



EMMER GREEN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

serving the local community

1984-2022

CAVERSHAM BRIDGE News Article 1 2022

**At the 38th AGM of EGRA in March 2022,
the decision was made to disband
the Association.**



Planning issues have always been at the heart of EGRA, and in 1984 were responsible for its founding to fight development in Hemdean Valley. CADRA, already an established group, gave invaluable advice on constitution matters.

After ten years, a compromise was finally reached, a swathe of open land saved, and new residents welcomed. By then, EGRA had become an established and respected group, so broadened the ways it served the community. Membership grew and it had a voice on other forums and Council matters, whilst maintaining its apolitical stance.

To celebrate the Millennium, in 2000 it hosted an exhibition on the history of Emmer Green. A book, 'Emmer Green Past and Present' followed. A website was set up in 2003, and quarterly newsletters were enhanced by email updates.

Planning issues resurfaced when infill development raged, often setting communities into separate camps. EGRA had members in both, so outright opposition without consultation was no longer an option. Guidance on how to respond to planning proposals was established, advising residents how to submit views to the Council, or to set up dedicated groups. Regular social activities helped bring the community together and the AGMs were enhanced by captivating speakers, followed by free wine and nibbles! The Queen's Diamond Jubilee 'Picnic in the Park' in 2012, saw the recreation of an event that had marked the coronation in 1953.

Looking back, Emmer Green and its periphery have been marked by huge change. No-one expected the BBC, established for many years at the historic Caversham Park, to decide the location was no longer relevant. The same was true of Reading Golf Club. After more than 100 years on the same site, land deemed safe for eternity, suddenly wasn't. In the same way that EGRA began in 1984, in 2017, a new group, Keep Emmer Green (KEG), evolved, whose function was to oppose development of the golf club site. However, the position for EGRA was more complex, as they still had a duty to consult members and express a majority view.

With the loss of EGRA, CADRA has continued to offer support, welcoming the involvement of former EGRA members. Working together in a productive way, CADRA aims to give a voice to local residents and their concerns.



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CAVERSHAM BRIDGE News Article 2 2022 - The People



The accompanying photograph, p118 of *Emmer Green Past and Present**, is dated 2001. It shows the committee midway through EGRA's tenure, and this article pays tribute to some of those who served the association during, before and after that time.

David Miles (centre back) was the inaugural Chairman during the days when all communication was in person, by letter, or telephone. He oversaw what was one of EGRA's most challenging times, the opposition to the development of the entire Hemdean Valley. But it cemented the association, which now had a voice on other matters. Committees are often operated by a few key people, and during that period members like Alan Perrin and Bill Goodworth played vital

roles. Jill Verran was an inaugural committee member from 1984 to 2012 – Treasurer and Membership Secretary. Bill Harper took on the role of Treasurer in 2002 and continued until 2018. Paul Gallagher became Chairman in 1997, and was succeeded by Margaret Ormonde in 2007, ably supported by Vice-Chair Barry Prior. Annette Fairweather took over as Chair in 2015, meeting new development proposals head on.

There were about sixty residents volunteering their time to serve on the committee. It would be impossible to name them all. In addition, there have been stalwarts who have run things, either after they left the committee, or avoided it altogether. Clive Ormonde, devised and managed the EGRA website for 18 years, Diana Hartrup ran the newsletter distribution team, and various others managed the community noticeboard. Bob Cruickshank instigated the Tradesmen's List. Vera Bodman was a great promotional ambassador.

When a specific event or project was imminent, it was all hands on deck. The Millennium History Exhibition, headed by Margaret Ormonde, linked up with Highdown School. The research for that led to the book in 2001. It brought us closer to the community than ever before, listening first hand to many who had witnessed change. Annual General Meetings were held in St Barnabas church hall, and celebrations linked in with Emmer Green Primary School.

**Emmer Green Past and Present* is due to be reprinted autumn 2022, and will be on sale at Fourbears Bookshop, Caversham.