

UNVEILED: FACELIFT SCHEME FOR PRECINCT

Plans have now been revealed for the extensive redevelopment of the run-down St Martin's Precinct in the centre of Caversham. They include the enlargement of the Waitrose supermarket and the construction of a two-level car park.

The state of the 1960s precinct has been a common complaint for many years. The property company, Hermes Real Estate Investment Management, who bought the precinct in 2007, has already made a number of improvements including refurbishment of the upper floor flats on Church Street and extensive repairs to drainage. Late in 2013, there was an informal indication that more ambitious plans were being developed.

In May these plans were unveiled to the public. Representatives from Hermes and the design team from architects Barton Willmore, organised a series of presentations on outline plans and public sessions were held on two days. In total, more than 500 people attended. The plans were then made available on a new website, www.stmartinscentre-caversham.co.uk.

A major change will be the expansion of Waitrose across the passageway from the car park to Church Street and into the space now occupied by Superdrug. The expanded store will have new entrances on Church Street and onto the car park and new public toilets, replacing the current toilet block, will be provided inside Waitrose. The QS store will close and Superdrug will move into that space.

At the end of the precinct, nearest the telephone exchange, a new building will include a Pizza Express restaurant on the ground floor and residential accommodation above. Residential accommodation will also be added above Boots and Costa Coffee. The Iceland building will be extended upwards and it is hoped to provide a small cinema with associated bar and restaurant.

The layout of the car park will be changed and an open deck built over the Waitrose car park with ramps for cars and a lift for pedestrians. The outer walls will be timber clad with planting and there will be a net increase of 52 spaces. The upper deck will provide level access to Reflex.

While footpaths across the car park are to be reviewed, the entrance and exit to the car park and the Waitrose delivery area will remain unchanged. A new service area for other businesses will be created which will be gated during the day and deliveries restricted to the evening.

A new square, called Caversham Square, will be created around the new trees at the back of the butcher's shop and this may be suitable for small local events.



CADRA committee members Paul Matthews and Helen Lambert examine the plans

The roots of the trees in St Martin's Square have been causing many problems, damaging drains and lifting the paving. These are to be removed and new trees will be planted with root barriers to prevent further damage. It is not yet entirely clear whether the trees at the front of St Martin's Square or the street trees near the telephone exchange are to be retained. New trees along the back are shown on the drawings, lining the edge of the car park.

The individual shopfronts along Church Street will be replaced to bring more light into the shops and the shop signs will be brought forward to the front of the awnings.

During the consultation, people were asked to say what they liked about the

plans and to make comments – specifically on the type of building materials shown. At the end of this process, Barton Willmore indicated that there had been a strong reaction against the timber and render finish shown for the new block by the telephone exchange and for the upward extension over Boots and Costa.

The Caversham Traders Association and CADRA (Caversham and District Residents' Association) have kept in close touch since the proposals were first announced. The proportion of independent traders is part of the essential local character and it is important that the independents can continue to thrive. The sense of a village community, which comes partly from the remaining Victorian buildings, is also precious to many people.

For years, we have all been asking for a regeneration of the old 1960s precinct. This should be an opportunity to improve the 1960s buildings, to improve the relationship between old and new and to resolve some existing problems. The scheme has great potential for Caversham. Structurally and architecturally, it has to fit around much of the existing buildings. Has it yet arrived at a design which retains a distinctive centre with character?

Comments prior to the formal planning application have now closed. There will be the usual opportunity to comment through the planning process. Once the application is decided, Hermes hopes to start work in March 2015. The first stage would be the Waitrose expansion and car park. Phasing is designed to allow all businesses to remain open with intended completion March 2016.

Details of the scheme can be seen on page 3

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The Editors also would like to bring to readers' notice that the
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TALKING POINT

by

Derek Chandler

Giving and receiving

I wonder if you have ever come across the children's story, 'Badger's Parting Gifts'? It is now 30 years old and has been read in schools and pre-schools in that time. Badger is old, and he knows that soon he will die. He is not afraid, and is only worried about how his animal friends will feel when he's not around any more. One day he settles down in his chair and has a dream that he is running, fast and without pain, towards a long tunnel. The next day his friends discover that he has died and read a note he has left for them, which simply says "Gone down the Long Tunnel. Goodbye, Badger". His friends are desperately unhappy. Mole in particular takes Badger's death very badly. Winter sets in, and all the friends continue to feel very sad.

Spring finally appears, and the friends begin to visit each other and talk about all the happy times they had with Badger. Together they realise that Badger left each of his friends a parting gift - a memory of something he had taught them that they could now do extremely well. Their sadness melts like the snow, and they remember Badger with a smile on their faces as they face the spring with their new found gifts. It is a book designed to help children explore bereavement with adults. The Christian metaphors are clear. Goodbyes are not always easy, particularly if they are imposed by redundancy, divorce, or death. There can be a long grieving process. But they are necessary if we are ever to grow as human beings.

Recently I have been sitting with my oldest son in our car while he has been learning to drive. If you are used to being in the driving seat you might agree with me that it takes trust to let that go. But you must let it go to build up the confidence of the driver. Letting go is important. My son's confidence to drive is, in part, helped if I let go. In a way it's like a goodbye and they are important too as any child can tell you who has read "Badger's Parting Gifts". Part of our growth as human beings comes from the realisation that we cannot and probably should not, always be in control. As I think of these things I also think about my life and I ask myself, "How many times have I really trusted God to be in the driving seat of my life? Or do I want to do it all myself, giving him the wheel only when I can't cope?"

I would like to end with these questions for us to consider:
At this moment in time are there goodbyes we need to make?
At this moment in time are there gifts we should hand on in trust?
What do we need to let go of at this moment in time, in order that God may do more of the driving in our lives?
Difficult questions. How we choose to answer them will define our destination.

*The Rev Derek Chandler is the vicar of St Barnabas church,
Emmer Green*

SUNDAY SERVICES

ANGLICAN

St Peter's, St Peter's Hill

8.00am Holy Communion
9.45am Parish Communion
6.30pm Evensong

St John's, Gosbrook Road

8.30am Holy Communion (2nd Sunday)
10.00am Parish Communion (except 2nd Sunday)
10.00am All Age Worship (2nd Sunday)

St Andrew's, Harrogate Road

8.00am The Eucharist
10.00am Parish Eucharist (Sung)
First Sunday, Family Eucharist
11.30am The Eucharist first and third Sundays
only, first Sunday BCP
6.30pm Evening Prayer (as announced)

St Barnabas, Grove Road, Emmer Green

8.00am Holy Communion
9.30am Family Communion (apart
from 2nd Sunday)
9.30am Family Service (2nd Sunday only)

St Margaret's, Mapledurham

11.00am Parish Communion

CAVERSHAM PARK ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP Meeting at Caversham Park School

11.00am Holy Communion (1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays)
Morning Worship (2nd and 4th Sundays)
All Age Worship (at Festival Times)

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH South Street

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7.00pm Powerhouse Service - 2nd Saturday
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6.30pm Prayer Meeting

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10.30am

Woodcote Parish Church

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NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD

Church Street, Caversham

9.30am Sunday School
11.00am Divine Worship
6.00pm Evening Service

Caversham Bridge

Contributions for the August 2014 issue should be sent to the Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham parish office by **Monday 30th June**. The date for the September 2014 issue is **Monday 28th July**. Email address is secretary@ctmparish.org.uk
Advertising copy for the August issue should be sent to Mr A Wright, Twiggmoor, Upper Warren Avenue, Caversham, by **Friday 27th June**. The date for the September issue is **Friday 25th July**

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PRECINCT SCHEME

SITE CONTEXT / CONSTRAINTS

The site lies within the centre of Caversham and includes one of the central Caversham car parks.

Access to the site is taken from Freshbrook Road close to its junction with Peppard Road, South Street and Church Street. Delivery vehicle access is taken from Abbotmead Place to the south of the site, accessed via Wolsey Road.

Environment Agency data confirms that the majority of the site is not within the flood plain, and the site was not affected by recent events. The redevelopment will not be at risk of flooding and will seek to reduce flood risk off-site by inclusion of sustainable drainage techniques.

The existing trees in the precinct have significantly outgrown the space available for them, both above and below ground. Whilst the above ground parts of the trees can be pruned, this approach is unsuitable to deal with excessive shallow rooting. Damage to drainage and distortion to the paving, resulting in dangerous trip hazards, are ongoing.

INITIAL CONCEPTS / OPPORTUNITIES

- Improve links to the river, including the new Thames cycle/pedestrian bridge connecting Caversham to Reading station and the town centre
- Improve the pedestrian experience including the creation of a High Street / Caversham Square / Market Square Loop
- Improve the quality of the built and landscape environment
- Create a sense of arrival from the rear car park
- Enhance the appearance and vibrancy of the district centre at the heart of the Caversham community
- Increase trade and vibrancy within the centre both in the daytime and through the creation of more evening uses (leisure and restaurants)
- Expansion of the existing Waitrose
- Potential to reconfigure the existing car park within a landscaped setting and increase overall parking numbers from 254 to 306 with separate dedicated residential parking
- Creation of additional jobs (approx. 70 full time equivalent)



INITIAL CONCEPTS



PROPOSED SCHEME LAYOUT



CAVERSHAM SQUARE

Caversham Square will provide a new link from the car park into St Martin's Square with an attractive landscape scheme throughout the space.

From this approach the square will be a focal point of the scheme, and be pivotal in increasing a sense of arrival at the rear of the centre providing a new public space which could be used for various community purposes.



PROPOSED ELEVATIONS



Part of the display put on by the owners, Hermes, showing plans for the redevelopment of St Martin's precinct in Caversham (See front page)

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From the Lookout Post

CADRA AGM and local planning

More than 70 people attended the CADRA annual meeting and presentation on local planning in May. It came at a busy time, just as the first presentations were being made on plans for St Martin's Centre in Caversham and arrangements for construction access across Christchurch Meadows for the new pedestrian and cycle bridge.

A summary of CADRA's activities over the past year highlighted work on the Sharing our Streets project. Copies were available of the draft Vision Statement, which is the first step towards establishing an agreed plan to improve traffic measures through the centre of Caversham.

The aim is: "To enhance Caversham centre as a high quality place for shopping, working, living and leisure and to promote an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable village centre for the 21st Century."

A show of hands confirmed support for the Vision, which was also circulated for comment to CADRA members and Caversham Traders. More detail of the Sharing our Streets project is available at www.cadra.org.uk.

Professor Gavin Parker, chair of planning studies at Reading University, then talked about the UK planning system in relation to other countries across the world and the changes brought in by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012. The "assumption in favour of sustainable development", which is central to the NPPF, is defined locally by the Reading Local Plan. This is highly significant as, without an approved local plan, applications are decided on the very broad policies of the NPPF.

Professor Parker went on to talk about Neighbourhood Planning. This is designed to provide local empowerment as part of localism

but also to achieve growth. Where there is no parish council, a Neighbourhood Forum would be set up and one of the early decisions would be to decide on the neighbourhood boundary. In both Woodcote and Sonning Common, local people have recognised that their village will expand and have chosen to proceed with neighbourhood planning in order to shape and direct development. Professor Parker kindly made his presentation available and there is a link from www.cadra.org.uk

Lynette Baker, area planning officer at Reading council, talked about the process to develop the local plan and the different policy levels within it. A housing needs assessment is in progress for Reading and its conclusions will be significant in determining housing plans for the borough. Responding to a question on building in the flood plain, she highlighted the importance of the report by Sir Michael Pitt in 2007.

In determining individual planning applications, officers must consider whether the plan constitutes Permitted Development. Among other issues, they consider "unneighbourliness" which includes the question of safeguarding the amenity of neighbouring properties. In Reading, 94 per cent of applications are delegated to officers to decide but ward councillors may decide to "call in" an application to be decided by the planning application committee. Enforcement of planning conditions is largely a reactive process following complaints made to the council.

The evening came to a close with a retiring collection for the Alzheimer's Society. Many people stayed to discuss local issues and put individual questions to the visiting speakers.

Daniel Pagella from the team at The Heights Primary School was available to explain progress and respond to questions.



Professor Parker responds to questions at the meeting

Recollections of old Caversham

This anonymous article has been sent to us by a Caversham Bridge reader. It was given to him by a friend whose father had grown up in Caversham and it was found after he died, so perhaps it was written by his wife. Apart from that nothing is known about it. Is there any reader who can help us identify the author?

I was born in 1915 and lived in Southview Avenue all my childhood. The road was rough gravel with lots of potholes and many puddles; the best part was when they froze into lovely slides in winter.

There were several good houses nearer St. Anne's Catholic Church end, but beyond Ardler Road they were few and far between. The rest of the land comprised well-kept allotments. St John's Road and Ardler Road were similar – very few houses and allotments.

Our house was detached, but should have had a house attached to it (the fire places were there), but the builder never finished it, so we had a double front garden with many fruit trees. Dad also had an allotment further down the road. We kept chickens and pigs, so there was always a side of bacon on the kitchen wall. The eggs were stored in a large bed pan (to store for winter) in the larder.

The fruit was laid out on wooden racks in specially-built sheds, and the wood for lighting fires was also stored in sheds. A load was delivered by horse and cart from Elliott's, the off-cuts of the wood work they manufactured. My brothers and sisters loved to go through it to find some lovely shaped pieces of wood, and often chopped some of the wood on the chopping block, but my young brother chopped the top of his thumb off and I found it in the garden! He was three years old at the time.

Open fires provided the heating. Mother had to clean the hearth with a hearth stone, also the front doorstep. The front room fire was lit on Sunday and, if we were ill, we had a fire in the bedroom. Of course, there was no electricity. We had a gas-jet in the scullery and one bedroom and a gas globe with mantle in the dining room. The front room had an oil lamp and we had candle-sticks to carry when we went to bed, with stone hot water bottles in winter, filled from a large kettle which was always boiling on a trivet attached to fire bars.

A fire was lit under the brick-built copper for boiling the washing, with large galvanised baths to rinse: a 'blue bag' was put into the final rinse. A mangle with large wooden rollers was in the shed to squeeze out the water, and clean sheets were put through again when dry to save the ironing. We had a pump for pumping up the water from the well, but later we had water laid on. Before this the toilet was a pine seat with a bucket beneath, and contents

were taken into the garden and dug into a hole.

A pond stretched between St John's Road and Ardler Road. My brothers, sisters and friends played in Ardler Road at the back of our houses. On the corner of Ardler Road we found "milk maids" among the little paths, with willow trees dipping in the water. The pond end nearer Gosbrook Road was deeper and open. The Snow Flake laundry was in Southview Avenue, with gates in St Johns Road, but is no longer there. The Star public house was a little thatched cottage. Lower Caversham more or less finished there. Woodlands Cottage and Woodland Farm were in Lower Henley Road and there were hedges along the roadside.

Donkin Hill had a few terraced houses and there were a few at the end of Southview Avenue, with Mrs Fuller's shop on the corner. Beyond the houses was a narrow hill, hedges and banks each side, where we picked wild violets. Just Barclose House was there, half-way up on the left. It is no longer there.

The Anglefield Road was all allotments. There must have been some good gardeners in those days. Opposite the top of Donkin Hill was a little round house and beside it was a lane which led up to the kissing gate. Corn was grown in the fields by the path which is still there, next to the Henley Road shops. There was another round house at the entrance to May's Farm, where the Travellers' Rest pub is now.

St Johns Road held its fete in May's field in front of the lovely old White House, later the Royal Show was held on this land, where Mayfield Drive is now. Mayfield Drive was built about 1936 onward and I lived there when I was first married in 1937, and saw the other half built. We went to St John's Sunday school and after, we would walk up Donkin Hill through Horse Close to Peppard Road. We picked wild flowers in Horse Close, made daisy chains, picked Lady's Slippers and Knap Weed, (wasn't it hard to pick!). Emmer Green was still woods and fields. We climbed the stile by Emmer Green pond and crossed the Co-op fields, to the lane by Bottle Cottages, so called

because they had bottle-ends worked into the brickwork (no longer there). On to Surley Row, then back down Peppard Hill, Cromwell Road through Mrs Reeves' passage Her shop was at the bottom of Cromwell Road.

Baltimore House was half way up Peppard Road and there were just two little cottages next to the Prince Of Wales pub where my friend's granny lived, and a few larger houses on Derby and Grosvenor Road side, with Queen Anne's School on the corner. Elliott's used to hold the summer fete in Queen Anne's playing fields (I fell off the end of a rather large see-saw when it was high!) and Dad ran the coconut shy!

Prospect Street was the main shopping street. The Co-op grocery store was on the corner of North Street with Colebrook the butchers and fishmongers next door. Then the Co-op built a new "superstore" opposite, and the old grocery shop became the Co-op butchers. To shop, it was best to give a list to the assistant so he could collect several things at once. He would weigh sugar and put it into little blue bags and weigh flour or cake fruit, then you would need to go over the other side for cheese, butter, bacon and wait for your turn again - it took ages! Thank goodness when I became a housewife a man would call for the order and it was delivered to the door and paid for when he came for the next order.

The Post Office was in the same place, but had been modernised. Jackson's was on the corner of Short Street. Near the Co-op was Parslows the bakers, Milwards shoe shop, Meadys and Smith's newsagents. We used to like to read the cheeky post-cards displayed in the windows. Robinsons, the builder's yard, was above the Co-op, and down the bottom was Howes the drapers. It was a double-windowed shop that sold towels, bed linen, haberdashery and collars. Often the goods were marked a farthing less than the full shilling, as we do today - £1.99 instead of £2.00. It was marked 1s 11 3/4d instead of 2s (two shillings) and we were often given a strip of pins for change instead of a farthing (a farthing was a quarter of a penny).



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Tennis club nets £38,000 for revamp

Work has started on a major redevelopment programme at Mapledurham Tennis Club. The club, which is located at Mapledurham playing fields where it has four hard courts and a clubroom in the adjacent pavilion, has recently secured a £38,800 grant from Sport England for improvements.

With a £27,000 contribution from the club's own funds, a total of more than £66,000 is available for the project. The money will be spent on re-fencing and resurfacing the courts, adding a verandah and disabled toilets to the pavilion, and will also contribute towards improved disabled access and parking bays. The area around the courts will start to be re-landscaped as part of an ongoing project.

The club hopes the renovation work will help to attract new members and plans to begin coaching for special needs youngsters in September and wheelchair players in phase two in 2015.

This is a big step forward in the campaign to raise funds to replace Mapledurham pavilion. Reading Borough Council has pledged capital towards the project and the Warren and District Residents' Association has so far raised around £40,000. Donations towards the project qualify for GiftAid, and can be made via the Virgin Money Giving website to the Mapledurham Recreation Ground Charity.

David Maynard, relaunch project manager of the tennis club, said: "This award by Sport England is part of their 2012 Olympic and Paralympic legacy programme. So I am not only really excited about the prospect of making great improvements to our tennis club but also excited to be part of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic legacy."

"By improving the quality of our club facilities we hope to attract many more players, in particular creating new coaching programmes for juniors, special needs youngsters and in phase two of our development plan, wheelchair users."

The council's lead member for culture, sport and consumer services, Councillor Paul Gittings, added: "As the trustee of Mapledurham playing fields, the council would like to congratulate the Mapledurham Tennis Club on their successful funding bid."

"This is a great step forward in enhancing the playing fields' facilities and I hope that it encourages even more local residents to support the council and local groups who are working on wider programmes of improvements."



An aerial view of the courts and the pavilion

Sisters triumph earning gold

Sisters Kathryn Williams, aged 23, and Rachel, 20 recently celebrated success with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, achieving their Gold Awards They attended St James's Palace in London to receive their certificates from the Duke.

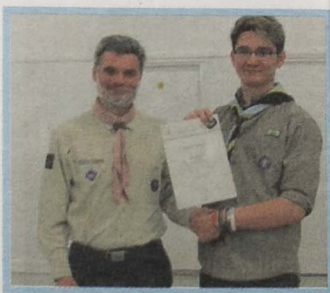
Kathryn's activities included learning about geology and organising a month's field trip, camping in Raasay in the Outer Hebrides. She also undertook a week's residential course, navigating a narrowboat through London, including the tidal Thames.

Rachel learnt to master playing the cor anglais and improved on her oboe, achieving a distinction in Grade 8. She spent a week helping to run an activity centre in north Devon, and participating in activities which included learning to surf.

Both girls gained their leadership qualification at 5th Caversham (St Peter's) Brownies where Kathryn was known as Dormouse and Rachel as Otter. They also did their expedition together in the north Yorkshire Dales. Often considered the most challenging section, this was definitely the case for them as it had to be postponed for over a year while Rachel underwent a major hip operation and then had to recover sufficiently to withstand the rigours of walking 80 kilometres.

The awards, were attained through hard work, determination and perseverance, sometimes in the face of difficulties which made it an even more worthwhile achievement. They learnt the importance of teamwork and gained new experiences and opportunities that they might not otherwise have had.

Meanwhile their brother Anthony, 18, has achieved his Silver Award. He was presented with his certificate at the 89th Reading Explorer Scouts HQ by Paul Bandy, the district commissioner for Reading Central. Anthony's activities were learning to cook, taking up rowing and volunteering in the Age UK shop in Caversham. His expedition took place in the New Forest last October during the bad storms experienced at that time. Anthony is now well on the way to achieving his Gold Award.



Anthony receives his certificate from Paul Bandy



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**Alpha
course an
inspiration**

Earlier in the year, St. Barnabas church at Emmer Green celebrated the completion of its 2014 Alpha course with a meal and fellowship shared between course leaders and attendees.

Twelve people attended the course, which was led by four members of the St. Barnabas leadership team. The course followed a 10-week programme and each session began with a meal provided, cooked and served by other member of the St. Barnabas fellowship. There was then a thought-provoking DVD featuring the charismatic Nicky Gumbel, followed by a group discussion on the topic of the week. Sessions were designed to encourage debate and to explore the basics of the Christian faith in a friendly, honest and informal environment.

All 12 people who began the course in January completed the full 10 week programme and the course leaders received some very encouraging feedback: "The Alpha course has been a fantastic journey..."

"I understand so much more about the Christian faith..."

"Coming to Alpha has been the highlight of my week..."

Future Alpha courses at St Barnabas will be announced in the *Caversham Bridge*.



Members of the course and their leaders

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CHURCHES

**Confirmation at Our Lady
and St Anne's**

Bishop William Kenney came to Caversham in May to celebrate Mass and to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation. Twenty young people were confirmed at a ceremony in the church of Our Lady and St Anne.

They included 12 pupils from St Anne's school, three adults, four travellers' teenagers and one other youngster. Helen Fletcher prepared the children from St Anne's school while Fr Paul prepared all the others.



The bishop cuts the cake with Helen Fletcher

Photos: Jane Shaw

will be reciprocated.

After the homily, Bishop Kenney invited the candidates as well as the whole congregation to renew their baptismal promises and then confirmed each candidate finishing with the words, "Peace be with you" and each replied, "And with your spirit".

After Mass, all retired to the Cenacle for refreshments. Bishop Kenney cut the confirmation cake made, as for so many years, by Helen Fletcher.



Bishop Kenney with the newly confirmed

Everyone invited to the fete

Organisers of the annual Church Fete in Caversham Court Gardens are inviting everyone to come along and enjoy a great afternoon in beautiful surroundings on 12th July. The event is organised by St Peter's, Caversham and St Margaret's, Mapledurham.

The Berkshire Maestros, a group of young musicians, will again entertain with a fine selection of music. Also welcomed back are the Hurst Morris People, who are always very popular and encourage the younger members of the audience to have a go.

One of the organisers says: "We can guarantee you a wonderful afternoon exploring many side stalls or trying your skill at traditional sideshows. Why not buy a ticket for the grand draw? This year the top prizes include a Kindle Fire, a Barrett Photography portrait pack and four rounds of golf at Caversham Heath Golf Club plus many other great prizes."

Among the many tempting stalls will be old favourites such as cakes, plants and bric-a-brac, as well as newer ideas such as a jams and preserves stall. You can also try your luck at the coconut shy, hoopla or hook a duck.

Home-made cakes, tea, coffee, and ice cream will be available on the lawn all afternoon and new for this year is a Pimms tent near the river.

Fred in the Shed will be returning to keep the little ones entertained with a fun show for all ages followed by children's races.

The fete, which starts at 1.45pm with the ringing of St Peter's bells, will raise funds to support the parish's work both at home and abroad.



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The Social Side takes off

A new group has been formed at the parish of our Lady and St Anne. Called the Social Side, it is a team of individuals representing a diverse pool of talents, across a broad age range and aiming to invigorate a strong sense of community in the parish. The intention is to focus on building up the social side of the parish.

The first event arranged was a car boot sale and a selection of sellers arranged their wares around the church car park on a sunny Saturday morning. The barbecue was lit and burgers and hot dogs, as well as tea, coffee and cold drinks, were available for buyers and sellers.

Stalls including children's games and books, baby clothes, plants, technology bits and pieces and stalls of miscellaneous items brightened up the car park.

The event raised £310 for parish funds as well as providing the first opportunity for the Social Side to get going.



Lex and Damian man the barbecue

Photo: Margaret Anscombe

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CHURCHES

Happy holidays with the Methodists

Due to the outstanding success of the Holiday @ Home scheme run by the Methodist Churches in Caversham last year -- for people who are not always able to get away or to get out to enjoy themselves -- the organisers decided to repeat the exercise this year and extended it to four days in May.

More than 60 "holiday makers" attended with some coming for the four days and many who had booked for one or two days asking to come on other days as well.

They were welcomed on arrival with coffee or tea followed by various activities during the morning. These ranged from découpage boxes and



cards, glass painting, paper tricks, garden games such as indoor bowls and hoopla. Planting up flower pots proved very popular. The guests were able to take home all they had produced from each of the activities.

Two course lunches were served each day.

There were quizzes, a bingo session, chair based exercises and a play reading (part of The Importance of Being Ernest) and a talk on old Reading. Over the four days there were various demonstrations on dog training, flower arranging, and how to make sugar cake decorations.

There was plenty to do if none of the activities appealed -- jigsaw puzzles

and assorted games, newspapers to read or the chance to chat with friends in a relaxed atmosphere.

Jim Plunkett, known as Tinkling Jim, had everyone singing songs of yesteryear. To round off the afternoon tea and cakes were served before a final Thought for the day led by Minister Jenny Dowding and Deacon Becky Lovatt.

Thanks go to Sherryl Quint and Lesley Boardley who between them organised the events and to the many helpers who gave so much time, shopping, providing lunches, serving teas, washing up and providing transport and generally making the guests welcome.



Learning the skills of glass painting



Potting plants was a popular activity

Sunshine, success and sharpening

The annual household and handyman sale at St Barnabas church was a great success this year due in part to very pleasant weather. Some people took advantage of the sunshine and enjoyed a cup of tea sitting at one of our sale items before it got sold.

All the stall holders worked hard to raise more than £1,800 for three African charities: Education for Life, Christian Engineers in Development and Masiphumelele. See the website for further information about these.

As ever, the tool and knife sharpening service proved very popular. As a result, we are happy to announce that it will be available for about the next six months, with the proceeds going to our Organ Restoration Fund. For further details, please phone Wendy on 946 1365

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ENVIRONMENT

MEADOW CRANESBILL



The lovely blue of the wood cranesbill beside the River Kennet

Despite its English and Latin names, you're more likely to see the meadow cranesbill – *geranium pratense* – by roadsides and on waste ground than in fields. Farther north, it is a plant of damp meadows, like its cousin, the wood cranesbill. My photograph was taken on a bit of waste land by the River Kennet, where Rose Kiln Lane crosses it.

This is a plant which I rejoice to see – the gorgeous colour, between a fairly deep blue and purple, with translucent veins to the petals which make the flowers look particularly attractive with sunlight streaming through them.

In my opinion, meadow cranesbill is one of the plants where the wild species beats the cultivated varieties on several counts. In my garden, I grow one of the usual blue varieties, Johnson's Blue, which is a hybrid between our wild plant and a foreigner, *geranium himalayense*. But I also grow the wild plant, grown from seed gathered in the Derbyshire dales. Its flowers are more subtly coloured and marked, and it has a longer flowering period.

The names geranium and cranesbill seem to have entered the English language in the sixteenth century. William Turner has both in his book *The Names of Herbs*, published in 1548. Geranium is straight from the Latin word for the bird, a crane, and is almost the same as the Greek word for a crane. Cranesbill is a translation of the name of the plant in various early modern European languages.

Presumably the plant had earlier English names, which have now been forgotten as the language of the textbooks took over. Most of the English names which have survived refer to the colour of the flowers – blue basins, blue buttons and blue warrior. They make no reference to the bills of cranes at all, though until the 17th century, cranes could be seen in England. (They are now making a comeback, with the aid of the RSPB and other agencies.)

The part of the plant which looks like a crane's bill is the seed pod, which is comparatively long and pointed. It has a rather surprising means of dispersing the seeds. As the bill and the seeds within it ripen, they turn brown, and when the weather is suitably warm and dry, the five segments forming the bill suddenly split at the bottom, flinging the seeds away from the plant. Of course, it's fun at the right time of year to tickle the seed-pods which look ready to burst, to induce them to shoot.

There are a number of other cranesbills to look for in the lanes round here. Some of them were introduced into gardens, and have escaped, and look quite at home under hedges by road-sides – the French, dusky, pencilled and hedgerow cranesbills among them. Then there are the very small cranesbills which grow in short grass, which look superficially rather similar – the small-flowered and dovesfoot cranesbills. The long-stalked cranesbill is rather less common, but grows in the cemetery at Goring, and probably many other places as well. On the other hand, the herb robert, *geranium robertianum*, is all too common, and is a weed in my garden, beautiful though it undoubtedly is.

Happy Wanderer

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CLUBS

Caversham WI

'England in Miniature' was the title of Graham Horn's talk, which proved to be a trip to the Isle of Wight. Views of well-known and less familiar sights showed what a lovely place it is, and members were prompted to visit as soon as possible.

The speaker also judged the competition: Easter biscuits. The winner was new member Claire Elliot, with Ishbel Nicholson and Sylvia Myszor as runners-up.

Details of the forthcoming river trip were given; let's hope the sun shines! More Easter goodies were on offer for lucky winners of the raffle.

Caversham Allotment Association

The next meeting of the association is on Tuesday 8th July at Church House, Caversham. The speaker will be John Negus, a horticulturalist and garden speaker who will be talking about Alpines of distinction and how to grow them. The talk starts at 7.30 and there are refreshments and a raffle. Entrance is free, so please come along for an entertaining evening. Contact Carol Wheeler on 9475802 for further details.

Probus

The speaker at the May meeting of Reading and District Probus club was Neil Shaw, whose subject was Basildon Park. Neil is in charge of maintenance of the contents of the house, and all the artefacts that are contained within it, and also oversees all the volunteer guides in this popular National Trust property. He started by showing how the items were cleaned or dusted. He then gave us a short history of the house, an 18th century Georgian mansion, which was acquired by Lord and Lady Iliffe in the 1950s. It was restored to its former glory, and filled with fine paintings, fabrics and furniture, and other items which are still there today.

Neil then discussed the films which had been made there, including its appearance as Netherfield Park in the film *Pride and Prejudice*, and also in the Christmas edition of *Downton Abbey*, described the preparations which had to be made for filming, and then replacing everything afterwards, so that two weeks filming can occupy up to eight weeks of disruption.

Probus is a club open to retired men, Probus being a contraction of professional and business. The club meets once a month at the Caversham Heath Golf Club for lunch and a talk. If you are retired, and are interested in joining, then contact the secretary, David Laird, on 947 0709.

Rosehill WI

Members were welcomed to the May meeting by President Margaret Pyle, who recently had a very enjoyable (but rather tiring) holiday in Japan. Treasurer, Doris Goddard reported that our accounts are healthy, which is good news. She also told us that £50.21 had been sent to ACWW (Associated Country Women of the World), which had been collected over the year by members donating their coppers to Pennies For Friendship.

The walks for May were Ewelme on the 13th and Binfield Heath on the 20th. A list was sent round for people to make cakes for the June birthday meeting.

Margaret then said she and a few other members had been to the Spring Council meeting at the Hexagon and it was a very enjoyable event. There was a change in the order of events in that one of the speakers delivered her talk before the formal meeting. This was very interesting, being by Mary Bayliss, the Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire who talked about her role as the Queen's representative in Berkshire. Next came the trustees report and financial statement, followed by a very amusing talk about cookery by Peter Lien, who is head of the

cookery school at Denman. There was also singing by the Calcot Diamonds.

The main part of today's meeting was to discuss the resolution which was to do with increasing organ donations and after quite a lot of discussion, the majority vote was yes.

Our speaker today was Sue Sutcliffe, advanced wine specialist at Waitrose whose talk was entitled *Flavours of Summer*. She talked about the six wines she had with her -- one sparkling, two white, one rose and two red). After her talk we were invited to taste the wines and most members took advantage of the offer.

After the wine, the usual cup of tea and biscuits before the raffle was called. We meet on the first Wednesday of every month at 2.0pm in St Barnabas Church Hall, Emmer Green. Come along and see what we do, we will make you very welcome.

Caversham Horticultural Society

The society will welcome Robert Harvey to discuss Mediterranean wildflowers in nature and the garden for the July talk. This will be held in Caversham Primary School, Hemdean Road, on Wednesday 16th July starting at 7.45pm. There is an entrance fee of £3.00 for non-members. Refreshments will be available after the talk.

The society's Autumn Show will be held earlier this year on Saturday 30th August at Emmer Green School. There are many categories open to anyone within the RG4 postal district. Check out the show schedules on the website www.caversham-horticultural.org.uk or contact the show secretary gmr113@hotmail.co.uk or send a SAE to 113 Southview Avenue, Caversham, W Reading RG4 5BB.

Chazey WI

At our May meeting we welcomed Wendy Robinson, WI Denman ambassador who came to talk about the many exciting things happening. Set in the picturesque village of Marcham, near Oxford, Denman College is a lovely place to learn crafts and cookery skills, both for WI and non-members alike. Wendy gave an inspiring presentation, including slides of the attractive residential accommodation available to those on courses lasting a couple or more days.

It was fascinating to learn how much is on offer, and even for those who would rather not be hands-on there is the opportunity to attend literary lunches, have a guided tour of famous palaces, and much more!

Chazey WI meets on the first Tuesday of every month (except August) at the Caversham Heights Methodist Church Hall. We normally arrive about 7.30pm and start at 7.45pm. If you would like to come, we have a wide range of speakers and offer a friendly welcome.

Royal treat for Heights Society

The Caversham Heights Society's annual mini-holiday was this year centred on Norfolk. On bank holiday Monday, over 40 members left Caversham, stopping on the way at Lavenham in Suffolk for lunch and a chance to admire this old town with its many half-timbered buildings.

The first trip from the hotel in Norwich was to Sandringham, to tour the royal estate. Unfortunately the weather did not permit any but the most hardy to spend time admiring the gardens, but there was plenty to see inside. The church, often featured in the news at Christmas when the royal family attend service there, was well worth a visit. Much of the house was available to view, and the museum housed many of the royal family's vehicles from the recent past.

A trip to Norfolk is not complete without a visit to the Broads, and we embarked on a pleasure boat at Wroxham, from where we sailed down the River Bure, soon leaving the village and its many pretty riverside cottages behind and seeing some of the area's wildlife. We sailed through Wroxham Broad, a large lake alongside the river, before returning to Wroxham.

Returning to Norwich, we were then shown round Surrey House, once the headquarters of the Norwich Union Insurance Company, and still used by its parent company Aviva. The house contains the most magnificent marble hall, clad in 15 types of marble which had been destined for Westminster Cathedral, but when the cathedral was unable to meet the cost, Norwich Union bought it all in 1903 for £6000, and installed it in this building.

We also visited Norfolk Lavender, with its large lavender fields, and Norwich Castle, now a museum and art gallery. An evening visit to Great Yarmouth to take the sea air was also arranged.

On the journey home a visit was made to Wrest Park, a mansion in Bedfordshire now in the care of English Heritage, of which the splendid gardens are undergoing substantial renovation.

The society's new season will start in September. Meetings are held on the first and third Wednesdays of the month from September to April, the talks starting at 8.00pm, with coffee served from 7.30. New members are very welcome. For more information visit the web site cavts-soc.fsnet.co.uk

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Singing bikers safely home

The singing bikers, who included a clergyman from Caversham, successfully completed their epic motorbike journey in May, touching 10 countries in 10 days. Their sponsored ride raised more than £5,000 for the Alzheimer's Society and they covered a total distance of 2350 miles.

The group consisted of five members of the Reading Male Voice Choir including the Revd Keith Knee-Robinson, until recently a non-stipendiary member of the clergy team at the parish of Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham. A friend of one of the riders made up the party.

They took the ferry to northern Spain before riding into France, Andorra and Italy and on through seven more countries before reaching Calais.

This is Keith's account of their journey:

The experience of riding our motorbikes through many different environments in weather varying from near freezing to over 25C has left a lasting effect on us and most probably on our two wheeled machines. Fortunately we had no serious mishaps although hitting a pheasant at 50mph meant cleaning a bike even before taking the ferry from Portsmouth.

Six men riding six two wheeled machines that were as varied as the riders themselves presented an incongruous convoy. The bikes consisted of three similarly powered bikes, a powerful Yamaha FJR 1300 which has an automatic gear and direct drive, a small low powered AJS 125 Eco and a Vespa PX200 scooter. The scooter and AJS restricted our maximum speed to less than 60mph and meant some discipline in riding as a coherent group. The riders ranged from a 57-year-old to a 73-year-old with one rider having had a cardiac shunt operation last year.

As we passed through towns and villages it was fascinating to catch fleeting glimpses of the differing architecture and more particularly the variety of road making and signage. It was interesting to experience the approach in some countries with regard to the priority given to pedestrians over traffic and in the majority of cases the traffic was very forgiving towards us.

Travelling on average over 200 miles each day meant we had to restrict detailed exploration and photographic recording of many of the places we passed by. However the general consensus was that the road between Bollène and Briançon, passing through the town of Gap in France was the most attractive, particularly as the weather was almost clear skies in bright sunlight.

Our priority however was focused on reaching our goal both of passing through 10 countries in 10 days and generating as much as possible in donations for the Alzheimer's Society.

Our "Slough of Despond" was climbing out of Italy towards Austria in the most dreadful downpour. We all were cold, soaked and weary as we reached the mountain pass. Quite suddenly there was a gap in the cloud cover, the rain ceased and the sun shone on a mountain pasture scene that reminded us all of the song *The hills are alive with the sound of music*.

May's Crossword answers

	1		2		3			4		5				
	E	S	C	A	P	E		L	U	K	E			
	D		A		U		6	M		A	N			
7	B	U	R	N		8	B	R	A	I	N	B	O	X
	C		N		L		S		T		C			
9	S	A	L	A	M	I		10	T	W	E	A	K	
						C		E		R				
11	E	T	H	O	S		12	R	A	N	G	E		
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15	L	I	L	A	C		16	I	N	S	I	D	E	
	L		M		T		N	U		U				
18	V	A	G	A	B	O	N	D		19	P	E	R	U
	M		A		R		E	E	E	E				
20	B	A	N	D			21	A	D	O	R	E	D	

Bible Friends**Cornelius**

Captain Cornelius was an important Roman soldier. He was also a kind man who loved God and shared his money with people who did not have any.

One afternoon Captain Cornelius saw an angel. He was very surprised. "Send some of your soldiers to find Peter," said the angel. "Invite him to your house."

So Captain Cornelius sent his soldiers with a message to Peter.

Peter had a dream too. In the dream God told him that it does not matter what country you come from, or what colour your skin is. God loves everybody just the same.

Peter wanted to meet Captain Cornelius and hear all about the angel he had seen.

Then Peter told Captain Cornelius, and all his friends and family, about Jesus. "God loves all of us," Peter said. "Jesus died so that we can all be part of God's family."

Acts 10

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