

BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



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In and around Berkhamsted

by 'BEORCHAM'

Our Changing Town

Nobody shed a tear when some derelict buildings on the far side of Water Lane car park were pulled down a short time ago. Nothing of great age or interest has gone and in due course flats and offices will be built on part of the site of a long-forgotten Baptist chapel and graveyard. In the meantime it is worth looking at the empty site to see how an arm of the Bulbourne flows under the foundations of the old brewery stables.

This once squalid part of the town now largely devoted to a car park, has seen many demolitions—and some spectacular fires. The entrance to Water Lane was even narrower than it is today, and the west side of the lane was lined with the buildings of a large brewery, afterwards Kepstons' pulley works. The smell of malt and hops was more acceptable to the inhabitants than the fumes of a central gasworks at the bottom of the Wilderness.

By the way, did you know that Adelbert House, at the top of Mill Street, was formerly the office and home of the gasworks manager? And that Greene Field Road (that's the one from the car park to Lower King's Road) was formerly called

Brewery Road?

Now the industries and the slums have gone, and our wide, open space is similar to the clearances that have been made in many other old towns. For views of the backs of buildings, it must be hard to beat a car park!

"Lutes and Rifts"

A short time ago I mentioned that Henry Nash, author of an excellent book on Victorian Berkhamsted, had a literary niece who wrote a novel and a pantomime for children.

In response to my appeal for more information about Louise Nash, Mr. Alan Dickman has brought along what must be a very rare copy of her novel, "Lutes and Rifts", which was published in 1898 under the pen-name of Louise Sahn, the surname being an anagram of Nash. It is well written but very, very tame.

Another reader remembers seeing Miss Nash's pantomime, "Catawampus", at Wallasey just before or during the first World War. It was so much enjoyed that she and her sister often talked about it. A third reader, who lived next door to the Nash family in Castle Street, saw a performance of "Catawampus" at Watford. My

informant added that her brother called Miss Nash "Bik-Bik" because she often gave him biscuits over the garden fence.

Musical Note

Recent additions to the Local History Society's collection of by-gones include a fife which was played by a member of St. Peter's Drum and Fife Band a century ago. It was for many years in the possession of Mr. J. Gower, who had a tailor's shop in Castle Street.

Recipes for All

On moving to Tring, Mr. R. Ian Sworder, for many years a resident of Dudswell, gave me a copy of what must now be a very rare booklet, entitled "200 Recipes in aid of the West Herts Hospital", it was compiled by his mother, Mrs. E. M. Sworder, after she had undergone a serious operation at the hospital some 50 years ago.

Various residents sent along their favourite recipes, and many tradesmen took advertisements to defray the cost of printing the 56-page booklet, which was sold for a shilling. General Foot, of Whitehill, contributed "An excellent way to cook old birds", and Mrs. Barnett, of Northchurch, supplied a recipe for "Plum pudding without currants."

"Hertfordshire Favourite", made with one egg, half-pint milk, quarter-ounce gelatine and 1 oz. castor sugar, does not fill me with county pride. I am however, curious to know how Mrs. Stephenson's "Kiss-me-quick pudding" turned out.

The last page of the booklet carries an astonishing advertisement. Here it is: "Men! Why stay in a dreary spot like Berkhamsted, tied to a nagging wife? Join Toc H and be happy! Come and spend your holidays in our lovely house bordering on the New Forest. Full board and lodging from 35s a week. Our own poultry farm. Fresh eggs daily. Tired chaplain nightly."

Well, Well!

The Civic Centre

A friend tells me that he is often asked where the Civic Centre is located. "A board bearing the name ought to be put on the buildings now that so many public meetings are held there," he says. To my horror, he added that people unfamiliar with the town

are not the only enquirers. Apparently there are lots of residents who do not know where to find the Civic Centre.

Perhaps the Dacorum District Council will put up a suitable identity board. A discreet one, of course.

STEWARDSHIP

The amount paid into the joint St. Peters and All Saints stewardship fund in January was £1042.58.

Women's Standard

The new standard of the Womens Section of the Royal British Legion (Berkhamsted Branch) will be dedicated on Sunday, 7th March. Members of the public are warmly invited to the service at 3 p.m. in St. Peters Church.



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