

# The Citizen



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

**September 2010**

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## Chairman's Column

*Chairman, Susan Johnson, writes -*

Well, I'll try to keep it shorter than the tome I wrote in June. I didn't realise how long it was until it had been printed. What awful August weather! All that rain showed up the remaining potholes and uneven surfaces. And the much-heralded High Street resurfacing? I noticed it so little I asked Herts Highways if they had done it. They had, and pointed out where. Just as well, because it's not immediately obvious. I hope our County Councillor was satisfied with the outcome.

August also seems to have spawned a plethora (literally) of consultations; the new Government is addicted to them. Locally we have the Town Council's parking survey, covering large parts of the town. Please respond by 24th September – even if you are not in the proposed areas for restrictions. Remember the effect of displaced parking, causing problems where none at present exist! I expect you remember the last time this proposal raised its head in 2002, and the explosive effect! I have looked at my paperwork, and many of my comments then still stand. I shall copy them to BTC with my personal returned questionnaire. The BCA will also consider making a response.

I cannot write this article without mentioning the Station's 2nd tier parking. As an organisation we backed the Town Council in favouring its installation as the first step in ameliorating the situation for the roads around; and personally I think a good job has been made of it. I particularly liked the quality of the materials, the new disabled bays, and motorcycle and bicycle racks. And it was much fuller than I had been lead to believe it would be. Let's hope that we can now persuade Meteor Parking to bring its charges more in line with Borough ones to persuade commuters to use it instead of littering our streets with cars. Perhaps some parking restrictions around the station and the castle would help?

I hope you were pleased by our spending some of the Footpath Map proceeds on the limes in Castle Avenue/Hill. Are there any other projects you think we could undertake or support for the benefit of the town's environment, green or built? We were

thinking of contributing to the restoration of the Totem Pole.

Speaking of infrastructure projects, of which the Totem Pole restoration is one, I hope you will be pleased to hear that the Berkhamsted Community Partnership has a stay of execution, as the Town Council has provided funding. Let's hope its long-term future can be secured, even in these straightened times.

Finally, let's consider the imminent demise of the *Berkhamsted Review* (a wonderful publication in my view) in its present form; and welcome *Your Berkhamsted* with a new editorial team and a desire to embrace change while looking constructively, but not uncritically, at the past. The BCA wishes the publication well, and will gratefully use its pages to publicise our work and 'entertainments'. Please, come to its launch day in the Court House on Saturday 9th October, where the BCA will have a table to show what we do. It would be good to see you!

Just in case you would like to get involved, we are still in need of committee members. Please, if you are at all interested in joining us to keep the BCA functioning, come along to our next Committee meetings to see what we do. The next two meetings are on Thursdays 21st October and 9th December (both start at 8pm). Give me or our Secretary, Miranda Cummins (866075), a call to book your seat.



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*Now missing one of its 'arms', our famous 'pole' could do with a little TLC!*

## Activities Sub-Committee

*Rita Jones, Chairman, reports:*

### Midsummer Ramble

Excitement turned to disappointment, when the largish group waiting at Berkhamsted Station on 6th June were not BCA but Holiday Fellowship walkers, bound in the Aldbury direction, and just one BCA member. To my great relief, a few minutes later, Bill Willett and two other members arrived. We waited, the HF group left, but no one else joined us, our original member opting to join the HF group. Eventually, the four of us set out for Cholesbury, in the direction of Ashley Green. What a lovely walk it was: meadows waist high with flowers, fields of crops or laid bare, attractive woods and lovely views. After a refreshing stop for lunch at *The Full Moon*, we took the more direct route back to Berkhamsted and I left my companions on the edge of the town and took the higher road back home. As usual, Bill informed and entertained with interesting details about the places we passed on our way. We all agreed it was a very enjoyable day. However we also agreed that we volunteer to organise these walks for all members, and it is so disappointing when so few attend. Was there too much on in Berkhamsted that day, as someone suggested, or is it that people don't recognise the enjoyable walks at their own back door? The HF members had to travel for their walk. Our 2 rambles have been included in our new programme (enclosed) but we are going to reconsider the format to try and encourage a greater attendance. Any ideas? Why didn't you join us? Several people on the New Year's Day ramble had said they would come.

### Talks

The Berkhamsted Arts Trust Festival is from October 1st – 24th; see posters and programmes about the town (and delivered with Berkhamsted Living) in September. Our contribution is:

‘An Evening with Richard Mabey’  
on October 14th

Richard Mabey, the naturalist and writer, was a Berkhamsted resident and has always been a popular and interesting speaker, so I hope you will join us at 8pm in the Great Hall, the Town Hall, to make his journey from East Anglia worthwhile, and support BCA's contribution to the Festival. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be available, as usual, from 7.45 pm. Do bring friends, even if they are not members, as they can pay £2 at the door, this being deductible from their membership fee if they decide to join the BCA.

The next date after that for your diary is November 11th, when Sheila Chauhan, from Dacorum Refuse

and Recycling will tell us what happens to the paper, plastic bottles, tins, glass etc that we leave to be recycled, in ‘Recycling the Recyclables’. We are back in the Sessions Hall at 8pm with tea, coffee and biscuits from 7.45pm.

I am delighted to say that we have found a volunteer to take over the Activities Committee from October next year. Katy Brookes-Duncan, a BCA Committee member will be organising the talks and walks. She took over the posters this year, so has had a gentle introduction. I welcome her and wish her good luck.

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### Membership Matters

*Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby*

There are still 18 of our members who do not appear to have paid their subscription for 2010. We need money to survive and the main source of our income is derived from your subscription. I agree it can be very easy to forget and put our reminders in your ‘To Do’ tray, so we hope that you will not mind being reminded yet again. We do not want to lose touch with you.

If you have paid, and I have enclosed a reminder with this Newsletter, please let me know, so that I can check my records. Regarding the 178 who have paid, thank you.

Membership currently stands at 405 members, 12 down on this time last year. We fear we will be dropping below the psychological number of 400. Please don't let that happen! The encouraging news is that new members for the year is double what it was by this time last year. One member knowing our plight joined up a friend for three years and renewed her subscription for three years, despite having already paid for this year. Could you do the same?

For those that need to contact me, please note my new address at the end of this newsletter. My telephone number remains the same.

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*Anyone know what this is, and where it can be found?*



## **Oh, you lucky readers, a whole page devoted to me!!**

*Editor (and contributor), Norman Cutting writes:*

I know we are all expected to cut back in an attempt to recover some of the monies the banks seem to have lost, but I'm sure this 'waste' hasn't escaped our local councils. It seems that the County Council is looking again how they procure services as they have been disappointed with the performance of their contractors (haven't we all?). What is surprising is that the County council has existed since before I was even born. Why is it so difficult to actually provide a service that works after all the experience they must have gained over the years?

The Borough Council is just as bad. At the moment they are cutting staff - and not just surplus staff as I know a number of 'good' people didn't get their job back when they had to re-apply for it. This suggests that staff that could easily be replaced didn't have to go through this process. I am also aware of some staff I wouldn't employ, who are still in position. To cap it all, an awful lot of money has been 'invested' in a cunning scheme to rejuvenate the area from Queensway to the Market Square in Hemel. Regular followers of my thoughts will be aware that I never did think much of it as it stood. I suppose the same people 'designed' the new entrance to Hemel but, strangely, I have been unable to find anyone who thinks it's an improvement. Now more money is being put into more consultants' pockets just to brighten up Marlowes.

I'm old enough to remember when the Town Council had a vision to improve the Town Centre. Why do they always want to change what isn't broke? I suspect that the ideas came from outsiders and this only works if you start with virgin territory. The Commission for New Towns (CNT) had exactly the right ideas and their plans actually worked. Once they let the local authorities take control, something went wrong. In Hemel, the layout, facilities and housing on the newer estates are not a patch on Adeyfield or Chaulden for example. The CNT even allowed for expansion and rebuilding of the hospital by setting aside land to accommodate a much needed improved hospital facilities for the planned growing population which by the way, Hemel has already exceeded.

Our town centre has been ruined by improvements over the years. This was brought home when I was in Derbyshire recently. I happened upon a small town which had a bypass, a railway, a canal, new homes and a shopping centre strewn along Main Street (High Street hadn't been invented in roman times - must have been the Normans!). It also had a conservation area. This conservation area appears to be exactly that; minimal 'improvements' had been made and so the charm and vibrancy remained. Contrast this with our town which seems to attract residents who love the place because it's near to the country and near to the bright lights of London. Not quite the same as wanting to move here because it's a nice place in its own right. We used to actually have factories making things as well as service companies such as the regional

headquarters of the Co-op, Outspan headquarters and Television Audience Measurement (TAM); although I admit we do have ABC now. We used to have a community, rather than residents. OK, we have a lot of clubs and societies which are well supported, but most have an aging membership just like the Citizens Association with very few 'young' members.

I don't always agree with some of the decisions made by the Citizens Association and I know they don't agree with a lot of my ideas, but we all care about our town. We are self-selected (unlike the local or national government - when did you last vote for a person rather than a party?), so why not self-select yourself or, ideally, someone younger than myself to the committee of the Citizens Association if you would like to see change as an improvement or even no change. I should warn you that reasoned argument would be useful, a thick skin, and understanding of the so-called local democratic process.

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### **Parish Paths Partnership**

The Parish Paths Partnership is a Partnership between Herts County Council and Berkhamsted Town Council, started in 1997, to promote the use and maintain in good condition the rural paths around the town. A number of local organisations are represented including the Chiltern Society, Countryside Management Service (CMS) and the BCA.

I'm the BCA representative and this year made the suggestion that to encourage residents and visitors to get out more, we ought to have a walk with a difference. The group decided that an audio walk would be different and, with the increasing use of i-pods etc., could prove popular. It was decided to base the walk on one of the routes of the Berkhamsted Waterways Walk produced by the Countryside Management Service which starts and ends at the station, goes along the canal to Sharpes Lane at Bourne End, up Sugar Lane, across to Kingshill Way to the path across the Berkhamsted School playing fields, through Butts Meadow and back to the station.

Naturally, with me involved, we couldn't make it simple, could we? Martin Hillier, of the Chiltern Society, and I were charged with doing the preparatory work and we decided to look at different aspects of the walk and combine them into an interesting half day stroll. At the time of writing, we have actually decided on a shorter route - station to Bullbeggars Lane, up Garden Field to Sugar Lane, across to the cemetery and down to Butts Meadow, Castle Street and back to station. For my part, I've looked at the history, the oddities and my own local knowledge as I'm not a natural walker. Martin is concentrating on the wildlife and nature aspect and, between us, we should end up with a walk like no other. I've even included three alternative sections without steps to help those with push or wheelchairs (got to catch the young and old as well!).

It's hoped to get the funding bid in this autumn and should mean the project will be completed by next spring. I'll keep you posted!

## Town Amenities Sub-Committee

*Gordon Bluck, TASC Chairman reports:*

Let me report what has happened since the last newsletter.

The totem pole next to the canal in Castle Street is looking a bit sad and the Berkhamsted Community Partnership are trying to get funding to restore it. The BCA is looking to put some of the footpath map profits toward this project.

The Town Council is taking forward the proposal by the BCA to look at bringing the parking at the rear of the Civic Centre into public use.

As a committee we were not sorry that the Appeal against the refusal of the New Lodge below Hall Park found in favour of the developers, as we had supported it principle all along. The "Berkhamsted is full" lobby did not win on this occasion. Every time an Appeal goes in it costs Dacorum Borough Council, and therefore us, £35,000 plus.

We objected to the latest plan for Castle Wharf.

The recent plan for development at The Grey House, Kitsbury Road has not been objected to but we have asked if there could be replacement trees.

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## Canal & Riverside Partnership (CARP)

*Norman Cutting is our representative*

CARP had a meeting in August and is still trying to resolve the thorny problems of funding improvements to the tow path between Billet Lane and Bank Mill (at least).

Having made improvements over the years, it now seems that everyone wants to use it, from walkers and cyclists to quad-bike users. This is causing wear that was not envisaged when the last improvements were implemented. I've done the measuring but we have yet to decide whether to ask for sponsorship by the yard, 100 yard or other reasonable length as it's unlikely that funding would be available from the usual sources in these difficult times.

Having said that, it has been suggested that an idea implemented on other waterways may go some way in achieving this goal. I'll keep you posted and should have some more information for the next issue.

## Walkers website gets better – and goes National

Walking in Herts [www.walkinginherts.co.uk](http://www.walkinginherts.co.uk) is a website packed with useful information for walkers.

With more than 150 walks to download and print, free, and details of around 100 guided walks every month, it also has books of walks, contact details for all the walking groups in the county and much more. Whether you want to walk on your own or with a group all the information is there in one place.

Now, after three years hard work local man John Harris has taken the concept countrywide. Walking in England [www.walkinginengland.co.uk](http://www.walkinginengland.co.uk) has thousands of walks to download and print – and all free of charge!

John said 'There is so much walking information on the web but it is difficult to find. Walking in England has brought it together in one place so whether you are walking from home or away on holiday you will be able to find a walk suitable for you'.

With walks from half a mile to twelve miles long, and a note of suitability for pushchairs and wheelchairs, everyone can find a walk to enjoy.

Did you know that walking for just 30 minutes a day can help you to:

- Feel good (you will feel fitter, your body will be more toned, and you will feel better about yourself)
- Have more energy
- Sleep better
- Reduce stress (have you ever noticed how it's difficult to walk and worry at the same time?)
- Reduce your blood pressure
- Manage your weight

So home or away, check out the websites and get walking!

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There has been a lot of comment, both in the local press and at our committee meetings, regarding the new station car park and its effect. As we go to press, the schools are still on holiday so parking is fairly easy in the town. The December issue will contain a review of the situation.

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Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association.

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