

The Citizen



Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association
Working for the social and civic life of our community

June 2008

Chairman's Column

Our new Chairman, Tony Statham, writes -

This is my first contribution as Chairman to the Newsletter and it is a useful reminder of the honour I have to hold the post in the eighty-fifth year of the Association.

It traditionally falls on the new Chairman to thank the previous incumbent (Rita Jones) and I do this without question; I am most grateful for her continued role chairing the Activities sub-committee, which remains a cornerstone of our regular interface with members. We stand as an independent body representing the citizens of Berkhamsted and act as a voice to express members' concerns about events that affect the well being of our town. We have representatives on most organisations that have some say in the day-to-day running of our community (planning applications, the environment, trees, the canal, etc.) and your attention is drawn to our "mission statement" at the top of this newsletter.

I hope to highlight topical issues and perhaps the most urgent matter today is the proposed flight-path alterations being put forward by the National Air Traffic Services. In summary, these are likely to result in southwest flights from Luton flying about 1000 feet lower over Berkhamsted thus increasing noise levels by some 20%. Regrettably you will only receive this newsletter after the consultation deadline (22nd May) but it shouldn't stop you being aware of the issues.

Finally, a welcome to Bill Willett as our latest life member in recognition of all his work on the Footpath Map and for conducting our country rambles on New Year's Day and each summer.

Membership Matters

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby

A big thank you for all those who have been spreading the word about the Berkhamsted Citizens Association and what we stand for. Since the renewal notices went out 6 months ago, 24 new members have joined up. We are now back to 450 household members.

There are still 42 members with outstanding subscriptions. If you are one of them, a third request will be enclosed with this newsletter. If you have paid and have still been sent a reminder, please let me know. Thank you to the 250 who have renewed their membership for this year, 100 paying for three years. This saves having to send out yearly reminders.

Joining is not just about going to meetings, or receiving newsletters, but it is to help us have influence. It is therefore very important that we maintain our membership because, if it continues to fall, we may no longer be listened to.

You know what the BCA does. Why not ask a friend and/or a neighbour if they are members? If not, encourage them to join by sending me £5 along with their name and address. It is as simple as that. It saves time and me not having to forward them a membership form. It would be marvellous if we could return to 500 members, as we were in March 2005, by the AGM next year. This equates to one in 10 finding one new member. It sounds easy!

Parish Paths Partnership

Norman Cutting reports:

The Parish Paths Partnership was formed in the late 1990s with the view of improving the footpaths within the town. Strangely, the town paths are the responsibility of the County Council, so it's those on the rural outskirts that come within the 'funding envelope'. As usual, a limited amount of money is made available which is never enough to really sort out problems. But, things do get done.

At the latest meeting of the Parish Paths Partnership (P3) in April, it was confirmed that the kissing gates had been installed on footpaths 41 and 42, near to Haresfoot Farm up near the Chesham Road junction of the by-pass, as well as a 'marlow' gate on footpath 47 with the junction with the road which used the grant money for 07/08.

For the current year (08/09), to make life easier, two benches will be installed on paths FP2 and FP26 (on the Common side of town) to take advantage of the views across the valley. Future projects include improving signage, the surface of some of the more popular walks and even looking to see if additional paths could be usefully provided to link existing paths.

Both we and The Chiltern Society have some very useful maps for those interested in leaving the car at home for a change.

Activities Sub-Committee

Rita Jones, Chairman, reports:

Fire Service Called to BCA Talk!

No, not a fire at the Town Hall, but a surprise interval item during Alan Verney's talk 'THE BERKHAMSTED FIRE SERVICE from 1886' on April 10th. Local firemen, including two in breathing gear, showed how much the service and its equipment had changed since the early days, which Alan had illustrated during his interesting talk.

In addition we were offered a home fire safety check and new style smoke alarm, if needed. General information about this service may be obtained on 0800 587 3347. The description, from the early heavy equipment and riding on horseback to summon the fire service if you weren't near the fire station, to our present electronic age made me realise how much we take for granted.

We are grateful to Alan Verney and the 'Interval Firemen' for showing us how fortunate we are to live in a town with a long history of an excellent service.

The Summer Ramble on June 1st will be to Cholesbury, with a stop for lunch or your own picnic, and back. It starts at 10.30 a.m. in front of Berkhamsted Station, or you can join it anywhere on the footpath to Shootersway, which we should reach about 10.45a.m. It will be led by Bill Willett. Do join us, but I have to point out that it will be at your own risk.

Dates for your Diary

The provisional programme for 2008/9 is:

- October 9th 2008. 'The Spirit of Berkhamsted' by Margaret Edenburgh.
- November 13th 2008. 'The History and Restoration of Redbournbury Mill'
- January 1st 2009. New Year's Day Ramble.
- February 12th 2009. 'Berkhamsted in Maps' by Bill Willett
- March 12th 2009. AGM
- April 2nd 2009. 'The Environment etc., an Update' by David Brown



It's good to see an outlet for the talent of our residents!
(Velvet Lawn)

Gripes and Grouches

Alison Watson rises to the challenge:

I am having a little moan, which you could include if you were short of "moans", about dog litter. Some dog owners think that they have cleared up after their dog when they use a bag and indeed, that would seem to be a good result. However, I have noticed here and there that bags are then left, thrown under hedges, trees etc. as the owner is nowhere near a bin. Can we ask all dog owners to be responsible and take their bags of litter home with them or to nearest facility, otherwise their dog fouling is a double nuisance - at least the organic bit will decompose on its own eventually, much more quickly than the bag it is in. I have even seen the special brown bags that DBC used to provide hanging from branches in the woods which does make one wonder what owners think is going to happen to them. Perhaps they could enlighten me.

Your editor adds his bit!

I have the misfortune to live with 3 dogs, 2 cats and a strange woman who drags me to Agility Competitions - for the dogs. These are organised by dog clubs for members and have to adhere to Kennel Club rules; one of which is to clear up after your dog(s). I get fed up with announcements over the Tannoy reminding competitors to clear up and use the numerous bins/sacks provided.

I even had to chastise my mum once and her comment was a wrinkled face and the comment 'I'm not touching that, it's dirty'. Now you know how I turned out as bad as I did!

I'm afraid it's an education problem, (like pavement parking!!) and perhaps someone can provide a better reason why it occurs.

And the Chairman adds:

- as a former dog-sitter and, more specifically, a dog-walker, I have been acutely aware of the hazards and management of doggie doo-doo. In the past most people didn't care and thought it adequate to let their animals carry out their natural actions anywhere in the open. In today's environment (more people, more children, less green space) dog owners have a much greater responsibility to remove canine waste. At present this is best effected by using a plastic bag and/or carrying a garden trowel. If you cannot bury the output, take it home or put it in a bin designated for it. I bet most dog owners clear up their own gardens after pooch has poohed - remember to do it for your town as well!

Local Events

Vice-Chairman, Susan Johnson, keeps us up to date:

Graham Greene Festival

The Graham Greene Festival this year has a more populist agenda than hitherto, with some very famous and interesting speakers and one of our favourite films. The Festival runs from Thursday 2nd to Sunday 5th October, and kicks off with a new event - for young people who aspire to write. The films are *Brighton Rock* at the Rex and *This Gun for Hire* at the Civic Centre. Speakers over the four days include Libby Purves, Michael Billington, Chris Mullin MP, Professors Cedric Watts and Neil Sinyard, and Jon Snow.

The full programme will be published as usual in the summer. Please come along, even if you have never done so before. Booking will be through the Festival website www.grahamgreenefestival.com or direct from the Treasurer, Colin Garrett, at 17 North Road, Berkhamsted HP4 3DX Tel: 01442 866694.

The Berkhamsted Board Game

April saw the launch of the Berkhamsted Board Game by the Chamber of Commerce. The promotional material says it's "a game of strategy, trading, knowledge and luck", so it sounds a bit like a cross between Monopoly and the Game of Life. I've bought mine (£24.99) but it looks so nice in its box, I haven't opened it yet! So I can't tell you what the quality of the playing pieces and cards are, or whether it's as much fun to play as it looks. Perhaps some of you will write in with your critiques in future newsletters? But all congratulations to David Guest (of *Berkhamsted Living*), who designed it, and the Chamber and 60 local businesses that funded it. To purchase a game – and they will make ideal presents for locals and friends worldwide – telephone 01442 824300, email BLivinginfo@aol.com, go to Hamlins toyshop in Lower Kings Road or Woods Garden Centre.

Dacorum Environmental Forum

Norman Cutting reports:

At the March meeting, Phil Pennington was re-elected as Chairman, and Gruff Edwards as the Vice-Chairman (replacing Douglas Walker).

Main items and decisions were that a letter should be drafted to the local supermarket managers requesting that they should do all they can to reduce packaging.

A presentation was made on proposals to reduce the 'carbon footprint' of the county, but it appeared to hinge more on calculations rather than actual measurements. There is £2.5m. available for community projects through a series of funding rounds over the next three years.

Producing food locally was the subject of another item (as local food funding available (£50m), which would be available to not-for-profit groups). Schemes which could be considered included community gardens, community seed exchanges, composting, food education and awareness, and farmers' markets. Two schemes, which were felt that Dacorum might pursue, were community supported agriculture and the community food-growing project. Land and enthusiastic people were required.

The Forum was informed that allotment use was not exhausted with plots available in many areas (but not all as a shortage was being experienced in some areas) and gardens could be used and maybe even not built on.

Finally, the Dacorum Community Partnership, in which Berkhamsted is very active, having produced the strategy, had to formulate an action plan to meet the objectives which would be used to monitor progress.

This needed to be set by January 2009.

More information on www.dacenvforum.org.uk

Town Amenities Sub-Committee

Gordon Bluck, TASC Chairman reports:

In March, the BCA Chairman met with Ruth Chapman (Trees Officer DBC) and Councillors Ken Coleman and Lindy Foster Weinreb to discuss the condition of the trees in the High Street. The BCA is concerned that trees have been lost and not replaced. The result is that Ruth Chapman will examine historical records which should identify what is planted and where and will clarify current budget allocation for tree planting. We await this information. A very useful exercise and another example of the Association being involved behind the scenes.

Our normal scrutiny of the planning applications has continued under John Parsons' co-ordination, and I thank him for agreeing to continue in this role. We have objected to several internally illuminated signs in the High Street and resisted the installation of an illuminated collar on the proposed Tesco ATM machine.

Since the last newsletter, the AGM took place and the Environment Award plaque was awarded to the Chadwick Centre. Runners-up were 77 High Street and the two new Edwardian-style houses in Montague Road, with a Certificate of High Commendation going to the new Hospice. The Centre was not a popular choice but the Committee felt it was a worthy winner. *What do you think?* I would like to thank John Cook who did his usual excellent job with the slide presentation.

There is a proposal to stop the paper copies of planning applications being available at the Berkhamsted Civic Centre, relying on the Planning Portal available on the Internet. I, and most of my Committee, have broadband and so are in a position to access plans from home or office but we have objected to the possible loss of paper plans as not everyone is on line.

The Committee attended a viewing of the Great Barn in Castle Hill following its conversion to a private dwelling. Members will recall that the barn (Grade II* listed) has been on the "Buildings at Risk" register for many years and now it has been converted by Thameside Homes and the Association is delighted it has been saved. I can report that an excellent job has been done to a very high standard.

What the Newsletters said:

Compiled by Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby

March 1968: Following a disappointing response to the Berkhamsted's greatest eyesore poll, the three that got by far the most votes were The Town Hall (with special reference to the fish smell), the derelict shops on the corner of Prince Edward Street, and Currys shop. The Committee also felt that this town has not many buildings left of historic interest but they felt the time had come to take stock of the situation and would be compiling a list of buildings and groups of buildings which they consider worthy of preservation and protection.

Ed - This was done in 2001

March 1978: There was a report on the application for the provision of a second 18-hole golf course on Berkhamsted Common in which the majority of the committee opposed the application. The reasons against included the reduction of cover available for birds and animals, reduction of plants trees and wild flowers and the danger from golf balls. The minority in favour said that the growing population of Berkhamsted would create an increased demand for golfing facilities and that the Common would be improved and made more accessible by the removal of bracken.

Ed - The second golf course was not built.

January 1988: Discussed the Special General Meeting that had been arranged to discuss the Erostin Group's planning application for the Bourne Centre (also known as the Town Centre Redevelopment). It had been referred to in an earlier newsletter as the town's most significant planning issue of this decade (if not this century).

"The proposal in arranging the meeting was to enable people to gain knowledge of the proposals not only by the presentation but by subsequent questions. It is worth noting that very little expression against the proposal was passed to committee members, and we will probably never be able to gauge the overall opinions of either our membership or the town population."

Ed - The Bourne Centre is now known as Water Lane

Contributions to:

The Citizen

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

E-mail: bca@berko.org.uk

Web site: <http://www.berko.org.uk/bca>

Edited and compiled by Norman Cutting

Chairman: Tony Statham, Ashlyns Lodge, Chesham Road, HP4 2ST Tel: 876995 (e: sahs@tinyonline.co.uk)

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

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association

Designed by Norman Cutting - 871851 & printed by The Print Centre - 876600