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LOCAL COMMUNICATIONS—8

By 'BEORCHAM'

## Railway Developments

Nearly a century ago, as was shown in last month's article, one could leave Euston station at 4.15 p.m. and reach Berkhamsted by 5.8.

But many years were to elapse before "under the hour" trains were the rule rather than the exception. In mid-Victorian times most of our trains stopped not only at "all stations to Watford" but at Bushey, Pinner, Harrow, Sudbury, Willesden, Kilburn and Camden. In 1877, the average time taken was 80 minutes. For example, the first up train left Berkhamsted at 7.50 a.m., arriving at Euston at 9.10. The best of the eleven up trains left at 9.20 a.m. (Euston, 10.10), and the fastest of the twelve down trains left Euston at 5.40 p.m. (Berkhamsted, 6.33).

### FASTER IN 1887

In the next ten years, Camden station was renamed Chalk Farm, and a new station, Loudoun Road, was opened between Chalk Farm and Kilburn. But fewer Berkhamsted trains stopped at these and certain other stations, such as Sudbury and Pinner, and speeds improved accordingly.

In 1887, there were twelve up and fifteen down trains on weekdays, and not one of the morning trains required more than 54 minutes to complete the journey from Berkhamsted to Euston. The best train of the day left at 8.54 a.m. and, with one stop at Willesden, reached Euston at 9.35. This was four minutes faster than the time taken by the best up train of today. The fastest down train left Euston at 6 p.m., arriving at Berkhamsted at 6.46, taking three minutes longer than the comparable train of the present time (Euston 6.6., Berkhamsted 6.49).

Curiously enough, there was some slight deterioration before the Victorian era had ended. In 1900, the 8.54 up

train was advanced to 8.53, but the Euston arrival time was still 9.35.

### NO EARLY TRAINS

Old time-tables reflect changes in the mobility of workers and the hours of employment. Season ticket holders of the executive type, who made sure that their own office hours were short, were able to live in Berkhamsted and work in London from mid-Victorian times onwards. But the ordinary worker, who was required to be at the factory bench or behind the shop counter for perhaps twelve hours a day, could not possibly journey to and from London daily. There was no "early workman's" train for the simple reason that the demand was negligible. As late as 1887 the first up train did not leave Berkhamsted until 7.48 a.m.

Significant, too, is the reduction in the number of first class carriages. Today many trains are "one class only," but a couple of generations ago, in certain "business" trains, first class carriages exceeded the number of both second and third class carriages.

### EXCURSIONS

Incidentally, the "midnight" train was born in the 'seventies. Roisterers were advised that it would stop at Boxmoor on Wednesdays, at Berkhamsted on Thursdays, and at Kings Langley on Saturdays, "on information being given to the guard at Euston or Willesden."

Excursion trains have been running for over a century, and many Berkhamstadians enjoyed their first railway journey when special cheap fares were introduced at the time of the Great Exhibition of 1851. It was not long before excursions to the seaside were in great favour. In 1877, the excursion fare from Berkhamsted to Ramsgate and Margate was 6s. 6d.—a long journey to make in a non-corridor train.

Yet, up to fifty years ago, hundreds of local people had never travelled by train. A party of Berkhamsted girls once walked to Boxmoor, looking forward to the thrill of returning by train. But at Boxmoor one of the girls wondered whether they would be able to open the carriage door at Berkhamsted, and the party deemed it prudent to return on foot!

### OFF THE RAILS

The London and North Western Railway had a good reputation for safety, but accidents occurred from time to time. One resulted from the breaking of an axle soon after a north-bound express had passed through Berkhamsted station, in November, 1853. The engine crashed into the Billet-lane embankment, coaches were thrown across the line, and the guard, whose van was smashed to pieces, was killed. Lords Lonsdale and Rothschild

were among the bruised and battered passengers. John Page, a Berkhamsted labourer, ran down the line to warn the driver of the London express, which was just emerging from Northchurch tunnel. The driver had no time to save the train from colliding with the wrecked coaches and being derailed.

### TRAMWAY TO CHESHAM

As was stated in an earlier article, for half a century Berkhamsted station was regularly used by Chesham residents, who had to wait for a station of their own until Britain's last trunk railway, the Great Central, was built. On many occasions the London and North Western Railway promised to build a branch line to Chesham, but the company's activities were limited to running a much-used road service between Berkhamsted and Chesham. Every day wagons drawn by four horses climbed the steep hills between the two towns, and the L.N.W.R. maintained a large goods depot at Chesham.

In 1887, our Buckinghamshire neighbours were thrilled by the news that the Chesham, Boxmoor and Hemel Hempstead Steam Tramway Company had been formed to ease their transport problems. The intention was to lay the rails along existing roads from Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead, to Bourne End, and then follow the Bourne Gutter valley to Bottom Farm, Ashley Green, and Chesham.

In their first flush of enthusiasm, the promoters also favoured a branch line along the main road from Bourne End to Berkhamsted railway station. At a meeting of the Northchurch vestry in December, 1887, Mr. J. G. Knowles (surveyor) stated that the engineer wished to take the trams down newly-made Lower King's Road, but this part of the scheme was abandoned.

### NORTHCHURCH PROTESTS

However, the company was empowered by Act of Parliament to construct certain tramways between Chesham and Hemel Hempstead, and at one period the scheme was so far advanced that additional powers were sought to increase the gauge and to lay a double track in Marlowes.

Meetings supporting or opposing the steam tramway were held in several parishes, and at a very long meeting of the Northchurch vestry, parishioners expressed fears that the trams would fill the streets with smoke and frighten horses. As only 200 yards of public highway in the parish of Northchurch were involved, it is difficult to understand why public feeling ran so high.

Eventually it was decided that the roads were too narrow for trams, and the promoters were not sorry to abandon a scheme which, as some belatedly recognised, would soon have become a "white elephant."

Nevertheless, when the Great Central Railway was built, there was strong support for a proposal that the branch line from Chalfont Road to Chesham should be continued to Berkhamsted.

(To be continued).

## 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:—

September 30—October 6: Boots  
October 7—13: Figg  
October 14—20: Dickman  
October 21—27: Taylors  
October 28—November 3: Boots.

### 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.

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