



**Berkhamsted
Citizens
Association**

NEWSLETTER

September 1986

Mcllroys is still here

Our last newsletter commented on the planning application concerning the Mcllroys premises and those adjoining into Lower Kings Road. We were pleased to see that it was well summarised in the Gazette, as this brought the matter to a wider audience. There is an opportunity here to improve the centre from a Road Safety viewpoint as well as visually and commercially. We also all want to retain our small shops to give us variety and choice, so it is good to see that the Bookstack have moved along the High Street to larger premises opposite the Outspan building, although for the moment retaining the corner shop. The West End of Berkhamsted including the development in the old Co-op building has now become the "small shops" end. If only the back of the High Street could be developed to include added car parking, the town might become even more attractive to shoppers. The Bookstack have moved both to expand and as a defensive measure in case planning permission is eventually given covering their corner shop. Discussions continue between the developers and Dacorum Borough Planning Department so almost certainly another application will emerge. We repeat our plea for a total overview of the area between Lower Kings Road and St. John's Well Lane so that incongruous ad hoc Developments are prevented.

Enquire ye not!

We had our knuckles rapped (by an ex Chairman of the BCA) when we dared suggest that enough money and time had been spent on Public Inquiries on the by-pass. Interesting that Councillor Hilary Rost is now voicing similar anxieties on the effect of the inquiries on the start date. Well justice has to be seen to be done of course. But justice has many faces and has to absorb many facts. One of these is the right of people (not only landowners and open spaces societies) to object to certain aspects, and/or seek improvements. This Association has done this over many years. There is also the right of people to have their local environment improves by the removal of trunk road traffic. The Association has not pressed for Inquiries when these have already been held, and note must be taken of the total context in which many people are living due to traffic volume, changes in size of lorries, and the M25. Let's remember that the by-pass is not for Berkhamsted but is for Hemel Hempstead, Apsley and Kings Langley. We have in our possession a 2-page letter dated 19th April 1985 from the Regional Director of the Department of Environment and Transport all about moving the line of the Kings Langley by-pass "14 metres to the North". This small distance is clearly important to some people and so is the amount of Boxmoor Trust Land taken up. It does illustrate the detail which has to be absorbed by the Planning Procedures, to allow justice to operate. But the view held by the majority is that the existing commitment to start in 1987 must not be watered down. The words used

by the Regional Director are "subject to satisfactory completion of the statutory procedures and the availability of funds, work on both by-passes could start in 1987, and would take two years to complete". Since then the statutory procedures have ground on!! The money availability depends on our MP's continuing to make themselves a nuisance with the Minister, and we hope they will keep up the good work! Write to them to encourage them and the Minister to take action. Our MP is Richard Page, House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1.

Watery By-Pass

Two centuries ago another by-pass was built - the Grand Junction Canal. This eventually by mergers of companies (heard it before?) became the Grand Union Canal. It is now a linear park through the Bulbourne Valley. Canal Fields has become a favourite overnight mooring for narrowboats, and we also have a floating restaurant. Litter we also have along the towpath so when you pop along for a stroll take a carrier bag please and pick up a bit of litter. On the common we have found that where an area has been cleaned of litter it generally stays clear for a year or so. Where no clear up occurs people pile on more litter. If it looks cared for - people care. So help its removal along the towpath. Our Town Amenities Sub Committee has completed a detailed written report on the canalside features from the locks west of Park Street footbridge to Bank Mill Lane. The report identified two main issues to be tackled:

1. Painting of railings, bridges and lock gates
2. Removal of rubbish and nettles.

Many instances of 2. could be removed by individuals doing an hour's work, and litter can always be taken home in a bag. Some work has started, eg. the Kings Road Bridge being painted, and the edge of the Boys School Tennis Courts being cleared up. Other small efforts are on the way and when completed in total will make a big difference.

The Inland Waterways Association National Rally was held at Brentford Boston Manor Park on the August Bank Holiday. Many boats will be travelling north during early September, and should be worth watching as they climb through the local locks.

Youth Club : Homeless and Helpless

This remains one of the most disgraceful issues over the last few years in Berkhamsted - in that the Youth Club was removed from its Park View Road premises (almost a flattering title) into no premises at all. The length of time taken to resolve this is a disgraceful commentary on our system of support for youth facilities. The system is complicated, that's the basic problem. The responsibility for Youth Service is vested in Herts County Council, and is organised through the Adult Education Branch. Dacorum Borough Council being the local authority are, in the absence of any private donor, the only available source of land on which to put a Youth Club. The latter is broadly managed by a Youth Club Committee, and there is a Youth Organiser appointed by County. So it is a tangled web not designed for clean, quick decisions.

In January 1985 this Newsletter said that if we really had one wish to make it a Happy New Year perhaps it should be spent on wishing for new

and adequate premises for the Youth Club. In September 1985 we were reporting rumours that "something will be announced soon". Well, we seem to have moved a little further forward. Two possible sites are now being talked about: a piece of land by the canal in Little Bridge Street which has been offered by Dacorum Borough Council, and a pair of cottages in Manor Street which belong to the County Council. We hear that negotiations are at a delicate stage. Let's hope that they bear fruit soon. It's nearly four years since the Youth Club lost its base in Park View Road. Is it too much to hope that those 1985 New Year wishes for new and adequate premises will finally come true in 1987?

Hugh Gardner

Some members may not be aware that Hugh Gardner died on 5th August. Although he retired from the Management Committee in 1958, after serving for thirteen years and having been Chairman in 1954 and 1955, he had continued to be a most active member. He attended most of our functions, and should the Committee follow a policy which he did not favour, or which he thought to be beyond its power or contrary to precedent, he would write in courteous but firm terms setting out his views, and these were always treated with respect. He saw the Association as a body whose advice is freely sought on current problems because it has no axe to grind and because its considered views have been found to be helpful and worth having.

When it was decided to produce a Diamond Jubilee History, it was decided unanimously that Hugh should be asked to undertake this, and, although much of the material with which he was provided was ill-sorted and uncollated, in a remarkably short period of time he had produced his first draft. Those who collaborated with him will always recall the kindly and generous manner in which he handled their initial comments.

We have been most fortunate in having had as a Life Member one whose distinguished career as an administrator in the Ministry of Agriculture and subsequently as a member of the Secretary of State for the Environment's Panel of Independent Inspectors, had given him an almost unrivalled knowledge of the provisions governing so many of the topics with which the Association is concerned, such as planning, rights of common land and the procedure at inquiries, and Hugh was always prepared to share that knowledge.

He will be sadly missed by a wide circle of friends, and we extend our sympathy to his wife, Margaret, and to Alison, Donald and Jinny.

Future Activities

Wednesday 15th October

A talk about the Grand Union Canal
Speaker is Mr. Martin Wood.

Sessions Hall. 8.00 p.m.

November

We hope to arrange a talk by our
local Euro MP - Mr. Peter Beasley.
(Date to be confirmed - watch out
for posters.)

Friday 12th December

Christmas Gathering, with carols,
wine and mince pies.