

THE CITIZEN



The Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

September 1998

Profile: Ken Davies



Ken Davies has been a member of the BCA Committee for eleven years and was Chairman in 1989-90. He is on the Town Amenities Sub-Committee and represents the Association on the National Trust Ashridge Committee and the Dacorum Citizens Advice Bureaux.

A career railwayman, Ken joined the GWR as a junior engineer in 1939. After returning from war service in North Africa and Italy a series of promotions took him to London and Manchester and then to BR headquarters in London. His speciality became the management of major railway projects. He was involved in the planning and implementation of the electrification of the Euston main line and later he managed the planning of a large railway project in Iran. At his retirement he was British Rail's Chief Projects Officer, responsible for all major works on the system, including the electrification of the East Coast Main Line and Liverpool Street station reconstruction.

Ken is married to Paula who among her interests has been a helper at the Hospice of St Francis since its inception. They have a daughter, Siân, who lives in Andorra and to their great delight has just produced a grandson.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Our Activities Sub-Committee has arranged a full and especially interesting programme for the 1998/99 season. We do hope that as many members as possible will come on the walks and to the other events.

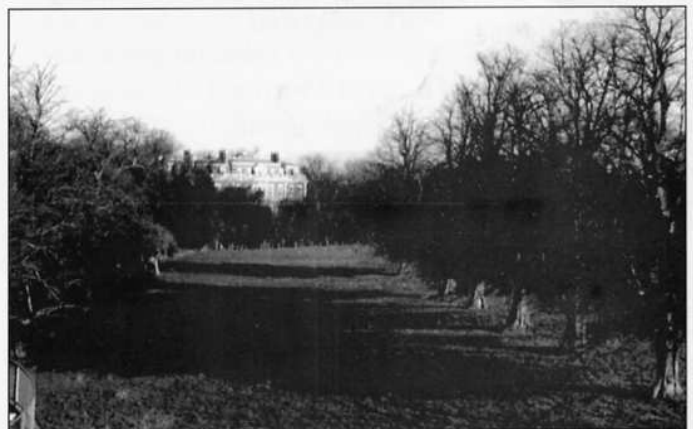
27 September: Autumn Ramble to Wigginton, led by Eric Drake. We meet at the junction of Cross Oak Road and Shootersway at 10.30 am.



Wigginton village

Thursday 15 October: Wendy Austin on 'The English Rothschilds'

This illustrated talk by Wendy Austin is both topical and of local interest. This year is the centenary of Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild (1839-1898), and 100 years earlier N. M. Rothschild started banking in London. Several of the family chose the Chiltern area to build their houses, and the estates and influence of the fabulous Rothschilds extended right to Berkhamsted's doorstep, so the subject will be of particular interest to us. The family interests cover a wide range including the arts, natural history and gardening, as well as finance. It should be a fascinating evening, so please come.



Tring Park - one former Rothschild Estate

Sunday, 25 October at 2.00pm: Guided tour of the former Rothschild residence at RAF Halton.

To supplement Wendy Austin's talk we have been fortunate to arrange a guided tour of one of the Rothschild residences - at RAF Halton. Alfred Rothschild bought the estate in 1880. The house, built in 1883, was used for weekend parties. As the tour is guided it will be necessary to limit numbers to 30, so advance booking will be essential. Booking forms will be available at the talk on 15 October. If more than 30 members are interested it will be possible to arrange a second visit on another Sunday. Details of the meeting arrangements will be given on the booking form. Parking will be available and photography is permitted in the house.

19 November 'Antiques and Auctioneering'

- a talk by Richard Ellis of the Amersham Auction Rooms.

12 December: Christmas Celebration

- music and carols, with mince pies and mulled wine (members only).

1 January: Traditional New Year's Day ramble to Aldbury. Meet at the railway station at 10.30 am.



Aldbury village

25 February: 'The Lighter Side of the Law'

- a talk by Graham Spittle, previous BCA Chairman and local solicitor.

25 March: Annual General Meeting

Environment Awards and Open Forum.

29 April: 'Gardens in a Natural Style'

- an illustrated talk by Francesca Greenoak, the well known authority on the subject.

19 June: Summer Event

- a celebration of 75 years of the Association. Details to be announced. (Members only).

All the indoor events will be held in the Great Hall of Berkhamsted Town Hall at 8.00pm

SIGNS

A number of members have responded to comments in the last issue of the Citizen, several on the subject of signs. Mrs Josie Cole says that generally signs are needed, and she lists in some detail and in order of priority which places should be indicated. Priority 1 is the public lavatories. All signs should be the same size and design, she believes. Mrs Cole considers the 'steep slopes' sign in the Castle to be necessary as 'one must make all possible allowance for the idiocy of us all'.

Mrs Joan Hunn would like to see a brief history of Butts Meadow on display there rather than 'all those rather unnecessary signposts'. Max Hagerman has a particular dislike of the posters which appear overnight on traffic signposts in the town from time to time with the words "Massive Pine Sale". Nasty fluorescent monstrosities, Max calls them.

ANNIVERSARIES

Next year is the Association's 75th anniversary, the year after that the year 2,000, and the Committee is considering ways that we might celebrate these milestones. Already it is planned that 1999's summer event will be a rather special one. We also have in mind making a video "One Day in the Life of Berkhamsted - 1999". If any members have other ideas, please let us know.

Mrs Hunn has already come up with one suggestion: that a serious effort be made to clear what she sees as the very neglected Castle moat, and who knows, she says, perhaps the Millennium could be enjoyed by skaters.



The Castle Moat

TOWN AMENITIES SUB-COMMITTEE

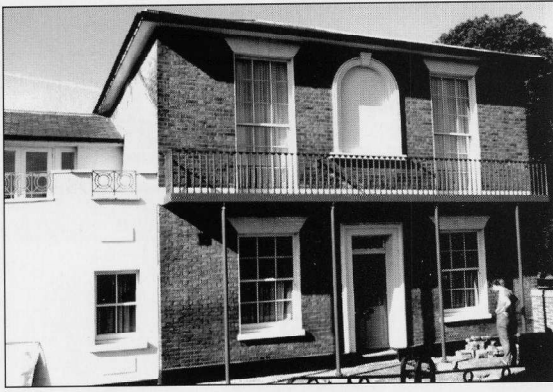
Report from Gordon Bluck, its Chairman

Since my last report we have been lucky enough to co-opt John Merriden on to the Sub-Committee to replace the loss of long-standing members, and already his experience is proving valuable.

Turning to planning matters, we have objected to the proposal to build an extra house at 13 Oakwood as we believe this would lead to up to six houses being eventually built with access off Dennys Lane, as outlined in an application in 1994.

Now that the new Town warden is in post we have been approached informally to suggest any ideas for improving the town, and if any member would like to channel these through the Association Chairman or myself we will pass them on.

We are delighted to note that work to replace the balcony and columns at the old Castle pub is under way, and all praise to the owner and Dacorum Borough Council for excellent co-operation and a good result.

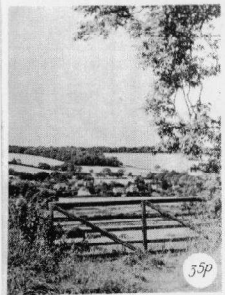


The old Castle Inn: well restored.

As you may be aware from press comment, an application to build a wet dock and slipway in Green Belt has caused a fuss, and the Association has objected to the proposal.

It has been recommended by our Sub-Committee and endorsed by the Main Committee that we investigate reprinting the 'Fieldpath Map' which has been out of print for many years, and I have been investigating the possibility of a joint venture with Dacorum Borough Council to update, reprint and sell the map on a cost only basis. It could then be available to walkers at, say, the railway stations and tourist information offices as it covers most of Dacorum, not just Berkhamsted.

BERKHAMSTED
CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION
FIELDPATH MAP



BERKHAMSTED, ASHRIDGE
AND DISTRICT

Published by
BERKHAMSTED CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION
BERKHAMSTED, HERTS.
NEW EDITION (Revised 1987)

*Our Fieldpath
Map - out of print
1969 Edition*

The Footpath Sub-Committee has been re-formed to take forward the project and George Phillips the quality mapmakers have put us in touch with one of their recently retired experts. I will of course keep the membership informed of developments of this exciting project.

Turning to more mundane but just as important matters, we understand that to get the speed humps to work at the Castle end of Bridgewater Road there is a proposal to reduce them to two (like the rest of the road) and put 'buildouts' to narrow the road at these points.

We have now seen the plans for the important 'AgrEvo' site, and although this has not yet been discussed fully by the committee the initial reaction from those who have seen the plans is that we share the views expressed by members of the Town Council regarding the treatment of the canalside area. Also the houses/flats to be built on the High Street could we feel be designed better. Rest assured we will be considering the plans in detail, especially as we were closely involved in the design brief.

Regarding the CARP Committee, we had expressed concern that no further meetings had taken place, but we have been informed by the Chairman Peter Such that good progress is being made behind the scenes with an engineer's report due at the end of July. Work to sort out the legalities of the spending of public money is being undertaken by Dacorum Borough Council. This is excellent news and we await further developments and an early start to the work.



'SCRUMPTIOUS!' The Hertfordshire Orchard Initiative

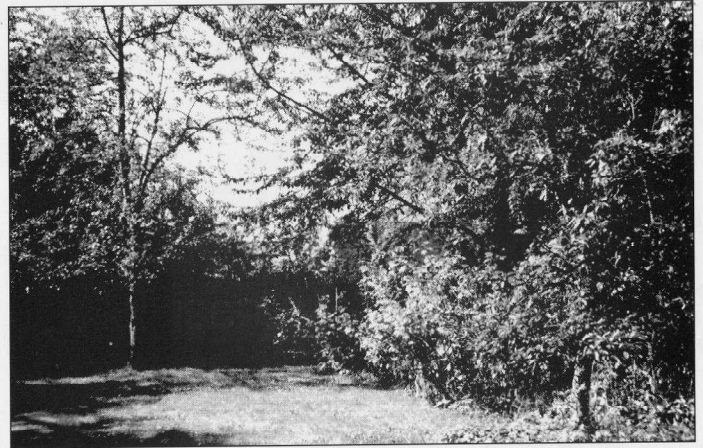


HOI was established in the spring of this year with the following aims:

- to promote and encourage a greater appreciation of our heritage of Hertfordshire fruit;
- to conserve and maintain the remaining traditional orchards and create new ones where appropriate;
- to create and maintain a database of sites and cultivars.

The first task of the steering group, which includes English Nature and Rural Enterprise Project, is to describe changes and identify surviving sites, many of which may now be gardens. Herts Biological Records Centre is currently undertaking a pilot study in Dacorum to do this, and consequently they are interested in any information from local communities on collections of fruit trees, even garden trees if they are of particular interest. A survey form has been designed and is available from our Vice Chairman, Susan Johnson (875517).

The initiative will be officially launched at a seminar on September 26, 1998 at Tewin, and will include a visit to the Wildlife Trust's orchard nature reserve. Any information you may have would be gratefully scrumpled!



Do you have old fruit trees in your garden?

Graham Greene Festival

One of the objectives of the Graham Greene Birthplace Trust, launched in Berkhamsted earlier this year, is to organise an annual festival on or around his birthday (2 October). This year's festival being the first will be special, starting on 29th September in the Old Hall at the Boy's School with a talk by the painter Paul Hogarth who illustrated many of Greene's books. In the following days there will be the showing of films based on his works, discussions and celebrations.



*Graham Greene -
a Paul Hogarth
portrait*

The splendidly produced programme gives details of all these. More information can be had from the Trust's secretary, Ken Sherwood (865158).

TOURISM

How far do we want to encourage tourism in Berkhamsted? This is a question that is prompted by reading a consultation document produced by Dacorum Borough Council *A Draft Tourism Strategy in the Borough of Dacorum*.

The reasons for trying to increase tourism in the Borough are essentially to stimulate the local economy and 'to raise awareness and appreciation of the Borough'. The basic problem in doing so in our view is that no one really sees Dacorum as a place; it is an administrative unit rather than somewhere that people can relate to, let alone love. If tourism is to be encouraged it can surely only be on the basis of promoting the individual towns and villages within the Borough.

What do we really want for our town? Berkhamsted put on the itinerary of American and Japanese coach trips? Tourist signs (you know the sort of things) - the brown ones) at the turnings on the bypass? Various initiatives that have taken place or are about to happen will improve the attractiveness of the town to tourists, such as the High Street improvements and the CARP project. The Graham Greene Birthplace Trust is off the ground and the planning of a heritage walk with plaques is progressing; but how much further do we want to go?

The consultation document (which is available in the library) includes a map of the Borough which indicates what at this stage are thought to be the principal places of interest to tourists. Four of them are in Berkhamsted. You would never guess in a month of Sundays what they all are. The Castle, of course; the Sports Centre; the Civic Centre (for arts and entertainment) and fourthly, KidZone!

TOURIST ATTRACTIONS?



The Sports Centre

KidZone

Anyway, the BCA has given preliminary comments and we have been invited to send a representative to a seminar on the subject on 11th September. Will any member who has views on the subject which they would like to be aired perhaps let me have them before that date.

CHANGES IN OUR LIBRARY SERVICE - 1:

A personal view from Paul Gilbert

Fellow members of the Association are probably aware that, up to this year, newly published books could be ordered through our local library and they would be obtained from libraries throughout the county. One simply filled out a reservation card and paid a small fee.

The writer has enjoyed this benefit for some years, and in the past twelve months, for example, read a number of fiction and non-fiction works, including Frank Muir's autobiography and the latest Dick Francis thriller.

It was therefore with considerable disappointment that I learnt recently that due to cuts in library funding new hardback fiction and fewer copies of recreational and 'life-style' titles will be purchased in future. There will also be many fewer magazines and newspapers in local libraries. However, the latest music recordings and videos will continue to be supplied since 'the income from hire charges for these directly supports the purchase of books'.

So...in these enlightened times, as we approach the 21st century, we shall be able to hire the latest video from our library but not, it seems, read the newest book!



The King's Road Library

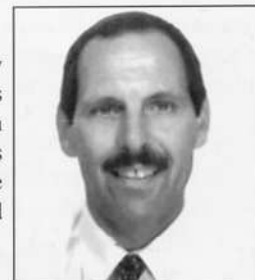
CHANGES IN OUR LIBRARY SERVICE - 2 :

The Library Layout

Alternative re-arrangements of the layout of the Kings Road library are being considered and views on these from library users are being sought. The idea is to change things around so as to have library staff in one place only on the ground floor, instead of two as at present - which seems rational. Then the reference library could either stay where it is now or it could go upstairs, in which case the children's library would be moved downstairs. A lift is planned but it is not known when funds will be available to pay for it; certainly not yet it seems. There is a pro-forma in the library on which users can state their preference.

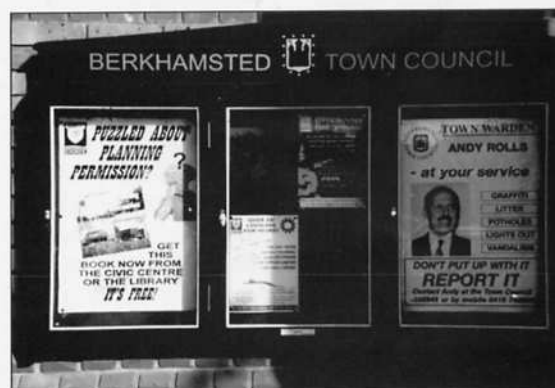
TOWN WARDEN

Many local people already knew Andy Rolls before he was appointed as Berkhamsted's first town warden. Born and bred in the town and for seven years our community policeman before he retired, he has started his job with a good knowledge of the town and its people.



The Town Warden has a wide range of responsibilities, involving monitoring and reporting on the physical state of the town in a systematic way, particularly its public places. Although he has no more legal authority than the rest of us he can and does take action himself in some areas, for example by removing flyposters (such as those Max Hagerman refers to) and inappropriate material on notice boards.

The Town Warden reports to the Town Clerk and can be contacted through her office in the Civic Centre.



The Town Council's new notice case at Waitrose, with Town Warden poster

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