

# A BERKHAMSTED NOTEBOOK

BY TOWNSMAN

## Telling the Time

The clock at King's Road corner held up its hands to indicate high noon. The Town Hall clock correctly interpreted Berkhamsted Mean Time as 10.30 a.m. And our oldest friend, St. Peter's Church clock, silently pointed idle hands to 2.15.

Really, there would be a good case for reviving sundials—if we could also revive sunshine.

To be fair, the church clock usually keeps going even when it is on strike. It is rarely temperamental unless its mighty hands are frozen. But anything which has been working all round the clock for nearly 130 years may be excused for taking an occasional rest.

The church clock was installed to commemorate the accession of Queen Victoria, who no doubt saw it when she rode down Chesham Road with the Prince Consort a few years later. Thwaites and Reed, a Clerkenwell firm founded in the 18th century, supplied the mechanism.

You may not know that before the ringers pull the ropes, they have to disengage the striking mechanism of the clock, which chimes on the treble and fourth bells. The hour booms on the  $\frac{3}{4}$ -ton tenor bell.

## Milestones Again

My reference to our vanished milestones prompted a reader to point out that iron posts similar to the ones which formerly stood outside Lagley and Egerton House may still be seen beside the main road between Tring and Aylesbury.

Why, he asks, were the Berkhamsted milestones not restored? Is it possible that they are still languishing in a County Council yard? If so, why cannot they be put on show again?

I do not know when milestones were first erected beside our highway, but I have a 200 years-old map which clearly shows the position of each milestone between Kings Langley and Tring. The sites on the map tally exactly with the ones I knew before the milestones were uprooted.

So, you see, the mile has not been devalued; it only *seemed* longer before the days of motor-cars.

## Saint Berkhamsted

Here are some more strange addresses. A friend recently received a letter addressed to "Berkhamsted, Herts." It's the hand that pours out the tea that rules the town . . .

Another friend (whose name and street number I have disguised) has just shown me an envelope which was addressed to her as follows:

Mrs. Blank,  
500 High,  
St. Berkhamsted,  
Herts.

The postman, so far as the addressee knew, never batted an eyelid; but then, he must be used to batty correspondents.

What intrigues me is the sudden emergence of Saint Berkhamsted. When did he live? How did he become a saint? Was he a martyr?

Steady, steady! I am often accused of flippancy, and this is neither the subject nor the place for idle speculation. So, with (I hope) the blessing of Saint Berkhamsted, I will move on to another subject.

## Transplanted

Much as I disliked the destruction of the 'sunken' cottages in Castle Street, I must applaud the way the site (a surprisingly small one) has been tidied up. It is now enclosed within an attractive fence, and the footpath is an improvement on the old one.

The iron railing which formerly provided swings for youngsters and protection for pedestrians has been removed from Castle Street to the Moor. My first impression was that the transplanted railing looked a little silly, but at least an attempt has been made to save something from the past. Unfortunately, more important things have been sunk without a trace.

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BERKHAMSTED 73