



**Berkhamsted
Citizens
Association**

NEWSLETTER

September 1993

Editor's Musings

As the mists of autumn, rather prematurely in my opinion, begin to settle in our valley, I am reminded that yet another newsletter is due.

As I write there is at least a partial outcome to some of the fairly frenetic activities of the last few years. One carriageway of the bypass is open with quite a marked drop in traffic in one direction on the A4251 which, those of us with a fairly active memory, may fondly remember as the A41. Having conducted a number of assessments from my front window I made the ratio of traffic in the two directions roughly 8:1. On the assumption that what goes one way must come back, this gives an incredibly high fall. I cannot believe it will be so good. However, even half the above ratio would be splendid and I look forward to the opening of the other carriageway.

It has to be said, now that some of the scars in our beautiful countryside are beginning to heal (slowly) that the planners have done as lovely a job as one could expect. The landscaping has been very well done and it has been described as one of the loveliest stretches of road in the country. (It was actually called a motorway which, of course, it is not.) It has even been well received in the national press. It will always be regarded by some as an intrusion and one can only understand this point of view. Accepting that there is no way that a road can be built which will not be at least a partial intrusion, what had to be done has been done well. The Association, by its nature, is frequently involved in criticising various developments. Let us for once acknowledge that a good job has been done and look forward to the benefits it should bestow upon us.

We will sharpen our critical edge, however, against the possible dis-benefits which might result. Controversy is never far away.

Indeed, it bubbles and boils around the proposed development at Kingsgate at this moment. The Association arranged a public meeting on 23rd July to discuss the proposed changes. This was well and vociferously attended. The Association had not then, and has not now, received a reply to their queries concerning the reasons for a bigger store, pedestrian access or car parking (public as opposed to shoppers). Nothing further has yet happened to the planning application but, as a result of the views expressed at the meeting, it is unlikely to be considered further until later in the year. It is also understood that a further review is to be undertaken and the indications are that the big scheme may be withdrawn. Nothing at the moment is certain but perhaps the views of objectors are being taken into account. To what extent only time will tell.

So far as the other supermarkets are concerned, it is understood that, whatever the Kingsgate outcome, one will probably close in a year or two's time but the other will remain open on its present site, although it may modify its activities according to circumstances.

The above are the facts so far as I have been able to glean them. In a fluid situation things may change at any time. Individuals may interpret the facts (so far as they are facts, some are indications) any way they choose to support their own point of view.

I wonder if I am the only person in the district who has not been set alight by the Kingsgate issue. I prefer one or two things more than some others. I think there are some inexorable conclusions to be drawn from some of the facts and studies. That is about it. But then, I am a bit of a misfit, a non-consumer in a consumerist society. I am, of course, advised by my Enthusiastic Shopper who willingly enlightens me in such matters. I was introduced to the new Sainsburys in Apsley recently. E.S. pointed out what a magnificent store it was. Since I could not see a garden centre anywhere around, its magnificence escaped me. "But look at the choice" she said. I did. At the time we were standing in front of 650 packets of Kellogg's cornflakes. "Yes," I said. "Which one shall we have". Apparently I was being obtuse. I had to admit that about ten yards away there were 650 packets of Rice Crispies and ten yards away further down a long row there were 650 packets of All Bran. Now I am one of those strange people who cannot see the improved choice one gets from having 650 of each brand to choose from, as opposed to 20. Unless, of course, you eat 650 packets in a week. In general E.S. and I don't.

My mind boggles at the monumental attack of constipation which would require the consumption of 650 packets of All Bran. Apparently, I was just being silly. As we trudged wearily along endless rows of shelves I was required to admit that it was all beautiful and spacious, well set out and clinically clean. Being the sort of chap who likes a quiet life I did, of course, agree merely pointing out that they ought to motorise the trolleys as I thought the southern end of the store was probably in Somerset and that the serried rows of heavily sprayed and beautifully packed cabbages were beginning to frighten me. Apparently I was being wilfully awkward.

Which is probably true. I always feel out of place in such palatial premises. I always have a nightmare that one day I shall either be swept away as a foreign object too untidy to be left cluttering up the passage or grabbed hold of by a smart man with "Deputy Manager" on his badge with a grimace of distaste and stuck in a basket with a label on me marked Past his sell-by date, price 4p".

As we loaded the car (several hours later) with all the items which looked surprisingly like the ones we always buy, E.S. brandished in the air a can of cream soda. "There you are", she said. "You can't get this anywhere".

So any time you feel like 650 packets of All Bran and a cream soda, you know where to go.

There is one other item which needs special mention. This concerns the proposed household waste transfer point in Northbridge Road. The planning sub-committee has been studying the proposals carefully. It sees little prospect of having the site changed but has raised strong objection to the detailed plan. At present it is located at a point near which some housing is likely to be built. Obviously this is a bad idea and the Association has suggested it should be as far away as possible on the north side, and should be well screened from Valley Road and the canal.

One thing is certain. There is no lack of problems and strife.

There are bright items too. You will have received with this newsletter a copy of Heritage in Action at Berkhamsted Town Hall, which lists the history, restoration details and facilities. A little later in the newsletter there is a brief note from the Chairman of the Friends of the Town Hall drawing our attention to the present state of the art.

Planning

In addition to the items mentioned above, the following are currently the subject of consideration by the sub-committee:

Shootersway Water Tower Objections have been made to an obtrusive safety rail which has been erected and particularly to the nature of retrospective planning approval which is involved. There is a point of principle here, the sub-committee is concerned that other even more objectionable additions might appear, eg. aerials.

Rex Cinema For some reason, the earlier proposals have resurfaced, although no imminent action seems likely. Pity!

By-Pass Action Group Proposals for traffic calming will be the subject of a public exhibition in October, to be followed by a further exhibition in February 1994.

Parking on The Moor A sign has been erected. Present indications, however, are that motorists can't read.

Friends of Berkhamsted Town Hall

The recently published Friends' leaflet Heritage in Action at Berkhamsted's Town Hall is enclosed with your newsletter. Giles Clark (the Citizens Association Representative Trustee and Chairman of the Friends in succession to David Sherratt) reports that the Friends and Trust have been making great progress during the summer. In May, the Wellcome Great Hall was decorated at night by volunteers with paint given by the Round Table. Redundant commercial cookers and stainless steel units, enormously expensive when new, were acquired from Middlesex University.

In the autumn the Trust intends to complete the kitchen which should allow large banquets and receptions to be held. The Medieval Players, a national touring theatre company, sadly lost their Arts Council funding in June and the Hall now has the benefit of their portable stage which offers the prospect of theatre in the round. Needless to say, any donations made to the Friends at this time of difficulty can have a considerable impact for the benefit of the town as a whole.

Future Events (further details on attached Programme Card)

6th October 1993	Illustrated talk. The Wildlife of Ashridge by Don Otter.
17th October	Autumn Ramble.
3rd November	Water, Water ... a talk by June Perkins of Three Valleys Water Services.
17th December	Christmas Celebrations.
1st January 1994	New Year's Day Ramble
10th February	I'm a journalist : talk by Jean Francis.
24th March	A.G.M.
4th April	Easter Ramble
2nd May	Town Centre Walk
17th June	Summer Wine

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