

# THE CITIZEN

The Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association



June 1999

## Profile : Colin Garrett



Colin Garrett has been on the BCA Committee for three years and took over as our Treasurer last December. He is on the Town Amenities Sub-Committee and represents the BCA on the Town Centre Forum and now the Town Hall Trust.

Colin became a solicitor in 1967 and a member of the New York Bar in 1978. He spent most of his career in corporate practice, first in the oil industry as part of Shell's international legal team, then as Chief Legal Adviser to 3i Group plc. In 1992 he founded Garrett & Co, Solicitors, in association with Arthur Andersen. He retired from the law in 1995 following a minor stroke.

Having lived in Berkhamsted since 1953 Colin is well known locally for two of his leisure activities: first as a teacher of Scottish country dancing, secondly as a maker and repairer of violins, violas and 'cellos. His other retirement activities include being a governor of Berkhamsted Collegiate School and Treasurer of the Chiltern Homoeopathic Society.

Colin has been married to Sarah for 32 years. They have two daughters, both married and living in Newcastle. More often than not recently the Committee has been privileged to hold its meetings in Colin and Sarah's comfortable living room.

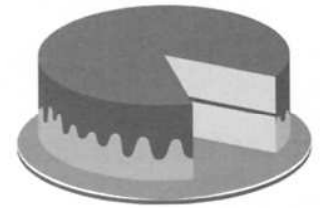


*The Bourne Gutter in flow this year  
- a sign of heavy winter rainfall.*

## Summer Anniversary Party

Our next event is the birthday party to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of our Association. It will be on Saturday, 19 June, from 3pm to 5pm, and will be held in Giles Clark's lovely garden at The Bothy, Berkhamsted Place. Refreshments will be served; there will be a large birthday cake, a short talk by Giles on the interesting history of this old corner of the town, a chance to look round the garden, and some music.

Because of the very limited parking and narrow access it will not be possible for cars to be driven up to the house. If you can, please walk. Follow the access road signposted *Ash* near where Murray Road joins Castle Hill. A limited number of cars may be parked in the drives Nos 2 to 6 inclusive of Murray Road by kind permission of the owners. If you are disabled or will be bringing someone who is, please contact a committee member beforehand.



*Only a narrow access*

## Talk: Berkhamsted – An Illustrated History

On the evening of Wednesday, 20 October, there will be a combined meeting with the Local History Society at which Scott Hastie will give an illustrated talk on the book he has recently written *Berkhamsted-An Illustrated History*. David Spain will be there to describe the techniques he used to produce the first-class illustrations, working with archive photographs.

The meeting will be held in the Town Hall at 8pm, and it will be our first in the newly restored Institute Rooms at

the front of the building. Under the work now being carried out these rooms are being made into one large room - now called the Clock Room - with a seating capacity of over 100 - greater than that of the Sessions Hall. It should be an excellent venue.



*Our October meeting will be held behind these elegant windows*

## Those Subs

The Treasurer's Report handed out at the AGM set out the reasons for the increase in subscriptions so convincingly that they were agreed to without a murmur of dissent.



At the end of last year's activities the General Fund was depleted by £643 compared with how it stood at the start

of the year. The Association has run at a deficit for about seven years. We have not put the subscription up for ten years. The modest increase voted for at the AGM should enable us to survive in relative comfort for the next few years.

The new subscription rates, which come into force next year, are as follows:

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

Members who have paid a five-year subscription have gained an advantage by having done so: they will not be asked to pay the new rates until their current subscription runs out.



## Elections

The members of your Committee elected at the AGM were as follows:

John Cook (Chairman)	
Susan Johnson (Vice-Chairman)	
Miranda Cummins (Secretary)	
Colin Garrett (Treasurer)	
Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby (Membership Secretary)	
Gordon Bluck	David Brunt
Ken Davies	Gill Feil
Paul Gilbert	Jenny Jones
Rita Jones	Graham Spittle
Norman Williams	

Committee members are always (well, nearly always) pleased to hear the views of members on matters concerning the way the Association performs and on other subjects affecting Berkhamsted and Northchurch.

## New Life Member

At the AGM Jean Braybrooke, wife of our late Treasurer, Peter, was elected as a life member of the Association in recognition of Peter's work on our behalf and the support they both gave to the activities of the Association over many years.

**Congratulations** to Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby, our Membership Secretary, on getting himself elected to Berkhamsted Town Council.



*Another go at traffic calming in Bridgewater Road*

## Report of the Town Amenities Sub-Committee

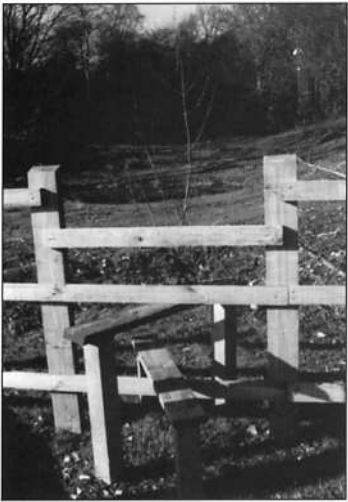
*Gordon Bluck, Sub-Committee Chairman, writes:*

The most important thing that has happened recently to the Committee and indeed the Association is the agreement of Dacorum Borough Council to give us a grant of £2000 to have the fieldpath map completely re-drawn, updated and printed. The funds have not just been approved but they have actually been paid and are at present held in trust in the Association's bank account, pending the printing of the map. The further £1000 I mentioned in the last newsletter has apparently been agreed, but the cheque is still in the post to Berkhamsted Town Council, who supported our submission.



*A footpath through Frithsden Beeches*

The Footpaths Sub-Committee/Working Party consists of myself, John Cook, Bill Willett (the mapmaker) and Colin Garrett. Bill is using non-copyright sources, and we have the opportunity to put what we wish on the map to have a bright new map for the millennium. In other words what I am saying is that we are not reprinting the old map, so if any of the membership has any ideas for inclusion we would welcome comments.



Bill hopes to have some drafts by the end of July. It is likely to have a large-scale map of the footpaths in the built-up areas of Berkhamsted and Northchurch on the back. The map will cost more than £3000 to produce, and Bill has deferred his modest fee until the maps start to sell. As early as we can we will show the membership the final proposals, possibly at one of our meetings.

John Cook has been to look at the comments made by Northchurch and Berkhamsted

residents and others regarding the Local Borough Plan, and he reported to us that there are a great number. It is excellent that people have taken the trouble to write on this important document. Turning to the CARP project, members will have seen the start at Castle Street bridge, and members of my Sub-Committee attended a ceremony to commemorate the start of the work, officiated over by both local mayors. I understand that the method of transport (a barge) had difficulty docking, but at least the worshipfulnesses did not go into the canal!

David Brunt in his usual expert way pulled the threads together of the schedules produced by the Sub-Committee members to get a result in the Environment Award. Although there was animated discussion as to the 'best of the bunch' we all agreed that there was no project of sufficient standard to justify a plaque. A plaque is not awarded, just for the sake of it, every year.

News reaches us of the planting of 2000 trees on Well Farm to be called Claire's Wood after the owners' young daughter. I wouldn't mind a tree, let alone a wood, named after me. This struck us as being excellent news.



*A new wood is born*

We considered a great number of planning applications and objected to the conversion of the fish shop at the crossroads to a restaurant as we do not agree with the loss of another retail unit and visual intrusion and distraction at the busy junction. At the April Committee meeting we were faced with another retrospective planning application, this time at Greggs Bakery in the High Street where a garish sign has been put up in the conservation area without permission. W H Smith did the same some time ago and I have written to the planners in the strongest

terms decrying this flaunting of the planning laws. Even McDonalds have to tone down their frontages in towns like Stratford-upon-Avon; why not here, I ask.

The wish of Ashlyns School to sell off 4.4 acres of its land to fund repairs and improvements has sparked a lot of debate in the town and in committee. We are drawn two ways, and while we want low cost, high density housing in the town, the loss of Green Belt and possible skylining of a development there is a concern. However, we welcome the way the school is opening up the debate, and I have written to the Head Teacher on this basis.

More and more planning breaches are happening, particularly in the conservation area, with unauthorised signs and banners. Frankly the Borough enforcement officers do not have the time to drive/walk the streets to spot them. We as a committee are trying to make up a list, but I would encourage any reader who sees these breaches please write to Dacorum Borough Council pointing it out for action.



We have written to English Heritage showing concern regarding the Castle Hill Barn. They have responded saying that they only have an action plan for Grade 1 and Grade 2\* buildings, but will take up the matter with the Borough.

*What sign will we get to replace Figg's?*



*Castle Hill barn: Listed Grade 2*



*A little bit of old Berkhamsted*

On a final note we were contacted by Dr Rice-Edwards regarding the removal of a cast iron drain in George Street. This was taken up and not replaced when the pavement was resurfaced. Water from the down pipe now spills across the pavement. Frankly the drain was part of the street scene in the Conservation Area. We have written to the Borough and the combined efforts of the residents and ourselves have resulted in a site meeting being booked to decide what to do.

LATE NEWS: i) We may get £1500 via the Town Council for the map. ii) Glaxo Wellcome have put in a planning application for demolishing all the old Coopers buildings between Manor Street and Ravens Lane, saying that it is impracticable to save them

because of contamination in the ground and in the buildings themselves.



All the Coopers buildings between Manor Street & Ravens Lane to go?

Sorry for the darkness of the pictures in the last issue of the newsletter. We apologise particularly to Jenny Jones: the way her portrait came out did her far less than justice.

## Garden Birds

At the April meeting of the Association, about 90 members and visitors came to hear Francesca Greenoak's excellent talk on the subject of *Gardening in the Natural Style*. She spoke not only about how to manage your garden in sympathy with nature but also touched on other aspects of natural history in our gardens, including wild birds. Some of what she had to say was worrying. Bird populations fluctuate, but she quoted a friend of hers - an authority on birds - as saying that for the first time in his life he was really depressed at the way so many species seemed to be in continual decline. Francesca asked the audience whether any of us still had song thrushes in our gardens. Only four or five hands went up.



Song Thrush

David Simmons, writing in the May issue of the *Berkhamsted Review*, gave some statistics he had collected himself over recent years, demonstrating the falling off in his garden in Northchurch in the numbers of what we used to think of as common birds, such as the house sparrow and the starling.

But not all species are reducing in numbers. Collared doves, which a few decades ago were quite a rarity, are now common, and as for mallard ducks the town seemed to be full of them in the mating season, waddling across the High Street and holding up the traffic, and nesting in all sorts of unlikely places, some far from water.

Not since the 70s have swallows nested under the railway bridge by the station, and house martins, once plentiful summer visitors, are now a rare sight in the centre of the town. The swift population has held up though, and as we go to press they have re-appeared in the skies over Berkhamsted.



House Martin



Swift

# The Guardians of the Countryside

For over 20 years Tony Hutchinson and his wife Liz have tirelessly managed the work of the *Guardians of the Countryside*. So well have they done this that many of us have not heard of the Guardians and are hardly aware of the reason that a major area of amenity land (to use the current jargon) is always kept comparatively clear of litter. Tony writes:

Those members who walk regularly on Berkhamsted Common, Northchurch Common or the Ashridge Estate may notice that there is very little litter to be seen compared to some other parts of the countryside.

This is a success story which goes back some 30 years. In 1968 a small group decided to tackle what was then a serious litter problem. The early leaders were Mr E G A Bartlett and Mr S O Quin who worked with the assistance of volunteers from the Berkhamsted Golf Club, the Citizens Association and the National Trust. Others soon joined in to help.

Volunteers were matched to specific areas (varying in size according to the extent of the litter problem) and worked to clear every bit of visible litter. Helpers and the local council assisted with larger items. Once a year in the spring a 'sweep' was held (and still is - some of you may have noticed recently sacks by the roadways awaiting collection).

The key to litter control in attractive countryside is that once it has been completely cleared only a very few ignorant or anti-social people will leave any - probably fewer than 1% of visitors. If just a few of the other 99% pick up any litter that catches their eye virtually all litter will be removed.

The Ramblers Association showed the way with their clearance of mountain regions of Britain in the 1950s and 60s. Our local scheme also met with success after a similar heroic start in 1968/69. The scheme's founding fathers deserve great respect and our determination to continue their work.



The edge of Thunderdell Wood: kept clean by the Guardians



The Common: cleared by the Guardians

the parts of Ashridge Estate further from Berkhamsted.

The Citizens Association agreed in the 1970s to work to maintain the Guardians of the Countryside' - still of course in close association with the Golf Club and the National Trust.

We are always looking for new helpers and it's really a satisfying activity. Do let us know if you might be able to help. Most volunteers work in the company of a friend and it is a first class reason to spend more time in our delightful countryside. Contact point: John Cook (866278) initially.

We still have problems of course - almost all with rubbish dropped or dumped from motor vehicles. On the other hand we get first-class support from the Dacorum Cleansing team at Cupid Green. Also on the plus side the National Trust Ashridge Volunteers now have a litter group which handles

Chairman & Citizen Editor: John Cook, 21 Castle Street, HP4 2DW

Tel: 01442 866278

Membership Secretary: Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby, 38 Kitsbury Road, HP4 3EA

Tel: 01442 865882