



The Citizen

Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

Working for the social and civic life of our community

www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

September 2014

Chairman's Piece

Susan Johnson
chairman@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

As ever, a busy time for the Association. We are engaged in commenting on all the topics of the day: Lidl, the former police station, the 'cage' at the station; and campaigning on the use of S106 monies (those coming from planning permissions) for affordable housing here in Berkhamsted. Meanwhile we are setting up some jolly activities: talks, walks, a special 90th anniversary lunch. We will also host the ANTAS AGM in November in the Town Hall. We can show off our town to the North Thames civic & amenity societies. St Albans, eat your heart out! We should be proud of our many beautiful buildings; and celebrate the demise of those we will be pleased to see the back of! There's never been a more important time to be in the BCA.

90th celebrations

The Committee agreed an informal lunch would be the best choice for an event, based upon the questionnaires returned at our AGM and the likely numbers wishing to attend. The event has been set for some time in April/May 2015 (or just after), as availability of organisers, suitable venues and the weather makes that a good time; avoiding Easter week, of course. Venues and menus are being researched, based upon 100 or so members (only) attending.

Sparrows Herne Waymark

The Sparrows Herne Waymark, together with the old boundary marker between Berkhamsted and Northchurch, which are set against National Tyres at 352 High Street, have been restored as part of the BCA's 90th celebrations.

The BCA organised and paid for the work, with financial assistance from the Town Council and Berkhamsted Community Partnership; and the support of the Berkhamsted History & Museum Society, The Milestone Society and DBC. Thanks must also go to the staff at National Tyres for their patience with the comings and goings. It is a small but significant part of Berkhamsted's heritage and, as a result, the BCA has made an application to English Heritage to have it listed.

The waymark is one of only two original markers remaining, put up by the Sparrows Herne Trust to mark the route of the toll road that ran from Aylesbury to Sparrows Herne in Bushey, following the now A4251 (old A41), and lasting from 1762 to 1873. The Trust was set up in the Kings Arms and wound up in the old Workhouse, which stood on Kitsbury Parade until the 1930s; so a truly Berkhamsted venture.

The toll road was no longer a going concern after the arrival of the railways, but its existence is marked as a small but significant part of transport history.



Picture of Cllr Peter Matthews, Town Mayor of Berkhamsted; Susan Johnson, Chairman of the BCA; and Tony Statham, Chairman of the Berkhamsted Community Partnership with the Waymark.

Berkhamsted's Public House Signs

Tony Statham

Members and readers of the Gazette are probably aware that the Association praised the renovation of the pub sign outside The George in the High Street a few weeks ago celebrating the restoration of a traditional illustration (of George III) instead of the seeming current proliferation of signs having perhaps just the name of the establishment or a very simplistic painting.

It is interesting to recall however that the history of inn signs was more meaningful when they first came into being as far back as the Middle Ages. In those days, ale houses, inns and taverns used signs to identify their premises – thus one might meet at the sign of the Crown or the sign of the Lamb. At this time, the majority of the population were essentially illiterate and thus unable to read the name of an

establishment. Pubs thus complemented many other tradesmen who used symbols of their activities to identify themselves to potential customers; pub names came to be added in later years.

While we don't have time or space to discuss the evolution of inn signs, our committee prompted some discussion about other pub signs in the town and this article attempts to cover the subject. At one time Berkhamsted boasted over thirty such establishments compared with the current surviving dozen or so. Working from east to west, the following list attempts to catalogue the existing establishments and their respective signs with, if relevant, some notes:

NOTES

The Old Mill	Stylised mill-wheel	More of a restaurant than just a pub. Originally the Lower Mill of two water mills used to grind cereal grains
The Bull	A bull (head-on) (very faded)	This name may have originally referred to Papal Bulls (notices) but the majority in common use today relate to the farm animal
The Rising Sun	Cockerel against a sunrise	Sometimes thought to represent "a place in the sun" or somewhere offering favourable opportunities
The Boat	Illustration of a canal boat	Appropriate as pub is on the canal
The Goat	Cut-out silhouette of a goat's head	Goat is a popular name for Inns including "The Goat and Compasses". This is thought to be a corruption of "God encompasseth us" but may also refer to "scapegoat" taking away the troubles of the world
The Crystal Palace	Stylised outline of The Crystal Palace	Original building had glazed front inspired by Joseph Paxton's Great Exhibition building. His nephew, William (agent for Lord Brownlow) lived in Berkhamsted
The Kings Arms	Stylised coat of arms with a lion and unicorn	Widely used as a sign of loyalty after the Restoration The Arms are actually those of Queen Anne
The Swan	Illustration of a swan in the style of a stained glass design	No longer a pub but a community centre for young people
The Crown	Painting of a crown	Very popular sign/name, easy to recognise and illustrate as well as demonstrating loyalty to the reigning monarch
The George	Painting of George III	Name originally used to depict St. George but a kingly name since 1714 (accession of George I)
The Lamb	Painting of a lamb in a half barrel	Various origins for this name but typically refers to the farm animal

Town Amenities Sub-Committee

Paul Crosland, Chairman
tasc@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

High Street Trees

The cutting down of four mature trees from the High Street in June was met with some consternation amongst the populace. Although it is like the disappearance of a familiar friend, it is quite normal for trees to be removed before they reach full maturity in order to prevent damage from their roots and before disease sets in. The BCA understands that replacement trees are planned, although the locations have not yet been finalised by Dacorum Borough Council.

A Blooming Improvement

The 'Better for Berkhamsted' working group on Berkhamsted Town Council has allocated funds for the provision of substantial planters, filled with seasonal blooms outside the Civic Centre, at prominent sites along the High Street, and at the gateways to the town. The BCA has congratulated the Town Council on their efforts, and we are assured that the planting will be maintained and changed from summer to winter.

Kings Road/ Kingshill Way/ Shootersway junction

The BCA has made representation to HCC in support of the resolution by Berkhamsted Town Council that a high priority should be given to junction improvements, including traffic lights, at this busy junction. We have recommended that sources of funding – including s.106 monies from developments such as the Egerton Rothesay site - should be pooled in order to meet the costs for the works. Provision for pedestrians, especially schoolchildren, to cross is badly needed. HCC plans schedule finding the funds for this work in "between 3 and 10 years".

Section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 allows local councils such as Berkhamsted Town Council (BTC) to raise funds for local highway improvement schemes in the form of a loan from the Public Works Loan Board. This would be covered by an increase to the Town Council precept. This funding route was not taken forward by the Town Council. What do you think? Should local residents be asked to pay more to fund local schemes where the body responsible does not have the funds available? Do you reject this on the grounds that it is effectively 'double taxation'? To date, the BCA has not directly supported this idea, though we whole-heartedly support the works being carried out. Please give us your views on what the BCA's position should be.

More from the Station

In the last issue of *The Citizen*, I advised that we had made representations to both Dacorum Borough Council (as the Planning authority) and Network Rail, as landowner, about the positioning of a substation and three metre high, galvanised

metal enclosure that had been placed in the forecourt of Berkhamsted Station. We regarded this as a significant negative addition to the Conservation Area.

Responses were slow in coming from Dacorum, and I had to resort to submitting a Freedom of Information Request to get adequate answers to the questions I put to them.

Network Rail had claimed that, although they have no legal obligation to consult with Dacorum as Planning Authority, they had been in communication with the Council. This claim was rejected by Dacorum, who advised that there had been no correspondence with Network Rail.

Dacorum Borough Council has taken the view that it is satisfied that the installation of the substation and enclosure may be regarded as 'permitted development' under the terms of the General Permitted Development Order, as the criteria which would otherwise prevent this are not fulfilled. The fact that the Station building and the brick arches which provide the backdrop to the substation enclosure are both a) within the Berkhamsted Conservation Area and b) now locally listed structures offer them no greater protection from having an ugly structure placed next to them, by virtue of the fact the substation sits on railway land. This seems to give Network Rail and London Midland carte blanche to act almost with impunity in regard to what it is allowed to build on its land.

Network Rail claims that it considered placing the substation on the north side of the station but rejected that option on the grounds that a) it would then face residential properties on Bridgewater Road and b) it would then be within sight of a National Monument i.e. Berkhamsted Castle.

The Head of Planning at Dacorum Borough Council, Mr. James Doe, has written to Network Rail asking them to paint the enclosure either black or green in order to minimise its impact. This has not yet been done, however. It seems that the residents of, and visitors to, Berkhamsted will have to make more noise if anything is to be achieved.

Evening and Sunday Bus Services

If you use the bus in the evenings or on Sundays, you will be concerned at proposals by HCC to withdraw funding for bus services after 6.30 p.m. on weekdays and altogether on Sundays. Voice your concerns by contacting HCC, by completing a paper survey available from the library or going on-line to:

<https://consult.hertsdirect.org/bus-services/>

The BCA will also be objecting to these proposals, which will limit mobility for those without their own means of transport.

Activities

Susan Johnson
activities@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Section 106

Gordon Bluck

With this newsletter you will have received your 2014/15 programme. Please share the topics with friends and family, as we often glean new members through our talks.

Our first talk is on Thursday 9th October 2014 by Greg Blesson of the Red Squirrel Brewery, Potten End. Real Ale is always a popular topic!

Then on 13th November 2014 Dr James Moir (DBC Planning and Berkhamsted resident) will talk us through a subject very close to the Association's heart, the recent changes to the Berkhamsted Conservation Area.

Then to start the New Year, the New Year's Day Ramble led by Paul Crosland. I leave the date for you to work out.

See you in October, if not before.

Membership Counts

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby
membership@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Since the last Newsletter we have circulated a third of our members, by email, of two important issues that may affect you and the town. These were the proposed changes to the opening times of the Household Waste site in Northbridge Road and the open meeting the Royal Forestry Society arranged to involve the community in Hockeridge & Pancake Wood and subsequent guided walk.

If you would like to be added to the list or even to receive Newsletters electronically E-mail addresses will be maintained confidentially by the BCA.

A warm welcome to our new member who has joined since the last newsletter. There are still 19 members with outstanding subscriptions. If you are one of them, a reminder will be enclosed with this newsletter. This may be your last chance to renew. If you feel you have already paid but are still receiving a reminder, please let me know.

Section 106 is part of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and is a device in planning law which allows Borough and County Councils to extract money from developers to compensate local communities for the inconvenience of the development and to boost the infrastructure of the area. As part of the planning process and for allowing permission for a building/s the developers have to pay money to Dacorum (DBC) and Herts Councils. The amount is decided by a formula and depends on the size etc. I became interested in how and if these monies were being spent, and the BCA discovered that £40,000 of S.106 money paid in relation to land at Stag Lane Berkhamsted and the improvement to the canal had been spent on the towpath in Northchurch. Digging deep into the Borough Council web site I found some statistics which indicated that that large sums had not been spent and would have to be returned to developers after an agreed period, normally 5 years.

As it was difficult to find anyone at DBC who was responsible I went to the Gazette in September 2012 under the heading "So why is all this money sitting in the bank?" Although there is now a very welcome S.106 Officer appointed at DBC who works a few hours a week; the situation is still, I believe, not acceptable with £186,308 relating to Rose Cottage, Bank Mill Lane unspent since June 2011 allocated to affordable housing. The latest figures for 2013 to date shows a S.106 take of £948,704 for just Berkhamsted split between DBC and HCC with the Town Council having very little input.

In a few years' time the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will be starting with more local involvement, but S.106 will still continue for larger schemes. The problem of spending the money will not go away. Your Association has spent a lot of time representing you, the members, on various working groups and in meetings with Councillors and council officers and will continue to do so. We will speak up for the Town.



Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association

Contributions to the Editor:
Katy Brookes-Duncan
58 Woodlands Avenue HP4 2JQ

Or via email to:
chairman@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Published by the
Berkhamsted Citizens Association ©

Printed by Strongs Printing Services tel:
878592