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THIRD of a new series of articles by "BEORCHAM"

## Houses with a History

OUR "tour" of Berkhamsted is necessarily slow, for almost every building in the heart of the town has an interesting story to tell. Last month's article ended with a brief reference to the old brewery offices, now occupied by the Court Café, and this month we resume our journey westward by first paying a visit to the International Stores.

Historically speaking, this does not seem a very promising building. But mention its Victorian nickname—"Hazell's Folly"—and we at once have a reminder of a remarkable man and a remarkable enterprise.

Nearly a century ago, this building replaced a butcher's shop which, according to a Victorian writer, stood behind a row of large elm trees and, judging from its venerable appearance, might have supplied the Royal table at Berkhamsted Castle!

### Bought Town Hall Site

It was William Hazell, a native of the town, who replaced the butcher's shop by the present building, still one of the largest in Berkhamsted.

Hazell was a man of big ideas and high ideals. As a grocer and pork butcher, he achieved much more than local fame, for as soon as the railway was opened he built up a large postal business, sending his renowned sausages and hams to customers all over the country. Hazell also found time to take an active part in local affairs. He was the chief promoter of the Gas and Water Companies, and for many years was Surveyor of Highways—an appointment often held by shopkeepers in Victorian days. When the old market house was burnt down, he showed great foresight and shrewdness by obtaining the site of the present Town Hall for the small sum of £825.

Yet Hazell was more widely remembered for an error of judgment than for his many "good works." When it became known that the enclosure of Berkhamsted Common was threatened, he not only sided with Lord Brownlow but encouraged fellow townsmen to forgo their common rights. Perhaps he genuinely believed that Berkhamsted would have the better of the bargain by accepting Lord Brownlow's offer of a 43-acre recreation ground in the town "as a just and liberal compensation for the loss of common rights," but when Mr. Augustus Smith rallied public opinion against his lordship, Hazell was bluntly accused of trying to curry favour with his most important customer.

### Saved from a Ducking!

Derided, snubbed, and sometimes completely ostracised, Hazell refused to alter his opinion. Indeed, on the morning after the famous midnight raid on the fences, he rode to the Common and remonstrated with the navvies, demanding to know who had inspired the attack. He soon had reason to regret his forthrightness; the navvies threatened him with a ducking in the canal unless he stood drinks all round!

*Punch* recorded the incident:

"Beholdst thou, Hazell, yon canal;  
Would'st like to swim the same?  
If not with beer this instant  
Thyself and oob redeem."

Peace was bought—at a price:

So down went Brownlow's railings,  
And down went Hazell's beer.

"He who smokes the hams"—again to quote *Punch*—may have made himself unpopular, but he was an astute business man and made a small fortune. His successors, however, were unable to run the shop profitably; it changed hands frequently and the building was known as "Hazell's Folly" until the present owners, with the resources of a large company, successfully re-established the business.

### Established in 1793

Now let us go down the "Farrier's Yard" beside the International Stores and visit the forge where Mr. Albert Nash, the professional shoeing smith, carries on a business owned by the same family since 1793. It is a fine tradition to maintain, and at Farrier's House, built on an orchard towards the end of the 19th century (when the forge was transferred from the top to the bottom of the yard) Mr. Nash showed me some of the early account books kept by his forbears.

Entries in beautiful "copperplate" writing record the names of many local notabilities, among them Mr. William Page, "mine host" of the King's Arms in the coaching days, and the Rev. George Nugent. The Rev. Thomas Dupré, of Berkhamsted School, ran up a bill for £3 7s. 8d. in 1807—proof

that this notorious headmaster, who sadly neglected the school, did not spend the whole of his time in Lincolnshire, where he received a second stipend as rector of Willoughby.

Business was also transacted with William Cooper, the young veterinary surgeon who came to Berkhamsted in the 1840's and founded the chemical works. As farriers were also horse doctors in those days—Mr. Nash showed me several faded "receipts" for horse medicines—one might have expected a certain amount of rivalry between the veterinary surgeon and the farrier, but they were obviously the best of friends. At any rate, it was not long before William Cooper was too busy making sheep dip to continue his rounds on horseback as a veterinary surgeon—but more of this remarkable man will be told in a later article.

### Public House with School Crest

The original farrier's house faced the High-street and is best known to the present generation as Grimsley's cake shop; in due course it will be rebuilt as a new shop for Boots the Chemists. The old forge was afterwards a bakehouse, and to this day some of the iron rings to which the horses were tethered at the top of the yard may be seen on the International Stores wall.

Thank you, Mr. Nash, for a most interesting story—and it will be news to many that the British Legion Club was built as a Conservative Club.

Westward along the High-street there formerly stretched a row of cottages and small shops, most of which have been rebuilt or extensively altered. One, however, retains its old frontage—the office of Mr. J. R. Harrowell, the solicitor.

The "White Hart," which bears the Berkhamsted School crest to remind us that it was built on School property, dates from 1861. It is one year younger than the Town Hall, which replaced the house and office of Messrs. King, the London carriers, who handled most of the town's merchandise before the railway was built.

### Cheap Fares—by Wagon

Here, in the wide High-street, was Berkhamsted's "goods station." Outside King's office, wagons were constantly arriving and departing, many of them keeping to as strict a timetable as the stage coaches which called regularly at the King's Arms. The carriers' wagons provided a cheap passenger service, too; fares by stage coach were expensive, and poor people customarily travelled by the common carriers' carts.

Mr. Frederick King, of 93 High-street, is a descendant of the Berkhamsted family of carriers, and his father, the late Mr. John King, often pointed to the Town Hall committee room as occupying the site of the bedroom in which he was born.

Beyond Mr. Harrowell's office stretched a row of tall villas, of which only two remain, their frontages partly hidden by shops built on the front gardens—Loosley's (Blake's), and Pike's. Two adjacent houses were

pulled down when Lower King's-road was made, and Morris's shop and house on the opposite side of the road were demolished in more recent times to make way for a new block of shops and offices.

The premises occupied by Ward's (Cawdell's) store have a particularly interesting history. According to tradition, it was here where William Cowper, the poet, attended a small private school. If this was so, we know the route

. . . where the gard'ner Robin, day by day  
Drew me to school along the public way,  
Delighted with my bumble coach, and wrapp'd  
In scarlet mantle warm and velvet cap. . .

It is also believed that formerly a part of Ward's store was a confectionery shop started by Mr. Huntley before he moved to Reading to establish the famous biscuit firm in partnership with Mr. Palmer. Unfortunately, Mr. H. Palmer, a present director of the firm, has written to say that no information is available on this subject.

### Stationer and Pastor

Ward's is, of course, one of the oldest established businesses in the town, and part of the present building has been a draper's shop for generations. Nearby is another business with a long ancestry—T. W. Bailey's, the stationers. The premises, thought to be about 300 years old, have been greatly altered, and at some period unknown an extra storey was added. A stationer's business existed here in 1790—Guy Abraham was the first proprietor—and from 1795–1840 it was owned by Joseph Hobbs, who was also pastor of the Baptist Church and a founder of Berkhamsted's first Sunday school. From Hobbs the stationer's shop passed to John Greedy, a printer, who in the days of expensive newspapers provided a reading room for his clients in what is now the composing room behind the shop. Anthony Slater succeeded Greedy in 1868, and in 1908 the business was acquired by the late Mr. T. W. Bailey.

(To be continued)

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