

# A BERKHAMSTED NOTEBOOK

BY TOWNSMAN

## Torture Chamber

Despite occasional interruptions, our councillors are pleased to see ratepayers at the back of the council chamber whenever the meeting is open to the public.

But oh, those chairs! Have you ever sat on one? Oooch! If identical seating accommodation were provided for our councillors, their meetings would never last more than ten minutes.

As an occasional wriggler and squirmer in the ratepayers' torture chamber, I hope there will be an immediate issue of comfy cushions, followed in due course by comfy chairs.

## Farrier's Hall

Here's an interesting request. Can I say how Farrier's Hall received its name, and who built it?

If your local geography is deficient, I must explain that the hall is behind Boots the Chemists, and is now occupied by the British Legion. It was built by an uncle of the late Mr. Albert Nash, the last to carry on the long-established farrier's business in the centre of the town.

The hall, in its earlier days, was let for meetings, and for some years it was used as a gymnasium by Berkhamsted

School for Girls. Then, in the 1920s, the British Legion moved in.

Some years have passed since we last heard the ring of Mr. Nash's anvil, but I hope that we shall go on using the name Farrier's Hall. It is a pleasant link with the past.

## Crossing the Road

Recently I read some impressive figures showing how many thousands of vehicles stream along the High Street, and how many pedestrians cross the road at certain points in the course of a day.

What no one can estimate is how many thousands of minutes are lost daily by people who wish to cross the road but are held up by the traffic. It often pays one to walk two or three hundred yards to and from the traffic lights for what one hopes will be a safe crossing.

And now, only eight years after the opening of the Post Office, we are having a pedestrian crossing to help us on our way. Well, that's a relief. Have you ever been in a hurry to catch the last post and waited minutes while cars and lorries streamed past?

So far, so good. What really infuriates me is the way the question of a by-pass is perpetually by-passed. We shall soon literally be getting nowhere.

## Writing on the Wall

The Railway Tavern in Castle Street is due to join the by-gones of Berkhamsted, but there may yet be time to see the interesting inscription on the wall facing the canal.

It extols Nash's celebrated Chesham ales, but how many years have elapsed since the Nash family kept a brewery at Chesham? Fifty, sixty years? The writing on the wall may be even older than the 'Foster's No. 2 Malting' inscription on the Scouts' premises in Chapel Street.

## Plain Spelling

A townsman was highly indignant when, having business to transact in the West Country, he was assured by an official that the correct spelling of the name of our town is Berkhamstead.

When, my friend asks, was the spelling Berkhamsted widely adopted? It is impossible to give a date, for the change came gradually. The Post Office and London and North Western Railway Company undoubtedly did much to make 'Berkhamsted' popular.

Writing some years ago in *The Times Literary Supplement*, a correspondent claimed that Dr. T. C. Fry, former headmaster of Berkhamsted School, deserved credit for the adoption of the short spelling. But he was not the first of the reformers!

The Great Berkhamstead Urban District Council did not officially drop the 'Great' and the two superfluous letters until 1937. The Gas Company and the Water Company continued to use the old form until one was nationalised and the other was absorbed by a larger company.

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