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Caversham Bridge

No 719

www.cavershambridge.org

January 2025

The Local Scene

Caversham Bridge

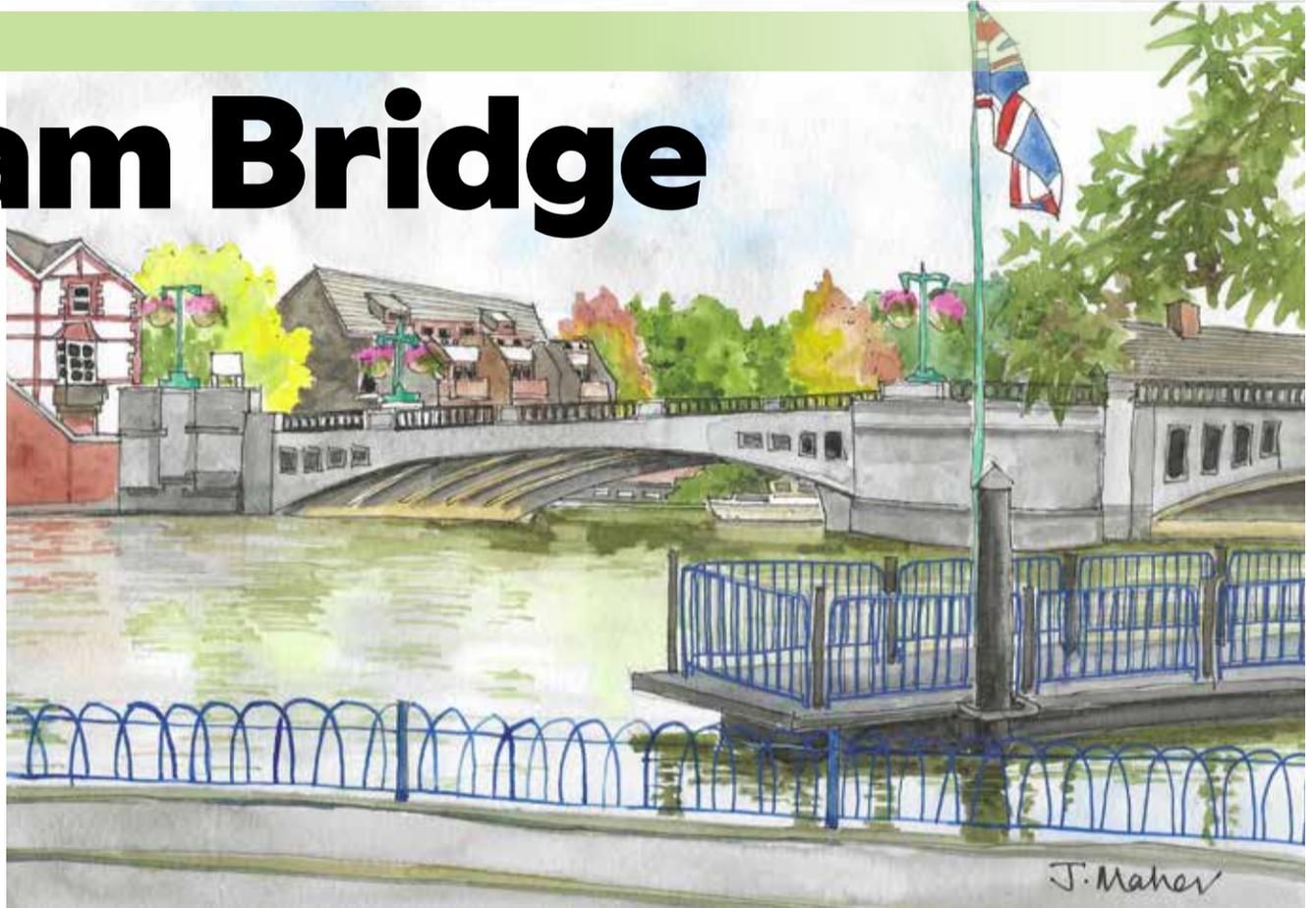
by Martin Andrews

CAVERSHAMBRIDGE is a gateway to our community, so it is a very fitting title and image for our local newspaper. There has been a river crossing at this point in Caversham for over a thousand years. Ferrymen had rowed back and forth for centuries but, in the 13th century, a bridge was constructed which connected the holy shrines in Caversham with the great Abbey in Reading, and provided a route for pilgrims, who paid a toll to cross. It also greatly enhanced communication and trade between the village and the town.

...generous contributions...

The first written record of the bridge dates from 1231, and William the Marshal and the Abbot of Reading are mentioned as helping to fund the construction. King Henry III regularly visited the Reading area and made several generous contributions to the building of the bridge – as a young boy Henry must have had to cross the Thames at Caversham to visit William the Marshal, who acted as his Regent until Henry came of age. William the Marshal, first Earl of Pembroke, owned Caversham Manor, and died there in 1218. You can find out more about this important figure on the information panel installed on the downstream side of the bridge.

In a document dated 1314, there is mention of the 'little chapel on the great bridge' which housed a precious statue of the Madonna. Sadly, this was demolished, on the orders of Henry VIII, and more destruction took place during the Civil War when, in order to defend Reading, the northern section of the bridge was taken away. Further damage



Drawing by Janina Maher

www.janinamaher.artweb.com

was inflicted during the battle to take the bridge in 1643. However, by 1646, the missing section was replaced by a wooden structure which stayed in use until 1868, although at times it fell into a dangerous state, with disputes about who was responsible for its upkeep.

The old bridge was replaced by an iron construction in 1869, although a ferry service still operated throughout the nineteenth century. When Caversham formally became part of Reading in 1911, Reading Council decided to build two new

bridges to cater for increasing road traffic. The First World War delayed construction, but eventually Reading Bridge was completed in 1923, and Caversham Bridge was opened in 1926 by the then Prince of Wales.

Today, slowly crawling across the bridge in heavy traffic, perhaps we don't appreciate the rich history of Caversham Bridge, the subject of Janina Maher's drawing. Find time to walk across the bridge, to read about William the Marshal and take in the wonderful views of the River Thames.

Bursting into the New Year

by Phil Chatfield



image rawpixel.com on Freepik

WE START the New Year with a mix of articles from both new and familiar writers. You will find offerings from our regular contributors, such as Elestr Lee's *Creative Caversham* article on local painter Rachael Hunter-Lara (p12), Ami Roy's *Wellbeing* column, which looks at the importance of friends (p15), and a reflection on Samuel Taylor Coleridge by Roslyn Weaver (p11). In addition, Happy Wanderer takes another look at the history of St Anne's Well (p7), and Les Cooper tells the sad story of his hellebores (p10).

We have the welcome return of Caroline Gratrix, who plans to write regularly on *Our Kind Community* (p2), and a report on the recently completed renovations at Our Lady and St Anne's Church (p4). The start of the New Year can be a very difficult time for people in unhappy relationships and marks a peak in divorce applications; Becca Scott provides some helpful advice on this sensitive subject (p9).

Local schools and outdoor learning features in two articles: parents and staff at St Martin's School have

met their fundraising target for an outdoor classroom, and Selina Hogarth writes about the benefits of outdoor learning (both p13). Church House, in the centre of Caversham, and its role in the local community is the subject of an article from Nigel Smith (p10), and we have some timely advice on estate management from David Robinson of Templar Estate Management, based in the building (p11).

The Caversham Bridge is your community paper, and we welcome contributions from our readers, so please do contact us with comments or items for publication.

WITH BEST WISHES TO OUR READERS 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



For your bookshelf

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Fitness Fun – Helga at the Health Club

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Les Cooper and the missing plants

p10

Thank you for the Cross, Lord?



Talking Point

by Revd Nigel Jones

NEWSPAPERS LIKE controversy because it sells. So, to boost sales...what if I were to suggest that Jesus didn't die on the cross for our sins after all?

You probably know the traditional story. Humanity 'fell' when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, and now all human beings are unable to live lives free from sin. God gave his people the Law, including animal sacrifices for forgiveness. Then God sent Jesus who lived a perfect life and died on the cross for us. New Testament writers interpret this as Jesus being the sacrifice to end all sacrifices, so we call him the 'Lamb of God'. The suffering and death Jesus experienced on the cross was the suffering and death that all of us actually deserve. You can see why people who believe this and take it literally are so very grateful to Jesus, and many of the songs sung in our churches today are songs of thankfulness for exactly this. I find these songs a bit difficult.

Because there are a number of problems with this 'sacrifice' interpretation of Jesus' death and resurrection. One is that it makes the resurrection not really necessary. Another is that it makes it very hard to accept that other religions may be different ways of saying something similar to Christianity. Take the above literally and it's Jesus or nothing. And what about salvation on other planets? A further problem

is that it makes the link between God's forgiveness and the need for us to lead good lives rather awkward. We're saved by faith: living good lives gets sort of tacked on afterwards. And is it even faithful to the Jesus we find in the Gospels? If this is the whole reason he came to earth why does he barely mention it? He even tells a parable about a Prodigal Son who repents and is forgiven—with no sacrifice required!

So perhaps we've got it all wrong? What if the message is really this: To live a life of self-giving love always leads to life. To live, and even to die, for the sake of others is what causes someone to live on after they die? So then it's not Jesus in our place, instead of us, but calling us to follow him (to 'take up our cross') and do likewise. This way of thinking about Easter deals with all the above objections in one stroke. It does imply that Jesus isn't unique, which may disturb some Christians. But he'd still be unique for us Christians, as the one who shows us the way, and inspires us.

Makes sense to me, but I'm not suggesting that we ditch the old, old story. Perhaps we should just bear in mind that there are various ways of understanding Christianity and none of them is the whole truth. Oh no! I was doing quite well at being controversial until then.

Nigel Jones, Vicar at St Andrew's Church

Our Kind Community

text and photo Caroline Gratrix

Sapna Odlin



After taking a break to focus on other pursuits, I am back with a new monthly feature. I love writing for Caversham Bridge, as it's the paper of positivity. With this in mind, I will be sharing stories of kindness within our community. I would love it to be a place where we can share our experiences of kind acts. So, if you have something you contribute, please send it to editors@cavershambridge.org including the word 'kind' in the title.

ACTS OF KIND and thoughtful behavior are infectious, make us feel good, and benefit us all. Let's start kind initiatives within our community and watch as those good intentions spread.

My subject this month is Sapna Odlin, who is always looking at ways to bring people together. With a fellow mother and friend, she started a Facebook group called *Reading Mumpreneurs Group*. It's an inclusive group where local mums can share their experiences, providing and receiving support and advice. It's a place for mums to discuss challenges or successes they are having when juggling being a parent with running a business, and most importantly, without judgment.

...time and effort...

More recently she has created a group called *Caversham Kindness Girls*. Again, an inclusive space for local women to ask for advice and share helpful information. These groups take time and effort to moderate and I for one, am grateful to have them as local, helpful, kind resources.

What small acts of kindness can you do this week to make a difference to someone? Write a local business a review? Leave the price of a coffee at a coffee shop for the next customer? Perhaps offer one hour of your time each week to a good cause?

I'm really looking forward to hearing your thoughts and suggestions. This feature does not



Sapna Odlin

aim to tell people how they need to be kinder, but to inspire us all to put kindness at the forefront of our minds and to notice the kind deeds around us. Until next month, I hope you enjoy a great many kind moments.



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Changes at Caversham and District Residents' Association (CADRA)



I care about the impact of planning decisions in my area

I want to be involved in issues affecting our local community

Could this be you?

I would like to help keep everyone up to date with what's happening locally

cadra.org.uk

Contact info@cadra.org.uk

IN MAY 2025, Helen Lambert will have completed 20 years as CADRA Chair and she has decided it is time for her to stand down and join the outer support team. CADRA has been at the heart of Caversham for almost 60 years. With your support, it can move forward and adapt; but help is needed. Helen will be a hard act to follow, and we

will need to do things differently. The CADRA committee is looking at new ways of working, but is seeking help with communication, newsletters, email summaries, social media and marketing, reviewing individual planning applications, and generally tracking what's going on locally.

As opportunities present, CADRA has taken on a range of special projects. You can read about these at www.cadra.org.uk/en/Special-Projects. There will undoubtedly be more opportunities to come, including the centenary of Caversham Bridge in 2026 and the 60th anniversary of CADRA in 2027.

There will need to be a flexible approach – perhaps some issues shared between two or three people who support and cover each other. The appointment of a new Chair will be decided by the Committee, after the AGM next May, under the terms of the constitution.

So please think if you could help or know someone who might be interested. If you would like to know more, please email info@cadra.org.uk to arrange a chat.

Friday Night and Saturday Morning

THE WEATHER was kind to Caversham for the late night shopping event on 6 December. A few light showers did nothing to dampen spirits, and the village centre was buzzing. Street food, drumming classes and DJ sets in Pop Classics enlivened the Precinct and the bookshop, cafés and restaurants in Prospect Street were busy, as was the craft market in the Baptist Church.

Saturday was a real contrast, with the arrival of strong winds and rain from another named storm. Despite this, the Econet sale of Christmas trees at Caversham Court went ahead and we had this message from Tricia Marcouse:

'Econet would like to thank the people of Caversham who turned out during Storm Darragh to buy their Christmas tree from us at Caversham Court on 7 December.

We sold all the trees bar one and have raised the money

we need to pay for the insurance, tools and other stuff needed to run conservation work parties across the Reading area for another year. Thank you for your loyalty.'



Trees ready to go

photo L Aliyeva

Come round the side of the house...

text and photo Ruth Wright



SO, I WENT round the side of the house on South View Avenue, as instructed on the 'Fairtrade Christmas Sale' poster. This sale was also supporting Water Aid, The British Red Cross, and Launchpad.

Was I surprised! Pam and Phil Chatfield had worked tirelessly for three days transforming the ground floor of their home into a showroom decked with Fairtrade goods and items made, or sold, by Caversham traders. And all perfect as Christmas gifts; I won't be missing the 2025 Christmas Sale!

These are the items I took home:

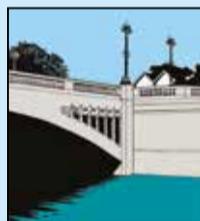
The monkey tote and a jar of Phil's 'Election Special' gooseberry jam (made on election day) for me, a shoulder bag for my great niece, and a 2025 calendar with scenes of Caversham for a good friend.

And a thank you from Phil and Pam Chatfield

WE WOULD like to thank all who supported our Fairtrade Sale this year. For the first time since the arrival of Covid-19 we were able to hold the sale in our house (rather than a damp marquee on the lawn). It was an exhausting few days, but we were able to send donations of £190 to the Red Cross, £260 to Water Aid, and a useful amount to local homelessness prevention charity, Launchpad.

We are already planning our regular plant sale for next May!

Don't miss an issue



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THE PAPER is delivered by our team of volunteers in Mapledurham, Caversham, Emmer Green and Caversham Park Village, as well as the Caversham Road area. 13 monthly editions cost £7.

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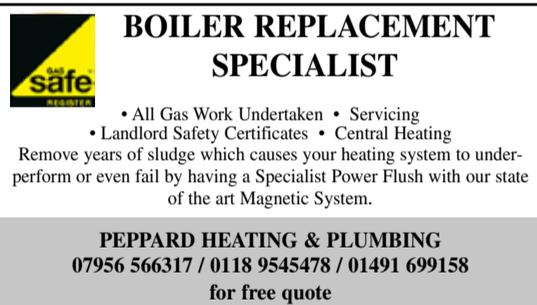
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or by post at **Church House, Church Street, Caversham, RG4 8AX** for alternative payment options

Existing subscribers are reminded that subscriptions are £7 and are not due until March 2025.

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Safe and secure by Margaret Thomas



Church interior taken from choir loft

photo M Ryan

AS REPORTED in this paper last month, on the 9 November, Our Lady and St Anne's church reopened its doors to parishioners. The tower was made safe and secure, damp in a number of places was fixed, followed by re-plastering, and the roof of the shrine made watertight. So many more jobs to do than we had anticipated. The beautification of the interior is now complete, the church looks stunning and the parish community is very happy with the results.

The church is a Marian church (its patrons being both St Mary and St Anne) and is home to one of only two shrines to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the UK, Our Lady of Caversham. It is now a credit to the devotion of the Mother of our Saviour Jesus Christ. We hope that future pilgrims will also feel our community has created something special.

...spectacular display...

The main sanctuary, where Mass is said, is now glorious. We removed the carpeting to reveal the original mosaic tiled floor and marble steps, now fully restored and on display.

Images portrayed in the mosaic tiles were reproduced in panels on the ceiling of the main body of the church. The ceilings of the main sanctuary and St Annes chapel have a display of hand painted stars on a blue sky.

I hope these photos will give a flavour of how the church looks today, but you are more than welcome to visit our refurbished and redecorated place of worship.

Now the work is almost completed, we are focusing on raising the funds to cover the substantial costs. This has been a labour of love, and we are happy to be honouring the blessed trinity, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The parish would be very grateful should any visitor wish to leave a donation towards the refurbishment costs.



Baptismal font

photo M Ryan



Shrine to Our Lady of Caversham

photo A Adrian

A New Bishop for Reading

A press release from Downing Street on 27 November announced the approval by the King of the appointment of The Reverend Canon Mary Gregory to the Suffragan See of Reading.

AFTER AN early career in the prison service, Canon Gregory, a graduate of Birmingham University, studied for ordination at Cranmer Hall and St John's College, Durham, and was ordained priest in 2005. Since then, she has served at St Lawrence's, Hatfield and as Rector of Good Shepherd, Kirk Sandall, in the diocese of Sheffield, before moving to the diocese of Leicester in 2015 to become Team Rector in Ashby-de-la-Zouch. She took up her current post as Canon Residentiary for Arts and Reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral in 2022.

Speaking on the announcement of her new appointment, Canon Gregory said: "I'm looking forward to getting to know Berkshire, its towns and villages, and, above all, its people. I am keen to understand how I can best lead our church communities in sharing the hope that we have in God, and in all that God is doing amongst us. There is so much for me to discover."

Sourced from GOV.UK and the Church Times

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For your bookshelf...

by Alex Forbes

Happy New Year. I hope you had a lovely festive break with plenty of reading.

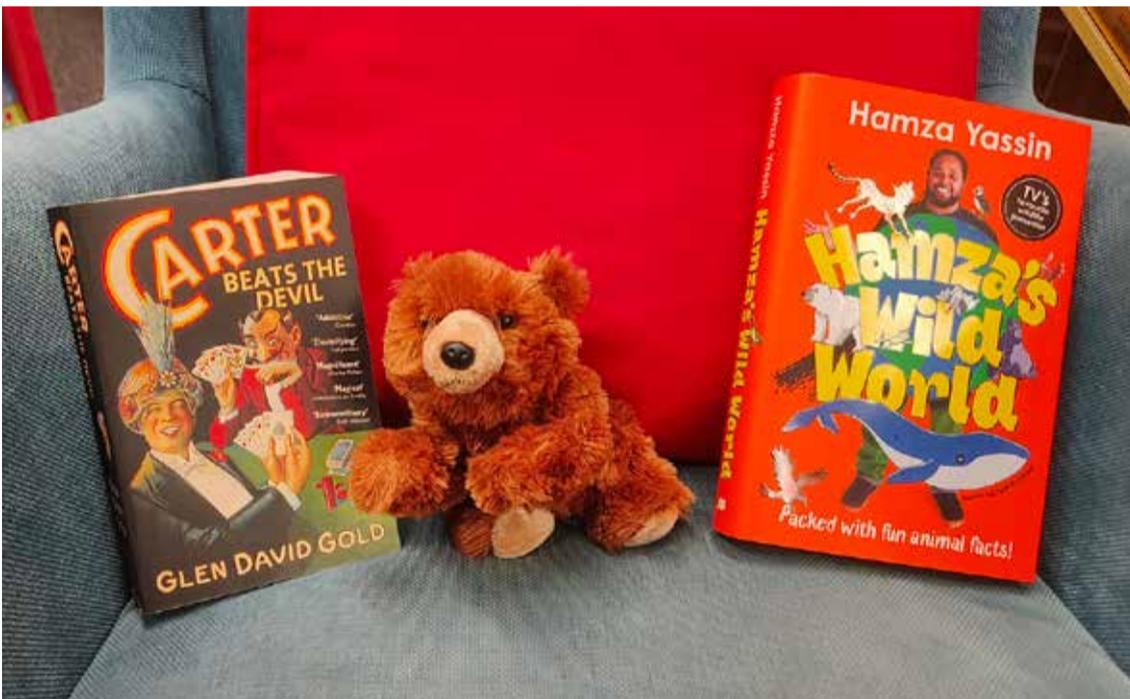
Welcome to my Fourbears Books ramblings, where I pick a couple of books to write about each month. January is always a funny month in the shop, we never know what to expect in terms of footfall as lots of people receive lovely new books for Christmas so have plenty to read, but people also have book vouchers to spend. We hope to see lots of you, especially at our event with Robert Thorogood. It will be business as usual though in terms of the Children's Book Group, and the YA Book Club for ages 14+.

MY FIRST IS such a good book. I first started reading *Carter Beats The Devil* about 15 years ago, and I must have started it about 10 times since and absolutely loved it before the book got misplaced in a house move, or I had a new job so didn't have time to read for a bit, the list goes on. Finally, I have finished it, and I am annoyed with myself for taking so long. Set in early 1900s America, we follow the life of Charles Carter, dubbed Carter the Great by Houdini. This is a highly fictionalised account of the actual magician's life, so don't believe everything you read. Soon you will be lost in the magic of a touring show which entertained crowds across the world. We see how he fell in love, and how he mastered magic, before the President of the USA at the time dies a couple of hours after seeing Carter's show, and now the Secret Service follow him everywhere. If you enjoy

books where you fall in love with the characters and you read about magic tricks from 100 years ago, then this is the perfect read for you.

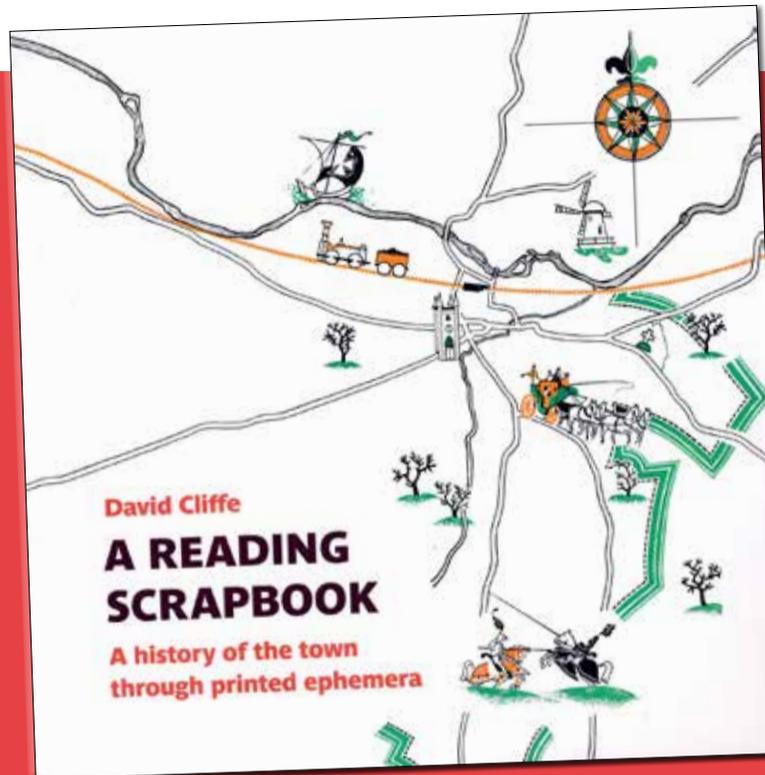
The children's book I have chosen this month is *Hamza's Wild World*. It's packed with hundreds of funny, smelly, awesome, scary, revolting, weird, cute, and clever facts. I loved Hamza when he was on *Strictly* and I'm delighted he won, so it's great to see him share his passion with other animal enthusiasts. Did you know that kestrels can see mouse wee tracks on the ground? A great gift for animal lovers out there.

Do check out our website for latest events; we have Robert Thorogood coming at the end of the month, and some of the Fourbears Fest programme is already in place, including Robin Ince, which will be bookable on the website shortly. We hope to see you in the shop soon **Happy reading!**



I thought the bear was supposed to be impartial?

photo A Forbes



A READING SCRAPBOOK

by Fred Smith

THIS IS THE title of a new book, published late last year, by David Cliffe, the Happy Wanderer of *Caversham Bridge*. It illustrates over 300 years of Reading history, using 150 examples of printed ephemera. These 'ephemera' are ephemeral pieces of paper and card, intended to be used for a limited period only – sometimes only once. They can be bills, receipts, timetables, handbills, sales catalogues, programmes, etcetera, and can be as large as a poster, or as small as a stamp. The earliest example is a Civil War tract about the siege of Reading in 1643, and the latest is an invitation to go dancing at the Alley Cat Centre in Great Knollys Street around 1992.

These items come mainly from the collections of the University Department of Typography, where they are used for teaching about the history of printing, and from Reading Central Library. Others come from David's own collection, and some are items lent by friends.

...over the years...

"As far as I know, it's the only book that tries to illustrate the history of an English town using ephemera," says David. "I've tried to show many different sides of life, in times of war, in times of celebration, and in everyday life, over the years."

So there are, for example, chapters on markets and shopping, on manufacturing, transport, eating and drinking, entertainment, clubs and societies, churches and religion. Of particular Caversham interest are items about horse-buses and motor-buses, blacksmiths, laundries, the West Memorial Institute, the Green Shield stamp shop, the Caversham Charity Folk Festival, and Bugs Bottom.

Copies are available from 'all good bookshops' as they say, including Fourbears Books in Caversham, for £17.99.

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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 entry on page 14.

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 9375103 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 334 8195 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: [@CavershamWriters](https://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 OJJ. 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 9475544 or email duncan.knight@googlemail.com

Thursdays – **Mapledurham Bridge Club** – 19:15 for 19:30 start. Mapledurham Pavilion, Upper Woodcote Road, Caversham. For more information see their website at www.bridgewebs.com/mapledurham or email lindasueclark@hotmail.co.uk

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 – **Redifolk 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

Friday 3 January – **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. For further info call Gill on 0118 947 8772

Friday 3 January – **Chazey Women's Institute** – 14:30 at St Andrew's Church Hall. Tel: 01189 470964, or e-mail rowena@primology.com

Tuesday 7 January – **Caversham Women's Institute** – 19:30 at Church House, Caversham. www.thewi.org.uk or Tel: 0118 947 5176

Wednesday 8 January – **Peppard Common walk (SU704813) 5 Miles** – 10:00. Park at Peppard cross roads. A largely wooded walk taking in Peppard Common, Little and Great Bottom Woods and Shepherds Green. Gentle ascent and descent. Pang Valley Ramblers. One of a programme of regular walks in the area – see <https://pvrblers.org.uk/walks-programme>

Wednesday 8 January – **Rosehill Ladies** – 14:00 at St Barnabas Hall, Emmer Green. Tel: Sue 0118 947 7570 or email suegreen@hotmail.com

Wednesday 15 January – **Driverless cars, a talk by Richard Cuerden** – 20:00 at Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmoor Road. The Caversham Heights Society. www.cavershamheights.org

Wednesday 15 January – **Gardening on the web with Katherine Woods, online talk via Zoom** – 19:30 Tips and ideas on how to enhance your gardening. Caversham Horticultural Society. For login details, see www.caversham-horticultural.org.uk

Friday 24 January – **La Bourgogne cachée Arnaud Barge reveals the hidden delights of Burgundy, the land of wine and mustard** – 19:30-21:30 at Church House, 59 Church Street, RG4 8AX. Le Cercle Français, for those who are learning French, love France and for French nationals. Admission £5 welcome drink included. Email readingcerclefrançais@gmail.com Website www.readingfrenchcircle.co.uk

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

AT THE Planning Applications Committee on 4 December, councillors debated a recommendation to approve the increase in class sizes at the **Heights Primary School** from 25 to 30 (PL/23/1023). A joint letter had been received from head teachers at all the north Reading primary schools, expressing concern about the serious financial impact on other schools while so many have vacant places. After a series of representations, the Committee decided to refuse the application.

Following the planning application last year for modifications to the front of the **Spice Oven** and changes to the rear, an application for Listed Building Consent has been submitted (PI/24/1531). In the meantime, the building continues to deteriorate. The retrospective applications for the shopfront and signs for **Chillis** in Church Street have been refused. After the refusal to add upper storeys to **Great Brighams Mead**, an extension of time has been approved for the original application to convert from office to residential. **Chiltern Edge Secondary School** has applied to build 50 dwellings on a part of their site (P24/S3629/FUL).

The Joint **Local Plan** for South Oxfordshire and the Vale of the White Horse has now been submitted to the Secretary of State. Reading Borough Council expect to submit their application for a partial update in the spring.

Following the approval of a license for the new **Spill Bar** in the former premises of the House of Cards, **Alto Lounge** applied to extend their premises into the adjacent space and extend licensing hours to midnight. This was approved by the panel subject to a list of conditions.

If you find these bulletins useful and could offer assistance in compiling them, CADRA would be very interested to hear from you – info@cadra.org.uk

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

STOP PRESS

NEW IN THE PRECINCT

ST MARTIN'S PRECINCT has had two new businesses opening in the last few months: in September, after many months of preparation, BKRY opened in the unit next to House of Cards, and Spill Bar opened on 13 December in the former card shop corner unit, which had been empty since 2022. Claire Anderton-Bell of NOOD store and Amanda Adlem from nearby Hilton Skin and Body Clinic have worked together to establish the bar. They aim to

find local suppliers, for example sourcing sparkling wine from the Fairmile Vinyard in Henley, and their offering will feature 'charcuterie boards' designed for two, with cured meats, artisan cheeses, and vegan selections – all served in unique pizza style boxes.

The remaining empty shop unit, the former Cara store, is being refitted, and will offer glasses and possibly optician services. **by G Grubb**

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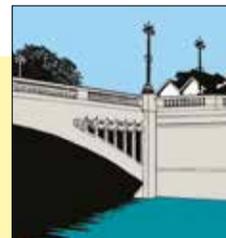
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Sporting Profiles

by Helga Bogisch-Francis

October Member of the Month at Caversham Health Club



Helga's presentation photo Caversham Health Club

we both join Caversham Health Club, which is owned and run by his schoolmate Isaac and partner Sophie. Despite major misgivings (do I really need this and have the time?) I agreed to give it a go as a favour to Karl. My initial MOT was a bit of an eye opener. I thought I was relatively fit and healthy, despite being obese, but there weren't many positive points in the MOT report.

My gym-going journey began. I started following the workout plan using the gym equipment, my goal being not having to get off my bike and walk part of the hill up to Emmer Green. I also joined some of the classes on offer; Zumba (a fun workout), and a Sunday advanced Yoga class (my first ever go and far too advanced; I found gentler classes).

...pleasure it gave...

As my gym-going career continued, I tried many of the classes on offer: Pilates, Meditation, Spin, Fitness and Strength circuits, Core, Strength and Core, and finally Box Club. I stuck with the ones I enjoyed and ditched the others. I soon found myself attending on average 8 to 10 classes a week, spread over three days. I continued going, not because I thought I ought to but because of the pleasure it gave me, and the physical and mental benefits. The health club is not just a gym, it's a place where I meet up with people of all ages and nationalities to work out and have fun. It's where I come to relax as well, and have a coffee and read the paper. I compete only with myself and, in 18 months, have come a long way towards a fitter and healthier me. I suppose that's how I got to be Member of The Month!

I thought I was relatively fit and healthy despite being obese, but there weren't many positive points in the MOT report...

FITNESS FUN

THAT'S ME in October 2024! I feel honoured but wonder how someone who isn't the gym-going kind got here. I believe my health and wellbeing is my responsibility, and I know that what I eat (and what not) plays an important part in maintaining it. Leading a physically and mentally active life is, of course, an important contributing factor. But I thought I had this covered, as my job is both physically active and mentally stimulating. I also enjoy making music and lead a busy social life.

Along came May 2023, when my son suggested

LIVE AND LOCAL



The OGRETONES – Face Bar - 26 September 2024

Report and photos by Richard Wells

THE LAST thing anyone expects to be doing is seeing a Shrek themed covers band on a chilly Thursday night in Reading, but there I was with a bemused friend!

I'd seen The OGRETONES, who hail from what they refer to as the 'swamps' of Hampshire, advertised a few times previously, and knew I had to see what they were all about!

The evening kicked off with support from local legend, Colours & Fires, who were on great form and sounding so good. Sophie has an easy rapport with the audience, and her songs are both touchingly personal and mesmerising.

The OGRETONES soon came bouncing onto the stage, full of energy. The 8-piece band, dressed as various Shrek characters, are committed to bringing the soundtracks of the Shrek series of films to life.

...a great knack...

The Face Bar was packed, and the crowd were clearly up for a great time. Some had come dressed in impressive costumes, and many had purchased 'glow in the dark' headbands. The band, and especially their leader, had a great knack of getting the crowd jumping around and singing along from the outset. The Shrek films have arguably the best soundtracks of any film series, with so many classic rock and pop songs included across the four films and other spin offs, including *Livin' La Vida Loca*, *Live and Let Die* and *I'm A Believer*.

The band, although full of fun and with tongue firmly in cheek, were really impressive, with a 3-piece brass section and an impressive female vocalist in the shape of Princess Fiona.

Even if you're not familiar with the films, you cannot fail to have a great time, and there'll certainly be many songs anyone would be familiar with.

The OGRETONES are definitely worth seeing next time they emerge from the swamp to play Face Bar, in March 2025!



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Essential jobs in the garden this January



The ever watchful robin

photo P Chatfield

MANY SPECIES of birds are pairing up and choosing nest sites earlier these days. Some are ready to lay eggs in early February. You can help.

Finish any hedge trimming, bush shaping and branch lopping by the end of January, and leave some smaller, non-prickly, pieces out on a garden seat or table for nest building.

If you are thinking of putting up a bird box, now is the time. Choose a plain, wooden box (the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds sells a wide selection) and consider sensible sites. It needs to face north or east to avoid over heating and too much wet. It must NOT have a perching rod for magpies to stand on whilst extracting the chicks (if you had one like this for Christmas, cut off the perch). Boxes with holes for tit species need to be

at least two metres off the ground, with a clear flight path to the nest hole. Robins like an open box, nearer the ground, hidden within a hedge or ivy-covered wall, or behind a wood pile or pots. Nest boxes should always be a minimum three metres away from any bird feeder, as squirrels or rats will explore the adjacent area.

It's not just birds nest building or looking for shelter in mid-winter. In Reading, the buff-tailed bumblebee produces three broods a year, rather than the usual two. Huge queen bees are out looking for food and potential nest sites on milder January days. An old mouse hole is perfect, but all holes are inspected. A perfect use for cracked or broken clay flowerpots is to fill them with dried moss or grass (dry nesting material in a shed first) and then 'plant' the pot upside down in a warm and dry spot: just underneath a south or east facing hedge, or a

shrub which comes down to ground level, such as Jasmine nudiflorum. Plant at an angle so the hole faces outwards and, if the soil is amenable, bury the whole pot beneath ground level with a small piece of garden hose into the hole as an entrance.

Finally, plant an extra food source for bees at this time of year. Mahonias are ideal wildlife plants, despite their very prickly leaves. These come in all shapes and sizes, with winter flowers which are perfect for bees and early summer fruits for blackbirds.

Sound advice at a difficult time

by Becca Scott

If you are in an unhealthy relationship, here are five steps to take before telling a toxic person you want a divorce.

DIVORCE APPLICATIONS peak in January. It can seem sudden to others, but it can take years of heartbreak and soul searching to reach the decision to divorce. You stay for years thinking it's a 'you' issue and not seeing that the relationship is very unhealthy. Finally, you're done, but you're scared of their reaction. You want to divorce amicably but you know it won't be easy.

By having your eyes wide open to the tactics which may be used, and being armed with strategies to minimise the emotional and physical toll it takes, you can navigate divorce with your sanity and health intact.

1) Understand Domestic Abuse takes many forms and is not 'just' being hit. A toxic person can become even more difficult (and possibly dangerous) when they feel they are losing control. Speak to a domestic abuse charity for their advice on separating safely, as the first three months following separation are when you are most at risk of harm.

- 2) Get your ducks in a row** by understanding your own and your spouse's financial situation. Difficult people often keep you in the dark, lie and prefer to do the finances themselves so they remain in control. Understanding the financial situation is crucial for negotiating a fair settlement.
- 3) Expect them not to be amicable.** They are already difficult, so protect yourself by expecting the worst, such as using the children and finances as weapons.
- 4) Put together a breakup support team.** This should be a trusted friend or family member, a solicitor, and a financial advisor, as well as a divorce coach.
- 5) Protect your physical, mental and emotional health.** Divorcing a toxic person can take a toll on your health. Prioritise self-care activities. Work with a divorce coach to help you navigate the practical, emotional and physical issues that can arise with a difficult divorce.

Every divorce is stressful. Divorcing a toxic person is exceptionally hard and painful. But life post-divorce really can be more fulfilling, peaceful and happier.

Becca Scott is an accredited divorce, breakup and health coach specialist in post-separation abuse. Find out more at www.healingspaceonline.com

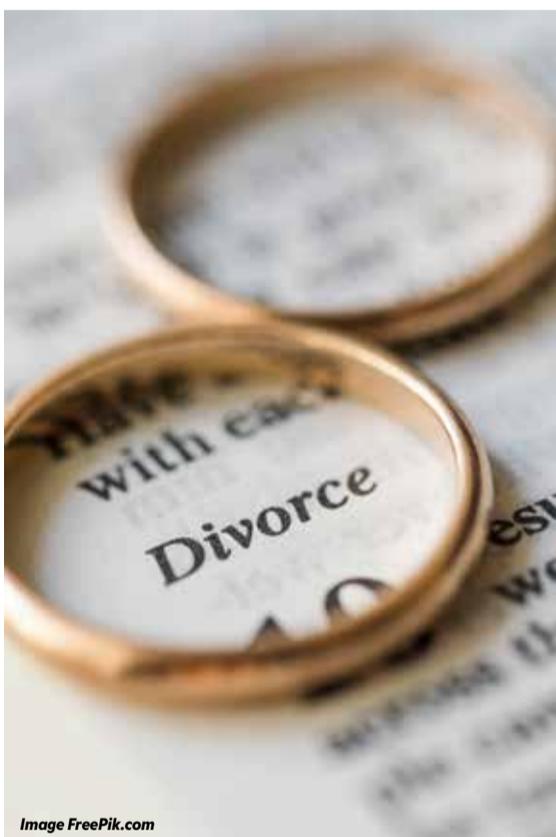


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Les Cooper



Up and at it...



Helleborus Pink Lady, the Christmas Rose *photo MabelAmber.pixabay*

JANUARY IS a brilliant but very uncertain month. Each morning, we look out of the window and ask: Will we get any snow? It looks as though we have had a hard frost? Will we get gales today? Oh no, it's not raining again! Will it be warm enough to sow seed yet?

The one thing for certain we must be doing is making sure the birds are fed. Is there anything more rewarding than to have a robin roving about, or goldfinches fluttering around your feeder?

Whatever the weather, happily there are many things to do and enjoy. Things like taking root cuttings of fleshy-rooted perennials, such as oriental poppies, Anchusa and Verbascum. Hardwood cuttings can be taken of shrubs like forsythia and viburnum.

Covering your rhubarb with a bucket to get an early selection of tender stems is worthwhile too. It is definitely the best time to plant snowdrops when

they are 'in the green'; I think this is because it gives time to get them established.

I know there are many more tasks to keep the keen gardener busy during January but...

"Les Cooper, make sure your January article is upbeat, do try to be encouraging." These were the words of our editor when I saw him recently.

However, I am sorry dear reader, but I must tell you the sad story of my Hellebores. A few years ago, I planted four of these lovely, so-called, Christmas Roses, and they were delightful when they flowered every January. They brightened my winter garden beautifully. The other day, and I am writing this in November, I strolled into the garden to see how they were doing and realised there was no sign of them. What? Then I understood what had happened.

These days I have someone to help with all the things I don't like doing. Their enthusiasm is great, but their knowledge of plants is rather minimal. And in a spate of weeding, I guess my lovely hellebores were mistaken for dandelions. Very disappointing!

Fortunately, nowadays so much is available online and I was able to buy replacements. All you need is a computer and money!

The very best thing about gardening is being optimistic and looking forward to what is going to happen next.

MEETING IN THE VILLAGE

CHURCH HOUSE, the building facing you as you come down Prospect Street, is a meeting place for many voluntary organisations, who hire the large hall for their meetings. It is also home to Caversham Good Neighbours, who have an office there, and the registered office of this publication. It has been managed by the Parish of Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham (CTM) and its predecessors since it was gifted to the Parish in 1943.

Through the 1970s and 1980s, Church House increasingly took on the role it now has as a community meeting place, and it has continued to flourish to the present day. From the start, it has been managed by volunteers, mostly from St Peter's Church, for the benefit of the community served by the Church.

Some of those people who have played a part in its development are remembered in the names of rooms within the building. The most recent to be named is the Tucker

story and photo Nigel Smith

Chair of the CTM Properties Committee

Room, commemorating Mary Tucker, who worked from 2001 as parish secretary in the office which now bears her name. She continued to serve on the Church House committee, after retirement from that post, until 2019, when she had to give up through ill health. During this time a lift and a two-storey rear extension were added. Sadly, Mary passed away in 2021.

The other people commemorated are the Haslam sisters, who donated the building; the Kents, a father and son who ran a tailor's shop and acted as caretakers; Ken Bennett, a churchwarden of St Peter's and chairman of the management committee in its early days; and Bill Vincent, a former lay reader. Information plaques for these people are



The late Mary Tucker and the late Bill Vincent in the newly installed lift, 2014

being developed for display in the building. If you have any relevant information or photos, the current management committee would love to hear from you. They can be contacted via the editors.

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text and photo Roslyn Weaver

Come, come thou bleak December wind,
And blow the dry leaves from the tree!

SO WRITES Romantic Poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, weary of life, echoing a common complaint of many at this time of year, faced with winter's bare branches and dead leaf detritus. This sense of loss in the natural world is often linked to other losses in life, and the sight of tumbled leaves can provoke sorrow.

Yet the sight of bare branches and lost leaves is a good thing. Unlike evergreens, deciduous trees have thinner leaves that can become fragile, damaged or diseased, causing problems for the trees' survival over winter. The leaves are therefore dropped for protection. The discarded leaves then serve a new purpose, feeding other parts of the natural world – maybe after providing children (and some of us adults) with the joys of crunching and jumping through them first. Meanwhile, the tree is stripped bare, ready for its new season ahead, not only to survive winter but to thrive in spring and summer. A January resolution equivalent, perhaps, to start again.

...failed to impress...

Coleridge's own background suggests the desire for new starts. As the story goes, he ran away from Cambridge studies and financial woes, and spent a brief time in our area, when he turned up to Reading in 1793 to join the Light Dragoons, under a false name, Silas Tomkyn Comberbache. It appears he failed to impress, spent a short time in Henley nursing a soldier with smallpox, was eventually discovered, and extracted back at some expense. His attempts to overcome personal problems continued, even as he went on to produce poems which are still read today.

Perhaps the bleak December winds of Coleridge bring us January promises, where New Year's resolutions are not about introducing more but about stripping away, losing the leaves that damage us, then to be ready to thrive. Lost leaves in December can mean the promise of new growth in the following months. Or, as Coleridge puts it elsewhere:

*Winter slumbering in the open air
Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring.*



Bleak December Winds and turning over new January Leaves



Time to make a plan

by David Robinson

THE OCTOBER UK budget has once again highlighted the importance of estate planning for individuals and families.

Estate planning involves making decisions about how your assets will be distributed, both during your lifetime and after your death, ensuring you and your loved ones are taken care of in the way you intend.

With changes in inheritance tax rules and regulations, if you already have an estate plan in place, it is crucial to review it and

ensure it is up to date and continues to meet your objectives. And if you don't have a plan, perhaps it is time to put one in place. It is important to understand estate planning is not just for the wealthy; it is an essential step for anyone who wants to protect their assets and legacy for future generations.

This is a complex area and seeking professional advice on estate planning has become even more important. Proper estate planning can help minimise tax liabilities, protect assets, and avoid family disputes. Find a good estate planner who will work with you to understand your situation, listen to your requirements and advise on both lifetime and death planning. By creating a comprehensive estate plan, you can secure the financial future of your loved ones and provide for them in a tax efficient manner.

David Robinson is Director of Templar Estate Planning, a specialist Will writing and Estate Planning provider based in the heart of Caversham within Church House. He is always happy to have a chat or offer a free full consultation for all your estate planning needs.

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ALTHOUGH I DID a lot of art while I was growing up, I fell out of love with the subject at secondary school," Rachael said. "I hated being told what to do! However, the older I've got, the more I realised I missed it. Having spent time concentrating on socialising, now I have found my way back to art."

Lockdown gave Rachael the impetus to rekindle her interest in art. "I bought some water colours and decided to do a watercolour painting of my brother's dog for his birthday, and it came out quite well. I began doing pet portraits as gifts for friends and family. However, being a bit of a perfectionist, I soon realised that I couldn't achieve the intricate details and textures I wanted using watercolours. I decided to switch to coloured pencils, and once I made the change, I discovered I had much greater control over the level of detail I could capture.

"As I progressed, I learnt a great deal about colour theory, and was amazed by the variety of colours needed, even in what appears to be black and white fur. Each of my portraits

takes hours to complete, as I work to accurately represent my subjects and their individual characteristics.

"I have taught myself, learning from other artists' work – nowadays there are heaps of online courses and also advice on what kind of artist supplies I need."

Rachael mainly uses professional quality coloured pencils as well as pastels, which are useful if she is doing a larger portrait. "Pencils are very time-consuming, whereas pastels cover the page quicker."

Rachael made the step from making portraits just for friends to selling her work quite quickly. "I offered to do a portrait of a spaniel to help the charity, Second Chance for Spaniel Rescue, which they raffled. I donated my portrait and raised money for the charity from my work – I still use the picture of the spaniel on my business card!"

I love capturing each pet's unique character and it's always such a special experience to watch the animal slowly come to life on the page...

Having posted a few of her portraits on Caversham Gossip Girls, a couple of people contacted Rachael to request pet portraits, confirming her confidence that she could sell her work. While Rachael still has a full-time job as a data analyst for a High Street store, she is nowadays busy in her spare time, producing portraits.

"I primarily work on commissioned portraits of people's



pets, but I also create original wildlife artwork. One of my wildlife portraits of a young tiger was recently exhibited in Edinburgh and London as part of a conservation project to raise funds for the charity Explorers Against Extinction.

"Since September 2024 I have been showing my work at the Artist & Makers Fairs, which I find great to meet and chat to other artists as well as customer. When I take a commission, the client sends me several photos of the pet. One of the photos is selected but I use the others for reference. The more photos the better – it gives me a better idea of the pet's personality! I like to get to know about the pet, and it's especially important to me to know their name. I take a lot of time over each portrait, and I can get quite attached to my drawings!"

...keeps me sane...

Immersing herself in art as well as being involved in animals in this way has brought balance to Rachael's life. "Doing this keeps me sane, it helps my mental health, and this kind of creativity keeps me centred," she said.

Working as an artist was not something Rachael ever imagined when growing up. "At Chiltern Edge the advice was that art was not something the average person could do commercially – but things are very different now, with the internet and social media. Although I didn't really enjoy art at school, I think my art teacher wouldn't be too surprised at what I am now doing!"

She listens to audio books and podcasts as she draws. "The audio books really help me, I find I can really focus on my drawing while I am listening," she explained. A dog owner herself, Rachael has a working cocker spaniel and loves walking in Bugs Bottom and Clayfield Copse. "I grew up with dogs and we also had cats, birds, fish – all sorts of pets! I mainly get asked to draw dogs, but I also love to draw cats – I especially love their vibrant eyes.

"I really enjoy creating each portrait and seeing the owner's reaction to the finished piece. I love capturing each pet's unique character and it's always such a special experience to watch the animal slowly come to life on the page."

Find out more:

www.rhunterlara-art.com



Rachael's image of a young tiger (top right) has been exhibited in London and Edinburgh. She often gets asked to draw dogs, such as Maggie and Joss (above) but she also loves drawing cats – especially their vibrant eyes (right)



all images R Hunter-Lara

ST MARTIN'S CHRISTMAS FAIR

by Hilary Smart

THE PARENT and Staff Association (PSA) of St Martin's Primary School in Caversham Park Village held their Christmas Fair on 24 November, raising around £2000 for the school. St Martin's is a Catholic State school which has families of all faiths and none, and the event is a great opportunity for the community to celebrate together.

The year 6 children ran several games stalls for the younger children to enjoy, including Knock the Elf off the Shelf, Sprout or Chocolate, and Guess the Name of the Lion (Professor Roars, as it turned out). Other activities included a silent disco, make and take crafts, and a Rainbow Hamper raffle.

The highlight of the fair was the St Martin's Glee Club. They had prepared Christmas themed songs which were performed in the school hall under twinkling Christmas lights to a packed audience.

The PSA were delighted to announce they had met their fundraising target for an outdoor classroom, which will supplement the outdoor learning opportunities currently offered by the school's copse area. The PSA Chair, Julie Fuller, thanked all the volunteers who made the event possible by giving their time before, during or after the event.



Enjoying a simple shelter

It seems to me that the natural world is the greatest source of excitement... It is the greatest source of so much in life that makes life worth living.

Sir David Attenborough

SCHOOLS ACROSS the country are under pressure to perform, despite shrinking budgets and increasing overheads. School staff are stressed, and extra-curricular activities are being cut.

Despite this, Micklands Primary School in Caversham has prioritised the health and wellbeing of students and staff by integrating outdoor learning into its busy timetable. Sessions led by qualified outdoor practitioners take place weekly, year-round. Every child from Foundation Stage to Year 6 takes part with their classroom teachers and teaching assistants, meaning staff get a much-needed break outdoors too.

Micklands' onsite woodland is home to many wildlife species, from woodpeckers and badgers to muntjac deer. Students learn to respect the woodland and its wildlife through activities like nature study, den building, fire lighting, habitat management, tree planting, tool use, outdoor cooking, gardening, nature connection and craft.

Head Teacher, Mr Mark Frost, says, "Outdoor learning gives the children at Micklands an invaluable opportunity to explore, create, and connect with the world around them. It develops curiosity, resilience, and a deeper understanding of nature, helping to build not only academic skills, but also confidence and a love for learning. It's the highlight of the week for many of our pupils!"

The Benefits of Outdoor Learning

text and photos Selina Hogarth



In the trees

Learning outdoors is more relaxed; one teacher commented how a student who found the classroom difficult seemed "empowered, happy and more confident" during outdoor learning time. Students who feel in control of their learning can build positive attitudes to education and start to experience success. During one session, a child who struggled socially with peers in class discovered a natural gift for knots and offered to help others who found it difficult.

...positive risk...

Outdoor practitioners prepare detailed risk-benefit assessments, enabling children to experience positive risk taking, and deal with success or failure in a safe and nurturing environment. When students learn from experiences, they can apply this knowledge in future situations.

In addition to developing practical skills and being fun, time outdoors helps children gain life skills like self-esteem, confidence, resilience, emotional regulation and creativity. Sessions take place come rain or shine; embracing the seasons and learning to dress for the weather can only be a valuable skill for life in the UK!

Selina is a Forest School Leader and Outdoor Learning Instructor based in Caversham, See www.facebook.com/SilverBirchOutdoorLearning for further information.

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First Impressions Matter by Laura Harmsworth

Brighten Up Your January Job Search:

5 WAYS TO LAND A NEW ROLE THIS WINTER



JANUARY CAN feel like a dreary month—but it's the perfect time to heat up your job search, with many employers eager to hire. Here are five ways to make the most of winter.

Warm Up Your CV with Achievements

While the days might be dark, your CV shouldn't be. Ditch the generic descriptions and dig deep into your highlights from last year. Did you lead a project to success? Bring in new clients? Add these specific accomplishments to your CV, which evidence what value you bring.

Top Tip: reverse the CAR (Result, Action, Context)

Use This Time to Tailor

Instead of rushing through applications, spend time tailoring each CV to match the job description. Pour a warm cuppa, get comfy, and focus on those unique details which make you a fantastic fit. A bit of January 'slow time' allows for creating a CV that's specific, thoughtful, and much more likely to stand out.

Top Tip: Don't use the same CV for every application

Reconnect and Reach Out

You might be worn out from parties, but January is the perfect time to nurture current connections and to make new ones. Send a friendly New Year's message to former colleagues or contacts, share your goals for 2025, and ask if they know of any roles or contacts which might be helpful. This small gesture often leads to big opportunities. You never know what might come from a quick chat.

Top Tip: Keep your connections live throughout the year – LinkedIn is a fantastic place to do this

Prepare for Virtual Interviews from Home

If you secure an interview and it's online, ditch the Christmas PJs and set up a well-lit spot for any online meetings. Embrace

the indoor season by being interview-ready in your own space, where you feel comfortable and confident. Showing you've thought through your setup will make a great first impression.

Top Tip: Have a clutter free background, dress smartly, and keep eye contact

Build Skills from the Comfort of Home

If January weather keeps you in, use the time to develop skills that'll make your CV even stronger. Whether it's brushing up on digital tools or taking an online course, employers love to see self-improvement. It shows you're ready to grow and bring fresh skills to the table.

Top Tip: Identify your skills gaps and look for free or paid courses to add to your CV and LinkedIn profile, e.g.

- <http://coursera.org>
- futurelearn.com
- udemy.com
- open.edu
- skillshare.com
- alison.com
- online-learning.harvard.edu
- and LinkedIn Learning

So, grab your blanket, find a cosy spot, and turn this winter into a productive start to your job search. January is just the right time to take steady, meaningful steps toward your new role!

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



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.

Mondays – Little Lambs and You – Caversham Baptist Church, South Street, Caversham RG4 8HY 10:00-11:30. Baby and toddler group. Numbers are limited, so there is an online booking system. See www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk/Groups/382970/Little_Lambs.aspx

Mondays – Busy Bees – Parish Centre, St Barnabas Church, Emmer Green, RG4 8RA – 14:00-15:00, including half terms. Contact Debbie children@saintbarnabas.org.uk for more information

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

THE CHALLENGE SOLUTIONS:

(From left to right from the top)

fish, load, platter, seam, dish, lode, wish, **hope**, lope, wash, stride, clean, march, bash, stripe.

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

Future editions:

Contributions for the February issue

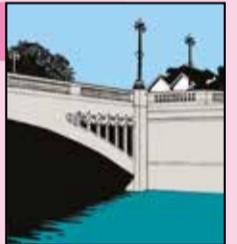
should be submitted by 1 January and for the March edition by 1 February.

These should be emailed to: editors@cavershambridge.org

Dates for advertising copy

are 1 January for the February issue and 1 February for the March issue.

These should be emailed to: advertising@cavershambridge.org



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St John's Church, Gosbrook Road, Caversham
Community led and volunteer run



Wellbeing with Ami Roy

Friends for all seasons

Ample research shows that social connection is crucial to our physical and mental health and our longevity¹. It is good for our brains and hearts and helps protect us against stress. One 2010 study concluded that a lack of social connection might be comparable to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day².

Friendship is a very specific and valuable form of social connection. It's difficult to be choosy about neighbours or co-workers. We're born into our families. Friendships are chosen and, because of that, we need intentionally to make time for them.

Putting in the effort to maintain friendships may feel like a heavy lift, and to a certain extent it is. Research suggests people need to spend around 200 hours hanging out together in order to forge a close friendship. Unfortunately, the amount of time we spend engaged with friends every day has declined over the past two decades³.

Nostalgia can be beneficial – curbing stress and

helping combat feelings of loneliness. Looking back on old memories with a friend instantly makes us feel better. Something as simple as looking at an old photo of ourselves and a friend may remind us of the depth of that bond.

We've all got them: work friends, college buddies, playground dads. Whatever we call them, they're the discrete groups of friends from different facets of our lives. Even these 'weak ties' go a long way in enhancing our wellbeing.

If we want deeper connections in our lives, we must be willing to put ourselves out there emotionally. This can become a barrier to maintaining friendship bonds. The very idea of vulnerability may make a lot of us squirm. We risk rejection, exposure, even judgement. But it is the core component of any deep emotional intimacy.

We could try a few well-researched techniques:

Asking a probing question: There is growing evidence

they can increase closeness between strangers and, most importantly, exponentially so between friends.

Confiding in someone new: Though we tend to worry that being vulnerable will make us seem weak or flawed, research suggests others tend to see it as courageous and authentic.

Offering a sincere compliment: Going deeper with a friend does not necessarily mean we must unburden ourselves emotionally. Research shows that offering a sincere compliment to a friend can increase our own happiness and lower stress levels over the course of a day. Though telling a friend what we appreciate about him or her might feel awkward, it will probably be more welcome than we expect.

In this jolly season of sharing and festivities, let us all extend a hand of friendship to each other. Happy holidays, everyone. See you in 2025!

1. www.nytimes.com/2022/04/20/nyregion/loneliness-epidemic.html
2. www.nytimes.com/2020/04/20/smarter-living/how-to-manage-your-loneliness.html
3. www.nytimes.com/2024/02/09/well/live/hanging-out-adult-friendships.html



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

Rev'd 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

Tel: 0118 947 4529 www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk

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

(including Emmer Green and Caversham Park Village)

Fr Michael Sharkey, St Michael's, Sonning Common

Tel: 0118 972 3418

<http://saintmichaelsonningcommon.org.uk>

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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