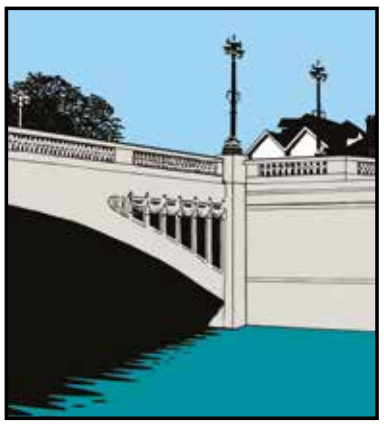

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Bake Off winner puts Emmer Green in the news

Austin with the trophy

story and photos Phil Chatfield

THE WINNER of the Channel 4 Junior Bake Off competition this year, Austin, has put Emmer Green in the spotlight recently. Austin has grown up in the village and attends Emmer Green Primary School.

The series was filmed in summer 2024, but the final was not broadcast until this January. The family were not able tell anyone during the intervening months, which Austin said made it seem "unreal".

He started baking whilst at Checkendon pre-school, where they ran a weekly *Little Chefs* baking session, and mum Georgina later taught him how to make a Victoria sponge. He has enjoyed baking ever since. His mum and sister encouraged him to apply for the Bake Off competition saying, "You could do that!" but it was Austin who put in his entry, "Spelling errors and all". The filming was in Kent, in one-week blocks, although the final session was an intense ten days, spent with Georgina in a hotel, away from his dad and sister. In the breaks from filming, Austin enjoyed playing cricket with fellow contestant Ronnie.

For his biscuit day showstopper, for which he received the star baker award, he depicted the first scout camp at Brownsea Island. For the final, contestants were asked to bake a cake on the theme 'My Best Ever Birthday Party'. Austin met this challenge with a chocolate orange Musical Theatre themed cake.

In the weeks before Christmas, Austin and his sister were busy with the 89th Reading Scout Group, of which they are members, delivering Christmas cards for the local Scout Post while still having to keep the results secret. Austin attends the Saturday morning Theatre Train sessions at The Hill School. The television production company filmed there to provide some background for Austin, although his friends there did not know what it would be used for until just before the final.

...prepared badges...

The programme was finally shown on a Friday at the end of January, so it was quite a surprise to find the staff at his school had already prepared badges featuring Austin by the following Monday morning. The head teacher organised an assembly to celebrate his win. The icing on the cake was the renaming of the technology room, used for cookery classes, as *Austin's Kitchen!* Austin enjoys baking as a hobby, but has plenty of other interests, including tennis, swimming and scouting, so it is too soon to decide if he would like to make a career in baking!

You can watch the series on Channel 4 – the final is at www.channel4.com/programmes/junior-bake-off/on-demand/74083-015.

Longer Days

by George Grubb

AS THE DAYS lengthen, we can really feel as if the Spring has arrived. Gardeners will already have planted the first potatoes, and with luck the cherry trees will be in blossom. We also have the Easter holidays to look forward to, with Easter Sunday on 20 April.

On the subject of Easter, our Talking Point article takes a look at Jesus' encounters with his followers on the day of his resurrection from the dead, or soon after *(p2)*. We have provided a summary of Easter services and events at our churches *(p4)*.

In celebration of Spring, this month's Creative Caversham features local landscape gardener, Hugh Netley, *(p12)* who has shaped many local gardens over the years. We also have our regular contribution from Les Cooper, who considers both bird tables and seed planting *(p10)*. Planting trees is the subject of a report from Tricia Marcouse on community orchards *(p9)*, and Beanpole Day provides a chance for gardeners to stock up for the summer *(p2)*.

Happy Wanderer travels back in time to write about Springfield House *(p7)*, whilst our Local Scene subject is Wings Fish Bar and Smiths News on Gosbrook Road *(p11)*. Three articles cover live entertainment in the area, with reports of the performance of the Merry Opera Company at St Andrews Church in March *(p10)*, and from The Mill at Sonning Theatre *(p3)*, and details of live music events coming up in April *(p3)*.

You will find our regular CV *(p14)*, Wellbeing *(p15)* and book reviews *(p5)* articles inside, as well as our What's On listings and report from Caversham and District Residents Association *(both p6)*.

Finally, the annual subscription for the paper of £7 is now due. Thank you if you have already paid. *For further details see page 3.*

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

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Roslyn Weaver – Swallows return p8

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CHURCHES TOGETHER in CAVERSHAM

Renewing Hope

Talking Point

by Revd Penny Cuthbert

SOME OF MY favourite stories in the Bible are of Jesus' encounters with his followers on the day of, or soon after, his resurrection from the dead. They had all had a harrowing time, hoping that he was going to be a great political leader who would drive out the hated Roman occupiers (imagine Ukrainians longing for someone to drive out the Russians). But their dreams had been shattered. Instead of a great victory they had seen their beloved leader arrested, whipped, mocked and crucified, and his lifeless body laid in a tomb. Their dreams lay in ruins, and they were fearful the same fate might await them.

Then we read of Jesus' encounters with his friends. On the Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene weeps outside the tomb because the stone which covered its entrance has somehow been shifted and Jesus' body is missing. Her grief is compounded. But, as she weeps, a person she doesn't recognise asks her gently, "Woman why are you weeping?"

Meanwhile, two more dejected followers of Jesus were leaving Jerusalem on the road to Emmaus, talking together about the disastrous events of the previous Friday. A stranger walking alongside them asks what they are talking about. Incredulous, they ask, "Are you the only one who doesn't know about the things that have just happened in Jerusalem?" "What things?" asks Jesus.

A few days later, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, the risen Jesus asks Simon Peter, his closest follower - who had vowed to follow Jesus even to death but who, when it came to it, had denied he even knew who Jesus was – "Simon, son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"

We might expect that the newly-risen Jesus would burst from the tomb shouting, "It's ok! I'm back from the dead! I'm alive!" Instead, he meets his traumatised followers in their grief, disappointment, and guilt. But he doesn't leave them there. He calls Mary by name and her sorrow is turned to joy. The disciples on the road to Emmaus realise who the stranger is when he breaks bread, and rush back to tell their friends. Simon Peter is forgiven, restored, and recommissioned to be a leader of the flock.

The risen Jesus is still doing this kind of thing. Meeting people in their sorrow, depression and doubt, walking alongside the dejected, affirming worth, renewing hope, and giving renewed purpose to lives. We may not recognise him at first, but when we do it's completely lifechanging. He's alive, and it's such good news.

Penny Cuthbert – Associate Vicar, St John's Caversham

Beanpoles at the ready **photo P Chatfield**

Beanpole Day:
Get your garden ready for summer!

by Tricia Marcouse

BEANPOLE DAY is coming to Caversham Court on Saturday 26 April, with or without the benefit of additional scaffolding!

We'll be open from 10:00-15:00 for you to buy very reasonably priced plants and plant supports, whilst learning about wildlife-friendly gardening and all kinds of environmental issues. We have vegetable and ornamental plants grown by charitable organisations, and a range of beanpoles, peasticks and plant supports for them to grow on.

Our plant supports come from locally managed coppiced woodland and willow beds, and your purchase helps maintain this traditional technique.

Other stalls include home-made cakes and biscuits, second-hand tools and books, Fairtrade products, the RSPB making bird boxes, bird tables and hedgehog homes from timber offcuts as well as selling bird food; and BBOWT sales and guidance on wildlife conservation.

...sharpen your tools...

The repair shop experts will sharpen your garden tools for a donation, so don't forget to bring those dull secateurs with you.

The garden kiosk is open for light refreshments or bring a picnic to eat on the lawn by the Thames.

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An evening to remember

The Mill at Sonning Theatre featured in our Creative Caversham article in February as the venue for author Rebecca Netley's play The Whistling last year. Regular reader Rowena Waddington sent us this report of a recent visit.

TOM AND I celebrated our 54th Wedding Anniversary on Friday (13th!) by enjoying the first evening performance of *It Runs in the Family* at The Mill at Sonning Theatre. Not only was it a first performance, but it was the first time ever this dinner-theatre had table service, as opposed to the usual buffet.

Along with other show-goers, we were allocated a table on arrival in the beautifully lit dining room. The young and enthusiastic waiting staff wasted no time in taking our drinks order, followed by our choice of food from the selection of dishes on the menu.

We enjoyed the table service which was unhurried; somehow it made the evening more special. I feel it really is the way forward for The Mill.

The show, a comedy, was so professional and entertaining, we won't think twice about booking another evening at The Mill.

The cherry on the cake was, because we live in Caversham, it took only ten minutes to get home!

***It Runs in the Family* is on at the theatre until 12 April. For more details of this and upcoming events see their website: millatsonning.com**

Fiona Kelly
both photos provided by Concerts in Caversham

FOR MUSIC LOVERS, there are two musical evenings hosted in local churches to enjoy this April.

On Sunday 6 April, Glass Ensemble will present a selection of highlights from Handel's iconic *Messiah with a Passion* and Eastertide flavour. This will feature favourite arias and choruses from the larger work, performed in an arrangement for upper voices. The concert will be held at St Barnabas Church, Emmer Green, RG4 8RA from 16:00.

Tickets £12.50 in advance from 07930 690 873 or £15 on the door. Under 18s' free. There will be a retiring collection for charity

Later in the month, on 26 April, Concerts in Caversham present their Late Spring Concert at St Andrew's Church, Albert Road, Caversham, RG4 7PL. The concert will feature an eclectic programme of trios and solos for bassoon, flute and piano, ranging from Weber to Chick Corea, Ravel and Poulenc. The innovative bassoonist, Emily Hultmark, an ex-principal bassoon from the Philharmonia Orchestra, with Irish flautist Fiona Kelly, (London guest principal) and Adrienne Black on piano (Concerts in Caversham Artistic Director), will take you on an exciting tour of music from the late 19th Century to the 21st century, with some familiar but also some surprising and atmospheric numbers to enjoy. The concert starts at 19:30.

Further information and tickets are available at concertsincaversham.littleboxoffice.com

Emily Hultmark

Time to renew subscriptions

£7 for 2025

THANK YOU to those who have already renewed your subscriptions. 2025 subscriptions are now due for payment. They can be paid by bank transfer, or by cash or cheque to your deliverer. We will be available for subscription renewals and other enquiries at the **Artists and Makers Fair at Gosbrook Road Methodist Church 12th April, from 10:00 to 16:00**, when you will be able to pay by card as well.

Payment details are as follows:

Cheques for £7 should be made out to Caversham Bridge News. Writing your postcode and house number or name on the back of the cheque is helpful. Please note the change in the company name since last year.

For direct bank transfer our bank account details are:

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Please include your postcode and house name or number as a reference!

Last year several payments were received without address details, meaning we are unable to allocate the payment to the subscriber.

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The chips are down
The results are in!

Presenting the certificate at Ready Tasty ***photo S Hook***

69TH READING 1st Caversham Heights (St Andrew's) Cub pack conducted a highly scientific chip shop survey in February and voted Ready Tasty (Henley Road shops) the best. Caversham Stir Fry, opposite Waitrose, was best value for money but the cubs didn't factor that in!

There's more to scouting than chips!
For further information visit scouts.org.uk

CHURCHES TOGETHER in CAVERSHAM

For more details, contact:
anna@ctmparish.org.uk

Easter Services in our Churches

In addition to services at the normal times, which are outlined on page 15, the following additional services and events are planned for Palm Sunday 13 April, Holy Week and Easter Sunday 20 April. Please check individual church websites for the most up to date information.

Churches Together
Good Friday 10:30 – Caversham Baptist Church followed by open air worship at St Martin's Precinct and a Walk of Witness to Caversham Court

St Peter
Palm Sunday 9:30 – Holy Communion
Wednesday 19:30 – Stations of the Cross
Maundy Thursday 18:00 – Maundy Thursday Supper
Sunday 5:00 – New Fire of Easter • ***9:30*** – Family Communion

St John
Palm Sunday 9:30 – All Age Worship
Sunday 9:30 – All Age Easter Celebration with Holy Communion

St Margaret
Palm Sunday 11:15 – Holy Communion
Maundy Thursday 19:30 – Holy Communion
Good Friday 10:00 – Stations of the Cross
Sunday 11:15 – Holy Communion

St Andrew
Palm Sunday 10:00 – Procession with donkey departs Copperfields
Palm Sunday 10:30 – All-Age Service
Good Friday 14:00 – Liturgy of the Cross
Holy Saturday 8:30 – The Resurrection Liturgy
Easter Sunday 8:00 and 10:00 – Easter Day Services

St Barnabas
Palm Sunday 9:30 – Service of the Word, ***11:15*** – Family Communion
Tuesday 19:00 – Stations of the Cross
Wednesday 19:00 – Evening Prayer for Holy Week
Maundy Thursday 19:00 – Holy Communion with foot washing
Good Friday 14:00 – Hour of the Cross
Sunday 5:30 – Dawn Service, ***9:30*** – Parish Holy Communion
Sunday 11:15 – Café Church informal service in the parish centre

Methodist Church
Maundy Thursday 19:30 – Holy Communion Service at Caversham Heights
Sunday 10:30 – Shared Worship at Gosbrook Road Church

Caversham Baptist Church
Palm Sunday 10:30 – Palm Sunday service
Good Friday 10:30 – Good Friday service with other Caversham Churches
Easter Sunday 10:30 – Easter Sunday Service

Grace Church
Good Friday 10:30 – Service • ***Easter Sunday 10:30*** – Service

New Testament Church of God
Easter Sunday 11:00 – Resurrection Sunday Experience

Our Lady and St Anne Catholic Church
See their website for services at: **www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk**

Caversham Park United Reform Church
Easter Sunday 11:00

St Michael Catholic Church, Sonning Common
Saturday 12th – Vigil 17:30
Palm Sunday Masses (with blessing of palms) 9.00 and 10.30
Maundy Thursday 19:00 – Mass of the Lord's Supper (with washing of feet)
Good Friday 15:00 – Solemn Good Friday liturgy
Easter Saturday 20:00 – Easter Vigil Mass
Easter Sunday 9.00 and 10:30 – Easter Masses

In the News
The Editors

LAST MONTH we featured businesses in Prospect Street, only to discover Geo-Café and the street as a whole appeared in a February 2025 Guardian Food Magazine article, *30 things we love in the world of food, 2025!*

Food critic Caroline Eden described the street as 'a culinary wilderness' in the 1990s. But she continues 'Today, it is a pocket-sized but perfect go-to dining destination.' She mentions Clay's Kitchen and Bar, famous for its Hyderabadi-style dum biryani and chepala pulusu (monkfish curry) and then goes on to say it is the Geo-Café that has her heart. The owner, Keti Maglakelidze is said to believe the café fosters a "strong and friendly sense of community". Best sellers from the menu include the chicken and adjika (salty spice paste) wrap, served with homemade tkemali plum sauce or walnutty, garlicky bazhe sauce and the aubergine wrap.

Read the article in full at
www.inkl.com/news/30-things-we-love-in-the-world-of-food-2025

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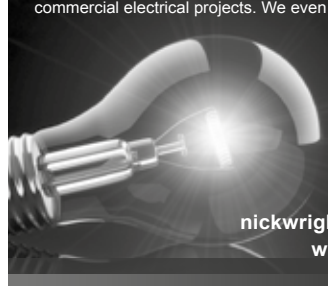

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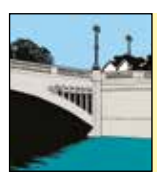

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by Alex Forbes

For your bookshelf....

Welcome to 'Fourbears Reviews', where we briefly review a couple of titles chosen from our book shop, 'Fourbears Books' on Prospect Street, Caversham.

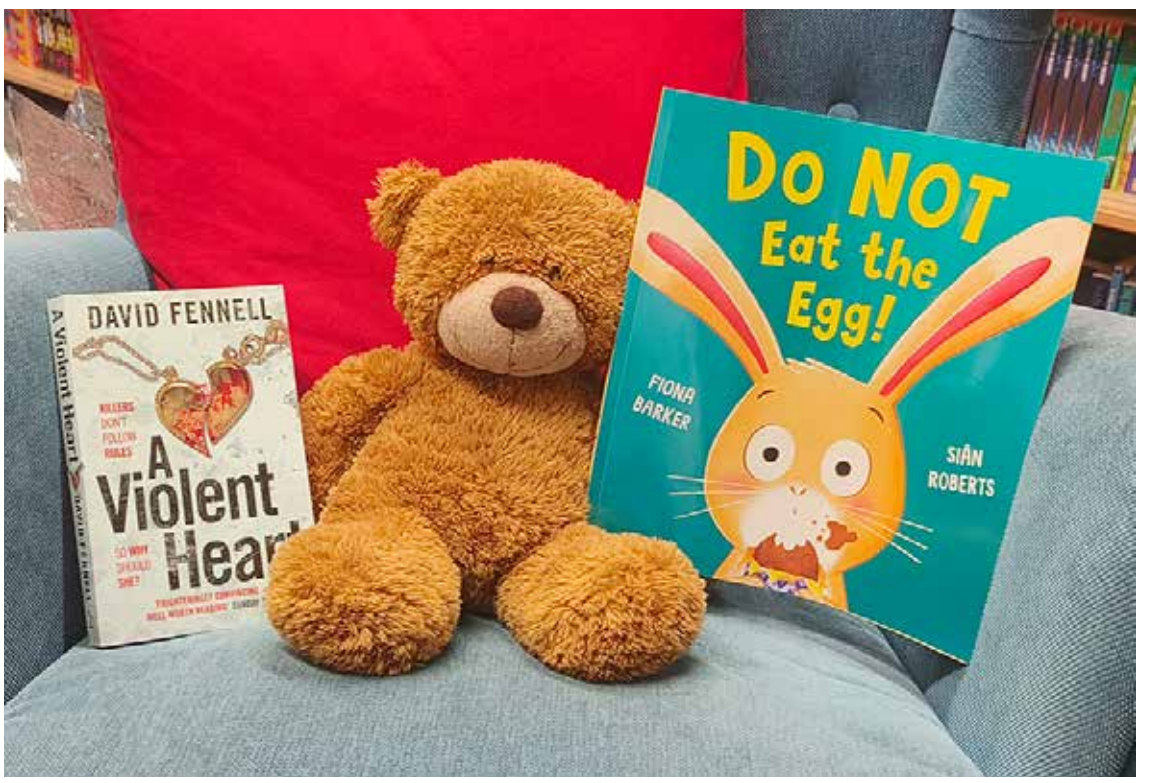
I OFTEN SELL books for Hillingdon Library Author Events near Uxbridge and, on occasion, they ask me to interview the featured author. It was my absolute pleasure to interview David Fennell recently. His Grace Archer series are fast paced, full of action, and not for the faint at heart. *A Violent Heart* is the fourth book in the series, but this is a book you can read as a standalone without having read the first three. Of course, there will be the odd reference here or there, but you will still enjoy the book. *A Violent Heart* is a police procedural case where Grace Archer and her team try to solve the murder of someone Grace once knew. All of a sudden, there are links to cases from over 20 years ago. Could this be the same killer? Grace Archer is one of my most favourite characters in this type of books in several years. She is compelling, and the teamwork and chemistry with her partner Harry is a recipe for success. Throw in a True Crime blogger and you have an emotional, tense mystery which you'll race through. I would recommend reading the first three in the series if you haven't read any of David Fennell's books, especially if you don't mind the odd brutal murder.

The children's pick is a lot gentler this month. *Do Not Eat The Egg!* is the latest picture book by Fiona Barker. It's a straightforward simple story that will be familiar in any household where someone, child or adult, has a weakness for chocolate. There is one instruction given to Small Rabbit. Do Not Eat the Egg, but, as hard as he tries to resist temptation, he fails. The illustrations are bold and sweet, and it's a lovely little Easter story for the children aged under five.

Fourbears Fest is gathering momentum. Do check out the events page on our website for everything we have planned. It should be a great weekend. May 17 and 18 in Caversham and at Progress Theatre in Reading.

Happy reading, whatever book you are enjoying at the moment.

www.fourbearsbooks.co.uk



The Bear on egg hunt — ***photo A Forbes***

Poetry Slammers — ***photo G Passman***

Poetry Slam in Caversham

by Richard Stephenson

HERE IS SOMETHING new for Caversham! A Poetry Slam. This is a poetry competition in which poets each have up to three minutes to read their own work. The readings are then judged by three, randomly selected, members of the audience. The judges mark each poet out of 10, based on how much they (and maybe the audience) liked the poem/performance.

Dreading Slam is a friendly Open Mic Poetry Competition which runs monthly at the Rising Sun Arts Centre in central Reading (RG1 2ST). The winner gets the opportunity to compete in the Grand Slam in January 2026. The Poetry Slam is coming to the Angel Bar in Caversham on Thursday 10 April, where you will be able to take part or join the audience for an evening of live poetry entertainment. There is also a lively quick-fire round of short poems up to five lines long, won by the loudest cheer! If you wish to take part in the Slam, you will need to bring three of your own poems. Anyone who turns up can compete – there is no need to book in advance. We have had a wide variety of poets, both in style and experience, take part at the Rising Sun, so look forward to hosting the evening in Caversham.

...create a bond...

We have found making this a competition encourages the poets to read and perform poetry which connects with the audience. Competing against each other helps create a bond between the poets. But you don't have to compete, as we have an open mic slot for people who want to read but not compete. In this slot you have up to three minutes to read any poet's work.

Competitions at the Rising Sun Arts Centre are held on the first Sunday of every month, with entry from 19:15. The event at the Angel Bar is free and is on Thursday 10 April, starting at 19:30.

You can find more information on social media:

On Facebook we are Dreading Poetry Slam
On Instagram, Bluesky and Threads we are @dreadingslam
On Mastodon we are @Dreading
Meeting details are also on Meetup.com in the Reading Poetry Writers' group.

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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, a listing of baby and toddler groups can be found 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 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 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: **meetup.com/CavershamWriters** or **@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**

Tuesday 1 April – ***Caversham Women's Institute*** – 19:30 at Church House, Caversham. **www.thewi.org.uk** or Tel: 0118 947 5176

Wednesday 2 April until Saturday 10 May – ***Exhibition of original pastels and oil paintings by Keshani Douglas*** – Caversham Picture Framer, Church Road – for details see **cavershampictureframer.co.uk/events**

Wednesday 2 April – ***Henley, Aston and Remenham walk*** (SU759826) 5.5 miles – 10:30 A flat walk along the river to Hambleden Lock, returning via Aston and Remenham. Short ascent and descent on return. One of a programme of regular walks in the area – see **https://pvramblers.org.uk/walks-programme**

Wednesday 2 April – ***Rosehill Ladies*** – 14:00 at St Barnabas Hall, Emmer Green. Tel: Sue 0118 947 7570 or email **suegreen@hotmail.com**

Wednesday 2 April – ***The History of Migration into the UK, a talk by Dr Daniel Renshaw*** – 20:00 at Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmoor Road. The Caversham Heights Society. **www.cavershamheights.org**

Friday 4 April – ***Chazey Women's Institute*** – 14:30 at St Andrew's Church Hall. Tel: 0118 947 0964, or e-mail **rowena@primology.com**

Friday 4 April – ***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 Tel. Gill at 0118 947 8772

Saturday 5 April – ***Performance of Rossini's Petite Messe Solennelle*** – 19:30 Reading Haydn Choir at St Joseph's College, Upper Redlands Road, Reading RG1 5JT. Full details at **www.haydnchoir.org.uk**

Sunday 6 April – ***Persecuction of Chistians*** – annual Lent address by a speaker from Christian Solidarity Worldwide. St Andrews Church Hall, Albert Rd ,Caversham. 16:30 free tea and cakes, 17:00 speaker. Tel. Rodney Oliver at 0119 947 8920

Sunday 6 April – ***A selection of highlights from Handel's iconic Messiah*** – 16:00 Glass Ensemble at St Barnabas Church. Details page 3.

Saturday 12 April – ***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**

Wednesday 16 April – ***Easter Flowers with Alison Broadbridge*** – 14:00 at Caversham Heights Methodist Church 74 Highmoor Road, Caversham. Caversham Heights Townswomens Guild. Contact Margaret Miles 01491 681223 for details

Wednesday 16 April – ***Caversham Park's 930 years at the Centre of History, a talk by Dr Stephen Goss*** – 20:00 at Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmoor Road. The Caversham Heights Society. **www.cavershamheights.org**

Wednesday 16 April – ***Composts and Soil Health, a talk by Kate Turner*** – 19:25. Caversham Horticultural Society – Caversham Baptist Church, Prospect Street. £3.00 admission for non-members. Light refreshments post talk. For details, see **www.caversham-horticultural.org.uk**

Saturday 19 April – ***Easter Trail in Caversham Court Gardens*** – 14:00-16:00 Friends of Caversham Court Gardens will host a nature themed Easter Egg Quiz. All young competitors will win an Easter Egg prize or a non-dairy treat. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Free entry, but donations to the Friends appreciated. Tea Kiosk open for refreshments. Email **friends@fccg.org.uk** Website **home.fccg.org.uk**

Wednesday 23 April – ***Gothic in the Garden: the context for Caversham Court, a talk by Architectural historian, Megan Aldrich*** – 19:00 for 19:30 at the Reading Canoe Club on the Warren. The Friends of Caversham Court Gardens spring meeting and AGM. The talk will follow the briefest of AGMs. Free event. All welcome. Email **friends@fccg.org.uk** Website **https://home.fccg.org.uk**

Saturday 25 April – ***Chance 2 Dance 4 Charity*** – 19:30-21:30 at Peppard Memorial Hall, RG9 5JA. Tickets £8. For details see **www.trybooking.com/uk/events/landing/75659?**

Saturday 26 April – ***Beanpole Day*** – 10:00-16:00 – Caversham Court Gardens. Details page 2.

Saturday 26 April – ***Concerts in Caversham Late Spring Concert*** – 19:30 at St Andrew's Church, Albert Road, Caversham, RG4 7PL Details page 3.

Monday 28 April – ***200 Years of Railways*** – 14:00 at Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square, Reading. Talk to Reading u3a by transport expert Christian Wolmar. Non-members welcome, free entry. See **www.readingu3a.org.uk**

Coming soon

With the early Bank Holiday in May, there are several events coming up you might like to note:

Saturday 3 - Monday 5 May – ***Henley Arts Trail*** – For more information, visit **www.henleyartstrail.com** or follow them on social media **@henleyartstrail**

Sunday 4 May – ***Dawn Chorus Walk at Clayfield Copse*** – 5:00 for the early birds, tea/coffee available at 6:15. Walk continues to 7:00. Children welcome with an adult. Meet in Caversham Park Road car park, RG4 6AA. Contact 07748 766340. Confirmation would be appreciated. To see a list of last year's sightings visit **www.econet reading.org.uk**

Monday 5 May – ***Island Bohemian Bowls Club open day*** – 14:00-19:00 See **www.islandbohemianbowls.club/give-bowls-a-try**

Monday 5 May – ***Community tea party to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of VE Day*** – 14:00-17:00. If you are not involved in a street party, why not join this celebration? Caversham Baptist Church, South Street, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire RG4 8HY

Saturday 10 May – ***Five Days that Changed the World (Chilcott) complemented by music spanning six centuries*** – 19:30 at St Andrews Church, Caversham RG4 7PL Reading Bach Choir. Tickets, £18 / Under 18's £5, via the website or on the door. **www.readingbachchoir.org.uk**

Tuesday 13 May – ***CADRA AGM and Open Meeting*** – 19:30 The New Testament Church of God, next to Caversham Library. Caversham and District Residents Association AGM (brief) followed by two speakers from Savills, who will discuss Planning – how the system works and what is changing. Everyone is welcome to attend.

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

NEW PLANNING applications in February to March include an application in **Kidmore Road** (PL/25/0209) seeking to remove two yew trees, which face the road. The **Co-op Supermarket** on Henley Road (PL/25/0319) has proposed installing new cold room equipment, expanding the single-storey rear extension. In the Surley Row Conservation Area, at **13 Surley Row** (PL/25/0265), a tree crown lift (removing lower branches for clearance) to 7m is proposed.

Meanwhile, at the old **Drews building** on Caversham Road (PL/25/0338) proposes demolition and documenting the heritage parts. Lastly, a proposal at **414 Gosbrook Road** (PL/25/0216) seeks to convert the house into an HMO for six occupants. This falls under permitted development rights, meaning no public consultation is required.

Some undecided applications have seen updated. At **2 Bridge Street, Caversham** (PL/24/0022), CADRA sent a statement to the appeal against the enforcement notice to remove the outdoor seating terrace and canopy along the Thames. The felling of a silver birch at **5 Springfield Mews, Emmer Green** (PL/25/0107) was refused. The applications for the **Spice Oven** (PL/24/1531) have still to be decided.

The major redevelopment project at **2 Norman Place, Vastern Road** (PL/24/0958) continues to progress, with new supporting documents submitted. These include reports on drainage, biodiversity, highways, and landscaping.

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

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Happy Wanderer revisits Springfield House

IT MUST HAVE been around 1973 when I first saw Springfield House, a listed building on Surley Row, Emmer Green. At the time I was a member of St Laurence Players, and at Christmas, we would hold a Players' Service in the church in the middle of Reading. This often involved a Nativity Play, and we sometimes repeated the play for the elderly ladies at Springfield St Luke nursing home. This was built around Springfield House, which was run by Anglican nuns from the Community of St Mary the Virgin at Wantage. I seem to remember it was summertime when we went there - an outdoor performance on the lawn.

The house had been built on the site of a farmhouse in the late eighteenth century. As a private house it had been occupied by Lieutenant-General Sir Rufane Donkin, according to the book, Emmer Green Past and Present, published by the Emmer Green Residents' Association.

...a major role...

Sir Rufane (1772-1841) was a military man, taking a major role in overseas campaigns. By 1820 his health was suffering, and he was posted to the Cape Colony, where he was made Acting Governor. On his return, he served as MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed, 1830-37, and became the Surveyor-General of Ordnance in 1839. He appears in Caversham history in 1833-34, when he was one of the Commissioners for the Enclosure of the Caversham Commons. An official notice in the Reading Mercury mentions a footpath leading from the Caversham Pound, over the Great West Field to the West Field Close, which he owned.

However, John Malpas, in his book Caversham Names, says that Sir Rufane lived at Caversham House on Church Street, which stood where the St Martin's Shopping Centre is now. After his death, his son lived there until 1849, when he sold it to Francis Knighton, and it became a boys' school, the Caversham Academy.

I can't help wondering why Sir Rufane was in Caversham, when he lived at Springfield House, and when at Caversham House? And how did he manage to fit in all his official duties.

Springfield House

photo by courtesy of Reading Borough Libraries

Of course, Springfield House was given its name for a reason. A mineral spring was discovered by the Rev T E Williams in 1803, and he developed the site as a spa. John Man, who published The Stranger in Reading in 1808, mentioned Mr Williams' cottage and physic garden, and his report on the qualities of the water from the spring. The property was advertised for sale in 1829 – a 'chalybeate spring and pump room, the property of the late Mr. W. Williams, and now in the occupation of J. W. Pidgeon'. Presumably the advertisement of 1837 mentioning a 'brick and slated cottage with Gothic windows ... well-known grotto and chalybeate spring' refers to the same property.

I had hoped I might find an illustration of the grotto, the spring, the physic garden or the cottage with Gothic windows for this article, but have had no luck, so have settled for a photograph of Springfield House, by courtesy of Reading Borough Libraries.

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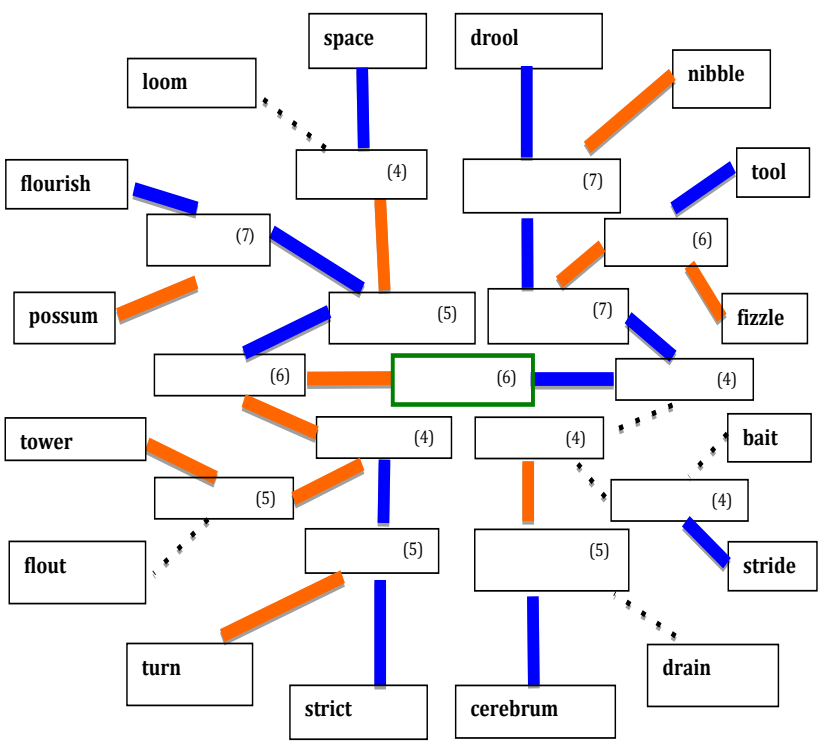
Puzzle Corner

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

MOGGYS

Can you find 22 cat related words in the grid?

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

Abyssinian
Aegean
Bengal
Birman
Bobtail
Burmese
Cat
Cornish Rex
Egyptian Mau
Feline
Levkoy
Longhair
Maine Coon
Manx
Moggy
Persian
Scottish Fold
Shorthair
Siamese
Tabby
Thai Blue
White

Swallows and Easter Eggs

text and photo Roslyn Weaver

OF ALL THE symbols associated with Easter, birds are perhaps not the most obvious ones. The cross, crown of thorns, tomb – yes. Eggs, doves, and chicks – not so much. Let's not even get started on rabbits – unless it's eating the chocolate variety.

What all symbols have in common, however, is the idea of new life, so central a theme to Easter. Birds of all kinds, even those not typically linked to the season, also bring associations with freedom and new hope. Indeed, a welcome sight for many around this time of year is the migrant bird. Swifts, swallows and other migrant birds may begin to be seen or heard from Spring in the skies and buildings of Caversham or further afield. Often interpreted as the promise and sign of Summer, heralding the end of darkness and welcoming in the light, swallows in particular are beloved by many people. They are mentioned in the Bible, and are the subjects of much literature and poetry, from Tennyson and Wordsworth to Rossetti and others.

As it is, these bird migrants undertake a somewhat Lent-like journey from southern Africa, a challenging period spanning multiple weeks and thousands of miles, culminating in a feast of celebration – although feasting on insects not chocolate eggs. It is a journey made all the more remarkable for the fact that swifts and swallows often return to the same nesting site each year. It's fascinating to think that, at one point in history, naturalists didn't know why swallows disappeared each year. Some indeed believed they hibernated in mud at the bottom of ponds. It was not until 1912, when an Englishman received a letter from Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal) in South Africa recording the arrival of a swallow which had been ringed in England, that migration emerged as the answer. In this respect at least we know more now, but other mysteries remain. For instance, not everything is understood about how birds undertake such astonishing migrations, leaving them for now somewhat in the realm of miracles – and making birds on a whole quite fitting symbols for Easter.

Remembering Joyce Hicks (née Loveridge) – 1926-2025

AT THE END of February, we received the sad news of the passing of one of our long-time postal subscribers, Joyce Hicks. Joyce was born in July 1926 in Reading to Horace and Mary Loveridge. Horace owned an ironmonger's store in central Reading at the time.

Joyce attended Malvern House School in Addington Road and then The Abbey School – she was evacuated with the school to Clevedon for a year during the war. After a period as a trainee nurse at the John Radcliffe Hospital Military Ward, nursing young soldiers, she took a post at Barclays Bank in Reading and Henley. She later moved to the BBC in London and then to Berkshire County Council Libraries, becoming the personal assistant to the Head of Libraries.

She led an active social life, enjoying concerts and plays, and her holidays. During a walking holiday in Austria, she met her future husband, Ernest Hicks, a senior scientist working in atomic energy in Lancashire.

They married in 1977 at Mapledurham and moved to the Lancashire coastal town of Lytham St Annes. Joyce was 50, Ernest was 59. Joyce maintained links with Caversham through her postal subscription to the Caversham Bridge, and would sometimes respond to articles with beautifully handwritten letters. She wrote about swimming in the River Thames at the Caversham Lido at Freebody's (close to Caversham Bridge) for our June 2022 paper.

Ernest died in 1997, and Joyce remained in the same house in Lytham until the summer of 2024, enjoying the social life there and continuing as an active member of the Women's Institute. Recently she moved to a Residential Care Home in Northamptonshire close to her nephew, where she died 1 February. She was buried at the family grave in the Henley Road Cemetery 12 March.

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Fruit for the Future

by Tricia Marcouse

Planting at Emmer Green ***photo M Knight***

Planting at Bug's Bottom ***photo M Knight***

SATURDAY 16 FEBRUARY saw a flurry of tree planting in our area. Wokingham-based charity Freely Fruity worked with Econet and Reading Tree Wardens to plant two new community orchards and replace some dead apple trees at an existing site.

The planting kicked off at Mapledurham playing fields with the Friends of Mapledurham Playing Fields, and the replacement of dead trees at the existing community orchard there.

Later in the morning, Reading Tree Wardens, led by Dave Kenny, set to work in Bugs Bottom to plant a selection of new fruit trees for a mini community orchard. In the afternoon, Econet led the planting of another new orchard, this time in Emmer Green Playing Fields. If you are local to Emmer Green Playing Fields, or have an allotment next door, then please consider doing some watering duties this summer. There is a tap on site, so there is no need to carry from afar. Contact me at **tricia@marcouse.com** if you could help.

Freely Fruity provided the free fruit trees for these community projects. The choice of tree will provide fruit from August to October for residents and wildlife, and will also help to meet the tree planting targets of the Reading Climate Action Plan.

In a separate initiative by Reading Borough Council, an avenue of 18 white flowering cherry trees has been planted either side of the diagonal path across Westfield Park. Once established, these will provide not only a spring spectacle but welcome shade in the summer.

Econet is a local community group undertaking practical environmental projects in the Greater Reading area, see **econetreading.org.uk**

Freely Fruity is a local charity providing free fruit trees for community planting projects. They received the King's Award for Voluntary Service in 2024, **www.freelyfruity.org**

Reading Tree Wardens plant, protect and promote local trees. They work in partnership with Reading Borough Council, local businesses and charities, resident groups, and the general public – see www.readingtreewardens.org.uk

Eco Tip

by Tricia Marcouse

Repair, Rehome or Recycle

Reading Library of Things

SPRING IS the time for sorting out the house and garden. This is a summary of Ecotips gathered over the last few years.

If you are planning some DIY, then don't purchase new tools without considering whether the Library of Things could supply your needs. For £20/year, you can borrow as many tools as you like and, perhaps more importantly, get advice from experts on how to get the task done. **lotreading.myturn.com/library**

Tools need sharpening? Power drill not working? Sewing machine stuck? Before buying new stuff, try the Repair Café in Central Reading which takes place on the third weekend of every month. The next one is Sunday 13 April from 12:30-16:30 at Lab, Weldale Street, Small Business Centre, Reading RG1 7BX. More dates for all repair cafes in the area on: **communityrepairnetwork.org.uk/find**

And, if your bicycle needs maintenance or you need a larger cycle, use the Bicycle Kitchen at Unit C10 Weldale Street for cost-effective maintenance and fully reconditioned second hand cycles. Opening hours at **www.readingbicyclekitchen.org**

> ***...don't purchase new tools without considering whether the Library of Things could supply your needs***

Just need to clear things? Offering usable stuff on Freegle **www.ilovefreegle.org** means that others come and collect, or you can take things to a charity shop. The British Heart Foundation in Oxford Road accepts electrical goods and will collect furniture, as will other local charities. Just type 'donate furniture reading' into a search engine. Of course, booking a slot at Smallmead may be the answer for unusable stuff.

Need some replacement furniture? There's a very good upcycling unit in the Thames Valley Hospice superstore in Richfield Avenue.

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Les Cooper

Bird table warning

DID YOU realise that the bird table in your garden, which each day you conscientiously fill with bird food, is a death trap? I guess you, dear reader, maybe did know, but others, like me, may not have noticed this warning. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has ceased selling flat bird feeders because of the likelihood of spreading disease. The numbers of finches, mostly greenfinches, have fallen dramatically because of the diseases they have caught through eating from our bird tables.

I had no idea of the amount of bird food people in our country put out each year but in 2019 it was 50,000 – 60,000 tons! I didn't realise that I could be doing more harm than good by putting food on a bird table, but when I think back, I cannot remember seeing one single greenfinch last year. From now on, rather than flat bird feeders, we are advised to use hanging feeders to lessen the chances of spreading disease. An alternative would be to scatter food such as sunflower hearts onto flat areas making sure you swap these around frequently.

Isn't it odd how often in the garden world we imagine we have been doing the right thing, only to be informed later we have got it all wrong? DDT, creosote, metaldehyde, peat, and many more items we used to use happily are now banned.

Sowing annuals now is good fun, and I know I should do it more often. In the seed catalogues there are so many lovely things to choose from and tempt us to have a go. I kid myself I know a thing or two, and suddenly a name pops out and I haven't a clue what it is or what it looks like.

I was glancing in my seed catalogue and there it was - Gomphrena Globosa. What on earth is that? It sounds like some kind of onion but apparently it is a flower that can be in bloom from summer to early autumn with unusual spherical heads of petals composed of pink, purple or white papery bracts. Apparently, they make superb cut flowers, lasting up to two weeks, and can also be successfully dried for later use. It is an upright and bushy annual approximately 1.0 – 0.5 m in height and width with oblong leaves to 15cm long, covered densely with white hair when young. I had better have a go, just to see if it is as good as it sounds.

Greenfinch

image by jacekben from pixabay

Night at the opera... at St Andrew's

by Elestr Lee

CULTURE LOVERS in Caversham are increasingly spoilt for choice these days, with an extraordinary range of artistic and musical treats on offer. And as well as concerts showcasing some highly talented instrumentalists, there is also the chance to enjoy a night at the opera.

Touring company Merry Opera, the brainchild of Matthew Quirk, made its third visit to St Andrew's at the end of February with a production of Johann Strauss II's Die Fledermaus. Set up in 2007, the company is a bursary scheme for rising opera stars, offering the chance to learn a role then perform it on a tour around the country – giving invaluable experience to the young singers.

The perils of touring notwithstanding (there were a few issues with the lighting and props), the talented cast, accompanied on the piano by Elspeth Wilkes, threw themselves into their roles. Olivia Singleton as Adele was convincing as the maid who is desperate to escape from drudgery to a life on stage; the marital complications of Rosaline (Bethan Terry) and her husband Eisenstein (Conor Prendiville) provided rich opportunities for operatic plot confusion, while the lovelorn tenor Alfred (William Diggle) maintained beautiful high Cs while wearing a ridiculous tiger costume. Meanwhile standout star Chris Faulkner played Dr Falke, whose plotting lies behind the farcical scenario – (plot spoiler... it all ends happily!)

"We have been to St Andrew's twice before," Matthew Quirk explained. "Once in 2023, with our dramatized production of Handel's Messiah, which has toured across the UK and Northern Ireland since 2011 and, for a second time last year, with The Magic Flute. We love the venue – we often go to churches, as we find they usually help us more than theatres with the local marketing.

"We very much hope to return next year to the church – and of course, we would love to do other things locally, galas or birthday parties, for example. We have a repertoire of lovely melodies and very silly songs, as well as opera favourites!"

Find out more: merryopera.co.uk

The Merry Opera cast

photo Merry Opera Company

Gill Madeley NAHort.
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The Local Scene by Martin Andrews

Wings Fish Bar and Smith's News and Off Licence

Drawing by Janina Maher

www.janinamaher.artweb.com

THERE IS A small row of terraced houses in Gosbrook Road which were all private residences in 1921. However, later, the ground floors of numbers 63 and 65 were converted into shop premises. Today number 63 is Smith's News and Off Licence, and number 65 is The Wings Fish Bar. Both businesses are very familiar to local residents and have been serving customers for many years, although they have changed hands over that time.

Mr Selvakumar has been running the corner shop as a family business for over twenty years. He previously owned a similar business in Kidmore Road. The shop is crammed with provisions of all kinds but, today, a large part of the business is as a delivery and collection point for parcels. Mr Selvakumar is also proud of his early morning newspaper delivery service, which at one time his children helped with. He greatly values his role in providing a service for the local people, particularly the elderly, who rely on the convenience of his store.

Next door is the Wings Fish Bar and, when I visited, I could not resist a portion of hot crispy chips wrapped in paper to enjoy on the way home, as it was bitterly cold and raining. The welcoming staff were hard at work, but perhaps they did not know fried fish had been served there for nearly 75 years.

Both houses in Gosbrook Road became shops at the same time in the 1950s. In 1954 number 63 was a confectioner and tobacconist run by W J Whitworth and, next door, Mrs E Neale had opened a 'fried fish shop'. By the 1960s the confectioners was owned by Mrs Hurley and the fish shop by Mr E Eighteen and, in 1976, it changed hands and became the Eastern Chinese Fried Fish Shop. The present owner is Zhi Li, who took over about five years ago.

It is amazing that both shops have remained the same serving the public for so many years.

A stroll through Caversham

Janina's illustrated book, which is available at Fourbears Books on Prospect Street.

LITTLE PICKERS

by Hilary Smart

PUPILS IN year three at St Martin's Primary School in Caversham Park Village spent an afternoon litter picking along the path between the school and the Milestone centre. They went out fully equipped with rubbish bags, high-vis jackets, litter grabbers and smiles.

The class managed to fill several bags with the rubbish they found, which included sweet wrappers and cans. One of the students commented that they were surprised how much litter they found, and another noted that often it was hidden under hedges. The children very much enjoyed getting out of the school grounds together.

St Martin's is a Catholic State School which accepts pupils of all faiths and none. When talking about the litter pick, the students recognised the value of doing something that contributes to the community and helps to look after God's world, which we all share. They also discussed the negative impact that litter has on animals who might try to eat it, and that it can attract rats and other vermin into residential areas. They were pleased that, on the day of the litter pick, their schoolmates got to enjoy a very clean path on the way home!

The children were proud of what they had done to help, and parents were invited into school for a class assembly where all the children took turns to speak confidently about the litter pick and other work they have been doing this term.

Year Three in action ***photo Mrs Hughes***

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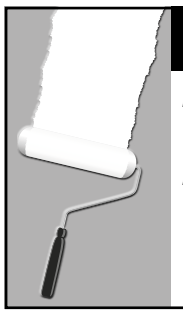

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All gardens great and small

From tiny terraced houses to large estates, local landscape gardener and designer **Hugh Netley** has watched the seasons come and go since setting up Netley Landscapes 39 years ago, as he told **Elestr Lee**

HAVING GROWN up in Caversham then settled with his wife Rebecca and family in Emmer Green, Hugh Netley never nurtured a burning ambition to be a gardener. However, he knew that he wanted to be his own boss and loved being out of doors. "Nature was always important," he revealed. "For example, my mother was in despair as I took so long to learn to read. But then a friend taught me – through using bird books. And I'm still a birder!"

Aged 18 he was employed for a year working at a nursery in Worplesdon, where he started to learn the Latin names for plants ("learning Latin at school proved very useful!"). He then went on to Merrist Wood College, near Guildford, where his three-year course covered landscape, design and construction. Qualifying in 1986, his plan was to start work and earn enough to be able to go travelling, "But the business took off, so I never did the travelling!" he joked.

Looking back, Hugh is grateful he started out when he did. "Although the 80s were tough, it was so much easier to set up a business. There was the Enterprise Allowance, which was so helpful. Nowadays there is so much to do if you employ someone, then there is VAT..."

Despite the 80s' recession, Hugh managed to build up a client base. "My mother worked at the new Balmore Park Surgery in Hemdean Road, so I worked on some of the doctors' gardens. Apart from my regular advert in Caversham Bridge, most of my work has come by word of mouth – I have rarely advertised anywhere else!"

Indeed, 'word of mouth' found Hugh a major and longstanding client quite early in his career. "A friend had recommended me, so he picked me up and drove me through the gates of Friars Park, near Henley. I had no idea who lived there – but then I recognised George Harrison, with his family!

Once the digger is on site, there's no turning back! All aspects of the design are supervised by Hugh – and after nearly four decades, he still enjoys working out of doors... ***all photos NetleyLandscapes.co.uk***

A knowledgeable plantsman, Hugh carefully sources the plants which make his garden designs complete

"George had just started to get into gardening. He had said to his wife Olivia that she could do the kitchen garden, and that's why they wanted me. However afterwards, George asked me to work on projects all round the garden." This included working on the vast rockery recently featured on Monty Don's series Great British Gardens – although not involved when George Harrison first restored it, in later years Hugh worked on replanting it.

Hugh has been pleased that his two sons (and their friends) were willing to help him out; now grown up they are starting their own careers. So how has life changed since the 80s?

"People still look for the same things from their gardens," he explained. "Today there is so much more choice, for example of the type of natural stones you can choose from.

> ***...Another change is that so many nurseries have now closed – it's where I buy my plants, rather than at garden centres***

"On one of my first jobs, I saw something lying on top of a briefcase – it was the first time I saw a mobile phone. Mobile phones have really changed things.

"But it's the climate, and the weather generally that has changed a lot. At college in the 80s the winters were always cold, but we've only had a few cold winters since then. Now it's damper, and greyer. But it's warmer, so plants can be in full leaf in March. When I started out, people would say of certain plants, 'You can't grow that, it's not hardy' – but now you can.

"The climate isn't predictable. It is hard – for example, if we are doing a patio and it needs to be pointed or grouted, it can be a problem when there is a long spell of damp weather. And while we are lucky to be outside when it's sunny, I don't like it too hot. When it hit 40c a couple of summers ago, it was unpleasant.

"I am now a lot more cautious about new planting. I used to want to plant in April-May, but if we then enter a very hot spell, the plants won't reach their full potential.

"Another change is that so many nurseries have now closed – it's where I buy my plants, rather than at garden centres. It's a shame that things are so much more difficult!"

Creating interest in the hard landscaping can transform a garden

The garden path becomes a feature in its own right

Being out of doors all day does have its compensations – Hugh retains his love of birding, and keeps his eyes peeled for the more unusual species. "I was once distracted when talking to a client in Caversham – there was a firecrest behind her!" he laughed. Meeting clients is another pleasure – "I have met so many lovely people through my work, and many who have used us again and again, and as a result I have had the privilege of getting to know these clients very well."

And making beautiful gardens remains his passion: "It is very creative," he said.

Find out more:
netleylandscapes.co.uk.

The Call of the Sea...

by Graham Martin

Regular reader Graham shares his passion for the sea

THE READING OFFSHORE Sailing Club (ROSC) is a social club for all those interested in sailing and the sea, including non-boat owners.

We hold a series of talks, usually on the first Monday of the month, and at least one sailing rally on the sea. We also organise social activities, such as a Summer BBQ, an Autumn 'laying up supper', and a New Year walk and pub lunch.

We are lucky enough to have the use of the Upper Thames Motor Yacht Club premises on the waterside behind the Mill at Sonning for our meetings. It is a delightful spot to socialise with others with similar interests, share our experiences, make plans, and enjoy the beautiful surroundings.

The talks last year were as varied as the story of the Vasa, a 17th century warship raised from the deep in Stockholm harbour, the work of the Marine Conservation Society, cruising in the Netherlands, and amusing but cautionary tales of sailing mishaps. The programme included a very enjoyable film review evening, where six members each presented a film connected to sailing and the sea – the ROSCARS! At one of these meetings more than £240 was raised for the Royal National Lifeboat Institute.

We were fortunate with the weather for the May weekend rally in the Solent. The eight boats included two charter yachts, skippered by qualified members of the club, which gave non-boat owners the chance to get afloat and develop or hone their sailing skills.

Climate Change and Sailing: A Journey through Time was the first of our talks this year, held on 3 February. It was given by Tim Reeder, a Climate Change Consultant and formerly Senior Advisor at the Environment Agency.

On Monday 7 April, Stuart Little, a Thames pilot who has spent his entire career in shipping, will give an insider's view of life as a pilot on the capital's estuary.

The Reading Offshore Sailing Club offers a warm welcome to visitors at this and subsequent meetings. We normally gather for a chat and drink from 19:30 and our talks begin at 20:00. First time visitors can attend their initial talk for free. These meeting are held at the premises of the Upper Thames Motor Yacht Club in Sonning.

Two weekend rallies in the Solent are planned this year. The first is from 9 May in East Cowes and the second in Lymington in September, again with an opportunity for non-boat owners to join in.

For further details of our activities and venue, please see www.readingoffshore.org.uk

Redwing sailing to 2024 rally ***photo ROSC***

Can you help the Gurkha Ladies?

by Pam Reynolds

Andrew with two of the Gurkha ladies ***photo SSAFA***

We have featured the work of the Armed Forces charity, the Soldiers Sailors and Airmen Families' Association (SSAFA) with Gurkha ladies in Reading in past editions. Last March we reported on a recipe book produced in support of the work of SSAFA, which came out of a local SSAFA project, the Gurkha Ladies Project, which provides support and weekly English-language sessions for local Gurkha women. Local resident, Pam Reynolds, who has led the Project for the last 14 years, has now stepped down, and a new Project leader, Andrew Jones, has taken the helm.

ANDREW BRINGS a host of valuable experience to the Project. He served in the Royal Navy for 14 years, leaving with the rank of Chief Petty Officer. During this time, he also ran the ship's voluntary education classes, teaching maths and computer skills to those sailors who wished to increase their competence.

After leaving the Royal Navy, Andrew moved into the manufacturing industry, working for several global companies. He will now bring this experience and expertise, and some new dynamic ideas and energy, to this well-established Project. To take it forward, he is looking for new volunteers to enhance the existing team.

The project runs over four terms a year, each of ten weeks. If you can spare two hours a week on a Tuesday, between 12:00 and 14:00, then Andrew would be delighted to hear from you.

You do not have to be a teacher, but you will need understanding, empathy and certainly a sense of humour. You will work with experienced volunteers using the training material which Andy produces each term. Existing volunteers say the project gives them a huge sense of achievement and fun, and that working with these lovely, highly motivated Gurkha ladies is a great privilege.

If you are interested in volunteering to help the project, please contact Andrew on Mobile: 07539797890 or email Andrew.Jones@ssafa.goassemble.com

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First Impressions Matter *by Laura Harmsworth*

Don't be fooled in your job search!

APRIL FOOLS' DAY may be all about pranks and jokes but, for job hunting, being misled — or misleading employers – can have serious consequences. This month, I'll look at four job search lessons inspired by the origins of April Fools' Day.

Calendar confusion
(applying for the wrong roles)

Just like those who didn't get the memo about France's calendar change in 1582, some jobseekers apply for roles when they're not the right fit. Read job adverts carefully and tailor your CV. However, don't be discouraged if you don't meet 100% of the criteria. If you have most of the requirements being asked for, it's still worth applying — employers often value potential as much as experience.

Roman 'Hilaria'
(don't fake it until you make it)

The ancient Roman festival of Hilaria involved people wearing disguises and playing tricks — similar to job seekers who exaggerate their skills or qualifications. Being caught out in an interview (or worse, on the job) can ruin your credibility (or worse). Instead, highlight your true strengths and back them up with examples.

Image KamranAydinov on Freepik

Scottish 'Taily Day'
(watch out for hoax job offers)

April Fools' Day lasted two days in Scotland, with the second day focused on pranks like pinning fake tails on people. Be cautious of scams where recruiters or fake job ads request upfront payments for CV reviews, training, background checks, visa processing, interviews, job placements or equipment. Legitimate employers and recruiters never ask for money before offering a job. Always research companies and avoid anything that sounds too good to be true!

Media hoaxes
(don't fall for buzzword overload)

April Fools' pranks include media hoaxes that sound believable but are fake (from spaghetti trees to the BMW P.R.A.M!). Likewise, jobseekers often fill their CVs with overused buzzwords like 'dynamic go-getter' or 'results-driven team player'. Instead of relying on clichés, show evidence of your impact — use numbers, metrics, and specific achievements to stand out.

A successful job search isn't about tricks and fooling people — it's about strategy, authenticity, and attention to detail.

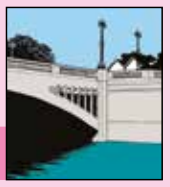
You can follow Laura on:
www.facebook.com/CavershamCVWriting
on Linkedin:
www. linkedin.com/in/lauraharmsworth
Website: www.cavershamcvwriting.co.uk
Email: contact@cavershamcvwriting.co.uk

THE CHALLENGE SOLUTIONS:

(From left to right from the top)

room, dribble, blossom, chisel, bloom, drizzle, flower, **shower**, rain, dour, gain, flour, gait, stern, brain.

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



Future editions:

Contributions for the May issue
should be submitted by 1 April and for the June edition by 1 May. These should be emailed to:
editors@cavershambridge.org

Dates for advertising copy
are 1 April for the May issue and 1 May for the June issue. These should be emailed to:
advertising@cavershambridge.org

Image senivpetro on Freepik

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**

Fridays – *Baby and Toddler Group* – Church House, Church Road, Caversham, RG4 8AX. 9:30 – 11:00. Step-free access at the back.
See **www.ctmparish.org.uk/stpeter** for details

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Wellbeing with Ami Roy

Timeless Threads

"GRANDMA HOBBIES" typically refer to activities traditionally associated with older generations, like knitting, crocheting, quilting, baking, gardening, scrapbooking, sewing, preserving, needlepoint, birdwatching, and reading book clubs; essentially, crafts and domestic pursuits that often involve manual dexterity and a focus on creating something tangible.

These hobbies often evoke a sense of tradition and comfort, associated with a slower pace of life. Interestingly, younger generations are increasingly embracing these activities, often seen as a relaxing and creative outlet, sometimes referred to as the 'slow living' aesthetic. On TikTok, posts with #needlepoint increased by 400% in 2024!

These grandma hobbies offer a range of benefits:

- Counting stiches involves concentration and mental maths.
- Dexterity and fine motor skills are improved, since a lot of them involve continuous working with our hands.
- Creating and working with our hands helps divert the ruminative and internally focused energy that we often see in anxiety, depression, or burnout.
- They boost mental health by providing stress-free productivity and creativity.
- They offer a respite from the world of social media.
- Something tangible is created in real time, and it is an antidote to the commercial bombardment we face, especially in the form of internet shopping.
- They're also fantastic stress relievers, bringing focus to something meditative.
- The repetitive movements and present moment awareness mimic mindfulness meditation in a lot of ways, which may explain why they could help to improve mood and mental health.
- They can foster social connection when practiced in groups, and even online groups are shown to have great benefits.

Embroidery and photo Malini Hazarika

I'm always amazed at the creative crochet decorations that appear on the post boxes in Emmer Green.

Direct evidence for our community of the beauty and joy that these hobbies bring!

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**
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)
Parish Deacon **Brian Theobald**, 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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