

August 1979

The news of the death of Mr Max Struthers was received with sadness by his very wide circle of friends, and in particular by the Association to which he has given such sterling service over so many years.

Max took a keen interest in all the activities of the Association, but more recently he was responsible for arranging the programme of public meetings and in their organisation he was most ably supported by Mrs Struthers; to whom we tender our sympathy. Max was the Vice-Chairman of the Association and it was known that he was looking forward to his term of office as Chairman which was due to begin in February 1980.

For your Diary

For the first time we can announce a programme of events for a year ahead. We begin with one aimed especially (though not exclusively) at newcomers to the town, a meeting at which four Berkhamsted organisations will introduce themselves and describe their aims and activities. This time they will be the local History and Geographical Societies, the Chiltern Society and ourselves. We hope to arrange more meetings of this kind in the future.

Wednesday	3 October 1979	Gable Hall	'Focus on Berkhamsted Societies' Part 1
Sunday	14 October 1979		Autumn Ramble
Wednesday	24 October 1979	Gable Hall	Opinion Polls Mr Norman Webb
Thursday	15 November 1979	Gable Hall	Wildlife in the Ashridge Estate – Mr John Wilson
Thursday	13 December 1979	Gable Hall	Social Evening
Tuesday	1 January 1980		New Year Ramble
Thursday	17 January 1980	Gable Hall	Trees and the Landscape Mr Richard Haigh
Thursday	14 February 1980	Gable Hall	AGM and speaker –Mr V Caudery
Wednesday	12 March 1980	Gable Hall	History of Berkhamsted School Mr B.H. Garnon-Williams
Monday	7 April 1980		Easter Ramble
Wednesday	23 April 1980	Gable Hall	Weather Patterns and Gardening – Mr L.P. Smith
Monday	26 May 1980		Castle Fete
Friday	20 June 1980	Court House	Wine and Cheese
Wednesday	9 July 1980		Canal Walk – led by Mr & Mrs Foster

Town Hall

On 10 July we put on a most successful meeting when the new Trustees were introduced and put forward ideas for progressively bringing the various parts of the building back into use. The Chairman of the Berkhamsted Town Hall Trust (Mr Geoffrey Lancashire) explained that the Trustees were appointed only temporarily to set up a permanent management scheme. He introduced the other Trustees: Mrs Hilary Talbot-Ponsonby (Vice-Chairman), Mr Jeffery Edwards, Mr Dennis Hart and Mr and Mrs Bernard Orna. The architect to the Trust, Mr David Mansfield-Thomas, showed drawings and explained how the buildings could be adapted to various uses, some communal, some commercial. Particularly attractive was his idea of opening up the arcade at ground level, which runs right through the building to reach a small court at the rear where a garden could be made: he saw this as being lined with booths where people might do their shopping under cover. Thus income could be generated from an early stage to supplement that from lettings of the available rooms above.

The Town Hall Trustees want to involve as many people as possible in the resuscitation of the Town Hall, whether contributing in labour or in money. To this second end they are setting up a street collecting system (as was done for Northchurch Social Centre) asking for monthly contributions of 10p (minimum) which is not beyond anyone's means. Many contributors are needed, but also many collectors. Will Citizens prepared to help in this please get in touch with Hilary Talbot-Ponsonby, 38 Kitsbury Road, Berkhamsted 5862, who is the Trustee responsible for fund-raising.

Cross Oak Road

As you probably know one member of the committee goes weekly to look at planning application drawings, as they are issued. Information about other planning matters is often brought to the Citizens' Association's notice at these weekly sessions.

For instance, you may have read in the Gazette of 6 July "Road widening plan dropped. The Dacorum District Council has agreed with a Herts County Council proposal to abandon plans to widen the upper stretch of Cross Oak Road".

According to our information, the Herts County Council never intended to widen the roads but when the Dacorum Council have acquired land on the frontage of the Oaks (just south of Anglefield Road to Graemesdyke Road) the County Council will put in a footpath and the footpath will be taken behind the two trees with a preservation order on them. This is good news. We have been asking questions about these trees for some time and while there was some doubt on the advisability of widening the carriageway for one short stretch of the road, thereby perhaps encouraging more through traffic, it was always obvious that a footpath was essential for pedestrian safety. Now we would like to see it also extended south of Graemesdyke Road so that there would be a continuous footpath right up to Shootersway.

Ashridge Estate

In our April Newsletter ("Berkhamsted Common", p.3) we dealt with the public's right of access to that part of the Common which is owned by Berkhamsted Golf Club Trustees. The rest of the Common, and much other land, is owned by the National Trust whose responsibilities are defined by the National Trust Acts 1907-71.

We are not here concerned with land owned by the Trust which is enclosed land let to tenants for farming or other purposes, but only with that to which the public in practice has access: what are the public's rights?
The unenclosed land owned by the Trust comprises -

- (1) the remainder of Berkhamsted Common, including the western part often called Northchurch Common;
- (2) Frithsden Beeches and Copses;
- (3) Aldbury, Pitstone and Ivinghoe Commons;

- (4) Ashridge Park, on either side of the Ringshall Road;
- (5) the Ivinghoe hills, including Beacon Hill, Gallows Hill, Steps Hill, Clipper Down and the Coombe;
- (6) Hudnall Common and Little Heath,

The Commons In respect of their property which is common land, the National Trust Act 1907 (as amended in 1971) gives the trust powers and duties a little wider in their effects than those under the Law of Property Act 1925 mentioned in our previous article. The land must be kept unenclosed and unbuilt on as open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public; the Trust may make temporary enclosures to protect or renovate turf or protect trees or plantations; they may set apart places for games and sports, car parks, public conveniences, etc.

Not all land known, and marked on maps, as 'common' is common land today. The commoners' rights on Pitstone and Ivinghoe Commons were extinguished in the nineteenth century; but common rights on Aldbury Common were recognised by the Trust in an Agreement of 1937 with Aldbury Parish Council, by which all inhabitants of the parish owning or occupying houses, cottages and land are entitled to exercise rights to pasture horses, cattle, donkeys, pigs and sheep; to remove fallen wood; to cut fern and gorse; and to take chalk from the chalk pit.

Aldbury Common is in two parts, joined by a narrow strip down the west side of Old Copse. The northern part is bounded on the north by Tim's Spring, just north of the Monument; on the north-east by Pitstone Common and (further east) by Sallow Copse; on the east by the Ringshall road; and on the south by Old Copse. The southern part is bounded on the north by Old Copse and on the south-east by Northchurch Common, the boundary being the bridleway running north-east from Norcott Hill.

Hudnall Common is registered as a common under the Commons Registration Act, but as no-one has registered any rights over it, its status is in doubt. It is safe to assume that the Trust will continue to allow the public to use it without hindrance as they do at present; and the same applies to Little Heath.

Other Open Land Thus common land owned by the Trust consists only of the northern and western parts of Berkhamsted Common, Aldbury Common and probably Hudnall Common and Little Heath. The remaining open lands - Frithsden Beeches and copses; Ashridge Park (except the part owned by the Management College); all the open land on the west side of the Ringshall road except Northchurch and Aldbury Commons; and the Ivinghoe hills - all these are held by the Trust for its general purposes, without any special provisions against enclosure or building such as apply to the areas of common land. The purposes of the Trust as laid down by the Act of 1907 are - " --- promoting the permanent preservation for the benefit of the nation of lands and tenements (including buildings) of beauty or historic interest and as regards lands for the preservation (so far as practicable) of their natural aspect features and animal and plant life."

It follows that as regards open land other than commons the Trust is under no legal obligation to allow access to the public, though at Ashridge it is its policy to do so; and that the Trust would be at liberty to exclude the public from any part of this land if it thought fit. This explains how it is possible for the Trust to lease a part of the park to Ashridge Golf Club and some adjoining land to a farmer; though these parts are not fenced off, the public are probably not, in strictness, entitled to cross them except by the public footpaths.

Footpaths and Bridleways As in the case of the southern part of the Common owned by the Berkhamsted Golf Club Trustees, the public rights of way are quite another matter. In legal terms they are highways quite as much as the public roads across the estate - but highways limited to passage on foot or, in the case of bridleways, to passage on foot or on horseback; the Highway

Authority and, ultimately, the appropriate Minister. As on the southern part of the Common, there are many paths and rides on the estate which are not public rights of way, so anyone who wishes to stand on his rights in this matter would do well to consult the Definitive Map of public rights of way which is compiled and held by the appropriate County Council. (The southern part of the estate is in Herts and the northern part in Bucks.

The Custodian at Berkhamsted Castle

Members will be aware that there is no longer a full time resident custodian at the Castle and that as a consequence the hours when the public are admitted have been restricted, and the same facilities are not available for visitors. A petition was organised by the Association for which more than five hundred signatures have been obtained. This has been passed to our local M.P. Mr Nick Lyell, who has been asked to make representations to the Department of the Environment.

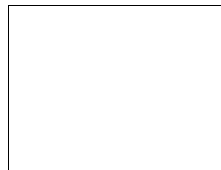
Boundary Commission Proposals

The Boundary Commission for England have just completed their current general review and they have published their provisional recommendations and advertised the opportunities that are available to ensure that local opinions and interests are taken into account before they determine their final recommendations. They propose that Berkhamsted shall be removed from the Dacorum Parliamentary constituency and be grouped with Rickmansworth, Bovingdon and Kings Langley, as part of the Three Rivers Constituency.

The Committee felt that objections should be made to these proposals because the natural links are not with the Rickmansworth area but with those districts that lie in or are contiguous to the valley running from Hemel Hempstead in the direction of Aylesbury. Representations have been made in those terms drawing attention in particular to the transport and cultural and sporting connections between these areas.

PLEASE!

There are still just under a quarter of our members who have still not paid subscriptions for this year. If there is a cross in the box can you please either pay it (50p per individual, or £1.00 per family) to the Treasurer Mr Roy Doe at Lloyds Bank or to your Newsletter deliverer – whose name and address below.



Deliverer - Name.....
Address.....