

OUR FISH
is fresh daily
OUR PRICES
are reasonable

W. W. WARD

Fishmonger, Game Dealer
and Fruiterer
MARKET HOUSE
BERKHAMSTED
Telephone 146

P. D. CLARK & SON

High Class
Groceries &
Provisions

100 HIGH STREET
BERKHAMSTED Phone 87

For all
heating queries
consult the old firm

James Wood and Son

Domestic Heating & General
Engineers, Plumbers & Ironmongers
294 HIGH STREET,
BERKHAMSTED
Phone: 94

BERKHAMSTED'S "OLD WIVES' TALES"

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF LOCAL HISTORY

Wandering around the district, I am often reminded of humorous stories and curious legends which amused and sometimes frightened an earlier generation of Berkhamstedians.

In the Town Hall, the portrait of General Finch recalls a priceless story of Victorian naïveté and frugality. The General's valuable services to Berkhamsted, a vestry meeting decided, should be recognised by commissioning an oil painting of the great man, the cost to be defrayed by public subscription. But there was prolonged argument about the cost and choice of artist. One man, shocked by the fees charged by a first-class portraitist, said he had heard that some local schoolboys were displaying much artistic ability. Why, then, should they not be given a canvas and a few pounds of paint to produce, collectively, a masterpiece? To his dying day the poor man never knew why his suggestion was laughed out of vestry.

VANISHING TRICK

From the Town Hall, let us set off on a few little tours of discovery. The Co-operative Society's grocery shop at Manor Street corner has the distinction of having a beer-mug incorporated in its masonry. One of the bricklayers was so disgusted by the poor quality of his mid-morning "pint" that he cemented the mug in the walls, and told the inn-keeper that if he wanted the mug back he would have to knock down the wall!

Climbing Swing Gate Lane, we approach Long Green, where there is a little dip in the road which has occasionally been flooded to a depth of perhaps six inches. Here, tradition says, a coach and horses once plunged into the swirling waters and were never seen again. This must have been the

COURTIER and
RAYBURN ROOM
HEATERS NOW IN
STOCK. IDEAL,
BEESTON, RAYBURN
and other BOILERS
SUPPLIED. HAND and
MOTOR MOWERS
OVERHAULED and
REGROUND ON THE
PREMISES. ALL
MAKES OF MOWERS
SUPPLIED.

Est. 1826

most baffling disappearing trick of all time!

THE CURATE'S EGG

In the next valley, we cross the bea of the Bourne Gutter, an intermittent "woe-water" traditionally said to flow only when Britain is at war. Over the hills and far away we may reach the pretty village of Flaunden, which had no resident clergyman and relied upon the Berkhamsted curate to take an occasional service. Once, when the curate had been absent longer than usual, the caretaker refused to admit him to church, because her goose was sitting in the pulpit and the eggs were expected to hatch out the following Wednesday!

In years gone by, superstitious folk were afraid to walk from Berkhamsted to Potten End on dark, dirty nights, for the devil was said to rattle his chains on a lonely part of the Common near the water tower. In the village itself, the inhabitants were noted for their ferocity, and Berkhamsted lads who dared to court Potten End girls were chased out of the village. Potten Enders, I am sure, were not nearly so bad as they were painted. I cannot really believe that they made a practise of leaving their front doors open whenever a flock of sheep passed through the village, hoping that one of the animals, unseen by the shepherd, would step inside, never to be seen again except as free mutton!

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

The nearby hamlet of Frithsden has its legends, too. An old man dreamed that a chest of gold was buried at the bottom of a pit, and that it would be his if he could get it up without speaking a word to break the spell. He took into his confidence a young neighbour, and after hours of digging, their spades struck something metallic. So excited was the younger man that he uttered a wicked word; the sides of the pit caved in, and the men were almost buried alive. And so the chest of gold remains to this day, awaiting diggers who do not forget that silence is golden.

In "Spooky Lane," between Frithsden and Nettleden, it is said that Henry I was thrown from his horse and trampled on by a mare ridden by a monk. But I prefer to picture the scene when the first Queen Elizabeth sailed down the Gade in a state barge, on the first stage of her journey from Ashridge to London. It must have been a pretty sight!

OLD REMEDIES

Berkhamsted's Bulbourne had no state occasions. But did not St. Paul include Berkhamsted in his travels, banishing serpents and thunderstorms from the neighbourhood? Mr. Cobb, in his "History of Berkhamsted," admitted the prevalence of this old belief, but he did not mention another curious legend: that St. John baptised

the district's first Christians in St. John's Well, the Bulbourne's former tiny tributary. The water was said to cure sore eyes, and it is a pity that, as the well has dried up, we cannot bottle the water for home treatment, as was the custom of many Victorians.

Besides possessing a well which relieved sore eyes, Berkhamsted had a tree which cured the ague. It was "Cross Oak," and ague victims merely had to bore a hole in the trunk, peg a lock of hair in the hole, and then spring away, leaving the hair behind. It must have been the shock of partial scalping that effected a cure!

The local remedy for fits, on the other hand, was painless. It was merely necessary to obtain from a clergyman a piece of silver which had been presented as a sacramental offering. The silver, made into a ring and worn on a certain finger, was claimed to be a sure cure.

GHOSTS!

Ghosts? Berkhamsted had its share, and Egerton House was watched night after night by townspeople who hoped against hope that the ghost would appear. A breeze-flicked curtain was sufficient to thrill the crowd and send everyone home horrified but happy.

More frightening, however, was the reputed appearance of the ghosts of Cromwell's army in the lonely lane known as Soldiers' Bottom; it was widely believed that, shortly before nightfall, ghostly Ironsides marched along the lane, their pikes glittering blood-red in the rays of the setting sun. The soldiers must have been on the way to Wigginton, where, tradition has it, Cromwell's artillery fired on Berkhamsted and demolished a Castle which was already ruined!

From Wigginton it is a short walk to the monument in Tring Park. By running around the monument one could make blood gush from the top of the tall masonry; but the formula no longer works. Perhaps it's just as well...

AT DROPSHORT

Returning home, we must not forget Dropshort, the name given to the old cottage beside the main road near Dudswell. It is a curious name, and one explanation is that a load of bricks fell off the back of a cart and were straight-away used for building a cottage in this once outlandish spot. According to another version, the builders, who hailed from Northchurch, were too lazy to go to the specified site farther along the road, and "dropped short" by building the cottage much nearer their homes.

It is a pity to spoil a good story. There was nothing accidental about Dropshort; it was built in the coaching days for the convenience of residents of a large house some distance from the main road. There they could wait for their coaches in much greater comfort than modern bus passengers who in fair weather and foul, stand hopefully beside a bleak "request" stop.

'BEORCHAM'

(Extracted from a talk given to the Local History Society).

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:—

January 29—February 4: Figg.
February 5—11: Dickman.
February 12—18: Taylors.
February 19—25: Boots.
February 26—March 3: 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., Thur., & 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.
Saturday—10 a.m. to 1 p.m.; 2.30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

De Wool Shoppe

We specialize in
HAND-KNITTED Made to
GARMENTS measure

Many makes of wool always in stock,
including "P & B" (Beehive)

MUNROSPUN
COPELYS VIYELLA
SIRDAR
LAINES du PINGOUIN
LADYSHIP & HOLIDAY

Everything for the Needlewoman

EXCLUSIVE TAPESTRIES

162 High St., Berkhamsted

TEL. 912

Mayo's Corner Shop

THE BUSINESS OF E. M. HOLLINGS
(corner of Lower Kings Road and High Street)
HAS BEEN TAKEN OVER BY

W. P. MAYO & SON LTD.
Wholesale and Retail Tobacconists and Confectioners

AND WILL BE CONTINUED AS
HIGH CLASS TOBACCONISTS

At the old-established business at 232 High Street, the main service will be the supply of Confectionery but Cigarettes and Tobacco will also be available.

For the benefit of early travellers 'The Corner Shop' will be open from 7 a.m. each weekday.

Smokers' Requisites in Great Variety



By Appointment J. Floris Ltd. perfumers to the late King George VI

TRUE ENGLISH FLOWER PERFUMES

by

Obtainable from

HUBERT B. FIGG

(Proprietors: Hubert B. Figg Ltd.)

Chemist

HIGH STREET, BERKHAMSTED

Phone 80

also TOILET WATERS, BATH ESSENCES, TOILET POWDERS
TOILET SOAPS and SACHETS etc.