

IN AND AROUND BERKHAMSTED

by Townsman

GABLE HALL

Mr. W. Roberts, president of Berkhamsted Chamber of Trade, told a *Gazette* reporter that more people might have used the 'decimal shop' in Gable Hall had they known where to find it.

You will not see the name on the town plan in the car park, and I doubt whether it appears on any other map. But we are bound to hear much more about Gable Hall, for it is to be let by the Urban Council for meetings, parties, etc.

I have yet to tell the uninitiated how to find Gable Hall. It is in Prince Edward Street, opposite the King's Hall. Originally a Civil Defence training centre, Gable Hall was built in 1955 or thereabouts on the garden of a house called 'The Gables', the ground floor of which is to be used by official organisations as offices, the caretaker having a flat in the upper part of the house.

USEFUL ADDITION

I do not know how many people Gable Hall will hold—seated, perhaps sixty to eighty—but in size it is halfway between the Town Hall committee room and the Sessions Hall. Not a large addition to the town's meeting places, but very useful now that we have so few.

The Queen's Hall, in Chesham Road, is now a distant memory; Progress Hall, at the top of the tall Co-op building in Cowper Road, has not been used for public meetings for many years; and the smaller Unity Hall, also Co-op property, became a warehouse before it went up in flames over two years ago. Apart from the King's Hall, originally a cinema, limited use has been made of the remaining public and school halls since very strict fire regulations were enforced a few years ago. That is why the Operatic and Dramatic Society sometimes goes on tour to Northchurch and Potten End.

By the way, I have just read that the Arts Council has given £15,000 towards a concert hall and arts centre at Bishop's Stortford. When will it be our turn?

THE DIRECTORY

The new local directory is a best seller, and I award 97 marks out of 100 to the sponsors and publishers, the Berkhamsted Round Table.

Compiling and editing a directory is a task which even professionals find difficult. Goodness knows how many hours of hard work went into the gathering and sorting of many hundreds of facts and the listing of many thousands of names. Such is the rapid movement of population nowadays that one can never produce absolutely up-to-date lists.

Errors were inevitable. Some were laughable, such as giving Meadway a public-house. As for the name of the town, people have been spelling it their own way for hundreds of years, so we cannot really complain about such versions as Berkhemsted, Berhamsted, Berkenhamsted and Bark.

A local minister, whose name was crazily misspelt, did at least escape the indignity of a certain mister who was described in one entry as Mrs. and also had a misspelt name. I was the victim! After the twentieth ha-ha-te-he reader had pointed out the error to me, I ceased to join in the laughter.

The previous local directory, by the way, appeared in 1934. It was the last of a long series started by George Loosley in 1882 and continued by his son Albert. It was not an annual publication; sometimes years passed by without a new edition. A complete set of Loosley's directories, bound in four volumes, is in the Berkhamsted Institute reading room.

IN THE WINDOW

Full marks to all who provide those interesting displays which brighten the windows of the Evening School. (It has a longer, posher name than that, but you know what I mean, even if you go there for afternoon classes!)

Sometimes there is an exhibition of students' work, sometimes displays are mounted to promote a good cause or advertise a play or exhibition. But whatever is on show, people stop, look, and show interest. A pity, then, that the displays aren't illuminated at night. Can someone with influence please pursue this bright thought?

It was this column which suggested that window displays might be a regular feature after the Local History Society had staged a 'Bygone Berkhamsted' display in the windows at the time of the Pageant. That was in June, 1966. Goodness me, nearly five years ago!

SLIPPERY SLOPE

A reader asks me to draw attention to the very muddy, slippery state of the footpath from Butts Meadow to the playing fields. Certainly it was a sticky mess when I used it the other day. As there is now a fence on one side as well as a hedge on the other, one can no longer by-pass the mud by walking on the grass.

Frankly, I don't like asphalt ways to the country, but most people would probably prefer a clean path to mud-larks.

Incidentally, a newcomer tells me that he was shocked to find that not one of the roads leading out of Berkhamsted on

the south side had a footpath all the way to the hilltop. He referred particularly to Chesham Road, King's Road, and Cross Oak Road. But there are others: Durrants Lane, Bell Lane and Darrs Lane, and of course, Swing Gate Lane, which comes to a dead end except for the 'Crinkle Crinkle' track into Buckinghamshire.

However, I have already mentioned the Butts Meadow way for walkers who prefer mud to pathless roads. Another footpath, much less widely used, starts at the top of Queen's Road and continues to Greenway and Shootersway. I do not recommend it to people who like wide, open views!

MAKING ALTERATIONS

Here is a nice example of unconscious humour, quoted from the February newsletter of Berkhamsted Baptist Church:

'The following brief note was handed to the church secretary in the vestry just before evening service on 17th January: "Alteration to Young Wives—Cosmetic Demonstration".'

This referred to the notice to be given out concerning the Young Wives' Meeting later in the week.

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they are requested to make it to the Committee *only*.

7. The children are instructed in READING, WRITING and ARITHMETIC; in STRAW-PLAITING, NEEDLEWORK, MARKING and KNITTING—all of which will be taught the children *without any charge being made*.

8. Parents having girls at the School are permitted to send their own, or their children's clothes to be mended at the School, but they must take care that whatever is sent, be brought perfectly clean.

9. There will be a *month's* holidays at Harvest, a *fortnight* at Christmas, and a *week* at Easter.

10. There will be an Annual Public Examination of the Children, which the Parents and Friends are earnestly invited to attend, in order that they may judge of the progress of the children, and be present at the distribution of the Rewards.

(To be continued.)

CHRISTIAN AID

It was most pleasing to learn that contributions to Christian Aid during 1970 amounted to £1,033 including a sum of £140 approximately, from the Sponsored Walk with further monies expected.

Christian Aid Week this year is 17th–22nd May, and a house-to-house collection will be made.

On Monday 24th May, in the Social Centre, Bell Lane, Northchurch, at 8 p.m., a Fashion Show will be given by Susan Douglas. Tickets 60p including coffee. Please make a note of the date now and buy your tickets early to avoid disappointment. All proceeds to Christian Aid.