



**Berkhamsted
Citizens
Association**

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 1977

So, another year has come and gone and once again it is time to review our activities during that period and to look forward to fresh fields to conquer. The year is reviewed in our Chairman's report, a copy of which is attached and as to the future, well, we hope to welcome you all at the AGM on Thursday 10th February: the notice of which is also attached.

Silver Jubilee

This is, of course, Silver Jubilee year and a public meeting was called on 6th December by the Mayor to discuss what should be done in the town. One suggestion, put forward by Mr. Peake, was to close the High Street, from the traffic lights to Tesco's, for the two bank holiday days. But as it appeared that permission was unlikely to be given, that stalls in the High Street would conflict with the Castle fête (for which the Round Table preparations are well under way) and that bank holiday traffic, usually chaotic, would become even more so if traffic were diverted, and so delayed, the meeting was overwhelmingly against the proposal.

Various other suggestions were made: a two-day fair, possibly on the Moor: a water-carnival on the canal: a fund to be set up for restoring the Town Hall, and/or one for repairing St. Peter's Church Clock. A steering committee was set up, on which the Citizens' Association is represented. Two meetings were held before Christmas and, contrary to press headlines, the original decision has not changed and the High Street will not be closed.

Some of you may have heard the programme on the B.B.C. at lunch time on January 2nd when the Berkhamsted Jubilee celebrations were talked about. Stephen Claypole, whose parents still live in Berkhamsted, came down for the day the Thursday before, and talked to a number of people, including your Chairman, and interviewed Mr. Peake, Mrs. Doyle, Mr. Birtchnell, Mr. Phillips and others.

Local Government Finance - the rates?

We have promised to keep you in the picture on this sordid subject but until the Council has made decisions and published them there is little we can tell you, except that it is inevitable that the rates will go up! However, as a background you may like to know that the Layfield Committee of Enquiry's report on Local Government Finance, published in May, 1976, attempted to solve the conundrum of a system of finance which spends £13,000 million per annum, some two-thirds of which is financed by central Government grants. It recommended that, for various reasons, the bulk of expenditure should continue to remain under local control - even though such expenditure was greatly influenced by central Government requirements. A good example is education - some 34% of local expenditure in 1973/4 - where there still remain considerable differences in the Education Services, provided by different local authorities.

On the other hand, the Committee deplored the fact that the authority which authorised the expenditure did not have responsibility for raising the Revenue hence its proposal for a system of local Income Tax: it seems very unlikely that such a system will be adopted by the Government in the foreseeable future, since its costs of administration are high and its benefit rather more theoretical than practical.

The Committee did not recommend abolition of the present system of rating, but did suggest some changes, including, inter alia, (a) a substitution of capital values for rental values for the purpose of rating domestic property, since very little property was now rented at a full arms' length rental: (b) separate rate demands from the County and District for each authority's share, so that the responsibilities of each can be clearly seen. (The concept of one authority making a precept on another authority was thought to be objectionable): (c) rates to be paid in monthly instalments.

It is frequently said that you pay taxes in pain but you pay rates in anger - but there is no doubt that you pay.

An Evening with the Big Spenders

When members of Dacorum Council made their annual pilgrimage to Berkhamsted to answer questions at the Citizens' Association meeting, it was a surprise to most of the audience to find out which was the largest spending Committee. Housing? Refuse collection? No, the answer is Leisure: £1,000,000 out of a total budget of £3,800,000. This reason alone, made it seem worthwhile to spend an evening with them at their November Committee meeting.

Being the big spenders there was lots of public interest: three of us for seven public seats. The reason for the crowd was - wait for it - TOPLESS DANCERS* (No, no, not in person but on the agenda.) But before you get to the juicy bit, you must have some solid fare first.

Our keen Leisure Committee have not been, idle in spending, your money. Their Contract works programme for 1974/5/6 reads like this:

Little Hay Golf Course	
Course	£162,753
Access, etc.	153,000
Buildings	40,000
Mortimer Hill Swimming Pool	£117,000
Grove Hill Community Centre	£,258,656

Of course, to be fair, the £700,000 isn't really your money: it has been borrowed (as the Councillors pointed out at the Berkhamsted meeting!) After all, in 1976 England, borrowed money isn't real money. Still there is one consolation: it will all be spent by the middle of next year, and there doesn't appear to be anything else in the pipeline after that, only the interest charges. Although none of the expenditure is of much use or interest to Berkhamsted, do take the opportunity to visit the Little Hay Golf Course before it come into use and they start charging. It really has one of the finest views in the district, especially if there is a good sunset. The entrance is at the top of Box Lane, almost opposite the Bob-sleigh Restaurant. Try driving down the aforementioned expensive access road to the car park (even, if you're stopped, you can still walk as it is a Right-of-Way), the best view is about 250 yards beyond the carpark.

Now to the topless dancers. The Great Harry public house in Hemel Market Square has a Music and Dancing Licence but with a specific condition prohibiting topless dancers: the Licensee wants the condition withdrawn.

The arguments were balanced between the moral (two Reverend gentlemen had written in calling it 'lewd and unseemly'), and the fair ("Scamps" already have such performers). A vote showed a small majority for rescinding the condition: at this point the audience was reduced by a third as one member stalked out giving obvious signs of disapproval at the decision as he went.

As a matter of interest the number of licences issued by this Committee is as follows:

Music and dancing	57
Theatre	11
Cinema	7
Boxing and wrestling	1

Whoever said Dacorum was a dull place!

Of course, there were other matters on the agenda, but it seemed to be an off-night for spending - only £2,000 given away and one more person to be put on the payroll (a golf 'pro' for Little Hay). Still it might be more at their next meeting. Why not spend a pleasantly warm evening with them: the next meeting is 11th January?

This and That

We were rather pleased when our Map Secretary, Mr. Wilf Pyett, got a letter from a Cambridge Rambling Society praising our Fieldpath Map. The Society has walked every path within 20 miles of Cambridge and are now spreading their net to cover our area. We hope some of you will meet some of them walking our paths this Spring.

An Apology

It has been the practice in recent newsletters to use this space to remind some members about their subscriptions. You can guess what has happened^ Yes, a batch of payment slips seems to have gone astray and some who have paid were reminded to pay again: this caused a riot when our Treasurer got a cross on his newsletter!

We do most sincerely apologise for any embarrassment or inconvenience so caused and promise to do better this year. To put us out of our misery, and if you hold a 1976 membership card and have been advised of non-payment will you please let the Membership Secretary know (Berkhamsted 3857) or drop a line to Stuart Rosser at Lloyds Bank.

Meanwhile, and ever needing the money, if you have not paid why not do so with your 1977 subscription, a form for which is attached.

Your 1977 Committee

One of the most important items of business at the AGM is the election of the Officers and Committee. This year, as in other years, we have lost and are losing some members and, while we are sorry to see them go, it is only by an infusion of new blood that an association such as ours can continue to play such a vital part in the life of the town. So come on then, why not join the Committee? We need all the help, ideas, and wisdom we can get. Send your nominations to the Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Sheila Walton, 11 Murray Road.

And Finally, from our daughter Society

The Beaune Society has commenced arrangements for the 1977 exchange trip to Beaune. The children will travel there on 31st March and return 14th April. The cost is expected to be about £55 which includes return travel, insurance, and one or two excursions. The return exchange will be 15th - 30th July. Applications must be received by 24th January and if any parent is interested Roger Ford at Berkhamsted 5027 or Beryl Edwards at Berkhamsted 2013 will be pleased to give further details.

BERKHAMSTED CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION

Subscription 1977

Your subscription for 1977 is now due and members of the Association are asked to utilise the enclosed slip NOW to effect payment. You will be pleased to know that the recommended amount is not to be increased this year.

The Committee suggest, please, that a minimum of 50p is appropriate for an individual and £1.00 for a family subscription, but if you wish to increase these figures you can be assured that the Committee will not object! Those who have standing orders at their Bank may like to review the amount being paid.

There has been in recent years increased difficulty in handling the payments made to the Treasurer, at meetings, at the Bank and by post because the form supplied on more than one occasion each year has not been used. Please, please, please fill it up now and deal with the request without delay. Subscriptions received by post will not be acknowledged but a membership card will accompany a subsequent Newsletter, Cards will be issued at the Bank for payments made across the counter.

1977 Subscription

To: Hon. Treasurer,
Berkhamsted Citizens' Association,
Lloyds Bank Ltd.,
Berkhamsted

For	Office use
Card Issued	Treasurer's Number
Yes No	

I wish to renew my membership for another year.

Name.....Mr. Mrs. Miss
(BLOCK LETTERS) (Delete as appropriate)

AddressAmount Enclosed £.....

.....

.....

Signed