

The Council's Early Days—IV

by 'BEORCHAM'

The election of three additional Councillors when the urban district was extended in 1909 was followed a year later by the triennial election of the entire Council, now increased from twelve to fifteen members. There were 25 candidates! It could not have been easy for electors to make their choice, and there was much talk of introducing the present system of electing one-third of the Council every year, each member serving for three years.

However, instead of waiting another three years, the Council again held a 'general' election in 1911, and on this occasion 21 candidates contested the 15 seats. Then, in 1912, no fresh candidate came forward, so the retiring Councillors were returned unopposed. The first election of five candida-

tes took place in 1913, when, for the first time, a woman was among the nine candidates. Mrs. Bertha L. Hocken was placed seventh, with 221 votes, so it was still a 'men only' Council. Bottom of the poll was Mr. Walter Pitkin, who, many years later, was chairman of the Council.

TOWN PLANNING

Returning to 1910, the last of the 15 successful candidates was Mr. G. H. Whybrow, a Town Planning enthusiast who ruffled some fellow members who knew or cared little for what was then a fairly new subject. Nevertheless, Mr. Whybrow attended a national conference on Town Planning as the Council's representative; a few months later the surveyor, Mr. E. H. Adey, attended a similar conference, and early in 1911 it seemed

likely that Berkhamsted would apply to the Local Government Board for authority to prepare a Town Planning Scheme, the area extending from High Street to Shootersway, from King's Road to Durrants Lane.

Berkhamsted must have been among the very first small country towns to show interest in this subject. But the Council's enthusiasm soon evaporated and a 'voluntary' scheme was preferred. And so little or nothing more was heard about Town Planning until the early 1920s, when post-war housing needs and the sale of parts of the Ashridge Estate called for something more than 'voluntary' planning.

FIRST COUNCIL CHAMBER

Mr. Whybrow's initiative was not rewarded; he was defeated in the 1911 election, but continued to take a very active part in local affairs. He had much to do with the early development of Greenway, was a founder of the Citizens Association, and originator of the famous footpath map. His book

Shaw & Kilburn

VAUXHALL · BEDFORD MAIN DEALERS · AGENTS FOR ROVER & LANDROVER

FOR ALL VAUXHALLS AND BEDFORDS
PLUS QUALITY TESTED USED CARS

You'll get quicker delivery, wider choice
and best after sales service by experts.
Sensible part exchange prices too.

STATION GARAGE, BERKHAMSTED

Telephone 2232

PERSONAL SERVICE AT PETROL STATION

The History of Berkhamsted Common, keeps his name green while most of his fellow-Councillors are forgotten.

On the whole our Councillors had a quiet time from 1910 until the outbreak of the 1914 War. They moved into a disused chapel which became the first Council Chamber, appointed a new town crier (Arthur Grover), extended street lighting from 10 to 11 p.m., and gave permission, in December, 1910, for a former furniture store in Cowper Road to be used as a cinematograph hall, subject to there being not more than 150 seats. This was known as the Gem Cinema.

UNWANTED CASTLE

In 1911, Earl Brownlow was willing to relinquish the remainder of his lease of the Castle grounds and said he thought the Duchy of Cornwall would grant a new lease to the Council subject to their putting and keeping the property in thorough repair. The Council did not feel justified in taking over the lease on the terms suggested.

A row led to the resignation of the fire brigade (history repeated itself in 1929!) and the Council advertised for volunteers to form a new brigade. Mr. G. Callaghan was to provide horses for the engine for all fires and six drills a year at an annual cost of £5, the horses being stabled at the Goat Inn. A very reasonable contract! But prices, like wages, were still low, and the surveyor was authorised to have an office boy provided that he was paid not more than 5s. a week.

WARMING THE BATH

A very popular (and rotund) Councillor, Mr. P. H. de Fraine, who kept a barber's shop between the Swan and Crown Hotels, proposed the construction of a swimming bath 'on the station recreation ground or some other suitable site'. 'Daffy', as he was always called, kept on campaigning for a swimming bath, and when one was eventually provided, a few years after the 1914-18 war, he had the privilege of declaring it open. He did so by diving into the water, having previously thrown a lighted match into the bath to warm it.

There was a spate of letters from

the Urban to the County Council. In 1911, Hertford was informed that large, clumsy vehicles created much danger and noise. 'There is urgent need,' the Council said, 'of a regulation requiring a man to be always at the back of such dangerous vehicles, or that the driver should be provided with an efficient reflector to enable him to see anything overtaking it.'

There was the usual complaint to the County Council about the rough surface of the High Street; litter, too, was as much a nuisance as it is now, and Rear-Admiral A. H. Smith Dorrien's letter on

the subject, printed in the *Gazette*, was forwarded to Hertford with the news that the Urban Council fully endorsed the Admiral's comments.

Some more notes to Hertford—one requesting a bye-law to stop advertising on hoardings that spoil the beauty of the landscape; and a suggestion that Wednesday be early-closing day if it was necessary to fix a day; otherwise the Council preferred the choice to be left to individual shopkeepers.

(to be continued)



Big or small

we help them all

No matter how large or how little the amount you wish to save or invest, you'll find we can offer a great deal in good rates of interest and security with our savings or investment schemes. We have been established since 1884 — our experience is your profit.

**HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
BUILDING SOCIETY**
IS HERE TO HELP YOU PROSPER

Authorised for trustee investment
Member of the Building Societies Association
Assets exceeding £7,000,000
43 Marlows, Hemel Hempstead, Tel: 56443/54155
Manager and Secretary C. R. Hunt FBS.

HH

Local Agent: Western Insurance and Mortgage Services,
29/33 Lower Kings Road, Berkhamsted