

# The Citizen



Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

March 2001

## Annual General Meeting

**NOTICE** is hereby given that the 76<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association will be held in the Wellcome Great Hall of the Town Hall, Berkhamsted, on **Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2001 at 8pm.**

Nominations for the posts of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Hon. Treasurer, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Membership Secretary, Hon. Auditor and Committee Members should be submitted to the Secretary (Miranda Cummins, 27 North Road, Berkhamsted, HP4 3DU) not later than 24 hours before the AGM. Consent of the person nominated must be obtained previously.

## Agenda

- 1. Apologies for absence**
- 2. Minutes of the last AGM**
- 3. Chairman's Report**
- 4. Treasurer's Report**
- 5. Election of Officers**
- 6. Election of Committee Members**
- 7. Election of Hon. Auditor**

The present committee would warmly welcome other members to join them and look forward to additional nominations for committee members.

The monthly committee meetings last for around 2 hours and we have two regular sub-committees.

The Association is represented on a number of other local bodies such as the CAB, Graham Greene Birthplace Trust, Town Hall Trust and Town Centre Advisory Forum.

*The Town Amenities Sub-Committee* works to try and ensure that changes which take place to the environment, both in Northchurch and Berkhamsted, are for the better.

*The Activities & Publicity Sub-Committee* plans and organises a programme of talks, walk and other events.

## Chairman's Topics

*Susan Johnson, BCA's Chairman writes:*

### A NEW EDITOR

We have one, as you must realise from this newsletter not being on the back of an envelope. We welcome Norman Cutting to the team and will see what he makes of this publication over the next year or so. Please help him (us) out by contributing articles, if you'd like to.

I would like to express my personal, as well as the Association's, thanks to John Cook for his sterling service over the past five years. John is an asset to every organisation he helps and the Association is fortunate in having him on the Committee, as well as having his witty and informed commentary on Berkhamsted life. Thanks from all the membership.

### ANNUAL MEETING WITH BOROUGH COUNCILLORS & OFFICERS

The Association has an opportunity annually to have an informal meeting with Borough Councillors and senior officers to discuss matters of mutual interest/concern and to explore ways of co-operating in the year ahead. I along with Gordon Bluck, John Cook and David Brunt met the Borough's deputy Leader, Margaret Griffiths, various borough councillors serving Berkhamsted, the Chief Executive and other officers to talk about a range of topics including the state of the conservation area, the future of the Rex, the Borough Council's new political and administrative structure and the BUDS project. Some of our discussions are covered in more detail in the TASC report. The Association values these often frank exchanges of views and thinks they help to put Berkhamsted's case to the Council in a non-political context.

### BCA MEETINGS

You remember I asked what you thought about our policy (or lack of it) on meeting nights? Well, there was a resounding silence so we're just doing our best to arrange events for 2001/2 as and when we can.

## A DIRECTLY ELECTED MAYOR FOR DACORUM? WELL, NO...

The Dacorum man-in-the-street said he liked the idea, but the Citizens Jury (nothing to do with us, mate) said a cabinet with a Leader was the preferred model. So that's what we're getting. It's probably the least worst option and it really is going to speed up decision-making processes (so they tell us). It might facilitate (all the buzzwords in this article will be recycled and donated to a charity of your choosing) a lot of fast, **bad** decisions but, hey, speed is everything. Empowerment to the people!

## A VISION FOR DACORUM

You might remember me telling you of our participation in this exercise in the October 2000 edition. The summary has now been prepared and we'll be commenting on that before it finally goes out to public consultation later in the year. I hope we don't get consultation fatigue before we start all over again with the Culture Strategy!

## WEST COAST MAIN LINE: THE VIRGIN/SILVERLINK DEBATE

Leighton-Linslade Town Council helpfully organised a round table discussion between town councils up and down the WCML and Railtrack and Silverlink last month. Evidently, Railtrack turned up half an hour late. You couldn't make it up if you tried! Anyway, although there are concerns over the possible timetables for Silverlink services after the introduction (still not confirmed by the Strategic Railway Authority who are looking at commercial viability) of Virgin's 125 mph trains in 2002 and 140 mph trains in 2005, things are not so grim as they might seem. (Unless you live in Northchurch, that is.) The "slow" track might then get an upgrade so that Silverlink trains might go faster. It's all still theoretical, so keep the letters to John Prescott coming.

## THE ST. VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE

What do you understand by "car parking management in the A41 corridor"? In English, that's charging for car parking in Hemel, Berkhamsted and Tring. DBC held (by the time you read this) a seminar on St. Valentine's Day to discuss all the implications, and invited us along. "What's the big deal?" I hear you say. Well, this is groundbreaking stuff for the other two towns, and there might be some new ideas for Berkhamsted too. I'll let you know the outcome in the next edition.

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## Crime Prevention Group

*by Norman Williams*

The crime figures for the past year show a small increase, but this can be attributed in part to the new method of recording. No particular area has been targeted for car crime, but Kitsbury Road and Shrublands Avenue have had a number of burglaries.

With the approach of Spring it is important that garden equipment is security marked, and that outbuildings are locked.

In the Crime Prevention Newsletter attention was directed to the fact that on 1<sup>st</sup> June last year the 'Final Warning Scheme' came into operation. This replaced cautioning for all young offenders aged ten to seventeen years. Youth Offending Teams have been set up to help young people to appreciate what they have done and to stop them repeating the offence. Those who continue to offend will be prosecuted. On 27<sup>th</sup> January 'Car Crime' notices, which reminded motorists to secure their vehicles, were formally introduced into all the car parks in Berkhamsted.

For those who have access to the Internet, you can find more news from the beginning of March on the special page on the [www.berkhamsted.co.uk](http://www.berkhamsted.co.uk) site.



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## Membership Notes

*by Membership Secretary - Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby*

Our membership stands at around 600 households, or 1,100 individual members. This has remained much the same since 1993. This is not as disappointing as it might seem as the average age of members had become quite high. Allowing for the younger members moving away, new members are making up the difference. With so many other organisations in the town, this is very encouraging.

When renewal slips were enclosed with the last newsletter, 249 subscriptions were due. Three-fifths have now been collected. If you are one of them, thank you for paying promptly. If you have yet to pay, a further renewal slip should be enclosed. I would like to remind you that the subscription is £3 (£15 for 5 years). A single member can pay at the lower rate of £2 (£10).

In renewing your subscription, please would you consider a 5-year subscription? In that way, you can hedge against a possible increase, and it would make your deliverer's and my life easier in not having to ask you to renew each year.

## **Town Amenities Sub Committee**

*Gordon Bluck writes:*

As I missed the copy date on the last newsletter this is my first missive for 6 months. Last time John Cook wrote the piece for me and I am very grateful to him especially as he was standing down as editor after 5 years. I hope there will be much praise in other parts of the newsletter as John has done a wonderful job.

The REX saga has come to a conclusion for now. Both the Film & Arts Trust and Nicholas King Homes have their planning permissions, but as NKH now owns the site it is likely they will go ahead with their refurbishment. Fortunately, it must include restoration of the cinema (the reason the building was listed in the first place) but time will tell whether they can find an operator for one screen (they must use their "best endeavours" for five years) when it is widely seen as an uneconomic proposition. The BCA is disappointed that the Trust did not get there first as it has always supported this scheme. Perhaps there might be involvement for the Trust in the NKH option. We'll watch the development with interest.



Turning to other matters of interest to our members, in the last week Silverlink Trains confirmed their order for 1,000 of our footpath maps and my long suffering wife Jean delivered them to Bletchley. It is unclear if they will sell them through their stations or give them to season ticket holders as a "sorry" for the rail problems of late. This means that 2,500 of the maps have been sold in 7 months and this leaves us with a stock of 2,500. Thank goodness our Chairman Susan Johnson told me to up the print run from 3,000 to 5,000. We now have enough funds to reprint whenever we want.

Regarding planning matters, the best news has been the proposal to change the rules regarding advertising in the countryside appears to have been shelved for the time being by the government.

Plans have been submitted to build 13 apartments on the Castle garage site and although the plans are being amended our initial reaction is favourable. In addition there is a proposal to build a sports and swimming complex on the Kings Road site of the Collegiate School. My Committee have not yet a chance to study the plans in full but initial concerns revolve around the loss of some of the green centre of the town, parking loss on Kings Road and the effect on traffic when parents want to leave via the new access road.

We had a very useful meeting with the new Chief Executive of the Borough Council and met with a number of Councillors and senior officers. This meeting is an annual opportunity to put Berkhamsted's case over to the people who make the decisions and we are grateful to all concerned for giving up their evening. We are particularly delighted to be involved with the Berkhamsted Urban Design Study (BUDS) now that much improvement work has been done at the rear of the High Street buildings. There have been few normal planning applications which have caused us concern, which is a good position to be in. Finally I and my Committee look forward to marking and judging the annual Environment Award lead by David Brunt.



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## **The Mayor's Festival of Light Luncheon**

*by Paul J. R. Gilbert*

On Friday 1st December I was privileged to be invited to the Mayor's Lunch, held at the Civic Centre to commemorate the annual Berkhamsted Festival of Light. I attended not on this occasion as a member of the BCA Committee, but as one of the many volunteer workers helping out in the area - more of that later!

Organised magnificently by Councillor Garrick Stevens, we volunteers were presented with a most tasty meal in pleasant surroundings and hosted by the current Mayor. (I may have been the only vegetarian!)

It was a great opportunity to meet and exchange views with other local volunteers working in so many different fields. What was so commendable was that not only was the table service provided so efficiently by pupils of Ashlyns School, but that the lunch was so well supported by our local traders, with Waitrose providing poultry, the market traders the vegetable tables, Tesco the wine, Sarah Stewart the flowers, The Print Shop the invitations and menus, and many others too numerous to name individually.

After lunch, speeches and raffles, we were entertained by members of the Bridgewater School Choir who performed beautifully, providing the finishing touch to a wonderful event.

As one of the guests I would like to express, on behalf of all those invited, thanks to all those who supported the lunch.

By the way, I help as an administrative volunteer at The Focus Project, a part of Druglink which helps people with substance misuse problems in N.W. Herts. We are situated in Berkhamsted, and have a few administrative vacancies - anyone interested can contact me on 873959 for details, or the Manager, Marilyn, direct on 876255.

## The Environment Award for the year 2000

by David Brunt

A greater number of nominations than usual were made in January, a total of twenty covering a wide range of buildings and individual elements. This illustrates the considerable amount of construction work that has been carried out and completed during the calendar year.

Major developments such as that on the previous AgrEvo site have not been included this year amongst those being considered, albeit some dwellings are now being occupied. Apart from encouraging work of quality, a major aim of the Environment Award scheme is to raise the general awareness of developments (and hopefully improvements) within Berkhamsted and Northchurch. The adjudicators are members of the Town Amenities Sub-Committee who make recommendations to the main Committee after completing their assessment. It is not unusual for there to be heated discussion and debate as each short listed nomination is considered against the key criteria.

During the February meeting of the Town Amenities Sub-Committee, the following fifteen nominations were short-listed (in no particular order).

The Millennium Window - St Mary's Church (Northchurch)

The Millennium Window - St Peter's Church (Berkhamsted)

Magoo's Wine Bar - Rear Terrace Garden

Hard landscaped steps - north western corner of Waitrose Garage - 36 Chiltern Close

Housing - Lockhart's Yard

Regency Heights - Chesham Road

Deans Lawn housing - Chesham Road

Renewal of the canal towpath

Improvements - The Warehouse, Castle Wharf, Ravens Lane

The Collegiate School Sports Pavilion - Chesham Road

Scissors Hairdressers - High Street

Refurbishment - 17 Castle Street

Ambrit House - Northchurch

New external signs - Town Hall

The results of the adjudication will be made known at the end of a slide presentation illustrating the above shortlisted schemes during the AGM on 22nd March 2001.



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### Snippets

by Norman Cutting

Those of you who receive 'Your Voice' from the Town Council will have noticed that they have set up an Internet site (<http://www.berkhamstedtc.org.uk>) to add to their information provision. We have requested that we would like to have our information available attached to this site once it gets established.

The BCA sponsored the annual Best Dressed Christmas Shop Window awards and the winner was - 'Home & Colonial', with 'Vogue' (Lower Kings Rd) and 'Maude & Oscar' (High St.) commended.

B.U.D.S. is making a difference to the back of the shops which face the Waitrose car park, with grants available for owners to improve matters. Waitrose has provided funds to improve access from the car parking area to the service road and thus to the rest of the High Street. We hope the remaining shop keepers will apply for grants to improve their property before the funding for the scheme ends in March.



Go on, where can you not find the above?

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