

# IN AND AROUND BERKHAMSTED

By "Beorcham"

## Recent Changes

Berkhamsted keeps on changing. At the time of writing, Lagley, one of our largest old houses, is being demolished. With an interesting new frontage the former Methodist Church is recognisable, and the shabby old house opposite the Outspan building is now spic and span. Elsewhere builders are busy; for instance, a sizeable housing development may be seen near the top of Gravel Path, opposite Byways. A joker asks if it will be called Triways!

Then there is the Market House, looking quite smart with newly-painted green doors. What a pity the whole Town Hall complex isn't in as good a state as the front portion. The new trustees deserve the support of the whole town.

Incidentally, I have just discovered that the Town Hall architect, Edward Buckton Lamb, designed the church and vicarage at Prestwood, near Great Missenden. Well worth seeing if you are out that way, though Nikolaus Pevsner, in his book on Buckinghamshire, describes certain features of the church as odd, very odd, and even odder!

## Tall (and Short) Story

A friend who lives many thousands of miles away still has happy memories of his schooldays in Berkhamsted during and after the first World War.

He recollects a very tall lady calling at a china shop kept by a very short man. He ran to the back

of the shop, brought a large wickerwork crate, jumped on top of it and said, "And now, madam, we can talk to each other at the same level".

Not surprisingly, the lady walked out of the shop. And that was how a tactless retailer lost the sale of some china for Berkhamsted School House. The annoyed customer was Mrs. Greene, wife of the Headmaster and mother of Graham Greene and other distinguished sons.

My friend also recalls seeing a famous but absent minded author hurriedly walking up Kitsbury Road with a bath towel round his neck. He was going home to change it for a scarf.

## Compare our Prices!

I have been shown a grocer's bill, dated November 1939, for a family living in Chestnut Drive. There are 18 items, comprising 6 lbs. sugar, 1 lb. tea, 1 lb. desiccated coconut, ½ lb. chocolate biscuits, 1 lb. New Zealand butter, 1 lb. margarine, 1 lb. lard, ½ lb. back rashers, 1 tin salmon, 2 tins crab, 2 tins sardines, 2 tins pineapple slices, 2 tins sliced pears, 2 tins fruit salad, 1 packet starch, 4 tablets of soap.

The total cost was 19s. 0¼d. (95p), and on the back of the bill was an instruction to the delivery man - "Put the goods where the coal is." It is only fair that in 1939 the average wage was about £3 a week.

## Village History

Many Review readers have enjoyed visits to Pitstone Green Farm, famous for its ancient windmill (now National Trust property) and a splendid rural museum. As a frequent visitor I am delighted to know that the Pitstone Local History Society has published a book entitled "In Pitstone Green there is a Farm." The history of farming and village life is very well told, and for good measure there are many pictures, maps, etc. The book costs £1.75.

The Ashridge estate once stretched as far as Pitstone, and it is interesting to recall that Nettleden and part of Frithsden were formerly in the very large parish of Pitstone.

By the way, on your next visit to Aldbury, be sure to call at the village shop for a set of folders (20p each) which describe the village and its people 50, 150, 300, 400 and 700 years ago. Miss Margaret Kitson, ex-headmistress of the village school, had children in mind when she presented local history in this entertaining, informative and original way, but people of all ages will learn much from the folders.

## Puzzled Visitor

A visitor tells me that she was puzzled by a brass plate (near the pulpit in St. Peter's Church) inscribed; "In affectionate remembrance of her husband, Sophia Jane Hutchinson caused this wall to be decorated, AD 1874."

Older parishioners will not need to be reminded that this refers to the huge fresco of the Ascension which formerly filled the west face of the tower wall. This memorial to the Rev. J. Hutchinson,

rector from 1851-71, was obliterated in the 1960 restoration, but this is no reason why the brass plate should be removed.

## Writing on the Wall

Seeing "Foster's No. 2 Malting" in faded lettering on the large building at the corner of Chapel Street, a reader asks where No. 1 Malting was situated. It was in Chesham Road, behind the Swan Hotel, and was part of Foster's Swan Brewery until the business was taken over by Chesham Brewery in 1897.

No 2 Malting has been used by Boy Scouts for some 60 years. The first Berkhamsted troop, with twelve members, met in a decrepit building in Back Lane and moved to Prince Edward Street before finding a permanent home in Chapel Street.

## Weather Forecast

An old fellow stopped me in the High Street the other Saturday evening and said: "It's always a sign of rain when paper from the market is on the other side of the street."

A good reason for not having more than one market day each week!

## Out of Print

Apart from a few copies which may still be in the shops, the "Short History of Berkhamsted" is now out of print. In two editions over 6,000 copies have been sold. High printing costs do not encourage thoughts of a third edition, but after a suitable interval a not-so-short history will be published.



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## BERKHAMSTED LIBRARY

The Library in King's Road provides the following services: cassette recordings of children's stories; children's story-telling sessions - see the notice board for times; recordings of poetry, drama, language courses and classical music; a personal service to housebound readers on request in co-operation with the WRVS, and large-print books for the partially sighted. A photocopier is available for public use at 5p a copy.

The revised opening times are:

Mon: 10.00 - 17.30  
Tues: 10.00 - 20.00  
Wed: CLOSED  
Thurs: 10.00 - 20.00  
Fri: 10.00 - 17.30  
Sat: 09.30 - 17.00

During September the Library will feature a display by the local History Society.

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