



**Berkhamsted  
Citizens  
Association**

# NEWSLETTER

November 1977

It may be a little early, but as this is likely to be our last Newsletter before the holiday, on behalf of the Chairman and committee we should like to wish all our members a very happy Christmas and a successful New Year. We all hope that 1978 will see a turning point both in the country's and in individual fortunes.

There are many things that we should like to see brought about in Berkhamsted, for example a reversing of the trend of the loss of shops, a happy ending of the long running Town Hall saga, improvements to the canal sides, improvements to some of our council houses and so on - the list is endless. May we ask you, our members to tell us what you want? What should we the citizens be concentrating on? On what aspect of the Town would you like a debate? Please think about it and let us know.

## Whatever happened to the A41 Bypass?

We thought it might be useful to bring you up-to-date on this subject since believe it or not the Department of Transport hope to start construction in December 1979. The position is this:

Following the Public Inquiry in 1971/72 into draft proposals for bypasses of Kings Langley, Berkhamsted and Tring, the lines of the Kings Langley and Tring Bypasses and the eastern section of the Berkhamsted Bypass as far as Kingshill Interchange, were confirmed in 1973.

Consideration of the remaining part of the Berkhamsted Bypass was deferred and was to have been the subject of a new Public Inquiry in 1974. However, this was cancelled when evidence of extensive Roman remains was found near Cow Roast on the line of the proposed road. Revised proposals were published in January 1975 and a Public Inquiry was scheduled to be held in December that year. Shortly before the Inquiry was due to open however, new traffic predictions became available and the Department considered that a further examination of the traffic requirement and a further technical appraisal of the scheme for the whole of the Berkhamsted Bypass should be carried out. The Inquiry was therefore postponed.

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State announced in November last year that although the reappraisal was not yet complete, it was clear that there was no justification on traffic grounds for the Berkhamsted and Kings Langley Bypasses to be built as motorways. It had therefore been decided that in due course proposals for a new all-purpose trunk road would be published, and at that time any motorway schemes already made would be revoked.

Following the publication of a White Paper on Transport Policy in June this year, all proposed trunk road schemes are being reviewed in the light of the new criteria set out in the White Paper. If the Berkhamsted Bypass keeps its place in the programme after this review and, subject to the satisfactory completion of the statutory processes and the availability of funds at the time, it is hoped to start construction in December 1979.

## The Association and the Gypsies

Last year the Dacorum District Council published measures designed to prevent gypsies and others from stationing caravans on Brickhill Green, Sandpit Green and Long Green (for those who do not already know, Brickhill Green is at the junction of Kingshill Way and Chesham Road, Long Green borders Sugar Lane at its Swingate Lane end, and Sandpit Green is on the opposite side of Swingate Lane a little further down the hill towards Bottom Farm). The public were entitled to object to any of these measures, and as objections were entered the whole question had to be referred to the Secretary of State for the Environment, who ordered a Public Inquiry to be held in Berkhamsted on 19 and 20 July last.

Your Committee felt that they should give evidence at the Inquiry and debated the latter on 7 July, Not unexpectedly opinions were divided. Some members argued that the well-being of Berkhamsted, and especially its amenities and environment, were the Association's first concern. They said that the number of gypsies and others living on the three greens had increased in recent years and had seriously affected the south-east section of the town and the adjoining countryside. The most common complaints were of the unsightly litter from car-breaking and like activities, damage to trees and lack of hygiene. Petitions signed by many citizens had been sent to the District Council.

Other members of the Committee argued that preventing gypsies and others from camping on the three greens would not solve the problem. Prevented from camping there, they would perforce camp elsewhere. A national policy for solving the problem was embodied in the Caravan Sites Act 1966, which required each County Council to provide permanent, equipped sites for all gypsies residing in or resorting to their area. Hertfordshire had made better progress than most County Councils in implementing this part of the Act, yet two thirds of the gypsy families in their area were still not provided for. So long as gypsies were continually moved on by the Police or by local Government officials, the problem would remain, if not on our doorstep, then on someone else's. The recent Cripps Report had recommended the Government to launch a crash programme to get enough sites provided for all gypsies, and that wherever possible they should not be forced to move meanwhile

As there was no prospect of reconciling the two points of view, a compromise was adopted. The Brickhill Green encampment, at a sharp turn in a busy main road, was conspicuous and potentially dangerous, and not suitable even for a temporary site: the Association would therefore support the proposal to close Brickhill Green. The other two greens adjoined a lane carrying hardly any traffic and were comparatively inconspicuous: the Association should therefore advocate withholding the measures affecting these two until suitable sites had been provided elsewhere. Evidence to this effect was given by our representative at the Inquiry.

## The Chiltern Open Air Museum

The Chiltern Society to which we are affiliated, look ready to make a major contribution to our Region by setting up a museum of old Chiltern buildings as an Open Air Museum. They already have barns and a small manor house in readiness. What had been missing was a site but now the Bucks County Council have generously offered a beautiful 25 acre site of open grassland and wooded slopes at Newland Park, Chalfont St. Giles.

The aim is to preserve buildings which were lived in and used by ordinary people during past centuries; cottages, farmhouses, small town houses, farm buildings and workshops. An appeal has been launched and we commend it to you. The initial target is £100,000. (Donations to the Treasurer, The Chiltern Open Air Museum, Newland Park, Chalfont St. Giles, Bucks.)

Volunteers are also wanted to help with the reconstruction work; you don't have to be an expert carpenter or mason.

## The Bull about Footpaths

It wasn't clear from the map which side of the hedge the footpath ran - in the field or on the common. I tried the common, but either the path had got lost in a thicket of thorns and brambles, or it followed a route different from that shown on the map.

Next time I passed that way there was a large bull in the field. He just gave me an old-fashioned look as I passed down the lane; but his attitude might have been different if I had entered his field.

Which goes to show that it can matter which side of the hedge a footpath runs. If you notice any inaccuracies in our footpath map, please let me know about them. It will be some time before we need to have a fresh edition but now is the time to note any changes that will need to be made. I have quite a collection already. Write or ring R.V. Allen, The Grey House, Kitsbury Road, Berkhamsted 5212.

## Planting It Out

As foretold in our October Newsletter, a Citizens' Association working party proceeded to Northbridge Road on 12 November and planted hazels and laurels to screen some unsightly bits at the rear of two factories backing on to the canal. If the plants survive the hazards of life in Northbridge Road, the view from the towpath should be improved.

## Guest Spot

This month one of our Committee Robert Allen sets down a view on public order in his piece entitled::

### "It Couldn't Happen Here" (Or Could It?)

The disturbances at Grunwick, at Lewisham and, nearer home, at Hernel (and now again at Grunwick) spell danger for every citizen, even of so peaceful and law-abiding a town as Berkhamsted: at those three places the violence seems to have been stirred up less by local people than by enthusiasts for a punch-up imported from elsewhere. Therefore no one in Berkhamsted should imagine that such things couldn't happen here. Repressing the trouble makers can and should be left to the authorities; but repression is purely negative - it has no constructive effect. One may cut down a noxious weed, but it will grow again: one needs to go deeper to get to the root of the problem.

As members of Berkhamsted Citizens' Association, a non-political body, we are not concerned to support one faction or to suppress another; but everyone should be concerned to uphold the rights of freedom of speech and freedom from molestation, and above all the supremacy of the law. A second consideration is that if we remain passive we could in time come to accept violence as a normal means of furthering political ends.

The constitution of the Citizens' Association does empower us to provide opportunities for the discussion of matters of local public interest, but I don't myself think it would be a good idea to call a public meeting in Berkhamsted to discuss a matter such as this. Experience has shown that rational discussion is rarely possible in a public meeting on a subject on which feelings run high - and what subject is more emotive than a threat to our inherited liberties?

My own view is that there is little that the Citizens' Association can do publicly as a body, but much that we can do privately as individuals. The private opinions of individuals collectively make up public opinion, but not if we keep our opinions to ourselves, and let the running be made by vocal minorities holding extreme views. Here are some suggestions that any individual could act upon:-

- (1) Think about the problem; if we forget about it, it won't go away of its own accord.

- (2) Discuss it with others; if we keep our thoughts to ourselves, others will assume that we see no cause for concern.
- (3) Try to ensure (those of us who have children or other contacts with the young) that they do not grow up ignorant of the meaning of freedom of speech and freedom from violence, or the threat of it; of what those freedoms mean to us, and what life is like in countries which don't enjoy them. Some young people might also be reminded that the price of freedom is self-discipline.
- (4) We might also think a little more deeply about the root causes of violence. I do not believe that the streak of aggressiveness in most of us (especially males) - though undoubtedly a cause - is the only cause. I think that another is frustration: in particular -
  - (a) dissatisfaction with monotonous work without responsibility;
  - (b) for many people, the lack of any visible end-product of their labours in which they can take pride or feel satisfaction;
  - (c) the discovery that comparative affluence does not automatically bring happiness;
  - (d) the feeling that the individual is a cypher powerless to influence the conditions in which he lives and works, imposed on him by the vast and remotely controlled organisations of industry and Government.

We cannot cure these ills of our over-organised society but your Citizens' Association does endeavour to improve the quality of life and leisure in Berkhamsted. We on the Committee are conscious that we reach too few people and that perhaps we could do more. WHAT DO YOU THINK? We need to know. Please write to the Editor, Alan Havelock, 7 Barncroft Road, Berkhamsted.

Robert Allen

#### Your Vote

Did you remember to fill in the electoral registration form that was posted through your door recently?

If you didn't, your name is not going to be on the electoral roll, and you will lose your vote - unless you act very quickly.

The new roll will be available for inspection in the Civic Centre and main post office from 28 November. If your name does not appear, you must apply before 16 December if you want to be included.

#### Road Safety

Safety measures including a footbridge over the road through the new Chiltern Park estate will be discussed at a special meeting of the Berkhamsted Safety Committee. The meeting will be devoted entirely to the safety problems which may be caused by the estate, and officials from the Dacorum Technical Services (which includes planning) Department will be invited to answer questions. Concern centres on the loop road through the estate which, with the suggested closure of a section of Billet Lane, would take the traffic coming from and into the A41 via Billet Lane. The meeting will present a chance to re-examine thoroughly road safety in relation to the new estate. The road lay-out plan has been approved but certain safety features can still be included and the more easily at this stage than later. The Citizens' Association will be pleased to have your ideas.

The Road Safety Committee is also looking at the question of the siting of pedestrian crossings and again would like to have the views of Association members.

#### Future Activities:

Tuesday 29 November at 8 p.m. at Gable Hall

"Tibbenhan Travels" a film evening about the canal, introduced by Mr D.J. Aston of the British Waterways Board.

Monday 2 January - New Year Ramble - through Ashridge to the Bridgewater Arms, Little Gaddesden. Sandwiches at the bar or bring your own. Separate room for children. Meet at Berkhamsted Station. 10.30 a.m.

Tuesday 10 January at 8 p.m. at Gable Hall

"Berkhamsted 1984. Has it a Future?" - a symposium led by Maurice Brown Esq. R.I.B.A., F.R.T.P.I.

Tuesday 7 February at 8 p.m. at Gable Hall

Annual General Meeting - after formal business Mr P. Attwood of Attwood Statistical Services will speak.

A Walk to Northchurch

Having a letter to deliver in that other Bridgewater Road which belongs to Northchurch, I decided to walk by way of Tunnel Fields to see how Berkhamsted's latest accretion is coming on. But first one had to run the hazard of the new Billet Lane junction.

The Quick and the Dead

At this point the A41 is now 40 foot wide. A reasonably agile middle-aged man can walk this distance in about seven seconds and the lights stay red for 15 seconds, so theoretically he can launch himself on the crossing with confidence. Older or less active people may, of course, need longer but anyone who can't get across in 15 seconds (the traffic experts might argue) has no right to be alive anyway.

But for the pedestrian standing on the kerb waiting for the Billet Lane traffic to finish emptying itself into Gossoms End, the crucial factor is decision-making. Now the last lorry has passed, how many seconds have I left? Can I make it before the lights change? Already drivers are impatiently pumping their accelerators. I decide to stay put, then realise that I had plenty of time to cross if only I hadn't lost my nerve; but it does take an iron nerve to stalk across unruffled to the accompaniment of the revving-up of engines.

There is more to it than this, however. If on reaching the crossing one finds the lights in one's favour, the decision is agonising. How many seconds to go before they change? If ever there were a crossing where a "green man" would be a boon, this is it. Why is there no refuge in the centre of the highway? It would have two advantages. First, the pedestrian would need to look only one way at a time, with an eye and an ear open for the driver straining on the amber; second, even the halt and lame, and mothers with their babies in push-chairs, could be confident of crossing 20 feet where 40 would be an unjustified risk.

Highways Department, you can do better than this. Wake up, use your imagination and act now, before we see a corpse where the refuge should have been.

Lack of Vision?

At the next traffic lights, up Billet Lane, I was glad to see progress being made with the widening of the railway bridge. But this is not enough. Looking back after crossing the bridge, I imagined myself driving down from Bridgewater Road on a dark night or in a fog. Here we are approaching the bridge, road narrows but I follow the line of the fencing that protects the pedestrian by keeping him on the footway. Now I can see, beyond, another fence in line with the first; this must be the canal bridge. Careful not to stray towards the middle of the road I keep close to the fence. Bump! I've hit the kerb; this second fence wasn't, like the first, on the kerb but on the inside of the footway; and not even a red reflector 'or a white line to warn one that here the carriageway shifts to the right.

## larks under Notice

On the first of the Tunnel Fields, the new neighbourhood is beginning to take shape. It has the makings of quite a pleasant place to live in: the layout is varied; a group of three sycamores has been preserved as a feature at the entrance to a close; and all will look very different when gardens have been laid out and shrubs have had time to mature, offsetting the starkness of new brick and bare concrete.

As I entered the second field a pair of larks flew up from amongst weeds growing in a heap of rubble. Over the open field, more larks were singing (but for how long?), with the building site at my back, it was easy to imagine that all was as it had been before. The sweet-scented field was like a garden of wild flowers and grasses - red, white and alsyke clover; common vetch, ladies' fingers and black medick; hawkweed, dove's foot cranesbill, bladder campion, poppy and marguerite, amongst many others, whilst the cocksfoot flowers rose handsome in their short-lived lilac and purple colouring. Sad that this cannot remain so always!

## Rotary Club of Berkhamsted Supports Local Organisations

Amongst the many activities in which the Rotary Club is involved this year are two which will be supporting local organisations. Firstly, the Community Services Committee (Chairman Geoff Dell) will be sponsoring the Local Youth Club at "The Barn" Park View School.

Secondly the International Committee chaired this year by Michael Tollit is to found a number of 'Travelling Scholarships' for the Beaune Society. Roger Ford, the Chairman of the Beaune Society and member of the Citizens' Committee reported to the Society's A.G.M. on Thursday, 17 November, that £100 had been guaranteed by the Rotary Club for the assistance in travelling expenses for a number of young people visiting Beaune in July 1978.

Details of how to make application for consideration by a joint Beaune Society/Rotary Club Selection Committee will be announced shortly.