

BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



In and around Berkhamsted by 'Townsmen'

INDUSTRIAL ZONE

It is curious how little is said about the town's industries. 'I suppose you would call this a dormitory town,' says Mr. A. 'We have some very good schools here,' says Mr. B. 'Apart from Cooper's and East's, I can't think of any industries,' says Mr. C.

Yet we have an industrial zone which is so little known that lorry drivers often receive a series of 'don't knows' when they ask the way to North Bridge Road.

I doubt whether one resident in a hundred has ever walked the length of that road to see how numerous and varied—and still increasing—are the industries in that busy third of a mile. The farther you go the more interesting is the sightseeing: large and small factories, offices and depots are very close neigh-

hours. Then, abruptly, the road ends and the countryside begins.

Certainly it is a secluded industrial estate. Things were not like that when most of the industries were carried on in the valley east of Castle Street. Manor Street was often yellow with chemicals from the sheep-dip factory. And there were sounds as well as sights: small timber yards made their presence known by the high-pitched whine of steam-powered saws.

No one ever doubted that Berkhamsted was a small industrial town when the working day was heralded by factory whistles, hooters, and Cooper's famous bell. There was less need, of course, for factory managers to announce knocking-off time.

SECOND TIME ROUND

From the *Berkhamsted Review*

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JUNE

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for May, 1947:

Two urchins stood admiring the new pillar-box by the vicarage. 'Fancy vicar having a pillar-box all to himself.' 'Garn, that's not the vicar's. See what it says—No collection Sundays.'

If anything dates this story, it is the use of the words 'urchin' and 'garn'.

ON THE MAP

My facetious comments on the new Ordnance Survey map (sheet No. 165) prompted a reader to ask if I had noticed that the initials TH appear in the town centre.

As I expect you have guessed, the initials stand for Town Hall.

How sad that this recognition was not given to the building when it was still in business. But not so sad, surely, as the astonishing deterioration which has occurred in less than two years. As I said repeatedly at the time, at very small cost the life of the Town Hall could have been prolonged until something better was available. Millions of words have provided nothing more than a hiatus.

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

Many years ago, a reader tells me, one of his relations was a servant girl at Barncroft, the mansion which in more recent times gave its name to a road. When the domestic staff was given new caps, the mistress asked a young servant girl if she knew why the caps were

provided.

'Is it so that we shan't be taken for family, ma'am?'

'Stupid girl!' replied the lady of the house. 'The caps are to keep your hair tidy.'

Incidentally, I recall the late Mr. Ward, the draper, telling me of an occasion when a customer telephoned for sixpennyworth of ribbon to be delivered immediately to a house in Shootersway. Before the errand boy had returned from the special mission, Mr. Ward received another 'phone call ordering him to send the boy back to shut the front gate.

DOWN IN THE VALLEY

The clean, tidy state of the Gade and its surroundings at Hemel Hempstead makes me all the more indignant when I see what is happening to our Bulbourne.

I am thinking particularly of that short stretch beside the towpath east of Lower King's Road. Here the Bulbourne has its own little bridge, and on either side of this bridge there is an appalling accumulation of litter. Where does it all come from?

And this used to be a delightful spot where dozens and dozens of Berkhamsted boys netted their first tiddlers.

BEATING THE BOUNDS

Having heard that the parishioners of Cholesbury recently 'beat the bounds', a reader suggests that this ancient custom should be revived more often as a change from sponsored walks.

An enormous amount of time and effort would be involved. I have a copy of the instructions issued for beating the bounds of 'the parish of Great Berkhamsted Rural' on July 15th and 17th, 1903. An early start (7 a.m.) was made on the first day; the perambulation was resumed at 2 p.m. the following day.

Several photographs of this ceremony are in existence, and it seems that a good time was had by all—even by the lads who, in accordance with ancient custom, were thrashed at strategic points so that they would never forget the bounds of the parish.

THROUGH THE TUNNEL

Interested to learn that Berkhamsted station is nearly 100 years old, a reader, living in Scotland, tells

me that he served an engineering apprenticeship with the LMS, part of his training including six months on the footplate. Some of this time was spent firing between Crew and London, and he has vivid memories of journeys on expresses out of Euston, thundering round the curve through Berkhamsted and then plunging into Northchurch tunnel.

'Characteristic of the old LNWR,' he adds, 'were their single bore tunnels which were not designed for large steam engines, such as the Royal Scots and the Duchess class, with the result that when you entered the tunnels at speed the impact of hitting the air nearly broke one's ear drums.'

The Church of England Children's Society The Berkhamsted Walk

This annual Walk in aid of the above Society took place on Sunday 5th May. The weather was dull and the wind cold, as those who manned the check points will verify, but it was ideal for walking. This year there were 144 walkers—mainly children and young people—several 6 year olds among them, and even one of 3½ (who was manfully going on to check point 2 when last seen by your reporter.)

Although there were fewer walkers this year, (unfortunately the date clashed with various School Journeys etc.), the Society should benefit by over £900 when all the money has been received.

The Chairman and members of the local committee would like to thank all those who took part in the walk (surely one of the most beautiful for miles around), either by walking, acting as sponsors or by manning check points etc., who by their efforts have made it possible for the Church of England Children's Society to benefit by this magnificent sum—over £900.

CITIZENS' ADVICE

The Citizens' Advice Bureau will be open to help you at the 'Gable' in Prince Edward Street on Tuesday, Thursdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. The telephone number is Berkhamsted 6930.