

BERKHAMSTED REVIEW

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In and around Berkhamsted

by 'BEORCHAM'

Christmas Greetings

The Christmas greetings card trade may not be so brisk now that we have to pay 6½p for a stamp, but at least we have a variety of local scenes to make a change from robins, holly, and ye olde coaching inn.

I much admire Harry Sheldon's drawings of the Court House and Berkhamsted School, sold in aid of the Court House Restoration Fund. The same artist also enables us to send our best wishes with a very good impression of the Town Hall on market day.

Potten End is in the picture, too, with a card with two folds which opens out to show the church and village hall. This is the work of Janet Margrie, the cards are sold in aid of Multiple Sclerosis Research.

I am sure that many of these cards will be preserved when, on Twelfth Night, the Christmas cards are taken down.

Walking in the Road

A reader asks me to draw attention to the top portion of New Road, from the point where the footpath ends (at the entrance to the Common) to the Inns of Court war memorial. For 300 yards or so pedestrians

have to walk in the road, as undergrowth and overhanging branches prohibit use of the narrow grass verge.

Very heavy and fast traffic uses this road, and it is not unknown for motorists to shout at pedestrians to get on a path which, in sundry places, is unusable. Perhaps the authorities will see what can be done to please both walkers and motorists.

Red Lion Yard

A friend has just brought along a rusty, battered blue and white enamelled street nameplate, "Red Lion Yard". This recalls the time when there were as many as 18 little cottages behind the Red Lion public-house, which lost its licence in mid Victorian times and was a furniture shop until the building was replaced by the Midland Bank some 40 years ago. The nameplate had been dumped on the edge of the Common with other debris, probably when the few remaining cottages were pulled down.

Incidentally, my request for a photograph of Poet's Corner, a quaint little cottage which formerly stood beside the Crystal Palace, had the desired effort. Mr. T. D. W. Petty has just brought along two splendid photographs of the scene.

Whitehill Sleepers

Flint walls always look as if they will last for centuries, but the one towards the top of Whitehall is now in a sorry state. There have been heavy falls of flints near a minor ancient monument which, I hope, will be retained when the wall is repaired.

Perhaps "ancient monument" is too grand a name for two granite railway sleepers which have stood in Whitehall since 1840 or thereabouts. The stones were used as mounting blocks for horse riders.

Granite sleepers were ordered by Robert Stephenson, son of the great George, for the London and Birmingham Railway. He soon had to substitute wooden sleepers as the weight of the trains caused the stone sleepers (which were not linked together) to move outward, causing derailments.

There are still many old sleepers in this and other districts, but few are in such good condition as the ones in Whitehall.

School Broadcasts

Alerted by a note in the October Review, many people tuned in to Radio 4 (VHF) to hear two programmes in the current series of school broadcasts entitled "History: not so long ago." Two of the programmes were devoted to Berkhamsted, and in hundreds of schools up and down the country film strips from the BBC were shown to supplement the spoken word.

I give Mr. Nicholas Whines, the producer, full marks for presenting local history—our local history—in such an interesting way. The film strip includes many local scenes, including an early one of Holliday's cycle shop at the top of Holliday Street, followed by a recent photograph of the same building (now a fruiterer's shop) with an advertisement for bicycles still fixed to the wall of the adjoining house. If you haven't seen it before, now's the time to do so!

Then there was a "growth plan" showing, in colours, how the old built-up area of Berkhamsted was extended at different periods.

Mr. Whines has promised to come to Berkhamsted when the Local History Society sees the film and hears the recording at a meeting in January.

A Long Walk

An interesting booklet, "The Missenden Story", states that when a famous Victorian artist, William Callow, bought a cottage at Great Missenden in 1854, he travelled from Euston to Berkhamsted by rail and walked the remaining ten miles. Ours was the nearest railway station!

There are also references in the booklet to the horse-drawn vans which conveyed mails from the railway stations at Oxford and Berkhamsted. I quote: "Just after the second World War, in a field at the bottom of Frith Hill, there was a vehicle like a small hotel bus which was said to be the old mail-van that brought letters from Berkhamsted."



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