

BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



In and around Berkhamsted

by 'BEORCHAM'

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

A Local Vineyard

A rare sight in the countryside around Berkhamsted is the Frithsden vineyard, best seen from the road to Nettleden. Started a few years ago, it has been literally an uphill task, involving much hard work, heavy expenditure and constant vigilance, the end product depending largely on the weather.

The enthusiastic owners, Mr. and Mrs. P. Latchford, of Boxmoor, recently gave an illustrated talk to the Berkhamsted branch of the Geographical Association, and local historians recalled that Berkhamsted was one of only 38 places with vineyards that were recorded in Domesday Book (1086). The Norman vineyard was probably near the Castle.

Mr. and Mrs. Latchford started their enterprise with vines imported from Germany. A century ago it would not have been necessary to place an order abroad, for the once-famous Berkhamsted firm of nurserymen, founded in 1777 by Henry Lane, was so renowned for vines that they received orders from France and Germany. Older readers may recall the large glasshouses on the site now occupied by the Post Office. As a contributor to the *Gardeners' Chronicle* said a few years ago, vines were the firm's speciality, the water from St. John's Well being particularly acceptable to *Vitis vinifera*.

I do not know whether the Lane family actually produced their own wine. They had their own brewery on the same site, anyway!

But the fact that we now have a vineyard in the district adds a little more interest to Berkhamsted's link with Beaune, in Burgundy, which is surrounded by vineyards.

Broadly Speaking

The *Gazette* recently reported that the police were seeking a man in his late thirties with a local accent.

But is there still a local accent? Some older folk may have what may be described as a countrified accent, but one surely needs very good hearing to say whether anyone under 45 years of age comes from this or any other district within, say, 35 miles of London.

A famous exponent of a Chiltern accent was Sir Bernard Miles, whose broadcasts about Ivinghoe and neighbouring villages were very popular a generation or so ago. A friend in the West Country has asked me to obtain one of his old recordings, and when making enquiries at the Mermaid Theatre I was told that Sir Bernard himself was trying to find one!

Large and Small

One by one large houses are being demolished, to be replaced by several smaller houses or flats. A surprisingly large area has been cleared by the demolition of Rosehill, at the top of Montague Road. More recently, The Oaks, the home of the Wingfield-Stratford family, has been pulled down at the top of Angle Place. In this case the site is not quite so large as I expected.

In these instances we have not lost houses of great interest. They were late Victorian or early Edwardian, the last, or almost the last, of the large houses which originally had a staff of indoor servants.

A Famous Resident

Some confusion has been caused by reports that Baroness Spencer-Churchill, who died a few weeks ago, spent her girlhood days at 85 High Street.

The High Street was renumbered a few years after the 1939-45 War, and the house is now No. 107, two doors from Rectory Lane corner. Several people have suggested that a commemorative plaque should be placed on this house. If this is not possible, perhaps we can have a plaque on the old Bourne School (No. 222), which Clementine Hozier attended before Berkhamsted School for Girls moved to King's Road.

I have met a number of people who remembered Clementine and her mother, Lady Blanche Hozier. A friend recalls that Clementine regularly took the week's laundry to his mother-in-law's cottage near the Black Horse public house; she was always accompanied by her dog, which had been trained to wipe its paws on the doormat. Another old friend told me that Lady Blanche Hozier advised his father, a house decorator, to apply gin to his ulcerated legs, as she had herself found this a great comfort. Moreover, she gave him a half-filled bottle for home treatment, but it is doubtful whether he applied the gin to his legs!

Mrs. Edward Poppo

Many middle-aged and elderly readers, especially those who attended the Victoria Schools, will remember Jane Elizabeth Poppo, the widow of the late Edward Poppo, for many years headmaster of the Victoria Boys' School.

A lady of great charm, she moved many years ago to Bowdon, Cheshire, where she recently died in her 90th year. Her interest in Berkhamsted never waned, and to the last she was a regular reader of the *Review*.

Pointing the Way

A reader says he is puzzled by a signpost on Berkhamsted Common with the words, "Public Bridleway, Berkhamsted Common, ½."

"Why the half?" he asks. "Presumably this means half a mile, but the sign is actually on the

Common. One is already there. Is there some central point from which measurements are taken?"

Taking his Ease

Overheard: "No, he's not lost his job, he's retired. He's been made recumbent!"

What a Party!

One often hears of lavish parties, but how's this for extravagance? I have just found the following news item in the *Gazette* for July 20th, 1902: "At Rossway, the residence of Mr. G. F. McCorquodale, a ball was held in celebration of the coming of age of Mr. E. G. McCorquodale. A special train brought a large number of guests from London. On Thursday, the servants' ball was held, to which many tradesmen and residents of Berkhamsted and Northchurch were invited."



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