

UNPOPULAR ROAD PLAN DROPPED

At a meeting of Reading borough council's planning committee in November, the plan to close the Albert Road and Highmoor Road junction in Caversham to traffic travelling east along Highmoor Road was rejected, owing to overwhelming opposition from the public.

The plan would have meant diverting traffic along quiet residential streets, including Matlock Road, Buxton Avenue, Harrogate Road, St Andrews Road and the western end of Oakley Road. It is probably true to say that of all the options considered, this one was the most unpopular, writes our Road Watch correspondent

However the problems have not disappeared and the council will now investigate alternative solutions in an attempt to reduce the accident rate at this junction. Suggestions made include traffic calming, a mini-roundabout, changing priorities, and possibly closing Albert Road to northbound traffic at the junction.

The traffic lights at Caversham's busiest junction, where Bridge Street, Church Street and Church Road meet, were upgraded during November, and extreme congestion resulted during the morning rush hour on November 20th when the temporary lights were left with default phasing instead of the phasing normally



The troublesome Albert Road and Highmoor Road junction

used at this junction.

This mirrors the congestion recorded earlier in the year during the traffic light upgrade at the Gosbrook Road and George Street junction. It once again demonstrates that the road system in Caversham is barely able to cope with the traffic flows experienced on a day-to-day basis, whereby a problem at a key interchange can have enormous ramifications.

A filter light for drivers turning right from Church Street towards St Peter' Hill would be an advantage.

A problem at this junction is that in addition to the high volumes of traffic, there is a large amount of foot traffic, and no provision is made for pedestrians to cross the road safely. There are no crossing points giving priority to pedestrians in either Bridge Street or Church Road, and the nearby light-controlled crossing in Church Street has recently been removed, and replaced by a new one outside the Nationwide Building Society.

It will be interesting to see whether the Sharing our Streets exercise now in progress can produce a long-term solution to the problems at this junction, which will allow safe crossing facilities for pedestrians without significantly impacting on the traffic flow.

Gosbrook Road/Prospect Street

The double roundabout installed at this junction appeared to be working reasonably well (maybe because drivers have been very careful as they become familiar with the road layout) until a serious accident in broad daylight on Sunday 7th December involving a pedestrian and a Waitrose lorry under the archway. This highlighted the problems that pedestrians face when crossing the road here – a frequently used pedestrian route between Caversham centre and Gosbrook Road.

In addition, pedestrians have been seen crossing Gosbrook Road between the two roundabouts, a very dangerous practice, which raises the question of what is the recommended route from the Church House area to the Baptist Church. The only safe route appears to be to cross Church Street at the lights by the library, cross Prospect Street at the pedestrian crossing and then walk back to the junction -- an enormous detour, particularly for the less-mobile.

It is becoming apparent that some thought needs to be given urgently into improving pedestrian facilities here. It is very easy for drivers to miss seeing the occasional pedestrian, particularly after dark.

Cycling in St Martins precinct

The notices which appeared threatening cyclists with a £30 fine for cycling in or near the precinct appear to have had very little, if any, effect on the number of people cycling here. Has anybody been fined for this offence? If so, this needs to be publicised, as it may have a deterrent effect on others. At the moment, cyclists appear to be able to ride here with impunity.

Reading Bridge

The maintenance and strengthening work on Reading Bridge has now started, so delays can be expected at certain times, including the very occasional road closure. To add to the problems here, a new access road has been introduced to Christchurch Meadow, allowing access from George Street, almost opposite the Hills Meadow car park entrance, to the construction site of the new pedestrian and cycle bridge. This new access road necessitated the felling of a small number of the mature poplar trees lining Christchurch Meadow along George Street.

Sonning Bridge

The road works between Playhatch and Sonning have now been completed, and both lanes have fully reopened. The road has been repaired to its state before last winter's floods, but no work was carried out to alleviate the effect of any future flooding. Should flooding happen in the future, which is certainly possible, then chaos on Caversham's roads can be expected once again.



The new traffic lights at the Bridge Street junction

It's No. 600

This is the 600th edition of Caversham Bridge, your church and community newspaper, since it started in 1964. We celebrated our 50th anniversary with a special issue in September but the two milestones did not coincide as some monthly issues were missed in the early years.

The longevity of this newspaper is entirely due to the work and dedication of many volunteers over the half century.

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS

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Caversham Clergy

ANGLICAN

St Barnabas

Revd Derek Chandler, 20 St Barnabas Road.
Tel: 947 8239.
www.saintbarnabas.org.uk

St Andrews

Revd Nigel Jones, St Andrews Vicarage,
Harrogate Road. Tel: 947 2788
www.standrewscaversham.org

St Peter, St Margaret, St John

Revd Mike Smith, The Rectory, 20 Church Road,
Caversham RG4 7AD Tel: 9479505
rector@ctmparish.org.uk

Revd Jeremy Tear

St John's Vicarage, St John's Road,
Caversham RG4 5AN Tel: 946 2884

Revd Marion Pyke

26 Priest Hill, Caversham RG4 7RZ
Tel: 947 5834

Revd John Dudley Tel: 9470265

RIVERSIDE CHURCH (READING)

Revd Rob Beardsley Tel: 07736 353233
Email: robg.beardsley@sky.com
www.riversidechurchreading.co.uk

CAVERSHAM PARK ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP

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Tel: 0118 947 5152

METHODIST TEAM MINISTRY

Revd Jenny Dowding, 72 Highmoor Road.
Tel: 947 2223

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH

Transitional Ministers Revd Jonathan Edwards
Church office tel 954 5353
Email Secretary: sue.cantwell@cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk

GRACE CHURCH

(formerly Caversham Hill Chapel)
Colin Gault. Tel: 948 4151

ROMAN CATHOLIC

Fr Paul Martin, The Presbytery,
2 South View Avenue.
Tel: 947 1787.
Deacon: Hugh Anscombe
Fr Paul Rowan

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD

Revd H R Gayle Tel: 946 3009 (contact)

The newspaper produced by the members of the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Free Churches of Caversham and Mapledurham for the local community.

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The Editors wish to make it clear that the views expressed in this newspaper do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the board.

The Editors also would like to bring to readers' notice that the inclusion of advertisements in this paper does not mean an endorsement of the products or of the services offered.

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TALKING POINT

by Rachel Ross Smith

Only a year ago we were preparing to move to Caversham. Amid a manic work load with heart-rending Goodbyes, navigating the school transfer process, finding a non-existent nursery place for our youngest, I was trying to come to terms with a future of unemployment.

To make matters more daunting, others regularly reminded me that life down south was a lot less friendly and I must prepare myself for being isolated and lonely. How delighted I have been that none of these foretellings of gloom have come to pass.

From the day we arrived we have been met with kindness, generosity and hospitality. Perhaps it is because we are the rector's family that people were thoughtful about what it is like to move house with a young family and provided us with cake, biscuits and homemade, pop-in-the-oven meals. Yet time and again I have witnessed mums in the playground being helped and supported by countless offers of help.

I have been the recipient of the offer of an afternoon's care for our children when I was suffering from migraine and yesterday while we recounted the hassle of getting our children ready for school one mum told us that her washing machine had broken down. Immediately there was an offer to "bring your washing round". How wonderful it has been to experience that hospitality is not dead in these southern parts.

Sadly our experience is not everyone's. Here in Caversham, there are folk resorting to buying their washing machine by going to pay day loan sharks (for that is what they are: predators on people's struggle to keep their families heads above water, in a competitive world). There are elderly people isolated and alone, there are people experiencing prejudice, discrimination and rejection because of other people's lack of understanding of mental health issues. In a world where relationships beyond our family are so often only with people like ourselves, hospitality can feel a step too far because it is confused with intimacy.

The Benedictine monk Daniel Homan writes: "Not every guest is an angel... Hospitality is not a call to unquestioning intimacy with the whole world. Hospitality is a call to revere what is sacred in every person ever born. We reverence people not because they are pleasant, but because God is present in them."

This new year may we not only count our blessings – that network of family and friends that support us – but also genuinely seek out ways in which we can bless others through that simple and yes sometimes risky act of hospitality.

Happy New Year and God's blessing on you

The Revd Rachel Ross Smith is the chaplain at Queen Anne's School, Caversham, and the wife of the Rector of Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham

SUNDAY SERVICES

ANGLICAN

St Peter's, St Peter's Hill

8.00am Holy Communion
9.45am Parish Communion
6.30pm Evensong

St John's, Gosbrook Road

8.30am Holy Communion (2nd Sunday)
10.00am Parish Communion (except 2nd Sunday)
10.00am All Age Worship (2nd Sunday)

St Andrew's, Harrogate Road

8.00am The Eucharist
10.00am Parish Eucharist (Sung)
First Sunday, Family Eucharist
The Eucharist first and third Sundays only, first Sunday BCP
6.30pm Evening Prayer (as announced)

St Barnabas, Grove Road, Emmer Green

8.00am Holy Communion
9.30am Family Communion (apart from 1st Sunday)
9.30am Family Service (1st Sunday only)

St Margaret's, Mapledurham

11.00am Parish Communion

RIVERSIDE CHURCH(READING)

Meeting at Hemdean House School, Hemdean Road, Caversham
10.00am Morning Worship & Teaching

CAVERSHAM PARK ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP

Meeting at Caversham Park School

11.00am Holy Communion (1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays)
Morning Worship (2nd and 4th Sundays)
All Age Worship (at Festival Times)

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH South Street

10.30am Morning Worship each Sunday
8.00pm House of Prayer (praise and prayer) –
2nd Sunday each month
3.45pm Messy Church – for all the family
First Sunday of the month

GRACE CHURCH Old Peppard Road

10.30am Worship and Ministry, Children's Church
6.30pm Prayer Meeting

THE METHODIST CHURCH IN CAVERSHAM

Caversham Heights, Highmoor Road

9.00am (first Sunday), 10.30am
6.30pm (second and fourth Sundays)

Gosbrook Road

10.30am
Woodcote Parish Church
9.45am (second Sunday)

ROMAN CATHOLIC

Our Lady and St Anne's, Southview Avenue

Saturday 5.30pm,
Sunday 10.00am and 6.30pm

Mapledurham House 6.00pm Mass (last Sunday of the month)

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (Quakers)

Church Street, Reading

10.30am
(House study groups Sept-June Tel: 9475783)

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD

Church Street, Caversham

9.30am Sunday School
11.00am Divine Worship
6.00pm Evening Service

Caversham Bridge

Contributions for the February 2015 issue should be sent to the Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham parish office by **Monday 5th January**. The date for the March 2015 issue is **Monday 2nd February**. Email address is secretary@ctmparish.org.uk

Advertising copy for the February issue should be sent to Mr A Wright, Twigmoor, Upper Warren Avenue, Caversham, by Friday 2nd January. The date for the March issue is **Friday 30th January**.

PARISH OFFICES

PARISH OF CAVERSHAM THAMESIDE AND MAPLEDURHAM

St Peter, St Margaret, St John
Church House, 59 Church Street, Caversham RG4 8AX
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Tribute to Jennifer Millest

It is with sadness that we report the recent death of Jennifer Millest, at the age of 78, after a short spell in hospital. Jennifer moved to Caversham in 1992 and quickly became involved in the local community, through the Lower Caversham Community Association, Caversham Globe and in 2004, the committee of the Caversham and District Residents' Association (CADRA).

She was born in March, 1936, near Hampton Court and spent happy childhood days boating on the Thames. In the summer, the family would hire a camping punt and sometimes travel as far as Henley. It is not surprising then, that she should spend her later years in the lovely terrace at Mill Green with a garden reaching down to the Thames. It was never a problem to fill a watering can for the garden which meant so much to her!

Jennifer trained as an architect at Liverpool University. During her vacations she travelled the country enjoying her hobby as a bell-ringer, ringing quarter-peals in local churches. Her work took her to Lord Esher's estate, Watlington Park in Oxfordshire, and then to Berkshire County Council where she designed award-winning schools and old people's homes.

In London she worked for the Sports Council where she became their expert on artificial pitch and track surfaces. Her expertise as an architect was to be invaluable to the community groups she supported, keeping a very keen eye on planning issues - not just individual applications but also the important strategic decisions.

Before moving across to Caversham, she

lived in Brunswick Street, West Reading, during the 1980s and was one of the founding members of the Aldbrickham Clog (Reading Cloggies) traditional folk dancers - part of her life-long love of folk music and dance.

Her love of nature came to the fore in her work to campaign for and protect the lovely open spaces around the Thames and in Caversham. She was a tenacious campaigner for all of the issues for which Caversham GLOBE group exists. She took part in many of the practical activities as well as holding attention during meetings with a detailed knowledge of the workings of local government, environmental issues and planning regulations.

Jennifer is mourned by her nieces, a nephew and other family members. Her funeral took place in Teddington in December but a local memorial service will be held at St John's Church, Gosbrook Road, at 3pm on Tuesday 20th January followed by refreshments in the church. For more details, contact info@cavershamglobe.org.uk or info@cadra.org.uk



Jennifer (right) in 2008 at the planting of a memorial tree for Jane Stockhill in Grove Road

TIME TO SAY GOODBYE*

With great regret members of *Rivarate*, the Caversham community choir, learned that their much loved director of music, Alison Golby, had to leave them at the end of the Christmas term. Alison's husband, David, had been appointed to a senior position at Exeter College and they are moving to the West Country with their children, Ellie and Leo.

Alison is a well known, professional musician in the Thames Valley. She has taught in a number of schools, latterly at Henley College, and has led three adult choirs. She had been *Rivarate's* director of music for six years, since the choir moved across the river from Sonning and invited men to join what had been, until then, a ladies' choir. In all that time, despite having a busy career and a family, Alison never missed a rehearsal, not even when she sustained a fractured leg.

She has conducted many popular concerts with the choir, recently at Caversham Heights Methodist Church where the choir rehearses.



Alison Golby

At her final rehearsal the choir members presented Alison with a painting of the Bluebell Woods by the Caversham artist, John Yeo, to remind her of one of the local walks she used to take with her dog. They also gave her a selection of John Lewis vouchers to use once she moved into her new home.

In bidding Alison and her family farewell, Libby Lowry, chairman of the choir, said that the best gift *Rivarate* could give to her would be to uphold the ethos and the purpose of the choir which Alison and her accompanist, Pam Asbury, had helped to shape over the six years while Alison was musical director.

Libby reminded everyone that the group of 15 singers who met in 2008, had now grown into a confident choir of 100 voices, which gives regular concerts in Caversham and raises significant sums for local charities. She added that the choir now has a well stocked music library, a bank account in the black, a continuing list of eager people who want to join and a sound administrative set-up.

Rivarate will be recruiting new members in the New Year. If you can sing in harmony and would like to join, please look at the choir's website and, if you like what you see, fill in an application form and send it to the membership secretary. The 25 men in the choir would always welcome a few more hefty tenors and basses to join them.

**Time to Say Goodbye (Con te Partiro)* is one of the songs Alison taught the choir to sing.

From the Lookout Post

St Martin's Centre

At the Reading council's planning committee meeting in November a request from the developer Hermes to defer a decision on their application until the next meeting in December was agreed.

The committee concluded that the design did not relate to Caversham as well as it should. Councillors supported concerns over the lack of tree coverage on Church Street and in particular, the conflict between the proposed building and the 150-year-old holm oak. Without amended plans, a

substantial part of the tree would require removal and there would be ongoing conflict with the residents of the new flats, whose living space will take into the canopy of the tree.

Hermes was asked to give due regard to these concerns before the next meeting.

Heights Primary School

Following letters from the Education Funding Agency to Rob Wilson, MP and to the head of education at Reading council, a press release was issued by the council. This explained that the EFA had concluded that the council was best placed to take the issue of finding a permanent site for the school forward "with the people of Caversham, to ensure the community is happy that the benefits the school brings, outweigh any compromises".

Before the council can proceed with a consultation, it will be necessary to separate the council's role as trustees of Mapledurham Playing Fields from its responsibilities as the local education authority tasked by the EFA to engage with the local community. The proposal is therefore to set up a sub-committee of councillors who would fulfil the council's responsibility as independent trustees. A report was due to go to a meeting of the council's policy committee in December.

While details of the consultation may be a little clearer by the time you read this, it is sadly inevitable that this will be a divisive time for Caversham. Let us hope that all parties can work together to mitigate the impact of whichever compromise decision is finally adopted.

Adult Care Services

The Care Act became law last May. Most of the changes come into effect this April, and reforms to the way care is funded come in from April 2016. The changes from this April are wide-ranging. They cover assessment, eligibility, care planning, carers, the local care market, safeguarding, and prevention. There are also some changes to how care is funded, in preparation for 2016.

From April a person who can afford to pay for their care and support in full and has support needs that can be met in their own home (e.g. with homecare visits or in supported living) can ask the local authority to arrange care on their behalf. This can include planning with the person the best services to meet their needs and organising a person's care with their chosen provider. The local authority is able to charge for some of these services, to cover the costs of providing this support.

The council has launched a consultation and a series of events including:

Talkback Matters session (for people with learning disabilities)

Tuesday 13th January 10.30am - 12pm
Emmanuel Methodist Church, Oxford Road

Older People's Working Group

Friday 6th February 2pm - 4pm

Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading

It may also be possible for council officers to come to explain and discuss the proposals with small groups. Contact the Consultation and Engagement Officer on 937 2383 or email careact.consultation@reading.gov.uk. You can also

contact Healthwatch Reading on 902 3912 for support with sharing your views about the proposals.

More information and the on line survey (open to 16th February) are available at www.reading.gov.uk by selecting About the Council - Consultations - Open Consultations - the Care Act In Reading.

Sharing our Streets

Over 100 people attended a joint meeting in November held by the Caversham Traders Association and CADRA (Caversham and District Residents' Association). The Sharing our Streets project was first launched at a meeting in November 2013. There was a clear message from Caversham people attending that first meeting and a new vision for Caversham centre was agreed.

Paul Matthews, CADRA committee member with over 40 years experience in the design and construction of highway and traffic schemes, received a warm welcome. He set out the way that traffic management has evolved and a range of ideas for possible changes to Caversham centre.

Traditional traffic management has been very successful in managing unprecedented flows and keeping British roads among the safest in the developed world. However, it has reinforced the dominance of motor traffic in places like Caversham. Our streets are now cluttered with signs and road markings and green traffic signals mean GO or speed through. A contemporary approach moves away from segregating road users. Instead, much of the paraphernalia is swept away. The driving environment is changed to introduce uncertainty, causing drivers naturally to modify their driving behaviour.

These techniques have been successfully introduced in other centres and elsewhere in Reading. Paul Matthews set out how they might be implemented in Caversham as a bare minimum, a transitional level or as a comprehensive scheme.

You can see the presentation or read the full report at www.cadra.org.uk. CADRA and Caversham Traders would welcome comments to info@cadra.org.uk or cavershamtraders@googlemail.com.

Those present at the meeting agreed that many of the ideas seem at first to be counter-intuitive but there was nevertheless considerable support for a comprehensive scheme. If progress is to be made towards a clear strategy for Caversham centre, it will need the support of councillors, council officers and of the people of Caversham.



The Sharing Our Streets meeting attended by more than 100 people.

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Season of Magi and mystery

The season of Epiphany is the part of the Church calendar which runs from Christmas into the first six days of this month. This article explores its background and origins.

The Epiphany, called Theophany in the Eastern churches, celebrates the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles, symbolised by Christ's manifestation to the Wise Men. The feast originally was more closely connected to Christ's baptism and this event as well as the miracle at Cana historically occurred on the 6th January. This may or may not be true.

The story of the Magi travelling from the East to see the Christ child only appears in Matthew's gospel. The word Magi comes from the Latin word meaning sage and these sages were possibly astrologers from Persia. They realised that the star they saw rising in the East was a sign that the king of the Jews had been born. It was an incredibly bright star so they followed it to Bethlehem. On their arrival they gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

We think of there being three Magi because three gifts are mentioned, but Matthew does not state any particular number. Since the third century Christian writers have referred to them

as kings but again there is no mention of royalty in the gospel. Their names, Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar, date to the Sixth century and mean 'Master of the Treasure', 'King' and 'Protector-of-the-king'.

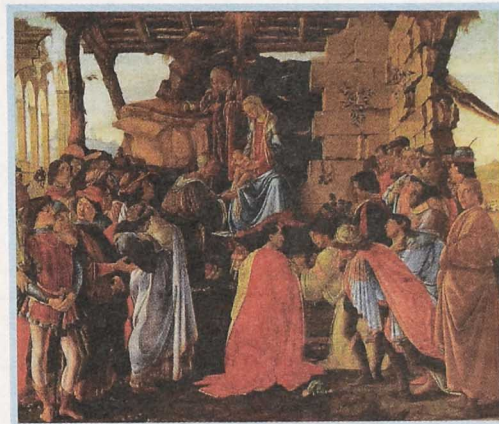
St Bede the Venerable tells us that Melchior was an old man with a long beard and white hair. He offered gold as to his king. Caspar was young and beardless and offered frankincense as homage to Divinity and Balthasar was of black complexion, bearded and middle aged and the myrrh he gave prefigured the death of the Son of Man. Again we do not know the basis for these words.

Bede thought that they represented three different races: European, Asian and African. According to another legend St Thomas initiated them into the Christian faith. They were then ordained priests and bishops and near the end of their lives the star reunited them – an interesting legend but again one without foundation.

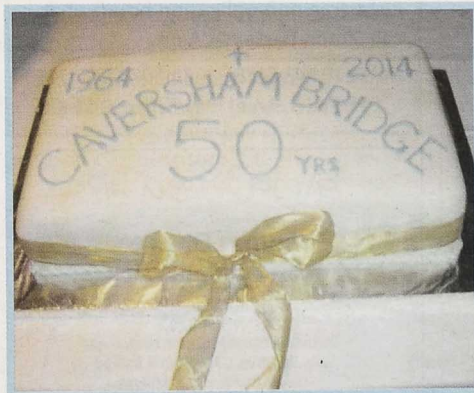
The Magi showed by their gifts who it was that was worshipped; myrrh because it was used to anoint a body after death and was symbolic of the sacrificial death of Jesus; gold

because He was a King whose kingdom would have no end and precious metals were often given to royalty; and frankincense because He was God and it symbolised his role as a priest (Incense carried prayers to heaven).

Today many Christians celebrate Epiphany. Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans, Lutherans and Methodists and countries all over the world have different ways of celebrating it.



Adoration of the Magi by Botticelli



Special cake for the anniversary

Tasty treat at Drop In centre

Last October Caversham Bridge, your church and community newspaper produced for and by the people of Caversham, celebrated 50 years of being in print. A wonderful party was held for all those who have given their time so generously to help produce the paper and the 120 volunteers who faithfully deliver it each month come rain or shine to local residents – many of whom are housebound.

Guests at the party at Caversham Heath golf club enjoyed a celebratory cake baked by the Bridge's distribution manager, Carol Moloney. What was left at the end of the evening was taken to the Drop In centre for the homeless in Reading to be enjoyed by their guests.

This month the Caversham Bridge directors wish to thank three people in particular who have given so much of their time: Pat Cleare for delivering the paper for many years (she can't remember how long!), Ann Seaman for co-ordinating a round and delivering on Caversham Park Village for 26 years and Jean Sawyer who has delivered the paper since it started 50 years ago! (More about Jean next month.)



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CHURCHES

Blessing of the graves

Father Paul, Parish Priest at Our Lady and St Anne's Catholic Church, Deacon Hugh Anscombe, permanent deacon at St Anne's, along with five priests from the Reading area, went to Henley Road Cemetery in November for the annual blessing of the graves.

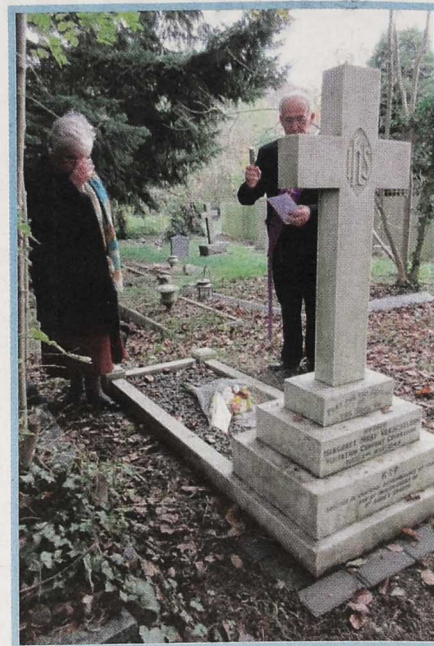
The priests and deacon were each designated to a part of the cemetery and there they blessed the graves that were pointed out

to them by relatives or friends. Each grave was blessed and sprinkled with Holy Water and prayers were said for those buried in it. In total about 100 people attended the ceremony.

The following Sunday, graves were blessed at Caversham Cemetery in Victoria Road by Deacon Hugh Anscombe. Although there are the graves of parents and grandparents of present parishioners in the cemetery, not many could be located but one of the graves that was blessed was that of two of the Visitation Sisters from the convent that until recently was in South View Avenue.

Last year was the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War, so it was decided to bless the graves of casualties from that war who were buried in Caversham Cemetery. Nineteen graves of WW1 casualties and three from WW2 are known to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and about half of these graves were located and blessed. The youngest war casualty buried in Caversham was just 17 when he died in July 1915.

Finally, prayers were said for all of the war dead and for all the people buried in the cemetery especially those who are relatives and friends of St Anne's parishioners.



Deacon Hugh blesses the grave of the Visitation Sisters
Photograph by Jane Shaw

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Remembrance lunch

On Remembrance Day in November the Caversham Baptist Church Sunday lunch took on the theme of remembrance and the commemoration of World War 1. Food, music and poetry were all based on those early years of the 20th Century.

It was a simple lunch of soup, rolls and salad, with a home grown feel. It included home-made bread pudding and trench cake, a dry cinnamon tasting cake which was popular among the soldiers in the trenches.

Music from the First World War was played, and some of the poetry written during the war and afterwards, was read.

As the meal progressed and the poetry read out the diners bowed their heads and remembered those who had fallen and those who had gone before. They then made a remembrance garden from the poppy crosses which were on the tables.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

In defence of Bugs Bottom

When I first came to Caversham in the 1980s, many local residents were in the middle of a long fought battle to preserve the Hemdean Valley (Bugs Bottom, as it is still known) from developers who wanted to build houses on it. I remember attending packed meetings at Caversham Primary School and Channel 4 made an award-winning TV documentary on the subject!

Despite the campaign and overwhelming opposition from Reading council, the development was ultimately given the go ahead by central government (Nicholas Ridley), although the numbers of houses were reduced. At least half the Hemdean Valley was then lost to housing.

Twenty five years later, what remains of Bugs Bottom is under threat again, including from your correspondent Martin Brommell (Caversham Bridge, December). Sadly some of the main campaigners to protect the Hemdean Valley back then, such as Molly Casey (life president of Caversham and District Residents' Association (CADRA), who also wrote a column for this newspaper, are not with us to resume the fight. However, many local residents have now been stirred into action to protect what is left of the Hemdean Valley from more development.

Although Martin Brommell says in defending Mapledurham playing fields as a site for the much-needed Heights Free School that such green space "will become a vital and very scarce commodity", he is nevertheless prepared to sacrifice the more ecologically important green space in Bugs Bottom as his favoured alternative site for the school.

What remains of Bugs Bottom is a prominent landscape of chalk grassland, ancient hedgerows and woodland with much plant diversity which is of huge amenity value to local residents, including children. It is designated in the Reading Local Plan as a Wildlife Heritage Site and as such is supposed to be protected from any more development.

As well as being highly valued by local residents, it has regular visitors from throughout the borough and further afield. Yes, there used to be an area in the 1990s housing development on Bugs Bottom set aside for a new school. But this has now been lost, as the site was deemed unsuitable and the school not needed at the time, so it was given over to build more housing instead.

This unfortunate fact does not mean that what remains of Bugs Bottom should now be sacrificed to build a school, especially as there are already two primary schools within a mile of Bugs Bottom. What is needed is a school to the west of these, which will encourage a reduction in car journeys and enable more children to walk to school.

Sadly we lost half of Bugs Bottom in the 1990s, despite huge local opposition. So it is even more important today that what remains of this much loved valley is protected for future generations.

Alan Pennington

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Key events in our first half century

As part of the celebration to mark the 50th anniversary in September of the first edition of the Caversham Bridge, Ian Lowry compiled a list of the key events over the 50 years. The first few years were published in a previous issue. Here are the next 24

1973. Pizza Hut opens its first UK restaurant in London.
January. The United Kingdom joins the European Economic Community.
April. VAT is introduced to the United Kingdom.
November. Princess Anne marries Captain Mark Phillips.

1974. The pandas Ching-Ching and Chia-Chia arrive from China.
March. Harold Wilson becomes Prime Minister for the second time. The general election results in a hung parliament for the first time since 1929.
November. Lord Lucan disappears after his children's nanny is found murdered.

1975. The year of David Beckham's birth.
February. Margaret Thatcher becomes the first woman to lead the Conservative Party.
October. Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody* is released.
December. The Balcombe Street siege in London ends after six days.

1976. Jeffrey Archer's first novel, *Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less* is published.
March. Anita Roddick opens first branch of The Body Shop in Brighton.
April. Harold Wilson resigns as Prime Minister.
December. Benjamin Britten, composer, dies.

1977. Colour TV licences exceed those for black and white for the first time.
April. Red Rum wins the Grand National for the third time.
May. The Queen begins her Silver Jubilee tour in Glasgow.
November. Firefighters hold first national strike to demand 30% wage increase.

1978. Concrete cows first appear in Milton Keynes.
March. *The Hitchiker's Guide to the Galaxy* first broadcast on Radio 4.
May. Liverpool F.C. retain the European Cup at Wembley.
September. The model Jodie Kidd is born.

1979. The year *Spandau Ballet* begins to play under this name.
February. Sid Vicious is found dead in New York.
July. Sebastian Coe sets new record for the mile in 3min 48.95secs.
August. Lord Mountbatten of Burma is murdered by Irish terrorists, along with three others.

1980. Alton Towers opens to the public.
February. First episode of *Fawlty Towers* broadcast by the BBC.
October. MG car production stops at Abingdon works after 56 years.
December. John Lennon is shot dead in New York.

1981. One hundredth FA Cup Final is played.
February. Rupert Murdoch purchases *The Times and Sunday Times*.
March. The first London Marathon is run.
September. Greenham Common Women's Peace camp is set up.

1982. The year of the Falklands War.
April. The Eurovision Song Contest is held in Harrogate.
October. The *Mary Rose* Tudor warship is raised from the Solent.
November. Arthur Askey, comedian, dies.

1983. CDs are first marketed in Britain.
January. BBC launches *Breakfast Time*, followed by *TV-am* the following month.
June. Tony Blair and Gordon Brown elected to Parliament for the first time.
November. Brinks MAT robbery at Heathrow Airport.

1984. Chatham Royal Naval Dockyard closes after 400 years.
February. Torville and Dean win gold at the Winter Olympics.
April. WPC Yvonne Fletcher is shot dead outside Libyan Embassy in London.
November. *Band Aid* records *Do they know it's Christmas?*

1985. Jilly Cooper invents Rutshire.
February. *East Enders* first broadcast by the BBC.
August. Fifty five people killed in Manchester air disaster.
December. *Comic Relief* launched on *Late, Late, Breakfast show*.

1986. Sir Alex Ferguson joins Manchester United.
March. *The Sun* claims Freddie Starr ate a live hamster.
April. The Duchess of Windsor dies.
September. The first episode of *Casualty* is broadcast on BBC 1.

1987. The Channel Tunnel is given the go-ahead.
March. *MS Herald of Free Enterprise* capsizes in Zeebrugge Harbour.
August. Michael Ryan shoots dead 14 people in Hungeford.
October. IKEA opens its first British store in Cheshire.

1988. *Hello!* magazine is first sold in Britain.
January. Margaret Thatcher becomes the century's longest serving Prime Minister.
June. President Ronald Regan visits Britain.
December. The Lockerbie air disaster results in 270 deaths.

1989. The Cold War ends.
April. The Hillsborough Stadium disaster at which 94 fans are killed.
August. The Marchioness collision in the Thames. Fifty one die.
November. Church of England General Assembly votes to allow ordination of women.

1990. The Channel Tunnel excavation meets in the middle.
July. Aldi opens its first British store in Birmingham.
August. BBC Radio 5 takes to the air.
November. John Major becomes Prime Minister.

1991. The year of the first Gulf War.
May. Manchester United win the European Cup Winner's Cup.
July. John McCarthy released from captivity in Lebanon. Terry Waite follows four months later.
November. PC World opens its first store in Croydon.

1992. The Queen celebrates her Ruby Jubilee.
February. The Maastricht Treaty is signed, creating the euro.
July. John Smith is elected Leader of the Labour Party.
November. The Queen declares the year as an *Annus Horribilis*.

1993. The year of the Downing Street declaration.
February. James Bolger is abducted and murdered in Liverpool.
September. UKIP is founded.
December. Diana, Princess of Wales withdraws from public life.

1994. The first women are ordained in the Church of England.
May. The Channel Tunnel is officially opened.
July. Tony Blair becomes Leader of the Labour Party.
August. Sunday Trading Act 1994 comes into full effect.

1995. Barings Bank collapses.
April. Bicester Village designer outlet opens.
September. Frank Bruno becomes WBC world heavyweight champion.
November. President Bill Clinton visits Northern Ireland.

1996. The Prince and Princess of Wales' divorce.
January. Arthur Scargill forms the Socialist Workers' Party.
March. The Dunblane massacre. Sixteen children and one adult killed.
July. Dolly the sheep, the first animal cloned from an adult cell, is born.

St John's Christmas Fair

The St John's Christmas Fair was held on Saturday 15th November. The stalls, including cakes, tombola, jams and preserves, handicrafts, jewellery, toys, books and Christmas decorations, all did a brisk trade.

There were games to play and some wonderful homemade sweets and chocolates on the Guides' stalls. The Caversham Community Cafe provided refreshments. With money still coming in, the fair raised in excess of £1300 for the Church.

Thanks go to all who helped, to Barclays Bank and to the many local businesses who provided prizes.



Some of the helpers at the fair

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Exhibition celebrates Wilfred Owen

The Dunsden Owen Association marked the centenary of World War 1 with a series of events linked to the name of Wilfred Owen, the war poet who lived in Dunsden for 18 months of his short life.

In the Village Hall, which he would have known as the Village School, an exhibition was staged, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and supported by local sponsors. It featured a room depicting life in rural Dunsden in the WWI period and used local archives, letters from Wilfred Owen and oral histories of residents who had family in the village, to capture a sense of the period and Dunsden at this time.

Many of the items on display were loaned by the community and families related to the men who lost their lives fighting in the war. There was a poetry corner where visitors created their own poems and a children's trail, both of which were very popular. The exhibition had more than 450 visitors over the two days.

David Woodward, of Design for Print, who designed and helped put together the exhibition, said: "It was a massive amount of work, but it was hugely gratifying to see our efforts appreciated by so many."

Emma Banks, curator of the exhibition, whose past heritage projects have featured in the BBC's Restoration TV programme, said: "Enthusiastic volunteers, support from the local Dunsden community in loaning artefacts and sharing their stories and the huge support from all the visitors made this project a joy to be a part of."

Mike Read of BBC Radio Berkshire, an avid poetry fan, who visited the exhibition and interviewed David and Emma for his programme, commented, "It was a wonderful, moving and educational exhibition."

'Letters to My Mother' was the title of a concert conceived and staged by John Bodman, co-chairman of the Dunsden Owen Association. Readings, drama and song formed the narrative of Wilfred Owen's life in Dunsden until his death in Ors in France in 1918, one week before the Armistice.

Boys from Shiplake College created moments of humour with their authentically risqué marching songs. John said, "The evening was a wonderful community event, and we are delighted with the 150-strong turnout."

Jackie Duminy, Mayor of Ors, Benoît Misson, President of the Association Wilfred Owen France, and Damian Grant of Lille University, were present at all events over the weekend, including the Remembrance Day service at All Saints Church on the Sunday. The friendship link was strengthened at the close of the weekend with a meal at Coppid Hall, home of Lord and Lady Phillimore, now patrons of the Dunsden Owen Association.

It is hoped that all those involved in the weekend will be inspired to read Owen's poems speaking of the tragedy of war. The next Dunsden Owen Association event will be the opening of the Wilfred Owen Trail that is planned to take place this spring. For further information visit: www.owenin-dunsden.org.



Pupils from Caversham Park primary school enjoying the exhibition

Requiem Indigo

St John's Church in Caversham held a special requiem service on Saturday 8th November. The music was composed by Len David, St John's organist and choirmaster. Members of the Hurst Singers joined with people from St John's choir, other local choirs and musicians to perform the seven movements of the Mass, and a song *When tomorrow starts without me*, based on a popular poem often found on funeral service sheets. The Revd Colin Bass, assisted by Revd John Dudley, led the service.

In this centenary of the First World War, the church remembered those who died in that war and subsequent conflicts. Proceeds from the retiring collection went to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal and St John's Church.

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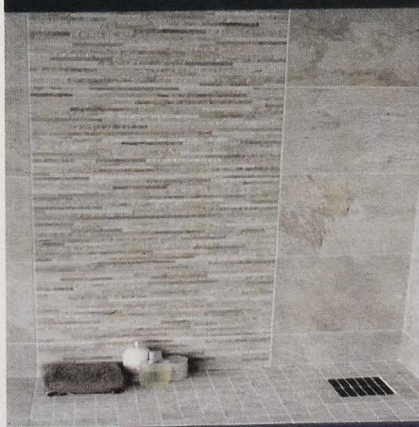
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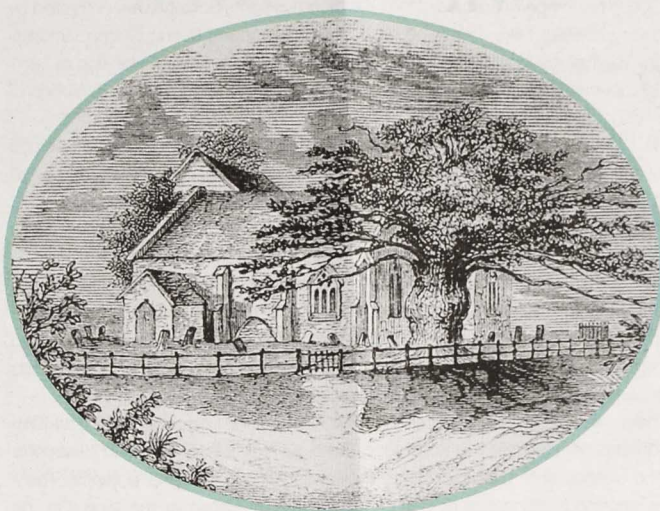
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ENVIRONMENT

Yew trees and churchyards



When I started thinking about a January article, I had just been contemplating Christmas, and was put in mind of a yew tree at the bottom of the garden, which occasionally gets a trim in December, and the trimmings are brought indoors and used for decoration. But the use of yew as a Christmas decoration has never really caught on – perhaps because it's not as readily available as holly, or perhaps because of its association with churchyards.

So much has been written about yew that I'm sure that from what I have on my bookshelves, I could write a whole monograph on the trees, considered from different points of view. There is the history, the folklore, the poisonous qualities, the pharmaceutical uses, other practical uses including archery, the longevity, the botany . . . So in the end I have decided to look at the yew just as a churchyard tree, and my picture shows a Victorian print of the once-famous tree in Aldworth churchyard. It was blown down in a storm in 1976.

There doesn't seem to be any one reason for the planting of yews in churchyards, and much of what has been written is contradictory.

The longevity of the tree is an established fact, though with very old trees the age has to be estimated, because the heart-wood has rotted away, so that, mercifully, you cannot count a thousand or more tree-rings. In some cases the tree is older than the church, and it has been said that it was customary to plant yew trees on pagan sacred sites. The druids have been mentioned in this connection. Could it not have been that sacred sites were established where yew trees were already growing?

When a pagan site became a Christian site, people had other notions. Yew trees, with their sombre foliage, reminded people of funerals and of the fact that one day we all must die. On the other hand, they were long-lived, evergreen trees, reminding us of the promise of eternal life.

Then, rather fancifully, when a yew tree is newly cut down, the heart wood tends to be red, and the sap wood is comparatively white, reminding church-goers of the body and blood of Christ. (I don't think many people can ever have seen one that's been newly cut down.)

Now to more practical considerations. It has been suggested that the trees would somehow absorb poisonous substances from the graves, and the noxious vapours arising from them, making the trees themselves poisonous. Then, in 1307, King Edward I ordered yew trees to be planted in churchyards to reduce the risk of churches being damaged by gales. Yew trees were planted round churchyards because they were poisonous, and livestock would have the sense to keep away from the churchyards. Or was it that the trees were planted in churchyards so that livestock could not eat them, because in rural areas, churchyards were the only pieces of land that were fenced off? In addition, farmers, to prevent their livestock from being poisoned, would make sure that churchyard fences were kept in order.

The most common belief regarding yews and churchyards is that they were planted so that, in due time, the wood could be cut to make long-bows, to be used by armies in warfare, but even this seems not to be true. I was disappointed to learn from the book *Longbow*, by Robert Hardy, that the wood of English yew-trees was too brittle for this purpose, and that the wood for the best English long-bows was usually imported from Italy and from Spain!

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Caversham Heights Society

During November members of the Caversham Heights Society were enthralled by two very different talks on related matters that happened during Queen Victoria's reign. The first, by local resident John Brearley, was on the Great Exhibition of 1851 which opened on 1st May, 1851, in Hyde Park. Its full title was A Great Exhibition of the Arts of All Nations.

In 1798 the French had held an exhibition of arts and folk ceramics in Paris and between then and 1849 several other exhibitions were held linking the arts, design and industry. Prince Albert was intrigued and felt that Great Britain should follow suit. A Royal Commission consisting of 50 of the great and good of Victorian society was established to look into the feasibility of doing something similar.

The result was that Paxton was commissioned to design a giant glass house, dubbed the Crystal Palace by Punch magazine. It took 10 months to build, five months to show the exhibits and a further five months to dismantle and move it to Sydenham in Kent, resulting in the loss of thousands of houses, making thousands of families homeless. It was eventually destroyed by fire in 1934.

There was considerable opposition to the whole project on grounds of cost [£15 million to build], the fact that at a cost of three guineas (£3.15) to attend it was only for the wealthy, and that it did little to showcase Britain's industrial potential. There were enormous disparities of wealth and poverty in Britain at the time. On the positive side it did lead to investment in building projects such as the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Natural History Museum, the Royal College of Music, and the Albert Memorial.

The theme of our second talk was building of a different sort, that of the London Underground, the first and oldest in the world. Beginning in 1863 it pre-dated the Paris Metro [1900] and the New York Metro [1904] and has been used as a model for all subsequent underground railway systems. Its origins came about because of population growth and traffic congestion in London but it was the Inspiration and drive of Marc Isambard Brunel and his son Isambard Kingdom Brunel that drove the project through, despite the difficulties of tunnelling.

The downsides of the underground were the destruction of thousands of homes, with the inevitable homelessness, but it also led to the outward expansion of London into what John Betjeman called Metroland and the re-housing of thousands of Londoners. Some would say that these early aspirations have yet to be realised since there were plans to build a railway from Paris via Dover to Manchester -- shades of HSR2.

New members wishing to join the society and who would be interested in informative talks such as the above should contact Jill Hodges either by email on IrishJill@southcote.com or phoning 959 5307.

Caversham Townswomen's Guild

Following a busy December, January is a quiet month for the guild.

A lunch club visit to Badgemoor Park, Henley, this time was for the regular sampling of lunchtime venues. There are no meetings of the main club or the social studies group in January, but the Scrabble club meet as usual. Our next meeting is on 19th February at Caversham Heights Methodist Church at 7.30pm. We will be holding a members' evening and bring and buy. We are always glad to see any ladies who wish to visit or join us.

Probus

The speaker at the November meeting of Reading and District Probus Club was Joe Mendell, who gave a talk entitled 'Bob Newhart Rides Again'. The presentation was mainly in the manner of the well-known American comedian, and consisted of a series of hilarious sketches, mostly being in conversation with a person whose side of the conversation was omitted. Born in 1929, Bob Newhart started his working life as an accountant, and the first sketch was a speech he might have made on leaving this employment. Following this, he starred in a number of television series.

The sketches included playing roles as an airline pilot, a driving instructor, a teacher, a policeman and many others, and his brand of humour was well received by the club members.

Probus is a club for retired men, who enjoy a meal once a month in the congenial company of like-minded men, followed by a talk on a variety of interesting subjects. The club meets at the Caversham Heath golf club. If you are interested in joining, contact the secretary David Laird on 947 0709.

Rosehill WI

At the November meeting, President Margaret Pyle welcomed members and visitors on a rather dull afternoon. After notices given by secretary Mary Robinson about future events in the WI calendar plus a financial report by treasurer Doris Goddard, it was time for our speaker Bob Whelpton (The Chocolate Man). He gave a very interesting talk about how chocolate was introduced, being started in Holland

in 1828, where it was a healthy drink. Chocolate, as we know it, has developed over the years, with the dark chocolate, having the most cocoa powder and less cocoa butter, being the healthiest. Milk chocolate and white chocolate have less cocoa powder, more butter and in some cases, milk, cream and sugar added. After the talk members were invited to buy some of his wares. He also kindly donated some of his chocolates and sweets for raffle prizes.

During the meeting, Margaret told us she had been in contact with Doreen Mann who recently moved away, and said that she is very happy in her new home. A flower card had been sent to Doreen to wish her happiness in the future.

In October a group from Rosehill went to the Hexagon to hear a talk by Michael Portillo. It was a very interesting, and often amusing, talk about his life, firstly as a politician serving under Margaret Thatcher, and going on to his love for steam trains and how he came to do his TV series.

The same month two of us went to Sonning Glebe WI for their 50th birthday meeting, a very enjoyable evening. After a short meeting, Annie Assherton talked about her experiences of being a participant in Master Chef, telling what went on behind the scenes and the camaraderie between the contestants.

Our meetings are held at St Barnabas Church Hall, Emmer Green, on the first Wednesday of each month at 2.00 pm. Come along and we will make you very welcome.

Caversham WI

Members were in for a surprise when they met in November. The expected speaker had been involved in a car accident and was unable to attend. We look forward to meeting her at a later date. A social evening with money prizes was hastily arranged instead.

Christmas arrangements were finalised. The competition -- a foliage table centre -- was judged by members and Margaret Cameron was declared the winner with Ishbel Nicolson and Sylvia Myszor as runners up.

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www.abwalker.co.uk**FORTHCOMING EVENTS****Women's World Day of Prayer**

Everyone is welcome to attend this year's service for Women's World Day of Prayer – men, women and children – which will be held at St John's Church, Caversham, on Friday 6th March at 8.00pm.

The theme of the service, prepared by Christian women in the Bahamas, is taken from St John's Gospel, chapter 13. Jesus said to them: "Do you know what I have done for you?" It challenges us to demonstrate the same radical, unconditional love for others that Jesus showed when he washed the feet of his disciples.

10k run for charityThe annual Woodcote 10k road run, now organised by Pangbourne Rotary with the Goring, Woodcote and District Lions Club, will take place on Sunday 11 January, starting from Woodcote village hall at 10.30 am. The main beneficiary for this charity road run will be *Hope for Tomorrow* as well as Rotary and Lions, and other charity projects.

By entering you not only help yourself but also the various charities. As with previous years the course is on undulating side roads, kilometre marked, and marshalled. Free hot drinks will be provided for all runners and there will be water stations en route and at the finish. Limited changing, showers (male only) and toilets will be available. Minimum age for entry is 15. All finishers will receive a medal.

For entry forms telephone 984 2660, email 10k@pangbournorotary.org.uk or download from **www.woodcote10k.org.uk****Reading Male Voice Choir in concert**

St Peter's Church, Caversham, will present a concert by the renowned Reading Male Voice Choir in church on Saturday January 17th. The concert will also include solos by Pam Asbury (soprano), a leading member of the St Peter's church choir.

The male voice choir, which has 80 members, will sing a varied programme of songs from their current repertoire which includes hymns, spirituals, folk songs, show songs and classical pieces.

The concert is in aid of the church organ appeal, which has now raised over £40,000 towards a final target of £55,000. It starts at 7.30pm and refreshments will be available in the interval.

Tickets cost £10 if purchased in advance from the Parish Office (tel 947 1703) or £12 on the door. For more information check the church web site: **www.stpetercaversham.org.uk****Reading Gardeners**

The club start the New Year with two excellent talks by local speakers. On 14th January Michael Keith-Lucas, our president, will talk on Gardens of Cornwall and on 28th January

Bible Friends**John baptises Jesus**

John was calling out to all the people, "Get ready! Get ready! Someone special is coming!"

"Who is coming?" the people asked.

"Someone special is coming from God," replied John.

"How do we have to get ready?" the people asked.

"Say sorry for the wrong things you've done," John told them. "And come to the river and be baptised."

One day, John saw Jesus coming. At once he knew that God had sent that person he had promised. And that person was Jesus!

"Baptise me!" Jesus said to John.

"But you're God's special one," John said. "I can't baptise you."

"It's what God wants just now," Jesus told him.

So John baptised Jesus. Then two special things happened. A beautiful white bird seemed to come and rest on Jesus, to show that the Holy Spirit was there to help Jesus. Then God's gentle voice was heard saying, "Jesus is my own Son. And I am very pleased with him."

Matthew 3:13-17



Val Pretlove, a registered City of London guide, will talk on Hidden Gardens of London.

Meetings are held in Caversham Primary School at 7.30pm. For more information visit our website **www.readinggardenersclub.org.uk****Caversham Allotment
Association**The next meeting of the association is on Tuesday 13th January at Church House, Caversham. The speaker will be Paul Patton an experienced horticulturalist who will be talking about *Composts, Growing Media and Mulches*, an ideal subject before the growing season starts.

Please come along. The talk starts at 7.30 and there will be refreshments and a raffle. Entrance is free. Contact Carol Wheeler on 9475802 for further details. Don't forget that Church House now has a lift for those who can't manage the stairs.

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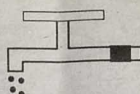
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