

# The Citizen



*Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association*

*May 2005*

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## CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

**Graham Spittle reports**

### AGM

Those who attended will recall that our speaker from Hertfordshire County Council, Jan Hayes-Griffin, undertook to keep the Association informed about the East of England Plan.

I have since heard from her that the Examination in Public will start in Ely on the 14th of September this year. As she said that our AGM, the Examination in Public is open to the public but the Panel will be selecting issues to be examined and inviting particular stakeholders to appear and give evidence.

As your chairman, I was keen to know how best the Association could support the County Council and Dacorum Borough Council during this period and she tells me she thinks the key point is to take every opportunity to maintain the profile of this process among our members.

The Association has been given the names of contacts for further correspondence and you can be sure your committee will make use of this information.

We were very grateful to Jan Hayes-Griffin for giving up her evening to be with us and to County Councillor, Ker Coleman, for arranging her attendance.

At the meeting, one of the residents raised the matter of the floodlighting of St Peter's Church. I am now informed that the original funding for the floodlighting was paid for as part of the Bypass Demonstration Project but that responsibility for the future maintenance falls upon the County Council as part of the Council's street lighting contract. There was some support at the meeting for reinstating all the floodlighting (some of which is at present out of order) but questions about light pollution were also raised. The Association has been asked for our views and your committee would welcome any comments from members.

I make no apology for returning to the topic of recruitment of new members. In my report to the AGM, I urged all members to recruit new members by word of mouth and I hope that you will all be making efforts to do this and that the results will show in our membership figures for the year. Membership application forms are available from the Association's Membership Secretary whose details appear elsewhere in this Newsletter as well as downloadable from our web site ([www.bca.normcall.com](http://www.bca.normcall.com)).

Any member who was unable to attend the AGM and who would like to see a copy of my report presented to the meeting is invited to contact me or any committee member.

### ELECTION QUESTIONS MEETING

By the time you read this, the result of the general election will be known and one of the four candidates who can be attended the meeting will be our local MP. The Association looks forward to keeping in contact with him (all the candidates were male) in the future about local issues.

My thanks go to my vice-chairman, Rita Jones, who masterminded all the arrangements for the meeting and to the other committee members who gave up their time to help; particularly past chairman, Gordon Bluck, who collected the written questions beforehand while I was meeting the candidates, and to former vice-chairman, David Brunt, who produced the name boards on the table in front of each candidate and which some of them accepted as a present after the meeting for their future use.

As usual, time did not permit us to hear the candidates' views upon a number of interesting topics raised by the audience, but I am grateful to all those who attended and submitted questions, and I took the view that the matters discussed were sufficiently grave and weighty to warrant proper time being allotted to consider them.

## Editors Piece

*Your esteemed editor, Norman Cutting, writes:*

As I sit down to put this issue together, the election of both our new MP and County Councillor has just been carried out.

In case you didn't know, our Previous MP, Richard Page, stood down and David Gauke has been elected in his place. Ken Coleman was re-elected as our County Council representative.

Apparently, it has been the custom for the Association not to get involved in politics - then they go and organise a 'hustings'. What really surprised me was the apparent lack of activity from the Labour Party. As one of my friends commented, 'what's the point of going to vote when we know our candidate will not get in'. Needless to say, they were persuaded to make the effort.

With all the new developments within the town, perhaps it's about time all political parties started to attempt to get residents interested and involved.

This leads neatly (?) on to the main thrust of my column for this issue. Most organisations in the town have the same problem as we do, inasmuch as the membership is ageing and reducing. I suppose it is not unexpected as I understand Berkhamsted has the highest average aged residents in the County.

In my travels around the town, I see lots of under 30's and lots of over 55's, and I always put this down to those in the middle are wasting their time traveling up to London etc. and back, but maybe the new data suggests exactly what it says. If the average age is just over 40, then my impression is actually born out in fact.

Now, we seem to attract the older section, but what about the young? When I was a lad, we just knew there was nothing to do in the town, but I spent a lot of time either in East Meadow, scrumping in the orchard or down the 'rec' in George Street. Saturday morning was the Court cinema and the afternoon was the REX. As I got older, I discovered the joys of the coffee bar next to the Town Hall, records from Norman Clarke's emporium (whom, I discovered recently, lived just across the road from where I am sitting) and those strange creatures with skirts.

However, I digress, this year will be the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II and those who actually remember it are getting fewer and fewer.

There is nothing quite the same as listening or reading about something that happened to someone you know.

As examples, among my customers, I knew a very unassuming lady who let slip she worked at Bletchley Park as a code breaker, another knew my mother when she worked in a large house/office in Shootersway, a neighbour saw her mother gassed in the chambers during the war, even my father played with my step-father in the garden of Egerton House. Those of you who take the 'Berkhamsted Review' recall the recent letters about the bombs that fell in Kings Road and Durrants Lane. I pointed it out to my mum, who suddenly remembered that she was 'lodging' in a house in Upper Ashlyns Road when it happened.

Meanwhile, back to the present.

What do you think the Association should be doing to encourage residents to get involved?

Should we become more pro-active and attack issues head on rather than the current 'pussy-footing' around we do at the moment?

Should we become more 'political', after all, many areas of the country have 'residents association' Councillor's on both Parish and District Councils and most political parties are looking to achieve similar results - in their own way.

Perhaps if we publicised ourselves more - now, there's an idea. Anyone out there who lives in the town, believes the town has a lot to offer\*, has experience in publicity or maybe like to treat it as a project for school or university - another good idea - must stop this thinking.

\*While I think about it, I was on a stand in the market a month or two ago and it surprised me how many people came from out of town or even the country. Can anyone provide an answer or am I just too close?

Sorry about that slight digression, anyway, put some thought into the problem and get in touch.

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And for something completely different:



Our young 'Sheltie' ▲



▲ Our elderly King Charles  
In Action

## **Activities Sub-Committee - Rita Jones - Chairman reports:**

The Activities Committee year has just finished and so time to look back and forward.

This year started with a talk by Peter Ingram about the Paper Trail Project. Those who braved what was one of the worst nights of this year, had a fascinating evening finding out about current and future projects for schools and the museum exhibits and also about ambitious plans to create a national, and possibly, international museum.

In the final talk, Annemette Banks gave an interesting account of the background and thoughts that went into the Montessori and Rudolph Steiner approaches to education. This was followed by a description of the Davis system to help people cope with dyslexia, so absorbing that no one seemed to notice that we had gone past finishing time, and still several people stayed to ask questions.

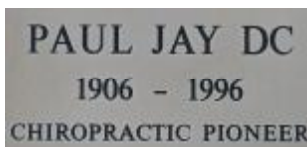
We are busy finalising next season's program, when we hope to have speakers on the lighter side of stained glass, the Boxmoor Trust, Bletchley Park and finally, Nick Siney has promised to give at last his talk on 'Bricks: Restoring the Past', which he was unable to give a year ago. There will be full information in the next Newsletter and on the card delivered with this issue.

We are working on the Winter (formerly Christmas) celebrations on January 26th 2006 and any ideas as to what you would like will still be welcome.

I hope you all have an enjoyable summer and can join Bill Willet on the Midsummer Walk. For date, time and place watch out for posters and keep an eye on our web-site.

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**I've been told you want to see some more photographs, so here goes:**



**I spied this plaque in the town - guess where.**

**You may have spotted on the opposite page that some of my mis-spent youth, was spent in and around the George Street play area.**

**Needless to say that at long last, the housing department of the Borough Council have 'approved' housing use - only it needs part of the play area.**

**Yet another facility reduced in size for young people unless we raise our heads above the parapet.**



George Street play area from Lt. Bridge Rd/George St. - View of old yard (sorry, housing plots) from bridge.

## And Finally:

I thought I ought to confirm your suspicions that Berkhamsted is on the edge of everything, including the Borough and Dacorum Councils by bringing to your attention these minor problems not a million miles from where I sit.

If you want to build a patio, then first you dig out the soil and put it somewhere.

The nearest verge is very handy ►



◀ The County contractor had two goes at repairing this highway verge - and still ran out of tarmac!



◀ Ravens Lane was resurfaced not many years ago.

It did look good, didn't it?

Mind you Bridgewater Road also done recently and now repairing it!!



A couple of years ago, yellow ► marks appeared on our local roads, then about a year ago, men came and cut round the yellow marks ready to tarmac. We are still waiting!!



The sad thing is, I expect the contractors have been paid to do the work - like the High Street pavements!!

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### Here I am again! *Norman Cutting rambles:*

Some of you may be aware that for the past 40+ years, I've been in the electrical contracting game and run my own business for over 30 of them.

You will also be aware that some electrical work within the home now needs to be notified to the Building Control dept of the Borough Council.

Contrary to the mis-information being spread by television programs and the press, you can still do many types of work yourself without being hauled before the local magistrate or notifying (and paying the fee!) the Council.

You can connect your own cooker, you can add a socket in

rooms other than kitchens or bathrooms (or outside) and you can replace a light fitting.

Don't let it get to this state! ►



Remember - when in doubt, ask or get someone competent in to do it for you. (Recommendation or member of trade body such as ECA or NICEIC).

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**Edited and compiled by Norman Cutting**

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Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association

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