

A Welcome from CADRA in 2003

Volume 3, Issue 1, March 2003



CADRA news

Caversham And District Residents' Association

What was conceived as a Millennium project, abandoned when the Heritage Fund refused to recognise its community significance, reborn as a Queen's Golden Jubilee project, supported by the North Area Consultative Committee, sentenced to death when a suitable site could not be found, then finally resurrected and delivered just too late for the Millennium Year? The answer of course, is the long-awaited Caversham Village Sign, graciously unveiled by the Deputy Mayor on the 1st of February. The final location is less than ideal, a compromise forced upon us by the plethora of cables and pipes under the pavement, but as a central symbol for the community of Caversham the new sign will do very well. What we need now are signs at our boundaries;

after all there is little point in having signs pointing to a place if you don't know when you've arrived!

We are delighted with the work of Stuart King, the carver of our sign. He is a rural historian and has included at least ten references to Caversham's past and present; more details can be had from the Library. We are also grateful to Cllr Skeats, who stepped in at a few hours notice for the Mayor who had been taken ill.

...an interesting capsule of local history...

Apart from being an interesting capsule of local history, the sign has an important purpose. For far too long, Caversham has been slowly sinking into oblivion, regarded by many at RBC as "North Reading", and CADRA is determined to see this trend reversed. We already have the two largest residents' associations in the

Borough, the most influential Safer Community Forum, and a hugely successful local Festival. However, we have lost too many independent shops, and we would like to see the Caversham Traders Association rejuvenated, encouraging local businesses to come back. We could even have some Christmas lights! We are lucky to have a good mix of political representation in Caversham, and most of our Councillors are genuinely interested in promoting community values before self-aggrandisement. As the current CADRA Chairman retires, he offers this advice: put the *community* first and your political future will be much safer, whichever party colours you choose to wear. We were hugely disappointed to learn that Area Consultative Committees, set up in response to Government directives, have been allowed to fade away. Worse still, when this was questioned recently by CADRA and other residents' groups, the response was polite but

meaningless waffle which effectively stifled any productive discussion. Consultation? No, we are going to have to work a lot harder in Caversham before we can claim to have an effective process for dialogue and feedback with our Council. They are to be congratulated on their support of the Question Time event reported elsewhere, but we urgently need a properly constituted ACC. To be effective, it needs a lay Chairman, given clear Terms of Reference which define the scope, values, authority and objectives of the body. Above all, it must be supported and promoted by RBC, and it can not be allowed to dilute or distract the excellent work of the Safer Caversham Forum.

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2003 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING TUESDAY 15th APRIL

AT THE BAPTIST CENTRE, PROSPECT STREET, 7.45pm.

All Members should try to attend this meeting, which includes voting for members of your Committee and a fascinating presentation by *The Thames Valley Air Ambulance*

Please see separate insert inside for full details

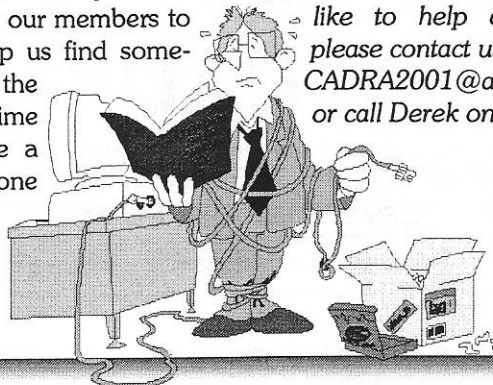
Could you design and operate a web site for CADRA? Do you know someone who could?

One of our stated objectives is to have a good, informative web site which members could use to communicate with CADRA. So far, although we do have an email

address, which is already well used, we have made no progress with our web site. Now we need your help. We are inviting all our members to try to help us find someone with the right skills and time to help us create a site. Then someone needs to be trained in its operation and maintenance.

CADRA and its members will provide the content, but keeping it topical, fresh and relevant is essential.

If you, or someone you know, would like to help or offer advice, please contact us by email at CADRA2001@aol.com, or call Derek on 947 9406.



Caversham Question Time

The well publicised "Question Time" took place on the 20th February. The audience, which filled the Prospect Street Baptist Church, heard senior managers from Reading Borough Council, Thames Valley Police, Ealing Family Housing Association and Reading Buses respond to previously notified questions from the public and to questions and com-

ments from the floor. It was a great disappointment that Tony Lear, the Council's Director of Environment, had to pull out at the eleventh hour through illness. With an area of responsibility covering everything from floods and traffic to planning, parking and playgrounds, it was not surprising that most of the submitted questions were intended for Mr Lear. The

Question Time organisers were, therefore, very grateful to the two council officers drafted in at three hours notice to fill at least some of the gaps left by Mr Lear's absence. Regrettably, they could not cover some popular topics, but CADRA will be pursuing these on behalf of the people whose questions remained unanswered.

Caversham Bus Services

An update from Ian Brown

As part from some difficulties with school services and routing, the new Reading Buses N° 9 service seems to be working satisfactorily. Timings along the route are affected by traffic across the town and along Caversham Road, which means that arrival times at Caversham Library

may vary considerably from the published timetable. Loss of late evening and Sunday services, always uneconomic, are regretted but understandable unless money could be provided from Council Tax to subsidise them. Services provided by Thames Travel via Caversham Bridge and along

Upper Woodcote Road are being amended; details have been posted at bus stops.

CADRA continues to observe and to make representations on bus services. We welcome any input from Members, including any matters to be taken up with RBC.

Goodbye to Chairman Bruce Manning

CADRA Committee

To your committee's great regret, Bruce Manning has decided to relinquish his position as Chairman after the AGM in April. Bruce will then have completed 3 years at the helm, and he feels that it's time for someone else to have a go. Presiding over a period of considerable change, Bruce has served CADRA well. During his tenure, our constitution has been modernised, making the committee more accountable to members, our membership has increased considerably, the number of newsletters we produce has

tripled and the format, quality and content have improved beyond recognition. We have a well-used CADRA email address, but unfortunately not yet a website. Under Bruce's leadership, CADRA organised "Operation Safeguard", jointly with The Safer Caversham Forum, and carried out an intensive consultation exercise on Kidmore Road traffic. This prodded the Council into action, although it has since been paralysed again through shortage of staff in the Traffic Department! He chaired well-attended Public Meetings on vandal-

ism in Caversham Heights and "Caversham Question Time" for people throughout the district, but perhaps Bruce's crowning achievement was the unveiling of the Caversham Village Sign last month. He pushed this project to fruition with dogged determination over 3 years of frustration, disappointment and delay. CADRA, and the whole of the north Reading community will miss his effective, enthusiastic, and imaginative leadership. With our thanks, we also send Bruce and Pam our very best wishes for the future.

Letters

We welcome letters from members; we will only publish them at the writer's request

Here are some extracts from many letters about the provision of leisure facilities in Caversham. This is an issue of growing concern which could not be covered in Question Time, but CADRA will take up on Members' behalf.

The play equipment has been removed from Mayfield Drive, and other playgrounds are being closed. How is this reconciled with RBC's Vision 2020 or Government amenity space policy? DS

Can RBC demonstrate that it has met its maintenance responsibilities in respect of Mapledurham Pavilion? RB

The four options being offered for Mapledurham Fields and Pavilion all involve loss of amenity and/or selling part of the land. Why?..... CW

*Sir,
Have you noticed how much more quickly the long snake of cars now moves down St Peter's Hill during the morning rush hour? Have you wondered why? Well, CADRA made strong approach to RBC about enforcing the parking restrictions in Caversham Road, and as a result a Traffic Warden has been sent regularly to deal with the offenders and clear the road. Well done CADRA!!
P Bolton.*

Response from RBC to our points about red recyclables boxes. Two thirds of Reading households have red boxes and we hope to cover the whole Borough from April 2003. The material is taken to a Reclamation Facility at Beenham, where it is sorted and baled for individual contractors. Plastic bottles go to St Helens or Stratford, aluminium cans to Milton Keynes, steel to Llanelli, and paper to Kemsley or Watchet. Only about 5% of the material does not fall into any of these categories, and is disposed of with conventional waste. This is much better than the national average, a good result for Reading residents.

Caversham Library

Molly Casey

When the Borough carried out improvements recently in the centre of Caversham, including widening and resurfacing the pavements, they demolished the wall around the Library without realising that it was listed. Why on Earth they didn't know, when plenty of other people did, remains a mystery. Red faces all round, and they were told in no uncertain terms by English Heritage to restore it to its original state. Research showed, oddly enough, that this was not as

most people remembered it. There had been some quite elaborate railings around the building, but in WW2 they were removed to make armaments. The result of the restoration is now there for all to see, and the writer believes it is even better than what most of us were expecting. One resident with a long memory says the corner used to be square, but most people seem to prefer it curved. Not many people know that the village whipping post once stood there. The

disabled entrance was not an original feature, but it is now a legal requirement. We hope that Old Father Time, holding up the clock, can be cleaned as soon as there is some money in the kitty. The village sign, commissioned by CADRA and paid for by RBC, is now *in situ* and greatly enhances the area. These improvements to central Caversham will be appreciated and enjoyed by residents and visitors for many years.

Planning Update

Derek Bartlett

Since our last report, the number of homes planned in the area has continued to rise. Seven applications covering 100 new dwellings were approved, while applications for a further 270 have not yet been determined. Three applications for an additional 53 homes were refused. CADRA critically examined each of the 22 applications. Kingsoak have made a successful application to build 77 dwellings on an area of higher ground adjacent to the flood plain behind Henley Road. Their previous application for 96 homes has been referred by the High Court to the Government Inspector.

The hearing at the Civic Offices is planned for the 13th May at 10.00am. The Southern Electric Company has lodged a revised proposal for 180 homes on the site of its Amersham Road depot, but it does not lessen our concerns about increasing the strain on the already inadequate social, educational and physical infrastructures in the area. CADRA and local residents have requested that development is postponed until the deficiencies are rectified. A renewed proposal has been submitted to develop the former Catholic Church site on Richmond Road. A reduction from nine to six flats with

an increase in the number of parking spaces is welcome. If the applicant can now improve the character of the buildings and the plot's boundaries, he may yet gain local acceptance. In their umpteenth attempt to secure permission to build 50 flats in the gardens on the flood plain behind Queens Road, Infill Land Consultants now propose to put the apartments on stilts. The space underneath is intended as the residents' car park. In a novel application, T A Fisher & Sons propose to replace the redundant electricity substations at Patrick Road, Gosbrook Road and Newlands Avenue with housing.

Caversham And District Residents' Association

CADRA Honorary President
Molly Casey, 14 Albert Road
Caversham RG4 7PE
Tel 0118 947 2300
Chairman Bruce Manning
Bridges House, Heron Island
Caversham RG4 8DQ
07831 376 790
Treasurer Stewart Bolton
11 Graveney Drive
Caversham RG4 7EG
0118 948 2687
Secretary Linda Watsham
159 Kidmore Road
Caversham RG4 7NJ
0118 947 8744

The Purpose of CADRA

CADRA has been in continuous existence for over 35 years. A lot has been achieved, and CADRA is widely respected as a voice for Caversham.

We resolutely avoid party political bias. Our aim, quoted in the Constitution, is "to preserve and enhance the quality of life in Caversham and the surrounding district." In practice, this means to try to keep the good parts, improve the undesirable parts and prevent detrimental change. Most of this inevitably relates to planning and environmental issues, which absorb most of our time and effort. We work with Reading Councillors and Officers, other local groups, the Police, companies and individuals. To be effective, we have to be able to hear members' opinions, and represent their views. These Newsletters are an indication of our commitment to this process, but our effectiveness will greatly increase with more members. At just two pounds per year per household, membership of CADRA represents amazing value.

Please pass this on to anyone you know who might like to join CADRA
Membership forms can be obtained from Marian Fallowfield, tel 0118 954 6899

Contacting CADRA

We prefer you to contact us in writing, so that we can give proper attention to your requirements, and a considered response. We are all busy people, and we may need to discuss your points before responding. In general, please write to the Secretary, or better still, use e-mail. Our e-mail address is CADRA2001@aol.com Letters for publication can be sent by e-mail, or by post to Tom Chadwick, 14 The Ridings, Emmer Green RG4 8XL.

For urgent matters only, Officers' telephone numbers are given above, but please use them with consideration.

USEFUL NUMBERS

Graffiti, Litter & Environment Helpline (Free) 0800 626 540
Racial Harassment Helpline (Free, anonymous) 0800 174 805
Refuse Collection & Wheelie Bins Helpline 0800 834 035
Liz Herbert, Neighbourhood Watch 953 6250

Police Sector Sergeant Dave Griffiths 953 6351
Sector Beat Office: 948 1290 for:
PC Peter Stratton, Caversham Heights
PC Chris Manetta, Emmer Green / Caversham Park
PC Rob Pitman, Central & Lower Caversham

Recycling collections If you have a red box for recyclables, it will be emptied every two weeks on your normal bin-emptying day. If you forget which week it is, just call 0800 834 035 for a reminder, and details of collection days at holiday times.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH REPORT

Derek Bartlett

In place of the now defunct *Caversham Chat*, we offer the following news which relates to the nine months to 31st December 2002. Figures in brackets are for the same period in 2001.

449 (467) crimes were reported in Caversham Heights. By coincidence, Emmer Green and Caversham Park Village together, also scored 449 (434). Caversham, including Lower Caversham, suffered 1030 reported crimes (1063).

In December 2002, across the district, there were 149 reported crimes. Thefts from cars accounted for 31 reports and there were 26 incidents of criminal damage. Caversham suffered nine house burglaries, Caversham Heights had five and Emmer Green three. Caversham's hot spot was Church Street, which was represented in most of the crime categories, with criminal

damage predominating. In Emmer Green, Grove Road caused particular concern because of three racially motivated incidents, and, sadly, on four occasions mourners at the crematorium had items stolen from parked cars.

By the time CADRA NEWS is published, it is hoped that all coordinators will have received and acted on the plea from The Safer Caversham Forum for help with its Distraction Burglary project. The information is being distributed through Liz Herbert's office. If you have not received your pack yet, be patient, you surely will!

We are hopeful that the community policing strength in Reading will soon be increased by an additional Sergeant and six constables. Superintendent Amin, the Head of Community Policing, proposes to use these officers as a "hot spot squad", and they will be de-

ployed on the basis of weekly intelligence reports prepared by the Sector Inspectors.

In response to mounting concerns from NHW coordinators about lack of contact with the police and each other, plans are being made to hold a meeting in April in each of our three areas, centred on Caversham/Lower Caversham, Caversham Heights and Emmer Green. Details of the meetings will be advised to coordinators shortly.

It is now possible to receive Ringmaster via email. Liz Herbert is currently sending out the annual database renewal forms to coordinators, and I have been assured that if a coordinator includes an email address on the form, Ringmaster messages will be sent to that address. The telephone service will continue alongside electronic mail.

LAST WORD (which the Editor always has)

Thank you, thank you to the many people who, when paying their subscriptions this year, were kind enough to include a donation over and above the annual membership fee. This is enormously helpful, not just for the extra money, but it is a very clear signal that we are delivering something of value to our members. Phew!