

A SERVANT OF THE LEAST

"By blood, Albanian; by citizenship, an Indian; by faith I am a Catholic Nun; as to my calling, I belong to the world; as to my heart, I belong entirely to the Heart of Jesus."

Small of stature, rocklike in faith, Mother Teresa of Calcutta was entrusted with the mission of proclaiming God's thirsting love for humanity. Born in Skopje in 1910, she was baptised Gonxha Agnes. In 1928 she joined the Sisters of Loreto in Ireland where she received the name Marie Thérèse of Lisieux. Afterwards she departed for India where for many years she was a teacher. Then she received a "Call within a Call" to give her life totally to the service of the poorest in society, the least of humanity. By 1950, she had formed the Order of the Missioners of Charity. Members of the order worked in 123 countries throughout the world. When she died in 1997, her fame as true servant of the sick and the poor was recognised by people of all faiths and none.

The Church does not make saints. All have the capacity to become saints by God's good grace, by following his commandments and serving him by serving humanity. Those who display exceptional examples of heroic virtue and personal sacrifice in God's name may be held up as a role model for us all. Mother Teresa was one such person and it was for this reason that a small group from the parish of Our Lady and St Anne joined a larger group and set off for Rome to witness the beatification of Mother Teresa, the penultimate stage to the Declaration of Sainthood.

On the appointed day, we arose at 3.30 am to complete the final two hour journey to Rome to join 300,000 others in St Peter's Square to await the arrival of the Holy Father. The fatigue we may have felt whilst standing for so long

melted away when we caught sight of this frail man in white whose flesh was so very weak and yet whose spirit was doubly strong. After confirmation of the Beatification of Blessed Mother Teresa, to enthusiastic applause from the universal audience, the Pope celebrated Mass and afterwards insisted on touring the Square in the Popemobile. We were blessed by warm sunshine and blue skies, an incredibly unforgettable experience.

After such a full and strenuous day, we somehow found the energy to visit Assisi the following day. It seemed a fitting location, for St Francis and St Clare were, like Mother Teresa, champions of the poor and the sick. We heard Mass in the great Basilica and were conducted on a guided tour of those places connected with the two saints.

The next day, we started for home, making a brief visit to the old walled city of Orvieto where we heard Mass in the Cathedral, one of the finest in Italy. After this we had a chance to walk the mediaeval streets and see the spectacular views from the city walls.

We were most fortunate in having a first class Spiritual Director in Father John Smethurst from Torquay and an efficient and sympathetic Tour Manager. Upon our return we were able to look back and consider the significance of the event we had just witnessed.

In this materialistic and self-seeking world, this diminutive woman, whose life was the Christian Faith in action and whose sole possessions at her death were a shawl and a bucket, left behind a rich spiritual and material legacy. We can take comfort in the knowledge that many continue her work for the poor, proof that in these dark and dangerous times hope springs eternal. *Ian Cane*



St Peter's Square with Mother Teresa's picture hanging from the balcony
Photos: Ian Cane



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Contributions are welcomed if they are relevant to community matters or church life. Copy should be kept short, typed in double spacing if possible and with a word count. Copy dates are given in the paper each month and copy should be handed in at the Parish Office at Church House, Church Street, Caversham. The office is open 9.30 - 12.30 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Please note the Editors reserve the right to edit copy if necessary.

The Caversham Bridge is delivered each month to homes in Caversham. It could be delivered to you for £2.40 per year. If you do not regularly subscribe to the paper and would like to do so, please contact the Parish Office on 947 1703.

TALKING POINT

By
Fr. Tony Jones
Parish Priest of Our Lady and St Anne, Caversham

LEADER AND SERVANT

A warm welcome from all the Christian churches of Caversham to Canon Stephen Cottrell on his appointment as the new Bishop of Reading. Canon Cottrell comes with a fine reputation as pastor, preacher and teacher of the Christian faith, and his wide experience of the Church, in London, Sussex, Yorkshire and, most recently, Peterborough will help him to settle down among the cosmopolitan bunch he will find in Reading and Berkshire. We all pray that his ministry will be richly blessed by God.

But what is he going to do? Traditionally, bishops and other church leaders had the primary responsibility of teaching the truth of Christianity. They were called upon to follow the advice given by St Paul to his young friend Timothy who was leader of the church in Ephesus. Paul wrote to him saying "Proclaim the message and, welcome or unwelcome, insist on it. Refute falsehood, correct error, call to obedience, but do all with patience and with the intention of teaching." (2 Timothy 4/2). Now there's the smack of authority for you! The bishop is guardian of the truth and must ensure that everyone knows it - and respects it. But times have changed; our own generation; Christians included, are more likely to respond to Paul's advice with the cynical question of Pontius Pilate, "What is truth?" We are sceptical about those who claim to speak with authority, and are happy to pick and mix our own brand of truth to live by; frankly, orthodoxy is out of date. Even in the Catholic Church, often seen as wielding authority with a heavy hand, there is widespread questioning of its teaching on doctrinal and moral issues. It is amazing to see hundreds of thousands, even millions, of young people from around the world thunderously cheering Pope John Paul at World Youth Days when he speaks so clearly against materialism, contraception, abortion, pre-marital sex - but do they believe what he says? It is much more likely that what they applaud so vociferously is the Pope's personal moral authority. It is just so clear to them that the Pope practises what he preaches. He has such integrity and conviction, and deep personal holiness. That is the truth that attracts people, not assent to a set of statements, but people whose living faith shows us the face of Christ.

All Christian churches must face this challenge to traditional authority. The Bible is only a dusty book sitting on a shelf, pope and bishops are only elderly men dressed in funny clothes if their words are not personally lived. No reliance on office, or recourse to verses of sacred texts will convince this generation of the truth of Jesus Christ, but when it sees His love, mercy and compassion lived out by individuals and communities, then the Gospel is effective. Jesus Himself said that the greatest must be the servant, the leader like a child; it is an immense calling and challenge to the spirit of the age. May Bishop-elect Stephens's ministry help us all to see more clearly the face of Christ.

CAVERSHAM BRIDGE

Contributions for the March 2004 issue of this paper should be sent to the Parish Office, Church House by noon on Wednesday 4th February. The date for submission of items for the April 2004 issue will be Wednesday 3rd March.

All advertising copy for the March 2004 issue should be sent to Mrs Loble, 15 Albert Road, Caversham, by Tuesday 3rd February. For the April 2004 issue the date will be Tuesday 2nd March 2004.

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Rev. Margaret Dimmick, 12 Lowfield Road, Caversham Park.
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Tel: 972 3418

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD
Rev H R Gayle Tel: 945 3849 (contact)

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
8.00am The Holy Eucharist
10.00am Parish Eucharist and Sunday School

St Andrew's, Harrogate Road
8.00am The Eucharist
10.00am Parish Eucharist (Sung)
First Sunday, Family Eucharist
11.30am The Eucharist
6.30pm Evening Prayer (as announced)
An up to date list of weekday Services will be found on the Church notice boards.

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

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH
10.30am Prospect Street
6.30pm Usually at 191 Kidmore Road

CAVERSHAM HILL CHAPEL, Old Peppard Road
10.30am Worship and Ministry, Children's Church
6.30pm Prayer Meeting

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Woodcote Parish Church
9.45am (second Sunday)

ROMAN CATHOLIC
Our Lady and St Anne's, Southview Avenue
Saturday 5.30pm,
Sunday 10.00am and 6.30pm
Mapledurham House 6.00pm Mass (last Sunday of the month)

**SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (Quakers),
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9.30am Sunday School
11.00am Divine Worship
6.00pm Evening Service

ST. MARTIN'S CHRISTMAS PLAYS



The sleepy shepherd surrounded by the Hawaiian dancers



The groovy Angel Gabriel



The sheep

Photos: St Martins school

Hawaiian dancers in a Nativity play! Jonny Wilkinson lookalikes kicking drop goals! Whatever next? In the Infants' play at St Martin's Primary School these dancers brought a little colour to the life of the Sleepy Shepherd who caused great annoyance to his fellow shepherds by forever sleeping when he should have been watching the sheep. His dreams included being serenaded by the dancers and trying to score a drop goal like Jonny Wilkinson. One night he was awakened by the snoring of the other shepherds and could not get back to sleep. He was visited by the grooviest Angel Gabriel you could ever imagine, played with great panache by a seven-year-old.

The Sleepy Shepherd was taken by a group of angels to see the baby Jesus but, of course, when he told his fellow shepherds, they simply said he had been dreaming again. They all got to Bethlehem, however, in time to see Mary and Joseph and baby Jesus, as well as the Three Kings and their entourage.

Almost stealing the show was a flock of the most loveable sheep, cosily dressed in costumes, with the most sheep-like of ears, made by one of the mothers. The sheep first appeared crawling along the aisles and, as the play went on, they lolloped on and off the stage like true shambling sheep.

The story was ably narrated by several of the infant (Key Stage 1) pupils and was accompanied by music and song provided by the children.

The Junior play - The Creepy Crawly Christmas - was about Wilfred the caterpillar who longed to have his wings. One day he found a bright shining object. He went to all sorts of minibeasts to find out what it was. The Ladybirds told him it was a star that some children needed for their nativity play and he spent the rest of the play, aided by crickets (all in their best whites), bees, dragonflies and the others, trying to return the star. Because he had worked so hard at his quest, he had earned his beautiful wings which appeared when he returned the star.

Jane Shaw

2nd Caversham Girls Brigade Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme

During the last twelve months Aysha Folland, Hannah Jackson and Katrina Keating have worked at various activities to complete the Bronze section of the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Physical and Service

They each spent three months taking part in a weekly aerobics session for their Physical activity. For the Service section of the Award they completed the British Red Cross Babysitting course. This included sessions on First Aid and how to look after a child with special needs.

Skills

Aysha undertook Video and Film production for the Skills section of the Award, Hannah and Katrina both did Drama, Hannah at the drama club at Hemdean House School and Katrina at the Helen O'Grady drama school.



Aysha Folland, Hannah Jackson & Katrina Keating

Expedition

To complete the Award the girls had to complete two expeditions. Before they could take part in these they had to learn how to use a Silva compass, tent craft, prepare their route and how to respond in an emergency. They completed their practice expedition on two of the hottest days in August. In blistering heat they walked the Thames path from Reading to Henley, camped overnight and then walked to Sonning Common the next day. For the second expedition they walked from the church at Waltham St Lawrence to Henley and after an overnight camp they then walked via Bix to Nettlebed. Each walk was a total of 15 miles and they had to carry with them all their food and camping equipment. During their walk they observed how other people followed the Country Code and were amazed at the amount of litter that was discarded by fellow walkers and fly tippers. At the end of their journey they had collected a large black plastic sack of rubbish.

Presentation

The girls were presented with their Badges and Certificates in November at Caversham Heights Methodist Church. They have all now commenced activities towards the Silver section of the Award.

2nd Caversham Girls' Brigade meet on Thursdays from 6.30pm at Caversham Heights Methodist Church. New members from the age of 5 upwards are always welcome. Activities include craft, dance, drama, and summer camp.

(photo by V. Keating)

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FROM THE LOOKOUT POST

By the time this article reaches you, Mr and Mrs Nomad will be enjoying the South Shropshire hills (weather permitting!). We wish them both every happiness. Mr Nomad will be a hard act to follow, not least on this page. He has worked tirelessly for the interests of our community north of the river. Fortunately for us, there is currently no shortage of live issues to share with our readers.

Several large-scale public amenity projects are poised to be on the starting blocks in the coming months. Whilst some of the projects are only in the formative stage, their scale and importance should cause Caversham residents to take a close interest.

A "new Hexagon"

Two of the projects are in the area east of Reading Bridge. The Hexagon is approaching the end of its useful life. It was built in the seventies and is now feeling its age. Asbestos removal required its closure for several weeks last year. It tries to provide a wide range of entertainment but, sadly, not all events are well supported. Is this because it lacks that certain ambience? So, how could it or should it be replaced? Reading Borough Council's initial thoughts are to have a new entertainment facility which would also be suitable for conferences and other commercial uses. The front-running location is Hills Meadow as this is owned by the Council and is a large site not far from the town centre.

With the right vision and the right balance between commercial requirements and community needs, this could be an exciting, far-reaching development providing a much needed artistic and entertainment centre for the people of Reading and Caversham. It would, of course, give excellent access for Caversham residents.

However, it is an irreversible development of a green field amenity area with serious flood plain implications. The Council aspiration of attracting revenue-generating conferences and exhibitions will require robust commercial marketing and the freedom to maximise revenue by obtaining users across the broad commercial and entertainment spectrum. This removal of political interference has not been an obvious feature of the Council.

Caversham Lock

The second proposed development is the approximately three acre area of Caversham Lock owned by the Environment Agency and Reading Borough Council. These two bodies have instructed the firm King Sturge to advise developers of the opportunity to develop the areas of the former Kings Meadow swimming pool, the Caversham lock keeper's house and operational buildings of the Environment Agency. There appear to be wide possibilities including mixed-use schemes and the clearance of the buildings, if required.

Mapledurham Playing Fields

As noted in the last edition of *Caversham Bridge*, plans are in the pipeline for the existing Mapledurham Playing Fields Pavilion to be demolished and replaced with a new one. The capital for the new structure and, indeed, its maintenance cost are planned to be generated from the sale of part of the valuable playing fields. There were some criticisms that the initial 2003 consultation to obtain users' and neighbours' preferences was flawed. Hence anyone who wishes to register their views at the next stage should be alert for the next steps in the formal consultation process. This could be from the Charity Commissioners who will need to approve the sale of playing field land, and who are required to consult via advertisements in the local press. It could also be from Reading Borough Council who are required to publicise any planning notices in the usual way. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, we do not know when this consultation is due to take place.

Police Office in Church House

Welcome progress has taken place with the Thames Valley Police having greater use of their new office in Church House. The computer links need to be refined in order for the facilities to be fully operational, but that step is very close and there should soon be a formal opening ceremony performed by the Chief Constable, RBC representatives and The Rector of Caversham. Surgeries for Caversham residents are planned where issues can be raised with officers dedicated to Caversham.

Amersham Road Community Centre

The relaunch of the completely revamped Amersham Road Community Centre is scheduled for Saturday 14 February. This is now a truly multi-purpose facility with a wide range of uses available from IT labs to sports, making it an attractive and welcoming environment for a wide user audience.

Street Lighting in Amersham Road

Street lighting in Amersham Road has been unmaintained for years, creating opportunity for vandals to ply their trade. It now emerges that no service contract for street light maintenance can be placed by RBC with the SEC because of a long running legal saga between Thames Water and

RBC lawyers over the ownership of drains and other street facilities. The crux of the matter is that the ownership of the lights cannot be assumed by RBC until the ownership of the drains and other street facilities is determined. Whilst the lawyers string out this matter, the Amersham Road residents pay the price of suffering in the dark.

Reading Community Strategy

In November 2003 the RBC on behalf of the Reading Local Strategy Partnership published the consultation document "Moving Forward in Partnership". It is a very comprehensive 61 page document covering seven key themes: transport, health issues, education, crime, safety, the economy and employment. The intention is that this document with the comments received in the consultation period, which extends to the end of February, will form the Reading Community Strategy. This is the long term plan which "draws together key partners to improve existing service delivery and to plan for the future." The document is available on the RBC web site (www.reading.gov.uk) as well as in hard copy. It contains a 2 page feedback which should be sent to the Community Strategy Feedback at RBC.

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Editorial Jottings

This is the first of an occasional column in which we pass comment on matters past, present and future.

The role of the Caversham Bridge is to act as a link between the various sections of the community making up Caversham and Emmer Green. It is sometimes difficult to realise that one hundred years ago Caversham was a village in Oxfordshire. Today we are just a part of the greater town of Reading. It was the promise of new bridges over the Thames that spurred the population of Caversham all those years ago to transfer its allegiance from Oxfordshire to Berkshire. Despite nearly a century of belonging to Berkshire, for Caversham the Thames still acts as a barrier to the central and southern parts of Reading. People from Caversham still have strong links to those parts of Oxfordshire adjacent to our boundaries. We are very conscious of this as we seek, monthly, to report on matters that affect and colour the lives of our readers.

Since the early days of this paper there have been strong links with Caversham and District Residents' Association through the monthly columns written by Watchdog and, latterly, Nomad. We are pleased to welcome two new contributors from CADRA who will be writing alternately in forthcoming issues. This month's column appears under the title 'From the Lookout Post'. Next month's column will be written by 'Bystander'.

Over the past years we have publicised money-raising ventures in Caversham which were aimed at supporting worthy causes, some of which were in our local areas and some of which have been overseas. We aim from time to time to bring you an update on what is currently happening in those causes which have been supported by you, our readers; to show you that your generosity is helping to improve the lot of those less fortunate than ourselves. On this page we have the first of such reports; this is about the provision of vocational training to young Vietnamese through the auspices of the Edward Morgan Trust.

In acting as a bridge between the different parts of our community we also endeavour to act as a bridge between the differing parts of the religious communities. Not only do we seek to be a link between the Anglican, Catholic and Free churches but we are concerned as well to be a means of communication between those in all of the churches who do not necessarily see eye to eye on church order or theology. Some of those differences have made the front pages nationally during the past year and those differences were reflected in what some of our contributors wrote, sometimes to the dismay of those with opposing views. As was shown in a report in the January issue of this paper, such differences will not go away and it is clear that those on either side of the fence have to accept that each has to live with that. It calls for a time of tolerance from everybody, and as a Christian-based paper we hope to promote that tolerance by being a veritable bridge in Caversham.

Caversham Theatre

The next production by Caversham Theatre will take place on 11th, 12th and 13th March, at St Anne's Hall, Washington Road. This will be a Victorian thriller, entitled "Gaslight", written by Patrick Hamilton. Performances will commence at 7.30pm and tickets (£5, £4 concessions) will be available from Caversham Bookshop during February. Your continued support is much appreciated - come along for a spine-tingling evening!

NEW HOPE FOR VIETNAMESE YOUNG PEOPLE

The Edward Morgan Foundation, set up in 2000 in memory of local pharmacist Edward Morgan, is pleased to report that its main project, the *Vuon Len Apprentice Hairdressing Salon in Vietnam*, has been able to double its intake of disadvantaged young Vietnamese as apprentice hairdressers. The name 'Vuon Len' means 'making the effort to succeed in spite of adversity' - a very appropriate title.

The seventeen trainees on Course 3 have been exemplary in every respect. A larger group has created an even more meaningful and cooperative atmosphere. The salon is full, but not overcrowded, and the group just fits into the classroom upstairs. The apprentices practise in three groups, with the trainer or one of the assistants, which has worked very well. The two assistants, who were among the original group of apprentices, have done an excellent job and will be kept on.

The course was due to end in mid-January, just before Tet (Vietnamese New Year), so the girls would be able to make immediate money during the Tet season when salons work long hours and take on extra staff. Salon owners frequently come to 'Vuon Len' to recruit staff, so finding work should be easy. All the trainees have achieved a high level of expertise. Monthly expenses will remain stable for future courses, working out at £20 per apprentice. 'Vuon Len' has so far transformed the lives of thirty-six young people and their families, all of whom very sincerely thank all who have helped.



Apprentices practising on a model "head".

Leaflets outlining all the individual lives that have been changed are available from Olive Morgan (Tel: 0118 948 2635 - e-mail: om@omorgan.fsnet.co.uk) for all who wish to be informed. The Foundation's website at www.edwardmorgan.org.uk gives further information about its aims and activities.

OBITUARIES

St Margaret's, Mapledurham

Violet Taylor and Beryl Lewington

Last November, many of the rural community of Mapledurham attended the funerals at St Margaret's of two of the few remaining members who had lived in the Chazey Heath area for many, many years. Both had helped in the nineteen sixties and seventies, and even before, in the running of the little Church of England Primary School. Mrs Violet Taylor coped with the school dinners and Mrs Beryl Lewington kept the school premises tidy after the children had gone home each day. They were an important part of the running of this little school. It was wonderful to see St Margaret's so crowded on each of these occasions when so many people gathered there to pay their respects.

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AROUND THE CHURCHES

Archbishop of Birmingham at Our Lady and St Anne's

On Friday 5th December, Archbishop Vincent Nichols of Birmingham visited the parish of Our Lady and St Anne to bless the new extension to the church. At the beginning of Mass, he toured each part of the extended building and blessed in turn the Cenacle, the narthex and the confessional, which last occupies the site of the old church porch. He then concelebrated Mass with six other priests.

In his homily during Mass, Archbishop Nichols talked to the congregation about the extension. The theme of his talk was love - love built the original church and love has built the new extension. The same love has flowed over into South Africa to help with the building of the new church in Mpoza. He sympathised with those who felt hurt when the Heights Chapel was sold. He felt that the open plan of the new building was a sign of the welcome that the Church wants to give to all. The Archbishop is a wonderful person - human, unassuming, humble and perceptive. At rest, his features settle into a gentle smile.

During Mass, the Choir sang Byrd's Ave Verum and joined the Band to lead the congregation in singing an African hymn, Jabulani Afrika - Zulu for Africa Rejoice. The Mayor of Reading, Councillor Jeanette Skeats, attended the Mass and joined the congregation for refreshments in the Cenacle afterwards. Another welcome guest was Father Thomas Meagher, the previous parish priest.

Amongst the priests at the altar were two Verona Fathers. One was Father Antonio Benetti, the parish priest of Mpoza, Transkei, South Africa, who was on leave in Europe. His visit came as a surprise, his leave having been extended so that he could attend the evening's ceremony. His parish is receiving a proportion of the funds raised in the Gateway Appeal to help finance the building of a church with clinic and schoolroom. The second contribution was handed to him after the Mass and Father Benetti gave to the parish a crucifix carved in Mpoza. This



Photo by Jane Shaw
The Mayor, Councillor Jeanette Skeats, Archbishop Nichols and Father Tony after the service.

is now hanging in the Cenacle. It must have been God's design that a suitable crucifix had not already been placed there.

The Mass was the final step in a process that had begun more than three years ago. It was decided that, when work was started to meet the new legislation regarding disabled access and toilets, a meeting room and new entrance should also be built. A development group of parishioners was formed. Its members were involved from their first task of choosing a suitable architectural practice, through presenting the Architects' ideas to the parish and feeding to the Architects ideas from the parish, reviewing all the

alternatives within the constraints of the budget, right up to the signing of the contract and the start of work at the end of 2002. The group maintained its input throughout the contract period with one of its members, Peter Lennon, a consultant Clerk of Works, acting on behalf of the Parish.

Another group, all ladies apart from Father Tony, became the Design Group. They were involved in the choice of colour and fabrics for the decoration of the church and in choosing furnishings and accessories for the extension. Sometimes they had to strike a balance between what the Architects wanted and what they felt that the parish would prefer. They also brought in a practical perspective in many matters, for example in choosing a carpet that could easily be kept clean.

Many parishioners have been involved in the work by raising funds through various activities. The Five Year

Gateway Appeal, however, relies mainly on the generosity of the many ordinary members of the congregation who have increased their normal contributions to the parish to include a regular donation for the church buildings as well as supporting the fund-raising activities. In addition, after Father Benetti had talked about his people in Africa, parishioners have now decided to send material help to Mpoza in the form of new baby clothes and blankets.

Report by Jane Shaw



Photo by Kath Turner
The new entrance to the church with the Cenacle building beyond.

CAVERSHAM CLERGY RETREAT

Ever since Fr Tony came to Caversham (ten years ago now) it has become the custom for the clergy of Churches Together in Caversham to go away together in the autumn for 24 hours at a convent in the New Forest. We arrive for lunch on the first day and depart after lunch on the second day. It is only a Retreat in the sense that we retreat from Caversham! There is not a lot of silence (except at night). It previously fell to Peter Edwards to organise us but, since his retirement, John Dudley has attempted to be in charge. He does not rule with the same rod of iron so this year we condensed sessions one and two together and in the afternoon enjoyed a two hour stroll in the New Forest.

The theme of our deliberations this year was 'Reaching the Unchurched'. We were very pleased that Chris Evans made a supreme effort to join us for a part of the last day (including the lunch!) as his work is all about reaching the unchurched. This year we were able to join the Sisters in worship in their new chapel which stands in the grounds. It is a beautiful building and we are glad we contributed at least one tile to its floor. We say 'thank you' to our church treasurers who paid for our retreat this year.

This will be my last one but I have appreciated each year's time away with colleagues and I think it is a good ecumenical tradition.

Rosemary Fletcher.



(photo courtesy of R J Fletcher)

Margaret Dimmick, Tony Jones, Lynne Davis, Keith Kinnaid, Rosemary Fletcher, Richard Kingsbury and John Dudley at the Convent of St Dominic's near Sway.

AROUND THE CHURCHES

NEWS BRIEFS

NEW BISHOP FOR READING

On the Feast of the Epiphany it was announced by 10 Downing Street that the Queen had approved the nomination of the Revd Canon Stephen Cottrell as the next Bishop of Reading. Canon Cottrell is currently Canon Pastor and Vice-Dean of Peterborough Cathedral and has previously served in urban parishes in South London, Chichester and Huddersfield. Trained at St Stephen's House in Oxford, he has gifts of mission and evangelism, has worked for the Springboard initiative on evangelism and helped develop the *Emmaus* programme. Canon Stephen Cottrell is married with three sons aged 13, 10 and 8. As he prepares for his consecration as Bishop on 4 May, he and his family can be assured of the prayers of the people of Caversham and a warm welcome when he arrives.

ANGLICANS JOIN METHODISTS FOR ANNUAL COVENANT SERVICE

The first local outcome of the signing of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant by the Leaders of the Methodist and Church of England in London last November has been the involvement of Anglicans in the Annual Covenant Services of the Methodists at the beginning of January. For many of the Anglicans present from the churches in Caversham, Emmer Green and Mapledurham, this was not only a new experience and a challenging reminder of our role as Christians but also an opportunity for the sharing of a Methodist treasure. These were facts about which those present were reminded in a significant and thoughtful sermon by the Revd Dr John Ogden who presided at the two evening services. Many members of the Church of England who were present are grateful for the privilege of joining in these services and hope that this particular form of joint worship may become a regular fixture in the annual calendar.

CHRISTMAS IN CAVERSHAM

Churches Together in Caversham are grateful to Forbuoys (TM Retail Limited), and to the local manager of Forbuoys, for allowing, once again, the display of a Nativity Scene in one of their windows in St Martin's Precinct. Each year this has provided, in the heart of Caversham, a reminder of the real meaning of Christmas and an opportunity to announce the Christmas Services in all the churches, a helpful supplement to the information on the Churches Together in Caversham Christmas Card that goes to every residence.

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2004

On the first Friday in March every year Christians throughout the world meet together for the Women's World Day of Prayer. From dawn to dusk people use the same order of service, which, this year, has been written by the women of Panama. The Panamanian women have chosen the title 'In Faith Women Shape The Future'

Panama became an independent country in 1903; it is about the size of Scotland. Panama forms a narrow bridge which joins North and South America. Panama is a Republic and is a nation of contrasts. The flag of the Republic of Panama is a red, blue and white quartered flag. The white in the flag represents peace, the blue star stands for purity and honesty, and the red star symbolises authority and law. The flag was designed by the first President. Although the current President is a woman, and in law, women are regarded as equal with men, in practice many women are inhibited by old traditions and taboos of culture and religion. Panama is a mainly Christian country, where most people are Roman Catholic.

This year the Reading morning service will be held at The Minster Church of St. Mary the Virgin, in St Mary's Butts, at 11.00 am. The speaker will be the Rev Valerie Fisher. In the evening there will be a service at St John's Church in Lower Caversham, organised by the local Women's World Day of Prayer committee which has representatives from most of the Churches in Caversham. The evening service will begin at 8.00 pm and the speaker will be Rev Lynne Davies. Refreshments will be served after the evening service.

The Women's World Day of Prayer service is written by women for everyone to join in. Why not write the date, Friday the 5th March, in your diary now, and come and worship with Christians from other Churches. The Women's World Day of Prayer is a great way to learn more about Christians in a different part of the world and to be led by them to meet with the Living God, who cares about all His children.

ST BARNABAS NEWS

A WEEKEND OF GENEROSITY AT ST BARNABAS

The first weekend in December at St Barnabas Church was marked by two events whose focus was outside the parish. The first of these was the Christmas Fair that raises money for the Amajuba Education Trust; this operates through St Barnabas' contact with Dr Guy and Mrs Jan Daynes in the Kwa Zulu area of South Africa. On this occasion a record £1,900 was raised which will assist the continuing professional education of black South African students. The following day saw the annual Toy Service in the Church to which gifts were brought for distribution by the Reading Family Aid Charity. Subsequently, members of Emmer Green Pre-School and Emmer Green Rainbows added more gifts. All were later taken to St Luke's Church Hall to be combined with those from other donors and sorted by volunteers, many of whom were from Caversham, before onward transmission to 600 deprived families, including 1,800 children, in the Reading area. Recipients in both South Africa and Reading are always grateful to the volunteers working on their behalf and for the generosity of all those in the neighbourhood who support the events.



The photo shows the "Simpson family" who featured in a sketch on the meaning of giving at the Toy Service at St Barnabas.

CHRISTMAS AT ST BARNABAS

St Barnabas Church was pleased to welcome record attendances, which were significantly up on previous years, at the Carol Service, Crib Service and Midnight Mass. In addition to the traditional readings and music at the Carol Service, some contemporary meditations on the meaning of Christmas brought a refreshing opportunity to reflect on the Incarnation. The mix of darkness and light, choral and congregational singing and instrumental music helped to capture the mystery and wonder of the Christmas message. The east end of the Church was transformed with stage, theatrical curtains and lighting for the Nativity Play in which young people of all ages participated as the central feature of the Crib Service, an event that was so popular that not everyone could get into the Church. In anticipation of Christmas, seasonal music was also brought to the residents at St Luke's Home by a choral group from St Barnabas Church and the Mayfield Handbell Ringers. Hidden behind all these services and other activities lies a considerable ministerial and congregational involvement, given for the glory of God, but from which all those present shared with thanksgiving in the worship it engendered.



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At its last meeting, the Reading Anglican Deanery Synod voted, without dissent, to support and promote Fairtrade and encourage further the use of Fairtrade products throughout the Deanery. It also agreed to serve only Fairtrade coffee and tea at its meetings and asked the Oxford Diocese to follow its example in supporting and promoting Fairtrade. "So what?" you may say, if you do not appreciate what Fairtrade is about.

Price of coffee beans at 30 year low

How many of us when we shop in the supermarket stop and think about how much of the cost of our food products actually ends up in the pockets of the primary producer? Any of us with links with the farming industry in the UK will know what a depressed state that is in and how many, despite subsidies, now struggle to make a reasonable living. But what do we really know about the primary producers overseas in the less developed countries in the world? For example, what do we know about coffee producers in Nicaragua, a country with which Reading has a link through its twin town of San Francisco Libre? Are we really aware that, despite what the supermarkets charge us, the price that primary producers are paid for coffee beans is at a 30 year low? In 1994 the farmer was paid 180 US cents for a pound of coffee beans; by 2001 this had fallen to 17 US cents a pound, much less than the cost of production.

Why growers are paid so little

Coffee is the second most valuable world commodity after crude oil. It is grown in 50 countries by around 20 million farmers, most of whom are smallholders. It is estimated that around 100 million people are involved in the growing, handling, trading and retailing of coffee, which may pass through as many as 150 pairs of hands before it reaches the supermarket shelf. The reasons for the fall in the price of raw coffee are attributable to three facts: the abandonment of the International Coffee Agreement by the Reagan Administration in the USA; the intervention of Vietnam, backed by World Bank finance, as a major coffee producer; and the restructuring of the economies of coffee producing countries, including the abandonment of coffee policies and subsidies as conditions for World Bank and International Monetary Fund loans. It is worth noting that OECD countries are subsidising the production of their own crops to the value of US\$260 billion, whereas tariffs imposed on developing countries for the export of their agricultural products to rich countries amount to US\$100 billion.

- and the consequences

Coffee growers have only one harvest a year; many of these small farmers are poor and by the time of harvest they are in debt and sell to unscrupulous middle men at low prices. As a consequence, these farmers are unable to buy clothing and medicines or pay for the schooling of their children. So serious was the situation of small farmers in Nicaragua last August that thousands of them marched on the capital Managua to draw attention to their plight; it was largely unreported in the west that fourteen people died on that march.

Fairtrade standards

Fairtrade arose because it was felt that small farmers, such as these, deserved a fair price. The payment to farmers' co-operatives is based on a set of standards of which the first is to ensure that payment covers the cost of production, plus a bit more to cover social, economic and environmental investment. The second is for 60% of the contract money to be available as credit so that farmers can be paid on delivery and processing and shipment costs can be covered. Thirdly, these arrangements are to enable the development of long term trading relationships. In February 2002, Fairtrade coffee farmers were paid a minimum of US\$1.26 per pound for arabica coffee beans and US\$1.06 per pound for robusta coffee beans, respectively 162% and 488% above the international market price.

Fairtrade's 10th Anniversary

Coffee, which has been used here as an example, was the first fairtraded commodity introduced some 14 years ago. The Fairtrade Mark, the use of which ensures that Fairtrade principles are applied, was first introduced 10 years ago. Seventeen countries are involved in its use and 130 products bearing the mark are available through retail outlets, including all the major supermarkets. In 2002, retail sales of Fairtrade products amounted to £62 million (£2 every second). Fairtraded coffee currently accounts for a 3% share of the coffee market. Renewed prominence will be given to Fairtrade products between 1 and 14 March - Fairtrade Fortnight.

This move in Reading by the Church of England adds considerable weight to the movement to make Reading a Fairtrade Town. The Revd Graeme Rainey, Reading University Chaplain, speaking in the debate, said that after University Fees issues of trade justice were the next most important priority for students.

Fair Trade Products are available at St Peter's Caversham (contact John Madeley 947 6063) in addition to the sources shown on page 6 of the January issue.

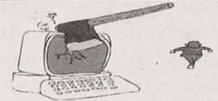
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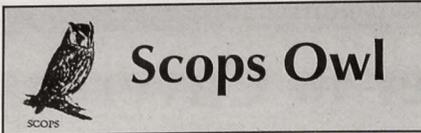
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With Christmas festivities now over, we take its Promise into the New Year.

Local bird species keep us on our toes with sub-songs from garden trees and hedgerow. They rise to sound "Reveille" for breakfast, appreciating water for drinking and bathing all the year round. At the nut-hanger, a Starling and 'Squirrel already play "Peek-a-boo". How dull life would be without them all.

Moments later, Blue and unusually, a long-tailed Tit feed from the nut-hanger.

Some years ago, a very small Cormorant sat on the river bank at Caversham Bridge. Black-headed Gulls alongside enabled easy size comparison. It turned its head towards me, exposing a truly "mini" bill.

Five years earlier a "Pygmy Cormorant" was claimed by another birder as it perched on a boat at Pipers Island. Neither record was accepted.

My dear Scooby's vet, a highly experienced birder, had several times seen Pygmy Cormorants overseas but felt unable to reconcile the two local sightings.

Cormorants are seldom retained in captivity, thus making escape unlikely.

Towards the end of of November '03, a Kestrel and Carrion Crow seemed involved in non-combantant aerobatics above Dinton

OPENING THE DOOR TO 2004

Pastures. Two days later, a Sparrowhawk and Carrion Crow were similarly engaged above my front garden.

When I was only five years old, I had walked to Caversham Bridge with my father. We stopped to watch a large, brown hook-billed bird which was resting on a lamp standard above the upstream parapet. Dad believed it to be a Buzzard. Now after many years of birding, it is assuring to still accept his identification of so long ago.

On Saturday, 20th December, our "Team of Three" drove to Headington, north east Oxford, to see a Baltimore Oriole. It is so rare that twitchers had come from far and wide. A generous and well disposed resident provided admittance to their back garden, plus free tea and coffee. A pound per person was suggested as a contribution to the RSPB. It was worth "twenty"!

The Oriole was very close and well seen, as it fed on a huge apple, specially provided. It also joined the Goldfinches at the nut-hangers.

This female has a tastefully orange breast, rump and tinted tail with yellowish underbody. Wings are dark with white bars. Bill, legs and tail are prominent.

Scops Owl

CAVERSHAM ROTARY CLUB CELEBRATE THE NEW YEAR

Members of the Rotary Club of Caversham did their best to slough off the extra pounds put on over the Christmas break by participating in the Club's annual walk. This year, members started their ramble at Greys Green, from where their route took them through the grounds of Greys Court and then by the beech woods towards Assendon. They returned by

National Trust paths, to the North of Greys Court, to their original starting point. The party then adjourned to the nearby Maltsters public house for lunch. Several days later, many of the members met up again for a Champagne reception at the home of the Club's president, Mac McCombe, the first event in the 2004 calendar.



MESSY PLAYTIME

Continued on Page 10

and to develop relationships. The more confident parents are, the more effective they are, so as we get alongside the parents, we encourage them and let them know we are "on their side" and there for them.

One of our longer-term goals is to offer more formal parenting support to those who want it. Many parents might not be happy embarking on a "course", but would consider joining a session on "how to cope with tantrums".

It is our hope that we will be able to offer a variety of activities and adult education sessions on Thursday afternoons, but for this we need much more help. We need people to run a crèche

on Thursday afternoons (1.30 - 3pm) and people who can get involved in various aspects of the day, anything from helping set up the messy play activities and doing the washing up, to making cups of tea and chatting with Mums. If you are interested and feel you could be enthusiastic about this kind of work, the CTC Youth and Families Initiative would love to hear from you! Please contact Bekah Little at the CTC Youth and Families Initiative office on 0118 948 4333. The office is manned throughout the week but if the team are out of the office please leave a message.

If you are one of the thousands of busy people in Caversham who cannot actually manage to come along and help, please continue to support us in prayer. We can do nothing except through the strength of Jesus Christ.

the CLUBS

St Peter's Wife's Group

On 16 December the group held its annual Christmas Party at Church House. Each member brought a plate of food and what a feast there was!

There was superb entertainment this year by members of Caversham Park Theatre, who sang songs from some of the most popular musicals such as *Oliver*, *Aspects of Love*, *Carousel* and *South Pacific*. The finale was a singalong which members took part in enthusiastically and enjoyed enormously. Many thanks to Glynis and her 'concert party' for coming along and making the evening so enjoyable.

The next meeting to be held at Church House will be on Tuesday, 17 February at 8.00pm when the speaker will be Fiona Rolls, a teller of traditional tales.

Caversham Community Association

November meetings were the beginning of Christmas festivities with a Christmas bingo session with suitable prizes. The following week was a bring along and buy raising money for club funds.

The month ended with a return visit from Mr Alan Copeland with his 'pictures of the unusual!'. This time the tour was round the Cotswold area with its well known stone cottages and oddities mixed in with the scenery.

December was celebrated in the traditional way by members. The month began with an informal games evening and was followed the next week by a carol evening. Members of St John's choir were welcomed with their musical director, Nick Bennett. The programme included audience participation, solos and some humorous readings and finished with a welcome cup of tea and mince pies.

The last meeting of the month was the Christmas party. A festive spread of salad, ham, salmon and hot jacket potato was followed by sparkling entertainment from Ken Fitt and Pamela Allen. Nostalgic songs from the 20s to the 60s came effortlessly and the evening finished with cake and wine or juice. The competition for a table centre was judged and the two Margarets were declared winners. The raffle finished a sparkling evening.

Caversham Branch - Royal British Legion

The end of 2003 was an extremely busy time for the Caversham Branch of the Royal British Legion. The Remembrance Parade and Service was attended by nearly 500 people. The Boys' Brigade, the Army Cadet Force, Caversham Community Association, Scouts, Girl Guides and representatives from the Red Cross, St John's Ambulance, Royal British Legion and others paraded through Caversham to the Memorial in Christchurch Meadows, where the Service was conducted by the Vicar of St John's, the Rev Fr Phillip Dallaway. Special thanks go to the Police, without whose help the parade would not have been able to proceed, to the Salvation Army Band for playing the music at the Service and to the Boys' Brigade for the Bugler.

The two minutes silence at 11 o'clock on November 11th was observed outside the Working Men's Club in the centre of Caversham where the Standards of various Services were presented. Thanks again to the Bugler and to the Caversham Resident (he knows who he is!) who stopped the traffic during the two minutes silence.

The Poppy Appeal during October and November went really well. To date, the Branch has raised £21,618.21p for the 2003 National Appeal - yet again a record for Caversham.

The Poppy Appeal Organiser for Caversham is always humbled by the generosity of our village. Everyone seems to help in one way or another, whether it be the shops, businesses, pubs, clubs and churches having collecting tins, people collecting house-to-house or on the street, or just giving a donation. On behalf of the Branch, a big 'thank you' to everyone.

As ever, the Legion could always do with more collectors and members; if you are interested in finding out about either (or both) give Pauline a ring on 947 5345.

About 70 Members of the Branch enjoyed a Christmas Party enjoying an evening of relaxation, food, bingo and the usual Christmas present - all paid for by fund-raising socials (and scrounging!) throughout the year.

Emmer Green Townswomen's Guild

The Christmas meeting of the Emmer Green Townswomen's Guild was very well attended to hear Jessica Rose from BBC Radio Berkshire talk about the radio station programme making. She attends to the Action Desk, seeking volunteers for good causes and encouraging an interest in "Lifelong Learning". The target audience for Radio Berkshire is 51+ as it is felt that the younger element of the population is already very well catered for. Present projects are the recycling of old mobile phones to raise money for Great Ormond Street Hospital, and the request for toiletries for the Salvation Army's Hostel for the Homeless in Reading and also the Women's Refuge. Music is chosen with the targeted age group in mind. News (predominantly local, although important national items are included) and traffic information are dispensed, events are publicised and anything else felt to be of interest to the listening public is broadcast. Next year it is hoped to have a religious programme. Well-known names have been welcomed onto the team of presenters including Maggie Philbin and Joe Brown. Jessica was a fluent and interesting speaker and answered a wide variety of questions at the end of her talk. Marie Rogers gave the vote of thanks.

A Christmas Raffle was held, the proceeds going to MENCAP in memory of Mabel White. Members enjoyed tea and cake and good wishes for a happy Christmas before venturing out into a very cold night.

The Guild meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm in St Barnabas' Church Hall and visitors will receive a very warm welcome.

METHODIST DIARY

CAVERSHAM METHODIST CHURCH (GOSBROOK ROAD)

1st February	10.30am	Rev'd Rosemary Fletcher
	6.30pm	Rev'd David Ellis
8th February	10.30am	Rev'd Tom Stuckley
	6.30pm	Dr David Williams
15th February	10.30am	Mr M King
	6.30pm	Mr M King
22nd February	10.30am	Professor Sir John Marsh CBE
	6.30pm	Rev'd Rosemary Fletcher
20th February	10.30am	Rev'd Tony Bell
	6.30pm	At Caversham Heights

CAVERSHAM HEIGHTS METHODIST CHURCH

1st February	9.00am	Rev Rosemary Fletcher
	10.30am	Mr Chris Evans
	6.30pm	Mr Robin Gowers
8th February	10.30am	Rev'd Lynne Davis
	6.30pm	Rev'd Rosemary Fletcher
15th February	10.30am	Mrs Nancy Quinell
	6.30pm	Chris Evans
22nd February	10.30am	Rev'd Rosemary Fletcher
	6.30pm	Rev'd David Ellis
29th February	10.30am	Major Samuel Edgar (Salvation Army) and Mr David Beek
	6.30pm	Rev'd Valerie Fisher

ST. LEONARD'S, WOODCOTE

8th February	9.45am	Rev'd Rosemary Fletcher
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