



**Berkhamsted  
Citizens  
Association**

# NEWSLETTER

September 1983

## 1. Now for Something Different

The first sign of the end of Summer is perhaps the plop through the letter box of the Film Society programme. The second sign, the goal posts on the Boys' School Fields at Chesham Road. The Autumn still seems far off whilst playing tennis and enjoying barbecues in the hot sticky evenings. Maybe we will be more grateful for the early Autumn, when we can begin to sleep better during cooler nights. What a contrast between a drenched spring and sun-drenched summer; but at least we have those contrasts. Who wants Californian weather? Well, perhaps sometimes. We certainly wanted it for the Country and Craft Fair on August Bank Holiday Monday and, for once it was perfect. This is one of the main fund raising events for the Town Hall and is becoming a 'fixture' in our local events calendar. Even though the Sessions Hall on the first floor and the shops on the ground floor are now completed, much remains to be done. The main Hall on the first floor, the garden and the bar area and committee rooms still have to be done in phase 2 over another two years.

The opening in September marks a triumph of patience and determination. The Town Hall gives a special and unique flavour to our Town Centre. Just imagine it not being there but replaced with a continuation - Boots and Waitrose land! Without wishing to insult anyone, they do seem to be a repetition of many other Town Centre sites up and down the land; legacies from an era of a particular fashion in Town Planning. The Town Hall however, is a speciality of Town Planning from a different era and an example well worth retaining for us and future generations. Not all the past is worth keeping, but this certainly is. Thanks are due to those anonymous people who have struggled and worked for this moment. Those of us who have been privileged to be involved, by Trustees and sub committees alike, really know the blood, sweat and tears involved. At least we now have achievement and satisfaction. There can be few who will not be impressed by the vista that greets them beyond those dark green doors.

2. Drains and Drags - The long awaited repair of the storm drains along the High Street is now under way. It seems incredible that some sectors have not been repaired since the turn of the century - when the High Street was a dirt track. The resurfacing will follow the drain renovation, then they can start to dig holes all over again. The traffic will tail-out to Northchurch or Swing Gate Lane for several months. So, ask not why we need a Bypass - just observe the volume of traffic. One compensation is that pedestrians can cross the road in safer conditions - as the traffic is halted. By the time the road is resurfaced (ready for the gas-man to dig it all up again) the Inspector holding a Public Inquiry on the bypass route will have reported. The Government proposals for Axle weights on lorries were agreed on the basis of more money forthcoming for more bypasses.

Berkhamsted has first claim on some of this. We now have 38 ton articulated lorries with 3 axle trailers passing along our roads. The Road Haulage Association says the change is going to be gradual. But so is the building of roads. The County Council and District Council are committed to the A41 bypass from Berkhamsted to Kings Langley. It all now depends on how much political pressures can be exerted to put it top of the list for action.

3. Pressure from Above - The Government Green Paper on removal of Green Belt restraints will have serious implications for Berkhamsted and Northchurch. There are already building applications in the pipeline for development of the green field sites around the town. Even though met by initial refusals, the developers will go on and on through procedures until they achieve their aim. It will need very strong public reaction to prevent an explosion of development round the area. The existence of either Inner or Outer Route for the bypass therefore may be irrelevant as a boundary as building pressure may exist either side of the Inner or Outer Route given this new policy development. If one takes in the extra pressures of traffic and mobility from the M25 Outer London Ring Road (due for completion in 1986) then West Herts can certainly expect some changes. It is hopeless to try and resist all change but we must ensure that changes are implemented in an intelligent way and not in an uncaring laissez-faire way. The most uncaring way would be to not have a bypass and allow more and more traffic to snarl along our High Street. The most uncaring way would be to allow our lovely skyline to be destroyed. Fortunately, there is a much sharper perception of these things now than 20 years ago but vigilance is still required.

4. Group Pressure - The mechanics of presenting our combined opinions to the officials and representatives in the local authority does exist. There are many examples of this, the latest being the alternative route 'furore' relating to Charles Street. The residents, knowing the local scene intimately, saw the hazards immediately and, fortunately, Mrs Anne Barling and her officers including Police Authority were persuaded to amend the first decision. That is a healthy and sensible result. One may wonder why local soundings were not taken earlier; there is after all the Road & Home Safety Committee of the Town Council - where questions had been asked right through the Spring about the plans for the High Street work, but without any adequate answers. One wonders why communication on these matters is so difficult to achieve. As the details of the diversion were announced with little notices the BCA wrote to Cllr. Barling giving some detailed suggestions for minimising the expected chaotic and dangerous re-routing. Her reply is given below:-

"I have received a number of letters on the above subject and this reply attempts to deal with the points raised.

Perhaps I could first explain the background. The surface water drains under the High Street are both inadequate and in a state of serious deterioration, many of them having been built when the road was a gravel surface. It is essential therefore, that these are re-constructed prior to the long needed re-surfacing of the High Street. The work will be done in short lengths, with traffic signals controlling alternate one-way traffic past the section.

The Works Committee was under no illusion that the work to be done on the A41 would be other than extremely inconvenient to the Town as a whole and the centre and nearby roads in particular, and the

route of any diversion presented problems often not immediately obvious. The alternative was to offer no alternative route around the stoppage. It was considered that it would cause less confusion, and indeed be less dangerous overall, if an alternative route was sign-posted for light traffic only. I would emphasise at this point that it is not intended to divert any heavy vehicles around a diversionary route - which will in any case only be advisory.

Whilst there is no legal requirement to do so, it this Council's policy to consult as far as possible with the public on matters affecting them, but I am sure you will appreciate that it was quite impracticable in this instance for all who might be affected by the route to be notified.

Every effort will be made by advance publicity which is being handled by the Department of Transport, to encourage drivers who can do so, to re-arrange their route to avoid Berkhamsted. The alternate route would only be advised as and when congestion occurs, and the signs will be covered until then.

Consultation took place between all the authorities concerned, and Charles Street / Shrublands was considered to be the most feasible of the alternative suggested routes for westbound traffic. At the same time it was recognised that it was far from ideal. At this last meeting, bearing in mind the points made by the residents, the Works Committee asked its officers to go back to the other authorities concerned, with a view to providing a further alternative route via Shootersway, which should be brought in as soon as possible, if at all feasible, at the same time retaining the Charles Street route, which would be care fully monitored, and if variations appear necessary they would be introduced.

Following these consultations it is intended to use Shootersway in the first instance as the signed alternative route after certain remedial works have taken place at the junction of Shootersway and Durrants Lane, where there have been several accidents.

Charles Street will not be signposted initially, but it will remain available as an alternative route and waiting restrictions will remain in force while work is in progress on the A41. It is anticipated that traffic with local knowledge will use it rather than the Shootersway route signed or not. The Works Committee has a duty to ensure that during the works, emergency services can operate with the minimum delay. We must therefore keep our options open.

Any request for a rate reduction should be made to the District Valuer at St. Albans.

In the final analysis should congestion become acute anywhere in Berkhamsted, the police have the authority to re-route traffic as and where they see fit with or without an alternative route either being available or used."

5. Achievements - The Sessions Hall in the Town Hall being open for bookings (phone Mr Heaton-Smith on Berk. 75636) adds to the Court House and Civic Centre as useful meeting and activity Centres. The extension to the Civic Centre should be completed by November. (The Town Hall office is open from 10am to 1pm on Tuesday to Saturday for bookings.)

When the Trustees get the Main Hall open upstairs in the Town Hall we really will have a goodly selection. Quite a change from the situation 3 years ago when we were becoming concerned at the dearth of available meeting places of appropriate size. We still do not have a public sports centre for Badminton, Indoor Carpet Bowls, Netball etc. but perhaps the opening of the Tring Sports Centre will now allow the Dacorum District Council to consider allocation of money to provide similar facilities in Berkhamsted.

6. No Achievement Yet - As well as public indoor sports facilities, the Town should be concentrating on providing an adequate Youth Centre. The Park View Road site was hardly adequate and was degenerating into a bad advertisement for Youth activities. If the County, District and Education authorities could invest in the political will then a solution could be found. It looks as if there is movement behind the scenes and the BCA committee have been active in discussing possible solutions with the people concerned. But there must not be any further delay, as this will undermine all the good work done so far, as well as indicating to the Youth Community that nobody really cares - as this is certainly not true.

7. Home and Car Burglaries - The BCA has a representative on the Road and Home Safety committee (of the Town Council) and one on the local Crime Prevention committee (arranged on a Dacorum wide basis). We know therefore what practical efforts have been made by the police and local safety officers to improve our awareness of the basic steps needed to deter burglars and car thieves.

To help with this publicity we circulated one of the leaflets with the last news letter. We cannot always do this, but we can advise members of the basic steps to take and where they can obtain information. Leaflets are nearly always available at the Police Station and at the Library in Kings Road. If you really want to deter burglars contact the local Crime Prevention Officer who will advise on what specific action should be taken with locks, window sashes, alarms etc.

To beat car thieves remember the following:-

1. Remove the ignition key;
2. Fasten all windows;
3. Lock all doors;
4. Do not leave valuables in the car and certainly not in view of passers-by;
5. Fit an anti theft device.

Some local garages have been distributing stickers which go on quarter light windows of the car repeating the above and reminding us "Watch out - there's a thief about". The various leaflets are:-

Lock it - or lose it	(Car Thefts)
As Safe as Houses?	(Burglary)

Danger from Fire - How to protect your home  
Protect your Home (A Home Office and Police Guide)

But you probably don't need these - it can't happen to you - can it?

8. Tree Planting - The demise of the limes leading from Castle Hill Avenue to Berkhamsted Place and the building of houses on the Place site are just a small reminder of the constant need for replacement to safeguard our inheritance for those following us. The new trees on the High Street seem to have survived a vigorous hot summer with the loss of one near the Co-op. Another older tree has died in front of Brown and Merry - but that's not their fault! The trees in the car park behind Waitrose seem to have survived as have the five planted at Queens Road by the Association. Other sites along the canal have fared less well. There is now, we hear, a plan to plant trees along the A41 on the approach to Hall Park end. Sadly, however, trees are lopped, as in Kings Road, Doctors Commons Road, and other places, as they grow large, sometimes appearing to be dangerous, and on occasions, actually are. So replanting on all sites is desirable so far as is practicable. Our phase 2 for the Town Centre will be developed this winter for planting between October and March. Any ideas for sites which would be improved by trees and shrubs should, be advised to our Secretary.

9. Town Improvements - There are a number of small eye-sores developing around the Town about which we will be contacting our Councillors. Some, such as the Tip (sorry - amenity site) are well known and being actioned. The state of Water Lane car park, the roadway along Greenfield Lane, the fencing opposite Billet Lane - are but a few. The first meeting of our Winter Programme is an Open Forum to provide opportunity to raise these points. So don't just sit there! Come along!

10. 1963

Tues. 20 September - Open Forum  
Sun. 16 October - Autumn Ramble - Meet at station at 10am  
Tues. 18 October - Local Birds of Prey - Talk by Dr. P. Burton  
Wed. 23 November - Crime Prevention by Hertfordshire Constabulary  
Fri. 9 December - Christmas Social Evening

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Sun. 1 January - New Year's Day Ramble - Meet at station at 10.30  
Wed. 25 January - The Computer Generation - Talk by

Mr A. Hutchinson

Wed. 14 March AGM  
Wed. 11 April - Talk by Gerald Priestland (subject to be  
announced, later)  
Mon. 23 April - Easter Ramble - Meet at station at 10am.

Wed. 2 May - Visit St. Peter's Church and Tower  
Mon. 28 May - Spring Bank Holiday Fête at the Castle  
Fri. 8 June - Summer Wine at Ashridge College

All meetings take place at the Court House at 8pm unless otherwise stated.

11. Berkhamsted Youth Club - In completing this Newsletter, we are adding an extract from a paper prepared by the Club's Management Committee in relation to their requirements for a new site. As indicated on another page it appears that some agreement may be found soon both on a site and the type of building. We hope to report positively on this before Christmas. We include the following extract for information.

'Berkhamsted Youth Centre has operated since 1972 in the old school premises in Park View Road. The premises have been made available rent-free by the Herts County Council Social Services Department, and have been provided on a temporary basis.

The Youth Centre has played a considerable role in meeting the needs of those young people for whom the town has little to offer and in particular to those whose main need is for a place to meet and talk. The Youth Centre has also been involved in a number of initiatives with young people with particular problems including drug taking and unemployment.

The Youth Centre provides the only independent Youth work facilities in Berkhamsted and has achieved success despite working in adverse and temporary conditions. Other facilities for young people in Berkhamsted are limited; there are Church Youth Clubs with restricted and fluctuating memberships, some specialist sporting clubs with junior sections, and the uniformed groups, which while active and successful themselves, acknowledge their limited appeal. Commercial discos are run occasionally in public houses.

It is now clear that the current site of the Youth Centre will be re-developed and that a new home is required. This has come as a disappointment to many, particularly the young people using the Youth Centre, but at the same time it presents a challenge and an opportunity. It is understood that the Youth Centre may have to be relocated towards the end of 1983. Although the County Council's Social Services Committee has given an undertaking that re-development of the existing site will not take place until alternative accommodation for the Youth Centre has been found, the situation is already urgent.

The need to re-locate the Youth Centre provides a challenge and an opportunity because it may provide the impetus for Berkhamsted to obtain for the first time a purpose built centre catering for a range of interests of the local young people and offering a base for Youth and Community Work in the town generally. It would be particularly rewarding if the Youth Centre could extend the creative and sporting opportunities for local young people.

It would be ironic if the year of publication of the report of the Government appointed Study Group on the Youth Service were to coincide with the frustration of youth work in Berkhamsted through the lack of basic facilities.'