

Neighbourhood News

from the Bell Tower Community Association

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Season's greetings to all our readers

Revealing our hidden history



EXPLORING THE PAST: David Neale from Bell Tower (holding the picture) shows a group of walkers some of the area's stories

Did you know that in March 1947 people had to walk along the middle of Swansea Road because the river flooding was causing water to come up through the drains? Or why the end house opposite the former Drews building in Northfield Road is different from the others in the same terrace?

All this and much more was revealed in our annual local history walk, held as part of Heritage Open Days in September. This year we guided two groups of walkers around the area, stopping to show pictures from the past and exploring some of the area's former industries, architecture and a few bits of quirky history.

The Bell Tower area was once populated by the families who worked at the maltings, printers, sawmills and other light industries. One of these, the Buckler Cars works,

is celebrated by a blue plaque on the gym building in Caversham Road.

Walkers also heard about the area's association with Reading's famous brewing industry, and that there was a significant engineering hub in the area around Northfield Road in the 20th century.

Finally, a small puzzle that we haven't solved yet. The picture shows some of this year's participants standing round the back of the old Drews buildings, in front of a series of small arches. We don't know the purposes of these arches; the building was probably used as a store for the malthouse next door and the arches may have originally been open, perhaps with gratings, to provide ventilation, but there could have been another purpose. If you happen to know, do contact us!

David Neale

News in brief

- There was a strong turnout for the Bell Tower September treasure hunt as the weather turned out fine and warm after a rainy morning. Six teams vied for the honours, and in the end Jake and Cristina Marin-Hanson's team just beat David and Mary Neale into second place, with their observation of the wording on a plaque on Caversham Bridge making all the difference.



- New Hope gardeners are planning the next season of planting for the local community garden, and would love your input! Vote on which vegetables you'd like to see growing next season using the poll at www.bell-tower.org.uk/garden (Facebook login required to vote).

Your choices will help shape the garden and provide fresh produce for everyone to enjoy in the future. The poll is open for a limited time, so don't miss the chance to have your say!

- We expect to repeat the Bell Tower gardening competition next year, so it's time to start thinking about what to plant in your front garden. Next year's competition will be judged in the summer as before, and we are considering an earlier spring gardening competition for 2026.

Make your garden greener



LET'S GROW BETTER: composting your vegetable and garden waste can help your plants grow and is good for the environment

What is sustainable gardening? Simply put, it's minimising waste and preserving natural resources.

Take a look at the plants you love in your garden that you can propagate. For example, peony plants can be split during their dormant stage. Sunflower heads can be saved and dried for wild bird food or even planted next spring. When saving seeds keep them cool and dry.

Lots of plants can be propagated by taking cuttings, some simply by putting a leaf in some rooting powder in a small pot. If you are not sure what plants to propagate or how to propagate them, search YouTube.

If you have the room you could start making your own compost. Tips on how to start the process are freely available on YouTube.

Try to reuse seed and plug plant trays by sowing seeds in the spring. Just

wash the seed trays out in clean water before reusing them.

To encourage pollinators choose plants and seeds which state that they attract bees and butterflies. A sprinkling of wildflower seeds could be the answer. Even a small patio pot or window box with wild flowers growing will see an increase in pollinators in your garden.

Not everyone has the space to grow enough fruit and vegetables to be self-sufficient, but even a small plot can be productive. A lean-to greenhouse or cold frame could be just what you need to produce your own tomatoes or cucumbers. Hanging baskets can be great for strawberries. It's even possible to have your own mini orchard with some modern fruit tree varieties that can be grown in patio pots. Happy gardening!

Bob Murrant

Show us your lights!



Turn your seasonal lights on to brighten up the area in December! We'll be walking around in the week of 16 December looking at front gardens and windows – there's a box of chocolates to be won for the lights we like the most. You don't have to tell us, but if you want to make sure we take a look please send your address to info@bell-tower.org.uk.

MEET THE NEIGHBOURS

Come and join us for a coffee and a chat

Saturday 11 January 2025
10.30am - 12.30pm
New Hope Centre, 95 York Road
ALL WELCOME



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