



# BERKHAMSTED CITIZENS

*The heart of  
Berkhamsted*

## December 2016 Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

Hello everyone,

It is now several months since I took over as your chairman. Your team has been busy protecting your local interests as you can see reported in the rest of this newsletter. Socially we have had three very successful meetings.

Each of these popular events has attracted new members and engendered new friendships.

### Art in Action



### Love Berkhamsted



Our aim, as for the last 90 years, is to improve the quality of life in our beautiful, historic market town and to provide a focus for a meeting of minds for those of you who share our concerns.

We hope that our wide range of activities means that there is something for all of you. Whether you would like to come along to a talk about current local issues, or express your concerns about developments in the town – we want to provide a way for you to get involved and have your voice heard.

We are positive in our approach, and try to work with all levels of local government. However, we are politically neutral and strictly independent. This means we can be robustly critical in our responses to development and the future of our town.

We aim to respond to your concerns, so do let us know what bothers you! Are you worried about litter and graffiti, unsightly shop fronts and signs, inappropriate planning applications, the neglect of historic buildings, the replacement of paving stones with tarmac? it is our town and we want the best for it.

The cup winner of the Best dressed Window was [Myrtle & Bloom:](#)



**With the judges comments :** Charming, ethereal winter wonderland. The calibre of Fortnum and Mason. The use of colour, shape and form was exemplary. Thank you for putting in so much effort. You've really raised the bar.

And the runner was: [White Mint:](#)



**The Judges said:** What a great fun and innovative window. Your use of shape, line and colour was both exciting and playful. Thank you.

We are currently working hard on a new web site, which should be up and running in the new year – meanwhile do look at our face-book

*Lindy Foster Weinreb*

## Seeing the Light': Rectory Lane Cemetery

The second Sunday in September marked a significant day in the life of the Rectory Lane Cemetery project. As part of the national Heritage Open Days scheme, the project - which has secured first stage Heritage Lottery and Big Lottery Funding to restore the cemetery to its former glory – ran an Open Day event entitled 'Seeing the Light'.

Proceedings were opened at 2 p.m. by the Town Mayor, Cllr. Tom Ritchie, after which visitors were entertained by sets of music variously delivered by Thoby Davis, Daria Kulesh and the Swan Youth Project. The music was interspersed by playlets performed by members of the Berkhamsted Youth Theatre. These featured three Berkhamsted luminaries from history – George Loader, the Reverend John Wolstenholme Cobb and Walter Pitkin, cleverly drawing together the achievements of those three figures against the backdrop of what the Rectory Lane Cemetery project might achieve, following delivery of the restoration project in the coming years.

At 4.30 p.m., Professor Sarah Foot was the guest of honour at the unveiling of the Seat of Remembrance, situated next to the Memorial Arch. The Seat was originally installed in 1934 in honour of Professor Foot's great-grandfather, Brigadier-General Richard Mildmay Foot – a decorated World War I officer who lived at Whitehill. Featuring two Irish setters, reflecting Foot's passion for dog breeding, the seat was restored earlier this year with a grant from the Tesco 'Bags of Help' scheme – using monies collected from the imposition of the five pence charge for plastic bags introduced in 2015.

Visitors to the event were able to try their hand at lettering in stone masonry, lantern making, learning more about the flora and fauna of the site from the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, and of bee-keeping from local keepers (one of whom is now keeping bees at Rectory Lane), taking a tour of the site – or simply enjoying a cuppa and a slice of cake !

In the evening, as a dusk fell, the cemetery was transformed with a thousand miniature lamps lit to mark-out the pathways. A procession from the town, featuring the original funeral bier of St. Peter's Church, was led by the 'Mississippi Swamp Dogs' New Orleans jazz band. Once in the Cemetery, the Rector of St. Peter's led prayers for the dead of wars and conflicts beside the war memorial before the procession progressed to the top of cemetery and down again. The foundation stone, memorial arch and gate piers were illuminated for the event, which was intended to show how various forms of lighting could be used to great effect within the cemetery restoration project.

The 'Seeing the Light' event marked another step in the process of securing Lottery Funding for the 'delivery' phase, a condition of which is the 'opening up' of the project for the benefit of the entire community,

especially those who would not normally visit the Cemetery. For those who did visit on the 11<sup>th</sup> September – and there were around six hundred people at various times - 'Seeing the Light' proved to be a memorable and unique experience.

For more details of the Rectory Lane Cemetery project or to volunteer, please visit the website, <http://www.stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk/>, or contact James Moir on 07545 786372 / [jamesmgmoir@aol.com](mailto:jamesmgmoir@aol.com).

## Membership Counts

*Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby*  
[membership@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk](mailto:membership@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk)

We continue to circulate our members, by email, on important issues that may affect you and the town. Over 50% now receive these messages together with reminders of our events. Of these a third choose to receive newsletters electronically, either as or as well as a hard copy. We would like to add you to this list.

E-mail addresses are maintained confidentially by the Membership Secretary and not passed on to anyone.

Any correspondence is sent out as 'blind copies'.

A warm welcome to our 32 new members who have joined since the last newsletter. This means our membership is growing and now stands 396; our highest for 5 years.

We have consistently said "joining is not just going to meetings, or receiving newsletters, but it is to help us have an influence in having a say." It is therefore important that we maintain our membership because if falls to low, we may no longer be listened to.

10 members have outstanding subscriptions. If you are one of them, a final reminder is enclosed with this newsletter. We do not want to lose you. If you have already paid, please let me know.

## Subscriptions for 2017

Continuing the practice of past years, we are enclosing with this Winter newsletter, a renewal form (including 10 final reminders) to our 170 members who are due to pay for 2017 (£5). If you were to consider paying a three year subscription (£15), it would make my life all that much easier this time next year.

Instead of paying by cheque or cash, subscriptions can be paid on-line to:

***Berkhamsted Citizens Association:***  
***Sort code 60-02-21: Account N° 51 85 84 87***

Please ensure your name and initial is shown in the payment reference, and notify the Membership Secretary you have paid your subscription this way.

## **West Herts Hospital Action Group**

The West Herts Hospital Action Group has come together to fight for better healthcare for the people of West Herts. There was a very successful meeting at our Civic Centre on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> October attended by over 100 people. A lot of useful comments and suggestions were raised with almost unanimous support for what the Action Group is trying to do. The presentation was a comprehensive assessment of the challenges ahead.

Over the past 20 years the number of beds in West Herts to meet acute patients' needs has been halved to some 650 – we now have around 1 bed per 1,000 population against a national average of a little under 3 per 1,000. Over the same period, Luton has successfully increased its acute beds and remains in line with the national average. Contrast these numbers against France which provides around 6 per 1,000 and Germany at 8+ per 1,000.

The latest cuts remove the 20 beds at Gossoms End ['step down beds'] which means local patients will be at Harpenden or further away, while even the few beds at Hemel Hempstead are forecast to be closed; 'flexi-beds' – hired at nursing homes is the coming solution!

Although staff at Watford are working heroically against the odds to keep things working – when ambulances are queuing to deposit inbound patients because its beds are fully committed it stands to reason that there needs to be a root and branch change on how the West Herts NHS service is delivered.

The review by the area's Commissioning Groups 'Your Care Your Future' will shortly decide on how substantial future investment is to be committed in West Herts. The choice seems to be more at Watford [and St Albans] or a new hospital on land owned by the County Council at Kings Langley, not far from the M25 junction.

Re-building and re-configuring the Watford site will probably mean a decade or more of disruption to services with all that means to staff, patients and our ambulance services.

A full service acute beds hospital at Hemel Hempstead is out of the question, but a solution to meet the needs for acute services for all of West Hertfordshire is arguably a new state-of-the-art hospital better able to function efficiently, be financially sustainable [in the NHS jargon] and be easier to access – avoiding the dreadful congestion on most routes to Watford's hospital.

We know that Hemel Hempstead MP, Mike Penney and the MP for St Albans both support the proposal for a new hospital better able to meet the needs of their communities. But the sums involved mean that central government need to get the message that residents also support this alternative solution.

The Action Group have suggested that residents write to our SW Herts MP Mr David Gauke and join the petition at : <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/169500>

## **Multi-storey Car Park**

*Paul Crosland*

Further to my piece on the proposed multi-storey car park in the August edition of 'The Citizen' I can report that the Planning Application for the Car Park was approved by the Development Control Committee of Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) on 29th September 2016. There was a request from a third party that the Application should be 'called in' for determination by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, however, having considered the matter, the Secretary of State was content that 'calling in' was not required and the Planning Authority (DBC) should determine the Application. The process to grant planning permission is therefore continuing – we understand that the drawing-up of a Section 106 Agreement is now in progress, prior to the grant of Planning Permission

## Townscape Committee

Gordon Bluck  
[vicechairman@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk](mailto:vicechairman@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk)

The committee continues to meet on a monthly basis to look at all planning applications and the major proposed multi storey car park progress is being reported on by Paul Crosland. We wrote to our MP David Gauke about the disruption on the Southern Trains services from Milton Keynes and received a reply that it was being taken forward with the company. Having spent over 4 years trying to spend effectively the S.106 money paid by developers to compensate the community for disruption – and which now amounts to over £1,000,000 - I have been disappointed with developments, or lack of. Town Council had agreed to set up a working party to suggest to Dacorum Borough Council how the money could be spent in the town but they have decided not to form a group. This would have included me to represent the BCA but they decided to leave it as a permanent agenda item on the transport and environment committee.

We believe that Dickman's Chemists have removed the internal wooden 'furniture'. Contact has been made with Dacorum Planning Enforcement to investigate and this is ongoing. One of the trees we paid for near the station bridge has been damaged but we have been advised it is "self healing". Karen Gilbert, a new member has agreed to attend the committee to "check us out". It is great that top class people are getting involved in the vital civic society work we do. After much discussion we have objected to the use of the new brewery beer shop as it is effectively a 'pub by the back door' and the request for retrospective change of use.

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby, who is not only our Membership Secretary but also collates and circulates all planning applications, has updated the shop and building directory originally produced by Paul Crosland. It is a fine piece of work which records the High Street and Lower Kings Road shops, the buildings and their names. A big thank you to Christopher from me and, I am sure, the whole committee.

### Environment Award 2016

Although there has been a lot of a change to the townscape of Berkhamsted during 2016, several developments do not fulfil our criterion of having been completed by the year end.

What new buildings or new features around town have attracted your attention for the right or wrong reasons? Your committee wants to hear your views, so please contact Gordon, details above. Is any new addition worthy of an Environment Award plaque?

A selection of ones that may be considered include:

1. South View, South Bank Road, Northchurch
2. David Case Pavilion, Chesham Road
3. Elizabeth Avenue, Cecily Close, Charlotte Close (Bearroc Park)
4. 70 (r/o) George Street

5. Giggling Squid, 296-298 High Street



6. Celyn, Doctors Commons Road

7. 21 South Park Gardens



8. Skateboard Park extension

9. 17 Finch Road



10. 14 & 16 Orchard Avenue

11. 263-265 High Street (Salter House)



12. 38 Kitsbury Road

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association  
Contributions to the Editor:

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby, 15 Shrublands Avenue, HP4 3JH; or via email to: [membership@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk](mailto:membership@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk)

Published by the Berkhamsted Citizens Association ©  
Printed by Strongs Printing Services tel: 878592