



SCANDAL! TIME TO ACT

Each year, the Methodist Association of Youth Clubs adopts a specific cause for which they think in some way they can help. Last year's was homelessness and the aim was to discover the real truth behind the scandal of homelessness. To do this, they enlisted the help of many Youth Groups around the country. There were surveys for council offices, refuges and most importantly the people actually on the streets. The results were then published in October. A second part to the project aimed to make more people aware of the plight of homeless people. A National Sleep-Out was planned for Saturday 16th December.

In addition to the Sleep-outs held in the Reading area, the Caversham Heights "Squash" Club decided to see if the Streets of London are really paved with gold, by joining the sleep-out in Westminster.

The first thing that hit me was the amount of stuff we all had with us. For one night we each had a sleeping bag, several layers of clothes and flasks of hot soup. If we had really been homeless, we wouldn't have that, we would hardly have anything. It was important for us to realise the realities of being homeless and it was a reality on one of the coldest nights of the year.

Some parliamentary MP's came to answer some questions and they were presented with the results of the survey. The Tory MP believed that a lot had been done about homelessness and told us that there were only 147 homeless on the streets of London. We didn't really believe him so we decided to see for ourselves. In the early hours of the morning, several of us walked down the Strand and in amazement we counted at least 30 people sleeping rough, huddled in doorways, trying to keep warm - a huge contrast to the Savoy Hotel. We crossed the river to the South Bank and went down to the concourse. Under the road is a kind of "cardboard city". There are extremely bright lights and loud music is blaring. People have made shelters for themselves against a wall. We could not see the exact numbers but I believe there were at least 50 people there. It was a very depressing sight. So in one night I saw 80 or more homeless in just two areas of London. I simply can't believe there are only 147. It's a scandal.

Hannah Coates



- D. Munns

Some of the group taking part. Polly Hunter, Tom Hunter, David Agrawal and Alex McCubbin.

ABBEYFIELD? NEVER HEARD OF IT!



A drawing of the new Extra Care House in Maitland Road, Devonshire Square.

Is this your reaction? We hope not, but, just in case . . .

The Abbeyfield (Reading) Society is one of over 600 local Societies which, nationwide, provide sheltered housing with care and companionship for elderly people. The name comes from the street in Bermondsey where the first House was set up in 1956. Now there are about 1,000 Houses, accommodating nearly 9,000 residents. Each Society is a Registered Charity, run by volunteers and the National Society sets standards and provides back-up.

Our service is centred round the Supportive House - a medium-sized family-type house which usually accommodates 6 to 12 residents. Each resident has a secure centrally-heated bed sitting room which they look after and furnish themselves. All rooms have a wash basin or en suite facilities. A resident Housekeeper provides the two main meals of the day, eaten as a family, and residents make their own breakfast from provisions provided. In Reading, we have two such Houses, and the inclusive weekly charge is about £120. Ages of residents vary from 70 to 95!

When residents can no longer cope in a Supportive House, we provide what we call an Extra-Care House, and a brand new purpose-built 24-bed House is due to open in March. It is in the Conservation Area of Downshire Square, less than one mile from Reading town centre, and handy for buses, churches, and shops. Again, residents each have their own en suite room, but a full back-up is provided with qualified staff on call right round the clock. Charges here are expected to be about £300 weekly, and bookings are now being accepted.

For more information, please contact Mrs Susan Skinner on 01734 751302 or Mrs Judith Moore 472694.

Abbeyfield are also trustees for the Eventide Watts Charity who own two self-contained flats in Hemdean Rise, Caversham. These are available for 'needy elderly persons' at a low rent, and the upstairs flat is vacant at the moment. Enquiries to Ken Shield on 01724 473709.

CHRISTMAS SUCCESS FOR CAVERSHAM TRADERS

The winter freeze-up prior to Christmas did not deter many local shoppers from entering the competition run by the Caversham Traders Association. Fred Nickson of Nickson's country shop, who co-ordinated the Twelve Days of Christmas Competition, reported that a total of 38 entries were received by the closing date of 20th December.

Picture cards depicting the twelve days of Christmas were placed in some of the participating shop windows for the public to find. Of course not all the entries were correct and some of the tie breakers were really amusing.

The lucky winner was Mr John Hinton, who won an enormous hamper which included all the usual seasonal food and drink together with lots of gifts supplied by the 35 or so participating shops in Caversham worth almost £400.

Amy Hall of Albert Road, Caversham won the Junior prize of a family ticket for 4 people to see the pantomime Cinderella at the Hexagon starring Bobby Davro.

Mr Nickson reported that the idea was to promote late night shopping in Caversham on Fridays in December and to create greater awareness of the diverse local shopping facilities in the community. Some traders reported brisk business whilst others were less busy. Freezing fog deterred the public from watching the Punch and Judy street show bravely put on by Mr Roger Kent (the tailor from Church House). A group of carol singers collecting for Save the Children Fund were also disappointed at the lack of people to encourage and donate.

The C.T.A. will build on the experience gained from this first year's promotion and expect to add street illuminations and other attractions next Christmas.

TALKING POINT

by
Dr Owen Jewiss
a Layman from St. Barnabas



WHAT COMES AFTER THE PANCAKES AND THE CARNIVAL?

On 21st February we shall see the start of the season of Lent, marked by many on Shrove Tuesday by pancakes and pancake races and, in many countries, by Carnival or Mardi Gras. In the minds of many this is a feast before the fast, a fast which is associated with some act of self denial: perhaps giving up chocolates, but for what reason? - because we are overweight? - or maybe to send the money so saved to some worthy charitable cause?

Lent is a penitential season, a time of self discipline marked much more in the past by fasting than now. In the middle ages pancakes were made to use up eggs and fat before Lent; egg albumen is a leavening agent and Lent was a time for unleavened cooking. Mardi Gras (fat Tuesday) was the day to use up the animal fat and the derivation of 'carnival' is *carnelevarium*, literally the taking away or the removal of meat prior to a meatless Lent. We may well eat pancakes on Shrove Tuesday but why and what follows have become blurred. Do Shrove-tide and Lent have any meaning for us? Do we stop to examine ourselves and see where we have fallen short? Do we seek God's forgiveness?

I doubt if any will wear sackcloth, or even a hair shirt, and cover themselves with ashes as a sign of repentance. Neither do I expect to see the people in Caversham making their way to church on their knees as a sign of penance. However, during Lent some of our churches will have frontals resembling sackcloth on their altars and many at the Ash Wednesday services are likely to have ashes imposed on their foreheads, thus symbolising earlier practices.

In the early Church new Christians were baptised at Easter. Lent was used as a period of preparation for the new life in Christ, a time to turn to Christ, a time to repent from sin, and a time to renounce evil. Easter is therefore also the time when those who are Christian renew their baptismal vows. Repentance is a complete change of heart, a turning away from one's sinful life towards one of serving God; all of us have fallen short of God's standards.

St Paul tells us that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5.19. RSV). The act of reconciliation was achieved on the Cross at that first Good Friday. Reconciliation is therefore a gift of God and the source of new life. One old meaning of the verb 'to thrive' is to reconcile to a course of action. The opportunity is open to all of us this Lent to do just that through the ecumenical Lent Groups on the theme 'Building Bridges' which is concerned with reconciliation; it is about making peace, restoring broken relationships, resolving conflicts, forgiving debts and making friends out of enemies. We all have the opportunity during the season of Lent to arrive at Easter better prepared for this particular celebration. Let us use it!

SUNDAY SERVICES

ANGLICAN

St Peter's
8.00am Holy Communion
9.15am Parish Communion
11.15am Matins
6.30pm Evensong

St John's
8.00am Holy Communion
10.00am Parish Eucharist and Sunday School
6.30pm Evensong (1st Sunday)
6.30pm Informal Worship (3rd Sunday)

St Andrew's
8.00am The Eucharist
10.00am Parish Eucharist (Sung)
First Sunday, Family Eucharist
11.15am The Eucharist (with hymns)
6.30pm Evening Prayer
An up to date list of weekday Services will be found on the Church notice boards.

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

St Margaret's, Mapledurham
8.00am Holy Communion (1st Sunday)
11.00am Parish Communion

CAVERSHAM PARK CHURCH
(Caversham Park Primary School)
11.00am Family Communion (1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays)

Morning Worship (2nd Sunday)
Triple F Family Service (4th Sunday)
6.30pm Evening Worship (1st Sunday)

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST FREE CHURCH
10.30am and 6.30pm

NORTH CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH
10.45am and 6.30pm

CAVERSHAM HILL CHAPEL
10.30am (in Chapel)

METHODIST
Caversham, Gosbrook Road
10.30am and 6.30pm

Caversham Heights
9.00am Holy Communion (1st Sunday)
11.00am and 6.30pm

ROMAN CATHOLIC
St Anne's Saturday 5.30pm, Sunday 10.30am and 6.30pm

Our Lady of Caversham 9.00am
St Martin's School 9.15am Mass
Mapledurham House 6.00pm Mass (last Sunday of the month)

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, York Road
11.00am

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (Quakers), Church Street, Reading 10.30am
Caversham Church House - Meeting for Worship 7.30pm. (last Sunday)
House study groups Sept-June Tel: 475783.

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD
9.30am Sunday School
11.00am Divine Worship
7.00pm Evening Service

DIAMOND WEDDING CELEBRATION



- O. Jewiss

Our picture shows Mary and Gordon Page on the occasion of their Diamond Wedding.

Congratulations to Gordon and Mary Page of St Barnabas Church who celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary just before Christmas. They were married at St Michael and All Angels' Church, Teignmouth on 23rd December, 1935. Among a large group of family and friends who celebrated the occasion were Gordon's older brother and sister-in-law, Caversham residents Aubrey and Nancy Page; not only were they among guests at the wedding but they also celebrated their Diamond Wedding not long ago.

Gordon Page will be remembered as a former District Warden at St Barnabas Church and a former Churchwarden of Caversham in the days when it was all one parish, roles in which he was ably supported by Mary, who was herself active in the church life at St Barnabas.

INTRODUCTORY DAY WORKSHOP

Saturday 24th February 1996

10.00am-4.15pm

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For further information or application form please contact:

PAT ANTELL

Tel: 01734 474787 or

SHEILA GOLDSMITH

Tel: 01734 475303

after 7pm

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

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All contributions for March issue should be sent to Church House, by noon on Wednesday 31 January. All advertising copy should be sent to Mrs E. Maule, 18 Albert Road, Caversham by Monday 29 January.

The dates for April will be Monday 4 March and Wednesday 6 March.

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

Published by Caversham Christian News Ltd, Church Street, Caversham, Reading. Tel: 01734 471703.

Typeset by Right Image Graphics Co. Ltd, Unit 1, 151-155 Cardiff Road, Reading. Tel: 01734 393032.

Printed by Chilton Offset, Amersham, Bucks.

There will be a public viewing of Senior Artists' work at Church House, Caversham on 9th March from 10am to 4pm.

Light refreshments will be available.

RESIDENTS' VIEWPOINT

By Watchdog

One of the dominant issues of 1995 to be carried over into 1996 is that of a superstore on the former Elliotts site. A decision on this should be known before the year is much older. The other issue, that of excessive traffic in Caversham, is a hardy annual which will be with us for years to come. (Shouldn't that be a perennial?). Efforts to solve it with a Caversham Traffic Strategy founded because of its central plank of a one way system, which was finally abandoned after widespread opposition.

Excavations by Telecental were something most people experienced during the year, as workmen arrived to dig trenches outside their homes, or where they walked. They packed up and left before every street had had the full treatment, but towards the end of the year they returned and continued their onslaught, notably in Hemdean Road where the pavements had only recently been renewed, after sewers for Bus Bottom had played havoc with them. A trench line now mars their former pristine appearance. Other roads which were left uncompleted on the last visitation can expect further disturbances at some future date.

It would be interesting to know how many people have actually taken up the opportunity of being linked into the information super highway. With cut-price offers being made, one suspects there was not exactly a rush.

THOSE BINS AGAIN

Dustbins, the wheeled variety, also featured large last year. They remain as eyesores in all properties which were unsuitable for them. They are also eyesores at more appropriate houses when lined up, often on the pavement, for collection. In many cases they are overfilled so that their lids cannot close. In other cases, plastic bags accompany them. It has specifically been stated that they should not be overfilled as it

makes it difficult, if not actually dangerous, for the bin men to empty them. The vehicles are not designed to take plastic bags. That was made clear from the very start. If a plastic bag is all right as long as it is with a wheeled bin, it should also be all right if it is by itself, and that is not the case. So far the collectors have been kind and taken all this, but offenders should not be surprised if one day their rubbish is left behind. You have been warned.

MORE STREET FURNITURE

Another legacy from last year is the illuminated advertisement stands which have grown up in pavements all over the town. Caversham has its share. Noticeably there is one outside St Martin's Precinct, and other at the junction of St Anne's Road and Church Road. The right of pedestrians to have an unimpeded pavement is slowly being eroded. 'Pavements are for Pedestrians' is becoming an outmoded concept, as parked cars and other clutter gradually take them over.

BUGS BOTTOM

Bugs Bottom is something else that goes back over the years, and will be here for years to come, as various firms fill this once beautiful valley with hundreds of houses. Once it was possible not to look at it if your property did not actually back on to it, but that is no longer the case. The view from Blenheim Road, for instance, is no longer a rural one as something resembling a barracks sprawls along the ridge.

A minor benefit is that money left over from the campaign to save Bugs Bottom has been used to lay gravel on muddy paths in its vicinity.

The Channel Tunnel is scarcely a bridge, but like the Forth, Severn and other great bridges, it was built by work commencing on either side of the water. Through the skill and cooperation of engineers working from England and France, the two bores met with a remarkable degree of accuracy.

"Building Bridges" is the title of the workbook prepared by the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland, for the 1996 Ecumenical Lent Groups. The ideas and guidance that it contains will enable groups to study a variety of areas where broken relationships need reconciliation. Reconciliation is not about making peace or making friends out of enemies by doing deals or signing treaties reluctantly. Reconciliation is about building bridges of understanding through conscientious activity that secures step by step agreement leading to the reduction of difference. This process leads to peace and friendship between former enemies, when the gap between minds on either side is so narrow that they can find no impediment in it.

This year's Lent course looks at five areas where conflict may exist. One is gender, another is race. Both can be areas of

difficulty for the Christian community or the individual, despite the teaching of Galatians 3:28.

Thirdly, the disparity between the rich and the poor. This division is becoming greater in some parts of the world, while others are witnessing a closing of the gap. The workbook refers to 'unhealed histories' - bitter memories of Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland, Palestinians in Israel, and British prisoners of war in Japanese hands as examples.

Last, but by no means least, are the religious tensions that exist between different faiths, and between differing traditions within the same faith.

Christianity is no exception, with its many divisions.

"Building Bridges" is intended to be more than a talking-shop. It is designed to help those who take part, to respond positively to the invitation to share actively in Christ's ministry of reconciliation. The Lent groups begin five weekly meetings on 25th February, and it is planned that at least one group will be meeting on each day of the week in Caversham community.

Everyone is invited to take part in these groups. Please telephone without delay either John Dudley on 470265 or Martyn Allies on 472007 for further details.

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CAVERSHAM CLERGY

ANGLICAN
Canon Richard Kingsbury, Caversham Rectory, Church Road.
Tel: 479130.
(Parish Office: Monday-Thursday 9.30-12.30 Tel: 471703)
The Rev Bill Carpenter, St Andrews House, Harrogate Rd.
Tel: 472788.
(The Rev. Andrew Tyler, Hon. Asst Priest)
The Rev Nigel Hardcastle, 20 St. Barnabas Road. Tel: 478239.
The Revs Stephen & Christine Rowe.
The Vicarage, St John's Road. Tel: 471814.
The Rev Sheila Nunn, 25 Ilkley Road. Tel: 472070.

CAVERSHAM PARK ECUMENICAL PROJECT
The Rev. Philip Abrey, 51 Galsworthy Drive, Caversham Park Village. Tel. 475152.

METHODIST
The Rev David Moody, 72 Highmoor Road. Tel: 472223.
The Rev John Boakes, 9 Woodlands Grove, Caversham. Tel: 482530.

BAPTIST
Rev Peter Edwards, 14 Tredgar Road, Emmer Green. Tel: 477697

CAVERSHAM HILL CHAPEL
Church Office Tel: 474529

ROMAN CATHOLIC
The Rev Anthony Jones, The Presbytery, 2 South View Avenue. Tel: 471787.
The Rev John Ellis, 18 Peppard Road, Sonning Common. Tel: 723418

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD
Rev. A. N. Lawrence, 6a Hemdean Road. Tel: 470816.

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THE THREE PATS

Somebody recently asked what happened to 'the three Pats' who figured in these columns some years ago. Well, as many of you will know, Pat Way moved to a new pharmacy attached to the surgery in Hemdean Road, but still welcomes old customers. This could be a boon for anyone interested in pharmaceutical items, for they waste little time or space for the usual cosmetics. On the other hand I should add that the two chemists in Church Street still carry a good stock of such items.

As to Pat Howard, well I'm sure we shall miss her antique shop in Prospect Street, for she has served us so well in recent years; typically she has left the shop front tastefully decorated with curtaining instead of the usual blank windows. We shall miss Pat but fortunately she is still quite a long way from leaving the area for good; she hopes eventually to move nearer the west country and has promised to keep in touch.

As to Pat, our florist, I must say how much I appreciate that she is still very much with us and so far doing well. She and her staff worked so hard during the Christmas rush, endeavouring to meet all requirements, deliveries etc.

So you can see we haven't forgotten any of them. But I do wish somebody would endeavour to cover, for the benefit of our readers, shops in other areas of Caversham. It is lovely to have interesting reports of affairs outside Caversham, pilgrimages etc., but this is, after all, a local

paper. I've said it before and I'll say it again. It is up to you - it's your paper.

APOLOGIES

Which reminds me to offer apologies for anyone who missed out on the street collection (to help cancer nurses) in memory of Daisy Essex. Streets change and I was fortunate to enlist the services of Pauline to do the rounds in collecting. Now I'm getting complaints that certain people were not called upon. It would be lovely to know that nobody gets missed out in such collections but, alas, time moves on and we old hands are getting much older and frailer. Pauline had no way of knowing which old friends of Daisy particularly needed a call. If you read the obituary in last month's paper you will realise that Daisy herself was becoming bereft of her old local callers. In fairness to Pauline I should add that I do know that some of those 'complaining' are not themselves in a position to answer the door. So my grateful thanks to Pauline and apologies to anyone who felt left out.

MORE ABOUT SHOPS

It both pleased and saddened me to see the local shops so crowded just before Christmas - pleased that some of our local traders were able to catch up on income lost during the year. Apart from anything, we can't afford to lose our traders - not being able to get into town more often, I personally was very grateful to make full use of shops like the florists and the bookshop, which filled most of my needs. Sad though - when I surveyed the loaded trolleys just before Christmas, I couldn't help a sneaking feeling of regret that we still have a minority in our midst to whom being able to stock up for Christmas is something they can only dream about. Apart from personal shortages there is

something very sad, amid such an avalanche of gift buying, to see people, both young and old unable to spare the necessary cash to buy for their loved ones.

It is not my job to sling the lottery and if you want to buy a ticket then please do so, but don't think that a pound spent on the lottery ticket makes up for all the odd coppers you used to put in collecting boxes for other very worthy causes. Please don't let us lose our sense of values over this.

THE VETS

I do hope a goodly number of people took advantage of the Open Days held to mark the opening of the new Oakley Veterinary Clinic as it is now known. I don't know who actually designed the Clinic, but it was most impressive with everything taken care of and if anyone needed assurance that our much loved pets will be well cared for, a visit to the clinic would have reassured them. It was an hour or so well spent. I solicited the help of Nick Butcher to gather up the names of those (now all well qualified and extremely pleasant) who help run the clinic.

Nick himself, Samantha Posner and Deborah Ware are the vets, the head nurse is Susanne Callis and the other nurses, Sarah Heard, Anne Schumann, Louise Edneall and Sara Hammond, all help to keep the Clinic running in a way that is worthy of such an establishment.

THE PET SHOP

I believe it was at one time the custom for people attending the Prospect Street premises to walk up the road to the Pet Shop to stock up for anything necessary. In case you won't know, the Pet Shop is one of the happiest and most helpful anywhere around so I hope you will continue to support Jill and Jerry in the coming years. It never ceases to amaze me how much some of our shopkeepers put into keeping their services running.

NEWS OF OLD FRIENDS

Christmas brought the usual crop of news from old friends, in particular many who served our churches faithfully in years gone by. And it was great to be brought up to date with news of families like the Grimwades, the Scott-Dempsters (still at Chieveley), the Dawsons at Tilehurst, the Crowes at Dorchester and many others. I used to have mixed feelings about the circular letters sent out at times like these, but they do keep us informed and it is one of the bonuses of Christmas that it does bring news of old

friends.

The card which particularly pleased me was from an old friend, Lesley Owen, of St. Anne's Road. We studied together on a pre-degree course many years ago; alas we don't seem to see that much of each other these days, so I was delighted to get the news that Lesley had finally gained her MA. She has worked hard all these years, supported by her two daughters, themselves studying, and her husband Robert, and if anyone deserved success she did. Now then, please more news of this kind, if you don't mind.

NETLEY LANDSCAPES



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SAVE THE CHILDREN ADVENT CONCERT

The annual Save the Children Carol Concert took place this year in St John's church on 10th December in the presence of the Deputy Mayor of Reading. The music and readings were as good as ever - the attendance, at least to this reporter's eye, was a little down on previous years, a pity since those who stayed away missed both a very enjoyable event and the opportunity to support a deserving cause.

Music came in a variety of forms with choirs from St John's and St Anne's parishes, the Network Singers from Caversham Heights Methodist Church, vocal solos from June Harper and Pam Chilvers, the latter accompanied by the Baptist Music Group, guitar solos from Stuart McCubbin, and, last but by no means least, the Recorder Group from St Anne's School who, as ever, delighted everyone with their youthful talent and enthusiasm.

These performances were interspersed with a variety of seasonal readings from the Bible and the singing by the whole audience of a number of well loved carols. The whole afternoon was underpinned by the organ accompaniment of Philip Bowcock who also provided the introductory and concluding music while opening and closing prayers were conducted by the Revs Stephen and Christine Rowe. Tea in the hall followed what had proved a most enjoyable occasion and it is to be hoped that greater support will be given to similar events in the future.

READING & DISTRICT CANCER CARE

35 Prospect St, Caversham, Reading RG4 8JB
Tel: (01734) 462930

We have moved from Hemdean Road to Prospect Street. Your donated items of clothes, unwanted gifts, bric-a-brac, china, glass will be gratefully received.

The money raised from the sale of these goods supports patients and families of cancer sufferers in the Reading and District community.

We also need more volunteers - half a day or just a few hours a week would be appreciated. Please pop in or ring the above number.

DO YOU NEED EXTRA CARE IN READING?

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IAN WESTLEY Master of St Peter's Music

After nine wonderful years, Andrew Bosley retired cum summa laude, from the post of organist and choirmaster at St. Peter's. Liz Cooke kept the musical ship truly on course. Her Bach voluntaries held the congregation in pews long after the final blessing. Pam Asbury worked wonders with the choir.

Now St Peter's has a new organist and choirmaster, Ian Westley. With Lizzie, Pam and the choir, Ian produced a musical Christmas feast.

Ian came innocently to St Peter's to lead the Erleigh Cantors for a January 95 concert. The bait was dangled, though he was organist at another Berkshire church.

Ian and his wife Mary are professional music teachers and Caversham welcomes them and their three children. They live in central Reading so Ian will not have too far to dash for all the spring and summer Saturday weddings at St Peter's. To watch him enticing and leading the choir and as a distinguished organist is a delight. St Peter's looks into 1996 and beyond

CHURCHPEOPLE'S LUNCHEON CLUB

The new year meeting of the club at St. Laurence's Hall, Abbey Square, Reading had instead of a speaker, a Musical Trio. John and Mandy Wyatt, both graduates of the Royal Academy of Music (where they met), and their daughter Alison. Mandy and John last played for the club eleven years ago, on a similar occasion, but Alison came in a 'KarriCot'. Alison is now in her second year with the National Children's Orchestra. Incidentally her mother was the youngest member of the Reading Symphony Orchestra at the age of 14.

The programme started with the carol 'Good King Wenceslas, which although of doubtful theological value was appreciated and sung by all present. Then followed a selection of music played individually and together, by Handel, Tchaikovsky, Pleyel, Elgar, Mendelssohn, Dvorak, and to be topical Irving Berlin's 'Dreaming of a White Christmas' concluded the concert.

The catering by the 'In house' catering team, Stella and Tom Rhymer was in keeping with the festive season. Everyone agreed that the club's entry into 1996 augured well for the future.

The Churchpeople's Luncheon Club meet on the first Thursday of each month, promptly at 1pm at St. Laurence's Hall, Abbey Square, Reading. If you would like to come along, please notify the secretary, Philip Wickens, Reading 872878 by noon on the previous Tuesday. Luncheon consists on each occasion of a selection of sandwiches, a selection of cheese and biscuits, plus coffee at a flat rate of £1.50 per head. Wine and Squash are available at 60p and 10p respectively.

W.A.V.



- P. Bailly

ERLEIGH CANTORS IN CONCERT

As reported in last month's Bridge, the ERLEIGH CANTORS will be making a return visit to St. Peter's Church on Saturday, 24th February.

The music will include:
Der Geist Hilft - Bach
Choral Dances from Gloriana - Britten
Beatus Vir - Monteverdi
Mass in G Minor - Vaughan Williams

They will be joined by the STRAND STRING QUARTET playing works by Barber, Puccini and Mozart.
Tickets: Adults £5, Children £3; details from Ian Westley at St. Peter's or at Reading 661087. The concert is in aid of The Berkshire Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre.

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AROUND THE CHURCHES

YOUNG AT ST BARNABAS CHURCH

The involvement of the young people in many of the events at St Barnabas Church is a notable feature of life at the Church. Guides and Brownies played their part by arranging some of the competitions at the Christmas Fair held in early December to support overseas mission. Members of the congregation and the Coffee Pot Group staffed other stalls. This particular effort supports the Guy Daynes' Educational Trust in the Kwa Zulu area of South Africa. Nearly £800 was raised, which will go to support the continued training of Sibongile Zungu as a much needed black lawyer.

The pre-Christmas Toy Service produced a collection of toys for circulation to those in need in Reading. The Carol Service subtitled 'Viderunt Omnes - All Have Seen' produced a pot pourri of carols, music, slides and readings from around the world; the young people featured in two stick dances and in the music group. The revelation by the children of some of their Christmas presents is an ongoing feature of the Christmas Day service at St Barnabas. The undoubted highlight as far as the young



Guides and Brownies in charge of stalls at the Christmas Fair.



The cast of the Nativity Presentation at the Crib Service.

people were concerned was their re-enactment of the Nativity to a packed church at the Crib Service.

Finally the Christmas collections were devoted to young peoples' causes: thus nearly

£600 was shared between the Reading based charity 'Feed the Children' for their work in Bosnia and other places, and the Reading YMCA for their project with the homeless young people.

Owen Jewiss

St Andrew's Fellowship

In spite of the unpleasant weather, a large number of members came to hear the Shinfield Handbell Ringers, led by Mr Lawes, perform at the Christmas meeting. A very amusing programme, including carols, had been arranged and the leader's sister sang several songs, which were much appreciated. She had driven specially from London for the performance, a journey which due to fog and traffic had taken her four hours instead of the usual one. Sandwiches and mincepies prepared by the committee were served with tea or coffee after the performance.

Sister Ethel Frances who died on 3rd December at St. Mary's Convent, Wantage will be remembered with affection by a number of people in Caversham. A sister of Peggy Flack, a member of St. Peter's congregation, she joined the Community of St Mary the Virgin in 1955. She taught at one time at the Community's well known school of St.

Mary's Wantage and on retiring from teaching came to Springfield St. Luke in Surley Row and was, for part of her time there, Sister Superior. Latterly she had been one of the sisters at St. Katherine's Home for the Elderly in Wantage. Often forthright in her views, she was an early supporter of the ordination of women and, at a time when even

to discuss the subject was regarded as heretical, was heard once to remark that the Church of England must expect to be short of priests while it considered that more than half of its members were ineligible for ordination. Her funeral took place at St. Mary's Convent on 11th December; she was eighty three years of age. J.G.G.

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST FREE CHURCH Christmas, yesterday today and forever

The Church was dimly lit by candles along the windows and by the decorative Advent set at the front, a small lamp for the readers and the illumination for the overhead projector. The "stage" was set for the candlelit carol service.

Many came and there followed a family service which gave the feeling that Christmas had truly come again and that the Easter message was alive and well - the latter a novel experience for a carol service. The readings followed the traditional pattern and were undertaken, where possible, by members of natural families as well as by those bound by the blood of Jesus. There was a lovely rendition of "Babushka" sung by Pam Chilvers who was accompanied by herself on the piano and by her daughter Rebecca on the violin. Another exceptional performance came from Graham Smith, a relative newcomer to the fellowship, who sang very movingly "Wonderful Counsellor" and then his own composition "Jesus came down from Heaven above" accompanying himself on the guitar.

The Pastor's wife, Shelagh Edwards, narrated "The Star" by Michael Walker, an extract of which asks that we follow the Star and do not perish in the night waiting for a new sun to arise - a poignant and memorable message.

The whole service was carried through most smoothly with guidance on the screen on when to sing, pray or listen, and the talented music group led the carols with the jolliest of them all, "The Calypso Carol", concluding the service. Everyone was invited to stay for mince pies and coffee before wending home full of the real Christmas spirit.

The pastor spoke briefly and his message came loud and clear - Yes, Jesus was born in a stable nearly 2,000 years ago and yes, He is as real and alive today for each and everyone who calls on His name.

Judy Ruck

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11am Rev. David Moody
6.30pm Mr J. Cruddas of Trinity,
Lower Earley.

February 11 11am Rev. David Moody
6.30pm Rev. Richard Lawson of
Burghfield Common and Mortimer.

February 18 11am Mrs Sylvia Stalder of Tilehurst
6.30pm Rev Judy Davies of Trinity,
Lower Earley.

February 25 11am Holy Communion -
Rev. David Moody
6.30pm Youth Service - Mr David Munns.

AROUND THE CHURCHES

THE WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER THE ALPHA COURSE

The Women's World Day of prayer is on the first Friday in Lent of every year, when women all over the world have the opportunity to take part in a service which is written by women from another country. Each year women from a different country will write the service on a specific theme.

Throughout the world groups of women meet together to prepare for the service, which they hold in their area. The Caversham Committee of ladies normally have two meetings and a rehearsal to prepare the service. The committee is an

ecumenical one comprising of one or more representatives from most of the churches in Caversham. One of our aims is to encourage people to support and attend the service. Publicity is one way of letting everyone know about the day and hence this article! We hope that on reading a little about the service you might put the date in your diary and attend one of the services. Everyone (including men) is welcome to attend the service and share in fellowship after the service over coffee. This year the service

has been prepared by the Women of Haiti and is entitled "God calls us to Respond". The service encourages us all to respond to the Christian message of salvation and peace. In Haitian society women are the mainstay of domestic and economic life. Christianity is the main religion, but many people are involved in voodoo. I find it very special that every year over a twenty-four hour period throughout the world women and men are taking part in the same service, which has been adapted to suit the needs of their community. I am

sure any event which unites people around the world can only benefit everyone!

The services for this year, on 23rd February, are as follows and I hope you might be able to attend one.

2.00pm - St James's Roman Catholic Church in Reading. The speaker will be the Revd Elizabeth Jackson.

8.00pm - St Anne's Roman Catholic Church, Southview Avenue, Caversham. The speaker will be Deaconess Margaret Robinson.

Karen Washbourn

The Alpha Course is running in Caversham. The ten-week course, designed as an introduction to the basic principles of Christianity, is running on Wednesday nights over ten weeks at Caversham Hill Chapel in Peppard Road.

The course originated at the church of Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) in London, in the 1980s and has become so successful as a means of "warm evangelism" that an estimated sixteen hundred similar courses are now running worldwide in churches of every mainstream denomination as well as in homes, schools and prisons.

HTB is still involved in running and promoting

the course and more than five hundred and fifty people take part in it there each week. Most of them, say the organisers, do not go to church regularly or are new Christians.

The course is based around a series of fifteen talks which tackle the key questions which non-churchgoers have about the Christian faith. Each Wednesday's event at Caversham Hill Chapel follows the recommended pattern by starting with a meal. This means that, if necessary, people can attend straight from work. The talk then follows and afterwards participants break up into small groups for a discussion.

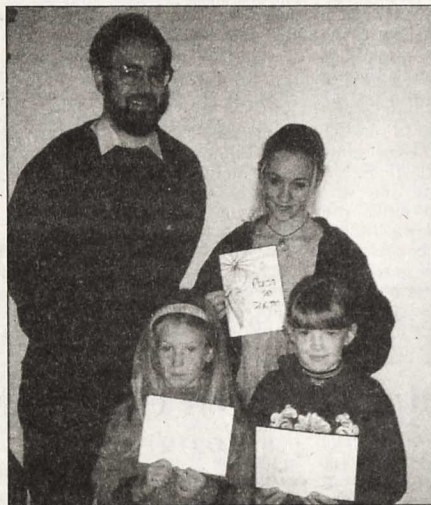
A team of three or four helpers from the Chapel are attached to each group

and the participants are encouraged to ask questions freely and express whatever opinions they wish. "No question is regarded as too simple or too hostile", say the organisers.

It is also a policy that no one should be pestered if they choose to leave, deciding that the course is not for them. Most people on the course have come along as a result of an invitation from a friend or a member of their family but the course is designed to appeal to "anyone in the street" and people interested in attending Caversham Hill Chapel without a personal invitation can obtain further details by telephoning 474529 or 474781.

WINNERS OF CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION

Members of St John's Church swept the board in this year's Christmas Card Competition. The outright winner was 15 year old Beth Hutchison, a pupil at Kendrick School; her 'Peace on Earth' picture was used on the Christmas Cards sent by Churches Together in Caversham to nearly all the houses in the Caversham, Emmer Green and Mapledurham areas with details of the Christmas Services in the Churches throughout the area. Winners in the other classes were Hannah Rowe, aged eight, and Lucy Rowe, aged six, both pupils at Thameside School.



- O. Jewiss

Our picture shows the Revd Phil Abrey, Chairman of Churches Together in Caversham, after the presentation of prizes, with Beth Hutchison (back row) and Lucy and Hannah Rowe (in front).

NEW ASSISTANT CHAPLAIN

AT THE HOSPITALS



The Revd Alison Meere, seen here in the Chapel at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, started her work as Assistant Anglican Chaplain in the Royal Berkshire and Battle Hospitals NHS Trust at the end of December.



- O. Jewiss

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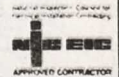


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During the 1960's and 1970's Caversham was well served by many assistant clergy, and over Christmas news has been received from many of them. Several of their children who were quite young when here with their parents are now married, and some of the former curates are now grandparents.

There are seven who are serving in other parts of the diocese of Oxford, including two in the deanery of Reading. Fred and Billie Dawson who came to Caversham in 1969 were for many years in Leicestershire but in 1994 Fred became rector of St. Michael's Tilehurst; their eldest son Jonathan was married last summer, and together with his wife he teaches in Birmingham; Clare is a verger at St. Paul's Cathedral and Jeremy a choirman at Durham Cathedral; Mary, the youngest, is still at school. Derek Spears at St. Peter's Earley had some sabbatical leave last summer, and it will come as no surprise to hear that part of the time was spent touring the French Alps on his motor bike; he was also some weeks in Northern Ireland with the Corrymeela Community.

Newbury Deanery has Colin Scott-Dempster at Chieveley where he is rural dean and Peter Sear in the large parish of Thatcham. The Scott-Dempster's elder son Robert was married in August; their daughter Clare is a physiotherapist at Stoke Mandeville Hospital while Harry is still at his prep school. Anne Sear, who still teaches, was licensed as a Reader in October which enables her to help Peter with services; their two daughters are both at universities, Rachel reading Sociology at York, and Catherine French and German at Bristol.

Elsewhere in the Diocese

Alan and Lucy Wilson are at Sandhurst having followed Roger Packer who went there in 1970 after being priest in charge at St. Andrew's. John and Una Crowe have a busy life at Dorchester. Like Colin Scott-Dempster he is rural dean and like Colin he is also an Honorary Canon of Christ Church. John with Una and their son Richard went to America last summer where John was doing a holiday locum at

Christ Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts; he found a lively congregation at Cambridge with volunteer cooks serving meals every Thursday to 150 homeless people. Their daughter Jo is reading Medicine at Bart's and Christiana Sociology at Liverpool while Monica is at present spending nine months in Australia. Raising funds for restoration work at Dorchester Abbey takes up much of John's time. Peter and Anne Atkinson are in Aylesbury where Peter is team missionary in the Aylesbury Team Ministry; he is actively involved in race relations and has regular contact with the Imam of the Aylesbury Mosque; he is also a member of the local Police/Community Consultative Council. Anne is doing part time work in a local Abbeyfield home; Richard their elder son is group auditor for Harrogate Borough Council while Stephen works at the Royal Library in Windsor Castle.

Non-Parochial Ministries

Three former clergy have non-parochial ministries. Martin

Loveless has for several years been a chaplain in the R.A.F. and Michael Kitchener is Warden of Rydal Hall in the lake district; this is an elegant Georgian mansion though some of it dates back to the year 1600. It is the retreat and conference centre for Carlisle Diocese. John and Alice Sumner have pioneered the establishment of a community in Glastonbury, but will not this year have the involvement of the Glastonbury Festival.

More Parish Ministries

Four other former curates are parish priests in the dioceses of Bath and Wells, London, Worcester and Chelmsford. The Packers, as already mentioned are now well established at Bridgewater where Jill is a J.P. Stephen and Betty Bartlett are at St. Mary, The Boltons in Kensington, a parish full of wealthy Arabs but drawing a congregation that comes from many parts of London. Leonard and Jennie Burn are in Evesham where in addition to being incumbent of a large parish Leonard has also for ten years edited the Worcester Diocesan Gazette; Jennie works for a team of doctors at Chipping Campden and is at present training to qualify as a pharmacist in his practice. Only Bernard Metcalfe has gone to a rural parish;

after many years as a rector of a big parish near Southampton he and Penny are in the village of Great Bentley near Colchester.

Retirement Approaching

John and Jo Stevinson will be leaving Leamington Hastings in October to retire to Winchcombe near Cheltenham; one feature of life at Leamington Hastings that they will miss is the remarkably successful series of concerts that take place each summer in the parish church. Both Richard and David are married and David's wife has presented John and Jo with two granddaughters. The Lynch-Watsons who are also grand-parents are happily settled into retirement in Banbury, and Graham, like so many retired clergy, finds himself in demand for occasional duty in surrounding village churches. Finally David and Bernice Milling have now been seven years in retirement at Cirencester where David also helps in many villages but he is at present once again in India lecturing for six months at the United Theological College in Bangalore. Their daughters are at the moment in Namibia, America and Exeter.

They all have fond memories of their years in the parish.
J. G. Grimwade.

THOUGHTS FROM THE FIRESIDE

BY HORTUS

'Old men dream dreams and young men have visions.'

I draw my chair to the fireside and pick up two slim volumes which recently came through the post. With pleasure of anticipation I open one, a seed catalogue bursting with illustrations, and browse through looking for new varieties of plants I might grow this year and for old ones I missed last year. I also skim the contents of the second, another catalogue, simply detailing lists of seeds available with pen pictures only, mentally comparing the entries with last year's. Is such-and-such plant in this year? And so I begin to delve deeper.

Firstly I have to decide what seeds I need this year. Of

course... the usual vegetables - peas, beans, tomatoes, brassicas, salads. Have I room in my plot for something different? The list of items to buy grows.

Now what about flowers? Do I really want to try to emulate the flower beds of the Forbury and have masses of colour? If so, what colours, what plants? How many plants am I likely to need? Ought I to take into account the appetites of the slugs and snails? Perhaps it might be cheaper to buy plants from the garden centre. Then I remember that I shall need space for all the exotic plants overwintering in the greenhouse - so I dither. I'm no good at drawing up plans for the garden beds - I'm

a few plants here and there at random, so I decide not to order seeds for bedding plants.

Moving on - perennials - again I wonder whether I should rely on a packet of seeds or plants from a nursery. I really get going when I come to shrubs, trees and exotics or subtropical plants that I cannot get from the average garden centre. My adrenalin flows, my mind works overtime. I want to try this and that - my marker pen highlights so many items that if I managed to grow all those seeds successfully I would need a garden the size of Kew to accommodate them.

cont'd on p 9

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GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

One of Caversham's oldest inhabitants left as 1995 came to its end and the factory which had been the home of Elliotts of Reading for almost 100 years closed before reopening in the New Year in Craddock Road on the other side of Reading.

Samuel Elliott had a large joinery works in Newbury from early in the reign of Queen Victoria, but the factory suffered a disastrous fire and could not have been adequately insured for debts piled up and he was declared bankrupt.

The business was reformed under new ownership

and he was given employment as a Manager by the new owners. In 1902 he was brought to Caversham by Mr. J. C. Fidler, a notable local financier and property developer, and installed in the factory in Gosbrook Road where he was joined by a number of his old employees, but the Newbury firm continued for another 70 years.

One of the first major contracts carried out from Caversham was in the newly built Queen Victoria Street, a development by Mr. Fidler to provide a direct route from Broad Street to the

Station, and Elliotts provided the joinery for the shops and offices. Over the past 90 years joinery and architectural metalwork have been manufactured and fitted in major contracts in this country and abroad. During the two world wars production was turned to essential work such as the building of aircraft and vehicles and many other supplies for the forces, and at its peak over 1,000 were employed.

Life as a separate independent company came to an end after the death in 1959 of Lionel Elliott, the last family member, and the company is now owned by Trafalgar House PLC, a conglomerate with world-wide interests.

Time has brought many changes to the construction industry with competitors closing and amalgamations between other firms, and recently another joinery works owned by the parent

company, Trollope & Colls Joinery, was closed and employees from the Camberwell works offered employment at Caversham to which some then travelled daily. The company has remained in the top quality sector of the market where the skill of its craftsmen is widely recognised, but the industry has changed with new methods, new machinery and different requirements from clients and this had led to a review of the facilities needed.

The number of employees is now much reduced, partly as new machinery has reduced hand working, also because the Gosbrook Road factory was much larger than required, with the old buildings having a high maintenance cost on a site which has not had the advantage of overall planning - over the years it grew up bit by bit; so the decision to move to a smaller site where a

fresh look could be made as to the best layout was inevitable.

Pensioners and other past employees were welcomed back to the firm on 22nd December and whilst enjoying the refreshments that were provided were able to examine and approve plans of the layout at the new and more compact factory. Whilst smaller and with fewer employees than in years gone by the modern layout and machinery will ensure that it remains one of the largest firms in its trade, and the news that the parent company has invested more than £1,000,000 to make sure that the move is a success is an encouragement for the future - all old friends will wish it well.

Caversham will miss Elliotts. Over the years it has been a major local employer, often with son following father into the firm, and there have been many in the past who have completed 50 years at the factory, and now the future of the site is unknown. The buildings, some almost 100 years old, are sure to be demolished, but proposals for another supermarket and petrol station on the 5 acre site have not been welcomed by many of those living nearby who would prefer to see the land used for housing. The decision of the planning authority is anxiously awaited.

THOUGHTS FROM THE FIRESIDE

cont'd from p 8

I pause to enable myself to come back to earth, to my senses. I only have a pocket-handkerchief garden and my greenhouse is overfull already. If I grow more where will I put them next winter? Growing subtropical plants here is perverse gardening - trying to disprove the power of nature and elements. The wise gardener will work with the assets at his disposal - type and condition of soil, location and weather in deciding what to grow. My inclination is to try to grow plants which captivate me in (hopefully) suitable conditions. I may not grow very good plants but I do enjoy the success of germinating different or unusual seeds and trying to bring them on. There are failures as well as successes. The climate in my part of Caversham is quite mild and as my garden, sheltered from the East and North, faces South and West it is worth trying the more exotic and unusual plants. I certainly see, in my walks around Caversham, individual plants flourishing in the open, even in winter. It is a combination of wet and cold which is most

injurious to such plants. Those in dryer spots can withstand cold snaps better.

Something which gardening teaches me is patience. Nature won't be hurried and yet it can surprise. Some five years ago I sowed the seed of the Chilean national flower, Lapageria Rosea - a climber with glorious pink waxy-leaved bell-shape flowers. The seed germinated and I now have a plant about six feet high in the greenhouse. Reference books suggested that it would be about a dozen years before it bloomed but all my dreams were realised in 1995 when my plant produced half a dozen beautiful flowers between July and November.

And so with all these thoughts in my mind I return to my catalogues, go through them again to see what I have missed, and find something else I could try to grow. Then I start wondering whether I should perhaps reorganise a whole part of the garden.

My eyes grow tired, I shut them... the catalogues fall into my lap...

'Old men have visions young men dream dreams.'

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Highdown staff and pupils are delighted at the commendation recently received by the 'Charter Mark Award' scheme after all the hard work that went into submitting the initial application.

'Charter marks' are awarded for institutions that provide 'a high quality public service'. Although after a series of shortlists, Highdown was not awarded a Charter Mark this year, the school was 'highly commended'. The report from Lord Henley, Minister of State, said that "this is an achievement of which you can rightly be proud, and one which reflects credit on the education sector as a whole". It was also noted by the inspectors that "good relations exist with local and national

companies which result in the school receiving a good level of financial and technical support."

Year 9 CommonRoom
Wednesday 13th December saw the opening of the new Year 9 Common Room. The designated area was officially opened by the Headteacher, Mr Alan Furlley. Mr Martin Povey, from the company who donated the carpets for the area after a persuasive letter from pupil Sheridan Lane, was also present. Other furniture for the area was donated by parents of the year group, in particular the members of the 'committee' led by year head Mrs. Sari Stacey, who said that she appreciates 'how important it is for the year group to have their own social area.

Team Spirit
'Team Spirit' (DDA Management Development Services) came into Highdown on Monday 18th December to 'Try out' the lower sixths' Team skills.

The group, normally associated with industry training for managerial positions, annually attends at Highdown to develop the students' team, management and organisational skills. The programme consists of the students working in small groups to discuss and solve problems throughout the day; the end of the day allows them to evaluate their performances.

Mr Paul Munton, organiser of the event and other programmes associated with industry, said the "opportunity to

practice team building skills is an invaluable experience for the students and one which they can take with them to their work experience placements. The course which was free to highdown, would cost around £3-4,000 to industry and so is run by very experienced organisers."

Christmas Cheer

The annual Christmas Concert was a huge success. Alison Doorbar, Head of Music and the organiser of the event stage-managed a variety of performances by talented pupils who belong to the variety of choirs and bands organised by the Music Department.

Also performing were the "Highdown Singers", a choir representing pupils, teachers and governors, and parents.

Sixth Formers Host Tea Party for Brookfields Special School

A group of enthusiastic sixth

formers from the school hosted a Christmas party for 24 handicapped children from Brookfields Special School.

The party, which has become an annual event at Highdown, started with "tea" and then they were entertained with a disco (DJ Aiden Dagleish), followed by party games and Father Christmas (David New). Donna Sibley played the Christmas Fairy. Each of the children received a present from the sixth formers.

Stuart Claridge, one of the students involved, said that "the party was excellent for the children and that they enjoy it more each year. We also get a lot of fun out of entertaining the kids although it is hard work to organise and very tiring."

Alan McMahon, Head of Sixth Form, said that "the party is always enjoyable for everyone and it is a very positive thing for the students to do.....

they are all looking forward to next year!"

MEMORIES (Part 2)

Removal of the black-poplar plantation in recent times coincided with departure of American personnel from the USAAF base at Lakenheath, Suffolk.

The Golden Oriole, a most exotic and uncommon migrant bred in those poplars, drawing us like magnets each year. It was strange how the roar of low-flying jet fighters seemed almost at one with the Orioles' beautiful song.

An American friend at the base and his Reading-born wife received regular visits from the Orioles to their garden in nearby Hockwold, perhaps recognising themselves as 'kindred spirits of the air.'

Major Glenn Miller with his fine orchestra played several times at the base in 1943/4 to boost morale of the airmen. Miller's music still lives on, being accurately portrayed in Britain by his nephew John Miller who bears a remarkable resemblance to his late uncle. John and his orchestra perform their annual concert at The Hexagon in February.

Lakenheath still claims one of the world's most authenticated cases of a UFO. First detected visually by ground staff, a Vampire fighter was sent up to investigate. Just as it made an 'air to air' sighting, Mildenhall air base a few miles south located both UFO and Vampire on radar. The UFO suddenly departed with phenomenal speed.

The Golden Orioles, the air base, Glenn Miller and now his nephew John, are strongly linked with those thrilling 'birding' days at Lakenheath, spanning more than half a century.

A nocturnal journey once saw us stealing quietly to a hide on a small reserve at Magor, Wales where a rare American Bittern had been discovered the previous evening.

Dawn revealed its statuesque silhouette standing at the edge of a reed-bed just to our right. With improving light the Bittern became active, presenting fine views in flight and at rest.

The Skylark is 'top-of-the-bill'. Is there a more joyful bird song of summer? So often we look in vain for that small, singing speck, high in the sky, seeing it only during its 'parachute descent' to earth on outspread wings and tail.

One morning some years ago, I relaxed atop a remote and sun-warmed hill, Scooby comfortably ensconced between my legs. We had moved up from our previous night's camp-site far below. Scooby stirred as we watched a Skylark climb aloft, cascading us with its sweet music.

The solitude, the gentle warmth, the clean air, the panorama, the Skylark's song - and sharing that golden secret alone with dear Scooby - will remain forever in my heart.

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At the approach of the year's ending it is appropriate to mention activities, additional to the regular monthly meetings, that have been a source of interest throughout 1995. The Crafts Group has co-operated in the making of a tapestry kneeler for St Barnabas Church, Emmer Green and is at present making a blanket for the Sue Ryder Home. The Rambling Group has enjoyed walks along several stretches of the River Thames while a group that meets to play Scrabble has provided members with further opportunities to get to know one another.

At the final (December) meeting, light-hearted entertainment was

provided by the Barry Strong Quartet, followed by tea and mince pies made by WI members.

CAVERSHAM COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

December followed a traditional pattern starting with a carol evening. The guests were the Woodford Singers who very ably put people in the right spirit with a mixture of Christmas songs and carols to encourage audience participation. A welcome break with mince pies was much enjoyed.

The month ended with the Christmas party. Hard work on the part of the committee members meant everyone was greeted with festive tables and a beef or

salmon salad followed by various desserts. A sparkling and fast moving entertainment was provided by the Broadway Stage Academy. The competition for a home made cracker was won by Margaret Payne with Margaret Biggs having second prize. This was followed by sherry and a slice of delicious cake, beautifully made by Maida Feast. The evening ended with the drawing of the raffle and members looked forward to meeting again in January.

CAVERSHAM LADIES CLUB

It was Christmas Party time and the tables were a real delight to see, with crackers and decorations on each table, and a special long table tempting the members with lots of mouth-watering goodies.

Firstly Mrs Brenda Strong, Chairman, opened the meeting, with her usual warm welcome to members. Club business was attended to and finalised with Madam Chairman hoping they had all enjoyed their Christmas lunch the previous week. All agreed it had been very enjoyable and made more so thanks to Mr Barry Strong and Mr George Pierce who provided music all through the meal, and afterwards entertained with well known carols in which all joined with much gusto, a very enjoyable finale, fitting to the company and meal.

Members were reminded that the next meeting would be for them to bring up ideas they would like, outings, and grumbles etc. as this was their Club to enjoy and the committee to serve - so 'open up' members if you feel something should change. It was now time for carol singing in their own Club, accompanied by Mrs Nelhams at the piano. This was followed by Mrs Strong saying Grace, and Committee waiting on, members with tea etc. which is their usual 'job' at Club parties. After a lively and happy afternoon time had caught up, so amongst all the Christmas greetings being passed among members it gradually closed down

and with a reminder of the next meeting to think on, doors were closed for C.L.C. until January 1996.

EMMER GREEN TOWNSWOMEN'S GUILD

met in St Barnabas Hall on December 14 on Tuesday evening. Members had been very generous in bringing lots of presents for the Raffle to be held during the evening and committee members supplied mincepies with tea and coffee.

ARTS & CRAFTS members went to the Royal Horticultural Society in London where Mrs Edna Barnes, one of their members, was awarded a Bronze Medal for her Watercolour Paintings of Flora of the Chilterns. Edna had brought 6 of the paintings to show members during the Guild meeting. WORDS & MUSIC members enjoyed their Poetry afternoon and the next meeting will be a social afternoon on 22 January.

RAMBLERS - two walks since the last meeting. The first a very muddy walk around Shiplate ending at the local Nursery for a very welcome cup of coffee. The second walk was 5 miles around Caversham and The Warren. There was to be a Ramblers Christmas Lunch with a short walk afterwards. Ramblers were also going to the Hexagon for a Pantomime in January.

The speaker for the evening was Mr H. Grainger who is very well known as a speaker to the Guild members and the talk was on "Amusing Look at Customs and Manners". It was an extremely amusing talk by Mr Grainger who has a great sense of humour. It was an excellent choice for the time of year because it was very funny and lighthearted.

The Emmer Green Townswomen's Guild is very keen to encourage new members to the Tuesday evening meetings. Anyone who would like information please contact Rose Randall on (01734) 476454.

CAVERSHAM HEIGHTS TOWNSWOMEN'S GUILD

As the meeting took place on December 21st, it really was a good time for a Christmas party. Outside it was intensely cold but inside the committee had worked hard to give a warm welcome with punch and a very wide choice of food. Long decorated tables in candlelight set a lovely pre-Christmas atmosphere.

Although the writer of this report was at the meeting, she was busy as a member of the drama group, so she has relied on comments from a visitor.

After such a simple introduction, it was a surprise to find not only that the play was so long but that the cast of eight had such large parts. The stage setting was well-designed and the cast very well-dressed, helping to make the simple play effective and very humorous. In fact it was a great pleasure to discover "The True Story of Good King Wenceslas".

The visitor also said how impressed she was with the warm atmosphere and feeling of companionship amongst the members of the Guild who made such an effort to make her welcome. Why not come to the meeting of February 15th to hear about Celtic art, it starts at 7.30pm and is held in St. Andrew's Hall, Caversham Heights.

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