

THE CITIZEN

The Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association



March 1999

Profile: Jenny Jones



A worker, but not usually a stirrer!

When Jenny moved to Berkhamsted from London 14 years ago, friends insisted she attend Citizens' meetings, and she did. Eventually she went further and joined the Committee, and she also serves on the Activities Sub-Committee. On both of them she is very active, and members who attend talks and social events will know that she is one of our invaluable workers.

Jenny is a pharmacist in a senior manager position in the Middlesex Hospital in central London. Previously she worked for 20 years at University College Hospital. She has a keen interest in the environment and conservation matters and always looks forward to returning to Berkhamsted after a long day's work in Town.

Jenny says 'Berkhamsted is a delightful and unique small town. We all bear a responsibility to protect what we have, while encouraging good development of the kind that will sustain our town's future'.



The High Street in Winter from the East.

Annual General Meeting

NOTICE is hereby given that the 75th Annual General Meeting of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association will be held in the Wellcome Great Hall of the Town Hall, Berkhamsted, on Thursday 25th March at 8pm.

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 (Miranda Cummins, 27 North Road Berkhamsted) 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.
8. Proposed increase in subscriptions.

The formal business will be followed by the Environment Award, then a talk on the security cameras for the town.

Finally there will be an open forum for members. Coffee will be served.

The present Committee would very much welcome new members to join them, and it is hoped that some new candidates will come forward. The Committee meets monthly for two hours or less. There are also two regular sub-committees:

- **The Amenities Sub-Committee**, which again meets monthly, usually for not more than 1/1½ hours, and considers and comments on planning applications and other matters that concern our environment, such as the Local Borough Plan.
- **The Activities and Publicity Sub-Committee** plans and arranges our talks, outings and other events, and meets when necessary.

If you are interested in joining one of the sub-committees we would be pleased to hear from you.



Members on the New Year's Ramble

The Environment Award

After the formal business of the AGM we shall as usual have one of the highlights of the Association's year - the Environment Award. The nominations received for this from members are:

- Caffe Uno (Town Hall)
- Orange Balloon Restaurant
- Refurbishment of the Railway Station
- Extension at corner Granville/Bell Lane
- Conversion of Northchurch Post Office
- Extension at 23 Kitsbury Road
- Terraced Housing, Cowper Road
- Extension at corner Boxwell Road/Charles Street
- Castle Inn Conversion
- Extension at corner Cowper Road/Charles Street
- The Crown Public House
- Robertson's Shop, 206 High Street
- Civic Centre Improvements
- Bridgewater Mews-George Street
- The Old Mill House Extension & Renovation.



The Old Mill House: renovated & extended

We are grateful to those who took the trouble to submit nominations: the list is now closed. Following the deadline for receipt of entries, the procedure is that members of the Amenities Sub-Committee inspect each of the entries, and with the help of a marking system list them in order of merit.

After the AGM, David Brunt will give a presentation with slides of a shortlist of the entries. If it is decided to make the Award the presentation of the prestigious plaque will be made, together with certificates of commendation for other entries which have been judged to merit them.



Another entry: Terraced housing in Cowper Road

Subscriptions

A proposal will be put to the A.G.M. (item 8) that subscriptions should be raised as follows:

| | | |
|------------|---------------|-----|
| Annual: | Individual | £2 |
| | Couple/Family | £3 |
| Five-year: | Individual | £10 |
| | Couple/Family | £15 |

Our Next Event

On Thursday, 29 April, we are fortunate that Francesca Greenoak, the gardening writer and well-known authority on gardens, has agreed to give us an illustrated talk, some members may remember the talk she gave us at Amesfoot a few years ago. This time Francesca has chosen as her subject Gardens in a Natural Style, it will take place in the Great Hall of Berkhamsted Town Hall at 8pm, and it promises to be an especially interesting evening.



Summer Event

Saturday, 19 June (Members only)

Please check your diaries to make sure you have a note of our Summer Event, to be held by kind permission of Giles Clark in his garden at the Bothy, at the top of Castle Hill.

This lovely garden is part of the grounds of the historic Berkhamsted Place, and there will be the opportunity to look round the garden and to hear a short talk on this historic corner of Berkhamsted. More details will be given in the next issue of the Citizen.



16th Century Berkhamsted Place. Pulled down in 1967.

Town Amenities

Gordon Bluck, sub-committee chairman reports:

Since the last newsletter I am pleased to report that Berkhamsted Town Council has suggested that they are willing to recommend to Herts County Council that £1000 be given by way of a grant to the BCA specifically to aid the reprint and updating of the field map. As I write a working party has been formed hopefully to submit an application by 12 February. I was delighted to be approached by Dacorum Borough Council with a change of heart regarding their financial involvement, and they are seeing which budget can provide £2000 or so. Further funding from, say, the local railway company may be sought.

The AgrEvo site development plans are on revision 'h' at the last count and it is beginning to look like a development the town can be proud of. We continue to monitor the situation.

Turning to other planning matters, we do not approve of the bright colour scheme of the signwriter's shop in Gossoms End and would support a toned down version. Regarding the proposals for the old prep school site in Chesham Road, we do not object in principle as high density housing is needed in the town, but we are keen to ensure that as many trees as possible are preserved on the Butts Meadow side; and materials and construction must be of the highest standard.



Edwardian elegance: The old prep school in Chesham Road

We were delighted to note that full coverage of the High Street on CCTV will be with us in 1999, and we have made it plain to the Borough Council that a camera covering the railway station and Lower Kings Road in Phase 2 would be helpful.

Paul Gilbert, after three years work as our representative on CARP (the canalside project) handed over to Rita Jones, and I would like to express my personal and the Association's thanks to Paul for a job well done on this committee which will have such an important impact on the town.

Following a great deal of preparation time, a specially extended committee meeting was called to discuss the latest version of the **LOCAL PLAN 1991-2011**. In summary there was little we objected to as the component parts have been discussed and 'whipped into shape' over the last few years. There were no nasty surprises and our main comment was that it was obvious that whole chunks of previous reports had been 'pasted' in with no attempt to update: however, overall it is an excellent if somewhat weighty document. All my committee had to read it, or at least the part on Northchurch and Berkhamsted, and I should like to thank them for the time and trouble they took over this vital planning document. I would like to advise all members that I retain the Association's copy of the whole plan and maps. Please phone me on 873548 if you wish to borrow it. It is especially good as nighttime reading if you have trouble sleeping. Comments from members about the problems of residents' car parking



Security camera already operational in Water Lane car park

have been incorporated in our response.

There were a number of appeals regarding the 'old chestnuts' attempts at over-development in areas like Kingsdale Road and a further attempt to build at Rose Cottage next to the canal and green belt, this time three five-bedroom houses. The Association has consistently objected and will continue to do so.

Since my last report we had our regular meeting with Dacorum Borough councillors and officers. As usual they fielded a strong team, including the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive. The full and helpful answers were much appreciated to gain an insight into matters affecting the town. It was an evening much to their credit.

Members Correspondence



Egerton-Rothesay Middle & Upper School across the fields.

On the subject of the latest version of the Dacorum Local Plan, Mr John Adkins, head of Egerton-Rothesay School, writes:

Your note re the new local plan has caused a ripple of concern. The school had a number of telephone calls arising from the phase 'Egerton-Rothesay School grounds in Durrants Lane (100)'. In isolation the idea that 100 houses might be built on the School Grounds must give rise to a concern for the future of the school. I should be grateful if you would put the record straight with the following information.

- 1 This land is only included under Part III (housing land reserved for implementation after the plan period i.e. post 2011)
2. The plan says 'Housing will not be permitted unless the school and playing fields are accommodated in this area' Alternatively, the school and its playing fields may be relocated.
3. Such development would be brilliant for the future of the school, which would then have brand new buildings and more playing fields.

Mr N. Rolls also writes about the development proposals in the latest draft of the Local Plan. He makes three points:

- If we (as we are told) have a stationary population, why do we have to keep building everywhere?
- Do you know where I can get shares in the property developer who's doing this area as they are on to a good thing.
- I really am surprised at the 'Northchurch infill', quote 'between the railway and the canal'. The next thing we know the lovely walk along the canal from between Northchurch and Dudswell will be gone. Where will, this stop? Who really cares?

Peter Braybrooke

An appreciation by Norman Williams

The Association's Treasurer, Peter Braybrooke, after a period of rapidly deteriorating health, died shortly before Christmas.



Peter was born in Watford and attended Watford Grammar School. He subsequently qualified as a chartered accountant and practiced in a firm in which he became senior partner. He became our Treasurer in 1981 soon after moving to Berkhamsted and continued to hold the position continuously until just before his death. He brought to it all the expertise and high regard for detail and accuracy which characterises his profession. When fresh expenditure was being considered he always drew attention to all its financial implications. Peter was able by reason of his wide experience to make valuable contributions to our discussions and policy, and his enthusiasm and friendly disposition promoted a team spirit.

Not only was Peter a regular attendee at our meetings, despite commitments to other charitable bodies in which he held office, but he and his wife Jean gave their full support to our social events. He will be greatly missed by members of the Association and we extend to Jean our deepest sympathy at this distressing time.

Norman Williams is a long-standing committee member and past Chairman of the Association.

Bypass

There has been correspondence in the technical press recently about alleged deficiencies in the design of the slip roads on new bypasses, including the Newbury bypass. The only serious criticism I have heard about our bypass relates to the inadequacies of the slip roads: they are too short, it is claimed, the curves are too sharp and there is not enough length to allow you to get up to the speed of traffic on the main road before joining it. On the other hand there are no 'give way' signs, suggesting that the intention is that you should filter in to traffic on the main road rather than stop and wait for a gap. Also it is said that drivers on the main road have insufficient time to decide whether to break or change lanes when confronted with a slow moving car emerging from a slip road.

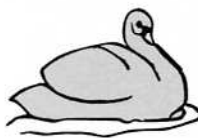


Slip roads on the bypass. Are they adequate?

This did not seem to present too much difficulty in practice when the road was only lightly used, but now the bypass is getting busier and busier the problem is worsening. (One driver I saw compounded the hazard by talking on his mobile as he sped off the slip road). If you have any personal views or experiences let the County Surveyor know, at County Hall, Hertford.

The Swan

The recent letter from the Chairman of the Swan Youth Project Ltd makes interesting reading now that the scheme has been in operation for a while.



When it was launched there were two distinct elements in the scheme for turning the empty and deteriorating historic inn into a place for young people: an alcohol-free inn on the ground floor and accommodation upstairs to meet the short-term needs of youngsters who where in need of it. As was to be expected, some parts of the project have gone more or less to plan; in other areas the management has had to adapt its ideas in the light of experience.

As far as the inn is concerned the chairman reports (perhaps rather ruefully) that it has been found that young people are not prodigious spenders, neither on drink nor food.

The Trustees have learnt that their target customer group is teenagers below the age of 17/18. It has become clear is that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to offer an attractive alcohol free alternative to pubs for the over 18s. The best weeks have seen up to 500 young people using the inn. Nevertheless it has now been decided that funds will not stretch to keeping the inn open every evening, and opening of the inn for non-alcoholic drinks and activities has now limited to three evenings a week.

The Trustees would like more people to be involved with it, as Trustees and as volunteers. They would particularly like to attract some younger people to be Trustees and to help to run the inn in the evenings on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Preserving Our Wildlife



The Association is often asked to comment on documents great and small which affect Berkhamsted and Northchurch in one way or another. The interest that the contents of these has is usually in inverse proportion to their size.

The latest to arrive is called Dacorum Borough Nature Conservation Strategy - A Local Biodiversity Action Plan. It was produced by the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust for the Borough Council and is certainly one of the better ones, despite its off-putting title. It sets out to catalogue the important wildlife of all sorts that we have in the Borough, in the towns and villages as well as the countryside round about, and the various

habitats that sustain it. It identifies the species that are under threat and sets out proposals for their protection and the preservation of the special habitats they need. Since the Second World War greater agricultural efficiency and industrial and residential development have all reduced the variety of wildlife in the Borough. Only 14% of Dacorum retains any significant value for wildlife. The water vole and the white clawed crayfish are now rare along the canal, and once common farmland species such as the skylark are rapidly decreasing.



Nevertheless, in and around Berkhamsted we still have much of special interest. Birds of prey like the sparrowhawk and hobby are on the increase, and within three miles of the town there is the richest site for butterflies in the whole of Hertfordshire, at Albury Nowers. Even in Ellesmere Road, the document claims rather intriguingly, some interesting reptiles have been identified.



Albury Nowers rich in butterflies

As usual a copy of the document has been deposited in the library and the public is invited to comment. Unfortunately by the time this newsletter is out the deadline for comments will have passed, although I am sure if any member has anything important to say and writes in they will not be ignored. The Association has already considered the document in some detail and commented on it.

By and large the objectives of the plan seem to be admirable and worth the support of everyone who is at all interested in preserving our local wildlife. We have, though, expressed reservations about the work that is referred to in the report and is already well in hand to restore some of Berkhamsted Common to heathland. There is some strong local opinion that in environmental terms the extent of felling of trees, some of them maturing hardwoods, may on balance be doing more harm than good, and we have included that comment.



Ellesmere Road: Look out for reptiles

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