

The Sunken Cottages

Last month's *Parochial Review* contained the news that the Urban Council's programme for the clearance of sub-standard houses will include nine houses in Castle Street—the much-photographed "sunken" row between the Bulbourne and the Castle Hotel.

It will be surprising if this scheme does not provoke lively controversy. Already I have received a letter from a reader who hopes the Local History Society and the Citizen's Association will urge the Council to preserve, not destroy, what is generally considered one of the most attractive features of the town.

An historical background to the impending war of words may be of interest. According to the Hertfordshire volume of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (1911), the cottages (described even then as "somewhat dilapidated") were built of brick and timber in the 17th century.

A CURIOUS PAINTING

This date disposes of the widely-held belief that the cottages were built for servants employed at the Castle. The last servants left to seek other employment towards the end of the 15th century, when the Castle was abandoned. Nevertheless, we may be sure that the site was built upon before the present cottages were erected, and earlier tenements may well have been the homes of Castle servants.

One of the "sunken" cottages was pulled down some seventy years ago, when the outbuildings of the Castle Hotel were extended. The housebreakers were astonished to find the mantelpiece of one of the two bedrooms decorated by a curious battle scene. It depicted men on the outer earthworks (and some in a boat on the moat!) attempting to wreck the Castle with cannon-fire. The late Mr. Knowles Drew, himself an artist, told me the painting was obviously of some antiquity. The water in the moat was "a beautiful blue," he added.

The picture may have been inspired by tales of the one and only siege of Berkhamsted Castle, in 1216. But Prince Louis of France and the barons certainly had no cannon; they used mangonels to hurl great stones against the Castle, and it was only after enduring attacks for a fortnight that the garrison surrendered.

The painting was probably as old as the cottage, and it is a pity no one

thought of photographing it. It was painted direct on the plaster, and crumbled away.

The cottage in the middle of the row, incidentally, has an interesting history. Many years ago the interior was stripped, giving it the appearance of an ancient tithe barn. Roman Catholics worshipped there for many years before the church in Park View Road was opened in 1909.

As has been mentioned in earlier articles, the "sunken" appearance of the cottages is due to the raising of the road when the canal bridge was built 160 years ago.

NOT PROTECTED

As townspeople are already asking whether the cottages are "protected" in any way, it may be helpful to recall that a list of buildings of "special architectural or historic interest" was compiled by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning a few years after the war and issued for the guidance of the local planning authority.

This list is in two parts—a Main List and a Supplementary List. In the case of over twenty buildings in the first list (our two parish churches, Berkhamsted Place, Berkhamsted School, the Sayer almshouses, the Swan, the Queen's Arms and several smaller houses), two months' notice of any proposed work must be given to the local planning authority, who will notify the Minister.

The Supplementary List, which covers nearly fifty buildings (including the "sunken" cottages) has not the same statutory significance as the Main List, but is prepared for the information of the Council, who can take such action as is considered appropriate.

Our First Bank

Now for an entirely different subject. In last month's issue I made a passing reference to Eddy Street, the little turning off the main road at Gossoms End. Until last week I was not aware that it was named after, if not by, John Turpin Eddy, who lived at Gossoms Lodge over 100 years ago.

He was one of two partners in a small local banking firm, Eddy and Squire. The name of this firm appears for the first time in the *Banking Almanac* of 1852, and in the following year it was

taken over by the London and County Bank. The successful take-over bid of 1853 was not considered important enough to be reported in the local press, though there is a news item which mentions our friend Eddy; he gave an exhibition of "dissolving views" to the Berkhamsted Mechanics' Institute in 1853.

His partner, Mr. Squire, lived at The Homestead, one of the two houses which formerly stood opposite the Co-operative Society's butchery and furniture departments. A keen horticulturist, he experimented with seeds and cuttings and "invented" the Berkhamsted-born apple which was afterwards marketed by Henry Lane, the local nurseryman, as "Lane's Prince Albert."

OPEN TWICE A WEEK

The London and County Bank, which took over Eddy and Squire's Bank, is mentioned in the first issue of Loosley's Directory, published in 1882. It was then open on Wednesdays and Saturdays only, but by 1887 it was open six days a week (10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays). In the same year there was also a Penny Bank at the Town Hall, open from 6.30 to 8 p.m. on Saturdays only. The London and County Bank, which was eventually absorbed by the Westminster Bank, had many homes in Berkhamsted before the present building replaced three old cottages a few years after the first World War.

At the turn of the century another bank was functioning in Berkhamsted. It bore the formidable name of Prescott,

Dimsdale, Cave, Tugwell and Co. Ltd., and the first manager of the Berkhamsted branch, the late Mr. R. E. Webb, transacted business in a house facing Chesham Road before moving to a house opposite the Parish Church. A few years later the Bourne School building was taken over, and there the bank (now the National Provincial) enjoys the fitful sunshine of a Berkhamsted summer while the rest of the "Big Five" line the shady side of the street.

AN EARLY CHEQUE

I have in my possession an unused cheque of the early 20th century. It bears the inscription: "Great Berkhamstead, Prescott Dimsdale Cave Tugwell & Co. Limited, with which is amalgamated Messrs. Thomas Butcher & Sons, Bankers, Great Berkhamstead." This cheque, printed in simple style on thin pink paper, is unnumbered.

Speaking of early bankers, it is interesting to recall that the distinguished Smith-Dorrien family, who were actively connected with our town for many years, had banking antecedents. One branch of the family was descended from Thomas Smith, founder of the Smith bank at Nottingham in 1699. Marriage united the Smiths with the descendants of George Dorrien, who was Governor of the Bank of England in 1818-9.

'BEORCHAM

COMING SHORTLY! A *Short History of Berkhamsted*, by "BEORCHAM" will be published in two months' time. One hundred pages, over twenty illustrations—all for five shillings!

DEANERY OF BERKHAMSTED YOUTH CONFERENCE

ASHLYNS SCHOOL

Saturday, 17th September
10.30 a.m. — 6 p.m.

Course open to those aged between 15 and 19.

Conference fee: 2s. 6d.
to be paid in advance.

Subject:
YOU AND THE NEXT TEN YEARS
—Coursing and Marriage

Speaker:
THE VICAR OF HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
(The Rev. C. H. Plummer)

Please bring own packed lunch:
Coffee, tea, etc. will be provided at the School.

Latest date for acceptance:
7th September 1960

APPLICATIONS TO: Mr. P. C. Barnum,
Longmead, Knebworth Terrace, Berkhamsted
(Tel: Berkhamsted 979)

Owing to works and other holidays

publication of the

September "Review"

will be postponed

until

7th September

Taxi Service

Phone:

Berkhamsted 1254

for

Weddings,
Dances, etc.

J. GATES

'Hillcote,' Darrs Lane,
Northchurch, Berkhamsted

F. W. FOX

(Proprietor—A. H. DOIG)

IRONMONGER
and
HARDWARE STORES

Engineers' & Carpenters'
Tools

All Household Goods and
Garden Requisites

Van delivery in town and district
three days a week.

125 HIGH STREET
BERKHAMSTED

Phone 83

PLEASE SUPPORT
OUR
ADVERTISERS

A. J. CRUICKSHANK

A.F.C. F.V.I.

HOUSE & ESTATE AGENT

INCORPORATED VALUER & SURVEYOR

236a HIGH STREET, BERKHAMSTED Tel. 2364/5

85 HIGH STREET, CHESHAM Tel. 8856

Planning & drawing department at Chesham office. Consultant available by appointment at either office.

SUMMER PRICES

for

SOLID FUELS

WILLIAM LOCKHART LIMITED

Telephone: Berkhamsted 60