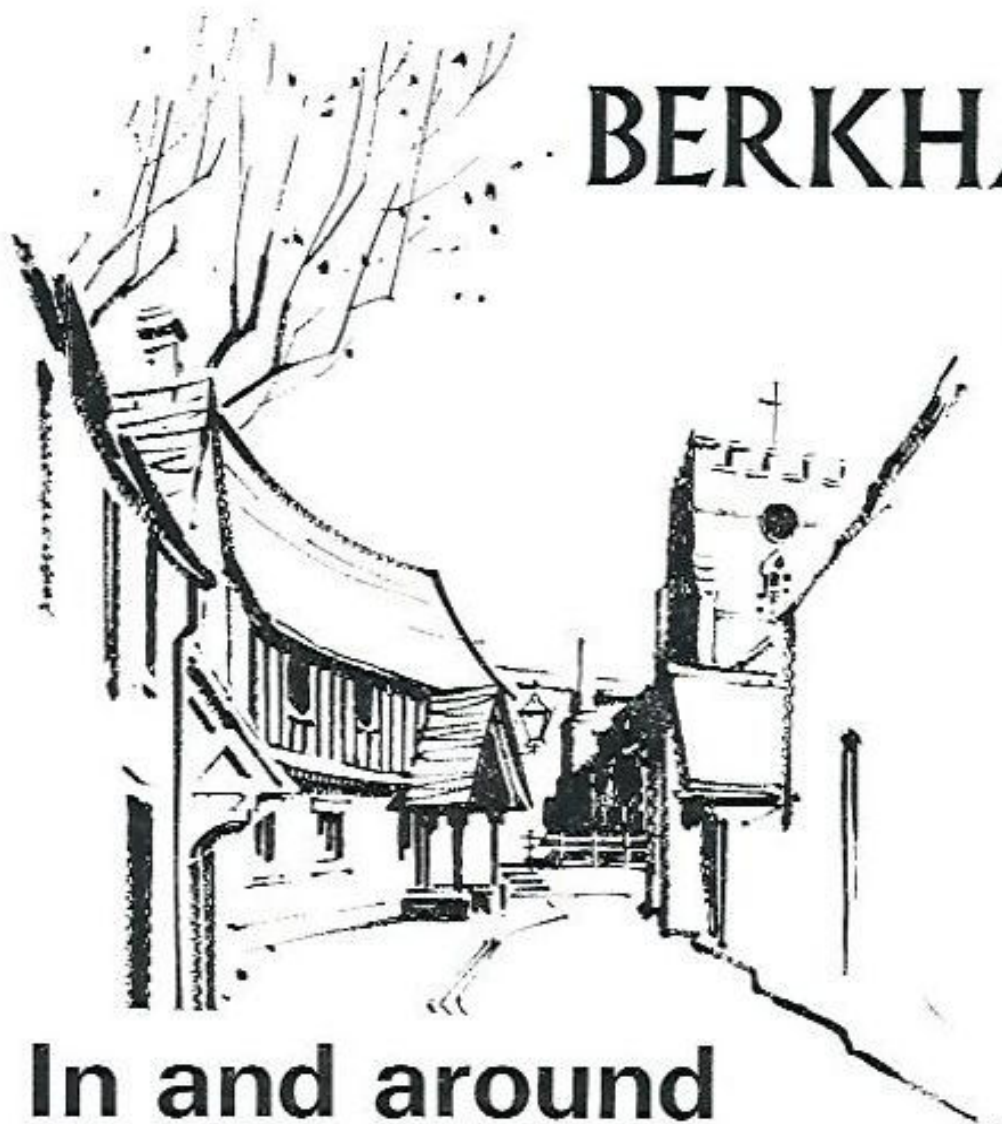


BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



In and around Berkhamsted by 'Townsmen'

OUR CONSTITUENCY

At the time of writing the national papers are discussing the possibility of an early General Election.

Scarcely a subject for Townsman, but I thought you would like to know that if the Urban Council had had its way in 1917, our constituency would have been known as the Berkhamsted Division. A recommendation to this effect, supported by the whole Council, was made when Hertfordshire was promised a fifth electoral division. However, it was known as the Hemel Hempstead constituency, and the first M.P. was Mr. G. A. Talbot, mayor of Hemel Hempstead, who stood as a Coalition Unionist and won by a large majority.

In March, 1918, the views of local authorities were sought on the subject of Proportional Representation, and our Council came out strongly in favour of trying this system.

ON THE LEVEL

Now that the Bulbourne, Gade and other Chiltern streams have lost most of their water, I hope that more will be done to maintain and improve the Grand Union Canal. Much is said about widening the waterway, and as one of the few local members of the Grand Union Canal Society, I always look forward to reading that society's bright, informative Newsletter.

In a recent issue a correspondent suggests that the enlargement scheme (from Brentford) should

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FEBRUARY 1974

reach Berkhamsted, and that the possibility should be considered of lowering the summit level to provide an eight miles' stretch without locks, a new, deep lock being built at Berkhamsted. A 'tantalising vision', as the writer of the letter admits.

JINGLE BELLS

Imagine, if you can, a bishop, an archdeacon and a canon being driven to church through heavy mist in a horse-drawn sleigh. A scene in Switzerland? No; the owner-driver of the sleigh was Colonel Algernon Smith-Dorrien, of Haresfoot, and the occasion was the consecration of Ashley Green Church by the Bishop of Oxford on the last day of December, 1873.

'The country was wrapped in a heavy mantle of snow,' says a contemporary report, but within the church there were 'flowers which had come from distant islands where there was no frost, where the warm westerly winds kept them in bloom.' Obviously the Isles of Scilly, the home of the Colonel's brother, Augustus Smith, and his successors.

Another relative, Miss Dorrien, bore the cost of building the church (£2,000) and in addition endowed it at the extra cost of £6,000. She lived at Clifton and did not attend the service, but it was said that she liked to spend

her money that way despite the fact that she was 'a stranger to the neighbourhood, her only connection being her association with Colonel Smith-Dorrien, and some of her friends who lay buried in Berkhamsted churchyard.'

My thanks to the Rev. J. R. Bennion, Vicar of Ashley Green, for this information. A pity we hear so little of a village that is no farther away than Potten End; but then, Ashley Green is in another county and a different diocese!

Incidentally, the death occurred recently of Lt.-Commander T. M. Dorrien-Smith, who was always pleased to meet Berkhamsted visitors to Tresco Abbey, Isles of Scilly, and show them a 17th century painting of Berkhamsted and a fine portrait of Augustus Smith. I never had the pleasure of meeting him, but he was a prompt and helpful correspondent whenever I sought information from him.

COWPER OR COOPER?

An old, old question—one that is frequently put to me. Should the name of our Berkhamsted-born

poet be pronounced Cowper, as it is spelt, or Cooper?

It is known that he called himself Cooper and was so-called by all his friends. But I doubt whether this information will stop Berkhamsted people continuing to pronounce Cowper Road as it is spelt. Anyone asking the way to Cooper Road will probably be directed to Raven's Lane, for William Cooper, founder of the chemical firm, is just as well known locally as the poet!

50 YEARS AGO

My thanks to a reader for giving me a copy of the *Herts and Essex Trades Directory* for 1922-23.

What changes have taken place in just over half a century! We had 18 grocers, eight butchers, five fish merchants, three dairykeepers, four tearooms, 15 bootmakers, nine drapers, five milliners, four tailors, six coal merchants, one charcoal merchant, five men's hairdressers, two coachbuilders, two basket-makers, two brushmakers, one jobmaster, three banks, six solicitors, and two millers. Oh, yes, and there was one pawnbroker.

B.P. SCOUT GUILD

The very successful supper-dance held at the Northchurch Social Centre, during November resulted in a profit of £90 which is being used to purchase an "Ambulift" (special purpose invalid chair) for presentation to Hemel Hempstead General Hospital. This type of chair is considered to be a great help to both patients and nurses.

Members are reminded of our 16th Annual General Meeting at 1st Berkhamsted Group H.Q. Chapel Street, at 8 p.m. Friday 22nd February. It is hoped to show a film during the meeting.

"JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR"

Following the successful and enjoyable visit to "Godspell" some time ago, the Berkhamsted Council of Churches is considering arranging a similar visit to "Jesus Christ Superstar" later in the year. In order that the council may have some idea of the number of friends interested, will you please get in touch, not later than 7th February, with your council representatives or with the secretary (Berkhamsted 2375).



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