

BERKHAMSTED REVIEW

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In and around Berkhamsted

by 'BEORCHAM'

Another Pipeline

No doubt you have seen the great gash that has been made across Berkhamsted Park by excavations for a new water main. This runs very close to the gas pipeline of 1971, a major excavation which exposed a small portion of a Roman wall under the footpath which runs from Brownlow Road to Well Farm and the Common.

Naturally, our archaeologists were looking out for more relics of the past, but nothing was found near the Roman site. Higher up the hill, however, some pottery, probably Iron Age, was found.

The discovery of Roman bricks some six years ago did more than anything else to arouse interest in starting what is now a very active Archaeological Society. Like the Local History Society, it would welcome the use of a room or rooms for a permanent exhibition of local by-gones.

Water—and Watercress

At the time of writing there is some water in the outer moat of the Castle, and the River Bulbourne is flowing vigorously for the first time for many months. Whether the Bourne Gutter will make one of its rare appearances remains to be seen; I am rather fond of the "woewater" which gave Bourne End its name!

But it seems that our once flourishing watercress industry has come to a full stop. Many years ago the beds at Dudswell and Northchurch were abandoned, and a similar fate has overtaken the cressbeds in Berkhamsted.

Older residents recall seeing men gathering cress in beds which extended as far as Lower King's Road. There was also a large cressbed on the west side of Brownlow Road, but it was filled in (largely with soil from the Post Office site) many years ago. Very coarse watercress, unfit for human consumption, formerly grew in the Castle moats and was said to have been sent to Manchester for use in a dyeworks.

By the way, the Northchurch Society, never at a loss for bright ideas, recently invited Mr. J. Knowles, of Broadway Farm, to give a talk on the watercress industry. A most enjoyable evening!

Family Bibles

I have just been shown a leather-bound Bible of great local interest. It is inscribed "George Margrave; gift from Bourne's Charity School, Great Berkhamsted, Herts, January 4th, 1819."

I, too, received a "Bourne" Bible—that it is of much more recent date!

I wonder if any reader has an older family Bible than the one dated 1819?

Casting a Spell

A brand new signpost at the Little Heath crossroads points the way to "Berkhamstead," with an extra a. Why this reversion to an obsolete spelling? A much older signpost, only 50 yards or so away, correctly uses the standard version.

Incidentally, a short time ago I received a letter addressed to "Berkham Step." It almost made me jump! And a friend tells me that he has seen an envelope with the spelling "Berkinsted." Instead of hamsted, I suppose.

Our Railway Station

I was pleased to hear words of praise for our railway station from Mr. Michael Tollit, who recently gave a lecture entitled "An Architect Looks at Berkhamsted."

Most of us are in too great a hurry to catch a train to stand and stare, especially if we use Lower King's Road. Two sharp turns left and we are in the booking hall.

But what an excellent view if we approach the station from Castle Street or Station Road. The long, high railway wall leads the eye to the bridge and a rather fine arcade which was built in the 1870s to support the eastern end of Platform One.

The booking hall is one of the better specimens of Victorian railway architecture, despite the loss of a huge glass and iron canopy which was removed for safety's sake during the 1939-45 War. The interior, however, was much improved when a ceiling-high, semi-circular wooden screen was removed some years ago. Now the hall is much more spacious than it was when we paid half-a-crown for a day return ticket to Euston, or only 1s. 4½d. if we were up early enough to qualify for a workman's ticket.

Cyclists in Costume

References in last month's *Review* to bygone jubilee celebrations prompted a Hertford reader to send me a cutting from a *Hertfordshire Mercury* of 1897. Berkhamsted was praised for its "exceptional demonstrations of loyalty as manifested by lavish decorations, illuminations, etc. . . A torchlight procession by numerous cyclists in costumes, headed by three horsemen and the secretary, Mr. Thomas, in a victoria, and two bands of music, paraded the

streets, and visitors from all the countryside thronged the streets till a late hour."

I expect you know that a victoria, without a capital V, was a four-wheeled carriage. I am reminded of a time, many years ago, when a lady living at Little Gaddesden asked two boys if they had seen a fly in the High Street. The lads burst out laughing, not knowing that the fly in question was a light horse-drawn vehicle.

Deer Soup

The following appeared in Potten End Parish Magazine for March, 1897: "In consequence of the severe weather, the usual kind gift of a Doe was received from Ashridge, at the Vicarage, and on February 8th, 10th and 11th, 270 pints of excellent soup were made there and distributed to all the families residing in Potten End."



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