

BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



In and around Berkhamsted by 'Townsmen'

NOISY HIGH STREET

Full marks to the *Gazette* for some apt comments on the 'cacophony and chaos' caused by the repeated digging up of parts of the High Street. Having complained that there was more water in the highway than in the Bulbourne, I suppose I should be the last to grumble about the efforts that have been made, at long last, to improve the drainage. But at times the din of pneumatic drills, on top of the roar of the so-called juggernauts that hurtle through the town, was intolerable.

As I just managed to hear someone remark, 'Who worries about the noise of aircraft while we have to put up with this infernal din?'

As people living and working beside the highway know to their cost, shouting is sometimes the only alternative to keeping doors and

windows shut. But a friend at Tring tells me that in his much narrower High Street the noise of the traffic is even worse than it is in Berkhamsted.

LOCK AND KEY

At a local meeting, two elderly people were talking about the old days.

'When I was young,' said one, 'very few people in our road worried about locking their doors when they went out.'

'I don't doubt that,' said the other, 'but there wasn't much worth pinching then, was there?'

KNOYLES DREWE

There must be many *Review* readers who have one or more paintings by a very good local artist who encouraged a number of fellow Berkhamstedians to make

EDITORIAL

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painting their hobby. Reginald Frank Knowles Drewe (1865-1951) was born in Faringdon, Berks, but spent most of his life in Berkhamsted. He lived in Castle Street and for many years was clerk to H. and J. Matthews, for a long period the town's largest building firm. Later on he devoted more and more time to painting and was such a prolific artist that it is doubtful whether anyone, past or present, painted more local scenes than Knowles Drewe.

For many years I have owned one of his watercolours of *The Wilderness*, before the old cottages were pulled down, and it was a pleasant surprise when the artist's son and grandson, who live at Hemel Hempstead, asked if I would like a few more pictures. In view of their local interest they are being passed on to the Local History Society—a watercolour of the old watermill in Mill Street, a lively Castle Street scene, a remarkable painting of the canal and railway at nightfall (1918), and an interior of a Castle Hill barn. How he loved old barns!

But he was a most versatile artist, always experimenting, always ready to chat about his work. The best of his paintings were shown at the Royal Academy and the Paris Salon. His art classes were popular when the Evening School was started between the wars, and he was also well known as a competent 'cellist and a staunch supporter of the local football club.

I think it would be appropriate to arrange an exhibition of the works of Knowles Drewe, Edward Popple, and other artists who left

behind so many pleasing reminders of bygone Berkhamsted.

OUTSIDE OPINION

Looking at some high-quality and expensive articles in a Hemel Hempsted shop, a friend of mine asked the salesman if there was much demand for them. 'Oh, yes, we sell them very well indeed,' he replied, and my friend commented that Hemel Hempstead must be a prosperous town.

'I suppose it is,' said the salesman. 'Er—do you not live here?'

'No, I come from Berkhamsted.' 'That's full of retired people, isn't it?'

Shortly after this little conversation piece was related to me, I met a newcomer, a retired teacher, who said that what especially pleased her was the very large number of children in the town!

BROADWATER

Question from a schoolboy: 'Why is the canal between Castle Street and the Park Street foot-bridge wider than it is anywhere else?'

Sorry, I do not know the an-

swer to that one. Do you? 'It's a fact however, that the lock near Lower King's Road bridge is named Broadwater Lock, and I have always understood that until mid-Victorian times part of what is now the Sports Ground was often under water. Hence, I suppose, the name Broadwater.'

JOSEPH NORTH

The demolition of the car show-rooms opposite the George public house reminded me of a remarkable businessman who formerly owned the property.

Joseph North came from a humble Aylesbury family, was almost self-educated, and on completing his apprenticeship to a wheelwright at Aylesbury, arrived in Berkhamsted with (so he said) all his belonging in a red handkerchief.

For a time he worked for East & Son, and as a sideline took a stall in the market on Saturday evenings to take orders for picture frames. The turning point of his career came when a Nonconformist minister remarked: 'Mr. North, you are cut out to be an auctioneer.'

Next, however, he experimented with a greengrocery and confectionery business—Joseph was a very versatile man—and later on he began to deal in furniture. He took two cottages opposite the George, and with the help of a tramp who was passing through the town, he personally fitted the cottages with large shop windows.

His furniture sales became famous locally, and in addition he started dealing in property. His first big undertaking was the construction of the road which bears his name, North Road. Later, he helped to develop the upper part of Cross Oak Road, Shrublands Avenue, and Park View Road. He was a councillor, magistrate, chairman of the gas and water companies and a great wit and raconteur. He died at the age of 85 in 1936.

THE REVIEW

Please let the Editor have your articles and your ideas for the sort of items you would like to see in your magazine. Copy for the next issue should reach the Editor by 7 November, 1973.



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