



May 1981

## Eternal Summer or Something?

'Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.'

Why it was buds in May rather than April is not clear, maybe in Shakespeare's time the spring was later, particularly in Stratford. The darling buds opened in Berkhamsted during late April and the first week of May, to transform the trees and bushes from black to green. The sudden change in the profile of roads and lanes should remind us all how fortunate we are to have such greenery in the town precincts. No wonder people get very agitated when local authority or individuals lop trees.

## Trees – our Trees

The agitation arises because they are a communal facility – even though they may stand in private ground. They contribute to the urban and country environment both aesthetically and for wildlife and when removed always change somebody's outlook. However, one person's beauty is another's shadow so some compromise is needed. This is recognised by the National Trust at Ashridge who have the problem of dealing with mature and old trees and of safety for visitors. They are currently reviewing the trees near to the car-parking and picnic spots and trying some consultation before taking action. The basic principle is that they will drop hazardous trees near 'public' areas and put notices near other areas of mature trees e.g. Frithsden Beeches, to warn the public that some trees maybe a hazard.

## High Street Trees

Those along the High Street and other roads give our town a pleasant character. These trees if removed would be a mini-disaster. That's why action may need to be taken to prolong their lives and intermittent planting be carried out. We will be taking this up with the Dacorum Council. The row of horse chestnuts along the canal near the station are a case in point. Imagine them gone! With no precautionary replacements now there will be one big gap. The Association is now involved with County in a tree-planting programme both at Bridgewater School and along the canal. We also plan some planting of appropriate species in urban areas.

## Details determine de environment-man!

It is caring about details that often makes the difference to the environment i.e. whether a place looks cared for or not. One of the products of economies seems to be a lack of attention to small improvements that in effect cost relatively little. This, of course, applies to private as well as public facilities. A cut hedge here, a coat of paint there, make all the difference. That's why we applaud the Town Council's arranging for the Town sign to be refurbished. What it costs is up to them to control, but at least they did something. We have tried to get the railings (opposite the station) painted, but to date no success. There is argument about ownership. At least British Rail have repainted the entrance hall and car park area. Thank you.

One item which looks uncared for is the Berkhamsted sign at Durrants Lane near Edgeworth House and that on Brownlow Road descending towards the castle. On the other hand the Dacorum Council are refurbishing many street signs in the now familiar yellow and blue. If you feel your road needs a new sign contact Mr C. Parrot, Works Controller, Dacorum District Council, Civic Centre, Hemel Hempstead.

### Role of the Town Council

There are many people who have questioned the need for a Town Council following reorganisation of local Government and the centre of power moving to Hemel Hempstead. This has of course created some problems and we have recently pointed out how allocation of resources can get distorted because of it. There are however some significant advantages and provided local interests and facilities are fairly shared then the system should work without resentment. That is where our local Councillors come in, for they are our representatives and should be our mouth piece to the Dacorum Council. Both Town Councillors and Berkhamsted Dacorum Councillors should be effectively representing Berkhamsted interests. This does not have to be done in a blind parochial sense but in the context of a fair distribution of Dacorum resources. There is evidence that this is not being done as effectively as it should, not because of individuals but, because the Berkhamsted Councillors do not have any specific objectives to go for, and are not organised together to go after them. We now know that the old UDC left no projects to be completed whereas Tring and Hemel did. Is this because they were not project minded or merely mindful of keeping the rates down? The latter is a true aim but with the spending facility we have to have progress not just a standing still.

The town is expanding (Tunnel Field and Northchurch) and the townsfolk deserve some better facilities for social and leisure purposes.

### Targets for the Town Council

From the above viewpoint, we have met Councillor Medcalf and some of his Councillor colleagues (both parties!) to suggest some specific objectives for the next year or so. These are (in no order of priority):-

- a) Increasing the size of the Auditorium in the Civic Centre - this is a project already proposed by the Council and allowed to lapse.
- b) Financially assisting the Town Hall Trust by matching a given sum raised by the Trust.
- c) Producing an updated Town Guide - the previous one was the blue book produced by the Town Council and a book produced by the Round Table. There is also the Dacorum Community Directory published by the Hemel Hempstead Council of Social Service.
- d) Providing trees and shrubs for the edges of car-parks.
- e) Straightening the pavement and/or planting trees along the road from Water Lane car-park to Lower Kings Road. Can you remember where the poplar trees grew along there?
- f) Improving off-street car-parking by levelling and gravelling the area alongside the Lower Kings Road car-park and behind the High Street. It need not be macadamed at high cost but just covered in shingle. This car-park should be sign-posted from the High Street where access is available between McDermotts and Hythe Chemical Company ie. the road down to the Vets.

There are probably lots more low cost improvements, so let our Secretary know of these. We will be meeting the Town Councillors again before the end of 1981. They are very receptive to ideas and welcome public interest ie. before a crisis occurs! We think they should be more positive in aims and communications and have suggested more publicity via Gazette, Review and our Newsletter.

## Swimming Pool

The Leisure Services Committee need to formally confirm the opening of the Pool at their 14th May meeting. There is clearly preparation work to be done but we understand that if the will exists, the Pool could be ready in 4 weeks. The exact date and period will depend on the Councillors' decision. If they wish to be difficult they could follow the 'due processes' and decisions and actions would wait for further committee and Dacorum Council meetings. Then tenders would have to be completed etc. We are seeking to find out how this will be played. We are pressing, with the Swimming Association, for a 12 week season between mid-June and the end of August to give 6 weeks of Term and 6 weeks of holiday time.

## Have you had a Daybreak?

This is not a British Rail advert but a facility organised by two local ladies - to provide outings during holiday time. If you have children between the ages of 8 and 16 years you may be interested in 'Daybreaks' a local volunteer unit which runs outings for children in each of the three main school holidays. The outings are a mixture of educational, fun and interest and range from ice-skating to visits to zoos, farms, museums etc. and some are for the whole family. Membership costs £2 per year per family and three programmes are issued each year. For a copy of the summer programme and booking forms ring Mrs Terry Sadler (Berk.4400) or Mrs Susan Andrews (Tring 4421) NOW.

## Public Tennis Courts

Dacorum Leisure Services Committee have published a pamphlet on the public use of the 6 tennis courts at Ashlyns School. The courts are available from now until the last day of the summer holidays (September 7) on weekdays from 6pm to dusk and at weekends from 9am to dusk. Access to the courts is free and reservations may be made at the Civic Centre during office hours at a cost of 50p. Details are also given of the trim trail at the school. The pamphlet is available at the Civic Centre, Berkhamsted.

## Bank Statements

We do not usually advertise Banking facilities but as Lloyds are the Association's bankers, members and readers maybe interested to know that they have been producing Braille bank statements for blind customers during the past years. In the summer, this facility is going to be extended with the production of large print statements for customers whose sight is seriously deficient or impaired.

If anyone is interested and would like to know more about this service, will you please contact Stuart Rosser or Roy Doe at Lloyds Bank, Berkhamsted, who will be only too pleased to supply fuller details.

## The Wildlife and Countryside Bill / Dacorum District Plan

This very important bill has now completed its procedure through both Houses of Parliament and we are studying it's final format. The 'devolution' of control of footpaths to local authorities is one particular aspect which interests us. More details later.

The Act tries to provide a viable framework on how to balance the varying demands on our countryside by farmers, preservationists, environmentalists, developers and demands for houses, employment and leisure facilities. This is exemplified by the provisions of the Hertfordshire County Plan and the Dacorum District Plan which both seek together to map out areas for each requirement and to specify principles upon which the land will be used.

We have written, supporting specific aspects of the Dacorum Plan as it affects Berkhamsted and Northchurch. The recent applications to develop Kitchener's Field for leisure and to develop land for housing up Durrants Lane, show how important it is that the principles should largely be

followed and not be mere words in a dusty document. The public Inquiry on the District Plan - to which many interests have objected - is to be held on 14 July. It is an example of local consultation and discussion and should (theoretically) provide the basis for some compromise between conflicting interests. Sometimes however, a line has to be drawn because compromise forms the basis for further encroachment in future years. More of the facts on the Plan in the next Newsletter.

Local Government and Land Act 1980

The Planning Department of Dacorum District Council have 'now received notice of substantial interest in the proposed seminar on the 1980 Act' and have arranged this for 11 May. So we will have one or two members of the Association committee attending. The subject matter covers the Act and Department of the Environment circulars relating to Town and Country Planning, Areas of outstanding Natural Beauty and Conservation Areas. We will report on this in our next Newsletter.

CONGRATULATIONS to Councillor Derek Townsend of Tring on his appointment as Chairman of the Dacorum District Council. We hope to meet him in the near future to discuss various aspects.

Activities

The programme for 1981-82 is nearly prepared and details will be published soon. The past season had a very wide and interesting range of topics, but with a varying size of audience. Most talks were very well attended particularly those having a Natural History connotation. Thank you to members who have supported these events - it is after all one of the facilities arranged free for members, although open to the public at a fee of 25p.

Summer Wine - 19 June

The summer social get-together (members only) is arranged for Friday 19 June. This will be a Wine and Cheese Party held this year at Victoria School as our usual venue the Court House is still involved with building alterations. Tickets are attached to this Newsletter.

PLEASE!

There are still a number of our members who have not paid their subscription for this year. If there is a cross in the box can you please either pay 50p each or £1 per family into Lloyds Bank or to your Newsletter deliverer.

We need to recruit many more members to make the Association as widely representative as possible of Berkhamsted people. Please ask your friends. An application form is appended.



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To Lloyds Bank Ltd. Berkhamsted for office use  
Berkhamsted Citizens' Association card

Application form  
I/We\* wish to apply for membership of the Berkhamsted Citizens' Association  
as a single/family\* member (\* delete as appropriate)  
Name.....Mr. Mrs. Miss\*  
Address.....Amount enclosed.....  
.....Signed.....

## Cesspools

Many of you will have noticed reference in the local press to cesspool charges. Few of you will know what the problem is about or even how it might eventually affect all of us, as a health problem.

Most of us have sewage taken away from homes to the treatment works by a network of pipes and tunnels. Apart from the inconvenience of sewerage roadworks in the High Street and the average annual household charge of £53.76 the matter is quickly forgotten. A small number of Dacorum households probably about 1,000 are less fortunate as they do not connect directly with the sewerage system but either collect all the sewage in a tank or cesspool which is emptied periodically by tanker or have a simple treatment system. Such a system has a septic tank collecting the solids and the fluids drain into the surrounding land or into boreholes. The fluids draining into boreholes eventually reach the ground water from which our water supply is drawn. Many of these properties are in the hills around Berkhamsted, from Tinkers Lane through Shootersway to Bovingdon on one side and Northchurch Common, Frithsden, Nettleden and the Gaddesdens on the other.

The 1973 Water Act set up 10 water authorities in England and Wales. These authorities are responsible for: conservation, purification and supply of water; sewerage and sewage treatment; environmental services including controlling the pollution of rivers, lakes and coastlines; land drainage and flood walls. The Thames Water Authority is responsible in our area for sewage and sewerage. However the Act did not make the water authority responsible for emptying cesspools or septic tanks. Nor did it leave responsibility with the District Council, which had traditionally carried out the service. However the District Council continued emptying them recovering part of the cost through a charge to the households concerned and the remainder through the general rate.

The Dacorum District Council has now decided that since it does not have a statutory obligation to provide the service, it will charge the households concerned the full cost. At the same time it has decided to change the basis of the charges. So at a saving of pence to most households in Dacorum, a very small number of households face enormous increases. Some paid £90 last year and this year face bills of £500-700. Of course many of those affected are searching for economies both legal and illegal.

So this summer when you ramble in the countryside around Berkhamsted mind where you go! When you stop to quench your thirst drink bottled water.

## Postscript

### Berkhamsted Open Air pool

Just as the Newsletter was being printed, representatives of the Association attended Dacorum Leisure Services committee meeting on Thursday 14 May. The committee have agreed that the pool will open this summer (probably from 20 June to 7 September ie. 11 weeks).

The entrance fee will be 50p for adults and 25p for children up to 16 years old, with season tickets £8 and £4 being available at the Civic Centre or from Berkhamsted Swimming Association (Tel. 2873 or 6223). More details will be available via the press and local notice boards.

The decision to open is a response to the public pressure executed over several months and we would like to thank all those involved in achieving this result. It is healthy for local democracy that public opinion can be voiced and heard and that the Council is prepared, to listen and change its mind. Thanks therefore to both local and Dacorum Councillors who have listened to the arguments about this matter. It remains now for them to press on with improving leisure facilities including swimming so that in 12 months time we have a permanent solution and we know that Berkhamsted will be getting a fair allocation of resources.

## How is our Local Government Organised?

There is no document apparently that tells local people how their local government is organised. We cannot do complete justice to the subject here but the following are the main points.

Dacorum District Council (DDC) is the Local Authority covering Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring plus outlying districts and a total population of approx. 127,900. The DDC operates through a number of functional committees which are:-

Policy Committee	Development Control Committee
Housing Committee	Budget Sub-Committee
Leisure Services Committee	Personnel Sub-Committee
Health Committee	Performance Review Sub-Committee

All these committees have professional salaried officials operating on each function eg. Director of Finance, Director of Technical Services, Director of Housing and Health, Director of Leisure Services, with supporting staff of about 1,000. The professional staff are headed by Chief Executive Mr R.H. Davis.

The DDC has a Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Councillors who are Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of committees. The current Chairman of DDC is Councillor Derek Townsend from Tring.

The Councillors elected to represent Berkhamsted areas are as follows :-

Paul Adams	12 Upper Hall Park (Berkhamsted 3295) - Berkhamsted East
Kenneth Coleman	Kenslea House, Frithsden Copse (Berkhamsted 6344) - Berkhamsted Central
Arnold Medcalf	Cedar Heights, Brown Springs, Potten End (Berk. 2005) - Berkhamsted East
Victor Milrath	Shootersway Park, Shootersway (Berk. 73647) - Berkhamsted West
Robert Peake	Lismere House, Bank Mill Lane (Berk. 4328) - Berkhamsted East
George Scott	25 Tring Road, Northchurch (Berk. 2787) - Northchurch
Albert Thomas	6 Brownlow Road, (Berk. 3895) - Berkhamsted Central
Eric Warrington	Meadow Way, Cross Oak Road (Berk. 5848) - Berkhamsted West

Berkhamsted Town Council operates within the above framework but with much less statutory power and responsibility than did the previous urban district council.

The Town Mayor is Councillor Medcalf and the standing committees are:-

Finance and General Purposes	Allotments
Planning	Home & Road Safety
Leisure and Recreation	

The programme of Town Council., DDC and committee meetings is available from Mrs S. Robinson, Clerk to the Town Council, Civic Centre, Berkhamsted.