



**Berkhamsted
Citizens
Association**

NEWSLETTER

A U T U M N - 1 9 7 6

NEWS FLASH

With the reorganisation of local government the centre of gravity of decision-making for Berkhamsted has moved to the Dacorum Council at Hemel Hempstead. The number of Berkhamsted Councillors has been halved and the affairs of our town are only a small part of what is discussed and the time given to Berkhamsted matters in Council is, of necessity, radically reduced. Even when matters of crucial importance are debated little is known about them since not all of us have the time or the inclination to attend the meetings and the local papers serving as they do a wide area have a minimum of space to devote to Berkhamsted.

This paucity of information has led to an increasing lack of interest in the town's affairs, indeed, almost in our view, to apathy. Too many people are saying "Berkhamsted is not the place it was!"

Your Committee has been looking into this and has come to the conclusion that one of the root causes is poor communication. We propose to try to do something about it by increasing the frequency and context of our Newsletters. Starting next month we hope to deliver to your door a new style Newsletter which will keep you informed of the Dacorum Council's activities and commenting on such important aspects as Rates, Education, Social Services and Planning. We hope, too, to discuss all aspects of town life and hope you will help by dropping a line to our Secretary, Mrs. Sheila Walton, at 11 Murray Road, if you have something to say on any local topic. So help us to communicate, tell us what you want and let us have your views.

THE CANAL-SIDE SCENE

Last November, with the help of the Gardeners' Society, we planted some 35 bushes beside the canal to screen ugly buildings and storage tanks adjoining the gas-works site. Of these, about half have so far survived the drought, with the help of many a bucket of canal water. We hope this autumn to plant some flowering shrubs on the canal-side between Castle Street bridge and the Crystal Palace, and, possibly, to establish creepers to cover the bare faces of the footbridge at Little Bridge Road. We are also talking to the Dacorum District Council and the British Waterways Board about clearing up the remains of trees felled behind Shaw and Kilburn's petrol filling station, but - wait for it - so far the two authorities have been unable to agree which of them felled the trees!

Last winter the Dacorum District Council received a "consultation report" on the Grand Union Canal and its environment, and this has been widely circulated for comment by interested bodies, including the Citizens' Association. Major recommendations for developing and enhancing this important feature of our district must await a more propitious time for implementation, but we understand that meanwhile a working party may be established to consider what might be done at little expense by voluntary effort. We are pleased to have been consulted by the Council and hope to be represented on the working party. One matter which it might appropriately consider is the condition of the canal bank behind certain factories in Northbridge Road, where a lot of unsightly rubbish has been deposited (probably by subordinate employees without the knowledge or approval of the management.)

DO IT YOURSELF

Need the idea of brightening up the town be confined to the canal-side? We believe it could be applied more generally.

Improving the environment by "do it yourself" is nothing new. Instances abound in and around Berkhamsted. Long ago the Citizens' Association planted the daffodils that still brighten the castle banks in spring; more recently we planted beech trees at the top of Tunnel Field. Pitstone windmill has been restored by the voluntary labour of members and friends of the National Trust; the Guardians of the Countryside, with whom we are proud to be associated, keep the Common free from litter; the Town Hall Rescue and Action Group have done much to preserve the Town Hall from vandalism and further decay, until frustrated by the Trustees - whose first duty, as most people know, is to preserve the Trust property.

There is another reason why the present is a time when we should think about "doing it ourselves". Unemployment is less widespread in the south-east than in some other parts of the country; there are even those who say that it has hardly touched Berkhamsted (which is not true), we believe there are a good many people - and there may yet be more - who have time on their hands. Some of them might be glad to be busy overhauling the car or making furniture (for instance) if only they had the space and the essential equipment. Other, even less fortunate, have no particular object in view and might be glad of a suggestion.

Here are two ideas which might be carried out by voluntary effort without much expenditure - other than of energy - and no doubt readers will be able to think of others.

(1) It is many years since Canal Field was earmarked for recreational purposes, yet it continues to grow buttercups. Volunteers, under skilled guidance, could get to work levelling a portion for a public bowling green and tennis courts. It does not matter that both would require money in the final stages; after levelling, the ground would be best left in any case for a few years to settle and consolidate.

(2) There are in Berkhamsted a number of vacant-buildings and semi-derelict lots whose owners might well be willing to grant licences to a responsible body to occupy and equip them with temporary workshops where constructive hobbies could be pursued by those lacking the necessary space and equipment at home. Group projects (such as building canoes and punts for use on the canal) should be encouraged.

Finally, we must be prepared to meet the classic objection to volunteers engaging in public work: that it deprives skilled men of a job. This could be true if the work had to be done in any case, but here we are speaking of work which, if not done voluntarily, would not be done at all - for the simple reason that the money is just not there to pay the wages. We believe, therefore, that there is no reason to foresee opposition from the Trade Unions provided that the plan and its purpose is explained to them, beforehand. Indeed, we believe we should get their support and co-operation in our bid to brighten up Berkhamsted.

WHAT IS A MUSEUM?

The old bank at 222 High Street is to be sold and there is a suggestion that it be turned into a town museum. Many people would like to see this but can we afford it? Can we afford not to have it? What do you think?

FUTURE ACTIVITIES - make a note now in your diary

Sunday, 3rd October Autumn Ramble to the Pitstone Windmill. Meet 2 p.m. sharp with or without car in Water Lane Car Park (behind Waitrose) to drive to Ashridge Monument by 2.15 p.m.. to walk on to the Windmill. Or meet at the Monument if you wish. The Windmill is of 17th Century construction and is the oldest Post Hill extant in England. Mr. Hawkins, the Curator, will talk about its background. On return to the Monument around 5 p.m. there will be an opportunity for a visit to the National Trust Shop, and to the adjacent Tea Room. All are welcome and we hope that those with spare seats in cars will give lifts to those without transport.

Friday, 15th October Candidates Meeting, Civic Centre, 8 p.m. It is hoped that the candidates in the County' Council election, on the 21st October will be present to answer your questions. Watch the notice-boards!

Tuesday, 26th October "Meet our Dacorum Councillors" at the Gable Hall, Prince Edward Street, at 8 p.m. Mr. Robert Davis, the Chief Executive of Dacorum Council, will bring along a 'team' of Councillors willing and eager to answer all your queries. Questions should be sent not later than Wed. 6th October, to the Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Sheila Walton, 11 Murray Road, Berkhamsted 5988. This is an open meeting and all are welcome.

Thursday, 11th November at 8 p.m. at the Civic Centre. Talk by Mr. R. Saunderson of British Rail - details later.

THIS AND THAT

Mr. Bill Snelson has taken over the job of Membership Secretary of the Association as Miss Enid Slatter has had to resign due to other commitments. Bill can be contacted at 49 Cedar Road, Berkhamsted 3857.

We are also very sorry indeed that George Cameron, a former Chairman, and John Seamark have had to resign from the Committee. George has served the Association for over 20 years and now finds he has not got sufficient time to devote to the Association while John's firm has sent him to the Shetlands for a spell.

We are very grateful to all of them for their help and support and we, on your behalf, wish them well.

Mr. Pyett has agreed to take on the job of Map Secretary and he can be contacted at 20 Castle Hill Avenue, Berkhamsted 4769

Finally, we are delighted that Mr. Denis Hart has agreed to our suggestion that he join the Committee as a co-opted member. His knowledge, wisdom and energies will be invaluable to the Association and we are most grateful that he has accepted.

As members of the Association probably know, the sub-committee dealing with the twinning arrangements with Beaune, in France, has now been disbanded as a new Society has been constituted: the Beaune Society. Two further exchanges have taken place this year. 13 children together with Mr. and Mrs. Peter Brown as escorts went to Beaune at the end of the Summer Term for fourteen days, and at the end of August, 23 children with three teachers and two other visitors were welcomed to Berkhamsted. The first Annual General Meeting is to be held shortly, after which arrangements for 1977 will be started. If any member would like to join in, either by acting as host to a French child or teacher, or by sending his own child to Beaune, the Secretary, Beryl Edwards, Berkhamsted 2013, would be pleased to give details.

Subscriptions

We hate to mention this subject but quite a number (163 actually) of you have not let us have your subscription for 1976. Regrettably we need money to survive and the main source of our income is derived from your subscriptions. It is very easy to forget so we hope that you will not mind being reminded. If there is a cross in the box below it means that we have no record of your payment.



Our Treasurer, Stuart Rosser, would be pleased to receive your subscription. Please send or take it to him at Lloyds Bank, in the High Street.

TO REMIND YOU

Chairman:	Hilary Talbot-Ponsonby, Edgeworth House	5882
Vice-chairman:	Ken Sherwood, Rhenigidale, Ivy House Lane	5158
Hon. Treasurer	Stuart Rosser, c/o Lloyds Bank Ltd. High St.	71271
Hon. Secretary	Sheila Walton, 11 Murray Road	5988
Hon. Mem. Secretary	Bill Snelson, 9 Cedar Road	3857

Committee:

Robert Allen, The Grey House, Kitsbury Road	5212
Valerie Clark, 329 Bridgewater Road	01 836 2741
Michael Day, Snelston, Shrublands Road	2716
Henry Fisher, Fairlight, Meadway	4527
Roger Ford, Ardracchan, Cross Oak Road	5027
Denis Hart, 15 Whitewood Road	2110
Alan Havelock, Linden House, Barncroft Road	2140
Max Struthers, 51 Cedar Road	4345
Norman Williams, Brecon, Castle Hill Avenue	5291
Chris Wilson, 16 Oakwood, Shootersway	6921