

IN AND AROUND BERKHAMSTED

by Townsman

FRESH FINDS AT THE CASTLE

In recent years some interesting work has been carried out in the castle grounds. For instance, on the east side we can now see the base of a semi-circular flanking turret, from the top of which the defenders were well placed to deal with attempts to scale or mine the curtain wall.

On the opposite side of the arena, just beyond the custodian's garden, thorough investigation has been made of the foundations of what was almost certainly the chapel of the castle. More recently, excavations have been made outside the curtain wall; earth from the bank of the moat was carefully removed, revealing a wall and some stone steps. What purpose this outbuilding served I do not know; it is certainly interesting to find stonework *beyond* the curtain wall, and perhaps an expert will let us have his opinion.

Even in winter a large number of people visit the castle; few, I imagine, are residents of Berkhamsted. Most of us go there only when a fete or pageant is held in the grounds. It may surprise you to know that in one year nearly 20,000 tickets were issued; this number does not of course include admissions to special functions.

LONELY WALK

A friend has been telling me about a Sunday stroll he enjoyed a few weeks ago. He walked up Swing Gate Lane, took the Long Green path to Bourne End, and then went along the canal tow-path to New Road, Northchurch. Next, he walked up Darrs Lane, continued along Shootersway to Brickhill Green corner, and returned to his home via Sandpit Green and Swing Gate Lane.

During this three and a half hours' walk, the greater part of it in the urban district, he saw only four pedestrians, one of whom was a woman who had obviously just slipped out to post a letter at the top of Cross Oak Road.

My friend admits that it was a slightly misty day, light rain falling at times, but it was not the sort of weather to keep people indoors. To see only four other walkers—well! I couldn't help recalling a film entitled 'the Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner.'

THE BULBOURNE

I have been asked if there is any connection between the river Bulbourne and a little place called Bulbourne beside the canal about a mile and a half beyond Tring station. A good question, but I do not know the answer.

As long as anyone can remember, the river has risen in a field between Duds-

well and the Cow Roast. The fact that the hamlet some three miles beyond the present source is called Bulbourne Head on old maps suggests that the river could, in ancient days, have started there. Perhaps a surveyor or someone else very familiar with the lie of the land will let me have his opinion.

A NEW 'HISTORY'

In 1960 I wrote and published *A Short History of Berkhamsted*. I thought it would take ages to dispose of the 2,550 copies, but 1,000 were sold in the first three months. Of course, the demand declined later on, but the entire edition was sold out by mid-1966.

Towards the end of that time sales were less than 200 copies a year, a rate which offered little inducement to rush through a reprint. Far better, I thought, to wait a few years and bring out a different book. The time has now come to meet what is now a strong and rather insistent demand for a book on Berkhamsted, and an order has been placed for the printing of a new, bigger, and I hope better *Short History*. Considerable new matter has been included, though much pruning has again been necessary to keep the book down to a size which will not be too ruinous in price.

I have long held the opinion that the history of Berkhamsted deserves several books—one on the castle, another on churches, and so on. One book I would especially like to write would deal with Berkhamsted since 1800; but no more promises at the moment!

LOOKING FOR RELICS

The Citizens' Association helped to found the Local History Society, and now the historians have a vigorous young offspring in the Berkhamsted and District Archaeological Society. It has been in the news ever since its inception in December; some digs have been made with interesting results, and lectures have been very well attended. I doubt whether Gable Hall had ever been more crowded than when the archaeologists' chairman, Mr. F. F. Leek, gave a lecture on Tutankhamun and the treasures in his tomb.

So far as I am aware all discoveries of archaeological interest have been made on the north side of the Bulbourne, where building operations on a large scale did not start until a few years before the 1939-45 war. Most of the town's houses are on the south side, but apart from single items such as coins I cannot recollect hearing of discoveries of bricks, tiles, potsherds, etc., such as have been made on the opposite side of the valley. However, very little interest was taken in

archaeology in years gone by; builders probably took little or no notice of anything unusual that was turned up when foundations were dug. Now, nearly everybody is on the alert when a new site is developed.