



EMMER GREEN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

serving the local community

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2010-2011

www.egra.co.uk

FRUITFUL YEAR

I'm happy to report this has been a positive year for EGRA and for Emmer Green in general. Despite the difficult economic climate several projects have come to fruition, some of which EGRA has made a direct contribution, and in others we have been active campaigners or interested parties. Sometimes a lot of work can come to nothing, but this time there is a genuine feeling that persistence has paid off.

A year ago the playground revamp was well underway. The scale of it was a bit of a shock to some, but after the initial over-excitement settled down, it's perhaps easier to appreciate the value of such equipment for our young people of all ages. Landscaping was incorporated last autumn and we hope in time the trees will soften the visual impact. In fact, after a long wait, trees have been planted in the recreation ground and the shopping precinct green. The hope is that by planting more mature specimens the survival rate will be greater.

As part of Reading's tree planting strategy, we also have a 'beacon' tree planted near the pond – a Sierra Redwood or Wellingtonia. Other trees have been planted including locations north and south ends of Peppard Road. Caversham GLOBE has also been busy on Grove Road green, with four saplings planted in March. EGRA is happy to support and promote Reading's Tree Warden Scheme.



Speaking of Grove Road, we were first alerted to the dangers of cars parking on the green by a concerned EGRA member in 2009. After a lengthy campaign by EGRA, we were told Reading Borough Council had managed to procure a grant from the Decent Neighbourhood Fund. Suitable knee high barriers have now been installed and we have all been rewarded with a visual feast of spring bulbs (Thanks to Cllr Daisy Benson). We congratulate all those involved and thank them for making it a safer area for our children.

Throughout the winter the Emmer Green Youth and Community Centre has undergone a total revamp in preparation for reopening as a Surestart Children's Centre. EGRA was able to promote consultations and keep abreast of developments through our representative on the North Reading Youth Project committee, Tara Taylor.

Footpath

After many years of dispute, we finally learn that the future of the footpath between Russet Glade and Jefferson is secure and is now a designated public right of way.

Bus shelters

After a miserable spell without bus shelters we now have swish new ones. The Courtenay Drive shelter and seat have swapped places, and thanks to the persistence of Councillor Richard Willis, a shelter has been installed on the very northern outskirts of Reading near the Tower Close/ Peppard Road Junction.





Seats

EGRA has sponsored and organised the refurbishment of two dilapidated seats by the pond. It also proposed (after consulting local residents) moving a redundant seat abutting a tree at the top of Peppard Hill to the green opposite the shops. Both were carried out in May.



St Barnabas Church

Once again EGRA had a stall, manned by Jane Handley and Cathi Edwards, at the annual garden party in July and was able to contribute to the cause, to raise funds to landscape the new Parish Centre garden behind the church. In March 2011 were able to use the centre for an EGRA volunteer reception. The new garden was very impressive.

DESIGN COMPETITION

EGRA has invited residents to submit drawings on the theme of the wildlife and plant life of our native woodland, Clayfield Copse. Six drawings will be chosen from the entries, and the Berkshire and Mid-Thames Woodcarvers will then set to work to create the carved green oak panels, set on posts. The designs need to be simple – suitable for carving on a panel of wood. The competition is open to people of all ages. Those interested in submitting a drawing should contact Jennifer Leach on 07878 697892 or Barry Prior at barry.prior@backhouse.co.uk. Closing date 30th April.

PLANNING

We try to encourage local democracy on planning issues and there are plenty of guidelines on the EGRA website. We receive weekly planning lists direct from RBC, and CADRA kindly share with us their summaries of development proposals north of the river. EGRA will respond as a body to reflect the wishes of the residents affected, if there is evidence of sufficient local concern.

In the light of revised government policies, the Council have produced a revised final draft of the documents which sets out detailed policies for deciding planning applications, sites for future development, and land to be protected over the next fifteen years. The changes include new local policies on the use of private residential gardens, the protection of local heritage and a revised Proposals Map and Sustainability Appraisal. Displays were in Caversham Library in March and the consultation closed on 4th April.

TRAFFIC AND TRAVEL

Buses And Bus Stops

Remodelling of roads and bus stops south east of the station is underway. Reading Buses details on their website. Station Road information affecting buses serving Emmer Green can be found at www.reading-buses.co.uk/articles/closure-of-station-road-reading

Rail Updates:

A drop-in information office has been set up by RBC at 6, Cross Street. Information on rail services and the station works should also be available on the FGW and Network Rail websites. For those who haven't already seen timelapse footage of the bridge move: www.youtube.com/watch?v=FL9m00_OBrI

POLICE MATTERS

The Upper Caversham Neighbourhood Action Group

It has been over a year since the NAGs and Safer Caversham Forum merged. Meetings now have a regular venue, Highdown School, to discuss priorities such as speeding and burglaries. Warnings have recently been given about distraction burglaries. EGRA has at least one representative at every meeting. We are able to feedback discussion and alert members to specific concerns.

Neighbourhood Police Officers

Inspector Penny Mackenzie reported that she will be leaving Caversham North in April and will be replaced by Inspector Graham Markham. Sgt Rob Pitman is to return to the area. The police ask us to be vigilant about home security and continue to report crime, because even if nothing materialises, the case will have been logged and if a pattern emerges locally, the issues can be targeted and resources allocated. Non-urgent crimes can be reported electronically in a secure way to Thames Valley Police. www.thamesvalley.police.uk/reptcr-repform.htm Still dial 0845 8 505 505 for more serious matters, and 999 for anything urgent.

SCHOOLS

For the third year running EGRA were able to present a couple of community book awards to pupils of Highdown School. We are happy to have good relationships with local schools, and Highdown School looks after the EGRA history display boards for use in their teaching plans.

READING 50 PLUS+ OLDER PERSON'S FORUM

EGRA continues to promote this joint venture between Age Concern, RBC and the NHS. The very well attended meetings are now held biannually in St Barnabas Hall. There has been an Active Retirement Club set up which offers Tai Chi class sessions on Wednesday mornings.

OUTINGS

In May 2010 a group of EGRA members had a tour of Caversham Court gardens led by Anne Latto. Please put forward ideas for future outings. The visit to the Police Museum in March had to be cancelled at short notice due to budget cuts. There is a possibility things might change, so please watch out for future announcements,

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Caversham celebrates 100 years in Berkshire this year and has organised a number of events throughout 2011 – see www.caversham100yearson.org.uk. Emmer Green is not quite so clear, as parts still remained in Oxfordshire until the 1970s. However we will be joining forces with CADRA on the 9th November in an historical display and presentation.

2012 will see Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee celebrated. We are in the process of consulting other community groups about the best way to celebrate this and will be consulting EGRA members at the AGM.

TRADESMEN'S LIST

After many years compiling EGRA's recommended Tradesmen's List, Bob Cruickshank has handed over the reins to our Secretary Jane Handley. If you have any recommendations please forward them to Jane on lukdan@hotmail.co.uk The next complete overhaul will be summer 2012.

Please note that minutes of last year's AGM can be viewed through the EGRA website. Hard copies will be available at the AGM, or if anyone would like one before then, please let us know.

For those of you on the EGRA email list, you should be receiving monthly links to web updates, the annual report, plus two newsletters a year. If you are not, then please inform the Membership Secretary, egra.memb@ntlworld.com, who will ensure she has your up-to-date contact information. Approval was given last year for annual subscriptions to raise to £1.50. However they will still remain £5.00 for five years.

THERE ARE STILL A FEW SUBS OUTSTANDING FOR THIS YEAR. IT MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE TO US IF YOU PAY ON TIME. ALTERNATIVELY LET US KNOW IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO RENEW.

FINALLY

Committee member Carol Gibson is retiring from her job as warden of Chiltern Court and moving to the Northampton area. She will be missed by all who know her. Jane Handley moved to Emmer Green from Kent, and joined the committee during the year and has taken over from Carol as Secretary. Thanks to all the committee for their continued dedication; thanks to our auditor Janette Joyce; thanks to other non-committee members, such as our team of committee supporters, web manager, newsletter deliverers, notice board carers, graffiti cleaners, and tree waterers. And last but not least to partners/family of committee members, without whose support most of us couldn't manage.

IF YOU LIVE NEAR ANY OF THE NEWLY PLANTED TREES AND WISH TO HELP WITH WATERING, PLEASE LET US KNOW.

WE ALSO NEED MORE VOLUNTEERS TO JOIN OUR GRAFFITI REMOVAL TEAM.



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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Tuesday May 10th 2011 AGENDA

The 27th Annual General Meeting of the Emmer Green Residents' Association will take place at **The Grace Church** (formerly Caversham Chapel on the Hill), 119 Peppard Road on Tuesday 10th May at 8.00pm.

FORMAL BUSINESS

Apologies for Absence

Approval of the Minutes of the 26th AGM (28th April 2010) and Matters Arising
Chairman's Report/ Review of the Year
Treasurer's Report and Accounts
Election of *Committee, Officers and Auditor
Any Other Business

*The committee comprises a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, plus a minimum of three, not more than seven others. Any contributions are welcome and a way forward appears to be 'Committee Support', which can either be a stepping stone up to, or down from the committee, or an independent role for those happy to remain that way.

Those offering to stand for re-election are Margaret Ormonde (current Chair), Barry Prior (Vice Chair) Bill Harper (Treasurer), Jane Handley (Secretary). The remaining candidates are existing members, Jill Verran, Cathi Edwards, Jenny Leach, Vera Bodman. Three new people have put their names forward – Richard Hammond, Andrea Robinson and Doris Hiscox.

Tara Taylor (North Reading Youth Project), Diana Hartrup (Newsletter distribution) Bob Cruickshank (Graffiti, Catering) Clive Ormonde (Website Manager) continue to offer valuable committee support.

Roles will be confirmed / decided after the AGM.

Nominations to either join the committee or offer support can be given to the Secretary before the meeting, or offered, on the evening of the AGM, or at any later date.

GUEST SPEAKER

Our speaker this year will be Chris Aldridge from the True Food Community Co-operative. We will learn the background to the project and have an opportunity to sample some of their products.

REFRESHMENTS

