

## The Trees of Caversham

Speaker: John Evans

John is a local man and a former agricultural and horticultural adviser to both Government and industry. He began by showing some old pictures of Caversham taken in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries which showed a few beech woods that would have been used for making charcoal, but revealed mainly arable fields with relatively few trees. It was the development of large houses such as Balmore Park and Caversham Park and the work of landscape gardeners such as 'Capability' Brown that transformed the scene as more and more trees were planted. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century many tree lined avenues sprang up, such as St. Peter's Avenue and Balmore Drive, as well as planting in areas such as Caversham Cemetery. Today Caversham is the most wooded and attractive part of Reading. It also has many exotic trees such as Douglas Firs, Tulip trees, ginkos and black mulberry trees, as well as azaleas and rhododendron shrubs brought into the country by travellers and explorers.

Apart from enthusing about Caversham's trees John also discussed the benefits of trees for health, such as providing shade, absorbing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen, as well as absorbing the fumes caused by traffic pollution. He also touched on certain tree diseases like ash die back, Dutch Elm disease and horse chestnut leaf mould. He enthused about Caversham Court and some of its special trees and made his audience feel that they needed to look afresh at their surroundings. He commended the excellent work of Caversham Gardeners and Reading Tree Wardens, all of whom do so much to preserve our local trees and landscape.

This was a fitting end to a varied and interesting programme this season, produced by Christine Bradbury.