

Paint the town red (or green, silver or gold) for Christmas

by Helen Lambert

MANY people have been thinking of ways to sustain connections across Caversham and Emmer Green and keep up the wonderful community spirit. So, with an uncertain winter and Christmas ahead of us all, the Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA) would like to bring you a little cheer. We approached two local artists, Janina Maher and Liz Real, for help and received an enthusiastic response. Janina and Liz have each produced three black and white images of Caversham with a Christmas theme. All six images are available for free download from www.cadra.org.uk so please do share this widely. We hope that lots of people all across Caversham and Emmer Green will print copies to colour in and display in their windows. Then we can all send out a message and wish each other a very Happy Caversham Christmas!

You may like to know a bit more about the artists.

Both have featured in the Caversham Bridge *Creative Caversham* articles in recent months, which are available on the Caversham Bridge website at:

<https://cavershambridge.org:5154/archives/category/in-the-news>.

Janina Maher, featured in the August edition, is a local artist and bookbinder. She loves drawing urban scenes around Reading and further flung locations. She also runs bookbinding and printmaking workshops locally and online. You can see more of her work at <https://janinamaher.artweb.com/> or www.facebook.com/JaninaMaherArtist/.

Liz Real, who appeared in the last edition, has lived in Caversham for over 25 years and always finds fresh inspiration from her observations of the village and its environs. She is a long-standing participant in the Caversham Arts Trail and member of the Reading Guild of Artists. You can see more of her work at:

www.lizreal.co.uk or www.facebook.com/lizrealart/.

Happy colouring and Happy Christmas!



Scotts Pine Christmas Tree photo D Rylands

2020 HAUNTS US – BUT THERE'S BETTER TO COME

by Phil Chatfield

OUR SECOND lockdown was imposed shortly before writing this article. I'm sure we all hope it will be lifted in December to allow some celebration of the seasonal festivals. Planning for Christmas is difficult in these times, as we don't know if we will be able to meet with family and friends. Our churches will not be able to hold their usual carol services and the celebrations of the birth of Christ will be very different this year. Churches Together in Caversham, representing all the churches here, will be sending a card to every household and are encouraging us to come out of our houses on Christmas Eve to sing together at our

windows, doors and gates - see page 4.

CADRA is also encouraging us to share in some seasonal cheer – see this page for details. Many people have commented on the growth in a feeling of community in Emmer Green and Caversham over the summer. The Covid-19 safe Halloween Hunt, organised by local resident Caroline Foulkes, is a good example. She wanted people to be able to celebrate Halloween despite the restrictions. It certainly gave some people a chance to transform their front gardens – see photos on page 3.

Our local businesses again feature this month, with articles about The Caversham Emporium – page 6, and the Geo-Cafe – page 14, and a recipe from The Lebanese Village Restaurant – page 10. A second lockdown as they were recovering from the first, means

local shops and businesses continue to need our support.

Our area has many talented and creative residents, and in this edition we celebrate the work of Martin Andrews in our *Creative Caversham* article – page 12 and Joyce Connor in our *Community Connections* feature - page 11. On the same page we also welcome a new writer, Rachael Staines, with advice on taking care of ourselves.

I hope you enjoy reading our paper this month. The Caversham Bridge is a community newspaper, produced entirely by volunteers who write, photograph, edit and plan the paper for you. On behalf of our team, I wish you all a peaceful and joyful Christmas. Let's hope the news of an effective vaccine means we can be optimistic and look forward to a better year in 2021.

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No Christmas?

FOR SOME people 2020 may have seemed like a non-year. The year in which many things didn't happen. The year in which plans needed to be abandoned or radically changed.

And will it be a non-Christmas too? No family get-togethers? Certainly no major Carol Services and no Nativity Live. If the word 'No' should characterise Christmas 2020 it may remind us of another 'No'.

There was "no room at the inn".

For a couple facing a desperate life and death situation, learning that there was no room for them must have seemed like the last straw.

When members of the Windrush generation arrived in this country with high expectations of being welcomed by the mother country they had travelled to serve, responding to the British Government's request, many of them, in seeking accommodation read notices in windows that said 'No Blacks, No Irish, No Dogs'.

If it should be a 'No Christmas' this year we can at least recognise that it is for our protection rather than a sign of rejection.

How can we turn the negative into a positive?



Talking Point by David Jenkins

You'll read elsewhere in Caversham Bridge of how the Churches Together are intending to send everyone a Christmas card in which it is suggested that on Christmas Eve we all come out of our houses (or stay indoors), and sing together a Christmas carol in a similar way to how we clapped to support the NHS earlier in the year. It may also give us an opportunity to greet our neighbours at

Christmas. The carol is 'O little town of Bethlehem' which has the poignant line 'The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight'. The hopes and fears relating to 2021 may concentrate our minds.

That is one response to turning the negative into a positive, but how will we do that individually this year?

Perhaps with less of the activities going on which can often leave us exhausted by the time Christmas arrives, this year there may be more opportunity for reflection – if we choose to take it.

And maybe that has been one of the special things about 2020 that, instead of being a non-year, it's been a year when the pace of life may have altered, appreciation for our surroundings has deepened, creative gifts have emerged, and we may have re-assessed what really matters in life? Whether or not such reflection has been part of our year already, the opportunity could certainly be there this Christmas.

And maybe there are other creative ways of making Christmas special whatever the restrictions?.....

Revd. David Jenkins is a member of the Methodist Team Ministry and Co-Chair of Churches Together in Caversham

Local clergy and church services

ANGLICAN

Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham Ministry

St Peter, St Margaret, St John
Rev'd Mike Smith, The Rectory, 20 Church Rd
Caversham RG4 7AD

Tel: 947 9505 rector@ctmparish.org.uk

Rev'd John Dudley Tel: 947 0265

Rev'd Penny Cuthbert Tel: 07825 331 810

Rev'd Judith Ryder Tel: 947 3783

Rev'd Andy Storch Tel: 07365 555 905

Parish Office

Church House, 59 Church Street, Caversham RG4 8AX

Tuesday and Friday 9.30 to 14.00

Tel: 947 1703 e-mail secretary@ctmparish.org.uk

Current services

Sunday 09:30 – You Tube service - www.youtube.com/channel/UCYMgve_d64enHsm1FUfwntA

10:15 – Zoom service – <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84366839832?pwd=M2xJSUtFbGkycG1DbEFxQ1JGYWRsQT09>

11:15 – Zoom service - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82793512985>

Wednesday – 09:30 – Zoom morning Prayer - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/786384026>

St Andrew

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

Tel: 947 2788 www.standrewscaversham.org

Current services

Sunday – 18.00 - Service on the 'St Andrew's Caversham' YouTube channel

Tuesday – 20.00 - Compline service by Zoom. E-mail the vicar to join - vicar@standrewscaversham.org

St Barnabas Emmer Green

Rev'd Derek Chandler, 20 St Barnabas Road.

Tel: 947 8239. www.saintbarnabas.org.uk

Office

St Barnabas Centre, Emmer Green

Tuesday and Thursday 8.30 – 10.30

Tel: 947 6310

Current services

Sunday 09.30 - Morning Service on St. Barnabas Facebook & Website

Monday 14.00 - Busybees - for pre-school children and their carers on Youtube

Details on their web site - www.saintbarnabas.org.uk

CAVERSHAM PARK CHURCH (LEP)

(Anglican, Methodist, Baptist and URC)

Contact: Dr Alison Johnston

Tel: 0118 947 5152 www.cavershamparkchurch.com

Current services

Sunday – 11.00 – Livestreaming on YouTube

Details on their web site at: <https://cpvc.org.uk:5152/live-stream>

METHODIST CHURCH IN CAVERSHAM

Rev'd Martin Beukes, 72 Highmoor Rd.

Tel: 0118 947 2223 <https://cavhmc.org.uk>

Rev'd David Jenkins Tel: 0118 327 1592

Current services

Sunday – 10.30 – Zoom service

E-mail the Minister for details martin.beukes@methodist.org.uk

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor: Colin Baker

Church office Tel 0118 954 5353

Email: secretary@cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk

Current services

A link is placed on their website each week at:

www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk

and on their YouTube channel

www.youtube.com/user/CavershamBaptist

Live broadcast starts at 10.30am each Sunday

GRACE CHURCH

(formerly Caversham Hill Chapel)

Pastor Keith Saynor

Tel 9474529 www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk

Current services

See their web site for details: www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk

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Tel: 947 1787 www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk

Current services

See their web site for Father Patrick's weekly homilies and details of opening for services at:

www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk

St Michael Sonning Common

Fr Michael Sharkey, St Michaels, Sonning Common

Tel: 972 3418

At the time of writing, church services are affected by the pandemic restrictions, disrupting normal worship. However, church communities have adapted to the circumstances and are alive and active in new ways.

Some churches have re-opened in a limited way. Most have a range of on-line services, house groups and social meetings, using web based systems like YouTube and Zoom. For current information, see individual web sites for each church on this page or on the Churches Together in Caversham website: www.cavershamchurch.org.

The Caversham Bridge is a community newspaper produced by Caversham Christian News Ltd
Company details will be found on page 15

Future editions:

Contributions for the January 2021 issue should be submitted by 23 November and for the February edition by 4 January. These should be e-mailed to: editors@cavershambridge.org

Dates for advertising copy are 23 November for the January issue and 4 January for February. These should be e-mailed to advertising@cavershambridge.org

Paint the town red....



Halloween Trail Photos



Left: Halloween Hutch, Hemdean Road *photo P Chatfield*
Above: Skeleton Crew, Elmleigh Court *photo F Smith*
Right: Weird Weller Welcome *photo R Waddington*

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The annual subscription including delivery is £5.00. Alternatively copies of this paper can be purchased from: Caversham Emporium in Church Street and in Emmer Green at the True Food Community Co-Op in Grove Road, opposite St Barnabas church.

Looking forward to Advent

by Anna Clarke

ADVENT starts on 29 November; Advent is the beginning of the church year and is a season observed in many Christian churches as a time of expectant waiting and preparation both for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus at Christmas and the return of Jesus at the Second Coming. Advent calendars, with a window for each day of Advent, are part of the preparations for Christmas in many families. The calendar windows open to reveal an image, a poem, a portion of a story (such as the story of the Nativity of Jesus), or a small gift, such as a toy or chocolate item, and each window often has a Bible verse or a Christian prayer printed on it, which Christians incorporate as part of their daily Advent devotions.

This year, why not play the Advent Game - a bit like snakes and ladders, which you can download from the Caversham Bridge website at www.cavershambridge.org.



Comfort and Joy at Christmas

by Rev Andy Storch



"WHAT WILL happen at Christmas?" the churches wondered: what can we offer Caversham with all the Covid-19 constraints? Only a few, mostly online, services can be held. The Churches Together in Caversham hatched a plan

to put Christ not just back into Christmas, but into every home. We are producing a Christmas card which we are sending to **every house** in Caversham and Emmer Green (16,000 addresses in RG4). Firstly, it will wish people a Happy Christmas, comfort and joy at a time when both are sorely needed. Secondly, the card will tell the Christmas story in the words of the timeless carol "O Little Town of Bethlehem", printed inside. Thirdly, it invites us to return to our



doorsteps (as we did for the NHS clap) at 18:00 on Christmas Eve, to sing that carol together. For those staying indoors, or wanting accompaniment, a professional-level rendition of the carol will be released on our YouTube channel, premiered at the same time. Finally, on the back, the QR code linking you to the YouTube channel, and to the websites of **all** our Caversham Churches, where you can discover how else your local church is celebrating Christmas.

Bereavement Journey Course

by Nicki Wisdom

ARE YOU grieving the death of a loved one or struggling with the long-term effects of loss? A six-session online course will be starting on Thursday 14 January (19:30-21:30). Each session will have short film clips and time to discuss in a small group. Topics include: Attachment, separation and loss, difficult feelings, rites of passage, the impact and pain of bereavement, coping with others, coping with change, moving forward and an optional session on 'Questions of Faith'. This course is for anyone who has been bereaved at any time and in any way, providing a chance to feel less isolated by sharing the journey with others.

The Bereavement Journey course is being run by Caversham, Thameside and Mapledurham Parish and will be led by Nicki Wisdom and Penny Cuthbert, who both have personal experiences of bereavement. For more information or to book a place contact:

nicki@ctmparish.org.uk



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IT'S ALL HAPPENING



Plant Purple Wheels to beat Polio

by Eric Moyse

WE ARE IN the midst of a pandemic and about seventy years ago we were in a different one. This was polio (full name poliomyelitis), which mainly affects children rather than adults. It is a highly-transmittable virus causing permanent, partial or even total paralysis. The disease was unstoppable until the early 1950s, when US scientist Dr Jonas Salk produced the first vaccine.

In the UK and other western countries, vaccination soon proved to be effective and no cases have been reported since 1955. But across poor countries, the situation improved only slowly. Then in 1985 Rotarians in the US decided to campaign to end the scourge of polio throughout the world. They provided funds to help governments ensure as many children as possible could be vaccinated. Soon Rotary Clubs in other countries, including the UK, joined the endeavour. This produced spectacular results and the disease has been eliminated from all but two of the 125 countries in which it was raging during the middle of the last century. The help given was not just a matter of raising funds. Reading Rotary Club is one of the many which sent members overseas to help with vaccinating children.

Work continues in Afghanistan and Pakistan to finally rid the world of



Tim Metcalfe planting crocuses

this disease. Rotary International designated 24 October as World Polio Day, as funds are still needed to complete this work. Recently, Rotary Clubs have planted crocuses to publicise the ongoing need.

Why crocuses? The variety that is planted produces light purple flowers with a white stripe, reminiscent of the purple dye put on the little fingers of children when they receive their jab. This autumn, members of Reading Rotary Club, led by President Tim Metcalfe, planted a 'Rotary Wheel' of crocuses near to Christchurch Footbridge, and Reading Abbey Rotary Club did the same in Caversham Court. When the crocuses flower next February, they will present a beautiful reminder of the need finally to rid the world of polio.

To help Rotary International 'End Polio Now', please visit their website

www.rotarygbi.org/our-causes/end-polio-now and give generously!

Another new beginning



IN OUR April edition we included an article on the retirement of the Reverend Marion Pyke from ministry at St Peter's Church in Caversham.

We are please to report Marion married Mr Howard Roger Vaughan on 26 September. Marion and Roger plan to make travel an important part in their lives - hopefully! For the time being, a honeymoon on the Queen Mary travelling to New York and Niagara Falls was swapped for a few days in Cheltenham!

Adapting to Covid Times

FOR NEARLY 30 years, the Christmas Traidcraft sale of fairly traded gifts and charity cards we hold in our house in November has been a fixture in our calendar. With the

Covid-19 virus infection rates climbing, it seemed it would be impossible to hold a sale this year. But after some thought and a careful assessment of the risks, we decided we could go ahead if we did things very differently.

So we brought the sale forward by nearly four weeks and held it in a large marquee on our lawn. With help from a number of supporters, we ran the sale for six days rather than our normal two, and set up a booking system for shoppers. This enabled us to keep to a safe number of people at any one time, thus ensuring social distancing was possible. With hand sanitiser, a one-way system and face masks, it was a very different experience this year. Although we could not provide hospitality as we usually do, many regular and new customers appeared to enjoy the chance to make a safe start to their Christmas shopping. The following week we held a craft sale in the marquee, at the end of which we were able to donate £500 to Launchpad from customers generous donations, the sale of home made preserves and a proportion of the craft sale takings.

by Pam and Phil Chatfield

WHAT'S ON

THERE are a number of events planned for December in which we can take part. With the possibility of a lockdown being extended, it becomes more important than ever to check to see if events are running. Our on-line events diaries are updated regularly, so it is worth checking to see what has been added at cavershambridge.org/5154/local-info/whats-on. If you have an event planned, please send us details.

Mondays – Time 4 U pram push 10:00 – 11:30 Caversham Baptist Church. Term time only. www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk

Saturday 5 December – Christmas themed flower arranging workshop led by Irene Manson – Zoom Meeting from 10:00. Members free, visitors welcome for a fee of £2 in advance with meeting details to follow. Any questions please email **Caversham and Chiltern Flower Club Chair**, julie.druce@yahoo.co.uk

Sunday 6 December – Farmer's Market and Artisan Fair 10:00 – 15:00 Caversham precinct www.facebook.com/CAFMarket

Saturday 12 December – Green Christmas Tree Sale (provisional) 9:30 – 13:00 Caversham Court

Sunday 20 December – Farmer's Market and Artisan Fair 10:00 – 15:00 Caversham precinct www.facebook.com/CAFMarket

Thursday 24 December – Christmas Eve Carol at your gate 18:00 Join your neighbours in singing *O Little Town of Bethlehem* at you gate, from your window or in your garden

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The Story behind Caversham Emporium

by Jayne Lee

AS A toddler, my family moved from Teignmouth in Devon to Caversham. My father had just left the RAF and taken a job with Debenhams in Reading. Most of my family have now moved back, but I preferred the South East, so have remained.

I attended Micklands Primary and Chiltern Edge Secondary Schools. I wasn't the brightest of pupils and back then slow learners sat further back in the classroom. I was in the back row! I used to love the Green Shield Stamp shop in Caversham (where Superdrug is now), and the café that used to be in the Precinct which sold Penguin biscuits - a special treat!



Caversham Emporium

photo C Lee

After leaving school, I worked for Reading Social Services before changing direction to train as a midwife, which was always my true vocation. During my

training, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. As a single parent of two sons, I was unable to balance so many aspects in my life and the training had to take a back seat.

During this time, I joined the Samaritans as a Listener and became involved with the Outreach side, where I visited Reading and Huntercombe Prisons for youth offenders.

Most of the lads were there for theft or driving offences and many had fathers in prison. Sadly, their own paths seemed mapped out already. We let the boys offload and discuss any concerns they had, and also taught listening skills and suicide awareness, so they could support their fellow inmates.

Later I decided to retrain in a different field and joined the Ambulance Service. Here I delivered several babies - at home, in the shower, on the roadside, and in the back of the ambulance, so finally fulfilling my ambition, but in an unexpected way!

Whilst with the Ambulance Service, I started a stall at Henley Market twice a month, selling vintage and retro items - and absolutely loved it. I have always preferred items which have become rustic or distressed, as it shows character and a past. I then decided to take a massive leap and open a pop-up shop in St

I JUMPED SHIP

Martin's Precinct - initially for 6 months. When Suprema Dry Cleaners in Church Street closed down, I jumped ship and left the Ambulance Service and so Caversham Emporium began. This was a massive decision but, after years of the alarm waking me at 4:00 and working long shifts, I was ready for a change.

I miss so many aspects of the Ambulance Service, mainly the patient rapport and driving, and often want to jump in when an ambulance zooms past the shop! It's a career that stays close to your heart, and it has been an absolute privilege to be part of so many

people's lives at crucial times.

The Emporium, now into its third year, has become a social hub, visited and supported by many local residents and visitors from further afield. The essence of the shop is to offer a random shopping experience with the opportunity to buy handcrafted, upcycled, fair-trade, vintage and retro wares for the home and garden, plus gifts and cards. I have been extremely touched by the friendliness and support of so many people. There is now definitely an awareness of the need to support local independent businesses. I managed to keep afloat during lockdown by continually promoting on social media using Instagram and Facebook, delivering goods, and offering one-on-one viewings around the shop. Both my sons are creative, and we made several bars and vegetable planters, which were popular.

I hope by continually keeping fresh, changeable and full of randomness, with a new website just launched, the Caversham Emporium will be around for years to come!

To find out more, see:

www.cavershamemporium.co.uk

Caversham Through the Year



2021 Calendar

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Jayne with 'Reverse Santa'

photo C Lee

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Happy Wanderer remembers when...

Santa Claus Came to Reading

HERE'S A tinted photograph, probably from the 1920s, showing Santa on his way to his grotto in McIlroy's department store. The shop, which opened in 1903, was on the corner of Cheapside and what was then called Oxford Street – the last word in department stores at the time. Because the outside of the building was largely glass windows, it was nicknamed The Crystal Palace – or simply Mac's. The building is still there, though lacking many of its original embellishments.

The idea of giving presents in the middle of winter is a very old one, but how it was done has changed greatly over the centuries. In pagan times it was Woden who rode through

the sky on a horse with eight legs, dispensing gifts, and sometimes punishments. His name still appears, only slightly modified, in the name of the fourth day of the week.

In Christian times, the present-giver over much of continental Europe was St Nicholas, a fourth-century Bishop of Myra (in modern-day Turkey). He was remembered for giving unexpected gifts to people who were in dire need, and he once rescued three young sisters from being sold into prostitution by their poverty-stricken father. This he did by giving them each a bag of gold. So St Nicholas became the patron saint of children. His later impersonators dressed in red robes.

But in this country, from the fifteenth century, we had Father Christmas as the present-giver, stout, red-faced and jovial, usually dressed in green, and definitely not a bishop. Santa Claus became popular in the United States, brought with them by settlers from Europe, and gradually, our Father Christmas took on many of the attributes of Santa, and eventually his name as well.



Santa arrives at McIlroy's Department Store, 1920s

Christmas gifts were traditionally given on Boxing Day, 26 December, rather than on Christmas Day. This of course was the Feast of St Stephen, when Good King Wenceslas, according to the old song, did his good deed. And there was also a tradition of giving presents at New Year, especially by employers to their workers, which lasted just into the twentieth century.

I can't remember feeling particularly disillusioned to discover that in fact it was my father who tiptoed into our bedrooms late on Christmas Eve to leave the presents for me and my younger brother to find when we woke up. When I told my brother it was only Dad, he didn't believe

me, so I proved it to him by rigging up my 'Santa Trap'. I suppose I must have been quite a naughty little beggar in those days. This was nothing more than a piece of cord, with one end tied to the old-fashioned light-switch, and the other end tied to a drawing-pin driven into the floor, just inside the bedroom door. The cord lifted the linoleum just a little, so that anyone entering the room would have

to depress the lino, which would cause the light to go on. Father did not seem to see the joke!

Will Santa Claus be coming to your house this Christmas? Perhaps you'd better leave some hand sanitiser on your mantelpiece, beside the mince pies and sherry!

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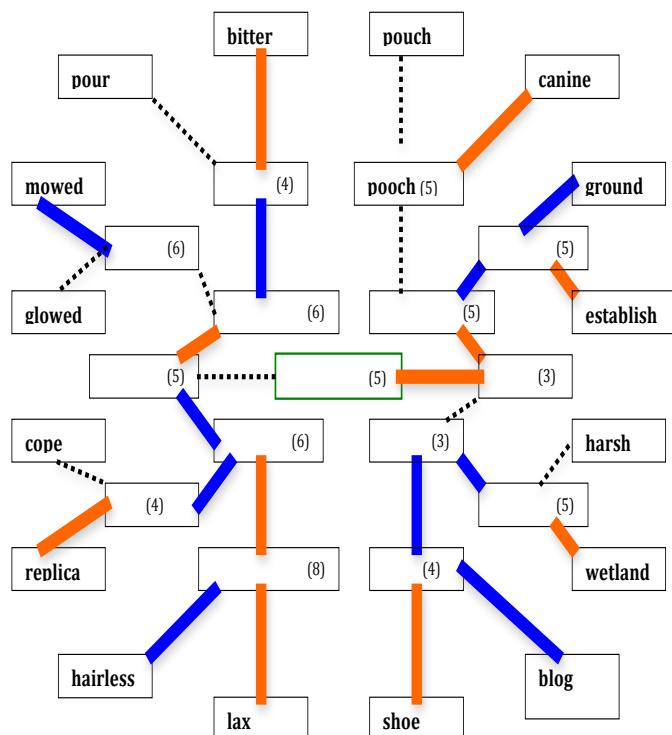
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Word puzzles

WORD PUZZLE by Erin

Find the word that has the same meaning as the clue; or rhymes with; or has one letter that is different. For example: *pooch* has 5 letters, has one letter change from *pouch* and means *canine*.

Rhyme —————
Letter change
Same meaning ————



Answers on page 15

The Season of Advent Wordsearch by C Moloney

W Y Z Q E E R F T E S E N H X
I R A N S O M K U Y C L O V E
N U F F N O I T A R A P E R P
D O C A L E N D A R E R E F G
O I P E N A N C E E E U T I N
W V F N D U J J N L X P A V I
S A M T S I R H C G C B L E T
T S I R H C F O G N I M O C I
C O U N T D O W N I T D C A A
L O N G E X P E C T E D O N W
F S Q J E N P O H S M D H D B
R Z G Q O E R Y L I E U C L I
C B B D A Y S T A R N D V E N
X I P C W R E A T H T I I S Y
L H E K E R C N C C D E F O K

CALENDAR
CHOCOLATE
CHRISTINGLE
CHRISTMAS
COMINGOFCHRIST
COUNTDOWN
DAYSTAR
EXCITEMENT
FIVECANDLES
FOURSUNDAYS
HOPE
JOY

LONGEXPECTED
LOVE
PEACE
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ENVIRONMENT

Robin - Hoodlum of the Bird Table

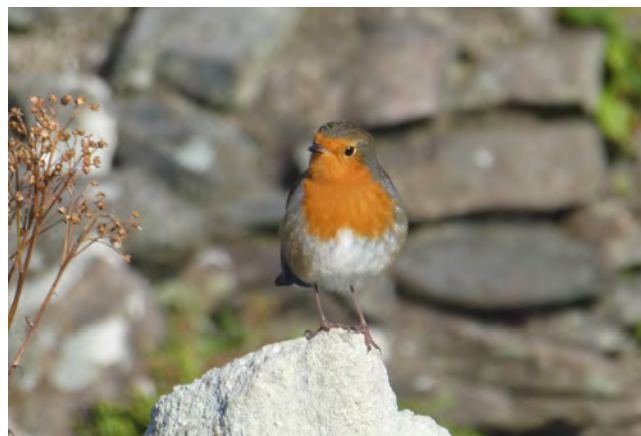
Wildlife by William Cecil

HE LOOKS so cheery and friendly on Christmas cards or perching on the handle of a garden fork while we take a breather on the allotment. There robin sits, wagging his tail and willing us to go on digging up more worms and insects for him to take home to his family.

But there is a darker side to robin redbreast. Male robins, particularly, are very aggressive in defence of their territory. The average life of a robin is from one to two years. About 40% of the fatalities are thought to be the result of territorial disputes. If a robin gets beyond two he can expect to live quite a few more years. The RSPB has recorded one robin reaching the grand old age of 11 years 5 months.

Despite the high mortality, robins keep up their numbers by having three families a season, which is why territory is so important.

My robin has a very clearly-defined kingdom. He goes



Robin on the alert

photo P Chatfield

from the climbing rose to the bird-feeder, to the birdbath, the garden bench, the corner of the roof and, finally, off to the hazel tree in the bottom hedge.

He will chase away tits of all varieties, finches, blackbirds and, especially, rival robins. They are so aggressive that robins have even been known to attack their own reflections in windows.

So how did this fighting hoodlum of a bird come to be so popular on cards at one of our main Christian festivals?

There is a legend that the robin got its red breast when it flew up to the blood-stained cross singing its song to comfort the dying Jesus in his last hours.

A more mundane explanation is that postmen in Victorian times wore scarlet jackets and were known to all as Robin Redbreasts.

The male robin is not all bad. To encourage its mate to start another family it practises what

is known as courtship feeding, bringing gifts of worms and insects. Rather like our practice of men bearing gifts of flowers and chocolates.

Buy a Green Christmas Tree

PLEASE join us for the annual sale of Scots Pine Christmas trees at Caversham Court on Saturday 12 December from 9:30-13:00. Because of the pandemic, this is a week later than usual, but please be patient and buy your trees from us.

These trees are the by-product of heathland management on the Camberley Special Protection Areas. Lowland heath is a rare habitat in Europe, and we are lucky enough to have most of it here in the UK. The trees hold their leaves, smell beautiful, but are a more open structure than the standard Norway Spruce. We'll also have holly, mistletoe, willow wreaths and stars, plus bundles of ornamental greenery.

The sale will be slightly different this year to comply with Covid restrictions. There will be a one-way system through the site with entrance through the main gates on Church Road, and a queue to enter on the pavement outside tailing back round to underneath the lime trees. There will be a track and trace system, a hand sanitiser station plus a 'Bouncer/Bounceress' controlling numbers going into the site! There's a subsidiary entrance for people coming down from the churchyard. Our volunteers will be wearing masks and gloves.

The trees will be in size order, with the other decorations available as priced bundles near the cash point. We've already washed and bagged change and stored £5 notes so you don't need to worry about that aspect of the morning.

The usual charities selling Christmas cards and gifts won't be setting up stalls, but have suffered from reduced income this year. Econet will share the monies raised from tree sales with these charities (BBOWT, RSPB, Reading Beekeepers and Traidcraft) and will also give money to two Reading charities doing sterling work in the time of Covid: the Reading Food Bank and Launchpad, a charity supporting the homeless.

There is no parking at Caversham Court unless you are using the disabled parking bays. Please park elsewhere, walk in to make your purchases, and then bring your car down to load afterwards. We'll have a crèche for storing trees and a person to help load and separate cars from pedestrians.

Of course, all may change if the current lockdown, which is due to end on 4 December, is extended. Please check on the Caversham Bridge website www.cavershambridge.org for the latest information at the end of November.



Harvesting the Scots Pines

photo J Oliver

Act to cut medicine waste

by Phil Chatfield



WASTED or unused medicine is a serious and growing problem for both the NHS and the environment. And it is something you can help tackle.

It is estimated that as much as £300 million is wasted every year in the UK on unused or partially used medication which cannot be recycled or re-used. A campaign called *Only Order What You Need*, working with the NHS, asks people to think carefully before ordering repeat prescriptions.

In addition to the cost of the medicines, they can cause pollution of our water resources and damage water treatment processes if not disposed of properly. Once medicines have left the pharmacy, they cannot be recycled or re-used by anyone else. Unopened, unused and out-of-date medicines can be returned to pharmacies for disposal. Never flush medicines down the toilet or put them in your domestic waste.

For more information, see *Only Order What You Need* at: www.medicinewaste.com/campaign

Big Bra Bank Bonus

OUR OCTOBER edition included an item by Sandy Chamberlin about the Against Breast Cancer Bra Bank. The charity collects bras which are no longer needed and recycles them, raising funds for their research. Sandy reports our readers have responded in a big way, with three recycling boxes filled already.

You need to contact the Bra Bank hosts to make an appointment to drop off donations:

Emmer Green – Tredegar Road, RG4 8QF

Tel: 0118 947 6767 / Mob: 07884 360313

E-mail tara@tarataylor.com

Caversham - Caversham Wharf, Waterman Place. Reading, RG1 8DS

Tel: 0118-3277-072

E-mail: Sandy@thebrafitter.co.uk

For more details see:

www.againstbreastcancer.org.uk/recycling/bra-recycling

Taking action on litter



Matt Rodda joins the volunteers

photo Rachel Barker

PLASTIC FREE CAVERSHAM is a group of local residents and businesses who have joined forces to drive Caversham to single-use plastic free status under the guidelines of Surfers Against Sewage. During the October half-term holiday the group organised a litter pick around the area. Members young and old, along with the local MP and Caversham resident Matt Rodda, and other volunteers collected 10 bags of rubbish from Christchurch Meadows on 25 October.

Those participating were asked to ensure they complied with Government Covid-19 guidance and to post photos of their efforts on the Group's Facebook Page,

www.facebook.com/plasticfreecaversham.

Several families have joined in, with two bags of rubbish collected at Gravel Hill and collections around Star Road and The Weller Centre. Friends Liz and Erica set off along Queen's Road and along the river, collecting over four bin bags worth of rubbish, with one full bag of recyclables. They commented, "Lovely to see some friendly faces along the way - we'll be doing it again."

by Phil Chatfield

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Christmas presents



by Les Cooper

ONE OF the better things about being a 'mature' garden enthusiast is that at Christmas time friends and family always have a notion of what to get you. They say, "He (or she) likes gardening, so let's get him (or her) something for the garden."

Only too willing to help out, the Garden Centres have been stocking up with goodies since October, sometimes with things that are actually for the garden alongside the plastic Father Christmases, chocolates and decorations.

The main problem is that unless you make some big cheeky hints, very few people know what you really need. And so maybe you should suggest some ideas of items that your friends or relations might buy. So here goes with my list.

First let's deal with the presents I definitely do not need. It's terribly un-Christmassy of me but:

I do not want holly or ivy or probably mistletoe. These have the urge to take over my garden, which would be too much after all the effort it has cost me in the past to get rid of them.

Another worry is those dwarf conifers that, once they have settled in, decide to become giants.

And please don't buy me a new-fangled garden tool that gleams with red paint but buckles the moment it touches real soil.

No - I would like a few nice plants such as alstroemerias...

Hang on a minute, because I hear a little voice in my head saying, "You once had a clump of alstroemeria that you dug up because they were taking over your garden." Yes, that's true - I had better cross that one off.

What about some gladiolus corms? "But why? Because with the mild winters we get now you already have them coming up everywhere."

Delphiniums then? "You've got plants waiting to be planted."

A tree or a shrub then, perhaps an acer or a berberis. "Will your friends know the ones you would like? There are so many different sorts."

Bulbs? Not really because surely most, like tulips and daffodils, should be in by now.

Fertilisers? I don't think they will know the ones I use and that they must be organic.

Garden gloves perhaps? No, because they will be too big or too small.

What's the answer then?

Umm? Perhaps after all I will ask for a plastic Father Christmas.



Santa for Les? photo F Smith

A winter treat from the Lebanon

by Naser Razin

WE ASKED a local restaurant, the Lebanese Village on Bridge Street, if they could come up with a recipe for us this month. The manager, Naser Razin, and his chef sent the following, which is one of their most popular dishes:

VEGETABLE MOUSSAKA (Vegetarian)



Serves 3-4

Ingredients:

- 2 Large Eggplants/Aubergines (about 2 lb in weight)
- 2 Sliced Sweet Red Peppers
- 2 Green Chillies (optional!)
- ¾ Cup Canned Boiled Chickpeas
- ½ Cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 Large Onion, diced
- 5 Cloves Garlic, minced

A pinch of Kosher Salt

Two Cups Tomatoes (fresh half-peeled in summer, otherwise canned)

1 Tablespoon Tomato Paste

1 Teaspoon Smoked Spanish Paprika

1 Teaspoon Ground Cayenne Pepper

1 Tablespoon Ground Cumin

1 - 2 Cups Water

Method:

1. Rinse your canned chickpeas under cold water.
2. Preheat your oven to 400°F (205°C). Cut your half-peeled eggplants into cubes about two inches square. Coat with half of the olive oil and roast in the oven until tender and browned (about 20-30 minutes). You can deep fry the eggplant if you prefer, but remove any excess oil.
3. In another heavy bottomed large pot, heat the remaining olive oil. Add the onion, sweet red peppers and the green chilli, if you prefer spicy, and a pinch of salt and sauté until translucent, about 15 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until the garlic is tender and fragrant.
4. Add the tomato, tomato paste, paprika, eggplant, drained chickpeas, cayenne pepper and cumin.
5. Bring to a simmer and cook until the flavours meld, about 20 minutes. Add additional water as necessary to maintain a moist, stew-like consistency.

Serve with rice or Lebanese flat bread

For more information on the Lebanese Kitchen Restaurant, see their website:

www.lebanesevillagereading.co.uk



Breathe deep

Wellbeing by Rachael Staines

IN THE current climate you'd be forgiven if, like many others, life feels just a little overwhelming right now. Acknowledging that life is '10% what happens to you, and 90% how you react to it' can be useful during the more challenging moments. The purpose of the following is to give you some hope and remind you that, whilst we can't always change our current situation, we can change our attitude towards it.

Much is talked about the importance of self-care, but how

many of us really understand what this means. Our approach to our wellbeing needs to be holistic; the body and mind are so intrinsically linked that there is no point in looking after one but not the other. Surely self-care must start with self-awareness, pausing every single day for long enough to check how we are really feeling in body and mind. Are we physically holding tension somewhere and, if so, why? A conscious pause for 10 minutes of undisturbed time to silence the unhelpful thoughts and let worries go. Focusing on the moment means we cannot stress about the future or ruminate on the past, try this simple exercise to help you to feel more grounded.

Look for 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things

you can feel, 2 things you can smell, and take 1 really deep breath, inhaling through your nose and then sighing it all out on the exhalation. (Or smelling the coffee and blowing out the candles!).

Simple adjustments can make a big impact, so check in with how you are feeling, reach out and let someone know if you are not OK and, above all, know that this time will pass.

Rachel is an Emmer Green based qualified Mindfulness Coach (through The UK College of Mindfulness). She specialises in Mindful Based Stress Reduction with children and teenagers struggling with anxiety. For more information on her work see her website www.thehushspace.com



Community Connections



by Caroline Gratrix

This month we get to know something about Caversham resident Joyce Connor



Joyce Connor photo B Palumbo

JOYCE is a multi award winning makeup artist, skin and cosmetic specialist. Through her work and continual studies into skincare and ingredients, Joyce has found some of the best skincare brands for all ages and skin conditions. In the last few years, she has developed a love of French pharmacy, Korean and Japanese skincare brands. She has studied their skincare routines and taken the best of each

to come up with tried and tested skincare routines for all skin concerns.

She has been published many times over the years for her work in fashion, the wedding industry, and her collaborations with many photographers, as well as for her top tips online and in print. She is also a regular guest on BBC Berkshire and Radio 5 live, and regularly writes for 'Living' magazines.

Joyce is a keen supporter of local charities, with her daughter Hayley, who has just won a Pride of Britain Award for Cianna's Smile, a charity which offers support and education to families affected by Sickle Cell Anaemia in the UK. Her granddaughter lives with the disease and the mother and daughter pair have run large events to raise money for the charity. Our big hearted neighbour also does makeovers for the Look Good Feel Better Cancer Charity.

Joyce, tell us a bit about yourself?

How long have you lived in Caversham?

I moved to Caversham in 1988, and have had a few different properties here. Caversham has changed a lot over the years.

What's your favourite thing about Caversham?

I love the community spirit of Caversham. It's like a village but you can get everything you need here. When we went into lockdown, the whole community came together to help neighbours who couldn't get out and about.

Caversham's best coffee shop?

Caversham Collective is my new favourite coffee shop. They have the best coffee and they are really lovely. You can do a bit of local craft shopping in there too, as well as having lunch and tasty cakes.

Where to eat in Caversham?

Alto Lounge has amazing Tapas. I love the homely atmosphere in there. Best fish and chips is Wings on Gosbrook Road. For good pub grub The Griffin is one of my favourite places. Oriental Express takeaway in Farnham Drive has amazing Chinese and Thai food.

Where to shop in Caversham?

Cara, Frangipani Home, Emporium, Terry's, Carousel, Dolly's Vintage, the hardware store, Griggs and Mackay, The Flower Shop and everywhere else.

If you could bring anything to Caversham, what would it be?

There's been talk of having a cinema back in Caversham - I'd love that. A little boutique cinema would be really popular. I'd also love to see more independent clothing shops in Caversham centre.



Examples of Joyce's makeup artistry

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Creative Caversham

Our Creative Caversham series continues this month with the work of local artist Martin Andrews. We reported on Martin's work in our September edition *Something new in lockdown*. This month, we take a closer look at his long and illustrious career.

Artistic eye bringing balm to soothe us



Martin in his studio

photo V Andrews

by Elestr Lee

IN UNDOUBTEDLY difficult times we have all needed to rethink old certainties and re-evaluate what is most important in our lives. For many of us, listening to birdsong and taking pleasure in watching the trees around us changing through the seasons has brought solace and pleasure that has, in part, helped us to cope with the turbulence of the past year.

Caversham artist and historian Martin Andrews sees parallels with the British public's extraordinary enthusiasm for Robert Gibbings - a former Reading University lecturer who constructed a punt during

World War 2, which he sailed down the Thames from Lechlade to London. Gibbings wrote up his observations in 'Sweet Thames Run Softly', illustrated by his wood engravings, and the book was a best-seller during the war. "During lockdown we have been reminded that we can slow down, appreciate the trees and our own local environment. We can take enjoyment in simple things," comments Martin, author of 'The Life and Work of Robert Gibbings'.

Martin himself is a retired Reading University Fine Arts lecturer from the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication, where he taught graphic design and printing history. Previously he was employed by Reading Museum as an exhibition designer - he also created the original Blake's Lock Museum. He remains busy on a variety of projects, but he has always been an active graphic and design artist. As well as creating his own prints (his studio has two presses!) he is also a potter, a sculptor and a painter.

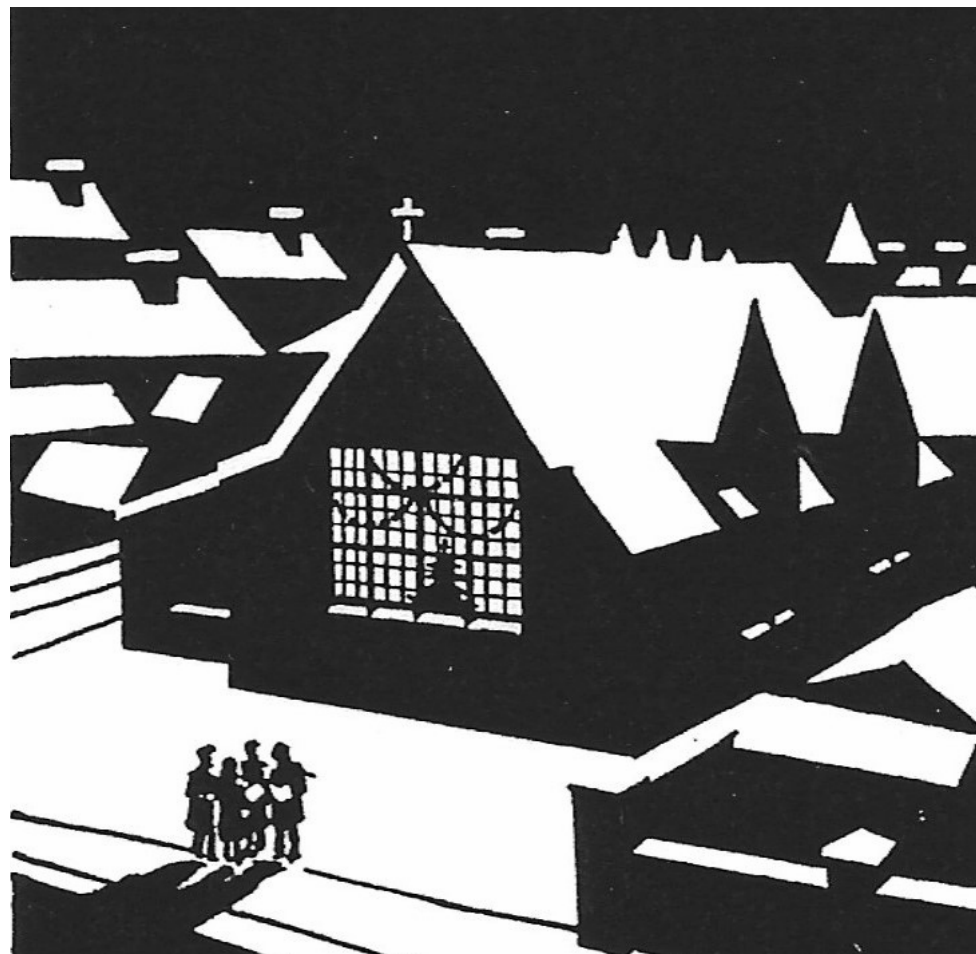
Taking a keen interest in local history, Martin worked with Mary Kift on 'Life in Old Caversham', published in 1980 and, more recently, has helped design the information boards about key moments in Caversham's history, displayed outside Caversham Library, and the board celebrating the life of William Marshal, on Caversham Bridge, in collaboration with Anke Ueberberg. He has a sharp eye for local architectural gems which, too often, are overlooked; for example the former Caversham Free Baptist Church in Gosbrook Road designed by Alfred Waterhouse. "It was artist John Piper - who designed the tapestries for Reading Town Hall - who described Reading as a 'much-maligned' town," says Martin, who loves to draw attention to the extraordinary man-made creations within our surroundings, as well as to the wonders of nature.

Martin himself was inspired during lockdown to produce a series of paintings of Caversham devoid of people. "I was queuing at Waitrose, and realised I was looking at all the shops in Church Street with no traffic, no people around. It would have been a bit embarrassing to set up my easel, so I took photographs and produced my set of paintings in my studio," he explains.

Being creative - however you can achieve this - has proved an important outlet for so many people during this time. Martin feels we can all benefit from any artistic expression. "If you can make things - anything at all, whether it is a painting, or baking some buns, it is incredibly cathartic," he says. "You can lose yourself from all the mental stresses and strains - you feel less



Eerily empty - Church Street in summer 2020



Martin's seasonal image of St Anne's School in the snow

confined. Any form of creativity is positive and, if you can make something yourself to give to others, this is always more meaningful than something you have bought. I am hoping that we have rediscovered some of the simpler values in our lives - and gained contentment from our creativity."



Martin also depicted the alley by St Anne's Church.



A narrow escape...conclusion

by Heather Baker

Last month we introduced local resident Heather Baker (née Hudson). Her story of experiences in the Second World War concludes this month.

'LANCASHIRE in October 1940 was so different from Eastleigh, Southampton, where our family lived in a modern three-bedroom house. Southampton was being heavily bombed, so three of us children were evacuated to stay with our grandparents and maiden aunts in Lancashire. In Great Harwood, where I was, there were long terraces of very tightly built stone houses. Each had a back yard and a lumber room, a coal hole and a deep wooden loo, flushed by running water from the scullery.

There were alleyways, or 'ginnels', just wide enough to take dustcarts and coal lorries, which ran down the back of most of the terraces where the washing lines would be put up. Roads were long and straight with all



My sister Gillian, mother and myself outside the asbestos bungalow, 1942 *photo restored by Henley Scan*

types of shops in people's front rooms, and you needed coupons for the things that were rationed. I remember the muffin man coming round the streets, taking a jug to collect milk delivered by pony and trap and the 'knocker-uppers', who would wake people very early in the morning to get off to the mills.

I went to a local authority school, where most basic subjects were taught, including cookery and housewifery - how to clean, how to make a bed and to use a Hoover. We were also taught needlework - my first frock was made from curtain fabric and sewn by hand. My grandmother took me to obtain a pair of clogs, with a wooden sole and green leather tooled straps to look like sandals, with brass studs. Most people wore clogs, which were very noisy but comfortable.

Leisure was Saturday pictures costing two (old) pennies to enter, and roller skating for five pennies. We played whist and dominoes at the local Conservative club, and often watched cricket - everyone seemed to



Girls Training Corps marching past Heelas, Reading, 1945. Heather indicated by arrow.

play. I joined the Girl Guides, attended Sunday School, and took part in Whit Sunday walks, when you dressed in white. I would often walk through open countryside to see my brother and sister three miles away, passing allotments as I neared Rishton, where pigs, goats, rabbits and chickens were kept, also racing pigeons in coops.

My mother and younger brother John came to join us from Southampton in 1941. We all moved to Reading in March 1942, where my father was living. He was helping to build Spitfires in Reading following the bombing of the factory in Eastleigh. Fifty semi-detached asbestos bungalows had been built for 'displaced families' as we were called, in Hartland Road, Whitley, opposite a German prisoner-of-war

KEPT RABBITS

camp. It was all a tremendous shock, everything was so different. We were told we could not speak to the Gestapo, but we could speak to the other occupants. We had a garden on three sides, kept rabbits, and bought day-old chicks to bring on to help with the food rations. I went to George Palmer Girls' School, and my one joy was the practical gardening lessons - we had gardens and a greenhouse and I grew gladioli and tomatoes.

My father became Captain of the local Rabson Rovers Cricket Club.

I left school at 14 with no qualifications, and applied for a post as a laboratory assistant in the Agricultural Bacteriology Department at Reading University. The work was five and a half days a week, from 8:30 to 5:00 during the week and from 8:30 to 12:30 on Saturdays, for £1 a week! I gave this to my mother, and she gave me two shillings and sixpence (12.5p) pocket money. I cycled to and from work twice a day, coming home for lunch, on a bicycle with no gears, which I bought on hire purchase.

The next year 1944, when I was 15, I volunteered to join the Girls Training Corps (GTC) where we learnt marching and other skills to help us to support the war effort. However shortly afterwards, the war was declared over! In May 1945, I took part in the Victory Parade in Broad Street, Reading to celebrate the end of the war in Europe and the end of six very eventful years for me!

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The Georgian Feast – Geo-Café

by Kathy McAleer

ZEZVA and Ketí Maglakelidze, plus daughter Alexandra, were already putting their stamp on the local food scene when they used to cook at the weekly street food market in Reading's town centre.

They started cooking street food in 2014, as Georgian Feast, doing festivals, markets and pop-ups, and introducing Georgian spices to the UK. After residencies at pubs and cafes in the area, and running successful cookery workshops, they came to Geo-Café at 10 Prospect Street in 2018.

Ketí has really brought a touch of Georgian and Caucasus friendliness and hospitality to Caversham. When running the café and restaurant she was always on hand to explain the dishes and herbs and spices, and bring extra samples to taste.

Geo-Café reacted very fast to the changing circumstances in March this year and were already looking at creative ways of running their business and serving the people of Caversham well before lockdown was announced.

They set up a fruit and veg stall and a grocery from the café premises, while continuing to offer takeaway drinks, cakes, pastries and savouries. If Ketí has time, legendary Georgian khachapuri cheesebread is on offer – once tasted never forgotten.



Zezva and Alexandra outside Geo-Café

photo Zezva and Ketí Maglakelidze

They started to provide a comprehensive fruit and veg box delivery service with add-ins, including sourdough bread, eggs, butter, cheese, milk, jam and honey. So supporting Geo-Café has also meant backing other local businesses. The list of new products has increased almost weekly, and their van has become a familiar sight around Caversham.

Rgbread is their new business venture and Ketí says they are in the process of setting it up as a Community Interest Company and expanding the artisan bakery

to include more local produce.

Christmas surprises are in hand and will include hampers.

Their Facebook page – Geo-Café - is a good way of keeping up with what is currently available and what is coming up, plus any changes to their opening times, which are normally 8:00am-5:00pm and 8:00am-7:00pm on Thursdays.

Orders for veg boxes and grocery products can be made via their website <https://rgbread.com/shop>



Georgian Feast street food in Reading photo Zezva and Ketí Maglakelidze

A Golden Age of Peace

Henry I and his Abbey



Lindsay Mullaney

OUR August edition included an article by Lindsay Mullaney about her book on Henry I. His 35 year reign was regarded as a golden age by contemporary chroniclers. He was also the town's most distinguished patron, founding Reading Abbey, where he was buried in 1136. The book, Henry I and his Abbey, has now been published and is available at a special introductory price of £18, when ordered from Lindsay. It will be available later (probably after Christmas) from bookshops at the full price of £25. To order at the reduced price, contact Lindsay directly, at:

ALMullaney@aol.com or by phone 0118 9470 478.

The book is richly illustrated and would make an ideal Christmas gift for present or past residents of Reading.

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Help disadvantaged children this Christmas...



by Anna Waite

READING Family Aid helps children in the Reading area living in poverty and with other disadvantages. For example, they may be young carers, or living in a family affected by drug taking, physical abuse, chronic illness or disability, or they may have a disability or illness themselves.

We normally distribute toys at Christmas to these children through our Annual Toys and Teens Appeal. In 2019, we delivered gifts to over 2,000 disadvantaged children from 895 families.

In the first three weeks of UK lockdown, it was estimated that a quarter of UK households lost either a substantial part or all of their earned income as a result of Covid-19. Devastatingly, this has plunged many Reading families into poverty. The charities we work with tell us how many families are struggling to cope right now and relying on food banks. We understand the struggles these families are facing, and every penny we raise will go towards putting a smile on a child's face and helping all these children to have a happier end to a difficult year.

This year, due to Covid-19, we're not able to run our appeal in the normal way. So we're asking our generous

supporters to donate money instead of gifts. This money will be used to buy presents which will be delivered directly to the charities helping the families we work with. Please visit our page:

www.gofundme.com/f/Reading-Family-Aid-Toys-and-Teens, to donate and share on your social media!

Our fundraising page will remain open until Friday 4 December, after which date the donations will be used to buy presents. Anything you can give, no matter how small, will make a difference to these children at Christmas.



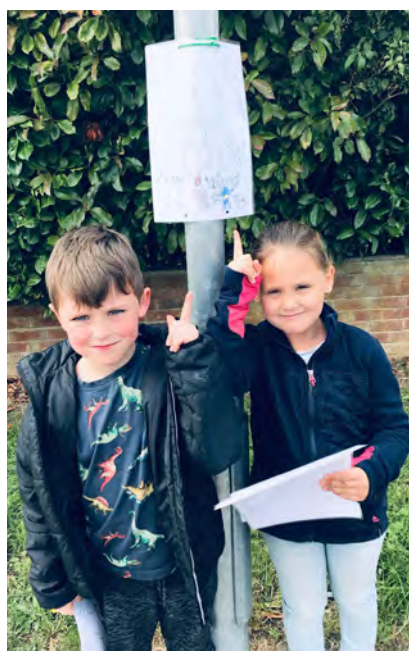
Toys and Teens appeal 2019

photo Reading Family aid

A helping Hand – Pride of Amersham Road

by Hazel Bingham

IN THIS edition, the Weller Centre wants to celebrate and share the selfless work done by two of our local residents. We so often see people around us upset and complaining about the attitude and behaviour of the young people who live in the area that the good tasks like this one get missed out. Recently Isla and Ollie spent their afternoon collecting bags of litter from across the Amersham Road Estate. There was no bribe from their parents, no reward, and no incentive other than these two young people want to be able to take pride in the area they are growing up in. The following day they put posters up across the estate to remind people 'Don't Litter Not Allowed'. We are proud that these two young people are the future of the estate.



Isla and Ollie with posters



Isla and Ollie at work!

photos proud mum Lisa

WORD PUZZLE ANSWERS:

(from left to right) sour, pooch, flowed, found, flower, hound, poppy, **puppy**, dog, sloppy, bog, copy, marsh, careless, clog

A community newspaper published by Caversham Christian News Ltd, Church House, Church Street, Caversham RG4 8AX

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