



Caversham Bridge

STEPPING OUT OF LOCKDOWN



Aiden's drawing (above) photo F Smith
Welcome Walk (right) photo F Smith



by Phil Chatfield

THE MONTH of April has a special significance this year. Not only will we be celebrating Easter early in the month, we are expecting to be able to move out of most of the pandemic Lockdown restrictions, with non-essential shops due to re-open 12 April. The last

year has been a difficult time for many. Even the most optimistic of us have felt the impact of 'Covid fatigue', and people I have talked to have spoken of a certain weariness in recent weeks. But the days are lengthening, the NHS is leading an amazing vaccination programme and pupils have returned to schools. Children were excited, parents relieved – no more home schooling – and some teachers apprehensive. How will our children respond now they are back at school after such a long, disruptive period? For some it may be a new class, school or teacher. At Micklands Primary, returning pupils and parents were met by a *Welcome Walk* of drawings by the children. Some churches are planning to reopen, but it is likely to be on a limited basis.

page incorporating a colourful logo designed by local artist and designer Martin Andrews and digitised for us by another Caversham resident, Anke Ueberberg. We have increased the size of the paper for this special edition, with an extra four pages.

You will still find our regular features and contributors inside. This month, our Talking Point, by Colin Baker, (*page 2*) reminds us of the hope found in the Easter Story. Happy Wanderer looks back at local bus services (*page 7*) and Les Cooper reflects on new life in the garden (*page 16*). William Cecil tells the tale of the slow worm (*page 8*) and our Creative Caversham feature takes a look at garden design (*page 14*).

As well as news from around Emmer Green and Caversham, we also have contributions from a variety of new writers, including book reviews from Alex Forbes (*page 6*) and Sarah Roy with her *Get Jamming* column (*page 15*). In our centre pages we recall the role of Mary Kift in recording our local history on the 100th anniversary of her birth (*page 10*). She was a regular contributor to this paper at a time when the masthead (as the title banner is known) below from the April 1991 edition was in use. The price was 15 pence for a 12 page black and white paper.

If you would like to send a contribution for consideration in a future issue or to comment on anything in the paper this month, contact us at editors@cavershambridge.org

... 'Think Local, Shop Local' ...

Those who have spent so long working from home may be concerned about returning to their normal work pattern, and it is likely many will continue to work from home for much of the time. Local businesses will need support from the community as they try to recover from the impact of the virus. The hospitality sector has been particularly hard hit. Even those who have managed to maintain a take-away operation have struggled. So now is the time to *Think Local, Shop Local* as much as possible.

The Caversham Bridge is also making a fresh start this month, with a new look to our front

Winter winners in Caversham and Emmer Green



Sign of the times photo James Tyson

In our fourth and final seasonal photographic competition, we asked for your winter images taken in and around our area. We were pleased to receive more than 20 entries depicting the wildlife, weather conditions and sunsets of winter. See page 12 for the results and our top choices.

Watch out for our new, themed, photographic competitions in the coming months.



INSIDE

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Mary Kift – p10-11



Caversham Coffee Exchange – p18



'YOUR TOO LATE IS NOT TOO LATE FOR ME'

IN JOHN 11, verse 25 of the New International Version of the Bible, Jesus told Martha, "... I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die."

Easter or Resurrection Sunday is a day of tremendous hope and victory for every person. On this day God says to us, 'Your too late is not too late for me.'

The Psalmist puts it like this – Psalm 30, verse 5 "Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."

The fact that Jesus rose again means for each of us that there is life after death. Some still choose to ignore that truth. But if that was the case then why, when a tragedy strikes in life, do we fight on? I believe it is because God has hard-wired the human spirit with the truth that 'too late is not too late for Him'.

You will have heard this phrase quoted somewhere by somebody (I cannot remember who said it first!) 'Good Friday represents the worst man could do.' I want to communicate to everyone who reads this that: 'Resurrection Sunday represents the best God can do!'

If in some area of your life you are facing a Good Friday situation – all appears lost, doomed and defeated – then Resurrection Sunday, Jesus rising again, is a message of hope, light and victory for you. It may feel like Friday, but Sunday is coming!

Jesus said in John 11, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, though they die... will live again." I want to let you know today that Jesus was not only talking about eternity and heaven; He was talking about life right here and now!

The context of this statement was to Martha, whose brother had



Talking Point by Rev'd Colin Baker

died. She had faith to believe that her brother would rise again on the Resurrection Day, in the future, but Jesus needed her to have faith to make Resurrection Day the day they were living in NOW. Jesus was not just giving her hope in regards to eternity for her brother, but for that situation right there and then.

What is the issue here? FAITH. Because Jesus did not answer the prayers like they thought He would or should. Faith is now lost.

Faith stands not on answered prayers but on announced Words. Jesus said – "I AM the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die... will live again."

Jesus may not have come through like we would like Him to, but He still is the I AM... Your family member may not have been healed, but Jesus is still I AM... The bill is overdue and God didn't come through with the finance, but Jesus is still I AM... The person is still getting on your nerves; God has not changed them but Jesus is still I AM.

Faith is the substance of hope, the evidence of the unseen (Hebrews 11, verses 1-6). The substance of the Christian life, the evidence of the Christian walk is faith. So much of how God wants us to live as believers is in the arena of hope and the field of the unseen. God wants us to believe that HE IS, not in what we see and have.

You may have lost your faith today. God did not come through like you wanted. Maybe it is because your prayer was based on what God could DO for you, rather than what God wants to BE to you. He says: "I AM the resurrection and the life." Believe that no matter what.

If you are struggling with faith today let me tell you it is not too late. God can save you. On Good Friday Jesus was crucified alongside a thief. Some would have said of that man, "It is too late for him!"

But as that thief hung alongside Jesus and with one of his final breaths he said, "Jesus remember me when you come into your Kingdom".

That thief expressed faith in the resurrection – that his too late was not too late for God. Jesus' response to him and us is: "today you will be with me in paradise".

Resurrection Sunday is our assurance that 'Our too late is not too late for God.'

Pastor Colin Baker
Caversham Baptist Church

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 Penny Cuthbert Tel: 07825 331 810
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

St Andrew's weekly service is at 10am on Sunday mornings and is a livestream on the St Andrew's YouTube channel. Details on the parish website. www.standrewscaversham.org/services
Tuesday – 20.00 - Compline service by Zoom. E-mail the vicar to join - vicar@standrewscaversham.org

St Barnabas Emmer Green

Rev Lionel Onugha
Rev'd Derek Chandler, 20 St Barnabas Road.
Tel: 947 8239. Email: vicar@saintbarnabas.org.uk
www.facebook.com/StBarnabasEmmerGreen
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)

(United Reformed Church, Methodist and Baptist)
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/livestream>

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

RIVERSIDE CHURCH (Reading)

www.riversidechurchreading.co.uk

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Rev'd H R Gayle
Tel: 946 3009 www.ntcreading.org.uk

ROMAN CATHOLIC

Our Lady and St Anne

Mgr Patrick Daly, The Presbytery, 2 South View Avenue.
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 are open in a limited way at present. 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

Future editions:

Contributions for the May 2021 issue should be submitted by 12 April and for the June edition by 10 May. These should be e-mailed to: editors@cavershambridge.org

Dates for advertising copy are 27 March for the May issue and 20 April for June. These should be e-mailed to advertising@cavershambridge.org

WHAT'S ON

THERE are a few events planned for April. Because we do not know how the lockdown rules will apply, it is important to check to see if they 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 details to

editors@cavershambridge.org

Caversham Library is open for booked appointments. Limited opening: 10:00-13:00 Tuesday, Friday and Saturday, 13:00 -16:00 Thursday

www.reading.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/libraries-reopening

Online throughout March – Art Gallery featuring Simone Bonnett – Caversham Picture Framer.

cavershampictureframer.co.uk/in-another-land-simone-bonnett

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

Sunday 4 April – Farmer's Market and Artisan Fair 10:00-15:00 Caversham precinct www.facebook.com/CAFMarket

Sunday 18 April – Farmer's Market and Artisan Fair 10:00-15:00 Caversham precinct www.facebook.com/CAFMarket

Advertising and the Caversham Bridge

OUR advertising revenue helps fuel the continuing existence of the Caversham Bridge and so is very important to us. We endeavour to provide a good range and selection of trades and services, such that they offer a first port of call for our readership and, in so doing, support our local business network.

Some of the responders to our survey enquired of our criteria for an advert's inclusion in the paper. Our aim for advertisers is that they should reflect the values of our community and family based paper, as well as providing essential services. The vast majority of our advertisers are based locally and we seek to find out as much relevant background information as possible to ensure suitability - how long have you been in business? Do you have local references that can be taken up by prospective customers? However, as with many publications, we do carry a disclaimer in terms of the endorsement of products or services offered.

We have been heartened that so many of our advertisers, some of whom have been with us for over 20 years, have continued with us during this difficult time for all types of business. Many fledgling businesses have had to postpone their advertising due to the pandemic, but are eager to start once restrictions lift. We look forward to this happening.

All our advertisers need our support as we emerge from the limitations imposed by Covid-19, so 'think local' and 'shop local'.

We are planning a four page advertising supplement for our June edition. As with our October supplement, the aim is to support local enterprises as we come out of lockdown. We are offering business-card size adverts at a special price of only £5. If you would like to take advantage of this opportunity to publicise your business, e-mail editors@cavershambridge.org before 20 April.

A Wright, Advertising Manager



2B.....or not 2B

WE QUESTION what is going on in these Caversham front gardens...

During the long months of lockdown, taking a stroll around the neighbourhood has turned into something of an eye-opener. Local citizens have been busy creating unexpected surprises of their own to delight passers-by, both young and old. The rainbow drawings which were displayed in so many windows last year, have faded. But the teddy bears can still be spotted in various guises – such as this entertaining topiary in Greystoke Road, or in the eye-catching tableau which features in Hemdean Road, alongside a garden photo gallery.

And what about those giant pencils in Blenheim Road? Why are they there? Why so big? Were they created to help all those children doing school projects at home, or are they poised to start filling in all those dates in the diary – when we are finally allowed to do so?

Answers on a postcard (giant sized) please...

E Lee



All photos F Smith

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Homecrafts and Fourbears
at the True Food Community Co-Op in Grove Road,
opposite St Barnabas church.

Here to care, listen and help – Reading Street Pastors



Following the recent fatal stabbings in Caversham, volunteers from Reading Street Pastors provided support to the local community. We wanted to know more about their work and who they are, so we spoke to Sally Leonard from the group to find out.

STREET pastors are trained volunteers from local churches who care about our community. The Reading group are part of a national team first pioneered in 2003, and Street Pastors continues to grow throughout the UK and across the world. Their aim is simply to 'Care, Listen and Help'.

They are usually on patrol in busy town centre areas from 22:30 to 03:00 on Friday and Saturday nights to care for, listen to, and help people who are out on the streets. They are led by a co-ordinator with support from local churches and community groups, working in partnership with the police, local council and other statutory agencies. Currently around six people from Caversham volunteer with the Reading Pastors. The majority of Pastors are lay people rather than ordained Ministers. They receive extensive training to enable them to undertake their work.

With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, the need for patrols changed dramatically. Reading Police asked for support in the outbreak, and the Pastors started patrolling Reading town centre during the daytime. Here they are supporting potentially vulnerable and lonely people who come to the town centre to escape their concerns and problems relating to isolation.

Following the tragic fatal stabbing in Emmer Green in January this year, the Street Pastors were asked by the police if they could patrol in the area. They worked around Bugs Bottom and Highdown School, engaging with young people

by Sally Leonard



in the community. Street Pastors were also able to support the officers at the crime scene by arranging with the local Church for hot meals to be cooked by local residents. They attended the church service arranged for the family a week after the incident, which was attended by between 300 and 400 people. Many conversations were had with young people and parents.

Within weeks there was another fatal stabbing in Caversham. The Street Pastors were called again and, although there was no Church close by, the Weller Centre was opened up to the Police and provided a hub for the community and those working with them. The Centre provided facilities and meals at lunchtime, with local Churches providing evening meals. Street pastors have been patrolling the area, engaging with the community and having wonderful conversations with people who are really wanting to talk.

Street pastors was originally started because of Christians concerned around knife and gun crime. Sadly it seems there is still a need for them here in Caversham, Emmer Green and Reading.

If you are interested in finding out more about their work, or are considering becoming a Street Pastor, please contact them. More information on their work and contact details will be found on their website: streetpastors.org/locations/reading They also have a Facebook page: www.facebook.com/streetpastorsreading



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photos Reading Street Pastors

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The Very Revd Canon Giles Goward RIP

by Julia Feeny,
Bereavement Support Co-ordinator,
Our Lady & St. Anne's



The Very Revd Canon Giles Goward
Born: 10 July 1965

THE PARISH community of Our Lady and St. Anne's was shocked and saddened at the news of the death of their former parish priest, Canon Giles Goward, who died peacefully on 28 January 2021 after a brief illness.

Canon Giles was appointed to St. Anne's in 2005. His straightforward faith, seasoned humanity and gentle and good-humoured shepherding endeared him to so many people, and he put them at ease with his personal lightness of outlook which was joyous and engaging.

He was closely involved in the work of St. Anne's School, supporting liturgical life with interest and care for the staff, pupils and their families which was much appreciated. He embraced the work and initiatives of the Reading Catholic Pastoral Area and supported the work of Churches Together in Caversham.

He had a finely developed sense of social justice and a deep commitment to the poor and marginalised, and will be particularly remembered by parishioners for his work with Fr. Barnabee and the street children of Mumbai.

His devoted pastoral service, academic and administrative talents, along with his personal integrity and uncompromising sincerity, brought him the role of Pastoral Director, Formation Tutor and Director for the Permanent Deacon Programme at St. Mary's College, Oscott in 2013 and then Rector of Oscott in June 2020; a significant role that involved him in supporting those studying for the priesthood.

Noted for his selfless ministry to the dying and their families, he himself was surrounded by the prayers of the seminarians of St. Mary's along with his closest friends in his final hours. He died in great peace and he will be remembered by all who were fortunate to know him with great affection and gratitude.

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The next step on the ladder

by Andy Turnstall

DESPITE a number of setbacks, work on the Reading Hydro scheme at Caversham Weir is making progress. A delay at the start of the project resulted in the civil engineering contractors starting work just as Storm Alex struck. The high river flows and some extra excavation caused a further four-week delay, meaning construction was increasingly vulnerable to high river flows over the winter period. The unusually high water level in January flooded the coffer dam where the concrete channels for the Archimedes Screws were being built, adding two more weeks delay.

Despite all of this, the civil engineering work was completed by 23 February



Volunteers at work on the fish pass

photo Reading Hydro

and the contractors were off the site by the end of the month. This means the removal of the diversion of the footpath around the contractor's compound until the arrival of the Screws from the Netherlands, which is likely to be in mid-April.

Whilst the contractors have been on site, a team of project volunteers have been building a fish ladder, which will enable fish and eels to by-pass the generating channels safely. Building the turbine house, with a decorative mural, and drilling under the Thames to deliver the power to the Lido site are the next steps of the project which may be completed in time for the arrival of the Archimedes Screws.

Beanpole Day

ECONET intends to run a Beanpole Day at Caversham Court this year, but the final date has yet to be set. It will either be Saturday 1 May or 22 May and you all know why it is a mystery at present! Please do wait to purchase your tomato plants, runner beans, plant supports, herbs, perennials and so much more from our amazing voluntary groups. Keep an eye out on the Caversham Bridge website 'What's On' page for May and the notice board at Caversham Court for the actual date.

Tricia Marcouse

Trees for Life

FOLLOWING extended consultations, Reading Borough Council has now published two new strategy documents, dealing with trees and biodiversity.

The Tree Strategy updates an existing 2009 document. It identifies the benefits of trees in our community, reviews tree cover in the town, and sets ambitious targets to increase the number of trees in Reading by 2030.

The Biodiversity Strategy outlines the existing rich biodiversity in the town and the threats it faces. The plan aims to ensure that by 2030 Reading will be richer in wildlife, will be better connected to the wider landscape, and that

IT'S ALL HAPPENING

biodiversity loss will have been reversed.

Both strategies are available on the Council's website at:

www.reading.gov.uk/news/securing-more-tree-planting-and-biodiversity-in-reading

Building our community

Planning update from Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA), bringing you a summary of planning and transport matters affecting the RG4 area

CADRA and many others objected to the vivid blue lights atop the huge development on the former **BMW site** in Vastern Road, so the developers, Lochaillort, have switched them off.

Across the river, the refused application on the **Drews site** has gone to appeal; the key issues being the retention of the historic buildings and the proposed height.

The environmental impact of proposals at **Blewgarth**, The Warren, is causing concern and attracting a lot of objections to the proposal to demolish the boathouse and build a new one and a leisure building. The plans can be viewed on the Council's planning site using application number 201876.

A decision on new homes at **Reading Golf Club** seems imminent (application 210018) and has attracted many objections, including CADRA's, which refers to the impact of significantly more homes than are allocated in the Local Plan, as well as traffic impacts and criticisms of the layout. The full objection is on CADRA's website.

An application for a big extension of **87 Balmore Drive** (231230) is causing local disquiet, not least because of its impact on this harmonious and well preserved area. Here and elsewhere, it would be a good idea for residents of such areas to prepare a brief analysis of the history and architecture which makes their area special, to help them when responding to threats to their character.

A lot of concern continues about the enlarging of paintball activity in **Chazey Wood**, cutting off a popular walking area for Caversham residents. CADRA has written to the owners, the Mapledurham Estate, setting out these worries and asking for access to be allowed, especially at bluebell time.

A regular update on live planning issues can be found from the home page of CADRA's website www.cadra.org.uk

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Kites in the Arbour

CAVERSHAM artist Liz Real, who was featured in the November issue of Caversham Bridge, will be reopening *Arts in the Arbour*, a mini pop-up art gallery in her front garden on 12 April. As before, she will be selling her original artwork (collages, paintings, prints and mixed-media), plus a new series of greetings cards which will feature, among other things, the Red Kites of Caversham. 50% of the proceeds from the cards will go directly to Launchpad Reading.

Arts in the Arbour will be open on the first Wednesday of each month or otherwise by appointment. Full social distancing will be in place.

To find out more or to make an appointment, visit Liz's website: www.lizreal.co.uk
email: lizreal1@icloud.com
phone 0790 9766733. F Smith



For your bookshelf....

Treading her own path

by Alex Forbes

Welcome to 'Fourbears Reviews', where we review a couple of chosen titles from our bookshop 'Fourbears Books' on Prospect Street.



THE ADULT book this month is *Circe*, by Madeline Miller, published by Bloomsbury Publishing. If you aren't a fan of Greek Mythology, then this book probably isn't for you. If you are, hopefully you'll love it. *Circe* is one of the lesser-known goddesses, daughter of Helios, and she

was banished to live on an island in solitude, forever. This book is her story fantastically written by Miller, with appearances from some of my favourite Greek gods. It's a mesmerising tale filled with rivalry, family, love and loss: a great story of a woman treading her own path in a man's world.

As we are hopefully near the end of lockdown, we can't underestimate the impact that events of the last year may have had on ourselves and our children. In the shop we have a shelf dedicated to books for children where they can read about situations that may be new to them (eg moving home) or books that may help them to understand their feelings. *The Worrysaurus* by Rachel Bright and Chris Chatterton is a great story that does just that. It's about Worrysaurus and the great day out he has planned until he starts to worry about what may go wrong with his day. Spoiler alert – more importantly, Worrysaurus then manages to deal with these fears and anxieties, and still manages to enjoy the day out. If you know of a child who worries about things, this may be a great book to show them they aren't alone, and also how to deal with the butterflies they feel in their tummies.

We'd love to know what you think of the books we recommend, so do come and say hello to us in the shop when we can reopen on Monday 12 April.

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Wildlife

by William Cecil

Tale of a tail

The slow worm can think fast when it has to



THE BIG black monster is usually the first to appear. Today he trotted up the path but failed to make his morning welcoming meow. Understandably. His mouth was stuffed with a feathery white bundle. He hurried on to do what a cat has to do.

Puss No. 2 is a newcomer to the block, a very pretty cream colour with brown shoulder flashes. It paused at the patio window then went into attack mode, haunches up, tail swishing, and a quick pounce at something out of sight below the window sill. Then it brought out what appeared to be a worm.

This was too much. If I want to watch murder I restrict it to the occasional Scandinavian crime

film on evening TV. So I opened the window and shooed puss away.

The worm was still moving so I removed it to the shelter of a nearby rosemary shrub. But on closer observation it was not an ordinary worm. It was a silvery greyish-brown with a firm dry skin. It was a slow worm. In fact it was the tail of a slow worm. They look like snakes, but are actually lizards. They have this very handy trick of being able to shed their tail to escape a predatory puss.

There is nothing they like better than finding a nice, warm sheltered compost heap to set up home. From there they set out to hunt for spiders and other insects.

Male slow worms are brown and can have a blue-spotted back. Females are darker with a stripe along the spine and their young are gold with a dark stripe.

In the mating season males become aggressive, grabbing the female, often biting the head or neck. Not our idea of 'necking'!

They can grow up to 40 cms long and look forward to a happy old age if they avoid those murderous cats. Some live to 30 and one slow worm kept in captivity in Denmark finally died at the remarkable age of 54.

Slow worms are also known as blind worms because of their small eyes, or as the deaf adder, despite it being completely harmless to you or me.

So I am glad my slow worm escaped - Scot free, if not tail free, from its adventure.

The slow worm can think fast when it really has to.

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Knit-picking Kites

Following my piece about kites in the March issue we received a letter complaining that putting out scraps of wool for them was wrong. In fact I said that putting out scraps was controversial and simply reported what my friend was doing. For advice on helping birds by providing nesting materials, visit the RSPB website at: www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/natures-home-magazine/birds-and-wildlife-articles/features/home-sweet-home



Pollution preventers growing for the future

by H Ilingworth

HEMDEAN House School in Caversham has over 160 years of history in the heart of Caversham and is now carving a legacy for the future. Forest School lessons are popular amongst our pupils. They apply their curriculum knowledge and investigative and problem-solving skills to understand the impact of their behaviour on the environment, whether in school or outside in the fields, woods or garden. Regular surveys initiate ideas for creating a more biodiverse landscape. This has enabled them to achieve a Woodland Trust Platinum Award and the RSPB Wild Challenge Gold Award.

All of our children, spearheaded by our Eco Committee, *The Pollution Preventers*, have undertaken projects to



Planting saplings in the woods

avoid single-use plastics. In a 'glitter amnesty', we set our plastic glitter stock into resin to create Christmas decorations, avoiding sending it to landfill. Future plans include using fabric bags for storage and using plastic bottles as planters and ultimately to build a greenhouse. The School has been proud to participate in the *Plastic Free Caversham* initiative organised by *Caversham Traders*, developing an action plan for dealing with plastic in the environment.

In the natural environs, the children's knowledge grows as they develop a wild flower garden for pollinators and use our vegetable crops in cookery lessons to learn about the impact of air miles on the world. The children have also benefited from a parent sharing their knowledge of the power of wild plants and supporting the children in creating a herb garden containing both cultivated and naturally growing herbs.

Our pupils have embraced the need for a sustainability plan to protect and nurture their woodlands. Consequently they have planted saplings to support regrowth and avoid erosion in the woods, fenced the area by weaving a willow fence, and created and maintained a pond which has been naturally populated with frogs and newts. Scattering wild flower seed bombs and bluebell bulbs is all part of their long term regeneration of the woods. The children have declared a separate area of woodland as a 'conservation area', and have been working on clearing the site of rubbish and creating homes for nature, as well as a bird hide.

As the school now works towards its Green Flag Award, the children can be sure they are creating a well-cared for sustainable landscape for years to come.

Photos provided by the school and used with permission.



Forest school class



Wellie planters!!



Fast fashion – second-hand solutions

THE MARCH edition of the Geographical Magazine included a startling item about the environmental impact of our clothes. It seems the average annual weight of the clothes we each buy in the UK is 26.7kg compared with 16.7kg in Germany and 14.5kg in Italy. Most of this clothing ends up in landfill or is incinerated. In the UK only 15% of our textile waste is collected separately for recycling,

and less than 1% is recycled for clothing use.

Charity shops offer one option for diverting clothing from the waste bin. But with their enforced closure for much of the last year, it is possible clothes which might have been taken to them for reuse and sale have either been stored or binned. Charity shops are currently due to reopen in April, with a requirement for donations to be quarantined for

three days. This means their capacity to sort and price clothing is likely to be much reduced. If you do have clothing (or any other items) to donate, contact the shop first to arrange a time when you can deliver. Please be patient if they can't accept your donation immediately and store the clothing for a little longer. In the meantime, why not take a look around at their stock – you may spot a bargain! *Phil Chatfield*

Thanks for booking out

I WAS SO pleased to be able to collect a book from our library in March. It's lovely to see the library open. To keep us all safe, books can be reserved and a time arranged to collect them in the doorway. Not quite the normal working conditions for the librarians, especially through the winter!



So a big thank you to Reading Library and to the team at the Caversham branch for helping us with reading material through these difficult times.

Photo and text Pam Chatfield

Invite wildlife into your garden

by Tricia Marcouse

THE advice for inviting more wildlife into your garden is fairly simple: put in a pond, plant a range of flowering plants to give nectar and pollen throughout the year, make a pile of dead wood, and change the mowing patterns for your lawn to create a meadow. There is lots of information on how to do all this online, including the Wildlife Trusts or the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) with a list of suitable garden plants on:

www.rhs.org.uk/science/pdf/conservation-and-biodiversity/wildlife/plants-for-pollinators-garden-plants.pdf

All this will be good for some wildlife and beautiful to look at, but please consider doing a little research to change your garden from a feeding station into a home for a wider variety of wildlife. This year is the perfect time to start.

Whilst we are still staying at home for longer and wandering around the neighbourhood, try to identify what species visit your garden, the neighbourhood gardens and local open spaces. Then work out what additional help they need to fulfil their life cycle in your space. All creatures require food, breeding opportunities and shelter for bad weather (cold, wet or heatwave).

Dedicated organisations for every type of invertebrate, amphibian, bird, etc provide huge amounts of advice on best practice to support biodiversity. Find them online yourself or go to Readingcan.org.uk for a lengthy list of printed and online identification materials.

Still can't identify it yourself? Take a photo and send in to [ispot www.ispotnature.org](http://www.ispotnature.org) where experts will give you an opinion. There's lots of advice on identification on the site as well.

Then make the necessary changes and invite the butterfly, bee or wren that usually flies over your garden, or comes in for a quick snack, to make a home there.

Can you spot any of these in the garden this April?

photos by Rob Stallard, RDNHS



The hairy-footed flower bee (*Anthophora plumipes*) is often seen on primrose, comfrey and lungwort in spring (Feb-June). It is seeking soft mortar or an exposed soil bank to make a shallow nest.



Bee-flies (*Bombyliidae*), with very long proboscises, gather nectar from primroses and grape hyacinths in spring. Their larvae eat the young of wasps and bees in the nest; if you have a bee-fly then social insects aren't far away.



Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria*) butterflies like dappled shade and need an uncut patch of grass to lay the eggs and allow the caterpillars to feed and pupae to develop.



Wrens, (*troglodytes troglodytes*) build their nests at least 1.5m off the ground in hedgerows or bird boxes or window boxes, but usually close to a good source of insects and available water. If you hear wrens in March, it will be the male declaring his territory. Consider planting some open structured shrubs and climbers such as summer jasmine, hebe and honeysuckle that wrens can hop through and collect insects.



Orange-tip butterfly (*Anthocharis cardamines*) emerges at the beginning of April and lays single orange eggs on Honesty, Dame's Violet and Garlic Mustard. Encourage Garlic Mustard to grow behind herbaceous perennials and the raggedy leaves and seedheads will be hidden by other plants whilst the butterfly completes its cycle.



Peacock butterflies (*Aglais io*) are unmistakable with their colourful eye pattern on the wings. From beneath, they look completely black. They overwinter in garden sheds and similar spots, mate in April, and lay eggs on the underside of nettle leaves in late April/early May. The black larvae munch through the nettles and then move off elsewhere to pupate.

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Who was Mary Kift?

FOR MANY years, the Caversham Bridge newspaper printed articles on the history of our community signed off with the simple initials MK. These initials concealed the identity of local resident Mary Kift, who would have celebrated her 100th birthday this month. Of course many readers will have known her name, but did they appreciate the achievements of this remarkable woman?



by Helen Lambert

richness of Caversham's past with its own individual character and sense of place, separated by the river from the urban conurbation of Reading. Mary had an air of a school mistress in her tweeds, but was also immensely warm and jolly – tea at her home in Darrel Road was always good fun. Her brother shared the house and kept a glorious Rolls Royce in the garage."

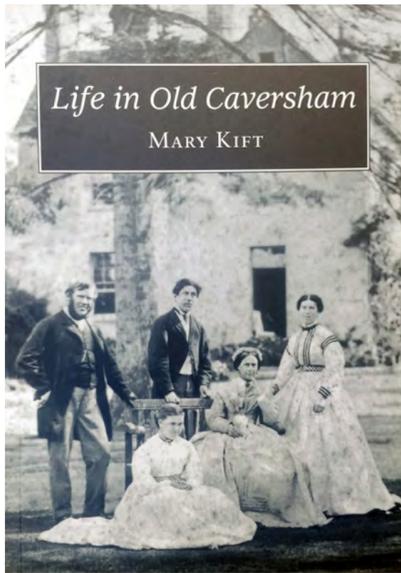
Mary's notes on the back of the exhibition poster recorded just how successful the exhibition was. Entitled *Life in Old Caversham*, it was mounted in the meeting room at Church House. More than four thousand people visited over four days, and Mary kept it open for a special day for school children, where she was in her element passing on her knowledge.

Mary had written many local history articles for the Caversham Bridge, and it was suggested she should bring all her articles together in a book. Martin knew printers and typesetters in Reading, and Mary agreed to finance the book herself. Her text was typeset as long 'galley's', laid out on the floor of Martin and Verity's bedroom, where they were cut into pages and pasted by hand onto camera-ready artwork. Mary would come down the hill to proofread and discuss the illustrations.

In 1980, *Life in Old Caversham* was printed and immediately sold well, coinciding with the opening of the first Caversham Bookshop. In 2004, a revised edition was published, re-designed by students in the Typography Department at the University, as

Perhaps best known for her book *Life in Old Caversham*, Mary Kift was passionate and extraordinarily knowledgeable about local history. To mark what would have been her 100th birthday in April, this piece – the first of two – draws on accounts from her friends Martin and Verity Andrews and John and Lindsay Mullaney, to explain how the book came to be written.

Martin writes: "My wife Verity and I had been living in Caversham for just over a year. I was an assistant designer at the Museum of Reading when, in 1978, a group of local residents asked for help in mounting an exhibition on the history of Caversham as part of St. Peter's Festival. Together with the archaeologist Susan Read, who also lived in Caversham, we soon became part of a team headed by Mary Kift bringing the past life of our community alive through prints, photographs and artefacts. Mary did all the research and wrote the text, and her warmth, enthusiasm and love of history soon inspired us. We all came to realise the



a collaboration with John and Lindsay Mullaney of the bookshop.

John writes: "Mary was so full of life and enthusiasm; you couldn't help but be swept up by her passion for the past. Not just a writer and researcher, she was an astute businessperson and nobody's fool. Every month, as her book sold steadily, I would go round to her house, pay her the money due, have a cup of tea and find myself being given a horticultural and botanical tour of her magnificent garden at Darell Road. She was the third generation in that house, just along from Toots Farm. Not only was she a first-rate historian, but also an enthusiastic and expert gardener".

Mary could tell the age of a hedge and spot orchids among wildflowers, naming almost all of them. Her love of nature and history came together in caring for the Gazebo in Caversham Court Gardens, which risked collapse before it was saved by a grant many years later. She donated the proceeds from her book to its maintenance.



Mary (right) at the Exhibition photo M Andrews

Mary Kift was one of Caversham's great characters, known and loved by many. She worked with friends on detailed research; she collected stories from older residents, as well as a mass of photographs which are now held at the Berkshire Record Office. Her great legacy provides a wonderful base for successive generations to explore their rich local heritage. For those interested to build on her excellent foundation, you will find a list of different resources at www.cadra.org.uk/en/Local-History

For those who have not read it, *Life in Old Caversham* is available, price £10, from Fourbears Bookshop or The Caversham Emporium.

In preparing this article, the authors discovered a wealth of information about Mary's earlier life, in particular her time in the Land Army. This fascinating background to her more well known public persona is the subject of a further article, which will be published in our May edition.



Inside the Exhibition photo M Andrews

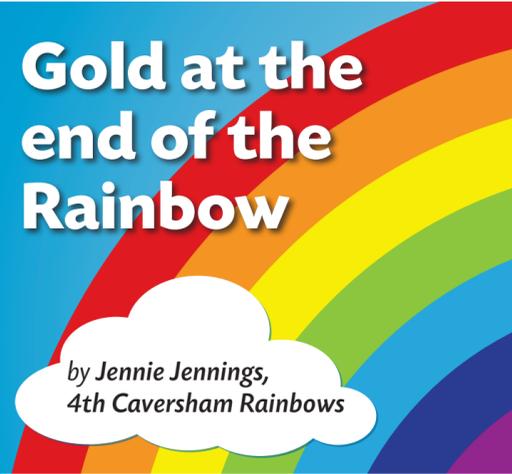


photo Amy Ward

YOUNG girls across Caversham have been earning their Rainbows badges despite meetings being cancelled due to lockdown.

The youngest section of Girlguiding UK has been continuing all of its normal adventures virtually, with five to seven-year-olds making their own tap shoes, becoming recycling warriors and inventing machines via Zoom.

Like everything else, Rainbows meetings had to stop last March when the UK was placed under national lockdown. But leaders in Caversham were keen to continue giving the girls the life skills and experiences Girlguiding provides.

District Commissioner Kathleen Moore, who runs 1st Caversham Rainbows, said: "The highlight of lockdown was that we did a virtual sleepover with Rainbows which we would

never have done, also including all the family members.

I remember some saying in the first lockdown that Rainbows was the only constant normal thing.

Making dens in gardens, cooking up s'mores¹, holding experiments and lots of laughter are a definite positive."

Florence Ward, who has now moved onto virtual Brownies sessions, was the first of several Rainbows to receive her Gold award during lockdown, collecting enough interest badges to receive the top accolade.

The District Commissioners paid her a special socially-distanced visit to present her with a badge and certificate, and to listen to her make her promise.

Florence said: "When I arrived at Rainbows

I wasn't very confident and didn't think I'd get many badges but I had an amazing time, even through lockdown.

I made lots of friends, and it was nice to show the new girls on Zoom what Rainbows was all about. I really missed it when I left but am very proud that I got my Gold award!"

Florence's mum, Amy, added that virtual Rainbows and Brownies sessions are great for her daughter for social interaction while she isn't seeing her school friends.

Find out more about Rainbows and how to take part at: www.girlguiding.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-volunteer.

1. Editors note. A s'more is a campfire treat made from one or more toasted marshmallows and a layer of chocolate placed between two pieces of biscuit or cracker.



2011 Exhibition on Caversham Village for Caversham 100 Years On project was dedicated to Mary Kift

photo courtesy of Reading Post

COMMUNI-TREE by F Smith

A COMMUNITY project in Chiltern Road is growing on local residents. The road is about a kilometre long, with wide grass verges but no trees. Chris Lobina, who lives there, found he had time on his hands as lockdown started last March, so he investigated the possibility of planting trees along the verges.

What started with a Facebook posting turned into a community effort to improve the appearance of the road. The group had extensive support from Reading Tree Wardens Network (RTWN)¹ who work in partnership with Reading Borough Council and the Tree Council. RTWN helped them navigate through the necessary agreements with the Borough. The residents raised over £2,000 to fund the trees, which was supplemented by an allocation of nine trees from the Tree Wardens, part of a gift of 100 trees from Japan². With the help of volunteers from RTWN, a total of 25 trees have now been planted.

Most are Swedish Whitebeam, although those from the Japanese gift are ornamental flowering cherries. Residents who agreed to have a tree outside their house are expected to water them during the growing season for the first two years. All being well, there will be a further round of planting later this year.



Volunteer tree wardens at work

photo C Lobina

1. www.readingtreewardens.org.uk - www.facebook.com/ReadingTreeWardens
2. <https://japanuksakura.org/>

Winter winners in Caversham and Emmer Green

by The Editors

AS WITH each of our competitions over the last year, the judges found it difficult to decide which photograph was the overall winner of our Winter Competition. There were plenty of entries showing Caversham and Emmer Green in the snow and the wildlife found in the area, particularly close to the Thames.

However, the *Sign of the times* entry from James Tyson, printed on the front page was our final choice. We thought it provided an excellent contrast between the colourful Caversham sign, the library and the snow falling all around it.

On this page we show some of the other entries which we particularly liked, along with the comments made by the photographers and judges. Working clockwise from the top left:

In the blizzard - a beautifully shot, Narnian style, which captures winter in the woods. Olwen Badziak, who took this picture wrote, "It was wonderful to get winter snow photos for the competition! Winter means snow for me. Caversham was transformed and there were dramatic sunsets from my favourite viewpoint in Balmore Park. I have really good memories of this lockdown winter - so much beauty all around us!"

Egyptian Geese - Anna Stevens photographed these cold looking birds doing their best to stay warm in Caversham Court on 9 February. Native to Africa, south of the

Sahara and the Nile Valley, they were considered sacred by the Ancient Egyptians, and appeared in much of their artwork. Because of their popularity as an ornamental bird, escapees are common and they are now a frequent sight by the Thames.

Flooded Christchurch Meadows – Another entry from James Tyson which the judges rated highly, it was taken on 4 February during the widespread flooding and just before the cold weather arrived, freezing the water.

Kidmore Road trees in the snow – Tony Rose, who sent this entry in, wrote, "It was taken in Kidmore Road on our day of snow 23 January 2021 at 11:37. Only at this time of year can the structure of these fine trees be appreciated."

Coot silhouette at sunset - taken at Caversham Court on Saturday 6 February. Sarah Horwood, who submitted this entry wrote, "It was taken during one of my many walks which have become essential to get me through lockdown. Being out in the fresh air and being able to watch the birds and take photographs along the way has been a saving grace to me after working from home for nearly a year and not being able to see friends and family, just like so many other people."

Over the next year we plan to run themed photographic competitions, each introduced and judged by a locally based professional photographer. Mark O'Neill, award winning night time photographer – who featured in our Caversham Connections article in November – will initiate the series with an introduction to night time photography in the May edition.





Write to the editors



Stick to the path

WE'VE HAD some bad weather lately, first the total saturation of all rural land on the outskirts of Reading, then flooding followed by frost, snow and bitter wind.

But in these times more than ever we need access to the countryside for fresh air and exercise, and for families to get out of the house for a while – to get beyond their four walls.

However, I'm concerned to see the damage this is doing, particularly in fields with crops growing. Footpaths, which should be less than a metre wide, are now 2-3 metres wide. The widespread quagmires caused by heavy rain have led people to sidestep the mud and tread down crops on ever-widening paths.

For good reason, this will anger farmers as they, like the rest of us, struggle through this pandemic. It is likely to mean that they and other land-owners will be less willing to welcome walkers onto their land, when we hope finally to be more free to roam during the summer months.

We can all understand why people, old and young, need to get outdoors, but I plead with you all to observe the country code – stay ON the footpath, and only on signed footpaths or bridleways, use a map, and wear good boots or wellies when it's very wet – they don't mind the mud.

Letter and photo Bet Tickner



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First Impressions Matter

Following a conversation with one of our regular advertisers, Laura Harmsworth, we asked her if she would write a short, regular feature for the Caversham Bridge with tips for anyone who is completing a CV or applying for a job. Over the months we hope these will help school leavers, graduates and those of any age who are seeking a fresh start as we move beyond lockdown. This month Laura introduces herself and her new feature.



by Laura Harmsworth

MY NAME is Laura and I live in Emmer Green with my husband, three teenage daughters, and our crazy Cavapoo dog, Molly. We've lived in RG4 since 1999 and love its sense of community.

When we moved here, I started work in Human Resources (HR) for a telecoms company in Maidenhead and stayed there until we started our family. I supported the business with recruitment, HR issues and redundancies.

After a four-year career break, I returned to work part-time, working from home in graduate recruitment, which I continued with until 2018. During this time, I realised I had seen thousands of CVs and that many people could do with support in selling themselves. My business, *Caversham CV Writing*, was born out of this experience in 2012. Since then, I've helped hundreds of people with their CVs, cover letters, and *LinkedIn* profiles. I support people across the country (thanks to *Zoom!*), at all stages of their careers, in multiple industries, and at all levels.

I love what I do. I enjoy speaking with people, learning about their roles and what they've achieved, and seeing them grow in confidence throughout the process – either in themselves or in their CV, or both. I get immense satisfaction and joy from hearing that clients have got interviews and, ultimately, a job. I feel privileged to share these positive moments.

Over the coming months, I'll be sharing my tips with you, such as the type of CV you should use, what to include and exclude, how to identify and showcase your skills, covering letters, using online resources like *LinkedIn* and how to beat the screening software!

You can follow Laura on:
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FLOWER POWER – Lockdown's silver lining

Outdoor spaces have taken on a new importance in the past year. This month *Elestr Lee* meets *Alison Galer* of Florence Gardening, whose expertise enhances gardens all around our neighbourhood.

HEALING has been a part of Alison Galer's life for many decades now. For 24 years she worked as a nurse, including a stint at the RBH, and looked after kidney transplant patients in the area. Then came her decision to retrain as a professional gardener. Nowadays, she is healing the mental scars the past year has brought, by providing her design ideas to renovate and revitalise the gardens which for so many of us have provided comfort and respite during such turbulent times.

"One positive of the past year is that people who used to commute to work have had to stay at home. They could be in their own gardens where they had more time to observe their environment. When lockdown first started last Spring, everything was just starting to grow – people were looking for things to do, and it was available on their very own doorstep," Alison recalls.

"We are so fortunate where we are, with places such as Balmore Park and Bugs Bottom to explore. Many of us are also extremely lucky to have decent-sized

gardens. For our mental well-being, having a garden is so good for us," she adds.

Alison's garden design business is named after her keen gardening nan, Florence – as well as paying tribute to the founder of nursing, Florence Nightingale. "Gardening was always there, a hobby, but then I wanted to do something more creative. I went to night classes to study for the RHS diploma, and then did an apprenticeship with the Women's Farm and Garden Association. I set up Florence Gardening, initially to do garden maintenance. Then I took my design diploma, and now I train up apprentices and, with my team of gardeners, we look after around 40 gardens."

Having lived in Caversham for around 13 years, Alison has certainly made her mark on both front and rear gardens in the area – front gardens being of particular interest to Alison. "Many people overlook their front gardens. But it's what you come home to – I am interested in countries such as Holland where they see their front gardens as sociable spaces. Front



Alison (right) with the Florence Gardening team

gardens may need to be functional, but there is no reason why they shouldn't also be beautiful. And I think lockdown has encouraged people here to take more pride in their front gardens!"



Alison creates her designs in collaboration with her clients, using both the exterior and interior of their homes as a starting point. She takes inspiration from architecture, historic gardens, and trends in interior design and fashion, and feels that ideas for designing a garden can come from so many sources. She is enthused by the great Dutch gardeners, Mien Ruys and Piet Oudolf, founders of the New Perennial movement; and creating strong architectural structure through her planting is at the heart of Alison's approach.

"It is so easy to get hooked looking at pretty flowers in the garden centre. But first you need structure, and then you can add layers," she advises. Plants she recommends for structure include *Nandina domestica* or *Fatsia japonica*.

Passionate about design, Alison got in

touch with the Caversham Arts Trail a few years back and offered her back garden as a venue for local artists. "I thought it would be an opportunity for artists to showcase their work in my space, and also to showcase my own work," she explained. She began taking part in the Arts Trail in 2018, and looks forward to it returning. Alison has been very busy during lockdown (gardening design and maintenance has continued apace), but she has also made time to set up occasional plant sales in her own front garden – keep an eye on her social media pages for details. And she is not averse to a spot of 'guerilla gardening' - as testified by her horticultural makeover of the disused telephone box on the corner of Albert Road (outside Beechwood Grove), which has certainly attracted local attention.

However Alison is no stranger to accolades and, in 2016, was thrilled to receive both a Gold Medal and the People's Choice Award at RHS Tatton Park, for her garden design *The Waiting List*. And now Spring has arrived, whether we are garden owners or onlookers enjoying a 'lockdown stroll' - we can all benefit from enjoying the sights and smells of nature reawakening on our doorsteps.

Find out more:

www.florencegardening.co.uk

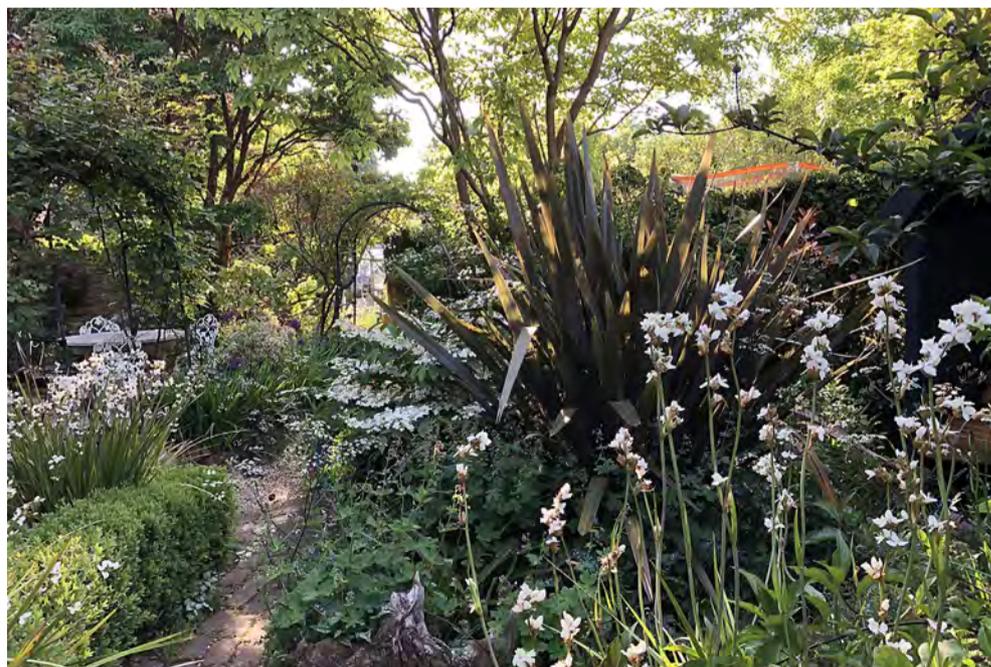
Alison's design & show garden photo:
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Alison's design (above right) and planting (above) won the RHS Gold Medal, as well as the People's Choice Award, at the RHS Flower Show, Tatton Park, in 2016



Once the Arts Trail returns, Alison is keen to open up her own garden again



Get Jamming

with **Sarah Roy – The Jam Lady**

Back in February, Sarah Roy was the subject of our Caversham Connections feature. We spoke to Sarah and asked if she would share some of the joys of jam making with our readers. She agreed to write a regular feature for the Caversham Bridge. This month she provides an introduction for future articles.



Tools of the trade

photo S Roy

SPRING HAS arrived at last! I get so excited as I look around my garden to see the sprouts on the berry bushes, leaves and buds on the apple trees, and beautiful new leaves and stalks appearing in my rhubarb patch, pushing up from the ground.

This is the time of year I start preserve planning, deciding on the flavours and combinations I will be making from local fruit I either grow, get donated, or forage the hedgerows for. I've been making jam for almost five years now, and the excitement for Spring is still there! My mum taught me how to make jam when I was a youngster. We'd pick our fruit from the garden or the local hedgerows, then back to the kitchen to get cooking. In the coming months I would love to teach you too, by sharing my recipes, and showing you just how easy making jam really is.

A Useful Extra

Basically you will need a large, heavy based saucepan with capacity of at least 4 litres, a silicon spatula or a wooden spoon, a ladle, and some glass jars with tight fitting lids. A jam funnel would be a useful extra but is not essential to the process.

In my eyes (and my tummy!) nothing beats the taste of homemade jam. Look at the label on a jar of supermarket jam and see all the additives that just aren't necessary in the home preserving process. You know exactly what you are eating and sometimes there are as little as just two ingredients that you need. Your family and friends will be so happy that you have learnt this new skill - I am actually providing a public service! See you next month for the first of my recipes. Let's get jamming!

A Distant Hum

by **Robin Thomas**

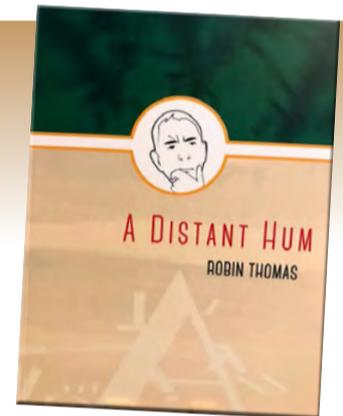
DO YOU like poetry? I have a new collection out: *A Distant Hum*, from Cinnamon Press.

People often ask how I got into poetry. Although I went for the science stream at school and had a career as a chemical engineer, my interest in literature, which began at school, remained strong. Indeed I studied for a degree in English in my spare time.

On retirement, I was able to step up my interest. I completed an MA in creative writing in 2012 and since then I've been writing poetry almost every day, collecting acceptances (and rejections of course) in magazines and anthologies, and having three books published, including the new one.

A Fury of Yellow was published by Eyewear in 2016; *Momentary Turmoil* by Cinnamon followed in 2018. All three books are on sale (Lockdown permitting) in Fourbears bookshop in Prospect Street. Look out too for a launching event in Fourbears, hopefully in April (there will be a formal publisher's launch on 29 April on Zoom).

I like to write about art, music, family life, recent history, and more, in fact anything that catches my fancy. Here's one of the poems from *A Distant Hum*:



Trains

*What have we done to deserve trains:
their hereness and gone-ness,
their doors open to let people off and on
and closedness, their swish of greeting,
roar of farewell, their sheer presence, at least
the grand, important ones that go
to places like Truro and Lostwithiel?*

*When a train stands throbbing with easy purpose
in an Edward Thomas country station
like Castle Cary set in an unpeopled valley
demonstrating the law of perspectives,
twice if you stand in the middle,
there's a frisson, a connectedness.*

*Then clouds of blue-grey diesel
where it isn't any more
and birds settling back into trees.*



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THE FLOWER TO SPUR YOU ON



by Les Cooper

IT WAS a February morning and I was not in the best of moods. Things seemed rather depressing; months of lockdown, Captain Tom had just died, and there had been enough rain to float Noah's Ark. I sloped out into the garden and

reluctantly went down to my greenhouse to remove the fleece I use to protect my cuttings. Then I looked around and saw there was life. All around new green growth was appearing. With me it had to be delphinium seedlings sown in the autumn of that dreadful 2020 year. They were now showing bright shoots, the promise of things to come.

Isn't that why we garden?

But I digress. April is here and we should really be thinking about all the jobs we should be doing now. The trouble is the list is frightening and I suspect you don't want me lecturing you on what to accomplish.

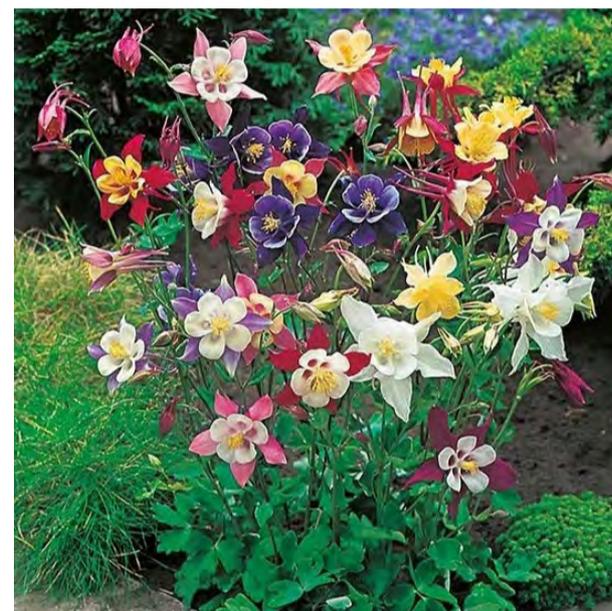
So let's relax and enjoy ourselves - for me, one of the pleasures is sowing flower seeds. What is better than sowing a pinch of tiny seed and watching it develop into beautiful flowers? And surely what we want is something not too difficult to grow and which we can see bloom this year.

One flower I really delight in is Aquilegia and now is not a bad time to sow the seed. So in a moment of knowledge seeking I looked in one of my books and found there were 100 different species. I knew there were a few diverse kinds but I had no idea there were so many. Quite a number of these are termed alpine species and I will leave them for the Alpine growers to play with. The one most of us know is *Aquilegia vulgaris* (it would be, wouldn't it) and it is what I think an Aquilegia should be, with its range of colour and long spurs. There are a number to choose from and I have tried one or two. For example 'McKana

hybrids' where I thought the florets too big and cumbersome, 'Nora Barlow' with double pink flowers (yuk) and, even worse, 'Black Barlow' double purple (yuk yuk) flowers.

No, I am going for ones called 'Old fashioned granny's bonnets', described as 'a jolly mixture of the cottage garden favourite'. I will sow them in a pot of seed compost and, if my memory is correct, they will germinate in three weeks. Then I will pot them on and with a lot of luck I might see flowers later in the year. Aquilegias are termed as a perennial, but I find them to be quite 'variable', with many giving up the ghost after a year and others seemingly happy to pop up for a few years. My book calls them 'short-lived perennials', surely a contradiction in terms but quite right.

Anyway, let's see what happens. Surely one of the joys of gardening is just wondering what you are going to get next.



April recipe - Grandad's favourite

by George Grubb

We asked a number of people if they could provide a family favourite recipe. George offered this slight twist on an old standard which is his father's favourite.

Grandad's Cottage Pie

I WOULD often cook this for my Mum and Dad when visiting them. Mum had a steady stream of nurses and carers calling on her and they always remarked on the appetising smell from the kitchen. The following ingredients will make four to five substantial individual pies or two medium sized pies suitable for 2-3 people.

Ingredients:

- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1.25kg beef mince (use a meat-free mince or Vegemince for a vegetarian alternative)
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 3 carrots, chopped
- 3 tbsp plain flour
- 2 tbsp tomato purée
- 1 large glass red wine (optional)
- 850ml beef stock
- 4 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- A few sprigs of thyme
- 2 bay leaves

For the mash:

- 1 kg potatoes, chopped
- 500g swede, chopped

225ml milk

25g butter

200g crumbled Lancashire cheese

Method

1. Heat 1 tbsp olive oil in a large saucepan and fry the beef mince until browned - you may need to do this in batches. Set it aside as it browns.
2. Put the other 2 tbsp olive oil into the pan, add 2 finely chopped onions and 3 chopped carrots and cook on a gentle heat until soft, about 20 mins.
3. Add 3 tbsp plain flour and 2 tbsp tomato purée, increase the heat and cook for a few mins, then return the beef to the pan.
4. Add the large glass of red wine, if using. Boil to reduce it slightly before adding the 850ml beef stock, 4 tbsp Worcestershire sauce, a few thyme sprigs and 2 bay leaves.
5. Bring to a simmer and cook, uncovered, for 45 mins. The gravy should be thick and coating the meat. After about 30 mins check - if a lot of liquid remains, increase the heat slightly to reduce the gravy a little. Season well, then discard the bay leaves and thyme stalks.
6. Meanwhile, make the mash. In a large saucepan, cover the 1kg potatoes which you've peeled and chopped, in salted cold water, bring to the boil and simmer until tender. Do the same for the swede, which takes a little longer to cook.
7. Drain both well. Mash each separately and then combine. Add the 25g of butter. Add the 225ml milk carefully - make sure the mash is not too watery - and then season with salt and pepper.
8. Spoon the meat into 2 ovenproof dishes. Pipe or spoon on the mash to cover. Use a fork to texture the surface of the mash. Sprinkle on the cheese.
9. If eating straight away, heat oven to 220C/200C fan/gas 7 and cook for 25-30 mins, or until the topping is golden. Alternatively, allow to cool and freeze.



The Art of Breathing

by Rachael Staines

DID YOU know that if the lungs were unravelled and laid flat they would cover an area the size of a tennis court, about 2,400 km of air pathways? Or that you breathe 22,000 times a day. How many are you aware of?

Lie flat on the ground with a cushion under your head. Place your hands on your stomach. Feel the rise and fall as you breathe in... and out.

As the breath waxes and wanes, the abdominal organs rise and fall by 4-5 centimetres, this pumps oxygen and nutrient rich fluids through the lymphatic system, flushing out toxins. The

physical movement of breath in the body also massages the liver, kidneys, intestines, and joints of the spine, so that they're kept healthy, and supple too.

Breath really is life on many levels, but it is also our greatest indicator of stress. Tension can cause you to breathe a little more shallowly. A shallow breath lowers oxygen levels in the blood, which the brain senses as stress. This then creates that vicious cycle of more rapid breathing, with oxygen levels falling, the heart rate increasing, and the brain feeling more stressed with unhelpful thoughts escalating.

In my work as a mindfulness and wellbeing coach supporting young people with anxiety, it

never fails to delight me when I see their shoulders drop as they deliberately engage with intentional deeper breathing which, in turn, stimulates the para-sympathetic nervous system, reducing cortisol and adrenaline, so that the breath, heart rate and blood pressure fall - restoring a sense of calm.

If you feel anxious, distressed, or exhausted, then begin consciously to breathe in and out. Take a long, deep breath through your nose whilst slowly counting to five in your mind, then exhale slowly, really sighing it out of your mouth for a count of seven. Come back to this whenever you need to feel grounded and more in control. It really is that simple.



Community Connections

by Caroline Gratrix

This month we get to know something about Caversham resident Ami Roy



Ami Roy photo C Gratrix

Ami grew up in India, where she trained as an architect. She moved to the UK when she was 28 and spent time living in Walthamstow, Surrey and Oxford before moving to Caversham 10 years ago.

After spending time looking after her two young daughters, Ami came across the Traditional Yoga Association in Berkshire and studied formally with them

to qualify as a yoga teacher, and found a wonderful link to her roots through teaching and sharing yoga.

As well as possessing a deep knowledge of traditional Indian Yoga, because Ami's late mother was a GP, during her class, she will often explain the physiology of a move and how it benefits you in many more ways than you expect.

It is important to Ami that her classes are inclusive and welcoming to all. She says, "Yoga is not about being competitive or assuming complicated poses, it is about taking the time to look inwards, to listen to our intuition and to let yoga set us on the path to greater self-acceptance and better relationships."

Although she misses her home in India, Ami has found the community she was missing here in Caversham. She would love to be part of bringing us all together as a more culturally diverse community.

Tell us a bit about you.

How long have you lived in Caversham?

We moved here 10 years ago from Oxford with my husband's job.

What's your favourite thing about Caversham?

I love the river and the green spaces around us. I have had the privileged to get to know the local community thought my work as a yoga teacher, and the best thing is people waving hello and stopping to chat with me as I weave through Caversham. It reminds me of growing up in a suburb in Mumbai where my Mum was a GP and so many people would wave hello. Makes me feel like I belong here.

Caversham's best coffee shop?

Geo Café is our go to place: we adore the owners and their unique story and the bread, eggs, cake and coffee at Geo Café are of excellent quality.

Where to eat out Caversham?

The Thai Table is a favourite of ours

Where to shop in Caversham?

Geo Café, Dolly's Vintage, Caversham Emporium, Terry's.

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

An outdoor Diwali celebration, although we would have to do one in the summer as Diwali falls in November and the weather stands in the way.

Ami Roy photo C Gratrix



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Who's that at the door?



by Phil Chatfield

WHAT DO you do if your global business is brought to a halt overnight? This was the reality for local businessman Tim Sturk last March. For more than 10 years, Tim has championed the coffee business. He believes people should be offered coffee which is 'made well and tastes good', irrespective of where the coffee is served – motorway service area or specialist coffee shop.

Tim's company, *Cherry Coffee Training*, is Caversham based, providing advice and training on how this can be achieved around the world. He is a judge in the *World Barista Championships*, the pinnacle of the worldwide hospitality side of the coffee business.

But last March, on his return from a business trip, he realised the pandemic meant things would change dramatically. With the hospitality sector furloughed and international travel no longer an option, Tim decided on a change in direction. He wanted to share his enthusiasm for well made, great tasting filter coffee.



Tim delivers photo C Gratix

So he set up *Caversham Coffee Exchange*. With a supply of flasks from a local supermarket, he set out to deliver coffee to Caversham doorsteps by bike, collecting the empty flasks the next day. His first delivery was 23 March 2020 and he now has around 400 customers in the Reading-Caversham-Sonning area. He has also cycled thousands of miles and lost a stone in weight!

Initially it was just about the coffee. Then one of his customers asked if he had anything sweet to go with it. His wife Helen, who used to bake cakes for the *Siblings Cafe* on Hemdean Road, had



Tim with the trusty bike photo C Gratix

made a batch of brownies, so he took some along. Coffee and cakes delivered to the doorstep has met a lockdown need and the business has grown by 'word of mouth', as he puts it. Valentine's Day was the busiest so far, but one aspect Tim had not



The perfect combination – coffee & cakes photo C Gratix

anticipated was people buying coffee and cakes for others. At a time when friends and families are apart, many are ordering deliveries as gifts. Tim recalls one in particular, "Just before Christmas, in a cul de sac near *The Caversham Rose* pub, one resident bought coffee and treats for four other houses. The other houses were all elderly retirees - one of the ladies burst into tears when she saw the coffee and cinnamon buns, she was so greatly moved. I smiled for the rest of the week!"

Like most of us, he had not expected lockdown to last so long. But his enthusiasm for good coffee and desire to keep busy has brightened the day for many local people and kept him fit. So if you know someone who might like a treat ...

For more on Caversham Coffee Exchange, see Tim's social media pages:

www.facebook.com/cavershamcoffeexchange

www.instagram.com/cavershamcoffeexchange

Last month we featured a reader's letter regarding the use of Balmore House during World War II. The following e-mail arrived just a few days after publication.

Dear Editors,

I LIVED in Caversham during WWII and went to Caversham Primary School until 1945. I can't add any information towards the haunting of Balmore House, but I can confirm that it was requisitioned by the Royal Army Pay Corps. The soldiers were billeted in homes around Caversham within walking distance of the house.

My family looked after two soldiers (Frank and Wilf); bed, breakfast and midday meal. They had been 'called up', and assigned to Balmore because of their aptitude for the work there. Sometimes they were allowed to travel home for the weekend,



Write to the editors

Balmore House

but mostly they were free with time to spare. I remember my mother gave them their Ration Books to take home with them: ration books were precious things then.

Both were talented pianists, and Frank was also an organist. There was a thriving social life for them at *Toc H* in the town, and they often rehearsed for musical productions in our front room. I think they chose to live with us to have access to the piano. I was lucky to have so many

people at home who could help me with my homework! I had been crossing the town on the bus for piano lessons so, before long, I was being taught by Wilf at home. Luckily, our soldiers were not in *Toc-H* when it was bombed. The whole structure was in ruins, as was the Town Hall area.

Balmore House was quite isolated at that time. Although I remember walking to and from school over Balmore Park, there was no access to the House. There were two ponds I passed on the way home where we collected frogspawn to take to school for nature lessons. No houses of course.

Do you have any memories of Balmore House during the war? Please contact us at editors@cavershambridge.org

Further information on the history of Balmore House can be found at: www.cadra.org.uk/en/Local-History-Resources#block297

Girls with Hopes and Dreams

by Bet Tickner

AS OUR children return to school, could we spare a moment for those children and, in particular girls, who don't get any schooling at all?

I chair a small UK charity, Grassroots Empowerment Network (GEN), working in rural Rajasthan, in an area where girls are traditionally not sent to school, partly because their lives are very home based. Many parents think it is unsafe for them to venture outside their home or village. Often girls are not sent to school if the class is taught by a man (which most are).

girls in India could drop out of school due to the pandemic, putting them at risk of early marriage, early pregnancy, poverty and trafficking.

These young people feel the stigma of illiteracy. They know how profoundly it will affect their choices throughout life, impacting on their ability to earn

adolescent and teenage girls. This includes literacy and numeracy, together with health, horticulture, sewing, and art and sports. The aim is to bring them to a level which enables them to join formal education.

Our programme, running since 2009, is now keenly sought after by girls and families in our area of operation. But our ability to expand it to more villages, or provide further training for girls who complete the programme, is limited by the funds we can raise.

www.endpoverty.org.in/gallery/video-gallery/girls-education says it much better than I can.

If you can support us with a donation, however small, please go to <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/charity-web/charity/finalCharityHomepage.action?charityId=1016130>

A modest amount goes a long way in this part of India.



A village class

photo GEN

In Rajasthan, female literacy is below 58% and less in rural areas. This despite Indian law providing a basic education for all. Six in ten girls in Rajasthan marry as children. Additionally, several million teenage

an income, widen their horizons in a meaningful way, or have a voice within their communities.

We run a one-year intensive basic education programme for unschooled

Weller Centre visitors

by Hazel Bingham

MARCH was a strange month at the Weller Centre. The schools are back but not many activities have restarted. We are sharing a collective sigh of relief at the better weather and lighter evenings. It has been nice to enjoy time in the garden (who cares if you need three coats, five pairs of socks and a fire to keep warm).



Hazel and the horses

photo S Prenderville

There's a spring in our step now we can see an end to lockdown, but it seems like a long time getting there. Despite the restrictions, we have ploughed ahead with our annual Easter Egg appeal. We've received several large

donations from individuals and companies. As you can see here, they are delivered in all sorts of ways, but this one does make us chuckle. Thank you to Caversham Fairtrade for the eggs. The Easter Bunny and friends will be delivering these across the Amersham Road Estate to local children early in April, along with activity packs to keep them amused during the Easter break.

As well as the Easter visitors, the Centre and the Estate recently had a visit from the police horses, which was a real treat for those who saw them – although a bit of a surprise. I wasn't quite sure what was going on when someone told me there were two horses on the field. They kindly came over to see me and posed beautifully for a photo.



Easter Egg delivery

photo S Prenderville

WORD CHALLENGE ANSWERS:

(From left to right) foal, mend, howl, fox, fowl, fix, birds, chicks, mix, curds, stir, words, move, cheese, burr.

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