

Neighbourhood News

from the Bell Tower Community Association

Issue 15 - March 2009



Join us now!

Andy Ellis explains why the Bell Tower Community Association is more than just a group of people...

Residential areas in busy town centres, where there are many rented properties with a relatively high turnover of tenants, can be quite lonely places. We have lived here for 20 years, but only really knew the immediate neighbours on either side of our house before the Bell Tower Community Association began. Once we started going to association meeting and events we got to know lots more people, and have made several new friends. It's nice being able to walk down your local streets and see people you can chat to and can trust enough to ask to watch your house when you are away.

clear rubbish from the culvert along Richfield Avenue; and cleaning away graffiti. The association also ran a competition for best front garden in the area last summer and subsidised the purchase of hanging baskets and planters in 2007.

All these things make us feel more proud of the area we live in.

Bell Tower also makes a positive impression on the local council. I know councillors will always try to represent the views of their constituents, but I think it gives us more clout if we are members of a recognised association. Our strength has been felt in recent campaigns against the casino planned for Caversham Road, which we succeeded in stopping, for traffic calming measures, and the installation of the large tub of flowers on the traffic island in Addison Road.

Membership of Bell Tower is only £1 a year, and gives you extra benefits including discounts at several local shops and restaurants, such as Lace Ups in Caversham, Drew's Ironmongers, Papa Gee's Restaurant, and the Standard Tandoori Restaurant.

So if you've thought about joining but not got round to it, now is the time to do it – you can help make the Bell Tower area an even better place to live in, and make some new friends too.

The Bell Tower Community Association's Annual General Meeting will be on Tuesday 24 March 2009 at 7.30pm at the New Hope Centre. See you there!



IT'S FUN TOO: Association members with the big skip (left) and cleaning graffiti in Ross Road



For us the best thing about belonging to the association is the opportunity it gives you to meet your neighbours - at meetings in New Hope, at events such as treasure hunts and quiz nights, and working on projects to improve the environment.

These projects also give you the chance to make your community a more attractive place to live. They include helping at 'tidy-up' days, when a huge skip is provided at E P Collier School; planting and maintaining areas of shrubs and flowers, such as the land in Randolph Road, where tall sunflowers could be seen blooming in summer; helping Caversham GLOBE and the council

I think, too, that the police will take residents more seriously as members of a recognised association. There is obviously an overlap here with the Neighbourhood Watch groups, but the monthly police surgeries are for the whole of the Bell Tower community. When problems are reported to the police at these surgeries, action is taken to try and resolve them and progress reports are given.

The association has a lively website and newsletter, with some great photos of recent events and articles of local interest, such as a review of the Moderation pub and advice on garden bird-watching.

News in brief

● March 14-15 sees the return of the borough-wide 'Reading Rescue' weekend. The Bell Tower Community Association is teaming up with the Caversham GLOBE group again, this time expecting to do some clean-up work in the Hills Meadow area. Interested in spending a fun day doing something really worthwhile? Contact David on 07740 488688 for details.

● The Association is looking for a minutes secretary to take notes at our monthly committee meetings. If you can spare a couple of hours each month to help us with this valuable task please contact Teresa on 0118 959 6475 or email us at info@bell-tower.org.uk.

● We have heard that the planning application to turn 65-69 Caversham Road - Dawsons Music and the former Kingdom of Leather store - into a restaurant has been withdrawn by the applicants.

● On Saturday February 28 the Bell Tower 'G-Team' had another outing,

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Visit www.bell-tower.org.uk or email us at info@bell-tower.org.uk

Save energy - save money!

You may know that in times of high energy costs (despite promises of reductions) it pays to shop around. There are lots of TV adverts and websites that offer you a wide choice of price comparisons, but you can also do your bit to reduce the effects of climate change at the same time as saving on your bills - saving money can also reduce your CO₂ emissions!

As well as checking the 'green' credentials of your energy supplier and competitors, you can also get grants for various types of energy saving measures in the home. One of the best sources of information to start with is the Energy Saving Trust (EST); this is a UK non-profit making organisation that provides free impartial advice to the public on saving energy and tackling climate change. Try their website (www.energysavingtrust.org.uk) or ring them on 0800 512012. The EST can also give independent advice on what local authorities can provide. You can get advice on all the suppliers of energy and what support may be available. There is also advice on switching to energy suppliers that promote investment in renewable energy (for instance wind power) - and they can provide competitive rates.

So what does all this mean to us all? You may be eligible for payments



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towards cavity wall insulation (inside and outside), loft insulation and draughtproofing, support for more efficient heating and home appliances, energy saving light bulbs, more efficient radiators and even investment in your own renewable solar or wind energy.

For example, renewing your kitchen appliances next time with an A to A++ rated item can save up to £40 a year in electricity in the case of a fridge freezer. Even getting an integrated TV/video recorder can save up to £7 every year. External cavity wall insulation can also save on fuel bills if your house has cavity walls - energy suppliers can fit this at subsidised low prices (typically £100-200 for mid-terrace houses; the difference is sometimes paid back as discounts from council tax bills). And for those interested in generating their own energy, central government provides grants toward investment in equipment for households under its Low Carbon Buildings programme (see www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk).

Rod Plinston

Forthcoming events

● **Tuesday 24 March, 7.30pm, New Hope Centre - Bell Tower Community Association AGM**

● **Saturday 25 April - Big Spring Clean. The big skip's back for all your unwanted stuff - 10am-2pm, E P Collier School car park.**

● **Friday 8 May, 7.30pm, New Hope Centre - Quiz night. Tickets £4 (including baked potato snack and refreshments) in advance from Rod and Denise at 88 Addison Road.**

● **Tuesday 16 June, 7.30pm, New Hope Centre - General meeting. The theme for this meeting is legal matters - Reading solicitor Sarah Benfield and other advisers will be available to answer your questions.**

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to clean up a few graffiti tags that had appeared during the winter. We were mainly working in Caversham Road this time, and cleaned several tags off shops, bus shelters and bins.

● We are hoping to get a security gate installed in Randolph Road because of the amount of fly-tipping that has been occurring in the alley behind houses in Addison Road and Newport Road. Unfortunately we will probably not qualify for a grant from the council for the cost of the installation. The council will be sending residents a letter on the subject shortly.

● As a result of reports from neighbours advising us of vehicles going the wrong way through the no entry signs in Northfield Road, the police have carried out another observation of the area. This time no drivers were caught - anyone caught breaking the law at this junction is liable to a £60 fine and 3 penalty points. Thank you for your support - please keep the information coming in.

● Don't forget our local police officers and PCSOs are holding a regular surgery on the first Monday of each month at 7.00pm in the New Hope Centre. Even if you don't have any specific issues, it's a good opportunity to get up to date on what's going on in our area and what to keep looking out for.

FIVE STAR WINES

133 Caversham Road



- ★ National Lottery (Lotto) ★ Pay point
- ★ Gas and electric meter cards, keys and tokens
- ★ Bill payments
- ★ Bus tickets
- ★ Phone top-up
- ★ TV licensing
- ★ Thames Water bill payments
- ★ Wines, beers and spirits
- ★ Sandwiches, snacks and groceries
- ★ Newspapers and magazines
- ★ Western Union money transfer

Ask in our shop about the Caversham Lodge Guest House upstairs!