

IN AND AROUND BERKHAMSTED

by Townsman

FARTHING ON THE BOTTLE

It seems that Victorian and Edwardian picnickers were just as thoughtless and careless as the litter louts of today. Their bottles and jars are still being found. The Head Ranger of the Ashridge Estate, Mr. John Wilson, has been collecting them, and in his new home near Thunderdell Lodge he has the nucleus of a bottle-and-jar museum of much local interest.

Beer, ginger beer and lemonade were favourite picnic drinks before everybody could afford to buy Thermos flasks. Some of the lemonade bottles found by Mr. Wilson may have been left behind by Sunday school children who, after a trip by canal barge to Newground, were taken to the Bridgewater monument for the annual outing.

One poor child lost a farthingworth of glass, leaving behind one of H. Lee and Son's bottles embossed with the words '¼d. deposit charged on this bottle.' Try working that out in decimal currency!

Mr. Wilson has also retrieved a lemonade bottle (from North and Randall, of Aylesbury) of a type which has always mystified me. It has a glass stopper. I know how ships get into bottles, but trapping a marble in the neck is a secret I shall probably never divine.

LOCKE AND SMITH'S BREWERY

Beer drinkers left behind the bottles of several long-departed breweries. A set of three bottles—quart, pint and half-pint—came from the Ivinghoe brewery of Roberts and Wilson. John (no relation, I imagine, of the last-named) also showed me a bottle from the brewery of Harris, Smith and Mott, of Dagnall, and another from Locke and Smith, whose pre-1914 brewery was in Water Lane, Berkhamsted. To show that picnickers came from far and wide, there is a beer bottle from the Tottenham and Acton Brewery.

Turning from glass bottles to stoneware—delightful to look at, pale buff shading to a rich brown—Mr. Wilson showed me some jars which were probably used for ginger beer, though there is no clue as to the contents of a jar inscribed 'A Caton, grocer, Berkhamstead.' Ginger beer almost certainly filled the stoneware bottles of E. R. Thomas (Boxmoor), W. G. Rodwell & Son (Tring), H. Lee & Son (Berkhamsted), Benskins (Watford), North and Randall (Aylesbury), T. Wild & Sons (Rickmansworth), and H. D. Rawlings.

Also in Mr. Wilson's collection are a jar inscribed 'Taylor's Prepared Mustard, Newport Pagnell', and a small pot bearing the words 'Areca nut tooth paste.'

Not many people bother to brush

their teeth immediately after picnicking in Ashridge Park nowadays. Times have changed.

PRINCE EDWARD STREET

Last month's reference to Gable Hall in Prince Edward Street brought a request for information about the derelict building between The Gables and the row of empty shops.

It was put up for the Working Men's Club, which flourished for some years at the end of the Victorian era. Later, the clubroom became a workshop. H. Truman, an electrician, used it for some time, then F. Saltmarsh moved in and also took the shop at the end of the row for an ironmonger's business, which was later transferred to Lower King's Road.

At one time there were two clubs in Prince Edward Street: the one already mentioned, and another, known first as the New and then as the Progressive Club, in rooms above the corner shop. This shop was occupied by the International Tea Co. before a move was made to the tall building on the opposite side of the High Street. Then, at Prince Edward Street corner, Sam Watts started a china and ironmonger's shop.

Before the County Library made temporary use of the row of shops in Prince Edward Street, several trades were represented there. Older readers may remember George Potter (pork butcher), Mrs. Adams (second-hand clothes dealer), Fincher & Co., afterwards Meek's (confectioners), and Len Hornsby (hairdresser). Finchers, by the way, had three shops in the town at one period.

SNOB'S ALLEY

It was only when checking my facts in old editions of Loosley's Directory that I discovered that a large room over two of the shops in Prince Edward Street was the Parish Hall for a short period at the end of the 19th century. Can anyone elaborate on this sparse information?

I expect you are aware of that faded reminder of the town's last saddler: a large, board inscribed 'Walklate, harness maker', on a shed at the rear of the former Working Men's Club.

But you may not know that before the entrance to Prince Edward Street was made by demolishing a house and a shop, there was a right of way which started through a gateway and continued to Butts Meadow. This was known as Snob's Alley, but I have never been able to discover whether the snob was a shoemaker or a supercilious person.

THE WILD BOY'S HOME

When walking down Hackster's (or Haxter's) End Lane (that's the one from

Little Heath to Broadway Church), I usually look over a fieldgate to see whether an iron pump is still standing on a small piece of uncultivated land which was once occupied by Hackster's End Farm.

The farmhouse was the home of the famous Northchurch oddity, Peter the Wild Boy, until he was transferred to Broadway Farm.

Now, I hear, the site has been bulldozed, and not even the pump remains.

That the farmhouse was pulled down over 90 years ago is shown by the following extract from Cussans' *History of Hertfordshire* (1879): 'On recently demolishing an old farmhouse at Hackster's End (*sic*) . . . some curious paintings were discovered on the walls, concealed beneath old oak panelling. One of them . . . is interesting as an example of costume. It represents three serving men, but the head of the one on the left is wholly gone, and the greater part of the figure is too indistinct for the outline to be traced.'

Nevertheless, Cussans reproduced a line drawing which suggests that the painting was of the Tudor period.

MARLIN FARM

Another landmark has gone—Marlin Farm. This was the one we saw from Shootersway, at the end of a track which started between the tops of Durrants Lane and Bell Lane. The house was vacated some years ago, and with various outbuildings it quickly fell into disrepair, aided by a fire and much vandalism.

Marlin Farm must not be confused with Marlin Chapel Farm, which is enclosed by a moat that was made for a small manor house in the 13th century, when the chapel, now a ruin, was also built.

FLOWER ARRANGEMENT

If you like to see beautiful things and would like to gain some useful tips about how to organise and arrange them, why not come to the Berkhamsted Flower Arrangement Society. The society have arranged a very varied programme for 1971 and you will be very welcome at the monthly meetings which are held at 2.15 p.m. on the second Wednesday in each month in the Friends Meeting House, 289 High Street. The annual subscription is £1, and an entrance fee of 5p is charged at each meeting. Visitors are very welcome, their entrance fee is 17½p per demonstration. The meetings consist of demonstrations and so members are not involved in the expense of obtaining flowers. Further details may be obtained from Mrs. D. Hill, telephone Berkhamsted 3814.

THE KOREAN MISSION

The Missionary Committee thank all those who so generously supported the coffee morning last month. The proceeds amounted to £25. Thanks are also due to the helpers.