



December 1992

Editor's Musing

We are at one of those interludes in a town life when everything is happening and nothing has happened.

As we prepare to go to press, there is to be an exhibition of proposed changes to the town attended by councillors in the Town Hall and preceding it a Citizens' Association meeting attended by councillors, their support staff and, it is hoped, representatives from the Kingsgate development and the grocery companies interested.

No doubt that will send a flurry of birds into the air which I will have plenty to talk about (I hope they are not vultures) but at the moment there is nothing to say.

If we can arrange to include a stop press report, we will do so. If we cannot, then just watch this space.

I guess if we were the tabloid press we would make it up anyway, and if we were the quality press we would talk about it, earnestly soliciting various views and not actually committing ourselves to hard facts. As we are neither, we shall just have to wait and see.

That, of course, leaves us with a large gap to fill. I don't suppose you would be very interested in my cold, would you? I don't think anybody is very interested in my cold but I always get one in November. I know my enthusiastic shopper, on whom I draw for my erudite knowledge on all matters retail is not, and it is really her fault. She dragged me round Watford for six hours with only one cup of coffee last week. I have always maintained that shopping centres are very prejudicial to health, certainly to mine.

However, I expect to be in rude health for the Association Christmas party on 18th December in the Town Hall at 8.00pm. It will take the form of a Victorian evening with carols and other suitable Victorian entertainment. Since many of the committee will attend in full Victorian attire, not to mention many members, this will be an occasion not to be missed. (Costumes can be hired from ABC Costume Hire at 59 Gossoms End, tel: 863786. Hours of opening: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday (6.30 – 8.00pm), Saturday (10.30 – 5.00pm))

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While on the subject of the Town Hall, the Trust is still working hard to bring it up to a high standard. Studies are being carried out to facilitate access for the disabled. For example it is hoped in due course to provide a reasonably sized lift.

My eyes lit up when, at a recent Association committee meeting, the Trust's representative said they hoped to get a Licence for the Town Hall. They promptly lit down when I discovered this was for weddings. Apparently these days you can get married in places other than churches and registry offices, providing they are deemed as suitable and for which a licence has been obtained. When finalised, the Wellcome Hall will make a splendid setting for a civic marriage.

You learn a lot at Association meetings, I can tell you. Get your application in early for the March A. G. M.

On the subject of the A.G.M., this is also the time for the presentation of the Environment Award and recommendations for the latter are now required. This is an enlightened and constructive attempt by the Association towards encouraging good design. It doesn't have to be anything large and grandiose. It can be something quite small. The Association is fortunate in having a body of expertise in the subject who are capable of making an informed judgement. So let us have your nominations please as soon as possible. I always find the annual Environment Award a very interesting part of the A. G.M. Evening.

This has been a good year for recruiting. It does not seem long since I was able to report we had passed the thousand mark and we are now well over that figure. 1993, incidentally, is the first year that the 5-year subscriptions become due for renewal. If, like me, you haven't a clue whether yours is one of them or not, do not worry. Our membership secretary has you in his sights (if a computer has sights) and you will be informed in due course.

It always seems to be Christmas. At least that is what it seems to be since I have become a little older than I used to be. When I was a child Boxing Day always seems to be an aeon away from the next Christmas Day, or even my birthday, but now it always seems to be imminent. Of course it may not be antiquity which causes this phenomenon. It might be the fact that Christmas trees and decorations start appearing in the shops round about Easter.

One thing is for sure, Christmas will soon be with us. May I on behalf of the Committee wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a fruitful and interesting New Year with all our best hopes for us all individually and the town in general.

Don't forget the New Year's Day Ramble. I shan't forget it, though at this time I shall be bleary eyed in Birmingham.

Planning and Amenities

Stag Lane - The Association has lodged objections to the proposal for a supermarket.

Alsford Site – Modified proposals have been submitted but the Association still does not regard them as satisfactory because the building is right up against the canal and is too prominent for such a sensitive site. The proposal is for a "Live and Work" development three storeys high with offices below and flats above. The building also comes right up against the road with an entrance opposite Mill Street.

The Meads - There is a proposal to build a house in the back garden of one of the houses. It is felt that this would overlook the others and would also need another bridge over the Bulbourne and could not be supported.

Lancaster Carpet Shop - The proposals are for a restaurant and a small retail shop. The Association can see no objection to this.

Countryside Committee

Archaeological Meeting - This was very successful. 150 people attended and heard a fascinating account of the finds encountered along the route of the by-pass.

Diary Events

Friday 18 th December 1992	Victorian Evening with carols, entertainment and wine. Berkhamsted Town Hall. 8.00pm. (members only)
Friday 1 st January 1993	New Year Ramble to Aldbury. Meet at Berkhamsted station at 10.30am.
Wednesday 20 th January 1993	"Our Canal Heritage in Berkhamsted." Sessions Hall. 6.00pm.
Thursday 25 th March 1993	AGM, Environment Award and Open Forum. Sessions Hall. 8.00pm.

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On Thursday 26th November after visiting the Planning Update Exhibition mounted by the Dacorum Borough Council and the Berkhamsted Town Council on what steps should be taken for the protection and enhancement of the town following the opening of the by-pass, a large gathering assembled in the town hall for a meeting arranged by the Association on "Whither Berkhamsted?"

The panel of experts present, under the chairmanship of Norman Williams, consisted of:
The Mayor of Berkhamsted, Councillor John Cook
Councillor Frank Seely, Chairman of the Town Centres Committee
Mr. John Hoad, Development Plans Manager
Mr. Robert Smith, who is responsible for the Department of Transport Bypass Demonstration Project
Mr. Alan Howling, Herts County Council Divisional Highway Manager
Mr. Keith Hunt, the Borough Chief Executive Officer
Mr. R. Duckworth, Managing Director of Highland Developments
Mr. Gordon Scott, Chairman of the Dacorum Chamber of Commerce;
Councillor David Roberts, a member of the Town Centre Committee
The Chairman of the Association, Nicholas Nisbet.

Each member of the panel addressed the meeting and members of the public present were given every opportunity to express their views and to put questions.

The discussion was very wide ranging, concentrating principally on how the best advantage can be gained from the reduced flow of traffic through the town as a result of the by-pass, and whether the proposed developments are likely to enhance the town and give it more vigour, or are likely to attract additional traffic and so nullify the effect of the by-pass. It was forecast that when the two new large stores were open in Dacorum, they might reduce the retail trade in Berkhamsted by about 20%, and so cast doubt on the viability and the need for two large stores in the town.

Although one million pounds will be available for the protection and enhancement of the town following the opening of the by-pass, those present expressed surprise and disappointment that consultations were not more advanced, and that members of the panel directly concerned were not able to reveal their specific ideas at this point in time. It was stated that they anticipated that they would be able to do so in February 1993, and so the Association proposes to hold a further meeting at that time.

At the Planning Update Exhibition, a Questionnaire and Comments Sheet was distributed, with an invitation to return it to:

The Director of Planning
Dacorum Borough Council
Civic Centre
Hemel Hempstead,
Herts, HP1 1HH.

Members are urged to let the Director of Planning have their views.