

# A BERKHAMSTED NOTEBOOK

BY TOWNSMAN

## Private, not Public

In last month's note about the declining number of public-houses in Castle Street I forgot to mention The Boote, which lost its licence in the early 1920s.

For as long as most of us can remember it has been a private house, but strangers still occasionally call there for drinks. Perhaps it's the architecture and the 'e' on the end of the boot which raise a thirst. Anyway, Mr. R. de Normanville sometimes answers the door to people who are quite surprised to learn that he is not 'mine host'.

On the other hand—or rather on the other side of Castle Street—people no longer call at St. George's for bed and breakfast. Formerly this house was a temperance hotel called The George and Dragon, and I imagine that with a name like that it often attracted people who expected something stronger than tea or coffee.

St. George's, by the way, is our oldest pre-fab. It was first erected at an exhibition in Paris and was brought to England by Earl Brownlow. Owned by Berkhamsted School, this translation from the French looks good in our Latin Quarter.

## Relic of the Past

Did you locate the remains of a farm gateway in the High Street? The answer to last month's question is that it is a decaying wooden post at Cowper Road corner, where it helps to ensure that motorists who cut things fine will not damage the Sayer almshouses.

The post dates from the time when Cowper Road was a meadow where cattle and sheep spent their last hours before being taken to the butcher's shop on the opposite side of the High Street.

## Poet's Corner

How did Poet's Corner—the derelict cottage in Station Road—get its name? This question is often asked, and some people have wondered whether there is any connection between the cottage and Berkhamsted-born William Cowper.

Mr. S. Bates, of Chapel Street, seems to have the right idea. He deems the name to be not much more than forty years old. He links it with Frank Reffitt, who lodged at the cottage.

Frank served with the Inns of Court O.T.C. in the first World War and stayed on in Berkhamsted, writing a large number of poems, some of which he had printed locally. He even wrote

the shopkeepers' advertisements (also in verse) which appeared in his little book to help pay the printer's bill.

## Penny Post?

Someone, I see, has crashed into the wall at the junction of Cross Oak Road and Shootersway, thereby tilting a genuine Victorian letter-box.

There cannot be many 'V R' letter-boxes left in the district, and I cannot help thinking that letters posted in this ancient box should still qualify for the Penny Post. But nobody ever follows up my suggestions.

## Nothing New

'What a noisy High Street this is!' a friend remarked the other day. Yes, yes, yes; but we have been saying this for almost as long as I can remember. Thirty-odd years ago Canon Stainsby often paused during sermons because the traffic created a fiendish din.

Incidentally, do you know when a local by-pass was first mooted? Over thirty years ago!

## The Folly

What do you think of this? Two students arrived in Berkhamsted and asked a resident if there was a folly in the neighbourhood.

He advised them to go and see me!

I would have been upset but for the fact that the students were seeking what my dictionary describes as 'a great useless structure, or one left unfinished, having been begun without a reckoning of the cost.'

No further comment, please.