

A BERKHAMSTED NOTEBOOK

BY TOWNSMAN

In the Air

There is something rather special in the Berkhamsted air these days. No, not the scent of flowers, nor the stench of petrol, nor even the litter borne on the breeze. What is so refreshing is the resurgence of interest in civic affairs.

For many years after the war few people got really excited about local politics. Oh, we had our annual two hours of listening to Council candidates, read the local papers and the *Review*, and followed housing, education and some other questions according to our needs and interests. But on the whole the people of Berkhamsted were not talking a great deal about the town of Berkhamsted. To put it bluntly, there was much apathy and not a little cynicism.

Looking to the Future

But, goodness me, what a lot of people are getting their teeth into questions of the day—and of tomorrow! Correspondence in the local Press tells its own story of mounting interest. It is even known for the telly to be switched off for discussions on the latest happenings (or non-happenings) in the Council Chamber.

Where shall we build a social centre, if we have one? Haven't we waited long

enough for a by-pass? Are we going to have a replanned Town Centre? Where shall we find room for a fresh burst of building (the greatest yet) as soon as the electric train service is operating?

As a resident with a long memory and a liking for tradition I am apprehensive about some of the proposals, but I neither resent nor shut my ears to the lively, challenging views that are being expressed.

Berkhamsted will remain a *real* town, not just a place of bricks and mortar, so long as the residents, new and old, really care about it.

Citizens' Association

For this reason I am pleased to see that the Citizens' Association is making a drive for more members and embarking upon a series of visits to places of local interest. But what's this? An evening at the sewage works? Well, why not? Later on there will be an evening visit to Berkhamsted School, and this will be an eye-opener to very many residents, old as well as new.

Many of the things the Citizens' Association battled for in its early days have been supplied. But it still keeps an eye on our rights-of-way and provides a useful public platform from time to

time. It should continue to play a prominent part in local affairs now that so many controversial questions are before us.

The Crinkle-Crankle

A newcomer has asked me to suggest some good, short country walks around Berkhamsted. Unfortunately, the Citizens' Association booklet on this subject, with maps and full instructions, has been out of print for many years, but maps are available. Over a hundred miles of fieldpaths are within easy reach of the town.

Here is a tip for those who are not familiar with the Crinkle-Crankle. Go up Swing Gate Lane (or enter it from Chesham Road or Kingshill via Sandpit Green) and continue down the lane to Bottom Farm. On this short stretch alone you will have wonderful views over the unspoilt Bourne valley.

Beyond Bottom Farm, where the lane ends, cross the dry bed of the Bourne Gutter and turn right along a track which soon rises steeply. This is the so-called Crinkle-Crankle. At the moment the track is clear of undergrowth, but expect some mud after heavy rain. On reaching high ground (look all around you, for the views are superb), the track continues beside a hedge, running straight for most of the way though twice it veers left. The hedge is your guide, anyway.

On reaching a narrow road, turn right for Haresfoot Park and Berkhamsted. Otherwise, with the aid of a map, you will find a fieldpath which will take you to Ashley Green.

This is my favourite short walk. It will probably be yours, too.

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