

# BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



## In and around Berkhamsted by 'Townsmen'

### WAKE UP!

Someone has just made me livid by saying that Berkhamsted is now more like a suburb than a town. 'Nonsense!' was my immediate reply. But on reflection I must admit that there are signs of Berkhamsted becoming a dormitory town. It is going to sleep.

Socially, this has been the dulllest, dreariest winter for years. There have been fewer entertainments and meetings than usual, and some of those that were held did not attract much support. Weeks went by when hardly anything was happening. Oh, yes, we had those long discussions on the town's future, but a torrent of words did little for a town that has been without a Town Hall for nearly a year, looks as if it has been bombarded, and acquires a paddling pool outside the embryo police station every time it rains.

How we miss the giants of yesterday who were known to everybody,

whipped up interest in local affairs, and got things moving!

Wake up, Berkhamsted!

### THE GRAND JUNCTION

I have just been reading Alan H. Faulkner's new book, *The Grand Junction Canal* (David and Charles, £3.75).

It tells the story of our famous waterway from its inception towards the end of the eighteenth century until it became part of a larger system, the Grand Union Canal, in 1929.

I was a little disappointed to see such scanty references to Berkhamsted, which, I have always understood, was one of the more important ports on the canal. But it seems that the Bulborne valley did not create so many engineering problems as arose in some other areas. For instance, there was the formidable task of carrying the canal over the Chiltern hills; Tring cutting is

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over 1½ miles long and at its deepest point is over 30 ft.

There are interesting references to the special negotiations that were made for the canal to pass over common land at Boxmoor; eventually a price of £900 was agreed for the 25 acres taken for the canal, and the money was used to build a new wharf on the canal—and a new workhouse! On two occasions a short arm from the main canal to Hemel Hempstead, about a mile long, was proposed, but nothing was done.

To everybody interested in canals and local history, I cordially recommend Mr. Faulkner's fact filled book.

### CHANGING SCENES

The High Street looks a lot tidier now that a screen has been put up in front of the newly-cleared site east of the Town Hall.

The last building to go had been occupied by Boots the Chemists for nearly twenty years. Older residents will remember that the portion next door to the old International Stores was previously Grimsley's cake shop. Earlier still it was the house of Mr. Nash the farrier, whose forge became Grimsley's bakehouse.

Not that the old-established farrier's business closed down when Grimsley's started making cakes. We still heard the ring of the anvil in the heart of Berkhamsted, for a new forge (and a house for the farrier) were built on an old orchard farther down the yard. I am sure that many readers still remember Mr. Albert Nash, the last of a long line of professional shoeing smiths, who was the subject of an article in the *Review* in March, 1961. As a youth, he told me, he

was often up at 5 a.m. to shoe the 24 dray-horses kept by Locke and Smith, who had a brewery in Water Lane.

Next door to Grimsley's shop was a hairdresser's saloon kept by Mr. W. Rickard. Now, like the adjoining premises, it has gone, but the British Legion Club survives, and it may surprise you to know that originally it was built for a Conservative Club.

I have been busy taking colour slides of the shops before they disappeared, thereby adding to what is now a very large collection of 'before and after' scenes of changing Berkhamsted. But I also have an eye for the buildings which survive, and hope you will occasionally gaze across the road to the rather charming and well-maintained row of shops between the Civic Centre and what, for brevity's sake, I still call the Evening School. A former tavern, now Weatherhead's shop, is the oldest, but its neighbours of various heights and styles are just as attractive. See for yourself!

#### OLD AND NEW

I am sure there will be a generous response to the British Red

Cross Society's appeal for a new ambulance for the Evergreen Club, the Happy Wanderers, and similar clubs at Tring and Hemel Hempstead.

It so happens that in my files I have a copy of an appeal which was made about 80 years ago for a 'superior and durable' horse-drawn ambulance costing between £70 and £80. It was stated that Berkhamsted and Northchurch had 'no proper vehicle to convey accident and other cases to the West Herts Infirmary, a distance of five miles, thereby causing unnecessary increase of suffering to the patients, and lessening their chance of recovery.'

The organisers of the Berkhamsted, Northchurch and District Ambulance Fund headed their appeal with an illustration showing old and new styles of taking patients to hospital—one by wheelbarrow, the other by a box-like four-wheeled vehicle. On the question of housing and maintaining the ambulance, it was proposed to present it to the Berkhamsted and Northchurch Rural District Council 'as the authority best representing the localities for the benefit of which the Ambulance will have been obtained.'

## A GOOD USE FOR REMNANTS OF WOOL

What happens to the odd balls of wool left over after knitting a pull-over, jumper, socks or gloves?

A number of the elderly ladies who reside at Ashlyns Hall are desperate for something to do and anxious to knit squares to join up into blankets for the Red Cross, but alas, their own stock of 'woollen ends' had to be turned out when they gave up their own homes.

It would be a great service if our readers were to help by donating some of these woollen left-over balls to enable the Ashlyns Hall residents to occupy their time making something useful.

Please send all you can spare to Mrs. Gossling, 8 Bridgewater Road, Berkhamsted, or telephone Berkhamsted 3194, when arrangements will be made for collection.

#### THE 'REVIEW'

The editor would be grateful if all contributions to the next issue of the *Review* could reach him by 7th April. Thank you.



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