

The Citizen



Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

March 2004

Annual General Meeting

NOTICE is hereby given that the 79th Annual General Meeting of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association will be held in the Wellcome Great Hall of the Town Hall, Berkhamsted, on **Thurs 25th March 2004 at 8 pm.**

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
8. To consider the following proposal:

To amend the constitution to provide for annual and three year subscriptions in place of the present annual and five year subscriptions.

Following the AGM, there will be a short talk by Dacorum's Head of Conservation, Emma Adams, entitled '2003 - a good year for conservation in Berkhamsted', which will be followed by a short presentation on the Canal & Riverside Partnership award by past CARP Chairman, Lindy Foster Weinreb.

Following coffee:

BCA Environment Awards 2003

There were a number of nominations for the Environment Award for the year 2003, representing a wide variety of entries. The selected short list (details overleaf) will be illustrated at the award presentation prior to the winners being announced.

Open Forum

Finally there will be an Open Forum in which members will be able to ask questions and make comments. It is hoped that as many members as possible will stay to make this a lively end to the proceedings!

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

Environment awards 2003

David Brunt writes:

The amount of development that is completed within Northchurch and Berkhamsted each year varies significantly. Of the nominations that were shortlisted for 2002, none were considered worthy of the plaque award although three received certificates of High Commendation.

A larger number of developments were completed during 2003 and the award assessors (the Association's Town Amenities Sub-Committee) have recently established a shortlist of sixteen entries from thirty three nominations, and during the next month the final assessments will be made so that the results can be announced after the slide presentation of all nominations at the AGM on 25th March 2004.

The number of entries does not necessarily reflect quality but, with some of the developments having made considerable impact on the town's assets, there is considerable insider support for a plaque award for 2003.

The nominations are as follows:

1. Gates to Victoria School, Prince Edward Street.
2. 'Clunbury Court', Manor Street.
3. 173 High Street restoration.
4. Railings 15-27 High Street.
5. 'Bollards' and 'Ashleigh', Station Road (balcony onto canal).
6. 'Chippings', Shootersway Lane.
7. The Rex Cinema complex.
8. 17 The Meads, Northchurch.
9. 30 Kings Road, Beulah Chapel.
10. 'Pilkington Manor', 112-118 High Street.
11. 'Stonycroft', 9 Shrublands Road (reinstatement of original window design).
12. Housing by the Grey Mare pub, Northchurch.
13. Conversion of Sheila's shop, Northchurch.
14. Reconstruction of Canal Fields Play Area.
15. Baptist Church's entrance paving.
16. 1 Cross Oak Road (workshop and walls).

Why not go and have a look at the nominated entries yourself and compare your findings with those of the assessors at the AGM?

Our suspicions confirmed

Norman Cutting reports:

We have been informed by the Herts Highways that, due to cuts, they will only go round and inspect roads every year (promises, promises!!).

They request that members of the public (you and me) report problems to them so that action can be taken. This can be done via their web site, <http://www.hertsdirect.org>, by telephone on 014 3873 7320 or via the Town Council help point.

The Borough Council report that the income 'promised' by the consultants from the new parking charges and fines has not been achieved. This means that by being basically honest and not incurring penalty charges, we might have even more parking restrictions imposed in order to raise the income level

in order to pay for the existing limited enforcement of illegal parking.

Am I the only one who could see this coming and the only way to 'resolve' the parking difficulties throughout the town is by providing an alternative to all day and long term parking within the town?

This could be easily achieved by actually enforcing current legislation, which could pay for a free park'n'ride facility and other necessary improvements.

Finally, the conservation area in Hemel (as I write in mid February), has just had nice wide yellow lines painted on the road. Conservation Area lines are much narrower and I have reminded the Borough Council (again) they they only have to specify 'Conservation Area' style lines when they get to Berkhamsted.

I live in hope!

Chairman's Report

Gordon Bluck says:

As this is my last Chairman's report for the newsletter, I am going to put everything in that I would have said at the Annual General Meeting, to ensure as wide an audience as possible among the membership. It sounds like I am on an ego trip; but that is not the intention as there are things I need to say.

When I look back in the archives, I note that in the 1930s the Chairman's speech was reproduced in full in the local paper, taking half a page, which allowed members not at the meeting to keep up to date. How times change! I can't imagine the Gazette allowing this. This leads me on to an exciting development for the Association, which should address the twin problems of lack of publicity and new members. LeAnne and Michael Johnson, a young couple who have relocated from the USA, came forward at a meeting and offered their services. I had met Michael about a year before when he was studying at Ashridge and at that time he explained that he wanted to get involved in the local community, and give something back. This is apparently something common in the States and it would be good if us 'Brits' could do the same.

LeAnne has been co-opted on to the main committee and has done a lot of planning to raise the Association's profile over the last couple of months and she is already meeting with the press and other influence makers. She has plans to increase membership especially among residents under, say, 40 who are unable due to family and work pressures to become directly involved or even attend public meetings. Although we have increased the

membership fee to a modest £5 per year, I am sure there are potential new younger members who would want to belong to the oldest Association working towards preserving what is best in the town. It is, of course, in the interest of anyone owning a property in the town to maximise the price of their home by keeping Berkhamsted special. I am very excited about the future.

Michael has been co-opted to the hard working Town Amenities Sub-Committee and joins Tony Statham who volunteered at the last AGM and also serves on the main committee. Tony is already making his mark and complementing both committees. While I am giving thanks, I have to mention my hard working Vice-Chairman, Graham Spittle, who has deputised for me when I have had a clash of dates and has offered such wise council. Rita Jones has continued her excellent Chairmanship of the Activities Sub-Committee with an interesting programme and I am sure you will join with me to thank her and her team for their hard work. Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby, our Membership Secretary together with Miranda Cummings our Secretary and Christine Manning our long-suffering Treasurer all have my grateful thanks. As to all other members of the committees - thank you for the past 2 years.

In conclusion, it has been a privilege to serve as your Chairman and, although I knew I would not be able to match some of my predecessors, I am pleased to have added something to the well being of the Town. I intend to put myself forward for a 10th term as Town Amenities Chairman if the Committee will have me and so I may well be continuing my newsletter reports.

See you all at the AGM and the BCA 80th birthday party in the summer.

Activities Sub-Committee

Rita Jones reports

2003 ended with the Christmas Celebration. The small choir from the Panda Players provided the entertainment, with a programme of light music and carols, giving everyone an opportunity to join in and sing. This was a contrast to last year's more classical approach and, I hope, equally enjoyable. The new table layout and photo identification competition added to the friendly atmosphere, aided by the reformulated punch.

2004 starts with an apology. Reluctantly, we decided to cancel the New Year's Day Ramble because the weather was uncertain and the ground very wet. Of necessity, this was a late decision. Cancellation posters were put on the main notice boards as soon as possible and I waited at the station to tell people there. As it happened, the weather was dry and 9 members arrived before I left at about 10.50 although 7 decided to do the walk on their own and I do hope they had an enjoyable time.

This will arrive after the talk on Verulamium and so the next event, as you have seen, is the AGM on Thursday March 25th, with the presentation of the Environment Awards. Conservation has been important in Berkhamsted during the past year and we are fortunate that Emma Adams, Head of Conservation for Dacorum, has agreed to talk to us after the business part of the meeting. This will be followed by a short presentation by Lindy Foster Weinreb on another achievement for Berkhamsted, the award to CARP. →

Activities Sub-Committee continued:

The speaker at our next evening meeting on Wednesday 21st April is Nick Siney, who many of you may remember from the talk on brickmaking which he gave a couple of years ago. This time his 'brick' theme will be its involvement in restoring the past and promises to be as entertaining and informative as his earlier talk. I hope many of you will come to make his journey worthwhile. Do consider bringing your friends, even if they are not members. Non-members are always welcome at our talks. There is £2 entrance, which will be deducted from the membership fee if they would like to join on the night. This year is the 80th anniversary of the Association and we shall all be celebrating at a garden party to be held on Saturday 10th July in the grounds of Woodcock Hill, Durrants Lane, with grateful thanks to our committee member, Tony Statham, and his neighbours. Make a note of the date and watch this space for further information.

All meetings (apart from the garden party) will be in the Great Hall of the Town Hall at 8p.m., coffee or tea and biscuits 50p during the interval.

Town Amenities Sub-Committee

Gordon Bluck, TASC Chairman reports:

With my other hat on, I am pleased to report that the Town Amenities Sub-Committee has gained a new recruit, Michael Johnson, who lives with his wife in the conservation area and is a very welcome addition.

Turning to planning matters, the business of the growing number of yellow signs still causes concern and I have received a communication from the Portfolio Holder at Dacorum Borough Council to say that permission was being sought from the County Council to delegate removal to the Borough. When this is received, the enforcement branch, which is now fully staffed, will swing into action round the whole Borough and remove this problem. During our recent annual meeting with Dacorum Officers and Members, I asked what stage we were at with this and as no response has been received they will chase up the permission. At the same time we suggested that Town Councils, and therefore Town Wardens, be similarly empowered. We await a result.

There have been several applications for projecting illuminated signs in the High Street and these, as always, have been opposed in line with our normal practice. Non-illuminated or externally illuminated signs are acceptable. There was a plan to convert redundant agricultural buildings at Castle Hill Farm to dwellings and, although we

are encouraged that plans to develop this complex are coming forward, we are worried that the grade II* barn is still falling down. We learnt of the efforts being made by the planners to get a good result at the previously mentioned meeting. Our major concern regarding planning since my last report is contained in the proposals by the Council to make budget cuts forced on them by central government. They have proposed 23 measures to achieve some of this saving. Hidden within these are, the proposed increase of 30p on meals on wheels, (saves 60p per year on a band D household), an increase in charges at Little Hay Golf course (saves 80p per year) and there is a proposal to limit the conservation service to consultation on statutory planning applications only (saves 60p per year). This would stop any proactive work on our conservation area, which is only one of over 20 in the Borough. I wrote, as did all the civic bodies, in strong tones and I hope that by the time you read this it will have been shelved. There was a strong hint at our Dacorum meeting that it was hoped this would be the case. We have written supporting further investigations at "Gorseside" to try and save the building from demolition up on the Castle Village site. A letter has been sent regarding the traffic calming in Cross Oak Road proposed by the potential developers of the new retirement flats, which stated that nothing should be implemented without consulting residents. Traffic calming is the responsibility of Herts Highways and would be part of a 106 agreement. Followers of improvements to the town will recall CARP (Canal and Riverside Partnership), the fantastic work done since 1996 and previous winner of our environment award. Although a lot of the major work has been done, we have been working behind the scenes to keep it going following the loss of the long standing, and excellent Chairman Lindy Foster Weinreb when she lost her Town Council seat. The good news is that as I write this, the new Chairman is looking to call all CARP stakeholders together to discuss the way forward.

Finally, as we have a problem accessing Northchurch plans, we are proposing that a duplicate copy is held at Berkhamsted Civic Centre for all residents to be able to look at. We will try and set this up.

As usual I would like to thank the person who types our minutes and letters (ME!) and more especially all members of my Committee.

Stop Press

As we go to print, we have heard that Max Hageman, life member of the Association and designer of the logo, died on February 12th 2004. More information at the AGM and next 'Citizen'.

Contributions to:

The Citizen Editor

C/o 15 Chestnut Drive, BERKHAMSTED, HP4 2JL

E-mail: bca@normcall.com

Chairman: Gordon Bluck, 22 Bridgewater Road, HP4 1HN Tel: 873548; e-mail gordonbluck@hotmail.com

Membership Secretary: Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby, 38 Kitsbury Road, HP4 3EA Tel: 865882

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association