

# A BERKHAMSTED NOTEBOOK

BY TOWNSMAN

## That Hidden Casket

Some months ago I referred to a casket which was said to have been buried beneath a tree in the grounds of The Hall, now part of the Hall Park Estate. It was stated that the tree had been felled and that workmen who had been asked to look out for the treasure found nothing but roots and soil.

For a correction and supplementary information I am indebted to Mrs. E. O. Blunden, of Collingham, Newark, who recently revisited the town of her birth. When I give the lady's maiden name—Bridget Constable-Curtis—old parishioners will recall that she was a daughter of the Rev. H. G. Constable-Curtis, rector of St. Peter's from 1902-8, and grand-daughter of Captain Constable-Curtis, who lived at The Hall.

Bridget was born in her grandfather's mansion, and she has clear recollections of a casket being placed beneath a tree which was planted in the grounds of The Hall at the time of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee (1897). The casket contained a complete set of coins of the Realm and contemporary newspapers.

Having read my note on the subject, Mrs. Blunden revisited the grounds she knew so well as a child and was

pleased to find the tree still standing. So one day—not for many years, I hope—some surprised fellers should find interesting Victoriana among the roots.

For security reasons a description of the tree and its site is being kept secret. I know what happened after publicising 17th century work in an old cottage at Gossoms End. Vandals broke in and smashed the relic.

## Empty Houses

Wandering around the countryside, I am surprised to see so many derelict houses. In some villages (especially in Bucks) whole rows of cottages have been left to the untender mercies of lads who enjoy smashing windows. A good deal of new building is in progress, of course, but the death rate for old property seems to be even higher in the country than it is in the towns.

## Look for the Date

Here is a little observation test for young Berkhamstedians.

See if you can find buildings in the High Street bearing the following dates: 1619, 1864, 1721, 1762, 1854, 1863, 1933, 1938, 1958.

I do not suggest that these are the only dates you will see in the High

Street, but the ones I quote, with one exception, are clearly visible from pavement level. You will be able to see three dates without moving an inch.

Off you go, children, and don't step into the road. You will be able to check the results of your sightseeing with the answers in next month's *Review*.

## Half Baptised

A great deal of interest was aroused by a reference in last month's 'Beorcham' article to the following entry in our parish registers: '1719. John the son of John White and Sarah his wife was half baptised.'

Mrs. E. Allsop, of Royston, writes: 'Half baptised is a term used when emergency action is taken for a child who is not expected to live. A clergyman goes to the child's home and conducts a brief bedside service at which the child is named. In exceptional cases the naming may be done by the doctor, nurse, or even by one of the parents. If the child lives, he or she is taken to church for the usual baptism.'

## Keep Going!

A reader complains that the 'Crinkle Crankle' walk I recommended two months ago is now overgrown. She turned back and missed the lovely hill-top views.

Now, lots of footpaths become overgrown in high summer. But please don't turn back. Put your best foot forward and do your bit to keep the paths open. If our forebears hadn't been plodders we would never have received the fine legacy of one of the best networks of footpaths in the country.

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