

## EX LIBRIS

### OPEN SPACES

My neighbours were away in France for several weeks earlier in the year. I thought it would be a nice welcome back to cut their grass. My wife and I pop round quite frequently and know their garden well. But how different it looks, and feels, when you get involved in the work. Theirs is an interesting and well-kept garden. It has wild life and fern areas, a small pond and an enticing range of shrubs and herbaceous flowers. But whilst mowing I saw it all with new eyes.

Thinking of writing this piece I realised just how easy it is to accept the green areas that surround us. So I decided to wander round Caversham and look at our open spaces again; even if I wasn't going to do any work on them. Perhaps I would see them in a different light. I was not disappointed. Caversham has wilder areas such as along the top of Balmore Park. Then there are the more formal gardens as at Caversham Court, which is undergoing refurbishment. Water is a significant feature in several of these areas from View Island to the Emmer Green pond.

I won't give you the scenic tour of Caversham here. I am sure every reader will be more than aware of their nearest green space. But it might be worth your while taking a stroll and looking at these beautiful spots with fresh eyes.

### ... AND ALLOTMENTS

However I will make a special note about our allotments. These are scattered all over the village and are there to be enjoyed by all. Last year I took some American relatives around my allotment. As they entered and I saw the look of shock on their faces it transpired they believed I was taking them into some secret shantytown which we kept hidden from general view. No, I explained, the wooden huts and even shacks were not permanent residences. (Though some of us do seem to spend more time

there than in our official homes). Allotments are not only green spaces. They are working environmental organs in our polluted world. They certainly benefit their users. (I estimate my potatoes alone this year would have cost me over £200 to buy and I am a lot fitter then if I had driven down to Waitrose.) Allotments are the lungs of the community; each plot is lovingly cared for by each holder but they benefit the whole community. They are there to be admired by passers by and so give pleasure to many. In fact one of the most fascinating aspects of allotments is that they draw all parts of society together. My allotment neighbours may be a PhD in astrophysics on one side or a bookshop shelf-stacker on the other. They may be octogenarians or young families and we know each other by our first names. Moreover in the allotment we are what we grow. We are what we eat. And allotments don't pollute.

Reading Council did an allotment consultation a couple of years ago. I am sure they recognise the importance of these areas; socially, economically, and environmentally. I have to say that there is nothing more satisfying than sharing the wonders of the seasons, hard times as well as good, and then digging your first new potatoes or tasting that early spring carrot.

## POLLUTION

Unfortunately pollution is the flip side of the coin. When working in the fresh air one becomes even more conscious of the pollution around us. And today we are growing ever more aware that pollution is inextricably linked with climate change. Most of us try to avoid the obvious polluting chemicals. But pollution takes many forms. How many of us use the car when a few minutes on foot is all that is required? How many of us, anxious to 'get there', drive 5 mph faster than strictly necessary? How many of

us burn our garden waste? Perhaps along with the drive for recycling the Council should consider banning garden fires.

Then there is the double annoyance of noise pollution. It is bad enough that some people cannot drive their motorbikes or cars without creating excessive and disturbing noise. But of course this actually adds to the pollution that is causing global warming. My pet hate of the moment is the curse of the 'joy planes'. They not only ruin quiet Sunday afternoons, as well as other days of the week, but worse still I dread to think how much fossil fuel is being consumed and its environmental impact. I wonder, if a young biker were to ride up and down our roads every Sunday morning, whether an ASBO would be invoked: not so for their more affluent air-borne counterparts, it seems.

#### CADRA: 40 YEARS OF CAMPAIGNING

Whilst researching the history of CADRA I went to the Berkshire Records Office. Flicking through early copies of the Caversham Bridge, I was struck by just how many of our campaigns have been centred on the preservation of green spaces. There was the concern over the development of Caversham Park village, Bugs Bottom, Mapledurham Playing fields and even the green areas around the Precinct. Then there is the continuing concern about over-development all over Caversham with its inevitable environmental impact. In virtually every case arguments were legitimately made both for and against development and this is not the forum to rehearse the rights and wrongs of each one. However CADRA's main concern has been the well-being of our community. And this word 'community' is the key. CADRA is an association. We are interested in our society. Different views will be honestly expressed but in this age of increasing population pressures, closer living and concomitant environmental

impact, each one of us will increasingly need to 'do our bit'. Part of that 'bit' is going to be to give up some of our 'rights' or just pleasures for the greater good. This might mean bi-weekly bin collection. It might mean not smoking in public. It might mean slowing down whilst driving. As I look at the youngsters of today I wonder what world we will be leaving as an inheritance to their children if we continue to pursue our current self-indulgent lifestyles. This to me is what CADRA is about and if you either agree or disagree with any of my opinions and prejudices please join in the debate actively. Help influence policy and join CADRA.

#### OUR RUBY ANNIVERSARY

CADRA is celebrating its fortieth year and to help mark the occasion we will be holding a meeting open to all, entitled CAVERSHAM – PAST, PRESENT and FUTURE. It will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 17 October at Caversham Primary School. There will be light refreshments, slide shows and displays from many different organisations. A nominal charge will apply to non-members. Please do note the date in your diary

#### CONFESSION TIME

By the way I did use a motor mower on my neighbours' grass. Perhaps I should ask myself is grass cutting really necessary. And now I'm off to the Tesco store in my car. Oh dear!