

From the Lookout Post – February 2012

Station Hill

You may already know that Station Hill closed to all vehicles from in January. This closure is due to last for a period of 18 months as part of the redevelopment of the Station. A new major retaining wall is being built between the railway and the new transport interchange in Station Hill. Once the retaining wall is completed, the Council will start works to demolish the existing road structure and construct the new lowered transport interchange. Pedestrian and cycle access is due to remain throughout the duration of the works. The remaining bus services from Station Hill will run from refurbished former Bus Station, off Station Hill.

The underground drop-off car park, located off Blagrave Street, near the Apex Plaza now closes at 11pm (previously 9.30pm), seven days a week.

Bid for ‘Green’ Transport Fund

Reading Borough Council submitted a bid in December for £24.2 million for Government funding of ‘green’ transport initiatives. Funding from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund would allow schemes including a new pedestrian/ cycle bridge across the Thames, expanded Park and Ride facilities in neighbouring boroughs and a bike hire scheme for Reading. The aim is to reduce carbon emissions, cut congestion and increase alternatives to travel by car. The package includes five key areas:

- Personalised Travel
- Fares, Ticketing and Information Services, including a range of reduced bus fare offers for local trips and payment by a single card or mobile phone, similar to London’s Oyster Card.
- Cycle Hire/Pool Bike Scheme at local centres, employment hubs and transport interchanges, including folding bikes at stations.
- New and improved pedestrian and cycle routes, including the proposed new pedestrian and cycle bridge over the Thames plus better surfacing, signage, lighting, widths and information/maps.
- Park & Ride/Park & Rail facilities and services including park and ride sites at Thames Valley Park, Mereoak and Theale railway station.

The total cost of these investments is £31.8m, of which £7.6m is made up from local contributions. The £24.2m LSTF bid - if successful - would then make up the full package. The Council expects to hear the result of its bid by June 2012.

Caversham 100 Years On

By the time you read this, 2011 will be well and truly over but the project is by no means finished. The website, www.Caversham100yearson.org.uk is still active. Any other contributions for the Local History page or picture gallery are still welcome. Please use the contact form on the website or email info@cadra.org.uk.

The exhibitions in Reading Museum were scheduled to finish before the end of January. They showed a fascinating glimpse of life in Caversham in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Many thanks to the museum staff for putting this together with the able assistance of Martin Andrews, who with other local people and businesses, loaned many of the items on display. This was just one example of the wonderful response from so many people in helping to bring together so many different parts of the programme in 2011.

The heritage exhibition booklet has been selling well at WordPlay. Stock levels are always limited so you may like to reserve a copy by calling 9482 800 or email: info@wordplay.co.uk. A big thank you Deirdre and her team at WordPlay for getting these on sale in time for Christmas. Copies are also available in Reading Library, Caversham Library and all the local schools.

Work is progressing to prepare a Heritage Map of central Caversham. Subject to the necessary formal permissions, this will be printed on an enamelled board and attached to the railings of Caversham Library on Hemdean Road, near to the site of the ancient Scholar Tree and before this the village whipping post! The map will include drawings of a dozen or so areas of historical or architectural interest. These will be shown on a hand drawn map with background information. The work is funded as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund grant to the Caversham 100 Years On project.

Also funded by the grant, will be a Caversham Court booklet. Both the map and the booklet should be complete by the end of 2012.

Caversham Traders

The work of the Caversham Traders' Association has gone from strength to strength in the last year. A considerable amount of work goes on behind the scenes to help Caversham Centre to flourish. A new initiative was the very successful Late night shopping evening in December. Do take another look at www.choosecaversham.co.uk. As well as giving details of the many businesses in Caversham, there are details of Events, Schools, Artists, local clubs and much more. It also allows an easy and cost effective way of providing a simple website for Caversham organisations.

Keeping the roof over your head

These are two starkly contrasting reports of the challenge of keeping the physical roof on your home.

The first is that, this autumn, several Caversham residents have been targeted by rogue contractors offering to undertake roofing maintenance and repairs. These individuals have a convincing patter, often offering to undertake work cheaply as a ruse for starting an operation that will require further more major and hence more expensive work. Tribute should be paid to the Reading Borough Council Consumer Protection section and Thames Valley Police for their speedy and professional response in dealing with a number of these incidents. Do contact these authorities if you or a neighbour or relative is approached by trades people who have not been requested by the householder. The recommendation is never to agree for works to be undertaken by door step traders and the old adage still rings true, "If it sounds too cheap to be true, it probably is"

The second incident of a Caversham resident is that a lady home owner undertook a roofing contract with a well-known local firm, to replace her leaking roof with like for like materials.

However, she was subsequently notified by RBC that she was in contravention of Building Regulations, which she had not applied for. A considerable financial penalty was imposed.

A visit to the RBC Help Desk could only establish that the range of building works encompassed by Building Regulations is available at the web site www.planningportal.gov.uk. This site is complicated to interpret. The definition of what works might be included is very encompassing, including all washing and sanitary facilities, foul and rain water drainage, replacement windows and fuel burning appliances of any type. Indeed if roof replacement of more than 25% of the area is proposed, Building Regulations apply, notably in relation to upgrading of thermal insulation. Many of the works, such as boiler or double glazing installation appear to be Building Regulations compliant if they are undertaken by contractors who belong to recognised trade associations or quality marks. The lesson is to check with RBC Building Regulations section to ascertain if your proposed project requires Building Regulation approval.