

Molly Casey 1918 – 2006

Molly Casey died on Monday 7 November following a period in the Royal Berkshire Hospital. Molly and CADRA have become synonymous over the years. As a central founder member who contributed so much to life in Caversham and in Reading, Molly was appointed Life President. She attended and made a lively contribution to all CADRA meetings until just seven weeks before her death. She was looking forward to celebrating CADRA's fortieth anniversary in 2007. She will be sorely missed and many people will want to pay tribute to her.

Below is a tribute to Molly and her contribution to Caversham and Reading CADRA, with the family and Reading Civic Society, have commissioned a replica wind vane for the soon to be refurbished gazebo in Caversham Court Garden to mark Molly's contribution to Caversham and to Reading.



Molly was a founder member of CADRA and a leading figure in Reading Civic Society. For many years Molly wrote for the Caversham Bridge newspaper under the by-line 'Watchdog'. She was a fount of information; she could be incisive, amusing, sometimes even formidable. Yet Molly was never vindictive or petulant.

A Local Girl

When she was only 17 Molly attended a League of Nations Summer School. Those of us who knew Molly will remember her strong anti-war feelings, her membership of CND and involvement in the Greenham Common campaign. Her strong pacifist views developed in those pre-war years.

As a child Molly had lived in Reading and attended Kendrick school. Her first teaching job, after training at Brighton, was in Reading. Here she met her husband to be, Harold, also a Conscientious Objector.

She loved the countryside, in particular the Chilterns which were on her doorstep. One of her daughters recalls how every spring, with the refreshing enthusiasm of a young child, she would be on the watch for the first primrose.

Molly also had a strong sense of personal duty. She undertook her responsibility to look after her father and aunt, in their old age, with the same dedication she applied to all her activities.

Molly was an inspiring teacher, as her students at Hemdean House School could testify. Molly was fond of literature and of Shakespeare in particular, having a word-perfect knowledge of Macbeth.

A Public Figure

Perhaps our attitude to pacifism has changed. The courage of standing up against the crowd and saying “no” to war is now receiving recognition. Pacifism for Molly certainly did not entail doing nothing. She was involved with CND from the start and was a member the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. Molly was not only active herself but expected the same of others.

Molly soon acquired a reputation as a local guru. She was renowned for her knowledge of the history of Caversham and Reading. She wrote a history of Hemdean House School and was invited to give talks about the Civil War and the Battle of Balmore Hill.

As a member of Reading Civic Society, Molly joined its committee in 1974; just in time to be part of the campaign to save the Old Town Hall. Here was a magnificent Victorian building, part of which had been re-designed by the famous architect Alfred Waterhouse. The Council’s reasoning was that the land was needed for the new IDR which, at that time, was to come through to the town centre. The Town Hall site would become a pivotal roundabout surrounded by offices. The Council claimed that Reading’s traffic problems would be eased by this bold traffic management plan.

The result of the campaign was that The Town Hall became a listed building and was saved. Some years later, spurred on by Molly, the Council applied for, and received, a Lottery Grant for the renovation of the Old Town Hall. Today we have not only a beautifully restored Victorian building but also a music venue held in high esteem by professional musicians.

In recognition of her work for the town Molly was presented to Prince Edward on the stage of the concert hall she had campaigned to save. The Prince was in Reading to mark a 1000 years of Reading’s Royal Charter and formally to open the Concert Hall.

Bugs Bottom

Not all Molly’s campaigns ended in victory. We have seen how much Molly loved the countryside. The battle to save Bugs Bottom from development was long fought. Despite overwhelming opposition from the people of Caversham, which crossed all political boundaries, Central Government, in the form of Nicholas Ridley, gave the go-ahead for the project.

Caversham Court

Molly was very fond of Caversham Court. It is most fitting that some aspect of the refurbishment of this beauty spot should be dedicated to Molly. One personal memory Molly herself held of Caversham Court was of taking her grandchild there.

Reading Civic Society and the Caversham and District Residents' Association are therefore working together to find a fitting tribute in recognition of all Molly did for Reading and Caversham. Our joint idea is to replace the Wind Vane on top of the Gazebo in Caversham Court. Click [here](#) to find out more and how you may be able to help.

Farewell

Molly will be missed by all. But whether we are getting off the bus at the Old Town Hall, taking a stroll down the river at Caversham Court, going for a country walk through Bugs Bottom and beyond or venturing over to Prospect Park, where Molly helped save the Mansion house, we are surrounded by permanent reminders of a truly great woman...

Molly outside her beloved Town Hall with a most appropriate caption alongside!

