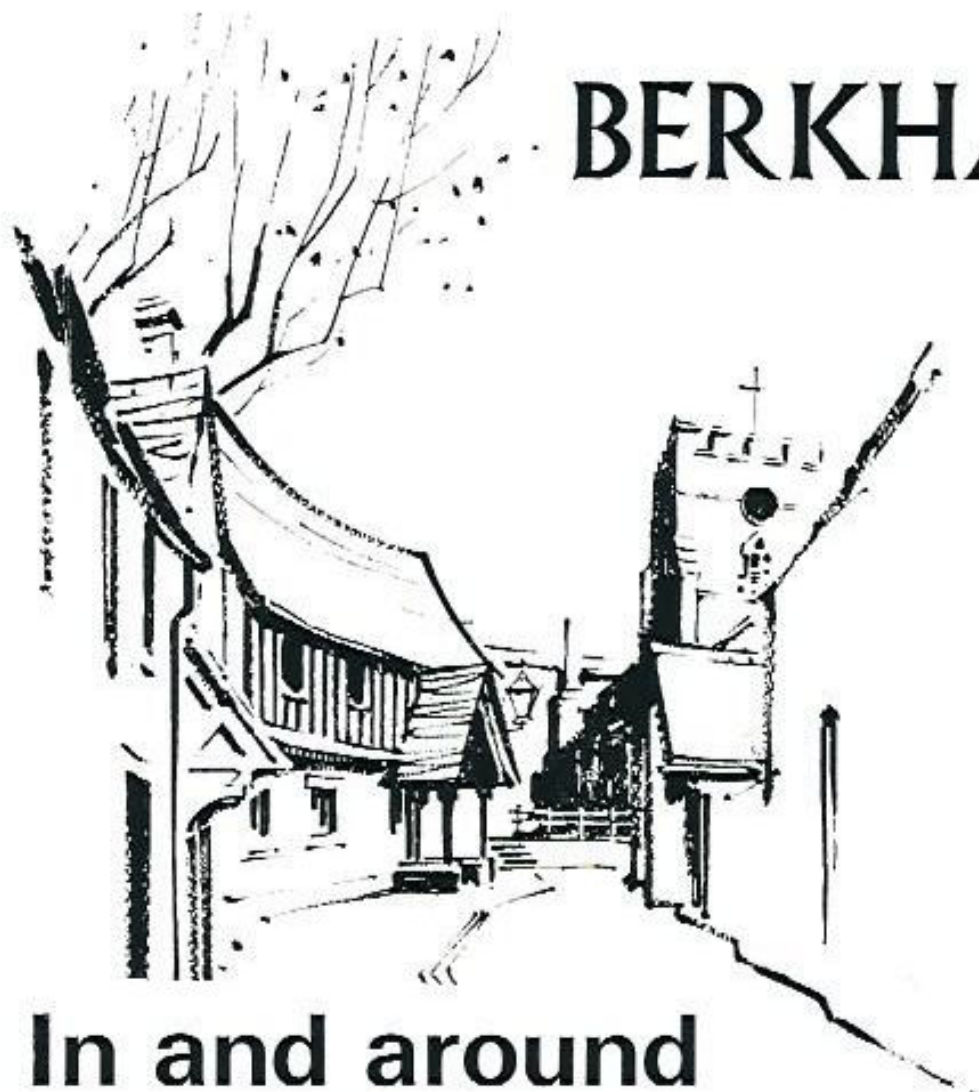


BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



In and around Berkhamsted by 'Townsmen'

AS OTHERS SEE US

A number of authors, writing about our part of the country, have been rather sparing in their compliments to Berkhamsted. In a recently published book, *The Chilterns*, Kevin Fitzgerald describes Berkhamsted as 'a Chiltern town which has lost all its character. The castle remains are scarcely more than a pleasant open space and there is little else to detain the tourist.'

This candid comment reminded me of Mr. H. J. Massingham's description of a tour through West Hertfordshire shortly before the war, when he 'should hardly have known that each of these towns had a name at all'. He found 'an almost continuous blotch . . . partly suburban, partly Victorian, without a single redeeming feature among the lot.'

Two distinguished residents of pre-war days, Mr. and Mrs. C. H. B. Quennell, whose 'History of Everyday Things in England' series of Brooks is still widely enjoyed, said that Berkhamsted was 'vulgarised in the nineteenth century; there have been hideous suburban developments . . . Still, the town is a microcosm, a little world of its own, and recognisable as such.'

Well, opinions are bound to differ, as we learnt when the Citizens' Association called a public meeting to answer the question: 'Is Berkhamsted being spoilt?' The date of that meeting? March, 1934, long before we regularly used the word 'environment'!

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

I have been asked if there is any connection between the village of Ivinghoe and the *Ivanhoe* of Sir Walter Scott's novel.

EDITORIAL

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To the best of my knowledge Scott coined the name because one of his friends, James Adam Gordon, lived at Aldbury, and during a visit he made the acquaintance of Ivinghoe. If I am wrong, please let me know.

RAINS AND DRAINS

A few months ago an enormous sum was spent on resurfacing the High Street. I wish a little money had been spared to improve the drainage.

In wet weather a nasty roadside lake forms at one of the busiest crossings in the town, by the traffic lights near Sharland's store. A few yards away the kerbs at Lower King's Road corner are almost as low as the road and we have two more lakes to negotiate. On the opposite side of the High Street, every heavy downpour produces the biggest watersplash for miles around. Must we wait for the police station to open before it is bailed out?

Then there is the little rivulet which forms along the old line of the High Street between Elm Grove corner and the Outspan building. Fast cars throw up a spray which dampens the ardour of many a pedestrian.

One recent rainy day there was more water in the High Street than in the Bulbourne.

POPULAR CHESS

Nearly a year ago the closing of the Town Hall forced the old-established Berkhamsted Institute to vacate the reading and recreation rooms which were built es-

pecially for its use. The closure could not have come at a worse time, for the most active section of the Institute, the chess club, was in no position to benefit from the great upsurge of interest in chess created by the Fischer-Spassky world championship.

Members, however, found a temporary home during the winter in a sports pavilion, and now they have a much more central meeting place in a hall in Park View Road. The membership is now going up, proof that all goes well if suitable premises are available.

THE SESSIONS HALL

Unlike the chess club, several societies have yet to solve their housing problems. There can be no doubt that the Sessions Hall, a very good lecture room, is missed even more than the Town Hall. Attendances tended to be smaller last winter when meetings were held in less central, smaller or colder halls.

What a pity the building wasn't kept open until the Council had made up its mind. It was not really necessary to have a resident care-

taker; the door could have been unlocked half an hour before a meeting was due to start.

Surely the Sessions Hall, if no other part of the building, could be reopened? It is still in good condition despite the deterioration which was bound to happen after eleven months of neglect. Gas fires are available, and a little extra heating of the non-central variety could easily be provided.

READING HABITS

A minor cause of smaller attendances at meetings could be the popularity of colour television, which, it is thought, may be a reason why fewer books have been issued at the local branch of the County Library.

In the year ending March 31st, 305,389 books were issued, compared with 333,878 in the previous year. Allowing for the recent closing of the library for redecoration, it is estimated that the real decrease over the year was 18,000. Even so, the average daily issue was 1,350 books.

What a change from the time when the library was opened for

an hour or so each week in the Town Hall committee room. The local branch started off in 1930 with 300 books! But in those days there were very good circulating libraries at W. H. Smith's and Boots, and one could buy paperbacks for a few coppers.

CHILDREN'S WALK

The Chairman and Committee of the local Branch of the Children's Society wish to thank all those who took part in the walk on Sunday 6th May, and those who helped by acting as sponsors or in manning check points and so on. In spite of the weather 169 children and adults took part in the Walk and when all the money is collected it is hoped over £900 will be handed over to the Society. The walk, an annual event, is intended as a family event and covers a route of 18 miles through some of the loveliest parts of the local countryside. This year, perhaps in response to the wet weather, an even more cheerful spirit than usual was shown by the walkers. The youngest walker was 6 years old and she covered 12 miles.



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