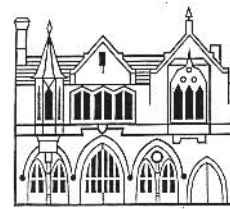


# The Citizen

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



September 2009

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## Chairman's Column

*Our Chairman, Tony Statham, writes -*

I have been taken to task on the rationale for the BCA. I realise that most readers of the newsletter are members of the BCA already and therefore are, by and large, happy to be members and align themselves with the aims and objectives of the association – “*Working for the social and civic life of our community*”. It appears however that not all members (past and present) agree with the stance that we (the committee) sometimes take on issues within our community. On the whole, the matters that raise the most controversy are linked to planning issues. In these cases, either the main committee, or more usually the Town Amenities sub-committee, looks at all planning applications within the town boundaries. When relevant, a letter is sent to the Borough Council with copies to the Town Council and possibly the developer in question. This collective opinion stems from the discussion of a few individuals with many years experience in reviewing planning applications but it must be stressed that it is only an opinion and sometimes this will be contrary to other views in the town. We attempt to balance all factors affecting a development which include the need for more housing, preservation of the Conservation area, over-development of a site, pressure on utilities and related issues such as traffic, parking and school capacity. Space does not permit a detailed analysis of our views on any particular development, suffice it to say that any member is welcome to challenge our opinions or bring their views to our attention. We will always try and offer a balanced and reasoned argument for our stance on these matters.

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## Your Editor gets to say.....

*Round up of odds and ends by Norman Cutting*

Colin Garrett got in touch a month or so ago, picking up on the Town Council organised "Big Tidy Up" campaign with the aid of lots of volunteers. Colin asked to keep the equipment so that he could continue the battle. Since then he has spoken to many people on the street who have applauded his efforts and some have volunteered to join in. His objective is to recruit a band of reliable volunteers, one in each street, so that each person feels some responsibility for their own immediate neighbourhood. It would also set an example to others and help engender a little civic pride.

He wonders whether members of the BCA would also help. DBC do quite a good job of keeping the High Street more or less clean but some residential parts of the town they will never get round to. He has offered to coordinate the effort so that we do not get unnecessary overlap. He has a supply of lurid green vests, pink garbage bags and mechanical litter pickers to give each volunteer so, if you can think of anyone who might help, ask them to get in touch with Colin on [colinngarrett@btinternet.com](mailto:colinngarrett@btinternet.com) or 866694.

Also in August, I attended the latest Canal and Riverside Partnership meeting. The main discussion really was that much neglected part of town - Canal Fields. It seems the world and his wife want a bit of the action (where were they when we had an open air swimming pool, I wonder?). Apart from CARP, we now have DBC in the guise of the 'Canal Fields Liaison Group' and another group called the 'Friends of Canal Fields', all wanting to have a say in what goes on.

Just in case you actually care, the 'green flag' will now be flown from the bowling club pole - unless their flag is flying when it won't be. One of the good things about having a 'green flag' is the £90,000 of money that comes with it (that can't be the reason for all this interest, can it?). Anyway, along with Chipperfield Common, the Borough Council now has two green flag sites and all that money. All readers who believe that £45,000 will go to both Chipperfield and Berkhamsted for more improvements please meet in the telephone box opposite St Peters Church on New Year's Day as that should be ample room.

Also discussed were the 'improvements' to the road/footpath/car parking boundary. Hmm, I shall just say that I hope it didn't cost much, as leaving about 4 foot for cars to enter and leave at the playground end has resulted in some careless driver knocking over one of the nice black and red posts. When did you last see a car four foot wide?

The Berkhamsted Access Committee met at the end of June and it was reported that the County Court case regarding lack of disabled access to various retail premises had gone against the shop concerned and could have serious implications for shops in Berkhamsted who have not yet made arrangements for the step(s) up or down to be accessible easily. The Access Officer is still trying to resolve the HSBC access difficulties.

If you, or a relative, has access problems in the town, then why not raise them with the Committee, either via my e-mail or telephone. (both on the back page).

## Activities Sub-Committee

Rita Jones, Chairman, reports:

### 2009/10 Programme of talks and walks

The new programme card will arrive with this Newsletter. Our editor reminds me that the next Newsletter will not be distributed until December, so here is a taste of the first two talks, which I hope will encourage you to attend.

Thursday, October 8th, "Designing Winning Gardens for the Chelsea Flower Show". Janet Honour, who lives in Berkhamsted, and her colleague, Patricia Thirion will take us behind the scenes at the Chelsea Flower Show and share their adventures when designing 2 silver-gilt, medal-winning gardens. Two years ago, when they had just finished a course at Capel Manor, their first courtyard garden had a Van Gogh theme and, this year, it was 'Entente Cordiale', and a BBC sponsored day in Paris. Its not just plants and design but celebrity and travel as well, so not only for gardeners.

On Thursday, November 12th, Robert Aigin, of 'Nomad' in Castle Street will talk to us about "The Identification of Oriental Rugs". Remember the jewel like colours glowing from stalls in exotic bazaars and floors of eastern mosques and western stately homes. Come along to find out more about the 'magic carpets' of folk tales and perhaps revive holiday memories. If you have a carpet found on holiday or part of the family 'treasures', bring it along to share it with us and to find out more about it.

As usual the venue is the Sessions Hall, starting at 8pm, with refreshments in the interval.

Please come along and support these experts who have given up their time to share their knowledge and pleasure with us.

### Was it really 20 years ago?

Councillor David Sherratt was suggesting a combined approach to identify buildings for possible listing in the town. (*The BCA has made significant progress in persuading DBC to impose Article 4 Directions in recent years*)

The proposed 'Bourne Centre' (corner of Lower Kings Road taking in Sharlands, Kings Chambers and the 'waste land' behind) was still being discussed, but the covered mall had been dropped.

A competition was proposed for a mural to be installed on the Ravens Lane Canal Bridge facing the Boat PH to present a nicer view than the concrete bridge supports. (*Who remembers the corks being fitted to telephone wires passing over the bridge, so the swans didn't just fly into them as they launched from the boat yard basin?*).

New parking requirements are being proposed in Dacorum's local plan for office developments. (*Now thoughts are going along the lines of charging to park on your own land to allow more 'clogging up' of nearby roads!*)

The developers of Park View School gave £20,000 towards the displaced youth club, which together with £10,000 from both the Town Council and others including the Rotary Club, so £40,000 should go nicely towards the new facility.

Thoughts about nominations for the 9th Environment awards, next years subscriptions and the Citizens' Carol evening were all part and parcel of the November 1989 newsletter.

Take a look at even more BCA history at:  
[www.bcacitizens.org.uk/archive](http://www.bcacitizens.org.uk/archive)

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### A Profile of: **David Collins**



David is a member of the Royal Horticultural Society, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the National Trust. It was his love of walking in the Chilterns and Thames Valley which persuaded David and his wife to move to Berkhamsted.

After spending twenty five years' in developing and managing small to medium size businesses in the consulting and engineering sectors, he established his own consultancy group advising on business development in a wide range of industries from electronics to construction.

David was elected a Town Councillor in May 2007 and is now serving his second year as Town Mayor. Married, with a grown up family, both he and his wife are governors of schools in Berkhamsted and campaigned for extra school places in the Town. David joined the Citizens in 2006 and joined the main Committee in 2007.

## Membership Matters

by Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby

We hate to mention this subject but 21 of our members do not appear to have let us have their subscription for 2009. Regrettably we need money to survive and the main source of our income is derived from your subscription. I agree it is very easy to forget and put our reminders in your 'To Do' tray so we hope that you will not mind being reminded yet again. Please don't let us loose touch with you.

If you have paid, and I have enclosed a reminder with this Newsletter, please let me know, so that I can check my records. Of the 233 who have paid, thank you.

Membership currently stands at 417 members, 28 down on this time last year and this will inevitably drop still further if we lose you with only 5 members joining since November. This means we are likely to drop to under 400 members by the end of the year.

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## THE TWELFTH INTERNATIONAL GRAHAM GREENE FESTIVAL

A reminder from Susan Johnson

The first GG Festival after Ken Sherwood's death will, in itself, be a new beginning. But this year the GGBT has adorned the Festival with the epithet *International*. In reality the Festival has always been international – speakers from all over the world, as well as visitors; for Greene is even more widely regarded in, for example, the USA, Japan, and those countries that still fight for their political freedom, than in this country. There has been more excitement this year with the discovery of an unfinished murder mystery, called *The Empty Chair*, which is currently being serialised in *The Strand* magazine in America. Professor François Gallix, who discovered this manuscript while researching Greene's papers, will be speaking at next year's Festival.

This year the Festival's theme is *The Third Man* and Austria, and takes place from 1st to 4th October. It has some exciting guest speakers, as usual, among them Michael Billington (theatre critic of the Guardian) and Kate Adie (former BBC Chief News Correspondent).

Festival brochures are available from the Library and Waterstone's. Tickets are available from the Treasurer and can be ordered by post at 17 North Road, Berkhamsted HP4 3DX, by phone 01442 866694 or by email [treasurer@grahamgreene.org](mailto:treasurer@grahamgreene.org) There will be tickets available on the door for most events, but it is best to book to ensure a place.

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: I don't have a lot of space, so I will ask this only :  
: once. :  
: :  
: Let us know what you like and dislike about your :  
: newsletter - we really would like to know! :  
: :  
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## Ken Sherwood

An appreciation by Susan Johnson

Ken played so many roles in local affairs in Berkhamsted, from soon after the time that he and his wife Jenny arrived in the town, that it is not possible to do justice to them all here, so this tribute can only cover some of the highlights.

While quite young (by the standards then) he became Chairman of the BCA, and his memorable achievement then was in 1974 when he persuaded Graham Greene and his brother Hugh, the controversial director general of the BBC, to come to Berkhamsted to talk to the Association, an event that is recorded for posterity in a photograph of Ken with the two famous Greene brothers.

But his contribution to Berkhamsted life went far beyond his Greene coup. He led the restoration of Berkhamsted Town Hall, from being a semi-derelict building threatened with demolition into a busy community asset. He brought his financial acumen, clear thinking and optimism to the Town Hall Trust at a time when it was struggling to make progress, both as trustee and later its chairman. He further put a great deal of time and personal skill into producing the complex paperwork and negotiations with the Lottery Fund and English Heritage that culminated in substantial grants being obtained to cover much of the cost of turning the Clock Room into the splendid facility it is today.

Then as chairman of the Market Fund he came up with initiatives that have helped to revitalise the market, sometimes with only modest support from others. The introduction of the monthly farmers' market and the French market can be largely attributed to him. It is much to Ken's credit that today Berkhamsted Market is thriving while others are in decline.

Perhaps, though, Ken's crowning achievement for Berkhamsted was in the leading role he took in getting the Graham Greene Birthplace Trust off the ground, and its subsequent success in realising and promoting the annual Festival. Others might have questioned what Greene himself would have made of such a venture, but Ken was absolutely adamant that the GGBT was what was needed to promote Greene's legacy as the leading author of the 20th century; and simultaneously advertise Berkhamsted's historic ambience. Jenny, as Chairman of the Local History Society, backed him solidly and, as a team, they were irresistible as Berkhamsted's best advocates. I followed David Pearce some ten years ago as the BCA representative on the GGBT, and take great pride in maintaining the link between the two organisations.

Berkhamsted as a whole, not just the BCA, owes a lot to Ken, which was demonstrated by the high turn-out for his funeral service on 17th April. I knew of him from the time I arrived in the town in 1981, and much better during the last decade. He was a man who truly cared about the town, and its historic and literary legacy; and was willing to work his socks off to see his aspirations for it realised.

## Town Amenities Sub-Committee

*Gordon Bluck, TASC Chairman reports:*

There has been a lot of discussion regarding the New Lodge development application for London Road / Bank Mill Lane, not all of it useful. I wish to put it on record that TASC neither supported nor objected to the application. The application resulted in a tirade from the Town Council and local residents; but TASC only suggested safety measures such as mini roundabouts at the entrances, and the extension of the 30 mph speed limit to entry to the town. I am not going to get into a long debate about whether the plan met the design brief in its smallest detail, but just say that TASC's view was that it was acceptable. Planners shared this view, but it was turned down by Development Control Committee. There the matter rests. We will expect an Appeal against the decision, which may well be won. As a result the detail of the development could be decided by an Inspector, not our own local planners who might have been able to have wrung a better-looking scheme out of this. Personally I think it is a shame that a scheme, which must have had a lot of time and money invested in it, is totally set aside because residents opposite, living in greenfield development themselves, do not want to lose that view of a site with its broken down caravans and abandoned land. This land, regardless of ownership, has been designated for housing to match Hall Park for at least the 15 years I have been TASC Chairman. Rant over.

Electronic planning consultation has become a reality for all but the most difficult of applications. In order to protect our members' ability to look at paper versions, we lobbied DBC to ensure that Berkhamsted Town Council and Northchurch Parish Council would continue to receive them. The Borough Council has assured us that all parish/town councils will continue, for now, to receive hard copies.

Now that it has been clarified that the profits from the Footpath Map can be used for other purposes there are moves to pay for replacement trees in Lime Walk between Castle Hill Avenue and Castle Hill in the autumn.

We have objected to the introduction by DBC of off-street parking fees on Sundays and Bank Holidays throughout the Borough. The DBC Portfolio Holder has disregarded these views, but as I write the item has been 'called in' to the DBC Environment Scrutiny Committee. Let's hope they make him think again!

TASC now has an assurance from the Borough Council that its planning procedures will ensure that the demolition of Gable Hall will not go ahead before what will replace it is decided upon. This was the very least we sought, given that its demolition is now inevitable.

The Association was not wedded to retention of the Hall itself, given its poor design and state of preservation, but it was concerned that demolition would result in a hole in the conservation area and loss of a public facility. We await the plans for the site with interest. We notice that the plans for housing for the Manor Street Social Services site are now submitted; this site being similar to the Gable Hall scenario (site in public ownership and usage in the CA). TASC has objected to them on design grounds. We had previously fought, and lost, the battle to keep the site for a community facility. Let's hope that we are more successful for the Gable Hall site.

A lot of time has been spent by the Committee on the consultative document *Spatial Strategy for the Town of Berkhamsted*, and a submission lodged. It should be in the public record soon.

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**David Woodward (30th Sept 1937 - 27th July 2009)** *A brief appreciation by John Cook.*

It was a great shock when we learned of the death of David Woodward, although we had been aware that he had been unwell for some time. He was an active member of the BCA committee until just a few weeks before his death.

David was a long-standing member of our Association. A few years ago when there was a need for capable people willing to serve on the committee, typically David stepped forward and became a valuable member, representing us on the Crime Prevention Panel. Incidentally, on the committee he found himself at meetings being held in his old house in Shrublands Road, even sitting on the old pew that the present owner, Susan Johnson, had inherited from him.

At his memorial service in All Saints Church on 10 August, a number of warm tributes were paid to him. After family recollections by his daughter, a colleague spoke of his time at St John's College Cambridge (where he got a first), and of his whole working life spent at the Bank of England. I then did my best to compress into a few minutes a record of what David achieved in Berkhamsted. Finally Ruth Treves-Brown spoke of just some of the things he did at All Saints' Church.

*(A fuller appreciation will appear in the October issue of the Berkhamsted Review)*

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Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association

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