

Neighbourhood News



from the Bell Tower Community Association

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Season's greetings to all our readers

Some colour for December

There will be a little more colour around our area in December as three local organisations have pooled their resources to turn the area into an Advent Calendar. New Hope

the daily pictures will be available on the New Hope and Bell Tower websites from 1 December. Hidden on the frames is the title of a well-known Christmas carol. The first to



TAKE A LOOK! Abi Ord from New Hope with a window ready for a picture, and an example of the kind of pictures that we'll be seeing.

Community Church, EP Collier Primary School and the Bell Tower Community Association have combined to exhibit art created by pupils at the school on the themes "Light in the Darkness and Hope in Times of Trouble".

From 1 to 25 December the art will be displayed in windows around the community. The map to hunt down

find all the letters and unscramble the words will win a prize.

If you are feeling creative and would like to join in the fun you can also take part. An exhibition of the school entries as well as other children's and adults' pictures is being planned at the beginning of January. Please send your entries to abi.ord@greyfriars.org.uk.

News in brief

- Bell Tower organised another successful local history walk for Heritage Open Days in September, with limited numbers because of the pandemic. To make up for this we have made a 20-minute documentary of the walk. You can watch our documentary, *Caversham Road: History & Architecture*, online at www.bell-tower.org.uk/history.

- The planning application for flats on the Drews site was unanimously refused by the council's planning committee in October. David Neale from Bell Tower spoke online, citing loss of heritage and excessive height. The developers plan to appeal.

- Legal action over train depot noise has been put on hold until mid-2021 to work on ensuring effective noise management. The council will then decide whether to continue to defend the appeal against its noise abatement order.

- We are organising another food bank collection for Readifood. Please leave donations outside New Hope garden entrance on Saturday 12 December between 10am and 12pm.

These local businesses support Bell Tower and are currently open - please give them your support if you can:



0118 375 0767
THE Moderation
Pub and Kitchen



CROWNE PLAZA
HOTELS & RESORTS



STANDARD TANDOORI
0118 959 0093



READING DRIVE - IN
0118 957 3649



Richfields
DELI & GRILL
211 Caversham Road
0118 939 1144

Over 200 years of printing

Jo Alexander-Jones from Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group takes an in-depth look at one of Reading's longest-running businesses.

Cox & Wyman in Cardiff Road was the largest dedicated paperback producer in UK at the turn of the millennium, but closed in 2015. The site has now been demolished, to be replaced by a housing estate.

The company started in 1777 when the founder Edward Cox was made 'Printer to the East India Company' operating out of Queen Street in London. In 1798 Edward Cox took his son, John Lewis Cox, into partnership and formed Cox and Son.

Production for the East India Company grew so much that in 1803 they needed to take on a partner, Thomas Baylis, and the company then became Cox, Son & Baylis until 1811 when it became just Cox & Baylis. They continued to print for the East India Company including winning the contract for their books in Sanskrit as they were able to do this more cheaply than could be done in Bengal.

Edward Cox died in 1824 and left his business interests to his son, with the company becoming John Lewis Cox and Son in 1832. By 1834 they had expanded their customer base and were printing the prestigious 'Lloyd's Register'. In 1853 John Lewis Cox's two sons took charge and went into partnership with Charles Wyman. Wyman had been with the company since 1840 and the partnership became Cox Bros. & Wyman.

By 1858, after complications with insurance and partners moving on, the Cox family ceased to be associated with the printing business and Wyman took sole ownership. The firm became Cox & Wyman and then later Wyman & Sons as Wyman took

total control. At this time their premises boasted just one printing machine. Wyman increased the printing resources to support the relationship with the East India Company which continued until their printing needs were transferred to the Crown later in the 1850s.

With the retirement of Charles Wyman his eldest son Charles took control, while his other son Edward became the commercial and financial head. The younger Charles was heavily involved in the printing industry becoming chairman of the London Master Printers Association and producing many industry journals and manuals. The firm expanded to produce the journals of many other trades too.

The Factory and Workshop Act of 1878 brought in inspections and fines which impacted small print works, typical machine rooms being in underground cellars, often 'a place only fit for the storage of coal'. In 1888 the new London County Council introduced regulation on fire protection and Wyman's found the need to comply costly, with the consequence that they consolidated their premises into Fetter Lane. In 1889 the newly formed Printers' Labourers Union demanded wages of 20/- a week and 6d an hour overtime; it seems Wyman's chose to ignore the demand with little consequence.

In 1889 Charles Wyman became seriously ill and Wyman & Sons was amalgamated into the Hansard Printing and Publishing Union Ltd. Henry Burt became the managing director of the new company and Edward Wyman was put in charge of managing Wyman assets. This new company became notorious through the actions of its owner Horatio Bottomley and his financial dealings.

When the company failed in 1891 Burt and Wyman were able to start a new company based on the original Wyman assets called Wyman & Sons Ltd. Henry Burt became the managing director and the following year Edward Wyman relinquished his interest with the company.

Burt's policy was to build up the technical resources and gain government and railway contracts. 1893 saw him obtain the lucrative Great Western Railway contract and greatly expand capacity. The company also won the contract for producing parliamentary debate papers in 1897.

In 1901 a decision was made to acquire a new factory site in Caversham Road area of Reading. This was precipitated by the cost of workers in London and the need to update the London premises to meet fire regulations, with only an HQ being retained in Fetter Lane. Building started in Reading in April 1901 and was finished by November when over 3,000 tons of machinery were moved in. Much of the machinery was sent by rail, but barges on the Thames and the Kennet & Avon Canal were also used to transport the heaviest equipment. The watery journey took three days.

Much of the London work was transferred to Reading; however the town also provided new work through Huntley & Palmers, local government and public services contracts. The Reading site employed a high proportion of women, not only in the traditional areas of finishing, but also on lithographic machine operation and in the composing room.

The history of the Reading works will be continued in a future edition.



A LONG HISTORY: (l-r) part of the eastern facade of the Cox & Wyman works and the interior just before demolition in 2020; the production line in 1908 (Modern photos: David Neale)