

BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



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In and around Berkhamsted by 'Townsmen'

More time for reading

Now that the novelty of colour television is wearing off, there is no longer a decline in the number of books borrowed from the local branch of the County Library. The latest report shows that in six months 154,344 books were issued compared with 150,289 in the same period of the previous year. Incidentally, the number of books in stock is now nearly 36,000.

Impressive figures, aren't they? Moreover, it is obvious that much greater use is being made of books that are not borrowed — in other words, those in the reference library. Recent additions include the very latest edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica as well as another new encyclopaedia and other costly works of reference. I am one of those people who always look at the price, even if the book costs me nothing!

Many people, by the way, are still unaware that the library has a complete set of telephone directories as well as the new metric Ordnance Survey maps. And I am sorry to add that some hon. secretaries still do not enter forthcoming events in the diary which, if fully used, would reduce the risk of a variety of meetings all taking place at the same time.

Still waiting

Periodically I peep into the Civic Centre, hoping to see that a start has been made on the conversion of the Council Chamber into a hall more suitable for public meetings than it is at the present time. Nothing to report so far, I am sorry to say. In fact, I find it rather depressing to enter what was once a busy centre of local affairs. The present small staff could not be more obliging, but it is distinctly off-putting to be greeted by a blackboard announcing that one can go so far and no farther.

Presumably the Council Chamber, after conversion, will be given a new name. Remembering some very lengthy meetings, I wonder if Gabble Hall would be an acceptable name? Perhaps not; it's too close in sound and spelling to Gable Hall, anyway!

Sign of the times

I have no time for people who fool about with signposts, turning them round so that people are literally misguided. But I had to smile on seeing a sign at the top of Cross Oak Road pointing to Chesham Ale. I doubt whether the V of Vale fell off without human assistance.

As dry as a Bourne

After a very wet autumn it is not surprising that there is more water in the Castle Moats than I have seen for a very long time. As the Bulbourne also shows more signs of life, I wandered off to Bottom Farm to see if the Bourne Gutter, our intermittent woewater, was flowing once more. But the bed was still as dry as it has been ever since the last flow at Easter, 1969.

Incidentally, the old stone horse trough outside the Goat Inn is once more full of water. I do not know the age of the trough, but it appears in some Victorian photographs. Those were the days when it not only refreshed horses but refilled the boilers of traction engines!

Highfield Road Chapel

In a recent reference to the old, short-lived Wesleyan Chapel in Highfield Road, I forgot to say that in 1855 it was recommended for conversion into a pub. An advertisement in the very first issue of the St. Albans Times described it as "a substantial modern brick-built, slated, lofty and well-lighted building at present used as a Wesleyan Chapel, but capable of easy conversion either into a public house or several cottages... especially worthy of the attention of brewers, builders and others." In fact, the chapel was sold by auction at the King's Arms Inn in July, 1855, and converted into two cottages.

The same newspaper reported that three labourers were found guilty of stealing one duck at Great Gaddesden. Two of the men were sent to prison for six weeks and the third for one month.

Dangerous paths

In Greenway, I met a very cross householder. Not for the first time someone had driven a heavy vehicle over the grass verge of the footpath, causing yet another dirty, muddy depression. Perhaps the worst footpath of all, if it can be called a footpath, is the one on the east side of the top part of Cross Oak Road. This busy road is often treated as a speedway and no walker likes to walk on the road, but the

alternative is to skip and slither along a muddy, chewed up and badly dented sidewalk which should have been put in good order years ago.

CHRISTIAN AID

A concert by Berkhamstead Welsh Choir enabled £100 to be raised for Christian Aid. Thanks are due to Rev. A. Llewellyn Jones and the choir. Austerity lunch, 1st December, raised £44: 1974 total over £1,000.

STAMPS

Over 11,000 used postage stamps have already been deposited in the box on St. Peter's bookstall for the Leprosy Mission and "Feed the Minds". Thank you everybody: please go on collecting.



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