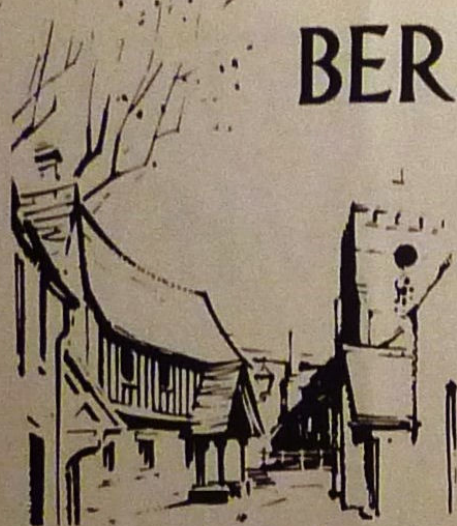


BERKHAMSTED REVIEW



In and around Berkhamsted by 'BEORCHAM'

The Town Hall

With the new trustees managing the Town Hall, very many Berkhamstedians hope that they will be able to meet what is admittedly a very difficult challenge. It is no use crying over the wasted years when the various halls and rooms were empty and the subject of much acrimonious talk. A notice calling residents to a public meeting on 10th July says that there is a bright future ahead, and I sincerely hope that this is not an over-enthusiastic forecast.

The original building (Town Hall and Market House, but not the Sessions Hall, a later addition) cost £3,291, and I have heard it said that today such a building would cost half a million pounds. Certainly the site is worth more than £825, the price paid for it in the 1850s.

Even then there was much argument about the site and the building. Some people thought the Town Hall should have been erected on the site of the old market house, which stood in front of what is now Tesco's store. Another site suggested was on the opposite side of the street, next door to the King's Arms Hotel.

Then, as now, many people had different ideas. But now we can make a fresh start, and I hope that before long one or two halls or rooms will be renovated for the benefit of the people of this hall-starved town.

"The Human Factor"

What a stir was caused when scenes for "The Human Factor" were filmed in and around

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Berkhamsted! Castle Hill hadn't been so busy since the siege of 1216. In the High Street, motorists stopped and stared, children asked film stars for autographs, and an elderly man asked if we were having a sequel to "Songs of Praise". At the railway station, passengers wondered whether they were in Hollywood.

Certain business premises were more or less commandeered for a few short scenes, and knowing little about the film industry I marvelled at the large number of actors and technicians required for even the briefest of scenes. The repetition would have driven me to distraction. But Otto Preminger, the director and producer, is a perfectionist, and no one was in any doubt as to who was in charge! I had one or two chats with him, and it was clear that Berkhamsted had come up to his very high expectations.

The film, he said, should be in the cinemas by Christmas. Meanwhile, there is much more filming to be done in England and Africa.

The Bourne Gutter

The Bulbourne's fickle tributary, the Bourne Gutter — said to flow only in times of war or rumours of war — was in full spate when I strolled down to Bottom Farm the other day. It was my intention to continue the walk up the Crinkle-Crinkle towards Whelpley Hill, but one needed waders to cross the stream and its muddy approaches. In years gone by one could clamber along a sturdy fence and stay dry-shod,

but the fence collapsed some time ago and now there is no easy crossing from Hertfordshire to Buckinghamshire at Bottom Farm.

The Bourne Gutter (an ugly name for a pleasant if very intermittent stream) determines the county boundary for a mile or two. Perhaps the two counties will set up a joint committee to decide whether to erect a new fence or provide stepping stones!

Lake District

Speaking of our waterways, I hope that you have walked down St. John's Well Lane to see the wide expanse of water where the late Mr. Dennis Bedford grew excellent watercress. Already we have a hint of a lake which, by skilful landscaping, could be a very pleasant feature of the town. As for the Bulbourne, now in full spate, cleaning-up operations between St. John's Well Lane and Lower King's Road will never succeed while rubbish escapes from those huge, over-filled skips in the car park.

Anyway, the Dacorum Leisure Committee is interested in improving the canal and its surroundings, and perhaps the Bulbourne will have the sort of beauty treatment that was given to the Gade twenty or so years ago.

The Cowper Museum

A short time ago I referred to the Cowper and Newton Museum at Olney, Bucks, and on a lovely June day I was one of 36 members of the Local History Society who enjoyed seeing the charming old house where William Cowper lived for many years.

We had been warned that at Olney everyone pronounces the name "Cooper", but the local historian who took us on a tour of the house and garden pronounces the name as it is spelt, as do many of the townsfolk of Olney.

A reminder of William's early years in Berkhamsted is a small piece of red cloth from the cloak the poet wore when he was taken to school by Robin, his father's gardener. This school is believed to have been the east end of Sharland's store, which, at the back, still has some ancient features. One of William's poems mentions his being "wrapp'd in scarlet mantel warm and velvet cap."

There are many hundreds of interesting things to see in the Olney museum, and for good measure the town has a large number of pleasant old houses.

Barrie and Berkhamsted

A newly published book, "J. M. Barrie and the Lost Boys", by Andrew Birkin (Constable, £6.95) contains several references to Egerton House, which formerly occupied the site of the Rex Cinema.

As was recalled when the "Peter Pan" plaque was unveiled at the cinema a few months ago, the famous dramatist asked members of the original West End cast to give a special performance at Egerton House when one of the Llewelyn Davies boys was ill. It was news to me that Barrie went to the expense of having a programme printed specially for the performance "in Michael's nursery". Little Michael looked glum throughout the whole performance and never smiled once! The date of the performance was 20th February, 1906, and the arrival and departure of the actors and props in motor cars — a rare sight at that time — was the talk of the town.

Incidentally, I am delighted to know that a plaque is to be placed on the house where Clementine Hozier, who married Winston Churchill, lived for a few years. This house is only a few doors from the Rex Cinema, and I hope to say more about it in next month's *Review*.

WORKER WANTED

The West Herts Church Council for Social Work needs to recruit a Christian worker. Among his or her duties will be an interesting new project involving the organisation of "caring groups" within the Berkhamsted Deanery.

The salary will be as for the basic grade for a parish worker or for a similar qualification. The hours of work are a minimum of 16 hours, with possibly more. A car is necessary but mileage will be payable at County Council rates. Experience of working with clergy, voluntary groups and the social services is important. Further details may be obtained from Mrs. M. Bowden, 1 Chalet Close (Berk. 6134) or from the Rev. J. Barrall, 436 Warner's End Road, Hemel Hempstead (Hemel Hempstead 51897).

REVIEW CONTRIBUTIONS

Readers are cordially invited to contribute to the *Review*, your magazine. Please let the Editor have your contributions by 7th July at 9 Shrublands Road or on Berkhamsted 2723.