

A BERKHAMSTED NOTEBOOK

BY TOWNSMAN

Ninety Years Young

One of the best local booklets I have seen for a long time has just been published by Berkhamsted Cricket Club. A 90th birthday is a very good occasion for digging into club history, especially if the digger is such a keen cricketer and lively writer as Mr. H. E. Todd.

He gives us some laughs and jogs the memories of older townsmen. New to me is a story about a pre-1914 search for accommodation for the second eleven. The Castle grounds were considered and turned down. Then the delegation inspected grounds at Sunnyside, only to find them unsuitable, as they were 'being used for the rearing of pheasants and ducks.'

The future of the club, Mr. Todd remarks, is well secured by a particularly happy liaison with the schools. And so, for many summers to come, 'hearts will always thrill when the club flag with the golden castle on a blue background starts to flutter at the beginning of May.'

Duncombe Terrace

Several readers tell me that they tried the 'Crinkle-Crankle' walk, described in last month's *Review*, and enjoyed the fine views. Requests have been made for

details of other good walks, but it would be wrong to use up my space with 'turn left, veer right' instructions while good maps, such as the one published by the Citizens' Association, are available.

To a reader who wishes to know my favourite long walk, I recommend one which must be familiar to hundreds of residents. Choose your favourite route to Northchurch and Aldbury Commons and continue to the Bridgewater Monument; then go through the woods (Duncombe Terrace) to Ivinghoe Beacon.

Your map will show footpaths all the way. Scenically it is one of the finest walks in the Home Counties and enjoyable at any time of the year—if you don't mind a little mud.

Right Number

I cannot get used to ringing fellow townsmen whose four-figure telephone numbers begin with 6. There aren't 6,000 houses in Berkhamsted—and very many householders have yet to enjoy the mixed blessings of the telephone. But not to worry. I understand that long sequences of numbers are omitted to make things easier when we have an automatic exchange.

I wonder, by the way, if anyone has an earlier telephone directory than my edition dated 1906-7? The exchange and public call office (Berkhamsted 1) were comfortably housed in the front room of No. 3 Chapel Street, and remained there for many years.

Sixty years ago there were 55 Berkhamsted subscribers, among whom were Drs. Bontor and Porter, Locke and Smith (brewers), R. Southey (cycle dealer), David Pike (grocer), and A. C. Meek (jobmaster). Berkhamsted School for Girls was on the 'phone, but not the Boys' School.

Coaching Days

Here is a strange tale of the Coaching Days, passed on to me by Mr. Harold Waterton, of Chestnut Drive. Among some newspaper cuttings, dated about 1821, he found an item headed 'A man's life saved by a mail coach running over him.'

Here is the news: A Berkhamsted labourer, returning from a 'frolic' during the severest night's frost of the winter, fell on the turnpike road and remained insensible, without power to move. Then, at 11.30 p.m., he was 'effectually roused' by the hind wheel of the Birmingham mail coach, which grazed his head and passed obliquely over his body.

No bones were broken, and the man made a complete recovery. But, as the reporter stated, he would almost certainly have been frozen to death had the mail coach not aroused him from a drunken stupor.

All the same, a friendly tap on the shoulder would have been less painful.

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