

BRINGING HELP TO OTHERS



Courtesy M Dimmick

We pay tribute to a prominent Caversham resident who died in January. Martyn Allies was a tireless worker for his fellow men in Reading and beyond.

Page 3

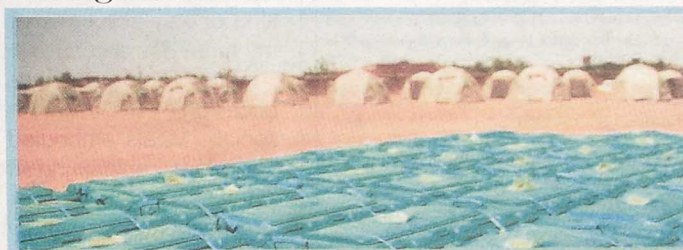


Courtesy S Chumbley

How Queen Victoria helped to bring a home nursing service to the people of the Borough of Reading.

Page 5

Raising Funds for Haiti



Courtesy ShelterBox and Thomas Lay

Shelter boxes with emergency tents beyond for disaster victims.

Caversham Churches put on events to help Earthquake stricken people of Haiti through shelter boxes and the disasters emergency committee.

Page 7

Have you a listening ear?

How you can help others by becoming a Samaritan.

Page 7



Fair Trade Fortnight

Tea for two – how tea from this plantation reaches your tea bags and you help its workers.

Page 6

INSIDE

Tribute	page 3	Churches	page 7
Ex Libris	page 4	WEA starts again in Reading	page 8
Community News	pages 5 & 11	Environment, Guiding	page 9
Fairtrade Fortnight	page 6	Forthcoming Events	page 10

D/EX 1758/68/3

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TALKING POINT

by

Derek Chandler

Fast Thinking

My mum has always liked television cooking programmes. Food is something special to my mum. This is because she spent most of her childhood in an orphanage. Although she did not starve, it certainly was not easy. She cannot understand people of my generation who for convenience, need to take something out of the freezer, put it in the microwave and eat it within the space of twenty minutes. To her something has been undervalued. I suppose in a funny kind of way she believes that food is sacred. To that extent my mum has a very biblical outlook.

In the Bible food acts as a focusing point for important occasions. But Jewish meals were never purely physical or social. Meals embodied central aspects of the spiritual life. Therefore, abstaining from eating possessed a religious significance. Whether for national mourning or some significant hope, fasting always held the purpose of seeking to come closer to God.

When Jesus was baptized he naturally went out into the wilderness to ponder on his role and focus his vision more clearly on his task. The wilderness was a place to refine oneself, a place where you came closer to God. Probably taking little provision it is no surprise that Jesus' first temptation involves food. More than any other spiritual discipline, fasting can reveal the things that control us. Non-essentials, also called junk, are like junk food. They can become habit forming and not always healthy. We have focused on food so far, but actually, fasting can concern other areas of our life. What we spend our time doing as well as eating.

A friend I know once gave up watching television soaps for a month. Instead she spent her time working in a drop-in centre for the homeless. It was fasting, in a way, that helped her see her life more clearly. If we look at fasting in this way then we don't fall into the trap of believing that fasting is simply about giving up chocolate for Lent. Fasting is more about fine tuning all our senses, all our appetites. Giving something up perhaps, but doing it, in order to gain something far greater. Helping us to fine-tune our lives more as God desires them to be. Rather than being under the controlling desires of other things or people.

When Jesus came out of the wilderness he was ready to offer Good News to others about the way life could be. His message about the Kingdom of God still stands amid all the junk that can fill our lives. Dare you put fasting first this Lent — think about it.

Revd Derek Chandler is vicar of St Barnabas Church, Emmer Green.

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Contributions for the April 2010 issue should be sent to St Peter's Parish Office by Tuesday 30th March. The date for the April 2010 issue is Tuesday 2nd March 2010.

Advertising copy for the April 2010 issue should be sent to Mr A Wright, Twigmoor, Upper Warren Avenue, Caversham, by **Friday** 21st February 2010. The date for the March 2010 issue is **Friday** 26th March 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
The Eucharist
11.30am
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

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

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

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9.45am (second Sunday)

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9.30am Sunday School
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

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

TRIBUTE

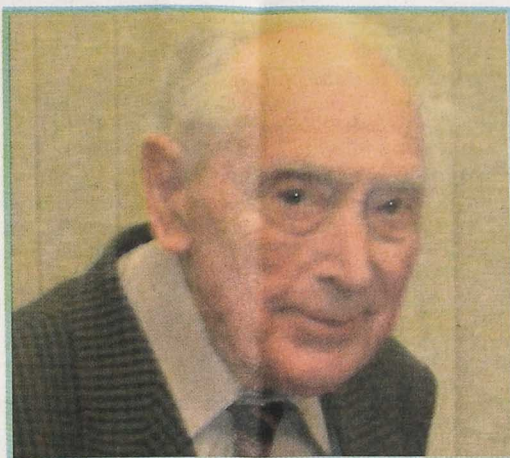
MARTYN ALLIES

1920 - 2010

Martyn Allies died in the Royal Berkshire Hospital in the early hours of 25 January, following a short illness.

Martyn and his wife, Lily, met at the Congregational Church Youth Fellowship in South Woodford and at the beginning of WWII he left his studies in aeronautical engineering at Queen Mary College, London to join the Royal Air Force. At the time of their wedding in 1941, he was an RAF pilot and the future must have seemed very uncertain. Martyn served in Coastal Command, and was stationed in the UK most of the time, though with a period in Iceland. In 1945 he was awarded the DFC. Their son Christopher was born in 1944 and daughter Cheryl arrived three years later. Following the war, Martyn resumed his education but at Bristol University, majoring in German - a language which was to prove very useful later - after which he rejoined the RAF in the Education Branch. At that time the family moved to Caversham. His postings took him far and wide, including Singapore where younger son Bob was born, and Germany, near Düsseldorf, where in about 1973, he first became involved with the Reading-Düsseldorf Association. On retiring from the RAF in 1975, by then a Group Captain and with an MBE for services to the RAF, Martyn continued in education work locally.

Social justice issues in their many facets, both at home and abroad, were Martyn's great concerns, together with ecumenism amongst the Christian Churches. Being then permanent Caversham residents, Martyn and Lily began to involve themselves in local affairs. Thus Martyn continued his association with the Reading-Düsseldorf Association, becoming its chairman in 1977 and remaining in the post until 1998. The association had initially concentrated on organising exchanges for young people, but during his 21 years at the helm its activities widened to include many other common interest groups such as the churches, sports organisations and musicians; at the time of its Golden Jubilee in 1997, no fewer than 50 such groups were active. For his services to the association he was made



an Honorary Freeman of Reading in 1991 and in 1992 was awarded the Verdienstorden (Order of Merit) of Nordrhein-Westfalen, of which Düsseldorf is the capital. At its 2009 AGM, the Association appointed him as Honorary Vice-President.

Martyn and Lily joined Caversham Heights Methodist Church near their home, where Martyn's talents and inclinations, not least in organisation, were widely used particularly in the field of mission, in its widest sense, and he several times undertook the demanding role of coordinating Stewardship Campaigns. Other examples were the setting up and running of the Stay-a-While luncheon club for the over 60s and the associated Out-a-While activity which arranged outings for housebound folk. In 1998 he had the idea of setting up a link between his church and one in a poor country and from that idea, a supportive link with a church in Zambia was established - a link which continues to flourish. Martyn also encouraged his church to participate in the Eco-Congregation Programme and in

2008 it was given the Award of that organisation. At the ecumenical level, he organised the One World Week activities in Caversham for many years, the last being in October 2009.

Martyn was also passionate about Debt Relief and worked tirelessly from the late 1990s for the cancellation of Third World Debt. He campaigned at a number of G8 meetings including Genoa in 2001.

In 1987 he set up the Berkshire Branch of the then Plan International, which sponsors children in Third World Countries, and led it until 2008. He himself sponsored a child in Egypt.

At the community level, in 1976 Martyn founded the Caversham Heights Society, a lecture group which arranges a programme of talks from September to late March and occasional trips. He insisted on retiring as chairman in 2009 to make way for younger leadership but remained involved; the society continues to flourish with over 200 members.

Martyn was a supporter of the Liberal Party - later the Liberal Democrats - and stood for election as a councillor on several occasions. One of his few disappointments was that he was never elected. Not daunted, he continued to campaign for the party. As one friend put it, "He was the best Councillor that Reading never had!"

So much more could be said, and we are grateful for reminiscences from Martyn's many friends, but we conclude with some words written by a neighbour at the time of Martyn and Lily's 60th Wedding Anniversary. "It is the multitude of smaller, unrecorded kindnesses which mark Martyn and Lily as truly wonderful people: hospital visiting; listening to the problems of others; often helping in very practical ways; turning out at all times to provide lifts... and all done so discreetly and unheralded."

A service of celebration will be held, in recognition of Martyn's contribution to the life of Reading, at the Minster Church, St Mary's Butts, Reading at 2.30pm on Saturday 13th March.

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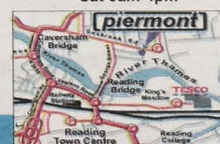
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Ex Libris

ELECTION YEAR

I am a political animal. No, I am not a party member, not of any party. I agree and disagree in about equal measure with the policies of all the major parties. The origins of the word 'political' come from the Greek 'polis'. In summary this meant the 'city' or 'citadel' or the 'citizens.' So I am a political animal.

John Donne wrote that

*No man is an island, entire of itself;**every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.*

Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

It is even possible that by the time you are reading this we shall at least know the date of the General Election. I make no excuse, therefore, in dedicating this month's 'Ex Libris' to overtly political issues.

So here are some practical topics you may like to mull over and even use to 'put the question' to our party candidates.

UNLICENSED LICENSING

We all knew it. Now after three years of the new Licensing Act we have a Parliamentary report which states the obvious. The House of Commons Health Committee recently accused the Government of a "failure of will and competence" over alcohol policy. It said that ministers are too close to drinks companies and supermarkets and that minimum pricing for alcoholic drinks, mandatory health warnings on labels and a rise in tax on spirits should be introduced to stem a 'shocking' rise in alcohol misuse in England.

The cross-party committee said that the alcohol industry - which depends for three-quarters of its sales on people drinking at levels deemed hazardous or harmful, and which could lose 40% of its market if they drank responsibly - holds more power over Government policy than expert health professionals.

About 31% of men and 21% of women are now thought to be drinking 'hazardously': consuming more than 21 units a week for men and 14 for women. Moreover 9% of men and 6% of women are 'harmfully' drinking more than 50 units for men and 35 for women.

Public health minister Gillian Merron said the Department for Health would use the report 'to strengthen and further develop the action we already have under way'.

The question to ask candidates is 'What will your Party do to address this problem?'

EDUCATION

How often, in this paper alone, have we looked at the crisis in our schools! We need more teachers, so the government puts increasing financial restraints on schools. We want to encourage continued adult learning, so the government cuts the grants to universities, forcing them to close adult education courses. And the list goes on!

The question to ask is, 'Will your party have the courage to invest more money in the very bases of our society?'

HEALTH

I doubt if many people in Britain understand or recognise the issues President Obama faced when introducing his Health Reforms. In Britain we value our NHS. It is not perfect. It sometimes lets people down, but the great majority of us agree with its basic principle of free health provision at the point of delivery. I was shocked therefore to hear that The Royal Berks has sacked its entire IT team and has contracted this aspect of our health service to an American company. I am not cynical but ...!

The question to ask is, 'Will your party GUARANTEE that it will maintain the ideals and practice of the NHS?'

HONESTY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Politicians are pretty much regarded as amongst the most untrustworthy of people. This may or may not be justified. That is for you the reader to decide. But the perception is a fact.

They are now bending over backwards to tell us what a hard time we have ahead. We all know we have just been through the worst recession in many decades. We all know that the government lent our money to the banks without writing in safeguards about the repayments. We all know that the country faces a terrible deficit. But we also know that the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. We know who hasn't suffered from the recession. We know who will get the first pickings as the economy recovers.

This is a Christian newspaper and I began by stating that I agree and disagree with many of the policies of all the political parties. There are some policies and some parties I could never support. I could never support parties with policies founded on a denial of basic human rights.

I also find it difficult to write blank cheques, financial or political. I tend to distrust someone who starts off by saying, 'Trust me...'

Perhaps the most important question we need to ask is, 'Are you honest?' If I go into a shop to buy a book, I come out and instead of 'Pride and Prejudice' I find that, despite the cover it is 'Emma', then I take it back. When I vote for a party that promises something but immediately does the opposite, then is it any wonder I lose trust?

Well there you are. A political diatribe from a political animal! But as someone who works in the community, who sees our society rapidly disintegrating and who fears that politicians are using the excuse of 'hard times' to avoid their political duties, then I feel that this column might bring into the open a debate we need as we elect the next government.

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Joy Blount

Pauline Semple

SCOUTING AWARDS

On Thursday 10th December 2009, Barrie Newby (President of Reading Central Scout District) presented Pauline Semple (Thursday Cub Pack, Akela) with the 'Chief Scout's Commendation Award and on Wednesday 16th December 2009, Steve McCarthy (Scout Leader) was presented with the 'Award for Merit for Outstanding Service to Scouting'.

Many congratulations to you both!



Colin Blount

Steve McCarthy

THE QUEEN COMMANDS

Many readers will be familiar with the Queen Victoria Institute in St John's Road, Reading, where a chiropody service is provided for the retired people of the Borough.

Eight part-time chiropodists and two office staff run clinics throughout the week. Over a thousand patients altogether are treated for anything from having nails cut to having corns and ingrown toe-nails dealt with.

This charity was originally set up in 1901 as a nursing service, to "Nurse the Sick Poor of Reading". In order to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria, some ladies of Reading of high social standing collected 'a purse of money' to present to Her Majesty.

The Queen then graciously returned the purse and said, "Start a home nursing service in my name".

The ladies purchased 25 Erleigh Road as a home for the nurses and set about starting such a service. The Queen's Nurses, as they became known, set up their rounds, supported by collectors who charged 6d. a week and another 2d. for dressings. Should you pass 25 Erleigh Road, high on the side wall there is a terracotta medallion naming the service.

The service continued until the advent of the NHS when 25 Erleigh Road became a nurses' home attached to the Royal Berkshire Hospital, and the District Nursing Service was born. The funds were split and money was given to the Queen Victoria Institute charity which purchased a house in Queen's Road, and began a chiropody clinic for residents of Reading and Earley. Several years ago this property was sold, and the present lighter and more spacious property in St John's Road purchased.

At present there is a short waiting-list for new patients, and a slightly longer one for patients needing home visits. The fees charged are approximately half those of independent chiropodists. If you are in need of treatment regularly, and are a retired Reading resident, you could phone the Clinic Manager on (0118) 959 0306.

The Institute is also inviting suitable people to become Trustees: There is a need for people of varying experience and expertise to be Trustees. As meetings are only held four times yearly, the duties are not onerous. The main requirements are an ability to absorb government regulations for charities, and then to administer the affairs of the clinic in a sensible way. If you think you can assist in this way, please phone our Clerk on (0118) 947 6075.

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FIRST READING CONTEMPORARY ART FAIR APRIL 2010

Exciting new arts event for Reading and call for artists

The fair is being organised by the team behind the highly successful Windsor Contemporary Art Fair, now in its sixth year.

Organiser Sarah McAllister says: "We are very excited about launching the Reading Contemporary Art Fair. Our events have always been about bringing stimulating new art to the widest possible audience. We present our exhibitors in a relaxed but professional setting, giving them the best platform to showcase their work while allowing them to talk about their art directly with the public - something few other art shows do. Our aim is to demystify the art world and make it truly accessible to everyone."

The fair brings together an exciting mix of over 80 artists, printmakers, photographers, sculptors, ceramicists and selected galleries offering the very best in contemporary art with prices from £30 to £3,000. Exhibitors includes artists from all over the UK, Europe and a strong contingent from the local area, newly qualified

and established artists along with a number of galleries bringing together accepted masters and young beginners. The interactive element of the fair is very important. Visitors will be able to participate in workshops by Reading's own artists' group Jelly. Sarah McAllister adds: "We encourage everyone to join in the workshops. They are great fun, and have been known to completely change people's perceptions of their own artistic abilities."

The Fair is being held on Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th April at the Rivermead Leisure Complex, Richfield Avenue, Reading. Tickets cost £6 (concessions £4) and children under 12 go in free. Refreshments and wine tasting are available throughout the week-end.

There are still opportunities to book a stand and be part of this exciting arts event where artists and art buyers come together in a mutually beneficial arena. Potential exhibitors should contact Deborah or Sarah on 01753 591892. For all information on the Fair go to www.readingcontemporaryartfair.co.uk.

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FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT AND BEYOND

Fairtrade Fortnight, 22 February to 7 March, spans the time over which this issue of *The Caversham Bridge* is published and begins to circulate. Each year it provides an opportunity to draw attention to Fairtrade products. The website (www.fairtrade.org.uk) tells us that gone are the days when you searched all over the town for a jar of Fairtrade coffee; there are now over 3,000 products. Nationally there are about 6,000 churches, including almost all of those in Caversham, which have been awarded the Fairtrade Certificate; this indicates that they use Fairtrade tea and coffee at their meetings and promote Fairtrade products, particularly during Fairtrade Fortnight.

The Fairtrade mark is an international symbol indicating that the commodity bearing it has met certain standards. They seek to support the development of disadvantaged and marginalized small-scale farmers and plantation workers. Fairtrade standards relate to three areas of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental. Their key objectives are to:

- ensure a guaranteed Fairtrade minimum price which is agreed with producers;
- provide an additional Fairtrade premium which can be invested in projects that enhance social, economic and environmental development;
- enable pre-financing for producers who require it;
- emphasize the idea of partnership between traders;
- facilitate mutually beneficial long-term trading relationships;
- set clear minimum and progressive criteria to ensure that the conditions for the production and trade of a product are socially and economically fair and environmentally responsible.

The idea of Fairtrade has been around for many years. The use of the Fairtrade mark goes back to 1989, since when the sale of Fairtrade products has burgeoned. In the 10 years to 2008 the estimated value of UK retail sales has risen substantially. In 2007 consumers worldwide spent £1.6 billion on Fairtrade certified products. This has directly benefitted 7 million people, farmers, workers and their families, in 58 developing countries. While this is impressive it is tiny on a world scale and there is still a mountain to climb. Harriet Lamb, Executive Director of the Fairtrade Foundation, stated recently that "conflict, poverty and climate change are the three global issues of our age. Their challenges are interlinked and we cannot address one without considering the others." Our use of Fairtrade products is helping to address the issue of poverty.

This year the campaign draws attention to the fact that each day in the UK we drink 165 million cups of tea but only 10% of these are Fairtrade ones. This means that lots of tea pickers and their families are still not



Vinay Devaiah.

getting a fair deal. We are urged during Fairtrade Fortnight to swap our usual cuppa for a Fairtrade one (assuming we are not already using Fairtrade tea), and there is no reason why this should not be a permanent swap.

The local focus will be on tea when Vinay Devaiah, Deputy Manager of the Thiashola Tea Estate in the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu, South India, comes to Berkshire in early March. He will be talking to some local schools and also at the World Shop in London Street, Reading, on 4 March at 7 pm. In an evening entitled "Tea for Two ...and



Much More", he will be explaining how tea is produced, how Fairtrade works in practice and the difference it makes to the workers. The 470 acre Thiashola Tea Estate is at an altitude of 6,500 feet, employs around 400 workers, mostly female tea pluckers, and produces 4.5 million kg of black and green tea; 60% of sales go to the Fairtrade market. The high quality tea is successfully marketed to higher value export markets. Tea from the estate is included in the blend for Clipper Fairtrade Organic Earl Grey tea bags.

Fairtrade Fortnight will see the production of a revised local directory showing where Fairtrade products are available in Reading, which is a Fairtrade Town.

CAVERSHAM MOTHERS' UNION BRANCHES.

Members from St Andrew's, St John's, St Peter's and St Margaret's met on February 2nd at St Andrew's church hall for a pre-Lent lunch. This co-incided with Candlemas and so the tables were decorated with both candles and daffodils. Rev Nigel Jones of St Andrew's welcomed everyone, prayers were said and then home made soups and rolls were served followed by tea, coffee and biscuits. Members from the three branches took the opportunity to meet each other and chat together. £45 was raised for the Mothers' Union "Away From It All" Fund, which, in 2009, arranged for 15 families to have a well deserved holiday. Grateful thanks to all who organised the event which was a great success and it is hoped will become an annual event.

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CHURCHES

Fund Raising for Haiti Earthquake Relief

The Silent Auction held at Caversham Heights Methodist Church for the relief of the people of Haiti raised £1,500 and the church is grateful to all those who donated items for auction and to all who helped to make it such a success.

This brings the total raised for Haiti at this church to £3,400, (including Gift Aid). Already five ShelterBoxes (each costing £490) have been sent and funds will be also be channelled through the Methodist Relief and Development Fund which has been working in Haiti for many years.

'ShelterBoxes' was the brainwave of a Rotarian living in Helston, Cornwall. He had seen pictures of refugees after one disaster scrambling for bread being tossed from a truck and was horrified to see how undignified and uncaring this 'help' was. He immediately wrote down the qualities that he thought help for refugees should provide. These were 'shelter, warmth, comfort, dignity'. He started work on the project which now has some 1000 specially trained volunteers who liaise with 32,000 Rotary clubs world-wide. The aim is to get

help to disaster areas within 48 hours. Following one recent earthquake, members of the local team had packed a lorry with ShelterBoxes and were on the road to the disaster area within four hours.

Each ShelterBox is packed with good quality equipment and the contents can be varied to suit the specific disaster. Normally each box - which itself being lightweight and waterproof can be adapted to many uses - will hold a ten person tent designed to withstand extremes of temperature, wind and rainfall; survival kit such as thermal blankets, insulated groundsheet and mosquito nets; means of water purification; basic tools kits (hammer, trenching shovels and smaller items); a wood or multi-fuel stove; basic household utensils and also small gifts for children.

The founder of the charity has said that big charities like UNICEF and the Red Cross say the boxes are too expensive but he argues that people who have lost everything deserve to be cared for and given some dignity and semblance of order.

Rev Canon John Grimwade

Caversham Bridge sends greetings to John Grimwade as he celebrates his 90th birthday on 13th March. He was the former Rector of Caversham and founder and editor of this paper until he retired in 1982. His family tells us that he still enjoys reading it each month. He also sends in the occasional contribution.

HAVE YOU THOUGHT OF BECOMING A SAMARITAN?

Reading Samaritans are looking for more volunteers to provide emotional support to anybody who is feeling anxious, distressed or even suicidal. Samaritans are there for people, on the end of a phone, or an email away, 24 hours every day of the year.

Letting callers talk about their problems in confidence can relieve a lot of their anxiety and stop it building up. It can often be the first step to dealing with whatever problems or worries they have, and starting to take charge of their own lives again.

Being a volunteer is a very rewarding way of "giving something back". You could help change somebody's life, and many of those who volunteer find they really enjoy learning new skills such as active listening, and the opportunity to meet new people.

Samaritans provide all the training and support needed, and new training courses will be starting soon. You must be at least eighteen, and a CRB check will be needed before you can start. All out of pocket expenses are payable.

Why not find out more by getting an Information Pack and going along to the Information meetings which are being held in the Samaritans' office in Reading?

You can call the Samaritans on 0118 926 6333. Or visit their website at www.readingsamaritans.org.uk

Coffee Morning for Haiti

On Saturday 23rd January Church House in Caversham opened its doors to the public to host an event in aid of victims of the recent Haiti earthquake. This had been hastily arranged by Churches Together in Caversham in response to the news of the earthquake. It had been decided that the churches should 'play to their strengths'... which meant baking! Hence the decision to host a 'Coffee and Cake' morning where local residents could mingle in a friendly atmosphere over coffee whilst feasting on the many home-made delicacies the ladies (and doubtless a few gentlemen) of the local churches had provided. Both coffee and cake were free, but guests were encouraged to make whatever donation they could for the Disasters Emergency Committee Haiti appeal. There was also a quiz for the more cerebral guests to pore over with their coffee. Gift Aid forms were on hand to ensure donations from tax-payers benefited from the extra 28% this scheme affords. The event was extremely well attended and those who came were generous with their donations. When the takings were counted, and Gift Aid added, the final total was around £1,100. As one church leader commented 'Not bad for two hours' work!' Of course this ignores all the urgent preparation that went on for the event and we are extremely grateful to all those who gave up their time and energy beforehand to raise such a magnificent total. We are also grateful to those who helped publicise the event on the day with leaflets and posters and to Church House who provided the venue free of charge. We hope and pray that with similar help from around the world the people of Haiti will soon be able to rebuild their country.

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"Our branch has reached a critical time as it gathers momentum from our first term which has provided 19 varied courses for about 320 students - and now goes on to launch our 2010 spring and summer programme" said Paul Kingston, chairman of the Workers' Educational Association in Reading. He thanked the many people and organisations who have volunteered their time to resurrect academic short courses for the people of the Reading area.

He was speaking at the celebration of the re-founding of the Reading WEA branch which was held at the Kennet Room at the Civic Centre Reading last November. Reading WEA was the first to be formed in the country in 1904, and originally provided university-style "learning for life" to workers who had missed out on higher education. Over the years Reading University developed its highly successful Department of Continuing Education, and the need for the WEA branch diminished and it closed in 2004. When short courses for adults came under threat this spring, adult students campaigned under the banner 'Reading Action for Continuing Education' but the University's closure plans went ahead and 105 years after its first founding the Reading branch of the WEA was re-formed.

The inspiring story of the founding of the WEA in Reading is told in an exhibition on show for the next several weeks at Reading Central Library. The WEA is the UK's largest voluntary provider of adult education. WEA Branches offer "mind food" on subjects from archaeology to psychology, art history to literature, philosophy, and religion.

Reading WEA's spring and summer brochure (available in all local libraries) offers 75 short courses and day schools run during the day, evening and weekend at venues in the Reading area. Innovations in the new brochure include courses in partnership with Thames Valley Ancient Egypt Society and the Berkshire Archaeological Society, and courses taught by Swami Ambikananda from the Reading Hindu Temple. Most day courses are in the Hamilton Road Centre, easily accessible by car or bus close to the University of Reading's Whiteknights campus, which has been provided to the WEA as part of a partnership with Reading's New Directions education service. Next term for the first time the WEA will also run some courses in Theale.

The re-formation of the Reading branch was assisted by generous donations from local WEA branches in Maidenhead, Windsor, and Wokingham. You can contact Reading WEA by email: WEAreading@googlemail.com or by phone **0118 946 4137**. Some of the new courses in the new brochure (and courses from other local WEA branches) can be found by inputting your postcode at www.wea.org.uk.

WEA



Learning for Life



From left to right are four members of WEA Reading's committee: Graham Thomas (Treasurer), John Beale (Programme Convenor), Paul Kingston (Chairman) and David Winchester (Database and IT Development). There are 12 members currently on the committee which also includes Carole Kingston (Bookings Secretary) and Geoff Forsters (Venues Co-ordinator).

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ENVIRONMENT

The Lesser Celandine

This is not a favourite plant of mine – through no fault of its own. Part of my garden in Caversham must once have been a hedgerow, and this is one of the hedgerow plants that won't go away. Every spring I attack it, but in lifting the plants, some of the little tubers underneath inevitably drop off and disappear into the earth, so that it comes back the following year. Perhaps I should just leave it alone – after all, once it has flowered, it shrivels up and disappears below ground fairly rapidly.

There is also a Greater Celandine, which also has yellow flowers, but it flowers a bit later in the year and is related to poppies, as opposed to the Lesser Celandine, which is closely related to buttercups.

The name Celandine is not native in origin, but it has displaced all the old English names for the plant. It comes from the Greek word for a swallow, and in the ancient world it was apparently thought that swallows could use the plant to restore their eyesight. This notion rather beggars belief, and conjures up visions of swallows performing acrobatic feats in order to apply the plants to their eyes. Another old story was that the celandines flowered at about the times when swallows returned to northern latitudes.

I'm afraid that most of the old English names for the Lesser Celandine are downright unpleasant. According to the medieval doctrine of signatures,

it was believed that God had given human beings clues as to the medicinal virtues of plants in their appearance. A plant with kidney-shaped leaves was good for curing disorders of the kidneys, and a plant with flowers that looked like eyes was good for eye complaints. The Lesser Celandine was known as Figwort or Pilewort, because those

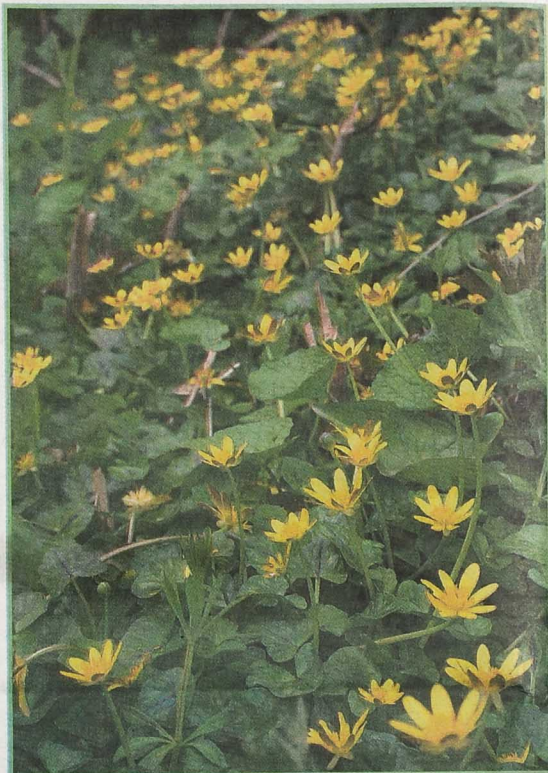
annoying little tubers underneath were thought to look like piles, once also known as figs. I take this on trust, since mercifully I have never suffered from, or had to look upon such things.

In order to obtain relief, some writers reckoned that all you had to do was to carry a piece of the plant in your pocket. Others advocated frying the tubers in lard to form an ointment, while others said you must make an infusion of the plant in boiling water, and drink it once it had cooled.

Lesser Celandines still grow in abundance on hedge-banks and on the edges of woods. The under sides of the floral leaves are shaded with a

silvery grey, so that when the flowers are shut, in dull or wet weather, you hardly notice them. Then, suddenly, when the sun shines, they open up and reflect the sun's golden rays back at you, and you know that spring is definitely on the way. So perhaps, rather than thinking of it as Figwort or Pilewort, you should remember the old Dorset name for it, Spring Messenger.

Happy Wanderer



Girlguiding Caversham District working in Waitrose

The last Saturday before Christmas is possibly not the ideal time to let unknown children pack your shopping but the generous people of Caversham allowed the Brownies and Guides to do just that. With the kind permission of Waitrose, Girlguiding Caversham District spent 7½ hours, working in shifts, to raise money to help fund their Centenary activities.

Doing the shopping, especially the Christmas food shopping, might be a chore for grown-ups, but when you are seven years old and in Waitrose with your friends, not with your Mum, then it's the best fun ever. Several girls refused to leave when their parents arrived to collect them

as they were having too much fun. Twenty girls from 2nd Caversham Guides came along because they were so keen, although the promise of hot chocolate in Costa afterwards might have had something to do with it. Every unit that took part got an equal part of the money, with over £1,000 raised.

Girlguiding Caversham District would like to thank Waitrose for allowing us to get under their feet at such a busy time and the kind people of Caversham who let us 'help' them with their shopping.

If you can offer any time or talents to Guiding then please get in touch with us at: c a v e r s h a m g u i d e s



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FORTHCOMING EVENTS



South Chiltern Choral Society

The Society's Spring Concert will take place on Saturday 20th March at 7.30pm in the University Great Hall, London Road, Reading. Whatever your musical taste, the Spring Concert programme will provide something to whet your appetite, featuring, as it does, works from very different eras.

The choir will be singing three significant works. These range from the Baroque - Vivaldi's *Gloria* (Italy, 1725), via the Classicism of Mozart's *Solemn Vespers* (which are anything but! - Austria, 1780) to the 20th century composer Kodaly's *Missa Brevis* (Hungary, 1944). The concert will be conducted by Gwyn Arch and the choir accompanied by the South Chiltern Orchestra. Four young professional soloists, all of whom have already made their mark, will take part. They are Lisa Anne Robinson (soprano), Kate Warshaw (mezzo-soprano), Ashley Riches (tenor) and Sam Furness (bass). In addition, Maddie Cottam and Ruth Strickland will play Vivaldi's *Concerto for Two Trumpets*.

Tickets cost £12 or £6 for under 18s and may be obtained from the SCCS Box Office (Heather Clark) on 01491 575 727. Further information is available on the choir website: southchilternchoralsociety.org.uk

Reading Festival Chorus

Reading Festival Chorus are presenting their Concert A French Connection on Saturday 20th March 2010 at 7.30 p.m. at Highdown School Concert Hall, Surley Row, Emmer Green, Reading. A programme of joyful French choral music ranging from the youthful exuberance of Bizet's *Te Deum* to the sumptuous orchestral colours of Poulenc's *Gloria* with a brief excursion for the orchestra into Fauré's *Dolly Suite*, made famous by BBC Radio's 'Listen with Mother'. The concert will be conducted by Janet Lincé and the orchestra will be the Oxford Sinfonia.

The soprano soloist is locally-based, internationally renowned Erica Eloff. Tickets (£15, £13 concessions, including Your Reading Passport holders) are available from Alison Mackay (tel 962 6214), Chorus members, on the door and via the website: www.readingfestivalchorus.org.uk

THE SUE RYDER CARE - MIDNIGHT WALK, Saturday 8 May.

Sue Ryder Care held their first ladies Midnight Walk in Reading last year, with more than 600 women taking part in the 10k walk around Green Park, Reading. It was a great success and over £50,000 was raised in sponsorship. The 2010 Midnight Walk is taking place on Sat 8th May and this year we have revised the 10k route around Green Park and have added some great entertainment to help you along the way.

So come along and enjoy the party atmosphere, whilst raising money for a worthy cause!

Registration is £15 including your Midnight Walk T-shirt and fundraising pack.

To register go to: www.suerydercare.org/midnightwalks or for more information please contact The Fundraising Dept on: 01491 641070 or email: fundraising.nettlebed@suerydercare.org

Parenthesis Concert

Parenthesis, a mixed-voice choir with members from around the Reading area, will be giving a Spring concert to include Mozart's *Mass in C Minor* on Saturday 27th March at St Andrews Church in Caversham Heights. Parenthesis will be conducted by Valerie Hoppe and accompanied by Martin Jones.

The concert will feature soloists, Alison Underhay (Soprano), Rebecca Gresson (Mezzo Soprano/Alto), Gareth Moss (Tenor) and John Lee (Bass), who have all sung with the National Youth Choir and perform with Chantage, winning BBC Choir of the Year in 2006.

As well as performing the Mozart Mass with Parenthesis, the soloists will also sing a number of pieces of their own choice.

For ticket enquiries please go to www.parenthesis.org.uk or call Lindsay Mullaney on 947 0478.

Caversham & Chiltern Flower Club

To start a new year of demonstrations, day-schools and fun days with flowers, Caversham & Chiltern Flower Club are holding a demonstration entitled "Welcome to Spring" by Ann-Maree Dicker on Wednesday 10th March. The venue as always is Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmoor Road., Caversham and begins at 7.30p.m., doors opening at 6.45p.m. Entrance £4.50 for visitors, £3.50 concessions. The Club meets on the second Wednesday of each month, and visitors are always very welcome.

On Saturday 20th March, the Club is holding a Jumble Sale in Sonning Common Village Hall, Wood Lane, Sonning Common, starting at 10a.m. Entrance 10p. This is always a very popular sale with good quality items at amazingly low prices.

For details of any of the above, please contact Berna Macdonald on 9477400.

Reading Gardeners

In March there will be two meetings in Caversham Primary School at 7.30pm.

March 10th is Members Evening. With a number of contributions from members.

On March 24th, Pamela Holt a former plant collector for Kew, will be talking about 'Lakeside Gardens of Northern Italy'.

Caversham Horticultural Society

The committee would like remind members that the society's AGM and social get together will be held at Caversham Primary School on Wednesday 17th March starting at 7.45pm. We welcome all members and anyone else who is interested in joining the society.

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

'LET EVERYTHING THAT HAS BREATH PRAISE GOD'

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.

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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THE BUILDINGS IN CAVERSHAM COURT - THE STORY BEHIND THE BRICKS AND MORTAR

Friends of Caversham Court Gardens AGM - 24 March

You are all invited to come to Giles Pritchard's illustrated talk on the restoration of the buildings at Caversham Court. When the gardens opened last summer many of us were amazed at the 'new' buildings which seemed to have appeared while the gates were shut. Giles is going to give us the inside story on Wednesday, 24 March at Reading Canoe Club on The Warren. So put the date in your diary now! Further details on our website - www.fccg.org.uk

Come along at 7pm to join the Friends or renew your membership, to reminisce over photographs of last August's official opening and to enjoy some refreshments kindly sponsored by Farmer & Dyer. The FCCG AGM will start at 7.30. A new committee will be elected so, if you would like to join this enthusiastic group, get in touch with FCCG beforehand - to find out more or to stand contact: FriendsOfCavershamCourt@goolemail.com or Tel: 0118 947 5062

Giles' presentation will follow, he is a very experienced historic buildings architect with Hampshire County Council. It is his job to look after historic buildings - to understand their history and construction so that he can plan their maintenance, carry out appropriate repairs and even propose new structures when required. After all, we are around for only a small part of their history. As well as Caversham Court he has worked on major projects like Basing House, another Heritage Lottery Fund project involving a new visitors' centre, and on Odiham Castle, which has just been nominated for an architectural award.

Giles plans to show lots of

photographs illustrating how he, along with a team of engineers and archaeologists, set about their task of restoring the buildings at Caversham Court. These included the unique gazebo which goes back at least to the 1660s. He will tell us what they expected to find when they started work on the causeway, the surprises they had and how they set about creating the marvellous walkway we have now. He will also be talking about the creation of the footprints of the two houses that were on the site and the discovery of the vaults under the path down to the Refreshment Kiosk.

Everyone is welcome to come to this free event. But we hope that as many of you as possible will support the work of FCCG by joining or renewing your membership - it costs £2.00 per person to December 2010 or £5 for a 3-year membership until December 2012. You can also join or renew your membership by contacting: Philip Darlow, Treasurer FCCG, Kalewa, The Warren, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7TQ - Tel: 0118 947 2205 / E-mail: FriendsOfCavershamCourt@goolemail.com

What to look for in Caversham Court in March

• Lots of tulips and anemones have been planted in the borders and daffodils, tulips and irises on the winter walk down from St Peter's

• Look for the new pleached limes to be planted on the framework between the causeway and the allotments and the three new mulberry trees round the carriage circle, just inside the gates

• On Thursday 1 April from 10 to 3.30 New Directions are organising an Art & Leisure Day in Caversham Court. They are planning workshops for you to try and, from 12 noon, cream teas.



Old stone found by
archeologists in
excavating under the
house.

Photo - Anne Keenan

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