



September 2013

# The Citizen

Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

Working for the social and civic life of our community

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

## Chairman's Column

*Katy Brookes-Duncan*

I'd like to start with a big thank you to the committee members for all their hard work over the summer while I've been busy with family commitments. Both the sub-groups, TASC and Activities, have been busy. We have an interesting programme of talks to look forward to. TASC's work never ceases!

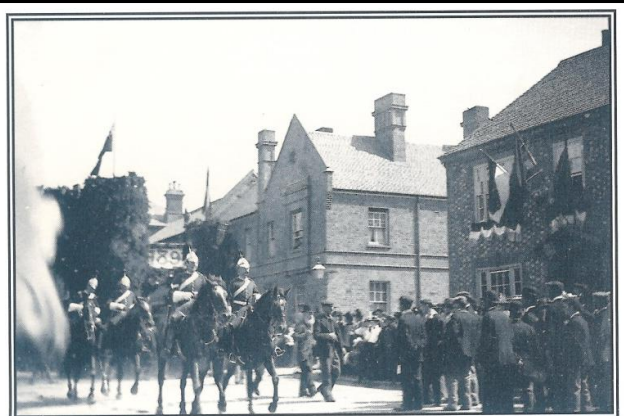
While I know some people are concerned about the speed of development and change around the Town it's a sign that we have a thriving community. In the current economic climate we are lucky that rather than the High Street contracting; a number of businesses close for refurbishment and new ones continue to open in vacated shops.

However, not all developments are to be welcomed and I was pleased to note that the Planning Inspectorate recently rejected the proposal for an all-weather pitch in the Green Belt which the Association has consistently objected to. As you know the Committee will continue to monitor developments and seek to influence them in favour of the social, civic and amenity of our community.

If you spot anything around the Town you are concerned about do get in touch with one of us.

## Berkhamsted Police Station Site

You may have seen publicity for a local group called 'B-Hive'. This group, which has its roots in Transition Town Berkhamsted, has been actively seeking the local population's views on what should replace the Berkhamsted Police Station - the site of which has been vacant in the town centre for the past two years. The group is also looking at ways of using the Civic Centre building for the benefit of our community. Whilst the Citizens Association has no formal link with B-Hive, we are encouraged by the energy and commitment its members have shown in engendering interest in the future development of this site. For more information contact John Bell on 07811 379938 or e-mail [info@bhiveberko.org.uk](mailto:info@bhiveberko.org.uk)



*Berkhamsted Police Station, newly built at the corner of Kings Road in 1894.*

From 'Berkhamsted' by Scott Hastie



The old police station (above) and King's Road before it was widened in late Victorian times

Taken in the 1860s

From 'A Short History of Berkhamsted by Percy Birtchnell'



...and today.

## Town Amenities Sub-Committee

*Paul Crosland, Chairman*

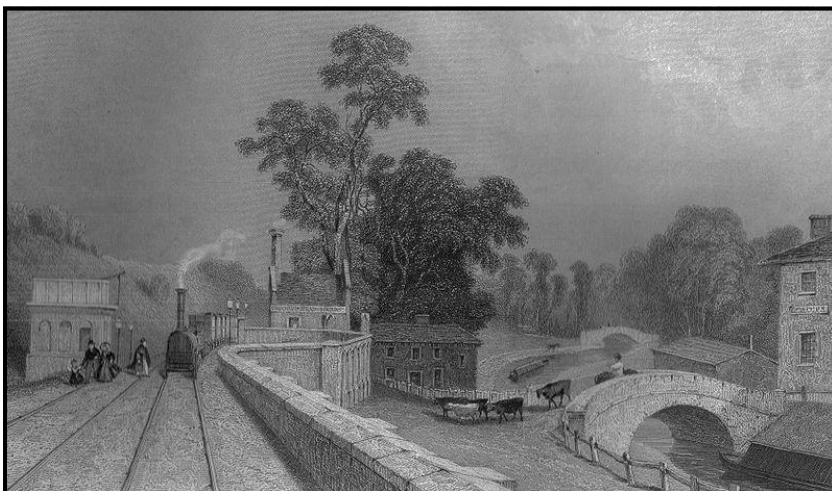
### ***The Canal Towpath – an update***

In the spring edition of *The Citizen* I expressed the BCA's frustration at the apparent confusion over the type of surfacing to be used for the towpath refurbishment. There was also local comment and speculation over the alleged high cost of the works. Eventually, after several prompts from the BCA, a report on the Towpath upgrade was prepared by the Canal and River Trust (CART) – the successors to British Waterways – which addressed these issues and other points. The cost of the refurbishment works came within the £76,000 budget by around £7,500. The money left unspent is now being put towards further towpath upgrade works on the section between Canal Fields (Waitrose) and Park Street bridge, and CART is actively seeking funding for these works.

Another project that CART is seeking funding for is the provision of additional mooring bollards at various locations along the canal to encourage boaters to moor up in designated areas rather than damage the towpath surface by knocking pins into the ground. CART will also repair the cracked retaining wall adjacent to Castle Street bridge, but has not identified precisely when this work will be done.

### ***Retaining Wall at Lincoln Court, Charles St***

The parlous state of a retaining wall along the Charles Street frontage to Lincoln Court, near to Kings Road, has led to closure of the adjacent footway for safety reasons. This has been the status quo for around the past year. The footway closure has brought its own safety concerns as pedestrians have had to walk in the road around the obstruction. With the site being in the conservation area, we understand that part of the delay was the result of discussions between the Lincoln Court Management Company and the planning officers over the type of brick to be used in the repair works. Earlier in the summer, the Lincoln Court Management Company submitted a planning application for the repairs and, unusually, requested that the works be carried out in phases, in order to spread the cost.



Berkhamsted's first station (1838) on the London and Birmingham Railway with the Grand Junction Canal to the right-hand side

The Citizens Association objected to this on the grounds of loss of amenity over a period of up to five years, during which time the wall will be in an unfinished condition, and will look ugly.

Furthermore, we believe that the footway will remain closed, further inconveniencing local residents. Nevertheless, Dacorum Borough Council has approved the planning application, and the Citizens Association is working to see how this intrusion can be mitigated for the benefit of the town's residents.

### ***Multi-storey Car Park***

In the Spring issue of *The Citizen*, I sought the views of the membership on the proposals to construct a multi-storey car park on the existing parking site adjacent to Waitrose on the Lower Kings Road side. The majority of respondents were in favour of more parking provision, though not necessarily on that site. Some suggested more underground parking and there was even one suggestion of building a car park under Butts Meadow. Radical thinking should challenge conventional wisdom to arrive at the best solution. However, such ideas often carry a high price tag. With tightly-controlled budgets, a quick, easy, relatively cheap - but perhaps not optimal - solution may be looked upon more favourably than one which is better for the town in the long run.

### ***Lower Kings Road trees***

A further update on this item: the three trees planted on the corner of Lower Kings Road and Brownlow Road near to the station, which were funded by the Berkhamsted Citizens Association. Despite appearances to the contrary earlier this year, one of the trees – the one nearest to the station – did not survive last winter. The good news is that it is scheduled to be replaced by Dacorum Borough Council, free of charge, at the appropriate time, later this year.

### ***Gable Hall***

The Berkhamsted Citizens Association has been successful in having Gable Hall in Prince Edward Street put on the Register of Assets of Community Value, only the third such building in Dacorum to be registered.

Gable Hall is owned by Dacorum Borough Council and has in recent years come under threat of demolition due to its dilapidated condition. But the Citizens thought it was worth preserving for all sorts of community meetings and social activities like children's parties for many years previously. The building is currently used by a theatre group. Registration will ensure that the BCA will be informed of decisions concerning its disposal/ demolition. and will then have six months to organise a bid to buy the building.

Our success has already inspired other groups in the borough to apply for the registration of buildings in their area as 'Assets of Community Value'.

## ***Kitchener's Field***

We took pleasure in noting that the application by Berkhamsted School to install 'astroturf' hockey pitches on their land adjacent to Kitchener's Field at Castle Hill, to which the BCA strongly objected, has been rejected by the Planning Inspectorate after an Appeal by the School. This means that, at least for now, the view across this corner of our Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will not be blighted by artificial intrusions.

## ***Core Strategy***

The approval in July, by the Inspector (appointed on behalf of the Department of Communities and Local Government) of the Dacorum Borough Council Core Strategy for the period up to 2031, means that it is now more difficult, though not impossible, for developers to propose large-scale development on sites which are not identified in it. Nevertheless, as pressure increases on central government to increase the housing stock, we can expect more applications for development 'via the back door'. Dacorum BC has committed to carry out a partial review of the Core Strategy by 2017-18, which may affect land currently within the Green Belt. The Berkhamsted Citizens Association remains strongly opposed to any incursions of development into the Green Belt, or re-designation of Green Belt land.

## ***Let There Be Light -but Only Externally !***

One of the subjects that raise the ire of TASC members during our monthly review of planning applications is internal illumination of signage within the Berkhamsted conservation area. In the past few months, most of our high street banks have applied for planning permission to install new shop-fronts, which invariably includes new signage. Signage and advertising in general is controlled by the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007, which has been in force since 6 April 2007. Whilst in general, illuminated signs carry a 'deemed consent', and do not require planning permission as long as certain criteria are satisfied, deemed consent does not apply in conservation areas (amongst others). It is the policy of the local planning authority (Dacorum Borough Council), that within the conservation areas in its jurisdiction, internal illumination is not acceptable and all signage has to be externally lit. This includes, for example, lighting around bank ATM machines. At the time of writing, Tesco Metro has made a planning application to change its shopfront and the proposals include an internally illuminated sign as well as increased bill-board space on the sides and rear of the store. Naturally, TASC has objected to these proposals for a prominent site within the conservation area.

## ***Lifts at Berkhamsted Station***

Works have commenced to install lifts to all platforms at Berkhamsted railway station as part of Network Rail's 'Access for All' programme. We are informed that lifts will be available for use at all times that trains serve the station. Works are due to be completed by February 2014.

## ***A-round and A-bout***

Hertfordshire County Council recently submitted two separate planning applications to place four, free-standing, post-mounted advertisement boards on each of the two roundabouts at the junction of the A41 and Chesham Road. The BCA objected to each Application on the following grounds:

1. The proposal involved the proliferation of street furniture in a rural setting
2. An aesthetic objection to advertisements on the side of the highway
3. The signs would be a distraction to drivers
4. In principle, objection to placing advertisements on the highway, which itself runs contrary to the Herts CC policy of opposing advertisements on the side of the highway on safety grounds

The application pertaining to the roundabout on the 'Chesham' side of the A41 was rejected. The application to place advertisements on the Kingshill Way/ Chesham Road junction, although recommended for approval by the officer, was unanimously rejected by the Development Control Committee. TASC had lobbied strongly against this proposal and were satisfied with the result that advertisement hoardings on the roundabouts will not be going ahead.

If you would like to comment on any aspect of the work that the Town Amenities Sub-Committee does, please feel free to contact the Sub-Committee Chairman, Paul Crosland, by e-mail to [peejaycee@yahoo.com](mailto:peejaycee@yahoo.com).

A postcard published soon after relocated station was opened in 1875



## BCA Activities

*Susan Johnson*

Our final activity of the last season was the summer walk on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> June, led by Paul Crosland. Eight people took part on a fine summer's day. The shady garden at the 'Full Moon' at Cholesbury made a welcome place for a lunch-time halt.

Our programme for 2013-14 starts on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> October, excitingly, with the first talk in Berkhamsted on the subject of 'The Devil's Own Trenches, the World War I Trench Mapping Project on Berkhamsted Common'. This project was undertaken last winter by volunteers, principally from the Chilterns Commons Project run by the Chilterns Conservation Board and The Chiltern Society, as part of the forthcoming 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the First World War. The training camp for the Inns of Court Officers Training Corps – known as 'The Devil's Own' – was on what has come to be known as 'Kitchener's Field'; and they practised building trenches on the Common. We are very privileged to be the first group in Berkhamsted to host this topic and our thanks go to Norman Groves.

The second talk this season will be on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November by representatives of Herts Constabulary on the subject of rural policing. If this topic is mentioned I am sure most of us think of investigating the theft of rare birds' eggs or the illegal hunting of small furry creatures. Well, this is certainly part of the work involved, but nowadays it is equally likely to be about the theft of farm equipment and its illegal export. We look forward to being brought into the modern world of rural crime.

We have some interesting and varied speakers this season, which you can see in the Programme card enclosed with this newsletter. The events also appear in the so-called 'Green Sheet' (the Berkhamsted Arts Trust leaflet) which will be coming out soon. Please do attend if you can. It makes our efforts, and those of our speakers, so much more worthwhile!

As you know, all talks take place on a Thursday in the Town Hall and start at 8 p.m.; and walks start from the Station at 10.30 a.m. Tell your friends and neighbours! Although the Activities Sub-Committee which used to organise these events does not actually meet, we have had recent interest from a volunteer who might augment our numbers and join the informal group comprising Miranda Cummins (our Association Secretary), Rita Jones, Jude Egan and me who are trying to keep this side of things going. But we are not complacent. Please, get in touch with me or the Chairman if you are interested in joining us, or other activities undertaken by the BCA. Your Association needs you!

## Membership Counts

*Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby*  
[christopher@talbot-ponsonby.org](mailto:christopher@talbot-ponsonby.org)

A big and warm welcome to the new member who picked up a leaflet from the Library. This means our household membership is now 353, still forty down on this time last year. This will drop even lower if we lose any of those still to renew. In 2003 we were 583.

As we have consistently said "joining is not just going to meetings, or receiving newsletters, but it is to help us have an influence in having a say." It is therefore very important that we maintain our membership because if it continues to fall we may no longer be listened to.

There are currently 16 members with outstanding subscriptions. If you are one of them, a reminder is enclosed with this newsletter. Please consider renewing, we REALLY DO NOT want to lose you. Thank you to all those that have renewed for this year including the 75 who have renewed for 3 years.

You know what the Citizens Association does. Please ask a friend and or a neighbour if they are members. If not encourage them to join by sending me £5 along with their name and address.

### **Electronic Newsletter**

Would you like to be among the 10% of members who will receive this Newsletter electronically (pdf)? By getting it this way, members receive it in advance of other members and possibly in colour!

If interested please let me know. E-mail addresses will be maintained confidentially by the BCA. They will not 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 now have a register 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 list, please let me know. So far over 20% have signed up to this service.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association.

Contributions and comments to: Katy Brookes-Duncan  
58 Woodlands Avenue HP4 2JQ or [k.bd@me.com](mailto:k.bd@me.com)

Published by the Berkhamsted Citizens Association ©

Printed by Strongs Printing Services tel: 878592