

CHERISH THE POPPY RED



Most people think that the poppy originated as the universal symbol of remembrance on the battlefields of Flanders. But they are mistaken as it had its beginnings in the United States, as Ian Lowry explains

November is the month of remembrance. For many of us it is associated with the familiar red poppy of remembrance. On the second Sunday of the month, the Queen leads the National Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph in Whitehall in London. At the same time, there is the Field of Remembrance in the precinct of nearby Westminster Abbey, with its thousands of poppy-faced, wooden crosses planted in neat rows in the ground.

Then, inside the abbey, there is the tomb of the unknown warrior, always bordered by a line of red poppies around the edge of the black, marble

Poem gives a clue to the origin of our remembrance symbol

stone. So where and when did the tradition of the red poppy of remembrance begin?

It was, in fact, a schoolmistress from Georgia in the United States who thought of, and who first began the custom of, wearing a red poppy in honour of the dead. Her name was Moina Belle Michael and she was the daughter of a Confederate soldier, John Michael, who had fought in the American Civil War. After General Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse in April, 1865, John went home to Walton County

and to the plantation he had inherited from his father. He married a year later and went back to planting cotton as he and his wife began to raise a family.

The Michaels were devout Christians and, early on, Moina had come across a verse in the Book of Ecclesiastes, which stayed with her for the rest of her life, *Whatsoever thy hands find to do, do it with all thy might*. Moina became a teacher at an early age and spent time in a variety of schools in her home state for the next 32 years.

After the United States declared war in April 1917, Moina, now 47 years old, volunteered for war work. She was too old to go abroad but got a post at the YMCA Overseas War Workers training

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Tel: 947 1787.

Fr Bob Devaney, Tel: 07786 836146
18 Peppard Road, Sonning Common

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD

Rev H R Gayle Tel: 946 3009 (contact)

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

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

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

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

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

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

TALKING POINT

by

Colin Ferguson

As a lay preacher and a writer of hymns and other worship material I have always found November to be a challenging month. At times I think of it as the 'doom and gloom' season, but it begins with triumph in All Saints and ends in triumph with Christ the King and the hope of Advent and Christmas. In between though it makes us face some difficult issues, none more so than remembrance.

In the First World War the death toll was frightening as within two or three days a whole regiment could lose over half its members, many of them never to be found in the mud, and it was unknown to the world back home until much later. Nowadays we mourn one death at a time and lives that once would certainly be lost are saved by modern surgical skills. There is hope to those who in the past would have had no future. Perhaps the Paralympics has made me more aware of the number of our troops who have been seriously injured. The evidence of how so many of them rise above the tragedy of life changing wounds is such a tribute to the human spirit.

But conflict is not confined to foreign fields, and if remembrance is to be relevant, it needs to be about now and not just the past, also it is about here. What sort of nation are we building now? As the church is being marginalised, so the message of love, hope, peace and joy is not reaching the new generations. There is a great interest in spirituality but Christianity seems to have become stuck in the church and in our religiosity. At the same time we have a culture of amorality, where people behave as if they do not know the difference between good and evil. The riots of last year and the deliberate killing of two young police officers are symptomatic of a moral hiatus. The casual criminality of the press and parliament has made the whole of society suspect and the greed of the rich is repugnant, especially when the poor are blamed for the problems of their making.

Recent governments have sadly, behaved in a distressingly adversarial way to the poor, including the disabled, while protecting the pockets of the rich. The result is twice as many people in prison than ten years ago, a generation of young people who cannot see a future for themselves, and those who depend on state assistance fearing the future even more than their present circumstances cause.

Yet there is light in the wonderful response of so many to volunteer during the Olympics and to be the witnesses of welcome and acceptance far more than any words could express. Also the willingness of Street Pastors to go out into the streets at night where they show with water and flip flops the care of God for his people. They cross all our divisions and show the true face of faith. These are the peace makers of today, rising above the fears of financial instability and unemployment, above the narrow confines of denomination or political ideology.

How are we to be peace makers, not in distant battles but in the everyday conflicts of our society, even of our family life? How are we going to stand up for justice and do what is right? Through the gloom of November we know there will be the hope that comes to us in a little child whose life lights the darkness of our deeds with love and forgiveness.

Colin Ferguson is a lay preacher in the United Reformed Church

SUNDAY SERVICES

ANGLICAN

St Peter's, St Peter's Hill

8.00am	Holy Communion
9.45am	Parish Communion
6.30pm	Evensong

St John's, Gosbrook Road

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

St Andrew's, Harrogate Road

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

St Barnabas, Grove Road, Emmer Green

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

St Margaret's, Mapledurham

11.00am	Parish Communion
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CAVERSHAM PARK ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP

Meeting at Caversham Park School

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

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH

10.30 am	Worship at South Street
6.45 pm.	Worship at South Street (1st & 3rd Sundays)
3.45 pm.	Messy Church for the whole family at South Street (Last Sunday of the month)
11.00 am	Sanctom Service (1st & 3rd Fridays)

GRACE CHURCH Old Peppard Road

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

THE METHODIST CHURCH IN CAVERSHAM

Caversham Heights, Highmoor Road

9.00am (first Sunday), 10.30am and 6.30pm

Gosbrook Road

10.30am

Woodcote Parish Church

9.45am (second Sunday)

ROMAN CATHOLIC

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Saturday 5.30pm,
Sunday 10.00am and 6.30pm

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

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (Quakers)

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10.30am

(House study groups Sept-June Tel: 9475783)

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD

Church Street, Caversham

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

Caversham Bridge

Contributions for the December 2012 issue should be sent to Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham Parish Office by Monday 29th October. The date for the January 2013 issue is Monday 19th November 2012. Email address is secretary@ctmparish.org.uk

Advertising copy for the December 2012 issue should be sent to Mr A Wright, Twiggmoor, Upper Warren Avenue, Caversham by Friday 26th October 2012. The date for the January 2013 issue is Friday 16th November 2012.

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from page 1

centre in Columbia University, New York City, a place she had studied at some years earlier.

On Saturday 9th November, 1918, she was on duty there when a young soldier left an opened copy of Ladies Home Journal on her desk. Moina looked at the page and her eyes fell on a poem she was familiar with. It had been written by a Canadian military doctor, Col. John McCrae, who was, by then, himself buried in a soldier's grave near Boulogne in northern France. It was called 'We Shall Not Sleep (In Flanders Fields)' and had first appeared in a pre-Christmas edition of Punch in 1915.

Moina later wrote in her autobiography: "I read the poem which I had read many times previously. The last verse transfixed me - *To you from failing hands we throw the torch; be yours to hold it high. If ye break faith with us who die, we shall not sleep, though poppies grow in Flanders Fields.* ...I pledged to keep the faith and always to wear a red poppy of Flanders Fields as a sign of remembrance and the emblem of keeping the faith with all who died."

She felt compelled to make a note of that pledge in the form of another poem which she hastily scribbled on the back of a used envelope. It included the lines: *We cherish too the poppy red,*



Moina Michael

that grows on fields where valour led... And now the Torch and Poppy Red, We wear in honour of our dead.

That afternoon she was given 10 dollars as a thank you from a group of people whom she had made welcome at the centre. She resolved to spend the gift on red poppies. After a futile search in several local novelty stores, she went to Wanamaker's department store on the corner of Broadway and 10th. In the course of making her purchase, Moina discovered that the young sales clerk who sold her 25 poppies was, herself, mourning the loss of a brother who had been killed in the fighting in France some months beforehand. This chance meeting gave Moina an even greater resolve to carry out her proposal.

Later that evening she distributed 24 poppies

back at Columbia and kept the last one which she pinned to her lapel. When she returned home to Georgia early in 1919 she continued her campaign to make the red Flanders poppy a symbol of remembrance for the war dead. Later, a Frenchwoman named Mme. Anna Guerin who was visiting the United States, took up Moina's idea and in 1921 she brought poppies to London to sell. She met Field Marshal Earl Haig, a founder and president of the newly formed British Legion, and the idea was subsequently taken up by him and by the Legion. It quickly spread to other parts of the Empire.

The following year, Major George Howson MC, who had founded the Disabled Society for ex soldiers, was given a grant of £2,000. He set up a small workshop to make artificial poppies in a former collar factory off the Old Kent Road in South London. At first he employed just five ex-servicemen but the number increased to 40 within a few months.

Moina Michael lived until May, 1944, long enough to see her simple, noble idea flourish and prosper across much of the world. So spare a thought for her and for the poet, Col. McCrae, when you make your donation to the Royal British Legion this month.

And pin a poppy in your lapel, as Moina did in New York City all those years ago, just before the Armistice in November 1918.

1000 may be on parade this year

Remembrance Day falls on a Sunday this year. This means that the short service usually held at 11.00am on 11th November when it's a weekday will be held in conjunction with the Sunday remembrance parade and service.

Royal British Legion members, army cadets, sea scouts, ex-service organisations and all associations wishing to take part in the parade to the war memorial should assemble at Westfield Park at 10.15am ready to march off at 10.25am. The parade,

as usual, will be accompanied by the police who will stop the traffic.

On arrival at the war memorial in Christchurch Meadow there will be a short service of remembrance and two minutes silence. The Salvation Army band will play music to accompany the service.

Wreaths and personal tributes may be laid on the memorial at the end of the service before the parade returns to Westfield Park, with the salute being

taken at the steps of the library.

Remember, anyone can join in the parade and service. Members of the public not belonging to any association will be able to join at the tail-end of the parade.

There are usually about 800 people attending one or both of these events. The British Legion says that as 11th November is on a Sunday this year it would be great to reach a total of 1000.

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It's tea time on the Thames

Caversham has an unusual new venue for tea, coffee and meals. It has an attractive riverside setting and is floating on the Thames.

The Whittington's tea barge, which opened for business in September, is moored at Christchurch Meadows close to Reading bridge. It gets customers from the riverside footpath which passes close by and the children's play area is also nearby.

The tea barge is the result of an idea by Andrew Craig, who lives in Yateley, and his partner Lesley Banks. He was looking for a career change after 25 years in the IT industry and was planning to build a barge as a houseboat. Andrew has a degree in catering and hotel management so they came up with the concept of the floating café.

Reading seemed an ideal location and the enterprise has the full support of the borough council. Andrew says: "The council has been brilliant and very supportive."

The barge is brand new having been launched on 1st August and was built from steel in Cambridgeshire. It is 12 feet wide and 65 feet long and is equipped with all the necessary equipment including a cooker and an elaborate coffee machine. The name comes from Andrew's grandfather who was a descendant of the famous Dick Whittington.



Andrew pilots the coffee machine in the galley

It is open every day except Monday from 7.30am to 4pm serving all day breakfasts, coffee and tea, light lunches, cream teas and home-made cakes. There is seating for up to 27 people. The barge, which is centrally heated, will stay open all winter with Christmas lunches being served in December.

River trips are planned for next summer, possibly with live music as Lesley is an opera singer and music teacher. The barge is available for private parties and has licences to serve alcohol and for live music.

Andrew says the response from local people has been very good with many people becoming regulars, calling in two or three times a week. Much of the business comes from word of mouth.

If you go to find the barge and it's not there, look on the downstream side of Reading bridge. The barge may have to move as the council does not want to establish a permanent mooring on Christchurch Meadows.

The tea barge at its mooring in Christchurch Meadows



Lindsay's quiz is back

Two years ago Lindsay Mullaney announced the end of her series of cryptic quizzes on behalf of various charities. The final puzzle, in aid of the Newman Holiday Trust, raised more than £2,400 for a charity which provides holidays for children with severe learning difficulties. Previous quizzes provided funds for charities including Age Concern, the Churches in Reading Drop in Centre, Reading Family Aid and Save the Children.

Over the last two years Lindsay has been busy looking after her grandson Luke as well as researching and publishing, with her husband John, *Reformation, Revolution and Rebirth*, a book about the return of Catholicism to Reading after the Reformation. (See last month's Caversham Bridge for details.)

A number of people have written regretting the demise of the quizzes and, spurred on by the Restoration Appeal for her parish of St James, Lindsay decided to produce a new quiz based on the name James. It is slightly easier than earlier quizzes and involves various versions of James in different European languages such as Jacques, Jacob, Giacomo, Seamus, plus short forms such as Jimmie and Jim. There are 80 answers in all, arranged in pairs so that the clues form slightly ridiculous sentences such as Double O Seven is a popular cheese biscuit.

As with previous quizzes the quiz costs £2 and competitors have until late January to solve the clues, which can be researched using Google or in conjunction with friends and family. There are prizes including Book Tokens and an Oxford Dictionary. WordPlay Book and Toy Shop have kindly agreed to sell the quiz, which is also available through St. James' Church or directly

from Lindsay, who can be contacted via www.scalloppshellpress.co.uk. All profits from the quiz will go towards the appeal for St James', Pugin's very first church, which has just completed a major restoration and re-decoration in line with Pugin's original decorative scheme, in preparation for the 175th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone, this December.

Today the parish, which also includes St. William of York, near to the University, has a very large congregation (typically over 500 for the Sunday morning Mass) from many parts of the world. Its weekday lunchtime Masses attract office workers and people of all ages from all over Reading, including many Caversham residents. Pugin would no doubt be delighted to see how much his church is loved and the care taken to restore it to its original glory. Readers of Caversham Bridge are warmly invited to drop in to view the newly re-decorated church, which is open every day until 4.0pm.

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Baa-vest festival at Gosbrook Road

A very different harvest festival from usual was celebrated at Gosbrook Road Methodist Church in September. This year a woollen theme was organized, and everyone who was involved put their heart and soul in to it.

All the windows were decorated with woollen items, from small hats, gloves, baby cardigans, to baskets of knitting, and sheep of many sizes and textures. David Herbert and Tao Barry made a life-sized sheep from chicken wire and papier-maché which stood in pride of place at the front of the church. All the art group provided many paintings of sheep, alpacas and pastoral scenes. Tao also provided a large display of tools and pictures on the history of wool.

Denise Neville set up a wonderful display of spinning wheels and many kinds of wool in the various stages, being prepared for spinning.

Rosehill Park WI provided a display of knitting destined for Buscot premature baby unit at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, and Rosemary Johnstone brought along some lovely knitted work for people to enjoy or purchase.

The idea of the morning service, which was led by Deacon Becky Lovatt, was to focus on the love of Jesus for all of us. Woollen friendship bracelets were made during the service and a large circle of knotted wool was used to represent each person's individual prayers.

Myra Fowler spoke about the work of Christian Community Action which highlighted the need for jumpers and cardigans which had been given for this charity. During the service the congregation brought forth their harvest gifts of a jumpers, cardigans, blankets, gloves, and socks,



Becky Lovatt and her son Theo check the goods for CCA and Emily Dryden looks after Dolly the sheep

all of which would be given to CCA.

Many people stayed for a soup kitchen lunch, and during the afternoon, a good number of other visitors came to view the displays and paintings and to enjoy some cakes and tea.

The woollen harvest idea was very successful and made a very worthwhile project.

Many thanks to all those who helped.

ALPHA COURSE AT ST BARNABAS

The next Alpha course at St Barnabas Church,, Emmer Green, will begin on Monday 7th January in the Parish Centre. Each week the session will start at 7pm with a meal followed by a DVD on a specific topic and then time for discussion.

Alpha is a practical introduction to the Christian faith for all those interested in finding out more about it. Alpha is for everyone, especially those wanting to investigate Christianity, new Christians, newcomers to the church and those wanting to brush up on the basics. If you are interested in attending, or know of someone who may like to attend, please contact us on 947 5744 or 947 9708 or at alpha@saintbarnabas.org.uk.

If you would like to find out a bit more first, we are running a taster session on Sunday 25th November after the 9.30am service at St Barnabas Church. Please come along and learn more about Alpha at this relaxed introduction.



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(tea or coffee from 7.30pm)

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Life begins at 40 for choir

Henley Choral Society get their 40th anniversary season off to a cracking start in December when they present Benjamin Bevan, baritone, and Susannah Wapshott, piano, in a lunchtime recital of English song featuring items both elegiac and pastoral from the early part of the 20th century. It's at 12 noon on Saturday, 1st December, at St Mary's church, Henley. Tickets cost £10.00 (under 18s free)

Then at 8.00pm on Tuesday 11th December at St Mary's, Henley, the society present their much-loved traditional carol concert featuring audience participation; the children of St Mary's School; readings from A Christmas Carol to celebrate the 200th birthday of Charles Dickens.

There will be a retiring collection in aid of the Footsteps Foundation which helps children with disabilities to take their first steps, and wine and mince pies.

Tickets cost £12 (under 18s £8) from ticket secretary 01491 572795 or Gorvett and Stone, Duke Street, Henley.

For more information see www.henleychoralsociety.org.uk



Hallelujah! It's Christmas!

This year the centre-piece of the South Chiltern Choral Society's Christmas concerts will be the music of the most famous oratorio of all, Handel's Messiah. The choir, conducted by Gwyn Arch and accompanied by Ian Westley (organ), will be joined by three young professional soloists, Lisa Wilson (soprano), Lindsay Bramley (mezzo-soprano), Adam Kowalczyk (tenor) plus the slightly older Stephen Holloway (bass).

In the second half of the concert members of the quartet will each contribute popular Christmas songs of their own choosing, interspersed with recently-composed carols by John Rutter, Alan Bullard and Will Todd sung by the 120-strong choir..

There will also be traditional carols for the audience. The dates are Saturday 15th December at 7.30pm and Sunday 16th December at 2.00pm at Chiltern Edge School, Reades Lane, Sonning Common.

Tickets: are priced at £12 for adults including refreshments, £6 for under 18s (children under five free) from Mary Esslemont tel 987 4346

For further information visit the choir website: www.southchilternchoralsociety.org.uk

Christmas fair

The Christmas fair at St John's church, Caversham, will be held on Saturday 17th November at 2pm.

Stalls will include books, cakes, jewellery, tombola and there will be a raffle.

Requiem service

On Sunday 4th November at 4.00 pm, St John's Church, Gosbrook Road, Caversham, will hold a Requiem service to commemorate the departed. This Holy Communion service will feature music composed by Len David. The seven movements of the Requiem will be performed by a choir specially formed for the occasion, accompanied by instrumentalists. Names of the departed can be given to Richard Purkis on 947 5120 or added to a list available on the day and will be remembered during the service. There is no need for a ticket and there will be a retiring collection.

Craft and gift fair

Mr Toad from Wind in the Willows will be the star attraction at a craft and gift fair organised by the parish of Our Lady and St Anne. It will be held at the church in South View Avenue on Saturday 1st December from 1.30 to 4.0pm.

There will be mulled wine and mince pies, Christmas arrangements, a draw, refreshments and some special stalls as well as cakes and a bottle tombola. Father Christmas will also make an appearance.

Tell us what you're doing

What's been happening lately at your church, club or association? Caversham Bridge is always pleased to hear from new correspondents and we need you to keep us in touch with what's going on. Send any information by email to secretary@ctmparish.org.uk if possible with a photograph. Details of deadlines are given each month on Page 2.

A Night to Remember

Reading Festival Chorus under its musical director Edward-Rhys Harry will present a concert entitled A Night to Remember on Saturday 10th November 2012 at 7.30 pm at the Wesley Methodist Church in Queens Road, Reading.

The concert will feature performances of Faure's Requiem and The Armed Man - A Mass for Peace by Karl Jenkins, and is supporting the charity *Help for Heroes*.

Tickets £13 for adults, £11 concessions, £2 for under 16s are available from Alison Mackay tel 983 4523, chorus members or the website

www.readingfestivalchorus.org.uk

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Heritage walks prove popular

For this year's Heritage Open Days, CADRA and the Friends of Caversham Court Gardens joined together to lead Heritage Walks of Caversham on two days in September. The route was based partly on the heritage map which is to go up outside Caversham library as part of the Caversham 100 Years On project.

Visitors began their tour on Caversham Bridge for a brief glimpse into some of the early history of Caversham manor and the growth of industry, commerce and leisure as the village expanded. From a site of pilgrimage to a tourist destination and now to a thriving urban centre, Caversham has developed through the ages and still has examples of architecture from the 12th century to the 21st.

There are many hidden gems to please the eye, and many characters who contributed to Caversham's history. The walks sought to draw attention to some of these and to build on the legacy of the 100 Years On project.

Visitors ended their walk in Caversham Court Gardens for tea by the river and further insights

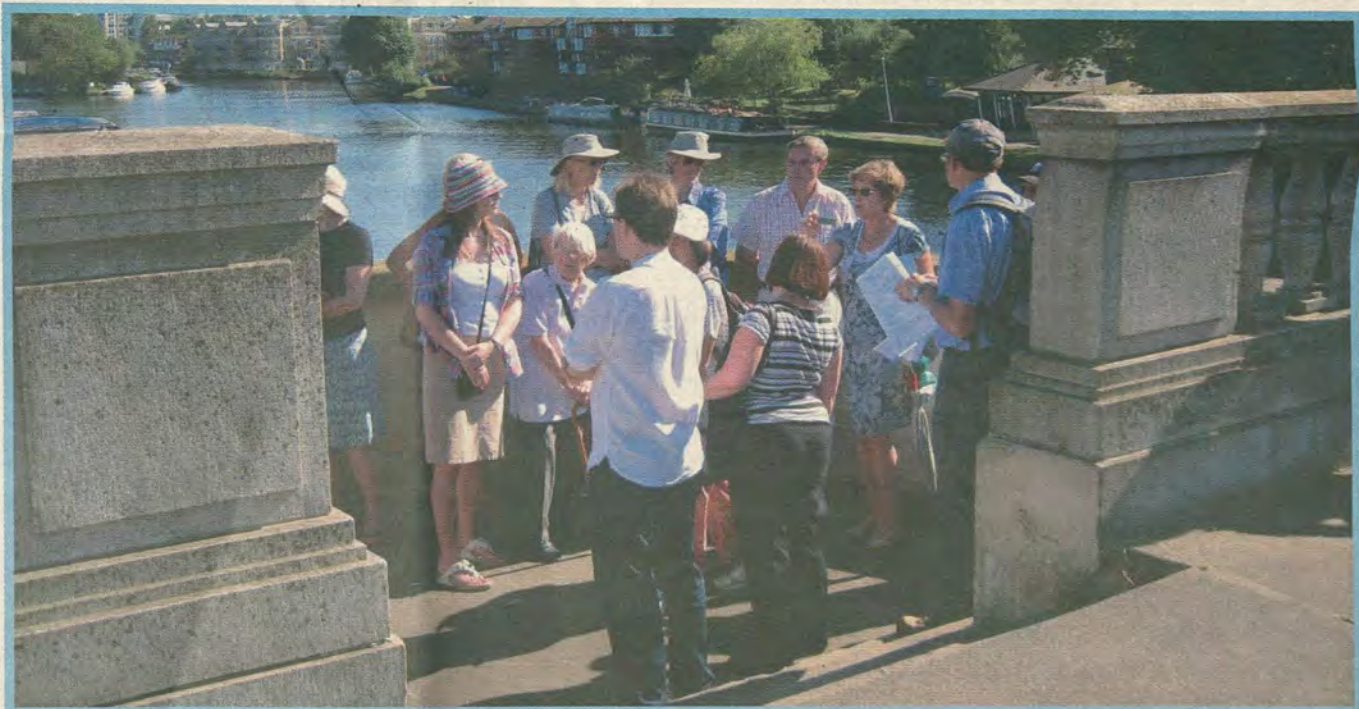
into the history of the area with a tour of this recently-restored site.

The two walks originally offered proved such a popular attraction that another two were organized, all fully booked. Visitors came not just from Caversham and Reading, but from much further afield, including Europe and the Far East.

Further information about Caversham's history can be found on the local history page of the Caversham 100 Years On site at <http://www.caversham100yearson.org.uk>.

A booklet containing the material from exhibitions put on as part of the project sold out earlier this year, but a reprint is now under way and will be available this autumn. You can place an order at info@wordplayshop.co.uk. The full size exhibitions are still available for loan.

A Heritage Guide to Caversham Court Gardens, produced by the Friends and published by the Two Rivers Press, is also due for publication later this year. This will also be available from Wordplay in Prospect Street.



Visitors hear about the history of the area on Caversham Bridge

Click Here !

Computer advice by Francis Brown

Card just for Internet business

If your credit card is fraudulently used, the chances are that the transaction will be Internet related. Once detected, your card account will be frozen and it will take at least a week for a new card to arrive. It happened to me and it took nearly two weeks for the replacement to arrive.

I now have a separate credit card with a low limit and it is only used for Internet purchases. This has several advantages. In the event of an Internet incident, I can continue my life with a usable credit card. In addition, my exposure to fraud is limited.

Naturally I also take other Internet precautions, including keeping my Internet security suite and Windows up to date. I also promptly agree to updates from Java, Adobe Reader and Adobe Flash. In general, I don't open e-mails from strangers and I never open attachments or web links sent to me by a stranger.

My recommendation is to get a second credit card, make sure the credit limit is set low and use it just for Internet purchases. See www.fbrown.org for other useful tips.

Rosehill WI

In August president Margaret Pyle welcomed members and visitors to a summer tea and social time, with fund raising stalls and a cream tea. A week later we had our outing, a river cruise with a visit to Mapledurham House and mill, which proved to be a very pleasant afternoon learning about the history of both buildings.

In September we welcomed Simon Jones, a local auctioneer, who spoke about the overall function of an auctioneer and how it has changed from his early years as an apprentice to becoming a qualified auctioneer. Members brought in various items of interest which he spoke about and gave a valuation.

In October we had our harvest lunch followed by social time with a quiz. In November our speaker will be Bob Odell whose talk will be entitled *No Wine for the Major*.

Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month at 2.00 pm in St Barnabas Church Hall, Emmer Green. Visitors are very welcome.

Caversham Heights Society

The society's 39th season began in September with a talk by Caversham GP Dr Rod Smith on the current NHS reorganisation. NHS funding has escalated over recent years, albeit with substantial improvement in services, but such increases clearly cannot continue. In the present financial climate the NHS must aim to make efficiency savings of £20 billion by 2014. The present government's aim is to develop more efficient bottom-up organisations with GP-manager partnerships.

Hitherto, funding of local NHS services has been commissioned (i.e. purchased) by primary care trusts – the West Berkshire PCC in the case of Caversham. This commissioning has funded local hospitals, surgeries and other services. From April 2013 commissioning in West Berkshire will be by clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). GPs were given the right to choose group size and they opted for a smaller size to foster GP ownership; thus four federated local CCGs have been set up. In the case of Caversham, this is the North & West Reading CCG, covering 10 local practices; it will be chaired by Dr Smith himself. The other CCG's are Wokingham, Newbury and South Reading. In Oxfordshire nearly half of the GP practices had not wished to get involved with the changes and the size of the CCG is very large.

Dr Smith pointed out that the reforms were NOT as radical as the media has tried to make out. He showed how they were evolutionary rather than revolutionary; how New Labour had built upon the reforms brought in under Mrs Thatcher; and how Labour had introduced the idea of private hospitals doing some of the work of the NHS. The threat of privatisation was, therefore, a red herring. He argued that what all political parties had been working towards over many years was a greater role for medical practitioners in the management of different parts of the NHS.

Data for past expenditure have been collected in the Berkshire area in order to aid the search for economies. For example, in the past year the Wokingham area spent considerably over budget, while the South Reading area spent considerably less than budget – why the variation? Some GPs spent much more than others on X-rays; some surgeries spent more on tests than others; some spent more on prescriptions than others; some made

wider use of secondary care, such as hospital referrals, and so on. By working together over the past three years and with GPs challenging over such differences, costs have been brought down substantially and savings have been made, allowing for expenditure on other aspects of medicine.

Caversham Heights Townswomen's Guild

Following the popularity of a sponsored walk in August, Caversham Heights Townswomen's Guild have launched an ambling group (not a rambling group, that's a bit too ambitious). A nice walk and a chat, finishing at a hostelry or coffee shop is more our style.

We are always looking for ladies to join us, why not give us a try? Our next meeting is on Thursday November 17th at 7.30pm at St Andrews Church Hall, Albert Road. You will be very welcome. Peter Smith will be talking about The Royal Collection.

St Peter's Wives

The group's autumn visit was to Ewelme and the watercress beds. Watercress requires moving water, which was provided by local springs and widening of the stream in 1880. The watercress was grown for many years as an important winter vegetable. It was tended and harvested by hand then bundled and sent by cart to Watlington and then by train to Manchester, Birmingham and London. Commercial production ceased in 1988 due to contamination of the water course from road run off. Now the beds are cared for by dedicated volunteers. The informative and enjoyable visit was followed by an excellent meal at the local pub, The Shepherd's Hut.

The AGM will take place in November followed by members' memories. New members are welcome to meetings held in Church House at 7.30pm on the third Tuesday of each month.

Caversham & Chiltern Flower Club

The club is staying at home this year for its annual open evening. On Wednesday 14th November, at Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmoor Road, Linda Shackleton, a national demonstrator, will give a demonstration entitled *Christmas Magic* starting at 7.30pm. To allow time for seasonal refreshments and sales, doors will open at 6.30pm. Tickets, to include refreshments, cost £10 in advance, or £12 on the door. For further details contact Berna Macdonald on 947 7400 or Sara Steward on 947 3006.

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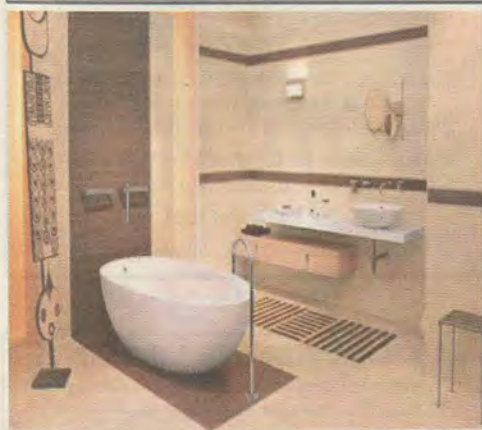
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Two choirs perform in historic setting



This striking photograph was taken when the Reading Male Voice Choir visited Louth in the Lincolnshire wolds this summer. They performed at a special concert with the Louth Male Voice Choir in the magnificent setting of the town's 15th century parish church of St James.

The church, built with money from the lucrative wool trade, has a steeple almost 300 feet tall – the highest of any Anglican church in the country. It also has the distinction of having a previous rector who, in the reign of Henry VIII, was hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn for his role in leading the Lincolnshire Rebellion against the dissolution of the monasteries.

The Reading choir, under musical director and founder Gwyn Arch, performs at ten or more concerts a year in the Reading area as well as further afield and abroad. The next concert is at Trinity Church, Lower Earley, on Saturday 17th November. It draws its members from all over the area including Caversham and Emmer Green. Like many other choirs it always has a need for new members, and there is no audition. If you are interested contact the secretary Jim Gufferty on 966 1315.

Caversham Allotment Association

The next meeting of the association is on Tuesday 13th November at Church House, Caversham (next to Waitrose). The event will be the annual Gardeners' Question Time so come along with your questions and ask the experts. The meeting is open to all and starts at 7.30. There will be refreshments and a raffle. Admission is free. Details from Carol Wheeler on 947 5802.

Reading Gardeners

The club has two meetings in November at which visitors are welcome. On 14th November *No Nettles Required* is a talk by Dr Ken Thompson, a plant ecologist, who will discuss ways of gardening to encourage wildlife.

On 28th November a talk entitled *Plant Hunting in Anatolia* will be given by Timothy Walker, a great favourite with Reading Gardeners. Timothy is the director of the University of Oxford botanic gardens.

Meetings begin at 7.30 in Caversham Primary School Hall. Please consult our website: readinggardenersclub.org.uk

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Something to celebrate



To most people, the Salvation Army is probably best known for its work with homeless people, soup runs and helping to trace lost relatives. Many are surprised to learn that the Salvation Army is, first and foremost, a Christian church and its main aim is to promote the name of Jesus Christ in the local community.

The Reading Central Salvation Army band has been a familiar sight in Reading for more than 125 years, presenting concerts in the Forbury Gardens, Broad Street and, more recently, at the Oracle shopping centre, both inside the mall and outside by the riverside.

As well as their usual Christmas carolling programme, the band will also feature in the 34th Carol Concert at the Hexagon, alongside massed choirs, the timbrel group and the children who will, as always, present the Christmas story in their own way. The audience will be able to take part by joining in singing some of their favourite carols.

The guest compère this year will be



Sangeeta Bhabra from ITV's Meridian News, who will bring her own style of presentation to this year's concert.

The concert will be at the Hexagon in Reading on Saturday 1st December and there will be two performances at 3pm and 7.30pm. Tickets costing £9 for an adult and £5 for children under 16 are available from the Hexagon box office - 0118 9606060, or online (a booking fee of £1.15 is payable).

All Saints' Day

All Saints' Day is a feast day celebrated on 1st November by Anglicans and Roman Catholics. It is also known as All Hallows' Day. The previous day (October 31st) is All Hallows' Eve (or, as we know it today, Hallowe'en).

All Saints' Day is an opportunity to remember all the saints and martyrs, known and unknown, throughout Christian history, particularly those who do not have a saint's day of their own. Many churches hold special services on this day, and for Catholics, it is a holy day of obligation, when they are required to attend mass. In some predominantly Catholic countries, it is a public holiday.

Remembering saints and martyrs and dedicating a specific day to them each year has been a Christian tradition since the 4th century AD, but it wasn't until

609AD that Pope Boniface IV decided to remember all martyrs. Originally 13th May was designated as the Feast of All Holy Martyrs. Later, in 837AD, Pope Gregory IV extended the festival to remember all the saints, changed its name to Feast of All Saints and changed the date to 1st November.

The following day, 2nd November, is known as All Souls' Day, when many churches commemorate the faithful departed. They remember and pray for the souls of people who are known within the church and who have recently died.

Many churches will hold a joint service to commemorate both these days, and may even hold this on the nearest Sunday, rather than on the day itself. This year the nearest Sunday is November 4th.

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ENVIRONMENT

Fly agaric to see off the bed-bugs

September has been a good month for fungi as far as I am concerned. I have just returned from a week in the forests of Latvia, looking for fungi, identifying, cooking and eating them, along with a few like-minded people, and an expert from the Museum of Natural History in Riga, the capital.

But you won't have to go as far as that to see the fly agaric. It can be found near Caversham, under birch or pine trees, and is pretty unmistakable – and poisonous.

Those white spots on the scarlet cap are fragments of a membrane which protects the fruiting-body of the fungus as it pushes up through the soil. Then this "universal veil" splits, leaving a kind of sheath at the base of the stem, and the spots on the cap. Then the membrane which has protected the gills beneath the cap splits, and its remains leave a ring round the stem near the top. Then the spores are shed from the gills, and can travel on air currents to land and form new colonies.



There has always been something a bit uncanny and sinister about fungi. They appear in some years, but not in others. They pop up very rapidly, apparently from nowhere and overnight. Their shapes, sizes and colours are many and various. And some of them are very poisonous to humans, though other creatures seem to eat them with impunity.

What we see above the ground is just the fruiting-body of the fungus – the business part is hidden away, breaking down dead and rotting matter, and sometimes working in conjunction with other plants in a mutually beneficial relationship. Many of the higher plants and trees cannot live without the association of a fungus. Then there are the micro-fungi which can be used to make bread rise, to turn sugar into alcohol, or to destroy bacteria. The more you study fungi, the more you begin to realise how vital they are to the rest of life on earth.

The name *fly agaric* was one of those "invented" names, a translation of *Agaricus muscarius*, the name given to it by the 18th-century Swedish botanist Linnaeus. But this most conspicuous of toadstools probably had many country names before this official one. In England it was known as fly-bane, because it was used for killing flies. Apparently, if you broke it into pieces, and put it in a dish with milk, or in a sugar solution, it would attract and then stupefy insects. There are also records of the fungus being rubbed on bedsteads to deter bed-bugs.

More notoriously, the fly agaric induced hallucinations in the people who ate it, and was said to have been used by Viking warriors before they went into battle. It was supposed to have been used by witches to induce the sensation of being able to fly through the air on broomsticks.

Tribes in the Kamchatka Peninsula in the far east of Russia used it in their magical rituals. In the United States, during the prohibition era, it was used as a substitute for alcohol, enabling people to feel drunk without having to break the law!

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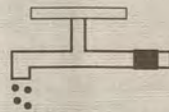
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