

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. 5796

TREASURER
36 Trevelyan Way

Mr. M. J. Robinson
Tel. 3559

In and around Berkhamsted

by 'BEORCHAM'

Road Up!

It has been a watch-your-step season for people using roads and paths in certain parts of the town. After a remarkable series of weekend excavations at the central crossroads we have had long, long trenches in Charles Street and some neighbouring roads. On a bitterly cold day it was difficult to tell chalk from snow.

But the most familiar mess has been created in the High Street, at Cowper Road corner, where both road and footpath were chewed up and then left alone for at least a fortnight at the time of writing. When the work is completed, motorists will certainly have an easier entrance to Cowper Road, but I doubt whether pedestrians will be pleased with the final result.

However, I understand that a narrow path will be provided on the opposite side of Cowper Road, so that lorries will no longer brush against the almshouses. Good! Perhaps the bollard which replaced a much-bashed roadside tree will be bowled over less frequently in future.

Our Side Streets

As in many other old towns, we have a number of side streets which were originally footpaths, alleys, tracks to farms or carriage drives to large houses. Kitsbury Road was originally a track to Kitsbury Farm. Three Close Lane was the carriage drive to Highfield House, the tradesmen's entrance being Highfield Road.

Rectory Lane survives more or less in its original form because it is a short cul de sac. Swing Gate Lane, once jokingly known as Swing Cat Lane, has been widened on several occasions, and every time we have a new police station King's Road gets wider still and wider. For Lower King's Road first one and then a second house was demolished.

Property was also pulled down to make an entrance to Prince Edward Street, which remains a short cul de sac. Almost directly opposite, however, the much more widely used Water Lane is only slightly wider than it was in Victorian and earlier times.

Returning to Cowper Road, it is interesting to recall that this completely new Victorian road had a narrow entrance until two shops were pulled down—a corn chandler's kept by Joe Callard and a grocer's owned by Pastor Wright.

At various times large and small improvements are made for motorists, but nothing is ever done for the safety of pedestrians in such pathless roads as the upper parts of Cross Oak Road and King's Road.

"The Human Factor"

Berkhamsted now has two Castles—the ancient stronghold and Maurice Castle, the chief character of Graham Greene's new novel, "The Human Factor".

By this time you will have seen reviews of the book and know that much of the action takes place in Berkhamsted. Readers all over the world will learn that Maurice Castle lived in King's Road and that we have a Tudor school, a King's Arms, a Swan, a *Gazette*, and a very nice Common. There are references to St. Peter's Church, too, and we shall have to say that fiction is stranger than truth if we are asked to produce a non-existent crusader's helmet in the church. Apart from one or two trifling slips such as this, Mr. Greene's local knowledge is very good indeed!

As one who seldom reads fiction, I am not really qualified to comment on "The Human Factor". But once I had started reading the book I could not put it down. It is a masterpiece by one of the greatest authors of our time, with a haunting conclusion that made me wish that Maurice Castle had stayed in Berkhamsted and not flown to Russia for what seems to have been not a very serious leak of information.

Our Historic County

Turning from fiction to fact—indeed, thousands of facts—I heartily commend a newly published book by Mrs. Gwenna Robinson, Deputy Head of Greenway School.

Goodness knows how many hours of hard work enabled her to provide a guide to the history of Hertfordshire from ancient to modern times. It is an unusual book, briefly listing events, people and places in the long history of our county. Its chief purpose is to tell readers where to obtain further information—there is a superb index—but I fancy that many people will be content to read on and on, changing rapidly from one subject to another and always finding something of interest.

This guide to county history, simply entitled "Hertfordshire", is published by Barracuda Books Ltd., of Chesham, at £5.95.

Lagley House

So few of our old, large houses survive that it is not surprising that there is much discussion whether Lagley should be preserved or demolished.

Today it occupies a very prominent position, due to the widening, some 16 years ago, of a notoriously narrow part of the highway. Previously the house was screened by tall trees, all of which, with a flint summer-house, were removed when the road was widened. At the

same time Lagley lost a high brick wall that was concaved so that occupants of the house could step directly from the garden into their carriages.

An earlier house stood immediately behind this wall, but in 1832 a much larger mansion was built farther back by Mr. W. A. Duncombe, whose initials, with the date, appear on the facade.

The Duncombe family lived there for several generations, to be followed by Mrs. Douglas, who often allowed fetes to be held in the spacious garden, which extended to the old footpath which ran from Shrublands Road to Durrants Lane.

References to Lagley (sometimes spelt Laglie) appear in early 17th century documents, and further research may produce more information about the house and its occupants.



**HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
BUILDING SOCIETY**

**makes
your money
make
more money**

43 Marlowses

Hemel Hempstead

Berkhamsted Agents:

**WESTERN INSURANCE
SERVICES LTD.**

No. 1 LOWER KINGS ROAD,
BERKHAMSTED HP4 2AE
TEL: 5877