

THE CITIZEN



The Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

March 1996

Profile:

Graham Spittle

Chairman of our *Town Activities Sub-Committee*



Graham, rather tongue in cheek, says he realises that he is a newcomer to Berkhamsted: his connection with the town only began in 1965 when he met his wife Helen (Lindeman) whose family have lived in Berkhamsted for over 100 years. But he soon started to share an interest in the town and its people, and after ten years as a partner in a large Watford firm he decided in 1979 to found his own solicitor's practice which he runs in Berkhamsted High Street.

Being organist and choirmaster at Langleybury takes up all his Friday evenings and Sundays. But if you want something done give it to a busy person, and under Graham's chairmanship the Activities sub-committee flourishes. It is to them that we are grateful for a continuing programme of interesting talks and walks and social events. For details of the next items they have arranged see below under 'Events'.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our Annual General Meeting will be in the Great Hall of the Town Hall on Friday, 28 March, at 8.0 pm. This is your annual opportunity to vote for your Committee, asks questions and have your say about the way the Association is run. Please come if you can.

The AGM will be followed by the important Annual Environmental Award. The short list for consideration this year is:

- Bridgewater Court in Lower Kings Road
- Extension to the Youth Club
- Woods Garden Centre
- Waterworks behind the Town Hall
- Five houses at the top of Gravel Path
- Extension to 75 Greenway
- Refurbished shop front at 305 High Street
- Hairdressers at 169 High Street



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Our next event is a talk by *Chris Green*, Chief Executive of English Heritage, who will speak about his work there. It will be in the Great Hall, Berkhamsted Town Hall, on **18th April 1996 at 8.0 pm**, and promises to be of exceptional interest. Come with your questions.



Chris Green, a resident of Berkhamsted, rose to fame as the dynamic boss of Network SouthEast (of blessed memory), and among other things gave us fast red, white and blue trains to London, four an hour, and an all night service. He went on to run Intercity, then Scotland's railways before leaving BR to take up his present job in charge at English Heritage.

The Borough Council acted quickly to replace the Catalpa tree in Lower Kings Road with a fine new specimen. Some 18 feet tall, it is firmly secured with wire guys



EVENTS cont

Among the many properties English Heritage manage is Berkhamsted Castle, but its responsibilities are much wider than just looking after the historic buildings in its own care, for example English Heritage is taking part in the current project to enhance Berkhamsted's conservation area.

On Sunday, 19th May, we are meeting at the St. John's Well Lane car park at 10.30 am for a morning walk beside the canal.

The improvement of the canalside and the surrounding area in the town is being planned by a Committee - CARP - in which BCA is represented. The walk will be led by Lindy Foster, Chairman of the Town Council's Planning Committee. This will not only be an opportunity to enjoy the 'Canal in Springtime' (as this walk is entitled) but also to learn about the work being carried out in the vicinity and to make your own suggestions to someone who can take them back to those involved.



St Peter's: in fact the parish of Berkhamsted St Peter was carved out of Berkhamsted Mary's parish in mediaeval times. So historically the two parishes are very close, and as far as the BCA is concerned we would like to think that we continue to represent the interests of Northchurch as much as those of Berkhamsted.



St. Mary's Church

Northchurch Village



When the BCA was founded in 1924 Northchurch was part of Berkhamsted Urban District, and I imagine it never occurred to the worthy people who drafted the Association's constitution then that any special reference need to be made to be made to the village of Northchurch or its inhabitants.

But since the local authority reorganisation in 1974 Northchurch has been independent from Berkhamsted it has its own parish council, which this year celebrates its 100th birthday. Appropriately the council's logo is a sketch of St Mary's Church, which is an older building than

Certainly residents of Northchurch are warmly invited to join the Association and help to strengthen our influence.

We are currently involved in the issue of the proposed closure of the bridge over the canal in new Road (see the Amenities Sub-Committee Report on the back page).



New Road Canal Bridge, Northchurch

THE HIGH STREET CHANGES: A favourable view.

In contrast to the critical letter in the last edition of the Citizen regarding the changes to the Town centre, John and Ann Seaman write to say they are delighted with the changes: 'A real heart has been created to the centre of town. It is pleasant to walk through by day and with the soft, well chosen mercury lighting a delightful centre at night', They go on to say: 'Friends from outside the area have commented how the centre of

The Town's Skyline

One of the pleasing things about Berkhamsted which distinguishes it from other towns is our skyline. I am thinking particularly of those features which make conspicuous contributions if you raise your eyes to the tops of the buildings, like the little spire (called a flèche) on the Boys' school chapel, the ventilators on Deans' Hall and the building next to it, another ventilator on the Britannia Building Society building and the clock tower over the fish shop; and of course the Town Hall. But there are other features which are not strictly speaking architectural but are nevertheless full of character, like the old chimneys and varied roofscape of cottages in Castle Street, and even Coopers' tall factory chimney and the water tower.



These days architects are hard put to know what to do about finishing off the tops of buildings they have to design. Modern flats don't need chimneys, so we often end up with acres of virtually unrelieved tiles or slates, as on the new Water Company building behind the Town Hall.

But all is not lost. It is interesting to see in recent building developments near the railway station, the designers have made an effort to add interest to the gables and ridges of the roofs of their buildings, with little pinnacles and even chimney stacks. The only reservation I have heard expressed is that this is all very well, but shouldn't architects and those who commission the design of new buildings be looking to developing an architectural style for the 21st century, rather than reproducing faking features from the past?



Bridgewater Court by the station, A better skyline?

Berkhamsted has been beautifully transformed, specially after seeing other totally pedestrianised town centre lacking soul and heart. We chose not to live on the High Street because there will always be traffic, despite the bypass, but that is because Berkhamsted is a lively and bustling town, not a dead one'

DRUGS AND YOUNG PEOPLE



The Berkhamsted Crime Prevention Panel is promoting the distribution in schools in the town of literature produced by the

Department of Health which seeks to inform children of the facts about drugs.

The Association is represented on the Panel by Norman Williams, who writes:

There are two guides: one is directed to young persons, and this points out in simple terms why some people take drugs or solvents, the different effects they have, that drugs are illegal and that some can result in death. It explains that the best way to avoid problems with drugs and solvents is not to take them. The leaflet illustrates in a comic form familiar to young people that the human body is not designed to cope with the chemicals in drugs and solvents.

The other sets out the facts for the benefit of those over twelve years of age, and is designed 'to give the plain facts, no drama no preaching; it tells you about the drugs you could come across, what they can do to you and where you stand when it comes to the law'.

It points out that while dabbling with illegal drugs may not necessarily lead to imprisonment, it could result in a criminal record which could jeopardise one's employment prospects. It advises those who need counselling to consult their parents, their teacher or a local drug advice clinic.

While a few parents may have misgivings about their children being targeted in this way, most recognise that children are made aware of drugs by the media and the best protection that can be provided is an accurate knowledge of facts and of the consequences of drug abuse.

TOWN AMENITIES SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee Chairman Gordon Bluck reports:

After correspondence with Councillor Flint regarding the concept of reinstating an outdoor swimming pool in the town, either on the old site or undertaking a feasibility study, we have been told that at this time there are no resources either to build or to pay for the study. There may be at some time in the future.

Following our intervention a new 'no parking' sign has been put on the Moor.



New no parking sign on the Moor. I hope this car doesn't belong to a member!

The application for installation by the local cable television company of 45 equipment cabinets in the Conservation Area were submitted to Dacorum Planning just before the Christmas break! This and the failure of DBC planning to send us copies until prompted by ourselves meant we only had a weekend to check them out. As it happens the majority are well sited and only minor changes were suggested by the committee.

The proposal to close the Northchurch canal bridge while British Waterways effect repairs has prompted grave concerns regarding the safety of residents in the event of fire or illness. We share the concerns and have written to the Chairman of Herts CC and Bridgewater Hill Residents Association on this basis. We will remain in touch with the situation.

We have studied the Berkhamsted Conservation Area partnership action plan in draft and made our observations to be taken into account before submission to English Heritage.

Although almost outside our area we have written to Bucks CC regarding the proposal to redesignate some footpaths in Hockeridge woods as bridleways.

The Committee is looking for someone to join it who is knowledgeable about trees in the landscape, canalscape and kingsgatescape. Any volunteers?



This has been put forward by the Chesham and District Bridleways Association. We are very concerned that horses will churn up this area and spoil it for walkers. Unfortunately we have been told that damage and loss of amenity will not be considered when looking at the redesignation. We are considering our position which is not a strong one.

Following a letter from ourselves suggesting salt bins in the conservation area are replaced by green or grey examples rather than the present bright yellow ones, Dacorum BC have confirmed that unless Berkhamsted Town Council and the Conservation Officer object they will order some in the more acceptable colour in future.

A third application from the Britannia Building Society to install a sign has been objected to in the same manner as its two predecessors.

We have written to British Waterways expressing concern that some canal boats have taken up permanent mooring very close to the town centre. We have been assured that the boats are regularly checked by the patrol officer.



The Borough Council has decided to resume putting up its tasteless road nameplates, even in rural settings

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