

IN AND AROUND BERKHAMSTED

by Townsman

TOWN HALL CLOCK

This Single Viewpoint has a bone to pick with Triple Viewpoint. In last month's *Review* the trio said that when the Urban Council took over the Town Hall, perhaps at last the clock would be kept right.

A joke's a joke, but a mistimed arrow has been shot in the wrong direction. There was just one part of the Town Hall building which was *not* controlled by the Town Hall Committee, and that was the clock. The reason why it was put on the Town Hall was because the local authority had nowhere else to put it. It was agreed, however, that the Council would always maintain the clock.

Now that the old Town Hall Committee has ceased to exist, the town has lost a favourite butt for criticism and sarcasm. But this may be an opportune time to mention that over the years—111, to be exact—the very modest fees charged for the hire of halls and rooms have helped societies to stay solvent and enabled good causes to make satisfactory profits.

PLEASE TRY LATER

It's the middle of the morning, and for the sixth time I have dialled a London telephone number only to hear, in dulcet tones, the famous recorded message: 'Lines from Hemel Hempstead are engaged. Please try later'.

Now, I know that since the postal strike more people have been telephoning and fewer have written letters. I'm one of the culprits who keep the lines busy, when I have the chance. But wouldn't it be nice to have 'Please try later' set to music? A catchy tune and we would all be dancing instead of hopping mad.

ALL SAINTS' ARCHITECT

A man who, with his father, designed All Saints' Church (1906) died a short time ago at the age of 90. Hundreds of townspeople remember Noel Rew; a very tall, soft-spoken man, he strode along the High Street at a very fast pace and scarcely slowed down until he was in his eighties. A few years ago he moved to a home for elderly people in Surrey; a last visit to his home town was paid about two years ago.

Another former resident who died recently was Mr. H. J. Brothers, who succeeded Mr. J. H. Hodges as headmaster of the Council (now Park View) School a few years after the first World War. Schoolboys who are now grandads will remember him with affection; so will many senior teachers all over Hertfordshire, for 'H.J.' was a prominent figure at county conferences. He moved from Berkhamsted in 1932 to take the head-

ship of Ashfield School, Bushey, where he remained until his retirement in 1954.

VISCOUNT MALVERN

Many tributes were paid recently to Viscount Malvern, whose death occurred in the country he loved, Rhodesia. He established a Commonwealth record by being Prime Minister for 24 years.

As Godfrey M. Huggins, he came to Berkhamsted in 1908 or thereabouts and lived in a semi-detached house in Doctors Commons Road named Sibertswood; it is now part of Angleside House.

A surgeon, Mr. Huggins moved to Salisbury, Rhodesia, in 1911, and continued in practice long after he became an M.P. in 1923. From 1933-53 he was Prime Minister of Rhodesia; then, as principal architect of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, he was the first Federal Prime Minister from 1953-6. He was knighted in 1941 and was created Viscount Malvern of Rhodesia in 1956.

In Salisbury he occasionally entertained friends he had made in Berkhamsted. I recall the late Mr. A. E. Loosley's account of a long chat he had with Sir Godfrey, as he then was, a few years after the war.

BRIDGE STREET

I have been asked how Bridge Street received its name. The enquirer said he couldn't see a bridge there.

It is almost, but not quite, out of sight. If you are tall and stand on your toes you will be able to see over high brick walls at the far end of the street. And there, far below, is the mighty Bulbourne, sending its quota of Chiltern water to the Thames.

A man who has lived in Bridge Street all his life tells me that before the first World War the Bulbourne could be seen and admired by the smallest child. Then, perhaps for safety's sake, wooden fences were replaced by high brick walls.

ELEPHANTS AND CAMELS

I have just come across an advertisement for John Sanger & Sons' colossal circus and menagerie, which set up 'a marquee three times larger than any other yet seen in this country' in a field off Gravel Path in September, 1887.

There was a novel race with ten giant elephants ridden by Indian and African natives. Twenty horses, one a brother of the latest Derby winner, raced round 'a hippodrome course nearly half a mile round'. Camel racing, chariot racing, ancient Roman sports, and a 'great Australian kangaroo hunt, the most charming and exciting chase ever witnessed,' were further attractions.

Admission charges ranged from sixpence to 3s. for 'balcony stalls'. Very good value for money, if I may say so.

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on to say that a new school at Gossoms End (for Northchurch parish) would accommodate 131 children and that new classrooms were being arranged at the Court House for another 100 scholars. Just one more than the number suggested by the School Board!

COUNTING THE COST

Thus the Church of England continued to keep ahead of the School Board, but not without regret that no contribution to voluntary schools came from the rates. In 1884, at a prizegiving, it was said that under the existing law the competition between voluntary and Board schools was unfair. 'If our schools need enlargement, or other extra expense is necessary, we have to go to our friends for increased subscriptions, which are often hard to get, whereas the Board School has practically an unlimited reserve fund in the rates'.

This theme was pursued in an article printed in 1886, when it was said that the expenses of the Board School for the year amounted to £747 for an average number of 260 children, an average cost of £2 17s. 6d. In the Court House and Chapel Street schools the cost was £778 for an average attendance of 424, the cost per child being £1 16s. 8½d.

The main difference between the two statements of accounts, continued the article, was that the Board School received £450 from the parish rates. 'We make these remarks in no spirit of hostility to our School Board, but if as is desired by those who are opposed to religious education and are in favour of a universal Board School system, our voluntary schools were closed, the additional cost would be some £700 or £800 per annum, the greater part of which must come out of the ratepayers' pockets'.

SCHOOL MEALS

One of today's controversial subjects, school meals, was familiar in Victorian times. A School Board report of January, 1887, states that 'the cooking accounts were passed'. Not, of course, a reference to the cooking of accounts, but confirmation of the very economical way Miss Read, 'superintendent of the cooking at the kitchen', had watched both the school's and the children's interests.

During the year 950 dinners had been cooked for £10 9s. 1d. Total expenditure in this department was £12 7s. 2½d., the income was £9 13s. 10d., and the deficiency was 'more than covered by the grant earned'. The price per meal was between 2½d. and 2¾d.

In the same year (1887) it was reported that Mrs. Howland had offered to superintend arrangements on behalf of girls from the National Schools, who, it was believed, 'would be prepared to attend and be taught cookery in March'.

Here, at last, was some liaison between the Church and Board schools: girls attending the Court House School paid regular visits to what we now call Park View School, using interdenominational pots, pans and plates.

(To be continued)