

The Citizen



Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

September 2001

Chairman's Topics

Susan Johnson, BCA's Chairman writes:

TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT

We've seen the presentation, we've examined the data and now we've got to ... do the seminar. Town Centres Ltd, Dacorum's chosen consultants, seem to have a pretty good feel for the town (better, I think, than Donaldsons of less than blessed memory) and will be seeking views at a seminar this month in order to formulate a plan for establishing effective town centre management for all three towns in Dacorum. This is a welcome development in that Dacorum is at last taking the economies of Berkhamsted and Tring town centres as seriously as that of Hemel Hempstead. A new Town Centres (note the plural) Manager, Amanda Kentish, has already been appointed and she will be taking up post soon. Our best wishes go to her endeavours; and meanwhile your representatives at the forthcoming seminar will do their best to represent your views, as well as what they see as the realities of Berkhamsted's strengths and problems. I'll keep you posted.

WEST COAST MAIN LINE INQUIRY

Railtrack has withdrawn its plans for electrical transformers along the whole length of the line so Dudswell is saved its blot on the landscape. Evidently it has now been decided by the company that it is possible to achieve the same effect by other, less intrusive means. Well, amen to that, but it begs the question why they made the applications in the first place. Maybe they did not realise the fuss the locals would make. But the Northchurch ventilation shaft is still on the cards. The Berkhamsted session of the Public Inquiry will have been held by the time you read this, so I hope you went to support your neighbours. We await the Inspector's report with interest.

(More overleaf)

Profile of.....

Christine Manning - our new treasurer

Christine Manning was born in North London moving to Aylesbury when she married husband Peter some twenty nine years ago. On leaving Latymer Grammar School, she worked first in the Trustee Department of a merchant bank and then joined the unit trust industry when it was in its infancy, rising to be Manager of the Trust Accounts department of Unit Trust Services Ltd, which was part of the then Target Trust Group (long since taken over by TSB)



responsible for the valuation and accounting function for some thirty odd unit trusts. After a brief spell in insurance company accounts and taxation, she joined local accountancy practice, Rickaby & Co in 1978 in order to broaden her experience whilst studying for her professional exams. She qualified as a Chartered Certified Accountant in 1980 and now has her own practice specialising in small businesses and personal tax affairs.

It was whilst a Council Member of the Association of Accounting Technicians that she met fellow Council Member, Ken Sherwood who was then Treasurer, and is now Chairman of the Berkhamsted Town Hall Trust. When in 1984 Christine gave up full time work on the birth of her son, David, Ken persuaded her to join the Trust as Finance Officer and she spent several years in this post until pressure of work in her growing accountancy practice forced her to resign.

Having lived in Berkhamsted for twenty two years, she and her family now live in Castle Hill Avenue. Listing gardening and walking among her hobbies, she wishes that she had more time for both! Until the last couple of years, a good many Sundays have been spent as a passenger for husband Peter on a variety of motor events, but mostly production and classic car trials. Young David has now usurped her in this post as he and Dad now compete together so Christine is relegated to the less active roles of spectator and occasional marshall. However, at least this means that she occasionally gets time now to read the Sunday newspapers!

Christine is also involved as a committee member of the Berkhamsted branch of Save The Children.

BYGONE BERKHAMSTED EXHIBITION

Those of you who went to see the Berkhamsted Local History & Museum Society exhibition will not need me to tell you what a splendid achievement it was. I always find it fascinating to look at the strangely familiar pictures of the town – the past is certainly a foreign country whose manners can best be viewed through the good offices of the Society, in the guise of the hugely informative boards which accompany the photographs. I liked immensely the demographic information at the exhibition's start, provided in simple and colourful detail by our good friend Bill Willett (he of the Footpath Map); and the gallery of "characters" from different periods of our history. Long may the eccentric have a place in our ever more conforming society!

The Association's congratulations go to Jenny Sherwood and her wonderful team. We look forward to the day when the contents of the Heritage Store have a permanent home for exhibition.

THE NAMING OF THINGS

John Cook was asked by the Town Council, who now have responsibility for such things, to suggest names for the new Ravens Lane development. He has suggested (and your Committee support him) **Clunbury Court** for the main development and **Axtell Villas** for the affordable housing. Clunbury commemorates the Clunbury Press which operated on the site; and Axtell the brothers who, severally, signed Charles I's death warrant (and met the same fate himself, deservedly or not, some years later) and went to America to found a whole dynasty (that's die-nasty) of Axtells who regularly come over to see the mother-town. John met another one in July while conducting tours of St.Peter's. If the Town Council are canny, they can boost the tourist industry and honour our predecessors all at once.

Laings, meanwhile, have started marketing the Ravens Lane development and have chosen a name for the purpose: Ranulph Villas. We do not think it appropriate. Ranulph was a mediaeval keeper of the Castle whom the histories say "persecuted the local innocents" and "dealt tyrannically" with workmen at the castle.

Oh, I don't know, though...

BERKHAMSTED TOWN CENTRE ADVISORY FORUM

The forthcoming meetings of the TCAF will be on 26th September and 19th December 2001 and 27th March 2002, all Wednesdays at 7.30 p.m. and all in the Town Hall. Please try to come along, as it is a

Town Amenities Sub-Committee

Gordon Bluck writes:

When I write this article it is the silly season of August when not only politicians go on holiday; news dries up in the papers; local government planners swap their hush puppies for open toed sandals and developers of suspect new housing resubmit them under a new planning reference in the hope they will sneak through. There has been at least one of these recently which frankly wastes everyone's time as we, as an Association have to send another letter of objection. On specific plans we have considered, the first was a proposal to develop 220 High Street (Clinton Cards) which is linked to another improvement to the buildings round the corner in Lower Kings Road. We felt that it would be an idea to try and get the Halifax building next door to join in, provided it was done sympathetically.

In June there were 2 large developments proposed, both of which were, in our opinion one storey too high; the first being at 110 High Street where we felt that, although, the part onto the High Street was acceptable the building behind was not. At three storeys this block of apartments, to be erected on the site of the Collegiate School current squash courts, would tower over surrounding premises and we have objected. Concerning the proposed Castle Mill development, my committee had long discussions with the plans in front of us and, on balance, we objected to the plan especially as an extra storey is planned. In view of the position next to the canal any development should reflect the towns industrial heritage and respect the strong features of the building. Another plan we objected to is the proposal to change the sign outside Caffé Uno, making it larger and changing the lettering, which we view as a retrograde step.

As residents of Ravens Lane/Manor Street will know, work is starting on the Laing's development and I have attended the first 3 meetings of the liaison group as the BCA representative. Others in the group are 2 representatives from CARAB; 2 Town Councillors; 2 Borough Councillors and up to 5 representatives from Laing's and it is now meeting every 2 weeks. I have to say that Laing's are certainly making every effort to ameliorate what will be a very difficult 18 months and the time the CARAB people have put in is of great credit to them. If any of our members are not being represented by CARAB, who have their own lines of communication, I will happily let you know what is happening.

A final change to the way my Committee operates is that I try to send a copy to any private individual to whose planning proposal we are objecting.

Coming Attractions for 2001/2002

Rita Jones writes

This is my first year as committee member responsible for BCA Activities and I hope you will enjoy the programme that my fellow sub-committee members and I have put together for you. Firstly I should like to add my thanks to my predecessor Gill Feil. She put in many years of hard work organising the programmes of speakers and other BCA events. I am grateful that she left me names of possible future speakers and for all her help since she retired from the committee. Thanks Gill.

We open with a toast to 'Beer and Berkhamsted'. Our speaker Roger Protz is well qualified, as chairman of the British Guild of Beer Writers and editor of the Good Beer Guide. I have read and enjoyed some of his articles, and, even though beer is not my favourite drink, I shall be there on **October 11th**, for what should be an entertaining and informative evening.

Our speaker on Thursday, **November 15th**, Hilary Talbot-Ponsonby, needs no introduction to most members. An active and long-standing BCA member, her talk 'Memories of Bletchley', is her personal recollections of Bletchley Park during the war, and should be interesting.

As usual, Christmas starts with the BCA Christmas Celebrations on Friday, **December 7th**, so come to share mulled wine and mince pies and bring your voices with you. New Year opens at 10.30 a.m. at the railway station, the start of the Traditional Ramble to Aldbury (and back), led by John Cook. A chance to walk off the holiday excesses in pleasant company and surroundings.

On Wednesday **February 13th**, our first speaker of 2002 is Valerie Edwards and, as Head Guide at Chenies Manor, who better to tell us about that lovely house near Chesham. The AGM and Environment Awards presentation on Thursday **March 21st** is followed in April by a joint meeting with the Graham Greene Birthplace Trust.

The dramatic presentation, on **Wednesday 24th**, is about some of Graham Greene's letters to the press, which he always started 'May I suggest....?'. We hope to repeat the success of our last joint meeting with the Trust and it should be a fitting finale to our year.

All meetings, apart from the ramble, start at 8 p.m. and are

The Graham Greene Festival

27th - 30th September

by David R.A. Pearce - Festival Director

At the end of this September Berkhamsted will be hosting the fourth Graham Greene Festival: four days of events, talks and films for those who have an interest in our town's author. A specially commissioned coach tour will visit those parts of London that feature in autobiography and the novels. Judith Adamson comes from Montreal to talk about Greene's fictional women; Julia Llewellyn Smith comes from following Greene everywhere dangerous and then writing a book on her travels; Bernard Diederich comes from Florida to tell us of his friendship with Greene as he introduces him to difficult republics of Central America.

'England Made Me', 'Travels With My Aunt' and 'A Shocking Accident' are films to be shown at the Kodak Centre (Hemel Hempstead), and the first of these will be the subject of various talks.

A session that may be of especial interest to our more local supporters will be with the broadcaster and antiquarian bookseller Rick Gekoski, who will talk about his dealings with Greene, and will suggest valuations for editions brought by the audience.

Berkhamsted Citizens who remember past delights given to us by Roger Watkins in previous Festivals and in a Spring Lecture, will rejoice that he returns to talk about Greene's plays. In this he will be assisted by local actors.

We hope to be able to welcome you, together with all those who now make this Festival a date in their diaries. Brochures (free) of all the programme details are available from the Library, and tickets are on sale there from 10th September. Tickets can be bought now by post from the Festival Office, and information may be obtained by ringing 01442 865159 or by accessing the internet site: www.grahamgreenebt.org.

* Crime Prevention Group

Norman Williams reports:

There was a good attendance at the Dacorum Police Community Partnership Meeting on the 4th July. Brian Hunt, the Chairman of the Berkhamsted Crime Prevention Panel, took the Chair, and the meeting was addressed by Ian Laidlaw-Dickson, who is a member of the Hertfordshire Police Authority and by Inspector Richard Dixon-Gough, the Inspector in charge of Berkhamsted and Tring. Ian Laidlaw-Dickson explained the changes in the structure of the Hertfordshire Constabulary, which will shortly take effect. There will be three areas, West, Central and East. The West area will cover Watford, Three Rivers and Dacorum, and will have Chief Superintendent Taylor as its Commander. It is proposed that front line policing will be enhanced and that jobs that do not require police power will be civilianised.

Inspector Richard Dixon-Gough produced the recent crime figures for Dacorum, and dealt in particular with those that relate to Berkhamsted. He pointed out that the area has one of the lowest crime rates in the county and indeed, the country. He emphasised that the Police have to concentrate on the reduction of crime, and that the limited resources restrict the time they can devote to other problems. Those present at the meeting felt that the Police should be more active in dealing with dangerous parking, speeding through the town, and unacceptable behaviour.

The Inspector expressed appreciation of the support given by the general public and, in particular, by the Crime Prevention Panel and the members of Neighbourhood Watch.

Preserving our Town - Conservation & Listing

John Cook writes:

Berkhamsted's conservation area stretches almost from one end of the town to the other. It takes in not only most of the High street, but also a number of the streets on either side.

To the north it includes Castle Street, Chapel Street and George Street; to the south, Charles Street and most of the roads linking that street with the High Street. There is a map showing the extent of the conservation area which you can look at in the Town Council offices in the Civic Centre.



Terraced houses in Chapel Street
within conservation area

The purpose of designating conservation areas is to protect and enhance important parts of historic towns and villages. Such designation allows stricter planning controls to be applied to those areas, but these do not automatically apply to all buildings in them. As a rule, residential properties are exempt from these extra restrictions, and so to a large extent only the normal planning controls apply to them. However, it can be decided that certain residential properties should not have this exemption. For example, a terrace of Victorian cottages may have special architectural merit as a unit which would be spoilt if the owners of one of them were to destroy the terrace's unity by changing the window frames of their house from wood to plastic. In this case a special order may be applied to remove the exemption. The technical term for such a measure is an *Article 4 Direction*.

The BCA Committee is currently looking at buildings in Berkhamsted's conservation area to decide which, in their view, should have such a direction applied to them. This is being done in consultation with the conservation team at the Borough Council, with whom the final decision will rest as to which buildings will be put forward for consideration.

We are also looking to extend the list of buildings in

Berkhamsted and Northchurch that are listed as being of *Special Architectural or Historic Interest*. All sorts of structures can be listed - not just buildings - if English Heritage can be persuaded that they have sufficient importance, and this does offer a safer way of ensuring their preservation. The committee would be happy to hear from any member who may wish to put forward ideas as to which building(s) they consider should be added to the list. Some have already been suggested to us, such as the railway station, but we would like to hear other ideas as well. They could be within the conservation area or outside it.



An example of a building within the
conservation area with plastic windows.

Some dates to note

- Sept 26th - T.C. Advisory Forum
- Oct 11th - Beer & Berkhamsted
- Nov 15th - Memories of Bletchley
- Dec 7th - BCS Christmas Party
- Dec 19th - T.C. 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 - T.C. Advisory Forum

Corrections to last issue

(bound to become a regular section!)

Mike Rogers took me to task because I didn't put captions to the photographs. I trust I have provided enough in this issue.

Peter Morgan of the Northchurch Tunnel Action Group is concerned that we implied Berkhamsted residents would be far less affected than Northchurch ones. The B.C.A. has always represented both Berkhamsted and Northchurch residents and, in mitigation, it has always been referred to as the NORTHCHURCH tunnel although when I was a lad, it really did only affect Northchurch residents (old habits die hard!!)

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