullard's 'A Light in the Stable' as well as other Christmas favourites** – 19:30 South Chiltern Choral Society with the Hill Primary School at Queen Anne's School. For tickets and information please visit southchilternchoralsociety.org.uk

Thursday 24 December – **Nativity Live** – 5:30. Starting at the Fox and Hounds. See page 1 for details.

CADRA Planning Bulletin

A summary of planning and transport matters affecting the RG4 area, provided by Caversham and District Residents Association www.cadra.org.uk

THE FINAL consultation on the updates to the **Reading Local Plan** will close on 18 December before submission to the Secretary of State. Changes for our area are limited but **Hemdean House School** is now identified for education/ community use or 22-34 dwellings. Requests to include reference to sites in South Oxfordshire within the Reading Local Plan were not accepted, on the basis that Reading expects to meet its housing needs in full, without assistance from neighbouring authorities.

An appeal has been lodged against the enforcement action requiring removal of the riverside canopy to the Persian Palace on **2 Bridge Street** (APP/E0345/C/24/3354043). The application for **18 Bridge Street** for change of use and flats above has been refused (PL/24/1151). The application for five terraced houses on the **corner of George Street and Gosbrook Road** has also been refused (PL/24/0900). The nine reasons for refusal included flood risk, landscaping and the impact on open space. The retrospective application for the lockers outside Tesco on Church Street has also been refused (PL/24/1174).

Regulations require that the Local Planning Authority **notify neighbours** of planning applications submitted by either posting letters to neighbours whose boundary adjoins the application site or placing a notice on site. Reading Borough Council previously used both methods, with the applicant being responsible for placing the site notice. As part of cost saving measures, the Policy Committee on 21 October agreed letters would no longer be sent. Instead, the case officers will install the site notice. CADRA identifies all the applications of wider interest in the monthly list but smaller applications like extensions will need to be identified from the site notice.

See www.cadra.org.uk for links to these planning applications.

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IN THE PAST, mummers' plays were performed around the British Isles. Although the scripts varied from area to area, the basic plot was the same. The best-known Berkshire version was that published in 1888 by Major B Lowsley of Hampstead Norreys, in a book entitled *A Glossary of Berkshire Words and Phrases*. It includes chapters on customs, superstitions and folklore.

The main characters are Molly, with her broom, who makes space for the performers. Then there is King George, the hero, and the French Officer who, in other versions, is the Turkish Knight. He is a foreigner, not to be trusted, and very boastful and belligerent. A swordfight ensues, in which King George falls to the ground, to be revived by the comic Doctor. The fighting resumes and the French Officer is felled. He is revived by Jack Vinny from Spain. At the end, Happy Jack and Father Christmas appear, a fiddler starts up, and everyone dances. All of this business gave great scope for colourful costumes and ad-libbing. The speeches are in rhyming couplets.

The death-and-resurrection theme, and the fact that the plays were often performed at Christmas or Easter, caused some folklorists to think that the tradition might be ancient, though the fact there are no mentions of it before the eighteenth century make this highly unlikely.

By 1885 the mummers in Reading had become something of a nuisance. The

Reading Observer reported, 'Complaints reach us of the annoyance caused to households by gangs of men and youths, usually with blacked faces and grotesquely attired, calling at their doors in the evening, early and late, to ask permission to entertain the occupants with an exhibition of their mummerly.'

Apart from the fun of it, one motive for taking part was to be offered refreshments and to collect money for yourself. The mummers would go from door to door in the wealthier parts of their locality, much as the carol singers did when they went a-wassailing.

...to wrap up...

The word 'mumming' would seem to have something to do with keeping your mouth shut, which is distinctly at odds with the kind of performance here. But then, I suppose the other Christmas entertainment, a pantomime, as we experience it today, has nothing to do with mime. Wikipedia suggests that 'mumming' may have come from an old German word, mummen, meaning to wrap up, disguise, or hide one's face. In other parts of the country the mummers were called guisers.

Today, if you come across mummers at all, they will be collecting money for good causes, usually in a pub. They are often Morris dancers. I recall such a visit to my local pub in Caversham. The show had been advertised and was to be on a Saturday



afternoon – not my usual time to go there but, because I was interested in such things, along I went. The whole thing lasted no longer than 15 minutes, and then the players moved on to their next venue. The patrons there didn't know what to make of it, and I felt obliged to try to explain!

King George, the Turkish Knight and the Doctor in costume, re-drawn from an old photograph.

image Happy Wanderer

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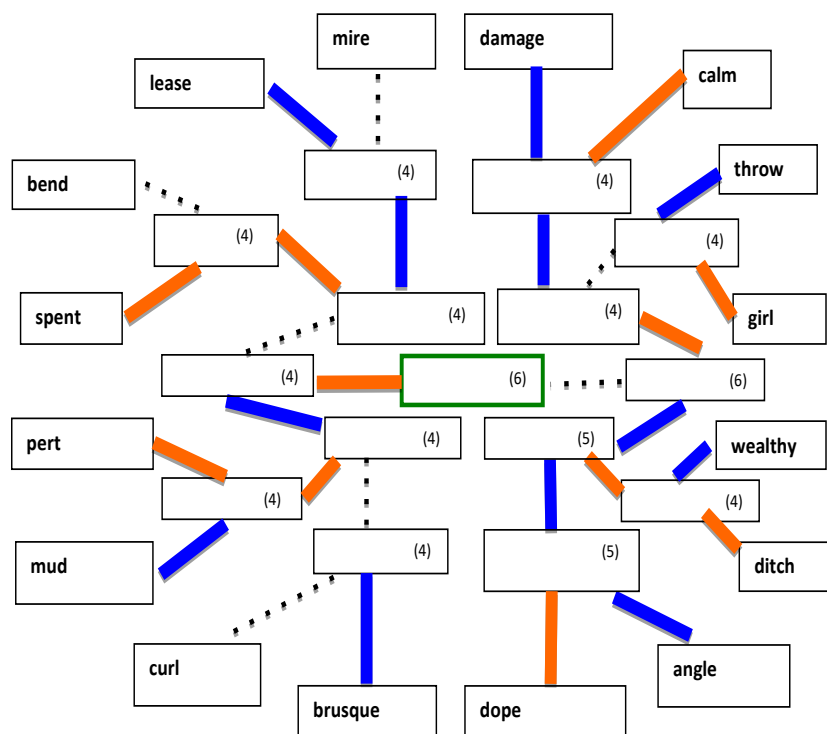
Puzzle Corner

The Challenge by Rachel

WORD PUZZLE

Find the word that has the same meaning as the clue; or rhymes with; or has one letter that is different. For example: *tingle* has 6 letters, rhymes with *shingle* and means *thrill*.

Rhyme ———
Letter change
Meaning ———



Answers on page 14

SEASONAL THOUGHTS

Can you find 20 words relating to the winter season in the grid?

Y E K R U T W Y U L E L O G
A P M U L L E D W I N E T S
E N Y M S T U N T S E H C M
N V V U G O O S E D G K U R
O E E R T S A M T S I R H C
T M I N C E P I E S M R S E
T U S L E D G E A T R H T A
E V T G C I I U C U E H O E
N K M E L A F B I F T A L G
A S N O W Q R U B F N G L S
P G X I C E R P U I I G E K
J H S E T A K S N N W I N I
M I S T L E T O E G V S F S
R P H O Q Z F F U D M U L P

Carp
Chestnuts
Christmas Tree
Goose
Haggis
Ice
Mince Pies
Mistletoe
Mulled Wine
Panettone

Plum Duff
Skates
Skis
Sledge
Snow
Stollen
Stuffing
Turkey
Winter
Yule Log

A feast of music this month

Music for Advent – time to celebrate and commemorate

by Elestr Lee

THIS DECEMBER'S Christmas Concert by Candlelight in Caversham will mark both music associated with the Advent season and also reflect and celebrate the life and work of oboist Timothy Watts. Timothy, along with his wife Adrienne Black, co-founded the concert series, which has succeeded in bringing an astonishing array of professional musicians to Caversham.

Musicians from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO), where he played oboe for 22 years, will be joining the CinC Ensemble to play the music Tim Watts loved. Directed by the RPO's

co-principal, Tamas Andras, the orchestra will be joined by baritone, Sam Pantcheff, and soprano, Susannah Fairburn, to perform music by Bach, Handel, and Rutter. The programme will also include Gabriel's Oboe by Morricone. As usual, there will also be audience carols, as well as mulled wine and mince pies.

The concert will take place at 19:30 at St Andrew's Church in Albert Road on Saturday 7 December.

Tickets cost £18 (ages 16-24); £24 (ages 25-59), and £22 (ages 60+). Under 16s free.

www.concertsincaversham.co.uk

Tickets also available from the Caversham Picture Framers.



Tim playing

photo Concerts in Caversham



Last year's festive carols from Reading Bach Choir

photo Lucy Appleton

"Nowell! Nowell!"

GLASS ENSEMBLE presents its annual Christmas concert, featuring Malcolm Archer's "Nowell! Nowell!", a dynamic carol Nochant and charming folk melodies with a fresh, modern feel. This will feature alongside a selection of seasonal music by Rutter and Palestrina, with a sprinkling of well-loved traditional Christmas carols. Sunday 8 December 2024, 16:00 at Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmore Road RG4 8BG

Tickets £12.50 in advance/£15 on the door/under 18s free.

Advance tickets available from 07930 690873

or <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/glass-ensemble/t-avgapqk>

Retiring collection for charity

Friends of Caversham Court Gardens Carol Evening

THE FRIENDS OF Caversham Court Gardens are holding their annual Carol Evening in Caversham Court Gardens on Monday 16 December at 19:30.

The choir of St Peter's church will lead the singing of traditional Christmas carols, and the Salvation Army Band will complement the festive music.

The floodlit gardens will be open from 18:15 and mulled wine, hot chocolate and mince pies will be on sale from the Tea Kiosk charities. Card payments will be accepted. The church bells will ring at 19:15.

Wrap up warm and bring a torch to read the carol sheets!

We will be in St Peter's Church next to the Gardens if the weather is bad.

Check our Facebook page for updates.

Free entry, but please bring cash for the collection.

Contact: friends@fccg.org.uk Website: <https://home.fccg.org.uk>

Sing Carols with the Reading Bach Choir

READING BACH Choir invite you to a festive evening of seasonal music, carols and homemade treats at St Andrew's Church, Albert Road, on Tuesday 17 December. Conductor Daniel Mahoney and accompanist Nicholas Shaw will lead the evening's proceedings, starting at 19:30.

Tickets are £5, under 18's free. Tickets will be sold on the door. See www.readingbachchoir.org.uk for details.



For the youngest members of our community

LISTED BELOW are regular term-time events for toddlers, babies and their carers. All are free of charge, although donations towards costs are welcome.

Tuesdays – Babies and Toddlers – Gosbrook Road Methodist Church, RG4 8EB. 10:00 - 11:30. Refreshments available. All welcome.
cavershammethodist.org.uk/baby-toddler-group

Tuesdays – St. John's Baby and Toddler Group – Caversham Hall, St. John's Road, RG4 5AN. 09:30 - 11:00. All welcome.

Thursdays – Toddler Thursday – St Barnabas Church, Emmer Green, RG4 8RA. 8:45 - 10:00. Friendly group for preschoolers and parents/carers, refreshments available.
www.saintbarnabas.org.uk/whats-on

Thursdays – Baby Massage with midwife Katie – 12:15-12:55 at the Weller Centre during term times. Suitable for babies from 6 weeks to crawling. 50p donation towards costs, refreshments available.

Fridays – Tiddlers for Babies and Toddlers – St Andrew's Church, Albert Road. Caversham Heights. RG4 7PL. 9:30 - 11:00. All are welcome, refreshments available.
www.facebook.com/groups/209815529592564



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Green Christmas Tree Sale, Caversham Court

7 December 09:30-13:00

by Tricia Marcouse

IGNORE THE uninviting scaffolding covering the walls of Caversham Court Gardens and come in for the annual sale of Scots Pine Christmas trees harvested as part of the management of local lowland heath. Regenerating pine trees shade out heather and take moisture out of the heathland pools destroying a rare habitat, home to specialty species. A Scots Pine tree has more open branches than a Norway Spruce, allowing your decorations to be seen to advantage. More important, they don't drop their needles, have a wonderful scent and occasionally come ready decorated with pine cones!

That's just the start. We'll have a range of natural decorations for sale, Fair Trade goods for Christmas gifts, local honey and beeswax candles, wood tree decorations and turned bowls, and a whole range of homes and food for birds from RSPB, as well as cards and calendars.

There is no parking at Caversham Court apart from disabled parking. We will have creches for trees and other goods in the gardens and at the church. Park elsewhere, walk in to do your shopping and then bring down the car to load up with your tree and other goodies.



IF YOU ARE an organised person, then this tip is too late, but maybe useful for next year.

The usual rules apply - don't buy disposable stuff that is unnecessarily hard to recycle. Wrapping paper, cards and tags with shiny surfaces, added glitter, padding or in-built speaker are all more difficult or impossible for recycling systems to work efficiently. Go for a simpler paper or card product or reusable fabric wrapping. The same rules go for decorations - buy something that can last for several years and become a family heirloom, or buy disposable stuff made of paper and card. Better still, go for natural or edible decorations with pinecones, greenery, strings of popcorn and suchlike. You can send e-cards rather than real ones but, if you do, then please personalise them, because they are incredibly soulless!

The big green gain is to talk to adult friends and family and agree to dispense with presents for winter festivals, birthdays, and the rest. Most adults have too much 'stuff' already. Start with those where you are buying packets of speciality teas,

Have a greener winter holiday



Buy something that can last for years...

biscuits or scented candles; you KNOW that this is a duty activity. Mostly, people will be overjoyed that you've raised the issue and, if you don't feel that there is time enough to do it this year, then have the conversation for next year.

That doesn't mean that you will never ever buy them a present again. Suggest that if anyone of the non-present circle sees something at any time of the year that they know another will really appreciate, then they buy it. As Humpty Dumpty said to Alice, there are many many more opportunities for unbirthdays presents in the year!



Christmas Tree Sale

photos P Chatfield



Quattro is 40!

by Ruth Wright

FOR FORTY YEARS, the food served at *Quattro* on Prospect Street, Caversham has excited the palates of discerning diners with its authentic Italian food. If you've lived in Caversham all those years, you may remember there were two Italian restaurants. *Nino's*, in Church Street (now *Alto Lounge*) and *Quattro* in Prospect Street.

Nino Bartolomi, the owner, had four restaurants in Reading and called Prospect Street's little gem *Quattro*, as it was his fourth. The name hasn't changed, but the current owners, brothers Ossi and Isan, who joined the team there in 1989, have kept up the tradition of serving delicious and well-presented Italian food. Many of their customers are regulars, who have become more like friends over the years. Hence the '40-years' signs at the entrance on Prospect Street. Now you know.

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Les Cooper



Give It A Try

SUSPECT I write much the same thing every December, but surely this is the time of year when we 'gardeners' should take it a bit easier. Let us not worry because the rain is still pouring down, the weeds have decided not to have a rest for winter, and our neighbours' gardens look much tidier than ours. Forget the television, abandon the Richard Osman novel, and study the seed catalogues instead. They are fun and, who knows, we might even order something different and surprise ourselves when we have raised a wonder in our garden.

I am thinking mostly of flower catalogues, although vegetable lists are always interesting. I recommend the Chiltern Seeds catalogue because it has a huge range to choose from and its little vegetable catalogue has the most amusing drawings too.

Regrettably, when I do look at the lists of flower seeds, I realise I don't know as much as I should. For example, I noticed the name *Celosia plumosa* and thought, 'What is that?' It didn't take long to find out and to realise I had seen it before but never in any garden, simply because it had always been used in floral displays. It has extraordinary feathery flowers in bright colours, and apparently is easy to grow, but usually in pots in the greenhouse. However, they can be treated as half-hardy annuals grown in a border. The catalogue suggests planting them close

together as single stemmed plants, to prevent side growth. I wonder with our warm summers whether it might be worthwhile having a go.

One of the things I used to do in the past was to buy one plant. It has taken years for me to realise it's better to have groups if you want to display. Growing plants from seed does allow you to have more available. I now go for a minimum of three.

I am also trying *Didiscus Caeruleus*; another two and half foot high half-hardy annual I had never heard of. It is called the Blue Lace flower, and it has large, pale lavender-blue flowers that make excellent long-lasting cut flowers.

My final try-out is *Ratibida Columnifera*, a name that doesn't thrill me, but what's in a name? Its common name, *Prairie Coneflower*, sounds better. The catalogue says it is unusual looking, but allegedly easy to grow and fine for cutting. If I do manage to get it going in the border it will, with any luck, have a profusion of four feet tall flowers with six or seven yellow petals surrounding a prominent brown cone. I hope it looks better than it sounds.

One of the good things about gardening is the surprises you can get, especially when you try something new. I hope I will be pleasantly surprised in 2025.



Celosia Plumosa

photo Shutterstock.com

Long ago but not far away by Dick Sawdon Smith

Earlier this year we were contacted by a former Caversham resident asking if we would like to have his memories of growing up in Caversham during the Second World War. We published Part 1 in August, here is the second part of his story.



St John's Scout Group

photo provided by Dick Sawdon Smith

MANY A NIGHT we scrambled out of our beds in our Chiltern Road house into the half-submerged Anderson shelter after the siren had sounded. Caversham itself suffered little. A bomb was dropped in the playing field behind us, making a large crater, perhaps aimed at the former Oratory School, which then housed the secret BBC Monitoring Station. There was also a secret small aircraft factory opposite the Star public house. Landing craft were made by Elliots in Gosbrook Road, with engines made next door at Thorneycroft's. Once, when delivering papers, I discovered an unexploded incendiary bomb between two houses.

Our mother was a devout church goer, and my brother and I joined St John's choir. When they discovered where the discordant noise came from, I was promoted to organ pumper. My brother and I joined St John's Scouts with skipper Freddy Night and Cub Leader Wiggy Emmans. Camping was somewhat limited of course, never further than Mapledurham, Shiplake or Binfield Heath, on the land of Lord Phillimore. Wide Games* took place at Peppard Common.

There were annual Gang Shows in St John's Infant School Hall. I often appeared and formed a double act with my friend, Gilbert Fuller, which eventually took us to the heights of the

Palace Theatre in Reading. Once, when rehearsing, the siren sounded - but we never stopped.

After St John's infant school, it meant a cycle ride to Hemdean Road Junior School, but always with a policeman to guide us across Prospect Street. One morning we found large bullet holes in the school walls and windows. A stray Nazi bomber had shot up the school, luckily, after we had left.

...cricket in the road...

There were no male teachers, so no football or cricket, but we had school sports days, with egg and spoon races, three legged races, sack races and slow bike races - my favourite. With so few cars about, we played our own football and cricket in the road; in cricket a lamppost was the wicket and a ball hit into a garden was 6 and out.

Then there were the Swillies, a large acreage of untouched land behind the Old Peppard Road in Emmer Green. In the holidays, we would escape there early in the morning to make camps, climb trees, and run around until we remembered to go home. Our parents had no need to worry where their children were. Tough days - make-do days but, for us youngsters, memorable days.

*Wide Games is a scouting term meaning energetic, outdoor team games



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Are you going home for Christmas?

by Glyn Picton

THE MAN next to me at the bar smiled and said, "Well, it's nearly here again". "What is?" "Christmas, not long now." I knew instinctively what was coming next – and it did.

"And you?" persisted my bar friend, "Will you be going home for Christmas?" I first arrived in Caversham from South Wales in 1978 with my wife and family to start a new career. Despite living here for 46 years, I have never lost my distinctive Welsh accent and still face the inevitable question, "You are from Wales, aren't you?"

Over the years, I have developed a short answer to enquiries about my Christmas plans, saying that I would be spending it at our family home in Caversham. This satisfied all but the most insistent enquirer, who could pass on to the next obvious question, "Where in Wales are you from originally?"

At this point I could turn the tables by asking, "Do you know South Wales at all?", before proceeding with a description of the specific location and its name. If I really wanted to be mischievous, I could add, "I used to live in a village called Ynysboeth which is not far from Penrhiwceiber, just down the road from Pontrhydyfen". But I don't take advantage, that would be unkind!

...secure and loved...

According to the Oxford Dictionary, 'house/home' is a building, usually bricks and mortar, wooden beams, etc. 'Home' is a cosier word - the comfortable place where people live, safe, secure and loved.

I was born in the 1930s in a row of terraces in the South Wales valleys, built to house miners' families. In those days poverty amongst the working classes was universal.

Food shortages, ill health caused largely by deficient diets, war shortages, and poor living conditions were normal. Mothers had to make do and mend, and borrow from neighbours, while World War II was raging, and the men had been conscripted into the armed forces. Women, including my mother, also had to work in war production factories, despite having children to rear or aged parents to look after.

My personal interpretation of house and home springs from the memory of my early life. For me, a house without unconditional love is not a home. It is what growing old is all about - fond memories of what was once the best Christmas Santa Claus could bring you.

Wishing you a Happy Christmas, whichever home you spend it in!

Unique items make perfect presents

by Elestr Lee

ORIGINAL CREATIONS made by local artists can provide unusual, quite special gifts, for lucky recipients over the festive season. And rather than facing a trip to a crowded shopping centre, St Andrew's Church in Caversham is once again hosting the annual Christmas Gala, taking place on Saturday December 1 from 14:00-18:00. As well as a shopping opportunity, there will also be refreshments provided by the Ways & Means Trust, in support of that charity – delicious cakes and a reviving cuppa guaranteed!

Organised once again by Li-Sheng Cheng, the Christmas Gala will see a range of artists displaying their work – including pottery by Debbie Page, mixed media works by Carolyn Nash, jewellery by Barbara Goodbun, and books by local writer David Burnell. Alongside familiar faces there will be artists new to the Gala for 2024, including the beautiful floral art of Sayani Sur, whose depiction of roses featured here and on this year's postcards and posters advertising the event.



...the Christmas Gala – delicious cakes and a reviving cuppa guaranteed!

Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA) Open Meeting

ON 13 NOVEMBER, CADRA hosted speakers from the South Central Ambulance Service and the charity, Thames Valley Air Ambulance (TVAA) at Caversham Baptist Church. Opening the meeting, Helen Lambert explained she would be standing down as CADRA Chair in May 2025. The CADRA team is appealing for new volunteers. Look out for more details in the January Caversham Bridge.

The Ambulance Service extends beyond the

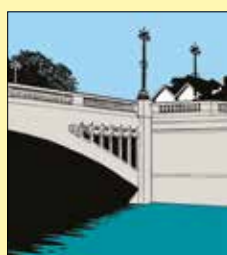
999 service. Through the 111 call centres, and developing paramedic care, patients are referred to the most appropriate service. TVAA serve the top 1% of the most critical conditions. The helicopter service from RAF Benson operates in daylight hours but most of their calls are attended by car. The evening finished with a demonstration of how to use a defibrillator and the reassuring news that the cardiac survival rate is going up. **CADRA**

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Looking forward to the last verse

In an uncertain world one thing can be sure... that this Christmas, traditional carols will be sung, bells ring out and the stirring sound of church organs will be heard. **Peter Bernard** talked to **Elestr Lee** about his long association with the Highmoor Road church, and its organ

CAVERSHAM IS particularly lucky to have a very fine church organ situated in Caversham Heights Methodist Church on Highmoor Road, and it was fascinating to meet Peter Bernard, who has been the organist for 20 years.

"We are very lucky to have a good organ here, I would say it's the best church organ in the area!" he said.

"It was originally made by Sweetland of Bath in 1878 for Trinity Congregational Church in Queen's Road, Reading, but in 1914 it was bought for Highmoor Road for the princely sum of £100. During its lifetime it has been rebuilt three times, the last time in 1981, with rededication recitals by Dr Eric Thiman and Dr William Lloyd-Webber.

"I feel very privileged to be able to express myself in music on this organ, in this place," he added.

Indeed, the Caversham Heights Methodist Church has played a very special part in Peter's life, as he has been a member since he was born 56 years ago. He started learning the piano at a house in Priest Hill when he was just four years old. "My mother soon noticed that I always liked to practise the loud pieces of music, not the soft ones," he commented. "Then, when I was older, I went to Reading Bluecoat School in Sonning. On a tour of the school, I saw the school organ – and I was instantly hooked, it was a 'wow' moment!

"While I was there, there was a great head of music, Roger Johnson, and I was taught organ by Richard Line,

On a tour of the school, I saw the school organ – and I was instantly hooked, it was a 'wow' moment!

gaining an organ scholarship in my final year. I was also encouraged by a family friend who arranged a tour of the Father Willis organ factory in Petersfield, as well as getting me the chance to play the Willis organ in Reading Town Hall, as well as in Blenheim Palace and at Guildford Cathedral – quite an experience!"

Peter gained useful insight into the role of the organist during his attendance in church on a Sunday. "I used to sit on the organ bench by Ralph Lascelles for the first half of the service, then leave in time for Sunday School," he recalled. "I was amazed how Ralph made playing the organ look easy! After watching him, I was eventually asked to join the rota – in fact, I still play some of the music he introduced me to.

...choir accompanist...

"I was then asked to play the organ at Elm Park Road, on the Oxford Road... I wasn't sure what to do, so they said just play the hymns you know! Eventually, I became organist at the Abbey Baptist Church, Gosbrook Road Methodist Church, as well as St Paul's United Reformed Church in Caversham.

"During the 90s I became part of the rota to play in Highmoor Road, and in 2004, after Dennis Tutty left, I was appointed organist."

While Peter has a 'day job' working in IT, music is an important part of his life, and as well as his duties as organist, he has been accompanist for the Thames Vale Singers since the 90s. "We perform three concerts a year," he said. "In 2014, we went on tour to Mondsee in Austria, where the choir sang at various venues. I was very thrilled to be allowed to play on the organ in the Basilica of Mondsee – the location for the wedding scene in the Sound of Music!"

Peter has made several CDs, including one of wedding music... weddings being very much on his mind recently, as he celebrated his own to long-term partner Adrian at the church, surrounded by friends, family and of course, many members of the congregation, who he regards as his 'church family'.

"We've been together for 12 years, so getting married at Highmoor Road church was important to us. I spoke to Reverend Jenny Dowding, and she said yes, she would marry us! We found we had so much to think about, but so much



The organist of Highmoor Road Methodist Church, Peter Bernard

help. Adrian's family came over from Mexico, it was good that they could be with us," he said.

Peter is remaining busy with Christmas fast approaching. As well as the Thames Vale Singers' concerts, there will be the annual carol service at Caversham Heights Methodist Church, on December 22.

"Arguably Christmas is the highlight of the year for organists. It's a time for family and friends to rejoice together with beautiful carols. The congregation at Caversham Heights Methodist Church know I like a rousing last verse... there is no better time for this than at Christmas!"

Find out more:

Thames Vale Singers Christmas Concerts
December 13, St Mary's, Purley, 7.30
December 14, The Barn, Purley, 7.30

thamesvalesingers.org.uk

Caversham Heights Methodist Church Carol Service December 22



Peter – delighted to play in the Basilica, Mondsee



The organ was built in 1878 by Sweetland of Bath – originally for another Reading church
all photos P. Bernard

The Lebanese Village

FIND IT extraordinary how eating out has expanded so much over the last few decades, and how we can enjoy the cuisine of countries and cultures from around the world in our own home area. Within the centre of Caversham we can experience the tastes of India, China, Italy, Greece, Poland, Thailand, Iran, and at No 6 Bridge Street – authentic Lebanese cuisine.

Janina Maher has chosen the *Lebanese Village* restaurant for her drawing this month. It was established in 2018 by Chef Shady, Mr Razin, and Mr Sedik. It was a challenging time to open a new business for, not long after opening, we had the global pandemic. But the staff were resilient and remained steadfast in their commitment to provide culinary excellence and make a success of the enterprise. The menu lists a wide range of dishes, from classic favourites like hummus, baba ghanoush, and tabbouleh, to delicious grilled meats and kebabs. There is an emphasis on organic ingredients, with olive oil and spices from Lebanon; they also offer some splendid Lebanese wines.

No 6 is clearly part of the much bigger building which includes the *Persian Palace* next door. Previously the premises were occupied by a popular Spanish restaurant called *Picasso Tapas*. From the early 1900s it was a stationer, newsagent and tobacconist and, in an advertisement of 1902, the owner, A L

Farr, stated, 'special attention given to early morning delivery of papers in the district'.

In the 1920s it was taken over by William J Scott who continued the stationery and newsagent business but also ran a 'Telephone Call Office'. An advertisement from 1924 highlights their stock of 'Winner and Regal Records' (Winner records produced budget-priced gramophone records of popular music, and Regal was part of the UK Columbia company). By 1930, Mr Scott was listed in the Reading Standard as a booking agent for 'comfy and cushy motor tours'. He ran the business until the late 1960s. It continued as a newsagent and confectioners under the name 'Newbrooks', and then it was taken over by J P Wright who ran it for more than ten years.

Today it is a warm and welcoming venue providing a true taste of Lebanese cooking. Let us hope that the terrible events and tension in that part of the world are soon over.

This drawing is one of a number which appear in Janina's 2025 Caversham Calendar which is available from Fourbears Books in Prospect Street and True Food Co-op in Emmer Green



Drawing by Janina Maher

www.janinamaher.artweb.com

OUT FOR LUNCH



THE BINA on Prospect Street was the lunch-time venue for a group of John Lewis Reading's Retired Partners.

The Partners meet once a month and a suggestion to meet for lunch at The Bina was taken up by those partial to 'an Indian'. "It was something different to look forward to, and the restaurant was very easy to get to by bus", said Rowena, ex-Lighting Department. "And what a lovely way to spend a Tuesday afternoon. Absolutely everyone enjoyed it and the meal didn't break the bank either!"

Ruth Wright

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First Impressions Matter *by Laura Harmsworth*



December checklist:

10 steps to boost your job hunt

WHETHER YOU'RE celebrating the holidays or simply enjoying the end-of-year downtime, December is the perfect time to prepare for a fresh career start.

Use my 10 top tips to help you make the most of December and set yourself up for success in 2025.

Give your CV a year-end makeover

Reflect on what you have done in the last year and update your CV with your latest skills and achievements. Put in your 2025 diary to do this at the end of every month.

Create a career wish list

Make a list of the jobs or companies you'd love to target in January. This will give you a clear focus when opportunities open up.

Network at social events

December often brings together friends, family, and colleagues for gatherings, both festive and non-festive. These are perfect opportunities to meet new contacts, connect on LinkedIn (and mention your job search if appropriate).

Reconnect with old contacts

Reach out to former colleagues or professional

acquaintances with a friendly message, offering them best wishes for the season or the year ahead. It's a great way to rebuild connections that may lead to job referrals.

Research hiring trends

Many companies prepare for a hiring surge in January, so take advantage of December to research which industries or businesses are planning to recruit. You can do this by browsing job sites and setting up job alerts for specific industries; checking annual industry reports; following recruitment agencies and company pages on LinkedIn; checking company websites and PR releases, trade journals, and investment announcements.

Refresh your LinkedIn profile

Update your profile with the latest achievements, check your headline and about section are aligned to your current job search, and fill in all 100 skills.

Set your career goals

Just like setting resolutions or planning for the year ahead, mapping out your career goals for 2025 will give you direction and purpose in your job search.

Apply during the lull

Remember that some companies are still filling positions

throughout December. With fewer applicants, your chances of standing out could increase.

Prepare for January interviews

Many companies schedule interviews for early January, so practice answering common questions and prepare competency-based answers. Have your interview clothes ready (or your tech set up if the interview is online).

Stay optimistic

December is a time for reflection and renewal in your personal and work life. Take some time to relax, renew your energy, and remember that new opportunities are just around the corner.

By actioning these tips, you'll start the new year in a powerful position for your job search.

You can follow Laura on:

www.facebook.com/CavershamCVWriting

on LinkedIn:

www.linkedin.com/in/lauraharmsworth

website: www.cavershamcvwriting.co.uk

Email: contact@cavershamcvwriting.co.uk

THE CHALLENGE SOLUTIONS:

(From left to right from the top)

hire, harm, bent, hurl, rent, hurt, tent, **advent**, advert, yurt, pitch, dirt, rich, curt, slope.

The Caversham Bridge is a community newspaper produced by Caversham Christian News Ltd

Future editions:

Contributions for the January 2025 issue

should be submitted by 1 December and for the February 2025 edition by 1 January 2025. These should be emailed to: editors@cavershambridge.org

Dates for advertising copy

are 1 December for the January 2025 issue and 1 January 2025 for the February 2025 issue. These should be emailed to: advertising@cavershambridge.org





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Wellbeing with Ami Roy

Angiogenesis

ANGIOGENESIS IS the mechanism by which the body grows blood vessels. It is a common denominator in many of today's most prevalent diseases including cancer, heart disease, stroke, blindness, and more.

I learned about this when looking into the work of Dr William Li, known for his best-selling book *Eat to Beat Disease*.

When foods are analysed, many of them are shown to have beneficial effects which can boost health and wellbeing. Some noteworthy examples include:

- **Soya** contains isoflavones, which are antiangiogenic. Several studies show that consuming more soya may be associated with lower breast cancer risk and reduced risk of breast cancer mortality
- **Tomatoes** contain lycopene, another antiangiogenic

molecule. Some studies in men have found those who eat more cooked tomatoes have a lower risk of prostate cancer

- **Cacao**, or dark chocolate, has been analysed and it was found the polyphenols within it can actually double the number of stem cells in your circulation
- **Omega-3 Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids** have also demonstrated the ability to increase stem cell activity
- **Kiwi fruit** is prebiotic, meaning it promotes the growth of the 'good' bacteria. One study conducted by the National University of Singapore illustrated that eating kiwi increased Lactobacillus (beneficial bacteria) presence in human subjects by 35 percent in 24 hours
- **Sourdough bread** also contains Lactobacillus Reuteri, which may inhibit the growth of cancer
- **Pomegranate** is one of the only ways in which you

can obtain Akkermansia. We cannot ingest it through a probiotic, but we can eat a pomegranate or drink pomegranate juice in order to get a healthy serving of the immune-boosting bacteria

- **Broccoli sprouts** have been shown to enhance the number of Natural Killer T cells in the human immune system
- **Orange juice** is high in vitamin C and other bioactives which have been shown to improve the blood's ability to protect DNA
- **Almonds, oatmeal, bananas, and tofu** contain magnesium, which is a necessary mineral for the upkeep of DNA repair mechanisms
- **Broccoli** contains vitamin C and sulforaphane, which can boost the immune system
- **Mushrooms** can increase IgA, an antibody that helps prevent viral infections
- **A Mediterranean diet** can help protect against many types of ailments and improve blood vessel function

...nature's cures...

It is vital for those who have a medical diagnosis to follow the advice of their clinician. However, Dr Li proposes that we start to evaluate food as medicine in a much more concerted manner and adapt our daily eating habits to include nature's cures and preventatives. Ayurveda* has said food is medicine and the kitchen and pantry are our pharmacies for over two and a half thousand years! Bon appetit!

**Ayurveda is an alternative medicine system with historical roots in the Indian subcontinent.*

Local Clergy and Church Services

ANGLICAN

Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham Ministry

St Margaret, St Peter, St John

Rev'd Mike Smith,

The Rectory, 20 Church Rd, Caversham RG4 7AD
Tel: 0118 947 9505 rector@ctmparish.org.uk

Rev'd Penny Cuthbert Tel: 07825 331 810
penny@ctmparish.org.uk

Rev'd Rachel Ross Smith Tel: 07884 371688
rachel@ctmparish.org.uk

Rev'd Dr Catherine Radcliffe Tel: 07740 475697
catherine@ctmparish.org.uk

Contact: admin@ctmparish.org.uk or 0118 996 8836
Correspondence address: Church House,
59 Church Street, Caversham RG4 8AX

Current services

St Margaret's Church

Mapledurham – 11:15. 1st, 2nd, 4th Sunday Holy Communion, 3rd Sunday Service of the Word.

St Peter's Church

1st Sunday of the month: 9.30 All Age Service of the Word, with music group and choir
18.30 Holy Communion with prayers for healing, with choir
2nd and 4th Sundays: 8.00 said BCP Holy Communion
9.30 Holy Communion with choir and activities for young people, primary and secondary age
3rd Sunday: 9.30 All Age Holy Communion in a shorter format, with choir – 18.30 Choral Evensong
Wednesday: 9.30 said Holy Communion
All services live streamed on Zoom. For Zoom details go to www.ctmparish.org.uk/services/online/

St John's Church

Gosbrook Road Sunday services
8:00 Online CTM Youtube channel (stays available to watch anytime)
9:30 1st and 3rd Sunday Holy Communion, 2nd All Age Worship, 4th Service of the Word
Sunday Club for children on 1st, 3rd and 4th Sundays

St Andrew's

Rev'd Nigel Jones, St Andrew's Vicarage, Harrogate Road.
Tel: 0118 947 2788 www.standrewscaversham.org

Current services

St Andrew's weekly services are Sundays at 8:00 and 10:00. The 10:00 is also livestreamed on the St Andrew's YouTube channel. Prayer Book Communion at 11.30 on the first Sunday of each month. More info on the parish website. www.standrewscaversham.org/services
Compline: 8.30 on Mondays during BST (in church)

St Barnabas, Emmer Green and Caversham Park

Rev'd Kevin Lovell, vicar@saintbarnabas.org.uk
Church Office Tel: 0118 947 5214

Current Services

Sundays: 8:00 BCP Holy Communion (1st Sunday only)
9:30 Parish Communion (Service of the Word on 2nd Sunday)
11:15 All Age Worship (Café Church or Family Communion)
Wednesdays: 10:30 Midweek Communion
Morning Prayer: Tuesdays 8:30 in church; Mon/Weds/Thurs 8:00. online at
www.facebook.com/StBarnabasEmmerGreen/live_videos
Full details at www.saintbarnabas.org.uk/whats-on

METHODIST CHURCH

The Methodist Church Caversham

Rev'd Jeongsook Kim Tel: 0118 947 2223
Rev'd David Jenkins Tel: 0118 327 1592
www.cavershammethodist.org.uk

Current services

Caversham Heights Methodist Church

Highmoor Road
Sunday – 10.30 – Also available on YouTube.

Gosbrook Road Methodist Church

Current services: Sunday – 10:30
New Testament Church of God

Revd Dr Garrick Wilson
Tel: 0118 946 3009

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

United Reformed Church, Caversham Park

Contact: Dr Alison Johnston
Tel: 0118 947 5152 www.cavershamparkurc.com

Current services

Sunday – 11:00 – Livestreaming on YouTube
Details on their web site at:
<https://cpurc.org.uk/live-stream>

BAPTIST CHURCH

Caversham Baptist Church

Pastor: Colin Baker
Church office Tel: 0118 954 5353
Email: secretary@cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk

Current services

Sunday worship 10:30 each week, including groups for children and youth
Sermons are recorded and uploaded to
www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk
Hymn Café 15:00-16:00 on the last Sunday of each month

Grace Church (formerly Caversham Hill Chapel)

Elders Nick King and David Steed
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See their web site for details:
www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk

Riverside Church (Reading)

www.riversidechurchreading.co.uk

ROMAN CATHOLIC

Our Lady and St Anne

Fr Joe McLoughlin, The Presbytery, 2 South View Avenue
Tel: 0118 947 1787 www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk

Current services

See their web site for services at:
www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk

St Michael, Sonning Common

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For details of the services being held at each of our churches, please visit their respective websites (on this page) or the Churches Together in Caversham website www.cavershamchurch.org



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