

A BERKHAMSTED NOTEBOOK

BY TOWNSMAN

A Famous Hymn Writer

I am indebted to Mr. A. R. Kibby, organist at Ashridge College Chapel, for a story concerning a curate who became a famous hymn writer.

There were no facilities for Church of England worship at Potten End and Frithsden until the middle of the 19th century, when a newly-ordained curate, the Rev. Henry Twells, visited Frithsden every Sunday to conduct a service in a cottage parlour. The congregation was never large, and there came a Sunday when, owing to illness and an accident, the only person present was the curate.

Disconsolate, young Henry Twells walked back to his lodging in Castle Street and there, thinking of the sick, he wrote the first draft of 'At even, ere the sun was set.' This hymn was not published until 1868, when Henry Twells was headmaster of Godolphin School, Hammersmith.

The services in a Frithsden cottage, by the way, were the prelude to the building of Holy Trinity Church, Potten End, in 1860. The decision to build at Potten End was taken because that village was growing; Frithsden, on the other hand, was declining, and it is still a tiny but lovely hamlet.

Climbing the Heights

I have been asked to settle an argument. Is it true or false that Ivinghoe Beacon is the highest point of the Chiltern Hills? Well, anyone can find the answer from a map, and having one handy I will save you the trouble of looking up the heights.

The Beacon, 762-ft. above sea level, is some 50-ft. lower than the hill near Clipperdown, a mile and a half south of the Beacon, and 90-ft. lower than Coombe Hill (852-ft.), near Wendover.

The highest point of all is crossed by the road which runs from St. Leonards to Aston Clinton, but there is no special feature to make the height (857-ft.) impressive. The Beacon and Coombe Hill attract attention because they stand high above the Plain of Aylesbury.

Not so Bright?

Several people have remarked that our High Street does not seem to be quite so brightly lit as it was when new lighting was installed a few years ago. That is my impression, too. Some parts seem very dull, especially when shop windows are not illuminated.

Perhaps the time has come to throw new light on an old subject.

Popular Lectures

Our Local History Society has an ever-growing following. The recent lecture by Miss C. V. Wedgwood was attended by well over 300 people, and there was standing room only for latecomers to a recent lecture to the Sessions Hall.

But the Society's activities are not limited to holding lectures. Earlier this year a survey was made of the Berkhamsted parish registers, and to carry on the good work a similar study has been made of the Northchurch registers.

The next task, part of a county-wide survey, will be a study of the Tithe Map to show how the land was used in the year 1840. Each of the county's many parishes will contribute one piece to a gigantic jig-saw puzzle which will be of great interest. Work on some parish maps has already been completed.

Found in a Garden!

More treasure trove! Ten-years-old Billy Sugars recently lent a helping hand in the garden of his grandfather, Mr. J. F. Sugars, of 8 Gravel Path. He didn't strike gold, but the good Berkhamsted earth yielded an interesting relic of the not-too-distant past—a metal token issued by a grocer who, in Victorian times, occupied what is now the International Stores.

The token, about the size of a half-penny, bears the inscription: 'C. B. Chasteney, Berkhamsted. Denomination ½-lb. coupon.' Doubtless it entitled the customer to a free packet of tea. Trading stamps, are not likely to survive 70 years' interment in the garden!

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