

BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



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In and around Berkhamsted

by 'Beorcham'

Temporary Lull

What—no scaffolding? No old buildings being pulled down, no new ones going up? It makes a change to walk along a High Street which, temporarily, is not undergoing one alteration or another. Not that I would object if something was being done to improve Prince Edward Street corner!

Elsewhere in the town builders are still busy. For instance, Provident Place is scarcely recognisable now that new, tall houses have succeeded that old, long row of cottages. And there is a new bridge in Billet Lane—the third canal crossing to be improved in recent years, the others being Bank Mill bridge and Raven's Lane bridge.

Credit Where Due

Speaking of changes, I was relieved to see workmen busy at the crossroads. No, not re-siting the traffic lights for the umpteenth time but improving the drainage so that we are less likely to be drenched by passing cars as we were when those recurrent ponds formed outside the Police Station.

Some drains in King's Road, left at a dangerously low level after recent road works, have also received attention.

Two more welcome improvements. At last there is a decent footpath beside the

upper part of Cross Oak Road. On the opposite side of the town, a path is being provided from the point where Gravel Path enters the Common to the crossroads.

Now, what about a footpath beside the upper part of King's Road? Long overdue, I am sure you will agree. And cannot something be done for pedestrians who have to cross the very wide road between Barclays Bank and the Police Station?

Newspaper Centenary

One hundred years ago—on April 17, 1875, to be precise—Berkhamsted had its first truly local newspaper. The "Berkhamsted Times", which also appeared as the "Tring Telegraph" and the "Chesham News", only the headings being changed, was printed in Berkhamsted for 25 years until it was incorporated in the "West Herts and Watford Observer."

At first the paper was printed in London, the price being 1½d. for eight pages, four of which contained national news, the other four being devoted to local news and advertisements.

It was not long before a four-page paper, consisting wholly of local news, was printed in Berkhamsted. Later on the printing contract was given to Frederick J. King, whose press in Holliday Street was powered by the steam engine of a sawmill next door.

Despite an increase in size to eight large pages, the price was still 1d.

In those days many local newspaper publishers bought large, flat sheets printed in London on one side only, containing general news. The reverse side was printed locally, several compositors being required to set up, letter by letter, four large pages of type. Every letter had to be "dissed" (distributed) into type cases for further use.

There is much I could say about the good old "Times", and I am proud to own a copy of No. 1. Perhaps I shall be able to return to this subject next month.

Beating the Bounds

Last month's reference to Beating the Bounds had an interesting sequel. A reader who took part in the last ceremony (in July, 1903) brought along a photograph showing himself, with other boys, shortly before they were about to start a perambulation of the parish boundary. All the boys were wearing their Bourne School caps, to which were pinned blue, black and yellow ribbons. These, the boys were told, were the "Berkhamsted colours," as used for the coat of arms.

The then Rector, the Rev. H. G. Constable-Curtis, took part in the ceremony. Somewhere en route he was bumped, and a good time was had by all!

In the Old Blue Box

Found a short time ago in the attic of an old house in Castle Street: two bundles of receipted accounts and some other papers of the late 18th century. They belonged to a carpenter, William Matthews, founder of a Castle Street firm of builders and contractors which flourished for a century and a half.

Among the papers was a letter written in 1790 by Mary Matthews, then living in Hammersmith, asking her mother to send on her black clothes so that she could go into mourning "like everybody else" for the funeral of the Duke of Cumberland. The clothes, Mary added, were "in my Blue Box and if you can't find the Key you must Rinch (wrench) the Box open for I must have them."

At the foot of the letter her father or

mother wrote: "September ye 30 1790: the Parsil was delivered to the Coachman."

EDUCATION IN THE SEVENTIES

"Christian Education—a rôle in the 70's?" is the title of the subject for the annual general meeting of the West Herts Church Council for Social Work this year. The speaker will be Mr. John Brackenbury, warden of the village college at Impington, Cambridge. The meeting is on Monday, 5th May, at 8 p.m. in the Gable Hall, Prince Edward Street, and is preceded by coffee at 7.30 p.m. All who are interested in education of the young should find this a very stimulating evening. All are welcome.



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