



BTC

UPDATE

The Newsletter of Berkhamsted Town Council

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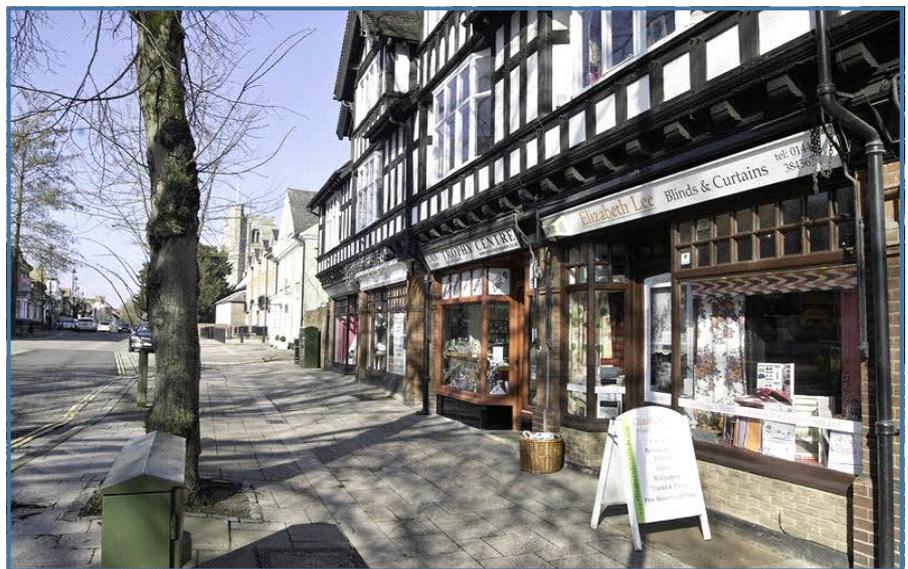
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Welcome to Our Town



Photograph by Julian Ashbourn

Berkhamsted is a market town whose roots extend back to the middle ages. In 1066, the Norman invaders made their way up to the Chilterns and it was in Berkhamsted that William the Conqueror was offered the Crown of England. The party then rode down to London and William was officially crowned King of England at Westminster on Christmas Day 1066.

The ruins of Berkhamsted Castle bear witness to events which occurred over the next few hundred years when Berkhamsted remained an important town

and the castle received many distinguished visitors. It was finally abandoned in 1495 after which local builders helped themselves to much of its masonry in order to construct new properties.

Today, Berkhamsted faces many new challenges and yet retains much of its traditional charm. There remains much to discover for those who are new to the area. Also new is this Newsletter which has been produced following requests from residents. We do hope that you enjoy reading it.

The Provision of Housing

The provision of housing is an issue that will doubtless be an ongoing one as our country continues to struggle with demand. New housing estates and apartment blocks are springing up not only in the south east, but all over the country. The situation has an attendant effect upon property prices which, as we know, have spiralled in recent years.

For those easily able to afford new homes, it is a question of snapping them up as they appear on the market. For others, there are various housing association schemes, and new developments often include a proportion of what is referred to as 'affordable' housing, although the term may be construed by many as relative. Existing houses change hands in a merry-go-round of buying and selling which tends to further elevate prices.

Amid this dynamic market-driven foray, the provision of traditional Council housing is perhaps easily overlooked. And yet, the Farm Place development in Berkhamsted has demonstrated a commitment to the provision of Council housing that is refreshing in the current climate. In all, twenty six new homes have been provided, covering a number of tenant requirements. There are six three bedroom houses, eight two bedroom apartments and twelve one bedroom apartments within this attractive development.



Photograph by Julian Ashbourn

Furthermore, these are nicely built homes which have been constructed to the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 standard. This means that they are particularly energy efficient as well as attractive in design. The new homes, once available, were

quickly allocated and the fortunate residents are now enjoying this important development in our town. The Farm Place development demonstrates that there remains a place for well designed Council accommodation among the bewildering array of property development in modern times. It also received a commendation in the recent Berkhamsted Citizen's Association Awards Scheme.

By Julian Ashbourn



Photograph by Julian Ashbourn

Rectory Lane Cemetery

A United States ambassador to this country once wrote that he had never experienced peace until he walked through an English churchyard. An hour spent recently in Rectory Lane Cemetery reminded me how much I share his sentiment. I have heard the cemetery described as a hidden treasure, and how few people know of its existence. No longer used for burial purposes, the cemetery remains much as it has, I suspect for decades, open to the public but with no attempt to beautify it beyond cutting the grass and attention to a dangerously leaning gravestone.

My visit takes place on a glorious morning in April. The sun is shining and the birds are in full song. I am reminded why English poets are obsessed with writing about the sky. The grass is dotted with daisies and dandelions. There are shadows made by the trees and the larger gravestones. They give the cemetery a mysterious, theatrical atmosphere. There are the war graves, their shining whiteness signalling their importance. The names and ages of the interred are carefully etched. I notice how young these men were, boys, really. Academics are still explaining the battles where they died. All of

us continue to live with the aftermath. History, like everything else, is cause and effect.

I notice a Christmas wreath, brown with decay. It has been placed on a very old grave. I wonder why someone placed it there. I hear an unknown voice saying, "I put a wreath there because my mother did, and her mother before her." There is no mention of the wreath's significance. Perhaps the ritual is now a comforting end in itself. I hear another voice, suspiciously like my own, advising me to mind my own business.



Photograph by Julian Ashbourn

Amongst the many graves, their headstones' inscriptions now defaced by the weather, is one covered in tulips in full flower. The grave's occupant is almost certainly now as dust, as is probably, the one who did the planting. Very likely they are both now a vague memory to one or two people or even totally forgotten. Still those tulips continue to flower year after year, decade after decade, their gaudy brilliance a complete contrast to their surroundings. I am reminded that we know very little and understand even less.

Someone appears with a machine to cut the grass. There is no attempt to emulate a lawn, just a gentle whirring to prevent the cemetery becoming a meadow. It is important for us to be able to walk around as we think and reflect or, even, just to walk. The dead are also being shown a level of respect. Perhaps that might remind us to show similar to the living.

I munch the remains of my lunchtime sandwich and shake a few crumbs on to the grass. A sparrow suddenly becomes very anxious that I go. I leave the cemetery and walk down the hill towards the

town. I pass a giggling group of ladies, fresh lipstick applied, hair neatly combed, on their way to an afternoon at the adjacent cinema. They are followed by two elderly gentlemen, on their way to the same destination, but with a more serious approach. I go on to buy a birthday card and slippers. In a couple of hours I have experienced the thoughtful and the prosaic. Life really.

By Elaine Collins

Editor's note. The Friends of St. Peter's have secured an initial Heritage Lottery Fund grant to develop a scheme to refurbish the Rectory Lane Cemetery.

An Overview of Planning

Planning is perhaps one of the most interesting factors that affect our town, its future and, consequently, the lives of all of our residents.

The Berkhamsted Town Council Planning Committee meets every three weeks to consider pending planning applications. Details of the applications which affect the Berkhamsted area are forwarded by Dacorum Borough Council for this purpose. Planning applications range from simple alterations and extensions to proposals for entire new build housing estates. In addition, there are proposals for demolition and rebuild, requests for alterations to or the removal of trees, proposals for specialist structures and so on. Naturally, some proposals become controversial, especially if they are perceived to have an impact upon neighbouring areas. For example, if a new construction will overlook existing properties, or will add unwanted congestion to an area.



Photograph by Julian Ashbourn

The evaluation of planning applications can become a little complex. Such evaluation is governed by alignment with the National Planning Policy Framework, laid down by Government and in accordance with the Dacorum Borough Council Core Strategy, which constitutes Dacorum's Local Planning Framework and which includes a raft of policies covering various situations. In addition, much of Berkhamsted exists as a Conservation Area, there are various listed buildings and some areas are within the designated Green Belt or within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, all of which have implications for planning.

Consequently, when evaluating applications, all of the above needs to be taken into consideration and conclusions cannot be reached simply because an application may be liked or disliked. Ultimately, it is Dacorum Borough Council who, as the Planning Authority, maintain the Core Strategy and who decide whether an application is granted or refused. However, the Town Council performs a valuable role by scrutinising all applications for the Berkhamsted area and providing local knowledge in order to make recommendations. Some applications are forwarded for information only, such as those for permitted development for example, and these are noted accordingly. Others invite a response from the Town Council Planning Committee and such responses are summarised as an objection (with qualifying remarks and references to local planning recommendations), no objection (self explanatory), or occasionally a concern, whereby there is no objection in principle although certain qualifying concerns and recommendations will be raised.

Applications are considered at the regular Town Council Planning Committee meetings. Residents may attend these meetings, if they so wish, and may also address the Committee with regard to specific applications. All published plans, submitted comments and residents' views as expressed are taken into consideration. Often, there is unanimous agreement as to what recommendations should be made. Occasionally, individual committee members might have conflicting opinions, in which case a vote is taken and a decision made accordingly; all of which is recorded within the meeting minutes, and these are subsequently made available on the

Berkhamsted Town Council web site. In instances where the Town Council objects to an application but planning officers recommend approval, these are referred to the Borough Council Development Control Committee for a decision. Town Councillors may, by arrangement, address the Development Control Committee meeting, as may residents and applicants.

Dacorum Borough Council maintains an excellent planning section within its main web site, where relevant policies may be perused and where the details of applications may also be examined. In addition, residents may submit their views with respect to specific applications directly via this portal. The planning web site be found at:

<http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development>

By Julian Ashbourn

The Berkhamsted Raiders

A small town club.... number 1 in the UK, and number 2 in Europe!

From its creation in 1996 by a group of enthusiastic "football Dads" Berkhamsted Raiders has grown to become a community organisation providing sport for around 800 children in Berkhamsted and the surrounding areas. The club runs 70 teams from U7 to U18, and operates Senior, Veteran and Ladies teams. The last twenty years have seen not only the massive expansion of the Club, but the recognition of Raiders as a model of how youth football should be run.



Photograph by Julian Ashbourn

In 2015, Raiders was awarded FA Charter Standard Community Club of the Year, and in 2016, received the Silver Award as UEFA European Grassroots Club of the Year..... so our small town of Berkhamsted is home to the number one youth football club in the UK, and the number two club in Europe!

It's not all about winning

Raiders plays competitive football but measures its success by the enjoyment and involvement of children from our local community.... and the parent volunteers who help to make it all happen. At Raiders, it's not all about winning Leagues and Cups. The Raiders philosophy is summed up as: "Combining excellence in the community with excellence on the pitch".

What's the secret of Raiders success?

As a club, Raiders prides participation, effort, development and performance more than just results. It's an all abilities club that aims to give every child the opportunity to participate in sport.

One of the key factors in Raiders success has been the way that the Club works with local schools, and in particular, Ashlyns School. BerkoAstro (the floodlit 3G pitch), and the Paul Beard Centre (the adjacent building) were the result of a partnership with Ashlyns that generated over £700,000 of funding for a sports facility which has benefited Raiders, Ashlyns, other local schools and the community at large. The resulting venture generates a significant surplus each year which is reinvested into sports development by Raiders and the School.

The support of local schools has been integral to Raiders success. Pitches are provided by Berkhamsted School (at no charge to Raiders), at Ashlyns, Bridgewater, Thomas Coram, Egerton Rothesay, Greenway and St Mary's. In most cases, Raiders funds the provision of goals and nets for use by Raiders and the school. Of course, on a Sunday morning, you will also see the blue and black stripes of Raiders at many other locations in the town - Berkhamsted Cricket Club, Lagley Meadow, Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead Hockey Club and Wigginton Recreation Ground.

Support from local business

Running a successful youth football club costs money - over £130,000 last year to run Raiders. But

the membership subscriptions only contribute 65% of the running costs. The rest has to be found elsewhere.... from fundraising activities, from grants and most of all from the fifty or so local businesses who support the Club through sponsorship. Every child's shirt carries the name of a local Berkhamsted business or a national brand.



Photograph by Julian Ashbourn

What does the future hold?

The biggest challenge for Raiders is finding more training and playing facilities to accommodate the ever increasing demand from local children who want to play football. The long term aim is to find a home for Raiders, a single location that can provide a clubhouse and a focal point for the Club.

Growing the girls section at Raiders is the immediate priority. Football is now the number one team sport for girls in the UK. The number of girls playing football at Raiders might double in the next few years... if Raiders can find some space for them to play.

By Keith Pollard

Editors note. We wish the raiders well with their future endeavours and look forward to hearing of further success for both boys and girls teams.

Further information about the Raiders may be found online at:

<http://www.berkhamsteraiders.co.uk/>

The hills are alive . . . with silence (well almost)

Most weekends in the winter and weekends and evenings in the summer, the hills and lanes around Berkhamsted play host to a growing population of cyclists, tyres humming, gears whirring and in my case chest wheezing and coughing. Almost silence, but not quite. My contribution may be a bit of an exaggeration; the last time I went out on my bike was 10 years ago. Hills around Berkhamsted are fearsome for the out of condition, occasional cyclist. The strange thing to me, and I have checked this so many times: the more serious the club rider or racer, the more they love hills. I have talked to cyclists in many countries and still the answer comes back, "Yes we love hills."

The first time I heard this, what to me seemed like a strange statement, was when I was invited, as last year's Town Mayor, to present the Berkhamsted Cycling Club with their new club jerseys. After spending some time with them, waving off the weekend club ride, I met them after the ride for a chat and some coffee and that is where I first learned of this strange mental switch.

Berkhamsted Cycling Club is relatively new on the scene, but has an enviable record of growth with over 180 members joining since it started 2 years ago. It has a growing reputation for excellence in competition but for me the most interesting facet is its inclusivity. Club rides have a variety of levels and they are happy to include people, not in the first flush of youth, who need some electric power to get up the steeper hills, but more of the club activities later.

Berkhamsted attracts cyclists from all over the South East, many bringing their cycles on the train. I can only see this number increasing in the future, although there are some anomalies that may need to be addressed by making the town more cycle friendly.

To give some perspective to the current popularity of cycling, Hertfordshire included cycling as one of the topics in the latest Hertfordshire County Travel Survey. There were some interesting findings, for example 53% of male respondents owned a bike but only 36% of females. There were more than 6,000 respondents so this is a reasonable sample. 81% of cycle trips were made by a male. Looking at this it would seem that fewer women have cycles and they make fewer journeys than men. It would

be interesting to find out if it is cycling, safety or infrastructure that has generated this difference (*or perhaps domestic responsibilities such as child care—Ed*). I have never counted heads but whenever I have been to a cycle friendly country like the Netherlands there are as many women cycling as men.

There are a number of measures that would help. Probably the most helpful would be car and cycle segregation, but this would be difficult in a Victorian town with narrow streets, but there are some possible locations that might be considered. Somewhere safe to put the bike would also help. The new cycle racks that have been springing up around town should stop the need to chain your bike to non-existent railings. There is more work to be done in this area, though there is a will to make Berkhamsted a more cycle friendly town, including the hills.

If you need to gauge the popularity of cycling in Berkhamsted you only have to come down to Berkhamsted Castle on 10th July 2016 to the Berkhamsted Castle Revolutions Festival. This half day event, with the support of Berkhamsted Town Council, Dacorum Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council, is being organised by Berkhamsted Cycling Club. The Castle is an ideal venue, with a compact circuit and somewhere for stalls, bike repairs and refreshments. There will be children's races, push scooter races and full blown amateur races. I shall be particularly intrigued to watch how racers negotiate the bend on Brownlow Road at the junction of New Road. Come down and see for yourself as the Castle once more becomes the centre of town events.

By Peter Matthews

Contact us

You may contact your Ward Councillors via the Town Council web site at <http://www.berkhamstedtowncouncil.gov.uk> where you will also find details of local services and links to other sites of interest. You may also telephone the Civic Centre on 01442 800146 or email your ideas for news items to news@berkhamstedtowncouncil.gov.uk