



Caversham Bridge

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March 2026

Mothering, in all its forms

text and photo Roslyn Weaver

THIS TIME OF year brings the possibility of seeing birds build nests, lay eggs, or lead young ones around, particularly as Spring progresses. Most of us walking through local areas will be familiar with the sight of mother (and father) birds guarding families, and hiding young ones under wings.

It seems fitting, then, that Mother's Day is celebrated in March, falling on 15 March this year, although many other countries celebrate in May. But the day is not always an easy one, especially for those who have lost a mother or children, cannot have children, or who have difficult family relationships.

...return to families...

Yet the day didn't begin with a focus on mothers. Historically, 'Mothering Sunday' has been a day when people went back to their childhood church or cathedral (the 'mother church'); when domestic servants could return to families. Coming halfway through Lent, the day is also called Refreshment Sunday – which explains the Simnel cake link, because it was a chance to relax Lent fasting.

These days, the commercial focus is on cards, flowers and gifts for mothers. Yet the reinvigoration of Mothering Sunday in the early 1900s by Constance Adelaide Smith (herself not a mother) celebrated more than the mother church and human mothers; it brought in wider aspects,



Keeping the youngsters under control

including the gifts of 'mother earth'. And nature is full of mothering. The phrase 'mama bear' is used to mean a protective human mother, and Bible imagery includes a mother bird sheltering its young under her wings to symbolise God's love for people. Simply spending time in nature can also feel comforting for some.

Mothers have a special place culturally, good and bad. It's hard to forget Mrs Bennet's nerves, Lily Potter's

sacrifice, Marmee's saintly wisdom, or those wicked stepmothers of Cinderella and Snow White. Loving care is the common theme of good mothers, which applies to any kind of 'mother', whether adoptive, step, foster, grand, or spiritual; anyone might be said to mother others when they actively protect, nurture, and seek the positive development of those younger than they are – even if no wings are involved.



Crocus in Balmore Park – January 30

photo O Badziak

Spring Bound

The groundflame of the crocus breaks the mould, Fair Spring slides hither o'er the Southern sea...

The Progress of Spring – Tennyson

by Phil Chatfield

YOUR CAVERSHAM Bridge for March leads with a reflection inspired by Mother's Day on 15 March this year (above). Several of our articles illustrate the diversity of our community, including a Polish Easter tradition and a cross cultural meeting in a local church (p4), along with some background about the establishment of a Polish community here after World War II (p10).

Making the most of the improving weather, and the chance for some fresh air, link our latest gardening slot from Les Cooper (p10) and an introduction to local rambling group, the Pang Valley Ramblers (p11). The subject of this month's *The Local Scene* is the brightly coloured premises of Dancia International in Prospect Street (p9), and *Happy Wanderer* introduces us to some fascinating local dialect (p7). Other regular contributors include our *Talking Point* on Prayer by David Steed (p2), Laura Harmsworth's *First Impressions* (p14), and *Wellbeing* with Ami Roy looking at rest (p15).

Our Creative Caversham subject is Caversham resident Hannah Thurston-Smith from the RABBLE theatre (p12), and we have news of their current tour with their production, *Glitch* (p13). More local people appear this month, including Tamsin Brown as our *Community Connection* (p8), and Stephen Dellow in *Our Kind Community* (p2).

Don't forget to have a look at our What's On and planning report from CADRA (both p6) and try our Puzzle Corner challenges (p7).

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS – a reminder, subscriptions are due for renewal in April – see page 3 for details.

Contact us at editors@cavershambridge.org or by post at Church House, Church Street, Caversham, RG4 8AX.

Please note, it is currently not possible to contact us by phone.

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Prayer

...take time to pray, to hold yourself still in the presence of God, and praise him, give thanks too and pray for the needs of others and yourselves.



Talking Point

by David Steed

IT IS WELL-ESTABLISHED that prayer has a profound beneficial impact on many people's well-being, and particularly their mental health. It goes to the heart of the Christian gospel of good news and is typified by Jesus' prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, surrounding his submission to and acceptance of His father's will, as he faces suffering, humiliation and the pain of the cross.

There is an acrostic about prayer – the first letters of each point spell the word ACTS:

- **A**doration for all God is, including his holiness, love and mercy and has done in creation, at the cross in taking on himself all the sin of the world past, present and future, the resurrection that showed he has power over death, and his ascension to heaven where he reigns.
- **C**onfession, as John says in his epistle, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness'.
- **T**hanksgiving for all he has done in our lives and those of others in providing for our needs, for healing and being with us.
- **S**upplication: praying for the needs of the world in all its turmoil, confusion and fear and for our churches, families, world colleagues and friends, and not least ourselves.

There are many model prayers set out in the Bible, the most famous being the Lord's Prayer, where Jesus in prayer follows the pattern of ACTS and above all prays to His Father, 'Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'.

God wants us to pray because prayer expresses our trust in God and is a means whereby our trust in him can increase. Praying

in humble dependence also indicates that we are genuinely convinced of God's wisdom, love, goodness, and power. 'Our Father who art in heaven' – acknowledges our dependence on God as a loving and wise Father and recognises that he rules over all. Jesus says, 'If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him' (Luke Chapter 11 verse 13). 'Whatever you ask for in prayer you will receive it if you have faith'. (Matthew Chapter 21 verse 22, Mark Chapter 11 verse 24 and James Chapter 1 verses 6-8,14-15).

He desires that we love him and have fellowship with him, as well as trusting him. He wants us to be engaged with him in the activities and work of his kingdom. Prayer changes the way God acts. James tells us in his letter, 'You don't have because you don't ask'. Jesus says, 'Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds and to him who knocks it will be opened'.

'If my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land' (2 Chronicles Chapter 7 verse 14). What a great prayer for our nation in all the uncertainty we face in the world today.

As we move into this season of Lent, take time to pray, to hold yourself still in the presence of God, and praise him, give thanks too and pray for the needs of others and yourselves.

May God bless you.

David Steed, Elder at Grace Church, Caversham

Our Kind Community

text and photo Caroline Gratrix



Real community kindness is often steady, practical and generous from people giving their time, skills and energy because they want to make things better – Stephen Dellow is one of those people...

STEPHEN IS A highways, drainage and infrastructure engineer by trade, but his work has helped shape Reading in ways many of us experience every day. He has been involved in significant local infrastructure projects, including work linked to the north entrance of Reading Station and the Christchurch Cycle Bridge, as well as wider transport developments across the area. He now works as a civil engineering consultant through his own business, alongside SEGRO (Slough Estates Group) and other clients, bringing deep local knowledge to everything he does.

His love of engineering goes far beyond the job. Stephen was a founding member and investor in Reading Hydro, helping generate renewable energy right here on our river. He's a passionate STEM Ambassador*, encouraging young people into engineering, and he gives his time to providing free energy advice, particularly supporting those experiencing fuel poverty. As a chartered civil engineer, he also volunteers to assess and review future engineers, quietly helping the next generation to progress.

Stephen has lived in Caversham for 30 years and sums it up simply; "It's a great place to live beside

the river". That affection shows in how he gives back.

Outside work, Stephen is rarely still. He's a Reading Half Marathon ambassador, a keen runner, and co-leads a free, friendly weekly run from Caversham precinct every Sunday at 9:15 with Matt and Wendy Hooper at RunStrong. It's open to everyone, men and women, set at an easy pace to suit all and around 3-4 miles with body strength coaching included to help fitness and injury prevention; it's more about community than speed.

...helping others...

He's also involved in organising the Emmer Green 5k and 10k runs, has completed over 100 park runs, and volunteers his time with them too. Add to that his role as a Scout leader with the 89th Scouts at Clayfield Copse and training to become a Mine Leader, and it's clear Stephen's idea of 'free time' involves helping others. Kindness doesn't always announce itself; It might look like running shoes, a hard hat, or a scout leader quietly making our community a better place.

*Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics see www.stem.org.uk/stem-ambassadors



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Can you help with Caversham Hall?

photo H McQueen

Join us in shaping Caversham Hall's future!

by Alastair Muirhead

CAVERSHAM HALL in St John's Road has been at the heart of our local community for many years — a place for groups to meet, events to flourish, and friendships to grow. We're proud to keep it thriving as a charitable community venue, run entirely by volunteers.

We're now looking for new people to join our team of trustees and helpers. Whether you have experience in management, finance, fundraising, maintenance, community engagement — or just

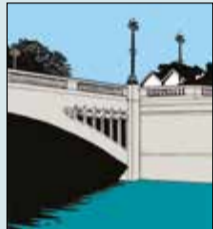
enthusiasm for making a difference — we'd love to hear from you.

Being a trustee isn't a paid role, but it's a deeply rewarding one. You'll help shape how the Hall serves our community, support local events and activities, and work alongside a friendly, dedicated team.

To find out more, please visit

www.cavershamhall.org
or email secretary@cavershamhall.org

We'd be delighted to chat about how you could get involved.



Time to renew subscriptions — £7 for 2026

by The Editors

THANK YOU to those who have already renewed their subscription. 2026 subscriptions are due from 1 April. They can be paid by bank transfer, or by cash or cheque to your deliverer.

We will be available for subscription renewals and other enquiries at Fourbears Bookshop on Saturday 21 and 28 March from 10:30 to 12:30, and at the Artists' and Makers' Fair, Gosbrook Road Methodist Church on the 14 March, from 10:00 to 16:00, when you will be able to pay by card as well.

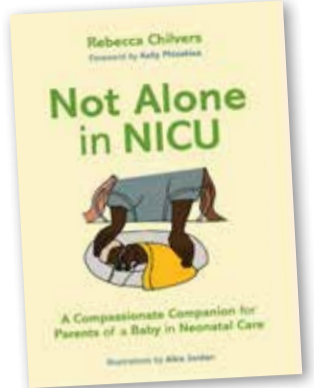
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Please include your postcode and house name or number as a reference. We have already received several payments without address details, meaning we are unable to allocate the payment to the subscriber!

A Compassionate Companion



THE DAUGHTER of local pianist and composer Pamela Chilvers has recently published a book for parents of premature and sick babies. Dr Rebecca Chilvers, who grew up in Caversham, was one of only a handful of psychologists in neonatal care who, around ten years ago, recognised the need for psychological support for families going through this experience, and for staff.

Her book, *Not Alone in NICU: A Compassionate Companion for Parents of a Baby in Neonatal Care*, was launched in Henley in January. It is based on more than 20 years of experience specialising in neonatal care. She describes it as a self-help guide for parents so they have something which they can use straight away if they have a sick or premature baby.

Because parents in this situation don't know where to start when confronted by such an emotional and alien experience, the first chapter is a book within the book which provides a concise guide to get them through the first few bewildering weeks. The rest of the book is designed so the reader can dip in and out as and when they want.

The book is available through local bookshops. For more information about Rebecca and her work, visit www.rebeccachilvers.com

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Noah's Pudding



Attendees at Gosbrook Road Methodist Church

photo A Aydin

CAVERSHAM METHODIST Church in Gosbrook Road is holding a series of Thursday Night Live services each month in varied styles. In January, this gave the opportunity to share some time with a local group from the Dialogue Society. This is a community organisation working to bring people together across different faiths, cultures, and backgrounds — not to debate or persuade, but to meet, to listen, and to build relationships based on trust and mutual respect. The Dialogue Society is a registered charity, established in 1999,

**by Asya Aydin
and Pam Gumbrell**

with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities, empowering people to engage, and contributing to the development of ideas on dialogue and community building.

Following an introduction from Rev'd David Jenkins and a short, shared act of worship, Sev, a local volunteer from the Society, outlined their objectives and the format for the remainder of the meeting.

She explained the significance of a simple dish we would be sharing, Noah's Pudding.

In many cultures, Noah's Pudding is associated with the story of Noah after the flood. The idea is simple; the ingredients remaining in the Ark were brought together and cooked in one pot. Each ingredient was different, yet together they formed something nourishing. Over time, this has become a powerful metaphor for how we think about community.

...feel easier...

We live in societies shaped by diversity, with different faiths, cultures, histories and experiences. Difference is often perceived as a difficulty rather than a resource. It can feel easier to stay within familiar spaces, where beliefs and lifestyles are shared. But doing so does not create understanding, and it does not always lead to trust.

Noah's Pudding reminds us that difference, when approached with care and respect, can become a strength. The ingredients do not lose their identity when they come together, nor do they merge into one indistinguishable flavour. Chickpeas remain chickpeas, raisins remain

raisins, and wheat remains wheat — and it is precisely this diversity which gives the dish its meaning. Their distinctiveness is not a threat; it is what allows the whole to be balanced and nourishing.

We then sat in small groups to enable us to get to know a bit more about each other before sharing in the delicious puddings. Everyone seemed to enjoy the chance to share time together and learn more about neighbours. One participant commented, "I thought it was a very positive and informative meeting. I look forward to seeing 'new friends' around our community!"

A final thought from the Society was 'Living well together does not mean becoming the same. It does not require agreement on every issue. And it does not mean ignoring differences. It means learning how to live alongside one another with dignity, openness, and respect'.

To find out more about the monthly services at Gosbrook Road Methodist Church, see cavershammethodist.org.uk

For more information on The Dialogue Society see www.dialoguesociety.org



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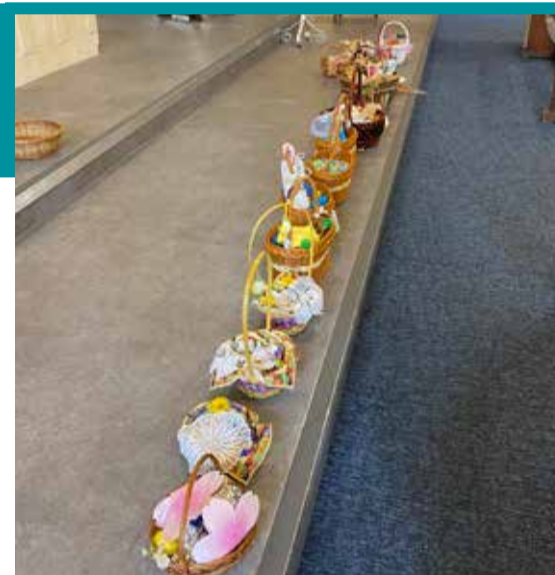
Blessing the baskets by Leszek Kujawa

EASTER IS THE most important event in the Christian calendar with the Rising of our Lord. By dying on the Cross, Christ gave us a new life and hope. We celebrate this around the world with different traditions.

One Easter tradition which has made its way from Poland is the Blessing of the Easter Baskets (Swiecenie). The baskets are decorated and filled with painted hard-boiled eggs, ham, Polish smoked sausage, bread, butter, salt and horseradish, and a cake in the shape of a lamb. Although it might sound like a lovely breakfast combination, each ingredient has a special meaning. The ham and sausage represent that we are human and are flesh and blood, as God created us. The Lamb is Christ. Horseradish and salt represent the bitter suffering Christ underwent before his death on the Cross. The eggs are our rebirth from original sin, while bread represents Christ's body. These baskets are blessed by the parish priest on Holy Saturday and then eaten as a special breakfast on Easter Sunday.

As the Polish community grew in the UK, the Polish churches were overwhelmed with the number of Holy Saturday blessings, so British priests took them on. Now the blessing is in the same form as the Polish one, but in English.

Other Eastern European people with similar



Easter Baskets

photo L Kujawa

traditions come along for this blessing. It has also found its way into the British way of life, with English families now taking part in this tradition and numbers growing each year.

This year's Blessing of the Easter Baskets will take place at Our Lady and St Anne's Catholic Church in South View Avenue, Caversham, at 10:00 on Holy Saturday, 4 April.

See page 10 for Leszek's history of the Polish community in Caversham.

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For your bookshelf...

by Alex Forbes

Welcome to the Fourbears Books monthly review where we pick a couple of recent books to chat about.

I AM A huge fan of Janice Hallet. I think her books are a great gateway for people who have fallen out of love with reading or are daunted by books with large amounts of unbroken text. Janice always adopts a multi-media approach, so uses text messages, emails, WhatsApp and diary entries to tell her story. *The Examiner* is no different.

We start off as an external examiner sends a message to a message group because he thinks something strange happened on an art course. He is worried someone has died and it has been covered up. This opening statement hits hard, and you just want to get stuck into the book to find out what is going on. We are then introduced to the group of students on the course. As ever with Hallet's books, there are a wide range of characters; some likeable, others not. Some beg

lots of questions and some fly under the radar. It's a decent mystery, with a particular twist in the middle which caught me completely unawares. I can't wait to see what Janice Hallett does later this year.

Our children's book is from bestselling author-illustrator, Tom Percival. *The Wonder* is a poignant picture book that encourages us to take notice of all the wondrous little things which happen to us each day. Daniel is having a terrible day. From the rain tumbling down from the dark, grey skies to the puddles that soak his shoes, Daniel's convinced nothing will lift his mood. But everything changes when he hears the sweet, delicate sound of music, barely audible beneath the rain.

It's so easy to get wrapped up in the annoyances of a day. This book is a lovely little reminder there is much joy and light every day if we take a second to notice.

Whatever you are reading, we hope you enjoy it and I hope to see you in the shop soon.

www.fourbearsbooks.co.uk



Help! There's a sting in the tale...

photo C Parker

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The end in sight

text and photo Martin Osborne

Grout injection equipment

WE REPORTED IN April last year about the sinkhole which caused the closure of Kidmore Road in January. Now, over a year later, it has just reopened. The site investigation work confirmed it was a deep sinkhole, probably tens of thousands of years old, which had filled with loose soil before the area was developed. A burst water main triggered the settlement of the loose material and collapse of the road surface. The remedy was a technique called compaction grouting, where holes are drilled into the loose material and a special cement mix is injected at various depths to fill the voids and stabilise the loose soil. Before the work could start a lot of site investigation and planning was required, so it was June before the work started in earnest. By the end of September, 87 boreholes were drilled and over 410 tonnes of grout injected. That is more than one borehole and over five tonnes of grout for every working day. Further investigation was carried out in an area just to the north of the original problem, which had also shown some settlement. This found another sinkhole which is now being treated. So far this has had 31 boreholes and over 260 tonnes of grout, with more boreholes planned. Thames Water took full responsibility for the repair work, despite the underlying cause being a natural hazard. They may be regretting this now the extent of the work has expanded so much. The good news is that, as I write this, the big drill has finished its work and has been taken away. The road has now reopened and local residents, including myself, will have to adjust to the old normal of road traffic, a convenient bus service, and a road not cluttered with parked vans. The bad news is that this is unlikely to be the last sinkhole in Caversham. There have been previous ones both here and in Tilehurst, and there may be more ancient problems lurking beneath our feet.

What's On

IF YOU have an event planned, please send details to whatson@cavershambridge.org. We need to receive these no later than the 10th of the month before the event for inclusion in the printed paper. Later submissions can be included in our online What's On, which is updated regularly. To see what has been added check: cavershambridge.org/archives/category/around-caversham

Please note, a listing of baby and toddler groups can be found on page 14.

Caversham Library – 09:00-17:00 Tuesday and Friday, 13:00-19:00 Thursday and 10:00-15:00 Saturday. Regular events include: *Rhymetimes for the little ones* – popular, so please book first! Every Tuesday at 10:15 and 11:15. *Games Club*, Friday mornings 10:30-12:00. All adults welcome – refreshments!
Sit and Stitch 17:30-19:45, on 2nd and 4th Thursdays every month. Refreshments – come and be inspired. Tel: 0118 937 5103 or see reading.gov.uk/leisure/all-libraries/caversham-library
Geo Café – *Artists Against Homelessness*, an ongoing and changing exhibition of art by local artists at Geo Café, Prospect Street. For each sale the artist makes a donation to Launchpad Reading. Daily.
Mondays – *Caversham Park Bridge Club* – at the Milestone Centre, 19:15 for 19:30 start. Phone Lin 0118 334 8195 for further information. bridgewebs.com/cavershampark
Tuesdays – *Rivarate Choir* – Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmoor Road. 19:30 in term time. Enjoy singing together. For details see rivarate.com
Wednesdays – *Caversham Writers* – Welcoming enthusiastic hobbyists and aspiring authors alike. Meeting weekly in person or via Zoom. Free to all. For details: meetup.com/CavershamWriters
Wednesdays – *Light on the Hill Café* – 19:30-21:30 at Grace Church, 119 Peppard Road, RG4 8TR. A wellbeing café for adults 18+. Come as you are for tea and a chat. Please see: www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk
Thursdays – *Friendly Over-60s Social Club* – 10:00-13:00 at Milestone Centre, Caversham Park Village. Hot lunch, quizzes and the chance to chat. Contact Cheryl at 0796 4750182 or Trina at 0747 7570541
Thursdays – *Weller Centre Craft Group* – 13:00-15:00. Be creative with friends. For details contact Pam Chatfield at pamch32@gmail.com Mobile 07986 905784 or Weller Centre 0118 947 5828
Thursdays – *New Caversham Heights Bridge Club* – 14:00 at the Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmoor Road. For details contact Duncan Knight on 0118 9475544 or email duncan.knight@googlemail.com
Thursdays – *Weller Voices Community Choir* – 19:30-20:30. Weller Centre, 110 Amersham Road, RG4 5NA. Term time only. Singing is fun, free and for all. Join any of our sessions. For details, contact wellervoices@gmail.com
Fridays – *Warm Welcome Space* – 10:00-13:30 at Caversham Baptist Church, South Street, RG4 8HY. All welcome, just drop in for free refreshments, including hot soup from 12:00. Tel: 0118 954 5353 www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk
Saturdays – *Keep Caversham Tidy* – A local charity dedicated to eliminating litter and improving public spaces in Caversham. Free to join and no ongoing commitment. Families welcome! Email Keepcavershamtidy@gmail.com, FB [Keep Caversham Tidy](https://www.facebook.com/CAFMarket)
Sundays – *Caversham Artisan & Farmers Market* – Caversham Precinct, 10:00-15:00. See www.facebook.com/CAFMarket
Sunday 1 March – Conservation volunteering around the Copse – 10:00 Clayfield Copse car park, RG4 6AA Friends of Clayfield Copse. Contact Peter: 07748 766340
Sunday 1 March – *Ufton Nerve walk 7.00 Miles* – 10:30 – SU633676 Park on verges near Ufton Nerve School, Church Lane. May be muddy. Bring a packed lunch. Pang Valley Ramblers. One of their regular walks in the area, see pvramblers.org.uk/walks-programme
Sunday 1 March – *The Greek Orthodox Community in Reading, Lent Address by Fr Ian Graham* – 17:00 St Andrews Church Harrogate Road. Meet at 16:30 for tea and cakes. No charge. To learn more contact Rodney Oliver 07900 968065
Tuesday 3 March – *Caversham Women's Institute* – 19:30 at Church House, Caversham. www.thewi.org.uk or Tel: 0118 947 5176
Wednesday 4 March – *Rosehill Ladies* – 14:00 at St Barnabas Hall, Emmer Green. Tel: Sue 0118 947 7570 or email suegreen@hotmail.com

Wednesday 4 March – *Reading University: A Century of creating change together a talk by Vicky Pearson/Molly Cleaver* – 20:00 The Caversham Heights Society, Caversham Heights Methodist Church Hall, Highmoor Road. To learn more visit cavershamheights.org or email: contact@cavershamheights.org
Friday 6 March – *Bereavement Café* – 14:00-15:30 at St. Barnabas, Emmer Green. A safe place to find others who have had their own loss and can appreciate something of your experience. For further info Tel. Gill at 0118 947 8772
Saturday 7 March – *Fundraising musical evening led by The Vocalese Choir, Reading & Bracknell* – Doors open 18:00 Highdown School, Emmer Green. The Olly Stephens Trust
Saturday 7 March – *Mozart's Così fan tutte* – 19:30 St Andrew's Church, Albert Road, RG4 7PL Merry Opera Company. Tickets, at £22, from www.merryopera.co.uk/cosifantutte
Thursday 12 March – *Panthera Africa Fundraising Event* – 19:00 Angel Bar, Prospect Street, Caversham RG4 8JB. Live music and raffles to support their sanctuary in South Africa recently damaged by fire. Tickets www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1982001134748?aff=oddtcreator
Friday 13 March – *Chazey Women's Institute* – 14:30 at St Andrew's Church Hall. Tel: 0118 947 0964, or e-mail rowena@primology.com
Saturday 14 March – *The Brian Kemp Memorial Lecture on Patronage, Scholarship and Scandal: the story of Malmesbury Abbey* by Tony Mcallevy – 14:30 St James's RC Church, Reading. Friends of Reading Abbey. The talk is free to attend.
Wednesday 18 March – *Farming: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, a talk by Philip Chamberlain* – 20:00 Caversham Heights Society, details as for 4 March entry above.
Wednesday 18 March – *Caversham Park's 930 Years at the Centre of History, a talk by Stephen Goss* – 19:30 Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square, Reading. The meeting is open to all, visitors are asked to pay £2 each to attend.
Saturday 21 March – *The Ted Burnell Community Art Centre Annual Exhibition* – 10:00-16:00 Church House, 57 Church Street, Caversham, RG4 8AX. Exhibits for sale (cash or cheque only). Homemade refreshments. Details gj@grahamjackson.f2s.co
Monday 23 March – *Honey Bees, a talk by Jenny Morgan, Education Officer, Reading and District Beekeepers Association* – 13:30 to 15:30 Reading u3a, Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square, Reading. Non-members welcome, free entry. See www.readingu3a.org.uk
Friday 27 March – *Un quiz de pub. Test your general knowledge and have fun with a team pub quiz hosted by Carol Flett* – 19:30-21:30 Le Cercle Français at Church House, 59 Church Street, RG4 8AX. Admission £5 welcome drink included. See www.readingfrenchcircle.co.uk for programme. Email readingfrenchcircle@gmail.com
Saturday 28 March – *Caversham Horticultural Society Spring show* – 13:00-15:00 Caversham Baptist Church Hall See www.caversham-horticultural.org.uk for details
Saturday 28 March – *South Chiltern Choral Society perform the Fauré Requiem and the John Rutter Magnificat* – 18:30 Greyfriars Church in Reading. Tickets £20 - under 18s £10 www.southchilternchoralsociety.org.uk or on the door
Sunday 29 March – *She Sang the Stars, a concert inspired by the night sky* – 16:30 Hardcastle Hall, Abbey School Reading RG1 5DZ The Glass Ensemble. Tickets £15, under 18s free, refreshments included. Book your seats from: asusied@btinternet.com or 07930 690 873
Wednesday 1 April – *Sailing the Göta Canal, Sweden, a talk by Clive Williams* – 19:30 doors open, 20:00 talk. Reading Offshore Sailing Club. Upper Thames Motor Yacht Clubhouse, Sonning Mill Island, Reading RG4 6TW. For further details see www.readingoffshore.org.uk or contact sailrosc25@gmail.com
Saturday 4 April – *Easter Trail in Caversham Court Gardens* – 14:00-16:00 Friends of Caversham Court Gardens. Contact: friends@fccg.org.uk Website: <https://home.fccg.org.uk>

CADRA Planning Bulletin

A summary of planning and transport matters affecting the RG4 area, provided by Caversham and District Residents Association www.cadra.org.uk

IN EMMER GREEN, the developers have appealed South Oxfordshire District Council's refusal for 70 extra homes (P26/S3688/FUL) and the linked Reading application for a road connection into the existing Reading development (PL/25/0691). Whilst both decisions will be taken by the Government inspector, Reading's Planning Applications Committee said they would have approved it and are expecting a contribution of £150,000 towards traffic improvements.

The major redevelopment of **Caversham Park (PL/22/0409)**, including renovation of the listed house, new homes, a care home, sheltered housing and new public access, was permitted last year. The 141 conditions have now been published, and applications to discharge them will follow. Heritage and ecological considerations will be central to this next stage.

In Caversham Centre, At **18 Church Road (PL/25/1597)**, a substantial extension has been refused due to concerns that its massing would harm the character of the Conservation Area. At **3 Prospect Street (PL/25/1211)**, the change of use to a tanning and beauty salon has been approved, bringing welcome activity back to longvacant premises.

The proposal for a new apartment block at **St Martins Precinct (PL/25/1608)** has been refused because it constituted a substantial change rather than a nonmaterial amendment to the original 2014 permission (PL/14/0097). Future schemes will require a full application addressing appearance, landscaping and consultation.

In Mapledurham a SODC application at **Park Farm (P26/S3688/FUL)** proposes converting former dairy barns to commercial storage. The farm roads are popular with walkers and cyclists.

Across the river in Reading, at **Forbury Retail Park (PL/25/1706)**, an outline application proposes up to 700 homes and 3,000 sqm of commercial space across 12 blocks.

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

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REGULAR READERS will know of my interest in words, pronunciation and dialect. When I moved from the north of England to Reading in 1969 to take up employment, I soon noticed that in the 'balmy south' people 'talked different'.

Recently the subject has been buzzing around in my brain because I've been busy editing the reminiscences of someone who lived in Reading in the first half of the 20th century, with a view to getting them published. The author includes a long list of 'Slang, Sayings and Dialect, heard in Reading Town'.

Here are a few examples, which were new to me and may amuse you:

- The Dannel – the River Thames
- D C M – the sack, or dismissal from work, standing for 'Don't Come Monday'
- Genles (probably pronounced gennels) – maggots, collected by anglers from rubbish heaps, for use as bait
- The horse artillery – the street orderly boys employed by the corporation to sweep up the horse-dung from the streets
- King Alfreds – the boys who were training on the King Alfred, the Thames Nautical Training Brig which was moored by Christchurch Playing Fields before the First World War
- The stagger – the boy or young man who watched out for the approach of policemen while his friends were playing

a game of 'Pitch and Toss' for money, which was illegal. On catching sight of one, the stagger called out 'Stag!' and everyone fled

- A Tin Ticket – the means by which boys could get into the football ground at Elm Park by climbing over the fencing made of corrugated tin. If they were spotted by the police, they would be thrown out.

I was also amused by the slang words ending with the letter 'O' used for places where many Reading people worked:

- The Corpo – the corporation yard in Abattoirs Road
- The Jammo – the Co-operative Wholesale Society's preserve works
- The Scrammo – Huntley and Palmers
- The Pulso – the Pulsometer Pumps factory
- The Tinno – Huntley, Boorne and Stevens, tinplate manufacturers.

...carry around...

Most of these are self-explanatory. I wonder whether 'Scrammo' came from the word 'scran', meaning food you could carry around with you and eat as a snack.

From these few examples, you will gather that the author was a working man, who could remember back to around 1900. Most of the people who have written about local history were well educated and comfortably off, with spare time to spend on hobbies. This writer grew up poor in the Katesgrove area of Reading, and mentions



Our photograph is of the 'King Alfred' training brig

image courtesy of Reading Borough Libraries

many things that other writers do not. His notes appealed to me, and I think they ought to be published.

Incidentally, if you watched the first television programme in the new series of Digging for Britain, about archaeological sites, on 7 January, you may remember

one of them was an abandoned skate park in Kelvingrove Park in Glasgow. It was built in the 1970s and abandoned in the 1980s, like the one in Hill's Meadow in Caversham which I mentioned last month. Skateboarding was obviously a national passion at the time.

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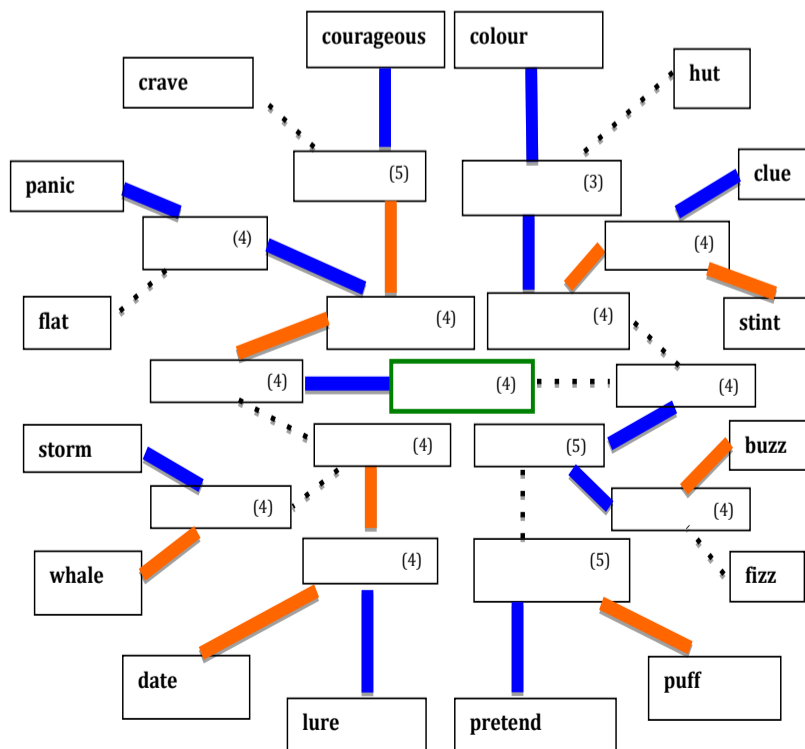
Puzzle Corner

The Challenge by Rachel

WORD PUZZLE

Find the word that has the same meaning as the clue; or rhymes with; or has one letter that is different. For example: *tingle* has 6 letters, rhymes with *shingle* and means *thrill*.

Rhyme ———
Letter change ·····
Meaning ———



Answers on page 14

CALL THE PLUMBER

Can you find 23 plumbing words in the grid?

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R Q M P R P U A R T O C H E
A E P L B O E P D Q T H S R
D V R U R M J W W R W C K R
I L E M E I T A E E O O R E
A A S B W W Z T R H L L O N
T V S I O E N E C S B I Y N
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Washer
Wastepipe
Water
Weld
Wrench
Radiator
Yorkshire



Community Connections

Interview with Tamsin Brown – text and photo Sarah Stuffs



TAMSIN DESCRIBES herself as a wine educator, and is passionate about sharing her knowledge and encouraging others to become as fascinated as she is. She loves feeling part of the community, offering some light relief in a world that can be tricky to navigate. A quick glance at her life shows how everything has led to this point.

She grew up in a wine-loving family and studied languages at university, spending time in the Cognac region of France, where she wrote a dissertation about attempts to modernise the appeal of the brandy. Fast forward through years in London working in events and corporate training, to the decision to retrain as a teacher, which brought her and her late husband to Reading, where they put down roots. Holidays were often spent touring vineyards, and her brother worked in the drinks industry, so wine was a favourite topic of conversation.

...rethink priorities...

After teaching in a variety of Reading schools, in 2010 Tamsin had a son and took some time out, returning to teaching at Caversham Primary School in 2014. Close family deaths caused her to rethink her priorities, and encouraged by her brother, she decided to follow her passion and study at the Wine and Spirit Education Trust. For the first time she was studying purely for the sake of studying, loved it, and passed her exams with flying colours.

While still studying she started working as a guide at a local vineyard and doing pop-up wine tastings in her own home. This has grown organically over the years, with more pop-ups and collaborations with other local organisations – if you have been to one of Fourbears Books wine and words evenings, or a walk round a local vineyard with Walk Works, you'll have met Tamsin. When Spill Bar was being set up, the owners asked Tamsin to design their wine list, and her newest venture, a wine club, meets there monthly. It has proved so popular that there are already two enthusiastic groups who love learning about the new wines each month.

If you would like to find out more about the wine club, contact hello@spillbar.co.uk with the header Wine Club. For information about the vineyard walks contact hello@walkworks.co.uk

How long have you lived in RG4?

I grew up in Wargrave so have known the area all my life. I came to live in Caversham when I came to train as a teacher at the university in 2006 and have lived here ever since.

Where are your favourite places to eat, drink and shop in our area?

I don't eat out much locally, although I like the Last Crumb. I do frequent the coffee shops, especially The Collective, and think we have a great selection of independent businesses here, especially the various gift shops.

How do you think we can be eco-friendlier here?

There are some communal recycling facilities, but they are not well signposted, so I would like to see this improved, and the range of recycling increased. For example, somewhere for clothing which isn't good enough quality to donate to charity shops.

How would you strengthen our sense of community?

I am a great believer in networking and working together between organisations and individuals, as there is power in collaboration. I would like to see events linking local venues, for example through music or food. It is important that some of these are free to encourage locals to get involved.

If you could bring anything here, such as an event, experience or a shop, what would it be?

Caversham already has a great variety of shops, experiences and events, but often people don't know about them, so we need to think about how we can get the word out there more.

...if you have been to one of Fourbears Books wine and words evenings, or a walk round a local vineyard with Walk Works, you'll have met Tamsin

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The Local Scene

by Martin Andrews

Dancia International Prospect Street

I was amazed to discover that there are so many dance groups in Caversham...

DANCIA INTERNATIONAL, with its distinctive pink façade, opened in Prospect Street fifteen years ago. The owner, Jude Chapman, was having trouble finding a good supplier of dance wear for her son and daughter (Ellie), who were both keen dancers. Realizing there was a gap in the market, she decided to set up her own shop. Since then, the business has flourished, with another branch in Crowthorne, and their reputation as expert specialists has ensured a loyal and extensive customer base. They supply hundreds of dance schools, colleges and dance classes for all ages, from professional dancers to young and older amateur enthusiasts. I was amazed to discover that there are so many dance groups in Caversham including JG Dance, Mo's Dance and Drama, Adult Dance, Stagecoach, Berkshire Ballroom, and Dance with Sonia Brown. When I popped into the shop a young mum was buying shoes for her tiny daughter who attended Baby Ballet in Shiplake, there are also such classes in St Andrew's Church in Caversham.

It is very much a family business, and the staff are all good friends who share a passion for dance. Julia Palalas and Ellie Howard, who clearly love working there, were on duty when I visited and showed me around. The stock



Drawing by Janina Maher

www.janinamaher.artweb.com

is extensive, shelves packed with leotards, tights, hair accessories and dance costumes of all kinds. They are particularly expert in supplying dance shoes for all forms of dance; ballet (beautiful pointe shoes), tap, jazz, ballroom & Latin, and Irish dancing (including some strange sounding shoes – soft Irish ghillies).

I have to confess my involvement in dance is sitting on the sofa watching Strictly but, in recent years, we have discovered contemporary ballet. We have enjoyed wonderful performances at the Royal Opera House and Sadler's Wells, obtaining tickets for under thirty pounds for seats in the 'gods'. We have been astonished by the strength and skill of the dancers – so athletic, which reminds me that Dancia International also supply a range of wear for gymnastics.

Ellie Chapman recalled that the previous occupant of the premises was a curtain and blind shop and at one time it was a toy shop. It had been two separate properties but a wall was taken down to create a larger shop space. Many businesses have come and gone since but, in 1921, it was Breakspear Sons, Brewery Stores. Let's hope that Dancia inspires many more generations of dancers.

Prints of this, and all Janina's other paintings are available from her website janinamaher.artweb.com/drawings-prints-paintings

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Les Cooper

Some veggie options

RECENTLY I HAVE been typing up my father's garden diaries written during the Second World War and they make interesting reading. One thing which amazes me is that we are still growing varieties my Dad was growing in 1942. He was planting potatoes such as Epicure, Majestic and Foremost which we can still obtain today.

I must admit I am also somewhat loath to give up on favourite things I have been growing for quite a while, for example, the named delphinium plants which have been around for decades. On the other hand, I do know varieties first raised in the twentieth century have deteriorated and are not today what they were back then. One reason is because they have been excessively propagated by taking cuttings time and time again.

This happens with other popular plants like chrysanthemums, dahlias and even roses. The old favourite rose Peace is still nice but not the beauty she was when first introduced in the 1950s.

Should this be a lesson to us? March and April are the time to enliven our gardens and grow something new, maybe vegetables. Glancing through a catalogue, I find more than a few options for things I have never attempted.

Kale is one, and a variety called Midnight Sun sounds rather enticing being, according to the catalogue, the best flavoured kale available.

What about aubergines? I like the look of them, but they are grown best in a greenhouse, and I never had room for them. They need a long season to mature but can be easy to grow. If I could grow



Swiss Chard seeds

photo P Chatfield

them as well as they look in catalogues and magazines, I would be very proud.

I could try growing kohlrabi, which I have never grown or even eaten. Who could resist one named Azure Star which is quick growing with tender white flesh and leaves that can be eaten like cabbage. Or perhaps another vegetable new to me called cucamelon (a Mexican gherkin), which grows like a cucumber with a refreshing, almost citrus, taste.

The vegetable I can really visualize growing is Swiss chard, not because I fancy eating it but because I like the look of it. Swiss chard Red Magic has bright, colourful stems which are apparently wonderful in salads and when mature delicious baked, steamed or sautéed. I am not a cooking aficionado, and I don't really know what sautéed means, but I want a handsome garden – therefore I will stick to Swiss chard for its looks.

Reading's Polish Community



by
Leszek Kujawa

THE POLISH COMMUNITY in Britain was made up of displaced people, not refugees. After the Nazi occupation of Poland in 1939, many Polish men and women were used in the German army or as forced labour. They were taken from their homeland and spread through Nazi-occupied Europe or to the Gulag camps in Siberia by the Russians, who were allied with Germany at the start of the Second World War.

When Germany turned against Russia in 1941, the Poles fought alongside the Red Army. Many thousands were sent out of Russia to go via Iran, Iraq and Palestine to North Africa. There they joined the allies and were taken under the wing of the British government and forces. Most became part of the British 8th Army and some made their way up through Italy, and played a pivotal role in the battle of Monte Cassino.

After the war, these soldiers were brought to Britain with the hope

of returning home to Poland. But by then Poland had fallen under the influence of communism, having been occupied by the Russians. Most chose to stay in their new homeland rather than face possible death by returning to Poland, while others went to North or South America, Canada and other countries to settle.

...popular place to live...

In the Reading area there were four resettlement camps – Sonning Common, Checkendon, Nettlebed and Whitchurch-on-Thames just north of Pangbourne. I was born in the Whitchurch camp, spending the first five years of my life in an ex-army barracks Nissen hut. Reading had a large Polish community, especially in local industry, where work was easy to find after the war. Caversham was a popular place to live for the families who had left the resettlement camps; South View Avenue at one time had 14 families living there.

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Walking in Berkshire and Oxfordshire

by **Tina Gusterson**
(Pang Valley Ramblers)

THE RAMBLERS is a national charity which aims to protect the ability of people to enjoy the sense of freedom and benefits that come from being outdoors on foot. It is an association of people and groups which come together both to enjoy walking and other outdoor pursuits, and to protect and expand the infrastructure and places people can walk.

Pang Valley Ramblers is an inclusive group, mainly walking in West Berkshire, South Oxfordshire, the mid-Thames and Pang valleys, and the Reading area. However, recently the group did venture both to Central London and Winchester for interest walks!

It is a friendly group, open to all who enjoy walking. The walks are planned and led by qualified volunteer leaders who offer a variety of routes, both in the countryside and in towns. The distance varies from approximately two to twelve miles. We generally organise two walks a week.

We keep our members informed by a newsletter which accompanies our four-monthly walking programmes. We send out weekly reminders of walks and maintain a website. Pang Valley Ramblers also offers residential walking holidays in different parts of England. For example, in

2025, our members had the opportunity to walk in Alnmouth, Northumberland, and the Surrey Hills around Dorking.

If you join Ramblers, you can walk with any group nationwide but are allocated to a local group so you can get to know fellow walkers in your area. As well as offering a wide variety of walking, our group organises social events, including quiz nights, lunch meetings, picnics, and, recently, a boat trip combined with an interest walk.

There is a link to the online membership application below, which gives costs. If you wish to join our group, then on the application form the area is Berkshire and the group is Pang Valley.

The Group welcomes new members. If you are interested in joining one of our walks, please look at our website for future walks. You will also find details of the first walk each month in the Caversham Bridge *What's On* listing. You are welcome to sample walking with us before committing to joining the Ramblers. Contact membership@pvrblers.org.uk

At under £4 a month for single membership, Ramblers is certainly value for money.

Please see the website at www.ramblers.org.uk/membership for further information.



Pang Valley Ramblers

photo S Spires

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EcoTip

by Tricia Marcouse

Spring Clear Outs

IT'S THE TIME for spring cleaning and chucking out the broken, obsolete or unwanted stuff, and there are loads of local options for some of it before filling up the bin or making a trip to Smallmead Recycling Centre.

First comes repair. There's a range of repair cafés in Reading these days, where you can sharpen tools, repair clothes and sort out the mysteries of electronics. Opening times are given on therestartproject.org/groups/reading-repair-cafe

Bicycle repairs take place Saturday-Wednesday at the Bike Hub in King Street (readingbikehub.org.uk), and on Saturdays at the Bicycle Kitchen at Weldale Street (www.readingbicyclekitchen.org). You can buy refurbished second-hand bikes at each venue, and both are happy to receive donations. Check their websites for opening times.

Berkshire Computer Recycling deals with old computers, phones and similar equipment, and will collect from your house free of charge. Send them an email with the list of things for collection to info@berkshire-computer-recycling.co.uk and they will take away that drawer full of ancient cables, hubs, and printers as well. With the world going crazy for minerals, it makes very good sense to have those removed from your electronics and recycled.

...reasonable price...

I haven't a clue how much the 'cash cows' and similar offer for your valuables, but I do know many local jewellers will weigh your gold and silver and give a reasonable price for it. I've used Jacobs in King Street to sell donated jewellery and raised money for charity and, as they say, other jewellers are available! This is an excellent way of clearing broken as well as unwanted precious metal stuff.

Of course, you could donate what's reusable to charity, either to the charity shops in Caversham or online. For example, Oxfam will send you a donation bag to fill with items they can sell which is returned free of charge via DHL, and this feeds their online store. Just type Oxfam/donate/online into a search engine and ask for a bag.

I haven't a clue how much the 'cash cows' and similar offer for your valuables, but I do know many local jewellers will weigh your gold and silver and give a reasonable price for it

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Creative CAVERSHAM

The play's the thing



As *Glitch* continues its national tour, **Hannah Thurston-Smith** talks to **Elestr Lee** about what inspires her and RABBLE theatre to continue their award-winning work

DESPITE STRINGENT cuts in arts funding and alarm over arts provision in state schools – Highdown being a notable exception – Reading is endowed with an impressive rollcall of musicians, artists, plus two emerging professional drama companies in Reading Rep and RABBLE, not to mention respected amateur groups such as Progress. So what is driving those who remain determined to keep the arts alive locally?

It seems the answer lies in one simple word: “Creativity,” Hannah Thurston-Smith, Head of Education for Rabble Theatre, told me. “Creativity is so important for well-being.” Caversham-based Hannah is responsible for the weekly courses run for both adults and young people, as well as the educational outreach work which RABBLE provides. Unleashing creativity is something Hannah is passionate about.

Hannah grew up in Reading, attending Maiden Erleigh School. She enrolled at Royal Holloway to study English and Drama, then switched to Leeds University to study

Broadcasting. “As part of the degree course we had to work in the industry, so I spent some time working at *CBeebies*. After I completed my degree, I moved to London and worked for the BBC for several years. I worked on various programmes, including *French & Saunders*, *The Money Programme*, as well as *Panorama*. I really loved it – especially being involved in current affairs.” Hannah worked as a production co-ordinator, managing budgets, schedules, crews and logistics, from pre-production right through to broadcast.

“It was exciting work, but involved long,

Those who have grown up attending RABBLE classes come back to gain work experience, before beginning careers in the creative arts...



Members of RABBLE'S Young Company Musical Theatre in *Matilda*

photo A Adrian

intense hours,” Hannah recalled. Having moved to Caversham to start a family, her life changed dramatically when her daughter was born three months premature and spent months in hospital. Hannah became a stay-at-home mum, later welcoming a second daughter. “I loved being at home with the girls. I often helped out at their school and did lots of voluntary work, including organising many fund-raising events.”

After her youngest child started school Hannah was ready to return to work. When RABBLE was looking for an administrator, she applied and soon found herself promoted to Head of Education.

Today, Hannah leads the development of RABBLE'S classes, which include LAMDA courses, weekly drama and musical theatre sessions, as well as popular school holiday camps. “We can provide for up to 800 students in a single term, so it's busy – but incredibly rewarding,” she said.

...in just a week...

RABBLE'S holiday camps bring children from across Reading together to rehearse and perform a one-hour show in just a week; the show is then staged in a real theatre for family audiences at the end of the camp. “It's intense for the team, but watching the children grow in confidence is amazing,” Hannah enthused. Camps are phone-free, and include shared lunches, with the focus on connection, creativity – and fun!

Hannah also develops free education packs for schools, including the latest pack for *Glitch*, complete with background information and creative activities. “RABBLE'S shows often explore historical or contemporary stories with local connections. I'm incredibly proud of how much we give back to the community through free places, tickets, as well as access to our work.”

While RABBLE'S new plays win national recognition, the company cannot operate without its ‘bread and butter’ educational work. I was delighted to be invited to attend a session of the Young Company Musical Theatre where I met regular attendees who told me how taking part in YCMT has impacted their lives. Bryley, aged 10, told me: “When I was six, I went to a holiday camp and mum saw I could dance and sing, so I have been doing it ever since – I have now taken part in five shows and love it!”

Mia, eight, said: “I love comedy – I always



Ava and Peighton – young stars of the future! – tell all to Elestr

photo H Thurston-Smith

get the comedy roles!” while Lottie, nine, only knew one other person when she joined, but is now Star Performer, and was cast as Matilda in the recent production.

Ava, 14, explained: “I have become more confident, I think that kids who don't do theatre aren't as confident. Taking part creates a level of excitement – knowing I have the classes to go to gets me through the day.”

Peighton, 14, told me: “I started about three years ago, taking part in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at holiday camp after studying the play at school. I have been awarded funding to attend, and it has been so important in giving me a chance to do something I love as well as meeting new people. I'm a young carer so I really enjoy being able to come to such a safe, welcoming space to have fun.”

Those who have grown up attending RABBLE classes come back to gain work experience, before beginning careers in the creative arts. “We love encouraging and supporting people's pathways into the industry,” Hannah told me. “There's always so much to do! But I feel so lucky to work in such a creative field.”

Find out more:

For information about

- Young Company Acting;
- Young Company Musical Theatre;
- Get Up On Stage for adults;
- LAMDA courses for adults and children, or holiday camps, see:

rabbletheatre.com



Actress Joanne Howarth plays the role of subpostmistress Pam Stubbs on tour in *Glitch* photo A Crichard



by Linda Chandler

Property to Let?

THE FORTHCOMING Renters' Rights Act has prompted understandable concern among landlords, particularly those operating on a let-only basis. In areas such as Caversham and Reading, where demand for rental homes remains strong, some landlords are asking if increased regulation makes continued investment worthwhile.

In reality, the new legislation does not signal the decline of private renting. Instead, it represents a move towards a more professional, transparent sector – one that supports responsible landlords while offering greater security for tenants. For well-located, well-maintained properties in this area, the fundamentals remain positive.

However, for let-only landlords, the practical impact of the Act should not be underestimated. Once a tenant is placed, all responsibility for



compliance, communication, documentation, and ongoing legal obligations sit squarely with the landlord. Under the new framework, those obligations will increase.

From clearer standards around repairs and property condition, to stricter processes governing rent increases and tenancy management, the margin for error will narrow. While many of these measures are sensible, they are also time-sensitive and backed by stronger enforcement. Even experienced landlords may find the administrative burden growing.

This is where professional property management becomes particularly relevant in a competitive local market. A reputable managing agent does more than oversee day-to-day issues. They stay abreast of legislative change, ensure deadlines are met, maintain accurate records, and handle tenant concerns in line with current law. In areas like Caversham – where good tenants expect responsive, compliant landlords – this level of professionalism can help protect both income and reputation.

...balanced alternative...

Importantly, moving from let-only to fully managed does not mean relinquishing control of an investment. It means reducing operational risk while safeguarding long-term value. For landlords who believe in the strength of the Reading market, but feel stretched by regulation, this can be a balanced alternative to selling.

Selling may appear to be the simplest response to change, but it is irreversible. The Renters' Rights Act is not a reason to exit the market but for many it is a reason to adapt. For let-only landlords, professional management could be the difference between stepping away entirely and continuing to invest with confidence.

Black & White Property Services are an Independent Lettings and Property Management Specialist team located at Chiltern Court in St Peter's Avenue. Established in 2015 by Carly Baker and Linda Chandler, they pride themselves on bringing their combined 50 years' of local knowledge to the business. For a free initial consultation please contact them on 0118 918 9211.

Website blackandwhite.properties

RABBLE HITS THE ROAD

by Elestr Lee

LOCAL PROFESSIONAL theatre company RABBLE is now part way through its 17-venue tour throughout England (with a brief foray into Wales) with *Glitch*, the play developed with the University of Reading about the Post Office scandal, featuring the story of Berkshire sub-postmistress, Pam Stubbs.

Having opened in Scarborough on 6 February – receiving a standing ovation and excellent reviews – during March the company travels to Newcastle before heading back south, stopping at Henley's Kenton Theatre on March 24. Then on to Plymouth and London prior to the triumphant return to Reading on 7 April, when performances of *Glitch* can be seen at the Minghella Theatre at the University of Reading up until April 17.

Despite this enormous undertaking, RABBLE are continuing their regular commitment to creativity in our area with, amongst other things, their annual writing competition. On 1 February competitors (all over 17) were invited to write a 20-minute play inspired by a clue revealed only that morning and completed within six hours. On Friday 20 March, the winning play will be performed with three others by professional writers, at the annual Off the Block event at South Street in Reading. A previous participant in RABBLE's competition was Beth Flintoff – now RABBLE's associate writer – who has recently been named as writer-in-residence for London's Royal Court Theatre.



Despite this enormous undertaking, RABBLE are continuing their regular commitment to creativity in our area ...

Find out more: rabbletheatre.com

Meet Hannah Thurston-Smith, RABBLE's Head of Education, in this month's Creative Caversham on page 12

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First Impressions Matter *by Laura Harmsworth*

Your interests could be the detail that gets you hired



MOST PEOPLE bury their interests at the bottom of their CV as an afterthought. That's a missed opportunity to show who you really are.

Your interests reveal genuine qualities which employers value. The key is presenting them thoughtfully and honestly.

Consider what your interests demonstrate about you. Training for marathons? That's dedication and mental resilience. Photography or creative writing? You've got an eye for detail and a creative mindset. Even gaming can showcase strategic thinking and collaboration skills when you frame it properly.

Making It Relevant

Be selective about which interests you include on your CV – and where you place them. If an interest directly relates to the role (coding projects for a tech position, for instance), incorporate it into your profile or skills section. If it's less central but still valuable, a brief 'Interests' section at the bottom works well.

Choose activities that align with the role or company culture.

Applying to a community-focused organisation? Mention your volunteer work at the local food bank. Pursuing a creative position? Your side projects suddenly become genuinely relevant talking points.

Keep It Genuine

Your interests can also make excellent conversation starters in interviews, helping you connect with potential employers on a more personal level. Just don't oversell them – be prepared to discuss them authentically if asked. Share specific examples that highlight relevant skills, but keep it real.

The important thing is relevance and authenticity. Avoid adding generic interests that tell recruiters nothing – 'reading', 'travelling', and 'spending time with friends and family' appear on countless CVs and add zero value. Similarly, steer clear of anything controversial. Three or four well-chosen activities are plenty – they humanise your application without overwhelming it.

When you connect your passions thoughtfully to professional strengths, you create a memorable application that stands out for the right reasons.

You can follow Laura on:

www.facebook.com/CavershamCVWriting

on LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/lauraharmsworth

Website: www.cavershamcvwriting.co.uk

Email: contact@cavershamcvwriting.co.uk

Your interests can also make excellent conversation starters in interviews, helping you connect with potential employers on a more personal level...



For the youngest members of our community

LISTED BELOW are regular term-time events for toddlers, babies and their carers. All are free of charge, although donations towards costs are welcome.

Mondays – *Little Lambs and You* – Caversham Baptist Church, South Street, Caversham RG4 8HY 10:00-11:30. Baby and toddler group. Numbers are limited, so there is an online booking system. See

www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk/Groups/382970/Little_Lambs.aspx

Tuesdays – *Babies and Toddlers* – Gosbrook Road Methodist Church, RG4 8EB. 10:00 - 11:30. Refreshments available. All welcome.

cavershammethodist.org.uk/baby-toddler-group

Tuesdays – *St. John's Baby and Toddler Group* – Caversham Hall, St. John's Road, RG4 5AN. 09:30 - 11:00. All welcome.

Thursdays – *Toddler Thursday* – St Barnabas Church, Emmer Green, RG4 8RA. 8:45-10:00. Friendly group for preschoolers and parents/carers, refreshments available. www.saintbarnabas.org.uk/whats-on

Thursdays – *Baby Massage with midwife Katie* – 12:15-12:55 at the Weller Centre during term times. Suitable for babies from 6 weeks to crawling. 50p donation towards costs, refreshments available.

Fridays – *Tiddlers for Babies and Toddlers* – St Andrew's Church, Albert Road. Caversham Heights. RG4 7PL. 9:30-11:00. All are welcome, refreshments available. www.facebook.com/groups/209815529592564

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

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Future editions:

Contributions for the April issue

should be submitted by 1 March and for the May edition by 1 April. These should be emailed to:

editors@cavershambridge.org

Dates for advertising copy

are 1 March for the April issue and 1 April for the May issue. These should be emailed to:

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Wellbeing with Ami Roy

The Rest Deficit

FEELING EXHAUSTED despite getting enough sleep? You may be neglecting other, equally important forms of rest. While sleep is an important component of well-being, a multi-faceted approach to rest is key to restoring energy levels and improving our ability to function. We've incorrectly combined the concepts of sleep and rest and, in doing so, we may become frustrated to the point it appears ineffective.

While rest sometimes means taking a break from draining activities, it can also be active. Spending time with supportive people, taking a favourite class, or going on a nature walk can all be restful. The key is to identify where we use the most energy, and focus on finding what restores and settles us in those areas.

Physical rest

Physical rest is just what it sounds like — restoring our body's energy. This may include prioritising sleep or taking a nap when needed. But physical rest doesn't always mean

being still—it might mean getting a massage to address tense muscles after a stressful week, or stretching instead of doing a hard workout.

Mental rest

When our brains are active for long periods, we begin to feel mentally drained. Mental rest means finding ways to quiet our thoughts and give our brains the chance to refuel. At work or school, giving our brains a break may look like scheduling breaks from mentally taxing work—or swapping draining tasks for low-stake, mindless ones, like folding laundry or working on a puzzle.



photo pvproductions@freepik.com

Emotional rest

Emotional labour can also be a depleting experience. Emotional rest involves finding practical ways to express feelings authentically, freeing us of the exhausting pressure of 'holding it together'. Resting emotionally could look like processing our emotions with a friend or a therapist, rather than pushing them aside or saying 'no' to emotionally intense activities.

Social rest

Not only introverts need social rest. Being around people all the time means being 'on' which can be draining for anyone. Social rest may mean scheduling fewer activities during the week or spending more time alone to recharge.

Sensory rest

The world can be loud, and constant exposure to technology only increases the noise, potentially overwhelming our senses. We may replace screen time with restorative activities, such as connecting with a loved one or spending time outdoors.

Creative rest

If you have a job that requires creativity, brainstorming or problem-solving, you may need some creative rest. Along with giving your brain the occasional break from those demands, find ways to engage in creative hobbies for fun.

Spiritual rest

Spiritual rest can mean taking steps towards what feels nourishing, refilling our tank by connecting to a cause that's meaningful, or simply taking time to enjoy the beauty of nature.

We can ask ourselves, 'How am I doing?'

What type of rest do I need? And then choose the thing that restores and refreshes us fully!

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St Margaret, St Peter, St John

Rev'd Mike Smith,

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Tel: 0118 947 9505 rector@ctmparish.org.uk

Rev'd Penny Cuthbert Tel: 07825 331 810

penny@ctmparish.org.uk

Rev'd Rachel Ross Smith Tel: 07884 371688

rachel@ctmparish.org.uk

Rev'd Dr Catherine Radcliffe Tel: 07740 475697

catherine@ctmparish.org.uk

Contact: admin@ctmparish.org.uk or 0118 996 8836

Correspondence address: Church House,

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Current services

St Margaret's Church

Mapledurham – 11:15. 1st, 2nd, 4th Sunday Holy

Communion, 3rd Sunday Service of the Word.

St Peter's Church

1st Sunday of the month: 9.30 All Age Service of the Word, with music group and choir

18.30 Holy Communion with prayers for healing, with choir

2nd and 4th Sundays: 8.00 said BCP Holy Communion

9.30 Holy Communion with choir and activities for young people, primary and secondary age

3rd Sunday: 9.30 All Age Holy Communion in a shorter format, with choir – 18.30 Choral Evensong

Wednesday: 9.30 said Holy Communion

All services live streamed on Zoom. For Zoom details go to www.ctmparish.org.uk/services/online/

St John's Church

Gosbrook Road Sunday services

9:30 1st and 3rd Sunday Holy Communion,

2nd All Age Worship, 4th Service of the Word

Sunday Club for children on 1st, 3rd and 4th Sundays

Thursday: 10:00 Holy Communion

St Andrew's

Rev'd Nigel Jones, St Andrew's Vicarage, Harrogate Road.

Tel: 0118 947 2788 www.standrewscaversham.org

Current services

St Andrew's weekly services are Sundays at 8:00 and

10:00. The 10:00 is also livestreamed on the St Andrew's

YouTube channel. Prayer Book Communion at 11.30 on

the first Sunday of each month. More info on the parish

website. www.standrewscaversham.org/services

Compline: 8.30 on Mondays during BST (in church)

St Barnabas, Emmer Green and Caversham Park

Rev'd Kevin Lovell, vicar@saintbarnabas.org.uk

Church Office Tel: 0118 947 5214

Current Services

Sundays: 8:00 BCP Holy Communion (1st Sunday only)

9:30 Parish Communion (Service of the Word on

2nd Sunday)

11:15 All Age Worship (Café Church or Family Communion)

Wednesdays: 10:30 Midweek Communion

Morning Prayer: Tuesdays 8:30 in church; Mon/Weds/

Thurs 8:00. online at

www.facebook.com/StBarnabasEmmerGreen/live_videos

Full details at www.saintbarnabas.org.uk/whats-on

METHODIST CHURCH

The Methodist Church Caversham

Rev'd David Jenkins Tel: 0118 327 1592

www.cavershammethodist.org.uk

Current services

Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmoor Road

Sunday: 10.30 – Also on YouTube

Gosbrook Road Methodist Church

1st and 3rd Sundays: 10:30

Worship on Wednesday: 10:00-10:30

Third Thursday - Thursday Night Live: 19:30'

New Testament Church of God

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UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

United Reformed Church, Caversham Park

Contact: Dr Alison Johnston

Tel: 0118 947 5152 www.cavershamparkurc.com

Current services

Sunday – 11:00 – Livestreaming on YouTube

Details on their web site at:

<https://cpurc.org.uk/live-stream>

BAPTIST CHURCH

Caversham Baptist Church

Pastor:

Church office Tel: 0118 954 5353

Email: secretary@cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk

Current services

Sunday worship 10:30 each week, including groups for

children and youth

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www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk

Grace Church (formerly Caversham Hill Chapel)

Elders Nick King and David Steed

Tel: 0118 947 4529 www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk

See their web site for details:

www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk

Riverside Church (Reading)

www.riversidechurchreading.co.uk

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Our Lady and St Anne

Fr Joe McLoughlin, The Presbytery, 2 South View Avenue

Tel: 0118 947 1787 www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk

Current services

See their web site for services at:

www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk

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(including Emmer Green and Caversham Park Village)

Deacon Brian Theobald, The Presbytery, 18 Peppard Road,

Sonning Common RG4 9SU – Tel: 0118 972 3418

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For details of the services being held at each of our churches, please visit their respective websites (on this page) or the Churches Together in Caversham website www.cavershamchurch.org



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EDITORS: Dr Alison Johnston, Mrs Heather Gale, Phil Chatfield, Judith El-Nager, Sue Silk, Maria Lloyd
 Email: editors@cavershambridge.org

ADVERTISING: Kathy Fahey
 Email: advertising@cavershambridge.org

COMPANY SECRETARY: Mr R Harper.

SUBSCRIPTIONS and DELIVERIES: C Clifford: Email: subscriptions@cavershambridge.org

COMPANY CHAIR: Mr Phil Chatfield: Email: chair@cavershambridge.org

COMPANY TREASURER: Mrs J Belcher
 Email: treasurer@cavershambridge.org

POSTAL SUBSCRIPTIONS: Mrs J Belcher
 Email: treasurer@cavershambridge.org

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