

The Citizen



Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

December 2005

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Owing to a transmission problem, my personal tribute to David Brunt, who died in June, did not appear in the last edition, so I would like to take this opportunity of recording my thanks to him for all his support and wise counsel both as a long-standing Association committee member and in particular as my vice-chairman from 1996 to 1998.

Looking to the future, it would be good to try to fill the vacancy on the committee with someone who has particular expertise in architectural and/or structural engineering matters.

We also need to replace Felicity Johnston's ready, willing and able help, both as a member of the Committee and the Activities Sub-Committee. One or more volunteers would be made very welcome. Duties could be anything from helping serve coffees at our meetings in the Town Hall, stewarding at those events to assisting with the clerical and administrative tasks of booking speakers, venues etc.

Elsewhere in this edition, you may see that a new sub-committee has been formed. This will result in additional involvement by our existing committee members, and further assistance would be gratefully received.

If you feel you may be able to help your Association in these or in other ways, we would be delighted to hear from you. The Committee welcomes observers at committee meetings, and this provides a good way to find out what may be involved without any initial obligation.

Anyone who might like to help is welcome to telephone me (Berkhamsted 871344) during office hours to find out more.

Hospital project update

By Norman Cutting

You may have spotted with the last issue, we included a supplement providing brief information on the idea we had, of encouraging the formation of a Berkhamsted Branch of the Dacorum Hospital Action Group.

After a number of meetings with Action Group members, including Zena Bullmore, the working party went to the September BCA main Committee meeting with several ideas to progress the matter.

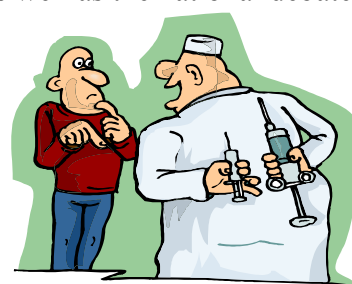
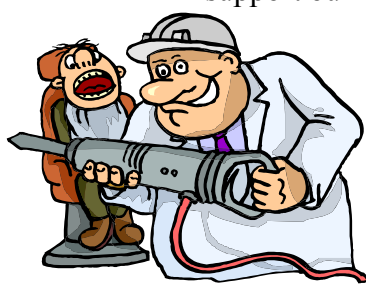
Your committee decided to form a 'Hospital and Health Sub-Committee' within the Citizens Association, to be headed up by Tony Statham who will be organising a public meeting in order to launch the Berkhamsted Branch of DHAG. If you want to get involved, then contact Tony either on 876995 or via e-mail at sahs@tinyonline.co.uk.

The Citizens Association takes the threat of the loss of a local hospital facility very seriously as does our local MP, David Gauke.

He wrote recently:

'The position with the local hospitals continues to be a major source of concern. In response to my questions, the local hospital trust has revealed that there have been a number of recent occasions when Watford Hospital has had to issue an "emergency pressures notice", meaning, in other words, that it is full. This is BEFORE services start being moved from Hemel Hempstead to Watford, which is likely to happen next year'.

On page three, I have reproduced a press release from the BMA confirming our worst fears. This is not just a local issue, more a national one and we need to support our local group as well as the national debate.



Activities Sub-Committee

Rita Jones - Chairman reports:

Alfred Fisher, founder of Chapel Studios in Kings Langley, provided an informative and amusing opening to the new season of talks. He amply illustrated how stained glass does have its lighter side, especially if you look for the amusing and unusual figures often found at the edges and corners of those brilliant windows adorning our parish churches. Although Mr Fisher is retired, he still has a studio. He showed us a prestigious example of his work, the stained glass window that he designed and made for the new chapel in Buckingham Palace. The chapel, replacing the one destroyed during the war, was built to celebrate the Queen's golden jubilee. We were fortunate to be able to see slides of this beautiful window, as it is not normally on show.

In November Hugh Davies took us into the world of deception, with a fascinating talk and effective computer presentation about spying in World War II. An introduction on the historical background to spying and just what was needed for success, led to the confusing world of plot and counterplot, from 'The Man Who Never Was' to D-Day. Were the spies on 'our' side or, as the Germans thought, on the 'other' side? Did they even exist? What were the mistakes and the failures? Fortunately it all worked out in the end, with the help of the decoders and others at Bletchley Park. It was good to see so many members and friends (in all, more than 80) and I do hope you will find our future events attractive.

The New Year opens with the traditional ramble on January 1st. We hope that the weather will allow us to repeat the success of this year, with a return visit to Cholesbury, but this time via Pancake Wood. Our leader, Bill Willett will meet you at 10.30 am in front of the railway station or at 11ish on the corner of Shootersway and Cross Oak Road. Lunch may be had at the Full Moon in Cholesbury (or you can bring your own). Those who want to walk only part of the way will have to provide their own transport home.

The first talk of the new year is on Thursday, February 9th 2006, when the Boxmoor Trust are sending a speaker to tell us all about the wildlife in the Trust's grounds.



Saturday, January 21st 2006

The BCA Seasonal Celebration:

A Burns' Night Supper with the Jolly Jazzers

Please Note. The venue has changed from that given in the programme. The new venue is the Cricket Club and they are supplying the catering.

The meal will start with the traditional Burns' Night Supper Haggis with 'Neeps and Tatties' (mixed as 'Clapshot') and a 'nip' of whisky. Roast beef, potatoes, carrots with thyme, Savoy cabbage with bacon and nutmeg and even Yorkshire pudding will follow this. The meal will finish with oatcakes and a selection of Scottish cheeses. Drinks may be purchased from the bar. Entertainment will be by the 'Jolly Jazzers'. Entry is by ticket, costing £12, on sale at Bookthrift, 248 High Street, from Saturday, December 10th. Numbers are limited to 50. Please remember that we are not only supporting the Cricket Club, but also the Hospice, to whom the Jolly Jazzers donate their fees. The programme is looking good and all we need is **YOU** to make it a really enjoyable evening. We look forward to seeing you at-

7.30pm for 8.00pm until 10.00pm, on Saturday January 21st at The Cricket Club



The Cricket Club is near the centre of town, off Castle Hill. From the main entrance to the station, turn under the railway bridge and straight along Brownlow Road, into Castle Hill. The Cricket Club is straight ahead, at the point where the road bends. There is plenty of room for parking.



Town Hall Courtyard



Original 'CRS' office sign

As part of our campaign to raise awareness we are reproducing most of a Press Release by the BMA issued on 24th September 2005 below:

BMA survey reveals one in three NHS trusts plan to reduce services

Press release date: Saturday, 24 Sep 2005 (BMA London)

"The whole of the health economy is in dire straits. Trust management is doing its best to mitigate its impact but is compelled to act by freezing services and reconfiguring services. Impact will be felt for a long time to come." - *Respondent to BMA survey*

Three out of four NHS trusts in England are facing a funding shortfall and a third say they will have to reduce services because of their debt crisis.

These interim new figures are revealed today [24/09/05] in a BMA survey sent to 530 medical directors in England. To date, completed questionnaires have been received from 120 respondents.

Key figures include:

- * Three quarters of respondents [72.8%] report that their trust is facing a funding shortfall in the current financial year. The predicted shortfall ranges from £0.2million to £25 million, with an average predicted shortfall of £6.2 million.

- * A third of respondents [37.6%] report that their trust is intending to reduce services as a result of any shortfall. Intended reductions in services include bed closures, staff redundancies and a freeze on recruitment, reduced elective services, ward closures, withdrawal of staff development and training, and reduction in patient transport services.

- * More than a third [37.8%] of respondents report that funding agreements with the primary care trusts have been changed at short notice in this financial year. The reasons include funding shortfalls, cutbacks and pressures, often at the strategic health authority level.

- * Almost half of respondents [47.3%] report that their trust is intending to freeze recruitment as a result of funding shortfalls and a quarter [26.8%] report that their trust is considering staff redundancies.

- * Medical staff are to be included in recruitment freezes [47.9%], with 1 in 7 [14%] saying redundancies would also include medical staff.

The BMA wrote to the Secretary of State for Health, Patricia Hewitt, on 26 August 2005 raising its fears about NHS trusts in financial crisis. However, a reply from Lord Warner shows the Government is still in denial about the problem.

Chairman of the BMA's Consultants' Committee, Dr Paul Miller, said today:

"It is hard to understand why at a time when the Government has invested unprecedented funding in the health service, that Trusts may have to lay off staff and close wards. Something is going terribly wrong when patients pay the price for these financial problems and the Government's lack of joined-up thinking. He added:

"Despite increased NHS funding, the health service is still suffering financial difficulties. Why is this? NHS trusts are facing the biggest and most radical reform in health policy since the inception of the NHS. What trusts need is support, not being thrown into the deep end, left to sink or swim.

"If the Government persists with the introduction of a market-based system for health care there must be a level playing field for all providers. It is financial madness to guarantee private providers huge volumes of work, often at a higher cost than the NHS, while NHS hospitals are deprived of essential funding and their facilities are being left idle.

"We urge the Government to work with doctors and all health care workers to integrate properly the welcome extra capacity and improve financial and clinical management so patients receive the best possible treatment, at the best value for money, but do not suffer on the basis of economic ideology. "

Town Amenities Sub-Committee

Gordon Bluck, TASC Chairman reports:

Since my last report the main concern we have are over the development at Bulbourne House at Gossoms End, this continues to be something we object to. There has been a reduction in the density (dwellings/acre) and an increase in the parking spaces, but we still feel that there could be a better design on the front elevation at the entrance to the town. We also feel that the entrance to the development should be on the left i.e. the west side.



We have been writing regarding the railings at the canal near the railway station and Town Council are considering putting some money to finishing the job off. We have had no success in getting Dacorum Borough Council to replace the trees felled on Station Road as they feel that this is not a suitable location in which trees will flourish.

On principle we have objected to the proposed security grill at 80/82 High Street (Bobbys) which we feel is not in keeping with the conservation area.

On the environment award we are compiling a list and if any members want to phone me on 01442 873548 to check if your favourites on there please do so.

Following the sudden death of David Brunt the archive of his photographic slides has been sent to the Heritage Store where it will be preserved and be available for future study. I am very delighted that this has happened and thank Joan, David's wife for agreeing to this.

We have a problem - Houston!

Your editor writes:

Our last issue had to have a supplement and this issue comes out too late to promote the DHAG 30th anniversary celebrations in mid November and even the Berkhamsted Best Dressed Christmas Shop Window competition reminder would be too late for this issue and too early for the last.

For the time being, remember the very latest news, updates and activities, are on our web site:

www.citizen.normcall.com

Note, I have changed it slightly to make it easier to remember.

I did ask a couple of years ago how many of you would like to receive 'The Citizen' electronically, or even 'between issue' updates. I had one positive response. I'll ask the question again, shall I?

Your Editor comments - Norman Cutting rambles:

There I was, wandering down to my local pillar box, when I spotted 'white van man' gently reversing at right angles onto the pavement via an 'on street parking bay'. As he played with his computer and mobile telephone, I thought I'd better remind him that he was committing an offence.

Apparently, he was under the impression that as long as two wheels were on the road, you can park anywhere. I asked him how he would feel when the children coming out of the local school had to go into the road to get home, the local bus came round the corner, knocked a child down and the driver had a heart attack due to shock.

He was last seen leaving the pavement clear.

It seems just a year or so ago that I was told by DBC, that their wardens only patrol the 'controlled parking' areas of the town and the rest was down to the police, so on Monday, I thought I would get the full SP from the horse's mouth - so to speak. Monday is the day

that the police station is closed due to lack of interest. On Friday, they were available and the story goes along the lines of that it is still not permitted to park on the pavement, even if you leave enough room to get a wheelchair past, and it's down to DBC to enforce the regulations all over the town.

Will you tell them, or shall I?

Just as an aside, I have suggested to the police traffic management team that consideration is given to extending the Bridgewater Road parking restriction idea (parking anytime except 1 hour) to roads which appear to suffer from all day parking from non-residents. I feel this will make our town centre a more pleasant place to live and work, don't you?

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Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association

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