

BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



In and around Berkhamsted

A Change of Name?

A little more than two years ago I was relieved when Berkhamsted opted for a Parish Council, not a Town Council. But once again the subject has been raised, and at the time of writing it seems likely that we shall have a Town Council and our first mayor for 314 years.

My views are unchanged, but as a local historian I must draw a few parallels between the present Council and the one which was born in 1618 and died of neglect in 1662 or 1663.

In those far-off times the so-called "common council", like the present Parish Council, had very limited powers. It was not the rating authority. The Vestry (like Dacorum District Council) held most of the purse-strings and had much larger responsibilities.

However, the "common council" was largely concerned with markets and fairs, collecting tolls which gradually declined, thereby contributing to its weakness and eventual downfall.

Twelve "capital burgesses" yearly elected a bailiff (mayor), recorder, clerk, and two sergeants at the mace. Their possessions included the mace, a common seal with a silver head, a table, a green carpet, twelve cushions, standard weights and measures, two pairs of handcuffs and a shackle.

If they bring back the bracelets I shall have to stop criticising the Council!

by 'BEORCHAM'

Fair Comment?

"I always think of Berkhamsted as the town with steep streets."—A visitor.

Dacorum's Fair Name

Since writing last month about the name of our District Council, I have seen several references to Dacorum in national newspapers.

In a letter to *The Times*, the Town Clerk of Hove playfully wondered whether Dacorum had a plural form—Dacora. Um! There is only one Dacorum, and history is on its side, for Dacorum was the name of our ancient Hundred, probably derived from a colony of Danes.

Not that all the people in the ancient Hundred send their Danegeld to Hemel Hempstead Town Hall. Dacorum, many years ago, included such distant places as Bushey, Aldenham, Shenley, North Mimms, Harpenden, Wheathampstead and Caddenham. But at least we have gained Nettleden, which was once in Buckinghamshire and the Hundred of Cottesloe.

Over to Belton

What has Belton Road, a short row of houses off Billet Lane, in common with Ashridge Rise, Bridgewater Road, Brownlow Road, Egerton Road and Paxton Road?

EDITORIAL
9 Shrublands Road

Mr H. D. Woodward
Tel. 2723

ADVERTISEMENTS
23 North Road

Mr. Neil Cowan
Tel. 4916

CIRCULATION and
MAGAZINE COMMITTEE
20 Murray Road

Mr. A. C. Conway
Tel. 5798

TREASURER
36 Trevelyan Way

Mr. M. J. Robinson
Tel. 3559

These street names all have Ashridge associations; a rather obscure one in the case of Belton Road, as it takes its name from Belton House, near Grantham, which was retained by the Brownlow family when Ashridge was sold to meet death duties over 50 years ago.

Recently, over 40 members of the Local History Society visited the Brownlow's Lincolnshire home. Of exceptional interest was a document headed "A Release of Common Rights", dated December 13th, 1865 and containing the signatures of hundreds of Berkhamstedians who were prepared to sacrifice common rights and accept Earl Brownlow's offer of 43 acres along the Bulbourne valley for a recreation ground and garden allotments.

Several Berkhamsted visitors found the signatures of their ancestors, and it was interesting to see that the Release was "signed, sealed and delivered in the presence of William Cooper and William Hazell"—the founder of the chemical works and the grocer who built the tall "International" building which was pulled down a few years ago.

As every reader knows, Augustus Smith stopped the Common enclosures in 1866. But what a huge number of commoners were prepared to throw away their ancient rights!

Houses and People

My thanks to a reader for showing me a "Topographical Dictionary of the British Isles," published in the early 1800s. The Berkhamsted entry shows that only 167 of the 1,690 inhabitants were "returned as being employed in trade"; the proportion was much higher at Hemel Hempstead, 775 of the 2,722 inhabitants being "employed in various trades and industry."

The following figures show the number of inhabitants and houses: Berkhamsted, 1,690, 385; Hemel Hempstead, 2,722, 481; Northchurch, 735, 127; Nettleden, 85, 16; Great Gaddesden, 794, 149; Little Gaddesden, 388, 82; Aldbury, 457, 100.

So Berkhamsted had the lowest ratio of persons per house. Northchurch had the highest; an average of 5.8 persons per house.

Off to America

I hope you saw Ralph Williams woodcarving of the town's coat of arms before it was taken to

Berkhamsted, Conn. with the town's best wishes in this, the bicentennial year of the American Revolution.

It is a splendid piece of craftsmanship by a young Berkhamsted man whose work has been seen at several local exhibitions. I have a hunch that he will soon achieve national fame.

JULY CONCERT

On Sunday July 11th in All Saints Church at 3 p.m. the Watford School of Music Junior Orchestra will give another of their concerts. They have given several concerts before, thanks to the hard work of Miss Kay Hazelton, and all have been well supported and highly enjoyable. This time the programme will include a concerto in A major by J. C. Bach, an ensemble of flutes as well as piano and clarinet works. Please come. Tickets will be 50p for adults, 25p for children and senior citizens.



**HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
BUILDING SOCIETY**

**makes
your money
make
more money**

43 Marlows

Hemel Hempstead

Berkhamsted Agents:

**WESTERN INSURANCE
SERVICES LTD.**

**29-33 LOWER KINGS ROAD,
BERKHAMSTED. TEL. 5877**