

The Citizen



Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

September 2002

Chairman's Topics

Our Chairman, Gordon Bluck says:

It was with a lot of sadness that we learnt that Max Hageman, who has been such a support to the town and particularly the Association, is moving to Dorset to be near to his family. Some of our younger members will not be aware that it was Max who designed our logo. Although I have obviously written to him personally I could not let my report start without thanking him on behalf of the Association for all his hard work, including the posters, over the years.

It is personally very pleasing to see the various large developments in the town particularly at Manor Street/Ravens Lane and at the old garage site progressing towards completion. This is especially as the former has taken so much of my time sitting on the fortnightly meetings with Laings, the CARAB group and Town/Borough Councillors. Now that the contamination has been removed, the site is a straightforward building site and meetings are planned to be only 2 monthly.

The latest hot potato are the plans to change the parking arrangements in the town and by the time you get this newsletter the public exhibitions may have taken place. I would encourage all members to put their thoughts to the Borough Council and if members want to feed them through me I would be grateful. I was however somewhat disappointed that the Task and Finish Group/stakeholders meeting, to which we sent Susan Johnson (previous Chairman) was a one-off before the public unveiling of the plans and as such we as a committee were not in a position to discuss before that meeting.

The litter sweep organized by the guides as a joint venture went well with many bags of rubbish collected along the canal and butts meadow.

We have started to look at the initial proposals to set up Regional Assemblies and John Parsons, our latest committee member taking a close interest. As we understand it, the proposal is to lump us in with East Anglia to create an Eastern province with HQ at, say Norwich. Our personal positions are easing towards leaving the county structure as it is. But can we have your thoughts.

On a personal level I had not realised that being Chairman was such a dangerous occupation, as when I returned from holiday I found that our house and nearly new car had been pelted with eggs and flour on 2 occasions. Normally I would just clean it off, but egg in the hot sun took the paint off my newly done windows and permanently marked the new car's paintwork. All I have done is object to a few planning applications over the years. If you know who did it please ask them to write to me instead.



The willow trees alongside the canal by the 'Rising Sun' with the daffodils just starting to show.



Profile:
Norman Cutting
(Caretaker editor)



Norman has lived in the town for most of his life, arriving at the age of 2 weeks to live in one of the ‘pre-fabs’ at the top of Three Close Lane and has lived at his present home for over 20 years.

He attended Ashlyns School prior to serving a 5 year apprenticeship with Eastern Electricity as an electrician. After spending a couple of years as one of the emergency electricians (those who attend at all hours to sort out electrical problems) and working for a local shopfitting firm, he started his own electrical contracting business in 1972.

In 1995, against his wife’s better judgment, he stood for election to both Town and Borough Councils. Much to everyone’s surprise, was elected.

During his time on the Borough Council, he was a member of numerous committees, including Development Control, Housing, Environment and Policy. On the Town Council, a member of the Planning, Transport & Highways and Finance & Policy Committees.

He was asked to resurrect the regular ‘Council’ column in the Parish Magazine after his efforts at informing residents of council activities via his own newsletter. He also started the first non-commercial Berkhamsted Internet web site (<http://www.berko.org.uk>) which is still updated on a weekly basis.

The ward boundary changes in 1999 effectively put him out of office as an Independent Councillor, but still takes an interest in local political matters - after all, he lives and works here.

Meetings for 2002/3
Rita Jones writes:

Once again it is time to tell you about the meetings for the forthcoming year.

We open with a talk on Bricks and Brickmaking in the Chilterns by Nick Siney on October 10th. Some of your committee visited Dunton Bros brickworks at Ley Hill where we met our speaker. We were delighted to discover that bricks are not boring. We were intrigued by the various processes involved in the manufacture, the history and the projects in which the company are involved. We felt sure you would also find these interesting and I hope you agree. You don’t have to be a specialist (several of us on the visit certainly weren’t) so do come along and prove that we were right.

The November meeting is definitely Thursday 14th and I apologise for the mistake in Arts for Berkhamsted. Stephen Halliday needs little introduction, as many of you will remember his talk about the designer of the London sewerage system. This talk is on another aspect of London low life, The London Underground.

The year ends with the Christmas Celebration on Saturday December 7th, and 2003 starts with the Traditional Ramble on January 1st.

February brings a talk of local interest when Matt Wheeler gives us the latest information about the Dacorum Heritage Trust on the 12th.

Still local, but covering a wider area, Cic Upcott will tell us all about the Chiltern Society on April 23rd.

As usual, the meetings are at 8pm in the Great Hall of the Town Hall and I look forward to seeing you all there.



Photographs this page:

Top left: It seems like only yesterday! ‘Coopers’ offices

Right: Incents Lawn (go on, spot the missing lamp-post)

Town Amenities Sub-Committee

Gordon Bluck, TASC Chairman, writes:

As I write this report it is the end of August and where has the summer and indeed the controversial planning applications gone. Normally as the planners get out their open toed sandals (to be worn with black socks) out of the wardrobe, cancel the Guardian and prepare for 3 weeks in the south of France every developer worth their salt whacks in that dodgy plan. This year has been a quiet time and our committee meetings have been short. We were however not happy with a proposed development at 2 Meadow Road as we viewed it as over-development of the plot and having a blank wall facing the road.

Regarding the proposed new site for the Hospice of St Francis, although we would normally object strongly to any development into greenbelt, but the fact that it is a "brownfield" site and would not be visually obtrusive we have supported the application on an exceptional basis.

We were pleased to hear that Tesco, who had put in an application to erect new signage when they convert the store to a Tesco Metro outlet, had taken notice of Town Councillors objections and put in a new plan to reduce the size of the signs.

On a final note the footpath map still sells well at The Bookstack and The Complete Outdoors in Bourne End and it will not be long before a reprint is needed and we will try and get better quality paper next time.

The Associations Contribution to the Jubilee

John Cook writes:

In the last issue of the Citizen, we were only able to include the bare results of the competition, organised and funded by the BCA, that was our main contribution to the town's celebration of the Jubilee.

The competition was for schoolchildren, and the subject was chosen to allow boys and girls to express what the occasion meant to them, as young citizens of Berkhamsted or Northchurch, using any medium of their choice. Two prizes were on offer, one for a child in a first school and the other for a child in a middle school (or their independent sector equivalents).

Not all schools responded, but the children of those that did, put in such a quantity of high entries that the judges had their work cut out to pick the winners. In the end, the panel were unanimous in awarding the prize for the 5 to 9 age group to 7 year old Richard Timms from Swing Gate School for his remarkable moving poem. The 9 to 13 age group winner was 13 year old Emily Stidston of Egerton-Rothesay School for a beautifully worked drawing, also incorporating a poem.

They were each presented with a cheque for £50 from the Association at a small ceremony during the Jubilee Celebration at the Berkhamsted Cricket Club's ground, and at the same time a similar amount went to each of their schools.

I'm getting old!



Above - Lower Kings Road a couple of years ago, but who remembers when the Post Office was here and the road was always full of people?

Below - Coopers Chimney that was!



September is Parking Consultation month

Norman Cutting has a view:

Let me see if I've got this right.

In order to solve the car parking problem, the Borough Council have employed consultants at great expense to advise that the only way forward is to charge for parking on the road and put up charges in the car parks. I may be stupid, but even I can see that this move will not be popular and will cost a fair amount of money.

The report that went to the Borough Council actually included 30,000 'fines' for parking to provide £900,000 income to the Council.

If you are really interested:

Total implementation cost is £659,000 with total annual operating costs £929,000, leaving a deficit of just £270,000, but the annual income is expected to be almost £2,000,000 (providing we all just ignore the regulation as we do now and get caught together with 'selling' more parking permits than actually available!)

It looks as though this is another cunning plot to 'balance the books' by the Borough Council. They have a problem with national government trying to 'redistribute' money from district councils who manage their affairs well, to district councils who don't. It just so happens that ours is one of the 'haves' having to give to the 'have not's'. It is much easier than having to raise income tax to do it I suppose.

As you all know, Traffic Wardens, along with the Police, are paid for by Herts County Council and thus directly by us via the Council Tax. A tinny weensy problem is that parking fines actually go to the treasury coffers and is the reason why we only have one warden in the town. Now, the plan is to 'decriminalise parking to allow the Borough Council to control all on-street parking within the Borough which has the beautiful side effect of allowing the Council to keep parking fines.

The logic goes along the following lines:

we have a shortfall of income; we have a parking problem; we could make it difficult to park and collect parking fine money instead of it going to the treasury; sell more permits than spaces available; bring in outside enforcement with a 'profit motive'; income goes up to cover shortfall taken by national government and we have the perfect excuse – you asked for better parking facilities – and we don't get the blame!

Parking Consultation continued:

The Association hasn't had the time to formulate a response to the proposals as our Chairman indicates in his front page column.

Let us have your views as quickly as possible as time is short.

The timetable is roughly as follows:

Late September - public exhibitions

November - Councillors consider feedback

December - Revised plans released

October 2003 - implement proposals

Spring 2004 - Review



Hilltop Road

Once there was a rose bed - grassed over

Then a footpath - removed and grassed over

Now a new lighting column - ????

Some dates to note

Sept 12th - Chenies Manor visit

Oct 10th - Brick making in the Chilterns

Nov 14th - London Underground, talk by Stephen Halliday

Dec 7th - members only Christmas celebrations

Jan 1st - Traditional walk to Aldbury

Feb 12th - Dacorum Heritage Trust, talk by Matt Wheeler

April 23rd - The Chiltern Society, talk by Cic Upcott

Corrections to last issue

(bound to become a regular section!)

None that anyone has spotted yet!

We welcome all your suggestions and contributions, so why not contribute?

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Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association