

# A BERKHAMSTED NOTEBOOK

BY TOWNSMAN

## Lighting-up Time

After many months of working through the dark hours without a light, the Town Hall clock is once again gleaming like the silvery moon. Thanks to the Urban District Council, it is brighter than ever before.

Why the Council? Why didn't the Town Hall Committee provide timely illumination? Well, the one part of the property *not* controlled by the committee is the great overhanging clock, which has been the responsibility of the Council ever since it was given to the town. In those days there was no Civic Centre and no council office suitable for such a large and useful ornament, so the Council asked the Town Hall Committee to provide a home for it.

Like St. Peter's Church clock, the Town Hall timepiece is pretty reliable, save when its far-from-tiny hands are frozen in a snowstorm.

Next time you gaze up to the familiar dials, see if you can distinguish (on the heavy iron bracket) an inscription stating that the clock was erected in memory of Thomas Read. He was owner of a saw-mill in Holliday Street and played a useful role in local life in late Victorian times.

## Fresh Discoveries

Unless there is the added attraction of a fete—or, at much wider intervals, a pageant—we rarely visit the Castle.

But thousands of people travelling by road and rail must have caught a distant view of men working on the wall in the south-east corner of the arena. The foundations of a small turret have been uncovered, and for a view of it you should clamber up the bank and go behind the curtain wall.

Not a lot to see, I admit, but the ruins are just that little more interesting than they were before.

By the way, 'caution' notices dated 1874-5 have aroused the interest of passengers using Lord Brownlow's former private entrance to Berkhamsted station.

Pasted on a wooden partition when the station was built over 90 years ago, the notices draw attention to the fines inflicted upon passengers who were drunk, trespassing, ticket-less, or boarding moving trains.

## Wandering Around

As a change from hill climbing in the Chilterns I often enjoy a visit to Hertfordshire's Lake District—you know, the corner of our county which charges into the plain of Aylesbury.

It is a region of large fields, huge reservoirs, small branch canals and one ripped-up railway. The other day I stood on the platform of Marstongate station, but there was no train to take me to Aylesbury or Cheddington. The rails have gone save for three short sections, just the width of the road, at so-called level crossings. The idea, I suppose, is to give motorists a jolly good bump for having made branch lines redundant.

But the lanes are still there to take me from Tringford to Thistle Brook, the county boundary. Ah, those rustic names—Astrope, Long Marston, Startopsend, Gubblecote, Wilstone, Puttenham. Let's say them again and sing heigh-ho for Betlow, Tiscott and Boarscroft.

I especially like Puttenham. It is small and quiet and *nice*. There are only 70 people in the village, and they lavish love and money on their church despite shameful setbacks. Twice in three years thieves have stripped lead off the roof.

It is cheering to turn to a memorial expressing thankfulness for the safe return of every man of Puttenham who went forth to serve in the first World War. There are only two other churches in England with similar war memorials.

## Roadside Chat

An elderly woman crossed the High Street, saw two of her cronies taking their ease on the seat outside the Civic Centre, and called out: 'Hello! Having a rest?'

'No, a Council meeting,' came the reply.

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