

# BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



## In and around Berkhamsted by 'Townsmen'

### ON AND OFF THE MAP

Besides inflating the famous old one-inch maps by bringing out a new series (roughly  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches to the mile), the Ordnance Survey people have devalued our Chiltern Hundreds.

When climbing to the highest point, 857 feet, I always thought that I was monarch of all I surveyed. But now it's 261 metres, and what sense of achievement is there in ascending a molehill like that? As for the Berkhamsted valley, well over 300 feet above sea level, I never bothered to check the time of high water at London Bridge until I saw that we are now only a little over the 100 metre contour.

Don't imagine that I am belittling the map. It is attractive and bang up to date. But many a map slices a town or village in two, and

this time it is Berkhamsted's turn to be a borderline case. Sheet No. 165 shows most of the town but not the Far East; much of Hall Park and Sunnyside and all of Potten End are off the map and on the adjoining sheet, No. 166. So, for complete coverage, you have to get two maps. At 65p a time this is anything but a fringe benefit.

### B. HAMPSTED

The various spellings of our town's name continue to arouse interest. A reader has just brought along a copy of Cary's *New Itinerary*, a guide for travellers published in 1826, which uses the spellings 'Berk Hamstead' and 'North Church.'

It is rare for the names to be separated in this way. The famous Mr. Bradshaw, in his early time-tables, gave us the cruellest version of all:

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'B. Hampstead.' Rather second class, don't you think?

### NATURE RESERVE

I have spent a pleasant evening reading *The Trees are Full of Song*, by David and Joan Hay, who live just over the Buckinghamshire border at Short Heath Farm, between Rossway and Hawridge.

The book is as charming as its title. How the Hays restored the farmhouse and turned their steep acres into a nature reserve is told with wit and great knowledge of Chiltern wildlife. For good measure, Gwen Webb, of Berkhamsted, contributes some charming illustrations of birds and animals.

The Hays are prolific writers; three more books are in the pipeline. They also edit the revamped *Chiltern News* for the Chiltern Society. But for the fact that they spend much of their time sailing—and writing about that subject, too!—I would say that there is never a dull moment at Short Heath Farm.

### MUDLARKS

Two comments on a little piece I wrote last month about muddy footpaths and the growing number of walkers.

One reader says she wishes I had blamed horse-riders for churning up so many paths. Duncombe Terrace, for instance, was almost impassable for pedestrians. One galloping horse, she adds, causes more damage than hundreds of walkers.

I am not a rider, but in fairness it must be said that many of our rights of way are bridle paths. Complaints are valid only if foot-paths are used by riders.

Now for a happier note. Another reader writes: 'How pleasant it is to find walkers are reviving a custom which I thought was dying out—that of saying "Good morning" or "Good afternoon" to fellows ramblers as they pass by.'

A friendly nod is just as good! Some people, of course, do not respond; perhaps they expect a formal introduction.

### **TRAINS AND BRIDGES**

I have been talking to a former resident who has returned to Berkhamsted after an absence of ten years. What impressed him more than changes in the High Street was the train service. 'Unbelievable!' he said, as he recalled the old steam and diesel trains which, outside 'commuter' periods, were either half empty or quarter full. As he added, trains are sometimes packed at what were once known as 'quiet' times of the day.

I suppose British Rail needs the extra revenue to pay for the reconstruction of the bridge next to the station. What a mammoth job it has been!

And I wonder how much money has been spent on the canal bridge in Lower King's Road? A great deal more, I am sure, than the original cost of the bridge, for which tenders ranging from £1,041 to £1,344 were received in 1908.

### **CHEAP AT THE PRICE**

The Local History Society recently received the particulars of sale, dated 1859, of 'very eligible freehold building ground', comprising all the land on the east side of Raven's Lane from High Street to Provident Place. It was divided into nine lots, two of which were bought by William Cooper, the chemical manufacturer, for offices. He paid £192!

The purchaser of the largest lot, at the top of Raven's Lane (101 ft. by 58 ft.) was required to 'enter into a covenant to erect thereon a private residence with appropriate offices or other buildings, to be approved by the vendors or their surveyor.' But it was never used for a private dwelling. A few years later