

IN AND AROUND BERKHAMSTED

By 'Beorcham'

NOT SO PLAIN

As we sometimes hear comments that the interior of St. Peter's Church is rather plain, I am very pleased that the large board bearing the coat of arms of the first Queen Elizabeth and a rhyming compliment to 'this mighty Queen' has been brought down from the gallery to the west end of the north aisle. Three memorial tablets have also been restored to the rather bare walls at the west end of the church.

One of the tablets is in memory of Mark, Lord Somerville (Baron Somerville of Scotland), who died at Berkhamsted in 1842, aged 57. I cannot recall seeing his name in local documents, but rightly or wrongly I link him with a tombstone in the churchyard with a large S but no other inscription. It is at the north-west corner of the church, behind the railing at the top of the four steps from Back Lane. A few yards away, on the opposite side of the path, there is a tombstone to the memory of John Cook, 'many years butler at Haresfoot, 1837, 60 years of age'. Do you ever stop to read these inscriptions?

Returning to the newly replaced memorials in the church, one is to the memory of an airman killed in the first World War. Another memorial is to George Pocock and Archibald Osborne, privates in the Berkhamsted Company of the Bedfordshire Regiment, who volunteered for active service and 'gave their lives for the Empire' in the war in South Africa, 1899-1902. This bronze memorial on a marble slab merits close inspection; you will see a horse-drawn ambulance with a wounded soldier on a stretcher and another on the ground. Appropriately, this tablet has been placed directly below another memorial to local men who lost their lives in the Boer War.

NEWS FROM AFRICA

Recently I was pleasantly surprised to receive a letter from the African republic of Zaire. The writer, Simon Houghton, was at Berkhamsted School until a few years ago, and he continued his studies at Durham. Now he is working in the tropics with the Baptist Missionary Society. 'I am thankful that Anglicans can work so freely under the Baptists,' he writes. 'Their care and provision for all those who work under them show immense thought and practicality.'

Simon goes on to say that trading occupies the time of many of the people, whether it be fish, fruit, *objects d'art* or cigarettes. Even the children filled their time in the same way.

Polio was much in evidence; few enjoyed the luxury of a wheel-chair.

Simon is a grandson of a former Berkhamsted doctor and a grand-nephew of Frank Laffitte, the internationally famous pianist who died a short time ago.

TOWN HALL ARCHITECT

In an excellent talk to the Citizens' Association, Mr. Michael Tollit showed many slides of churches and other buildings designed by the architect of Berkhamsted Town Hall, Edward Buckton Lamb. He was a very busy man whose designs appealed to Disraeli, Lady Alford of Ashridge, and other famous Victorians, but for reasons we do not know he died penniless. However, two writers are said to be working on biographies of Lamb, so they may supply the answer.

By the way, Mr. Tollit's talk followed the annual general meeting of the Citizens' Association, which meant that he did not start until nearly 10 p.m. Let this be a lesson to societies which have double-feature programmes. One man who went to the meeting and did not arrive home until after 11 p.m. was greeted by an anxious family who wondered if he had been mugged.

WORLDWIDE FAME

Here is an interesting sequel to a recent comment of mine on the world-wide fame of Cooper's Sheep Dip. A reader writes: 'Until I was eleven years old I was brought up in a 'dorp' (small village) in the middle of the Great Karoo, in what was then called the Cape Colony, where my father was the district surgeon.

'The farms in the district were enormous and were separated by wire fences with gates wherever roads crossed them. These had to be opened and firmly shut again by any traffic

or road users. On practically every gate there was a cast iron plate, on which was inscribed 'Mak toe de hek en verbraken Cooper's Dip', which, being translated, meant 'Shut the gate and use Cooper's Dip'. I was therefore familiar with Cooper's nearly 80 years ago, long before I had any idea that one day I should live in its home town and get to know the family.'

LOCAL CRITICS

I am always pleased to meet newcomers, most of whom are very pleased with the town and its surroundings.

But that is not an unanimous verdict. A fairly new resident complained that Berkhamsted was neither a village nor a town, and was hoping to move to a village near Luton. A few days later I met an old friend who was born in Berkhamsted 70 years ago, spent all his life here, served on the Urban Council and recently removed to Tring, which he praised for its market and above all the fresh air in Tring High Street, thanks to the Motorway.

Perhaps he will come back if and when we have a by-pass?

THE TOWN'S NAME

'When was the present spelling of Berkhamsted officially adopted?' was a question fired at me the other day.

It is quite impossible to give a date; even today we still have several versions, with or without 'Great'. John Cobb, our Victorian rector and local historian, listed 50 different spellings in his 'History of Berkhamsted', published in 1855. In the second edition (1883) he added the footnote: 'A very common way, Berkhamstead, is not included in the above list. The Railway Company, the Post Office and all the parish authorities have now adopted the spelling Berkhamsted.'

However, the newly-formed Great

Don't take risks with insurance

Consult a

BIBA

Insurance Broker

WESTERN INSURANCE SERVICES LTD.

The Insurance Advice Centre

No. 1 Lower Kings Road, Berkhamsted HP4 2AE

Tel: 5877

(By the traffic lights)

A member of the British Insurance Brokers Association
Motor, Household, Fire, Life and all Commercial Insurances arranged.

Local Agents for **HEMEL HEMPSTEAD BUILDING SOCIETY**

IVER K. COOLEY Ltd.

Building Contractors

Alterations, Extensions and
General Maintenance
Specialists in Carpentry and Joinery

31 Lombardy Drive
Berkhamsted, Herts
HP4 2LQ
Telephone 4500

IN AND AROUND BERKHAMSTED

By 'Beorcham' (continued)

Berkhampstead Urban District in 1898 used that spelling until 1937.

A few weeks ago, in the caption to a photograph of the Advanced Passenger Train streaking through our station, the *Standard* used the spelling Berkhampstead, but an attempt was made to eliminate the p and the second a after the stereo plate was cast. Like most hasty corrections, it was a bit of a mess!

'DIE FLEDERMAUS'

The Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society's production of 'Die Fledermaus' was surely the best we have had for many, many years. But what a shame that the hall in the Civic Centre had space for only nine rows of seats. There must have been half as many people on the stage or backstage as there were in the auditorium.

I hope that many hundreds of people have signed a petition calling for the long-promised extension of the hall. As the Society states, it is lamentable that the town does not have

a suitable building in which to stage musical or dramatic performances of any size.

VICTORIAN RELICS

Recently I mentioned Queen Victoria's gift of chocolates to all British soldiers serving in the Boer War. A Berkhamsted soldier sent the chocolates home to his parents, and Queen Victoria asked to see how the contents had fared after such a journey.

Two readers have brought along empty tins inscribed 'I wish you a happy New Year, Victoria'. Over 80 years old, and greatly treasured by their present owners.

HERTFORDSHIRE HEDGEHOGS

Hedgehogs have been in the news recently. An enthusiast is forming a British Hedgehog Preservation Society, and I am reminded that in years gone by people living in our county were known as 'Arfersheer Edgeogs', probably because they were thought to be rather prickly in their dealings with others.
No comment!