

A BERKHAMSTED NOTEBOOK

BY TOWNSMAN

Butts Meadow

Many people are wondering what use will be made of the newly-cleared site on the right-hand side of the footpath from Butts Meadow to Chesham Road. Four old cottages and some public air raid shelters were demolished some time ago, and the land has been levelled.

These changes have provoked rumours that in due course the allotment-gardens will be used for other purposes. This is untrue. The allotments will remain so long as they are used—and as there is usually a waiting list for any plot which becomes vacant, we are unlikely to see changes for many, many years.

The allotments were originally cultivated by brewery workers, and there is a tradition that the first occupants of the old cottages were ostlers employed at the King's Arms.

You may not know that when Mrs. Lionel Lucas gave Butts Meadow (including the allotments) to the town, she specified that the north-east corner (the newly-cleared site) was to be leased to the Conservative Club for use as a bowling green.

Unable to find a use for the land, the Conservatives surrendered the lease to the Council.

On the Level

Speaking of Butts Meadow, I wonder how many readers know how, when and why this recreation ground was levelled? Veteran sportsmen remember the bumpy, steeply-rising pitch and the many improvement schemes which were turned down for financial reasons.

Then came the year 1932 and widespread unemployment. The Urban Council set up a Work Fund, and money was raised by private subscriptions, dances, concerts, a flag day, and so on.

To ensure that most of the money would be spent on wages, with minimum expenditure on materials and equipment, the committee decided to level Butts Meadow. Men were engaged at 1s. an hour, while those unfit for heavy work were offered alternative employment on Brickhill Green, where the undergrowth was cleared and old footpaths were reopened.

Coming Events

This will be a great year for Berkhamsted. Five more months and we shall all be streaming to the Castle Grounds to see the Pageant.

Everybody knows that it will com-

memorate William the Conqueror's visit to Berkhamsted in 1066. Less well known is another important local centenary—the 100th anniversary of the frustrated attempt to enclose Berkhamsted Common. This, too, will figure in the Pageant.

Meanwhile, the Local History Society will hold a meeting in February at which various speakers will describe the events of 1866. The evening will end with a recital by Mr. Fred Fleming of the famous *Punch* poem which describes the midnight raid on the fences.

Then, in March, the Local History Society will promote a lecture by Professor David Douglas on 'William the Conqueror.' A very appropriate subject for 1966!

A later speaker—well known for his talks on radio and television—will be Mr. Rex Wailes, on 'Industrial Archaeology.'

In the Cart

What's this? Temperance children going on an outing in brewers' drays?

According to the *Berkhamsted Parish Magazine* for 1896, there was some good-natured chaff on this subject.

'The joke,' says the report, 'was not lost on the children. But surely such a thing is not so incongruous as it seems, for there is no essential reason against a brewer being a willing supporter of true temperance. The incident will not be without good if it teaches Temperance advocates to be less sweeping in their assertions of the iniquities of brewers who, as the day showed, have true kindly feeling and sympathy.'

Quite.

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