

# Berkhamsted Tradesfolk in 1824

To the regret of many townspeople, Berkhamsted no longer has a local directory. Over twenty years have passed since the last edition of Loosley's valuable publication appeared, and though much of the information given has long been out of date, much-tumbled copies are still consulted occasionally.

Directories are almost as old as newspapers. The earliest appeared in Paris in the 17th century. Towards the end of the 18th century, several English towns had directories giving the names of prominent residents and tradespeople.

### POPULATION CHANGES

The earliest directory of local interest was issued by James Pigot, whose publications eventually covered almost the whole of the country and were as famous in their day as Kelly's directories of more modern times.

The first known printed list of Berkhamsted tradespeople appears on pages 350-351 of the 1824 edition of Pigot & Co.'s directory. Twenty pages sufficed for the whole of Hertfordshire, and the fifteen towns listed included Redbourn, which had a population of 1,784 compared with Berkhamsted's 2,310. Harpenden, Letchworth and Welwyn were not mentioned. Hertford had a greater population than Watford. Tring, with 3,286 inhabitants, was much larger than Berkhamsted.

After praising the climate of Hertfordshire as "mild and healthy," Mr. Pigot's scribes said: "The general appearance of the whole county is pleasing, it being well wooded and watered, abounding in beautiful seats and parks, and affording a fine variety of hill and dale... The quantities of malt, corn and wheat conveyed by means of [the Grand Junction Canal] to the very vicinity of London are immense..."

Berkhamsted was "a small market town... situated upon the great road leading from London to Aylesbury... It chiefly consists of one street, which extends for nearly three-quarters of a mile... Owing perhaps to its proximity to the markets of Hemel Hempstead and Tring, that of Berkhamsted, held on Saturday, is very inconsiderable..."

### COACHES TO LONDON

No one had so much as dreamed of a railway in 1824. Coaches, stated the directory, left Berkhamsted for London every morning (except Sundays) at seven and eight o'clock; the London mail arrived at midnight and departed at 3 a.m. Charles Lambert was postmaster.

Goods were transported to London by wagon every Tuesday and Friday by the common carrier, Thomas Barthom. There must have been full employment for the town's two coach-builders, James Austin and William Bailey.

The town had a boat-builder, too: John Hatten, whose workshop was beside the 20 years-old Grand Junction Canal. Thanks to this new means of transport, coal was at last plentiful and cheap, and already Berkhamsted had five coal merchants: Thomas Collins, John Harris, James Morris, William Smith and William Tompkins.

### ACADEMIES—AND TAVERNS

It is not surprising to find that Pigot's Directory does not mention Berkhamsted School, for it was shamefully mismanaged in 1824. But private academies flourished. Two, for young ladies, were run by M. and H. Bainbridge and M. E. Halsey. Three, for young gentlemen, were owned by George Hodson, Charles Lambert (who was also the postmaster), and J. Sewell.

Why was the King's Arms Inn not mentioned? A serious omission, Mr. Pigot! Under the heading "Taverns and Public Houses" he listed the Bell, Chaffcutter, Five Bells, Goat, Red Lion and Swan, the last-named kept by Charles Foster, who was also one of the town's three maltsters. The Chaffcutter's Arms was in Highfield Road; the Five Bells is now Mr. Norman Clarke's shop; the Red Lion has been replaced by the Midland Bank.

Brewers? Berkhamsted had two: Thomas Butterfield and William Tomlin. The only wine and spirit merchant was W. H. Meacher.

Professional men were not numerous. Mr. James Duncombe was an attorney, Gomm and Haily were auctioneers, and William Collier and Richard Steele were surgeons.

Berkhamsted may have been a poor market town, but it had plenty of shops. There were six bakers, ten grocers, five butchers, five tailors, six drapers, eight shoemakers, three

saddlers, three ironmongers, one corn dealer, one currier and leather cutter, one watchmaker, one bookseller, and one seedsman—Mr. John Lane.

Most of the traders were men. But Widow Baker ran a draper's shop, and Widow Stacey was one of Berkhamsted's two hairdressers.

A rare instance of a business partnership was that of Impey and Littleboy, millers. They owned the Lower Mill, while William Archer was at the Upper Mill, near the Castle.

### FAMILY NAMES

Well-known family names link the present with the past. In 1824, three of Berkhamsted's five butchers were named Tompkins. We still have a butcher of that name. One of the two blacksmiths was James Nash—and a Nash still makes the sparks fly at his High Street forge, one of the most picturesque corners of old Berkhamsted. Thomas Matthews was one of the five master carpenters and joiners of 1824.

The bootmakers had good old Berkhamsted names: Froude, Hirst, Loader, Margrave, Putnam and Tomlin. Other familiar names are Halsey, Cox, Sutton, Pocock, Flint, King, Chappell, Gomm, Groves, Bailey, Harris, Morris, Dell, Martin, Pitkin, and Holliman.

### ON TO 1882

From Pigot's Directory of 1824, let us turn to the first issue of Loosley's Berkhamsted Almanack and Directory, which appeared in 1882.

It is a bulky book, but local information is limited to four pages. Not until a later date did Mr. Loosley give a list of prominent residents and tradesmen.

Under the heading "Public Institutions, etc.," we read:

Cattle Market on alternate Wednesdays.  
Plait Market on Thursday.  
County Police: Inspector Penn and three officers.

Bankers: London and County, Manager, Mr. Jackson, Aylesbury. Open Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Harriers: Master, Mr. R. Rawle. Hunting day, Wednesday.

Town Crier and Bill Sticker: Peter Wood.

### TAILOR-MADE CARPETS

The most interesting features of the 1882 directory are the advertisements. B. Sear, tailor and woollen draper, not only supplied liveries "on the shortest notice" but made and remade carpets. A. W. Brinkman, of "The Copperage," painted and lettered stable pails to order, and supplied wine casks from 4½ to 100 gallons.

There were excellent sixpenny dyes for silks, feathers, veils and shawls, and you could buy a sewing machine for 55s.

A brand of prepared fullers' earth was recommended for protecting the skin and preventing redness. Cough lozenges contained no opium. An ointment cured sore heads; you could buy pots of it for 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d., 11s., or 22s. Another patent medicine was "the true antidote" for small-pox, fevers, headaches and thirst.

We must dip into later editions of Loosley's directories on another occasion. They are a grand source of information and entertainment.

'BEORCHAM.'

## EMERGENCY MEDICINE

### Local Arrangements

Arrangements for the emergency supply of medicine now operating in Berkhamsted is as follows:—

### CHEMISTS' ROTA

The week-day evening (6-7 p.m.) and Sunday morning (11.30 a.m.—12.30 p.m.) service rota adopted by Berkhamsted chemists for the dispensing of medical prescriptions, is as follows for the current month:—

March 27—April 2: Figg  
April 3—9: Dickman  
April 10—16: Taylors  
April 17—23: Boots  
April 24—30: Figg

### LIBRARY OPENING TIMES

The Berkhamsted Branch of the County Library is open in Prince Edward Street on the following days and times:—

Mon., Tues. and Fri.—10 a.m. to 1 p.m.;  
2 p.m. to 5 p.m.; 5.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.  
Wednesday—CLOSED ALL DAY.  
Thursday—10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Saturday—10 a.m. to 1 p.m.; 2.30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

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