

BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



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

In and around Berkhamsted

by 'BEORCHAM'

In Darkest Berkhamsted

Now that darker nights are here again, a reader asks me to refer to the rather desolate appearance of our High Street at night. He wonders why so few shopkeepers favour window lighting after closing time and says that the Town Centre is particularly dark and uninviting.

An important fact is that the townspeople do not go out in the evenings so much as they did when we had two large, busy cinemas and many other popular attractions. After 7 o'clock the High Street is often deserted, and shopkeepers may well wonder whether there is any point in spending money on window lighting. Most of the customers are at home watching Television, anyway!

Exchange of Views

I have spent a pleasant hour looking at a series of colour slides of Berkhamsted, Connecticut, given to our Local History Society by Mr. Richard Wheeler, who was Colonel A. L. Wilson's host when he attended the bicentennial celebrations in July.

A preview, with taped commentary, has been given to the Town Council and soon it will be time for a repeat performance for local historians.

Most of the scenes are distinctly rural. There

are no skyscrapers in Barkhamsted! This very scattered and hilly township, halfway between Boston and New York, is the home of fewer than 2,500 people. One of the smaller neighbourhoods, Ratlum, is said to have been so named because its steep, rough roads used to cause farm wagons to rattle violently!

To reciprocate the gift and good wishes from America, a set of slides of *our* Berkhamsted, with taped commentary, will be sent to Barkhamsted. Naturally, there are slides of the Castle and notable buildings, as well as market scenes and shots of sporting events to show that Berkhamsted is a real, live town. Views of residential roads of different periods and the industrial estate in North Bridge Road are also included, but in some cases it is difficult to see the houses for the trees!

A Halfpenny Token

Mr. John Sharp, of Bourne End, has just shown me a 17th century tradesman's token which was lost 300 years ago and recently found in a watercress bed. It is the type of token defined as "a private coin redeemable in current money or goods", issued at times when small coins of the realm were very scarce.

The specimen in Mr. Sharp's possession is about three-quarters of an inch in diameter and bears the name of William Babb, 1666. On the

reverse side are the words "His half penny" and "in Barkhamsted." Note the spelling! They were "barking" the name in 1666.

William Babb was a prominent Berkhamsted tradesman, a Church-warden of St. Peter's, and a chief burgess in the last year or so of the Corporation of Berkhamsted.

Tokens issued by three other Berkhamsted tradesmen in the 1660s bear the names of John Seeling, John Carvell, and William Preston.

Vanishing Shops

The closing of a shop in the High Street—not an infrequent happening—always causes comment, but little is said about the diminishing number of shops in our older side-streets. However, the *Berkhamsted Gazette* recently stated that in fairly recent times three shops in or near Gravel Path have closed, leaving a deservedly popular group of three shops between the canal bridge and Station Road corner.

Not so very long ago George Street had several small shops; now there is none. There were also shops in Raven's Lane and Chapel Street, some of which had served the neighbourhood for many years. These, too, have gone. As for Castle Street, most of the 15 shops I knew in my youth have been pulled down or converted into offices. Now there are only five shops.

Kitsbury, however, still has a mini-shopping centre; all the shops are occupied and, I hope, doing good business.

Dry Subject

The prolonged drought reminded a friend of the time when shortage of water was a very dry subject in Berkhamsted. Cisterns were empty and not so much as a drip came out of the taps. But there wasn't a drought; the waterworks pumps broke down and supplies came from water-carts.

The time? Right in the middle of World War II, when the population was swollen by troops and evacuees. The London newspapers, much reduced in size, found space among the war news for stories of Berkhamsted's temporary plight. But there were many other things to think about at that time!

Peter the Wild Boy

I wonder if anyone has a copy of "Peter the Wild Boy", a novel by Miss C. M. Tennant,

published in 1934? It was based on the curious life story of that very sad 18th century oddity whose memorial is in St. Mary's, Northchurch. Although praised by the critics, the novel was not a popular success. If you can find a copy for me, I will give a good price for it.

Bricks and Iron

Referring to last month's item on the former Wesleyan Church in Cowper Road, a reader points out that the corrugated iron Church that was brought over from Hemel Hempstead in 1887 was not given a complete "overcoat" of bricks in 1923.

The back wall of the Church is still in its original state, with two stained glass windows inserted in good, strong Victorian corrugated iron.

HH

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