

IN AND AROUND BERKHAMSTED

By 'Beorcham'

THE TOWN HALL CLOCK

At the time of writing, six days after losing an hour's sleep for Summer Time, the Town Hall clock was still an hour behind every other clock and watch in the town. Earlier this year it stopped for an even longer period, creating a nasty impression that Berkhamsted is neglectful and behind the times in more ways than one.

I cannot recall long stoppages when this 80-odd years old clock was wound by hand, but now we have to wait day after day for someone to restart the clock after a power cut. The Town Council, I understand, is seeking new equipment, but most of all we want someone on the spot to ensure that any stoppage is a very short one.

'A memento of Thomas Reid' appears on both sides of the clock bracket, and I am often asked why he is so honoured. Well, he was a life-long supporter of the town's good causes, a great worker for the Baptist Church, a founder of the Mechanics' Institute, and active in many other fields. He owned a timber yard in Holliday Street, and his steam engine drove not only his circular saw but also a neighbour's press on which the *Berkhamsted Times* was printed. He built and lived at The Gables in Gravel Path, which bears his initials and the date 1888. It was one of the first houses built on the north side of the railway.

THOMAS BOURNE'S CHARITY

It was appropriate to mark the tenth anniversary of the Thomas Bourne School by staging a small exhibition of documents from the archives of the Bourne Charity School, founded in 1737. It was also appropriate for the documents to be exhibited in the office of the Britannia Building Society, which has respected the historic interest of the old schoolhouse, which was also the first home of the Berkhamsted Girls' Grammar School, as it was originally called.

One of the exhibits was an account for making up 40 shirts at one shilling each, and 20 chemises at sixpence each. That was in 1876, a year after the Bourne scholars were transferred to the National School at the Court House.

Incidentally a friend recently showed me an exercise book of one of his ancestors, Humphrey Tarbox, who was at the Bourne School in 1838. What splendid writing! It is equal to the copperplate of a very skilled solicitor's clerk.

SAYER AND SALTER

As the Sayer almshouses will be 300 years old in two years' time, it may not be too early to be thinking of some suitable commemoration. Generations of Berkhamstedians have

seen the inscription which proclaims 'The gift of John Sayer, Esq. 1684', and it is sad that in last month's *Review* the almshouses were attributed to John Salter.

However, only a stone's throw from the almshouses, land was bequeathed to the parish by Edward Salter, who almost certainly would have known John Sayer. Three acres in the vicinity of what is now Park View Road contained an ancient house which for many years was the town's workhouse. It degenerated into a wretched hovel which was pulled down in the early 1830s, to be followed a few years later by the town's first elementary school in 1834. In the meantime a new workhouse was built on the west side of Kitsbury Road, and this was pulled down and replaced by shops and houses in the 1930s.

Edward Salter also left other properties in the parishes of Berkhamsted and Northchurch, specifying in his will that the rents were to be 'disposed of among the industrious and laborious poor'.

KINGS ROAD

A reader tells me that she was surprised and rather angry to receive a letter addressed to her in Upper Kings Road. The name is Kings Road, it is only the extension to the railway station (Lower Kings Road) which requires a prefix.

In the 17th century Kings Road was called Cokes Lane, after a family name Cocks, and when an old house at the High Street corner was used as a Bridewell (a gaol or house of correction) it was known as Bridewell Lane. I cannot trace the date when the name was changed to Kings Road; presumably it was chosen because it is the way to Kingshill.

AN AMERICAN CALLER

Recently I had the pleasure of meeting Mr Paul Whately, of Sterling, Virginia, U.S.A. He was drawn to Berkhamsted by the know-

ledge that the glass of the great west window of St. Peter's Church was donated by Thomas Whately, brother of George Frederick Whately, Paul's great great grandfather.

The two brothers were surgeons and lived in Berkhamsted, but it is Thomas who is best known to local historians. He came to Berkhamsted soon after the railway was opened in 1837 and lived in a house opposite the parish church until he moved to Egerton House, the Elizabethan mansion which was pulled down and replaced by the Rex Cinema.

Thomas Whately hoped to restore Berkhamsted's ancient charters, and in his day there was still a chance of reviving the borough status of quite small towns. But his hopes were not fulfilled. Neither did he live to see his new window in the parish church. He died in 1867.

Paul Whately told me that several members of the family were surgeons, and he wonders why so many of George Frederick Whately's sons and daughters went to the colonies and the U.S.A. in the late 1860s.

I was reminded of a visit some twenty years ago of another member of the Whately family, Miss M. Williams, of Joslin, South Australia. She told me that her family had lived in Australia for 76 years, but felt that their roots were in Berkhamsted. The town was very dear to them, and she was distressed to know that Egerton House had been demolished.

THE TOWN'S NAME

Last month's reference to the many spellings of our town's name reminded a reader that a letter printed in *The Times Literary Supplement*, some 30 years ago, sought to prove that Dr. Fry, headmaster of Berkhamsted School from 1887-1910, deserved credit for the general adoption of the current, short spelling.

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By 'Beorcham' (continued)

The correspondent, Mr. W.N. Leak, stated: 'Though I could never find either the reason or the authority, Dr. Fry always insisted vehemently that the correct spelling was Berkhamsted. Being a very pertinacious man he gradually got the local council, the Post Office and Ordnance Survey, and eventually the railway to agree to his spelling. By a somewhat similar pertinacity and correction

of numerous lapses I have finally got the Editor of *The Times* to agree also.'

But Berkhamsted was a popular spelling long before Dr. Fry became a power in the town. And another correspondent to *The Times Literary Supplement* pointed out that Berkhamsted was the spelling in the Pipe Rolls of 1230, preceded in 1156 by Berchamstede.