

# A BERKHAMSTED NOTEBOOK

BY TOWNSMAN

## On the Waterfront

I wonder how many hundreds of thousands of meals were cooked and served to men of the Inns of Court O.T.C. in Key's yard during the first World War? Many a memory must have been jogged by the recent clearance of part of the timber merchant's premises.

From Castle Street we now have a new view of the tree-lined esplanade on the far side of the canal. It is also interesting to see the 'Crystal Palace' (quite a cut above the usual type of Victorian pub architecture), from a new angle.

I do not know what is going to happen to the newly-cleared site, but Messrs. J. Alford, Ltd., the present owners, will earn the thanks of the town if they plant some trees on their side of the waterfront. And trees do provide timber!

But long before the trees grow up I hope that the derelict building beside the 'Crystal Palace' will be pulled down. Once a charming cottage of unusual design, known as 'Poet's Corner', it is no longer likely to inspire an ode.

## Tall Chimneys

Demolitions at Messrs. Alford's premises have included yet another of our few remaining tall works chimneys.

It doesn't seem so very long ago when, viewed from afar, the townscape was dominated by the parish church tower, the Baptist church spire, and various tall 'industrial age' chimneys.

One by one the chimneys were taken down—from old saw-mills in George Street and Holliday Street, from the waterworks, and from Cooper's lower works. Cooper's monster chimney between Manor Street and Raven's Lane still soars above the Clunbury Press, and as it is nicely proportioned I hope it will be retained.

## Collops and Cucumber

A friend has given me a book entitled 'This England', by W. S. Shears. At the end of each chapter (one per county) appears an item headed 'Dishes which may be sampled.' This is the menu for Hertfordshire:

White collops and cucumber sauce  
Blackberries in butter  
Nettle tea      Watercress

I am fond of Hertfordshire watercress. I also enjoy eating Hertfordshire blackberries, though I have yet to try them with butter. Nettles aren't my cup of tea, but if I fancied the county brew I would not have far to go to sting myself.

It's that plateful of white collops and

cucumber sauce which worries me. What are collops? Do you catch them in the canal, or on the common, or wait for them to escape from Whipsnade? Do collops grow on trees or in the ground? Or do you buy them at the supermarket in tuppence-off tins?

I looked up the word in the dictionary and learnt that a collop is a piece of meat. So I haven't been missing the Hertfordshire speciality, after all, except the cucumber sauce.

## Tring Dumplings

Our county, alas! isn't rich in original dishes. Lancashire has its hot-pot and Yorkshire its pudding, but Hertfordshire hasn't even a rock cake to call its own. If you are now expecting a joke about Hertfordshire pudding-stones, you are in the wrong department.

Frithsden is said to have originated the cherry turnover, but every time I mention the matter, rival claims pour in from Buckinghamshire.

Hertfordshire's outstanding contribution to the delights of the table seems to be the Tring dumpling—meat one end, jam the other. This is said to have made a popular alternative to sandwiches for workers who could not return home for the mid-day meal. Starting at the meaty end, they nibbled their way through to the sweet course and then returned to work like giants refreshed.

The secret of a good Tring dumpling was a sound inter-departmental wall. If the gravy leaked into the jam sector, or vice versa, the flavour couldn't have been all that nice.

If I am pulling your leg, someone has been pulling mine.

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