



**Berkhamsted  
Citizens  
Association**

# NEWSLETTER

A U T U M N 1975

As the dahlias await frost's death-blow and the Michaelmas daisies burgeon and the first smoke rises from chimneys after the best summer for three hundred years, we brace ourselves for what the politicians once again - d'you remember Stafford Cripps? - assure us will be a hard and difficult winter.

But the Association is already in the field for the dark season : a very successful 'meet your councillors' assembly took place in mid-September. We have the distinction of being the first to hold a public meeting in the revitalised Civic Centre. The residents of Meadway were able to put an urgent roading problem direct to the DDC Chairman and another noble Citizen woke the interest of the elected representatives to the Wilderness car park's Stygian darkness. The representatives were erudite and political hyperbole was absent.

The Planning sub-committee have watched the Tunnel Fields development unfold. The present state is that one third of the proposed development is to go ahead - Section AC. and B if you've seen the plans - whilst Section C (two thirds of the site) has been referred to the Minister. The point the sub-committee made - that the estate should not contribute to traffic entering Rridgewater Road - has been accepted,

One consequence of much large scale development is the mundane and fundamental one of sewerage. The work's at the east of the town have already given some anxiety during this dry 'summer. A private individual, Mr. Holborn, has made a study of the effluent discharge in the canal which in his opinion gives cause for concern. As a result, an extra lagoon has been dug and the nuisance abated. The Association has expressed interest in Mr. Holborn's campaign as vital to public health and to canal users.

The marina on the canal at Cow Roast is to proceed. Another projected marina at Dudswell is the subject of a public enquiry. This involves additionally the building of some 200 houses at Dudswell which the Association considers undesirable in that Green Belt land is impinged upon. An objection has been lodged. Meanwhile the Parish Council is advising DDC on the use of the canal as an amenity for the public.

As a result of the raffle at the Wine and Cheese in July the Court House Appeal gained £18 ; the Appeal has raised £19,000 and needs some £4000. In November the Appeal Committee is inviting societies in the town to volunteer to man a stall in St. Peter's Hall to sell items and to advertise its activities ; it is hoped that the Association may be able to help this Appeal in its last lap.

On Wednesday October 8th (not October 9th as advertised originally in the Review) Mr. Mabey of 'Food for Free' fame will be talking enthusiastically about his ideas in the Gable Hall at 8 p.m. Do come - you may be asked to eat a dandelion!

On October 19th at 2.30 p.m. the autumn ramble sets out from the corner of Cross Oak Read and Shootersway. Destination : Tunfield Nursery at Ashley Green where flowers are grown large scale under glass .. the chrysanthemums will be worth seeing. A cup of tea will be provided.

On 21st November Mr. William Darling from Royston, a farmer and conservationist - two not incompatible roles - will speak in the CIVIC CENTRE at 8 p.m. on Farming, Wildlife and Conservation in Hertfordshire.

There was an effective response to the Guardians of the Countryside Womble volunteer appeal from Citizens ; we have at last got the hedge on the way to the station via

King's Road cut ; our French visitors from Beaune left happily - our thanks to the many who assisted and not least to the indefatigable organiser Roger Ford who seemed to be everywhere at the same time, even in Beaune itself it seemed. There are 309 paid-up members of the Association and 141 for whom a note is attached to this Newsletter!

The Town Hall once again creaks into the headlines. With the moratorium on local authority spending DDC must lose interest from an immediate action point of view and believe it or not the word 'renovation' is once again being murmured. A summary of the main points of a Report produced by the Berkhamsted Town Hall and Market House Rescue and Action Group is annexed and will be discussed by your Committee in October.

By the way for what it is worth the Committee has not upheld the recommendation from the members' meeting last May that Trustee membership should be restricted to Berkhamsted residents.

The Gable Hall is being refitted for use as an Old People's Luncheon Club and will be closed for public meetings after our meeting on October 8th (hence our change of date mentioned above).

St. Peter's Hall is also not taking bookings for much longer in view of its impending sale which has affected our 'daughter' society - the Local History Society - whose meetings on October 14th and November are now at St. Peter's Hall and the Civic Centre respectively. Their December meeting is also now at the Civic Centre with the date changed to December 10th. Readers who are members of the History Society please note your diaries.

Incidentally we learnt at the councillors meeting that the lease of St. Peter's Hall is interesting DDC but that considerable expenditure will be necessary if the purchase is made. And the DDC cannot spend money this year. Meanwhile Boxwell House is to be sold since the Council cannot make effective use of the building.

## THE TOWN HALL - A progress report

(Prepared especially for this Newsletter by the Berkhamsted Town Hall and Market House Rescue and Action Group)

Some of you will have attended the special meeting with the Trustees, on May 7th, at which it was decided to set up a working party of 6 Trustees and 6 Subscribers to discuss the Town Hall problem. The working party met on May 21st, when we, the Subscribers, agreed to make a study of the possibility of rehabilitating the Town Hall (including, of course, the Market House and Sessions Hall) and using them in whole or in part for Trust purposes. We have now finished the study, and have presented our report to the working party.

In the report, we dispel straight away the view that 'the only thing left is to pull it down'. A professional report on the condition of the building says that it is in 'bad condition, but not yet beyond economic repair', and the Sessions Hall, for example is in quite remarkable condition after standing unused and unprotected for three years.

Encouraged by this, we looked at the needs of local societies (to whom we are indebted for their help), and at the problem of making the building financially self-supporting, before proposing our solution - a 'utility plan', designed to bring the Hall back into use one part at a time, without the massive structural alterations that have bumped up the cost of previous proposals. The plan involves the rehabilitation of the Great Hall and the Sessions Hall, with accommodation for youth activities in the old Billiards Room. To help finance the facilities without burdening the rate payers, parts of the building are set aside for commercial use : the Institute and Clock rooms as offices ; the ground floor of the Market House as an indoor market, opening into an arcade of small shops leading through the Town Hall garden to the car park.

It will still cost money - but only £10 per sq. ft. as opposed to £22 per sq. ft for a new building, and the report looks into ways of raising that sum, ranging from inclusion in the County's major capital building programme for community projects (DES circular 13/71), to grants from the Historic Buildings Council and private Trusts, and last but not least, community self-help.

It is possible. The building can again serve the community, and continue to stand as Berkhamsted's unique monument to that 'eccentric and exceptional' Victorian architect, Edward Buckton Lamb, but only with your support. The Trustees (Berkhamsted Parish Council) have once again applied for consent to demolish the building (which is Listed) but we were much encouraged by Councillor Johnson's comments at the recent 'Meet your Councillors' evening that, partly 'in view of this impressive report' we must re-consider the situation of the Old Town Hall in Berkhamsted.

For further information, contact Margaret Hole, Berk: 4126 or Bernard Orna, Berk: 5889.