

A BERKHAMSTED NOTEBOOK

BY TOWNSMAN

Missing Milestones

The other day someone remarked that it was a pity we no longer had milestones beside our highway. The '26 miles to London' post stood outside Egerton House (where the Rex Cinema now stands), and the '27 miles' post was at Lagley.

It was in 1940 when we had to remove all milestones, signposts and other direction finders lest they helped enemy parachutists who couldn't afford maps. All the signposts came back after the war, and in some districts—but not ours—milestones were also restored. I suppose the local posts were sold to scrap metal dealers; they were of cast iron, with raised letters, painted black, on a white ground.

The only milestone in the district (and it really is a stone) stands beside the road between Nettleden and Little Gaddesden, proclaiming '27 miles from London'. I think it was overlooked in the anti-Nazi purge and stayed there all through the war.

Burke Hampstead

A young friend of mine has just received a letter addressed to 'Burke Hampstead'. A pretty name, don't you think? This must be about the 199th

spelling of a name which defies standardisation.

Another friend, on completing her education as a Christmas part-time postwoman, told me she never imagined that so many people employed flies with inky feet to address their envelopes. Some of the writing was indescribably indecipherable. Then there were addresses which could only have been concocted by doped Chinese crossword compilers who hate mankind in general and postman in particular.

Yet another friend (aren't I lucky to have friends?) received a letter addressed to 'Gossoms End or High Street, Berkhamsted or Northchurch.'

Thomas Ellens

Recently I referred to Henry Twells, the Victorian hymn writer, who, as curate of St. Peter's, conducted services in a Frithsden cottage before Potten End Church was built.

For a further reference to Henry Twells I am indebted to Mrs. Newell, of Chesham Road, who has shown me a copy of the *Review* for March, 1939. Mr. Twells, it was stated, baptised in 1851 an infant who became Berkhamsted's grand old man.

Hundreds of older parishioners will

know that I am referring to Thomas Ellens, a tall, bearded man who was prominent in parochial life for most of his 90-odd years. One of his great loves was St. Peter's Band, which he founded as a drum and fife band. As a daring young man he climbed to the top of the Baptist Church on the day it was opened and played a high-sounding cornet solo.

Tom's grandson, Harold Ellens, moved to Sussex some years ago, but like other former residents with a son at Berkhamsted School, he often revisits the town.

Ashlyns in America

We have heard about Barkhamsted in Connecticut and Swing Gate Farm (named after our lane) in South Africa.

But did you know that the name Ashlyns has been taken across the Atlantic? There are two houses of that name in Maryland: one in Baltimore, the other ten miles from the centre of that city.

Mr. L. Wethered Barroll, a descendant of the Wethereds who owned Ashlyns in the 17th century, lives in the town house. The country house, also named Ashlyns, was formerly the home of the Hon. John Wethered, a member of Congress in Victorian days.

He was not the first member of the family to hold high office; Francis Wethered, who gave the font which is now in All Saints' Church, was Comptroller of the Works to Charles II.

A book on the Wethered family history, with complimentary references to Berkhamsted, England, is now being printed in the United States.

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