

# BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



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## In and around Berkhamsted

by 'BEORCHAM'

### Brighter Berkhamsted

Having grumbled on several occasions about neglected buildings, I must now give credit where it is due. Only a few weeks ago Monk's House, near the Post Office, was anything but a joy to behold. It was smothered with posters and utterly uncared-for. But now it is looking its best, and the new owner deserves the town's thanks for saving and restoring what is now one of Berkhamsted's most attractive houses.

And what a difference some paint has made to the Town Hall! This tonic treatment was given by volunteers in time for the Silver Jubilee, and about the same time some modest improvements were made to the buildings at the corner of Prince Edward Street.

Unfortunately, the Town Centre is still marred by untidy posters plastered over a new shop which has yet to be occupied.

### A Plaque for No. 222?

Speaking of High Street properties, No. 222 seems to be arousing even more interest than it did before the National Westminster Bank moved out some months ago. This is because there is now no name or sign on the frontage; visitors wonder whether it is a very elegant private house, and some correctly guess that it was formerly a school. Certainly it is one of the most eye-catching buildings in the town.

I hope that in due course a plaque will be placed on No. 222, stating that it was built for

the Bourne Charity School and at a later date was the first home of Berkhamsted School for Girls.

### Taking Steps

Referring to some recent comments of mine on the towpath, a reader asks why, at rather rare intervals, one sees ramps descending from the towpath to the bed of the canal. Two examples may be seen between the Cow Roast and the hamlet of Bulbourne.

The steps were provided where the canal bank was very steep, for the use of barge horses if they fell into the deep water. The horse would be coaxed along the canal to the nearest ramp for an easy ascent to the towpath.

### Hertfordshire Hedgehogs

"Hertfordshire's disappearing hedgehogs" was the *Radio Times*' caption to a photograph of one of those prickly creatures which still seem to be plentiful in and around Berkhamsted. We often see them in our gardens and occasionally trip over one in the dark. Unfortunately they are flea-infested and not such strokable creatures as cats and dogs!

It may not be widely known that, in years gone by, people living in our county were known as "ertfordshire 'edge'ogs", a rather less pleasant nickname than, say, Wiltshire Moonrakers. Maybe some of our rough forebears were rather prickly, but surely not less hygienic than the people of other counties!

Incidentally, we are about to have a new set of 9p stamps which show a hare, a red squirrel, an otter, a badger, and a hedgehog. A Hertfordshire one, perhaps?

### Two Former Surveyors

A short time ago I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. John Hadfield, of Ocean Falls, British Columbia. He is a grandson of Mr. J. R. Hadfield, for many years surveyor to the Urban District Council and architect of our Civic Centre.

I was able to tell John that his grandfather was selected from 116 applicants for the post in 1914, at a salary of £250 per annum.

Oddly enough, I recently received an enquiry from Mr. Frank Adey, nephew of Mr. E. H. Adey, the Urban District Council's first surveyor (1898-1914). His starting salary was about £100 a year! My correspondent, who lives near Cheltenham, tells me that his first recollection of Berkhamsted was way back in 1907, when his father had an unpleasant mishap. The brakes of his cycle failed and he was hurled through a hedge.

### The Athletic Meeting

A reader recently brought along a huge poster, printed by Loosley, for the Fifteenth Annual Athletic Meeting held in the Castle Grounds on Whit Monday, 1902. For this great event, which attracted thousands of people, cheap railway tickets were issued at all stations between Euston and Bletchley. Admission prices were 1s. for adults, 6d. for children; half price after 6 p.m. Top prize for the athletic events was £7, a very fine reward at a time when many families had to live on less than £1 a week. When the athletic meeting was over, entertainment was provided by the Royal Clown Cricketers and the Imperial Minstrels. And, of course, there was dancing on the lawn, and fireworks.

### Ancient Bowling Green

I have just been shown a document of 1693, concerning "that messuage or Inn situate in Berkhamsted St. Peter commonly called or known by the name or signe of the Swan." Of especial interest is a reference to "that Bowling Greene behind the same messuage or Inn."

It is rare to find a reference to sports of any kind in old documents, but after archery bowls was our oldest outdoor pastime, and sometimes suppressed because it interfered with archery. The bowling green behind the Swan could not

have been very far from a corner of Butts Meadow which was once earmarked for use as a bowling green, but this option was never taken up.

### Hertfordshire Landscape

Next month I hope to say something about a new book entitled "The Hertfordshire Landscape". It is by Mr. Lionel Munby, who has given two courses of lectures in Berkhamsted as well as occasional lectures to the Local History Society. But his interest is county-wide, and many village histories have been produced as a result of his enthusiasm.

### THE BIBLE IN MISSION

The British and Foreign Bible Society invite you to hear Rev. Tom Houston talk on "The Bible in Mission" on Friday, October 28th at 8 p.m. in Kings Road Evangelical Church. Mr. Houston is BFBS Communications Director.



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