

Neighbourhood News

from the Bell Tower Community Association

Issue 6 - December 2006



🔔 🔔 🔔 *Season's greetings to all our readers!* 🔔 🔔 🔔

Local MP meets the Association

Rob Wilson MP gave an interesting insight into life as the new MP for Reading East at our recent public meeting. He explained that being an MP is not always straightforward.

At Westminster, Rob's first job was to find his way around through all the miles of corridors. He thought it was important to make his maiden speech quickly. This he did within ten days as there are certain activities MPs cannot undertake until their maiden speech, such as asking questions in the House.

Rob's work is split 50:50 between Westminster and the constituency. His constituents are very varied as are their problems, ranging from dumped cars to the IDR, immigration, crime and drugs.

Rob would like to see "Silver Surfers" being involved in local communities passing on their experiences and skills to other generations.

This was an interesting and informative evening.



Locals take part in the 'Stop the Traffik' anti people trafficking campaign (News in brief, below)

HELP WANTED!

Do you have typing or note taking skills? We are looking for someone to attend our monthly management team meetings to take and type up meeting notes. Our meetings are usually from 7.30 to 9.00pm at the New Hope Centre.

We also need a publicity/PR person to help publicise our events and liaise with local newspapers and radio stations.

If you are interested in making a valuable contribution to the Bell Tower Community Association please contact Barbara on 0118 950 7685.

News in brief

● Simon and Barbara from the Association presented the Caversham Road crossing petition to the Traffic Management Advisory Panel in September. As you may have seen, this was reported in our local papers.

The panel recommended that a review of pedestrian crossing facilities in Caversham Road should be included in the study for Caversham Corridor and the IDR one-way proposals. We have been invited to the panel meeting in January 2007 and will report back.

We continue to watch the situation closely and will keep pressing the council for action. If you have information on other safety incidents around these crossings please let us know.

● On Saturday 19 November thirty members of New Hope and Greyfriars churches took part in a live game of Monopoly (which meant that rather than throwing dice and moving counters, teams had to visit sites all over Reading and be photographed outside them!). The aim was to raise money for the 'Stop the Traffik' campaign against people trafficking and awareness of the campaign.

● We have heard from the council about proposals to install a gate at the entrance to the alleyway

Continued overleaf

Quizzing again!

Start sharpening up your brain cells for our next fun quiz evening! Thursday 1 February 2007, 7.30pm at the New Hope Centre. Proceeds to be shared between the Association and E P Collier School.

JOIN US NOW

for only £1 per person per year. We already have over 70 members - and hope to see you at our events! Don't forget members can claim some great discounts from local businesses!

You can join by contacting Simon Bolton at 4 New Hope Terrace.

Season's greetings from

**VIRK'S
SUPERMARKET**

**The Friendly
Off Licence**

Caversham Road
(corner of York Road)
Opening hours:
7am (8am Sundays) - 10.30pm
We're open on Christmas Day
12 - 3pm and 7.30 - 10pm

Visit www.bell-tower.org.uk or email us at info@bell-tower.org.uk

Beat the burglar!

There has been an increase in burglaries in our area in recent weeks, and the police are advising residents to be extra careful.

Here's a quick reminder of some of the simple things you can do to improve the security around your home:

- Lock all exterior doors and accessible windows when you're out
- Keep your house and car keys safe and away from doors and windows
- Keep your garage and garden shed locked with proper security locks, and keep any tools secure and out of sight
- Trim back any plants or hedges that a burglar could hide behind
- Make sure you have up-to-date insurance.

When you are away:

- Don't leave your curtains closed during the daytime
- Use timer switches to turn on some lights when it gets dark
- Cancel any milk or newspaper deliveries when you go away
- Ask a friend or neighbour to look after your home.

Why not join your local Neighbourhood Watch? Research has shown that where residents club together to share information this really does reduce crime. If your street doesn't have a Neighbourhood Watch group, it's easy to start one - details from Barbara at 77 Addison Road.

Compliments of the season from



Fanny's
ANTIQUES

*A wide range of Antiques,
curios and collectables at
very reasonable prices.*

*Why not come and
see for yourself!*

You can find us behind Reading station at
1-5 Lynmouth Road
off the Vastern Road
Caversham

0118 950 8261

HOUSE CLEARANCES UNDERTAKEN

OPEN EVERYDAY
10.30 - 4.00
SUNDAY
12.00 - 4.00

UNDER THE THAMES

We may have had some mixed weather recently, but older residents will remember much worse. Jonathan Dart tells the story of the Thames floods of 1947.

Recently many in our area may have been outraged by the hosepipe ban which Thames Water contractors ignored, but spare a thought for residents in March 1947, who were told to use water sparingly and boil drinking water while the ground floors of some of their houses were flooded.

The flood came after one of the coldest winters on record. There was a rapid thaw, but the ground remained frozen and unable to absorb the water. The Thames overflowed its banks to the extent that in the Reading area it became just one wide stretch of water, bounded by the railway embankment to the south and the Warren, South View Avenue and Henley Road to the north. Across Reading 1,600 homes were affected, most of them in Lower Caversham.

The reason for the warning about water consumption was that the flood waters were higher than the Fobney and Southcote waterworks and there could be no guarantee that the flood water had not bypassed the filters. To make matters worse, the plant's turbines had stopped working because of the high level of the river and the plant was operating at full capacity on auxiliary power.

Other services functioned reasonably well, with amphibious vehicles loaned by the army and a flotilla of boats meaning that no one was without a delivery of milk, bread or other groceries for more than a day. The Women's Voluntary Service toured the affected areas, providing hot meals to those who were unable to leave their homes. Trading at the cattle market went ahead despite it being under several inches of water, with both traders and animals wading about.

Once the water subsided, flooded householders were faced with cleaning up a coating of mud and

slime from their floorboards once ruined lino and carpets had been disposed of. Outside, streets had to be hosed down to remove the layer of mud deposited by the flood.

The waters had also washed a huge amount of debris into Caversham Weir, and workers had the hard and dangerous task of fishing it out to prevent further damage. The water had also cut a deep channel along the towpath, bypassing the weir.

Coal - the main means of domestic heating at that time - was still rationed in 1947, and the government's granting of an extra hundredweight ration for people to dry out their homes was criticised as hopelessly inadequate. To add insult to injury householders had to fetch it themselves and provide their own sack. A hardship fund was set up by the mayor from which each householder received a bar of soap. People were warned against bogus collectors and to give only to those with properly labelled tins.

Coming so soon after the Second World War, the floods were met with stoicism on the part of those affected. Despite criticism of the Labour government's handling of the harsh winter and the lack of aid given during the flood, there was little political fallout, with Labour retaining the seat in the 1950 general election.

News in brief - continued

between York Road and Addison Road, and to erect a higher fence around the Denbeigh Place play area. Also, an improved sign will be put up in Caversham Road to deter lorries from using Randolph Road.

● On 21 November the Bishop of Reading led the Licensing Service for Rev Catharine Morris, the new vicar at New Hope. We are hoping to include an interview with Catharine soon - so watch this space!

● This year's community carol singing will be on Thursday December 21. Meet at New Hope at 6.30pm for a tour of the area - there will be mince pies and refreshments afterwards.



Neighbourhood News is kindly sponsored by grants from the Berkshire Community Foundation and Reading Borough Council.