

# Berkhamsted Notebook

By TOWNSMAN

## Ashley Green

Just before settling down to write this page, I heard a BBC news item about a fire at Ashley Green. Ah, yes, Ashley Green. Not a village that is often in the news, is it? For all we hear of its activities, it could be twenty, not two, miles away. We are much better informed about Potten End and the more distant Gaddesdens and Aldbury.

But Ashley Green is in Bucks (and in the diocese of Oxford), and although nearer Berkhamsted than Chesham it is in a different news-gathering and publicity zone. The county boundary isn't such an invisible line, after all.

Ashley Green, incidentally, is surprisingly like Potten End: it is on a plateau, has a green, a mid-Victorian church, little early history, and keeps on growing. But unlike Potten End it has no pond to keep the village centre moist.

To add interest to your next trek beyond Hockeridge Woods, I draw attention to a pudding stone which has just been restored to the village green after long exile in the vicarage shrubbery. Once a landmark in densely forested country, the stone is mentioned in a document of 1227, when Ashley was spelt Essleie. You will see the stone on the green in front of the old vicarage.

## Chalk School

A friend who recently carried out repairs to Park View School tells me he was surprised to find that the walls consist largely of chalk. In early times it was in fact known as the Chalk School, and was later called the British, the Council and then Park View School.

Another friend tells me that on removing an overmantel he found the signatures of the men who built the house scrawled in pencil on the wall. Here are the names: Sether Lay, W. Hoar, E. Cook, H. Flint, E. Jones, W. Smith, J. Jones and - Fisher, foreman. Good old Berkhamsted surnames! I remember some of the men and so, perhaps, do you. The date of the house? 1905.

## Berkhamsted Institute

It is sad to learn from the 122nd annual report of the Berkhamsted Institute that the town's oldest society is drawing so heavily on its financial resources that without a much larger membership and help in running the games room it may have to close down.

Ever since the Town Hall was built the Institute has had a reading room overlooking the High Street. Since the

1880s it has also had games rooms beneath the Sessions Hall. The Institute pioneered evening classes and exhibitions, and ran cricket and football sections as well as a camera club. It still has a thriving chess club, and table tennis is popular.

But billiards receipts have dropped alarmingly, and in the absence of adequate supervision it has often been necessary to close the games rooms.

To my mind a mistake was made in not raising what is still a very low annual subscription; the fact that it is so low may encourage well-wishers to extract helping hands from their own pockets to keep this old Berkhamsted institution alive and flourishing.

## Pride of Berkhamsted

A reference in last month's *Review* to 'The Pride of Berkhamsted,' the town's first motor-coach, prompted an interesting letter from Mr. Ernest Hillsdon, of Kitsbury Road.

He states that it was apt that Mr. R. G. Wright, of Tring, was mentioned in the same article, for the coach body was built by Messrs. Wright and Wright of Tring.

'I was apprenticed there in 1915 to learn coach-trimming (upholstery to the layman) and in 1920 I was one of the trimmers who worked on "The Pride",' continues Mr. Hillsdon. 'In 1929 or 30 I, as a freelance, retrimmed it at Messrs. Dwight's garage in the High Street, together with a new hood, etc.'

'It used to be driven by Mr. Jesse Dwight's brother, and later by Mr. Stanley Bates, of Chapel Street.'

# CALLAGHANS

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