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June 2020 Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

Hello Everyone,

Here we are enjoying the sunshine, the roses, and everything is looking verdant and beautiful. Yes, it has been a difficult time, but we are sailing through and coming out the other side.

We have missed seeing you all.

However, your Committee has been very busy.

Our Vice Chairman Paul Crosland has been representing us on the Parking Forum overseeing the multi-storey car park and keeping us up to date with progress; keeping his finger on the button since lock down via Zoom.

I have been representing you on the Town Council CIL working group (The CIL is the Community Infrastructure Levy). The town Council gets a small percentage of the DBC levy to spend on our town.

You may remember at the 2019 AGM we furnished you all with a questionnaire as to how you would prefer our CIL money to be spent. Refurbishing the railings opposite the station was your favourite – it won by a country mile from a huge list. We are trying hard to make this happen and Berkhamsted Town Council has been very supportive, as has Ian Reay, our County Councillor. However, it will require partnership working which always takes a time to put together and the lock down has not helped.

A number of our members selflessly spent a few Sundays before lock down, clearing the ivy from the railings; thank you so much.

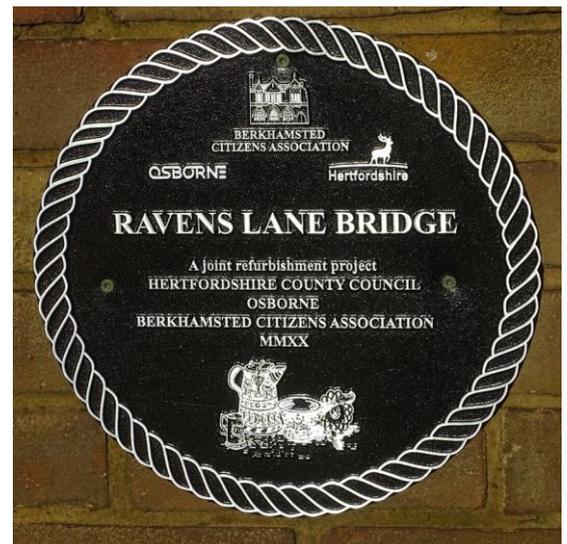
It is a really important area as it is the first thing visitors see when they come out of the station. Essentially it is the gateway to our town and if we want to encourage inward investment we need to make a good impression.

As many of you will remember Ravens Lane Bridge was closed for six weeks. This was to refurbish the bridge which has been in a dreadful state of repair.

We, the Citizens, worked in partnership with the County Council and Osborne their contractors to take the opportunity whilst they were upgrading the bridge to enhance the decorative and heritage aspect of the bridge.

We have been delighted to work with them and they have shown huge respect for our concern for the heritage value of the canal to our town. We were delighted to see so many of you at the grand opening. The renovated Port of Berkhamsted signs have been re installed and a further eight traditionally painted plaques. Thank you for your support.

We are now engaged on planning and designing the Lower Kings Road bridge, which is the next to be refurbished and decorated. This will not be completely closed to traffic during the work, which I know will please many of you.





Yet again I am asking members who feel they have something specific to offer our main Committee to come forward and share your expertise. We would love to welcome you onto our team.

We look forward to seeing you all soon.

Stay Safe,

Lindy Weinreb, Chairman

Gordon Bluck writes

Footpath map and more

Friends have said to me over the last few months “how are you coping?”; “Very well I say, just like being retired,” which I am. Having taken stock of my position: just under 70, tick; Type 2 Diabetes, oops; high blood pressure, oops; technically obese, oops; I decided to retake up walking. I am known by the BCA committee as “the map man” as the Footpath Map is my responsibility. Longstanding members may recall the Association has been selling the latest three versions over the last 15 years with over 12,000 sold. Despite being so heavily involved I had never used one. Now was the time and those who use the map will know what a fine job was done by Bill Willett our mapmaker. The latest edition has the numbers of each footpath which match up on the HCC/DBC signs. I have rediscovered Hockeridge and Pancake Woods sandwiched between the A 416 Chesham Road and Johns Lane and accessed off Shootersway and along Dennys Lane and under the bypass. The woods are a revelation as it is mostly fairly flat which helps my bad knees, with relatively short walks and owned by the Royal Forestry Society who allow permissive access. It is beautifully managed with 50 specimen trees all labelled up, and you can print off an internet map on their website www.rfs.org.uk You will need to go into main menu, then “about” page and on the right “resources”, then dropdown box “map”. There is a line of Giant Sequoia (no 12) right in the centre and near a bench I have called the Mr B bench. I have been out every day on a new walk including a walk to Marlin Chapel accessed via Northchurch Lane and footpath 19 as we can no longer walk from Shootersway along footpath 33 and 21 and the scamper across the A 41, although this may be reopened. I also recommend footpath 23 round the Iron Age fort in Cholesbury. If you need a BCA map they are on sale from Hill Farm Café, New Road, Northchurch or from Waterstones at a bargain £2.95.

Happy walking!

Paul Crosland, Vice Chairman

Lower Kings Road Car Park

Significant steps have been made this month (June 2020) towards having the multi-storey car park on Lower Kings Road opened this summer. Permanent power and water supplies were connected in the first half of the month. This enables the commissioning of the building and the services within it to take place. The highway works in Lower Kings Road including the mini roundabout, various alterations to kerb-lines to improve visibility and therefore safety and the introduction of parking restrictions are taking place as this newsletter is being prepared. The traffic lights at the main crossroads have also been renewed and upgraded to be more 'demand-responsive'. Many people have commented on the already degraded appearance of the car park elevations, mainly due to the choice of mesh cladding panels. Although these are intended to be 'pre-weathered' (or 'rusted' to the layman!), they should not look like they do. Representations have been made by the BCA and other construction experts in the town, and Dacorum's Project Manager is looking to see how the appearance can be improved. Another concern is the lack of protection given to the building next to the narrow service road to the rear of Waitrose. At present, it looks like the first articulated delivery truck is likely to rip off the building's cladding by the bend in the road..... Plants for the 'green wall' are in store until they can be installed and maintained.

Local businesses have been invited to apply for parking permits for the two uppermost levels in the car park, with a ballot in case demand exceeds the available provision. Concerning the reinstatement of The Moor, the effects of COVID-19 have led to the diversion of Dacorum's Clean, Safe and Green team's resources elsewhere. The exceptionally dry spring has combined with this to preclude much progress being made in the restoration work. Grading and re-seeding with grass are due to take place in late summer. Additional improvements to The Moor include tree planting, which has started, as has new fencing for the children's play area. Being now no longer unenclosed, the path beside this play area is now legally open to dog walkers!



Brightening up the Station Environs

Our enthusiastic support goes to the Berkhamsted Gardening Society/ Friends of Berkhamsted Station group who have put in a lot of work to improve the appearance of the flower bed at the rear (Castle) side of the Station. Please do take a look next time you are passing by.

Closure of Footpath crossings across the A41

As the COVID-19 lock-down took hold, Hertfordshire County Council took the decision to summarily close the following rights of way which cross the A41 'at road level':

1. Northchurch footpath 21A at grid reference 974074
2. Northchurch footpath 22 at grid reference 969077
3. Northchurch footpath 72 at grid reference 964083
4. Northchurch footpath 71 at grid reference 960087

The reasons given for the closures are the condition of the steps which lead down to and up from the A41 (in the case of the footpath identified at item 1 above) and, in general, the danger to users of the rights of way because of the volume and speed of vehicles on the A41 along this stretch of road.

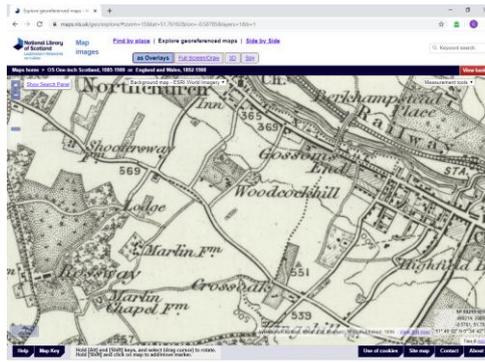
Ironically, the closures - which are described as 'temporary but likely to become permanent' - have been introduced at a time when usage of the A41 was severely reduced due to the Coronavirus 'lockdown' and, conversely, usage of the rights of way network in the vicinity of Berkhamsted had increased as people used footpaths as a means of getting daily exercise.

The A41, at this point a dual carriageway road under national speed limits, opened in 1993. The 2km stretch of road where these four rights of way cross the road are unique along the whole of the A41 in that they cross the dual carriageway 'on the level' i.e. no footbridge or underpass was provided - a decision taken 30 years ago on cost grounds. Twenty-seven years later, traffic volumes and speeds have increased, so that crossing the road at these points can only safely be undertaken early in the morning at weekends; at other times it is not practical.

Hertfordshire County Council's Highways contractor, Ringway, has blocked off the paths at the road crossing points, and has posted notices (dated 7 May 2020) at each crossing point and at nearby junctions with metalled roads. Strangely, HCC has alleged that the crossing points have never been designated as rights of way; this despite the presence of road signs, steps having been constructed on the road cuttings, the crash barriers on the central reservation having been slewed to allow pedestrians to walk between on the dual carriageway - not to mention fingerposts, stiles and waymarks having been applied on the rights-of-way themselves.

The BCA has given its backing to Town Councillor, Paul de Hoest, in successfully gaining the support of Berkhamsted Town Council, calling for improvements to the rights of way in the affected area. This includes the possibility of a footbridge across the by-pass on a former ancient roadway and right of way from Berkhamsted to Marlin Chapel and on towards Cholesbury. Let's see if the government stands by its promise of £2 billion of investments to promote cycling and walking!

The BCA will be raising an objection to Hertfordshire County Council. If this issue is something you feel strongly about and/or you have used these rights of way in the past, please send in your individual objections as well, by e-mail to highwaysassetoperations@hertfordshire.gov.uk. The deadline is the end of July this year.



extract OS map 1896



empty by-pass 9th May

Better Footpath News

In 2017, Berkhamsted School blocked access to a stile on Upper Ashlyns Road which, for many years, had allowed access to the school's playing fields to local people, and indeed, had been used by them to cross, unofficially, to Ashlyns School on Chesham Road. The local residents petitioned the school to have access reinstated. When Berkhamsted School refused, the residents took legal action, claiming that access, and the crossing point to Chesham Road, had become an accepted right of way by virtue of its use over many years. On 8 April this year the Planning Inspector allowed an appeal by the residents against a previous decision by Hertfordshire County Council not to make an order to add this footpath to the definitive map of rights of way. The Planning Inspector has instructed that this footpath should be added to the definitive map by Herts CC. The path has been shown on successive editions of the BCA's Footpath Map (under a proviso that paths marked thereon are not necessarily rights of way) and the map was used as part of the evidence presented to the Planning Inspector. We shall keep the pressure on to ensure that public access is restored as soon as possible.

Rectory Lane Cemetery Restoration

Restoration works stopped for a month during the initial COVID-19 'lockdown period' but then re-started under government and construction industry safe working guidelines. The Project Group - led by James Moir as Project Manager and Kate Campbell as Community Engagement Officer - are working towards a 'soft opening' of the restored cemetery for the Heritage Open Days weekends in mid-September. For further details, please contact Kate Campbell on 07866 020254 or campbellkate01@gmail.com

Townscape Group

Susan Johnson, Chairman

It's been three months since the AGM, and so much has happened since then. But planning and development goes on, and your Townscape Group has been working as usual – at a social distance, of course. First we must report on the outcome of the **Environment Award** which this year had the added frisson of an award of a **plaque** (last awarded in 2014) to **Corn Mill Court**, the social housing development on the corner of High Street and Swing Gate Lane. It is the finest social housing (commissioned by Dacorum Borough Council) we have seen in many years; not only new build in the vernacular style but also the renovation of the Victorian cottages in the High Street. We also awarded certificates of commendation for *The Lamb* PH; Gutteridge Farm, Ivy House Lane; and 123 George Street. The awards were made at the AGM on 11th March, which we just squeezed in before lock-down. You can see the new Committee elected then at the end of this newsletter, as well as pictures of the award-winners below.

The winner

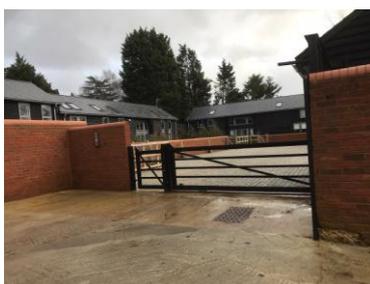


Corn Mill Court, 9-13 High Street & Swing Gate Lane

with certificates of Commendation to



The Lamb, 277 High Street



Gutteridge Farm, Ivy House Lane



123 George Street

One of the commendations, the studio at 123 George Street, has made it to the **RIBA East 2020 Awards** shortlist of 21 projects labelled rather whimsically as "Byre and Garrett". The project was commissioned by artist and BCA member Jeanne Woodcraft ARCA. We are absolutely delighted that the work of a local architect (Hugo Hardy), presented so well by a local photographer (Siobhan Doran), should get the recognition it has so far achieved and we hope it goes the whole way to an award.

Next we move on to planning matters. First we now have the possible date for consultation on the next **Borough Plan 2018 – 2036**. The timetable has been revised yet again, and it is now due to take place in November 2020. However we do not hold our collective breaths. When we have a firm idea of when it will take place we will set a date for an information and consultation evening, like the one we held last time.

More specific matters have engaged our attention recently. **Townscape Group** has commented on specific planning applications within the conservation area; and one 'concept' for outside its boundaries. The Group objected to the replacement of a wooden front door in Charles Street with a composite one on a house with an Article 4 Direction; and the demolition of 58-60 High Street (Victorian shops) to enable replacement by a bland block of flats. While we await the outcome of those applications we have been commenting on the 'concept' by Elysian Developments for the Old Orchard site on Shootersway, near the traffic lights. In our view it is anything but Elysian, unless you take their name literally. We are joined in our opinion by The Chiltern Society. Since a development of mansion flats on this site was turned down earlier this year (and was dismissed on Appeal) it is likely that, if this turns up as an application, it will get a rocky ride. Another Appeal has been lodged for 26 Station Road (one pair of semis); and 57 South Park Gardens (originally 6 detached houses) has its application granted last month for five houses. Long-term applications resolved include: the Old Dairy in Castle Street (granted, amended); and alterations to The Cow Roast Inn (granted). Kitchener's Field car park access lighting rumbles on, and could be influenced by the outcome of the application for Berkhamsted Hockey Club at Northchurch. However there is another controversial application on Brownlow Road, a replacement dwelling for Mabuhay. Worth a look!

We try our best to cover anything significant, especially in the conservation area; and report any unauthorised development to DBC. Let us know if you feel we are missing something!

Anne Foster writes

Ashlyns School Places

In our last newsletter we highlighted the predicted shortfall in places at Ashlyns for the 20/21 intake and for the following years.

Ashlyns has an 8 form intake which equates to 240 pupils. In fact after many, including us, raised concerns 265 places were allocated, so slightly larger classes; and, as we understand it, all local children who wanted one were allocated a place.

The predicted shortfall for next year is 62, and this is before any major developments that might result from the new Local Plan, so there is an ongoing issue and we will keep our finger on the pulse, to try and ensure that all local children who want can have a place at their local Secondary School.

Membership Counts

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby

Our membership currently stands at 309 households. A renewal slip will be issued to the 21 yet to renew. It would be appreciated if you would pay by Bank Credit Transfer as it is currently more difficult to do banking. Details are on the renewal slip.

We have decided to send newsletters to all members for whom we have email addresses. This is to ensure this newsletter arrives promptly as deliverers may not be able to get out. For the 43 to whom we will deliver or post this newsletter, please let me know if you would like to receive newsletters electronically. Also for those that normally get a paper version, please let me know if you are happy to continue to get an electronic version.

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Publicity

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There are vacancies on the Committee. If anyone feels they would be interested in joining us please contact the Secretary. Someone with IT experience would be particularly welcome.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association

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