

The Citizen



Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

December 2001

Chairman's Topics

Susan Johnson, BCA's Chairman writes:



TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT

When I went to the Town Centre Forum on 26th September I was pleasantly surprised to find that Dacorum's consultants had already produced some feedback from the Seminar held on the previous Wednesday 19th. It was fairly simple stuff but I thought it showed they meant business. The Seminar itself was standard fare: we had the presentation; we broke up into groups to identify the issues and reported back; we filled in questionnaires on the content **and** on the process. So far, so good. Now comes the difficult bit – exactly what do you do about solving the problems while talking up the strong points. The ultimate goal is to set up a new Partnership Company involving the Borough Council and the retail and business sector, with a Berkhamsted Co-ordinator and a new membership scheme. Its success, indeed its existence, depends upon input (and I mean money) from both sides, just like in Hemel Hempstead; you pay for what you get. I hope the Chamber of Commerce and all the businesses in Berkhamsted are enthusiastic, because otherwise the new Town Centres Manager will have a fruitless task on her hands. We await their response to the Consultants' final report.

BERKHAMSTED TOWN CENTRE ADVISORY FORUM

The next meeting of the TCAF will be on **12th December 2001** at 7.30 p.m. in the Town Hall and not 19th December as previously stated. The change was made by Dacorum, and is not the result of my incompetence (really!). Please try to come along, as it is a valuable source and exchange of information. Next year's dates remain, unless they change them, of course!

Profile of.....

George Cameron - Life member & Chairman 62/63

George Cameron, a mathematics and geography master at Hemel Hempstead Grammar School, moved to Berkhamsted in 1951 where his wife, Vera, was already on the staff of Berkhamsted School for Girls. He joined the Citizens in 1954, becoming a member of the Committee from 1956-76 and Chairman in 1962/3.



George has represented the Citizens Association on various bodies and at various times - the Library Committee, the local National Trust Committee for Ashridge and the CAB - and was for some time the Hon. Treasurer of the latter.

In the 1960s he became Principal of the Further Education Dept. in Berkhamsted and introduced a variety of new classes. He was always concerned for the status and welfare of teachers and was for many years Treasurer of the West Herts Association of the NUT.

George and Vera were active members of BAODS at the time when productions could be mounted on a large scale at the Court Theatre (now Tesco). He also used his dramatic skills when reading to the children at Sunnyside Church, where he was on the PCC. He always had a good rapport with the young and continued to coach after he retired. He also served on a University of London Examinations panel.

The Camerons have lived in Castle Hill Avenue for over 40 years and have two sons and five grandchildren. In September they celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary with a large gathering of friends and family at the Golf Club.

George is still active in the Town and is currently a member of the local Crime Prevention Panel.

Names Decided

by John Cook

Many ex-employees of Coopers who still live in the town will be pleased that the name of Clunbury will be preserved in the new flats to go up in place of the old Coopers complex in Ravens Lane and Manor Street. These condemned buildings include the premises of the one-time printing works associated with the firm - Clunbury Press - and it has been decided that the main part of the new development, comprising blocks of flats surrounding a central courtyard, is to be called Clunbury Court after them.

The choice of the name Bartrum Villas for the small group of houses to be included in the new development may need a little more explanation. One of the old buildings on the site, (as I write hidden behind the vast area of sheeting and about to be demolished), was called Bartrum House, taking its name from one of the most distinguished headmasters of Berkhamsted School.

Dr Bartrum's energetic rule of the school began in 1864, and under him the number of boys at last reached, and then well exceeded, the figure of 144 which was the intended number when the school was founded over 300 years before. This expansion continued and led to the need for more and more accommodation. As the numbers of boys relentlessly grew over the following 100 years or more, premises for the school's use were built or acquired in Castle Street, Mill Street, the High Street and Chesham Road - plus the one in Ravens Lane which appropriately came to be named after the headmaster who really got the expansion going.

Coming Attractions for 2001/2002

Rita Jones writes:

Christmas, as I've written before, starts with the BCA Christmas Celebrations, on Friday, December 7th from 8 p.m. Wine glasses and mince pies have been ordered, punch recipes found, carol sheets dusted, the piano tuned and Graham has been practising for weeks. Join us in the Great Hall, for what we are sure will be a friendly and happy evening, with a little extra entertainment, so your voices will get a short rest.

2002. I hope you are all resolving to have a happy and healthy New Year, and what better way to start than with our Traditional Ramble to Aldbury, and back, on New Year's Day. Join John Cook at 10.30 a.m. at the front of the railway station on January 1st.

Looking even farther ahead, our first talk is about that attractive, historic house, Chenies Manor across the border in Buckinghamshire. On Wednesday, February 13th, (8p.m., The Great Hall, as ever), Valerie Edwards, the Manor's Head Guide will disclose all its secrets, so keep this date free.



Winter in our local woods

Maternity Manoeuvres

Stephen Halliday writes:

Members of the Citizens Association will no doubt have followed with interest the large volume of correspondence in "The Gazette" about the proposed transfer of Maternity Services from Hemel Hempstead hospital to Watford. There is a national shortage of midwives and of nurses trained to care for new-born babies needing special care and West Hertfordshire is severely affected. Ante-natal care, home visits and similar services will continue to be offered locally but, if the proposals are implemented as they stand, babies will be born at Watford hospital with the exception of the small number born at home. The main concern for people in Berkhamsted involves the difficulties of getting to Watford in a hurry. I sit as a magistrate at Hemel and Watford. I always drive to Hemel. I never drive to Watford since Silverlink, at its worst, offers me a shorter journey time than the queue into and round Watford by car.

This is no doubt one of the matters which is being considered by the Health Authority and the Secretary of State to whom, I understand, the issue has been referred. Perhaps they'll build a tunnel from Hemel Hempstead to Watford hospital. And perhaps the cow will jump over the moon. I understand that the transfer has been postponed until the new year so if anyone is planning to have a baby, try and make it a short pregnancy.

This is a worrying time for all those concerned with maternity services.

Please give them your support.



Up in Scotland, this is a Childrens' play area located in a park.

I suppose there really must be a reason why ours are so unimaginative and fenced in

Listing and Conservation.

John Cook writes:

We can report fair progress at committee and sub-committee levels towards producing a shortlist of buildings, which we should like added to those already listed as being of special historic or architectural interest. We started off with quite a long list of items for consideration and none of them has been ruled out; but we feel that the chances of making progress will be better if we don't ask for too much at once. The process is now one of prioritising, and although good progress has been made it is still not too late if any member would like to submit a building to us for possibly adding to the list.

On the question of working towards ensuring the preservation of the appearance of buildings in the conservation area as a whole, we agreed with the Borough Council to produce a photographic record of at least what we see as the most important parts of it. In this exercise we are not looking at individual buildings so much as the 'street scene' – groups of buildings which to a great extent rely for their attractiveness on the unity they present. Some 500 photographs have so far been taken and these are being joined together in groups so that an appreciation can be more readily made of the total impact of terraces or other complementary groups of buildings. The exercise will take at least into next spring to complete.

What do you think of it so far?

This issue marks the end of Norman Cutting's first year of compiling this newsletter.

Let us know what you think, how you would like to see it develop or just drop a line to say you actually read it!

Graham Greene Festival

Susan Johnson, BCA's Chairman writes:

They say that Graham Greene is unfashionable; he certainly is no longer 'taught' in schools (except, perhaps, in Berkhamsted Collegiate where I am sure a little 'extended' reading is recommended to English A level students). But last week (I am writing this at the end of October) on Radio 4 'The Human Factor' was the Classic serial and his short stories were on every afternoon; and on BBC1 on Saturday night Stephen Fry referred to him on 'Parkinson' and Richard Attenborough waxed lyrical (as only he can) about 'Brighton Rock' in a documentary on C4 later that night on the British gangster movie. I certainly came to Greene through the films of his work; they didn't teach contemporary writers when I did English A level and the English element of my degree didn't get beyond D H Lawrence! (Clearly I wasn't reading around enough!) The films at the annual GG Festival are always the most popular events but the Festival offers a good deal more, in terms of literary criticism, related authors' works and, in increasingly short supply due to Time's winged chariot, reminiscences of people who knew him. People come literally from all over the world to the Festival but it still remains something for the town, deliberately directed to that end by David Pearce and before him Roger Watkins. For those of you already aficionados, it will be no surprise to hear the recent Festival was a success. The next one is well in hand but meanwhile we in the Citizens look forward to the joint event on Wednesday 24 April 2002 in the Town Hall, a dramatisation of some of GG's letters to the press. Hope to see you there!

Susan is the Association's nominated Trustee on the Graham Greene Birthplace Trust

Town Amenities Sub Committee

Gordon Bluck, TASC Chairman, writes:

On the planning front it has been relatively quiet, but before I start on that part I have to report that Paul Gilbert, who has been on this and the main committee for many years, has moved to Alfreton in Derbyshire to be near his family, in the company of his wife Sally. Paul has always been a great support to me, attending the vast majority of the meetings and, although not the most vocal of us, when making a contribution it was always to the point and well presented. His preparedness to stick with what he believed in has influenced, to the good, I must add, more decisions than Paul realised. Thank you for all your help over the years; we will miss your wise counsel. I would personally like to thank Paul, and indeed Sally for letting him out to play, for his support of the Town and wish them well for the future in an area they love so much.

There has been an amended plan for the expansion of the cricket club building and, in line with our previous objection to oppose the doubling of its size on this sensitive site, we have objected again. The cosmetic changes to the proposals at Castle Mill have meant we continue to object to the scale of the development. The Committee and indeed the Town Council have been concerned about the new KwikFit sign and the possible illumination of the totem pole next to the High Street. We have pointed this out to the planning department and will keep an eye on the situation.

As will probably be mentioned elsewhere in the newsletter, John Cook is creating a photographic record of sensitive parts of the town in the form of what I believe are called photomontages, and a fine job he is doing. We look forward to seeing the finished article.

One of the highlights of the last three months was the Canal Festival organised by the Town Council, which was excellent, especially the fireworks paid for by Laing Homes. While on that point, the meetings between Laings, Dacorum Borough Councillors, Town Councillors, CARAB and the BCA still continue on a fortnightly or monthly basis and I have to say are a useful method of communication. The investment of time by Laings to keep the residents fully informed, with a local newsletter and website, is very much appreciated. I like the fact that these meetings are to the point and on strategic issues and do not get bogged down with too much detail.

At this point I am standing aside from my role as Chairman to say that recently I attended three meetings in as many days representing the Association and all the meetings went on too long and did not keep to the point. With the same old chestnut issues coming forward and the same, often logical answers being advanced by representatives of the Borough Council, people like me who are still under 50 and have busy lives soon begin to lose interest. Can I make a plea to anyone who reads this and goes to these meetings, please keep your questions short and to the point. If younger people can be encouraged to get involved, we will all benefit.

Having got that off my chest and returning to planning matters, we are concerned at the proposed building of 35 retirement apartments in two blocks at 343/351 High Street. The bulk of the blocks so close to the pavement, and the lack of visitor parking and amenity space make the plans unacceptable, and we have written to DBC on that basis. As I go to press there is another slightly altered plan being submitted.

We will be looking shortly at contenders for the Environment Award 2001 and any candidates can be nominated to any of the Committee.

Some dates to note

- Nov 15th - Memories of Bletchley
- Dec 7th - BCS Christmas Party
- Dec 12th - Town Centre Advisory Forum
- Jan 1st - Walk to Aldbury (and back!)
- Feb 13th - Chenies Manor talk
- March 21st - AGM and Environment Awards
- March 24th - Graham Greene Dramatic Presentation
- March 27th - Town Centre Advisory Forum

Corrections to last issue

(bound to become a regular section!)

The photograph on this page suggesting that the property depicted had 'new' windows was incorrect. It was actually the adjacent property owned by the same organisation.

Stop Press

As we go to print, the Maternity Unit move will be the subject of an independent inquiry at the request of Lord Hunt.

**Merry
Christmas**