

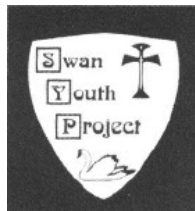
THE CITIZEN



The Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

September 1996

What's Happening to the Swan?



The Swan Inn, one of Berkhamsted's most historic coaching inns, is emerging from behind scaffolding in the centre of the High Street, but as what? Tricia Williams, the Chairman of the Swan Youth Project, gives the answer:

'The work is on schedule and by the end of the year the renovated building will be ready to welcome 20 Dacorum youngsters who need a home - and training to help them find a job. It will also house the new unlicensed Swan Inn, a much needed

meeting place for local young people to relax with friends, play games and hear music. Affordable snacks will be available'.

The concept is known as a 'Foyer', a revolutionary method of tackling the homeless and jobless problem which has been receiving strong support from the Prince of Wales. There



are now 14 Foyers open in the UK, with a further 20 expected soon. The schemes which are in place are working. Over 90% of the young men and women who have been through the Foyer at Norwich have obtained employment or gone into training or further education.

Breaking the Cycle

'We are confident that the Swan Project can achieve the same success rate here, Our aim is to help break the cycle of no home, no job; no job, no home, and give young people some security, perhaps for the first time in their lives. As well as providing training for the residents, all local young people will be able to benefit from the vocational guidance, counselling and job-search assistance which will be on offer.

What has been done so far is a major achievement: the raising of the finance for the Project, the partnership with the Aldwyck Housing Association and the transformation of a building which had become an eyesore in the heart of the town. We are extremely

grateful for all the support we have received and it is the continuing support of local people which will help bring our original vision to fruition. Thank you'.



'The Swan' - when it was still a hotel

The Swan Youth Project is looking now for volunteers to help run the Swan Inn. For further information please ring Dacorum Volunteer Bureau, in Berkhamsted (866051) or Hemel Hempstead (247209).

PROFILE

Miranda Cummins



Miranda Cummins has lived in Berkhamsted for 40 years. It is a reflection of the interest and concern she has in the town and its people that for nearly half that time she has willingly and ably served on the committee of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association. And for the last nine years Miranda has been our secretary.

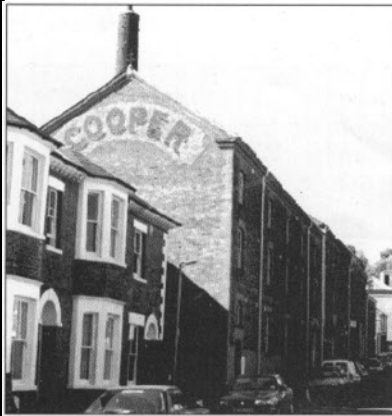
The smooth working of the committee and the administration of the Association is largely due to her efforts. Miranda has managed to fit in this service with the BCA with a full personal life; being married to a local headteacher, having two sons - and a full time job. She has worked in publishing in London, then at Ashridge Management College; and now she works full time for two education specialists in Berkhamsted. She enjoys gardening, walking, reading and needlework - when time permits, she says.

Forthcoming BCA Events

A ramble and two talks have been arranged for the next three months:

This year the Association's autumn walk will be on **Sunday, 6 October**, and will be via Hockeridge to the 'Eagle'. We meet at the top of **Cross Oak Road in Shootersway at 10.30am**.

On **Thursday 17 October** Yan Christensen will talk about Cooper's 150 years in Berkhamsted. (A timely talk, now that it has been announced that the business successors in the town, currently AgrEvo, are to close next year.)



*Cooper's Factory
in Manor Street*

On **Thursday, 14 November** Margaret Shuffrey, who lives in Frithsden, will give an illustrated talk on the Navajo Indians and their weaving.

Margaret and her husband Tony have visited the Navajos' reservation eight times, made friends there and taught themselves to design and weave Navajo rugs in the traditional way.

Tony is a member of the Royal Photographic Society and the talk will be illustrated by some of his fine slides of the people, their crafts, their way of life and the dramatically beautiful scenery; and Margaret will also bring some of their rugs with her.



A Navajo Indian at her loom

Then there is the **BCA's Christmas celebration** to look forward to on **Saturday, 14 December**.

All the above events will be held in the Town Hall - apart from the walk!

Town Amenities

The Chairman of our Town Amenities Sub-Committee, Gordon Bluck, reports;

August is the traditional time when the Town Amenities Sub-Committee takes a break; we all go on holiday, local planners exchange their hush puppies for open toe'd sandals with socks, cancel The Guardian for two weeks, and everyone with a controversial planning application submits it quick.

This year is no different, with a modified scheme for Berkhamsted Collegiate School to build a new Prep school on the lacrosse pitch. At the end of July we were initially given seven days by Dacorum Borough Council to respond to the plans, but this was an error and we were allowed 21 days. In reality it will be considered by councillors in September having failed to get it considered in August.

My committee colleagues and I will have had a special meeting to discuss the most important planning matter for years by the time you read this report.



Site of Planning Application -from the West

Our initial thoughts are likely to be the same as those on the previous application when we objected to the loss of green space in the town with the further complication of the disappearance of a playing field. The resultant traffic concentrations on Kings Road, rather than the spreading of the problem at the existing Prep and Beeches sites looks on the face of it to be a retrograde step.



Site of Planning Application - from the South

The problem we face as a committee is balance between improving the education facilities in the town and the resultant loss of amenity, i.e. open space, especially as we may as individuals have vested interests (I have a child at each school). We will try to come to a balanced view.

Other matters considered by the Town amenities team included:

1) The continuing controversy regarding the track from Ivy House Lane to Bulbeggars Lane and its possible designation as a public footpath. As an Association we felt unable to make a specific recommendation to Herts County Council as this would involve completing a questionnaire with actual usage.

I have been supplied by the Chiltern Society with a supply of forms for completion by individuals and if any members of the BCA wish to make a personal declaration please contact me. As an Association we support the extension of the footpath network in appropriate cases.

2) There were mixed views on the new fencing on The Moor, but at least it should keep it car free.



New railings on the Moor: mixed views

3) We have had a deal of correspondence with Dacorum regarding the proliferation of chalkboards on the south of the High Street and we would wish to have this reduced.

4) I attended a briefing regarding the Residential Areas Character Study prior to its public exhibition, and was disappointed to learn that so few people attended the showing of this important blueprint on planning in the area.

5) There are plans to erect illuminated signs for Waitrose and we are getting hold of the plans to discuss urgently.

6) We objected to the change of use of the shop at 118 High Street (which used to be Dusty's) to a fast food takeaway.



Objection to a fast food takeaway

7) Paul Gilbert is our representative on the CARP project and he continues to provide the Associations input to this important initiative. You will have seen press comment on the scale of the plans for the canalside. Architects will be appointed to take these forward in conjunction with the work proposed by Waitrose. WATCH this space.

Everyone on Television

Are you relieved or concerned at the prospects of closed circuit television surveillance cameras coming to public places in Berkhamsted?

To some extent it has already happened. Several shops and banks here have CCTV systems conspicuously in operation, even covering the street outside. Most people who walk up Church Lane are unaware that Tesco's camera is on them. You can in fact see yourself on screen through their shop window; and presumably all your movements are preserved on video tape.



Walk past here to be on television

Is this, we have to make up our minds, a reasonable security measure or an invasion of our privacy?

The Citizens Association has been consulted by Borough Council officials on their intention to install CCTV cameras in the Town. Graham Spittle, our Chairman, writes;

With some reservations which have been made known to the Council officers, the Committee has given its support to the scheme.

The crime statistics following the installation in Hemel Hempstead town centre are encouraging:-

- Public Order incidents down by 23%
- Car Crime in the Water Gardens Car Parks down by 60%
- Crime Related incidents down by 49%

Those in charge of the project are anxious to keep the Association informed of progress through *The Citizen*, so look out for reports in future editions.

It is not too late to bring your views to the notice of any Committee member so that the Association can make them known to the Council.

How Permanent Should Buildings Be?

Now that the large new Waitrose building is nearly finished the comment has been made to me several times that it has changed the face of the town for ever. I doubt it.



The grocer's shop: predecessor of our present Waitrose

All indications are that the useful life span of large industrial and commercial buildings is only 30 or 40 years. The factory which stood on the Kingsgate site and at one time employed several hundred people went when it was no longer needed - decades before there was anything to take its place. There was also a large factory in George Street, long since obsolete and demolished.

If recent history is to be taken as a guide it will be obsolete in 30 or 40 years from now. Future generations will then have the chance to knock it down and build something else: in fact not necessarily future generations. It could well be that people living or working in Berkhamsted today could be involved in three or four decades' time in all the hassle of deciding how the site should be redeveloped. There could even be moves to have it 'listed' and preserved!

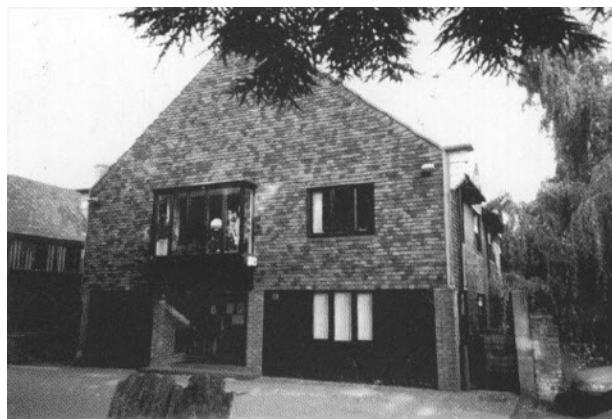
Cooper's factory in Manor Street (pictured on page 2) lies largely empty, an-out-of-date building with no identifiable use. That is a pity, as it is a building with character and one of our town's few monuments to Victorian enterprise. And now the firm's other buildings along the High Street will follow next year.



Buildings of Berkhamsted's biggest Company: redundant next year

The Rex lasted about 40 years as a proper cinema, and nobody now knows what to do with it. The Civic Centre was built at the same time as the Rex but lasted as the town's headquarters for only 35 years. It survives, but it is not really suitable for its present purpose as a satellite office for the Borough Council.

Some older buildings have been successfully converted to another use, like St Peter's Hall, now a small office block, and the Town Hall, but examples of such adaptations are few.



St Peter's Hall: a successful conversion

Perhaps in view of all this the solidity with which the Kingsgate foodstore has been built is out of place. To see all the massive concrete and brickwork of the new building makes you wonder whether a building with a less substantial form of construction might have been more appropriate. But then of course few people would have liked to see something resembling a prefab rise in the middle of the town.

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