

GOXHILL - GREENVILLE?

Environmental issues in a rural village.

Reprinted because of unforeseen technical faults in the last issue cutting off the final third. We apologise to Alan.

In a world becoming increasingly concerned about global warming, never has the Green slogan of "Think Globally, Act Locally" been more apt to those of us who live in rural communities. Issues like pollution, climate change, ecology, food production, transport, re-cycling, energy consumption etc. affect the lives of villagers as much as they do dwellers in towns and cities.

Adopting a greener lifestyle does not have to mean making great sacrifices or dramatic changes to the way we live. We can enjoy our homes and gardens, our families, our leisure and pleasures in the manner we choose while at the same time taking a little more care of the planet on which we live. In whatever way we in Goxhill choose to become a little greener, it will be part of acting locally. It will also be our personal contribution towards the world environment in which we all live, and that will be thinking globally.

Our modern 21st. century society has developed on the increasing availability of private cars and commercial road transport. These assets have been an immense boon to all of us and they will remain an important feature in our lives for the foreseeable future. Their emissions do cause air pollution however, and the fuel on which they run often comes at the cost of international conflict. While quite a few Goxhill residents live without owning a car, most of us need one or more of them, and we all depend upon commercial road transport more than we may have thought.

Goxhill village is mostly surrounded by agricultural land. That land is mostly used to grow food, either for humans to eat, or to feed to livestock which humans will eventually eat. Some of the food grown around this village is eaten in the village, but the majority of it is not. At the same time all of our village's residents eat food, the majority of which is grown and processed elsewhere. This creates the need for one network of transport to take away most of the food grown here, and another to bring to us the food we need.

That factor of double transportation is repeated for every village and town in the whole country, and it is just one small example of how dependent we have become on road vehicle distribution, and why our roads are so choked up. Some of

the food we eat comes from other countries, partly by choice, partly by necessity, and some of the food produced in this country is exported, thus involving air, seaborne and rail transportation. This has been and always will be the case, there is no question of attempting to stop it, but we can look at ways of reducing it, and its environmental penalties.

Happily, the process of reduction has already begun. As people become more concerned about where their food has come from, so shops and supermarkets are responding by stocking more local produce. In a similar way, concerns about how livestock are treated and how crops are grown is resulting in an increasing proportion of certified organic produce being offered and sold. Much of the recent interest in locally produced and organic food is being catered for by farm-shop sales and Farmers' Markets. Whole-food and Health-food shops too like to stock such wares.

The most certain and most local way to obtain fresh healthy food is enjoyed by those who grow some of their own. So it is good to see that there is resurgence in home food gardening, whether it is only to have a summer supply of delicious tomatoes or for twelve month's provision of vegetables, fruit and salad stuffs to be ready for the table at all times. It is not long ago that horticulture was one of Goxhill's main industries. That enterprise and Goxhill's beautiful avenues of flowering trees are a tribute to the families from Holland who settled in this village and demonstrated the horticultural suitability of Goxhill's soil and climate.

Not everybody who would wish to grow their own food has sufficient garden space to do that, or they may not wish to use what space they have in that way. For those, an allotment is one of the answers, and it is encouraging to know that Goxhill Parish Council is striving to make allotments available to them. In this way the horticultural heritage of our village will be maintained, and Goxhill will have made great steps towards becoming Greenville.

***This article by Alan Gould
aims to open an ongoing dialogue about
green and environmental issues in Goxhill
and like villages.
Its continuance will depend upon the
responses it attracts.***