



December 2014

The Citizen

Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

Working for the social and civic life of our community

www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Chairman's Piece

Susan Johnson
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A very merry Christmas and a happy New Year to all our members! We hope you will join us at the Berkhamsted Festival of Light on Sunday 30th November to see the BCA award the Cup for the Best Christmas Shop Window. Where would we be without our very successful High Street and its thriving businesses? They make a town centre.

If you are stuck for ideas for a Christmas present, and the High Street cannot help, why not give a subscription to the BCA? A small outlay for a gift that lasts all year.

90th celebrations

The Committee agreed an informal lunch would be the best choice for a party and we have agreed the date: Saturday 18th April 2015. It will be held at Sunnyside Church Hall, so that parking is easy. It will be for members only and tickets will be sold on a first come, first served basis. There is a flyer in this newsletter which tells you how to book. Please come and celebrate our 90th year working for the good of the Town and its Citizens.

Library Service Public Consultation

Hertfordshire Library Service is carrying out a public consultation entitled Inspiring Libraries and would welcome as many contributions as possible.

Questionnaires are available in Berkhamsted library or online at www.hertsdirect.org/libraries. There is also a drop-in session in Berkhamsted library on Thursday 4th December from 3.00 – 5.00 pm where you can share your views with a senior representative from Herts Libraries. The consultation period ends on 7th December 2014. The future of Berkhamsted library is particularly important in view of the proposed development of the site.



Section 106

Gordon Bluck

At the beginning of November the Chairman and Vice Chairman of BCA meet with Council Leader and Deputy Dacorum Borough Council. We had an informal meeting with Councillors Andrew Williams and Margaret Griffiths, being the portfolio holders for planning and social housing respectively. As our membership should be aware there are considerable sums available from "Section 106" monies paid by developers to the Borough and County Councils to facilitate new building permissions. This allocated according to a formula and is for infrastructure in the locality; social housing, education etc. Since we started a push to spend this money, some of that allocated for social/affordable housing had been unspent after 3 years. We were heartened to hear that real progress is being made to locate suitable sites to buy and develop, if they are not already owned by DBC. There had been virtually no council housing in the Borough over 25 years and there is a real push to get things done especially at Farm Place in Berkhamsted where the scheme had stalled with the Housing Association. Although government guidelines state S106 money should be spent in the town where the population have put up with the building work, we were told this will not happen with money allocated to social/affordable housing which will be allocated within the Borough. The Councillors convinced us that this was the only way to get value for these large sums of money. Both Chairman Susan and I were both impressed that both Andrew and Margaret, highly experienced Councillors are on top of this housing problem with a projected spend of £50 million in the coming years. Members should be aware of the type of representation the Committee undertake on their behalf.

Subscriptions for 2015

Continuing a practice we have done for many years, we are enclosing with this Winter newsletter, a renewal slip (including 15 final reminders) to our 189 members who are due to pay for 2015 (£5). If you were to consider paying a three year subscription (£15), it would make life all that much easier this time next year.

Closed 'Ports of Call'

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby

As a follow up to the article 'Pub Signs in Berkhamsted' (*The Citizen*, September 2014), we thought you might be interested in the pubs that have closed over the last 100 years or so. In Percy Birtchnell's book *A Short History of Berkhamsted*, Northchurch & Berkhamsted boasted 30 ports of call in the 1880s.

By 1972, this had dropped to 17. Now there are only 11. This excludes the hopefully temporary closure of the George and Dragon, 87 High Street, Northchurch. This is just a start; readers may like to do further research. Do please contact us if you do.

NOTES

High Street, north side

1. One Bell, 154 closed 1959 and demolished: site of Aitchison's
2. White Hart, 170 closed c.1972 and demolished: 1861- 1972: site of Boots

High Street, south side

3. Black Horse, 29 closed c.1983: C17th (listed g II) The Curry Garden
4. Queens Arms, 53 closed 1968: C17th or earlier (listed g II): residential
5. The Five Bells, 163 closed 1860's (lost licence): C17th or earlier (listed g II): Bill's
6. Red Lion, 181 closed early C20th and demolished; HSBC
7. Royal Oak, 247 closed 1909: replaced by Gas Company Office: Ask Italian

Castle Street

8. Gardeners Arms, 21 closed 1966-68: residential
9. The Boote, 37 closed c.1920: C17th (1605) (listed g II): residential
10. Railway Hotel, 48 demolished to make way for residential
11. George & Dragon Coffee Tavern now part of Berkhamsted School

Chapel Street

12. Brownlow Arms, 19 closed 1990: rebuilding of an early Victorian pub: 1990-2014 offices; residential

Mill Street

13. Castle, Mill Street & 49 Castle St closed c.1967: c.1840 (listed g II): residential
14. Edward VI closed 1920s: demolished 1960: Berkhamsted School
15. Fish, 5 bought by Berkhamsted School in 1959

Park Street,

16. Gardeners Arms was known as Carpenters Arms in 1881

Gossoms End

17. Rose & Crown, 50 closed 2010: residential
18. Stag, closed early 1920s (lost licence), demolished 1971

Billet Lane

19. The Crooked Billet closed c.2006: 1766 demolished and rebuilt 1964 for road widening: Majestic Wine

Northchurch

20. The Grey Mare, 144 High St
11 residential units closed c.2004: original rebuilt between the wars: demolished: now
21. Pheasant, Orchard End closed early 1920s (lost licence)
22. Compasses, New Road demolished: 28 residential units
23. The Bell

Dudswell

24. The Swan closed 1848 (lost licence): 1799 – 1848) (listed g II)

Breweries

- The Swan Brewery, Chesham Road
Locke & Smith Brewery, Water Lane closed 1914: supplied over 40 public houses locally

Town Amenities Sub-Committee

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BCA Environment Award

One of the benefits of our Membership Secretary taking well-deserved retirement is that the BCA's Environment Award is approached in an even more methodical and efficient manner. Throughout the year, Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby has been foot-slogging the streets of Berkhamsted, taking photographs of new additions and improvements to our streetscape and enabling comparisons of 'old' and 'new' to be made. Christopher generally uses the database of Planning applications and approvals as a point of reference, but sometimes there is no substitute for keeping one's eyes open to see what has been going on.

No-one can have missed the fact that 2014 commemorates the centenary of the start of the First World War. Berkhamsted's war memorial has been spruced up, and poppy seeds have been sown at strategic locations around the Town. A replacement for Birtchnells, though not a carbon copy, has filled in a 'hole' in the town centre. The old Post Office and Delivery Office has been converted and extended to house M&S Simply Food and two café / restaurant outlets, and a Berkhamsted residence featured in a TV property makeover show. Flower troughs have brought vibrant colours to the pavements and gateways to the Town. The installation of lifts at the station has been delayed by site conditions, however the benefits of the access that lifts will provide has been tempered somewhat by the inappropriate siting of the sub-station required to power the lifts themselves, and its ugly palisade enclosure.

Christopher listed twenty-five initial candidates for the Environment Award this year. The Town Amenities Sub-committee will whittle that down to a short list, but we want to hear the views of the membership – what are your 'wonders and blunders' on the Berkhamsted street scene in 2014? Please give your thoughts to Paul Crosland, the Chairman of TASC by e-mail (see above).

Canal Towpath Upgrade, Part Two

In the June 2014 edition of *'The Citizen'*, we predicted that the next stage of the towpath upgrade, between the Waitrose bridge and Stag Lane, would take place during the summer. Other priorities elsewhere on the canal network as well as the ongoing works at Lock 52 (Park Street) meant that the upgrade works, carried out by the Canal & River Trust, were delayed. However, we are promised that they will be done this winter and the good news is that extra funding has been found to enable the surfaced towpath width on the Stag Lane

section to be increased to 1.75m – a little under 6 foot. This should mean that cyclists and walkers no longer have to 'compete' for right of way over this section. Looking further into the future, the Canal & River Trust already has its eyes on "Section 106" monies for sustainable transport identified in the proposed Lidl development at Gossoms End. Securing these funds should enable the towpath upgrade project to be completed to Billet Lane.

As part of the towpath upgrade, The Canal & River Trust will install mooring rings along the towpath for the use of visitors to the Town. The BCA will contribute some funds, as will the Berkhamsted Community Partnership, to purchase the rings and the Inland Waterways Association will fund their installation.

Read All About It

Back in February, we reported that the BCA intended to fund a noticeboard to be located on London Road, near to Swing Gate School. As we go to press, the board has been delivered and installed and is available for posting of community notices. The purchase of the noticeboard is part of the BCA's 90th birthday celebration, continuing the BCA's tradition of working for the benefit of the community in Berkhamsted.

Signs of Street Clutter

In September, a rash of sign posts suddenly appeared, without warning. They turned out to be the handiwork of Herts Highways and their contractor, Ringway, and were intended to correct the signage installed previously. The 20 mph zone in the town centre wasn't enforceable as there were no signs telling motorists where the 20 zone ended. So, signs appeared in all sorts of inappropriate places – Church Lane outside St. Peter's Church, Prince Edward Street and Elm Grove, proclaiming that the 20 zone was ending and motorists could now proceed at 30 mph. In these streets, it would be well nigh impossible to reach 30 under any circumstances. Meetings were hastily arranged with County councillors and officers, and an outbreak of common sense has occurred..... the traffic orders are being revised so that the above streets and others are now to be included in the 20 zone, and hence the many of the signs have been removed once again. One offending sign remains, partially blocking the footway on the High Street near Boxwell Road. We are told that the size and weight of this sign determined where its support must stand, and it has to stay. One blot on an otherwise good news story, where good sense has prevailed..... Now how much of precious funding did that little exercise cost, we are tempted to ask!

Last Post?

You probably remember back to May when a truck careered out of control and embedded itself in the front wall of a house in the High Street, near to Swing Gate Lane. A phone box and a pillar box were also destroyed. The Town Council requested Royal Mail to reinstate the post box and all seemed to be going well, until Royal Mail decided the location is "too dangerous". Royal Mail is now refusing to replace the post box, saying that they have looked at other alternative sites nearby, but these all have below-ground obstructions.

The loss of this post box leaves a substantial void in this part of town and inconveniences local residents. We have objected to Royal Mail's plans on behalf of local citizens. We encourage members to lobby the Town Council, so that they maintain pressure to have the post box reinstated. Alternatively, you can write to Royal Mail at Pillar Box Collections, Royal Mail, 100 Victoria Embankment, London EC4Y 1HQ, or e-mail customerservice@your.royalmail.com. who have signed up over the course of the year.

Activities

Susan Johnson
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Our first talk on Thursday 9th October 2014 by Greg Blesson of the Red Squirrel Brewery, Potten End was really interesting on the evolution of the craft beer industry. Real Ale was not only the topic, but was given away to the lucky audience! Then on 13th November 2014 Dr James Moir (planning consultant and Berkhamsted resident) talked to a packed Sessions Hall about the recent changes to the Berkhamsted Conservation Area; and the ambitions of the newly-formed 'Friends of St. Peter's' and its Three Close Lane cemetery project.

To start the New Year, Paul Crosland will lead the New Year's Day Ramble. You fill in the date. The time is 10.30 am. On 5th February we have a talk by the leading expert on the Beatles, Mark Lewisohn, who also happens to be a member! Come and relive your youth! Or if you are a youth, come and see the history of British pop music.

We hope you are enjoying your 2014/15 programme. Please share the topics with friends and family, as we often glean new members through our talks.

Membership Counts

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby
membership@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

According to our records, there are still 15 yet to pay their subscription for 2014. We regret that we have to enclose a **final** reminder, inviting them to pay for 2015 as well. As we do not want to lose members, if you are one of them, please may I have your subscription? If you have paid, and have been sent this reminder, would you please contact me as a matter of urgency? If you do not intend to renew it would be good to hear from you giving your reason.

Membership currently stands at 359 households, A warm welcome to our four new members, including one who unexpectedly dropped in their application form to me earlier this month and the one who rejoined after a gap of two years. They join the 16 that have joined up over the course of the year.

This makes an encouraging 24 for the year. This means we reverse our gains on last year with only three down on this time last year.

You know what the Association does. We have tried in the past newsletters to encourage you to recruit a new member. Please could persuade a friend or neighbour to send me £5 together with their name and address? This could be considered as giving the same Christmas present to more than two people: your friends and us!

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to say a very big thank you to the 60 deliverers, which we are apt to take for granted for both delivering and on many occasions, collect subscriptions. It makes my life all that more easy. Several have certainly been doing it for 30 years, when my mother was Membership Secretary.

Electronic Newsletter

Would you like to be among the 13% of members who will receive this Newsletter electronically (pdf)? By getting it this way, members receive it in advance of hand delivered copies and possibly in colour!

If interested please let me know. E-mail addresses will be maintained confidentially by the BCA. They will neither be disclosed to other members nor made available to third parties under any circumstances. The newsletters are of course sent out as blind copies.

In addition we maintain a list of those that have asked to receive a reminder in advance of our meetings (or other important announcements). If you would like to be included in this register, please let me know. Over a third of you receive information this way.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of
the Association

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