

# Berkhamsted Notebook

By TOWNSMAN

## HOCKERIDGE WOOD

The days draw in and there is never sufficient time to enjoy the colours of autumn. But I have managed my usual treks to Frithsden Beeches, Ashridge Park, Moneybury Hill, Duncombe Terrace and the rest of my Hertfordshire favourites. Splendid, all of them, despite the worst autumnal mud for years.

Nearer home we have another inviting stretch of woodland. It straddles the county boundary and most of it is in Beechy Bucks. Not that Hockeridge Wood bears any resemblance to the dense, tall beechwood we knew when the footpath to Ashley Green was so shady as to be almost sunless.

Hockeridge was a magnificent wood then, and with new, astonishingly varied growth it is again magnificent. For the walker there are many footpaths with sudden, lovely views. For the naturalist the fascination of Hockeridge Wood is endless.

This, then, is a wood for all seasons, as enjoyable on a frosty day as it is in high summer.

## NORTHCHURCH MYSTERY

Newspaper photographs of Britain's new style rectangular post-boxes reminded a Northchurch reader of a minor mystery in his village.

A short time ago the wall-box at Northchurch post office was changed. The old one, difficult to describe now that it is no longer visible, was definitely a non-standard, made-to-measure job, and all through the penny, 1½d., 2d., 2½d., 3d. and 4d. post periods it served the village well. And Northchurch, you may not know, has had a sub-post office since 1855.

Well, shortly before we started putting fivepenny stamps on our new, high-speed, first-class mail, the old box was replaced by a not-so-new box. It is the standard type but of George VI vintage, and therefore at least 17 years old.

It is rare, I understand, for an old post-box to be resited. But maybe the one at Northchurch isn't second-hand. It could have been made especially for Northchurch many years ago and then put into cold storage until the right moment.

## BY APPOINTMENT

A month ago I mentioned that Mr. Percy Pocock, who for many years kept the hairdresser's shop opposite Chesham Road, had advised me that the alley between Back Lane and the High Street was once known as Post Alley.

One thing leads to another. A former Berkhamstedian, for many years resident in the West Country and still a regular reader of the *Review*, writes to say that he was delighted to be reminded of Mr. Pocock, who had regularly cut his hair when he was in Berkhamsted and had also given his father, son and young grandson the short-back-and-sides treatment. I am sure that Mr. Pocock will be pleased to know that his service to four generations is well remembered.

My correspondent adds that earlier on he patronised the barber's shop kept by Mr. 'Daffy' de Fraine, who was also mentioned in last month's *Review*. As the name suggests, he was of French descent, an ancestor having come over to England with Louis XVIII as the king's hairdresser. For some years the French court was at Hartwell House, near Aylesbury, and when the exiled king returned to Paris his hairdresser stayed behind. Some of his descendants became printers and publishers; but at least one son, grandson, great-grandson and perhaps great-great-grandson were barbers, and their Berkhamsted shop, between the Swan and the Crown, flourished for many years.

## TUPPENCE A HEAD

'Our "Daffy" was a man for whom most Berkhamstedians had a real affection,' my West Country friend continues, 'and one of my early recollections is of his well stimulated anger when, after trying to cut my own hair, I went to him to repair the damage. He made me pay an extra penny for the job, the ordinary price being twopence. I cannot remember when the price went up to 4d. It was, I think, either when I first went to Berkhamsted School at the age of eight or when I went into the Senior School at 13.'

Thank you, sir, for a most interest-

ing letter. I may add that for a short time (in the late 1920s, I think), 'Daffy's' son carried on the business, adding a ladies' department; then, for a short time, the shop became a men's outfitters. But for well over thirty years it has been a shoe shop.

## SAVING THE GATES

Do you remember the large iron gates at the entrance to Berkhamsted Place?

The mansion has gone, but the gates have been saved. Twenty-five miles away from their old home, they have been re-erected at Radclive Manor, Buckingham, a beautiful old house which had gateposts but, until recently, no gates.

## CROSS OAK

*Hertfordshire Countryside* recently printed a letter asking for information about Cross Oak.

I wish I could give a full answer to this enquiry. I understand that the mansion, the home of Lady Haslam, was built about 170 years ago and enlarged nearly a century later. It is young compared with the 17th century farmhouse and outbuildings, which probably stand on the site of a much older building that may have been the home of Robert de Cruce, whose name appears in a document of 1307.

There is some doubt whether Cross Oak takes its name from the Cruce family or from an ancient oak that was said to resemble a cross.

Older residents may recall the Berlein family, who lived at Cross Oak many years ago. Mr. J. Berlein, born in Rothenburg, Germany, in 1852, went to Kimberley in 1871, became interested in the diamond fields and later in the gold and coal mines of Transvaal. He became chairman of Transvaal Gold Fields Ltd.

## TO BOOT

Last month's *Review* contained a brief reference to a former Berkhamsted bootmaker who specialised in the manufacture of high leather boots for watercress growers.

On the very day the *Review* was published, Mr. Dennis Bedford, whose cressbeds help to keep the Bulbourne valley green, moved an old packing shed and discovered a leather boot which was lost or thrown away at least half a century ago. It was still in good condition—but what use is half a pair?

For very many years watercress growers have used rubber boots.

*Continued on page 9*

Established 1903

**Stimpson, Lock and Vince**

148 High Street  
Berkhamsted  
Tel: Berkhamsted 5252

CHARTERED SURVEYORS  
AUCTIONEERS & ESTATE AGENTS

and at  
Watford  
St. Albans  
Bushey  
Pinner  
Rickmansworth  
Harrow