

Caversham Bridge

No 708

www.cavershambridge.org

February 2024

THE NEW YEAR started with exceptional flooding in the Thames Valley. Caversham was in the national news, with drone shots of flooded parks and gardens. After three named storms in the final weeks of 2023, the Thames catchment was saturated. The underground gravel aquifers of the Thames floodplain showed exceptionally high groundwater levels, which appeared at ground level. So fields and meadows were awash before the Thames finally spilled onto the floodplain, which is quite normal. Environment Agency reports estimated we had received 150% of the average rainfall in the southeast for December. Any further rainfall would simply run into the rivers.

The Environment Agency Floodline issued a Flood Alert on 30 December, warning of possible flooding for the Thames from Mapledurham to Sonning. January started with more rain. Storm Henk brought heavy rain on 4 January. The Agency estimated we had more than 70% of the normal rainfall for January in the first week.

River flows recorded at Reading Bridge climbed steadily through the week, reaching the highest level since 2003. Gardens in Lower Warren Avenue were inundated, as were the parks in Caversham, and gardens in Queens Road. The towpath on the Reading side of the river was impassable, and the Reading Rowing Club on Thameside Promenade was surrounded with water.

...one of the weir gates was closed...

Despite the exceptional conditions, one of the main gates on Caversham Weir was closed throughout. It is difficult to quantify the impact of this, but it undoubtedly reduced the capacity of the weir to pass water down the river. When asked for comments, the Environment Agency replied: 'Due to a recent mechanical fault, we are not currently able to operate one of the 8 radial gates at Caversham Weir, where there are 17 weir gates in all. Repairs are needed to part of the structure which extends over the river.'

Dangerous river conditions made it unsafe to carry out the repairs, but they will be carried out as soon as it is safe. They said the gate in question provides an estimated 5-7% of the weir's total capacity, continuing 'the water that would have passed through it has been diverted through the 16 remaining fully open gates. River levels in the area have remained within expected limits for a flood event of this scale.'

At the peak of the flood, water flowed along the footpath from the river into Queens Road and eastwards to Mill Lane, resulting in houses in the area suffering internal flooding. Other residents said they, "Had a lucky escape", as the water came within an inch of entering their properties.

The storms in recent weeks, warmer winters and heavier rainfall, are all symptoms of climate instability driven by carbon emissions, so it is likely we will experience more events like this in the future. It is essential critical infrastructure like weir gates is maintained and in working order when needed.



And it rained...

by Phil Chatfield



Peak flow 15:15 7 January at around 276 cumecs
 Environment Agency unvalidated data from
www.gaugemap.co.uk/#!/Map/Summary/1070/1139
 viewed 9 January 2024

Flooding at Hills Meadow

photos V Robinson



Bringing in the light

by Elestr Lee

DESPITE THE mayhem caused by the recent wintry weather, we are reminded that February is a time for optimism. St Valentine's Day may be most famously associated with the month, however, we examine a different Christian festival, Candlemas, in Talking Point (p2). Happy Wanderer (p7) looks at snowdrops – aka Candlemas Bells – traditionally used to decorate the altar during Candlemas. And our obituary commemorating the life of Margaret Ellison (p9) remembers her long association with the International Peace Light, annually lit from the Grotto of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and carried around the world by Scouts and Guides.

On the much-needed theme of Peace, Les Cooper's In The Garden article (p12) recalls the poignant history of the beautiful Peace Rose.

Looking after ourselves and acting to improve our physical and mental health is more important than ever at this time of year. We have tips on nurturing our skin (p17) while, on the same page, Samantha Fields reminds us of the importance of exercise, especially as we age. Meanwhile, in Wellbeing with Ami Roy (p19), the idea of having a 'third place', outside of work or home, readily available as a retreat to unwind from the stresses and strains of everyday life is recommended.

February marks the start of Lent, but before that time of reflection no-one can begrudge the fun of Shrove Tuesday, let alone the traditional consumption of pancakes on that day. As ever, Launchpad is organising the annual Pancake Race in Reading to raise funds for the homeless charity (p11). The race takes place 13 February - best wishes to all intrepid readers taking part in the fun!

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Have you heard a good story lately?



Talking Point

by Rev'd
Mike Smith

WE CHRISTIANS tell a rather old story on 2 February as we celebrate the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple. This is the event recorded in St Luke's gospel when Mary and Joseph fulfil Jewish law by bringing their baby to the Jewish Temple. There, two old people, Simeon and Anna, recognise who this baby is, and their life's work waiting for the promised Messiah seems complete.

Christians also call this festival Candlemas because, in medieval times, households would bring a year's supply of candles to the church to have them blessed. In doing so, they would be invited to remember throughout the year that Christ – proclaimed in scripture as the light of the world – would be with them at home. This service became known as the Mass of Candles, or Candlemas.

Telling stories is a vital part of the Christian faith. We read stories in our holy book, the Bible, and we relate them to our own lives. Through telling the stories of our faith we learn about the presence of God in our lives. Christians believe they can meet God by his Holy Spirit in the telling of their stories.

The beginning of February is also National Storytelling Week (27 January – 4 February). We are all invited to tell stories – of fact, of myth and of fiction, from long ago to present day. Stories can have a powerful effect on us. Just

think of a recent drama or film you have watched, or a novel you have read. All religions use stories to explain their understanding of God.

February also brings Valentine's Day which, beyond all the commercialisation, is a day to mark the importance of love in our lives. In my experience, telling the story of our experience of love – for better and for worse – is vital to being alive.

So please do have a story-full and blessed month of February. Maybe light a candle on the second and give thanks for the story of your life.

Rev'd Mike Smith

*Rector Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham
Area Dean of Reading*



A Jolly Life by the River: The Wind in the Willows

by Roslyn Weaver

MANY FAVOURITE walks from Caversham take in the banks of the Thames, wandering alongside its curves, watching boats and birds, enjoying wellies in winter and picnics in summer. For some parts of the river, it is easy to imagine it as the scene of Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, all leaf-dipped banks as trees bow into the river.

Grahame spent much of his life in Berkshire, including Pangbourne and Cookham Dean, and it is hard not to see the legacy of this part of the world in his children's classic. Even the much-loved illustrations by E H Shepard of Toad Hall in *Willows* are allegedly based on the nearby Mapledurham House, although any number of manors along the river might also suffice. Grahame describes idyllic landscapes from meadows to paddocks and commons, but it is always the river that features most in his book.

... 'jolly life' by the water...

In sentiments to which many of us in Caversham and surrounds can probably relate, the waterway of Grahame's book is described as not 'a' river but 'The River'. The book begins with The Rat introducing his new friend The Mole to the river. I am no fan of rats on rivers – or anywhere at all – but it is hard not to warm to Rat's descriptions of his 'jolly life' by the water (and on the river, in it, and with it).

Grahame himself appears to have led less than a jolly life himself, with disappointments



The River Thames at Caversham

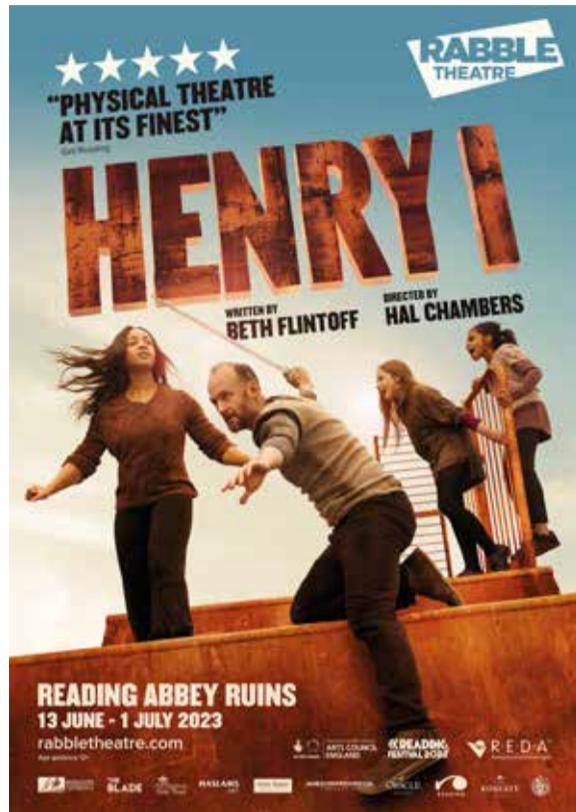
photo R Weaver

and tragedy, but perhaps he understood all the more clearly the compensations of nature. Not all of us can live right by the river, but anyone can enjoy its benefits. We might associate river life most often with the summer, with its cruises and swimming and picnics but, as Rat puts it, the season doesn't matter when it comes to the river; any time of year has 'always got its fun and its excitements'. Year round there are always people messing about in boats, wild swimming even in colder temperatures, or walking beside the water, enjoying the different ways the river makes life just a bit more jolly.

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Rabble Theatre hits the heights

OVER THE last couple of years, we have featured the Rabble Theatre several times, following their move to The Stables at Caversham Court Gardens in 2022. We reviewed their production of Beth Flintoff's play, Henry I, in the ruins of Reading Abbey, in our July edition.

Their production has been included in the Telegraph's top five UK shows for 2023 – quite an accolade for such a small company. The play is described as 'a hugely accomplished résumé of the life and times of William the Conqueror's youngest son'.

Rabble Theatre thanked both Dominic Cavendish, the lead theatre critic for The Daily Telegraph, for the recognition, and all who helped make the show possible. They went on to say, "We hope to be able to reveal more plans relating to the trilogy in the new year".

Congratulations to all involved.

The Editors

Valentines

Be my Valentine.
My heart beats at double time
Will your love be mine

These are all my words
Which I give freely to you
With all of my heart

Lady so wise and fine
Please make hearts beat in time
Say you will be mine

Richard Stephenson

designed by freepik



Caversham Bridge

Time to renew subscriptions - £7 for 2024

by The Editors

THANKS TO those of you who have already renewed your subscription. Subscriptions for 2024 are now due for payment. They can be paid by bank transfer, or by cash or cheque to your deliverer. We will again be available for subscription renewals and other enquiries at Fourbears Books on Saturday 3 February, from 10:00 to 14:00, when you will be able to pay by card as well.

Payment details are as follows: Cheques for £7 should be made out to Caversham Christian News. Writing your postcode and house number or name on the back of the cheque is helpful.

For direct bank transfer our bank account details are:

The Caversham Christian News Ltd – Sort Code: 30-67-99 – Account Number: 72808960

Please include your postcode and house name or number as a reference! Last year several payments were received which did not contain address details, meaning we have been unable to allocate the payment to the subscriber. If your surname is Green, please do contact us at subscriptions@cavershambridge.org as we have an unallocated payment with this name!

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Can you help?

We are in need of volunteers who could help with both the production and the delivery of the paper. If you would like to become involved in this community activity, and to find out more about the current vacancies, please contact chair@cavershambridge.org

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A Christmas Community



There were reminders of both the Christmas story and the spirit of kindness in our community over the holiday period.

THE ANNUAL Christmas Eve Nativity Live event, organised by several of the churches in Caversham, was once again blessed with dry weather, encouraging a large number of people to join in. For the first time, the procession started in the car park of The Fox and Hounds pub on Gosbrook Road. By the 16:00 start time, the car park was filled with donkeys, families, safety marshals, and an assortment of actors. After singing carols there, it was across to Westfield Park, where sheep, goats and shepherds joined the throng for more singing. Processing via the churches of Our Lady and St Anne and then St Johns (where they found the Wise Men), the pilgrims arrived at Gosbrook Road Methodist Church for more carols and refreshments.

The following day, two local shops decided they would open to offer refreshments, warmth and company for some of the many people otherwise on their own. After a number of customers had commented about being alone over Christmas, Alex Forbes, of Fourbears Books, with his wife Claire, decided they would open the shop for drinks, mince pies and the chance to play games. Around 30 people dropped in to join them in celebrating the day, a few travelling some way to join in.

Meanwhile, Pritpal Singh Malhotra – known to many of his customers as Paul – opened the doors of the Conisboro Stores in Caversham Heights with the idea of welcoming those who found themselves alone at Christmas. He said, “The idea came to me last year when I asked one of my customers if they had had a good Christmas and they said they had not seen a soul. I was determined that should not happen this year. Nobody should be completely on their own at Christmas”.

Pritpal posted notices offering free tea, coffee, mulled wine and mince pies from 11:00 to 14:00, expecting perhaps 20 or so customers to attend. In the event, more than 70 people came and enjoyed refreshments accompanied by Christmas music. Pritpal and his family were kept very busy serving food and drink while the guests chatted – in some cases meeting near neighbours for the first time.

Conisboro Stores hospitality
photo courtesy S Mills

by Phil Chatfield and Steve Mills

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Singing for good

photo and text by Carey Clifford

FOR MORE than 20 years, some of Reading Festival Chorus have provided a harmonious start to Christmas in the Grosvenor Road, Derby Road and Balmore Drive area. In what has become something of a tradition, 24 of us set off on 19 December 2023 to sing by invitation at a few homes, before gathering at the roundabout on Balmore Drive for our main event.

Under the light of a solitary lamppost, our performance started with singing from our young people. Then, accompanied by flutes and cornet, we sang in four-part harmony for an audience of about 40 residents and friends. For many, this annual event, held in the week before Christmas, has come to mark the start of the festive season.

A fun evening for all involved, ending in a reception for the singers in a nearby house. And we raised more than £200 for AgeUK and Amnesty.



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by Alex Forbes



For your bookshelf...

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

THE FIRST pick this month is a Children's Book by Maz Evans. 'Oh Maya Gods' is set in the same world as the action-packed series 'Who Let the Gods Out', with many of our favourite characters returning. This time the God's Squad have to travel to the Underworld of Maya to prevent the world from ending next Thursday. Maz Evans has mastered writing for the 9+ age group. Her books are filled with laughs and adventure and ideal for any fans of her original series. The new characters bring a freshness to the series, yet the familiarity of the world the readers find themselves in adds a level of comfort, like seeing an old friend. You know you are in safe hands with a Maz Evans book.

This is the first new spin-off from the original series. The second in this new series, out later this year, is called 'Oh Mummy Mia' as the gang travel to Ancient Egypt. Maz Evans deserves a lot of credit as it's no

coincidence the subjects of her books tie in nicely with what is being studied at schools for the targeted age group; hopefully the books help the kids get even more enjoyment out of the subject.

The adult's pick is by Eve Smith; 'The Waiting Rooms'. I have some sympathy for the author as it was released right at the start of the pandemic in April 2020. So it was a challenge for the book to make a name for itself given the news and attention elsewhere. Coupled with that, the medical thriller follows a crisis in the availability of antibiotics which is decimating the population - hardly suitable subject matter for the Covid times when people were looking for an escape. This all meant that the book didn't get the audience it deserved.

However, when you get stuck into the book and get beyond the headline synopsis, you discover an absorbing thriller as a lady tries to find her birth mother in a disturbing



Oh My' – where is Alex?

photo P Chatfield

version of our world where every second matters, especially as you get older. The story is split across two timelines where eventually the past meets the present. A good absorbing thriller, although there is a scariness about it as well. Eve Smith has

since released two other dystopian thrillers, and we look forward to her visiting the shop soon.

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

Bags of Joy

by Ruth Perkins and Amber Bentley



Collection at St Peter's

photo courtesy Reading Family Aid

The Reading Family Aid Toys and Teens Appeal was featured in the November edition of the Caversham Bridge, so we asked them for an update on the success of the appeal.

2023 WAS A successful year for the Toys and Teens Appeal. On Sunday 2 December we cleared a church hall in Reading ready for a week of collecting the toys donated over the previous few months. By the end, 668 sacks were filled to go to 2,480 children throughout Reading and surrounding areas.

This is thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, and the support of many individuals from Reading (and beyond), clubs, societies, places of worship and businesses. As a result, we provided each child with at least four presents.

As well as donations of presents, many individuals contributed to our GoFundMe page, which raised over £3,000. Our volunteers used this to shop for toys and gifts, particularly for the older age groups, who are less likely to be bought presents. This ensures each child has a few toys or gifts to open on Christmas Day.

We would like to thank all those in the Emmer Green and Caversham area who helped. Reading Golf Club organised a

huge collection from their members, and the Junior Captain, Alex, organised a collection amongst themselves. Alex said, "The Juniors heard about Reading Family Aid when it became the Club charity at Reading Golf Club earlier this year, and I thought we could help raise awareness of the situation of young people who will not be as lucky as we are this Christmas by holding a Junior Competition at the club. Fourteen juniors took part, along with senior members, and we were all happy to be able to help the Toys Appeal."

...deliver the packed sacks...

Other contributions from the area included The Hill School, Emmer Green, and St Peter's Church, Caversham, who organised collections. Many individuals took gifts to local donation points, such as Mapledurham Golf and Health Club, Caversham Homecrafts and Library, Fourbears Books and St Barnabas Church in Emmer Green. Caversham Vehicle Hire donated two large vans for the week to allow us to pick up these donations and those from schools, businesses and churches which had organised their own collections. They were also used to deliver the packed sacks to the requesting organisations.

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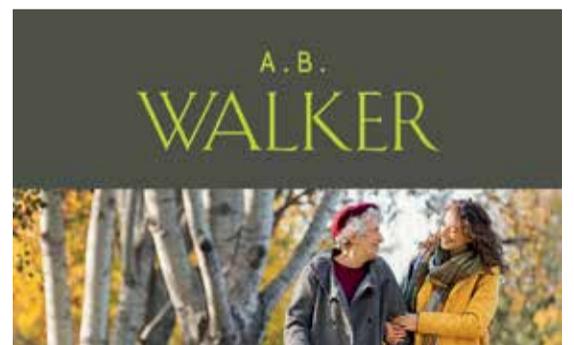
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What's On

IF YOU have an event planned, please send details to 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

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

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

Tuesdays – **Babies and Toddlers** – Gosbrook Road Methodist Church. 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 – **Rivarate Choir** – Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmoor Road. 19:30 in term time. Enjoy singing together. For details see rivarate.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 or [@CavershamWriter](https://twitter.com/CavershamWriter) on Twitter (X)

Wednesdays – **Light on the Hill Cafe** – 19:30-21:30 at Grace Church, 119 Peppard Road, RG4 8TR. A wellbeing cafe for adults 18+. Come as you are for tea and a chat. Please see: www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk

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 07964750182 or Trina at 07477570541

Thursdays – **Baby Massage with midwife Katie** – 12:15-12:55 at the Weller Centre during term times only. Suitable for babies from 6 weeks to crawling. 50p donation towards costs. Refreshments available.

Fridays – **Toddler Group at Hemdean House** – 09:45-10:45 at Hemdean School Hall. Ideal for children 6 months+. £2 donation per child, coffee and tea included.

Fridays – **Warm Welcome Space** – 10:00-13:30 at Caversham Baptist Church, South Street, RG4 8HY. All welcome, just drop in for free refreshments, including hot soup from 12:00. Tel 0118 954 5353 www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk

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, FB: **Keep Caversham Tidy**

Sundays – **Caversham Artisan & Farmers Market** – Caversham Precinct. 10:00-15:00. See: www.facebook.com/CAFMarket

Sundays – **Nordic Walk (or just walking)**. Free to all. Tel. 07931754096 or email Pat at Wiralbird@hotmail.com

Sundays – **Readifolk Song and Music Club** – 20:00-22:30 in the Community Hall, Watlington House, RG1 4RA. £8 admission for performances, £3 on singing nights. See www.redifolk.co.uk

Friday 26 January to Sunday 28 January – **The Big Garden Birdwatch** – For details and to register, see www.rspb.org.uk/whats-happening/big-garden-birdwatch

Friday, 3 February – **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

Friday, 3 February – **Chazey Women's Institute** – 14:30 at St. Andrew's Church Hall, Albert Road, RG4 7AW. Art, craft and book groups, plus coffees and lunches. Email: chazeywi@berkshirewi.co.uk or FB: **Chazey Women's Institute**

Wednesday 7 February – **Chinese New Year, a talk by Dr Carrie Zhang** - 20:00 at Caversham Heights Methodist Church Hall, Highmoor Road. The Caversham Heights Society. To learn more visit: cavershamheights.org or email: contact@cavershamheights.org

Thursday 15 February – **Caversham Women's Institute** – 19:30 at Church House, Caversham. <http://www.thewi.org.uk> or Tel. 01189 475176

Saturday 17 February – **Early Spring Concert** – Piano Trio in B major by Brahms and Piano Trio in Eb major by Schubert, played by Jiafeng Chen – violin; Naomi Watts – cello and Dina Duisen – piano – 19:30 Concerts in Caversham, St Andrew's Church, Albert Road, Caversham RG4 7PL For more info: www.concertsincaversham Phone: 0118 9483220 or follow their Instagram and Facebook accounts. Tickets: under 16s free, 16-24 £16, 60+ £20, 25-59 £22

Sunday 18 February – **Hymn Café** – 15:00-16:00 at Caversham Baptist Church. Relaxed café style setting with hymns, prayers, testimony and cake.

Wednesday 21 February – **Fracking – friend or foe?** A talk by Prof Chris Rhodes - 20:00 at Caversham Heights Methodist Church Hall, Highmoor Road. The Caversham Heights Society. To learn more visit: cavershamheights.org or email: contact@cavershamheights.org

Friday 24 February – **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

Monday 26 February – **Art on the Paris Metro** – 14.00 at Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square, Reading. Talk to Reading u3a by art historian Mike Grundy. Free entry, non-members welcome. See www.readingu3a.org.uk

Wednesday 28 February – **Being Productive in a small space** – growing in containers, an online talk by Mark Ridsdill Smith – 19:30 Caversham Horticultural Society. Free to members, £3 for non-members, See www.caversham-horticultural.org.uk/talks for details and to book.

Advanced notice:

Saturday 23rd March 2024 – **Spring Show** – Caversham Horticultural Society – 13:00 - 15:00. Caversham Baptist Church Hall (Prospect St, Caversham). Their first Spring show for over 10 years! Put the date in your diary. See www.caversham-horticultural.org.uk/spring-show

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

THE MAIN planning news is the consultation on partial updates to the **Local Plan** which closes 31 January. Many of the updates are driven by changes in national policy, of which the most significant is the requirement on larger towns to increase their housing numbers by 35%. Associated with this are requirements for minimum densities. With so many of the town centre schemes providing mainly one and two bed units, the main local need is for family housing and the updates try to address this.

Following the objection from Historic England to the application at **Caversham Park (220409)**, the Council's Conservation Officer has also recorded an objection to the latest plans. This concludes that the development within the registered park and garden and the proposed conversion of the main house would cause harm to the heritage and outweigh any benefits.

A decision from the Secretary of State on the appeal for the **land between TGI Friday and The Range** is expected by the end of January. The appeal hearing regarding Caversham Lakes was held in December, and we await the outcome. A site visit by the Planning Inspector is planned for the **Moorings, Mill Green**.

Following the significant flooding in January, you may like to see the latest update on the **Thames Valley Flood Scheme**. The project remains in its early stages and will need to pass approvals and gain further funding to continue to progress. Among other things, it is looking into potential locations for flood storage, likely be on rivers that flow into the Thames, reducing the amount of water flowing downstream.

See links at

www.cadra.org.uk/en/Local-Environment



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Happy Wanderer looks out for SNOWDROPS

FEBRUARY IS the month when Snowdrops flower, and people go out to see them, with Welford Park in the Lambourn Valley, and Swyncombe churchyard, nearer at hand, being favourite places.

In the wild you can find Snowdrops here and there. They seem to be rather choosy about where they will and will not grow. Several times, friends have brought me Snowdrops 'in the green' to plant in the garden at home, but they've never become established and I don't know why. They seem to like hedgerows and the edges of woods, and sometimes form large colonies.

The extent to which they are native to Great Britain isn't clear. (The word 'native' implies that they arrived here after the last Ice Age without human intervention). In English, the first mention of Snowdrops in books is not until 1664, when they are garden plants. As wild plants, they don't get mentioned until the 1770s. And even now, they're usually near human habitations, or former human habitations – churchyards, parks, gardens, the sites of monasteries and deserted medieval villages.

Like most white flowers, their symbolism is confused. They have been associated with purity, but on the other hand, in some parts of the country they have also been associated with corpses, shrouds and death, and bringing Snowdrops into the house was courting death and disaster.

Nevertheless, churches accepted Snowdrops as symbols of purity, and they were used to decorate altars for the Feast of Candlemas, one of their old names being Candlemas Bells.

Candlemas was celebrated on 2 February, 40 days

after the birth of Jesus, to remember the Presentation of Jesus Christ and the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Temple at Jerusalem, as required by the law of Moses. New mothers were forbidden to enter temples or synagogues until the ceremony had taken place. The story is told by St Luke in Chapter 2 of his Gospel.

In old England, Candlemas customs involved the celebration of the Holy Mass and the blessing of candles (which were afterwards taken home and used throughout the year), candle-lit processions, eating and drinking, and putting lighted candles in windows.

The Presentation of Christ is still regularly remembered in the Church of England when the 'Nunc Dimittis' is said or sung. Simeon sang of the 'light to lighten the Gentiles', which led to the connection between 2 February and candles.

...emphasis on thanksgiving...

The 'purification' of women after childbirth continued after the Reformation, but the emphasis is now on thanksgiving for the safe delivery of the child rather than kneeling in penitence, and husbands are encouraged to stand beside their wives. In the course of doing a bit of reading during my research, I came across an interesting article on the 'churching' of women from 'The Church Times'.

Back in the old days, I've read that Candlemas was sometimes regarded as the last day of Christmas. It was unlucky to take your decorations down before then so, if you forget to take yours down by 5 January (Twelfth Night), to avoid misfortune you have the option of keeping them up until Candlemas!



Snowdrops in the Spring

photo Happy Wanderer

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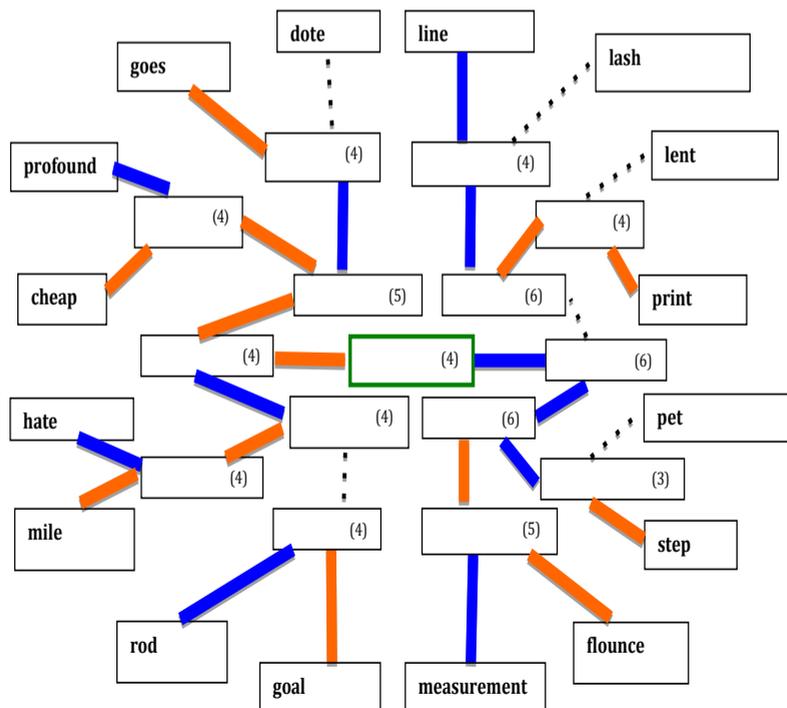
Puzzle Corner

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 18

CLOSES AND ROADS IN EMMER GREEN

Can you find the names of 21 Roads and Closes in Emmer Green in the grid?

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

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Chaucer Close | Peppard Road |
| Evesham Road | Penn Close |
| Fallowfield Close | Phillimore Road |
| Grove Road | Scott Close |
| Highdown Hill Road | St Barnabas Road |
| Jefferson Close | Stuart Close |
| Kidmore End Road | Tower Close |
| Kiln Road | Unity Close |
| Langford Close | Venetia Close |
| Northbrook Road | Wetherby Close |
| Old Barn Close | |

Delivered on time



by George Grubb



MORE THAN 2,000 Christmas cards were posted in the 89th Reading (Milestone Wood) Scout Group Christmas Post boxes sited around our area. They were collected and sorted on 15 December for delivery over the weekend. Scouts could be seen around our streets working enthusiastically to ensure the cards reached their destinations in time. Over £820 was raised, which will be used to replace camping equipment used by the troop.

Robin Kent, the Group Scout Leader, thanked all who made use of the service, which has become something of a local tradition. It is expected to run again in 2024, so watch out for details in the Caversham Bridge in November.



photos courtesy 89th Reading (Milestone Wood) Scout Group

A BEACON IN THE DARKNESS



by Robin Kent, Group Scout Leader

We gladly receive the light as a sign of our willingness to be channels of peace, by our words and actions

FOR 37 YEARS, in a campaign originally organised by the Austrian Broadcasting Company, the International Peace Light is lit from the Grotto of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. It is then carried around the world by Scouts and Guides. It is taken to at least 30 countries in Europe and across the Atlantic to America and Mexico.

For over 25 years the light was distributed throughout Berkshire and well beyond by Margaret Ellison, whose obituary is on this page. She was a faithful ambassador for this precious flame and its message. This year the flame was collected by Rev Pam Gordon, and distributed from the 89th Reading Scout HQ to local churches and Scout Groups in the Reading and Henley areas.

The 89th Reading Scouts paraded the light into a darkened St Barnabas Church, Emmer Green, at the start of their Scouts Carol Service on Tuesday 19 December, and it has been shared with many other churches in Caversham.

You can read about this precious flame and its message:
www.peacelight.org.uk

If your Group or local Church would like to receive the International Peace Light next year, please register now: gsl@89th.org.uk

Margaret Ellison – a life of service

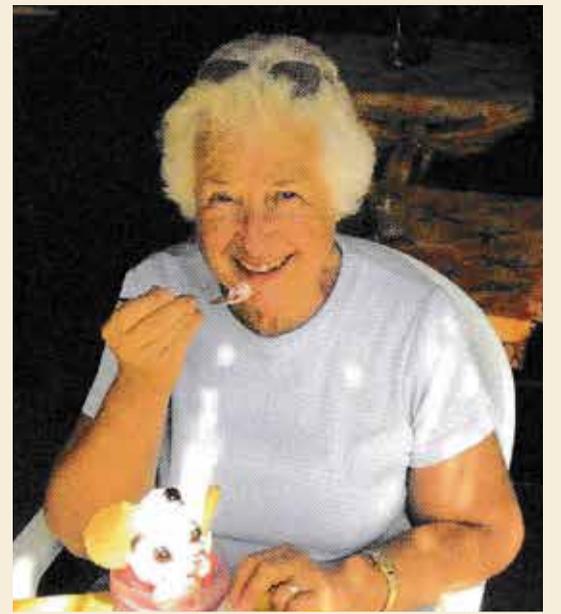
MARGARET, WHO had lived in Caversham for over 50 years, and was known to many people in the area in a variety of roles, over the years, sadly died unexpectedly in October.

She was born in Blackpool in 1936 and spent the war years in her Grandparents' Boarding House. At 18 she left home to train as a nurse at Westminster Hospital in London. Then, at 22, seeking more adventure, she went to Australia to continue her nursing career. The voyage out was very significant, as she met Richard, her husband for 52 years. In Australia she trained as a midwife, ending her years there as a sister.

...home deliveries...

Margaret returned to England 3 years later to marry Richard. Initially they lived in London, then moved to Kent. There she worked as an on-call midwife for home deliveries, just like 'Call the Midwife', before having their own children, Jeremy and Rowena. They later moved to Caversham, where she lived for the rest of her very busy life.

When they first moved to Caversham, she and Richard were founder members of Caversham Park Church, an ecumenical church situated within the new development. After many years there, they moved to Caversham Heights



Methodist Church, where Margaret undertook many important roles. She was a steward for several years, started a Drop In for Ukrainian visitors, and lately was very involved with the Babies and Toddler Group.

Margaret was known to many people in the area from her time working as a Health Visitor based at Balmore Park Surgery. She later moved into management, ending her working life as the chief nursing officer for Berkshire.

She and Richard were also very involved with Scouting. She started one of the first Beaver Colonies in the county at the 89th Scout Group in Emmer Green. Through this connection, she was involved for many years with collecting the Peace Light (see left) from Europe and distributing it around the UK.

In addition to her professional success, Margaret had many other skills, not least her ability to produce wonderful celebration cakes. Above all, we will remember her wonderful smile and her kind and generous heart. She will be sadly missed.

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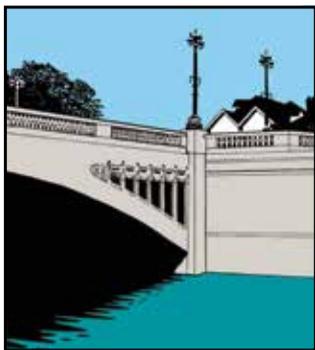
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A Glimpse into the past

by The Editors

WE HAVE been working with both the Royal Berkshire Archives (formerly the Berkshire Records Office) and the Oxfordshire History Centre to create an online archive of the Caversham Bridge. Both have archival copies of the paper, which together provide a complete set from the first edition in 1964.

We have now completed the scanning of all the papers between 1980 and 1991 which are available to download from our website at cavershambridge.org/list-of-past-issues

Highlights include regular features on the past in Caversham by Mary Kift and a sports column by Stan Eldon, International Cross Country Champion, who had a sports shop in Caversham. 'Watchdog' wrote a 'Resident's Viewpoint' column for many years and 'Katy in Caversham' reported regularly on the shops, local events and people. Other items include a celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the 3rd Reading Scout Group (May 1984), the story of the 'Bedouin Baptists' as the Baptist Church was modernised in 1980 and reopened in March 1981. The controversial development of Bug's Bottom was reported throughout much of this period, and proposals for a third Thames Bridge (March 1991) have regularly resurfaced.

It is also fascinating to peruse the adverts, some for businesses like Elliots of Reading, and Gee Gee Pets of Prospect Street, both now long gone, and some for businesses like Robin James Opticians and Caversham Tile Centre who still advertise with the paper.

We plan to add to the archive over the coming years, so if you have any particular years you think we should prioritise, do contact us at editors@cavershambridge.org



The heading of the paper changed in April 1982, giving the paper a new look at the time, but still in black and white only! (see above)



A tribute to Helen Dix

HELEN SADLY passed away on the morning of 14 December 2023. She had survived three different cancers in her time since 2007. In November last, Helen had a diagnosis of a secondary breast cancer that had spread to her liver. Although a palliative care plan had been arranged, she became suddenly ill at the beginning of December. The speed in which the cancer took her was a tremendous shock to us all.

Helen came to find God during 2007 and was baptised at Grace Church, along with her twin sister, Sally Card. They both said that they were 'born again'. Ever since, Helen and Sally would attend services together at the church on most Sundays.

...became good friends...

Sally was the first to attend Grace Church, where another lovely lady called Jill also attended. Jill happened to work at Caversham Primary School, where Helen had started to help out as a lunchtime supervisor back in 2001. Helen's son Joseph and daughter Megan also attended the school and had a happy time there. Helen and Jill became good friends at school, so Jill invited Helen to attend Grace Church

with her, when Helen first became ill with chronic myeloid leukaemia. On arrival at Grace Church, Helen surprised her sister Sally, who was not expecting her to be there.

Helen often spoke of the wonderful times she had working with the children and staff at the school. Before she took sick leave on 1 December, Helen had wished she would eventually return to the job she so adored.

On Tuesday afternoons, Helen and Sally would travel together to Grace Church to attend the 'Knit and Knatter' handcraft group. Helen produced a cross-stitch sampler of the Lord's Prayer with the intention of gifting it to Grace Church.

When Helen was moved to the Sue Ryder, Duchess of Kent Hospice in Reading during the last few days of her life, we asked Helen if Sally could carry out her wish and present the cross-stitch to the church on her behalf.

Before Helen's passing, Sally presented the Lord's Prayer to Grace Church, where it is now in a prominent place.

She will be greatly missed by her family, Church, and Caversham Primary School.

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FLIPPING MAGIC

by Rick Lay
Launchpad Marketing Manager

LAUNCHPAD'S ANNUAL Pancake Race will be delighting Reading residents on Shrove Tuesday – February 13. There is still time to enter a team to see if you have what it takes to lift the coveted frying-pan trophy, whilst entertaining Reading shoppers and workers. Teams of four will show off their fancy dress and flip pancakes as they race the Broad Street route.

As well as the frying-pan trophy for the winners, there are prizes for second and third place, best team spirit, best fancy dress, and best fundraising team. All the money raised will fund Launchpad's essential work with people who are homeless or at risk of losing their home in Reading. This includes supported housing; a free drop-in service for anyone in housing crisis; and a work and life skills centre so clients can build confidence, learn new skills, and get back into work.

2023's winners – a team from creative agency TMW - beat 35 teams to take top prize in their electric-blue shell suits. We can't wait to see what this year's winners will be wearing! Over the last 26 years we've had clowns, bananas, dinosaurs, chickens, fast food, and astronauts (and many others) all scramble for first place.

Wherever you work in Reading, you can secure your spot and batter it out with other local businesses by emailing fundraising@launchpadreading.org.uk by Friday 9 February with your name and contact details. Race registration is £125.

There are 36 places for teams of four, allocated on a first-come-first-served basis. To enter more than one team, call the pancake hotline, 01189 507 656, and choose option 5.

Launchpad are also asking for volunteers to help – with team registration, bucket collections and monitoring participating team's pancake flips! If you would like to get involved, please email fundraising@launchpadreading.org.uk for details.

Launchpad is Reading's leading homelessness prevention charity, providing vital information and support for individuals, couples and families who don't have a stable place to live or are at risk of losing their home.

For more information about Launchpad, or to donate, visit: launchpadreading.org.uk



Reading Library of Things

by Tricia Marcouse

ACQUISITION OF excess 'stuff' is bad for the environment. It requires energy and resources in the manufacture and distribution, with only a proportion of this recoverable through recycling, and 'stuff' either clutters up the house or needs even more 'stuff' for hideaway storage. Why buy and store all those bits of equipment that you only need to use once in a blue moon? Make a resolution to borrow them instead.

The first Reading Library of Things (RLoT) opens its doors on the afternoon of 9th February in Caversham, with plans for two more centres to follow in Tilehurst and South Reading. The library will be open every Friday afternoon, anyone can become a member for a small annual fee, and can then borrow tools for a special project, a marquee for a summer BBQ, or display boards for an event, as well as getting good advice from experts on 'how to' do those odd jobs around the house and garden.

Right now, the RLoT is accepting donations of tools and equipment, recruiting volunteer help to run the Library, and getting ready for the grand opening. Please go to the website and sign up for the electronic newsletter which will keep you up to date with progress. Then think realistically about the items you've got in your house, shed and garage that haven't been used for ages but 'might come in useful again someday'. Consider whether these are in good enough condition to be in more regular use and, if so, offer them to the Library. You'll get free membership for the first year and you can borrow them back any time you need them.

The website is:
<https://lotreading.myturn.com/library/>



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A GOOD PEACE

BY LES COOPER



When it came onto the market, it stood out from the other varieties available at the time,



Peace rose

AS I SAT at my computer, the rain was splattering against the window. It was a chilly December afternoon and here I was attempting to write a gardening article for February readers. I was not sure my imagination was up to the task. Turning to nearby notes, I read that February is the turning point in the gardening year. Yes, it certainly is, I muttered. "The world is in turmoil and what we need is some kind of peace". Then a wonderful peace came into my thoughts - the famous rose called 'Peace'.

I first saw 'Peace' in flower at the Chelsea show. I presume this was at some time in the 1960s. All I know is that I was totally enchanted by the beautiful sight. It has large flowers, light yellow to cream in colour, with pink petal edges and healthy, vigorous-looking foliage.

Later I discovered it had been raised by a French rose grower, François Meilland, who in 1945 asked Field Marshall Alan Brooke if he could name this lovely rose after him in thanks for his contribution to the liberation of France. Brooke modestly declined and suggested that 'Peace' would be a more enduring name. When it came onto the

market, it stood out from the other varieties available at the time.

I purchased 'Peace' from Wheatcroft Roses, and enjoyed growing it for a number of years. Older readers will remember Harry Wheatcroft who, with his sons, owned the company. Harry was a flamboyant man with large whiskers, and always wore ostentatious suits. He was often on TV gardening programmes or in magazines publicising roses. He travelled the world, lectured extensively, and wrote several books.

...enduring name...

In 1948 Harry had contacted François Meilland to introduce 'Peace' to Britain. Later he presented other famous roses such as 'Queen Elizabeth' and 'Fragrant Cloud', but the one I remember most fondly was 'Super Star', with its gorgeous luminous vermillion flowers.

Oddly enough he was not a rose breeder as such, but I wonder now whether, because of the amount of exposure he received, he was one of the reasons roses became so popular during the 60s and 70s. He died in 1977, but what a wonderful character.

Weller Winter Wonder by Hazel Bingham

IT WAS A very busy day at the Weller Centre on 22 December! It all kicked off at 9:00 with two public sessions with the Reindeer from Riverways Farm in Twyford. Parents and children got to feed them and hear all about what they eat, how they live and ask all those burning questions they had. Every question was answered and kept the magic alive for them. Questions such as 'where are the others?' were answered with 'Santa sent these two to Caversham to learn their way around and the others have gone in pairs to other towns'. After these sessions the children who were in at Caversham Nursery came over to experience the magic. This Reindeer visit was very kindly funded by The John Sykes Foundation.

Whilst the young children from the nursery were feeding the reindeer in the garden there were 40 children aged 5-11 arriving in the hall to enjoy a full English and continental breakfast with Santa. Every child sat down with their

personalised placemat and tree gift, plus a party blower (sorry parents). Each mat contained a scratch panel and once scratched off revealed the name of their soft toy. It was great fun watching them search for their new friend and seeing the looks of joy on their faces. As they left they were given a gift and bag of sweets to take home and enjoy. All of these 40 children had a session with the reindeer too and learnt a lot about them.

Once the children left the staff returned to finishing off Santa's grotto (a 3 day project), which included a magical winter walkway round to see Santa, with his log fire and handy elf giving out the gifts. Each of the 91 children that attended got gifts, chocolates and a magical experience. We saw many happy faces coming out of the grotto. We ran a more relaxed session at the end, allowing more time and less pressure for some of the children with additional needs who can't cope with the noise and anticipation of seeing Santa.



Weller Reindeer

photo courtesy of the Weller Centre

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TERRYS



Drawing by Janina Maher

www.janinamaher.artweb.com

It is truly a family affair. Everyone helps behind the counter and enjoys meeting and chatting with customers

TERRY, HIS wife Lyn and their son Matt, were very busy serving customers when I dropped into Terrys. Of course, the weeks before Christmas are one of the busiest times for their shop. I have happy memories of browsing the well-stocked shelves finding all sorts of little things for our children's stockings. The shop is an Aladdin's Cave of toys, gifts and much more.

Luckily, Terry found a few moments to fill me in on the history of the business. Terry Woods opened a discount store in the Meadway in 1980 and, in 1990, opened a second store in St Martin's Precinct, Caversham. This was managed by his son Matt (then only 18 years of age), who still runs the successful business today. Older residents might remember that, prior to Terrys, the shop was a gift and card shop called Midas. The Meadway store closed in 2013 and the business focussed on the Caversham shop. It is truly a family affair.

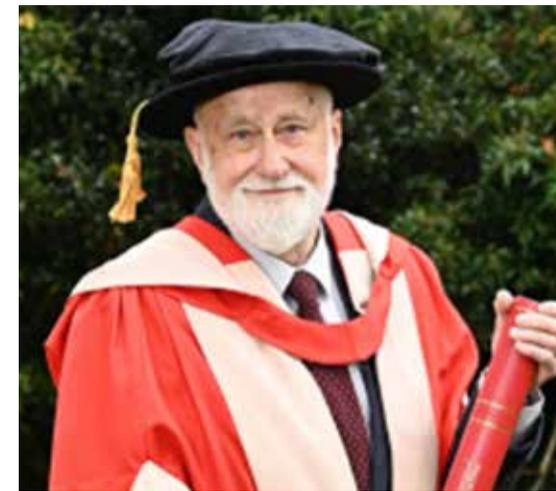
Everyone helps behind the counter and enjoys meeting and chatting with customers. Locals who came in the shop as children now bring their own children and often their grandchildren to pick a present from the shelves.

Terrys approach to retail was 'volume sales with small margins'. He describes it as an 'everything store' and certainly the range of goods on offer is amazing – toys, hardware, stationery, gifts and a wide selection of ready-made picture frames, mounts and a framing service.

... helping out...

Today Matt is still in charge and Terry and Lyn have technically retired but still regularly work in the shop on Sundays and some mornings. Matt's partner and stepdaughter also help out and so perhaps a third generation will take over. At the heart of the community, Terrys was given a My Favourite Shop award in 2016 and we hope it continues for many years to come.

Janina's book, *A Stroll Through Caversham*, is available from Fourbears Books and through her website, <https://janinamaher.artweb.com>



Congratulations to Dr Martin Andrews

CAVERSHAM resident Martin Andrews, who designed the Caversham Bridge logo and writes the Local Scene articles which accompany Janina Maher's paintings each month, has received an honorary degree from the University of Reading. It was awarded in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the University and the town.

He received the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters in a ceremony on 7 December 2023. Martin started at the University as an undergraduate in the 1970s, graduating with a degree in Typography and Graphic Communication in 1976. He then pursued work as an exhibition designer at the Reading Museum, and won a Museum of the Year award for installing the Riverside Museum at Blake's Lock.

In 1990, Martin returned to the University as a lecturer in the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication. He taught typography and specialised in printing history. He also authored several books and contributed greatly to the Department's collections over the years.

Since retiring from lecturing, Martin has returned to working as an exhibition designer and artist. He redeveloped the Ure Museum in Reading as well as museums for Oxford University Press and the Royal Berkshire Hospital. He actively promotes the arts locally through his work with the Reading Guild of Artists and Two Rivers Press.

He continues to work as a painter, printmaker and exhibition consultant for television period dramas, and still finds time to write for the Caversham Bridge!

Based on information from the University of Reading website: www.reading.ac.uk/news/2023/University-News/Designer-honoured-for-University-and-town-contributions



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Musicals



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photo F Smith

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NEVER THINK of Reading as one of the most adventurous of places. It appears to me that our council takes an age to come to any decision and, even then, sometimes fail to get it quite right.

I have never been really happy with the Hexagon, where the decision to make it a multifunctional theatre was, in my opinion, wrong. I tend to think of it as a Jack-of-all-trades but master of none theatre. I realise I am being wise in retrospect and occasionally it has been ideal for some events but often not quite right for others.

I am thinking here of the musical theatre, where I have seen many really good amateur productions which could have been even better in a standard theatre.

I shouldn't complain, because previously amateur groups had to content themselves with Palmer Hall in West Street, Everyman Theatre in London Street, or the Town Hall. I am sure someone will put me right if I get things wrong, but I think I remember 'The White Horse Inn', 'The Desert Song' and 'The Merry Widow' at one or the other. In more recent years, the Hexagon came into use with some excellent productions.

In Reading we have been blessed by having three outstanding music groups. The oldest is the Sainsbury Singers, who were formed by Frank Sainsbury in 1939. I have really enjoyed a number of their productions but, in 1997, the one that I greatly enjoyed was 'Fiddler on the roof' with Henry Hawes as Tevye.

The Reading Operatic Society came along later in 1951 and they also have a wide selection of excellent shows to their credit from 'Oklahoma' to 'The Pirates of Penzance'. For some reason, maybe because it was so good, their production of 'The Pyjama Game' sticks in my memory.

...stand out for me...

The Masquerade Theatre Group came along later, but they too achieved some delightful shows. These stand out for me: 'Paint your Wagon', 'The Sound of Music' and 'Titanic' - all brilliant and there were other really good productions too. Sadly, the founder of the group, Martin Cooper, died in 2011. A great loss.

The Covid lockdown had a devastating effect on things like amateur theatre groups, so let's hope the future is as bright as their shows have been in the past.

A New Pair *by The Editors*

A NEW property agent, Avocado, has launched in Caversham, operated by locals Debbie and Andre.

They have both lived in Reading all their lives. Debbie went to school in Caversham and has spent most of her life living in and around the area. They bring this local background and their extensive property knowledge to the Avocado business model in order to offer Caversham something new.

Clients will deal with them as the business owners from the beginning to the end of a transaction. They will make sure there is just one point of contact, and will

be contactable outside normal office hours to provide a property update or to answer questions about a purchase or sale.

With the use of social media as well as the traditional portals for selling property, they will offer presenter-led videos which aim to create a buzz around a property to ensure it sells quickly and for the best price.

Andre said, 'We don't want to work with everyone, just like-minded people who want to see estate agency change and being done in a better, more modern way, with service levels they expect.'

You can call, send a text or WhatsApp message or email on **07590 990800** or **07387 802900**

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To find out more see <https://avocadopropertyagents.co.uk/agent-profile/debbie-andre>



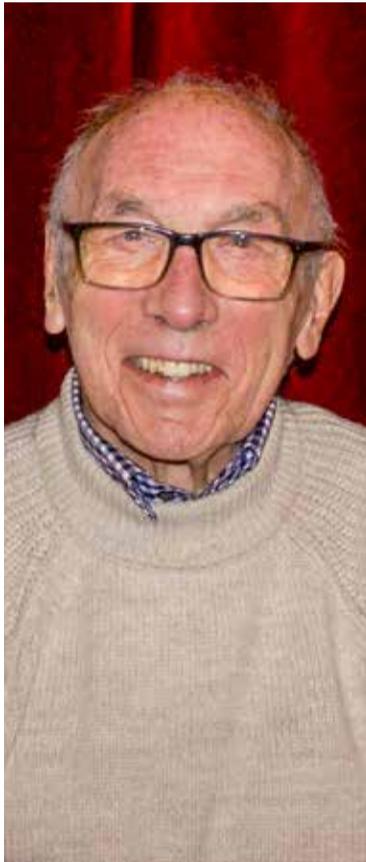
Andre and Debbie

photo F Smith



Community Connections

Story by Fred Smith – This month we meet Tony Champion



Tony Champion photo E Cooper

THIS YEAR marks the 40th anniversary of Caversham Tiles, started by Tony with a shop in Emmer Green in 1984. The company have advertised in the Caversham Bridge ever since those early days, so it seemed timely to find out more about Tony and the business.

Tony's father was born in Gosbrook Road, so his family has deep roots in the area. He grew up in Chiltern Road and attended Sunday School at what is now Grace Church. He went to junior school at Wolsley Road (now Thameside Primary School). Because of his interest in playing football on Sunday mornings, he joined the Boys' Brigade at Gosbrook Road Methodist Church, which met on Sunday evenings. He remembers there being around 100 members and a fine band, which led the monthly parades around local roads.

As was usual at the time, he left school at the age of 15 and became an apprentice pattern maker at Robert Cort, a local engineering company, which later moved to Elgar Road. He vividly remembers breaking an arm just as he was due to start, and then breaking the other in a football match soon afterwards. This delayed his start and resulted in the apprenticeship lasting 6 years (rather than the normal 5). The company

had a foundry, where he had to work for 6 months – a period which he did not enjoy!

Once his apprenticeship was over, he went to the Royal Artillery for his National Service, transferring to the Army Air Corps after his basic training. He describes his two years with the Corps as a good and mostly enjoyable time, some of which was spent in Germany. Shortly after his return, he left Corts and joined a local company making aircraft components, and then a fiberglass company in Nottingham, which culminated in a sales role around the south of England. The company worked on the restoration of the Royal Observatory in Greenwich – fibreglass was the ideal material for recreating the dome of the observatory. This led to a dome project for the Sultan's Palace in Oman. This was followed by many more contracts in the Gulf, including a new airport in Oman, and four years of travelling backwards and forwards.

Whilst in the Gulf, Tony met many Indian craftsmen working in ceramics and was fascinated by their skills. As his family grew, he tired of the travelling for work, and he looked for something closer to home. The interest in ceramics sparked in the Gulf led him to set up a tile shop, working with companies in Stoke on Trent.

The business is now at the top of Donkin Hill and is run by his sons. The tiles now come directly from factories in Italy.

Tony has many stories of life in Caversham when he was young and of his long association with the Boys Brigade which may warrant another article in the future!

Let's find out a bit more about Tony.

How long have you lived in the area?

I was born here and have spent most of my life in the area.

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

We enjoy eating in many of the local restaurants – we have so many which are good. Quattro is one of our favourites.

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

Perhaps we should all look at the small steps we can each take, for example in reducing waste and energy use and by recycling what we can.

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

By supporting local businesses and making an effort to know our neighbours.

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

It would be nice to have a cinema again – we once had two! I can still remember Mr Cole who ran the Regal.



You Wrote

Dear Editors

Referring to the article, 'My Music' by Edward Bradley, 24 January, it would be very interesting to know which youth club Edward was referring to. I belonged to the Methodist Church youth club in the late 50s and, as I played rhythm guitar, I was invited to join a group in the early 60s. The band played in Balmore Hall which had a stage and, presumably, a youth club. We played hits of the late 50s and early 60s. We too never went on to be a great band - to be honest I cannot remember now what our group was called!

Sincerely
Clive H Litten

We asked Edward about this, and he replied to say the youth club was at the Gosbrook Road Methodist Church and he remembered the group were called The Raiders.

In response, Clive said he had played at the Balmore Hall, Hemdean Road, which is now the surgery. He recalled the band leader was called Stuart Buck, his father was Charles, and they lived in Blenheim Road. At that time, Clive lived in Oakley Road. Clive wondered if these details would jog any memories. He said, "I still have my futurama Electric guitar and my son has actually renovated it and improved the circuit board within!"



Clive's Futurama guitar

photo C Litten

RECYCLING TIP

Your small aluminium wrappers are easily recyclable but sometimes might get lost during the sorting process. Keep one aluminium tray (ie from your takeaway) and use as a mini-recycling bin. When it's full, simply scrunch together into a ball!



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Creative CAVERSHAM

Wine tour led to musical inspiration for Pamela



Pianist and composer Pamela Chilvers has been a mainstay of musical life in Caversham for five decades. However, instead of heading into retirement, she has found an unexpected new source of inspiration, as she explained to Elestr Lee

MUSICAL INSPIRATION is bubbling up for pianist Pamela Chilvers these days – rather like the bubbles in the wines which have been inspiring her! A trip to an Italian vineyard a few years back gave Pamela an extraordinary challenge; to compose a series of pieces for piano which captured in sound the sensations of drinking wine. The original compositions of the Caversham-based composer can

now be heard by wine-lovers around the world, simply by scanning a QR code attached to the wine labels.

Pamela, who has lived in Caversham for 50 years, was born in Grimsby. Her parents weren't from musical families, but her mother was determined to learn the piano, buying one once she got married – then told she was 'too old' to learn. Her daughter "took to it like a duck to water!" Pamela reminisced. Finding



Playing the concert grand piano recently acquired by Caversham Baptist Church *photo F Smith*



Pamela, with vineyard owners Ivan and Dina Rapuzzi in Italy

photo P Chilvers

lessons for such a talented pupil wasn't easy. Eventually a local piano teacher, Miss Davies, kindly took Pamela to London on a weekly basis for lessons with Maurice Jacobson, but the arrangement ended when Miss Davies fell ill. "I managed to get my Grade 8 by the age of 13, but at this point I didn't have a teacher. However, after a year, I was taken to Leeds, to study with Dame Fanny Waterman.

"All my teachers were my mentors. They went above and beyond to encourage me. Fanny Waterman was formidable – but she taught me so much, with her forensic attention to detail. She taught me to appreciate every note."

Pamela won both a scholarship to study with Fanny Waterman, and a commendation in her scholarship for the Royal Academy of Music. Afterwards she signed on at Reading University to take her PGCE and met her husband. "I had just become a Christian and met George at church in Reading. We were married within a year!" remembers Pamela.

...always composed...

George Chilvers – a partner in Campbell, Thompson & Chilvers Estate Agents based in the King's Road – died ten years ago. "After he died, I found it hard to be in the house on my own. Caversham Baptist Church were brilliant at supporting me, and I joined Phyllis Court in Henley. Also, I got a dog," Pamela said.

Having taught music at Highdown for a few years in the 70s, Pamela has worked mainly as a piano teacher; nowadays she supports students in all instruments offering mocks as exam preparation, most recently at Bradfield College. She also adjudicates the annual piano festival at Pangbourne College. And she has also always composed music.

"I wrote my own wedding march, a piece for organ. My daughter then had it performed at her own wedding! When I was at Highdown, I used to make three-part arrangements of pieces of music the pupils all knew, so everyone could

play something. At the end of the 70s, I composed a music drama based on the Acts of the Apostles, each taking me a year. I wrote *Act One* in 1978, the year my daughter Rebecca was born. Then *Act Two* was composed in 1980, the year I had Edward. The productions were put on by all the Churches in Caversham Together and involved an orchestra as well as actors – it was huge! Someone said, there is also a third Act – but I said 'No!'"

It is Pamela's membership of the Phyllis Court wine group which led to her recent compositions. "We went to Ronchi di Cialla, and the family who owned the vineyard were so welcoming. I had given them a CD of some of my piano compositions, and when I came home they got in touch and said if I was in Italy again, to visit them.

"I got the opportunity when I went back to Italy singing in the Mozart *Requiem* in Trieste. When I met the vineyard owner, Ivan Rapuzzi, he said how much they liked my music, and suggested we do a joint project! He sent me a case of his wine, and I wrote music to accompany it. Since then, I have been back to Italy to perform the music, and we are now going to perform it in London at the Steinway Hall."

Since her husband died, Pamela confesses that life hasn't been easy. "I have had to find ways to reinvent myself, and have had to fight to do this. I don't like being on my own", she admits. Friends have played an important role, but so has music. "I have composed a lot more since George died", she says. "I made my CD, *Changing Places*, before the wine project. And I have a new idea on the go – the son of one of my students is studying portraiture in Florence. I am going to compose music to go with his portraits. I will study his paintings in detail and, once I have composed the music, we'll put on a concert at Caversham Baptist Church together with these amazing portraits!"

Find out more:

pamelachilvers.co.uk



Six Full Body Winter Skincare Tips

WINTER IS here, which means this is the time to get your body into a good skincare routine. Dry skin is common during the winter, so you need to transition your skincare to maintain a healthy skin barrier. Think of your skin's barrier like mortar between the bricks on a wall. When the skin's barrier is impaired, the mortar chips away. This lets essential moisture escape from within the skin (trans-epidermal water loss), and harmful, irritating free radicals can penetrate the skin through the impaired barrier.

Here are my 6 winter tips:

- 1 **Check your water temperature:** it is appealing to run hot showers and baths in the cold months, but don't. Use lower temperature water to avoid aggravating sensitive, irritated skin even more. Have shorter showers to reduce the time the skin is exposed to hot water. Wash your face in the morning with cool water and in the evening with lukewarm water.
- 2 **Use PH balanced cleansers:** to combat dryness use a PH balanced cleanser to soothe gently and remove dirt and bacteria without stripping the skin of its natural oils. Always double cleanse to keep your skin hydrated. (Look to a skincare specialist to help you find the right cleanser for you).
- 3 **SPF all year round:** don't think SPF is just for the summer months. Sun Protection Factor should be used all year round to protect your skin from harmful UV rays that can penetrate through clouds. A good quality SPF will also act as a shield to protect your skin from free radicals and pollutants. I personally love a tinted SPF as it saves me using foundation.
- 4 **Check your clothing:** cold weather materials such as wool can aggravate dry winter skin. Stay comfortable with your clothing choices. Cashmere is warm and gentle on the skin.
- 5 **Add more moisture:** drink lots of water if you suffer from dryness or flakes. Invest in a humidifier for your home. A humidifier can help to keep skin soft and moisturised. Artificial heat will make the indoor air very dry.
- 6 **Introduce dry brushing:** this exfoliates dry winter skin, increases blood flow circulation and promotes lymph flow to detoxify the skin. For best results, brush upwards or in circular movements. Dry brushing helps to unclog pores and primes your skin for fresh new skin cells. Try to do it daily before you shower.

by **Perry Walker** Owner of Perry's Beauty, Caversham
@perrys_beautyroom

KEEP ACTIVE AND AGE WELL



by *Samantha Fields*

IT'S NO SECRET that, as we age, we start to find things harder physically. But why is this, and what can we do about it?

Our bodies peak at around 30 years of age. After that, we regress anatomically, which affects our physical output. Our muscles begin to weaken, we lose coordination and are quicker to fatigue. All of this and more happens even in the absence of disease or illness. Pretty scary stuff! So what can we do about it? One way we can age successfully is to try to maintain as much of our strength and vitality as possible through effective physical activity.

General guidelines recommend 150 minutes of physical activity per week for over 55s. But previous studies have shown that only 20% of men and 17% of women aged 65-74 are meeting these recommendations (Health Survey for England 2008). Part of the issue older adults face in meeting this target, is knowing how and where to start.

...cardio, strength and balance...

The good news is that there are instructors who cater specifically for this age group. Good classes will include a mix of cardio, strength and balance, all designed to be adaptable and incorporate all abilities. Classes also offer social enrichment, with a chance to meet new people. Above all, exercise should be enjoyable, and a fitness session with others is a good way to get motivated and have fun together. An exercise class or two in the week

would result in big benefits and improvements to physical, mental and social health, and overall wellbeing.

But if you're not ready for classes, remember, any activity is better than none! Physical activity is not limited to working out in a gym or an exercise class; it includes gardening, walking, housework – anything that results in an increase in energy expenditure. With the Start Active Stay Active report (2011) finding that many adults over 65 spend 10 hours or more a day sitting or laying down, it is so important to find ways to get moving. Your body will thank you!

Samantha Fields is the founder of Fielgood Fitness, and runs classes locally which are specifically created for over 55s (including seated only exercise classes).

Visit

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First Impressions Matter



Seven steps to writing your CV



by Laura Harmsworth

IF YOU'RE looking for a new job, having a well-written CV is essential. It's part of your job search toolbox. But where to start?

Here are my suggested steps and top tips.

Choose a format

- Reverse chronology: Everything is written in reverse chronological order with your most recent experience and qualifications showing first. This CV is logical and makes it easy for recruiters to see your experience and progression. This format is for you if you've been following a natural career path.
- Functional (also known as skills-based): This format focuses the reader's mind on what you can offer in terms of skills, abilities, and professional expertise, rather than in which role you acquired them. This highlights your transferable skills, and any gaps are less obvious. This format is for you if you're changing career direction or have a career gap. Just be aware that recruiters are often wary of this type of CV.
- Hybrid: A functional CV isn't favoured by all recruiters and hiring managers, so a hybrid of functional and chronological works well. The 'Skills' section can be more informative, to include examples and achievements, but not to the extent of a functional CV. You will keep a lot of that information under each role. This format is for most job seekers, and particularly suits those just starting out, changing careers, or returning after a career break.

Add CV sections

- Personal Details
- Profile
- Key skills
- Career history

- Voluntary roles
- Education, training, and qualifications
- Interests

Write a list of all your skills

- Seek input from others
- Find adverts for your ideal role
- Highlight the skills, write them into a document, group them, and delete duplicates/ones you don't have
- List the top four to six skills in the 'Key Skills' section of the CV
- If you're changing career, focus on your transferable skills

Write a list of your achievements

- Think through all your roles and write down positive feedback, awards, targets achieved, challenges overcome, initiatives that have saved money etc
- Write as much as you want on each achievement using CAR (Context, Action, Result)
- Refine into a succinct sentence or two, starting with the R, quantifying where possible
- Don't start every line with 'Responsible for' – remember it's about your achievements
- Use the strongest action/power word you can find at the beginning of a sentence to ensure your CV is impressive
- Avoid jargon words
- Don't overuse the same words or phrases
- Ensure the action verb is relevant to the key words in the job advert/description
- Copy and paste the ones relevant to the job ad into your CV

Formatting

- Ensure your CV is easy to read, with white space, clear headings, and consistent use of formatting
- Spelling and grammar
- Proofread your CV e.g. spell check, use the Read Aloud function in Word, and ask someone else to read it

Tailoring

Writing a generic CV and using it for numerous applications without changing the content is unlikely to land you an interview. The hiring manager wants to know how you fit the bill specifically and what you can bring to the company.

- Read the job advert and use the keywords in your CV
- Ensure an example/achievement is on your CV to evidence each skill/requirement
- Only include relevant responsibilities or those that demonstrate transferable skills they're looking for

Would you like an even easier way to write your CV?

I expand on all of the above in my book, Your All-In-One CV and Job Search Companion. This provides tools, templates, and advice on cover letters, LinkedIn, and interviews. There are chapters dedicated to specific situations, including career changes, career gaps, student CVs, advice for the over 50s, and redundancy. Find it at www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B0CN2G5FPP

You can follow Laura on:

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Wellbeing with Ami Roy

Do you have a third place?

IT'S AN old concept, dating back to the late 1980s, which has new relevance in today's hybrid/remote work environment. In fact, having a third place could have a positive impact on our mental health and wellbeing.

The term third place has its roots in sociology and is attributed to Ray Oldenburg in his book, 'The Great Good Place'. According to Oldenburg, our first place is home. The second place is work. Our third place is a public place which facilitates social interaction and a sense of comfort. The third place is where we relax in public, encounter familiar faces, and can make new connections. This can be a park, coffee shop, church, gym, neighbourhood bar, museum, community centre, barber shop, beauty salon, library and so on. The third place should be somewhere we frequent, so our favourite holiday destination doesn't qualify.

Third places typically have eight characteristics, including being neutral ground (no obligation to be there), a levelling

effect (no emphasis on individual status), the ability to converse (typically light-hearted conversations), and have regulars (individuals who serve as community anchors and set the tone).

Simply put, our first and second places have become muddled. Almost everyone worked remotely during the height of the pandemic, and the ramifications still linger. With many employees still working remotely some or all of the time, our first and second places have become completely intertwined, making work-life balance more complicated. A third place provides separation.

These third places often catch us at our best, when we're not burdened by immediate urgencies of work, or piles of laundry left to fold. They also offer a safe place for us to show up at our worst when we need to, when we're stressed or feeling worn down. Our only obligation is to show up, engage, and metaphorically put our feet

up with our friends and community – or alone if it's solitude we're after.

The relevance of third places to health and quality of life is under-researched. They may promote wellbeing through mechanisms of stimulation, support, protection, and care. However, with the closure of so many accessible third places, we must look after the ones still thriving in our communities. And nurture connection to each other outside the workplace and the home. The value of online third places also has a relevance in our increasingly connected world. As we saw during the pandemic, we were able to make connections online and support each other through uncertain times.

Our third place should come with a sense of ease and offer respite from the world, without removing us from it altogether.



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Local Clergy and Church Services

ANGLICAN

Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham Ministry

St Margaret, St Peter, 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

penny@ctmparish.org.uk

Rev'd Rachel Ross Smith Tel: 07884 371688

rachel@ctmparish.org.uk

Rev'd Dr Catherine Radcliffe Tel: 07740 475697

catherine@ctmparish.org.uk

Contact: admin@ctmparish.org.uk or 0118 996 8836

Correspondence address: Church House,

59 Church Street, Caversham RG4 8AX

Current services

St Margaret's Church

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

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 Andrew's

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 and Caversham Park

Rev'd Kevin Lovell, vicar@saintbarnabas.org.uk

Church Office Tel: 0118 947 8239

Current Services

Sundays: 8:00 BCP Holy Communion (1st Sunday only)
9:30 Parish Communion (Service of the Word on 2nd Sunday)

11:30 All Age Worship (Café Church or Family Communion)

Wednesdays: 10:30 Midweek Communion

Morning Prayer: Tuesdays 8:30 in church; Mon/Weds/Thurs 8:00. online at

www.facebook.com/StBarnabasEmmerGreen/live_videos

Full details at www.saintbarnabas.org.uk/whats-on

METHODIST CHURCH

The Methodist Church Caversham

Rev'd Jeongsook Kim Tel: 0118 947 2223

Rev'd David Jenkins Tel: 0118 327 1592

www.cavershammethodist.org.uk

Current services

Caversham Heights Methodist Church

Highmoor Road

Sunday – 10.30 – Also available on YouTube.

Gosbrook Road Methodist Church

Current services: Sunday – 10:30

New Testament Church of God

Rev'd Dr Garrick Wilson

Tel: 0118 946 3009

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

United Reformed Church, Caversham Park

Contact: Dr Alison Johnston

Tel: 0118 947 5152 www.cavershamparkurc.com

Current services

Sunday – 11:00 – Livestreaming on YouTube

Details on their web site at:

<https://cpurc.org.uk/live-stream>

BAPTIST CHURCH

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

See their web site for details:

www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk

Riverside Church (Reading)

www.riversidechurchreading.co.uk

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

(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



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