

Neighbourhood News

from the Bell Tower Community Association

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Season's greetings to all our readers

Twenty years on



ACHIEVEMENTS (clockwise from top left): the first G-Team outing; Bell Tower's first street party; fixing bikes at the Big Skip day; revised design for the Dreads development.

Imagine our area without street parties, someone to campaign on behalf of the community or organise local events. Before 2005 that was precisely the situation because the Bell Tower Community Association only came into existence then.

Twenty years later the association represents a larger number of residents than ever due to new residential developments and is considered to be a force to be reckoned with in Reading.

Once life returned to normal after COVID, Bell Tower managed to recruit new committee members, revive popular events and come up with some new ones. It has managed to adapt to a changing world and all the fresh challenges that come with it but still remain true to its motto of "Bringing Local People Together" through its events, campaigns, and this newsletter.

Here is a timeline of Bell Tower's achievements in its first 20 years:

2005: First *Neighbourhood News* is published in September, advertising

the inaugural meeting of the association on 11 October.

2006: The first Community Tidy-up Day, better known as 'The Big Skip'.

2007: Bell Tower wins a Pride of Reading award for its 'G-Team' anti-graffiti campaign. The G-Team is still keeping on top of the problem.

2008: Plans for a casino in Caversham Road are withdrawn after a successful campaign by Bell Tower.

2009: Entrance gates are fitted to two alleys in the area to stop antisocial behaviour and crime.

2010: Plans to close the Denbeigh Place play area are dropped.

2011: Bell Tower draws up an emergency flood plan for our area.

2012: Bell Tower helps organise its first street party in Newport Road. It is so successful that it becomes an annual event.

2013: Bell Tower is awarded a Community First grant for a front-garden competition to help improve the local environment.

2014: Bell Tower begins engagement with local councillors to ensure that the Printworks site remains low-rise if it is redeveloped for housing.

2015: Bell Tower purchases and receives planning permission for a new community noticeboard.

2016: Bell Tower launches a major media campaign about the nuisance caused to Cardiff Road residents by the relocation of Reading Train Care Depot. This eventually leads to GWR and Network Rail agreeing to operate the depot in a way which is acceptable to residents.

2017: Bell Tower starts its local history project, which has become an annual Heritage Open Days walk.

2018: A substantial number of cast-iron lamp posts in the area are preserved after our campaign.

2019: Bell Tower begins the fight to prevent the demolition of the entire Dreads building. A second plan is eventually submitted, preserving most of the original facade and reducing the height of the main block.

2020: COVID hits. To help those in need Bell Tower helps to organise collections for the Readifood food bank.

2021: A long-time Bell Tower aim, the closure of vehicle access between the industrial estate and the residential area, is realised.

2022: A compromise is reached with the owner of the proposed bowling alley over licensing hours.

2023: Bell Tower begins engagement with the newly-opened River Academy.

2024: The area's first Christmas lights competition is switched on.

2025: Bell Tower's 'Meet the Neighbours' event is launched.

With a new year approaching, we can look back at Bell Tower's history with pride and look ahead to its future with confidence.

Jonathan Dart

Don't bin it!



BLOT ON THE LANDSCAPE: some waste is still sent to landfill

Sadly we seem to be living in a throwaway society and yet there are a number of options to dispose of the material things we no longer need.

Here are a few organisations and places where your working electrical items, clothing or bulky furniture can be reused by others:

Freecycle – www.freecycle.org, register and then list almost anything

Freegle – www.ilovefreegle.org

Facebook and WhatsApp groups

Christian Community Action – free collection of furniture is possible. Contact warehouse@ccam.org.uk and check details at www.ccam.org.uk.

British Heart Foundation for furniture and electrical items. You can arrange a free collection by booking at www.bhf.org.uk and to check what items they cannot accept.

Age UK shops for clothes and bric a brac. It is best to ensure items are clean and bagged.

Reading Library of Things – www.rlot.org.uk for donations of tools or to borrow tools.

www.recycleyourelectricals.org.uk: enter your postcode and the site will give you details of local collection points. What cannot be donated can still be recycled.

Reading Borough Council offers bulky waste collection for up to 5 items. There is a charge for this service – please see their website.

There are also many professional waste disposal companies who for a charge will dispose of your bulky waste. Please make sure the company you use is correctly licensed so your waste will be disposed of legally and safely.

There are many other organisations we do not have the space to list. Please let us know of any others who provide free services and we will compile a list and add it to our website.

Bob Murrant

Lights on!



Turn your seasonal lights on to brighten up the area in December! We'll be walking around in the week of 15 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 last year a few households missed out because they didn't have their lights on when we walked past so don't forget to switch on if you want to take part!

News in brief

- Our next 'Meet the Neighbours' coffee morning will be on Saturday 10 January, 10.30-12.00 at New Hope. This marks the first anniversary of our coffee mornings. All welcome.

- It's time to get tending the bulbs growing in your front garden. The deadline for entries for our spring gardening competition will be at the end of February and judging will take place during March. As before there are vouchers to be won.



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