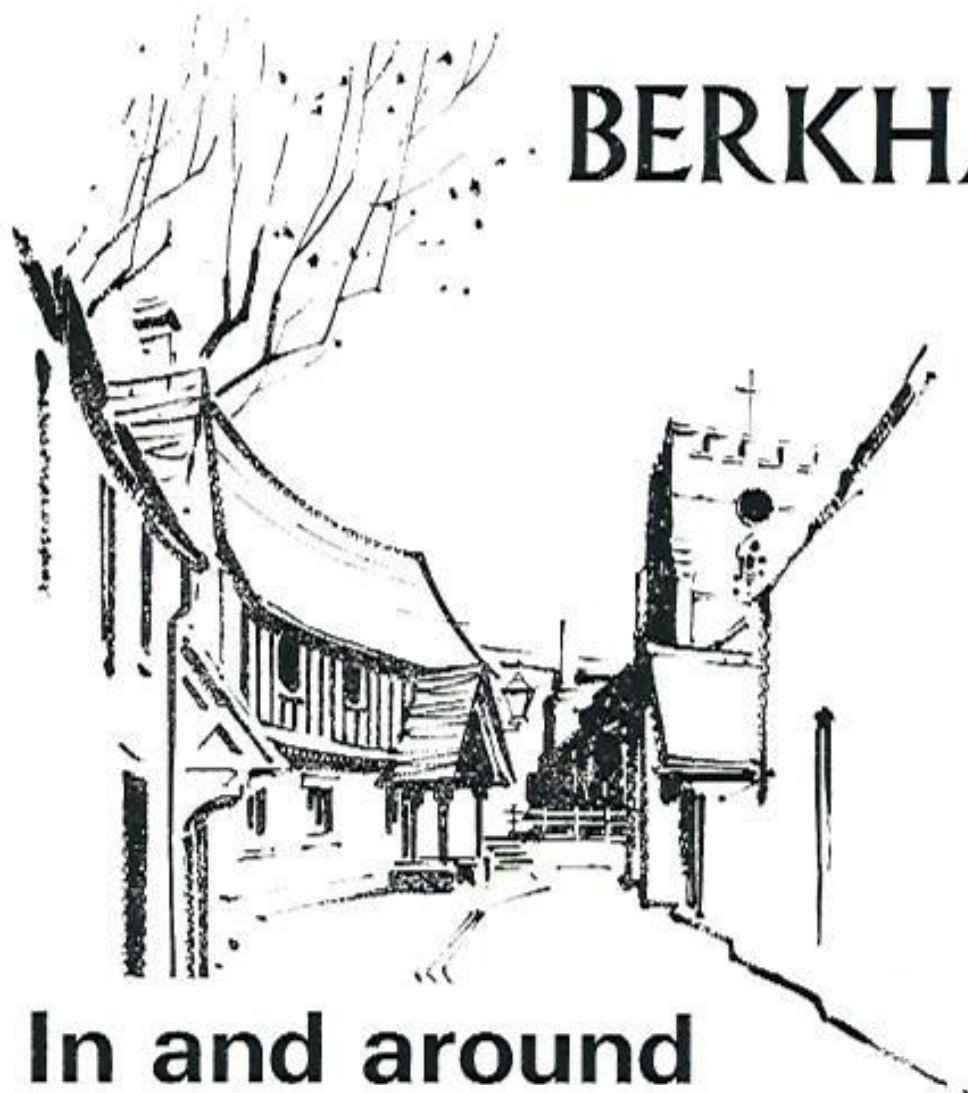


BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



In and around Berkhamsted by 'Townsmen'

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER

Up to the time of writing I have heard nothing of the use that may be made of the Civic Centre when we lose our Urban District Council in four months' time.

As Utopia is farther away than Hemel Hempstead, we shall still have to pay rates, and the Dacorum Council doubtless will require branch offices in the Civic Centre. But what will happen to the Council Chamber? I cannot imagine that the Hemel-based authority will go on tour, holding an occasional meeting in Berkhamsted and Tring to show the Dacorum flag.

Ever since Berkhamsted lost its police court, the use of the Chamber has been restricted to Council and Council-sponsored meetings. But when the final Council meeting has been held, cannot the present fixtures and fittings be removed or

altered to give the town a much-needed hall of medium size?

I estimate that 200 people could be accommodated comfortably in the Chamber. That is double the capacity of Gable Hall, which the Council has been advertising for lectures, parties, receptions and other social occasions.

Gable Hall certainly has come to the rescue of hall-hungry societies, but how I wish the low ceiling at the far end could be raised for the screening of films at a reasonable height.

OFF-CENTRE

One great asset is the truly central site of the Civic Centre. Sites a quarter and even half a mile away were considered when, in the 1930s, the inclusion of Northchurch in the urban district accentuated the Council's need for larger premises.

EDITORIAL

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One suggestion was Nugent House, the old workhouse (replaced by shops and flats) at Kitsbury Road corner. Highfield House was also considered. This was a mansion standing in spacious grounds at the top of the old part of Highfield Road, then a cul-de-sac; subsequently the land was used for many council houses, not for one house for the Council.

EGERTON HOUSE

Yet another suggestion was Egerton House, which was replaced in 1938 by the Rex Cinema—beg pardon, Studio One. It is remarkable how many people—not only older residents but younger folk who know Egerton House only from its photographs—still deplore the loss of that handsome Elizabethan mansion.

Both the Council and the Citizens' Association appealed to the Office of Works for a preservation order, and at one stage the National Trust was prepared to hold it on condition that it was bought locally and offered without cost to the Trust. It could have been bought and put in repair for between £6,000 and £7,000.

The Council's interest in purchasing the house for its own use declined when a fish shop adjoining the old Council Offices came in the market. The shop was purchased for £3,500 in 1936—how property values have changed!—and with a loan of £12,000 from the Berkhamsted Co-operative Society the whole site was cleared and a brand new Civic Centre erected. It was opened in 1938.

ALL FOR 8½d. A DAY

Found in the Town Hall—a recruiting poster dated 1908. To join the Hertfordshire Militia, recruits had to be from 17 to 35 years of age, of good character, not less than 5 ft. 2 in. tall, and medically fit.

Pay, exclusive of all stoppages, was 8½d. a day on enlistment, rising to 11½d. after training, if 19 or more years of age. In addition to these rates, corporals were to receive 8d. and sergeants 1s. 6d. a day.

There was 'no extra charge', thank goodness, for food. A specimen menu for Sunday consisted of tea, bread, butter and eggs for breakfast, meat pudding, potatoes and beans for dinner, tea, bread and butter for tea, and soup at 8 p.m. during training. On other days the main course for dinner was baked meat, brown stew, roast meat, sea pies, baked meat, and curry stew on Saturday.

If you are interested, please apply to Sergeant Instructor Killington, 2nd Herts Vol. Batt., Bedfordshire Regt., Armoury, Great Berkhamsted. The date of the poster, I remind you, is 1908.

ON THE BOARD

When alterations were made to the building at the east end of the shops between Water Lane and St. Peter's Church, the name of a former occupant was temporarily exposed—E. Carlisle, fruit and potato merchant.

Of the dozen or so people who drew my attention to this faded lettering, not one remembered Mr. Carlisle. He had a large wholesale business at Watford and started a Berkhamsted branch in the late 1920s, taking over a shop formerly occupied by Mr. F. Kingham, baker. It wasn't long before Mr. Carlisle moved out; Mr. F. E. Brincombe, fruiterer and florist, then brightened a very dull corner with wonderful displays of flowers. In more modern times the shop was used as an office, and now it has been smartened up for a travel agency.

Speaking of old signs, several people have asked if the 'Walklate, harness maker' board in Prince Edward Street is worth saving. I don't think so. It narrowly escaped destruction when an adjacent building, once used as a working men's club, was burnt down a few months ago.

WHERE? WHAT? WHEN?

Here is a very short quiz to test your (and your friends') local knowledge:

1. What (excluding St. Peter's and St. Mary's) is the oldest place of worship in the district?
2. Where, on the wall of an empty shop, can you see the date 1724?
3. Where was Prospect Place Chapel?
4. What well-known brand of toothpaste was at one time made in Berkhamsted?
5. When was the Rex Cinema opened?
6. Where were the old '26 miles to London' and '27 miles to London' posts situated?
7. What is the old name of Cross Oak Road?
8. What is the date on St. Peter's Hall?
9. Where can one still see two specially preserved street lamps of the gas era?

(Answers on page 10)



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