

THE CITIZEN

The Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association



February 2000

Profile:

Giles Clark

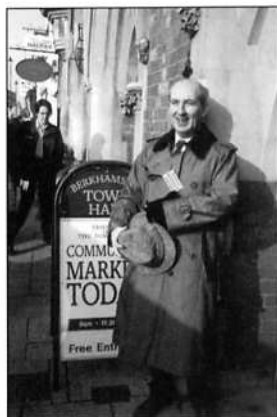
Giles, an almost lifelong member of the Association, was a keenly active Committee member for 19 years and our Chairman for 1992/3. He represented the Association on the Berkhamsted Town Hall Trust and in recent years has put great energy into the restoration of that building - a major asset belonging to the people of Berkhamsted and Northchurch.



When David Sherratt left Berkhamsted in 1992 Giles took over as Chairman of the Friends of Berkhamsted Town Hall and their success has grown under his leadership. The Friends raise thousands of pounds every year towards improvements to the

Town Hall, and on the first Saturday each month he is to be seen in the High Street encouraging people into their flourishing monthly community market.

Members who came to our 75th birthday party last summer will remember it with pleasure, particularly because the event was hosted by Giles in his especially fine garden at Berkhamsted Place. His unique house there, the Bothy, has been restored and sympathetically extended over 30 years and the rehabilitated vinery produces arguably the best dessert grapes in town.



Giles encourages 'em into the market

Giles holds a senior position in the publishing department of the Open University at Milton Keynes. He is currently working on the third edition of 'Inside Book Publishing', which should be out this autumn.



The Community Market

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, 23rd March, 2000, 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

The present Committee would warmly welcome other 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 Town Amenities Sub-Committee works to try to ensure that changes which take place to the environment here in Berkhamsted and Northchurch are for the better.



The Activities and Publicity Sub-Committee plans and organises a programme of talks, walks and other events.

The Committee is also represented on a number of other local bodies such as the CVS, Citizens Advice Bureau, the Town Hall Trust, the Chiltern Society, the local National Trust and several other organisations in the area.



The Environment Award



The Town Hall Clock Room

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 shortlist of nominations received for this from members is:

Berkhamsted Collegiate Prep School
New housing in Shootersway
New house in Castle Hill
Acorn Chemists' new premises in the High Street
The refurbishment of the King's Arms
New house at 23 Hall Park
Conversion of 'Kiwi Corner', Gravel Path
2b & 2c Station Road - two town houses
Housing development at Netherfield (Grantham Mews)
The CARP works at Mill Street
Town Hall - recent improvements: facade and Clock Room
New houses in Covert Road, Northchurch



Berkhamsted Collegiate Preparatory School

By the time of the AGM the entries will have been inspected and assessed by the Town Amenities Sub-Committee members, and taking account of their recommendation the full Committee will decide which (if any) of the entrants should receive the coveted BCA plaque for the year. Considerations which led to the choice of winners will be reviewed and an illustrated presentation given by David Brunt (undoubtedly in his usual polished manner). The plaque and any certificates of commendation will then be awarded.



Another Environment Award candidate

Talk by Keith Hunt

We are fortunate that Keith Hunt, the retiring Chief Executive of Dacorum Borough Council, has agreed to come and talk to us following the formal business of the AGM and the Environment Award presentation.



There have been many changes in the Borough while Keith has been at the helm, and more major ones are planned which will affect the services we receive and the taxes we pay. What he has to tell us is bound to be of great interest.

Open Forum

Finally there will be an open forum at which members will be able to ask questions and make comments. It is hoped that as many members as possible will come to what promises to be an especially interesting AGM evening.

Next BCA Event: Some reflections and readings by Roger Watkins, lately the Director of the Graham Greene Festival.

Roger, with his deep knowledge of one of Berkhamsted's most illustrious sons, has called this event 'The Smell of Innocence'. To be held in the Town Hall on 27 April at 8pm.

Town Amenities

Gordon Bluck, Chairman of the Town Amenities Sub-Committee, writes:

Since the great flurry of activities reported in the last newsletter, apart from some notable exceptions it has been a quiet time on the planning front. Our attempts to get at least the central part of the High Street subject to an 'Article 4 Direction' have so far come to nothing, as Dacorum Borough Council Planning Department has continuing staffing difficulties; but it is still a long term aim of the Committee to get the extra level of protection we believe this planning restriction could give.



An Article 4 Direction needed?

Three of the Committee were invited as guests to attend a private briefing of the Town Council by the Rex Film and Arts Trust to see the professionally produced, designed and delivered presentation. I for one came away impressed that their plans could succeed and bring back the Rex into use as a three screen cinema, and we understand that the Trust are looking into funding and negotiating with the owners of the site and buildings. We wish them well with their application for planning permission. This could well be granted in parallel with commercial plans to build flats.



The Rex: two planning applications

We objected to the plan to double the size of the Halifax Bank sign in the High Street and the proposal to build three town houses in Church Lane between The Court House and Tescos. The lane is not suitable for any extra traffic and the development would further darken this historic area which has no street lighting.



Church Lane: Not suitable for houses

We wrote expressing concern regarding the quality of the design of a proposed development on the important site on the south side of the main road between Cross Oak Road and Queens Road, although in principle such a development has our support. It would comprise eight two bedroom flats and four one bedroom flats.

Three very large internally illuminated metal advertisement signs have appeared on the pavement near 321 and 374 High Street, and Gossoms End. Although they are on private land they have had to be the subject of retrospective planning applications. We have objected as they are detrimental to the street scene and too large.

The plan to convert the bakehouse at the rear of Simmonds the bakers to offices is contrary to the established plans to strengthen links between the High Street and the Waitrose site behind, so we have objected.

I end this report on a high note: Bill Willett has nearly completed the BCA new fieldpath map in colour. We should be able to get it printed soon after Easter and it will be on sale soon after. We would welcome help from members to market what will be a credit to the Association and to Bill Willett. Just to remind members: we raised £3,500 grant funding to cover most of the cost, so the finances of the Association are not at risk. It may be possible to have an advance proof at the AGM.

The BCA – The First 25 Years

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby has taken the trouble to reprint a ten-page document recording the early history of the Association which was produced in 1949 after we had been in existence for 25 years. It makes very interesting reading. Unfortunately it is not possible even to attempt a summary here, but copies will be available to members at the AGM.

In the early days there were no fewer than twelve sub-committees. Hearing all their reports must have made the main

committee's meetings uncomfortably long and tedious. The original objectives were much as they are today, but one or two of them were rather oddly expressed, such as to 'promote the sentiments of local patriotism'.

Over the first quarter of a century of its existence the Association joined in several important campaigns, not least of which was to preserve access to the canal towpath when the canal company in 1935 put up notices saying that unauthorised use of it was strictly forbidden. After much effort, eight years later the canal company signed a deed which gave the public for all time the privilege of using the towpath.



The towpath is now open to the public for all time

This short history, for anyone at all interested, is highly recommended reading.

Berkhamsted Heritage Walk

After rather a long time of gestation, the Berkhamsted Town Walk is about to be born. The idea of the Walk is simple: blue plaques will be fixed to 27 buildings in the town, each bearing the name of the property, a number and usually a date as well. The numbers on the plaques correspond to those in a leaflet which will give a short description of the building and explain its significance, together with a map of the route to be followed.



- a short guide around Berkhamsted

It is by no means intended to be a complete guide to the town: rather its purpose is to give a flavour of our heritage to both local people and visitors to kindle greater interest in Berkhamsted's history. The leaflets will be provided free at various outlets in the town.



Dean Incent's House will have a plaque

The project will be launched on Saturday, 18 March in the forecourt of the railway station by the Town Mayor in full regalia. This will be to which everyone

followed by a conducted tour of the walk is invited (for all or part of it).

The timetable will be:

Launch at the station	10.00 am
Start of tour	10.10am
The Goat	10.35am
Café Rouge	11.00am
The Town Hall	11.15am
Berkhamsted School	11.30am
(Castle Street) (finish)	



A typical plaque

The New Year's Day Walk

18 members and friends and one dog took the New Year's Day walk to Aldbury, and 16 and a dog walked back too. Most of us had been up late the night before celebrating the New Millennium, including those who believe that it doesn't actually start for another year, and we set off in subdued mood. But even in mid-winter our surrounding countryside offers splendid walking that raises the spirits, particularly when the sun shines as it did for us. It was an excellent day.



The walk back



Norman Binks writes:

If you go down to the library today be sure of a big surprise. The entrance is (and has been for several years) full of notices about all sorts of groups, societies, activities and opportunities. So Berko isn't just a commuter town of charity shops and estate agents! Not advertised but financially supportive of some 20 plus of these groups is Berkhamsted Arts Trust (BAT), whose principal purpose is to redistribute an annual lump sum provided from the Leisure Services budget of Dacorum Borough Council.

Many of the groups cannot run at a profit for varying reasons, so subject to certain criteria and budget control their deficits are covered by grants from BAT. BAODS cannot put on, for example, 'Sound of Music' at a profit due to high startup costs and audience capacity limits of the Civic Centre, so the deficit is covered by BAT. The Graham Greene Birthplace Trust has grown successfully over three years and has been financially supported by BAT. Berkhamsted Jazz has been going longer and its gigs are now mostly a sellout but has its annual deficit



The Civic Centre: venue for musicals & jazz

covered by BAT. To be eligible a group has to register as a member of BAT and send a representative to each of four meetings a year – to liaise on activities, and analyse and discuss the allocation of money, based on the events and circumstances of members' yearly programmes. BAT also produces an Annual Diary of all members' programmes which is distributed throughout the town and via free newspapers. Next year, to improve efficiency of distribution, it is being sent via Royal Mail to each household in postal district HP4.

Tring has a similar Arts Trust, but it is organised differently and mainly focuses on the Tring Festival and the events in the Court Theatre at Pendley. Hemel Hempstead Arts Trust currently does not exist since volunteers could not be found to run it. In this case applications go direct to Leisure Services.

So BAT is a form of local democracy and delegation in action and brings together many local groups in regular liaison, although for mainly financial reasons. Coordination of event dates, requirements for use of equipment and development of the arts scene in Berkhamsted are other benefits.

BAT welcomes applications for grant support for arts related events in Berkhamsted and the surrounding area. Any organisation which wants to join should contact BAT secretary, Norman Binks, 123 High Street, Northchurch, HP4 3QL, telephone 01442 866300.

The Diary is published annually in late August for events from September through to May. For items to be included in the annual diary contact Liz Wood, The Cottage, 78 High Street, Northchurch, HP4 3QN, Telephone 01442 874477.

The Chairman is George Franks of Berkhamsted Jazz Club; the Treasurer is Ken Sherwood of the Graham Greene Birthplace Trust and Vice Chairman is Dr Brian Parsons of Berkhamsted Music Society. BAT has been in continual existence since the early 1960s.

Changes in the Library Service



Berkhamsted Library

Members may wish to know that they can now renew their library items using the Library Service's new renewals line. Phone the number below and follow the instructions using your telephone keypad.

Telephone enquiries will now be answered on a new enquiry line. These new services should mean:

- * faster answering of telephones
- * Longer hours of service -
Monday – Friday 8am-8pm; Saturday - 9am to 4pm.

If you ring the local library number you will not be charged for the call but will be asked to redial using the new number. To ensure that your call is charged at the local rate you should ring the numbers as set out below:

Renewals 01438 737373
Enquiries 01438 737333
Minicom 01438 737599

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
