

THE CITIZEN

The Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association



February 1998

PROFILE



Norman Williams

Norman Williams is a life member of BCA and the longest serving member of the Committee. He joined it in 1972 and has had two terms as our chairman - in 1978/9 and again in 1984/5. At present he is on the Town Amenities Sub-Committee and represents the Association on the Berkhamsted Crime Prevention Panel.

As well as his commitments with BCA, Norman has also taken a leading role on the management committee of the Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring Citizens Advice Bureaux. For five years he was chairman and now continues as their president.

He is a solicitor and was a principal legal advisor to the Department of Health before being appointed Under Secretary. He was head of the department responsible for the safety of medicinal products in the United Kingdom and for that purpose he represented the UK at the European Commission in Brussels. When he retired from the Department of Health the Treasury appointed him as the arbitrator specialising in Friendly Society disputes. For his services he was made Companion of the Order of the Bath.

Norman served in the Royal Artillery in the war and was in the Normandy landings. He and his wife Hilary settled in Berkhamsted in 1966 and they are both members of Berkhamsted Golf Club. They have two sons, Robert and Andrew, and a grandson, Nicholas.

Annual General Meeting

NOTICE is hereby given that the 74th Annual General Meeting of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association will be held in the Wellcome Great Hall of the Town Hall, Berkhamsted, on Thursday 26th March at 8.00pm.

NOMINATIONS for the posts of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Hon. Treasurer, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Membership Secretary, Hon. Auditor and Committee Members should be submitted to the Secretary not later than 24 hours before the AGM. Consent of the person nominated must be obtained previously.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the last AGM.
3. Chairman's Report.
4. Treasurer's Report.
5. Election of Officers.
6. Election of Committee Members.
7. Election of Hon. Auditor.

After the formal business of the AGM, Mr Bob Scott has agreed to tell us something about his new responsibilities with Dacorum Borough Council. Mr Scott has recently been appointed the Council's first Director of Environmental Services. In his new position, among other tasks, he will be involved in fresh initiatives on re-cycling and in setting up an agency arrangement with the County Council for road maintenance in the Borough.



Re-surfacing Chapel Street - 1998

During the evening an appreciation will be made of the entries for the Environmental Award. The final shortlist to be looked at by the judges is as follows:-

- The Art Gallery, 41/43 Lower Kings Road*
- Benetton Shop, High Street*
- 'Home and Colonial'*
- Nicholl's Brasserie*
- 303 High Street*
- 14 Castle Street*
- Berkhamsted Baptist Church*
- A block of houses in Cross Oak Road*
- New Units in North Bridge Road*
- The Children's Playground, Canal Fields*
- The Dower House, 108 High Street.*



Canal Fields Playground

Other forthcoming events:

**Thursday, 30th April 1998:
THE WOODLAND TRUST IN DACORUM
8.00 pm in The Town Hall.**

As an introduction to our May walk, Richard Jameson of the Friends of Tring Park, will give a talk and lead a discussion on Tring Park and the Woodland Trust. The Park is owned by Dacorum Borough Council but managed for them by the Woodland Trust.



Tring Park

The Trust is a charity which aims to preserve our woodlands, especially those under threat, by purchasing or leasing woods and managing them, while allowing public access. Councillor Jameson will give the history of Tring Park and of the Woodland Trust and discuss the present management arrangements. He hopes the talk will provoke a lively discussion, so come early.

Sunday, 17th May:

A MORNING WALK IN TRING PARK

We hope Richard Jameson's talk will encourage you to join us at 10.30 am outside the Zoological Museum, Akeman Street, Tring, for an exploration of the Park. Even if you miss the talk please come along for what promises to be a pleasant morning walk.



Tring Park

TOWN AMENITIES REPORT

A principal role of the Town Amenities Sub-Committee is to vet all the planning applications affecting Berkhamsted and Northchurch and to comment on them when appropriate.

Of course individual members of the Association also have the right to do the same. Notice of planning applications is given in the Gazette every week, and it is easier to pick out those which affect Berkhamsted and Northchurch than used to be the case. But they only appear once each, so to be sure not to miss anything which might affect you it is necessary to look in the paper every week. Plans relating to all these applications can be viewed in Berkhamsted Civic Centre.

Look out too for notices of planning applications fixed to buildings or sites. The printing is small, but just because it is a little notice doesn't mean it's a minor application!

Pepsi Cola

Such is the demand for Pepsi Cola and the like that it has been considered justifiable to put no less than four dispensing machines on the railway station. The sub-committee discussed the matter at some length.

This may seem a minor matter until you see the size of the objects and their appearance. The Committee were of the view that the one outside the Bridgewater Road entrance should be installed inside as it impacts on the environment of the historic monument nearby - the Castle. Also a blind person exiting the station could walk into it.

The machine on platform 4 is considered to be too near the top of the stairs and being behind a roof support restricts access to the



platform at busy times. We have written to Railtrack about it.

Stop Press: As we go to press the machine in the picture has been moved outside, as requested, and the one on Platform 3 removed altogether.

From railways to waterways: we are complaining about the mess that has been made of the towpath near the Crystal Palace by the cable laying.



Towpath by the 'Crystal Palace': damaged

Perhaps the most important development in recent weeks affecting the committee's sphere of work is that Donaldsons, the consultants, have finished their Town Centre Health Check. This is nothing to do with the bodily health of the population but more a review in planning terms of the commercial state of the centre of our town. A half day workshop is to be held on their report. We shall be represented.

Personal View *From Colin Garrett:*

When the editor suggested that members of the committee of the Association might like to contribute to the newsletter he proposed that we might write about some of the things that we like or dislike about the town.

I like all sorts of things about the town: the fact that most of the buildings are still on a domestic scale (the new Waitrose excepted!), the proximity to both canal and stream, the fact that there are many, many societies and clubs for all sorts of cultural and sporting events. The list could be much longer. However, I have one or two niggles

First: I believe that our town could be much tidier and litter free if householders would tie up their bin bags. I can understand that the bin men prefer an advance party to put a heap of bags in the road and then they can collect them all at once a little later. This is more efficient than heaving bins around. It is a lot quieter too! But some people do not bother to tie up the bags..



Is this the best way?

Once the local cats and dogs have explored the contents of the bags and the wind has blown a bit, the contents are strewn around the road. Perhaps the answer is to have wheelie bins. There are problems. They may be too heavy for some people. Others have nowhere obvious to keep them. However, many places have solved these problems so why not Dacorum?

My second niggle is about pavement cyclists. When I was a boy in the 1950s our High Street was wide enough to cycle along with plenty of room for cars to overtake safely. Since the 'improvements' this is no longer the case. Indeed, at some points there is barely room for two vehicles to pass each other. It seems a pity when the Government is encouraging us to get out of our cars.



High Street, 1998

I can understand that small children may need to cycle on the pavement for safety. But there is no excuse for the youths on mountain bikes who tear along. Their approach is swift and silent and I have several times seen old people nearly knocked over. Is it no longer a criminal offence to cycle on the footpaths in Berkhamsted? I fear that I can offer no solution except to widen the High Street.

Power Failures

One of your committee members, fed up with repeated cuts in the power supply and dimming, wrote to Eastern Electricity complaining. When he got no reply he rang them up. They promised a response but still none came, so he wrote to Offer - the Office of Electricity Regulation, who took up the cudgels. This did the trick.



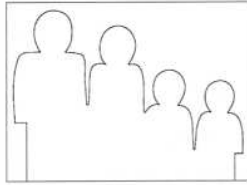
Eastern Electricity replied to Offer giving incident by incident details of the cause and duration of each failure and the numbers of customers affected in each case.

Eastern Electricity stated that the area of Berkhamsted is listed as one of the worst 200 performing circuits. As a result of this they say they have embarked on a major refurbishment of the network in the Berkhamsted area. This work has included the installation of underground cables. Only a few days before we went to press. Offer wrote back to the Electricity Company asking for a timescale for these improvements to take place.

From April 1998 we read that the electricity market is being widened. This means that in due course we will be able to choose to buy our electricity from one of a number of competing companies. How this will happen exactly is still a bit of a mystery. We hope that by the next issue of the Citizen there will be more to report on the subject.

Membership Matters

**Our Membership Secretary,
Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby,
writes:**



Membership matters, as the bigger we are the stronger we are in having a say in what affects Berkhamsted, Northchurch and their surroundings. At the beginning of the year we had 600 member households. There has been no increase on this number since 1991. Please help us in our aim to increase this to 630 by the end of the year by encouraging someone else to join.

When our last newsletter went out before Christmas, over 300 subscriptions were due for 1998. Nearly two-thirds have already been renewed. I am very grateful to all those who have paid so promptly. For those who have not yet renewed, your deliverer has a renewal slip in case the original has been misplaced. For those who have still to renew, could I encourage you to take up a five-year subscription: it may save you trouble in the future. It would also mean that if we were to increase the cost of subscriptions in the next five years you would not be asked to pay any increase.

You maybe interested to know that the Berkhamsted and District Local History Society was founded following a meeting organised by the Citizens Association in 1950 when Percy Birtchnell was on the committee. Following the combined membership drop last year, around 3% of the membership of each organisation has joined the other and I hope you will find your new membership rewarding.

Coats of Arms

Little glimpses of history can be caught in a walk round the town if you look out for coats of arms. The oldest and most historic are in St Peter's Church. There is some brightly coloured medieval stained glass in the old chancel (which unfortunately has to be kept locked), including the 14th century coats of arms of both England and France, and those of the famous Archbishop Chichele who crowned Henry V.



*The Arms of England
- about 1390*

There are others, more or less contemporary with the stained glass, in the form of graffiti crudely scratched on the big pillar in the middle in the Northeast corner of the church. On the opposite side of the building in St Catherine's Chapel are late medieval arms in the brasses on the wall monuments. From these you can see how the insignia of families were combined when they became joined by marriage. Hanging up near the west door is the coat of arms of Queen Elizabeth I.



The Arms of Good Queen Bess

On the opposite side of the churchyard, carved into on one of the oak doors of the original 16th century Tudor Hall of Berkhamsted School, is a shield with a coat of arms which incorporates a naked boy holding up a Tudor rose. This belonged to the founder of the School, Dean Incent., who lived in the black and white house in the High Street opposite the church.

Walking down the High Street you come to The Kings Arms, but the arms on the signs are not in fact those of any king but of Queen Anne.



Not the Kings Arms

Outside the Civic Centre is Berkhamsted's own coat of arms, the design of which dates from 1611 and includes the 13 brass balls of the Duchy of Cornwall. The arms and the post were donated to the town by the Berkhamsted Citizens Association a good few years ago now, and have stood the test of time. Unfortunately we got the colour scheme wrong: the background should be gold, not blue.



*Nice Sign,
wrong colour*

The Sayer Almshouses have the coat of arms of John Sayer who gave that building to the town in 1684, and opposite are the three coats of arms on the old Bourne School building pictured in a recent issue of the Citizen.

At Ashlyns School the stained glass in the chapel has dozens of coats of arms of the London merchants who were benefactors of the original Foundling Hospital. These were brought from the old chapel in London.

Finally, the coat of arms many of us feel we could do without is that of the Borough of Dacorum on the deplorable street nameplates. Fortunately they have now decided to omit the coat of arms on future signs, but otherwise they don't plan to improve the design.



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