



BERKHAMSTED CITIZENS

*The heart of
Berkhamsted*

www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk/

June 2022 Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

Dear Members

As this is the first newsletter since the AGM in March it falls to me as the new Chairman to put my piece on the front page. As you may recall, I've done the job before, but 20 years has seen a lot of changes in our society, and our methods of communication. So here we go on the post-Platinum Jubilee edition of the BCA newsletter!

First, the Association would like to thank Lindy Foster Weinreb who has been 'at the helm' as BCA Chairman for the last 6 years. At the AGM she was deservedly awarded Life Membership, the highest recognition of long service to the BCA. She was in the good company of Dr James Moir, a member who had this year been awarded a RIBA Fellowship, as a non-architect, for his work on historic building preservation; not least in Berkhamsted on the Rectory Lane Cemetery, our Environment Award winner last year. Our congratulations to them both.

Now that Covid has abated we will return to face-to-face meetings and events and have some fun.

We have arranged a guided tour around Ashridge Gardens on the 6th July followed by an optional visit to the new café. The tour will be lead by Zora, Head Gardener, and later in this newsletter there are further details.

We are also at an early stage of arranging an update meeting with our MP Gagan Mohindra in October or November, depending on his diary. This time we intend it to be an informal forum with questions 'on the night'. We are looking at allowing members to invite friends to come along, on the basis they might join the Association on the night. It will not be a public meeting and there will be no posters or promotion on social media. We want to avoid the problem we often encounter at Hustings when many people turn up for a necessarily open event and it becomes overwhelming.

With a new Mayor, Councillor Wendy Conian, in place we are hoping to be invited to provide BCA representatives on the Town Council's key working parties such as the Canal and Riverside Partnership, the Community Infrastructure Levy Working Group, Parking Provision and Management Forum, Parish Paths Partnership and the Local Plan Working Group. It is important to represent your views on these bodies.

The Townscape Group continues to make representations on planning matters – and can help you fashion your personal views to Berkhamsted Town Council and Dacorum Borough Council where you need help with the intricacies of the planning system.

We are also setting up a working party to take us forward into our Centenary in 2024, and beyond. The main Committee is looking at suitable ways of celebrating our centenary, including restoring or replacing the Town Shield on the post outside the Civic Centre, which was erected by the BCA for the Queen's coronation in 1953. A very appropriate project to pursue in this Platinum Jubilee year.

In conclusion, I am looking forward to bringing back a regular social programme. If anyone has the names of potential speakers, or any ideas for events, let me know: mobile 07856 665813 or landline 01442 873548, email gordonbluck@hotmail.com

Finally, we are always seeking volunteers to serve on the main Committee, where we have vacancies, so that together we can enthuse the BCA and take it into our next century.

Gordon Bluck

Chairman

Townscape Group *Susan Johnson,*
Chairman, writes

We are at last learning to live with Covid and feeling free to meet regularly. Here are some updates on representations the Group has been making on the most significant sites since the last newsletter.

Moorings, 13 Anglefield Road We and the Town Council objected. Generally we do not favour the trend towards high, close-boarded boundary fencing and gates where no safety reasons are given or apparent. Eventually, when we thought all was lost, the planning officer refused the application on the grounds we had cited. The applicant appealed against the refusal; but the Appeal failed. So Enforcement by DBC will be the next step, if the applicant does not comply willingly. **22 Shrublands Road – retention of tree house in front garden** We objected on the grounds of safety (for users and passers-by) and appearance. The Town Council did not. The application took 5 months to be validated, and was subsequently refused. A re-submission was made and we objected again, on the same grounds. It was refused. The applicant made a third, much more modest application. We did not comment. We await a decision. **Aitcheson Rafferty, 154-158 High Street (now Ashtons)** We objected to the proposed loss of the traditional indented shop front and the divided window facing Water Lane. The applications were withdrawn and redesigned to our liking. Then the applicant did not build the window facing Water Lane to the approved plan. We informed Enforcement. Let's see what happens. **New development at 57 South Park Gardens** An application is now in for 6 houses rather than the 5 given permission.

That's the updates; now for the new ones. I do not intend to cover them each separately, but to highlight the themes. In fact, the themes are universal and timeless:

- Intrusion into the Green Belt and the AONB
- Felling trees subject to TPOs and Conservation Area controls, without justification or suggested replacements
- Internal illumination of signage in the Conservation Area
- Replacement housing not fitting with surroundings – too large, or unsuitable materials

- Attacks on listed buildings or locally listed buildings, whether within the conservation area or not

And then there is the conundrum of the application for Solar Array in Bourne End. We all (well, nearly all) accept the need to generate alternative streams of energy, and solar power is a good method. But where? Surely not in the Green Belt and overlooking the AONB, on prime agricultural land? Against National Planning Policy, and creating a future Brownfield site for housing development a few years hence. That's the current proposal, opposed by us and just about every person who is not ideologically wedded to green energy, no matter what the circumstances. There seems to be an absence of a fence on which to sit. However, some of our readers will disagree. There is plenty of opportunity to discuss this point.

Come along to the Town Council Town Planning Committee to listen, and to make your voice heard. If you need any help to make representations on a planning matter, whether in person or written, please get in touch. We might not agree, but we will help you put your point of view across.

townscape@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Environment Award

This year, as we had a face-to-face AGM, we were back to considering all the contenders in a presentation (thanks to Simon Heywood) and made a live presentation at the AGM. All the developments were completed by 31st December 2021. We whittled the numbers down to 4, and the winners were as follows:

A plaque was awarded to each of:

- The Hide (formerly Castle Hill Farmhouse) – rebuild
- Milton House, Doctors Commons Road – re-creation of dwelling house from doctor's surgery, complete restoration and rear extension and garage

Excellent examples of additions to Berkhamsted's built environment. How it should be done! The winners were a complementary pair.

And runners-up certificates to:

- The Crystal Palace PH – restoration and reopening as a traditional pub
- Bridge over the canal at Park Street and onward path across Canal Fields to the play area.

We hope you will come along to the next AGM and Environment Awards in 2023 to see where the accolades for 2022 go.

BCA Events

Wednesday 6th July at 2pm – come and join us for a tour of Ashridge House Gardens!

We would like to invite you and your friends for a tour around the Gardens at Ashridge House, led by the Ashridge House Head Gardener. Entry to the gardens is £5, and the New Bakehouse Café will be open for refreshments until 5 p.m. To give us an idea of numbers, if you are thinking of joining us we would be grateful if you could please complete this short [form](#) by 1st July. We will be meeting in the main car park at 2pm.

Card payment is required for both the Gardens entry and any purchases in the Bakehouse Café or the adjacent shop.

MP's return visit

Our MP offered to make a return visit in October or November, depending on his Parliamentary obligations. We are trying to set up a date. Details to follow.

New Year's Day walk

Sunday 1st January 2023 at 10.30 a.m. meeting at Berkhamsted Station. Paul Crosland will lead.

Annual General Meeting & Environment Awards 2023

To be held in the Great Hall, Berkhamsted Town Hall on Thursday 30th March 2023 (provisional date) starting at 8 pm. More details to follow.

AROUND THE TOWN

The Berkhamsted Castle Trust

The castle attracts visitors from around the country, and indeed the world. Volunteers (mostly from the BLH&MS) people the castle every weekend from Easter through the summer months and interpret the site for the public. Susan Johnson is on the rota as a Trustee and a volunteer. *But they need more! Please get in touch if you feel you can help. Full training given! Contact Andrew Holder at Andrew.holder@berkhamstedcastle.org.uk*

Graham Greene International Festival

This will take place this year from Thursday 29th September to Sunday 2nd October. Put it in your diary and look for updates on the Festival website.

Open Door

Do you have a couple of hours to spare a week - or more if you want to? Why not come and join our warm friendly team @Open Door. Open Door is run almost entirely by volunteers, and we are always looking for enthusiastic people to add to our wonderful team. We welcome everyone, from all walks of life, to get involved - we have a whole range of ways you could help out:

- Helping in our community cafe - welcoming visitors, serving refreshments, helping in the kitchen
- Setting up exhibitions or activities from painting to music and much more
- Or maybe you have some special skills (Admin, legal and accounts especially welcome)
- Help with fundraising
- Or just being your usual friendly self, making everyone feel welcome

Interested? Just pop in for a chat and a cup of tea, or contact anyone of our team, or our volunteer manager Iain Manson on volunteering@opendoorberkhamsted.co.uk www.opendoorberkhamsted.co.uk

Rectory Lane Cemetery

The Rectory Lane Cemetery Project is now well into its 'maintenance phase'. In addition, new wildlife habitats are being created, starting with efforts to create an urban wildflower meadow in the upper part of the cemetery. As well as a regime to reduce the dominant grasses which have thrived on the nutrient-rich soils over the years, low-nutrient soil has been introduced in selected areas to enable an initial flourish of annuals and grave gardens to be prepared for perennial wildflower plug plants. This will be a long-term project requiring a dedicated small team interested in improving biodiversity in the town's green spaces. If you would like to be kept informed or be involved in this exciting initiative please contact Kate Campbell, Ranger, via email: team@rectorylanecemetery.org.uk

Rectory lane cemetery, apart from being a beautiful tranquil place, to visit (there are lots of places to sit with a coffee or have a picnic) is

now becoming a well used events space, as was always intended. A very successful clue based Easter egg trail, which enabled children and their families to explore some of the history of the Cemetery, was held; and as we go to press a Children's Book Festival is under way.

There is also currently much work going on to create a wild life area in the top part of the Cemetery, and volunteers are always welcome. Volunteering is very flexible - as much or as little as you want, and when you can manage - it's an amazing project to be part of.

Canal Fields

After a long wait the refit of the Canal Fields playground has now started, and hopefully should be completed by the start of the school summer holidays. Unfortunately no sooner had it started then someone set fire to one of the new pieces of equipment. It's been replaced and work continues, with our PCSOs (did you know we now have 7?) doing extra patrols in the area.

Parking across driveways

Did you know if someone parks in front of a dropped kerb preventing access, a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) can be issued?

To report the obstruction of a residential driveway that has a dropped kerb, please call DBC's parking contractor (Saba Park Services) on **01908 223505** or email parking@dacorum.gov.uk and provide your name and address. DBC will then try to get a Civil Enforcement Officer to the location to take enforcement action.

More details here:

<https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/community-living/parking-and-travel/problem-parking>

Travel

From May the rail timetable changed.

Southern trains no longer run between Watford Junction and Milton Keynes Central through Berkhamsted. The service to West London stations through to Clapham Junction still runs from Watford Junction, platform 10, and connections out of London Northwestern Railway trains to/from Berkhamsted are usually good (check before travelling). Coming back, you may find it easier to change at Harrow & Wealdstone for Berkhamsted (same platform interchange).

Bus 500 has reverted to a half-hourly service (it was every 20 minutes) on Monday - Saturday. The 501 runs hourly on Sundays. Note that there is now an evening service on Monday - Saturday, supported by Herts County Council. Use it or lose it!

DBC Litter Police

.. and whilst we are talking PCNs, DBC currently have a pilot scheme running, with a team of enforcement officers (commonly referred to as 'litter police') who can issue FPNs (don't you hate 3 letter acronyms – Fixed Penalty Notices) for an £80 fine to anyone seen dropping litter. As they have to witness the offence, it is mostly people dropping cigarette butts who are caughtwe know BCA members would not do such a thing .. but they do visit Berkhamsted - we have 1 offence in Berkhamsted East recorded.

Future events (dates to be confirmed)

A Book Festival for adults is being planned for later in the year - though probably not in the Cemetery.

The Chamber of Commerce is planning a Medieval Festival over the August Bank Holiday weekend. Look out for posters!

Membership Counts

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby
membership@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Our membership currently stands at 293 households. Since we are now able to offer a normal service to our members, it has regrettably been decided to delete the 8 that last paid in 2020 or earlier. This is to make us GDPR compliant. I hope you enjoy this newsletter and will renew.

16 have not renewed for 2021 and 41 for this year. Renewal slips will be sent out as appropriate.

The subscription remains at £10 for 1 year; £30 for 3. The subscription was last increased in 2018.

I would like to reassure you that all personal details including emails are confidential and will never be passed on.