

# In and around Berkhamsted



## By 'Beorcham'

### MIDSUMMER FETES

Now is the time for organisers of summer fetes to hope the weather will be fine and all good causes will benefit. But did you know that in years gone by a Whitsuntide fair was held on Berkhamsted Common? It was a two-day event, with stalls and booths for refreshments. The main event was a cricket match between married and single. Weather permitting, fiddling and dancing extended far into the night, but the fair ceased to be held on the Common in 1867, a year after the short-lived enclosure of the Common.

G.H. Whybrow, in his "History of Berkhamsted Common", said that the fair was of the traditional rural character, with such games as jumping and rolling for legs of mutton. It seems to have been purely for purposes of amusement, not at all for business, and was described as a "holiday fair" in a printed leaflet of 1819.

Here are some of the prizes: a subscription purse to be run for by two prize Dandy Hobbies; a pair of breeches to be jingled for; a linen shirt to be run for by men, the second best to have a pair of stockings; a Holland chemise to be run for by women, the second best to have a pair of stockings.

On the second day there was a prize of ten shillings to be run for by donkeys; a pair of shoes to be run for by men in sacks; a linen shirt to be run for by boys; a fine chemise to be run for girls; a leg of mutton to be put on the top of a pole and climbed for by boys.

The leaflet added: "Cricketing as usual. Wickets pitched at 11 o'clock."

The old-time diversions were mentioned in the famous law-suit which followed Lord Brownlow's frustrated enclosure of the Common. With a fine

sense of feeling for our inhabitants, Sir Richard Baggallay told the court: "I should hope that the people of Berkhamsted and Northchurch are not addicted to climbing up a greasy pole or bobbing for rolls. I think perhaps some persons who come to the fair from other parts indulge more in those proceedings."

This was the sort of thinking which gave our town a snobbish reputation!

### UNFAMILIAR NAMES

My reference last month to Snob's Alley (now Prince Edward Street) reminded a friend of some other unusual local place names. He recalls Happy Valley, a group of old cottages off Castle Street, near the timberyard, and Petticoat Lane, the footpath through Berkhamsted Park to the Common.

Two unfamiliar names are Smith Street and Hampton Court Road, two short turnings off George Street on each side of the recreation ground.

Then there was Foggy Bottom, the nickname for Provident Place; the Pightle, the old name for Highfield Road; and Squire's Lane (a family name) west of Lower Kings Road, near and sometimes beside the river Bulbourne.

Loosley's Directory for 1897 included Cavendish Road, a new road with only two houses. In the 1898 edition Cavendish was altered to Clarence, now a very well known road off Kings Road. And what is now Middle Road was for many years Kitsbury Middle Road.

### CHERRY RIPE

I was stopped in the High Street by a reader who agreed with my claim that the steep lane linking Frithsden with Nettleden is one of the most interesting walks in the district. I was then asked if it was true that the cherry turnover was "invented" at Frithsden, but I believe that the claim is made in some other Chiltern villages, including Potten End.

However, in years gone by Frithsden was noted for its cherries, and the place-name Cherry Bounce survives. Many years ago I interviewed the oldest inhabitant, Mrs Kirby, who recalled using rattles to scare birds off the trees, the children chanting "Shoo birds away for tuppence a day."

Mrs Kirby remembered being woken up at 4 am. by Potten End men who, having bought the fruit which grew opposite her cottage, fired guns to scare the birds. The cherries were sold at twopence a pound at Hollybush Farm. It was this annual sale, and the convivial hour or so that followed at the Alford Arms, which constituted the so-called cherry fair, though in earlier times it may have been a more picturesque event.

Today Frithsden is in the parish of Nettleden-cum-Potten End, but for centuries it was just inside the parish of Berkhamsted St Peter until the county

boundary was revised in 1895, the northern slopes of Frithsden (and the adjoining ancient parish of Nettleden) were in Buckinghamshire. At least one house had its front door in Herts and a back door in Bucks.

In the Berkhamsted registers we find an interesting entry of 1701: "Ould Goodwife Bates of Freesden." Some people still use that very cold pronunciation.

### ST PETER TIDE FAIR

ON SATURDAY JUNE 29th THE ORDERS FOR THE DAY:

*Come Early and Stay Late*

Start the day by buying a delicious cake or two from the Cake Stall and of course some exclusive sweets from the choir's Sweet Stall. Garden produce will also be available and you can browse through the Bric-a-Brac. Your weekend reading can be enhanced with choice books from the Bookstall and the children will be well pleased with a choice from the Toy Stall.

Before getting too energetic in the garden later in the weekend, use up some surplus energy by smashing some of the Youth Group's china and take your chance in Trapping the Rat, Guessing the Depth, Hunting Treasure, playing Darts and skittles or touching the Live Wire. Of course you will find not only Desert Sand but also Tombola and Bottles. For that mid-morning break visit the Barbeque or Candy Floss stalls and then take a leisurely walk into St Peter's and see the New Display of Crafts associated with the Church.

Just before enjoying your Ploughman's Lunch and watching the lunchtime display by the Aldbury Morris Men, visit the stall showing some lovely engraved pendants and maybe buy that special present. There will still be time to buy some Raffle Tickets and maybe win either a MICROWAVE OVEN or TV (your choice if yours is the first ticket out of the hat) or one of our numerous other prizes.

In the afternoon watch the production by the Junior BAODS and just before you leave make sure the children have their dip into the Bran Tub and you have put the rest of your loose change into the Tea Tin and handed it in to the Rector's wife.

What a lovely way to spend a day and give a good boost to St Peter's Appeal - SO - 9.30 am. till 2.30 pm SATURDAY JUNE 29th. *Come Early and Stay Late!*



## FRIENDS OF ST PETER'S APPEAL

APPEAL SO FAR:

The Appeal is rattling on! Over £50,000 is in the kitty - this in nine months of activity. Where has it all come from - gifts, covenants, the congregations of St Peter's and All Saints', pennies in boxes! The Rector sat outside St Peter's in bitter wind and took £2,700 in gifts having had delivered an envelope to every house in the Parish. The sun is beginning to shine on the Appeal indicator board - the gift of Aitchisons, the Estate Agents - and it is hoped that the Petertide Fair on June 29th (St Peter's Day) will raise thousands not hundreds. The 200 Club draw will be held then and the Lipton Tea Tins will have their quarterly emptying at Sara Davis's hands.

June 8th sees the Parish Barbecue and a month later on July 9th, Augustus Smith School gives a Concert in St Peter's.

If you have not made a donation and would like to do so, please contact the Appeal Office at 154 High Street.

Mrs Ann Sharpley has made a handsome Appeal Flag which will fly on days significant to the Appeal and below it, John Cook's cricket score board of the Appeal total will keep the whole of Berkhamsted informed about what's going on.

At the Petertide Fair you will be able to buy the first of the Appeal mugs with a Harry Sheldon picture on it. You will also be able to order one of the unique Berkhamsted Chalice. Made by Lisa Benattar, a well-known local potter, it is a chalice of fired clay with the legend in Latin 'Virgo Mater eccles: eterna porta glo (ria)'. Where is this from? It is a graffito on the north side of one of the Tower piers in St Peter's scratched in Lombardic letters dating before the Reformation. It faces what was the medieval Chapel to 'Our Lady of Grace' for which Edward de la Hay left money for 'the light' to burn perpetually. Who wrote it no one knows, or when, but it still survives and the Berkhamsted Chalice will perpetuate this simple act of medieval piety. Who knows - when the organ is removed from that quarter of the church, Edward's light may burn once again?