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### Next Whist Drive

An alteration has been made in the date of the next whist drive in the series held in the Court House.

It will take place on Wednesday, 24th July instead of the third Wednesday in the month as is usual. Time of commencement 2.30 p.m., and admission 2s. including tea.

ALL THE FUN OF THE VILLAGE FAIR

## More Northchurch Stories

Mr. H. MEAGER, Mr. A. Hosier and other readers are supplying so many entertaining stories that it will be some time before my "Short History of Northchurch" goes to the printers. It may be necessary to drop the word "short" from the title!

In an earlier article it was stated that in the 17th century the people of Northchurch made more use of the Common than their Berkhamsted neighbours. This appears to have been the case in more modern times, too. Farmers valued the grazing, but a far greater number of commoners exercised their right to cut furze for fuel and fern for litter. They also played cricket and golf on the Northchurch end of the Common.

Mr. Meager tells me that furze-cutters set off for the Common at a late hour on 31st August. Then, at midnight, they cut circles around favoured areas to establish sole rights for the whole season.

It is interesting to have confirmation from Northchurch of an unwritten law that cutting was not to start until 1st September, and that no one was to intrude upon another man's claim. My earlier knowledge of this tradition came from Potten End veterans many years ago.

### GOLF AT NORTHCHURCH

A Northchurch vestry book refers to poor people being ordered to take bundles of "fuzzen", as furze was often called, to the village workhouse. Stones were also taken from the Common to make up Northchurch High Street; sometimes they were dumped on the roadway and left there in heaps all night.

On a breezy corner of the Common near Hill Farm, Mr. I. Bunker, the farmer, ran what was probably the first Northchurch cricket team. That was way back in Victorian times, when anyone could call at the farm and buy twenty eggs and half a gallon of milk for a shilling, to quote the price charged in 1886.

And did you know that a nine-hole golf course was laid out on the Common between New Road and Norcott Hill?

It was made at the turn of the century by Mr. M. Englis, of Norcott, ten years or so after Berkhamsted's pioneer golfers made their first course near Frithsden Beches.

Mr. H. Meager, who was born in 1890, worked on this short-lived golf course when he left school at the age of ten or eleven, his parents having previously paid twopence a week for his schooling.

### FIVE SHILLINGS A WEEK

Later, after working for a year on a farm at Dudswell, he was apprenticed to bricklaying for four years, starting with a weekly wage of 5s., rising annually to 7s., 9s., and finally to 12s. His working hours were from 6 a.m. until 5.30 p.m., except on Saturdays, when hods were downed at 4 o'clock.

Mr. Meager remembers taking Sunday dinners to be cooked in the huge oven at Mr. Maynard's bakehouse at the top of Duncombe Road. Mr. Maynard wore a long, white beard and worked long hours, supplying customers not only in the village but in Sunnyside, which was then in Northchurch parish.

He set off in his pony cart late in the evening, and, after calling at various places of refreshment, completed deliveries of bread in George Street and Ellesmere Road after "closing time", 11 p.m. Most of his customers had gone to bed, and Mr. Maynard stood in the pony cart and pitched loaves through the bedroom windows. It is not known whether the glass was ever broken.

Mr. Meager remembers a coal-yard in Thorne's Yard, opposite Alma Road, kept by his namesake, Mr. D. Meager, who delivered coal over a wide area. Mr. Curl afterwards took over this business.

### THE "STATTY" FAIR

Before my informant's time, wooden bowls were made in a workshop in Bell Lane, where a straw-plaiting school also flourished. Many of the village women regularly walked to Tring to sell their plait to Luton hatters, presumably after the Berkhamsted plait market was closed.

On the west side of the Baptist Church stood a large black shed, originally a

blacksmith's shop. Later, it was occupied by William (Crutchy) Garner, who chopped wood and hawked it around in a pony cart. The nickname tells us that Mr. Garner used a crutch. The shed ended its life as a fish and chip shop.

In late Victorian times, Mr. L. Nicholes, who introduced football to Northchurch, kept a wheelwright's shop in a barn in the grounds of Rosemary Cottage, which then consisted of a large house with a small cottage at the south-east end. In the large orchard behind Rosemary Cottage, roundabouts and swings were erected on the Saturday before 11th October, the day of the village statute fair. There were also side-shows and donkey-rides along the High Street, and stalls were set up beside the church wall.

### THE GLEANERS

Smaller fairs, not to be compared with the "statty", which was discontinued in 1881, were held behind the "George and Dragon". Here, once a year, threshing machines were installed, and gleaners took their corn along to be threshed. It was then ground into flour at Mr. Cook's mill in Water Lane, Berkhamsted. Some families obtained as much as a bushel of flour, admittedly at the cost of much back-breaking work and a few coppers for threshing and milling.

Even in those days of widespread poverty, the villagers were always ready to help less fortunate folk. In 1890, when the canal was frozen for thirteen weeks, collections were made in church to buy food for starving bargees.

And there were gay as well as sad occasions. If any event was worth celebrating, the village made sure that everybody enjoyed the fun. On 26th July, 1841, when Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort drove through Northchurch on the way to Woburn, all the village boys and girls were entertained to dinner. The tables were set up in the churchyard.

### WATER MUSIC

At the time of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee, 2,000 people were served with a meal in a meadow at Durrants Farm. Special arrangements were made for those living in scattered parts of the parish. Sunnyside residents under 10 and over 50 years of age were conveyed to the jubilee meadow by canal boats. Tring brass band was also water-borne to provide music on the cruise. Wagons brought people from Dudswell and the Cow Roast. If they wanted music en route, they had to provide their own!

A wagon-load of meat was consumed at Durrants, including ten hams and many rounds of boiled beef. Afterwards, a race for a pig was held. Five or six women entered for the race, but when the pig escaped through a fence and made off towards Woodcock Hill, 500 others joined in. The pig was frightened into capture.

### DAYS TO REMEMBER

Then there were the children's annual treats. The Band of Hope—formed by Mr. W. Randall, market gardener, church sexton, Sunday School teacher and one of the pioneers of the local Co-operative movement—were

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taken to the Bridgewater Monument in Mr. Bunker's farm wagons.

The Sunday School treat started with the children marching behind a drum and fife band from the school to the rectory garden, singing "Onward, Christian soldiers". After races, swings and tea under the trees, a large balloon was released from the lawn, a signal to mothers that their children would soon be home, clutching meat sandwiches handed out by two maids as the children departed through the rectory gate.

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