



EMMER GREEN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

serving the local community

WINTER NEWSLETTER

December 2013

www.egra.co.uk

The EGRA Committee wishes all its members Merry Christmas and a healthy and happy 2014!

Next year EGRA will be 30! Please put the date for the 30th AGM in your diary now –

Thursday 10 April 2014 at St Barnabas Church Hall, Emmer Green

The guest speaker will be Corry Starling, Miller of Mapledurham, whose extensive knowledge and charisma will ensure an entertaining presentation.

There has been plenty of action in Emmer Green since the Summer newsletter. Read on ...

ALL ABOUT TREES!

EGRA Beacon Tree

On 18 November the long awaited beacon tree, a deodar cedar, was planted on the large island bed at the junction of Courtenay Drive and Burnham Rise. The tree has been funded by EGRA as part of the Courtenay Drive 'BLOSSOM' enterprise. The removal of large laurels and general tidying a few weeks earlier had left the bed looking rather bare but this was to provide room to plant the tree and to free up the ash. The tree is a fast growing cedar species and will become an impressive and beautiful specimen giving pleasure for generations to come. Special thanks to Elaine Murray in Brooklyn Drive for watering the tree all summer.

Photo from left, Arthur Marson, Gill King, Richard Stimpson (RBC), Vera Bodman, Margaret Ormonde (Chairman EGRA), Liz Lyke, Trevor Dymond (Reading Tree Warden)



Reading Woodland Project

We are very fortunate to have so much of Reading's woodland in Emmer Green; Clayfield Copse, Bugs Bottom, Beech Wood (by Highdown School), Rotherfield Way Copse and Furzeplat. RBC is planning to undertake work in these areas through grant funding. A community engagement meeting was held in September to present and discuss the plans which can also be viewed on the council website at www.reading.gov.uk/woodlandproject. The proposed work includes: tree thinning; coppicing; holly, bracken and bramble control, and ride maintenance. EGRA welcomes the initiative to introduce a proper management plan to our woodland. EGRA has worked closely with Caversham Globe in the past and supports their detailed response to the RBC plans. Globe understand the importance of particular species, for example the beech and bluebells in Beech Wood and the historical importance of particular specimens, such as the line of veteran oaks which formed the boundary of the old Caversham Grove Estate (now Highdown School). EGRA will continue to monitor and report on this project.

Other Tree News

Reading Borough lost over 90 trees as a result of the recent storm. Unfortunately one of the veteran oaks off Grove Road lost part of its canopy, causing much damage to the adjacent garden. The land is part of the electricity sub-station and under the ownership of SSE. Safety is paramount, and after much consultation with Caversham Globe, RBC's Parks Department, and SSE's arborist, we have accepted that three old trees cannot be saved. Thanks to Cllr Willis for his assistance.

However as part of the Council's 2013/14 street tree planting programme about a dozen trees have been planted throughout Emmer Green this October, including Rotherfield Way, Surley Row and Grove Road. If you live near any of these please monitor their well being during the early years. Please get in touch if you need advice on watering.

Bulb Planting, Rotherfield Way



A few years ago EGRA member Jeremy Harmsworth of Rotherfield Way arranged to have three trees planted through Trees for Cities and Reading Tree Wardens, who donated the trees. They were planted by local residents who have now raised money to plant bulbs in the same area. Recently twenty-five residents came out with spades and gardening gloves to help plant 400 daffodil bulbs. The bulbs were scattered randomly around the three trees. A mix of generations and whole families worked together to carry out the work, finishing with shared tea and cakes. We look forward to enjoying the results of their efforts in Spring!

ALL ABOUT ROADS!

Reading's Cycling Strategy 2013

This is now online at www.reading.gov.uk/cycling. It is accompanied by a survey, which includes a series of questions about the sorts of things that would encourage more people to try out cycling as a way of getting around. The public consultation runs until January 10th 2014.

Hourbike will help to deliver a bike hire scheme, which will be operational by Spring 2104. Plans for the pedestrian/cycle bridge have been approved and completion is set for Summer 2015.

Pedestrian Refuges & Zebra Crossing

Good news for Emmer Green pedestrians! Three pedestrian refuges and a zebra crossing on Buckingham Drive have been awarded funding. Subject to comment, they are due for installation this financial year. A campaign and petition led by Laura Harmsworth and Gillian Caveen, supported by Dawn Cox (Headteacher at The Hill School) to achieve this took place in 2010. The new zebra crossing is sited as you enter Emmer Green, just beyond where Peppard Road becomes Buckingham Drive. We thank all those who have worked towards this including our local Councillors.

Temporary Closure of Kidmore End Road

Thames Water will be carrying out urgent sewer pipe repairs in the vicinity of the junction of Kidmore End Road and Crawshay Drive. Works are due to take place between 2nd December and 10th January, with temporary access over the Christmas/New Year period.

Road Surfacing – Grove Road & Old Peppard Road

Grove Road and Old Peppard Road have been resurfaced. The work was carried out over the weekend, thus minimising local disruption. We very much appreciate all the work done to improve our roads over the summer.

Shopping Precinct Car Park

The deplorable state of our car park has long been a bone of contention. For very many years shopkeepers, EGRA, local councillors have battled with the management company, all to no avail. One stumbling block appeared to be the crippling financial liability of the shopkeepers to fund any meaningful and long lasting repairs. It seems that hope is on the way. The freehold of the site has been bought by a new owner who has appointed new managing agents. The hope is that the new scheme will be more affordable for some of the smaller shopkeepers. Thanks go to EGRA's Anthony Hill for his recent efforts on this matter, and our Councillors for updating us.

OTHER NEWS!

Clayfield Waymarks

Many of you will have seen the carved oak panels at our 2013 AGM. They are currently in the hands of Reading Borough Council awaiting installation. We are indebted the Berkshire and Mid-Thames Wood Carvers for the generosity of their time and skills. We all look forward to seeing the waymarks in Clayfield Copse soon.

EGRA Prize to 89th Reading Scout Group

The Summer Newsletter announced that EGRA was awarding a £50 prize this year to the 89th Scout who had contributed most to the local community. The 89th Scout Leaders were unanimous in their decision that Charlie Bellars should be the recipient. We were very pleased to receive a thank you letter from Charlie, who was surprised and delighted to be presented with the award and certificate at the Scouts' annual Summer Camp on the south coast.



Photo Charlie Bellars and Chris Butlin

The Heights Primary

A family fun and information day for the new free school being set up to serve Caversham Heights was held on 20th October. It is anticipated that the school will open in September 2014, with four classes (two Reception, one Year 1 and one Year 3). Places will be allocated through the Reading Borough Council admissions process which closes on 15th January 2014. The Heights Team hope to be in a position to announce details of the Headteacher and give an update on location by Christmas, to help parents make an informed decision before the deadline.

Arthur Clark /Albert Road Day Centre

It appears following on from the consultation earlier in the year the Council is looking at rebuilding the site in conjunction with a private partner in the hope of providing graded services according to changing needs. There is also likely to be provision for day care. Plans are still at a very early stage and RBC is looking for a suitable partner. Press release:

<http://www.reading.gov.uk/pressreleases/2013/oct/major-proposals-new-housing-day-services-older-people-reading>.

Michelle Brown, former manager of the Albert Road Day Care Centre, is now employed by the Council as Neighbourhood Coordinator, Older People Services. She is carrying out pilot work in the Caversham and Emmer Green area. One of her primary aims is to link up all the services and organisations within the local area so that older people can be supported through sharing information and development of any services that are missing. She can be contacted at Michelle.brown@reading.gov.uk. Tel: 07834335103

March RESCUE Event

Rivers & Environmental Spaces Clean Up Event <http://readingrescue.org.uk> takes place over the weekend 13th – 16th March 2014. Mark Hutchings would like to hear from anyone who is interested in participating mark.hutchings7@btinternet.com or phone 0118 9479727.

Dunsden – Ors Visit

Five members (including three Emmer Green residents) of the recently formed Dunsden Wilfred Owen Association travelled to Ors in northern France, where they met with the mayor and local people, and attended the annual memorial service for the WW1 war poet, Wilfred Owen, held on the anniversary of his death on 4 November 1918. A number of events in Dunsden are planned for 2014, which marks 100 years since the beginning of WWI. The Association is also hoping to build up community links between the Dunsden and Ors. More information can be obtained from the website <http://www.dunsdenowenassociation.org.uk>.

Notice Board

EGRA has funded the refurbishment of the community notice board at the shopping precinct. We have a dedicated team of volunteers who maintain it on a weekly basis. To help them, we request users affix posters with drawing pins, as staples are very tricky to remove. Thank you.

St Martins Precinct Development, Caversham

Exciting plans have been submitted for the redevelopment of this area. Caversham and District Residents' Association (CADRA) will be part of a consultation scheme together with Caversham traders (CTA) and local Councillors. The public will also have an opportunity to comment in due course.

Caversham Traders & Loyalty Card

The Caversham Traders Association (CTA) has recently launched a new loyalty card scheme. Cards cost £20 a year; £10 of that goes to a community fund. This payment should be easily recoupable if people make use of the local independent shops & businesses. The scheme is still in the early stages of development and CTA is keen for Emmer Green traders to become involved. For details of the scheme - see <http://www.choosecaversham.co.uk>.

Sharing our Streets

A recent joint meeting of CTA and CADRA focused on the concept of Street Share and the possibilities for Caversham. RBC is already undergoing a programme of de-cluttering where it is felt street furniture/signs are outdated. There is also a mini roundabout proposed at the junction for Waitrose Car Park. The YouTube clip shows the result of a major and much more radical scheme in Poynton, Cheshire <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vzDDMzq7d0>. CADRA has reviewed the meeting and posted an online questionnaire <http://www.cadra.org.uk/sharingourstreets.php>. Paper copies of the survey are available from Walton's Jewellers, Prospect Street.

Reading Bus Awards

Reading Buses have won the 'Top Shire Operator' award for a second time and the award for 'Putting Passengers First'. They were runners up for the 'Environment' award and were short-listed for the national 'UK Bus Operator of the Year'.

POLICE

Upper Caversham Neighbourhood Action Group - meetings are held regularly at The Children's Centre, St Barnabas Road. The following priorities have been identified by the community and the police for discussion at NAG meetings: Traffic Issues, Burglary, Litter and Fly-tipping

The next two meeting dates are, Thursdays 16th January and 20th March 2014, 7.00pm start.

Have Your Say Meetings with the Caversham Neighbourhood Police Team take place at Budgens Car Park, Emmer Green: Sat 7th December, 12:00 -13:00, and Sat 28th December at 16:00 -17:00.

EGRA continues to monitor any threat to our precious South Oxfordshire countryside. We listen to what the community wants and liaise with Parish & District Councils and other elected representatives.

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