

BULBOURNE NURSERIES LTD.

Bedding Plants
Tomato Plants
Salads in Season

Specialist growers of
TOMATOES
and CHRYSANTHEMUMS

HIGH STREET
BERKHAMSTED

Telephone 2548

Taxi Service

Phone:

Berkhamsted 1254

for

Weddings,
Dances, etc.

J. GATES

'Hillcote,' Darrs Lane,
Northchurch, Berkhamsted

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

Also at

85 HIGH STREET, CHESHAM Tel. 8856

and

16 HIGH STREET, TRING Tel. 3433

In association with P. Fountaine and Cruickshank—planning consultants.

AN AUSTRALIAN LINK WITH BERKHAMSTED

Egerton House Memories

A REQUEST in last month's *Review* for further information about Egerton House has brought a lively response.

Mr. R. Gilbert, of Ashlyns Road, remembers visiting Egerton House and seeing the "Curfew Chamber" above the main entrance. This was a room with an ancient fireplace occupied by a curious iron grate which, on being turned half-way round, completely shielded the fire. Far, far safer than the conventional fireguard.

"Curfew Chamber"—what a fascinating name! One thinks of an ancient bell tower sending out a bedtime signal to the townspeople. But it was the grate which named the room, for the word curfew is derived from the French *couvre-feu* (cover-fire). The curfew bell, incidentally, was originally a warning to put out fires and lights; a safety precaution which was especially necessary when houses were more inflammable than they are today.

PETER PAN

Another reader, Mr. Noel Rew, points out that my list of owners of Egerton House did not include Mrs. Brass, whose head-coachman, Mr. Elsdon, was one of the best fast bowlers the town has ever known.

Mrs. J. S. Ross tells me that the boy who inspired "Peter Pan" (his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Llewellyn Davies, were often visited by Mr. J. M. Barrie at Egerton House) attended the kindergarten at Berkhamsted School for Girls when that department received boys as well as girls.

Miss S. Delderfield has shown me a photograph which she took of Egerton House a short time before it was pulled down in 1937. The exterior of the building was by then showing many signs of neglect. A sale board suggested that the house was suitable for conversion into shops and flats. It was, of course, replaced by the Rex Cinema.

Another reader draws attention to a supposition in Cobb's *History and Antiquities of Berkhamsted* that the hospital of St. Clement formerly occupied the site of Egerton House. A seal inscribed with the name of the fraternity of St. Clement was found in the garden of Egerton House, but a chance discovery of this kind proves nothing.

Several readers have mentioned the

ghost of Egerton House, recalling night-time vigils when townspeople gathered in the street opposite the house in the hope of seeing the ghost. No one ever heard moans or clanking chains, but if a curtain fluttered in the breeze the movement was attributed to the ghost, and everybody went home happy, perhaps elaborating the story to chill the blood of friends and relations.

A GENEROUS SURGEON

Last month I promised to quote some notes about Egerton House from an Australian lady who recently visited Berkhamsted because a distant relative, Dr. Thomas Whately, lived at Egerton House a century ago. Before quoting these notes I should say something about the kindly surgeon who is best remembered for his gift of the great west window in St. Peter's Church.

Dr. Whately came to Berkhamsted soon after the railway was built in 1837. To quote Henry Nash's *Reminiscences of Berkhamsted*, he "had a great veneration for ancient institutions", was "a collector of works of antiquity", and "bestowed much care" upon Egerton House. Before moving into the Elizabethan mansion, he owned and probably lived in the house which in later years was the home of the Benson family, opposite St. Peter's Church.

THE WHATELY WINDOW

Dr. Whately at one time contemplated taking steps to restore the town's old charters, and in his day there was still a chance of reviving the borough status of quite small towns. But his hopes were not fulfilled. Neither did he live to see his great window installed in the parish church. In 1868, at a vestry meeting, the following resolution was passed: "That the stonework of the west window be erected as especially commemorative both of the generosity of the late Thomas Whately, Esquire, in presenting the parish with the stained glass for the same, and of the very high respect in which, professionally and privately, he was held in the parish and neighbourhood during a residence of thirty years in Berkhamsted."

The Whately window inspired a book, *Painted Windows*, by the Rev. F. B. Harvey, usher of Berkhamsted School and afterwards rector of Cheddington. It is interesting to learn from Mrs.

Whately's will that one of her nieces and beneficiaries was Mrs. Harvey.

Now for some local history provided by Miss M. Williams, of Joslin, South Australia. She writes:

"My interest in a visit to Berkhamsted during my holiday in England arises from the following facts. Mrs. Whately's brother, John Salter, of Leominster, married Louisa Smith in 1855; he died, leaving a wife and two children, Henry Charles Salter and Emma Jane. The son was sent to a boarding school, and the widowed mother and daughter, Emma Jane, lived with Mrs. Whately at Egerton House. It was their home until the son Henry came to Adelaide, South Australia, as a young man; his mother and sister followed. The sister married in 1891, and her daughter, Ada Louise, married a priest of the Church of England, the Rev. C. H. Williams, in 1917. I, Monica Williams, am their second daughter.

PLEASANT MEMORIES

"Our family is so small, and we feel so closely knit, that when my elder sister Christobel came to live in England from 1949 to 1957, she immediately visited Berkhamsted, the home of her grandmother, great-grandmother and great-great-aunt, Mrs. Thomas Whately, afterwards Mrs. Henry Dixon. Now, on the occasion of my first visit to England, I, too, have been to Berkhamsted.

"My grandmother (who was Dr. and Mrs. Whately's niece) has recounted to me how she had played on the Common and in the old Castle precincts as a child. She remembered that cress grew in the remains of the moat in those days. She

remembered, too, the conservatory of luscious grapes that Dr. Whately had grown, and the large cannon balls from the Crimean War resting on the top of the gatepost pillars of Egerton House. She was confirmed in St. Peter's Church, Berkhamsted. She left Egerton House to come to Australia, and lived in Adelaide until she died in 1957 at the age of 90 years.

FAMILY HISTORY

"Dr. Thomas Whately, surgeon, his wife Jane, afterwards Mrs. Henry Dixon, and the Rev. Henry Dixon, are all buried in the cemetery at Berkhamsted, and I have located their graves. Mrs. Dixon died in 1894.

"There being no issue to the Whately marriage, Egerton House would have reverted to relatives on Dr. Whately's side. No mention of it was made in Mrs. Whately's will (or rather Mrs. Dixon's will, as was her name when she died) which was drawn up by Arthur William Vaisey, solicitor, of Tring.

"The old home presumably passed into other hands and was ultimately demolished. There may be distant relatives somewhere in England, even in Hertfordshire.

THE MAGNET

"Our family in Australia is very small, and somehow our roots in Berkhamsted, though severed so long ago, seem dear to us.

"My grandmother was alive at the time of my sister's visit and she was so distressed to hear that dear Egerton House, her old girlhood home, had been demolished to build a cinema.

"My mother has just a few treasured

All building repairs
and maintenance
Painting and
decorations

All work under personal
supervision

S. Gilbert & Sons
Builders

'GREENLY,' TRING ROAD
NORTHCHURCH

Telephone : 1517

possessions, Georgian and Victorian silver pieces, and old china, that once graced Egerton House.

"The above history I am afraid is slim and fragmentary over the years, due to the fact that my family has lived 12,000 miles away in Australia for 76 years; but it is the magnet that has drawn me to these paths and byways of Berkhamsted."

Thank you, Miss Williams, for a most interesting and moving document. It will be a source of pride to all Berkhamstedians.

'BEORCHAM'

F. H. Woolsey Ltd.

recommend

SOLID FUEL for CENTRAL HEATING

F. H. WOOLSEY LTD.

24 Lower Kings Road
Berkhamsted

Phone: Berkhamsted 60

F. H. WOOLSEY LTD.

89/90 Akeman Street
Tring

Phone: Tring 2009