



BERKHAMSTED REVIEW

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In and around Berkhamsted

by 'BEORCHAM'

The Town's Halls

The Nineteen-seventies could go down in local history as the Decade of Lost Halls. The Town Hall and Sessions Hall have been closed for nearly eight years, St. Peter's Hall has just been sold, and we have also lost the Methodist Hall, Congregational Hall and the old All Saints' Hall.

Of course, we have a restored Court House which is to be extended, and some useful changes are promised at All Saints'. But the town still lacks a large hall which would justify the promotion of concerts, plays, celebrity lectures, exhibitions and other activities which are viable only if they attract reasonably large audiences.

More and more use is made of the Civic Centre, but what a pity the enlargement of the former Council Chamber hasn't been given precedence over some very expensive internal alterations.

A Shootersway Railway!

I am grateful to Mr. F. G. Cockman, author of a new book entitled "The Railways of Hertfordshire", for information about the Tring and Reigate Railway, which was to climb a gradient of 1 in 140 for two miles to Northchurch before heading for Chesham, Beaconsfield, Slough and other towns to Reigate, a distance of 46 miles.

Presumably the line would have accompanied, more or less, the western end of Shootersway before entering Buckinghamshire. But the

Company failed to attract sufficient capital in 1845, and so we were spared yet another Beeching closure a century or more later.

Tring was to have been the terminus of several other cross-country lines, and as late as 1887 it was planned to provide a steam tramway from Tring Station to Aylesbury. At the same time a tramway was proposed from Hemel Hempstead to Chesham, via Bourne End, with a branch from Berkhamsted and Northchurch, but the rails were never laid.

I cordially recommend Mr. Cockman's book, which contains some splendid photographs of local interest taken by our famous author of railway books, Mr. H. C. Casserley.

New Versions

A reader has shown me a letter addressed to her at Truvelen Way, Boric Hamstead. I assured her that Trevelyan Way is not down the salt mines!

Incidentally, *Paris-Match* recently printed a picture of General de Gaulle's war-time home near the entrance to Ashridge Park. The name of our town was spelt Berkhamsted. Still, mistakes occur in parish as well as in Paris magazines.

Gravel Path

If you do not use Gravel Path very often, you may not know that it has sprouted a new branch road, directly opposite Byways.

An interesting fact is that Gravel Path was the first road on the north side of the railway to

be lined with houses. The first few houses were built in late Victorian times; since then there has been much in-filling. Meadway was started in the late 1920s, and in more recent times many houses have been built on the old Millfield estate.

With successive developments here and in the Park, Dell Field and Tunnel Field, we now have many hundreds of houses on the north side of the railway. But unlike the numerous side streets on the south side of the High Street, there are very few road links with houses on the other side of the town.

People and Places

What a good idea to install a plaque in the Rex Cinema to recall the fact that its predecessor, Egerton House, was often visited by J. M. Barrie when it was the home of the Llewelyn Davies family from 1904-7. The West End cast of Barrie's play, "Peter Pan", came to the house to give a special performance for young Michael Llewelyn Davies, who was too ill to be taken to London to see the play.

I understand that the Britannia Building Society is also providing a reminder of the history of its premises, originally the Bourne Charity School, then the first home of Berkhamsted School for Girls, and until recent times a bank. How apt that the initial B on the weathervane stands for Bourne, Bank, and now Britannia!

Perhaps Weatherheads will now proclaim the news that their shop was once the Five Bells Inn. And perhaps the Midland Bank will provide a reminder that it stands on the site of the old Red Lion. Another building worthy of a plaque is No. 107 High Street, once the home of Clementine Hozier, who married Winston Churchill.

Over to Freezeden

A reader tells me that occasionally he hears old people call Frithsden "Freezeden". Is this, he asks, because the valley seems to be cooler than other places in the district?

The name Frithsden means the valley of the Frith, as the wooded part of the Common was known in early times. However, in old maps the hamlet is spelt Fresden, and it was pronounced that way for generations.

I have often found the valley refreshingly cool even on a hot day, and during a recent walk

I noticed that snow and ice survived the thaw much longer than elsewhere.

Henry Nash

I wonder if anyone has a photograph of Henry Nash, author of "Reminiscences of Berkhamsted"? I would like to include a portrait of the town's "Grand Old Man" in a publication I have in mind.

A portrait in oils, formerly in the reading room of the Berkhamsted Institute, is now in a committee room at the Civic Centre, but I doubt whether it would reproduce satisfactorily.

STEWARDSHIP

The amount contributed to the St. Peters and All Saints stewardship fund in December 1978 was £1,435.97.



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