

# Caversham Bridge

No 704

www.cavershambridge.org

October 2023

## Reading Bridge marks 100 years



by Helen Lambert

**I**N 1905, ALMOST 5,000 people a day crossed the Thames over the Clappers footbridge by the weir. But the route was prone to flooding and the iron Caversham Bridge, built in 1869, was proving inadequate. As Caversham became part of Reading in 1911, the Corporation sought permission from Parliament, not just to replace Caversham Bridge, but to build a completely new vehicle bridge in Lower Caversham.

This new bridge needed a long single span and space for footpaths on both banks. Two designs for a steel suspension bridge were prepared in 1912. However, a French engineer, Francois Hennebique, had patented a method of strengthening concrete with iron and steel bars. His agent in Britain, Louis Mouchel, established L G Mouchel & Partners Ltd.

The Borough Extension Committee met in November 1913 and commissioned Mouchel to provide designs and costs for both bridges. The new Reading Bridge was to be a modern landmark – the largest structure in ‘ferroconcrete’ in the UK and the longest single span. Though more expensive than steel, it would require little maintenance.

Work was halted by WWI, but early in 1922, a contract was agreed with Holloway Brothers, and work started in March. Four piers were built in the river to support the shuttering and the assembly of the steel framework, before freshly mixed concrete was compacted in situ. Apart from the Portland stone parapet and the northern embankment, the whole structure was built in reinforced concrete. George Street was raised and extended through the meadows to connect with the new road across the bridge.

On 25 September 1923, 30 traction engines and wagons, with a combined weight of 372 tons, rolled onto the bridge, demonstrating its great strength. On 3 October 1923, after luncheon and speeches in the Town Hall, the Mayoral party proceeded to the bridge amid rain and high winds. A chain was unlocked with a golden key and two bronze plaques on the central plinths of the parapets, commemorating the event, were unveiled. The total cost of the bridge and approach roads was almost £70,000, of which £6,000 was donated by Charles Powell of Eastfield, Derby Road, Caversham.



Testing the strength

photos Reading Libraries

## PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

by Phil Chatfield

IT IS HARD to think about October during a September heat wave. I did hope for better weather last month!

This edition of our paper starts with a look at the past and the construction of Reading Bridge (see above). We have further

reflections on the past in the second part of Francis Serjeant's article on The Changing Face of Caversham (p8). A recent change is reported on the same page, with the opening of a new record shop, Pop Classics, in St Martin's Precinct.

Happy Wanderer returns to nature this month, looking at White Bryony (p7) and our gardeners are challenged to try growing root cuttings and to take stock of how plants have fared in the garden this year (p10). Our Creative Caversham this month features guitarist Gerard Cousins, who will be performing as part of the October Festival of Music and Art (p12).

We learn something of the story of The Gorge Café on the Caversham Road, which is the subject of Janina Maher's Local Scene painting this month (p13). Janina has been very busy, as

she has produced not only a Caversham Calendar this year, but also one for Reading!

Ami Roy takes a different angle on snacks in her wellbeing article this month (p15). Her subject for the September edition, coping with summer heat, could not have been more appropriate! In her regular article on CVs, Laura Harmsworth welcomes the autumn and tells us it's a good time to transform CVs (p14). We have our regular book reviews (p5), a Meet the Maker report (p11), topical contributions on adapting to our changing climate (p9) and much more.

We do hope you enjoy reading the paper, and if you do, please recommend subscribing to new neighbours and friends. See page 3 for subscription and contact details.

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# Why doesn't everyone go to church?



## Talking Point

by Rev  
Nigel Jones

IN AN EARLY episode of Grange Hill, (a BBC children's programme from the early 1980s), something that's always stuck with me...

Girl 1: "I can't come to the party on Sunday, I've got to go to church."

Girl 2: "Church?" (with an expression saying clearly: Church? Surely not? In this day and age!)

Girl 1: "Yeah, I know!" (with a roll of the eyes) as if to say 'My parents are so uncool!'

Forty years later, what has changed? Obviously the chances of any teenager being in church at all are much reduced. Although I suspect those teens who do regularly go to church today go to rather more upbeat events than Girl 1 had to attend. The assumption in this brief moment in Grange Hill was that it was an old-fashioned, traditional church that she attends with her parents. Phil Redmond, the Grange Hill screenwriter, probably hadn't heard of the house church movement!

A couple of weeks ago The Times had the headline: 'Britain is no longer a Christian country, say frontline clergy'. Firstly we should note this refers to only a small number of frontline clergy. 5000 were invited to respond but only 1,200 did so. And only the opinions of those under 70 were analysed, (769), which is less than 4% of active Church of England clergy. You might also wonder if the self-selection of the few who did respond might skew the results. For example, if you're busy running a thriving parish perhaps you're less likely to take the time to fill in a survey... In short, pinches of salt are called for.

However, no-one will dispute that churchgoing is in decline in the UK, indeed in the entire western world. This is a big, complex topic, to do with long-term, large-scale changes in society. (Although it's not as gloomy as people might think. Young people today are generally open to things 'spiritual'.)

My daughter's ballet class has just relocated to Gosbrook Road Methodist Church hall. While they were waiting, some of the girls were looking through the glass doors into the beautiful worship area and saying they would like to visit it. At the same time it seemed assumed that this was a place for 'other people'.

It got me wondering. Why doesn't everyone go to church? We are used to the fact that church appeals to only a tiny fraction of the population. Everyone knows that there are these eccentric few people who go to church and that most people do not.

But, although we are used to it, to church people it still feels wrong. We don't just accept it. We think that there should be thousands of people cramming into Caversham's churches every Sunday with standing room only. Of course there are convinced atheists and adherents of other faiths. Fine. But the vast majority of our population are neither of these. They are just not in the habit of going to church, even though church (if you're doing it right) is life-giving and used to be the foundation of our society. It feels good when there's 60 people in church rather than the usual 50 or so. But really there should be many hundreds in each of our wonderful and varied Caversham churches!

I wonder whether people would be surprised to hear this is what we church people think, and that we do not accept church is for a few people 'who like that kind of thing'.

*Rev Nigel Jones is Vicar at  
St Andrew's Church, Albert Road*

## 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: 0118 947 9505 [rector@ctmparish.org.uk](mailto:rector@ctmparish.org.uk)  
Rev'd Penny Cuthbert Tel: 07825 331 810  
Rev'd Andy Storch Tel: 07365 555 905  
Contact: [admin@ctmparish.org.uk](mailto:admin@ctmparish.org.uk) or 0118 996 8836  
Correspondence address: Church House, 59 Church Street,  
Caversham RG4 8AX

#### Current services

##### St Peter's Church –

1st Sunday of the month:  
8:00 BCP Holy Communion  
9:30 Service of the Word with junior choir and potential for baptism  
2nd and 4th Sundays 9:30  
Holy Communion using existing service booklets, with adult and junior choir and Sunday Club  
3rd Sunday: 9:30 Holy Communion in a new, shorter format with junior choir  
18:30 Sung Choral Evensong.  
Wednesday – 09:30 – Zoom morning Prayer –  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/786384026>

##### St John's Church Gosbrook Road Sunday services

8:00 Online CTM Youtube channel (stays available to watch anytime)  
9:30 1st and 3rd Sunday Holy Communion, 2nd All Age Worship, 4th Service of the Word  
Sunday Club for children on 1st, 3rd and 4th Sundays

##### St Margaret's Church Mapledurham –

11:15. 1st, 2nd, 3rd Sunday Holy Communion, 4th Sunday Service of the Word.

##### St Andrew's

Rev'd Nigel Jones, St Andrew's Vicarage, Harrogate Road.  
Tel: 0118 947 2788 [www.standrewscaversham.org](http://www.standrewscaversham.org)

#### Current services

St Andrew's weekly services are Sundays at 8:00 and 10:00. The 10:00 is also livestreamed on the St Andrew's YouTube channel. Prayer Book Communion at 11.30 on the first Sunday of each month. More info on the parish website. [www.standrewscaversham.org/services](http://www.standrewscaversham.org/services)  
Wednesday 8pm Compline (in church/vicarage)

### St Barnabas Emmer Green

Rev'd Kevin Lovell, [vicar@saintbarnabas.ork.uk](mailto:vicar@saintbarnabas.ork.uk)  
Church Office Tel: 0118 947 8239

#### Current Services

Sunday – 9:30 Parish Communion (except 3rd Sunday of the month: Service of the Word)  
1st Sunday of the month – 11:30 All Age Worship  
3rd Sunday of the month – 11:30 Family Communion  
Every Wednesday – 10:30 Midweek Communion  
Full details on our website: [www.saintbarnabas.org.uk](http://www.saintbarnabas.org.uk)

### CAVERSHAM PARK UNITED REFORM CHURCH

Contact: Dr Alison Johnston  
Tel: 0118 947 5152 [www.cavershamparkurc.com](http://www.cavershamparkurc.com)

#### Current services

Sunday – 11:00 – Livestreaming on YouTube  
Details on their web site at:  
<https://cpurc.org.uk/live-stream>

### METHODIST CHURCH CAVERSHAM

Rev'd Jeongsook Kim  
Tel: 0118 947 2223  
Rev'd David Jenkins Tel: 0118 327 1592

#### Current services

Sunday – Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmoor Road – 10:30 – (also available on YouTube)  
Sunday – Caversham Methodist Church, Gosbrook Road – 10:30

### CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor: Colin Baker  
Church office Tel: 0118 954 5353  
Email: [secretary@cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk](mailto:secretary@cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk)

#### Current services

Sunday worship 10:30 each week, including groups for children and youth  
Sermons are recorded and uploaded to [www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk](http://www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk)  
Hymn Café 15:00-16:00 on the last Sunday of each month

### GRACE CHURCH (formerly Caversham Hill Chapel)

Pastor Keith Saynor  
Tel: 0118 947 4529 [www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk](http://www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk)

### Current services

See their web site for details:  
[www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk](http://www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk)

### RIVERSIDE CHURCH (Reading)

[www.riversidechurchreading.co.uk](http://www.riversidechurchreading.co.uk)

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See their web site for services at:  
[www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk](http://www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk)

### St Michael Sonning Common

(including Emmer Green and Caversham Park Village)  
Fr Michael Sharkey, St Michael's, Sonning Common  
Tel: 0118 972 3418  
<http://saintmichaelsonningcommon.org.uk>

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

The Caversham Bridge is a community newspaper produced by Caversham Christian News Ltd

#### Future editions:

Contributions for the November 2023 issue should be submitted by 1 October and for the December 2023 edition by 1 November These should be e-mailed to:  
[editors@cavershambridge.org](mailto:editors@cavershambridge.org)

Dates for advertising copy are 1 October for the November 2023 issue and 1 November for the December issue. These should be e-mailed to:  
[advertising@cavershambridge.org](mailto:advertising@cavershambridge.org)





Safety fencing, Caversham Court Gardens

photo V. Abel

# Caversham Court Gardens – update to tackling repairs

by Vickie Abel, Chair, Friends of Caversham Court Gardens

**R**EADING BOROUGH Council (RBC) have passed on the welcome news that a source of funding may have been identified to tackle necessary repairs to the Church Road wall, and the ramp in Caversham Court Gardens. Visitors to the Gardens, and readers of Caversham Bridge, will be only too aware of the hazard fencing blocking off part of the wall and, more importantly, the ramp leading down to the Tea Kiosk and toilets. This has meant that the lower lawns, Tea Kiosk and toilets, are inaccessible to wheelchair users and other visitors who cannot manage steps.

A portable disabled toilet unit has now been sited close to the entrance gates for the use of disabled visitors this autumn. Any works in Caversham Court Gardens are complicated because of the listed status of the historic walls. The Friends of Caversham Court Gardens are grateful to RBC for this temporary solution, and hope that repair work can begin on the wall and ramp soon.

**Don't miss the Halloween Trail in the gardens on Saturday 28-Sunday 29 October!**



## Caversham Bridge News from the editors

### Volunteer Advertising Manager

We are pleased to announce we have had a volunteer come forward for this role. We will be contacting our regular advertisers shortly with more information.

### Going the extra mile

Help us to celebrate and share those occasions when someone goes beyond your expectations in what they are doing. It could be a neighbour who has helped you, or outstanding service from a local business. If someone has made your day by going 'the extra mile', do tell us, so we can share it with our readers. Write to [editors@cavershambridge.org](mailto:editors@cavershambridge.org) or by post to Caversham Bridge, Church House, Church Street, Caversham RG4 8AX.

### Subscribe

The annual subscription for 2023 is £5 and runs up to and includes the December edition. For new subscribers, the charge is £2 to the end of the year. You can pay by direct transfer from your bank account, using our bank account details:

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### Contacting us

Please do let us have your news, events and feedback. Contact us at [editors@cavershambridge.org](mailto:editors@cavershambridge.org)

We have had reports that some emails sent to us have not gone through. If this does happen to you, please leave a message on our answerphone, 0118 328 2754, and we will call you back.

## Singing for a day

by Kathy Munns

**DO YOU LOVE** singing? Are you free on Saturday 14 October? If so, Reading Bach Choir would love to see you at Caversham Heights Methodist Church (RG4 7BG), to learn and sing together a beautiful Requiem Mass by Tomas Luis de Victoria, composed in 1583. If you were one of the 90+ who came to our Mozart workshop last January, you'll know what satisfaction we gained from a day's singing together, gaining fresh insights about the music and composer along the way.

Our day will be led by our Musical Director, Daniel Mahoney, from 10:00 to 16:00. The cost is £25 for the day, including music and tea/coffee through the day, but please bring your own lunch. Tickets are available from the choir website [www.readingbachchoir.org.uk](http://www.readingbachchoir.org.uk)

But, if listening is more your thing, then come along to our next concert on Saturday 25 November, at St Andrew's Church, Caversham, when we will perform what is perhaps Victoria's better-known 'Requiem', composed in 1605, along with the Bach motet 'Jesu Meine Freude' and 'Selig sind die Toten' by Schütz. We look forward to seeing you!



Daniel Mahoney

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# Remembering a loved one

by Nicki Wisdom

AS THE NEW Bereavement Support Co-ordinator for the Caversham, Thameside and Mapledurham (CTM) Parish, I wanted to let you know some of the things we are doing to help those who are grieving to get the support they need. Currently in Caversham, we run the Bereavement Journey Course twice a year and have regular 'Meet & Chat' sessions for anyone who is bereaved. These are either at the 3Cs Café in St John's Church, St John's Road, on a Tuesday morning, or in the evening at a local pub. We also have annual 'Remembering a Loved One' services, the next coming up in November.

The time of Covid-19 may seem like a distant memory for many of us now but, having talked with people who lost loved ones during that time, the effects are still being felt. Three funerals come to mind from that time – one I watched online, one I didn't attend at all, and one I did

go to. There was talk of holding big thanksgiving services once restrictions had lifted, but now the moment seems to have passed.

Maybe something similar happened to you. Perhaps there is a friend or family member who you would have liked to have paid your respects to but didn't get the chance. If so, you might like to come to one of our 'Remembering a Loved One' services on 5 November. They are at 16:00 in St John's Church and 18:30 at St Peter's Church. You can come on your own, or bring others to remember together. As part of the service, the names of those being remembered are read out. If you would like your loved one's name to be included, please contact [admin@ctmparish.org.uk](mailto:admin@ctmparish.org.uk)

For more information, including dates of our next 'Meet & Chat' or Bereavement courses, contact

Nicki – Bereavement Support Coordinator,  
CTM Parish, Caversham

Email: [nicki@ctmparish.org.uk](mailto:nicki@ctmparish.org.uk) Mobile: 07918211607



Memory tree

photo P Cuthbert

## Welcome for new Methodist Minister

by Brenda Caborn

LAST MONTH we reported on the departure of the Methodist minister in Caversham, Rev Martin Beukes. The new Methodist minister serving Caversham and Woodley, the Rev Jeongsok Kim, was welcomed for her first service in Caversham at the Gosbrook Road Chapel on 3 September. Jeongsok is originally from South Korea. She studied for an MA in Theology at Nottingham University. While she was studying, she attended Beeston Methodist Church, where she learned of the shortage of ministers for the Methodist Church in Britain.

Following the advice of local church leaders in Nottingham, she returned to South Korea, where she was eventually ordained. She came back to Britain in 2006 to take up a position as a Minister of five Methodist churches in North Lincolnshire. She moved on to serve as a Minister in Nottingham and London before taking up a post in Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, in 2018.

A formal welcome service was held at Christ Church, Woodley on 1 September with representatives of the three churches she will serve (Caversham Heights and Gosbrook Road Methodist Churches in Caversham and Christ Church, Woodley) and other local churches. She will be living in Woodley.



Rev Jeongsok Kim

photo P Chatfield

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## For your bookshelf....



Welcome to 'Fourbears Reviews' where we briefly review a couple of titles chosen from our book shop 'Fourbears Books' in Caversham.

by Alex Forbes

**M**Y FIRST CHOICE this month is a Children's Picture Book by Joseph Coelho. It's very different from most other books because it is filled with ten-word stories, each brilliantly illustrated by a different illustrator.

The ten words aren't typical beginning, middle and end structure, they are ten words that capture a particular moment within an adventure or situation. The readers can use their imagination to think about what happened before the moment which led to the situation on the page, or what happens next? As well as being a beautiful book to look at, I love how it provides a starting point for the imagination to be let loose. I think there will be a lot of fun on every page, and it can be read time and time again with different scenarios. I'd say it's probably aimed at 5-year-olds, but parents/carers should take a look before buying, as some of the scenarios are a little bit creepy, which the child may or may not love.

My choice for adults is the latest book by Anita Frank, *The Good Liars*. After World War 1, a family is dealing with the scars of the war; whether they be the physical injuries carried by one brother or the mental trauma carried by the other brother, or the guilt and memory of actions taken by other members of the household. Then ghostly incidents start occurring, and an investigation is reopened about a boy who went missing just before the war started, which pushes the household into disarray. We were very lucky to have Anita come to



Two bears make the choices this month

photo A Forbes

the shop and talk about *The Good Liars*. It's a great read with many atmospheric scenes, presenting imagery from the war which will stay with you after you put down the book. A good gift for anyone that loves historical fiction and a little bit of spooky.

**Book Fact:** A year ago two of the biggest publishers were in the news in the United States because information was released showing of 58,000 books

published by Penguin in the USA per year, more than half sell fewer than 12 copies. Ninety percent of the titles sell fewer than 2,000 copies. For a writer, it's scary to learn you can get the dream deal and still sell so few books. We'll always support the Indie Publishers that have a better success rate.

**Happy reading, whatever you pick up, and hope to see you in the shop soon.**

## Anita Frank – The Good Liars

by Joy Gumbrell



Anita Frank at the signing

photo R McDonnell

**L**OCAL AUTHOR Anita Frank is celebrating the success of her latest book, *The Good Liars*, which entered the Sunday Times Top Ten in its first week of publication.

*The Good Liars*, her third historical fiction novel, is a dark murder mystery set in 1920. It focuses on the once esteemed Stilwell family of Darkacre Hall, who are struggling to come to terms with the legacy of the First World War. Double death duties incurred following the loss of the patriarch and his cherished heir have left them in financial straits. The new heir, Maurice, is still suffering the after-effects of shell shock – much to the distaste of his socially ambitious wife, Ida. His younger brother Leonard, an energetic schoolboy soldier, has returned a triple amputee confined to a wheelchair, while their close family friend and permanent houseguest, Victor, seems strangely reluctant to leave Darkacre.

But their already troubled lives are thrown into further disarray when police reopen the case

of a young boy who vanished in the summer of 1914. Suddenly they find themselves facing the scrutiny of Detective Sergeant Verity, who wears a painted copper mask to conceal the facial injuries he sustained in the war. To add to their discomfort, peculiar incidents begin to occur which lead them to fear the dead may be returning to Darkacre. As old resentments flare, secrets risk being unearthed that could destroy them all.

Anita, who lives in Emmer Green, says 'I'm thrilled by the positive response *The Good Liars* has received so far. Having always been interested in the First World War, I wanted to create a story that included some of its social aspects – such as white feathers and war memorials – whilst also exploring the physical and mental impact the conflict had upon those involved.'

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# WHAT'S ON in OCTOBER

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

**Caversham Library** – 09:00 -17:00 Tuesday and Friday, 13:00 - 19:00 Thursday and 10:00 - 15:00 Saturday. Regular events include:

**Rhymetimes for the little ones** – popular, so please book first! Every Tuesday at 10:15 and 11:15.

**Games Club**, Friday mornings 10:30-12:00. All adults welcome – refreshments!

**Sit and Stitch** 17:30 – 19:45, on 2nd and 4th Thursdays every month. Refreshments – come and be inspired.

Tel. 0118 9375103 or see [reading.gov.uk/leisure/all-libraries/caversham-library](http://reading.gov.uk/leisure/all-libraries/caversham-library)

**Geo Café – Artists Against Homelessness**, an ongoing and changing exhibition of art by local artists at Geo Café, Prospect Street. For each sale the artist makes a donation to Launchpad Reading. Open every day.

**Mondays – Caversham Park Bridge Club** – at the Milestone Centre, 19:15 for 19:30 start. Phone Lin 0118 3348195 for further information. [bridgewebs.com/cavershampark](http://bridgewebs.com/cavershampark)

**Tuesdays – Babies and Toddlers** – Gosbrook Road Methodist Church. Term time 10:00 - 11:30. All welcome.

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

**Tuesdays – Rivariate Choir** – Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmoor Road. 19:30 in term time. Enjoy singing together. For details see [rivariate.com](http://rivariate.com)

**Wednesdays – Caversham Writers** – Welcoming enthusiastic hobbyists and aspiring authors alike. Meeting weekly in person or via Zoom. Free to all. For details: [meetup.com/CavershamWriters](http://meetup.com/CavershamWriters) or [@CavershamWriter](https://twitter.com/CavershamWriter) on X (Twitter)

**Wednesdays – The Waltham St. Lawrence Silver Band** – Neville Hall in Waltham St. Lawrence RG10 0JJ. 20:00 – 22:00. Free and friendly club for brass instrumentalists. Email: [waltham.band@gmail.com](mailto:waltham.band@gmail.com)

**Thursdays – Friendly Over-60s Social Club** – 10:00 - 13:00 at Milestone Centre, Caversham Park Village. Hot lunch, quizzes, and the chance to chat. Contact Cheryl at 07964 750182 or Trina at 07477 570541

**Saturdays – Keep Caversham Tidy** – A local charity dedicated to eliminating litter and improving public spaces in Caversham. Free to join and no ongoing commitment. Families welcome! Email: [keepcavershamtidy@gmail.com](mailto:keepcavershamtidy@gmail.com), Facebook: [Keep Caversham Tidy](https://www.facebook.com/KeepCavershamTidy)

**Sundays – Farmer's Market and Artisan Fair** – Caversham Precinct. 10:00 – 15:00. See [www.facebook.com/CAFMarket](http://www.facebook.com/CAFMarket)

**Sundays – Nordic Walk (or just walking)**. Free to all. Tel. 07931 754096 or email Pat at [Wiralbird@hotmail.com](mailto:Wiralbird@hotmail.com)

**Sundays – Redifolk Song and Music Club** – 20:00 – 22:30 in the garden of Watlington House, RG1 4RA. £8 admission for performances, £3 on singing nights. See [www.redifolk.co.uk](http://www.redifolk.co.uk)

**Sunday 1 October – Pang Valley Ramblers** – 10:30 Combe Gibbet and Walbury Hill, 6.5 Miles walk. One of several walks planned for October. See <https://pvramblers.org.uk/walks-programme> for details.

**Sunday, 1 October – Prayer for World Peace** – 11:00. Free to all. Meditation at the Buddhist Temple on Bath Road, RG1 6HH. Tel: 0118 959 9133.

**Wednesday 4 October – Rosehill Ladies Meeting – Harvest Lunch** – 14:00 St Barnabas Village Hall, Emmer Green. Contact [jeanhewitt@gmail.com](mailto:jeanhewitt@gmail.com)

**Wednesday 4 October – Global Warming and Extreme Weather**, a talk by Professor Ted Shepherd – 20:00 at Caversham Heights Methodist Church Hall, Highmoor Road. The Caversham Heights Society. To learn more visit: [cavershamheights.org](http://cavershamheights.org) or email: [contact@cavershamheights.org](mailto:contact@cavershamheights.org)

**Wednesday 4 October – A talk on Growing and displaying flowers** by a local grower, Yonella, lead florist at Wild Bloom by Ella – 19:30 at Caversham Baptist Church Hall. Caversham Horticultural Society. See [www.caversham-horticultural.org.uk/events](http://www.caversham-horticultural.org.uk/events)

**Friday 6 October – Bereavement Café** – 14:00 - 15:30 at St. Barnabas, Emmer Green. The café is a safe place to find others who have had their own loss and can appreciate something of your experience. For further info Tel. Gill at 0118 9478772

**Saturday 14 October – Artists & Makers Fair** – 10:00 - 16:00 at Caversham Methodist Hall, Gosbrook Road. Local artists and craftspeople display their work for sale. Free entry. For further information phone Jean at 07808 966928 or visit [www.cavershamcrafts.co.uk](http://www.cavershamcrafts.co.uk)

**Wednesday 18 October – A talk on a homeless charity** by Steve Scrase – 14:00 at Caversham Heights Methodist Church. Caversham Heights Townswomen's Guild. For details contact Margaret Miles on 01491 681223

**Wednesday 18 October – The Windrush Generation**, a talk by Cyrilene Small-Tollafield – 20:00 at Caversham Heights Methodist Church Hall, Highmoor Road. The Caversham Heights Society. [www.cavershamheights.org](http://www.cavershamheights.org)

## 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**

THERE ARE still conditions to be discharged in relation to building on **Reading Golf Club**, including schemes for hard and soft landscaping. Thames Water has raised concerns over the potential for ground water contamination.

Amended plans were submitted for **Caversham Park**, including radical changes to the proposed housing areas and the new care home. More of the main rooms in the house will be for communal use, rather than conversion to apartments. A transport plan is available and a Construction Method Statement showing the route for construction traffic.

A request for an Environmental Impact Assessment screening opinion has been submitted for **Napier Court**, Napier Road. This would provide 570 'build-to-rent' residential units over 11 storeys.

The application for the **Thames Valley Service Station** in George Street (provision of electric charging but removal of trees) has been withdrawn. A second application for a **15m 5G telecoms** installation on the corner of All Hallows Road and Henley Road has not yet been decided. There is an application for **tree work at St Peter's Church**.

As a result of changes in funding structure, the **Heights Primary School** is being urged by the Department of Education to increase class sizes from 25 to 30 and a planning application was submitted. While there is a waiting list for the Heights School, the change may result in lower pupil numbers for other schools in Caversham, reducing their funding. You can find the links from the CADRA planning list [www.cadra.org.uk](http://www.cadra.org.uk)

Following a nomination submitted jointly by CADRA and the Conservation Area Advisory Committee, **Reading Bridge** is now Locally Listed, giving equivalent status to Caversham Bridge within St Peters Conservation Area. In addition to the booklet on the history of the bridge available from Fourbears Bookshop, a Guest Blog for Reading Museum will be available from 3 October at [www.readingmuseum.org.uk/blog](http://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/blog)

**Thursday 19 October** – Caversham Women's Institute – 19:30 at Church House, Caversham. [www.thewi.org.uk](http://www.thewi.org.uk) or Tel. 01189 475176

**Thursday 19 to Saturday 21 October** – **Fair Trade Marquee Sale** – 10:00 - 16:00 daily. For details see page 11 or [www.facebook.com/cavershamfairtrade](http://www.facebook.com/cavershamfairtrade)

**Friday 20 to Monday 30 October** – **Autumn Festival of Music and Art** – Presented by Concerts in Caversham. For details of performers and ticket prices, see [www.concertsincaversham.co.uk](http://www.concertsincaversham.co.uk)

The festival includes concerts on: Friday 20 and 27 October and Saturday 21 and 28 October at 17:30 – all at St Andrew's Church, RG4 7PL and on the Festival Finale on Monday 30 October - 19:30 - Queen Anne's School, RG4 6DX  
**Sunday 22 October – Hymn Café** – 15:00 - 16:00 at Caversham Baptist Church. Relaxed café style setting with hymns, prayers, testimony and cake.

**Friday 27 October – Le Cercle Français** – 19:30 - 21:30 at Church House, 59 Church Street, RG4 8AX. For those who are learning French, love France and for French nationals. Admission £5 welcome drink included. Email: [readingcerclefrancais@gmail.com](mailto:readingcerclefrancais@gmail.com)

**Saturday 28 & Sunday 29 October – Halloween Trail** – 11:00-16:00 at Caversham Court Gardens. Visit the gardens during daylight hours and encounter ghosts, witches, weird creatures and nature spirits, all made from recycled and found materials. Free entry but trail guides will be available for £1 cash donation.



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# WHITE BRYONY

**F**OR OCTOBER 2011, I was writing a piece about another plant, similar in appearance and habit, but botanically unrelated, the Black Bryony. For me their names bring to mind my feelings, around 70 years ago, on spotting, in the newsagent's window, a little book entitled 'I-Spy Wild Fruits and Fungi'. It had a coloured cover, but only some of the pages were in colour. Post-war austerity still held sway, and the book cost one shilling. Others in the series, all in black and white, cost sixpence. How much I wanted that book! In the end, mother was prevailed upon, it was taken out of the window and handed to me.

The I-Spy books, published by the now-defunct daily paper, The News Chronicle, encouraged children to note down where and when they saw the various things depicted and, when they'd seen everything, to send the book off to the newspaper offices in Bouverie Street, London (a very distant place – I didn't know anyone who'd been there), in exchange for an I-Spy badge. The book turned out to be particularly frustrating, because I never found everything, including the two plants called Bryony, so the book was never sent off, and I still have it.

**...one of the attractions of Reading...**

There was just no-one to explain to me how some plants required a particular kind of soil to thrive, and that others did not grow as far north as where we lived. One of the attractions of coming to live in Reading for me was that I could easily get to see the missing plants.

The name Bryony comes from the Greek and Latin names given by the old herbalists, and first appears in Old English around 1000 A.D. Both Bryonies climb around in hedgerows, thickets and scrub, and have berries which turn red in the autumn. But whereas the Black Bryony has heart-shaped leaves, the White Bryony has leaves which are lobed, and has tendrils to help it climb. There seems to be no obvious reason why one should be Black and the other White, apart from differentiation.

This summer, a friend in our local pub told me that he'd found a vine growing in his hedge. I was a bit sceptical so asked him to take a picture on his smartphone and send it to me. It was unmistakably White Bryony, so I warned him that it has a big fleshy root, which is notoriously difficult to get rid of. Though it's a member of the cucumber family, all of it is poisonous.

From ancient times, around the Mediterranean, strange beliefs

have surrounded the Mandrake plant, with its fleshy rootstock supposedly shaped like a human child. In this country, up until the late 19th century, there are records of unscrupulous people digging up the roots of White Bryony, carving them to look like babies, and selling them as Mandrake roots, to promote fertility in women. This led to the White Bryony sometimes being called the Woman Drake, while the Black Bryony was the Mandrake!



## White Bryony

*photo Happy Wanderer*

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# Puzzle Corner

## The Challenge by Rachel

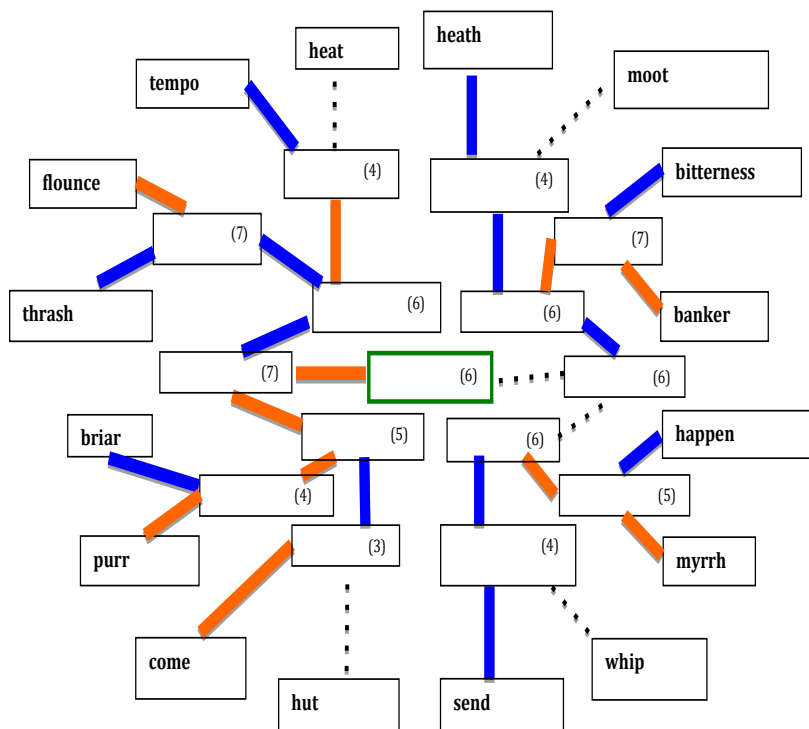
**WORD PUZZLE**

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

## Rhyme

Letter change . . . . .

## Meaning



**Answers on page 15**

## GARDEN VISITORS

Can you find 22 garden insects in the grid?

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

Ant  
Aphid  
Cockchafer  
Cranefly  
Cricket  
Damselfly  
Dragonfly  
Earwig  
Gnat  
Grasshopper  
Hornet

Hoverfly  
Ladybird  
Lilybeetle  
Mayfly  
Mosquito  
Sawfly  
Stagbeetle  
Thrip  
Vine weevil  
Wasp  
Woodlouse



# The Changing Face of Caversham – Part 2

by Francis Serjeant



St Martin's Precinct at night

photo Vadim Gurevych

**M**OVING FORWARD from August's Caversham Bridge article, which ended in 1922, we reach 1972. Whilst there were a few Caversham changes between these two dates, the majority of shop types could have fitted comfortably at either date. However, Prospect Street in 1972 included a swimming pool installation company and a company selling X-ray equipment. One major physical change was the construction of St Martin's Precinct; shops here were first listed as trading in the 1970 Kelly directory. Two shops I frequently visit – Caversham Homecrafts and the Oxfam shop - were trading by 1972. I had not realised their longevity.

With spot survey checks 50 years apart, I found changes occurring between these dates could be missed. A major example was discovering Caversham's second cinema – the Glendale – whilst researching the history of the Caversham Electric Cinema of 1911. The Glendale was situated opposite what is now Waitrose. Its relatively brief life span, from 1938-58, meant that it was not recorded in the 1922 or 1972 directories.

In December 2022, I did a street survey to discover significant Caversham changes compared with 1972. The first thing that stood out was the absence of banks. Less than 10 years ago, it would be inconceivable for many of us that Caversham would lose all its local branches. It is ironic that a number of local pubs, which also have major problems surviving in these challenging economic conditions, remain open. As mentioned in the first article, several of them have a long history, making them, in fact, the longest continuous businesses in Caversham.

The survey showed several striking differences to the shops and services recorded in 1972. In addition to the increase in the numbers of hairdressers and barbers, personal adornment is provided by tattoo parlours and nail bars. Residents have become much more adventurous in eating out. In 1972, apart from a grill house offering kebabs and two Chinese restaurants in Prospect Street, cuisine choices were resolutely British. Now, with the increased choice of cuisine, together with the sheer number of outlets, Caversham offers a world culinary journey.

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## WHAT'S NEW ON THE DECK..?

by Elestr Lee



IN THE past few weeks, a new independent store has opened in St Martin's Precinct – Pop Classics, which sells new and second-hand vinyl LPs and singles, as well as striking pop posters.

The shop is managed by Damian Jones, a long-time music enthusiast and record expert, who has been selling vinyl and music memorabilia online for two decades. When we popped in a couple of days after the official opening there was quite a buzz!

"We decided to open the shop on the Thursday to give ourselves a couple of days to sort out any issues before the weekend," Damian's wife Martina told us. "But there is already a lot of interest. We're very pleased with St Martin's Precinct – there is somewhere to park as well as other interesting stores nearby to explore. I previously worked in the area, so we know it well and are very happy to be here!"

For contact details and more information about Pop Classics, see their advert on page 15.



Browsing the new store

photo P Chatfield

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Garage roof solar panels

photo P Chatfield

**F**OR YEARS we have been thinking about installing solar panels to generate electricity for our house. When our neighbours signed up to have them fitted to their house, we finally took the plunge and paid for a survey, only to be told our house roof is unsuitable. But, as I looked out over our garage, I thought they might work there. It turned out the roof faced east and west and was well situated to generate solar power.

But why should we act now? In the last 18 months, the cost of electricity and gas has rocketed, and they are unlikely to come down significantly. We also wanted to play our own small part in tackling the causes of climate change and to increase our energy self-sufficiency. Added

# A lightbulb moment by Phil Chatfield

to this, technological improvements in the efficiency of the panels, better installation design and battery developments mean solar energy can meet an increased proportion of household use. Any excess electricity can either be sold to an energy company or used to provide hot water. And for the increasing number of people with electric vehicles, the electricity can be used to charge the car battery.

One other important factor is the increasing number of qualified and experienced local installers. Having spoken to friends about their experiences, we decided we would find a local company to do the work rather than some of those from further afield. At the suggestion of a friend, we contacted a local company who undertook a survey and provided a quote for a system, which they installed in a day in August. Dan Van Der Kemp, from the company Generate Energy, said, "Solar panels can be installed and effective on roofs which face east and west, as well as those facing south". Although accreditation of the installer is not mandatory, he emphasised the benefits of using Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) registered contractors.

Repayment periods for these systems have reduced because of increased energy costs, and the savings on energy bills can be significant. It would be interesting to hear from any of our readers about their experiences. Contact [editors@cavershambridge.org](mailto:editors@cavershambridge.org)



Drone shot of solar panels

photo D Van Der Kemp



## Cooling Shade

by Tricia Marcouse

THIS JULY saw the highest world air temperatures since regular recording began in the 19th century, and the meteorological guys anticipate that the current El Niño event will give the world another two years of world record temperatures before things cool down a little. We've been lucky this summer in Northern Europe, whilst much of southern Europe burned, but such luck can't last. Now is the time to plan for shade to cool both the house and parts of the garden.

The press and radio have been full of the well-being impacts of nature, whether deep in the country or sitting in an urban park or garden, but no-one (man or nature) benefits from a roasting.

Trees and shrubs with small leaves, or which can be easily pruned to an open structure, will give dappled shade in the garden, allowing for underplanting around a seating area and perhaps a structure for honeysuckle to twine up and perfume the air. Things like rowans, birches, shrub cotoneasters, purple hazel and witch hazel will all grow fairly quickly to a useful height, as well as providing food sources to increase biodiversity.

Deciduous trees and shrubs are the best choices for shading the house in summer and letting most of the



Witch Hazel

photo F Smith

winter light and sun in. But you might prefer to have something like a trio of wigwam structures covered in sweet peas, runner beans or other annual climbers, (and having them near to the house makes it much easier to keep them watered during hosepipe bans). You don't need a continuous barrier of vegetation blocking all views of the garden, but aim for some planting to the south and south-west of windows to reduce the heat gain during the hottest parts of the day.



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# GETTING ROOTS

BY LES COOPER



I WAS delighted when, in May, one of my favourites flowered beautifully in my shambolic garden. It was Anchusa 'Loddon Royalist'. There are a couple of reasons why I like it. Firstly, the colour; it has lovely intense



Anchusa 'Loddon Royalist'

photo E Cooper

deep-blue flowers, and am I right in thinking we men always like blue? It blooms beautifully in spring and, with a bit of deadheading, you can have a second flush of flowers later.

The other reason I like to grow it is because it was raised 50 years ago by Tommy Carlile. The more ancient of you will recall the Carlile Nursery, once situated on the Twyford roundabout along the London Road, where Tommy raised a number of interesting hardy perennials. As I have mentioned many times before, he was involved with the Delphinium Society but sadly I never met him, as he died in 1950. His daughter, Wendy, continued running the nursery and, later, Eunice and I met her and bought an Anchusa 'Loddon Royalist' plant.

### ...not prone to disease...

Anchusa is suitable for most kinds of garden, be they wildlife, cottage or simply borders. They don't mind the soil you plant them in, as long as it is not water-logged, and they grow to about 18-24 inches high. They don't appear to be particularly prone to any pests or disease, except perhaps a touch of mildew.

Now we come to the nub of this article; the downside is that Anchusa are not very long-lived, judging by my experience, so they need to be propagated. The way to do this is to take

root cuttings in late winter, when the plants are dormant. You have to dig up the whole plant to cut off some of its roots – it can be re-planted.

Making and potting your cuttings is best done in your greenhouse, shed or garage. You will need some pots about 4-5 inches diameter and some compost to put the cuttings in. I use cutting compost with a generous handful of vermiculite mixed in. Fill the pots with compost but don't pack it down too tightly.

Reject very old, thick pieces of root and the very young, thin straggly ones. Using a sharp knife, cut off a piece of root about 2 inches long. The roots are going to be inserted vertically into the compost and, to make sure you have the piece the right way up, cut the bottom end at an angle. The five-inch pot will take about five cuttings. Push them into the compost with the top of the roots just under the surface.

Store the pots in a greenhouse or frame. In the New Year, the roots will sprout, but this doesn't mean the shoots have roots yet. Wait until you see roots showing in the drainage hole of the pot. Then you can separate the cuttings and pot them up singly. When their roots have filled their new pot, you can plant them out in the garden.

**You will be so proud of yourself!**



## Plant of the month – taking stock

by Louise Hampden

HERE DOES not seem to be a particular moment these days when summer turns into autumn; we now have the meteorological dates and the astronomical dates to contend with. If I went with the meteorological dates, autumn would have started a month ago, which seems a bit early to me. As a gardener, I much prefer to go for the astronomical dates which are more closely linked to the growth and habits of plants.

Astronomical autumn begins on 23 September this year, so by October we are officially 'autumnal' in the garden. But the party is not over yet by any means. Our autumn weather starts later and later each year. In October, the soil is still warm, some plants are still going strong and could continue to bloom for at least a few more weeks, and the leaf colours of autumn are weeks away.

It's a great opportunity to take stock of plants which have done well and those that haven't. Because the soil is still warm, you can move and divide summer perennials to take advantage of the warmth and rain and get their roots

into the soil before the cold weather really does arrive.

If you grow ornamental grasses, this is their season to show off. Their flower heads add a dimension of movement and catch the low autumnal light and are perfectly paired with asters. I grow Miscanthus sinensis 'Morning Light' with Aster 'Little Carlow', both of which have been in my garden for years. The aster has even started to seed around too.

I have found Phlox seem to have done well, both in the very dry summer of 2022 and this year's rather wet summer. Phlox are very hardy and will grow in sun and shade. It's a keeper and I'm going to add more varieties. I rather like the look of Phlox paniculata 'Franz Schubert'.

Another garden stalwart is the white Japanese anemone 'Honorine Jobert'. I have a host of them in my north-facing front garden. I also have a pink variety 'September Charm', and both never fail to throw up their bright flowers and light up the shade for months on end. They can spread but they are certainly not invasive and



Phlox 'Franz Schubert'

are easy to move around. I'm going to move a clump of the pink ones to another border, which will make a space for Phlox.

Don't forget that you can also sow sweet peas in pots this month to grow on for early flowers next year. The party is certainly not over yet!

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# Community Connections

Story and photo by Fred Smith – This month we meet Debbie Pettet



Debbie, Dolly and the smock

I HAVE often wondered about the signs for Dolly Rose Vintage on the corner of North Street and Prospect Street. So, following a chance meeting with a mutual friend, I arranged to meet Debbie Pettet at the store.

The store is open most Fridays and Saturdays, or by appointment, and is an Aladdin's Cave of antiques and vintage clothes. It was there I met Debbie and her new puppy, Dolly, who was full of energy. Debbie caught the bug for trading when her brother-in-law asked her to stand in for him on his Portobello Road market stall while he was on holiday, and has never looked back.

She has been trading in Caversham for about 10 years, her premises in North Street the latest in a series of sites she has occupied over the years, including the Caversham Emporium on Bridge Street. Most of her sales are at events in London, with regular FrockMe! Vintage Fashion Fairs in both Chelsea and Kensington Town Halls. As one of the top dealers in vintage clothes, she has been

called on to provide clothes for theatre productions, films – most recently 1970's clothes for a film about Bob Marley – and even fashion designers. The Fairs in London attract the rich and famous seeking something unique, and Debbie remembers Yoko Ono in particular.

In a quiet moment you may find Debbie upcycling an old cabinet or an item of clothing, like the French linen peasant's smock from about 1900 in the photo, to which she has sewn fragments of 1930s embroidery.

Let's find out a bit more about Debbie:

## How long have you lived in RG4?

More than 30 years. We moved to Rosehill House in Emmer Green first, and four years later to central Caversham. Our children have grown up now, and my mum is next door, so we don't plan to move.

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

I do miss Cara. Pre-loved clothes are my passion

and my business, so I enjoy visiting Carousel Clothing on Prospect Street and the Thames Hospice store, which is always so well presented. The Angel Bar is good for a drink and Meena, who runs it, is always welcoming. And the Griffin is great for a meal.

## How do you think we can all be eco-friendlier in RG4?

By giving old items a second chance! Upcycling tired furniture and making imaginative use of old clothes keeps them out of the waste stream and reduces demand for new products.

## Being part of a community has many benefits. how would you strengthen our sense of community?

Prospect Street can feel a bit out on a limb, rather than a part of the centre of Caversham. The recent hanging basket initiative by Caversham Traders' Association has brightened it up, but we need to make it feel more of a 'gateway' to the village.

## If you could bring anything to Caversham, an event, an experience, a shop, what would it be?

A regular antiques market held in the Chester Street carpark. It would also be good for empty premises to be used for pop-up shops, providing a home for local craft producers.

You can follow Debbie on her Facebook Page at [www.facebook.com/debbiepettet1](https://www.facebook.com/debbiepettet1).

## Meet the Maker

Pam Chatfield chats with **Charlotte Ruffle** of Grove Cottages Arts and Crafts

HAVE YOU stumbled across a pretty row of cottages in Emmer Green connecting Surley Row and St Barnabas Road? Grove Cottages (RG4 8RB) is an attractive little road, just wide enough for a car but with hardly any traffic. And on Sundays in the summer (weather permitting) you will find a lovely display of crafts in the front garden of number 12, the home of Charlotte Ruffle.

Charlotte has enjoyed being creative from childhood, saying she has been "crafting for years". A lifetime resident of Emmer Green, Charlotte studied Art and Design and 3D studies at Highdown, then went on to do a GNVQ and then an HND in business and marketing at Reading College. For the past three years, Charlotte has turned her passion into a business, Grove Cottages Arts and Crafts. Creating her items at home has enabled her to be a stay-at-home mum looking after her son, Emrys.

Charlotte's work is bright; her stall zings with colour. You can find earrings, necklaces, pin badges and bracelets to brighten up any outfit. From beautiful butterflies to novelty designs in the form of Lego bricks or glasses of lemon fruit tea, Charlotte's items are fun and sure to make you - and others - smile. She has plenty of items children would love.

## ...taking on commissions...

As well as creating these bright and cheerful accessories, Charlotte is an accomplished artist. She loves painting wildlife and has, by word of mouth, widened her business to take commissions for animal portraits with the aim of expanding her portrait and art work. You may catch some of her work in The Bite Café, Emmer Green, and can see more on her social media platforms (details right).

It was lovely to meet Charlotte and discover yet another local creative person and small business in RG4. In addition to her pop-up stall in her front garden, you can find Charlotte's work in her Etsy shop:



Charlotte displaying her wares

photo P Chatfield

[www.etsy.com/uk/shop/grovecottagescrafts](https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/grovecottagescrafts)

She hopes to be one of the exhibitors at the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

She can be contacted by email [grovecottagesartsandcrafts@yahoo.com](mailto:grovecottagesartsandcrafts@yahoo.com)

You can follow her on Instagram [@grovecottagescrafts](https://www.instagram.com/grovecottagescrafts),

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# STRIKING A CHORD AT FESTIVAL OPENER

For the first time, a guitarist will be performing in this autumn's music festival. **Gerard Cousins** explained to **Elestr Lee** how he has carved out his niche, arranging works by some of the greatest living composers so they can be heard on guitar



**W**HEN CAVERSHAM'S Adrienne Black was making plans for this October's Festival of Music and Art, which is taking place at St Andrew's Church and Queen Anne's School, she came up with a decidedly Celtic theme. The festival opens on Friday 20 October with a recital by Brecon-born Gerard Cousins – the first time a solo guitar has featured in the regular concert series. However, Gerard won't have too far to travel, since he has been living in the area for the past 14 years.

"I came to live here as my wife is a climate scientist at Reading University," Gerard revealed. Having grown up in Brecon, where he first started learning guitar in his early teens, he still travels back to Wales regularly, and has made

several of his recordings in a small church in Cantref, near his childhood home.

Having learned first piano then guitar, as well as singing with Brecon Cathedral Choir, Gerard studied music in Leeds, where he had the opportunity to take a year abroad in a conservatoire. He chose to study at Enschede in the Netherlands, one of the country's largest music academies. "It had a brilliant guitar department, and there was a very good guitar scene in the country. I studied composition, and practised my guitar for nine hours a day!" Gerard recalled.

"My teacher assessed me as musical, but said I needed to improve my technique. There were plenty of performance opportunities, and also we did 'commando training' where one



student would perform, while your colleagues would do anything they could to put you off – it was very good training!

"The guitar is such a quiet instrument that nowadays I often use an amp to help the sound to carry. But I like my recitals to begin in silence, and to end in silence."

After he finished university, where he studied sound recording as part of his degree, Gerard spent time in London and set up his own record label, Galles Music. CDs have included his recordings of Spanish classical guitar and Welsh folk music, as well as an album of his own compositions. In 2017, he decided to arrange piano compositions by Philip Glass for guitar. "This involved coming up with new techniques so, for example, I had to re-tune my guitar strings to be able to perform the music on guitar.

**...more than a million downloads...**

"I made a recording of these arrangements in Monmouthshire, and then I sent it to Philip Glass – and I was delighted when his management asked me if they could release the album, *Escape*, on his own label, Orange Mountain Music. This has done really well on Apple and Spotify, with more than a million downloads."

While Gerard isn't able to share the arrangements he has made of Philip Glass' music with other guitarists for copyright reasons, he has recently released his second album, *The Poet Acts*, which also includes transcriptions of Glass' piano music for guitar. Now a recognised exponent of the music of Philip Glass – he has presented a lecture recital at Ohio's Bowling Green State University on the subject – he has also become interested in arranging works by the composer Eric Whitacre for guitar. "I first heard Eric Whitacre's song *This Marriage* sung

as a surprise gift for me at my own wedding. I approached Eric's management with the idea of making guitar versions of his songs; Eric loved the idea, and suggested which pieces I should try. We made an EP of four songs arranged for guitar, and this has been streamed five million times!"

Having carved out a niche as a performer of contemporary composers' works arranged for his own instrument, Gerard's recitals typically include his transcriptions as well as some of his own compositions based on his native Welsh folk tunes. When Adrienne invited Gerard to perform at the forthcoming festival in Caversham, they discussed his suggested programme in depth over a cup of tea – and it can be revealed that the recital will cover not only Philip Glass and Eric Whitacre but also arrangements of Icelandic composer Ólafur Arnalds' music and a tribute to the jazz musician John McLaughlin – clearly, we are in for an eclectic evening!

Gerard is very much looking forward to taking part in the Caversham festival – musicians are always delighted to meet their audiences – and having taken a peek at the venue beforehand, Gerard commented, "I think St Andrew's Church is perfect for the guitar."



Find out more:  
[www.gerardcousins.com](http://www.gerardcousins.com)



Gerard (above) has now released several albums, including *Escape* (top). Working in his studio (above right), and performing live (below right).

Photo credits, clockwise: Laila Cousins, Paz Vaira, Michael Smythe, Dave Griffiths, Paz Vaira



# The Gorge Café, Caversham Road



Drawing by Janina Maher

[www.janinamaher.artweb.com](http://www.janinamaher.artweb.com)

AT THE time of writing, it's a few days before the invasion of thousands of young people here to enjoy the Reading Festival. Local businesses are making preparations for the sudden increase in demand and the Gorge Café is no exception. A favourite breakfast venue for many – popular with workmen fuelling up for the day with a generous plate of 'Full English', it is equally popular with the festival-goers. The staff are preparing for three days of frantically busy mornings, with the café packed out by young folk seeking refreshment and nourishment before the music starts.

The Gorge is a well-known landmark on the roundabout at the end of Caversham Road, and Janina Maher has captured the decorative façade with its fretwork fringe looking something like a Swiss chalet. The interior is equally memorable, with a sculpted ceiling resembling the rock roof of a cave, but painted in bright colours.

The address is 227 Caversham Road, and a hundred years ago the site was occupied by 'refreshment rooms' called the Pagoda run by Mary Jane Clark.

The present owner, Don Lewis, remembers going to the Pagoda as a child in the 1940s for posh afternoon tea. By the 1960s he had bought the business and re-opened the café with a new name – 'The Viking'. In the 1960s and 1970s it was known as a 'bikers' café' popular with 'Ton up boys and girls' also known as 'rockers or greasers'. A contributor to a Berkshire history website recalled their Uncle Arthur used to do the cooking and their Aunt Connie kept the rockers in order, and they lived in a flat above the café. The basement cellar was filled with fruit machines, and no doubt a Jukebox played the latest hits. Don still owns the café, and a number of others in Wiltshire, Dorset and Somerset – two are also called The Gorge and others are named the Friar Tuck and the John Peel.

Janina has produced two 2024 calendars featuring her characterful artwork, one for Caversham and another for Reading. These are on sale at Fourbears Books and through her website, <https://janinamaher.artweb.com>. Her book, *A Stroll Through Caversham* is also available.



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## First Impressions Matter

# Welcoming in a new season

by Laura Harmsworth



**A**UTUMN IS my favourite time of year – there's something about the change in smell, the beautiful colours, and the crisp mornings. The world transforms before our eyes...and it's a good time to transform your CV and job search.

As the trees shed their leaves, read through your CV and take out anything old and which is no longer aligned to your current career pursuits. For example, take off your school education if you have years' of experience, and reduce content of roles from 10+ years ago (unless relevant to the role you're applying to).

With harvest season commencing, it's time to reap what you've sown in your career. Instead of listing tasks and responsibilities, focus on the

fruitful outcomes you've achieved. Did you reduce costs by 20%, or save 15 hours a week by streamlining a process?

To help you with this, think about positive feedback received, awards, targets achieved, and processes or initiatives you have implemented or actioned that have saved the company money/time/resources or that have increased profits/customers/sales/enquiries, and any challenges you have overcome.

As leaves fall, branches are visible - a good reminder for you to branch out (network). Attend industry events to connect with others in your field, update your LinkedIn profile and engage with your network.

Just as leaves carpet the ground and the beautiful colours capture your eye, keywords must carpet your CV and capture the eye of a recruiter (and any automated Applicant Tracking System – ATS). Read through the job advert, highlight the key words and skills, and ensure you have these scattered

throughout your CV. Don't just throw in the key words at random, ensure they make sense and are backed up with evidence (achievements).

When walking through woods with all the leaves on the floor, take a detailed look at the myriad of colours and the different shaped leaves, and marvel at nature! With this same attention to detail, it's imperative that your CV is error free. Run Spellcheck, Grammarly and Word's Read Aloud, print off your CV and read through it, read it backwards, and ask someone else to read it.

You can follow Laura on:

[www.facebook.com/CavershamCVWriting](https://www.facebook.com/CavershamCVWriting)

on LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/in/lauraharmsworth](https://www.linkedin.com/in/lauraharmsworth)

website: [www.cavershamcvwriting.co.uk](http://www.cavershamcvwriting.co.uk)

Email: [contact@cavershamcvwriting.co.uk](mailto:contact@cavershamcvwriting.co.uk)



text and photos Ruth Wright

**W**HAT WAS going on in the Clematis just outside our kitchen window? It was a pigeon bringing twigs to another pigeon, safely nestled in the thick growth. Most of the time there was a bird in the nest and, very occasionally, it was empty. That was on 14 June.

Then, when I looked closely at the nest on 23 July, I saw there was a fledgling, which kept very still. Whenever I looked in the nest, a beady eye stared right back at me. And the day after, there it was, sitting on the patio.

*...frantically towards the garage...*

One day not long after, two adult pigeons were perched on our pergola, and the grey fledgling was sitting nervously on the handrail to the steps leading down to the garage door. It was looking toward the birds on the pergola and dipped up and down a few times before attempting to fly toward them. Sadly, it

seemed the fledgling's wings weren't strong enough, and it misjudged the height of the pergola. In a panic it headed frantically toward the garage, I guess hoping to land on the roof, which was lower than the pergola. But it mis-judged and crashed into the brick wall, falling out of my view, wings flapping, in amongst the bags of compost and stacked flower pots. One of the pigeons sitting on the pergola immediately flew down toward it. All was quiet and I resisted going to look in case I caused further panic. Thankfully, later on I saw the fledgling back in its nest.

I've watched 'our' pigeon grow into a needy fledgling and a gawky 'teenager'. I saw its grey feathers gaining more colours and its confidence to fly increasing day by day. In the early days I could get very close to it, but I knew the 'show was over' when the now sleek-looking pigeon would take flight when I got just that little bit too near.



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# Wellbeing *with Ami Roy*

## Snack Time!

**A** SNACK IS a very small meal between big meals that helps quell our hunger. And a movement snack is similar – a very small amount of movement to give our bodies a break from inactivity. The idea behind movement snacks is to counteract the downsides of not moving for long periods of time, such as muscle stiffness, decreased circulation, decreased energy levels, and reduced productivity.

By ‘snacking’ throughout the day (with movement, that is), we can improve blood flow, decrease joint stiffness, increase energy levels, enhance focus, and promote overall wellbeing, largely counteracting the effects of sitting.

One of the secrets to healthy living – and having a healthy body in general – is to move often. It doesn’t need to be much. Even one minute of any type of movement counts towards better health, experts say.

The goal is to find ways to move our bodies and to engage in physical activity, even if we have limited time or a busy schedule. So whether it’s a short stretching routine at the desk, taking the stairs instead of the elevator, or doing a few minutes of high-intensity exercise during a break, movement snacks provide an opportunity to prioritise physical and musculo-skeletal health and break up the monotony of a sedentary day. Perhaps the main reason people don’t incorporate more movement snacks into their day is because they think it’s not going to do anything. But new research shows that the benefits of regular exercise are

cumulative – it all adds up. We don’t have to exercise for one long, continuous session. As summer turns to autumn, it will help to remember that even a few minutes of physical activity can make a significant difference in how our minds and bodies feel and function.

We can sneak short bouts of movement into our day and see the benefits, including:

- Enhanced cardiovascular health. Movement snacks that get our heart rate up, like brisk walking, jogging in place, or jumping jacks, provide cardiovascular benefits that help strengthen the heart and lower the risk of heart disease.
- Improved muscle strength. Research shows that resistance exercises, such as squats, lunges, desk push-ups, and even walking can help improve muscle tone and strength.
- Better flexibility and joint mobility. Stretching exercises such as reaching for our toes, can improve flexibility and joint mobility. This can help prevent muscle imbalances and reduce the risk of injury.
- Reduced pain and stiffness. Staying in the same position for too long can contribute to aches and pains.
- Anxiety relief. Doing something that gets the heart rate up for just 30 seconds has been proven to release ‘feel-good’ chemicals that help create new connections in our brain.

### THE CHALLENGE SOLUTIONS:

(From left to right from the top)

beat, moor, trounce, rancour, defeat, anchor, conquer, **conker**, canker, whirr, tanker, burr, occur, hum, ship



Search for the star  
The journey seems so far  
Lightning illuminates the storm.  
Now the rain feels warm.  
Then Shine like the sun,  
A new spring has sprung.  
Romance of the candlelight  
This time feels so right.  
Guilty beam of torchlight  
Stealing out at night.  
But in the cold light of dawn  
Look around the glitter is gone.

In the evening shade  
Don’t let hope fade.  
Tempted by the neon sign.  
Looking for more than fine  
Caught in the limelight,  
Paralysed by stage fright.  
Red light you should say no!!  
But something makes you go.  
Every new sunset.  
Refills a heart with regret.

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