

THE CITIZEN



The Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

December 1997

Profile:

John Cook, *Editor of The Citizen.*



John will be well known as a prominent local resident for about 30 years. Although an engineer by profession his flair for journalism is readily apparent to our readers and to those who read his entertaining contributions to The Berkhamsted Review.

Knowing Eric Hoey's dryly humorous style as Newsletter editor would be a hard act to follow, the Committee were delighted when John was persuaded to succeed him in 1995. He has so far produced ten issues and taken most of the photographs.

John has been involved across a range of voluntary organisations in the town. He was churchwarden at St Peter's at the time of its major restoration in the 80's and he has been chairman of The Cowper Society, The Town Hall Trust and The Berkhamsted Committee of the Dacorum Council for Voluntary Service.

He was Town Mayor for three years when he was largely responsible for re-establishing the town's Chamber of Commerce. He was involved with the Scouts and various other charities as well as being governor of a local school. He is retired but still does some consultancy work.

The Committee overruled John's normal editorial freedom and his modesty to publish this overdue acknowledgement of his work.

Graham Spittle.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

For this year's **Christmas Celebration on Friday, 12th December** in the Town Hall, starting at 8pm, the choir of Ashlyns School will return to entertain us with music and carols as they performed so well two years ago. Their new Head of Music, Kathryn Pickup, took up her post in September of this year and is enthusiastic about taking part in this event: an evening to look forward to, with mince pies and mulled wine.



1st January 1998: The traditional **New Year's Day Ramble** to Aldbury will be ably led by Ian McCalla. Meet at the railway station at 10.30am.



26th February 1998: *The Making of The Making Place.*

Something to listen to and watch as Freda Earl tells the story of The Making Place (which is located at the rear of the Town Hall Arcade) and demonstrates its main activity, the teaching of pottery. In the Great Hall of the Town Hall at 8pm.



THE LAST OF THE SUMMER WINE?

Our Chairman, *Graham Spittle*, writes:

With utmost reluctance your committee has decided to abandon the plans for the Association Summer Party in 1998; at any rate in the form recently known as 'Summer Wine'. Mindful that this marks a break with a tradition of very many years standing, committee members were nevertheless faced with disappointing attendance figures over several recent years.

They would, therefore, like to hear from you, the members, as to whether you, would like a social event in future and what form it should take.

- * Would you prefer an earlier or later date?
- * A more rural venue or one nearer the centre of the town?
- * A more structured event perhaps with a speaker or other entertainment?

Please have a word with any committee member known to you or perhaps better still let me have your observations in writing. These can be dropped through my office letter box at 85/87 High Street to save postage.

At least let us know whether 1997 should be the last of the Summer Wine! Whatever is eventually decided, I am sure everyone will agree that it is no reflection upon the endeavours of our hard-working and imaginative Activities sub-committee and that we are very grateful to them for all the time and energy they have put into preparations for the Summer events in the past.



Members' Correspondence

Compliment: Ken (Phil) Phillips writes:



Many of the letters in The Berkhamsted Gazette are rude and insulting, so I thought I'd try The Citizen.....

I think our Post Office is great!

When the big move to The Way Inn from the main GPO building was suggested I, like many others, forecast disaster. But they are super. A long queue no longer means a long wait even if we are sometimes relegated to the pavement.

The staff under their manager must surely be unique in their skill, knowledge and above all cheerfulness and courtesy. Well done all you dedicated 'Postal Persons'.

I'm sure there are other happy stories in Berko and like Martyn Lewis of the BBC, I prefer happy news.

Please don't stop writing your rude letters to The Gazette though - it enhances my breakfast on a Thursday morning.

On Retirement Paul Gilbert writes:

18 months ago I retired. Before retirement I had made plans which included doing voluntary work, sharing the home chores with my wife and promising to do more cooking and home-made wine-making!

An extra treat would be to take a pleasant stroll early each morning over the canal to a small paper-shop to collect a daily newspaper. I particularly enjoyed this little exertion after breakfast.... it reminded me of the end of rushing for the early commuter train.

The lady proprietress always treated me courteously, giving me the personal attention and chat so often forthcoming from a small local shop. Now this has all ended.

The shop is closing because of its close proximity to a large supermarket which can offer newspapers, wines, small groceries etc. at all times, including Sundays, and with which my little shop can no longer compete.

Originally I had not been one of those in the town who protested against the opening of a large supermarket. I thought it would be a welcome benefit to the community. Now I wonder.....

Maybe it's political - should a government - so long in power - have allowed these huge developments to spring up without proper control and with such great powers to close our small shops. I don't know - you tell me!

Town Amenities Committee

The Committee Chairman, Gordon Bluck, reports:

One of the bonuses the Town Amenities Committee chairman has is that long-standing and dedicated members take the time and trouble to write to me to try and keep Berkhamsted not a NIMBY (Not in My Back Yard) town but one which wants to preserve the environment for future generations. Mr Ivan Baker, a long-standing member of the Association, has been in correspondence with me (and I hope he will not mind my mentioning this) for some time regarding the re-designation of the track from Ivy House Lane to Bullbeggars Lane to a proper authorised footpath.

We have been unable to lend much weight to this proposal as it needs individual people to certify that they have used the track regularly over the years. An association cannot do this. Funding and priority from Dacorum are lacking, so if any member wishes to try and bring back this track into public use as a footpath please let me know. The only thing I will say on the other side is that the landowner /farmer has rights too.

Other matters include a change of user for the ground floor of the Town Hall which we are pleased to support as this building is so important to the town. Cafe Uno are offering a 25-year lease.

We have objected to a number of schemes which we feel are to the detriment of the town, including a further objection to Fleurfield (turned down on appeal) and yet another plan for 9/11 Kingsdale Road. A very disturbing planning application has been submitted on land adjacent to 5 Castle Hill Close, to chop down a number of protected trees to extend the station car park. The application claims it is on behalf of British Rail. We fear a subsequent plan for a house/houses, and strong objections have been lodged.

We are very disappointed that the plans for closed circuit television in the town have been modified following consultation with interested parties including ourselves.

We have lost the vital camera covering the railway station and the canal, and the proposal to put a camera covering the railway tunnel to South Park Gardens has been dropped in favour of covering the car parks in front of and behind Waitrose.

We would have hoped that these could be in addition, with the cost being covered by Waitrose, especially as their premises would be protected. We have written on this basis but we have made the point that the last thing we want is another delay while we go out to further consultation; so we will accept what we are given and try and increase the sites later. This is what has happened in Hemel Hempstead where the scheme has been extended.

Regarding the Canalside Project, Paul Gilbert continues to give up his time to attend on behalf of the Association and I believe we are making progress as a costing document has been produced and an exhibition was put on recently. It was disappointing that so few people attended what hopefully will be an important project for the town.



*Town Hall Arcade:
Change of use.*



Despite opposition from us, planning permission for the Collegiate Junior School has now been granted. We are still of the opinion that the traffic generated will pose problems for the town.

Finally, we have just had our regular meeting with the leader of Dacorum Borough Council, the 'chairs' of the principal committees, the Chief Executive and other senior officers. These meetings have been taking place over a number of years, and although nothing secret is discussed it is a perfect opportunity to talk to the policy maker.

Woods Nearby

We are fortunate that there are so many areas of woodland on the outskirts of our town and that most of them are open to the public. To the north there is of course Ashridge Park with its various wooded areas - Thunderdell Wood, Hardings Rookery, Frithesden Beeches etc. - all owned and cared for by the National Trust. The Trust also own some of Berkhamsted Common, a good deal of which is wooded these days. Even the substantial part of the Common which is owned by the Golf Club is partly covered with trees.

On the southern edges of the town - actually within the boundaries of Berkhamsted - are Sandpit Green and Brickhill Green, both of which are managed by the Borough Council; and then just the other side of the bypass up Denys Lane we have Hockeridge and Pancake Woods. These two valuable amenities are in easy walking distance of the town, but in fact they are not in Berkhamsted - not even in Hertfordshire, but just over the border into Bucks.



*Riding towards Berkhamsted:
Pancake Wood on the left,
Hockeridge Wood on the right.*

Both are now owned by The Royal Forestry Society which in my view looks after them particularly well, with the three objectives of timber production, wild life and amenity. This winter's planned thinning of the trees is all part of the long term programme of improvement.



There is a wide variety of species of trees - ornamental and forest - and to help you tell which is which they have clear pictures on the notice boards. Identification is of course easier in the summer when the leaves are on the trees!

The BCA Environment Award

David Brunt, our Vice-Chairman, writes:

It was in the early 1980's when consideration was first given to creating an annual award scheme that would encourage good design and construction whilst raising awareness of changes within Berkhamsted and Northchurch each calendar year. The pottery award plaques are to be seen on quite a few buildings now.



As we head towards the end of 1997 it is time to start thinking of potential contenders. This is where the Association's membership can help by passing on to any

committee member what is considered to be an entrant item. It doesn't have to be a complete building in a prominent position, but it should show thoughtful care, and be useful and fit into its immediate environment.



Commended in 1996. A Boxwell Road improvement

Certificates of Commendation have been awarded to refurbished shop fronts, and the decorative painting of Lower Kings Road bridge over the canal.

To qualify the item must have been substantially completed by the end of December. From the initial entrant list your Town Amenities Sub-Committee (TASC) decide which should be nominated. The nominated items are illustrated by slides at the AGM in March when the results of the final assessment by TASC are made known. Not every year is a plaque awarded as it is the intention to maintain a consistently high standard.

Please help by looking around, and a simple telephone call to a committee member is all that is necessary. A new weathervane and repairs to a certain prominent church spire is already on the entrant list; but there are many other items that need identifying between now and mid January 1998 when the list will be closed.



A certain prominent church spire

Editor's Note: For a good few years now David Brunt has played a leading role in judging the environment awards. It is worth coming to the Association's AGM just to hear his succinct and scholarly presentation of the entrants for the award and to see his slides of them.

The Berkhamsted Conservation Area Partnership

We have mentioned before what the Berkhamsted Conservation Area Project (CAP) is all about, and now that it is well into its second year is perhaps a good time to review how far it has got.

The first thing to say is that the project is not to be confused with CARP, which is the canalside project and which Gordon Bluck refers to above.

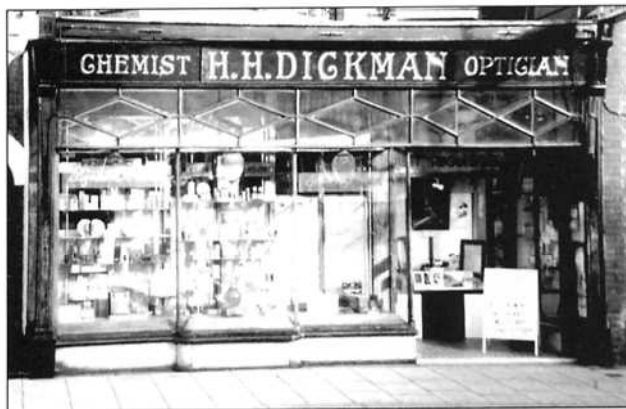


GRANT AIDED:

*The New Picture Shop
Lower Kings Road*

*The Dower House
High Street*

Kingsley Fulbrook, the Borough Conservation Officer, tells me that so far 13 grants have been made under CAP towards restoration and conservation of buildings in the town, with a further three pending. The sums involved vary from £694.60 (over two years) for a house in Shrublands Avenue to £34,727 for the Baptist Church.



GRANT AIDED:
224 High Street

The buildings to have been helped are:
69 Shrublands Avenue
17 Chapel Street
41 /43 Lower Kings Road
(the new picture shop)
7 Gravel Path
The Sayer Almshouses
The Swan
Berkhamsted Baptist Church
224 High Street (Dickmans)
108 High Street (The Dower House)
14 Castle Street
35 Castle Street (The Boote)

Grants are pending for:
11 Castle Street
15 Castle Street
53 High Street



GRANT AIDED

The restoration of 14 Castle Street

The grants only cover a portion of the costs involved in each case, but it is very possible that without this funding a number of the improvements would not have been possible. Our gratitude is due to all those responsible for achieving such progress.

Most of these valuable buildings can be inspected on a short walk, a rewarding experience for anyone interested in the preservation of the best things in the town.



GRANT PENDING
53 High Street

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