



Summer 1982

The mid-summer newsletter is always the most difficult to compose because of the apparent lull in local activities. This is more apparent than real although, of course, some momentum is lost due to people being away on holidays. As always however, once the pen starts to write, it triggers off comments on many aspects of the local scene which shows that despite summer drowsiness, much goes on.

## 1. Planning Procedures

One of these 'business as usual' activities is the cycle of planning applications and the meetings of the local Planning Committee. This meets approximately every 2 weeks, year in – year out, to consider perhaps between 6 to 15 items. These are generally fairly mundane such as house extensions, garages, advertising signs, bus shelters, change of use etc. Mundane? Insignificant? Far from it! One man's extension is another man's change of environment and we all know what potential emotion that can bring about. Many of these applications are quite reasonable uncontentious changes enhancing properties and forming part of the evolution of the town. They represent in many cases efforts to improve property and standard of living. Nevertheless, taken cumulatively over a year or two, they amount to considerable activity and more than subtle changes to areas of the town. And, of course, mixed in with all this is the 'googly' application and the full toss. Some applications appear to ignore impact on local area and others are blockbusters which will have significant impact on the town, its resources and social environment. Who now remembers the applications for development of Northchurch Hall, Durrants Estate, Ashlyns Estate, South Park Gardens and the area above Bridgewater Roads Tunnel Field and the Grey Mare site at Northchurch where 100 dwellings will emerge? Some change in our environment!

Both the principle and the detail of planning applications, for good or ill, go before the Planning Committee and, it is critically important that our representatives doing such tasks have a commitment to thoroughness, and have a perspective on what they are doing. Not that in general it is not so, but we do well to remember the power and influence that reside in such activities.

It is for this reason that one of the Association's major activities has been observing and commenting on planning applications and developments. This includes inspecting applications when available to the public (as they must be), listening to the comments at Committee and the style with which the Committee completes its work and, where such applications are of local impact, commenting on this with the hope that our comments will be taken into account. They often are and we have an impressive record of involvement and influence in this matter. From time to time applications erupt with a Public Inquiry and we have spent much time and effort commenting to Inspectors on such issues. The most recent are the ones on Kitchener's Field and on the Dacorum District Plan.

We believe that it is crucial to the town to have Councillors who are intelligent and sensitive on such matters and to have an Association such ours which can specialise in knowledge of procedure and development of the

town. It is a pity that more people do not occasionally pop in to listen to local Committees. Some times they are quite lively entertainment! Details of meetings are always posted several days ahead on the notice board in front of the Civic Centre. Meetings of the Dacorum District Council and its Committees are posted in the window of the office, above the notice board. It is there but you must seek in order to find!

## 2. Rockville Around the Clock

Another example of pressure on the boundaries of Berkhamsted is the latest application by Rockville Construction to build on the land between Bell Lane and Durrants Lane. This would involve between 176 and 206 dwellings, in what is currently designated Green Belt in the County and District Plans. We have written to the Department of the Environment objecting on the above basis and that the access on to Durrants Lane is a pedestrian and traffic hazard and that it is taking up farming land. This area and others on the shoulders of the hills along the Berkhamsted / Northchurch Valley are going to be under continuous pressure for some years, by-pass or no by-pass, and we will have to watch this issue around the clock. Berkhamsted cannot turn the clock back but we can and should guard against over-development and pressure on the environment without a compatible overall improvement in the resources and facilities of the Town.

## 3. Traffic to be Tamed?

An Extraordinary (in more ways than one!) Meeting of the Road and Home Safety Committee of the Berkhamsted Town Council was held on Monday 12 July to consider a Traffic Survey Report which contains proposals intended for submission by the Town Council to Dacorum Council, as recommendation, on traffic flow.

Norman Williams, the Citizens' representative on the Committee, sought to have the report amended so as to take more specifically into account the interests of pedestrians and, in particular, those of the very young, the elderly and the infirm. The Committee were not disposed to so amend their report because they considered it to be exclusively a traffic survey prepared with the primary aim of seeking ways to increase the free flow of traffic, both within and through the Town, mainly in the interests of safety. They preferred that the interests of pedestrians should be considered as a separate exercise. In preparing this report the easing of the movement of emergency services and the lessening of driver frustration were uppermost in their consideration.

Accordingly, the recommendation that consideration be given to replacing the traffic lights at the King's Road / A41 crossroad in the centre of Berkhamsted with a new roundabout was retained. Mr Williams pointed out that such an arrangement is rarely satisfactory where there are more than three entry points and would make it more difficult for pedestrians to appreciate when it is safe to cross the High Street, articulated vehicles would have difficulty in turning in such a congested area and any increase in the speed of traffic along the High Street would render it inevitably even more hazardous for pedestrians.

Similarly, the recommendation to introduce one-way systems was retained although this might well be confusing both to pedestrians and strangers to the town and any increase in the speed of traffic in residential areas could be hazardous to those living there, particularly young children.

It was also sought to modify the proposal that parking in the High Street be limited to 20 minutes, because this would result in cars moving in and out of parking spaces more frequently and so still further impede the flow of traffic.

The Committee did agree to recommend that the completion of the Billet Lane to New Road link via Springfield Road (on the Chiltern Park estate) be deferred until the by-pass has been completed. It also inserted in its report a recommendation that a roundabout be placed at the top of Chesham Road, at the junction with Shootersway.

The report as a whole contained a large number of constructive suggestions, particularly those directed to the better regulation of parking and those for increased parking facilities. If accepted by the Town Council it will be passed to the Dacorum District Council.

#### 4. A41 not tamed?

The town was promised a resurfaced A41 this May but this seems now to have gone the same way as all promises. The surfacing should originally have been done in October 1981, but this was put off due to the belated realisation that the water drains (built at the turn of the century) needed rebuilding. Now there is argument between County (responsible for trunk roads) and Thames Water Authority who are responsible for water flow control and conservation. The argument is guess what? Who pays!

It really is not good enough for us to be fobbed off again but if we have a new surface by 1983, it will be a miracle.

#### 5. Town Hall

Another activity which has not stopped for the summer is the work for the Town Hall. Plans for the Country and Craft Fair on Bank Holiday Monday 30 August at BUTTS MEADOW proceed. The Town Crier leaflet gives details of this and other aspects of the Town Hall efforts. 7000 leaflets have been distributed to advertise this and the street to street collection.

It is hoped that the plans to open the shops in February / March 1983 go ahead on time which will then lead the way to the completion of the main first floor area, providing much needed facilities and giving the Old Lady of the High Street a new life.

#### 6. Exercise Training for the Elderly and Disabled

If you have recently retired, feel lonely, are not as able as you were and feel the need for movement, then this is the class for you.

These classes are for men and women and specially arranged for retired people. The benefits are:-

Improves posture, poise and co-ordination

Provides recreational exercise to music

Encourages correct diet and nutrition

Stimulates health of body and mind

Increases mobility and muscle tone

Enhances the quality of life

Give it a whirl! Perhaps you have friends or relatives who could enjoy this. The classes meet at Gable Hall on Thursdays from 2-3 PM and the cost is 30p per session. For further details contact Mrs Olive Bolton Dacorum District Council, Leisure Services Department, Tel, HH. 64501

#### 7. Summer Wine

Those of you who were not able to take wine, at the Court House missed a most enjoyable evening. The Court House is a delightful setting and we wish more members would join us in future. The next opportunity will be at Christmas when we should have some more beautiful singing, sherry and mince pies. It is too soon to think about it - but note the date.

## 8. Forthcoming Activities

Tuesday	21 September	Open Forum	Court House - 8pm
Sunday	17 October	Autumn Ramble	Meet at the Station at 10am
Wednesday	20 October	Talk by Mr A Campbell CMG Ex-General Secretary of the Chiltern Society on 'Conservation or Change?' at the Court House at 8pm.	
Tuesday	23 November	Talk by Mrs P.S. Cunningham on 'Around the World in an English Garden' Court House at 8pm.	
Friday	17 December	Christmas Social (Members only) Court House at 8pm.	

The Open Forum is a new feature of our Activities programme and an experiment. The idea stems from the pattern of the AGM earlier this year when it became clear that many subjects raised needed and deserved time for detailed discussion. There are also many topics with which the Committee become involved during the year, which could usefully be described at an Open Forum better than in the Newsletter. It is hoped that members will raise questions in writing to the Secretary (11 Murray Road) at least a few days beforehand, but this does not preclude subjects being raised on the night. The meeting is not devised as merely an 'Any Questions' session, but will give Committee members and group leaders in particular, an opportunity of explaining in detail the work with which they are involved. BCA work is very much like an iceberg - only the tip shows. There is a lot of leg-work and discussion / letter - writing, which lies underneath results achieved.

## 9. Articles in the Berkhamsted Review

We have long sought to support this excellent monthly journal, by providing 'copy' for most editions. This occasionally clashes in timing of publication with our Newsletter for members and, sometimes, results in overlap of articles. Where members also receive the Review, we hope for their tolerance and understanding as we believe the Review is one way of reaching many Citizens who are not 'Citizens'! Additionally, it is a quicker and better distribution method as it includes Newsagents' shops etc. If we had a monthly Newsletter we would have to have a higher subscription. By contributing to the Review we believe we are helping communications in the Town - a factor which is implicit in our Constitution.

## 10. Youth Club

We have formally been invited to have, and have accepted, a representative on the Berkhamsted Youth Club Committee. We believe this is an area which the Town in general has neglected and which deserve better treatment. More of this in future Newsletters.

## 11. Boundary Commission Proposals

In spite of many protestations, the proposals have not been altered. This means that our future Parliamentary Constituency will be linked with Rickmansworth as 'West Herts'. Hemel Hempstead will remain linked with Tring and outlying districts between. This has no effect on the Dacorum District Council boundary but does mean our future M.P.'s will cover a weird spectrum of local authorities and communities. We feel another orchestrated effort should be made to register the undoubtedly large majority opposition to the proposal; and we shall be contacting people about this. Meanwhile let us have your views.

### This Month's Walk - 2-3 hours

A round walk from the Castle which takes in Alpine Meadow, Coldharbour, Northchurch Common, Norcott Hill and Dudswell returning along the Canal. 7 miles. Suitable for a summer evening as the canal return makes route finding easy in the dusk. Take strong footwear as the Coldharbour to Northchurch Common section can be muddy.

This route is just one of very many possible circuits to the northwest of the town. There are alternative paths for each section and the area provides an endless source of pleasure for walkers familiar with the possibilities. Many of the pathways on the commons are not shown on any maps and the whole area repays careful exploration. Enthusiasts can join together the 1:25000 maps for Chesham and Tring, marking in routes as they find them. Others are happy to discover paths as they go along, gradually learning which are best for particular seasons and weather conditions.

Route - Start from the Castle along Brownlow Road. Where the main road turns right, go straight on along Castle Hill which turns left and climbs towards the old site of Berkhamsted Place. At the top of this road turn right along a farm track past a notice 'Private road - access to farm and residents only'. Pass to the right of a fine old barn and other farm buildings continuing until the track divides at the entrance to the driveway of the modern farm. Keep straight ahead here crossing a stile by an iron gate into a large field. Follow a track along the left hand hedge for 30 yards and then fork right on an initially indistinct track leading north-north-west (NNW) to the opposite corner of the field. The track crosses a slight crest followed by a valley before reaching a stile and gate in the corner. Cross the stile and continue along the good track for about 5 minutes until a hedgerow is reached leading left at right angles to the crack. Turn left here and follow the footpath along the right hand side of the hedge. A belt of trees is soon reached - turn right and follow the path along the field edge below a large oak. There is an iron gate at the next boundary and a good view of the trees along the edge of the common. Before crossing the gate please check any dogs are under control as there are usually sheep in the meadow beyond. Keep straight on along the left hand side of the meadow which soon leads downhill to a valley.

About two thirds of the way down this slope a stile leads left into a dense wood. Follow the path through the wood to Alpine Meadow - now a nature reserve managed by the Herts and Middlesex Trust for Nature Conservation. A delightful place with many flowers and butterflies at this time of year. (In fact the whole walk this month passes through such a wide variety of habitats that you should allow plenty of extra time if there are naturalists in the party.)

At Alpine Meadow the path leads uphill, re-enters the trees and crosses a stile into a field. There are often horses and donkeys here - friendly but keep an eye on any dogs or children in the party. The path follows the left hand hedge, crosses a further stile and reaches the large trees at the edge of the common. Cross the stile here and turn left to follow a path running parallel to the edge of the common towards Coldharbour Farm. The general direction is NNW and the path runs through attractive mixed woods. There are several parallel alternative paths as one approaches Coldharbour - I prefer to keep to the left on smaller ones less used by horses. To do this keep left at the first fork 5 minutes from the stile, cross a small dip, cross a farm track and continue on to cross the main track from Woodyard to Coldharbour. You should arrive here some 10 mins from the stile and see the gates of Coldharbour Farm to your left.

From Coldharbour, a well surfaced farm track leads WNW along a wide clearing towards Little Coldharbour (still continuing parallel to the edge of the common) which is reached in 5 minutes and where the track ends. From here the edge of the cordon gradually curves left. Our route follows this curve along paths some 70 yards inside the common from the fields. Provided you keep an eye on this boundary, direction can be maintained whilst using some of the smaller paths to avoid boggy patches on the main route. From Little Coldharbour keep straight ahead (WNW initially). After 7 minutes take a left turn where a path crosses your route. Your direction should now be WSW and you should keep left again at the next fork a couple of minutes later. Very soon you should pass a large beech and emerge alongside a line of old beeches leading SSW. Follow these a short way (100 yards or so) and look at the view to the SE across fields to the woods surrounding Alpine Meadow. It is now time to turn right from the line of beeches (ie. walking due west). You should arrive at the main Northchurch / Ringshall road, in a couple of minutes. If all has gone well you should see an obvious clump of ten or so medium size oak trees on the opposite side of the road fairly close to you. (In case of difficulties these are 400 yards south of the road junction to Aldbury.) Cross to these trees. From their north (ie. Ringshall) side a good trackway leads SW across open fields. This is the halfway point and navigational problems are now behind you!

Follow the trackway with wide views all around. Cross another track after 10 minutes or so keeping straight on along the edge of the birch trees and bracken. A couple of minutes later a further junction is reached where 5 ways meet. Continue straight on between the trees leaving 2 paths to your left and one to your right. (The left hand path here provides a good alternative high level return to Berkhamsted joining the walk in the May newsletter.) Bear slightly right and emerge from the trees on to the surfaced road by Norcott Hill Farm. Turn left along this road.

The road from Norcott Hill has very little traffic. Follow it downhill with good views across the valley towards New Barn, Champneys and Wigginton. Keep left at the junction (Norcott Court is to your right here) and continue across the railway bridge to the canal at Dudswell. There are some very attractive cottages here to the right of the road.

Turn left and follow the towpath on the right hand side of the canal towards Berkhamsted. This year there are plenty of young Mallard, Coot and Moorhen and the marshy ground between the Bulbourne and the towpath always has something of interest. No place to hurry on a summer evening although a brisk walk will return you to Berkhamsted station in 30 minutes if you wish. You will pass 4 locks and 3 bridges before coming to a final lock where the large blue iron bridge carries Lower Kings Road over the canal. Leave the canal here by the steps to the right and turn left to reach the station and Castle.