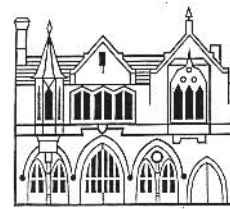


# The Citizen

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



December 2009

## Chairman's Column

Our Chairman, Tony Statham, writes -

There is a long history of newspaper owners and editors occasionally having different views on life, politics and everything. I do not own this newsletter but as Chairman I have taken it on board to raise an objection to our editor's comments in the last issue about Canal Fields. I guess I am also wearing my other hat as Chairman of the Berkhamsted Community Partnership which has provided some assistance to the development of this community facility. While there may have been a few "quangoesque" elements to establishing the Green Flag status for this park, it has become a significant recreational area for all ages backed by both town and borough councils. Older residents (and others?) may bemoan the loss of the open-air swimming pool but we have a delightful Millennium Garden, a very superior playground, a skate-board park, an outdoor gym amenity (Fitness Trail) - all free of charge, including the parking! This still leaves a significant area of open parkland conveniently situated between the canal and the bowls and tennis clubs. What more could a town want? Yes, I know, more parking, less traffic, etc., etc. Look elsewhere in this edition for news about a slower traffic scheme being promoted by the cycling fraternity. You may not be a two-wheeler person but safer streets must be on everyone's agenda.

## Maybe, just maybe something positive!

by Norman Cutting

Over the past couple of years we've had the small 'problem' of the disappearing banners advertising worthy events such as the Sgt Pepper concerts. One day they were put up in the usual places and suddenly they had gone. It was noticeable that the small 'strap on' advertising boards were untouched (anyone know where the 'green house' is up Swing Gate Lane?) for rug sales, markets and both small and larger housing projects.

It transpires the Planning Enforcement Officer has decided to hold them hostage as it's illegal to erect advertising signs anywhere without planning permission, so I suppose it's easier to remove a banner from the castle railings than actually reach up and take one down from a piece of street furniture.

The Town Council have an idea that if stout poles are erected in suitable positions around the town and a blanket permission obtained from Dacorum and County, maybe, just maybe, it will go some way to resolve the so called problem. If you have a view, why not let the Town Clerk know and it would be nice to also hear from you!



## Letter to the Editor - just the one, so far!

From David Collins:

The September 2009 edition of *The Citizen* under Town Amenities Sub-Committee (TASC) stated that TASC "had received a tirade from the Town Council and local residents."

Nothing could be further from the truth. As a Committee member, not as a Councillor, I indicated surprise that the Citizens Association had not supported the residents by objecting to New Lodge, Ellesmere Road and The Pines developments, all of which will impact upon Berkhamsted.

I am pleased to report that Dacorum Borough Council Development and Control agreed with Berkhamsted Town Council and objected to the plans for New Lodge and Ellesmere Road.

(Editor - I think this arose due to a misunderstanding of the report. The 'tirade' mentioned was referring to the robust comments the Town Council made to the DBC Planning Department. Both applicants have now gone to appeal.)

We also had a couple of e-mails:

From June Street:

"What do I like about The Citizen?"

Profiles of people involved in the BCA - very interesting Matters concerning planning applications And finally the delightful touch of gentle cynicism which provokes a wry smile!

Well done to you all and to Tony Statham too - for his interest and energy! And also for Susan Johnson's input into just about everything!"

Colin Garrett sent:

"Thank you for printing a piece on the front page of The Citizen - and that is exactly what it has produced - one citizen! I am disappointed, but probably not very surprised, that so few people are actually prepared to take some responsibility for the environment in which they live. Too many people take the view that "they" should do something about it but the reality is that DBC have neither the money or the manpower to do it - and have not done for decades.

Ah well, onwards and upwards !"

## Activities Sub-Committee

Rita Jones, Chairman, reports:

### Red Kites Over Berkhamsted

The activities programme for 2010 starts with the Traditional New Year's Day Ramble, meeting at 10.30 a.m. in front of Berkhamsted Station. We will stop for lunch at a pub in Aldbury, or you can bring your own. We may even see Red Kites, the subject of the first talk of 2010, on Thursday, February 11th. Red Kites, scavenger birds, which once kept London clean, had disappeared from our area. They were successfully reintroduced to the Chilterns, and you may have seen them when driving along the M40. They are now seen over Berkhamsted. Come along to find out much more in an illustrated talk by Phil and Ann Farrer, at 8pm in the Sessions Hall.

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### Membership Matters

by Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby

According to our records 15 members have not yet paid their subscription for 2009 and therefore a fifth and final reminder is enclosed, inviting them to pay for next year as well. As we do not want to lose you, please may I have your subscription? If you have paid, and have been sent a final reminder, would you 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 the next year. This year, I will be sending out 201 in addition to the 15 final reminders. This shows that half of the members 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.

Membership currently stands at 416 households, 28 down on this time last year as we only managed to recruit 6 new members. In 2008 we managed 26. If we have to remove the 15 who have not paid, our membership will be as low as 401. In March 1998, it stood at 608.

You know what the Citizens Association does. We have tried in past newsletters to encourage you to recruit a new member. 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. It could be considered as giving the same Christmas present to two people: your friend and us!

In past newsletters, I have said it would be marvellous if we could be in the position we were three, four or five years ago. This has proved to be too ambitious. How about just 9 months ago and bring it up to 425 – just above the figure at March's AGM?

**Please think about it**

### 20 mph for Berkhamsted?

Tim Vaughan, Chairman of the Tring and Berkhamsted Cycling Campaign (TBCC) puts the case

The TBCC is planning to support the national campaign for 20 mph speed limits in residential town roads in Berkhamsted along with other interested groups, such as the Berkhamsted Transition Town campaign. This has been promoted by the Living Streets campaign for several years, as well as 20's Plenty. This April, the Department of Transport issued a public consultation on road safety, one of the key issues of which was the benefit of reduced traffic speeds in urban (and rural) areas. Numerous towns and cities have introduced widespread 20 mph speed limits (e.g. Portsmouth, Oxford, and Norwich) and seen noticeable improvements in road safety and other benefits. In summary these are reduced incidence of accidents, improvements in the local, social environment (such as residents seeing and talking to neighbours), encouragement for healthier forms of transport (such as cycling and walking) and reduced pollution and noise; it is also well established that a slightly lower average speed results in a quicker overall journey time. For all these reasons, TBCC feels it is now right to promote 20 mph limits in Berkhamsted (in addition to the High Street), which will need to be implemented by the local councils and in coordination with Herts Highways. In this regard, TBCC has contacted the head of the Transport working group of the Town Council, which is currently working on a new transport plan for the town.

It is important to demonstrate the level of public support for this scheme and this will be achieved through a petition. Copies of this can be obtained from the TBCC by contacting Mr Tim Vaughan, chairman of the TBCC, on 01442 872127, at:

timvaughan@waitrose.com or by visiting the TBCC website - [www.tbcc.org.uk](http://www.tbcc.org.uk)

See also:

[www.transitionberkhamsted.org.uk](http://www.transitionberkhamsted.org.uk)

[www.livingstreets.org.uk](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk)

[www.20splentyforus.org.uk](http://www.20splentyforus.org.uk)

[www.dft.gov.uk/roadsafetyconsultation](http://www.dft.gov.uk/roadsafetyconsultation)



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### Environment Award 2009

**I've been reminded that any nominations for this year's award should be submitted as soon as possible to any committee member (or to me and I will forward it on).**

**Only projects that have been completed in 2009 are eligible, but can include, for example, gardens or buildings that have improved the town's environment.**

**Your nominations are needed!**

## **Talk: Designing winning gardens for the Chelsea Flower Show**

*Susan Johnson reports:*

Janet Honour and Patricia Thirion brought an infectious enthusiasm and jollity to their talk on Thursday 8th October. Listening to them, you could not imagine having more fun than designing gardens and promoting them on the BBC. I am sure that the hard graft that goes into making their success is as much a feature. But they seemingly giggled their way to two Silver Gilt Medals at Chelsea in 2007 and 2009!

The themes for their gardens - Van Gogh's garden in 2007 and Entente Cordiale in 2009 - were inspired by their Anglo/French roots. They will attempt a hat-trick in 2010 with a garden to reflect that of a certain well-known French couturier. Perhaps they might even go one better in the awards stakes!

The ladies gave us something of their background and their meeting at Capel Manor when they were taking a diploma in garden design. They just hit it off, and have worked together, as A Touch of France Garden Design, ever since. They emphasised the debt they owed to their contractor, who helped them source the plants and then built the 'sets' which are taken to Chelsea and assembled in a weekend. They also said how thrilled they were to meet the Queen and other members of the Royal Family at the private viewing day.

The 60+ members who came to the talk, plus the few who joined on the night, really enjoyed their slides and commentary, and the opportunity to talk to them afterwards. We wish them 'Bonne chance!' in their future projects, at Chelsea and elsewhere.

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## **Winter 2009 beats Autumn 2009**

*Norman Cutting has yet another view*

The Autumn usually brings forth a flurry of information from our 'local' Councils.

County sends out its very own, as do the Police - Fire and Ambulance obviously can't make it up our hill! Dacorum go into consultation mode as they want to please everyone at the same time, from Council House tenants to young people. They actually seem to have believed Mr Blair when he promised a computer and Internet access to every home in the land as they appear to want to cover everything and add 'more information is available at [www.\\*\\*\\*\\*\\*.\\*\\*\\*.uk](http://www.*****.***.uk). As my stepfather keeps asking me, 'what good is that box you gave me, apart from playing games?'



It seems I have a lot of educating still to do!

The Town Council has just issued the Autumn 2009 newsletter having had a Winter 2009 issue earlier in the year. Better late than never, I suppose. They have concentrated on one main subject and, naturally another which includes the magic words 'Please visit the town council's website..... (someone convince me that the web site doesn't belong to the council, or should it be councils'?)

The 'another' refers to yet another stab at addressing the town's parking problem. It seems that the problem only occurs between Cross Oak Road and Cowper Road as that was the area where 'hard copy' questionnaires were provided (according to my informants!). Perhaps it's thought that residents in that area can afford to pay for parking permits, whereas other 'problem' areas can't/won't pay. It just shows they ought to get out more. My feedback goes along the obvious lines of why pay for a non-existent parking space? This has always been the problem and until someone bites the bullet and removes the cause of the problem, it will not go away.

Turning to the main thrust of the publication. To my mind, they have made a good job of providing a balanced response to Dacorum's emerging core development strategy, which in turn was imposed by higher levels of government, even though national government policy is to devolve power and allow decisions to be made where it matters. For some reason, I still get accosted in the street asking for information on what new developments are going where - as if I should know! It just goes to indicate how concerned residents are about the changing image of the town. Only last week, I had an e-mail from a life long, now ex-resident, lady who moved to Wales seven years ago because she felt the town had just changed too much. In case you are interested, she mentioned that where she has moved to, is just like Berkhamsted used to be years ago - don't all rush!

Apparently about 700 Berkhamsted residents responded. However the Borough Council only received 2,000 (according to Cllr. Ian Reay - but might be only 1,200 according to the local press!) from the whole of Dacorum - not bad really, 35% of Borough wide responses came from little old Berkhamsted, so perhaps you do take notice. However, concern has been expressed that the BCA does not appear to represent residents' views when considering planning applications and I hope the Chairman has allayed some of these concerns in this newsletter.

Remember, it's no use moaning and complaining if you don't actually elucidate your views and opinions to the committee. Indeed, why not do as I did - get involved, 'cause I was like you until 1995. Now look at me!

(You know what I mean!!).

## Town Amenities Sub-Committee

*Tony Statham reports:*

Regardless of whether our members (or readers) agree with the opinions taken by this committee, it is thought that it might support our cause if we identify ourselves. Firstly, I must again stress that we act as a sub-committee to look at all planning applications for the town, discuss those of any significance and, if and when necessary, send an objection to the Borough and Town councils. Sometimes we are fairly unanimous in our collective opinions, at others we hotly debate the merits (or otherwise) of a particular proposal. We believe we offer a view that is fair to the longer term benefits of our community but it has no official weight in determining whether an application is ultimately passed by the Borough council or not. Our objections to the re-development of the former day-care centre in Manor Street is a case in point where we (and the town council) objected to this proposal but were over-ruled by the Borough (on a 5-4 vote) in favour of putting 14 houses on the site.

As well as planning applications, the sub-committee is also concerned with the environment in general. For example, three trees died in Lime Walk and the BCA has paid, on our recommendation, for replacements, and, of course, we organise the annual Environment Award, presentation of the awards, obtaining and placing of the plaques.

Our members are: Gordon Bluck (chairman) is a retired banker and Susan Johnson, a local government officer, are both long-time committee members (18 years), former chairmen of the BCA and long-term residents. John Cook, retired civil engineer and long-term resident, former committee member and chairman and former Mayor of Berkhamsted. Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby who works for English Heritage is a former Chairman of the Town Council Planning Committee, life long resident and a committee member for 22 years. John Parsons, long-term resident and former committee member (6 years); Tony Statham, also retired from the financial world, is currently Chairman of the BCA, committee member for 7 years and resident since 1985. Jenny Habib, retired architect, resident for 13 years and committee member for 4 years.

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Contributions/letters/comments to:

The Citizen

c/o 15 Chestnut Drive, BERKHAMSTED, HP4 2JL

E-mail: [editor@bcacitizen.org.uk](mailto:editor@bcacitizen.org.uk)

Web site: <http://www.bcacitizen.org.uk>

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**The Committee wish all members (and Friends) a Merry Christmas and a Healthy & Prosperous New Year**

Chairman: Tony Statham, Ashlyns Lodge, Chesham Road, HP4 2ST Tel: 876995 (e: [tony.statham@sky.com](mailto:tony.statham@sky.com))

Membership Secretary: Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby, 38 Kitsbury Road, HP4 3EA Tel: 865882

*Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association*

## Eric Hoey

Since our last newsletter, we heard that Eric Hoey sadly passed away on the 9th September aged 85.

He had lived in Bourne End for 30+ years where he was an active member of community activities including the church (Church Warden & Parish Councillor for many years etc), Wine Society & Village shows (stand up comic). He was a member of BCA for several years and of Berkhamsted Probus. He played quite good tennis & indifferent golf, although he was a keen gardener which was reflected in the beauty of his garden which ran down to the Bulbourne.

He was by profession an industrial chemist specialising in protective paints for amongst other things heat resistant coatings for Concorde and anti-fouling paints for warships.

He was a committee member and editor of this publication from April 1991 to June 1995.

As some of you are aware, I'm slowly transcribing the old newsletters for the Internet and Christopher reminded me of his style from September 1993:

His Enthusiastic Shopper introduced Eric Hoey, the editor, who called himself a misfit, a non-consumer in a consumerist society, to the new Sainsburys in Apsley. E.S. pointed out what a magnificent store it was with its large choice with its 650 packets of Kellogg's cornflakes. He wanted to know which packet to take. There were similar quantities of Rice Crispies and All Bran. How could that be improved choice, he queried. His mind boggled at the monumental attack of constipation, which would require the consumption of 650 packets of All Bran. He thought the store could be improved if the trolleys could be motorised as he thought the southern end of the store was somewhere in Somerset. Eric also made reference to the serried rows of heavily sprayed and beautifully packed cabbages.

*(The above information and comments provided by John Parsons and Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby)*

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**Don't forget our Christmas shop window competition, the winner of which will be announced at the Festival of Light on December 6th**