



Autumn reflections

by the Editors

OUR AUTUMN photo competition received more entries than ever, capturing the mood of the season. Leaves changing colour in local woodlands, a fallen sweet chestnut, autumn mists, sunrises and sunsets over the river, early Christmas lights and children playing in Caversham Court gardens. Once again, the challenge for the editors and Chris Walton of Walton's Jewellers was choosing a winner.

Our overall favourite, printed on this page, captured the transient early morning mists around Reading Bridge and the adjacent office building around 7:30 am on 5 November. Within minutes the mist had dispersed. Our congratulations to James Tyson, who was on a regular early morning walk when he took this photograph. A £25 John Lewis gift card is on its way.

A further entry showing the illuminations in St Martin's Precinct appears below. This has appeared widely on social media and in other publications.

It has also been turned into a Christmas card and copies made available in local shops. Three further entries appear on *page 3*, along with commentaries from the photographers.

Many of the entries featured the River Thames and the bridges which link Caversham and Reading. Our other open spaces were central to most of the entries. It is clear just how much we have valued places like Bugs Bottom, Balmore Park, Clayfield Copse, Caversham Court and the riverside walks in the recent months. More photographs featuring people would have been welcome – looking at our entries you would be forgiven for wondering if anyone lives here!

We thank all who submitted entries for this competition. Our Winter competition is now open, so do keep taking photos and sending them to us. The closing date is 1 March. Could you find inspiration in our area which tells what the winter means to you?

For full terms and conditions, go to:

www.cavershambridge.org



Reading Bridge, early morning in November

photo J Tyson

A HAPPY NEW YEAR



St Martin's Precinct at night

photo Vadim Gurevych

from the team at the Caversham Bridge

by Phil Chatfield

IT WOULD be fair to say most of us are pleased to say goodbye to 2020. Whilst we still have a long way to go before our lives return to something like normal, we can be hopeful for 2021. Over the last year, our distribution volunteers have managed to ensure your paper has been delivered to your door despite the impact of the pandemic. So, on behalf of the Caversham Bridge team and our readers, I would like to say 'thank you' to all of you who have made the deliveries possible, including those who were not able to carry on and the volunteers who filled their places.

In our *Talking Point* this month – see *page 2*, recently ordained Minister Andy Storch reflects on the way many of us have felt lost over the last year. It has been an eventful year for Andy, and you can find out more about this in *Called from Court to Church* on *page 14*.

Over the last year we have been pleased to have a number of new writers, as well as old favourites. This month, Happy Wanderer, a long-established

contributor, considers the threatened Ash tree see *page 7*. Our colourful *Creative Caversham* article from Elestr Lee this month looks at the work of local potter Debbie Page – see *page 12*. Our area seems to be home to many creative people, and this month we also highlight local writers of all kinds. We have a poem by Audrey Preston on *page 15*, a short story by Jenny Gordon on *page 6*, and news of two books from local writers – *Bessie Bakes* – also on *page 6*, and *Life beyond Divorce* by local minister Keith Saynor – *page 13*.

Local businesses continue to offer us valuable services and in turn need our support. Our *Caversham Connections* article by one of our new writers, Caroline Gratrix, this month profiles Roland Hazell from *Caversham Butchers* – *page 11*. We also welcome a new bookshop, *Fourbears Books*, which opened in December – see *page 5*. Alex Forbes, the owner, will be providing personal service with advice and information on the books – something on-line businesses cannot compete with.

If you would like to contribute to future editions of the paper, or have comments on any of our items, please contact us at:

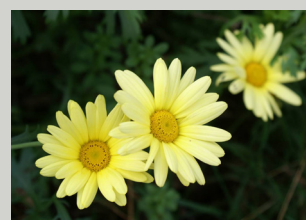
editors@cavershambridge.org

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Feeling lost

WAS 2020 the year of the ramble for you? Since becoming curate of Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham Parish, I have had more and more reason to cross the Thames from my home in RG1, and I have been enjoying walking in South Oxfordshire. With almost no other leisure activity open to us in the March-July lockdown, and with a November lockdown of dismal weather, my wife and I took every opportunity to get out, go into the Chilterns, and feel normal again. But we also had the Ordnance Survey phone app. Pricey but essential, it meant we always knew exactly where we were and where the public paths were and how to get back to the car and return home.

No longer would we be getting lost. Being lost is miserable. Many people have felt lost in 2020. Not geographically of course, but emotionally, mentally, and often spiritually. For Years 11 and 13 at school, suddenly the exams that they were working towards disappeared. For their school mates, they were told first that it was too dangerous to attend school, and then that they could bubble with hundreds (but not outside the school gates).



Talking Point by Andy Storch

Business owners struggled to make plans for each day, let alone for the long-term. Many industries and professions, most notably hospitality, the arts and sports, lost all sense of direction as total closure was never properly reversed and nothing seemed to be predictable. Countless residents in care homes felt abandoned. Confusion and uncertainty abounded.

Hence 2020 has felt like we are fumbling around like walkers lost on a foggy mountain side. As a country we can't see where we're going and the huge uncertainty of Brexit makes things feel worse. Any slip and we could be in danger. The stress is continuous; we have not been enjoying this. We had no map, we were never sure of where we were, and there seemed to be no route showing us the way we should go. It felt – and it may still feel – like there is no light at the end of this tunnel.

That is why we must remember that Christ is the King. We need to have faith that He is in charge. He knows where we are going, even if we don't. Jesus never promised to show us the route, nor even the next step along the way. But He did promise to take us by the hand and journey with us. We can even enjoy the journey if we allow Him to lead us, if we dwell in His word, if we praise Him in our souls. We are all like lost sheep. But Jesus is the good Shepherd. He seeks the broken-hearted, the injured, the stray, and, in particular, the lost. He will lead us home.

Rev Andy Storch, curate of Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham

Local clergy and church services

ANGLICAN

Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham Ministry

St Peter, St Margaret, St John
Rev'd Mike Smith, The Rectory, 20 Church Rd
Caversham RG4 7AD

Tel: 947 9505 rector@ctmparish.org.uk

Rev'd John Dudley Tel: 947 0265

Rev'd Penny Cuthbert Tel: 07825 331 810

Rev'd Judith Ryder Tel: 947 3783

Rev'd Andy Storch Tel: 07365 555 905

Parish Office

Church House, 59 Church Street, Caversham RG4 8AX

Tuesday and Friday 9.30 to 14.00

Tel: 947 1703 e-mail secretary@ctmparish.org.uk

Current services

Sunday 09:30 – You Tube service - www.youtube.com/channel/UCYMgve_d64enHsm1FUfwntA

10:15 – Zoom service – <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84366839832?pwd=M2xJSUtFbGkycG1DbEFxQ1JGYWRsQT09>

11:15 – Zoom service - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82793512985>

Wednesday – 09:30 – Zoom morning Prayer - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/786384026>

St Andrew

Rev'd Nigel Jones, St Andrew's Vicarage, Harrogate Road.

Tel: 947 2788 www.standrewscaversham.org

Current services

Sunday – 18.00 - Service on the 'St Andrew's Caversham' YouTube channel

Tuesday – 20.00 - Compline service by Zoom. E-mail the vicar to join - vicar@standrewscaversham.org

St Barnabas Emmer Green

Rev'd Derek Chandler, 20 St Barnabas Road.

Tel: 947 8239. www.saintbarnabas.org.uk

Office

St Barnabas Centre, Emmer Green

Tuesday and Thursday 8.30 – 10.30

Tel: 947 6310

Current services

Sunday 09.30 - Morning Service on St. Barnabas Facebook & Website

Monday 14.00 - Busybees - for pre-school children and their carers on Youtube

Details on their web site - www.saintbarnabas.org.uk

CAVERSHAM PARK CHURCH (LEP)

(Anglican, Methodist, Baptist and URC)

Contact: Dr Alison Johnston

Tel: 0118 947 5152 www.cavershamparkchurch.com

Current services

Sunday – 11.00 – Livestreaming on YouTube

Details on their web site at: <https://cpvc.org.uk:5152/live-stream>

METHODIST CHURCH IN CAVERSHAM

Rev'd Martin Beukes, 72 Highmoor Rd.

Tel: 0118 947 2223 <https://cavhmc.org.uk>

Rev'd David Jenkins Tel: 0118 327 1592

Current services

Sunday – 10.30 – Zoom service

E-mail the Minister for details martin.beukes@methodist.org.uk

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor: Colin Baker

Church office Tel 0118 954 5353

Email: secretary@cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk

Current services

A link is placed on their website each week at:

www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk

and on their YouTube channel

www.youtube.com/user/CavershamBaptist

Live broadcast starts at 10.30am each Sunday

GRACE CHURCH

(formerly Caversham Hill Chapel)

Pastor Keith Saynor

Tel 9474529 www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk

Current services

See their web site for details: www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk

RIVERSIDE CHURCH (Reading)

www.riversidechurchreading.co.uk

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD

Rev'd H R Gayle

Tel: 946 3009 www.ntcgreasing.org.uk

ROMAN CATHOLIC

Our Lady and St Anne

Mgr Patrick Daly, The Presbytery, 2 South View Avenue.

Tel: 947 1787 www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk

Current services

See their web site for Father Patrick's weekly homilies and details of opening for services at:

www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk

St Michael Sonning Common

Fr Michael Sharkey, St Michaels, Sonning Common

Tel: 972 3418

At the time of writing, church services are affected by the pandemic restrictions, disrupting normal worship. However, church communities have adapted to the circumstances and are alive and active in new ways.

Some churches have re-opened in a limited way. Most have a range of on-line services, house groups and social meetings, using web based systems like YouTube and Zoom. For current information, see individual web sites for each church on this page or on the Churches Together in Caversham website: www.cavershamchurch.org.

The Caversham Bridge is a community newspaper produced by Caversham Christian News Ltd
Company details will be found on page 15

Future editions:

Contributions for the February 2021 issue should be submitted by 11 January and for the March edition by 8 February. These should be e-mailed to: editors@cavershambridge.org

Dates for advertising copy are 5 January for the February issue and 26 January for March. These should be e-mailed to advertising@cavershambridge.org

Autumn reflections



Sweet Chestnut

photo E Bonsall

I took this photo of a sweet chestnut when I was walking a friend's dog on 17 October in Clayfield Copse.

Write to the Editors

by the Editors

WE ARE working through the results of our reader survey and will be reporting more on this in future editions. However, a number of the responses suggested we should include readers' letters, providing they were relevant, interesting and not controversial.

We are always pleased to receive feedback and ideas for the Caversham Bridge in the form of readers' letters or e-mails. In the last year we have published a small number under the heading *Write to the editors* or have used them as the basis of short articles, such as the *Mini Memories* item in June and the *Breath of Fresh Air* article in July.

We may not have space to print everything sent to us and longer letters may be published on our website. We may edit contributions if appropriate. But we do aim to reflect our local area and help to build a sense of community. So help us to celebrate what is special about Mapledurham, Emmer Green and Caversham by sending us your stories, news, comments, poems and other contributions.

Contact us by e-mail at editors@cavershambridge.org

or by post at Church House, 59 Church Street, Caversham, Reading RG4 8AX



photo O Badziak

Help!

This photo was taken in Balmore Park on Friday 27 November. I went out early to catch this shot of the fog and frost. I saw this person in the distance making a phone call – in the middle of the fog it looked like a distress call! I thought this could apply to all of us in the pandemic surrounded by a fog of conflicting information, we call out for help in order to survive.



Autumn Beechwoods

photo Emma Roper

This photo was taken in the woods behind The Packhorse Pub.

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The annual subscription including delivery is £5.00.

Alternatively copies of this paper can be purchased from:
Caversham Emporium in Church Street and in Emmer Green
at the True Food Community Co-Op in Grove Road,
opposite St Barnabas church.

A new face at St Barnabas

A NEW Minister has been appointed to help at St Barnabas church in Emmer Green. Leonard Onugha, who spent part of his training on placement in Caversham, was subsequently ordained and has been working in Thatcham for the last 2 years. The Bishop of Oxford has asked Leonard to come and help in St Barnabas parish for the foreseeable future, working alongside the current



Leonard and his wife Joanna

Minister, Rev Derek Chandler, who began a phased return back to work in November. Leonard will be helping with general ministry in the parish, and providing some extra help alongside Derek for the future.

Sky Pilot Grounded



THE REV John Dudley has retired from active service as part of the Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham Parish.

For John this is a second 'landing', as he retired from his first career as an airline pilot with British Airways 31 years ago. In retirement, John studied Theology (for interest) and was encouraged to offer himself for the priesthood by Revd Richard Kingsbury, the Rector of Caversham. He was ordained in 1997, served in a variety of churches in the Oxford Diocese before becoming involved with the ministry team for the last few years. He hopes to continue worshipping and supporting the parish in his retirement.

WHAT'S ON

THERE are a number of events planned for January. With the possibility of a further lockdown, it becomes more important than ever to check to see if events are running. Our on-line events diaries are updated regularly, so it is worth checking to see what has been added at cavershambridge.org:5154/local-info/whats-on

If you have an event planned, please send details to:

editors@cavershambridge.org

Mondays – Time for U pram push 10:00-11.30 Caversham Baptist Church. Term time only. www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk

Sunday 3 January – Farmer's Market and Artisan Fair 10:00 – 15:00 Caversham precinct www.facebook.com/CAFMarket

Thursday 14 January – Bereavement Journey Course 19:30 - 21:30 First of a six session online course run by Caversham, Thameside and Mapledurham Parish. Contact Nicki Wisdom at nicki@ctmparish.org.uk for details or to book a place.

Sunday 17 January – Farmer's Market and Artisan Fair 10:00 – 15:00 Caversham precinct www.facebook.com/CAFMarket

Caversham Library is open for booked appointments. Limited opening: 10.00 -13.00 Tuesday, Friday and Saturday, 13.00 - 16.00 Thursday

www.reading.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/libraries-reopening

Martin Howarth – Whittings Butchers

WE REPORTED the closure of Whittings Butchers in Coldicutt Street in our May edition. We regret to say the following notice is now in the shop window:

'It is with great sadness we have to inform you all that Martin passed away peacefully surrounded by his loved ones on Tuesday 6 October 2020. Martin was very passionate about his career and loved all of his customers as you were a big influence and impact on his life. We thank you for supporting him and his family through the tough times'.

The message is also on the shop's Facebook page, www.facebook.com/RealMeatWhittings

A new local connection

READING Borough Council has posted the following on its Facebook page about a new social media app which connects neighbours.

'We are now on Nextdoor! Nextdoor is a new social media app that connects neighbours to each other – and to everything nearby: local businesses, services, news updates, recommendations and stuff for sale from the people down the block. Alongside all our other social media channels, we hope to use Nextdoor to reach as many people as possible - especially with important local Coronavirus safety messages or emergency alerts.'

Join today and say hi to all your neighbours.

rdgcouncil.co.uk/Nextdoor_L9Fwg

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IT'S ALL HAPPENING

Caversham Library now open

OUR Library re-opened just before the November lockdown. It remained open for booked appointments, although computer bookings were temporarily suspended. The home library service has continued to operate.

The current services available to you at Caversham Library are:

- To order specific items online at <https://library.reading.gov.uk/cgi-bin/spybus.exe/MSGTRN/WPAC/HOME>
- To order a selection online or phone orders through on 0118 937 5950
- To collect items you have ordered where you have a confirmed collection slot
- To return items (no appointment needed)
- To use computers but for essential use only (book via 0118 937 5950)

At this stage, you will not be able to:

- Browse shelves – although it is planned to introduce this
- Use Wi-Fi
- Use toilets
- Look at newspapers or magazines
- Use study tables or spaces

All of this could change if further restrictions are introduced in response to the pandemic. Currently, the opening times are limited to: 10-1 Tuesday, 1-4 Thursday, 10-1 Friday, 10-1 Saturday

For current information, visit:

www.reading.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/libraries-reopening

Online Art Exhibition

THE READING Guild of Artists' online exhibition *Celebrating our Town – Discover Reading* has been 'Expanded & Revisited' with 90 new works added



and new stories to tell, alongside works from their original exhibition launched in September 2020. Visit their website at:

www.rga-artists.org.uk/online-exhibition2.html to 're-discover' Reading through the eyes of local artists. With 9 'Rooms' ranging from *History in buildings* to *Green Spaces*, each with 20 or more paintings, there's plenty to explore.

Support our new bookshop

CAVERSHAM resident Alex Forbes has made a significant change in his career to open a bookshop in Caversham. *Fourbears Books* fills a gap in our local retail provision left when the toy and book shop Wordplay (now Chapter Coffee and Cocktail Bar) next door closed some years ago.

Despite the impact of the pandemic, Alex worked hard, with the support of friends and family, to prepare the shop for the opening on 2 December. The shop stocks a wide range of children's books, fiction and non-fiction. Alex can also order almost anything for delivery with days. He hopes the store will rapidly become a valued part of Caversham's independent retail community.

The shop is at 20, Prospect Street. Opening hours are likely to be 9:30 to 17:30 Tuesday to Saturday and 11:00 to 15:00 Sundays. For more information, see their facebook page:

www.facebook.com/fourbearsbooksuk



Changes to Council Wards in Reading

A REVIEW of the arrangements for electing local councillors in Reading will lead to an increase in the number of councillors from 46 to 48. The Local Government Boundary Commission report makes recommendations for significant changes in Caversham. Mapledurham Ward will become part of a new Caversham Heights Ward, Peppard Ward will become Emmer Green Ward, with some minor changes, Caversham Ward will change and a new Thames Ward covers areas on both sides of the river. The changes are expected to be in place for the 2022 elections. For full details, see the Commission's website at

consultation.lgbce.org.uk/node/18202

A tonne of tasty veg for a 'Good Cause'

LOCAL charity Veg4Reading has been selected by the Co-op Local Community Fund as a 'Good Cause' that Co-op members can support when doing their own food shop.

The project, which was only set up in July, has now delivered nearly a tonne of fresh fruit and vegetables for free distribution to people in Reading badly affected by the Coronavirus crisis.

Co-op members can help by nominating Veg4Reading as their chosen good cause, which means that whenever they scan their card in the

shop, or use any other Co-op service, 4p of every pound spent will go to help Reading people in need. Anyone who shops at a Co-op can become a member for free and choose this local good cause membership.coop.co.uk/causes/51412 to help support people in Reading.

Our February edition will include an article with more information on Veg4Reading.

In the meantime, to find out more about the project and how you can volunteer, now or in the New Year, visit:

www.food4families.org.uk/Veg4Reading.cfm

Caversham Through the Year



2021 Calendar

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www.gardinersnursing.co.uk

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Teddy's Panama Canal Adventure!



by Jenny Gordon

ON 14 November 1950, my parents and I left Victoria, on Vancouver Island, to sail back to the UK. From mainland Vancouver we travelled down the West Coast of Canada and the USA, via San Francisco, Los Angeles and the Panama Canal.

I was one of two children among the 18 passengers on SS Duivendijk, a ship with the Holland America line; its final destination was Antwerp.

My mother, dreadfully homesick, was desperate to come back to the UK; she had never really wanted to emigrate to Canada. In the short time we lived there, she suffered an ectopic pregnancy and very nearly died.

My father, on the other hand, was keen to make a new life in Canada. Having sold our home in Testwood, Southampton, he had wanted to buy a property on Vancouver Island with the assets, but Exchange Control would not allow the bank to release more than one instalment of the money. I still have all the official correspondence between the bank in Southampton and my father, including an unofficial handwritten letter from the Bank Manager condemning Exchange Control's decision.

The Duivendijk docked in the Panama Canal for two passengers to disembark and the rest of us were allowed to leave the boat for a while. I insisted on taking my little teddy with me and carrying him myself down the gangway. My father suggested that he looked after little teddy, in case I dropped him, but I refused to hand him over and carried on walking. Then the worst happened. Not only did I drop teddy but he fell in to the canal water a long long way below. I was distraught.

I don't think I deserved what happened next. Some crew members, having witnessed the drama, manoeuvred wooden planks through the water and lifted teddy out. When we came back to the boat, he was returned to me dripping wet and stinking of the filthy water he had fallen into. Mum was none too pleased. Our cabin facilities were basic, even by the standards of those days, but she did her best to scrub him up with hand soap in the small basin. She left him soaking overnight and the smell pervaded the room for several days as he dried out.

It's now 70 years since teddy's dramatic fall. He's since lost his ears, and a lot of his fur, but he's still with me.



The rescued teddy!

Cooking to help Dad

by Maria Hackemann

THE COVID-19 lockdown in summer 2020 was a difficult time for everyone. But for Caversham schoolgirls Bessie (10) and her sister Milly (12) it was especially tough having to cope with home-schooling whilst also helping their mother, Hannah, care for their father Neil, who has young onset dementia. When things became fraught, Neil's specialist dementia nurse suggested Bessie cook with Neil to keep occupied and help them get along.

These baking activities soon blossomed into a creative family project. But what started out as a summer holiday exercise for Bessie morphed into a full-scale fundraising effort. Bessie asked family and friends for their favourite recipes and the memories they held. The result is a new book, *Bessie Bakes: Fond memories & fun recipes to support families affected by dementia* by Hannah and Bessie Riches, sales of which will raise money for Dementia UK.

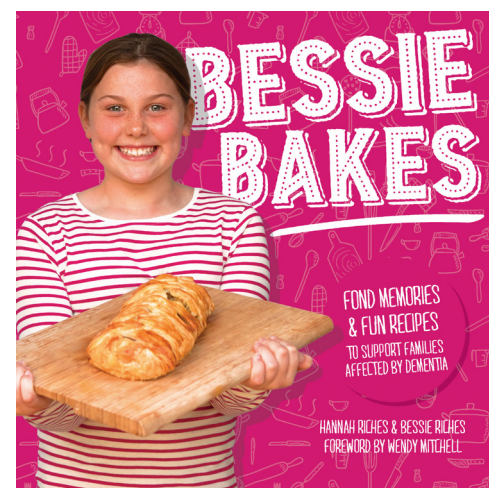
The charity trains Admiral Nurses, the specialist dementia nurses who support families like Bessie's. Hannah, a former police officer and now a full time carer for Neil, is a member of Dementia UK's Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP). Bessie and Milly have already done lots of fundraising for Dementia UK. Bessie loves cooking and baking, and records and shares her baking adventures on social media.

Hannah and Neil firmly believe that honesty about a young onset dementia diagnosis and willingness to engage with it is critical: "Bringing



Bessie with Tray Bake

photo C Gratrix



up children when one parent has a diagnosis of dementia is not easy, and Milly and Bessie could easily feel like passive witnesses to their father's illness. Instead we have encouraged them to learn and talk about dementia and, in doing so, have inspired them to raise money and to help others. Publishing this collection of recipes as a book to raise funds seemed like a natural progression from the memory walks, table-top sales, and coffee mornings the girls have already done," says Hannah.

The book is a collection of easy-to-make, well-loved cakes, biscuits, savoury dishes, sweet treats and memories. From scrumptious delights such as Raspberry Brownies and Malteser Tray Bake to classics including Speedy Spice Cake and Shrewsbury Biscuits, it has something for everyone to start to create their own new family memories.

Bessie's book, was published by Kingshill Books on 30 November 2020 and launched at the Caversham Artisan and Farmer's Market on Sunday 6 December.

To order a copy of the book, visit the website <https://bessiebakes.co.uk>. All profits from the sale of the book go to Dementia UK.

Bessie Bakes: Fond memories & fun recipes to support families affected by dementia, by Hannah and Bessie Riches ISBN 978-1-8382609-0-3 £13.99 Kingshill Books

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HAPPY WANDERER WORRIES ABOUT...

THE ASH was always one of the commonest trees in woods and hedgerows. Over the centuries, it has acquired a vast amount of folklore, too much to go into here.

Its name may be connected with the grey colour of the bark, which is smooth in saplings but becomes grooved and reticulated as the tree gets older. Compared with beech, its twigs are much stouter, and end in buds which are totally black – a distinguishing feature.

Like other wind-pollinated trees, the flowers burst out of the buds before the leaves, and are a dull purple colour, and devoid of petals, which would serve no purpose. It's one of the latest trees to come into leaf in spring, and the leaves are pinnate – with paired leaflets arranged opposite one another along the leaf-stalk, and a terminal leaflet at the end. The fruits are known as 'keys', with each key being a seed with a 'wing' attached. When the seed breaks off from the twig, it can be carried by the wind, twirling round as it goes. The seeds are attached in bunches, looking a bit like bunches of keys.

It's hard to believe that the ash is in

the same botanical family as privet and lilac, which both have scented flowers with petals. And they're all related to the Olive. I once tried making ash-key pickle: the recipe dated from 1690, and came from a book called 'Wild Food' by Roger Phillips. I was hoping for something that tasted like olives to eat with cooked meat, but the pickle proved inedible.

RELATED TO THE OLIVE

Ash timber had many uses. Its tendency to flex rather than to splinter when subjected to sudden knocks made it particularly suitable for the handles of implements and tools, and for oars, hockey sticks and tennis racquets. It was also used in the making of carts and wagons, and the frames of early aeroplanes and cars. At one time Elliott's of Caversham carried large stocks of seasoned timber and could make almost anything from wood. Between 1947 and 1950 they were making the frames of Elliott-Healey car bodies from ash, to which the aluminium casing was attached.

Sadly now, ash trees are being attacked by a disease, Ash Die-Back, which it has been estimated will remove 70-80% of the trees. Some trees have been found with a measure of natural resistance to the fungus which causes the disease, and it is hoped that the trees will not disappear completely from the landscape, as happened to the English elm in the 1970s. The fungus was new to science and was identified in 2006. It was first found in this country in 2012, in ash saplings imported from

The Netherlands to Buckinghamshire, though it has since been reckoned that it must also have reached this country by natural means – the spores carried on the wind.

So perhaps we shouldn't feel too bad about the importation of the saplings. The fungus was native in parts of Asia where it had evolved with the trees, and caused little harm, but in Europe it was a different story. Quite why it was necessary to import ash saplings into Buckinghamshire seems baffling – they seed themselves so readily – as in Bottom Wood, near Mapledurham, where I took this photograph.



Ashes at Bottom Wood

photo Happy Wanderer

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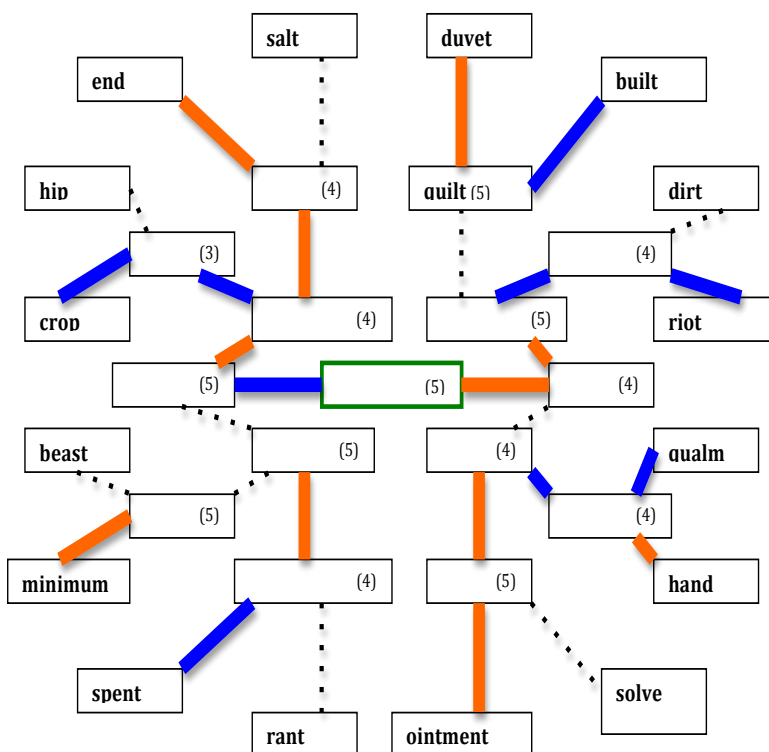
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Word puzzles

WORD PUZZLE

Find the word that has the same meaning as the clue; or rhymes with; or has one letter that is different. For example: *quilt* has 5 letters, rhymes with *built* and means *duvet*.

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



Answers on page 15

COUNTRIES in the THE EUROPEAN UNION

Wordsearch by C Moloney

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

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MAGGIE, MAGGIE, MAGGIE

- so handsome, but

OUT, OUT, OUT!

Wildlife by William Cecil

AN ELEGANT bird in its black coat and tails and with vivid white splashes of waistcoat. But the harsh guttural chac-chac-chac cries of the magpie announce its presence and warn lesser birds that danger is in the air, particularly in the nesting season. The magpie likes a diet of eggs and nestlings.

Gamekeepers, protecting their young pheasants and partridges, drove magpies from farms and woodland in the early 20th Century to establish new homes in the hedges and trees in the gardens of our towns and cities.

I don't have any partridges in my pear tree, but I still have qualms when a hungry magpie starts rummaging about in the bottom hedge. About 600 years ago they were known simply as 'pies', then some misogynist, irritated by the *chac-chac-chacking*, added 'mag', a common term for chattering women.

Magpies have always been regarded

as an ill omen. If one crosses your path the recommended precaution is to address the bird politely and recite 'Good morning Mr Magpie. How is your lady wife today?' As well as bringing bad news, they were also widely regarded as robbers: hence Rossini's opera 'The Thieving Magpie'.

The lady wife is very important. Magpies are monogamous and they build untidy high-domed nests where they bring up their young. They are not long lived, on average about four years, although one ringed near Coventry in 1925 was shot in 1947 – 21 years later.

They are generally regarded as the most intelligent of all birds and animals. They form gangs for hunting and defence against predators, have been known to imitate the human voice and, if caged, use tools to tidy up.



Magpie

photo Mabel Amber, Creative Commons

Our wariness about the mysterious magpie and what to expect when they cross your path is summed up in that age-old rhyme:

One for sorrow
Two for joy
Three for a girl
Four for a boy
Five for silver
Six for gold
Seven for a secret that can never be told.

I have never seen seven magpies at a time, so perhaps that means I have no secrets left to be exposed.

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Write to the editors

THE TALE OF TIMMY TIPTOES



BEATRIX POTTER
THE ORIGINAL AND AUTHORIZED EDITION
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Beatrix Potter's Timmy Tiptoes

THE FOLLOWING e-mail from Hilary Jakeman was received by the Editors in late November. "I always enjoy reading Caversham Bridge. My husband buys it when he goes to the True Food shop in Emmer Green, and we both think it is very good. So much interesting news.

I expect I am not the only person to contact you about a glaring inaccuracy in the current issue! On page 8, you have an article about a grey squirrel, calling it Squirrel Nutkin. As anyone will tell you, who has read Beatrix Potter's books, or read them to children and grandchildren, Squirrel Nutkin is the

very ill-mannered RED squirrel who lives in Cumbria. You can still see red squirrels in Beatrix Potter's beloved Lake District, but you are not at all likely to see any in Caversham. In the Reading area the squirrels are indeed grey, and Beatrix Potter wrote a book about a grey, called Timmy Tiptoes. He too eats nuts, and while he gets into trouble he is nothing like as naughty as Nutkin. He is not to be confused with his smaller red cousin."

Editors Note: William Cecil's face is as red as a Cumbrian squirrel at making such an error. His excuse is that it is about 60 years since he read Beatrix Potter to his children, and *Tiptoes is Going Crackers* would not have been such a good title.

THE TALE OF SQUIRREL NUTKIN



BEATRIX POTTER
THE ORIGINAL AND AUTHORIZED EDITION
New colour reproductions
F. WARNE & CO

Beatrix Potter's Squirrel Nutkin



Replace the plastic in your garden

PLASTIC is really useful in the garden, but it comes at a cost to the environment and wildlife. Luckily, there are alternatives and sometimes they are better for your plants too. Plastic pots, trays and root trainers are lightweight and cheap. They may not rot, but they do degrade and become fragile with exposure to sunlight.

Changing the way we garden to avoid using plastic, by using biodegradable materials like wood, paper and coir, and making careful choices, reduces the environmental cost of gardening. For example, seed modules and root trainers are often flimsy, and shatter and crack easily. You can swap them for newspaper pots, soil blocks or paper pulp modules. Toilet roll inners are best for larger seeds, such as sweet peas. You can then simply plant the seedlings without removing containers, which rot away in the soil.

Soil blocks are cubes of compressed blocking compost, shaped using a soil blocker; you sow into the top and the seedling's roots bind the compost into a natural module. Home-made modules take time to make and need more frequent watering - but seedlings never suffer from pot-bound roots and establish more quickly.

Replacing plastic string is an easy step, as there are plenty of natural products available using cotton, jute or hemp. These will eventually rot and biodegrade, unlike plastic string, which often breaks down with exposure to the elements into tiny strands which are impossible to dispose of, leaving plastic fragments in your soil.

Based on an article by Sally Nex on the Royal Horticultural Society's web site, www.rhs.org.uk/garden-inspiration/get-gardening/how-to-go-plastic-free-in-your-garden

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Take it all back

by Claire Anderton

A NEW enterprise has started operating from the Frangipani shop in Caversham, offering a refill service for a range of cleaning products. Frangipani moved from its shop next to Vegivores, in St Martin's Precinct, to a larger unit at 21 Church Street, just around the corner, at the beginning of December. We asked Claire Anderton to tell us about the services they offer.

NOODSkin is quickly becoming a household name in Caversham. As we are a family suffering with eczema, we started making our natural skincare products to give us a kinder solution to skincare. Having a passion for the environment and a growing awareness of the sheer amount of waste produced daily in our planet, we decided to do our bit.

In 2017, we vowed to turn all of our soap offcuts into toxic free cleaning products to provide an eco house cleaning service and

REFILL CLEANING SUPPLIES

a zero waste cycle with a safe and natural option for people to clean their homes. The company, Clean Green Living, was a great success and the demand for our products was overwhelming and wonderful.

We met with Anne-Marie at Frangipani Home and discussed the idea of introducing a refill station with our eco products into Caversham's St Martin Precinct. We believed this would both benefit the community and be easily accessible, so the plan was put in motion. The refill station was born and is full of refill cleaning supplies and a refill beauty bar with shampoos, conditioners and moisturisers. It is packed with raw ingredients to make your own cosmetics at home, plus recipes full of information to guide you through making



The refill station and Claire

photo Jodie Bennet

your own cosmetics, such as hair masks, creams, sugar scrubs, and more.

Bring your own container or pick one up in store, start refilling and begin your eco journey to sustainability.

Our natural NOODSkin products are a perfect pairing with Anne-Marie's wonderful Bali inspired home decor and ethically sourced gifts and furnishings. Visit: www.frangipanihome.co.uk to see what she has available.

We continue to provide the same excellent eco house cleaning service in Caversham. Please contact us via

www.noodathome.co.uk

to discuss ways we can help you make the change to a greener future.

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Blooming Latin names



by Les Cooper

I WAS seated in front of my computer wondering what I should write about and then the notion came that it ought to be about those yellow daisies I like so much. Yes, of course, they are so easy to grow and they have flowered all summer. I expect readers might like to know about them. Now what are they called? My mind is blank. Was it not *Jamaica Yellow*? Maybe, but what variety of plant is that? I went into the garden and found the plastic label that would tell me. Sadly the name written by a so-called indelible pen had long since faded. Never mind, I can easily find it on-line. I seemed to think it was a *Leucanthemum* but I wasn't sure. I looked that name up. Nothing seemed to fit. I searched and searched and then eventually it came up. Lo and behold it was an *Argyranthemum* I had been looking for. What is more it was called *Jamaica Cream* (not Yellow) and it used to be called *Marguerite*. Why do 'they' keep changing names?

This entire preamble is to remind you to keep notes of your new plants and not to trust that marker pen you got for Christmas.

And I do recommend *Argyranthemum Jamaica Cream* because it will really brighten up your garden. It has long stalked primrose yellow flowers with deeper yellow centres in bloom all summer. It likes to be in the open and prefers moist soil, although my plants

survived the drought quite happily. It is allegedly tolerant of low temperatures but, to be on the safe side, I always take a few cuttings to over-winter in my unheated greenhouse.

Are you like me and sometimes struggle to remember these long Latin names? And as for spelling them I am lost on that one too. But thinking of this new year I am going to grow at least one plant that I have never tried before. It is *Eustoma Grandiflorum* (you might know it better as *Lisianthus*) and the strain is *Echo Blue*, an F1 hybrid. The catalogue makes it sound really good. 'Fully double, dark blue blooms borne on strong stems'. I am a sucker for blue flowers, and my wife tells me it is excellent for flower arranging - so wish me luck.



Jamaica Cream

photo E Cooper

A treat for the New Year

by Bessie and Hannah Riches

We asked if we could include a recipe from the Bessie Bakes recipe book featured on Page 6. Bessie and Hannah suggested Grandma Dixon's Shortbread.

Grandma Dixon's Shortbread

Ingredients:

145g plain flour
30g semolina
115g butter
60g caster sugar
a pinch of salt

Make it!

1. Preheat the oven to 170°, 160° (fan), gas mark 4.
2. Cream butter and sugar together, then add flour, semolina and salt and mix to form a soft dough.
3. Tear off a walnut-sized piece from the dough. Form into a small ball and put onto a lightly greased baking tray.

4. Press each ball with the back of a fork until flat and about 5cm across.
5. Bake for 20 minutes, remove from the oven and sprinkle with caster sugar.

Each of the recipes in the book has a memory to go with it, and this one is from Bessie's Aunt Sarah, who said "The smell of shortbread always takes me back to Grandma's house, and I always have a smile on my face when I bake it, thinking back to how she always used to apologise, saying it wasn't 'up to her usual standard.' "





Make a new start

Wellbeing by Rachael Staines

THE PROMISE of new beginnings, a chance to let go of unhelpful habits and to reset, are amongst the many motivations for setting new year resolutions, but how can we make sure that we haven't broken them after just a few days?

The smallest of changes to our day can sometimes have the greatest impact, positive wellbeing really can be simple. There is a wise Chinese proverb that says; 'Do not fear going forward slowly, fear only to stand still,' so here are a few ways to make those changes in a slow but effective way.

Start with this question – if you knew you would not fail, what one change would you make?

Try to identify what it is the single most important habit that you want to change, now look at what the barriers are to this change happening. Do you need support from family or friends, to commit more time, or to simply be honest with yourself and ask why you repeatedly fall back into old habits?

Then look at achievable ways to reach your goals: you need a plan, not just a wish list, a tangible guide as to how you are going to make those changes, and each and every day write down three things that you have achieved to help you.

A positive mindset that allows you to believe you are capable of change is key, reminding yourself of what you have to gain by achieving your goal, breathing deeply to reduce the anxiety. Change isn't easy but, as the proverb says, there is greater fear in standing still.

Wishing you all a happy, healthy and positive new year!

Rachael is an Emmer Green based qualified Mindfulness Coach who specialises in Mindful Based Stress Reduction for children and teenagers struggling with anxiety. For more information see her website www.thehushspace.com



Community Connections



by Caroline Gratrix

This month we get to know something about Caversham resident Roland Hazell



Roland Hazell

photo C Gratrix

ROLAND, owner of The Caversham Butcher, is a Caversham boy through and through. As a youngster he went to St Andrews Preschool, then on to Caversham Primary School and Highdown. He started his butchery apprenticeship at 15 and has never looked back.

Since taking over the much-loved Jennings Butchers in St Martins precinct just over a year ago, Roland and his team have worked really hard to bring new products to the community: beautifully pre-prepped meat plates, signature scotch eggs, and even cakes. They have seen their online ordering soar, most likely due to the pandemic.

Roland's heart is in the community. He runs regular competitions via The Caversham Butcher Facebook and Instagram pages with prizes from meat joints to afternoon tea. He supports a lot of the local schools with vouchers for their fundraising raffles. He sent scotch eggs and sausage rolls to the NHS Covid Staff team at Royal Berks, and he is affiliated to local organisations which support our less advantaged families.

A big supporter of fellow local businesses, Roland and his

team designed a signature sausage for Sam and Susie at The Collective, in Church Road Caversham.

Roland, tell us a little about your favourite places in Caversham....

What's your favourite thing about Caversham?

Caversham is a wonderful place to live, relax, eat and shop. Full of charm on the banks of the world's greatest river. A stroll in the beauty of Historic Caversham Court or walking the dog in Balmore Park - we are all lucky to live and work where we do.

Caversham's best coffee shop?

The best coffee and cake is served in The Collective. Run by the lovely Sam and Susie, the shop brings a little West End glamour to our village.

Where to eat in Caversham?

For lunch or delicious dinner there is nowhere better than Quattro in Prospect Street. One of the longest established businesses in Caversham always serving wonderful meals.

Where to shop in Caversham?

Many superb independent shops trade in Caversham, our great friends at Terrys, the always brilliant Flower Shop, and our neighbours next door at Vegivores to name a few. Warings the bakery always offers irresistible treats and warm snacks.

If you could bring anything to Caversham, what would it be?

A cinema would be great.



...and even cakes!

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This month in our Creative Caversham feature, Debbie Page tells us about her lifelong passion for pottery, and the inspirations which have fired her imagination. Working with clay can prove a very soothing and therapeutic experience, she reveals.

It's all in our hands

by Elestr Lee



GETTING her hands dirty - in the nicest possible sense! - has long been an obsession for ceramic artist Debbie Page. Debbie, who grew up in Folkestone, was introduced to pottery whilst at secondary school.

"In art, we were supposed to spend a term each in pottery, batik and lino cutting. But I fell in love with pottery. There's something about working with clay, it gave me such a buzz. So, in the following terms, I found someone who didn't want to do pottery, and we swapped. I did pottery for the whole year!" Debbie recalls.

Initially, she trained as a nurse, moving into NHS management in her 20s. Moving from Leeds to Reading in 1994, she got back into pottery via adult education classes in Caversham. Completing City & Guilds courses in pottery and ceramic design, Debbie now concentrates on creating her ceramic range, as well as teaching.

As a designer, Debbie specialises in producing tea pots, water pails and moon jars, all influenced by her study of Korean and Japanese ceramics, which she discovered during her City & Guilds course. "Another student did a presentation on Jomon pottery from Japan, the oldest in the world - some more than 18,000 years old. They're mainly cooking utensils, but each piece which has been found - and some are still intact - are all decorated. I found this absolutely amazing!"

Another inspiration has been potter Lucie Rie, who fled Vienna in 1938 and made her

life and career in London. "There is a famous photograph of Lucie aged 88, taken by Lord Snowden, dressed completely in white, sitting next to the most enormous white pot. Seeing this was a spine-tingling moment for me - I discovered she had been given it by the famous potter, Bernard Leach. I decided that I had to make something like that!"

Lucie Rie's pot originated from Korea, where the design was simply known as a 'big white jar'. "They were purely functional, for storing food. But the style is iconic in Korea, rather like the tea pot for Britain - it was even used to hold the Olympic flame."

In Debbie's hands the Korean jars are reimagined as 'moon pots' - purely decorative works of art. "They are very appealing to make. Every moon jar is made in two halves; I coil the clay to make my pots, up to a certain diameter. Once they get to football size, I use a mould. I glaze part of the pot, and then smoke-fire them, so the smoke gets into the glaze. It struck me that the moon isn't pure white, so this way I produce a range of tones in the final glaze," Debbie explains.

Debbie is passionate about teaching her craft. "It is so therapeutic, and it is so good for people to be able to come together to learn the technique. It is so social, and a great opportunity to chat. But it is also quite primeval, working with mud," she adds.

Despite lockdown, Debbie has been able to continue working with her students at Bracknell and Wokingham College; she can also be found running short courses at a range of locations, including Micklams Farm, Ardington School of Crafts and, more locally, Art Jam in Caversham. "A complete beginner can create their own apple-sized moon jar in around two and a half hours," she explains. "The technique, of coiling and pinching the clay, is the first thing you teach a beginner."

Debbie owns two kilns, but apart from buying earthenware or porcelain clay - and since lockdown, some terracotta - the tools of her trade are surprisingly simple. "I use a serrated edge kidney, and a chopstick," she reveals. "Once at a craft fair I was doing a demonstration, and realised I'd forgotten my chopstick. Luckily, I always wear one in my hair! I spent the day using it to make tea pots."

Looking forward to the return of craft fairs and arts trails, Debbie has spent some time during the previous year revamping her website and social media presence, and her efforts paid off in a surprising way. "When the Caversham Arts Trail was called off, I put out a small stall by my front gate with some of the items I was hoping to sell. I took a photograph and put it on my Facebook page - and someone in Vancouver got in touch and bought a moon jar!"

To see more of Debbie's creations, see her website:

www.debbiepage.co.uk or her Facebook page [@debbiepageceramicsyellowshedpottery](https://www.facebook.com/debbiepageceramicsyellowshedpottery) and Instagram [@debbiepageceramics](https://www.instagram.com/debbiepageceramics)



Debbie's gate stall resulted in a sale all the way to Vancouver!
Above left: Naked raku moon jar.
Right: 'Torn' moon jar

Giving Children a Hug

by Pat Jones

ST PETER'S Craft Group have been busy this summer making quilts for Project Linus. The Project provides cosy quilts for sick, disabled or distressed children of all ages. It is a volunteer led Community Interest Company, which exists to benefit the community rather than its shareholders. Its aim is to provide love, a sense of security, warmth and comfort to these disadvantaged children through donations of new, homemade washable quilts, made by volunteers.

The project, named after the security blanket toting character Linus in the Peanuts comic strip, started in America in 1995 and

came to the UK in 2000. Several million quilts have been delivered worldwide through the project. Area organisers try to ensure the quilts are delivered to children who are local to the makers.

We have had feedback from several local organisations, including Alexander Devine Children's Hospice, Maidenhead, who thanked us "...for the absolutely gorgeous quilts that you dropped off last week. I know the children and families at the Hospice will love them." Reading based charity Parenting Special Children provided the following from a parent "Thank you so much for the quilt, it is really lovely. My daughter doesn't think she deserves it. She has very low self esteem..."

To learn more about the

project, see their website www.projectlinusuk.org.uk or contact them at projectlinusberkshire@gmail.com



A selection of quilts photo P Jones

Reading Golf Club Development

THE CONTROVERSIAL planning application for development at the site in Emmer Green has been withdrawn by the applicants. However, the club maintains everything is on track and the application will be re-submitted shortly. The large number of comments received meant the January planning committee meeting would not be able to consider the application adequately. So, with the council's agreement, the plans have been withdrawn and a revised version will be submitted shortly. This should allow enough time for them to be appropriately considered at a future planning committee meeting.

by Phil Chatfield

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Talking About Life Beyond Divorce

by Andrew Mathewson

A LOCAL church minister has taken the bold step of writing a book describing his personal journey to recovery and restoration following the shock of a painful separation and divorce.

Keith Saynor, pastor of Grace Church in Emmer Green, was prompted to write his book, *Life Beyond Divorce: My Journey*, when he noticed the lack of written resources on the subject in a Christian bookshop.



Keith Saynor

"There were books about marriage and marriage preparation," he says, "but nothing giving a Christian perspective. As I searched more widely I found very little written to help people move on following divorce."

Keith, who is now happily remarried with a young daughter, says in the book that he faced "a tough, five-

year challenge", which started when his ex-wife left him.

"As a pastor and as a former sergeant in the Thames Valley Police," he says, "I have helped many people learn how to forgive and move on, so I knew that it was important that I faced and dealt with this area early on."

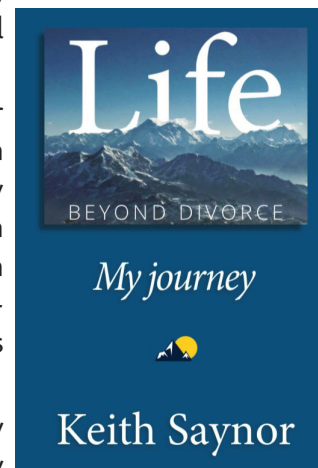
But even Bible theology and conventional prayers seemed unable to fix his problems. So instead he went back to the source of his faith and was surprised by the variety of ways in which God showed him how to shed his bitterness and anger and show forgiveness instead.

Along with stories from the Bible, many lyrics from popular music, passages from literature and scenes from Hollywood films illuminate his story. With his spiritual eyes and ears attuned to receive signs from God, he found that he received love, guidance, reassurance and ultimately restoration.

His aim, he says, is for his book to bring hope in the midst of uncertainty for people going through a marriage breakdown – or any profound loss – and pointers for churches offering them support.

Life Beyond Divorce: My Journey is published by Ronyas Publishing, ISBN 978-1-5272-7469-3, price £7.99. It can be obtained by emailing:

lifebeyonddivorce@gmail.com



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Called from court to church

by Phil Chatfield

IN NOVEMBER 2020 we reported on the ordination of Andrew Storch. Andy has now started his new role in the church as a curate in the Parish of Caversham Thameside, with particular responsibility for St Margaret's Church, Mapledurham.

Andy runs a law firm in Reading, specialising in legal aid criminal defence work. He describes his work as having been something he was 'called' to do. However, in the last ten years, he has increasingly felt a new calling, to ministry in the Church. For Andy the two roles have much in common, as both have a large element of helping people. However, his work in the courts is very immediate, about the here and now. As a minister he describes his role as building a long-term relationship with people, walking with them now and guiding them towards the hereafter.

In 2015, when he was considering training for the priesthood, he visited St Margaret's Church in Mapledurham and was drawn to its rural character. It is part of the Caversham Thameside Parish, which brings together three quite different churches each with their own character and traditions.

Before training as an Anglican minister, the candidate goes through a selection process to ensure they are prepared for their new role. Most candidates in the Oxford Diocese train at Cuddesden



Andy conducts the service at Reading Abbey

Vimeo screenshot

College, near Abingdon. However, Andy chose to attend St Mellitus Theological College, part of the University of Durham, which has a campus in Earl's Court. The college was set up by the Dioceses of London and Chelmsford in 2007 and is named after the first Bishop of London.

For three years Andy rushed to London once a week, had regular weekends away, and was squeezing high level academic essays in around a full legal practice and maintaining family life. He emphasised how grateful he was for the support of his wife and family through this time.

it should be a more inclusive service, representing all aspects of the Reading Community. So a small number of Judges and legal representatives processed from the Court building to a marquee set up within the walls of Reading Abbey. Here Andy presided over an interfaith service, with input from a Sri Lankan refugee and his son who had made Reading their home, the Bishop of Reading and the Chairperson of the Hindu Temple in Reading. The service can be viewed on-line at vimeo.com/464983273/f7530b10b1

Andy is now a non-stipendiary minister (which means he fills an unpaid role in the church). He splits his week between three days of legal work and Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday as a curate.

Andy expected this year to be special, but no-one could have anticipated what has happened. For many 2020 was a year of bereavement. We have lost friends and family, opportunities and events, be it holidays, celebrations, performances or funerals. However, there is some good news from the church, as online engagement has grown, reflecting what he describes as a 'spiritual hunger' which has become more acute for many now. In the long term, Andy would like to be a full time minister, but for now he will continue to balance service to defendants with service to the wider community through the church.

A GRAND AFFAIR

One additional duty for Andy this year is serving as Chaplain to the High Sheriff of Berkshire. Mary Riall, the current High Sheriff, started her 12 months in this ceremonial role in April 2020, just as Covid-19 struck. Traditionally, the incumbent chooses their own Chaplain for the year and she chose Andy, in part because he was the only ordained lawyer she knew. For the Chaplain, the high point of the year is the annual service marking the start of the Legal Year on 1 October. This is usually a grand affair held in the Minster Church in Reading, with beautiful singing and traditional wigs and gowns.

In 2020 the service was very different, in a large part as a response to the pandemic. But the High Sheriff was determined



St Margaret's Church

photo H Gale

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Stand Strong to help others

by Philippa Nugent
of the Standing Strong Team

IN NORMAL times, the Witt Morgan Chorus would be at the Wesley Methodist Church in Reading busily rehearsing for their next concert. But these are not normal times.

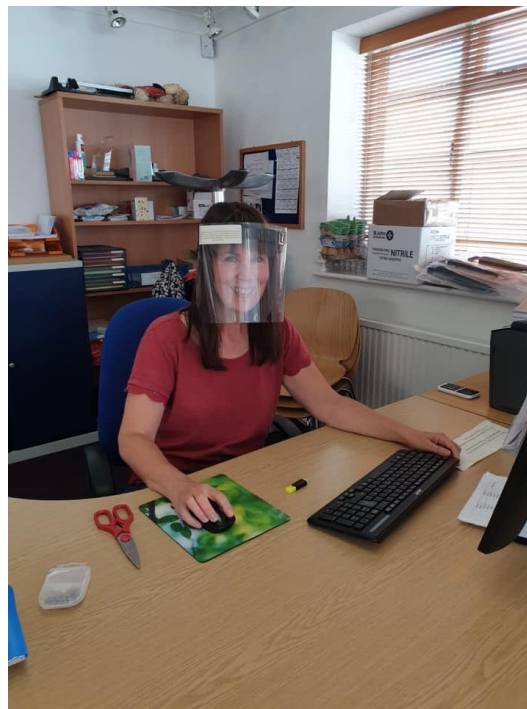
While the group still meets online to sing together every Wednesday evening, they are also turning their talents to something other than tunes. The singers already fundraise for the Samaritans in Reading but, encouraged by choir directors Louise Morgan and Anthony Witt, they wanted to find additional ways to help the community during the Covid-19 crisis.



Street Pastor in faceshield
photo Reading Street Pastors

The Standing Strong Team was set up to provide protective face shields to frontline workers and volunteers. Using a design developed by a group from the Science and Technology Facilities Council in Didcot, the team started its own production line in June with volunteers making the shields at home. They consist of an elastic headband and transparent plastic visor, and give the wearer some additional protection from the spread of droplets that may contain coronavirus.

Over £1,000 to cover the costs of



At work with a faceshield photo Launchpad

materials has been raised by the Witt Morgan singers through their GoFundMe page www.gofundme.com/f/face-shields-against-covid19-k and a Warren and District Residents Association yard sale in July.

More than 700 have now been distributed to 40+ charities, community groups and other organisations in the Reading area, including Launchpad and Cirdic, Hope in Action, Communicare, Christian Community Action, British Red Cross, Trussell Trust and many more.

For more information, including how to order the shields, see their website www.standingstrongwmc.org They can be contacted at standingstrongwmc@gmail.com

News of vaccines has brought hope that the Covid-19 pandemic may be over next year. But while it is still with us, the choir that cannot sing together is working in harmony to help others stay safe.

For information about the choir, see their website <http://wittmorganchorus.com>

A video from local homeless charity, Launchpad, featuring the face shields in use, is available at

www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpBgOkfWSF

Empty Times

by Audrey Preston

So I sit in the quiet of the
garden and words come
back again and again
'What am I doing here?'
A lone plane buzzes in an
empty sky and seemed to
ask itself
'What am I doing here?'
The birds begin a
conversation
A song and rhythm in the
bushes
They take on the world – no
pressure or rushes

They know what they are
doing there.
A red kite came to visit me
dived at me again and
again
until another swirled above.
My kite knew what he was
doing there
and left me sighing in the
empty air
Now hope in this time to
view the cost.
Allowed six together – love
not lost?

WORD PUZZLE ANSWERS:

(from left to right) halt, quilt, hop, diet, stop, quiet, cease, **peace**, calm, lease, balm, least, palm, rent, salve

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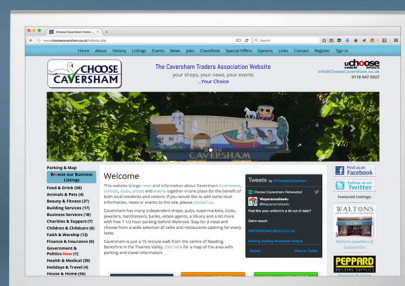
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