



**Berkhamsted
Citizens
Association**

NEWSLETTER

December 1986

Get Together - Come Together

First item of this newsletter is to invite you to the Christmas Gathering which has choir, carol singing, chat, mince pies and wine. This is always an enjoyable evening - so please put it in your social diary NOW.

Friday 12th December

Sessions Hall

8.00 p.m. until 10.30 p.m. (approx)

We normally charge £1.50 per person at the door to defray expenses - but wine is free.

This event is one of the main (and probably the most enjoyable) ways of getting us together. The other events are the AGM in March (mainly business) and Summer Wine - but the Christmas event is special. See you there! If any members want to have a lift in a car please contact our Chairman, Hazel Ward (Tel 5604) or our Secretary Pam Quin (Tel: 4565).

Walk into 1987

In our traditional way a New Year's Day Ramble is arranged for 1st January 1987. 10.30 a.m. at the station. General direction - Ashridge and the Bridgewater Arms. Not too strenuous given the occasion! On a sunny crisp day, such a short ramble can be very invigorating and help you rather enjoy the remains of the turkey.

Now you see them - now you don't!

Many groups and societies in the town are upset and amazed that their notice boards have disappeared. The reason for this is that Dacorum Technical Services have decided to implement the legal requirements of the highways Act and Advertisement Regulations concerning "illegal advertising on the highway". Presumably the requirements are to avoid road safety hazards. So the notice boards have all been removed. What we can't understand is why a warning note wasn't sent to societies, and the local newspapers, to give an indication of what was to happen, and when and why. It seems particularly ironic, and rather sad, that when at the start of his year of office, the Mayor of Dacorum calls for unity (a worthy message), we then experience decisions and action which completely destroys any developing feeling of unity. Manners make the Man - in personal and professional life, and there really is no need for this peremptory action. We have protested to the Director of Technical Services and asked for discussions on how this matter can be resolved so that people are not prevented from being notified of local events. The existing "official" notice boards are not adequate or extensive enough throughout the town, to give pedestrians access to

the notices which many local organisations depend upon to advertise their events. It really should be the basis of consultation before such action is taken by the local authority.

Meeting with Councillors

Our regular meeting with Town Councillors has been held in order to discuss and press for action 'hopefully with everyone in concert' on many issues affecting the town e.g. town planning, development pressures car parking, by-pass proposals and any threat to its progress. A planned meeting with Dacorum Councillors, Chairman and officers of main Departments has been postponed, and hopefully will be now arranged in January. If you have any special items of local policy which you feel should be voiced please advise our Chairman or Secretary.

Membership Records and Money

Please forgive the reference to this boring subject but all groups have to go through the painful assessment of members who have not paid the annual sub! It possibly would be easier to have a Standing Order via your bank but perhaps £1.50 is too small an amount for this. Your committee has thought long and hard about making subs collection easier for all of us (Membership Secretary and Treasurer included!). The low level of our subscription may be a factor but there is an obvious reluctance to increase it when it is financially not essential. BUT we must have all the subs due or we will have financial problems. Please help with this and if you have ideas for solving this problem, please let us know.

Recently we have been updating the Association's records and discovered that some of those receiving our Newsletter have not paid the current year's subscription (£1.00 single membership or £1.50 family membership - although more can be contributed). Some of the discrepancies will have arisen, for genuine reasons, e.g. resignations not advised, including removal from the area or just simple oversight. If you are receiving a Newsletter and realise you have not paid your membership subscription please contact Margaret Phillips, Membership Secretary at 133 Cross Oak Road, Berkhamsted (Tel 75713) or complete an application form (available at the library or the Civic Centre). Thank you for your co-operation. If you have paid you will have a small green membership card.

Any members still outstanding their 1986 subscriptions at the end of January 1987 will be deemed to have resigned from the Association and our records altered accordingly.

Kittsbury Post Office

Two and a half years ago the bombshell was dropped. In the interests of economy and efficiency several sub-post offices were to be closed: two of these were in Berkhamsted - George Street and Kittsbury. (That is not a misprint. There are two T's in the post office and only one in the road). You will probably remember the outcry and articles in local papers. After massive protest, George Street was closed but Kittsbury got a two and a half year reprieve.

Those two and a half years are up on March 31st 1987 and the many people who use this post office are appalled at the idea of its closing. If it closes, it is forever, and now is our last chance to fight preferably well in advance of the closing notice.

To make a hard and fast rule that post offices should be at mile intervals and that therefore no sub-post office can remain which is only a quarter of a mile from the main post office, may look alright on paper but surely there must be flexibility. We, in Berkhamsted, know that there are special circumstances here, with the exceptionally steep hills and the fact that the main post office is not in the centre of the town near shops and car parks. We must try to get the hard and fast policy rule relaxed.

There are two lines of approach: (1) a petition from users of Kittsbury Post Office, showing how many use it, and (2) letters to our M P. Richard Page at the House of Commons, London, and to the Director of the Eastern Postal Region, Sir Ronald Deering CB, Post Office Board, London. Preferably objectors should use both approaches. Petition forms and information sheets with addresses of who to write to are available at Ectrofix, next door to the post office, by kind permission of Mr. Irvine.

Much help is needed in organisation. The co-ordinators are:

Noël Hartle	105 Cross Oak Road (Tel: 3510)
Marion Ince	61 Cross Oak Road (Tel: 6206)
Hilary Talbot-Ponsonby	38 Kitsbury Road (Tel: 5882)

Please contact them with offers of help.

We know that it seems a long time ahead, but now is the time to act. For the sake of the elderly who like to collect their own pensions, the young mothers who don't want to push prams up steep hills, especially in icy weather, and all of those who enjoy the friendly helpfulness of a sub-post office, let us try to keep this integral part of Kitsbury Village.

(This item has been included in the Newsletter at the request of local people who want as much help as possible with this matter.)

A Plea for Trees

Many of our residential side streets of Berkhamsted are very pleasant green, leafy, peacefully refreshing areas in which to live. This effect is as a result of the combination of individual specimens of trees, the majority of which are in private gardens and in private ownership. These trees are not statutorily protected by tree preservation orders. If, one by one, they are felled – at worst – or, little better, brutally lopped, the green and pleasant effect we enjoy is gradually eroded. May we therefore put out a plea to all the owners of such trees to care for the health of their "arboreal charges". Please think very carefully before felling and avoid it if at all possible. Instead of overall lopping, thin out one or two branches. If any help or advice is needed, Ruth Chapman, Woodlands Officer, at Dacorum Borough Council is available for consultation. We also ask for vigilance if anyone should hear of an intended threat to individual trees, groups of trees and especially fine trees. Perhaps a phone call in time to Ruth Chapman (Tel: Hemel Hempstead 60161) or Janet Crowhurst of the BCA Town Amenities Committee (Tel: Berkhamsted 6556) could help to save a tree.

Bowls Club at Canal Fields

One of the outstanding successes of recent years has been the emergence of the Bowls Club. From the sceptical days of 1983 when the Dacorum Leisure Services Strategy was being debated the Citizens Association

stated confidently that there would be support for such a club. The initial meeting, held in the Gable Hall under the auspices of Leisure Services Officer, John Nisbet, gave birth to a committee, which has worked hard to plan the club into existence. The rest is history! The Green is now established and a Club House is coming. Last year's first full season saw membership over-subscribed and a waiting list. Friendly matches have been held with other clubs, and more are planned for 1987. At the Annual Dinner in October, Chairman of Leisure Services, Robert Peake who presented the Awards, acknowledged in his speech the contribution of the BCA in the creation of the Bowls Club and the development of the Leisure Services Strategy. The remaining part of this which is not yet fulfilled is the Ashlyns School Development which should start in 1987. However, the Bowls Club is now giving pleasure to many people in Berkhamsted. Well done all!

Our Environment - other aspects

It is now time to remind you of our Annual Environment Award - given for that building or development which contributes most to retaining or enhancing our local environment. The booby prize for many years has been the A41! But as this has no competitors we don't give an award for blighting the environment. Maybe we should. Please consider all the new or changed buildings completed during 1986 and nominate them for the Award by dropping a line to our Secretary.

One building which has not changed during 1986 but whose existence was threatened by development of houses is Rooksby's building yard and specifically the Victorian engine shed along Station Road. Happily the appeal of the developers against rejection of planning permission was rejected by the Inspector holding the appeal. So an interesting building in the Victorian/Edwardian part of the town has been rescued from extinction.

Green Belt Policy

Mention of the Green Belt immediately conjures up thoughts of "sacrosanct" areas of beauty, which are constantly under threat and the subject of preventing sprawling development on fertile agricultural land. The list is endless of national and local spots, and few of us don't have strong feelings on the topic. It is still worth concentrating on because ever since 1938 when the Green Belt (London and Home Counties) Act was passed it has continued to be a matter of the moment.

Recently a number of Association members have been enquiring about our policy when considering planning applications that involved Green Belt land. The answer is very much in keeping with the original intentions behind the 1938 Act, which is that permanent development should be prevented unless there are over-riding reasons for it. The definition of Green Belt land is an area in which there is a presumption against development but over which no statutory restrictions apply. This, therefore, leaves considerable discretion in the hands of local planning authorities and the Secretary of State for the Environment to grant planning permission as they so please! A seemingly dangerous state of affairs? Or is it an arrangement to encourage reasonable action after a balanced assessment has been made of all the significant factors?

It is worth noting that since the 1938 Act there has been a large increase in the area of Green Belt land and there has generally been government support in extending it. The London Metropolitan Green Belt amounts to over 850 square miles, however not all of it is well maintained and attractive.

A formal circular issued by the Department of the Environment in July 1984 called on local planning authorities to enhance the countryside, especially those areas within the Green-Belt, or adjacent to it which suffer from disuse or neglect. Special mention was made of the importance of those parts of the Green Belt that are close to existing urban development, which can be especially vulnerable to neglect or damage. We need to be constantly on our guard to defend Green Belt land when it is under threat whilst at the same time looking at the broader interests of our town and community. After all we have been campaigning for our A41 town by-pass even though it will consume some Green Belt land! This is an excellent example of where some compromise is justified in the interests of the many who would suffer if the by-pass is not built. Judgement has to be exercised on the balance of advantage, sometimes the Green Belt has to be defended in the interests of posterity, and in some cases a compromise is necessary. Another example is the M40 through the Chilterns, and the Okehampton by-pass.

Press Uelease - Report of talk given by our M.E.P. Derek Prag

Mr. Prag told the meeting of Berkhamsted Citizens Association "European Parliament is the conscience of Europe."

"My top priority for the European Parliament is to get the European Community to spend its budget on the things that really matter." Herts Euro-MP Derek Prag told Berkhamsted citizens at the Court House on Tuesday 18th November. Answering a question from a member of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association, he said that that meant jobs, research and development, regional renewal, job training, and cleaning up the environment.

"It is absurd," Mr. Prag added, "that the Community should still be spending over two-thirds of its budget on agriculture, and a large part of that on subsidising and storing food that can't be sold or given away."

The European Parliament had just told the 12 governments earlier this month, in a resolution adopted by the over-whelming majority of 308 votes to 41, that it wanted an 8% cut in milk quotas, and fundamental measures to change land use patterns.

"We have got to streamline the Common Agricultural Policy and make it both efficient and acceptable. At the same time I want farming to remain a prosperous industry. I believe we shall have to think of using more land for forestry and recreation purposes, and less for producing milk, meat and grain."

"My second ambition is to get the Community to step up its efforts to provide rehabilitation and job training for disabled people", Mr. Prag said. As Chairman and founder of the European Parliament's All-Party Disablement Group, he wanted the European Social Fund to recognise that the Community's 30 million disabled people deserved all possible help. "It is very difficult for able-bodied people to realise just what handicaps disabled people suffer, not only in pain and the difficulty of getting about, but also in low incomes and the difficulty of getting a job. No-one needs and deserves job training more than disabled people, and the European Community should finance many more rehabilitation and job training projects for them."

In his opening talk Mr. Prag said the working of the European Community affected everyone's daily life. European legislation covers matters such as food prices, safety standards for cars and

lorries, acid rain, lead in petrol, job training (nearly one quarter of which in this country has been financed by the E C.), advertising standards, and the grading and sorting of fruit and eggs. "Perhaps the older housewives among you will remember the days when shops and market stalls used to show large, beautiful, polished apples at the front of the pile, and serve you with small damaged, wrinkled fruit from the back. That doesn't happen any longer; it is now illegal under EC. Law. You must be served with the grade and size you ask for. The EC. is very consumer-conscious."

Mr. Prag said the European Parliament is an indispensable link between the European Community and its people, and the essential means of controlling the E.C.'s bureaucracy. "It is also the conscience of Europe, defending human rights wherever they are violated."

Some items from the Committee Minutes - Town Amenities Sub Committee

Daffodil planting - 400 bulbs had been planted at the Castle on 5th October. Herts C.C. are providing bulbs free for planting in places 'in public view'. It was agreed that any bulbs obtained from this source should also be planted at the Castle.

Canal - Four people had undertaken rubbish clearance on 12th October. It was agreed that there was scope for further work and that this should take place in the spring with prior publicity in the Newsletter. It was also agreed that a letter should be sent to Dacorum B.C. about the need for rubbish bins at the picnic site.

W. H, Smith DIY premises - concern had been expressed about the reduction in provision for car-parking and about possible road-widening which it was feared might involve the loss of the flower-beds on the opposite side of the A41. It was agreed that letters should be sent to Dacorum B.C. about the parking and to Herts. C.C. about the road-widening.

123 High Street - an application has been submitted for a private 20-bed old people's home behind Kennett's.

Bottle Banks - it was agreed that a letter should be sent to Dacorum B.C. commenting on the fact that these were frequently overflowing.