

November 1979

With a comprehensive programme of monthly events this season from October to July we shall be spending more on hire of halls. Your Committee see no reason why members of the Association should bear the whole cost: we have therefore decided to charge a modest entrance fee of 25p to non-members whom we welcome to our indoor meetings. The full list of fixtures for 1979-80 was included in our August Newsletter and elsewhere in this issue you will find a reminder of those for the next four months. Another innovation, suggested by several members at our last wine and cheese party is the Social Evening at Gable Hall on 13 December. It will be a simple affair for members only, designed to help them to get to know one another better, with wine, soft drinks and mince pies, and carols led by members of the Potten End Welsh Choir.

To mark the change in the appearance and contents of the 'Berkhamsted Review' we have invited its new editor, David Sherratt, to introduce it. His contribution appears overleaf.

Field Path Map

Berkhamsted Citizens' Association's field path map was introduced about 1938 to meet a much-felt need: at that time no map existed showing all the many footpaths in the area on a single sheet. In its 40 odd years the map has run through several editions, but basically it is the same map as it was then.

Much has changed since. Towns have grown; many woods and parklands (shown green on our maps) have disappeared, as have many hedgerows. Moreover our map has never distinguished between footpaths and bridleways, causing confusions and sometimes acrimony, between walkers and riders. Consequently your Committee have been considering the need for an entirely fresh map when stocks of the present edition are exhausted, probably early in 1980.

The Committee, recognise, however, that since the introduction of the Ordnance Survey's 2½ inch series (the same scale as our present map) the need has not been so great as it was. So far the defect of the O.S. map has been - from Berkhamsted's point of view - that no less than four sheets are required to cover our area. In other respects it is superior: it is more detailed and accurate, and shows the contours of the hills and valleys. By discreet enquiries, however, we have ascertained that the Ordnance Survey have plans which will remove the defect: towards the end of 1981 they intend to publish the 'metricated second series' of 2½ inch maps for this areas in double sheets of which two, instead of four, will cover an area greater than that of our present map.- and will distinguish between footpaths and bridleways. But that is not all: after three months this is to be followed by the publication of an O.S. 'Leisure Map' of the whole of the Chilterns on the same scale but in a single sheet printed on both sides, each side being equal to two double sheets of the metricated second series. This will meet the needs of those who drive, or drive and then walk, as well as of those whose outings are limited to walking distance from Berkhamsted.

We could get within a year from now a reproduction of our present out-of-date map (a straight reprint would be impracticable because the master

sheets have been lost or destroyed); but the result would be an inferior map at greatly increased cost, for prices for colour-printing have risen astronomically. Moreover, after another year we should have to compete with the vastly superior (and probably no more expensive) O.S. Leisure Map. The Committee have therefore decided, with great reluctance, to discontinue the Field Path Map and to devote the Map Fund to some cognate purpose, such as a booklet describing walks around Berkhamsted.

Meanwhile, if you want to secure a copy of the current Field Path Map, don't delay; stocks are still available at the usual retailers, but our reserve is fast running out.

The Berkhamsted Review

Having at one time edited the Citizens' Association 'Newsletter', it is a pleasure for me to write something about the Berkhamsted 'Review'. I hope that you are one of its 1,300 readers - and will try to introduce it to one of your friends: it is supremely a BERKHAMSTED Magazine and needs the help of Berkhamstedians.

Technically, it is the 'Parish' magazine but the editorial policy - set I believe by the late Mr S.H. Smith (whom I never knew, but whose name is mentioned so often in connection with the magazine) was to embrace Town news as well as specifically church news. This is a healthy amalgam.

Since taking it over, I have been bold enough to change the well-known cover and to alter its format. The 'old' cover dated from 1962 and I think, had served its purpose. Within, we still treasure 'Beorcham' - now in his 39th year of writing 'In and around Berkhamsted'- and local societies are increasing their contributions announcing events. This is an important facility in a town like Berkhamsted. We aim to have a main article of interest each month - so far Pat Wilkinson and the Police Chief have been featured and November will carry an extended edition on the theme of 'Remembrance' to which the Royal British Legion's Col. A.L. Wilson and Bill Reid, VC. have contributed. December will be a Christmas edition, carrying amongst other things a Christmas Crossword with a free year's subscription for a prize-winning pensioner-solver.

Local stationers - Smiths, Bobbies, Jennifer's, Ansell's - carry the magazine free of charge and McDermott's 'the friendly shop' have recently agreed to sell for us.

Surely a sign that in Berkhamsted we still have a spirit of neighbourliness?

DAVID SHEERATT

Planning

In 1968, the Minister of Housing and Local Government published his proposed modifications on the First Review of the County Development Plan 1963. There were three main areas for housing development in Berkhamsted which proved to be a greater or lesser degree controversial; the woodland area at Berkhamsted Place, Tunnel Fields and land at New Road, Northchurch. After the Public Inquiry in 1969 when the Citizens' Association objected to the first two, and the County Council objected to all three, it was ruled that there should be no building in the woods of Berkhamsted Place, but that building should be allowed in Tunnel Fields and at New Road.

This month we have news of all three. First Berkhamsted Place. There have since 1969 been numerous applications to develop the woods. The Citizens' Association have consistently put in objections (destruction of sky-line boundary of Berkhamsted, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty etc.) The latest application, which was refused by the Dacorum District Council goes to appeal on 14th November, when the Citizens' will be represented.

Tunnel Fields The plans submitted in 1974 (see sketch map) were divided into three phases: Phase 1, Sectors A,B & C. Phase 2, Sectors D,E,F,G & H. Phase 3, Sectors J,K,L, & M. According to the stipulations made when outline permission was given, only Phase 1 could be developed before the

completion of the Berkhamsted bypass; the other two phases must wait. So it was with surprise that we saw an application had been submitted for Sector E, for 88 houses.

The explanation, which was news to us, is that in Phase 1, where the application was for 230-270 dwellings, permission was given for 300. This was high density, nearly 18 to the acre, on the land available for building, but that may have been due to the suggestion at that time of a mixed development, private and council. The private development consisted of only 212 dwellings and so the Secretary of State (Department of the Environment by this time) agreed that the remaining 88 houses of the 300 should be allowed in Sector E.

We understand that this does not mean that D can also be developed. No doubt prospective householders and the builders would be pleased if the remaining phases went ahead of the completion of the bypass but any proposals should be ruled out of court. The complete Tunnel Fields development represents a large increase in the population of the town, and quite apart from traffic problems, the delay in completion allows the town to adjust with less strain.

Finally New Road, Northchurch Here there have been two separate applications one for over 80 houses by a private developer, behind, the Old Grey Mare and other properties; the second by Dacorum District Council for 100 houses on land south of the allotments running up to New Road. Both developments would share the same road system, allowing access both to New Road and to the High Street (A41).

While there are obvious problems for traffic we thought that these would be well taken care of by the various highway authorities and we did not object to the scheme. The Council housing will not, presumably, be bringing added population, and we prefer the principle of infilling, particularly at the bottom of the valley, to covering the higher, more visible, fields and woods with houses.

The Billet Lane – Bridgewater Road – Springfield Road Junction The present position is that the District Council Works Committee, having considered views expressed by local residents and by the Berkhamsted Town Council, have decided not to proceed at the present time with the Traffic Order to restrict to buses only the link between Bridgewater Road and Springfield Road. The Committee have asked that detailed plans be prepared for the provision of a roundabout at the junction and the closing of Bridleway where it joins Bridgewater Road.

These plans are to be submitted to the Committee for consideration at its meeting on 1st November. Subject to the agreement of the Committee, they will then be displayed in the area and observations will be invited. Only when that procedure has been completed will the District Council reach its final decision on the matter.

Ashlyns Hall near Brickhill Green has fallen on hard times of late and now looks a sad ruin. A planning application has been made for restoring it for use as a conference centre and offices. This involves a change of use of a building in the Green Belt, but in fact the choice is between a quarry for thieves and vandals and a fine old building brought back to life. If a commercial firm of good standing is willing to spend the enormous sum necessary for this we think the proposal should be heartily welcomed.

Hertfordshire Landscape Development Plan

This is the title of a public consultation report produced earlier this year by the planning department of the County Council. It has been issued now to help local authorities in the preparation of their district plans; these we hope will recognise the importance of landscape development policies. The planners have divided the County up into six roughly-defined landscape regions, each area distinguished by its individual characteristics. The regions identified are the Northern Vale salients, Chiltern Hills, North

Hertfordshire Ridge, East Hertfordshire Plateau, Central Valleys and South Hertfordshire Plateau. Berkhamsted, not surprisingly, is in the Chiltern Hills.

The landscape of today is the result of the latest of successive attempts by man to organise the earth's surface. Some of the 'historic landscape' features of the past are still evident, but their present character is under attack. For example, farming practices such as enlarging fields by removing hedges, cutting hedges mechanically (thus checking the growth of saplings which could replace ancient hedgerow trees) and ploughing fields which have been under pasture for centuries can have a dramatic effect on the appearance of the landscape. Though Hertfordshire has over one hundred conservation areas, the majority within villages, the outskirts and fringes of villages are often visually of poor quality. The report suggests that planning control and guidance to developers could be extended through the use of design guides describing 'vernacular' architecture, the sympathetic use of materials and improved housing layout. Local authorities might concentrate on improving urban fringes while at the same time, and in conjunction with amenity societies, developing individual 'village appraisals' so as to preserve their character.

If a general landscape development plan is to come about, the report further suggests the following measures: (a) the encouragement of increased investment in tree planting and woodland renewal by public and private interests; (b) the preparation of codes of practice for landscape design and management in order to strengthen regional landscape character; (c) the good management of publicly owned land to set an example to others; (d) the encouragement of landscape improvements in the planning process; (e) the regular use of agreements to secure good management of the landscape; (f) the reclamation of areas of degraded landscape; (g) the purchase of small, strategically located tracts of land which after improvement would be resold subject to agreements; and (h) the undertaking of demonstration projects for landscape improvement and the creation of new agricultural landscapes.

If all these proposals were adopted, there is no doubt that landscape degradation would be arrested; however, in the present political and financial climate it seems unlikely that all these suggestions will be taken up.

In the wake of the combine harvester If, during late Summer, you had been driving fast along the road from Nettleden to the A4146 near Water End, and had been concentrating your attention on the road, you would have noticed nothing unusual. If your speed had been moderate a glimpse of the woodlands along Pipers' Hill might have surprised you by its early surrender to Summer. A more leisurely pace, allowing you to savour the countryside, would have shocked. This brown owed little to autumnal tints but revealed a harsh, uncompromising uniformity and a lack of leafy texture.

A blackened surface in an adjoining field clearly showed the cause. Burning of straw had clearly got out of control allowing flames to flash along the length of the wood. A closer examination showed that though leaves were burnt the branches were not. It suggested that the wind which spread the fire probably caused the conflagration to pass sufficiently quickly to prevent intense damage. Next Spring should see the wood restored to its beauty; at least we hope so, because four public footpaths converge on the wood and two run just inside it, one at either edge for its full length.

In brief

At their meeting on 4th October your Committee agreed that until the next AGM in February, Norman Binks should fill the vacant post of Vice-Chairman and Guy Moores the place on the Committee left vacant by the resignation of Dennis Hart, due to pressure of other voluntary work (notably the Talking Newspaper).

Church Lane

In our May issue we drew attention to the state of the surface of the lane (formerly known as Back Lane) which runs from Tesco to the Court House. It is the only road in Berkhamsted still paved with stone setts (not cobbles, please). We urged the Dacorum District Council to repair it. Members will be pleased to learn, that last month the Council invited tenders for extensive relaying of the setts, involving some 60-70% of the road, laying new granite setts where needed. By the time these words appear the work should have been finished. All credit to the Council, whether their action was in response to our urging or not!

To jog your memory

A full list of fixtures for a year ahead was included in our August Newsletter. Here are reminders for the next four months. All the indoor events are at 8 pm. And are at Gable Hall.

Thursday	15 November 1979	Gable Hall	Wildlife in the Ashridge Estate – Mr John Wilson
Thursday	13 December 1979	Gable Hall	Social Evening (members only)
Tuesday	1 January 1980		New Year Ramble (destination to be announced)
Thursday	17 January 1980	Gable Hall	Trees and the Landscape Mr Richard Haigh
Thursday	14 February 1980	Gable Hall	AGM followed by speaker – Mr V Caudery

We need to recruit many more members to make the Association as widely representative as possible of Berkhamsted people. An application form is appended. Ask your friends. 50p per person, £1 per family.

Berkhamsted Citizens' Association	<u>for office use</u> card
APPLICATION FORM	-----

I/We wish to apply for membership of the Berkhamsted Citizens' Association as a single/family* member

Name.....I..... Mr. Mrs. Miss*
(*delete as appropriate)

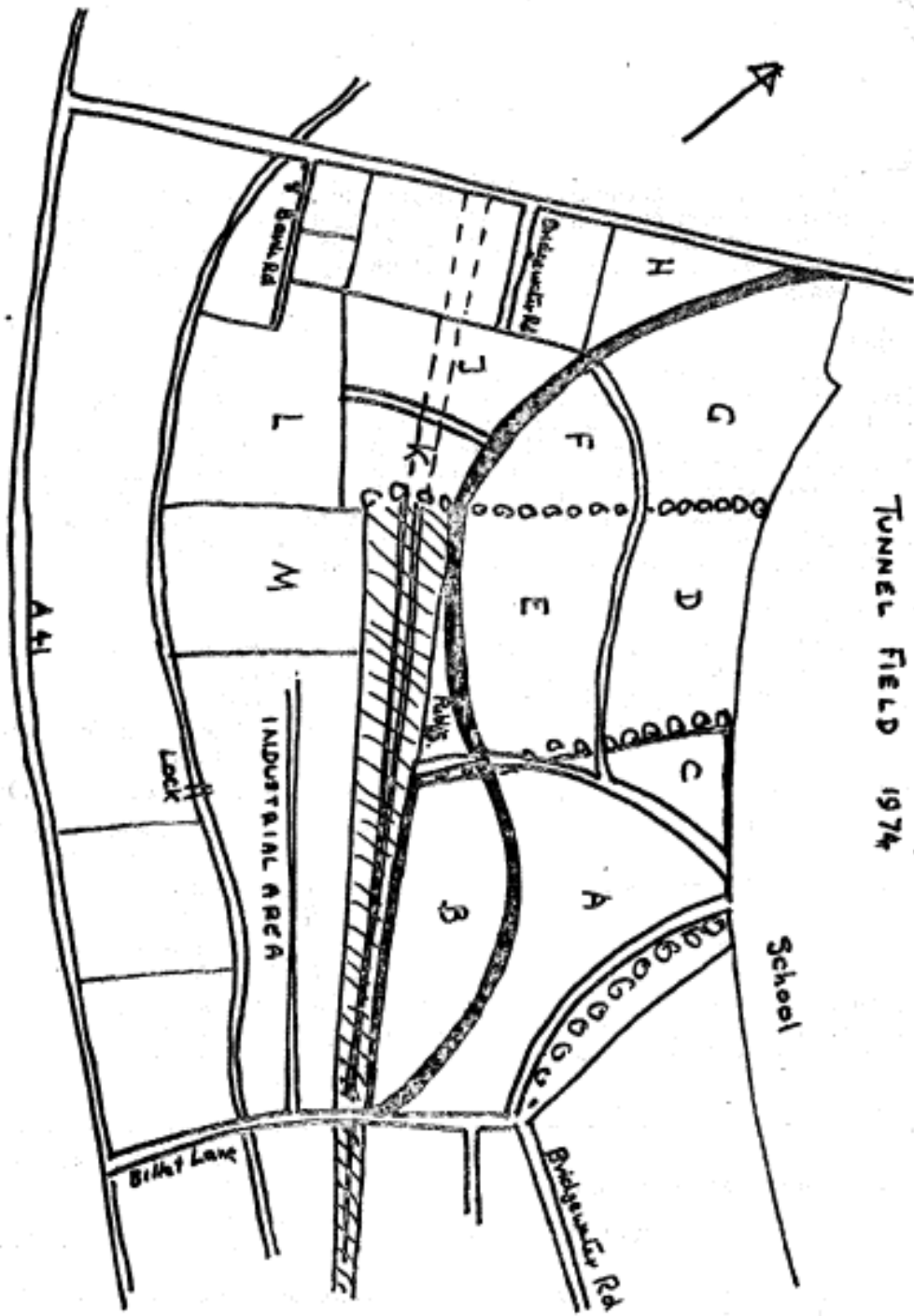
Address.....

.....Amount enclosed.....

..... signed.....

Please ensure that all details are completed.

TUNNEL FIELD 1974



BERKHAMSTED REVIEW

The Berkhamsted Review is a monthly magazine covering town and parish news.

It is on sale in WH Smiths, Bobbies News, Jennifer's, Ansell's in Castle Street, McDermotts in the High Street.

An annual subscription can be arranged through Lt Col JCM Ansell, 12 Gaveston Drive, telephone 75688,