

# THE LONGEST NIGHT

It seems that everyone has a story about the snow that fell on 21 December (the longest night) last year. At Caversham Heights Methodist Church, we too had an exciting time.

Early in the evening, my doorbell rang, and a very public-spirited neighbour asked if I knew that a number of motorists were stranded on the main road in their cars and trucks, and wondered whether we could open the church hall and offer hot drinks? While she went off to tell shivering drivers we were opening up, I phoned several church members who live nearby, and in a short space of time, we were offering warm shelter, hot drinks and most importantly, loos!

Many cars, vans and lorries, including big trucks, were straddling St. Peter's Hill and Woodcote Road, and soon we had dozens of people, old and young (plus a couple of dogs) thawing out. Amazingly, the word got out very quickly, and a number of local residents (not necessarily connected with our church), appeared at the hall, offering help, food, bedding and accommodation, and so as the evening wore on, we were able to provide soup and sandwiches. Woodcote Way Stores kindly stayed open long enough for us to stock up on some items. (One local resident generously paid for these.) When it became clear that those travellers not within walking distance of home, would have to spend the night in Caversham, some folk were taken to local homes, and the rest slept at the church. Several valiant volunteers stayed up all or most of the night (thank you, Sarah & Steve, and Adam!), and in the morning, we offered a simple breakfast of toast and tea.

A BBC TV reporter appeared early on, and later, we were phoned by Radio Berkshire, the Reading Chronicle, the Reading Post and Rob Wilson

MP. A few drivers decided to leave their cars and try the train. A police officer eventually appeared, but when there was still no sign of the road being cleared, some of the truckers knocked on doors, borrowed shovels, and began clearing the road. Meanwhile, some new drivers had arrived, having left the Oxford area that morning, unaware that the road was blocked.

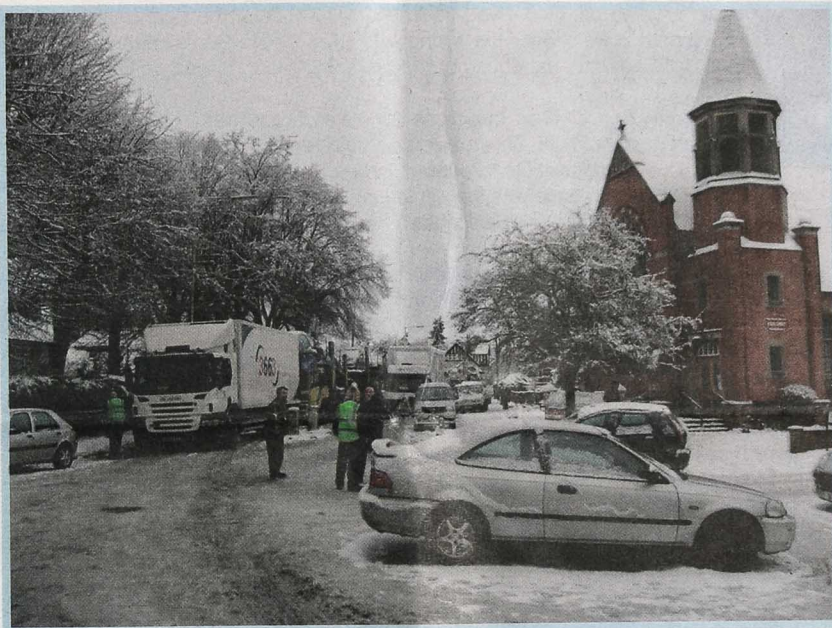
We continued to benefit from the help and support of the Caversham community - for example, some bacon sandwiches turned up in the morning; someone brought in a flask of hot chocolate; and folks walked down to Waitrose to buy supplies and received a donation of tea bags from the store.

By midday on 22nd, all of our temporary visitors had gone, but not before some of the truckers had generously taken up a collection in gratitude.

If you are one of the people who very kindly offered or gave help, food or bedding that night, we are deeply grateful for your generosity. If you need reimbursement for your expenses, please contact me. Any surplus money from the collection will be divided between Shelter and Action for Children. If you lent bedding or a shovel, we still have a few items left in the church hall! Please ring (0118) 9470040 to arrange collection.

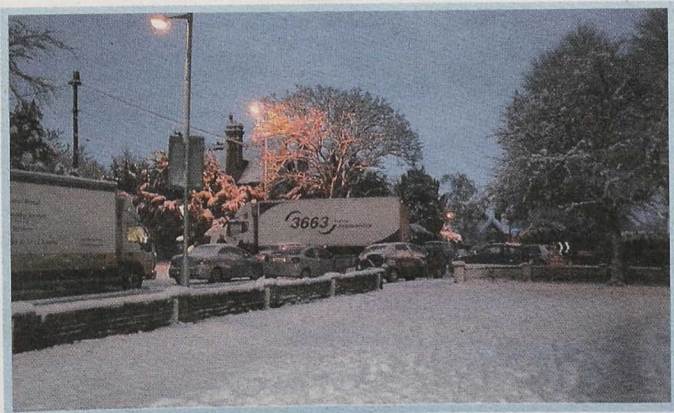
Once again, a big thank you to all those generous people who showed community spirit that night. When giving us the collected money, one of the truckers made a little speech. He said, "We thought Caversham people were all posh. We truckers are seen as the scum of the earth, but you've treated us with respect and kindness. Thank you."

(Rev) Jenny Dowding



10.45am Tuesday by the church.

K. Macrae



Woodcote Road  
early on  
Tuesday  
morning

Photos:

J Dowding



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## Caversham Clergy

### ANGLICAN

Rev'd Derek Chandler, 20 St Barnabas Road.  
Tel: 947 8239.

[www.saintbarnabas.org.uk](http://www.saintbarnabas.org.uk)

Rev'd Nigel Jones, St Andrews Vicarage,  
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[www.standrewscaversham.org](http://www.standrewscaversham.org)

Rev'd Alveen Thoresen, 25 Ilkley Road, Caversham,  
RG4 7BD. Tel: 946 4786

Rev'd Keith Knee-Robinson, 8 Hewett Close,  
Caversham, RG4 7ER Tel: 947 7868

Rev'd Dan Tyndall, The Rectory, 20 Church Road,  
Caversham. Tel: 0118 947 9505

### CAVERSHAM PARK ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP

Rev'd Margaret Dimmick, 12 Lowfield Road,  
Caversham Park. Tel: 947 0258

Heather Wilson, 15 Northbrook Road, Caversham  
Park. Tel: 947 5152

### METHODIST TEAM MINISTRY

Rev Jenny Dowding, 72 Highmoor Road. Tel: 947 2223  
Deacon Becky Bawden, 1 Forge Close, Caversham RG4  
8BG. Tel: 948 2530

### BAPTIST

Paul Rhodes. Tel: 954 5353

### GRACE CHURCH (formerly Caversham Hill Chapel)

Colin Gault. Tel: 948 4151

### ROMAN CATHOLIC

Fr Giles Goward, The Presbytery, 2 South View Avenue.  
Tel: 947 1787.

Deacon Mike Walker, Tel: 07786 836146

Fr Christopher Bester, 18 Peppard Road, Sonning  
Common. Tel: 972 3418

### NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD

Rev H R Gayle Tel: 945 3849 (contact)

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## TALKING POINT

by

John Madeley

## Where is God in all these\* disasters?

An earthquake in Indonesia, a tsunami affecting Samoa and Tonga, a typhoon hitting Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia, devastating flooding in South India, severe drought in Kenya and Ethiopia. Hundreds of people dead, tens of thousands displaced. Suffering on a massive scale. It all happened in a week in late September last year. What is going on? Where is God in all these disasters? Why doesn't God intervene to stop them?

These are fair questions. The meaning of suffering is difficult for us to answer, but what we do know is that God gives a free will. In that sense God is vulnerable to our choices. If we choose to exercise that free will in a way that is damaging for others, and for ourselves, God does not stop us. God gives us freedom, to choose the right or the wrong path. If we choose the wrong path, it will grieve God's heart, but God does not stop us, does not act like some giant policeman in the sky.

God the Son died on the cross 2000 years ago because people decided he should die. They exercised their free will. God did not stop them. The world is not God's puppet theatre. God guides us to use our free will in accordance with his will for us. But if we ignore it, if we turn away from God, if we abuse natural resources, then consequences may follow.

We should stop calling disasters "natural disasters". Severe floods and droughts, hurricanes, typhoons and cyclones are occurring at twice the rate of 40 years ago. They are not as natural as they seem, they are more related to the way we live than they appear. Disasters are increasingly related to climate change, to emissions of carbon, to the world's heavy use of energy. And that includes our use of energy.

A few years ago, Christian Aid published a report entitled "Unnatural Disasters". It said that rich nations such as Britain were condemning poor countries to an "ever increasing number of overwhelming humanitarian catastrophes". Climate-related disasters, which kill thousands of people and cost millions in terms of providing aid to stricken populations, are man-made and should no longer be termed natural disasters, it said. But what about earthquakes? 98% of people who die in earthquakes die not because of the earthquake itself, but because buildings collapse on them. They are related to poverty. On tsunamis, we know from the 2004 tsunami that where nature's barriers were intact - mangrove forests along coast lines for example - there was far less damage. New tourist hotels, shrimp farms etc had caused many of these barriers to be removed.

Where is God in these disasters? God is with those who suffer. And God is with us, calling us to be more responsible stewards of the beautiful world he created.

What can we do? At the very least we can support the 10/10 Initiative - cut our emissions of carbon, our use of electricity, gas, oil, by 10% by the end of 2010. Cutting our emissions is vital if our children, our grandchildren are to have a future. It's vital if children, women and men in poor countries are to have a present. Where is God in all this? God is working in us.

*John Madeley has been writing about disaster related events for some 30 years.*

*\*This was written before the earthquake in Haiti.*

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## Caversham Bridge

Contributions for the March 2010 issue should be sent to St Peter's Parish Office by Tuesday 5nd February. The date for the April 2010 issue is Tuesday 2nd March 2010.

Advertising copy for the March 2010 issue should be sent to Mr A Wright, Twigmoor, Upper Warren Avenue, Caversham, by **Friday** 29th January 2010. The date for the March 2010 issue is **Friday** 26th February 2010.

## 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

10.00am Parish Eucharist

#### St Andrew's, Harrogate Road

8.00am The Eucharist  
10.00am Parish Eucharist (Sung)  
First Sunday, Family Eucharist  
11.30am The Eucharist  
6.30pm Evening Prayer (as announced)

#### St Barnabas, Grove Road, Emmer Green

8.00am Holy Communion  
9.30am Family Communion (apart  
from 2nd Sunday)  
9.30am Family Service (2nd Sunday only)

#### St Margaret's, Mapledurham

11.00am Parish Communion

### CAVERSHAM PARK ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP

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

### CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH

10.30am South Street  
3.45pm Hymn Café (3rd Sunday)  
6.30pm Usually at 191 Kidmore Road

### 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 and 6.30pm

#### Gosbrook Road

10.30am and 6.30pm

#### Woodcote Parish Church

9.45am (second Sunday)

### ROMAN CATHOLIC

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11.00am Divine Worship

6.00pm Evening Service

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.

Published by Caversham Christian News Ltd, Church Street, Caversham, Reading RG4 8AX Tel: 0118 947 1703.

Typeset by Caversham Print & Design, 2a Randolph Road, Reading RG1 8EG  
Tel: 0118 939 1981 Fax: 0118 959 8090  
E-mail: [splat@cavershamprint.co.uk](mailto:splat@cavershamprint.co.uk)

Printed by Newbury Weekly News (Printers) Ltd, Newspaper House, Faraday Road, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 2DW.



## Caversham residents help bring the Peace Light to the UK

In December the Peace Light was taken by an Austrian child from Bethlehem to Vienna where it was shared at an ecumenical service for distribution around Europe and beyond. Members of Scoute de France carried it to Béthune in Northern France where they were joined by UK Scout members at an ecumenical service to accept the special symbol which they then ferried to Dover. On 14 December the main service of distribution took place at St Paul's RC Church in Dover and from there the light was taken across the UK.

Caversham residents Margaret and Richard Ellison, who had taken part in the service at Béthune, brought the light to Caversham where it was distributed to many local churches, including St Barnabas, St John's, St Peter's and Caversham Heights Methodist.

The Peace Light from Bethlehem campaign was

originally started by the Austrian Broadcasting Authority, being part of a charitable relief mission for handicapped children and people in need both in Austria and abroad. The light comes from Bethlehem because it is a city which has special significance for Moslems, Jews and Christians of all denominations. The aim of the campaign is to bring the light and peace message to as many people as possible to encourage everyone, especially Scouts and Guides, actively to create peace in their environment. The Austrian Scout movement became involved when they were invited to be the couriers of the light when it reached Austria, in the hope that they could spread the light through Europe. In 1996 the UK Scouts and Guides were invited to accept the light. This challenge was accepted by the Deep Sea Scout Fellowship about whom Margaret Ellison can provide information (e-mail [ellisonm@waitrose.com](mailto:ellisonm@waitrose.com))



Lighting candle with Peace Light at Civic Service



Margaret Ellison taking part in the service at Béthune.

Courtesy Margaret Ellison

## CORRESPONDENCE

I was interested to read the article about hops in the last issue. I lived in the Malvern area as a teenager surrounded by hop fields so my memory is of driving past high hedges grown to protect the emerging shoots from late frosts. By September these shoots which had been trained up the poles in rows, formed huge green canopies high above one's head. One September I worked in the drying kilns in a local farm which grew hops for the Guinness Dublin brewery, a hot, dusty and smelly experience. Luckily I did not mind the pungent smell, and being indoors avoided the frequent September showers. In addition to beer drinking, I have continued my relationship with hops by collecting Edwardian postcards of hop pickers.

One aspect the article omitted is that hop shoots can be used as food for those of you keen on hedgerow foraging. Admittedly the result is more of a snack than a significant part of one's "five portions a day" as these shoots are very small in diameter. Therefore I am not going to divulge my local source of hedgerow hops. Despite meagre returns from forage the result is worth it as the cooked young shoots could be mistaken for asparagus in a blind tasting. The recipe to prepare hop shoots is as follows:

Pick young shoots before May. Each shoot should be about 20 cm (8 inches) long from the growing tip and not include any leaves. Plunge shoots briefly into boiling water to blanch, drain and immediately eat. Serve with melted butter and season with salt and pepper as an accompaniment to a main dish.

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Francis Serjeant

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# From the Lookout Post

## The pre-Christmas winter storm – the good, the bad and the ugly

I spring to defend the borough council on the fact that they were not able to deal robustly with the pre-Christmas snow and ice. Thirty years of experience in a snow laden area leads me to conclude that measures, such as gritting, need to be taken before conditions deteriorate, and while the gritting lorries can travel. My careful attention to the forecast noted that there was no adequate severe weather warning, in spite of the fortune that has been spent on the met office's new computers!

That said, the treacherous conditions brought out the best in Caversham folk to assist those in difficulties. There were outstanding undertakings, such as the Caversham Heights Methodist Church providing refreshment and accommodation for those that were stranded. Additionally, many ordinary folk gave warm drinks to passing and indeed stationary strangers, and invited them to use their toilets. Tribute should be paid to RBC and Reading Buses staff, who persevered in getting to work and took on duties that were not part of the normal remit, such as digging out the buses.

Royal Berkshire Hospital staff also made their marked contribution. Approximately 675 fractures were tended in a three-day period, more than double the normal load. The question is, how many of these fractures could have been avoided if the roads and pavements had been dealt with by timely gritting and snow clearance? And in a cost/benefit analysis it has to be recognised that some fractures are not straight forward, involving complicated medical procedures and long recoveries.

That is the good and the bad, what was the ugly dimension to the storm? That has to go to the mean spirited individuals and firms that clamped and/or levied penalties on vehicles which could not be moved any further. Many excuses for this severe enforcement of parking restrictions have been offered, such as private parking spaces being blocked for their normal user, but none of them are convincing. Drivers took either a responsible decision to park up, reducing the chance of an accident, or the decision was made for them by their vehicle not being drivable, or their way blocked. Penalising them should not even have been contemplated.

## Thames Valley police and Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs)

For three years there have been two NAGs in Caversham working with the police and other organisations to identify priority problems and the action needed to address them. The NAGs are in the process of consulting on their roles, including surveys and public open meetings. Meetings for North and West Caversham have slowly faded away and action is needed to bring new life and to reflect the current

concerns for that area. A separate article and notice, on page 5, by Caversham Inspector Penny McKenzie gives further information. Please do voice your concerns at the north and west Caversham NAG meeting on **Tuesday 9 February 2010 from 6pm to 8pm at Highdown school hall.**

## Reading Mayor's St George's Day dinner

Caversham Councillor, Mayor Fred Pugh, is holding a St George's Day Dinner, on Friday 23 April 2010, with event profits going to his charities of Diabetes UK and Sue Ryder Care. This will be one of the final events of his mayoral year. It has been rewarding to follow the wide range of events supported by Councillor and Mrs Pugh.

The evening starts with a champagne canapé reception, and is followed by a five course dinner. The evening, at the new Hilton hotel, includes table gifts, dancing to Supper Club jazz band, table magicians and a disco. Tickets are on sale individually at £60 per head, or tables of 10 at £550. If you wish to support this initiative please ring 0118 939 0071 (or email [sandie.bonner@reading.gov.uk](mailto:sandie.bonner@reading.gov.uk)) to obtain more information or make your reservations.

## Bridge Street corner with Church Road

This corner of land, so prominent as you enter and leave Caversham, has been looking increasing dilapidated and uncared for. Concern has been expressed by local businesses, by the Friends of Caversham Court and by CADRA. If you would like to add particular concerns or can help in any way, both FOCC and CADRA would be pleased to hear from you.

## Reading Transport plans

The current Local Transport Plan lasts until April 2011 and by that time a new plan, Local Transport Plan 3, must be in place for the following five years. This should set out the objectives, policies and schemes for the area and must follow new guidelines issued in July 2009 by the Department of Transport. There will be a number of consultations on work leading to the new plan during 2010. We are told there should be more information on [www.reading-travelinfo.co.uk](http://www.reading-travelinfo.co.uk).

## Development sites in the locality

The final report on sites in Reading was considered by the full council last month so look out for reports. There is information via the CADRA website, [www.cadra.org.uk](http://www.cadra.org.uk). The timetable being followed by South Oxfordshire District Council is slightly different. Their broad strategy does not favour development on the Reading border but proposals from a number of landowners have yet to be considered and we are expecting a further consultation.

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## Meeting to revive the NAG in Upper Caversham

Neighbourhood policing aims to increase communities' levels of confidence in policing via the setting up of locally focused teams of police officers and police community support officers (PCSO's). The local team works together with special constables, local authority wardens and staff, as well as volunteers in partnership with local communities.

Across the country, over 3,600 Neighbourhood Policing teams have been set up, with around 13,500 police officers and over 16,000 PCSOs deployed and working to deliver the new approach.

Central to Neighbourhood Policing in the Thames Valley is the **Neighbourhood Action Group, or NAG**. The NAG is a 'multi-agency problem-solving group consisting of relevant partner agencies, key stakeholders but most importantly members of the local community...brought together to plan and action the main concerns identified by the local community.'

Over 200 NAGs are now in place across the TVP area, typically meeting once every six to eight weeks to tackle those issues highlighted as priorities in each area.

Despite the initial enthusiasm generated following a public meeting held at St Andrews Hall, the Upper Caversham NAG has slowly dissolved. Although I optimistically assumed this was because there weren't any issues concerning the residents in Caversham Heights, Mapledurham, Emmer Green or Caversham Park Village, recent surveys completed by local residents have indicated otherwise.

Three areas of concern have leapt out as being the top three; **road traffic issues** (particularly speeding and cycling on the footpath), **burglary** and **environmental issues** (particularly litter, lighting and noise).

A public meeting will be held to discuss these issues to ensure they are those causing the most concern in order that the NAG can tackle them during 2010.

It is important that as many local residents attend the meeting as possible being the only ones that really know what needs to be done to make the neighbourhood safer and better.

I hope to see you all on **Tuesday 9th February 2010 at 6pm at Highdown School, Surley Row.**

If you haven't completed a survey and cannot make the meeting but wish your views to be considered, please e-mail me at [penny.mackenzie@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk](mailto:penny.mackenzie@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk).  
*Penny Mackenzie*

## Singing for the Brain

A requiem service featuring music composed by organist and choirmaster Len David will be held at St John the Baptist Church, St John's Road, Caversham on Saturday 27th February, 2010, at 7:30pm. The choir, with soloists and instrumentalists, has been brought together from across Reading - and further afield - especially to perform the requiem.

There will be a collection in aid of the Alzheimer's Society (Singing for the Brain).

For further information, visit the website, [www.achurchnearyou.com/caversham-st-john-the-baptist](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/caversham-st-john-the-baptist)

## The Victoria Cross

Wednesday 24th February 2010 in Our Lady & St Anne's Church, South View Avenue.

To commemorate the gazetting of the very first VCs in 1857, a fascinating talk on the history of the Victoria Cross, entitled "For Valour", will be given by one of the world's leading experts on the subject, historian Michael Naxton, curator of the largest collection of VCs in existence. Tickets £5, available after weekend Masses or on the door on the evening. All proceeds in aid of the Building Fund.

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## CHURCHES

## A SUNDAY IN KANDY

As part of the Centenary celebrations at Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Rev Rosemary Fletcher, who was Minister from 1997 to 2004, had been invited to preach at the 10.30 and 6.30 services on Sunday 27th November. Rosemary and her husband, James Rowley, had offered themselves as Mission Partners in 2004, and following their training they travelled to Sri Lanka where they are based at The Theological College of Lanka, in Pilimalalawa near Kandy. Rosemary teaches at the college and acts as faculty secretary. James is the Development Officer for the college.

As well as the two services, Rosemary and James agreed to give a presentation on their life in Sri Lanka to a crowded church hall at 4.00 pm. The subject was 'A Sunday in Kandy'.

A typical Sunday in Kandy, we were told, would include a drive to a church service sometimes conducted in three languages – English, Sinhala and Tamil, in one of the several churches in Kandy, negotiating the way past elephants which are a common sight on the streets of the city, followed by shopping (James mentioned that for him Kandy was one of the few places where shopping was 'nearly' enjoyable), lunch at one of the many restaurants – this could be 'short eats' – a snack or a meal consisting of several different and delicious-looking curries and rice (no, we didn't have any samples just photographs!), followed by a stroll around the Royal Botanical



Elephant on a Sunday stroll. - Courtesy Rosemary & James

Gardens and the lake, passing by the Temple of the Tooth, one of the most sacred of the Buddhist temples.

Question time proved very interesting, and we learned more about the effects of the war on the ordinary people of the country, but we also learned of a gentler, less pressured way of life, and it was clear that both James and Rosemary have a real affection for the country and its people.

Rosemary and James flew back to Sri Lanka next day, following what turned out to be a very busy fortnight in England.

## News from Parish of Our Lady and St Anne

On the third Sunday of Advent, thirty-four candidates for Confirmation were introduced to the congregation during the ten o'clock mass. They declared their desire to be confirmed and were promised the prayers of their families and of the whole congregation to help them during the months of preparation to receive the sacrament.

After mass, a celebration for the restoration of the Angelus bell took place in the Cenacle meeting room. Parishioners were able to enjoy a piece of stollen and a glass of wine or other beverage to toast the bell and its donor. Over the weekend of the Feast of Christ the King, the newly restored bell had rung out for the first time to the great delight of many of the congregation, especially those who remembered its sound from years ago. Each day now, it starts with the Angelus at 9 am, then sounds the Angelus at noon and at 6 pm. and strikes the hours in between until 8 pm. At weekend, it tolls for 15 minutes before the Sunday masses.

A few days earlier a flower arranging afternoon had been arranged, mainly for those of the parish who are unable to get out to events in the evening. As well as demonstrating ideas for Christmas decorations, refreshments were provided for those who attended. Money raised by the event was used for the purchase of flowers for the church at Christmas.



Jane Shaw

Father Giles and Mary Van Den Berghe during the celebration.

## WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

On Friday 5th March over three million people worldwide will be praying and worshipping together during the annual day of prayer, using a service prepared by Christian women in Cameroon.

Emma Wilcock, president of the national committee of the Women's World Day of Prayer movement, said: 'This is always an exciting day as a great wave of prayer sweeps the world, beginning when the first service is held in the Queen Salote's Girls' School in Tonga and continuing around the world until the final service takes place, some 35 hours later, in neighbouring Western Samoa. By then the day will have been celebrated in over 170 countries and over 5,000 services will have been held in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.'

In the Republic of Cameroon, a country of great cultural diversity, traditional rights and attitudes discriminate against women in many areas of life. However giant steps have been taken towards assuring women's rights, and women are involved in the struggle for peace, justice and integrity. The country faces many challenges as its people seek to move forward into a modern age without losing their distinctive characteristics. But at all times Cameroonians are able to praise God with joy and exuberance and the service reflects this.

Although organised and led by women, this is essentially a day of prayer for everybody as we demonstrate our solidarity with our sisters and brothers in other countries and all are welcome to attend. The services being held locally on March 5th are at St Mary the Virgin, in the Butts, Reading at 10.30am (speaker Mr Mike Penny) and at St Andrew's, Harrogate Road, Caversham at 8.00pm (speaker Caroline Wilson). We look forward to seeing you at one of these services.

Dorothy Abrey, Caversham Co-ordinator



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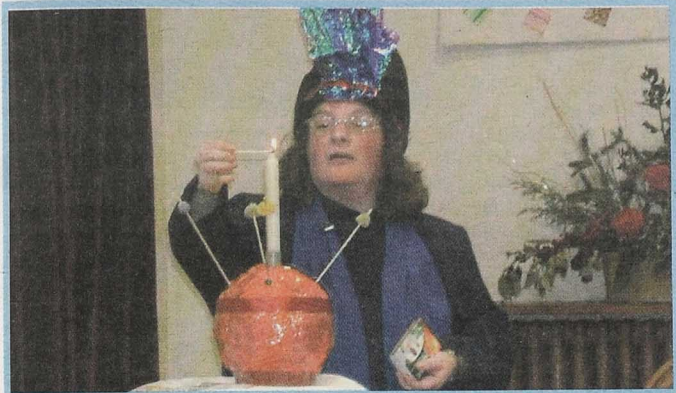




## CHURCHES AT CHRISTMAS

## CRIB SERVICE AT GOSBROOK ROAD

The Christmas Eve service this year took the form of a pantomime, written by Colin & Tarel Lavelle. The idea was "A Ladd In...A Manger", so you had Becky Bawden as the genie, and Colin & Tarel playing Mary & Joseph, plus various Arabs with officials giving them jobs as stable cleaner and hotel receptionist. It really had to be seen to be believed, but it worked. Items for the giant christingle were bought from the supermarket! The finale was the wonderful "Aladdin's Lamp" cake that Catherine Scott had provided. This was topped with a firework candle and everyone sang Happy Birthday to Jesus. So in spite of all the ice and snow a warm welcome was found at Gosbrook Road and a good number of people braved the elements to be there. Our thanks go to all who took part and also those who did sterling work clearing the snow and ice.



Becky lighting the giant christingle.

E. Cooper

## Caversham Heights Methodist Church

The afternoon children's Christmas service at Caversham Heights Methodist Church was wonderful, with little angels and shepherds doing unexpected things like ripping off their headdress or running to Mummy when they should be on stage. All the children (and some older 'children' like me!) were loaned bells to ring in the choruses of the carols. Most of them were too young to act the Nativity, so one of the youth group acted as narrator and handed out presents in stages from a sack. The little ones first unwrapped a manger and put it on the communion table; then Mary and Joseph, animals, shepherds and wise men, etc. The little ones (with supervision) put everything in or round the stable themselves. Finally, the last BIG parcel unwrapped was the world which, when placed above the stable, lit up - to illustrate that Christ, the Light of the world had come. Just before the last hymn, all the children in the church (not just those on stage) were given stars on sticks (lit by a switch on each handle) and they all kept going round and round the church waving their stars as we sang 'Shine, Jesus, shine'. So a very happy time was had by all.

## SING IT LOUD AND SING IT PROUD!

On a very cold day in November, the Caversham district Rainbows, Brownies and Guides gathered with their leaders at St Peter's Church, Caversham, for their centenary celebration Carol Service and nativity play. Although it was seemingly a little early to begin celebrating Christmas it was a good time to get in the Christmas spirit. We opened with a welcome from Marion Pyke, (who kindly led the service for us), and sang *Little Donkey* (accompanied by Pam Asbury). The nativity was then performed by some of the sixers of the Brownie packs from Caversham, who had learnt their parts at a Sixer Day in November. The plays were linked by more carols sung by the gathered crowd. The



Guides later participated with some moving readings and poems and the Rainbows sang *Away in a Manger*. Altogether, it was a very enjoyable afternoon and everyone sang carols, performed drama and read beautifully.

Imogen Eley and Eve Russell Caversham Senior Section members and Young Leaders with 2nd Caversham Park Brownies.

Photo courtesy Caroline Smith

## GREAT EXPECTATIONS AT ST BARNABAS

Although for the Church the New Year starts at the beginning of Advent, the theme for the special All Age Guest Service held by St Barnabas on that occasion can be applied throughout the year. The Service spoke to everyone irrespective of age or where they were on their spiritual pilgrimage.

The service developed from a short sketch in which a child was persuaded to put together the pieces of a puzzle that we discovered was a copy of the Head of Christ, as depicted in the Church's East Window. Although we do not know what Jesus looks like, his presence is seen in the bigger picture that is achieved when we come together to worship him. Just as the picture of Christ is incomplete when a piece of the jigsaw is left out, so is Christ's body incomplete when we are not present to worship him. Three members of the congregation from across the age range



testified what coming to Church and joining in its fellowship meant to them and the challenge was made to the congregation, and, through them, to the wider community to come and be part of the bigger picture.

The photo shows the completed puzzle with the picture of the head of Christ, also seen in the window above.

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## TRIBUTES

**MARGUERITE PEGGY (MAGGIE) CHURCHER**

1918 - 2009

A large congregation gathered in St Barnabas Church in mid-December to give thanks for and remember the life of Maggie Churcher, who for about 25 years until her 90th birthday had been vergar at the church. It marked the end of an era and the passing of a legend. Maggie's origins were in Kent near Romney Marsh, but she had lived in Reading for many years, latterly in Pinetree Court overlooking the Church, from where she kept a beady eye on the coming and goings. Tributes were paid to her by her son Andre Paul, who lives in Australia, undertaker Tony Walker, with whom she had a close association in her vergar role, and the vicar, the Revd Derek Chandler.

Many will remember earlier years when she collected for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, an association that linked back to the time when she enjoyed sailing at Buckler's Hard and which provided a nautical theme in the service. Reference was made to Sir Alec Rose's account of his circumnavigation of the world in his yacht My Lively Lady, a name the vicar applied to Maggie, variously described as loyal, funny, rude, honest, naughty and shy. Maggie knew that while not perfect she was always up to the task, whether as a bus conductress for Thames Valley and Reading Buses during the war, or later in her career as a store detective, in her work with the crime prevention panel, and latterly as vergar. Who can forget her story about hiding in a dustbin in order to apprehend one malefactor?

With the vicar, Maggie regularly visited the Caversham Group of Churches on patronal festivals and other occasions, sometimes mistaken as his mum. Above all Maggie will be remembered for her role as vergar, dutiful and dedicated, immaculately turned out for every occasion, putting out the cones



on the church drive for special occasions; and on sunny afternoons, sitting in the church grounds on her chair – speaking to all who went past. For Maggie sitting in the garden with laughter, friends and telling stories was a vision of heaven where she surely is now.

**JOYCE ELIZABETH ANDERSON**

1928 - 2009

Emmer Green and Scouting have lost another prominent member of the community through the passing of Joyce Anderson at the end of 2009. For 15 years during the 1960s and 1970s she was Akela of the 89th Reading (Milestone Wood) Cub Scouts and had been involved in the movement for over 40 years, having earlier been a Guide in her teens. The Scout Movement was well represented in the large congregation that gathered at St Barnabas Church in early January to give thanks for her life; Mr Ted Price, himself a one time Scout Troop Leader, gave one of the tributes, warmly extolling her virtues of wisdom, authority and leadership.

Born, brought up and educated in North London, Joyce trained as an engineer at Northampton Polytechnic; it was while she was involved in research and development work that she met her husband Bob, whom she married in 1952. In 1964 they moved from Hertfordshire with their three sons to live in Emmer Green. After training as a science teacher she returned to work while her sons were growing up and taught in several schools in and around Reading. Latterly

she taught English to adult immigrants. Other tributes, on which this appreciation is based, were made by the eldest son, Nick, and by the Revd Derek Chandler on information supplied by John, who with Peter are the younger twin sons. Her husband Bob and one of the granddaughters, Katherine, read the lessons.

Joyce, a member over the years of both St Andrew's and St Barnabas congregations, was incredibly caring, a very special wife and mother of enormous energy and drive who liked walking, camping (particularly overseas), tennis and reading and imparted her enthusiasm, observational skills and powers of discernment to her sons, qualities which were warmly remembered with anecdotal stories. The community and her family, with whom the Caversham Bridge sympathises, are the poorer with her passing.

**\* T'AI CHI \***

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## ENVIRONMENT

# On Valentine's Day

There was once a time when the morning of St Valentine's Day saw me making for the letter-box in the front door. Would there be an envelope for me, one with the mysterious letters "SWALK" on the flap? These days, I'm more likely to go to the back door, to gaze into the garden pond.

Very little seems to be known about St Valentine. In fact there were two St Valentines, martyred in Rome on February 14, AD 269 and AD 273. There is nothing amorous about the lives and deaths of either of them, I'm afraid, though the date of February 14 is significant.

This was the eve of the Lupercalia, the Roman fertility festival which involved animal sacrifice, and the choosing of partners by casting lots, among many even less pleasant things I won't dwell on here.

The choosing of sweethearts by casting lots seems to have reached England, and was certainly a Valentine's custom by the eighteenth century, as was the giving of gifts between sweethearts. Eventually the gifts were replaced by mere tokens – Valentine's cards. At first these were produced by hand, but later you could buy ready-made ones from the stationer.

Now, I know that February 14 is supposed to be the day on which the birds also choose their mates, but almost as soon as I got a garden pond in Caversham, I noticed that it was also round about

the date when the frogs came to mate.

As a schoolboy in the north of England, I knew that the frogs would be mating at least a month later. After the founders' day service in the parish church, commemorating the foundation of the grammar school I attended, we had the afternoon off school, at the start of the Easter holiday. What better than to walk to the Blue Pool, and watch the frogs in a state of amplexus!

So I was surprised to find that in the south, the

frogs woke up in February – probably a combination of latitude and global warming! And I was also surprised by the noise the frogs made – a rasping, and a booming, a roaring and a croaking. Was it heavy traffic, or a passing aircraft? No, it was around a hundred frogs in one little pond!

Since those early days, things are rather quieter, with only perhaps 20 frogs

coming to breed each spring.

This pond has given me a great deal of pleasure over 20-odd years, and some good photo-opportunities, involving newts, dragon-flies, damselflies, birds coming to bathe, the odd marauding heron, and attractive aquatic plants like bog-bean, water soldier and water violet. And all this for less effort than it would take to look after a lawn of the same size!

*Happy Wanderer*



## NEWS FROM CLAYFIELD COPSE

On a cold dull December day volunteers were coppicing in the woods. Suddenly snow fell gently and softly, transforming the woods to a magical place. I didn't have a camera but even the camera cannot capture the feeling of the scene. The coffee tasted particularly good that morning!

On the first Sunday in January, The Friends group discovered six fallen branches blocking footpaths in various parts of the woods. Two were from cedars and two were from Scots pines which surprised us as we thought they would have withstood the snow and ice. One of the Scots pines was rotten inside and the remaining trunk is pockmarked with woodpecker holes. We cleared what we could and are asking RBC parks dept to come and move some of the brush.

Thank you to those who bought one of our Scots

pine Christmas trees at the sale in Caversham Court yard. The money raised will go towards repair and replacement of tools used by local conservation volunteers. Perhaps a new kettle?

The trees came from local common land and application has been made to authorities to enclose some of the common land we cleared so that it can be grazed for part of the year to help restore the heathland there.

An all round good project, satisfied customers with Christmas trees, money raised for tools and a healthy heathland for wildlife.

If you feel like helping, check out the website [www.econetreading.org.uk](http://www.econetreading.org.uk)

PS Reading University are doing some research about dead hedgehogs; check the website for more info



Left:  
Clearing path in  
Clayfield Copse.

Right:  
Snow covered  
path in the  
Cope.



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## CLUBS

### Caversham Afternoon Townswomen's Guild

Caversham Afternoon Guild ended a happy and successful year with a Christmas teaparty and quiz, having enjoyed a Christmas lunch earlier in December at the Traveller's Rest.

During the autumn members were entertained to interesting talks on basket making and the life of the canal people and their painted barges; plus other subjects, interspersed with members' meetings and quizzes.

The lunch club continued to be popular each month, along with the arts and crafts group, the latter providing each member with a hand-made Christmas card presented to them at the party.

Members have taken part in the various activities of the local federation (composed of local guilds), ie. a Guy Fawkes lunch, card making day and a Christmas carol and readings group, plus an outing to the Henry VIII exhibition in London.

The guild looks forward to more activities in the New Year, with a possibility of meeting members of Fareham (Hants) guild who are now twinned with Caversham Afternoon TG. Our guild is the first in the country to twin with another guild, and have exchanged telephone calls, letters and photographs with them.

The guild meets on the third Thursday at 2.00pm at the Caversham Baptist Church hall, South Street, and all ladies are warmly welcomed to join with us, for a talk tea and biscuits, only 50p for visitors. For more information please phone the Hon Secretary on 0118 947 9796

### Rosehill WI

There was a very well attended December meeting and members and visitors were welcomed by President Mrs Brenda Caborn. After Brenda and Secretary Margaret Seal had conducted the business part of the meeting, Berna Macdonald from the Caversham and Chiltern Flower Club was introduced by Brenda. Berna demonstrated the making of 3 Xmas arrangements and gave a lot of useful tips on arranging, how to use and keep Oasis for future use and other tips. This demonstration was really enjoyed by members. Berna very kindly donated the arrangements to the raffle.

The walking group had enjoyed 2 walks during November. The first was a walk round Oxford City and the other was a Heritage walk in Reading, both ending with enjoyable Pub lunches. The Scrabble group had held 2 pleasant social afternoons and the tea and chat group had met up at Mrs Rita Bush's.

The Buscot knitters had also been busy and a lot of garments were brought in.

The afternoon ended with the raffle, mince pies and a cup of tea. The February 3rd meeting will be as usual at St Barnabas Church Hall starting at 2pm and the speaker will be Pauline Allen and the subject will be Tai Chi.

### Emmer Green Townswomen's Guild

The Christmas meeting of the Emmer Green Townswomen's Guild was a very happy one with carols and Christmas songs, to a guitar accompaniment, by a member and friend. This was interspersed with poetry and a Joyce Grenfell skit by member of the Words and Music Group. The mix of light and serious items was just right, giving a lovely balance between fun and the real meaning of Christmas. A raffle took place, proceeds to our Charity of the Year, The Alexander Devine Children's Cancer Trust and members enjoyed coffee and mince pies provided by the committee.

Our speaker in February is a Guild member, Mrs Helen Holloway, who will tell us about her 'Icelandic Adventure' illustrated with slides.

Visitors are always welcome and we meet on the second Tuesday of the month, 7.30pm at St Barnabas' Church Hall, Grove Road, Emmer Green

### St Peter's Wives Group

Our members enjoyed another successful annual dinner at Henley Golf Club on 21 November. As usual, we all had a very enjoyable evening.

We held our Christmas Party at Church House on 15 December (well-supported), with a wide selection of food being contributed by our members. Our guest speaker for the evening was Nigel Smith, who recited some of his humorous poems before we sampled the food. After the feast, a glass of Bucks Fizz, and the raffle, he continued with his hilarious poems, some involving audience participation. We all had a thoroughly delightful evening.

Our next meeting will be at Church House on Tuesday, 16 February at 8.00pm, when one of our members, Hazel Blackburn, will speak about honey. New members are always welcome.

### Darby and Joan Club

The Darby and Joan Club of (over 60's) Caversham invite new members to join for a sing song, a cuppa and a chat on every 2nd and 4th Thursday afternoon in central Caversham.

Contact Sonya on 954 5860 or Elaine on 948 4943

### Caversham Community Association

November was a busy month for members with a five Monday programme. It began in the usual way with a games evening and the next week was a whist drive which pleased the keen card players. Accuracy was the keynote the following week with a darts tournament - using magnetic safety darts of course!

The following week was a charity fundraiser fun evening for our annual charity - this year 'Gift of Sight'. Quizzes and games were followed by delicious cake. Other cakes were auctioned to swell the funds.

Christmas came at the end of the month with a popular bingo session with various seasonal prizes

### Reading and District Probus Club

Twice a year the members are joined by the ladies, and Christmas lunch is one of them with over 80 sitting down for the festivity.

The guest speaker was the Bishop of Reading, the Rt Rev Stephen Cottrell, whose clear voice was in no need of a microphone. He introduced himself as The Bishop of Old Berkshire (the original one!) in which there are 260 churches.

Continuing in a lighter vein with some Christmas stories, he explained how many times he is asked to visit or attend a function and how difficult it can be, with his many commitments, to say 'No'. But one he couldn't resist was to the Shiphams Fishpaste Christian Fellowship Christmas Carol Concert in Chichester where he had been curate. However, this led to a tour of the factory accompanied by the chairman, Mr Shiphams himself. Moving over the manufacturing details he asked the chairman about the many varied parts of his job, chicken farming, transport, staff, retired members club, and how this fits with a family life 'but', the Bishop continues, 'what about the chickens?'

Amazingly, the Bishop turned this event into 'The Christmas Story' of God getting to know first hand about human life through the life of Jesus, from the nativity which we all celebrate at this time of the year.

An absorbing and at times humorous delivery was followed by an elegant vote of thanks given by Keith Ternent.

Future meetings will cover a variety of subjects, all of interest to retired men who would also find an interest in Probus. Contact the secretary Raymond Head on 0118 941 1445 or www.readingprobus.talktalk.net

### Caversham Horticultural Society

After the winter hibernation, the society's first event of 2010 is the reopening of the Oakley Road Allotments Trading Shed between 10.00-11.30am on Saturday 6 February. Members are invited to purchase seed potatoes and other gardening sundries at very competitive prices. The shed is open on alternative Saturdays and Sundays from this date i.e. Sunday 14, Saturday 20 and so on.

Use of the trading shed is for members only. Any interested Caversham gardeners wishing to join the society can do so for the nominal sum of £5.00 per household reduced to £3.00 for senior citizens. To join the society either visit the trading shed during its opening hours or contact the membership secretary Elaine Rae. erae@harpolutions.co.uk or (0118) 947 0510.

Details of the society's other activities which include talks and garden visits have not yet been finalised. Details when known will be advertised in this magazine, the society's web site www.caversham-horticultural.org.uk and locally displayed posters.

### Reading Gardeners

There are two meetings with talks in Caversham Primary School, Hemdean Road at 7.30pm in February.

Feb. 10. 'The Savill Garden and the Royal Landscape' Harvey Stephens, the Head of Savill Garden.

Feb. 24. 'The Beauties and Mysteries of the Burren' by Clive Dawes.

For more information phone 947 7125 or contact our website readinggardenersclub.org.uk or contact gillmbetts@yahoo.co.uk Tel. 0118 9477125



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## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT CAVERSHAM COURT

Friends of Caversham Court Gardens (FCCG) are thrilled to have had the help of a group of students from Highdown School to set up their website. Working with their ICT tutor, Bouba Dembele, Caitlin Thomas and Eve Russell did the analysis, research and prototyping. Then Dilmeet Singh and Piotr Gorski first designed and developed the website and then trained a member of the Friends' committee, Alison Hewitt, to maintain it.

You can access it at [www.fccg.org.uk](http://www.fccg.org.uk) for information about the Friends, about Caversham Court and about past and future events.

#### What to see in February

- Last of the snowdrops under the yews – This is our first opportunity to enjoy them as Caversham Court was still closed this time last year.
- The first crocus should be flowering down by the river. Emily and Ben, the head gardener and her apprentice, planted about 16,000 bulbs, mainly purple, mauve and lilac.

#### A very silent night

Caversham Court looked magical on Monday 21st December, the night of the planned carols evening. A heavy blanket of snow covered the ground, silhouetted the branches and smoothed the shapes of the walls. Unfortunately there were no

singers as the snow had also blanketed every road leading in and out of Reading. Community spirit was very much in evidence as local residents opened their homes to stranded motorists, but the carols event sadly had to be cancelled.

This cancellation was a great disappointment to so many who had planned to come and sing in such a wonderful setting and especially after the hard work of so many different people.

After so much enthusiasm, we hope all concerned

will be keen to organise a similar event next Christmas as so many people were planning to attend.

Many people enjoyed visiting the snow-covered park. Several snow men appeared and the roly-poly bank was very popular for small children as a gentle slope for sledging.

Caversham Court is at the corner of Church Road and St Peter's Hill. It is open to all between 8am and dusk. The refreshment kiosk will reopen again in the spring.

To support FCCG in its aim of publicising and preserving Caversham Court, please contact: Philip Darlow, Treasurer FCCG, Kalewa, The Warren, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7TQ - Tel: 0118 947 2205 / E-mail: [FriendsOfCavershamCourt@googlemail.com](mailto:FriendsOfCavershamCourt@googlemail.com). The subscription to December 2010 is £2.



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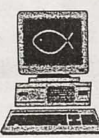

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