

When Trade followed the Trains

TO A READER of the *Review* I am indebted for the gift of a copy of Pigot's Directory for 1839. It is a valuable source of local information, naming all the tradespeople of the period as well as the 'Nobility, Gentry and Clergy.' Twenty-eight names appear under this heading.

Older directories (the 'Universal British' of 1792 and Pigot's of 1824) have been the subject of earlier articles in this series, but the 1839 edition is perhaps the most interesting of the three. It appeared at a time of sudden change which started the modern development of our town.

FASTEST GROWTH

Berkhamsted, in fact, increased its population at a faster rate in the 1830s than in any other decade of the 19th century. This is proved by the following census figures, which, for added interest, are shown beside those for the parish of Northchurch, which then included Sunnyside.

	Berkhamsted	Northchurch
1801 ..	1,690	735
1811 ..	1,963	864
1821 ..	2,310	1,028
1831 ..	2,369	1,156
1841 ..	2,979	1,269
1851 ..	3,395	1,383
1861 ..	3,585	1,638
1871 ..	3,940	1,886
1881 ..	4,485	2,135
1891 ..	5,073	2,312
1901 ..	5,600	2,455

By the end of the century the population of both parishes had increased 3.3 times, but the rate of growth was far more erratic in Berkhamsted than it was in Northchurch, which, Mr. Pigot says, was 'respectably inhabited.' No comment is made upon the respectability or otherwise of Berkhamsted, where, from 1821 to 1831, the increase in the population was so astonishingly low, only 59, that I suspect an underestimate. In the following ten years there was an increase of 610, a record for the century.

TOWN OF PROMISE

Why this sudden spurt? A minor cause was the closing of village workhouses and the concentration of poor people in a large new workhouse (the Union) in Berkhamsted. A major cause

was the railway, opened in October, 1837.

Hundreds of navvies had previously been billeted in the town, some of whom stayed on and married local girls. Then, as was bound to happen, trade followed the trains. One of the first small country towns to have a railway station on a trunk route, Berkhamsted was a town of promise if not of actual prosperity.

In the previous decade of despair and unemployment, many residents must have left for the cities or the colonies. The railway reversed this trend. The drift towards Berkhamsted was first encouraged by brighter trading prospects; at a much later date came the season ticket era and a new incentive for living in Berkhamsted, our excellent schools.

It is only fair to say that many towns not served by railways grew at an even faster pace than Berkhamsted. On the other hand, without the railway Berkhamsted could have stagnated in the same way as, say, Redbourn, where the population declined after the 'coaching days.'

MORE SHOPS

The rise in the population of Berkhamsted was accompanied by the opening of many new shops. More professional people came here, too. Here are some figures based on the information given in two editions of Pigot's Directory:

	1824	1839
Grocers and general dealers	10	23
Bakers ..	6	8
Butchers ..	5	9
Brewers ..	2	3
Chemists ..	1	2
Millers ..	2	2
Drapers and milliners	6	9
Tailors ..	5	7
Bootmakers	8	12
Booksellers	1	2
Blacksmiths	2	4
Saddlers ..	3	2
Surgeons ..	2	4
Attorneys ..	2	4

Two services not available in 1824 were supplied by 1839. We had a bank (Richard Wood was agent for the Aylesbury Branch Bank) and a pawnbroker's shop.

With the opening of the railway, Castle Street, for many years the only way to the station, became a secondary shopping centre.

HIGH RAILWAY FARES

In 1839 prices and wages were low, but travel was remarkably expensive. Few Berkhamstedians could afford to go by train to London. A single first class ticket cost 7s. 6d. in the daytime and 8s. at night. A second class day ticket (single) cost 5s., and one sat in carriages open at the side, without linings or cushions or divisions in the compartments. For night travel closed second class compartments were provided—and the fare was 6s. 6d.

There were four up trains each weekday, leaving Berkhamsted at 7.55 and 10.10 a.m., 4.10 and 9.10 p.m., reaching London 80 minutes later after stops at Boxmoor, Watford and Harrow. In the reverse direction, three trains called at Berkhamsted, leaving London at 8 a.m., 2 and 5 p.m. Two trains each way provided the Sunday service.

A year or two after the railway was opened the local 'coaching days' were numbered. Pigot mentions only one coach in 1839—the 'Dispatch' from Aylesbury, which called at the Red Lion Inn (on the site of the Midland Bank) at 9.30 a.m. before continuing to Watford, Stanmore, Edgware and London. On the return journey the coach called at Berkhamsted at 6.30 p.m.

BY ROAD AND CANAL

Carters worried less about railway competition than stage coach owners. John King's wagons took goods to London every Tuesday and Friday, returning from the Old Bell, Warwick Lane, on Wednesday and Saturday. Sarah Willis, another carrier, ran a similar service on the same days, but her London destination was Clemmitts Inn, Old Bailey. A third Berkhamsted carrier, John Chapman, owned a cart which departed for London every Friday, and goods were also conveyed by Aylesbury, Buckingham and Tring carriers.

For Amersham and Windsor, goods were loaded on John Chapman's cart, leaving the Swan Inn, Berkhamsted, every Wednesday.

The Grand Junction Canal, then and for many more years an important trade route, advised London merchants who wished to send goods to Berkhamsted to use Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 27 wharfs, City Road, or 1, 4 and 7 wharfs, Paddington.

'BEORCHAM.'

(To be continued).

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