



THE INDEPENDENT

MILL ROAD NEWS

N°23
Early Summer
2019

Reduce, Recycle, Repair, Repurpose, Reuse:

Five words beginning with 'Re', the importance of which we are only just acknowledging.

A while ago, in the last century, the economist John Maynard Keynes theorised that – in hard times governments should keep people in work, they spend money, money flows and wealth grows. The brave new consumer world of stuff and cool fashion was born and later it became within everybody's grasp. The 1960s were silly and fun; in between recessions fashion and technology moved with speed, style and impact. In-built obsolescence was not a problem, it was an asset which could propel the whole economic eco-system. So what

if cheap goods break; buy another it will be the more advanced version after all. Fashion comes and goes, so why worry if your clothes fall apart in the wash. Few people worried about what happened to discarded goods until one day, not all that long ago, we realised that plastics are poisoning the oceans and fossil fuels are poisoning the atmosphere.

How is Mill Road rising to the challenge of keeping its economy alive while preserving the planet's eco-systems? Are the five 'R's on our radar? In this issue we take a look.

Charlotte de Blois and MRN team

Street cleaning, then and now

Mill Road's favourite Street Cleaner, local historian Allan Brigham says: "Long before the town authorities employed their own dustmen and street cleaners, there were bound to have been boys hanging around Mill Road hoping to pick up horse poo, or for a penny, clean in front of your house or where you planned to cross the road. Before the sewers were installed in the 1870s there would certainly have been night soil carts collecting the contents of your chamber pots, and rag and bone men hoping for some rich pickings. When I worked at the Depot there was still a scrap merchant operating along the edge of the site.

We must remember that before the 1950s many people in Mill Road were still living in extreme poverty; they would have re-used everything;



Cambridgeshire Collection PC.Dus.K17.16689 The wonderful Cambridgeshire Collection at the Central Library is the source of this photograph of early street cleaners; the women in this 1917 photograph were of course doing voluntary work in the First World War whilst the corporation dustmen were fighting overseas.

every scrap of food, every item of clothing and anything else that they might possess. They owned very little. Only during the 1960s did people have more 'stuff'. When I started work here, there were no Charity Shops and now Romsey has three and Petersfield two, these shops are full of our surplus china, clothes, books and so on. They do a great job helping us all to recycle".

Readers interested in this topic should certainly visit the Museum of Technology down by the river, when it re-opens later this year. There you will see the best surviving example of a 19th century waste recovery and wastewater pumping station which pumped water under the river to Milton to grow vegetables.

**Allan Brigham and Caro Wilson.
Mill Road History Society**



OK, that's for throwing out but where does it go?

Small and Streetwise

Alan Brigham, Caro Wilson and the photographs from the Cambridgeshire Collection capture how ad-hoc and efficient recycling was before World War II. It was an agile craft. Some of our recycling giants have their roots with individuals or in family businesses engaged in the small streetwise activities of clearing-up and selling-on in those early days.

Biffa the second largest recycling company in the country started in 1912 with a lad called Biffa who collected ashes and clinkers and sold them on to be used as a material in the construction of pathways. Amey's founder however, was up-market in comparison he was a quarryman who supplied kerbstones for city streets in Oxfordshire. While the company which morphed into Palm recycling was founded in 1872 and collected used paper and turned it into fresh paper and cardboard.

These were interesting operatives but it would be inaccurate to call them all early recyclers, to be precise Mr Biffa was a re-purpose-er, Mr Amey was just a businessman not involved in recycling, while our Palm founder, and I have not discovered his name yet, was a true re-cycler.

City Recycling goes to Waterbeach

Mill Roaders' recycling is processed either by Amey or Palm. If you put your recycling into one of the City Council household bins it will be collected by the City Council and taken up to Amey's recycling site at Waterbeach. If you use the Gwydir Street collection point it will also go to Waterbeach but if you take your recycling to Sainsbury's it will be processed by Palm in Kings Lynn.

Recycling is Recycling not Alchemy

All recycling companies are open to criticism. There are reports of companies fly-tipping on private land while most of the large companies only recycle around 50% of the material they collect. The surplus is put into landfill, or incinerated. This seems disappointing but as Jeff Rhodes Head of Environmental and External Affairs for Biffa, says "We are recyclers not alchemists". In 1917, a piece of paper was obviously a piece of paper, a piece of horse poo was obviously horse poo, and a clinker was a clinker. These days it is not always possible to know what material an item is made out of and we are coping with a host of objects made from composite materials as well as large quantities of plastics which were in their infancy until the post-war boom.

What on Earth is it?

Now the biggest problems facing recyclers are, identification of substances (for which they use scanners), sorting and keeping up with the sheer volume of material needing to be processed. Rhodes wants to encourage manufacturers to be more responsible in the materials they use and the information which they pass on to shoppers who will then be able to sort and dispose of packaging responsibly at source.

In 1917 keeping the city neat and tidy was common sense albeit hard work but in 2019 it has become highly technical and scientific and it is sometimes a counter intuitive activity. It is clear however that recycling companies have more to recycle than they have capacity to work with, therefore effort can be made to re-use items at source and we should all try to avoid using materials that are hard to re-cycle. As individuals we do have the capacity to make a difference by reducing and reusing.

NB: Amey do things on an industrial scale so their organisation means that waste is travelling long distances to sophisticated central depots. Some City refuse collectors think this is environmentally irresponsible as collection carts use diesel fuel.



Photo by Daisy Zoll

Amey's response is that collection is the responsibility of their customers. Interestingly both Amey and everyone else we have spoken to agree that a key strategy to address these complex problems is to use less and to try to re-use.

By Charlotte de Blois

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What does Amey say?

We asked John Twitchen from Amey 'What are the greatest challenges facing recycling companies at the moment?'

This was his reply:-

There are three key challenges facing recycling companies:

- Quality – the quality of material is becoming more critical as the volume of recyclables collected has increased; a recycling bin with non-recyclable materials in it could contaminate an entire vehicle's worth of recycling, causing problems at Materials Recycling Facilities or for re-processors.

- Markets – traditional markets are changing and demanding higher quality input materials, but there are still not enough manufacturers using recycled content in their products, and brands are not compelled to use recycled materials in their products.

- Recyclability – many products are made from a range of different materials, including 'composite' products such as cartons which can combine paper, plastic and aluminium; these products perform important tasks but are very hard – and expensive – to recycle and brands are not compelled to improve or fund this.

As consumers we can all do much more to reduce our waste,



reuse more items, recycle more products and buy recycled products, whilst ensuring the right waste ends up in the right place and companies like Amey can ensure as much as possible is recycled back into quality products. And we will always do our best

to recover as much of the material and energy value in the waste left over after recycling – which is why we would like permission to build and operate an EfW facility at the Waterbeach Waste Management Park.

Mill Road News Editorial Team.



A REALLY important and great initiative!

Pay it Forward Gift Vouchers is a marvellous initiative.

It allows people to buy gift vouchers for our street community and other people in need which are redeemable at local participating independent shops.

We are publishing a link to their site here and will give more details next issue

<https://pifcambridge.wixsite.com/payitforwardgiftvouc>

10x10x10 Greene King bottles sitting by a wall

It is not easy being green... especially when you are up against a big company. We run a pub in Covent Garden near the Petersfield end of Mill Road and we receive weekly deliveries from the Greene King depot in Bury St Edmunds. Therefore every week hundreds of glass bottles arrive at our door, and every week hundreds of glass bottles go into the glass collection bin because Greene King will not take them back! I have asked the reasoning behind this policy time and time again but I have yet to receive a satisfactory explanation.

Perhaps I am doing Greene King a disservice and it is actually more ecologically sound to recycle the glass, make new bottles, deliver them to the plant and fill them than to sterilise them and reuse existing bottles. I just wish that someone would give me a satisfactory explanation.

Eileen O'Brien, Landlady of the Six Bells



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B+Q Takes Black Plastic Plant Pots to reuse.

Following information outlined in a letter in the Royal Horticultural Society magazine, I went to B&Q with a bag full of black plant pots. There was no obvious place to leave them so I asked a member of staff who took them from me!! Yes, success!! They don't seem to be advertising the service so tell everyone you know. It saves making the trip out to Scotsdales.

Sheila Cane, Petersfield Resident

When in doubt use this link to find out how to recycle.

**www.cambridge.gov.
uk/what-goes-in-
which-bin**

useful list of how you should recycle or dispose of unexpected items

All that glitters is not gold:

Luxury wrapping paper and packaging reserved for up-market foods cannot be recycled easily.

In that quiet time between Christmas and New Year I started my first ever petition!

As I sat amongst a growing pile of spent wrapping paper I started to wonder 'why does metallic wrapping paper still get made? It's destined for landfill'.

Food wrapping made from paper at least serves a purpose in keeping our food sanitary but those rigid liners from supermarkets, which come in a variety of colours, can be awkward to get rid of. Protected parcels of food make food look at its most appealing when it's displayed against black, apparently. Black is regularly reserved for the 'finest' and 'extra special' delicacies – but black plastic can be recycled

in only one centre in the UK. Realistically this means that it won't be recycled at all.

As customers it's in our power to let our favourite suppliers and retailers know that we want to see change soon. Saving the planet seems like such a huge task but let's play our part and do little things locally and also help make sure there's no market for things that cannot be recycled.

The people who make what we consume are all about keeping themselves in profit, that's their bottom line. Designing a product to be recycled can take time and effort which means there is less profit attached. But as fellow consumers on planet earth we have different priorities. We must let the manufacturers know our values by choosing recyclable products in recyclable packaging.

Daisy Zoll, Romsey Resident

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All wired up and never to be used



Seven years ago when my mother died and my sister became Commanding Officer of operation dismantle mother's house; charity shops did not generally accept donations of electrical goods.

After many months of sifting and sorting, my sister uncovered various not-yet-used electrical items still in their sealed-boxes.

My mother, who had grown-up motherless during the great depression of the 1930s, could not resist a bargain, especially if it half-promised her the power to create a cosy secure home for her babies. Thus she was vulnerable to the mantras, spells and ditties of the 1960s ad men and chasing consumer goods was something that she secretly aspired to do. She bought a vacuum cleaner quite early in the 1950s which was still fully functioning at the time the Beatles released their first hit (15 years later).

Record players, televisions, fridges and even a washing-up machine followed. At that stage she was not particularly keen on having a toaster, an electric kettle or even a hairdryer. She saw them as potentially dangerous as she was fearful of mixing electricity with water or seeing naked elements.

She made up for it later. And as the global economy expanded, she bought 'spare' kettles, 'spare' toasters and all the 'essentials' which were the items we found in the sealed boxes.

It seemed inevitable but sad that these objects were to be laid to rest in landfill, never having left their packets or been used at all but having travelled half-way around the world to reach their tomb. As we finished our clearing however, I found one charity shop – I think it was Cancer Research – that was prepared to take electrical goods as long as they were still in their original boxes and had obviously not been used.

Have things changed?

Seven years on have things changed? Here I outline the current policies of our Mill Road charity shops. The new Wood Green Animal Welfare shop, opposite the old Sally Ann accepts electrical goods but they need to be taken to their other branches for PAT testing. PAT testing is a legal requirement which prevents the resale of dangerous equipment. The Wood Green shop does not have a member of staff qualified to do this at the moment but an existing staff member is going to undertake the training very soon.

The Salvation Army shop, which is now in Tenison Road, is not taking them at the moment as they are overloaded. Charmaine the manager reports that they get a steady stream of electrical donations and occasionally they get items that fail the PAT test.

The Cats' Protection is not taking them at the moment – it has become a volunteer led shop – which means that it is difficult for Jenny, one of their volunteers, to squeeze PAT training into her schedule.

Romsey Mill does accept them, they have a fully PAT trained volunteer and they are currently assessing the cost of training a second person. They reported that putting a person through training and buying the necessary equipment costs about £500.

As people are becoming more sensitive to the need to recycle the volume of donations is increasing and as an organisation they wish to rise to the challenge.

Liz Diamond Romsey Mill's manger explained that women's clothes and small electrical products were their charity shop's life blood as styles in both come in and go out of fashion, quite rapidly.

Arthur Rank was taking donations of electrical goods until very recently but not at the moment, their PAT tester is only able to give a couple of hours a week and so they need to train an additional member of the team before they can start accepting goods again.

Liam Callcut is in charge of this side of Arthur Rank's operations. He reports that about 90% of donations pass the PAT test and those that fail are most likely to be items with heating elements or really old items.

Not all items that pass the PAT test are re-saleable however. Really cheap products, a toaster for example, which may cost no more than £10 new is not going to sell for very much, particularly if it is donated complete with the remains of its previous owner's crumby breakfast. As all donations are accepted, another solution other than sale has to be found for battered hairdryers and crumby appliances.

Until recently that would have been a drive up to Barr Hill for disposal but now unsaleable goods are sold to an organisation called Genesis. It is good that the charity now gets money for items that in the past would not have brought in income but there may be ethical concerns. The items are sent to Africa where they are often broken down with highly toxic chemicals in attempt to extract traces of gold and presumably copper too. This process must leave a large residue of broken and eroded plastic which is unhealthy.

Liam does sell really old items through Amazon and ebay as vintage pieces but clearly states in their listings that these items are not intended for use. It is surprising that even with electrical goods, retro can still be chic .

Charlotte de Blois, Mill Road Resident

Do not gulp your water!

Rodrigo Garcia Gonzalez is an inventor who, as part of a team working for an organisation called 'Skipping Rocks Lab', conceived of and developed an edible water bottle. It uses a technique which was developed in the early 1950s with the purpose of creating fake caviar for those mass markets which were created by the post-war convenience-food boom. The new product, loosely called Moonshot Ooho water, uses a manufactured organic membrane made from seaweed which encases a quantity of mineral water. There is something encouraging about this initiative:- a technique which was born out of big business's desire to sell, seduce and sell again, is now being repurposed to solve the environmental problems caused by mass marketing and mass production.

Bottle is probably not the correct word to describe these little capsules. They are bite-sized nuggets of mineral water which look quite magical, like squidgy transparent bubbles. If this invention becomes main stream we will surely adapt to new ways of drinking quite quickly. We will no longer sip or gulp but may suck and bite. I for one cannot wait to experience this new way of quenching my thirst. Gonzalez's presentation is available on You Tube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-J68mz2agIA>

This product has already been given out free to participants and spectators at the London Marathon and appears to have been well received.

Throughout our discussion on recycling, repurposing, reusing, reclaiming and reducing a common theme keeps cropping up; it is this — in the past small businesses had an advantage over larger organisations when they embraced the new, as they were agile and adaptable. Is small and imaginative still an advantage? We are lucky in Mill Road because we have retained small, adaptable independent grocers and traders. It may be that Mill Road will trail-blaze the selling of this new product, which quite frankly promises to outstrip the merits of cubed sugar and sliced bread.

Charlotte de Blois, Mill Road Resident



Even Birds Reuse

Even birds reuse. Look at the plastic in this abandoned blackbird's nest from Mill Road. Of course we know that plastic is dangerous for small birds. Let's hope that the parent birds do not repeat this mistake too often.

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An A-Z of Recycling, Reusing and Repurposing in Bags



Mill Roader Monica Smith makes textile bags out of repurposed fabrics which are for sale at the Salvation Army shop in Tenison Road, people who buy her work will not only be helping the planet but will also be supporting the charitable work of the Salvation Army.

- A** is for Albums and Apples.
- B** is for Brushes and Bread.
- C** is for Christmas presents and Clothes pegs.
- D** is for DVDs and Dog's toys.
- E** is for electrical items.
- F** is for First Aid box and Fresh Vegetables.
- G** is for Gloves and Glamorous tights.
- H** is for Handbags and Hankies.
- I** is for Interesting Items and Illuminations.
- J** is for Jigsaws and Jigsaw puzzles.
- K** is for Knitting needles and Kites.
- L** is for Leaflets and Lettuce.
- M** is for Magazines and Meringues.
- N** is for Notepaper and Nappies.
- O** is for Odds and Ends or Oranges.
- P** is for Pens and Plums.
- Q** is for Quilts and Quills.
- R** is for Ribbons and Recycling.
- S** is for String and Shopping.
- T** is for Toys and Tangerines.
- U** is for Unwanted but Useful.
- V** is for Videos and Valentines.
- W** is for Wool and Wood.
- X** is for Xmas cards and Xmas pudding.
- Y** is for Yarn and Yoghurt.
- Z** is for Zips and Zebras.

Mill Road News is published by the non-profit organisation Mill Road Bridges, c/o The Six Bells Pub, 11 Covent Garden, Cambridge, CB1 2HS UK. Mill Road Bridges is a volunteer community group serving Petersfield & Romsey wards in Cambridge.

We welcome your submissions on any topic about the Mill Road community.

Send images and short articles to info@mill-road.com. Please note that our articles cannot favour a political party, they should not be of a purely commercial nature, and we reserve the right to edit, refuse, or postpone use of

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MRB logo: Sam Motherwell, Gwydir Street

Closure of Mill Road Bridge

Govia Thameslink Rail organised a public meeting on Monday 29th April at the Salvation Army Hall in Mill Road. Locals who had previously left their contact details with Govia so that they could be alerted to future meetings and presentations were not alerted. Despite being poorly publicised attendance was good, however. Total closure of the Mill Road Bridge to vehicles is scheduled for 1st July to 25th August 2019. Maintenance

on an aged gas pipe which runs along the length of the Mill Road will take place simultaneously. This involves inserting a plastic lining into an existing cast iron pipe in sections and means that the road will only need to be dug up at the start and finish of each section. A useful link is <https://overmillroadbridge.org.uk>

Richard Wood and John Caldwell

Bus Services During The Bridge Closure

During the traffic closure period of Mill Road Bridge to provide an enlarged arch for an additional track, shuttle bus services will be provided on both sides of the bridge. The 'main' citi2 route will be diverted via Coldham's Lane. In order to serve all existing stops, short wheelbase vehicles will be used. On the Petersfield side of the bridge, it will loop through Gwydir Street and Kingston Street. The Romsey shuttle will use Argyle Street and Stockwell Street.

At a recent meeting with (bus operator) Stagecoach we learned that the company is bringing in three short wheelbase vehicles – one for each shuttle and a spare for maintenance/breakdowns. These are 15-seaters with space for a wheelchair.

Is this good enough?

Our view is that whilst the Petersfield shuttle might be adequate, as onward connections



to Addenbrooke's can be made from the adjacent stop, Romsey have got a poor deal, losing direct services to the hospital, with buses terminating at Brooks Road Sainsbury's. Stagecoach stressed the difficulties in obtaining extra vehicles and, crucially, planning for extra driver duties. We also gained the impression that this is probably all that GTR would be prepared to pay for.

Some supplementary service is needed for Romsey. Their councillors are looking at ways to do this.

*Richard Wood, Secretary,
Cambridge Area Bus Users*

Letters to the editor

Dear Editor,

The UK was shocked by the death of Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah. A nine year-old girl from Hither Green who suffered from asthma. It has been established that her fatal attack in 2013 was triggered by high levels of pollution at her home which was 80ft from the South Circular Road. My condolences to her mother Rosamund, and my admiration as, since Ella's death, Rosamund has campaigned for pollution to be the recorded cause of death on her daughter's death certificate.

Local Councillors and County Councillors should be aware that there is at least one child, living less than 20ft from Mill Road, who has been hospitalized with asthma when pollution levels were high. The London Mayor sees the reduction of pollution as part of his remit. Please learn from Ella's tragic death and find a way to cut down pollution on Mill Road. *Madeleine Loewe*

Dear Editor,

In your last issue of Mill Road Bridges, you asked for ideas about the horses of Mill Road.

At the back of our house is a wide area between Catharine Street and Thoday Street. One evening I was playing out there with my friends when I got side-tracked and saw a piece of metal sticking out of the ground so I dug it out and it was a really old, thin and rusty horseshoe.

I showed it to my Mum and Dad and they told me that on the 1901 census there was a blacksmith living at number 94. We also looked on a map and we saw that at that time there was a big gap between our house and his. Maybe that is where he shod the horses.

We've always wondered if the blacksmith was the reason why our part of Romsey Town is the only area that has a wider gap at the back of the houses – We don't know, but maybe it was to get the horse and carts down there.

Eaden Hart – aged 10

Dates for your Diary

1st July

Mill Road Bridge is scheduled to close for motor traffic.

6 July

Vintage Clothes sale St Barnabas Church Mill Road. 10am-5pm.

6 to 7 July

The Big Weekend Parker's Piece.

3rd Wednesday of each month

Mill Road WI (Women's Institute) meets in the Romsey Mill at 7:15pm til 9pm We are a friendly, diverse group of ladies who meet to hear and take part in a wide range of activities. New members are welcome.

This first meeting is free. £5 for further meetings until you become a member.

Email: millroadwi@gmail.com

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CAMBRIDGE SUSTAINABLE FOOD

Cambridge Sustainable Food is taking part in planning a Cambridge Vegetable Festival in July 2019 (mostly on the weekend of the 19th and 20th).

The event will feature a town meal, vegetable treasure hunt, celebrity chef cookery tour of local allotments and a veggies recipe competition. Most of the events will take place in front of the Museum of Technology.



Visit our webpage, mill-road.com, to discover more about Mill Road and add your own contributions. Scan the QR code.

Letters and opinions can be addressed to the editor at info@mill-road.com

Letters published here express the views and beliefs held by their authors

**This issue has concentrated on recycle, reduce and reuse.
The next issue will concentrate on up-cycle and re-style.**