



**Berkhamsted
Citizens
Association**

NEWSLETTER

May 1992

EDITOR' S MUSINGS

We are now a band of a thousand citizens, strong and true. The Association has now surged past the magic thousand in its membership for the first time.

Attendance at the various public meetings over the year has also increased.

This is all very encouraging and rightly so. Berkhamsted is at a very critical juncture in its development. The by-pass and the town centre development studies present a unique opportunity for the creation of a truly delightful environment in which to live. There is also the possibility that failure at this stage will be difficult to rectify subsequently and could result in a withering branch.

I believe that this situation is sensed by most responsible citizens in the town and is responsible for the upsurge in public interest.

The Association is actively looking at two important aspects.

Firstly, the by-pass. There is no doubt now of its presence. If you live near the line, as I do, the clouds of dust when dry and mud when not are an ever present reminder of the great activity now in progress - not to mention traffic hold-ups. I must say that, at least in my area, the contractors are making a reasonable effort in minimizing the dirt nuisance. Obviously it cannot be eliminated.

This nuisance however will pass. The Association is more concerned with the longer term, for example, in the promised screening taking place and appropriate restoration. When possible it is hoped that a group might be allowed to walk the route which can, of course, only take place under supervision and at appropriate times because of possible hazards. So if you see a group of hard-hatted stalwarts heading for the line of the by-pass you will realise that it is the chairman and Association about your business and not a bunch of latter day Vikings! Mind you, perhaps the chairman would prefer a winged helmet and a battle axe.

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The second important aspect is the Town Centre Enhancement Study now under way, The Association is preparing a discussion paper, the details of which are manifold and too numerous to include here. The basic principles however are enshrined in the preamble to the paper and since I could not paraphrase it any better, I shall quote it in toto:

"The completion of the by-pass and Kingsgate will achieve the largest and most dramatic change to the centre of Berkhamsted since the coming of the railway. The Berkhamsted Citizens' Association is keen to review the Town Centre and prepare proposals to grasp any further opportunities arising. The aim, in a debate where proposals will conflict, must be to develop Berkhamsted's attractiveness to the current users ; a small market town, its focus should be on the residents and workers in its immediate vicinity.

The attractiveness of the town depends on the judgement of its qualities in terms of safety, facilities, environment and ease of use."

You are the current users. The proposals, as yet undefined, are where your views may conflict either between yourselves or with the council or the developer. Make your views known, either to me, members of the committee or at an important public meeting the Association hopes to hold, probably in July, to discuss the issues. They are important. Your views are important. There is no better time to air them.

The litter drive on 5th April was perhaps not the best attended attempt to tidy up the town that we have had. Indeed at one time it consisted entirely of two past chairmen. There was a representative from Dacorum with a video camera and a Gazette reporter present and while the two past chairmen are admittedly very photogenic, it was a relief when a few more members turned up. Much useful work was done and no doubt much more could have been done if the numbers had been greater. Alternatively we could of course give the Gazette and Dacorum representatives a litter bag and sticks and increased our efficiency by forty per cent. We must do better next time.

The recent A.G.M. was well attended and useful. Two new committee members were recruited - Jenny Jones and Gordon Bluck. David Brunt reviewed the contenders for the Environment Award in his usual clear and informed way. It was not a vintage year and while there were one or two commendable efforts it was decided not to make an award this year. Suggestions and debate ranged over a number of topics from tethering posts for bicycles to the town centre studies. The outgoing chairman, Giles Clark, handed over his badge of office to the new chairman, Nicholas Nisbet, and wished him well.

The new chairmen had little difficulty in keeping the meeting in order as he was well supported by a substantial posse from the senior ranks of the local constabulary who later gave an excellent and informative talk on policing the district and what the average citizen should do to deter the criminal. It was very well received and I understand that one result was the formation of a new Neighbourhood Watch in Potten End. I, at least, was surprised to learn how thinly police resources are spread at any one time. I was also relieved to learn that the whole of their activities were not concentrated on keeping an eagle eye on my speedometer. I must say it was a pleasure to see and listen to such a sound and sensible bunch of officers, particularly as the press seems only to report on the activities of what must be a very small number of bad eggs in the force. I hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing them again one day.

PLANNING AND AMENITIES

The Galleria A new application has been received but it is still not acceptable and an objection has been lodged. My notes tell me it may become (or be called) the Gas Station. And I thought that was the Civic Centre in Hemel.

The Old Gas Showroom Proposals have been received for its demolition and the erection of - wait for it - yes, you've guessed, another office block. Despite the staggering novelty of such a proposal the Association has concluded that perhaps it is not entirely acceptable for the location and have lodged an objection.

9 Kingsdale Road Doubts on density have been expressed at proposals to build two dwellings in the garden.

Rex Cinema Theatre Projects Ltd. have submitted proposals for a redevelopment which would keep the frontage and include a shop and flats. There would be an auditorium for conferences, etc. and one or two small cinemas. It looks a good use for the site and the Association feels it could provide some much needed amenities in place of the present eyesore.

TOWN HALL

Wellcome Hall As a final present before they left the town, Wellcome made a present of £30,000 towards the cost of renovating the Great Hall. A presentation was made to the outgoing mayor, David Sherratt, recently. The hall is to be named Wellcome Great Hall as a tribute to their generosity.

There is also a plan to ask for sponsors to plaster individual alcoves of the hall. So, welcome all.

DIARY EVENTS

Summer Wine – A New Date

You will see from the invitation included with this newsletter that the Summer Wine is on Friday 26th June not 29th June as originally advertised.

The location is Amersfort, an Edwardian country house on Berkhamsted Common, which, after a spell as a community, is now the Haresfoot Senior School. There are attractive gardens, originally laid out by Gertrude Jekyll, overlooking the valley, (so we hope for fine weather)!

Directions: At the top of Gravel Path turn right and Amersfort is on the right after about a third of a mile (past Ivy House Lane and a rough track on the right but not as far as Potten End).

If any members would like a lift, Gill Feil (telephone 865752) will be happy to make arrangements.

Stoke Bruerne

A new date has been arranged for this trip which had to be cancelled earlier this month. This is now to be held on Sunday 20th September and application forms are attached to this newsletter.

Berkhamsted Youth Club

Further to our report in the December Newsletter, the Youth Club is now successfully operating for different age groups on five evenings a week. We said then that the running costs would probably be about £5,000 a year “*even after the County Council grant is taken into account*”. It is now known that there will be no County Council grant for Youth Clubs this year. Many clubs in Hemel Hempstead have said they will be forced to close in September but the Berkhamsted Management Committee is determined to keep going even though it will mean even greater efforts in fund-raising by the committee and the Youth Groups themselves (car cleaning etc?)

As a first step there is to be a 'Quiz Night' on Friday 19 June at 7. 30pm at the Youth Centre, Gossoms End. Why not make up a table of 6 or 8 or come individually?

Tickets, price £5, include a fish & chip supper and are available from Hike Legge, 1 Chalet Close, HP4 3NR (Tel: 874696)