

THE CITIZEN



The Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

September 1995

Message from the Chairman

Most of you know that Eric Hoey relinquished the editor's chair after the publication of the June Newsletter. He occupied it with distinction for a long period of, during which he covered the Association's activities with wit and wisdom. The Committee have formally conveyed thanks to Eric on behalf of the members. The new editor, John Cook, has all the qualities we were seeking - a profound knowledge of and deep concern for our town, excellent communication skills and some extra time available owing to a recent change in his commitments!



You will see that John has introduced some changes in the format to the newsletter. The quarterly publication represents our only contact with the majority of our 1000 members. We hope that the format will stimulate some feedback and look forward to hearing from you. Please also look for the details of our program for the rest of the year. We have booked the Great Hall at the Town Hall for our speakers in anticipation of greater numbers coming to enjoy talks. We hope that some members who have not regularly come along in the past will do so in the future - we can promise you that we are better than anything you can see on television.

Keith Gay

EDITORIAL

Having opted for an easier life by not standing for re-election at the May local elections, I now find myself editor of the prestigious Newsletter of the BCA. My principal reason for taking it on is a keen personal interest in Berkhamsted, its history, what goes on in the Town now, and perhaps more than anything what will happen here in the future.

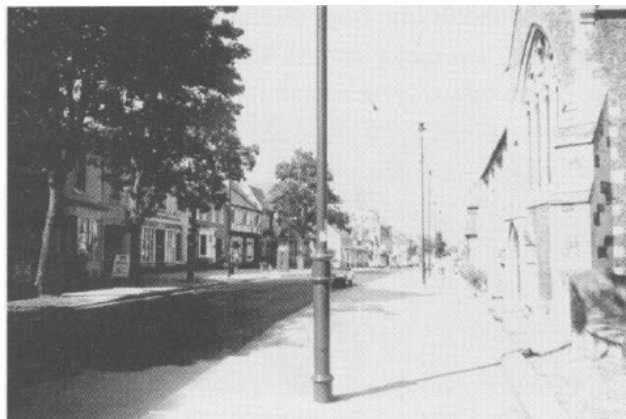
We all know that most of the major decisions that are made affecting Berkhamsted are not taken in the Town at all. They are debated and decided upon in Hemel Hempstead or Hertford or Westminster, or in the boardrooms and executive suites of companies whose head offices are outside the Town and whose interests in what happens here are simply financial. This is how things are and how they will remain into the foreseeable future.

The one redeeming fact is that all the bodies which take these decisions are made up of people who are susceptible to pressure to a greater or lesser extent, sometimes even to reasoned argument.

For some years now planning applications affecting the Town have been methodically and carefully considered by our Town Amenities sub-Committee and their views put forward to the planning authority. Over the page their comments on some of the more important recent applications affecting the Town are Summarised.

You may not always agree with what the sub-committee says - sometimes I don't - but it seems to me that they cannot be faulted in the care they take in seeking to arrive at a view that represents the best interests of Berkhamsted. Are there other areas of decision-making affecting the Town where the BCA ought to be similarly active? (Now while I am new to the job is the time to ask naive questions).

Although it only come out about every three months the Newsletter does seem to me to offer an opportunity for a wider cross-section of members to voice their views than are able to get to the AGM or other meetings. The best part of a thousand people see it. Why not write to me at 21 Castle Street with your comments? I don't guarantee to print them in full, or at all for that matter; but depending on available space I think we could have a lively correspondence section in future editions.



Wider footway and new lampposts by St. Peter's

Aftermath

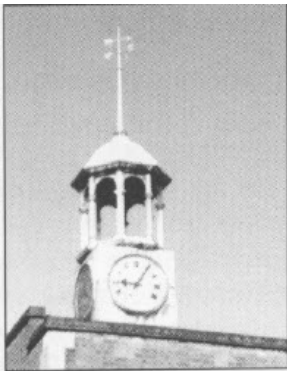
Has the dust finally settled along the High Street? Has the last set of Temporary traffic lights gone? Have all the paving works been completed?

Not altogether. The length between St John's Well Lane and Elm Grove has still be done, although the new pedestrian crossing outside the post office is in and parking regulations on this section are now in force.

As far as the middle part of our long High Street is concerned - between Manor Street and Elm Grove - the town centre enhancement and the bypass demonstration project works are all finished, apart from some tree planting to be done in the autumn. Posterity, someone said to me the other day, will judge whether it has all been worthwhile.

Without waiting to hear the judgement of posterity, many Berkhamstedians have already formed decided views on what has been achieved so far. For the paving works I award eight marks out of ten.

I particularly like the big granite kerbstones and granite sets and the wider footways, but the new paving does seem to show the stains of the market rather badly. Perhaps it will look better when it has weathered a little and had some rain on it.



A floodlit feature over the Fish Shop.

In a few years time when the trees have grown a bit I expect this part of the High Street to be leafier than it has ever been. The tall lampposts are a rather ungainly compromise between what the environmental planners wanted and what the lighting engineers said was necessary; but the overall level of lighting and the

floodlights are excellent.

On the down side in my view are all the signs. The signing, nearly all of it directed at motorists telling them how fast they may go, where they may park, turn left



New sign in the Town centre. Disappointing?

for Chesham, etc, is visually intrusive and of disappointing design. It is unworthy of the Town centre at the heart of the conservation area. Unfortunately those responsible for putting the signs up say that there are regulations they have to abide by, and they did their best.

Soon we are to have a 'Conservation Area Partnership' for Berkhamsted, and the Action Plan for this is to go to English Heritage in January next. The essence of this is further enhancement of the conservation area, particularly the buildings. We look forward to seeing what comes out of that.

Who Owns Berkhamsted?

Many of us have the freeholds of our houses and the land they stand in, but who are the really big landowners in the Town?

Berkhamsted Schools (the Boys and the Girls Schools, as now combined) are major owners of land in the Town. Near the centre they own nearly all the property between Castle Street and Mill Street, lots of buildings and land on both sides of Chesham Road and Kings Road and acres and acres of playing fields to the south. The Schools are currently seeking to develop on a large piece of open land which they own behind the Girls' School (see the Amenity sub-Committee's report on the back page).



Three Close Lane Cemetery: Part of the Rector's Freehold

Most of the other open spaces in the Town belong to Dacorum Borough Council, but not the allotments, which are the only property of the Town Council, or most of the other school playing fields, which belong to the County Council.

The substantial Three Close Lane cemetery belongs to the Rector of Berkhamsted - technically it is part of his free-hold - but it is a liability rather than an asset to the Church. As for the Castle, for centuries it has been owned by the Duchy of Cornwall and still is, but English Heritage looks after it.



The Castle Cottage belongs to the Duchy of Cornwall.

Railtrack owns a substantial swathe of land through the Town. Next year if all goes to plan most of Railtrack will be privatised. There is some concern that the buyers of it may be more interested in the development potential of the land they will acquire than in providing a good railway, but Berkhamsted is on the premier route of Britain's railway system, and the Government have just announced they won't be selling that yet.

Forthcoming Events Graham Spittle reports:



Sunday 8th October 1995/6

The programme of events starts with the autumn ramble to Wigginton led by Eric Drake.

Meet at the junction of Cross Oak Road/Shootersway at 10.30 am.

The Association's walks are not strenuous and if you have not walked with us before, do not be put off by the fear that you may not be able to keep up.

Please Note:

Congestion of Town Hall bookings while the disabled lift is being installed dictated the dates of our October meetings and prevented our holding any thing in November.



Thursday. 12th October.

Our first evening meeting, is an illustrated talk by John Cook on The Making of Berkhamsted. He tells me that this will be a look at the way the Town has developed from its early years, and some speculation about the direction in which it might change in the future. This will be in the Wellcome Great Hall at the Town Hall at 8.00 pm.

*Advanced Notice: the Christmas Celebration will be on **FRIDAY 15th DECEMBER** this year - not Saturday 16th December as previously advertised in the last Newsletter. Please note this change of date. There will be more details in the November Newsletter and on the card for the full 1995/6 Programme which is being supplied to members, or from me as this year's Chairman of the Activities sub-Committee.*

Thursday 19th October



This is followed unusually quickly by our second talk by Alfred Fisher of Chapel Studio, Hunton Bridge, entitled *Stained Glass and Looking After it*. Mr Fisher is a national authority on his subject but there are many examples of his work locally. Appropriately in this their centenary year, he is stained glass adviser to the National Trust. His talk will be illustrated by slides and will also

be in the Wellcome Great Hall at 8.00 pm.



B.C.A. Meetings will be held in the Wellcome Great Hall

Our Amenities

The Chairman of BCA's Town Amenities sub-Committee, Gordon Bluck, writes:

Traditionally the summer months and particularly August is the time of holidays and the Town amenities sub-Committee do not meet. It is always a time of activity for planning applications as developers try to sneak them through when minds are on other things. Since the last newsletter we have been involved with the following:

1) New application for a bungalow at 98 King Road. We objected on the grounds of lack of access onto a busy road, and over-development.

2) We objected to the proposed infilling and building of two dwellings at 'Kingslea' on the grounds of over-development in front of the building line and the impact of traffic on the road.

3) Turning to the controversial plan to build a new Junior/Prep school for the Berkhamsted schools, the committee was hampered because most of us had or had had children at the schools and a dispassionate view considering the needs of the Town, both planning and educational, had to be taken. Although we did not want to hold back improvements we felt that the application in its present form should be refused for the following reasons.

- a) The loss of the largest open space in the town is contrary to the local plan.
- b) The re-routing of the footpath would lose the views over the valley and bring users into conflict with traffic on the site.
- c) No apparent consideration given to 'rat-running' between Chesham Road and Kings Road.
- d) Traffic flow figures needed for the larger school.
- e) The view for traffic accessing onto Kings Road not acceptable as is the conflict with pupils on the footpath.
- f) Concern over the fate of the then redundant sites owned by the schools and their development.

4) Paul Gilbert is our representative on the Canalside Environmental Project which continues to refine plans under the chairmanship of Andrew Barrett,



Should development be allowed here, behind the Girls' School?

Town Councillor, which were outlined by David Smedley of Dacorum Borough Council at the summer wine (This is an initiative which this committee has been involved with from its inception).

5) David Brunt is our representative on the Dacorum Heritage Trust Focus Group, and as a committee we visited the new Heritage Store behind the Civic Centre in the old fire station: an excellent facility for preserving local items of historic interest.

6) The Committee had a most useful meeting with most of Berkhamsted Town Council to forge links between us for co-operation on matters affecting the Town.

7) We have just received plans for the staged building of Kingsgate and we will want to see the impact on the Town minimised and the car parking preserved. We continue to press for the vital linking of the scheme to the Town with new pedestrian access to the High Street/Lower Kings Road cross-roads.

8) We are considering the tree screening proposals for the Northbridge Road waste transfer site. This is something we have consistently pressed for.

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