

How Berkhamsted was Governed in Years Gone By

## The Constables' Accounts

THE CHURCHWARDENS' ACCOUNTS, the subject of two preceding articles, are important because the Vestry was the local authority until 1898. Although shorn of some of its powers in the 19th century, it had in its time controlled poor law, education, fire, police and other services which do not come within the province of its successor, the Urban District Council.

Outside the boroughs, the Vestry was the only popular assembly, other than the House of Commons, with the right to impose compulsory taxation. In the government of the parish there were two great legal factors: one, the right of all ratepayers to participate in parochial business, the other a duty of all ratepayers to serve as required in the parochial offices as churchwardens, overseers of the poor and surveyors of highways.

### IN THE STOCKS

As with other officers, two constables were appointed at Michaelmas to serve for one year. Their duties were varied, as we see from the following extracts from 'The Constables' Book of Accmpts.'

	<i>s. d.</i>
1748 Gave eight sailors	1 6
Mending lock and hand-cuffs	6
1749 Relieved a disbanded soldier	6
Relieved a woman with a child that had smallpox	1 0
Expenses for mending the bridge by Jeremiah Pocock's	1 0
Expenses summoning people for arrears in ye poor rate and going to the Justices	2 6
1750 Expenses when Jane Johns was whipped	3 0

1754 Beer for workmen at Gutteridge Pond and Brickhill Green	2 6
1757 Watching and warding Statute Fair	4 0
Billeting out soldiers several times	3 0
Quartering Dragoons and going to the Justices about them	6 0
1785 Expenses taking Rowland and sitting up with him all night at King's Arms	2 6
Serving five summons on persons for short weight	1 8
Gave an old soldier 91 years of age	8

### BY

## 'BEORCHAM'

1801 Attending the execution of Snooks (highwayman)	5 0
Attending the Magistrates with a woman and giving her money to go out of town	3 0
Attending Gunpowder Treason	1 0
1807 Putting a man in the stocks and attending by order	1 6
New lock for the stocks	1 2
1808 Going after a boatman on canal	1 0
Attending at Prince's Arms to keep peace	1 0
1815 Paid John Pudd for whipping a man at the stocks	3 6

(Notes. One of the constables in 1801 was named William Shakespeare. The stocks mentioned above were outside the old Market House. The Prince's Arms probably stood on the site of the White Hart. Another inn, the Green Man, is also mentioned in the Constables' Accounts.)

### TOBACCO AND BEER

Now for a glimpse at the 'Workhouse Book', kept in the church chest. This book not only gives the prices of bread, butter, milk, tobacco and brimstone, but strikes a pleasant note by mentioning little luxuries that were given to certain inmates.

Twice in one week a woman was given tobacco; then there were gifts of ale to two boys, ages not stated. The purchase of half a pound of soap for one man was obviously exceptional.

The following payments were made by the workhouse master in one week of July 1727:

	<i>s. d.</i>
Robert Newnan for 2 Bushell of Malt	7 0
Mr. Roughan for 20 lb. of cheese at 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	4 7
Jos Turner for 21 loaves of bread for $\frac{1}{2}$ an ounce of tobacco for Mary Ross	15 9
for $\frac{1}{2}$ pound of Sape for Woods man to wash	3
for a Quarter and a half of hops for an ounce of tobacco for Mary Ross	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ 1 $\frac{1}{2}$

### BUTTER—AND BRIMSTONE

Here are some further entries, dated 1727-9:

	<i>s. d.</i>
To Mr. Stanley for 9 Quarts of Milk	9
To James Edge for $\frac{1}{2}$ a pound of Wool for Ann Good (Note:—for burial in wool.)	5
To Hen. Brandon for bread and cheese at Ann Good's funeral	1 6
for a pound of Sugar and 2 candells for Eliz. Wilkinson	5
To Daniel Bedford for 4 bundles of Straw	1 0
To Mr Aldridge for a pound of Butter	6
For a Quarter of a pound of Brimstone	3
To Jane Halls Boy for a point of ale	1 $\frac{1}{2}$
To Jane Wards Boy for $\frac{1}{2}$ a point of ale	3

An entry of 1753.—'Paide Mr. Watsons pt. of charges about Chapman Boy going to ye salt water, £1 7s.—'means that the boy was going to sea.

In a later issue we shall peep into the book kept by the Surveyors of Highways, or Stonewards, as they were sometimes called. Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that in 1834 the Vestry considered Whitehill unsuitable for vehicles and advocated closing the road, but deferred action until 'the affair of the Rail Road crossing' was settled. A century later Whitehill was made a one-way street.

### DIRTY FOOTPATHS

In 1824 it was decided that overseers of the poor should also be stonewards with the duty of maintaining footpaths in good condition. At the same time three tradesmen were appointed 'to value the houses, wharves and buildings of every description' to secure 'a more equal assessment thereof to the parochial taxes.' Another item of that period tells us that parishioners were threatened with prosecution if 'they continued to 'throw slops and other nuisances on the footpaths or roads.'

In view of the insanitary conditions then prevailing it is not surprising that infectious disease was prevalent. Way back in 1773 the Vestry provided an isolation hospital—the Pest House, on the Common, near Potten End—which, as late as 1856, was let on condition that the tenant 'receives into the house any case of infectious diseases that the parish, or a medical practitioner, may think fit to send thither.'

### Bottle Tops

## COMPETITION ENTRIES ROLL IN STILL TIME TO ENTER

A steady stream of postcards bearing suggested names for Berkhamsted's Guide Dog for the Blind is arriving at the editorial offices of the *Berkhamsted Review*.

There is still time to enter for the competition, and entries may be sent in by anyone who has helped to collect foil, or given a donation, in the campaign. Entries from school-children will be particularly welcomed.

The sender of the most original and suitable name will receive a photograph of the dog, and a book token for one guinea.

The runners-up will receive book tokens for half a guinea, and five shillings.

Entries, on a postcard, please, should contain the declaration 'I have helped to collect aluminium foil for (or given a donation to) the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association'; the name and address of the sender; and the suggested name for the dog (a bitch).

Cards should be addressed to: Bottle Tops, 'Berkhamsted Review', 57 Greenway, Berkhamsted, Herts, and must be received by Friday 14th October 1966. There is no entrance fee, but not more than one name may be submitted by any one entrant.

Judges will be Mrs. Betty Hulst, local collector of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association; the Rev. Basil Jones; and Mr. John Crisford, Editor of the *Berkhamsted Review*.

The winners will be notified by post, and the result will be published in the November issue of the *Review*. No correspondence can be entered into, and the judges' decision is final. Entrance to the competition implies acceptance of the above rules.

### GENEROUS GIFT

The fund has been given another quart forward by a further handsome gift of £5 from an anonymous donor. Mrs. Hulst would like to thank him/her most warmly for so generously helping the fund to reach its target—now only a few pounds off.

### RESULTS TO DATE

	Jan/Dec '65	Jan/Aug '66
For foil	£62 11 0	£78 3 5
In cash	62 11 0	£40 16 0

Total £125 2 0 £118 19 5

Grand total £244 1s. 5d. (target £280).

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