

BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



In and around Berkhamsted

by 'BEORCHAM'

Court House Memories

I have received a letter from a former resident who was pleasantly surprised to see references to the Court House Restoration Fund in a daily newspaper.

She writes: "My late mother attended school in the Court House in the 1870s and often told me about the scholars sitting round a great open fire in winter. Some of the girls came from Potten End, they had to walk in those days and in winter were allowed to leave early to get home in daylight."

My correspondent, who sent a cheque for the fund, continues: "I hope the Court House will be used as well as admired; it is the one building in the town apart from the Church itself that should certainly be preserved."

Slippery Slope

A reader, after a nasty fall on the steep, muddy footpath from Butts Meadow to the playing fields, suggests that this much-used path should be asphalted. Certainly it has been in a dreadful state for many months, but I think paved or asphalted paths should be confined to built-up areas.

Perhaps I would have a different view if I had somersaulted and walked home in muddy clothes.

In The Picture

Following the publication of "Bygone Berkhamsted", many people have brought along old photographs which were new to me. Of especial interest is a photograph of Mr. "Pommer" Wood and his wife in a very early motor-car bearing the number-plate AR 492. Incidentally, as a small boy I saw AR 1 being driven down Lower King's Road; the car, I was told, belonged to Lord Brownlow, of Ashridge. I wonder if there is still an AR 1?

The great interest taken in old photographs will, I hope, encourage more camera enthusiasts to take pictures of present-day scenes and activities, not necessarily pretty pictures or important subjects. For instance, double-deck buses may one day be as rare as steam locomotives. Then there are buildings of little architectural interest, such as the Bulbourne Factory, which very few people bothered to photograph.

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I could kick myself for not having photographed the Gem Cinema in Cowper Road, "Poet's Corner" in Station Road, Durrants Farm and several other buildings which are already a dim memory. If you can fill these gaps in my collection, please let me know.

The Bourne Gutter

Several people tell me that they paid regular visits to the Bourne Gutter valley, hoping to see this very spasmodic stream flowing again after a very rainy season.

After one or two false alarms it was reliably reported that the Bulbourne's fitful tributary was again active. But it was only a half-hearted revival; certainly there was water in the river bed between the Whelpley Hill road and Bottom Farm, but nothing like the sizeable flow in 1969.

By the way, John Cussans, the Victorian historian, wondered whether the saying, "as dry as a bone", meant as dry as the bed of the Bourne. Surely not; but it is a fact that in years gone by many people called Bourne End "Bone End".

The Berkhamsted Times

Now for another look at the "Berkhamsted Times," which, as I said last month, appeared almost exactly 100 years ago. No. 1 contains nine columns of local news, including 'Our Opening Address,' an editorial which promised a good family newspaper, fitted for the perusal of all classes of society". Eighty shareholders, representing all shades of opinion, financed the newspaper. There are reports of the marriage of Thomas Algernon Smith-Dorrien to Edith Tower, meetings of the Board of Guardians and the Mechanics' Institute, local corn markets, meteorological observations, and notices of the Rifle Volunteers.

The front page (six columns) contains over 40 advertisements, mostly from local tradesmen. Ezra Miller had a stock of 400,000 bricks and unlimited supplies of coal; Charles Kingham, baker, supplied good currant cake at 6d. per lb.; W. H. Warwick weighed bread on delivery and supplied hot rolls for breakfast at 8 a.m.;

James Elliot, plumber, hired out flags, lamps, etc., for festive occasions; Howard and Son restored furniture and cleaned and remade feather beds and mattresses; Robert Breckon advertised washed calicos at 6s. 6d. to 11s. 6d. per dozen yards; and E. G. Page & Co. sold good fine shag at 3s. 3d. per lb. and best Cuban cigars at 8s. 6d. per lb. in boxes of 100.

Half of the back page is devoted to railway time-tables, showing 10 up and 10 down trains daily, the single fare to London being 4s. 6d. 1st class, 3s. 6d. second class 2s. 5½d. third class, and 2s. 4d. 'Parliamentary' or fourth class.

What a pity it would cost so much to reproduce this historic newspaper!



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