

Berkhamsted Notebook

By TOWNSMAN

Old Names for New

Choosing names for new roads is becoming a regular task for our councillors. Modestly, they do not put their own names forward, though I don't see why they shouldn't remember such bygone civic worthies as Major James Parsons, Tom Bailey, Walter Pitkin, and so on.

And now that bulldozers are churning up the field below Ashlyns School, I hope we shall name a new road after an Ashlyns resident who was an alderman of the former borough of Berkhamsted as well as Comptroller of the Works to Charles II. His name? Francis Wethered.

Another name which must be perpetuated is St. Edmund's. This old field name was in later times applied to the footpath which runs from the top of Three Close Lane to Chesham Road. 'St. Edmunds' Close' would look fine on any letter-heading.

Bulldozers are also working on the uncultivated part of all that remains of Dell Field, and the fact that it is near the gasworks, where many interesting archaeological finds were made about 60 years ago, suggests that more Samian pots and other relics of the past may be brought to light.

Smoothing the Way

Several readers have thanked me for introducing them to the interesting walk between Frithsden and Nettleden—the steep, sunken lane sometimes known as the Roman road.

Having warned readers that it was better avoided in wet weather, I must report that on my latest tour of inspection the lane was being given a decent surface for the first time in living memory. I never really minded the mudlarks, but I have nothing against Progress so long as the lane doesn't become a petrol-scented race-track. Never satisfied, am I?

Villagers All

Since suggesting that the Pageant should be revived every ten years, I have heard some bright ideas. One is that we should have another Pageant in 1972 to celebrate the 750 anniversary of St. Peter's Church.

A good suggestion? I think so. In the meantime, the weather has gradually supplanted the Pageant as the town's most popular talking point, but interest is bound to revive in the autumn, when a film of the Pageant will be shown to

recapture the pleasures of those glorious June evenings.

Incidentally, I have been shown a newspaper which, in a caption to a photograph of a scene from the Pageant, referred to 'the villagers of Berkhamsted.' 'Oi almos' fell orf me ole foive-bar gate 'n' swallered that there straw in me mouth.

Despite the fact that Berkhamsted has been a town for 900 years, I rather like being called a villager. But, as you will see from my *nom de plume*, I am a townsman; and as a member of the Citizens' Association I may also claim to be a citizen of no mean hamlet.

Thomas Read

An 86 years-old reader rebukes me for not mentioning, in a recent note on the drinking fountain which formerly stood outside the Town Hall, that it was given to the town by Thomas Read. Sorry! But in another connection I did pay tribute recently to this great Victorian worthy, to whose memory the Town Hall clock was erected.

My old friend, who attended the state opening of the drinking fountain in 1887, recalls that he was a member of the Working Men's Club, another of Mr. Read's good works. The first club room was in Holliday Street; later on the members met in Prince Edward Street, where the little building they used still stands just beyond Wren's shop.

The Working Men's Club was amalgamated with the Berkhamsted Institute (then called the Mechanics' Institute) some 60 years ago.

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