

Neighbourhood News

from the Bell Tower Community Association

Issue 14 - December 2008



🔔 🔔 🔔 *Season's greetings to all our readers!* 🔔 🔔 🔔

The Big Bell Tower

On Monday 27 October six pairs of tired, aching feet returned to Reading after an enjoyable visit to the Houses of Parliament and the Jewel Tower.



FAMOUS SKYLINE: The Houses of Parliament and Big Ben

The tour of the Houses of Parliament was very interesting and informative. I wish it could have been longer. The building is very beautiful, both inside and out, especially as the sun was shining on the day.

The Jewel Tower is nearly opposite the Houses of Parliament and holds some interesting old records, but no jewellery these days.

I would recommend anyone to pay a visit - it's free and it's a valuable part of our national heritage.

Sue Colliass

Bell Tower Community Association presents a

QUIZ EVENING

Friday 6 February 2009 7.30pm
New Hope Centre

Come along for a fun evening!

Teams of up to 4 players - £3 per person,
jacket potato included in price.

Neighbourhood Wardens

Like many roles within the community, the wardens started as an idea and grew into a reality which developed over time.

Back in 2002 the government put forward an idea to have wardens patrolling in areas where there was a perceived high crime rate. Reading was one of those areas where the perception of crime was disproportionate to the actual amount of crime. A physical presence was needed, and the wardens were born with the basic remit of deterring crime and the fear of crime by being there on the streets.

The Community Wardens patrolled local estates, dealing with housing problems, FLAG issues (Fly tipping, Littering, Abandoned Vehicles and Graffiti) and low level antisocial behaviour. A year later the Street Crime Wardens followed and covered the town centre, Oxford Road and Kennet Side. They also dealt with issues such as broken street lights and paving slabs and became walking signposts for the homeless and those with drink and drug problems.

In 2007 with the roll-out of Neighbourhood Policing and the formation of Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs) it was agreed to merge the two teams to become Neighbourhood Wardens. New uniforms have been issued - a casual street look in black and red with distinctive logos.

The teams will patrol in pairs and each cover three NAG areas (excluding the town centre). They will continue their work in the community and also be proactive in bringing together the various agencies to work together to achieve

positive results against crime and environmental issues.

The wardens are a positive and helpful resource who will help with information from crime reduction through to supporting vulnerable people. They also spend time working with on youth projects and in schools.

If you would like further information on issues involving the council, police or their partners please ask your local wardens.

George Friel & Clinton Payne

News in brief

● Our shopping evening at the New Hope Centre on 11 November was a great success - there were ten tables at the event selling a great variety of goodies from books through jewellery to a wide range of home made jams. Plenty of residents took the opportunity to do some early Christmas shopping.

● Oxford Road Neighbourhood Policing Team are asking for your help. Please can you keep an eye out for closed or empty buildings near you that may be developing into a squat or that look as if they might have been entered.

Please contact The Thames Valley Police Enquiry Centre on 08458 505 505 quoting URN694 if you can help.

● We would like to thank everyone that took the time to complete and return our traffic survey. As a result Thames Valley Police carried out an operation on Monday 20 October and caught two drivers driving through the no entry part of Northfield Road. These drivers now each have 3 points on their licence and a £60 fine to pay.

● Many thanks to everyone who replied to our request for information about rats in our area. Of particular interest was a response from a resident in Swansea Road who

Continued overleaf

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How it used to be round here

Harold Baverstock, one of our oldest residents, remembers life in this area in the early 20th century.

I was born on 1 April 1915 in Islington, London. My mother died of tuberculosis when I was four years old – at that time an effective treatment was not yet commonplace. As a stepchild I was not really accepted; I left school in 1929 and obtained a job as errand boy in a butcher's shop. This I kept until the end of July 1932, when, owing to a bout of flu, I lost my job. I was therefore sent out every day to look for work, which at that time was scarce.

Being out of work was very frustrating. In August 1932, after 4 weeks out of work, I joined the army, much to the displeasure of my adopted family. The next day I had to report to the Depot of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, at Brock Barracks in Oxford Road, where I spent six months in training.

It was during this period that I got very friendly with a girl (who incidentally lived at my present address). We eventually got married on Saturday 26 August 1939. The following Saturday I was sent to France with my regiment, so we had very little time together.

During the period between 1939 and 1942 I saw active service in France and Burma, and I was one of the



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lucky ones that came out of Dunkirk. I also served in Palestine, Egypt, Eritrea, Cyprus, Germany and India. My family were allowed to reside with me but only during some of these assignments.

On 10 February 1943, a single German fighter plane bombed and machine-gunned the town. 41 people were killed and over 100 injured, many by a bomb that hit the People's Pantry, a crowded restaurant in the Market Arcade. One bomb hit a house in Cardiff Road – it is believed that the bomber was trying to hit the railway line but the bomb failed to detonate and rolled down the embankment. When the damaged house was rebuilt it became number 75a.



The remains of the People's Pantry. Behind are damaged buildings in the Market Place (photo courtesy of Reading Museum)

In March 1947, floods caused chaos over a large part of the country, including our area – there is a separate article on the subject in the December 2006 edition of Neighbourhood News.

I eventually came back to Reading in January 1953, to my present address, to serve my last few months in the army, and finally retired from service at the end of August 1953.

Plenty has changed in this area. Cardiff Road used to be very busy largely due to the transport firm BRS at the far end of the road (at the site now occupied by QTR Transport). This was made much quieter in 1994 by the introduction of the road barriers to separate the industrial area from the residential. Going back a few years, the entrance to Barry Place used to lead to the Co-op milk department; there were stables with the horses going up a ramp to the upper floor.

Continued from front page

tracked down the source of a serious infestation to a broken sewer in her garden. Local councillor Tony Page has been urging Thames Water to repair the damage, and we hope to hear very soon that it has been fixed.

If you have a problem with rats, Reading Borough Council can offer advice and offers a subsidised pest control service at a cost of £25 for up to three visits (£20 for Your Reading Passport holders). Contact the council on 0800 834035 for details.

● New Hope will be holding their annual community carol singing evening on Monday 22 December. Join an evening of carol singing in the streets followed by refreshments. Meet at New Hope at 6.30pm.

● Because of the time required to obtain a licence to hold events in the E P Collier School car park, we were unfortunately unable to hold a tidy-up day this year. The good news is that we now have the licence, and provided we can get sponsorship again for the skip hire we intend to organise a tidy-up day in spring 2009. More details to follow in the next issue of *Neighbourhood News*.

● Finally, we would like to wish all our readers a merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.



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