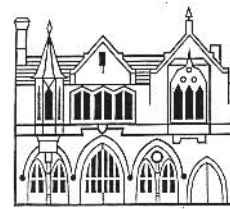


# The Citizen

*Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association*  
*Working for the social and civic life of our community*



**December 2007**

## **Yet another hospital update!**

*Norman Cutting keeps you up to date*

The last issue reminded you that the Trust was visiting the town in September and around 60 residents attended the Civic Centre to be informed that everything was perfect, all was well and anything that did go wrong would be resolved etc., etc.

The November issue of the Berkhamsted Review provided a summary of the event, but in the best tradition of consultations, things move on.

The Chief Executive resigned following calls from our local MPs, the press, the DHAG and just about everyone else. Smelling blood, it was suggested that the whole trust stand down as, not for the first time, the 'Public Consultation' was perceived as nothing of the sort as even the introduction on page 2 of the document pointed out that it was not a vote on the proposals, more a PR exercise.

Never fear though, the trust hasn't stood down (yet!) and they have brought in Jan Filochowski, to ensure the proposals go ahead. As the last Chief Executive pointed out, they have no choice if they wish to balance the books and I was under the impression that providing adequate health care was the object of the exercise. The new temporary Chief Executive apparently has a reputation for turning round failing hospitals. It's good to know that his heart will be in the job then as he is only 'booked' for 6 months.

As you all remember, the Watford branch will be the trauma centre, the St.Albans branch for planned procedures and the Hemel branch for diagnoses. At the 'consultation' meeting we were assured that Dacorum residents will only be at Watford for a couple of days for any necessary procedures before being returned to the Borough for aftercare. Considering that most of the 'proposals' have already been implemented with varying degrees of success (or should that actually be lack of!), I will finish off with yet another couple of examples of how our local NHS is letting us down.

Case 1 - Elderly lady has various health problems and falls down the stairs. She lives within sight of Hemel Hospital and could have walked across the road to the A&E (OK, you know what I mean), if the 1970's proposal had taken place. Her daughter returned from holiday to find her mum had been taken to Watford A&E and as I write, has been there for 3 weeks. So much for coming back to Dacorum for aftercare and the daughter is not amused having to fight her way into Watford just to visit. I should point out that the daughter only lives 100 yd's up the road from mum, so visiting would have been so much easier!

Case 2 - Lady has had an ongoing skin problem for years and spent many a long hour being investigated by staff at Hemel as well as various treatments being tried without any real success. Remember this is the continuing diagnoses unit. In the end, Hemel decided they could do no more, so she just accepted it was a fact of life.

Enter a chance conversation a few months ago, where a nurse suggested a visit to a nearby clinic where they 'solve the unsolvable'. A couple of hours there and it appears that during a holiday in 1970 in Yugoslavia, she picked up a tropical parasite which has been causing the problem. When she asked why the hospital didn't pick this up, she was told that they don't even consider it.

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Talks Not On a Thursday, Tried – Failed.

## **A New Date for your Diaries**

**Monday, February 11th 2008 was confidently booked at the end of last year. However, a short while ago, I discovered that there was a permanent booking on Mondays. A new date had to be arranged. I'm afraid it's back to Thursdays but we have been compensated for this muddle. Our speaker, Leslie Rance, Secretary of the Parrot Society UK, kindly agreed to come on Thurs February 7th to give his illustrated talk on parrots and why the Parrot Society UK is in Berkhamsted.**



**Rita Jones, our Chairman, and the Committee wish all our members a happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year.**



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

### **From The Tolpuddle Martyrs to Globalisation**

This vast area was covered in an informed and amusing way by our speaker, Derek Simpson, on the evening of November 8th. A Berkhamsted resident of some five years, Derek Simpson is joint secretary of Unite, the largest trade union in the country, so well qualified to explain the challenges facing trade unions in the 21st century.

We are fortunate that such a busy and high placed official was able to come to speak to our small association. Those of you, who were unable to attend, missed an interesting and entertaining evening. Unions tend to get a bad press, after all strikes are more news worthy than disputes sorted by negotiation. How easy it is to forget how much has changed since the early days of the unions, despite televised reminders from the works of Dickens and Gaskell. Holidays from work, we discovered, are thanks to the unions. Today, how do we deal with the challenges of the east, Europe as well as Asia. Lots of thought provoking ideas, which may, or may not, be solutions.

All of this was presented in a relaxed and entertaining way. From the many amusing anecdotes, look out for men on mobile 'phones in supermarkets. You thought they were checking on pack sizes, things they couldn't find etc. Don't be fooled. One of them could be having a high-powered conversation with the prime minister.

Next Event January 1st 2008

The ramble to Aldbury and back, meets in front of Berkhamsted train station at 10.30 a.m. Bill Willett will be leading us on an interesting route, with a stop for a pub lunch (or bring your own).

Walks are at our members' own risk and if you only want to do half the walk, you will have to arrange your own transport back to Berkhamsted. Do join us for (weather permitting), what I am sure will be, a pleasant and healthy start to 2008.

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### **Membership Matters**

*By Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby*

#### **Membership – Last Chance**

We do not want to loose you.

Despite three reminders there are still 15 that have not paid their subscription for 2007. If you are one of the fifteen, a fifth and final request is enclosed with this newsletter, inviting for you to pay next year as well. If you have paid and have still been sent a reminder, please contact me as a matter of urgency.

For many years now, we have included with the last newsletter of the year, a renewal slip for next year. This year, I will be sending out 283, an increase of 60 on last year, which shows that a third have already paid. If you were to consider paying a three-year subscription, it would make my life that much easier this time next year!

We have tried in the last three newsletters to encourage you to recruit a new member. So far, with your help, we have two. I am sure you have tried. My promise previously made that I will give a bottle of wine to the member who has helped recruit the largest number of members and a further bottle for one of the new members will still be honoured, but this cannot be done with just two members. Please see what you can do between now and the AGM and continue to persuade your friends or neighbours to send me £5 together with their name and address (together with your name if you wish to be included in the competition).

Membership currently stands at 455 household members. This may have to be reduced to 440 if we have to remove the 15 who have not paid.

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#### **In Praise of Berkhamsted Library**

*David Collins reminds us:*

In my book, libraries are wonderful places. When we moved to Berkhamsted we joined the library straight away. In terms of architecture Berkhamsted library keeps books and readers warm and dry but like books it must not be judged by its cover.

Like everywhere else it is the people there who make the library what it is. Almost the day I joined I was looking for a book to help me solve a cooking problem. The librarian did her best to find the answer from the books on the shelves but then told me she had experienced the same problem with her oven and this was how she solved it. Such service has a price above rubies.

Then there is the librarian who spotted my accent was her own and we had a ramble down memory lane, would we ever go back, that kind of thing.

There are the library users themselves; the elderly lady filling a shopping bag with novels, the earnest hobbyist collecting a pile of specially ordered volumes. Sitting at one of the tables is a young mother helping her son with his school work. It is difficult to see of the two which one is more involved. I am sure that library staff learn much about us from the books we borrow. Do they ever have a chuckle at us or perhaps a moment of empathy? I am sure they do.

The peace and tranquillity of Berkhamsted library provides so much more than books.

## Parish Paths Partnership

*Norman Cutting attended the last meeting:*

The partnership (P3) meets every 6 months or so and although chaired by a Town Councillor, brings together representatives from the Borough and County Councils, Countryside Management Service (CMS), Chiltern Society and others with an interest in the rural footpaths around the town. I was involved when it first started in July 1996 and it was the County Council who asked the CMS to administer the partnership for the initial 3 year period. The grant, of around £1000 per year is to cover work agreed and the September meeting agreed that two kissing gates will be installed to replace stiles on Footpath 21A and benches on footpaths 2 and 26 to take advantages of the views over the valley from the Ashridge side during 2008/9. As P3 is always looking for ways to improve rural paths within the Parish, I have suggested that path 42 is considered for improvement and maybe a bench or two along the well used Long Green and Sandpit Green public highways in the future. The next meeting is in April 2008, so if you have better or additional ideas, get in touch.

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## Canal & Riverside Partnership

*Norman Cutting reports:*

The new Council has revived this partnership and gone from annual meetings to monthly ones as there is much to do.

The 'Community Boatyard' is moving forward and the Chairman is confident that funding can be obtained to retain this historical site for the town.

Ways to link the Rising Sun lock area to the new housing opposite are being investigated, although readers will remember that this was attempted at the time the development was being constructed. I have spoken to residents who think it would be a good idea, so let's hope the problems can be overcome.

The canal leaflet is to be updated with the new brand, 'Your Canal - Yours to enjoy', and detail the new features such as the 'Canal Gym', which should be up and running next year.

British Waterways have been reminded that they promised to re-erect the 'Port of Berkhamsted' signage and they will do this. This was controversial at the time, and as a result of a letter in the Gazette, Dr David Hilling, a member of IWA's Inland Waterways Freight Group, wrote an article for their newsletter suggesting that even inland waterways (e.g. river or canal) that load and discharge freight could be called a 'port'.

Cllr Phil Gibbs queried the phrase 'Port of Berkhamsted' at a Town Council meeting earlier this year and was just told to 'read the report'. On your behalf, I have tried to find this report without success, apart from Dr Hilling's explanation, but must confess that none of my living relatives, who only go back 80+ years, can recall the town being referred to as either a 'Port' or 'Port of Berkhamsted' - unless you know better of course. A site visit was made with some of the partners and 16 items have been identified for attention or bringing forward as projects.

I will update in the next issue.



**The Canal in Berkhamsted**

The 'Totem pole' is on the list for a re-paint, The railings are due for a repaint and the mill has been redeveloped.

## Town Amenities Sub-Committee

*Norman Cutting brings you news:*

At our October meeting, we found that £5000 could be made available to cover the cost of replacing 3 of the High Street trees that have 'disappeared' under the relentless onslaught of the motor vehicle. Mature trees stand a better chance of survival, but County, in their wisdom, have decided that in many cases, tarmac was an appropriate material to fill the areas around the trees and therefore trees 0, vehicles 5.

Waterstones now carry our map, so there is no excuse not to have one.

The 'wonky' High Street paving is being replaced, only with the more bland variety, we have asked them to improve the ones replaced outside the church. We have objected to the proposed developments at Rose Cottage in Bank Mill Lane and the Dells old storage facility in Stag Lane and the loss of car parking spaces in the Lower Kings Road car park is only acceptable if the large illuminated Waitrose sign is removed from the Council land at the entrance.

We have expressed concerns regarding the possible changes to the Water Lane car park, as any development must mean a loss of parking facilities either in the short term or, more importantly, in the long term.

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### The good old days

*Hilary Talbot-Ponsonby - Chairman 1977 & 1978 wonders:*

Fifty-six years ago we came to live here at Edgeworth House, just over the 'border' in Northchurch.

In those days, Berkhamsted had an Urban District Council as well as a Rural District Council with Northchurch Rural Council encroaching via the 'parished' areas such as Sunnyside.

I was asked recently if the town had changed much in that time. My first reaction was 'No'. It had still the same spirit; was still in the country although near to London; was still intellectually stimulating. But, population-wise, of course it has. So we listed the developments we could remember since 1951.

**1950's** - Durrants Estate, Park Estate (Biltons), Westfield Road / Loxley Road, The Meads, Farm Place, first building in Northbridge Road.

**1960's** - Valley Estate, Ashlyns Estate (part one), Bridgewater Road (East), Castle Hill, Gaveston Drive etc, Winston Gardens, Douglas Gardens, Chiltern Park Estate 'Tunnel Field' (part one), Coombe Gardens, Finch Road / Orchard Avenue, Riverside

Gardens, 'allotment' housing Bridgewater Rd

**1970's** - Ashlyns Estate (part two), more Tunnel Field, Priory Gardens, Oakwood, Beech Court, Hunters Park, Byways start, Broadwater, Lincoln Court, Greystoke Close.

**1980's** - Nightingale Lodge, Springwood Estate, Dudswell Lane, Coppins Close.

**1990's** - Cooper, McDougall & Robinson, Castle Village, Greenes Court, Chesham Road (various), The Churchills, Callaghans Court, Cavalier Court, Rothesay Court

**2000's** - Clunbury Court

These are only my memories. You may want to add to this list.

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### I have the answer!

*Norman Cutting comments:*

Climate change always seems to be in the news and the idea of compulsory ID cards fills many with horror. The government seems to be changing its mind almost by the day on both subjects, but continues to believe that we are changing the climate, so that it has to be addressed somehow. Friends of the Earth are convinced that because aircraft throw out pollutants and harmful gases at the sort of heights that are supposed to cause most problems then this needs to be addressed urgently.

The latest cunning plan for introducing ID cards is to link them to passports, although we have met our obligations under the EU regulations and current US ones as well.

This does mean that if the government pursues the current plans, the the EU will invoke the Human Rights Act in order to protect its' (?) citizens.

Now, this is where my answer comes in.

If you don't have a passport you are unlikely to use an aircraft solving part of the climate change problem. This would mean that it would be difficult to introduce the compulsory ID card, which solves the other problem.

I suppose someone out there does have the answer as to how you 'police' a system which only applies to visitors/citizens who intend staying more than 3 months and not members of the EU?

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**If you have Internet access**, have your very own 'Citizen' sent to you (in colour) as a pdf file and keep an eye on the BCA web site for any updates as there is a lot going on!

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*Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association*

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