

Caversham Bridge

A brighter prospect



by Fred Smith

IT'S ALL change in Prospect Street, in the centre of Caversham. Over the last year, several businesses have moved into empty premises on the street, revitalising the area. We highlight some of them here.

Bascuda moved into the shop adjacent to Walton's the jeweller at the end of November. They specialise in ceramics from Turkey, providing a very colourful display of both everyday and decorative items.

Nathan's Nibbles have relocated from their premises opposite Waitrose to the former flower shop, serving their renowned English breakfasts, sandwiches, lunches, and tasty cakes. They are making the most of the extra space the bright new premises gives them.

Further up the street, next to Fourbears Books, is the Angel Bar, which opened in 2022. It is a table-served cocktail bar, serving a range of drinks and charcuterie boards, with most items sourced from local suppliers. They also host regular open mic evenings and other special events.

...a splash of colour...

Clay's Indian Restaurant has moved from London Street in Reading to take the place of The Baron Cadogan. They bring a splash of colour and a taste of authentic Hyderabadi food to the street, and will be open from morning to night for breakfast, coffee, lunches or evening meals (we featured the owners, Nandana and Sharat Syamala, in our September edition).

Next door, the long empty premises which were formerly the home of Jennings the butchers, has been refurbished and split into two units. The Prospect Street Dentist Practice has taken part of the site for a suite of additional surgeries to cater for the increase in demand for a local dental treatment. One of the dentists, local resident Darragh Buckley, showed me round the new facilities as the final preparations were being made for opening on 5 December. They include a state-of-the-art x-ray machine, as well as surgeries for dentists and hygienists. The rooms are bright and airy, with rooflights in each. Their existing surgery across the road will remain in use, but the new premises feature level access from the Chester Street carpark at the rear, suitable for wheelchairs and the less able – a real asset to our community.

Looking forward to longer days

by Phil Chatfield

JANUARY CAN be something of an anti-climax, but hopefully this edition of the Caversham Bridge will brighten up the dark days. Our first paper of the year has been expanded to 20 pages to enable us to report on events early in December.

Our regular writers include Les Cooper and Louise Hampden on gardening matters, looking back on the last year and forward to the next (p12), and Happy Wanderer with the story behind the name of Darell Road (p7). In addition to our Creative Caversham feature on artist Helen Ridley (p16), Elestr Lee has also written about the Christmas Gala at St Andrew's Church Hall on 4 December (p15) and news of the Rabble Theatre (p4).

The weeks before Christmas were busy in our area, with a Christmas Market and late-night opening in Caversham

(p14), as well as the annual Green Christmas Tree sale in Caversham Court gardens (p15). We report on The Pride of Reading Awards, held on 2 December, which featured two winners from Caversham this year (p10 and p11).

The Warren and District Residents' Association has launched a photographic competition to help better understand what local people value about their area (p9), and we have our regular report on planning matters from the Caversham and District Residents' Association (p6).

We have two of Janina Maher's paintings this month, with a brand-new illustration showing Walton's the Jeweller and the new Bascuda shop on Prospect Street (above), as well as her drawing of The Spice Oven for our Local Scene article (p17).

We wish all our readers a happy and healthy new year and, as always, we hope you enjoy reading your trusted local paper. We welcome your comments and contributions – write to us at editors@cavershambridge.org

INSIDE

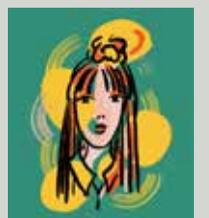
Ukraine not forgotten – p4



St Andrews Gala – p15



Creative Caversham Helen Ridley – p16



IT'S NOT FAIR!

SITTING IN my chair on a cool November afternoon, I paused to consider what might be interesting to share with you. Considering what I write will not be read until the January edition of Caversham Bridge, I thought for a brief moment I might try writing something motivational about New Year's resolutions. Quickly, I decided it would be rather a difficult task, when you bear in mind that the majority of these resolutions are given up by early February. No, I must write something achievable for us all. So, even if we don't have complete success, we won't feel too bad about picking up where we left off and trying again – without feeling we have failed.

The strange thing about this November is the fact that the football World Cup is ongoing and, as I write, the final is some way off. But, by the time you are reading this piece, it will be all over. There seems to have been some debate on TV over whether the refereeing is consistent. The chief complaints often come from the teams who feel things have gone against them, along with a huge sense of injustice. 'It's not fair,' they cry, 'We should have had a penalty'; or 'They should have got a yellow/red card'.

If football is not your thing, don't worry, I won't say any more on the subject. Of course, there are many areas of life where we might want to say 'It's not fair'. The reality is, throughout the huge range of activities in the world - pastimes, the workplace and education - it can often be said 'Life is not fair'.

We do not always reap what we sow - and neither do others. Innocent people get hurt and the bullies get away with being bad. This has been the case since the days of Adam.



Talking Point – by Colin Baker

Our natural response to this reality is to protest. It's not fair when people will not forgive us, or they take more than they give, or they don't want us the way we want them. These things are not fair, but our protest is a good thing to experience because it helps us to identify hurtful things and people. Why is that good? Well, it becomes a warning sign that something negative is going on so that we can understand and take action.

What we must not allow ourselves to do is to be always complaining or protesting in our relationships. Don't let 'It's not fair' become your mantra. Don't allow your protesting to define who you are. Don't be defined by all the things that you are against. If your battle is in demanding perfect justice and fairness, you will always be dissatisfied and are more likely be preoccupied with getting just treatment than loving and being loved. The ultimate solution is to go beyond justice and fairness and live in grace instead. Give more than you should. Do not give until it is fair and then stop. Don't stop at doing your 'half'. Be a force for justice and fairness in your relationships, but don't require that the balance sheet be even for you to be a loving person.

'That's not fair, Colin', I hear some say. But hear this, no couples have ever said that they don't love the other person until they are fair with them first. Just imagine that the creator of the universe went far beyond fair. 'For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God'. 1 Peter, Chapter 3, verse 18.

I am glad that God decided to go above and beyond for the people of the world and for me. It's not fair, but we are blessed that God desires relationships with us as of first importance. Happy New Year!

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: 0118 947 9505 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 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.
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
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: 0118 947 2788 www.standrewscaversham.org

Current services

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

St Barnabas Emmer Green

David Howell (Churchwarden)
Email: churchwarden@saintbarnabas.org.uk

Current Services

1st, 2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays of the month at 9:30:
Parish Communion
1st Sunday of the month at 11:30: All Age Service
3rd Sunday of the month at 9:30: Service of the Word
Every Wednesday at 10:30: Midweek Communion

CAVERSHAM PARK CHURCH (LEP)

(United Reformed Church)
Contact: Dr Alison Johnston
Tel: 0118 947 5152 www.cavershamparkchurch.com

Current services

Sunday – 11:00 – Livestreaming on YouTube
Details on their web site at:
<https://cpvc.org.uk:5152/live-stream>

METHODIST CHURCH IN CAVERSHAM

Rev'd Martin Beukes, 72 Highmoor Rd.
Tel: 0118 947 2223 <https://cavhmc.org.uk>
Rev'd David Jenkins Tel: 0118 327 1592

Current services

Sunday – Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmoor Road – 10:30 – (also available on Zoom – email: martin.beukes@methodist.org.uk for details)
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

Current services

Sunday worship 10:30 each week, including groups for children and youth
Sermons are recorded and uploaded to 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

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 Dr Garrick Wilson
Tel: 0118 946 3009

ROMAN CATHOLIC

Our Lady and St Anne

Fr Joe McLoughlin, The Presbytery, 2 South View Avenue
Tel: 0118 947 1787 www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk

Current services

See their web site for services at:
www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk

St Michael Sonning Common

Fr Michael Sharkey, St Michaels, Sonning Common
Tel: 0118 972 3418

Following the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic, our churches are now open on a regular basis with no restrictions.. Most have a range of on-line services, house groups and social meetings, using Zoom and YouTube. For current information, see the websites 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 February 2023 issue should be submitted by 3 January and for the March 2023 edition by 1 February. These should be e-mailed to:

editors@cavershambridge.org

Dates for advertising copy are 3 January for the February 2023 issue and 1 February for the March issue. These should be e-mailed to: advertising@cavershambridge.org



First time performing in the Abbey ruins

by Elestr Lee

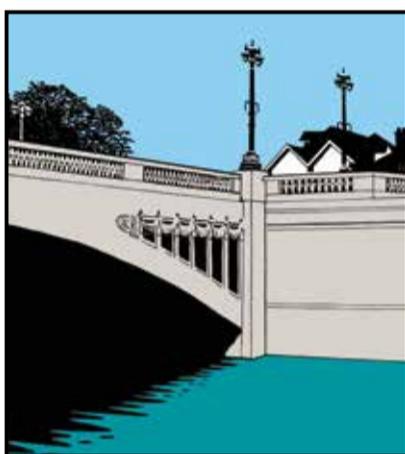
FRESH FROM moving in to the Stables at Caversham Court in 2022 – the new home for the Rabble theatre company – the group have recently learned they will receive a £100,000 Arts Council grant, which will enable them to stage playwright Beth Flintoff's Henry I in the ruins of the Abbey which Henry himself founded, in the summer.

"It will actually cost a lot more to put on the production, but with the Arts Council there is

no negotiation, so this is what we applied for. It will cover some of the costs, and also help us do lots of educational work in the community as well," Rabble director Toby Davies explained. "We are very pleased!"

The new play was first produced by the company in 2016, but this is the first time it will be performed in the Abbey ruins themselves, where it is believed Henry I himself is buried. "Although it is about an episode from history, in fact a lot of the themes are very contemporary," Toby said. "It deals with the negative experiences of women, and also examines how someone power-hungry can take people to war. We felt it had a lot of relevance to our modern day, and so did the Arts Council."

Henry I will take place at Reading Abbey from June 15 – July 1 2023.



Delivering the Caversham Bridge

Encouraging readers to pay online if possible – by The Editors

EVERY MONTH a team of around 90 volunteers distribute and deliver the Caversham Bridge in our area. Without their contribution, the paper could not continue. So we would like to take this opportunity at the start of the New Year to thank them for their service, to both the paper and our community.

One of their often less popular duties is the annual collection of subscriptions through the winter months. We have encouraged our readers to pay online if possible. However, we know many of our readers wish to continue to pay their subscription to their deliverer directly, so this option does remain.

Looking for volunteers

With such a large team, it is inevitable there will be those who wish to retire or who can no longer continue. We are currently looking for volunteers who could help with deliveries in the centre of Caversham (around St Martin's Precinct and Abbotsmead Place), in the St Barnabas area of Emmer Green, and in Hemdean Road around Caversham Primary School. In

most cases this involves delivering between 10 and 20 papers and takes around an hour a month.

If you live in any of these areas, or elsewhere in Caversham and Emmer Green, and could help with the deliveries once a month, please contact us at subscriptions@cavershambridge.org.

Subscribing online – a mystery

PLEASE MAKE sure you provide address details in the form of a postcode and house name or number if paying your subscription, eg RG48AX59. We have one mystery postal subscription paid on 7 November, initials Mrs NJJ. If you recognise this, please email the address for delivery to: editors@cavershambridge.org

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Pre-school and Pastors

text and photo by Virginia Cullura

AS AUTUMN came to an end, St Andrew's held its Autumn Tea Party, just squeezing it in before all the Christmas Fairs started. We invited all the local community to join us for tea, with delicious home-baked cakes. Very few people left empty-handed, either carrying prizes from the raffle and giant

tombola, or choice second-hand children's books and toys, or something from the excellent selection of fair trade goods on sale. It was a great opportunity to catch up with friends over a cup of tea - and be serenaded on the piano by Nigel Jones, the Vicar. The proceeds, more than £740, will be divided between St Andrew's Pre-school and Reading Street Pastors, who came to tea and told us about their invaluable work, helping in the streets of Reading on Friday and Saturday nights.



Caversham Methodist Church clothes collection

photo Pam Chatfield

by Phil Chatfield

IT IS NOW more than nine months since Russian forces invaded Ukraine. Many local windows still display the Ukrainian flag or blue and yellow bunting as a sign of support, but there are also many practical steps being taken. There have been sales to raise funds for the Red Cross and other agencies working there, and collections of food and clothing, which have been

taken in convoys to the border in Poland for onward delivery by Ukrainian volunteers. The latest such collection was assembled for transport at the end of November, with vans full of warm clothing and bedding destined to help people cope with the freezing weather and lack of power.

A number of local people have provided accommodation for Ukrainians locally, and the Methodist Church in Highmoor Road is running a regular coffee morning on Mondays for Ukrainian guests and their hosts. Children and young people from Ukraine are attending local schools and colleges, and some refugees have found work here, or are working remotely. Keti at the Geocafé, who we talked to for our May 2022 edition, has been providing training for some Ukrainians to help them work in the catering business here.

In our July edition we interviewed Caversham resident Mick Polleck, who had been seconded to work with the Reading Ukrainian Community Centre. The work of the Centre was recognised at the Pride of Reading Awards in early December, winning the Special Recognition award. Their citation said they had raised funds and coordinated donations of goods for Ukrainians and welcomed new refugees. They worked with the council and other voluntary and statutory agencies, demonstrating both dignity and passion. All of this was done by volunteers, enabling the wider Reading community to show its support to Ukraine and the Ukrainian community.

With no sign of an end of the fighting, the people of Ukraine will need our continuing support for some time.



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For your bookshelf....



by Alex Forbes

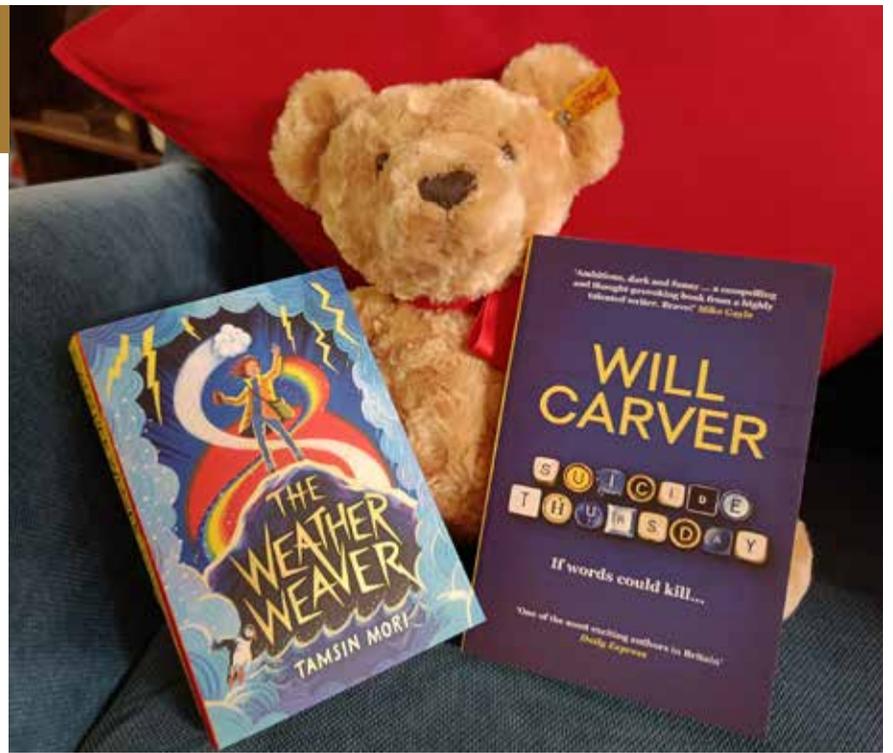
OUR FIRST choice is *The Weather Weaver*, by Tamsin Mori. The story follows Stella, as she learns that she can control the weather, although sometimes the weather can match her mood, whether Stella wants it to or not. It's a magical adventure story set in Shetland, with the story successfully projecting the beauty of Shetland from the page into the readers' imaginations. A perfect book for readers aged 9+.

The second book's title is a lot darker than the actual content of the book. *Suicide Thursday*, by Will Carver, is a funny book, as the reader joins Eli, who can't finish anything: his relationship, his novel, his job. When his best friend takes his own life, Eli is motivated like never before. It's an incredibly funny book, with Carver's usual style, and you will chuckle along the way. His originality and skill is in not glamourising what can be a dark subject, but in exploring it, and the influence people's actions can have on others, in a darkly funny and engaging way. Many of the characters will seem familiar to anyone who has worked in an office, as Carver has achieved perfection with their characteristics. Definitely a book to check out if you like something a little different.

Our book club will be starting in the next couple of months so we may see you there. Best wishes for the New Year and happy reading!

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

THE NIGHTS MAY be dark but that just gives us a great excuse to curl up and read a good book.



Are you sitting comfortably?

photo A Forbes

Happy second birthday to Alex and Fourbears Books! – The Editors

Reading Bach Choir in Caversham



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

by Kathy Munns

FOLLOWING OUR successful concert at St Andrew's in November, Reading Bach Choir (RBC) are hosting two more events in Caversham in January.

First, we would love you to come and sing with us! No, really - we are hosting a, 'Come and Sing' day on Saturday 14 January at Caversham Heights Methodist Church, to spend a day working on Mozart's Requiem – but with a difference. We will be studying a version completed by Mozart expert Robert Levin, rather than the more well-known version by Sussmeyer. Musicologist Lloyd Buck will highlight and explain the variations and guide us through the day and RBC Assistant Musical Director Nick Shaw will accompany us. Our Singing Days are a great way to get a taste of singing with the Reading Bach Choir, as well as being a thoroughly enjoyable way to spend a day. Everyone is welcome, no matter your singing ability. Registration is at 10:00, with an informal performance at 15:30, to which family and friends are warmly invited. Tickets cost £22 and must be booked in advance. This includes hire of the Levin version score and tea or coffee. Please bring your own lunch.

And secondly, our postponed concert, 'Clarinet and Cake' (see September's issue) has now been rescheduled for Saturday 28 January, at St Andrew's at 15:30. We are looking forward to hearing Janet Hilton wow us with her clarinet playing, accompanied by Nicholas Shaw. Janet is a renowned soloist and professor of clarinet at the Royal College of Music, as well as being a Reading Bach Choir alto! All tickets previously purchased remain valid, and include tea and cake after the recital.

Tickets for both events are available from the website www.readingbachchoir.org.uk.

Tickets for our next concert, on 11 February, will also be available for purchase here.



Janet Hilton

photo D Richardson



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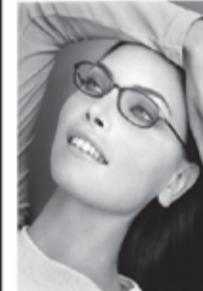


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WHAT'S ON in JANUARY

IF YOU have an event planned, please send details to editors@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/local-info/whats-on

Caversham Library opening: 09:00-17:00 Tuesday and Friday, 13:00 - 19:00 Thursday and 10:00-15:00 Saturday. Regular events such as *Rhymetime* are now being held again – see www.reading.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/all-libraries/caversham-library

Geo Café – Artists against homelessness, an ongoing and changing exhibition of art by local artists at Geo Café, Prospect Street. Sales support Launchpad Reading. Open daily except Tuesdays.

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

Mondays – *Little Lambs and You – Baby and Toddler Group* – 10:00-11:30 in term time – Caversham Baptist Church. www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk

Tuesdays – *Babies and Toddlers* – 10:00-11:30 – Gosbrook Road Methodist Church – term time

Tuesdays – *St John's Baby and Toddler Group* – 09:30-11:00 in term time – Caversham Hall, St John's Road - all welcome. See www.facebook.com/stjohnscaversham

Tuesdays – *Rivarate Choir* - 19:30 in term time - Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmoor Road. Enjoy singing together. For details see <http://rivarate.com>

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

Friday 6 January – *Bereavement Café* – monthly drop-in for the bereaved 14:00 -5:30, St Barnabas Parish Centre, Emmer Green, RG4 8RA First Friday of the month. All welcome. Contact Gillian Wilson 0118 947 8772 for information.

Wednesday 4 January – Rosehill WI – 14:00 St Barnabas Church Hall, Emmer Green

Wednesday 11 January – *RHS Bridgewater: the world's Largest Gardening Project*, a Zoom talk by Doug Stewart's – 19:30 Caversham Horticultural Society. Advance booking only is via Eventbrite website. Suggested donation for non-members £3 is payable when booking a ticket. Website www.caversham-horticultural.org.uk/events.htm

Wednesday 18 January – *Holocaust Memorial Day and Personal Story* a talk by Tom Lake - 20:00 at Caversham Heights Methodist Church Hall, Highmoor Road. The Caversham Heights Society www.cavershamheights.org

Thursday 19 January – *Caversham WI meeting* – 19:30 at Church House (next to Waitrose). Every 3rd Thursday of the month. New members are welcome. Email: cavershamwi@berkshirewi.co.uk Secretary: Joy Kennedy on 07786 642424



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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

A PUBLIC exhibition was held at Caversham Park on 8 December and the exhibition boards are available at www.caversham-park.co.uk. Amended plans are expected to be added to the current applications, 220409 and 220410. The care home shows a more contemporary design, to distinguish it from the main house. Housing to the east and by Peppard Road has been redesigned. In the house itself, the main ground floor rooms will now be communal spaces, although the adjacent BBC conference room, with the elegant fireplace and detailing, is now shown for conversion. A footpath around the perimeter of the full site would include information boards and be open from dawn to dusk.

The Reading Golf Club development November newsletter from Vistry is available on the CADRA website and is due for delivery to nearby homes. Additional copies will be available at the site entrance. Work has started on trial trenches for archaeology. The Construction Method has still to be approved, but the newsletter reports no deliveries will be allowed from 08:00-09:30 and 15:00-15:45.

Applications for 5G masts include an appeal against refusal of 220587 on St Peter's Hill. There is a slightly revised application on Kidmore Road, 221729, which has received large numbers of objections, and a new application on Henley Road, near the junction with Donegal Close.

Recent refusals include the additional storeys to Great Brighams Mead, the appeal for vehicular access at The Moorings, Mill Green and the Certificate of Lawfulness for Existing use as a commercial boatyard.

As always you will find all the links in the latest list on the CADRA website at www.cadra.org.uk

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MY EARLIEST venture up the hill to Caversham Heights must have been in the early 1970s, to attend a Saturday evening Dinner Dance at the Grosvenor Hotel, in my black velvet jacket, frilly shirt and bow-tie. Fortunately, I don't think any photographs of me, dressed up like this, now exist. Then, around ten years later, I decided to get married. At the time I wasn't a regular churchgoer, and was persuaded by a friend to try the Methodist Church at the end of Highmoor Road. I recall my fiancée and I passing a police telephone on a post, which looked as though it hadn't been used for a long time, and an equally elderly Reading Corporation Transport bus stop sign, which had a turned wooden finial on top of its pole. On our arrival in the vestry, the genial minister, the Rev. Ralph Rogerson, was filling in some forms, and the first thing he asked me was how you spelled 'Darell' Road. Since I'd just passed the corner and seen the street sign, I was able to tell him. I remember thinking what an odd name it was.



photo F Smith

Around ten years later, a slim volume appeared which answers questions about the origins of local street names – 'Caversham Names', by John Malpas. He published it himself in 1994, and copies are now hard to come by. Perhaps it should be reprinted? I see from the price label stuck to the cover of my copy that it cost £2.75. It appears that, when the fields of Toots Farm were sold off for housing in 1898, the land was part of the Mapledurham Estate, which belonged to John Darell-Blount, and that what is now Darell Road was then Toots Lane.

The Blount family had purchased Mapledurham from Anthony Bridges in 1582. The Blount family were Catholics and Royalists in the Civil War, and the estate was sequestered by Parliament following the death of Sir Charles Blount. But his son, Walter Blount, later managed to regain Mapledurham. Three Michael Blounts owned

the estate, one after another, in the eighteenth century, but it was Michael Henry Blount who purchased Toots Farm in Caversham in 1825. He had three sons, who inherited the estate in turn. The youngest, John Blount, inherited in 1881 – the year he married Henrietta Darell, and changed his surname to Darell-Blount.



If you try looking up the name 'Darell' on the Internet, you find that it was an English surname deriving from 'd'Airelle', meaning someone whose ancestors came from Airelle in France. Unfortunately, it says that there is nowhere in France now called Airelle, and it doesn't tell you where Airelle might have been. It lists many notable people who had Darell as a given name rather than a family name, and they're almost all American and recent.

Turning to the classic English work on the subject, 'Name This Child' by Eric Partridge, 'Darell' as a first name (with varying numbers of Rs and Ls) is a boy's name derived from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning 'darling'. Maybe both interpretations are right, in different cases!

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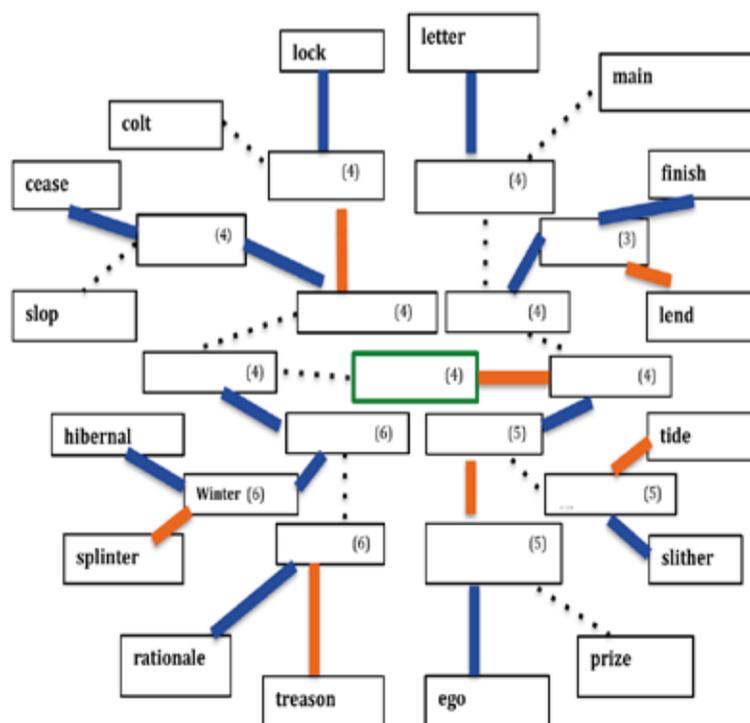
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Puzzle Corner

The Challenge by Rachel

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

Rhyme ———
Letter change * * * * *
Meaning ———



Answers on page 15

TALKING ABOUT TIME

Can you find 20 time related words here?

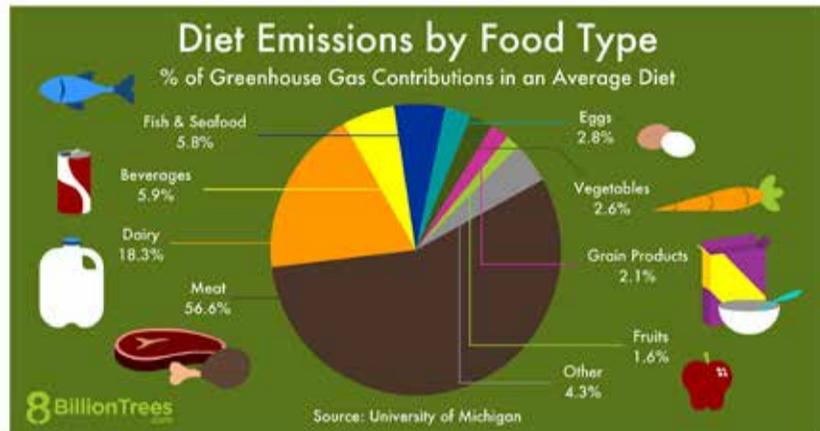
W E U E M G N I N R O M P X
K X V G V M I D N I G H T L
N I G H T E T I Q T F Y H G
M M A G H F N Y E A R H G C
V I O D Q P L I F E T I M E
N S N M V K D M N Y P M C N
H E D U E S E I D G X Y N T
U C D A T N P L E W E E K U
W O U A D E T L C U V I Y R
D N S S K I J E A I O A Q Y
D D K R N Y U N D F E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

- Age
- Century
- Day
- Dawn
- Decade
- Dusk
- Eon
- Evening
- Hour
- Lifetime
- Midnight
- Millenium
- Minute
- Moment
- Morning
- Night
- Noon
- Second
- Week
- Year

A vegan start to the year by Esther Jacobs

JANUARY IS traditionally a time for resolutions and ringing the changes. You may have resolutions relating to your own health, to your finances, or even how you spend your free time. In this day and age, maybe you've thought about making resolutions that benefit the planet – in which case, Veganuary might just be what you're looking for!

In January 2022, over 600,000 people from 228 countries pledged to try veganism for the 31 days of January. Reducing our consumption of meat and other animal products, such as dairy, is one of the most powerful steps we can take as individuals to help preserve our planet for future generations. Switching to a plant-based diet reduces your carbon footprint in a way no other personal action can. The infographic below shows the significance of meat in the carbon emissions of the food we eat.



The options for a plant-based diet are so much more varied and readily available than in the past. Even eating out is no longer the challenge it used to be for vegans! Veganuary is a great way to try it out and see how you get on – even if you don't end up converting fully to veganism, you'll almost certainly find yourself trying lots of new foods and feeling better for it. The True Food Co-op in Emmer Green stocks a wide range of vegan products, the vast majority of which are also organic - a double benefit for our planet. All the ingredients for this month's tasty recipe can be bought in store.

Vegan Mac 'n' Cheese

Serves 4

Ready in 30 minutes

There are lots of recipes out there for vegan mac 'n' cheese, but this one is a real winner! It's very straightforward, cost-effective, and relatively low calorie too. You can choose whatever toppings tickle your fancy – mix and match for added interest.

- Plain flour - 2 tbsp
- Cornflour - 1 tbsp
- Nutritional yeast - 4 tbsp (available in the loose goods section at True Food)
- Salt - ¾ tsp
- Olive oil or vegan block butter - 3 tbsp
- White pepper - ¼ tsp
- Garlic granules - ½ tsp
- Smoked paprika - large pinch
- Cider or white wine vinegar - ½ tsp
- Dark soy sauce - ¼ tsp
- Plant milk (eg soy, oat or almond) - 500ml
- Macaroni - 250g

Ideas for toppings:

- Blanched broccoli florets tossed in oil and sea salt with toasted pumpkin seeds
- Garlic breadcrumbs
- Half cherry tomatoes

- Preheat the oven to 200°C / Gas mark 6.
- Measure out all dry ingredients into a smallish bowl. Put the macaroni on to boil. Prepare your chosen toppings.
- Heat a medium pan with the oil or butter, add the dry ingredients and allow them to cook in the fat for a minute. Remove from the heat and, with a whisk at the ready, begin to add the plant milk slowly. Whisk in the milk to incorporate before you add more. Return to the heat while you continue to add the milk. The sauce should thicken as you go.
- Now add the carefully measured soy sauce and cider vinegar. Taste the sauce and adjust the flavour carefully.
- Set the sauce aside and check the macaroni - be mindful not to over-cook it. Drain the pasta and set aside for 5 mins to steam dry (you don't want your sauce getting wet).
- In a medium sized oven dish, mix the pasta and sauce, then add your toppings.
- Bake for 15 minutes in the oven.
- Let it sit for 5 minutes before serving.

For more information about Veganuary, or to see our full range of vegan products, pop into the True Food Coop, opposite Emmer Green Primary School and on the 23/24 bus route. We're open from 9:00 – 18:00, Tuesday – Saturday.

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Recycle Your Holiday *by Trish Marcouse*



TWELFTH NIGHT approaches with the end of festivities for another 12 months. The leftovers are safely in the freezer as soups, fricassees and casseroles, and it's time to think about recycling the other bits.

Crinkly, shiny wrapping paper belongs in the rubbish; paper wrapping paper into recycling please, but keep the ribbons back.

Christmas cards are up until the sixth, and then the non-glitter ones go into the recycling bin, unless the family is feeling up to a little DIY present tag production. Look at the back of the picture on the card and see whether it is blank. If no writing or print on the back, cut out a large piece of the picture to make a present tag for next year. It's easier to cut out a rounded shape than to aim for a perfect square. Punch a hole in the

card, thread through a piece of the ribbon saved from your present wrappings, and put them away in a place you will remember next year. That is the hardest bit.

If you bought a real Christmas tree this year, then please recycle it. You can chop it up and put it into your green waste bin or take it to one of Reading Borough Council's Christmas tree recycling points (see their website after New Year for details). There will be a large mound of chipped trees created at these sites and anyone is welcome to collect this as a mulch for the garden. It is slightly acidic and perfect for azaleas and camellias. Leave it in a heap for another month or so to cool down and then mulch your acid loving plants.

And then box up the rest of the non-degradable decorations ready for next winter.

WARREN AND DISTRICT PHOTO CONTEST

by Elisa del Gado

GROUCHO MARX famously would not join a club which would have him as a member. This is not a problem for people living in Warren and District. The Residents' Association covers the west side of the A4074, from the Thames to the county boundary. If you live in this triangle, you are eligible to join for a one-off fee of £5.

When much of the area was moved from Oxfordshire to be part of Reading Borough, there was concern its character could be lost to one size fits all policies of an urban authority.

Since 1963, Warren and District Residents' Association (WADRA) has been committed to its aims to preserve, protect and enhance what draws residents to the area and keeps them here. Undoubtedly the green and quiet nature is a major factor. It was greatly appreciated by neighbours from further afield during the pandemic – an interest which has continued. Such interest can lead to excessive pressure to develop. WADRA monitors planning proposals and other activities which threaten local amenities. We are represented on the management committee of Mapledurham Playing Fields. This forum lays bare the competing interests of local people and users from the wider area.

The decaying playing fields pavilion has been resurrected, in part due to our lobbying and fundraising. We see this as a catalyst to revive community engagement, which suffered in the COVID-19 pandemic. The WADRA community café has been running in the pavilion on Thursday afternoons for much of 2022 and, after a brief winter closure, will reopen on 2 February. It is run by volunteers, who are always pleased to welcome new members to their team. It is an excellent way to meet fellow walkers and neighbours. Local businesses have opportunities to show their wares at the café, as at our Christmas fair.

Our Committee is keen to hear what residents value in the area. To this end, a photo competition will run on our website from January to April. This gives adults, teenagers and children a chance to highlight what Warren and District means to them.

To join WADRA or to enter the competition, go to <https://wadra.org/join-us> Alternatively, contact the Committee at info@wadra.org if you have questions or require further information.

Lastly, a thought for our times, 'Be always at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbours and let each year find you a better man' - Benjamin Franklin.



The River Thames

photo F Smith



Mapledurham Pavilion

photo F Smith

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Caversham Successes – The Pride of Reading *by The Editors*

For information on the **Pride of Reading Awards**, see their website at www.porawards.co.uk and their Facebook page www.facebook.com/PORAWards.

EACH YEAR, The Pride of Reading Awards celebrate the exceptional people of the town, who make Reading a unique place in which to live and work. There are 17 awards this year, from Local Hero to Volunteer of the Year. The awards are sponsored by a cross-section of more than 30 businesses and organisations working in the town. These range from hotel chains and restaurants to Reading Football Club and our local bus company.

The awards ceremony, with the theme 'Let's Celebrate', was held at Reading Football Club Conference and Events centre

on 2 December. It was hosted by Chris Tarrant, who said it made him proud of his hometown, and awards were presented by Mel Bloor of ITV News and the BBC's Matt Allwright, who both hail from the area.

Caversham featured in two of the awards this year, with Claire Anderton-Bell of NoodStores in Church Street taking the Entrepreneur of the Year award, and the Weller Centre in Amersham Road winning the new Community of the Year award. See below and right for details of each of these winners.



Claire Anderton-Bell

photo J Harper

Pride of Reading – An Exceptional Entrepreneur

by Jean Harper

CAVERSHAM'S OWN Claire Anderton-Bell was the worthy winner of the Entrepreneur of the Year Category at the Pride of Reading Awards. When Claire and her partner Jodie moved to Caversham eight years ago, they found the hard water here caused Claire and her daughter Millie's eczema to flare up. She decided to make her own soaps, and this led to her making a range of natural body and home products, produced in her Caversham based studio. Claire also set up a cleaning company, originally called Clean Green Living, and rebranded to 'NOOD at home', using cleaning products made from offcuts of their soaps.

After the success with her natural body and home products, Claire and Jodie set up the Caversham Artisan & Farmers Market. They have seen it grow from a fortnightly market in the car park behind Iceland and Waitrose into a hugely popular market held every Sunday.

...mutual support...

Claire also collaborated with a couple of local businesses to take on the premises of the Caversham Emporium in Church Street to form NoodStores. The shop supplies a wide range of ecological home products, refills, houseplants, dried flowers and gifts. She has been an enthusiastic member of the Caversham Traders' Association, helping to build a sense of community and mutual support for local businesses.

In the future, Claire plans to get involved with local schools, to give children an insight into entrepreneurial life, and show how dreams can become a reality! She now goes forward to the national competition. Good luck and congratulations Claire!

Well-deserved the Weller

A CAVERSHAM COMMUNITY Centre also came up trumps in the Pride of Reading Awards. The Weller Centre team won a new category for 2022, the Community of the Year, sponsored by Hilton Hotels & Resorts.

The Weller Centre, in Amersham Road, was opened 9 September 2017. It aims to provide a thriving community centre primarily for the benefit of the residents of Lower Caversham, but also welcomes those who come from the wider Reading area. The Centre offers something for everyone, from the oldest to the youngest, with social lunches, youth sessions and parent/baby groups. It hosts a craft club, baby massage, eye clinics, and a wide range of other activities, as well as supporting the local community with initiatives like its winter coat swap.

...respond to local needs...

They have responded flexibly to local needs, and were particularly active in supporting the community through the Covid-19 pandemic. The award citation said, 'They consider all aspects of the wellbeing of their communities, and go out of their way to respond to local needs, from cooking up meals in a power cut to providing Covid vaccines on site. They are creative and very successful in building relationships with all organisations to find the best offers for their residents including school uniforms, a community bakery and hairdressing. Everyone is made to feel welcome.'

One particular challenge in 2022 was the laying of a new football pitch adjacent to their building. No one could have anticipated this would coincide with a drought – but they have managed to complete the work and the pitch is now in use for the local RG4 football team.

Congratulations to Simone and all of the team who help to make this centre so valuable to its local community.

by Phil Chatfield



Weller Centre team and award

photo S Prendiville

Mama's Way is a winner



Matt and Walter

photo Mama's Way

Shining the light on small local businesses

by Pam Gumbrell

IN A FURTHER award scheme success for a Reading business, Mama's Way, an Italian Delicatessen run by Caversham resident Dario Simoncini and his business partner Walter Gumina, received the 'Small Business Saturday' Award for the second year in a row in December.

...a piece of Italy...

Small Business Saturday is a UK campaign to support small business which takes place on the first Saturday in December each year. The campaign encourages businesses to promote themselves and work with other small businesses, and consumers to 'shop local' and support small, independent businesses in their communities.

Marking the 10th anniversary of Small Business Saturday, local MP Matt Rodda ran the competition to shine a light on the many fantastic small businesses in his constituency. Matt asked local residents to register their votes for their favourite local



photo Office of Matt Rodda MP

small business in the run-up to the day and announced the winners on Saturday 3 December.

Dario said, "We are truly thankful for every single vote, and we promise to continue to do what we know best...bringing a piece of Italy into the beautiful community of Reading town".

**Find out more about
Mama's Way at
www.mamasway.co.uk**

**and on Instagram
[@mamaswayuk](https://www.instagram.com/mamaswayuk)**

**For details of the award see
www.mattrodda.net/news.**



A GARDENER'S LAMENT *by Les Cooper*



Codonopsis Bhutanica

WHEN I AM writing these articles, I always look back to see what I had written in previous articles. I suspect no one will remember my words of wisdom, but I would not like to repeat myself – well not too much. So, I turned up my January 2022 article to check it out and blanched with horror as I read my intentions for the new year. Yes, I was proposing to raise three climbing flowers, new to me, which I had never grown before.

I did indeed buy the seed.

First came Codonopsis Bhutanica seed, which I carefully sowed in a pot of good compost and popped into a plastic bag. According to the seed packet it is an easy-to-grow low climber or scrambler, blooming from June until August, with long downward facing purple and black flowers. But mine never did! A few days after the sowing, I knocked the pot off the bench and the contents were strewn all over the greenhouse floor.

According to the seed packet, my second sowing, Gloriosa Rothschildiana, is an easily grown, superlative climbing lily bearing very large, reflexed, frilled yellow and crimson flowers. In my article, the

phrase 'easily grown' did tend to worry me. How right I was, because after sowing I waited for weeks and weeks with not a sign of a seedling. I cannot remember what I eventually did when the drought came in and my enthusiasm disappeared like the rain clouds. I can only think that I was very busy at the time, because if only I had looked it up, I would have found the seed needed to soak in water for a day in order to germinate.

My third attempt was Dicentra Scandens, a fast-growing plant carrying clusters of lemon-coloured flowers. I wrote that 'fast growing does sound a bit ominous'. What a joke that was, because I grew some nice seedlings just in time for our endless weeks of drought to arrive. My desire to stay out of the heat, and resultant grumpiness, meant they did not get the treatment or the water they deserved. Sadly, the poor little things flowered, but were never the pride of my garden.

I hope I haven't disillusioned you about my gardening abilities, and I hope the Editor does not decide to get rid of me. However, the moral of my story is to take your time when gardening, make sure you know what you are doing and enjoy yourself.



Plant of the Month – January

by Louise Hampden

THE NEW YEAR arrives full of optimism and hope, as well as reflection for the year just past. However, you can never predict the future and, as last year proved, who would have thought that the gardens would have suffered months of drought and still survived. But this coming month will be spent in the best way possible by planning for the coming summer. And what better way than to settle down with the plant and seed catalogues on a cold day and imagine the flowers we are going to grow.

I'm very much a list person, and last year when I came across a plant either in a garden or at a flower show, I made a note of it. Armed with my list, this month I will be seeking them out to grow for myself.

Firstly, I'm going to purchase seeds of Mirabilis Jalapa, also known as Marvel of Peru, or four o'clock flower. Sown in February indoors and planted outside



Mirabilis Jalapa

once the frosts have passed, it will quickly grow into a small bush. The flowers open late in the afternoon and close in the morning (hence the name). Like a dahlia, it develops tuberous roots so these may be stored over the winter to flower again the following year. I'm planning to plant these in sunny spots, both in the ground and in pots, and see which performs best.

Next on my list is Anisodonteia 'El Rayo' which has come highly recommended by a colleague of mine. Flowering from summer and sometimes into winter,

it's a perfect plant for small gardens and is evergreen, growing well both in pots and in the ground. Sounds like a winner to me, so I will invest in a small plant and see what happens.

Lastly, I'm going to grow some pumpkins from seed. Unfortunately, I have no space to grow plants that achieve monster proportions. So, I'm going to downsize and grow upwards in pots using a lovely miniature pumpkin called 'Jill Be Little'. They are deep orange, around 10 cm (4 inches) in diameter, are mildew resistant, early maturing, and will cover a bare fence that is begging for a plant or two. I'm looking forward to planting these seeds with my grandchildren and watching them mature. They will not only look great, but are the perfect size to harvest and roast in the oven with a bit of olive oil.



Pumpkin 'Jill Be Little'



Anisodonteia 'El Rayo'

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Community Connections

by Caroline Gratrix

This month we meet journalist and podcaster Helen Perry



HELEN STARTED her broadcasting career at the much-loved institution that was 2TenFM in Reading. She progressed from there to the newsroom at BBC Radio One.

After taking a career break to look after her children, Helen was curious about what was next for her. Commuting to London on a daily basis was not an option, so Helen started looking at new ways of bringing her journalist background into her present.

She started a lifestyle blog and Instagram account called Not About The Kids, and set about learning everything there was to know about Instagram and its possibilities for small creative businesses.

Helen was invited by The Creative Duck to give a talk to their creative community, which gave her a taste for presenting live events. She set up Elevate with friend and fellow creative business owner, Antonia Taylor PR, where together they taught businesses how to elevate their offering. However, it was the pandemic that changed her business significantly. Helen starting teaching online, and that



Helen Perry photo Katie Spicer

expanded her audience. She teaches people how to use engaging effective content, brilliant newsletters, and courses.

You can find her via her website

<https://www.helen-perry.co.uk>

and on Instagram @helen_perry

You can also listen to her excellent 'Just Bluddy Post It' podcast.

Let's find out a little more about her...

How long have you lived in Caversham?

I've lived in Caversham for 15 years.

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

I love to drink coffee in The Collective, shop in Nood stores, and eat at Bina takeaway.

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

We should all walk more, shouldn't we? And continue to shop locally, supporting The Caversham Butcher, Home Stores, Warings, etc. Use them or lose them!

Being part of a community reaps a wealth of benefits; how would you strengthen our sense of community in Caversham?

I think Caversham already has a good sense of community. I love the Christmas shopping event in the precinct. It would be great to see that part of Caversham brought to life more often with events.

Caroline would like to wish our readers a Happy New Year and would like to hear from you with ideas for 2023. Who are your community champions? Who would you like to see featured here in Community People this year?

Let her know via editors@cavershambridge.org



by Angela Walton

THANKS ARE DUE to local man Tony Hendricks for his generosity in donating the defibrillator now situated in St Martin's Precinct in Caversham. Tony feels that if it can help to save just one life it will have been worth it.

Tony has led a very interesting life. Born in 1928 in Ashford, Kent, of Dutch descent, he and his sister were evacuated to Maidenhead in 1940, when the Second World War bombings became severe. His family eventually settled in Reading, where he attended Presentation College, now The Wren School. Thanks to this school he placed great importance on education and wanted to give something back and dedicated an annual Arithmetic prize as his legacy.

On leaving school, Tony did his two years of National Service in the Royal Army Service Corps, staying on for a further fifteen months.

In 1952 he married his beloved wife Heather, whom he met while working as a clerk in a local builders' merchants. Eventually, he progressed to become managing director of W W Hall, before setting up his own company. He went on to great success in the building industry, and has many stories to tell about it.

Now a long-term Caversham resident, he takes great delight in talking about the wildlife in his garden and the thousands of daffodil bulbs planted.

Not one to sit on his laurels at the tender age of 93, he also contributed to a stained-glass window at Dunsden following an appeal in the Caversham Bridge. During the pandemic, I approached him regarding specialist chairs for the Chemotherapy Unit at the Royal Berkshire hospital which I was attending at the time. He didn't hesitate and contributed a substantial amount of money, which, together with myself, my husband and Sir John Madjeski ensured they could have the six specialist chairs they needed. This has made a massive difference to the patients who are using them every day.

Although no longer very mobile himself, this unsung hero has certainly helped many local people.



Tony Hendricks photos C Walton

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A late date in Caversham

Precinct lights photo C Walton

in the Baptist Church on the corner of Prospect Street, which was well attended, in part as a result of the efforts of a member of the church in a distinctive hat handing out leaflets in the precinct! Unique crafts from local producers, and a range of fair-trade goods were on sale, and the sale gave several people their first chance to see the newly refurbished church and entrance area.

A stall collecting donations for both food and pet food banks set up in front of the New Testament Church of God was well supported. The goods collected went to The Weller Centre and BeKind Rescue UK.

Local restaurants and the Angel Bar seemed to be very busy, and there was a relaxed and friendly atmosphere enjoyed by those attending. Plans are already in hand for next year!

Festivities abound with carols, street food, songs, dancing and craft displays a resounding success

by Jean Harper

the Douai Divas, as well as songs and dancing from Theatretrain Reading. Younger visitors enjoyed taking part in the Big Christmas Silhouette Search, and visited the reverse Santa at Fourbears Books. Here they gave Santa presents for distribution to children who might otherwise have very little to celebrate at Christmas. The bookshop was also host to local artist Janina Maher, who was working on a new painting showing Walton's the Jeweller and Bascuda Ceramics (see our front page). Friday was also the official opening of the ceramics shop.

There was an indoors craft market



Crafts in the Baptist Church photo C Walton

THE CHRISTMAS Shopping Evening on Friday 2 December, organised by Caversham Traders and the Caversham Artisan & Farmers Market, proved a resounding success. Shoppers enjoyed Thai street food from Krua Koson and browsed a wide variety of stalls. They were entertained by beautiful carols from the Hemdean House School, The New Testament Church of God, and

An early call for Santa

photos and story by Fred Smith

THE ARTESIA Christmas Market in Southview Park, off Marsack Street in Caversham, kicked off on Sunday 20 November with a visit from Santa and one of his helpers. In its second year, the market featured around 30 local artists, artisans and makers.

With its blend of unique hand made gifts, mulled wine and minced pies, and festive barbeque, it provided a lively and relaxed atmosphere for some early Christmas shopping. There was Santa's Grotto and children's craft activities for younger visitors to enjoy. The barbeque was complimented by a second food stall, barista coffee, homemade cakes, and beer from local Reading brewery Double Barrelled. There was also a chance to taste samples from the nearby Henley Gin Distillery.

...People loved the atmosphere...

Organiser Sue Reeve said, 'There was a fabulous mix of local artists and artisans who were very respectful of the environment. People loved the atmosphere, and the mix of artists and crafters'

More than 700 people visited the market, and nearly £300 were raised for Sue Ryder through Santa's grotto and various other activities held during the day in the CreativSpaces studio on the site.



The calm before the crowds



Artesia Santa arrives

Sue was pleased to say the landlords have agreed to the market being held on 19 November 2023 – put it in your diaries now!



THE ECONET Green Christmas Tree Sale at Caversham Court on 3 December saw trees harvested from local heathland finding new homes for Christmas. Although cold, the weather remained dry, and there was a steady flow of customers. There were many old friends who come and support the sale every year, together with lots of young families – the youngest visitor spotted was just five weeks old!

Christmas trees could be seen being carried up St Peter's Hill and into central Caversham, along with bundles of dried flowers, jars of local honey, and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds birdboxes and feeders. The fairtrade stall Christmas cards and wool socks were particularly popular and their beautiful, hand painted, tree decorations from Kashmir were nearly sold out.

Watch out for us next year!



Waltham St Lawrence Silver Band entertained

Trees finding new homes for Christmas

by Tricia Marcouse
photos P Chatfield



Happy customer and volunteer

HAPPY RETURNS FOR THE GALA

by Elestr Lee

THERE WAS a wonderful reunion for Caversham's art and craft lovers during December, when the annual Christmas Gala took place at St Andrew's Hall. There was plenty on offer for those seeking out unique gifts for friends and relatives in time for the festive season.

"I think the show went smoothly," organiser Li-Sheng Cheng told us. "The number of visitors is slightly down on previous years, but it didn't seem to affect everyone's takings. The highlight of the show is the community spirit - the show is very much about the community."

Celebrating its 12th year, the Gala is the brainchild of local artists Li-Cheng and jeweller Matthew Hitch, while St Andrew's Church hall provides the venue. In the first couple of years, coffee, tea and cakes were even served by the vicar until the show became so popular that the couple turned to the Ways and Means Trust, who now provide refreshments.

"Most of our visitors are local. One of the artists said it was great to be here to have that opportunity to catch up with friends and neighbours – it's rather like a pre-Christmas gathering," Li-Sheng commented.

THE CHALLENGE SOLUTIONS:

bolt, mail, stop, end, halt, tail, salt, sale, **sail**, season, glide, winter, slide, reason, pride.

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Creative Caversham



DRAWING LEADS TO HAPPY CONCLUSION

Helen had a career, but it wasn't very creative; redundancy provided the chance to build on her artistic skills. She tells **Elestr Lee** about her thriving new business doing live portraits at weddings and parties

LIKE MANY people, Helen Ridley found herself re-evaluating her ambitions during the Covid-19 lockdown – and having taken a brave decision, she is now delighted to be pursuing a career as an illustrator.

"Originally I studied fashion design at the University of Middlesex," she explained. "After university, I worked in product development for big-name brands such as the White Company, Habitat and Harrods. It was very varied work; I spent a lot of time auditing factories abroad, checking that they met standards for both the employees and for the products. I spent ten years doing this. But it wasn't very creative. So, during lockdown, I

decided to take redundancy, and instead took a short course in illustration at the London Metropolitan University. I also did several online courses and began building up my portfolio of illustrations.

"Since then, I have never stopped drawing. And if you keep on drawing, you keep progressing!" she said.

Having grown up in Chichester, Helen moved to Reading seven years ago. Taking the plunge to become an illustrator, she started off by making gifts and greetings cards which she aimed to sell online and at markets. However, she has discovered a new use for her drawing talent – doing live portraits at special events.

"I go to weddings and corporate events and do quick portraits of the guests in watercolours and finished with fineliner pens, in around 10 to 15 minutes. At the



end of the event, the guests will have an original portrait to take home with them. The portraits capture the person all dressed up for the occasion. It's a great way to picture people on a memorable occasion, and an alternative to caricatures," she added.

Guests may pose for Helen while she draws them, or else she can do a portrait based on a photograph. "I create a gallery of pictures and, by the end of the event, they are ready to collect," she explained.

Helen is thrilled that she has become very busy doing live portraits at a range of bookings over the past year. During the run-up to Christmas, she has been busy doing portraits, for example at the Artisa Christmas Market at Caversham's Creativ.Spaces in Marsack Street. Doing portraits of people with their pets is also proving a popular birthday and Christmas gift idea. Helen is now looking forward to doing portraits at weddings planned for the coming Spring. And she is also looking forward to making her second appearance at the Caversham Arts Trail, having joined the Arts Trail for the first time in 2022. She is far from daunted by her new-found career.

"Some artists are a bit scared by the idea of doing 'live illustrations' such as my kind



of quick portraits, which I do in front of people, but I love doing it," she revealed. "I enjoy working at speed, and I am becoming increasingly confident. I really like going to events, meeting new people, and creating something special for them.

"I think it's a bit of a reaction to lockdown, when we were all shut away and separated from other people," she added. She is delighted with the reaction to her work so far.

As well as attending corporate events and weddings, Helen has found herself in demand teaching drawing and painting skills at centres including Norden Farm in Maidenhead and Creativ.Spaces in Caversham.

"I will be starting a watercolour painting club at Creativ.Spaces this year, where I will be helping people to learn skills, and then plan and compose their work. It's great to work in Caversham, there is such a supportive art community.

"At Norden Farm I run a studio art club, which explores different themes from landscapes to abstract; I also teach the use of different materials including watercolour, pastels, and pen and ink," she explained.

To complement her busy work as an artist, Helen works as an Awards Assistant for the World Illustration Awards organised by the Association of Illustrators in London, a role she took on during 2022. This combines her previous experience as a product developer with her new career as a live illustrator and supports other illustrators as they find their creative feet. During the coming year, Helen is hoping to juggle her work doing live portraits at events with illustrations for magazines and publishers. "I am hoping to get involved in illustrating books," she revealed. And with her positive, determined attitude, it seems very likely that during 2023, she will achieve her ambition!



Helen finds inspiration from food and recipes (above); she loves doing live portraits at events such as weddings (above right). People's pets have also proved popular subjects (top right)

All images: Helen Ridley

Find out more at www.helenridley.com



Drawing by Janina Maher

www.janinamaher.artweb.com

From grocery deliveries to nightclub queues and now global cuisine

COMING OVER Caversham Bridge and looking down Bridge Street, you can't miss the building that is now the premises of the Spice Oven that is the subject of Janina Maher's drawing. In 1911 you would have seen the same building covered with advertising, windows stacked full of produce, and a huge shop sign the length of the building saying 'The Caversham Grocery and Provision store'. On the road outside might well have been one of a number of horse-drawn delivery vans being filled with provisions for local folk. The façade was adorned with Union Jack flags and colourful

swags to celebrate the coronation of King George V. The shop was then owned by Baylis & Co. who had set up business in Reading around 1875. They had branches in other local towns including Abingdon, Maidenhead and Newbury.

By 1921 they had premises in Reading in Broad Street, St Mary's Butts, Erleigh Road, and The Arcade, as well as in 2 Church Street in Caversham. They had a well-known catch phrase, 'It pays to shop at Baylis'. Caversham Bridge's own 'Happy Wanderer' wrote in an article in 2018 that, in 1956, Derek Baylis modernised the business and introduced 'self-service' and Green Shield stamps (which older readers will remember). However, by the early 1970s, the business had been sold and taken over by Oakeshott Grocers. Later, the building underwent a big change of use when it became Valbonne's nightclub – very popular with the youth of the day.

The Spice Oven was established in 2001 and has become famed for its extensive buffet which now provides a global cuisine. Many patrons have been fascinated by the ornamental pond, with its Koi carp, when passing over the little bridge in the middle of the restaurant and tempted by the food emerging from the open kitchens.

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First Impressions Matter

Have you heard of the STAR (or CAR) technique?

by Laura Harmsworth



LAST YEAR I wrote about the importance of achievements and touched on the STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) method. You might also hear this method being referred to as CAR (Challenge, Action, Result).

As a recap: achievements are a key part of your CV and prove you have the skills and abilities the recruiter is looking for, and that you can deliver results. Can you solve their problems, impact the bottom line, increase efficiency, decrease costs, and improve customer service?

Many CVs read like job descriptions, with responsibilities and no achievements, often because people cannot think of them, or they don't want to appear arrogant. Don't worry that by adding your achievements you're overselling yourself – by quantifying them, they are proven, i.e. not just your opinion.

I suggested gathering your achievements, brainstorming using the STAR technique and refining the brainstorm into a succinct bullet. So, how do you use the STAR technique?

For each skill being asked for in a job advert, think of an example and write down all the detail you can with regard to what the situation or task was, the action you took, and what the result was. For example:

Situation:

As a senior customer service manager, our latest feedback poll showed customer satisfaction had dropped significantly.

Task:

At our monthly senior management meeting, I was asked to investigate the causes of the drop and what could be done to bring the levels back up.

Action:

I collected all the data and customer comments on why they were dissatisfied and reviewed with my customer service team leaders, asking for their input. I devised ways of improving on these areas e.g. more regular product training of customer service staff; and reviewing customer feedback more regularly to ensure issues are resolved more quickly.

Result:

Within a month, customer service satisfaction had increased by 20%.

How to write your achievements:

- Lead with the results of achievements which will grab the reader's attention, then follow with how you did it.
- Be succinct, ideally one or two sentences.
- Start with a positive action verb e.g. increased, implemented, developed, won.
- Quantify with numbers if you can, e.g. percentages, although this is not applicable to all achievements.

So, for the example above:

Increased customer satisfaction by 20% in a month by analysing customer feedback, seeking input from the team, and implementing new measures such as more regular training.

Put all your achievements in a document, copy and paste the ones relevant to the job ad into your CV, and use further examples and detail at interview.

Next time, I'll be giving advice on interviews.



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Wellbeing with Ami Roy

A journey towards good mental health...

As the new year starts, I thought it might be the time for us to turn the focus once again to our journey forward...

CHRONIC WORRIES can cause us to experience significant cognitive decline, and considering the current global economic uncertainty and rising food and energy costs we're all facing, this can cause widespread insecurity and social unrest. Whether we find ourselves making repeated mistakes at work, forgetting important dates or details, struggling to keep up with tasks that used to be second nature - there are many ways that worries can manifest.

The good news is that there are simple things we can do to boost our cognitive functioning and recover our mental energy.

We can try one or more of the following:

1. Improving our sleep schedule

Sleep is arguably the most underrated factor of good psychological health. When we sleep, our body recovers, fights off disease, repairs muscle tissue and refreshes the brain. The hours we spend asleep each night influence how sharp our mental acuity will be the next day; from feeling more energised to improving memory, sleep and cognition go hand-in-hand.

2. Learning to manage negative relationships

The people in our lives play a huge role in how we feel about ourselves. If we are surrounded by negative, toxic relationships, this can rub off on us, causing emotional exhaustion.

Although it isn't possible simply to stop talking to a difficult boss, co-worker, relative or friend, there are ways to manage these relationships with communication strategies that can make them easier to deal with.

Knowing the right time to act, and putting our own wellbeing first, could be the stepping stone towards mending difficult relationships.

3. Setting personal boundaries

Boundaries aren't solely about what we permit from other people; boundaries also help us to make better choices for ourselves.

Setting boundaries can help us stay committed to goals such as keeping active, eating well and reducing screen time. While it isn't always easy to set boundaries, taking time to figure out what will work for you will go a long way to improving mental health.

4. Keeping on top of our finances

Money problems can lead to chronic stress and, as a result, poorer cognitive functioning. Worrying about our finances can take over our personal and work life, affecting our motivation and ambition.

Empowering decisions about money can help us work towards greater financial stability, enabling us to start thinking about the future rather than finding it adding to worry and stress.

5. Having the courage to ask for help

Last but not least, trying not to let ourselves struggle beyond our abilities is key! There's a difference between pushing through a challenge and suffering in silence. If we find that we're unable to improve our cognition and psychological wellness alone, reaching out to someone trustworthy, or a professional such as a doctor or a therapist, is a great first step.

The adult brain is not stuck in a permanent state of being. It can change, evolve and expand, building new pathways and being 'rewired' to help us continue to improve and perform better.

The journey to good mental health is a lifelong journey! Best wishes for 2023!



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by Pam Reynolds

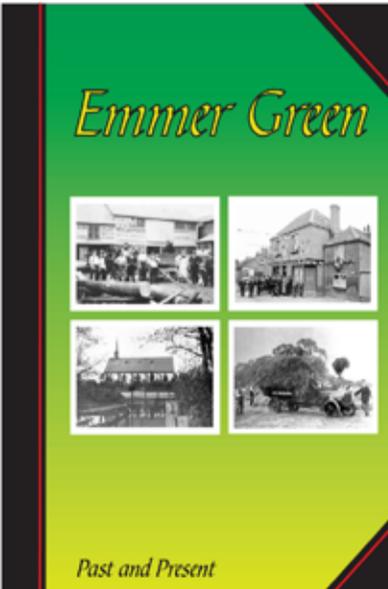
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