

Neighbourhood News

from the Bell Tower Community Association

Issue 9 - September 2007



Exploring the area

Our first fun treasure hunt

The streets were alive with locals running around one evening in June - it could only be our first treasure hunt! People were everywhere trying to solve 60 fiendish questions, set by Bell Tower secretary Simon Bolton, in no more than 60 minutes - looking at front doors, studying signs, counting hanging baskets and even looking for garden gnomes!

By the end of the hour there were plenty of red-faced treasure hunters sprinting back into the New Hope centre and trying to hand their answer sheets in on time.

The event was a great success, with the winners taking half of the total entry money and the rest going towards the association's funds. We had great fun and hope to organise a similar event next year.



GO! A group of treasure hunters sets a cracking pace

SHOPPING EVENING

Wednesday November 7
New Hope Centre
7.30-9.00pm

FREE ADMISSION

Jewellery, cosmetics, cards,
wrapping paper and more!
Ideal for Christmas!

Details from Teresa on
0118 959 6475.

News in brief

● Our 'G-Team' has been busy over the summer cleaning up all the graffiti in our area - by the end of June we had cleaned the entire area, over 200 tags in all. Unfortunately on August 22 over 70 new tags appeared, with Ross Road and Caversham Road the worst hit - we cleaned over 50 of these the next Saturday, and hope to have finished by the time this edition is distributed. Thanks as ever to all the team who have given up their evenings and weekends to help, and to all residents and businesses who have supported us.

● We have some good news from the council - their borough-wide graffiti clean-up has reached Abbey Ward at last, so some of the long-standing tags on the edge of our area should be disappearing soon.

● More details have been published on the proposed expansion of Reading station. There will be more platforms, a railway underpass under Reading West junction and a new road along the north of the main line from Richfield Avenue to Scours Lane. More to follow in a future edition.

● *Neighbourhood News* is pleased to announce a new sponsor for the next few editions - we have obtained funding from BT's Community Champions award scheme for community groups.

● New Hope's Youth Cell was serving breakfasts for Reading festival goers again this year - this was very successful, selling breakfasts to hundreds of revellers and raising £1000 for youth activities at the centre.

● Finally, the Association is looking for more committee members - if you can spare a little time to help make a big difference in our community please contact Teresa at 92 Addison Road. And if you haven't joined us yet, remember it's only £1 per year, for which you can get some great discounts from local businesses! Details from Simon Bolton at 4 New Hope Terrace.

Community association makes its neighbourhood spotless



Clean sweep: The Bell Tower Community Association team, (l-r) Catharine Morris (Minister, New Hope Community Church), Pat Short, David Neale (event organiser), Jackie Fountain, Sue Colliass, Teresa Colliass, and PCSOs Chloe Denny and Steve Morgan-Russell.

THEY were ringing out for members of the Bell Tower Community Association when they made a clean sweep of their neighbourhood and filled a giant skip full of rubbish.

The Community Tidy Up Day, covering an area off Reading's Caversham Road, even included some uncollected sandbags left over from the flooding.

It was the second annual clean-up day

staged by association, which takes its name from the famous bell tower at EP Collier School in York Road.

Association members helped residents clear junk from their front gardens and, with encouragement from police community support officers Chloe Denny and Steve Morgan-Russell, took only four hours to fill a 40 cubic metre skip with everything from mattresses and old furniture to fence panels.

Event organiser David Neale said: "The day was so successful last year we decided to make it annual. It's a great opportunity for people to clean their area and put unwanted items to use."

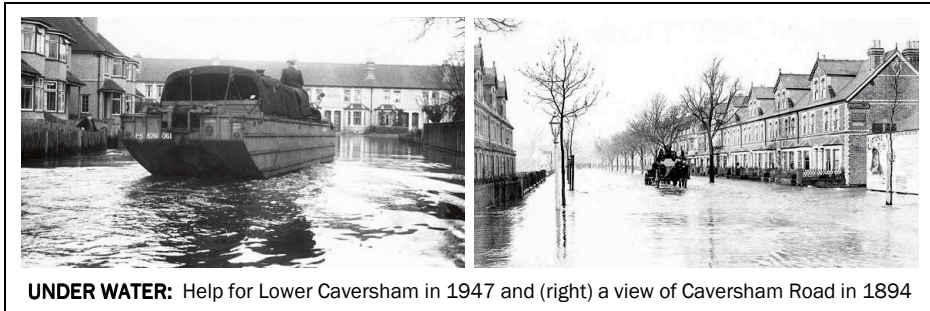
Nothing was wasted because the association was logged on to internet service www.freecycle.org/group/uk which operates a market for goods in decent condition. And even those sandbags found a home.

THE BIG SKIP'S BACK: Press coverage of August's tidy-up day (courtesy of the *Reading Chronicle*)

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

Will our area flood?

July's flood warning was a timely reminder that we are not far from (or far above) the Thames. Fortunately Reading escaped serious flooding this time, but what's the chance of a severe flood like the 1947 event happening again? Neighbourhood News investigates.



UNDER WATER: Help for Lower Caversham in 1947 and (right) a view of Caversham Road in 1894

A neighbour recently contacted us about difficulties he was having renewing his household insurance because of this area's location in the Thames floodplain.

We first turned to the Environment Agency's published flood map, accessible on the web. Interestingly, most of the area was shown as being at "Low" or "Moderate" risk up to early this year, but now we are almost entirely in the "Significant" risk category (meaning that the area is expected to flood at least once every 75 years on average). In general, it can be difficult to get

insurance for properties in an area of "Significant" risk, but most insurance companies should offer insurance on normal terms to those outside such an area.

So what has happened since last year? When asked, the Environment Agency explained that their computer model had changed - only slightly - but the extra predicted 1 in 75 year flood height brought this general area into the "Significant" risk category. However, using detailed land height information the

EA confirmed that the ground in a selected area (in this case based on the street height in Addison Road) is just outside the 1 in 100 year area. The discrepancy is because the flood map does not incorporate the most detailed level of information - there is a project going on to improve its accuracy and we should see a change in 2008.

How did the flood of March 1947 affect our area? According to the EA's map of the event, no houses existing at the time in our area would have flooded, except perhaps in Caversham Road. Residents of Addison Road remember water backing up through the drains into the street but not reaching their front gardens. It seems that the many photos from the time of streets underwater were taken in Lower Caversham, although a booklet published by Reading Borough Council at the time lists all the streets in our area as having been affected. The best we can guess from all this information is that our area was at the margin of the 1947 flood: most likely water came up into the streets but actually entered only a small number of properties, and the water did not reach the newsworthy levels seen on the other side of the river.

What does this mean in reality for all of us? As for insurance, most companies generally use more data

to assess flood risk than just the published map, and it is clear that many residents are continuing to obtain insurance on reasonable terms. Ground height in the area varies, so it is worthwhile talking to the Environment Agency and asking for more detail on your property if you have any difficulty with your insurance company.

Finally, even if the perceived risk is low, preparation is still important. For example, registering for flood alerts (our area qualifies for these), having a few sandbags and boards ready in the garden shed and thinking about keeping irreplaceable items upstairs and where to stay if evacuation became necessary. It should be remembered that floods higher than that of 1947 have occurred in the past, as shown in pictures of Caversham Road underwater in November 1894. It may be 60 years since we last had water in our streets, but in the end we should all remember that a 1 in 100 year event (or perhaps worse) could occur at any time.

To register for flood alerts, find out about the current flood warnings in our area or discuss any aspect of flooding, contact the Environment Agency's Floodline on 0845 988 1188.

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

"Open all hours" off licence and convenience store is now at

FIVE STAR WINES

133 Caversham Road

- ★ National Lottery (Lotto) ★ Pay point
- ★ Meter keys & tokens ★ Bill payments
- ★ Gas cards ★ Bus tickets
- ★ Phone top-up ★ TV licensing
- ★ Wines, beers and spirits
- ★ Sandwiches, snacks & groceries
- ★ Newspapers & magazines
- ★ Western Union money transfer

Ask in our shop about the Caversham Lodge Guest House upstairs!

Neighbourhood News is kindly sponsored by BT's Community Champions scheme.