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This month "BEORCHAM" turns to more recent local history and interviews one of our oldest inhabitants for an impression of

## Victorian Berkhamsted

**E**IGHTY years hence some well-preserved youngster of to-day will probably fascinate his great-grandchildren with a first-hand account of the bombing of Sunnyside bridge.

That incident will then be as "historic" as the enclosure of Berkhamsted Common in 1866 is regarded at the present day. Yet a few old inhabitants can still remember the enclosure, and only a few years ago I was given an eye-witness description by a man who was an important if blameless accessory to the fact—he helped to put up the offending fences!

### Mr. Gladstone Passes By

Recently I had the pleasure of interviewing another townsman who, though by no means the oldest inhabitant, has long and lively memories of bygone Berkhamsted. He is Mr. Joseph Tufnell, of Kitsbury-road, who has spent all of his 86 years in Berkhamsted and, as his erect figure constantly reminds us, is "still going strong." He has distinct recollections of boarding trains at the old railway station near Castle-street bridge—and that must have been before 1870! He remembers "as if it were only yesterday" doffing his cap to Mr. Gladstone and receiving a friendly "Good morning!" from the great statesman as he walked from Berkhamsted Place, where he was often the guest of Lady Sarah Spencer, to the Parish Church.

One of Mr. Tufnell's best stories is admittedly second-hand, for it concerns an incident some two years before he was born. When the Baptist Church was built, two daring young musicians climbed the scaffolding and played a fanfare near the top of the spire. One of the instrumentalists was Mr. Tufnell's elder brother Walter; the other was the

late Mr. Thomas Ellens, whose enthusiasm for music evidently started many years before he founded St. Peter's Band in 1888.

It was a "countrified" Berkhamsted Mr. Tufnell knew as a young man. Three-fourths of the present built-up area was farmland. Charles-street was a rough, unnamed track without a house along its entire length. Many side-streets now considered "old" did not exist at all; a number of others were narrow lanes, such as Elvey-lane, Cox's-lane, and Gilham's-lane—now Chesham-road, King's-road, and Cross Oak-road. Castle-street was the only carriage-way to the station until Lower King's-road was made at the cost of demolishing two houses opposite the "Bridewell," the old prison which occupied the site of the police station.

### At the old Bourne School

Mr. Tufnell is probably the only surviving "old boy" who attended the Bourne School when it was still a separate institution, housed in the building now occupied by the National Provincial Bank. He was about 10 years of age when he paid a visit to Mr. Hill, the tailor, to be measured for his first school uniform—blue coat and waistcoat, breeches, and blue cap with red tassel. One week in ten there was no schooling at all: two of the twenty boys took turns to perform household chores and run errands for the resident schoolmaster! Mr. Tufnell had not been a "Bourne boy" for many months when the school was closed and the boys and girls were transferred to the "National" school at the Court House.

### All for Sixpence an Hour

On leaving school, Mr. Tufnell was apprenticed to Mr. John Sills, one of the town's woodware master-craftsmen, whose modest workshop, now known as Tower Mills, stood at the end of Thompson's-row, off Holiday-street. There Mr. Tufnell learnt his trade the hard way. Often he had to help to fell and cart the trees to the workshop, where pit-sawing was the vogue and very limited use was made of the circular saw. Hours were from 6 in the morning until 6 at night, except on Saturdays, when the men "knocked off" at 4 p.m. The only holidays were Christmas Day and Good Friday, and sixpence an hour was considered a good reward for a skilled craftsman. "When I received 24s. a week," Mr. Tufnell said, "I was better off than most manual workers in the town." He was often on piece-work and recollects the time when craftsmen had to make a dozen whitewash brush handles for 4d. and a dozen malt shovels for 4s. "If a man could make two malt shovels in an hour he was an exceptionally fast worker," he said.

Mr. Tufnell referred to an old directory showing how labour was absorbed in Berkhamsted in the 'eighties. There were 200 employed in the various timber yards; 16 more were engaged in boat-building, 50 in coach-building, and 80 in the brush factories of Messrs. Stafford, Nash, Plested, Goss and Sterne. Sixty men worked at Berkhamsted's two breweries, 100 at the nurseries, and 20 at Wood's iron-works.

The largest factory was Cooper's, then employing 200 men and boys, and Mr. Tufnell showed me an interesting memento of the founder of the firm. It is a receipted account in the handwriting of William Cooper, veterinary surgeon, who sat up all night with a sick horse and administered medicines—all for half-a-crown!

### At the Post Office

After losing several fingers in an accident at the saw-mill, Mr. Tufnell became a postman. The post office, he recalled, was in the High-street, opposite the Crown Hotel, and business hours were from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily. There were four deliveries of letters; pillar boxes were cleared as late as 9 p.m., and one could post letters at the post office up to 10 p.m. for first delivery in London the following morning. Mr. Tufnell mentioned that horse-drawn mail-coaches rattled into the town long after it was the custom for the bulk of the mail to be transported by rail. The bright red coaches, drawn by four horses from London to Watford and then by two horses for the remainder of the journey to Aylesbury, made a stirring sight.

### Then and Now

Was local life dull in those more leisurely days? "Good gracious, no!" Mr. Tufnell replied. "In some ways we took life more seriously, but there is no fun like home-made fun, and we knew how to enjoy ourselves." He recalled the town's old-time fairs, held in the High-street, with stalls and side-shows extending from the Town Hall to the Parish Church and sometimes overflowing into Red Lion-yard. Fetes in the Castle grounds attracted enormous crowds, and major events, such as an ox-roasting ceremony in the park or the visit of the Shah of Persia to Ashridge, were talked about for years.

"All the same, I think I prefer modern times," Mr. Tufnell added. The "good old days," he admitted, were not uniformly good. There was much poverty, much narrow-mindedness, and a great deal of stupid snobbery. Rivalry between the political factions was often bitter, and members of the different religious denominations often regarded one another with disfavour and distrust. Many people were stupid enough to boast that they had never travelled more than three or four miles from the town.

There have certainly been vast changes during Mr. Tufnell's 86 years in Berkhamsted, and it is good to meet a fine old stalwart who, while treasuring happy memories of bygone days, remains active, alert, and keenly interested in current happenings.

## "A TREMENDOUS RESPONSIBILITY"

Bishop Heywood at All Saints'

"IT'S a tremendous responsibility to be alive," declared Bishop Bernard Heywood when he preached at All Saints' Church at the morning service on Sunday, July 18. "A tremendous responsibility," he added, "because all the time we influence other people by what we do, by what we say and by what we really are. We may do them good or we may do them harm. We should, therefore, make the fullest use of the means of grace which the Lord supplies. We should make our prayers real, we should make church attendance a gathering together in His Name, we should read our Bibles so that we may know what message God has for us."

There was a large congregation to greet the first Bishop who had visited All Saints' Church since it was opened over 40 years ago.

The Rev. E. K. Mules celebrated the Sung Eucharist, and the beautiful music and singing of the choir helped to make the occasion a memorable one.

## MINISTRY OF DIVINE HEALING

(Continued)

**D**URING my ministry in the South of Tasmania, I came across a child suffering from infantile paralysis. The doctor had just left the house, having told the mother of the child that complications had arisen which would probably prove fatal within twenty-four hours. The mother was in tears. I felt this was a direct challenge to the Christian Faith. I therefore asked the mother if she believed that Christ could save her child in spite of everything if she put her trust implicitly in Him? She replied that she did believe it. Prayer for healing was offered at the bedside of the child, a little boy of six or seven years old. The doctor called next day and after examining the child exclaimed, "Something has happened in this house since I left." The doctor went on to explain that the fatal complications which he said were clearly in evidence the previous day had disappeared. The child lived and very shortly afterwards began to receive power in his legs to walk.—From "Commission to Heal," by the Rev. F. L. Wyman, Rector of St. Paul's, York.

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