

# Berkhamsted Notebook

By TOWNSMAN

## The Castle Grounds

The Pageant prompted many people to ask whether better use could be made of the Castle grounds.

All sorts of suggestions have been made: that there should be tennis courts, bowling greens and a bandstand in the arena, and perhaps boating on the moats, water permitting.

I would be sorry if there were a permanent encroachment on the arena, thereby restricting, if not prohibiting, any future pageant, service or fete. But I do think we should at least explore the possibilities of an open-air theatre in a corner of the arena, with permanent or easily portable seating accommodation for a fairly large audience.

The Operatic Society, hampered since the closing of the Court Theatre by the absence of a large, central hall, might consider staging open-air performances of 'Merrie England' and similar works in the Castle grounds. If I am talking through my light opera hat, I am sure the Society will tell me so.

And, please, may we have a united service in the Castle grounds every year? I know it will not be so comfortable without large grandstands, but there's always the grass—if it's dry!

## Ten Years On

When shall we hold the next Pageant? There have been jokes about another glorious celebration of 1066 in a hundred years' time, but we need not bother the planning department with this suggestion just yet.

In all seriousness, I recommend a revival every ten years. I am not sure what local centenary we would celebrate in 1976 or 1986, but the Pageant needs no reason for a revival other than its sheer excellence.

## Twin Town?

Another point arising from the Pageant. At two performances we heard *La Marseillaise*. The first night was attended by the French ambassador. The mayor of Barfleur was there for the final performance.

Hasn't the time come to add a little Continental spice to local life by finding a twin town in France? It would be appropriate to look no further than Normandy, and not merely for historical reasons. The fares would not be too ruinous for exchange visits.

In a scholastic town such as Berkhamsted, where hundreds of people have a knowledge of the French language,

new friendships and interests would be created, especially for young people.

## Not in the Papers

And now, some deliberately uncharitable words about the London morning papers.

The BBC informed viewers and listeners that we were indeed having a Pageant. The London evening papers were kind to us. The local papers 'covered' the Pageant most effectively.

But I did not see a single reference to the Pageant in any of the morning papers; certainly not up to the time of writing—midnight, after seeing the final performance.

If we had fired a rocket to the Moon from Tower Hill, or asked a couple of students to swim round the moats in armour pursued by submarines, I suppose the Pageant would have merited a line or two. But a town's concerted effort to celebrate a great national event was ignored.

Not that the Pageant itself suffered because the London critics and reporters did not come. The busiest place in Berkhamsted was the box office.

## Making Friends

On the way home from the last performance, a friend remarked: 'This Pageant has done a lot for my wife and me. We have both made lots of new friends. We are now on Christian name terms with people who were formerly known to us as Mr. or Mrs.—if we knew them at all.'

Splendid. But then, everything about the Pageant was splendid, wasn't it?

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