

Neighbourhood News

from the Bell Tower Community Association

Issue 38 - December 2014



Season's greetings to all our readers

Rail depot misery continues

Many Cardiff Road residents continue to be disturbed by the new train depot, despite the improved acoustic fence erected last year.

The main disturbance is noise, vibration and pollution from diesel trains idling in the new sidings behind Cardiff Road.



NOISY: sidings for the new train depot. This picture was taken before the new acoustic barrier was put up.

Residents have recently conducted their own survey to find out the effect on individual households. Typical comments include residents being unable to use their gardens because of noise and diesel fumes, soot covering gardens and cars and coming through windows, and being woken up in the early hours by the noise. At least one householder has had to take time off work because of the disturbance.

Bell Tower representatives recently spelt out residents' concerns at meeting with the three local councillors.

A meeting has been promised between all parties, including railway representatives, council officers and local residents, and it is expected that new environmental surveys will be carried out.

David Neale

News in brief

● Our regular health walks attended by local residents and patients from Priory Avenue Surgery have now stopped until next spring. The walks last about 1½ hours and take place by the river and in Reading's parks. If you are interested in joining us in the spring please let us know your preferred day and time.

● Another enjoyable quiz evening was held at the Crowne Plaza in October. Questions ranged from history and geography to sport, cookery and much more. We also had a good laugh and plenty of lively conversation, with an excellent buffet selection and lots of tea and coffee. Thanks to the Crowne Plaza for their help - watch this space for details of our next quiz evening in the spring.

● In 2015 we will be knocking on doors to ask what you would like to happen in the community. We already have our street party, Big Skip day, quiz and health walks, but what else would you like to do? This will be your chance to tell us - and perhaps help with events if you like. Please start thinking (no idea too crazy - try us!)

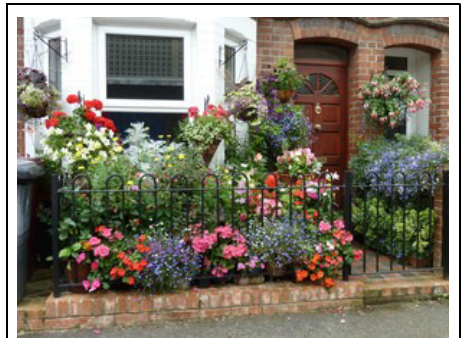
● About every six weeks the council's Streetcare team does an Environmental Visual Audit (EVA) in our area, usually accompanied by a Bell Tower committee member and sometimes the police. The purpose is to maintain a tidy and safe area by reporting fly-tipping, bins left on pavements etc.

● Dog owners are urged as always to clean up after their dogs. The council's dog patrols are operating regularly in the area and issuing penalty charges to offenders. Please help us to keep our community clean.

● This year New Hope is holding a Christmas nativity pantomime in the school playground. This will be on Sunday 7 December at 4.00pm.

Double awards for local gardener

Congratulations yet again to local gardener Bob Murrant, whose spectacular front garden has won two awards this year.



COLOURFUL: the winning garden in bloom

Bob's Cardiff Road garden has become a well-known and colourful local feature. This year he has won the gold award for most attractive floral garden under 12 feet and the Royal Horticultural Society Banksian medal for most points scored in the competition.

FIVE STAR WINES

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E P Collier: past and future

In our last edition *Steve Bale* looked at the history of our local school up to World War Two. Part 2 brings the story up to date and looks at the school's future expansion plans.

From 1936 until 1970 E P Collier was a Central Selective School. Central schools were selective and occupied a position between grammar schools and secondary schools. They provided a more vocational secondary education than the classical academic curriculum offered by the grammar schools. E P Collier was the last remaining Central school in the south of England in 1970, when education system reforms meant an end to secondary education at E P Collier and a change to the primary school as we know it today.

Perhaps the greatest threat to the school came in 2002 when the council consulted on closing both E P Collier and Oxford Road primary schools to be replaced by a single school near or on Victoria Park. Thankfully that did not come to pass and the changing population demographic within the borough has meant that E P Collier is now being invested in as an asset as opposed to being under threat.

You may have visited the exhibition at the beginning of July presenting the school's expansion plans. The school intends to increase its maximum capacity to more than 470 pupils. ECOS House (the building adjoining York Road) would be demolished, and more use would be



NEW PLANS: (top) an artist's impression of the proposed new block, between the main school building and York House and (bottom) a plan of the new school layout with York Road at the top (images courtesy of Reading Borough Council)

made of York House, the building nearer Swansea Road, with a new block linking York House to the main school building.

Full details can be found by inspecting the planning application

- this is now available to view on the council's website and at the Civic Centre on request, application number 141640. Time to comment on the application is running out, so please make your views known as soon as possible.



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