22 Scours Lane

The walk from my allotment at Waterloo Meadows to Scours Lane via Prospect Park is about four miles. It is an interesting walk that takes you up hill from the valley of the Kennet and down to the Thames.

Reading Borough Council has a long relationship with land along the Thames. On the north bank, Caversham Court was purchased in 1931 (1) and on the south bank of the Thames, land for the Thameside Promenade was acquired in 1907 (2). Tilehurst was incorporated in the 1911 Reading boundary extensions. One of the drivers for the inclusion of Tilehurst, was its need for sewage improvements. Bradfield Rural District Council had been considering the erection of its own sewage works at Scours Lane. This was not something that Reading were happy to see happen so close to the Promenade.

The area here between the railway line and the river is home to Reading Town FC football stadium, a sports ground, and the allotments. It is next to the Reading Festival site on the east. Along the river it can be reached by the Thames Path which continues along the bank beyond the Promenade, leaving the River briefly with a steep climb up to the Oxford Road at the Roebuck Inn and down again into Purley and Mapledurham Lock.

Allotments first appear on 1931 maps of this area on the field adjacent and to the west of the current allotment site. In 1950 the owner was approached but did not want to sell the land and the process of compulsory purchase of 13.516 acres for allotments began (3). Early in 1958, Tilehurst Horticultural Association informed the committee that allotment holders had been given notice to quit with effect from February 1959, presumably this was from the existing private allotment site. The committee resolved to draw the attention of the Town Planning and Buildings Committee to this (4). Later in the year the tenants petitioned the corporation to acquire land near the allotments (5). At the end of 1960 the compulsory purchase of a larger piece of land went through and 36.463 acres between the Thames and the railway line were purchased (6). A sports ground was to be provided on some of this land and the committee noted that the allotments requirements should be borne in mind (7). 1960 maps show the area as allotments. Finally in 1966 it is recorded that 13.516 acres were allocated for allotments (8).

The site’s special character is its uniqueness for the number of completely closed-in private plots and also some exceptionally beautiful plots. In the allotment categories for Reading in Bloom 2012 Scours Lane allotment holders won in both categories: most attractive and most diverse.
FACT PANEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of plots:</th>
<th>(9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full plot equivalent:</td>
<td>(10) 180.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date allotments established:</td>
<td>by 1960, recorded 1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date taken on by Council:</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous use:</td>
<td>open land/ farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status:</td>
<td>Statutory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References

(1) See the chapter on Caversham Court Allotments.
(3) Allotments and Smallholdings committee minutes 20 March 1950. R/AC1/3/103. (BRO)
(6) Allotments and Smallholdings committee minutes 19 September 1960. R/AC1/3/129. (BRO)
(7) Allotments and Smallholdings committee minutes 19 November 1962. R/AC1/3/133. (BRO)
(9) November 2008 Report to the Green City and Open Spaces Forum, 19 November 2008. Allotment Provision and Plan Update. Director of Environment Culture and Sport. Adjusted to include the 68 additional plots for tenants displaced from Cow Lane.

© Evelyn Williams 2012