

# BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



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## In and around Berkhamsted

by 'BEORCHAM'

### Architect and Historian

Peter Quennell's interests were shared by his parents. Charles and Majorie Quennell came to Berkhamsted in 1917 and at their home in Shrublands Road they wrote and illustrated the first volume of a still popular series of books entitled "A History of Everyday Things in England", sales of which have passed the million mark.

Charles Quennell was an architect with some notable buildings, including a church, to his credit. He also designed the Berkhamsted war memorial. But the house he designed for his own use ("Crabtrees", at the top of Gravel Path) had a bleak appearance which, as Peter Quennell admits, caused passers-by to remark, "I've heard say that it was built by an architect!" I can remember my parents making similar remarks every time we passed the house.

Peter Quennell devotes a generous number of pages to Berkhamsted and its people. What especially interested me was his account of an accident on Armistice Day, 1918, when soldiers and other roisterers "invaded the precincts of the School and burst into the Tudor hall, shouting the headmaster's name, whereupon Dr. Greene wisely took refuge behind the locked doors of his study".

"The Marble Foot" covers the years 1906-38 and is published by Collins at £4.95.

### Local apathy

Several readers have referred to last month's comments on the lack of interest taken in local affairs. One blames the growing number of commuters, but I could name many season-ticket holders who take a much more active interest in local affairs than lots of stay-at-homes!

A clergyman who left Berkhamsted a long time ago tells me that he hears similar grumbles in his new parish, and a friend in Rickmansworth says that in his town, too, the closing of shops causes much concern.

Berkhamsted is not unique.

### Little Heath

A reader asks if the "earthworks" on Little Heath are of historic interest. If you visit this pretty little common, crossed by several roads and notable for its trees, you must have noticed the many shapeless and deep excavations. But they are not old; merely the result of digging for gravel in fairly modern times. The men who constructed moats in olden times would have made a better job of the excavations!

### The Court Theatre

Another enquiry: a correspondent is astonished that the old Court Theatre (formerly on the Tesco site) was built in the middle of the first World War, when there were strict restrictions on non-essential building.

To the best of my knowledge permission was granted because so many troops trained in the district and lacked recreational facilities. The "Court" really was a theatre, with good dressing rooms and an adequate stage, though for most of the time only films were shown.

### Kingshill crossing

A reader asks if anything can be done to improve the wide crossing which pedestrians fear to tread at Kingshill. This T-junction is certainly a danger spot for all who wish to pass from Kingshill Way to Shootersway—even more dangerous than the upper part of Kings Road, which still lacks a footpath.

As I have said before, we have too many pathless roads. Pedestrians have been sadly neglected, and all we can do is to tread warily and find alternate routes, if possible.

### A "First" for Northchurch

I have a very old book, printed in 1730-1, entitled "Magna Britannia", described as a

"new survey of Great Britain, collected and composed by an impartial hand (the Rev. Thomas Cox)".

A list of charity schools in Hertfordshire includes the following entry: "Berkhamsted St. Mary, where all the poor Children of the Parish are taught at the Expense of the Rector and a private Gentleman".

So the poor children of Northchurch had some elementary education several years before the Bourne Charity School was opened at Berkhamsted in 1737.

### LEPROSY MISSION

The amount raised at the annual coffee morning in aid of the Leprosy Mission at St. Luke's was a record £73. Our thanks are due to all friends and helpers who supported this effort.

E.C.A.



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