

# IN AND AROUND BERKHAMSTED

by Townsman

## FLASHLIGHT CORNER

Road up, pavements up, a new set of traffic lights—what a noisy, busy, messy time we have had in the High Street!

At the time of writing men are still working on the new set of traffic lights, but already there have been appreciative comments on the more powerful green, amber and red lamps. We all remember how difficult it was to see the colours in brilliant sunshine.

You may not know that Berkhamsted was one of the first towns in Hertfordshire to have traffic lights. The first set was installed about the year 1930, and the junction of High Street and King's Road was nicknamed Flashlight Corner.

About the same time the town also acquired its first motor fire engine. Until the late 1920s we still had a horse-drawn engine, affectionately called Alice. A pity it wasn't preserved; it would now be a major attraction. Alice, where art thou?

## BERKHAMSTED BANKERS

Full marks to the local branch of Lloyds Bank for mounting a small exhibition of 'banking bygones', some of great local interest. I was especially interested to see some drafts and cheques drawn in 1823 by the seventh Earl of Bridgewater, who rebuilt Ashridge House. I also cast covetous eyes on a £1 banknote issued by a Hemel Hempstead bank in 1821; what a high purchasing value it must have had at that time! There was another banknote, issued in 1780 by Thomas Cobb and Company. I wonder whether the bankers were ancestors of our Victorian rector and local historian, the Rev. J. W. Cobb?

It may not be widely known that our great defender of common rights, Augustus Smith, of Ashlyns, was descended from a famous family of Nottingham bankers. His neighbours at Haresfoot were descendants of another rich banker, John Dorrien. How appropriate that these two families were united by marriage; many older readers will remember the Smith-Dorriens, who lived at New Lodge, Bank Mill Lane.

## EDDY OF EDDY STREET

It may surprise you to know that a little turning off Gossons End, Eddy Street, was named after yet another banker, John Turpin Eddy. He lived at Gossons Lodge and was one of two partners in a small local banking firm, Eddy and Squire, which was taken over by the London and County Bank in 1853.

Mr. Eddy's partner, Thomas Squire, lived at The Homestead, which was replaced in 1958 by what is now Budgen's,

the grocers. It was Mr. Squire who propagated a new apple which became world famous as Lane's Prince Albert. The original tree, in the garden behind The Homestead, was cut down some 15 years ago.

## THE TOWN HALL

Further to my note in the June *Review* on Town Hall bookings, I now understand that it is unlikely that any part of the building will be available until the end of the year. This will create problems for a number of societies, but it is pleasant to look forward to 'new look' rooms with greater comfort and better heating than we have known in the past.

The Institute, by the way, has the monumental task of emptying the reading room, with many heavy bookcases containing thousands of volumes. Nine large cases of stuffed birds, most if not all from Australia, have been presented by the Institute to Tring Museum. The birds were sent to the Institute over 100 years ago by Henry Costin, a member of a local family of boat-builders, whose yard was between Raven's Lane and Castle Street. Henry Costin left Berkhamsted in the 1850s and established a saw-mill at Ballarat, Victoria.

## IRON AGE POTTERY

The Local Archaeological Society has made further discoveries on the new Middle School site above Dell Field. Members, alerted by a workman who spotted some charcoal, found an undisturbed burial group of four pots, the largest pot being a cinerary urn. It contained several pieces of bone.

Nearby, a second burial group of four pots was uncovered, the largest pot again containing bone. This pottery, thought to be late Iron Age, also included beakers and a pedestal urn. Although the area around these burials was more fully excavated, no more pottery was found, and it is thought that the burials were from a small family group.

During earth scraping in the opposite (eastern) end of the field, a small pot with bone was found as well as an oval band of iron which may have enclosed a wooden container.

## NEW EDITION

So many people have asked when the new *Short History of Berkhamsted* will appear that I am taking the liberty of issuing a progress report. Sweet are the uses of free advertisement!

Well, the type has been set, and the book will run to at least 142 pages, including some thirty illustrations.

I hope that readers will be especially interested in a map showing the paroch-

ial and manorial boundaries. Everybody knows that one large parish was divided into two, probably when St. Peter's Church was built in the early thirteenth century, creating a large, detached portion of St. Mary's parish on the east side of the town. The boundaries, however, are very complicated. Between Cross Oak Road and Billet Lane, the south side of the highway is in the parish of Berkhamsted, and the opposite side is in Northchurch. Another curiosity is a small, detached portion of Northchurch parish near Frithsden, beyond the old parish of Berkhamsted St. Peter. Of course, changes have been made in fairly modern times by the creation of the parishes of Sunnyside, Bourne End, and Nettleden-cum-Potten End.

Returning to the book, this time there will not be a paperback edition. The saving would not be more than 15p per copy, and I am sure that most people would rather pay a little more for a book with a good, strong cover. Sorry, but I cannot say what the price will be. Probably £1, but it could be a little more.