



May 1982

1. When our Easter Newsletter was written, the weather was not reliable enough for us to think about outdoor pursuits. Many members are not fair weather walkers but it is only now that we can seriously contemplate the joys of the great outdoors - once the gardening is done! That's the trouble - unless one does a little and often in the garden, the explosion of growth can commit several weekends to getting things under control. And the same thing is happening to the countryside - except we don't need to worry about control - or do we? It is very important to check that our footpaths and rights of way have not been ploughed over; or if they have, to walk the line to remark the track. Some footpaths may have become blocked or partially grown over, so, next time you are out, remember to take a pair of secateurs and do a little trimming. So, in anticipation of a wonderful summer, this Newsletter will concentrate on outdoor activities.

2. Swimming Pool

The Berkhamsted Open Air Pool is scheduled to open on Saturday 19 June although it will be available to schools from Monday 14 June. The season lasts 12 weeks until Monday 6 September (11 weeks for the public). Season tickets are £8.50 for adults and £4.25 for schoolchildren. The single entrance fee is 55p so at 1½ swims per week you break even! This is an excellent reason for having 2 swims per week when you can satisfyingly consider that you have got something cheap on the Rates. And keep fit into the bargain! The attendance figures last year were much better than forecast and we are hoping for a further improvement. It is still important to support and use this marvellous public amenity - there isn't another one in Dacorum! So please buy a season ticket or a trip ticket, ie. a block of 14 tickets for the price of 10 Season tickets are available through Berkhamsted Swimming Association c/o Roy Went, 22 South Park Gardens, .Tel. 75288. Also from Dacorum officers at Berkhamsted Civic Centre, Hemel Hempstead or Tring.

Dacorum District Council have budgeted £30,000 for improvements which include a new boiler and heating system, repair of changing rooms (roof and floor), refurbished paddling pool, repair of walls of main pool and provision of an entrance turnstile. We are hoping that this year there will be a more interesting range of drinks and nibbles. Swimming lessons may be available depending on the agreement of the Supervisor to whom enquiries should be made.

3. Swimming Association

This group was closely involved with us in the campaign to retain the swimming-pool last year. Less well known may be its great success in developing the teaching and coaching side of swimming for children. More precisely it nurtured the birth of the Berkhamsted Swimming Club which under the enthusiastic and dedicated leadership of James Spooner and his colleagues has provided weekly swimming training at Ashlyns Pool for some 60 youngsters. In addition the Association has arranged for teaching of child non-swimmers. This, together with the Dacorum College evening classes held by Eve Medcalf, gives an excellent record of effort in the swimming arena. It also indicates the basic breadth of support there

would be for an all year round pool of better standard than Ashlyns. All these people who have laboured unsung during the winter deserve our thanks. We are sure they have it - particularly from parents of those children who have benefited. Hopefully the training will continue next winter, but lessons will be in abeyance during the summer months except if any are arranged at the open air pool.

4. Leisure Services Strategy

The work on the pool and its continuing promise of a 5 year life are the first specific fruits of the Dacorum Leisure Services Strategy for Berkhamsted. Many people seem to have assumed that as the plans for dual use of Ashlyns have to date come to nought, there is no leisure strategy. But, the Ashlyns scheme was only a part, albeit a large part of the whole. The remainder concerned Canal Fields and the provision of a footbridge to link it with St. John's Well Lane. This latter project is being proceeded with (we understand) and the improvement of the area along the Bulbourne. Some members expressed concern that our pressing for a 'tidy-up', implied a removal of the natural wild look. Far from it! We have asked that a minimum of change be made commensurate with it looking cared for rather than neglected. We have no reason to believe that the Council wish to do anything more elaborate.

The remainder of the Leisure Services Strategy now needs a review with the emotive issue of the open air pool behind us. The BCA committee have delegated a few of their number to look at this matter again. Members who have views on it should contact our Secretary and if necessary, one of the committee will discuss details with you. More of this matter in our next Newsletter.

5. Amenity Site

Any action taken on the Bulbourne / Canal Fields site must depend on future of the Amenity (Rubbish) site in St. John's Well Lane car park. This site seems to be getting out of control and we wonder whether it really is appropriate in this location, ie. in a Conservation Area and by the Canal and Bulbourne which potentially could be a very pleasant area. The problem is that the rubbish tip is a very useful facility and one wonders where the refuse would go otherwise. In the country lanes and on the Common? However, what was originally a 2 skip site has now grown into a rat infested monster, which takes up very useful parking space and is incompatible with making the canal side a pleasant recreational area. Anyone who has ideas on a solution to this problem please contact our Secretary. We have already made, contact with the Director of Technical Services about the deplorable state of the site.

Ironically the Thames Water Authority have just cleaned the Bulbourne and trimmed the river bank. The canal side walk is very attractive just now - pop down next weekend and have a look. You might just risk looking at the tip as well and if it is still in a bad state, contact the Civic Centre and complain.

6. Canal Improvement

Further along the canal, by the station and Castle Street bridge, the railings have been painted. We are particularly pleased with this as we have tried to get action for some two years now. It took at least 18 months to get someone to accept ownership of the liability! Dacorum District Council eventually did so last year and have 'budgeted' the job in this financial year. There may be some argument about the colour - 'you can have anything so long as it is black!'. But it has to be an improvement on the mixture of colours from rust to Cambridge blue which has existed for several years now.

7. Guardians of the Countryside

Ashridge and the Common are looking their best at the moment, and it is a good time to thank the 'Guardians', who do such an excellent job clearing litter and other eyesores.

Many members of the Citizens' Association are also Guardians and new volunteers are always very welcome. This really is a case where 'many hands' help tremendously.

The way the scheme works is that each Guardian chooses an area (with the organiser) in which he or she takes a special interest. This area is visited at fairly regular intervals, litter is removed and an eye kept on pathways and open areas. If any large objects or other problems are encountered additional help is readily available. Once an area looks litter-free visitors become much more careful.

There is a great deal of satisfaction in helping to keep a favourite area looking its best and this is the kind of work which is either done by volunteers or not at all. We all appreciate the results so do please join in if you enjoy Ashridge and the Common. It doesn't take long and makes a good excuse, for a few extra walks!

The organisers are Liz and Tony Hutchinson, 5 Trevelyan Way, Berkhamsted (Tel. 4440) who will be very pleased to hear from anyone who would like to help either regularly or occasionally.

8. Local Walks

It is planned to start including routes of local walks in the Newsletter since many members who enjoy walking say they tend to stay on the same routes and would like more variety.

As far as possible the description will aim to be clear enough to be followed directly. However, the 2½" (1:25000) Ordnance Survey maps (available from W.H. Smith) and a small compass are very useful and well worth carrying.

9. This Month's Walk - for a Saturday or Sunday afternoon.

A round walk from the Castle taking in the gardens at Ashridge College which are currently at their very best. 7 miles. 3½ to 4 hours if you spend an hour or so in the gardens - and you should not spend less!

Starting from the station car park by the Castle, go along the left hand side of Brownlow Road. Where the main road turns right go straight on for 70 yards along Castle Hill, then take the footpath straight ahead passing to the left of the tennis courts. Keep straight on along the valley to the right of the hedge towards a large white barn. Before reaching it, the path crosses a stile at a T junction of farm trackways. Keep straight ahead along the valley with the open field on your left and the barn, on your right. At the next gate follow the right-hand hedge to a stile at the edge of the common. Cross this stile and follow a winding path uphill (North) through bushes and trees. This little path is not very clear at the moment - it threads through birch trees and gorse. In 5 minutes you should cross a larger path (after going 15 yards to the left along it) and reach a good path still heading north along a row of larger birch trees. Within a couple of minutes cross another large bridleway and, still going north arrive at Frithsden Beeches by a notice warning of old branches on pollarded trees. Follow the wide path down through the trees, across the dip and up again until you emerge on to a good farm track skirting a large field. Keep the field on your left hand and follow the track as it forks right down to the motor road. Turn left along the road and in 200 yards go right up the small road signed

to Rodinghead. Keep left where this forks and then in 30 yards the fieldpath starts leading north over the ridge. This path gives fine views of the Golden Valley but, is to be avoided in winter because of horse damage (although not a bridleway). Follow the path through a gate and down across a large field to the valley bottom where it meets another path. Turn left here and follow the rising trackway keeping the valley to your right. In about 150 yards, a track strikes left up through the trees - follow this to Ashridge College.

You come out by the entrance to the gardens. These open 2- 6pm. on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays from 1 April to 31 October - 40p Adults, 20p Children. If any members have not visited them for some years, they will find a tremendous improvement which does much credit to the College management gardeners.

After leaving the gardens, turn left and follow the main motor road past the College. Keep to this road where it turns sharply left at a junction with a track and then, in about 250 yards, leave it on a small road to the right which has a notice 'Private road to Woodyard and Coldharbour'. Follow this to Woodyard Cottage and stay on it until Coldharbour Farm is reached. Keep straight ahead between the barns and then cross a stile into small field with a large pond. Cross to the diagonally opposite corner of this field where there is another gate and stile. Cross this to a good track running south west along the edge of a large field. (This quiet area is a good place to observe wildlife). Follow the track until eventually it dips to the left at a wooded valley which it then crosses on a small causeway. Our path leaves the trackway where there is a sharp right turn and a notice 'Private - no public right of way' shortly after, the causeway. The footpath at this point goes straight on (south west) through a gateway and along the right hand edge of a field beneath a few oak trees. Keep on to the far side of this field and turn left along a trackway. Follow this along the field edge and stay on it when it turns right through a double gateway. The track continues to Northchurch Farm and passes between the outbuildings. As you emerge from the Farm turn left immediately along a small trackway (not the metalled road) descending gently between scrub. Follow this round below the gardens of some bungalows to a T junction at a letter box. Turn left passing more bungalows and go straight ahead passing above the playing fields of Bridgewater School. Maintain this line across an iron gate and along the right hand edge of a field (again with excellent views) until a second iron gate leads to Castle Hill Farm. Continue to the top of Castle Hill and go down the road to the Castle and station.

10. Forthcoming Events

Monday 31 May	Fête	Castle Grounds	
Friday 11 June	Summer Wine	Court House	6.45-8.30pm. (Members only)
			Tickets attached
Thursday 1 July	Walk in Hockeridge Woods.	Meet Lower Kings Road car park	at 7.30pm. Lifts available for those without cars.

11. Committee Officers

Chairman	-	Guy Moores	-	44 Gaveston Drive	-	6783
Vice-Chairman	-	Norman Binks	-	123 High Street, Northchurch	-	6300
Hon. Secretary	-	Sheila Walton	-	11 Murray Road	-	5988
Hon. Treasurer	-	Peter Braybrooke	-	16 Castle Hill Ave.	-	4955
Hon. Membership Secretary	-	Hazel Ward	-	Red Lodge, Graemesdyke Rd.	-	5604

PLEASE!

There are still a number of our members who have not paid subscriptions for this year. If there is a cross in the box can you please either pay it (£1.50 per family or £1.00 per Individual) to Lloyds Bank Ltd. or to our Membership Secretary Hazel Ward, at the above address.

