

IN AND AROUND BERKHAMSTED

by Townsman

CLOSED SHOPS

Several people have remarked how depressing it is to see so many empty shops in the town. Sainsbury's, Fry's and some smaller shops closed down several months ago. In August there were three more closures, all in the High Street.

A similar shrinkage may be seen in many other towns. Tring, for instance, has a number of closed shops in its High Street. All of which suggests that the Distributive Trades' Economic Development Committee could be right in prophesying that by 1980 one shop in five would disappear.

Locally, there have been grumbles that parking restrictions have depressed local trade. But this does not seem to be a majority view. Berkhamsted remains a busy shopping centre, and despite the yellow lines there are many out-of-town customers, some of whom come from much larger centres.

With the redevelopment of part of the town centre and the coming of a by-pass, the future is unpredictable. It seems clear, however, that the centre will stay where it has always been. Predictions that the Post Office would start a westward drive have not been fulfilled.

HAZELL'S SHOP

Perhaps the most talked-about closure after Sainsbury's was the International Stores. The tall shop, with outbuildings extending far behind the High Street, was the most ambitious building of its kind in the town prior to the supermarket era.

It was William Hazell who, over a century ago, replaced a very ancient butcher's shop by the present building. As a grocer and pork butcher he built up a large postal business, sending his renowned sausages and hams all over the country. He was active in promoting the Gas and Water Companies, was an unpaid surveyor of highways, and earned the town's thanks by acquiring the Town Hall site for £825, which I imagine is somewhat below its present-day value.

Hazell made a small fortune. His successors were not so lucky. There were three changes of ownership within a few years in the early 1900s; C. B. Chastenev was followed by Stacey & Co., then by Warren & Son, and finally by the International Tea Company, which had previously traded for several years at Prince Edward Street corner.

JOSEPH NORTH

The closing of the Hertfordshire Minicentre must have reminded many old Berkhamstedians of earlier occupants of a shop with a very wide frontage. The windows, whitewashed at the time of writing, were installed by Joseph North,

who was thought to be very modern and daring to have plate-glass extending to within a few inches of the pavement.

Popularly known as Joe or Joey, Mr. North was a furniture dealer, auctioneer and valuer. He held monthly sales in the Corn Exchange, as he always called the Market House in the Town Hall building. Mr. North had a great deal to do with housing development before and after the turn of the century; he also took a very active part in local government work, with an especial interest in the Board of Guardians. North Road, geographically a misnomer, was named after him.

His successor in the furniture shop was another well-known resident, C. E. Seagrave.

FROM PUBS TO SHOPS

The third recently closed shop, in front of Tesco's, was built some ten years ago, replacing an old public-house, the One Bell. This singular name distinguished it from the Five Bells, which lost its licence in mid-Victorian times and is now Weatherhead's shop.

How nice it would be to have plaques on buildings with an interesting ancestry. 'Site of One Bell public-house', 'Formerly the Five Bells', 'Site of Red Lion Inn' (the Midland Bank), and 'Formerly Thomas Bourne's Charity School' (the National Westminster Bank)—these reminders of the past would arouse the interest of passers-by and give present occupants an extra-special distinction!

ONE T OR TWO?

Which is the correct spelling—Kitsbury or Kittsbury? This question was put to me, by no means for the first time, a few days ago.

The Post Office has always favoured two t's, and Kittsbury Stores follows suit. But the name-plates tell us that we are in Kitsbury Road, and this is the spelling most people use.

I wish I knew the origin of the name. I do not see how it could have been derived from Kick's End, a very old place-name in this once truly rural part of the town.

FOUND IN THE GARDEN

I often hear of local residents finding interesting relics in their gardens.

Recently, Mr. and Mrs. A. Good, of Elm Tree Cottages, Potten End, showed me a farthing of George IV (1828) and a button of the Hertfordshire Rifle Volunteers; both were found in the garden.

A day or two later, Mrs. Trainin, while working in her garden at Dudswell, found what was first thought to be an ancient coin but was later identified as

a fifteenth century counting piece from Nuremberg.

Counting pieces were widely used in the days when arithmetical calculations were made by means of Roman numerals. The metal discs were used in conjunction with a counting board, the procedure being similar to that used with the abacus. Made of copper or brass, and like coins in appearance, the discs were first made in the thirteenth century. Nuremberg was the chief source of supply, and large numbers were imported into England. They are usually found on mediaeval sites and in old ecclesiastical buildings, and for this reason are sometimes called 'Abbey tokens'. They fell out of favour when Arabic numerals simplified calculations.

BUCKNALL OF BERKHAMSTED

Early this summer, a friend tells me, he stayed in a Scottish hotel and was surprised to see an old clock bearing the name of Bucknall, clockmaker, of Berkhamsted.

This name came into prominence a few years ago, when a clock by Bucknall was shown in a television feature programme.

'Paid for beer for Bucknall when he cleaned the clock and chimes, 6d.', is an entry in the Berkhamsted churchwardens' accounts for 1754. There are several other references to the town's old clockmaker.

If you ever come across a clock by Bucknall, please let me know. So far as I am aware, not one survives in Berkhamsted.

TELL YOUR NEIGHBOUR

Although the *Review* has a wide circulation, I often meet people—some of whom have been in the town for a long period—who have never seen nor heard of this publication.

I make it my business to give them a spare copy or two. Some become regular and enthusiastic subscribers, and even ask for back numbers.

Perhaps you, too, could do someone a very good turn.

ST. PETERS CHOIR AT THE ABBEY

The choir of St. Peters was supported at St. Albans Abbey by a large number of parishioners from Berkhamsted who joined with them in singing Evensong on Sunday 15th August.

The choir sang 'Lead me Lord' by Samuel Wesley as an introit, the solo voices being those of Matthew Jenkins and David Norman. The Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis were sung to the setting by Samuel Arnold and the anthem was 'The Hymn to the Trinity' by Tschai-kowsky.

The choirmaster and organist was Peter Payne, assisted by Clifford Gossling.

The service was conducted by the Precentor.

It was a memorable occasion both for the choir and congregation.