

Berkhamsted Notebook

By TOWNSMAN

Planning Progress

One of the best free shows we have had in Berkhamsted for a very long time is at the County Library—at least, it is still there at the time of writing. The Town Centre Appraisal Plan is seldom without a few interested viewers, and the excellence of the large, detailed plans probably explains why few visitors continue their studies by reading an accompanying 'not to be taken away' book on the subject.

This isn't the first time ambitious plans have been dangled before the people of Berkhamsted. You will probably be surprised to know that ours was one of the very first towns in the country to take an interest in Town Planning. I have a copy of Map No. 1 of the Great Berkhamstead U.D.C. Town Planning Scheme dated 1911. I repeat, 1911.

Eight years later, soon after the first World War, we could have turned Water Lane and Greene Field Road into boulevards, trebled the size of the Moor, and acquired a central technical school and a welfare centre, all for £9,000. But this money could not be raised, and various free gifts of land and buildings were eventually withdrawn.

As for the much-discussed by-pass, a

'supplementary route,' which is much the same thing, is shown as a red, dotted line on a map in the Hertfordshire Regional Planning Report, 1927. You can't do much in forty years, can you?

New Views

Any indignation I may feel about missed chances does not, of course, imply that I am critical of the new plans. And I am most grateful to the planners for producing some very interesting illustrations.

Two of their pictures give Castle Street a 'cathedral close' look. I just hadn't thought of wandering all over the churchyard to find some exceptionally good viewpoints. Another surprise was a view of Raven's Lane, which had not previously been on my list of local beauty spots. But I still think that the most interesting scene in this part of the town is Cooper's forecourt; it is so Spanish-looking that I expect to hear music by de Falla and meet a toreador, but no such luck.

References to 'listed' buildings at the County Library exhibition aroused a good deal of curiosity. These are buildings of historical and architectural interest, and include Monk's House and

Monk's Cottage, both of which were vacated a short time ago. Having received the usual treatment from the town's bashers, the windows have been boarded up.

Cheap Fares—Old Version

I am grateful to a reader for giving me a copy of the *Berkhamsted Gazette* timetable for June 1923, an elaborate pennyworth which is especially interesting for details of our early bus services.

But first, a word about the railway. On weekdays we had 21 up trains, not 24 as now, and 11 on Sundays, three more than the present number. The fastest up train took 51 minutes in 1923, but there were two 'crack' trains which ran from Euston to Berkhamsted in 41 minutes, two minutes more than the present timing.

Cheap day tickets were restricted to a few trains on two weekdays only. The return fare to Euston was 3s. 5d. on Wednesday and Saturday only, and a 'market ticket' to Watford, on Tuesday and Saturday only, cost 1s. 10d. Not really cheap, considering the low wages at that time.

With five journeys each way on weekdays, six on Saturday and four on Sunday, the Aylesbury bus required 55 minutes for a run which now takes 39 minutes, or 34 minutes by Green Line. But in 1923 you could go to Aylesbury by train in 39 minutes if there was a good connection at Cheddington.

The bus from Bushey Station reached Berkhamsted in 72 minutes; it was also possible to go to Watford by bus via Chesham and Amersham.

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