

BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



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In Celebration

Now that the Queen's Silver Jubilee is only a few months ahead, many people are asking how Berkhamsted celebrated previous Royal occasions.

For centuries our bellringers have saluted coronations and jubilees. As long ago as 1660 we had a primitive form of fireworks, on which the parish spent 15s. 2d., to celebrate Charles II's return from exile.

The first mammoth celebration was at the time of George III's golden jubilee. 1,500 poor people were entertained with hot meat, baked and boiled, set on temporary tables in the centre of the town. A band played, the bells were rung, and if the highway was closed, nobody objected! As the population was under 2,000, there was obviously a very high proportion of poor people.

How I wish we had a photograph of a rather special cruise at the time of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee. Sunnyside was then in the parish of Northchurch, and children under ten and men and women over fifty were conveyed to Billet Lane by horse-drawn boat, accompanied by Tring Brass Band. Young and old disembarked and made their way to Durrants Farm, where 2,000 Northchurch people were given a meal in a meadow. A wagon-load of meat was consumed. Later on, five or six

women entered for a race, the prize being a pig. But the poor creature escaped, and 500 people then joined in the race!

Royal Visit

The last jubilee was celebrated in 1935, a truly "Royal" year for Berkhamsted. A month or so after the street decorations were taken down, the Prince of Wales (afterwards Edward VIII and Duke of Windsor) spent several hours in Berkhamsted, visiting schools and then the Castle grounds. There were crowds, crowds everywhere. I remember how bored the Prince looked as he walked through Butts Meadow on the way to the School for Girls.

The George V Silver Jubilee was celebrated in the traditional way, with lavish street decorations, floodlighting, and a particularly exhausting programme for local bands. They played in the High Stret, for children's sports in Butts Meadow, for a cricket match between the Urban District Council and the Chamber of Trade, and finally headed the big parade which surged towards the Park for a firework display.

There were gifts for the unemployed, and poor families received vouchers exchangeable for goods. Every child was given a 1935 sixpence and invited to free cinema performances.

Times have changed, and so has the value of money!

Narrow Footpaths

Referring to recent comments on roads that lack footpaths, a reader says he is more concerned with the narrow footpath on the west side of King's Road, from the bus stop to Barclays Bank corner. He cannot understand why this very busy path was not widened when the new Police Station was built and a much wider footpath provided on the east side of the road. On the west side there is scarcely room for two persons to walk abreast, and even then one is almost brushed by lorries, buses and cars which "hug the kerb."

A somewhat similar situation exists at the corner of Cowper Road, where a bollard is forever being knocked down. Why, my friend asks, cannot a footpath be provided beside the almshouse, and the wide path on the opposite side of Cowper Road be reduced in width?

Wrong Number?

Have you noticed that the front page proclaims "Vol. 100", suggesting that the *Review* is now 100 years old? Actually, publications started in July, 1872, but in early years no one bothered about "volumes". To the best of my knowledge publication has never been suspended; the *Review* certainly appeared without interruption throughout the two World Wars.

Hard Winters

Referring to a note in last month's *Review*, Mr. Peter Ashford writes: "I well remember the canal ice-breaker which used to be moored in Gurney's Yard, near the Raven's Lane lock. This had a grab-rail running the length of the boat, and about four men held on to this rail, rocking the boat as it was pulled along by a horse through the ice. In one hard winter the ice was thick enough to walk on and the men at Key's timber yard (now Alsford's) used this as a short cut to work. Apart from the Castle moat the Cross Oak pond (now filled in) was also used for skating."

Monumental Mystery

An inscription in St. Peter's Church was often puzzled me. I refer to the memorial to Mary Isabella, mother of our famous defender of common rights, August Smith. Beneath the life-size kneeling figure carved in white marble

there is an inscription with the date MDCCCXIII. The use of Roman numerals is quite normal, but why are the three Cs engraved the wrong way round?

Was there any reason for this "misprint"? Or was it just ignorance or carelessness? I would like to know.

CHRISTIAN AID

The last austerity lunch for Christian Aid, held in December, raised £35. This brought the total for the year 1976 to £1,812. £240 more than in 1975; a good effort indeed.

On Saturday 5th March from 9.30 a.m. to 12 noon a coffee morning and bring and buy sale is to be held in the Court House. Please support this event generously!

STEWARDSHIP

In November £1084.24 was given by subscribers to the St. Peter's and All Saints Stewardship Fund.



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