

# A BERKHAMSTED NOTEBOOK

BY TOWNSMAN

## Overseas Visitors

My reference to an entry in St. Peter's Church visitors' book, 'Lesley and Paul Hart, Swing Gate Farm, Johannesburg,' has brought a most interesting letter from Mr. S. Dell, who now lives at Potten End. Yes, there is a connection between the South African farm and Berkhamsted's Swing Gate Lane.

Here is the story. Mr. and Mrs. Dell, soon after the birth of their daughter Sylvia (now Mrs. Hart), moved to Swing Gate Lane. Sylvia attended the Victoria C.E. School, where she was a Bourne scholar. After secretarial work with the Friesian Cattle Society, she was a full-time member of the Fire Service in the war, serving in Berkhamsted and other Hertfordshire towns.

She was married at St. Peter's in 1948 and the young couple emigrated to South Africa, where Mr. Hart pursued his career as an engineer and Mrs. Hart was secretary to the managing director of Cooper's South African company. Then, in 1954, they purchased a farm near Johannesburg and named it Swing Gate Farm, a pleasant reminder of Berkhamsted. Their children, Lesley and Paul, accompanied them on a holiday visit to England and signed the church visitors' book.

## The Choirboy's Return

While in England, Mrs. Hart met her cousin, Mr. John Dell, who was spending his first holiday in England since 1946. For many years he has made his home in Connecticut, and on renewing acquaintance with Berkhamsted he was thrilled to see, in the parish church, a photograph of himself as a choirboy, with the late Mr. W. H. London, the organist.

Mr. John Dell, back in New England, has some interesting reminders of Old England. His state capital is Hartford, named after our county town. There is also a Barkhamsted in Connecticut, but much of this little township has been submerged by a vast reservoir.

The original Berkhamsted, thank goodness, keeps its head above water.

## Alice, where art thou?

I started something by recalling Alice, the town's horse-drawn fire engine. Mrs. N. Newell has been kind enough to give me a snapshot of Alice making her last public appearance in Berkhamsted. The year was 1929. A Wigginton reader adds that our pride and joy, sold to a scrap dealer at Tring, ended her days as a trailer on a farm.

What a pity we never kept this interesting relic of the past. In her red coat Alice was much, much nicer than the drab old fever cart, which I saw in a shed in the Red Lion Yard a few months ago.

## Colourful Berkhamsted

Every spring, every autumn, seems to be nicer than the last one. Walking over hills and commons in the middle of October, I thought the countryside had never before looked so lovely. There may be more spectacular scenes in the Welsh hills and the Lake District, but our corner of Hertfordshire has its own especial character.

Oh, I've travelled quite a bit and taken photographs of exotic, far away places, but my favourite colour transparencies are the ones I took last autumn from the tower of St. Peter's, Berkhamsted. For colour and interest it would be hard to beat these bird's eye views of the roofs and trees of the town.

## What's His Name?

Now for the question of the month. A friend who has the good fortune to live at Northchurch wishes to know whether he is a Northchurchian, a Northchurcher, a Northchurchite, or a Northchurchman.

I prefer the first version, detest the second and third, and feel that Northchurchman somehow suggests a clergyman in a fur coat.

For safety's sake I shall continue to describe my friend as a parishioner, or a resident, of Northchurch.

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