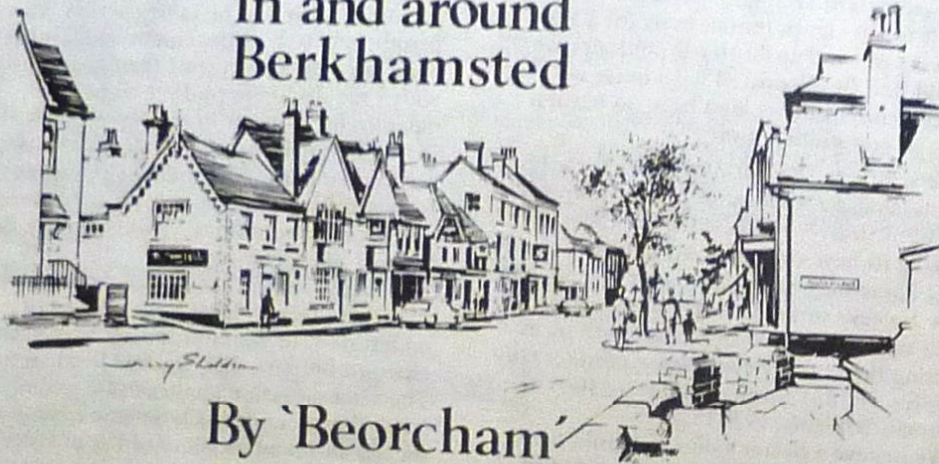


In and around Berkhamsted



By 'Beorcham'

STAG LANE

A newcomer tells me that she is fascinated by the names of some of our roads. She especially likes Three Close Lane, Swing Gate Lane, Cross Oak Road, Doctors Commons Road, and Gilpin's Ride. Certainly these are very rare names, perhaps unique. But we have the usual ration of bird and tree names as well as lots of roads named after local celebrities.

The newly published Berkhamsted Official Guide contains a map with the names of over 200 streets, roads, lanes, avenues, ways, gardens and courts. But no squares or crescents!

I was surprised to see Stag Lane on the map. How many — or how few — have ever heard of it? This very short, so-called lane runs from the High Street to the Bulbourne at Gossoms End, and takes its name from the Stag public-house, which lost its licence a few years after the first World War. The Stag survived as a private house until the 'sixties, when it was pulled down with an accompanying row of cottages.

FAR EAST CALLERS

A short time ago I had the pleasure of meeting a young Japanese couple who had a special reason for including Berkhamsted in their cycling tour of England. The wife was a great admirer of Graham Greene, and wished to see and photograph the novelist's birthplace.

I directed the couple to St. John's, the large school house in Chesham Road, where Graham's father, Charles Greene, was house-master before he was headmaster of Berkhamsted School. Standing high above a tall brick wall, the house is not an easy subject for the camera.

It is interesting that the town's two greatest literary figures were born within 150 yards of each other — William Cowper at the Rectory in 1731, and Graham Greene at St. John's in 1904.

THE BULBOURNE FACTORY

A reader asks if I was exaggerating when stating, in the June Review, that as many as 750 women and girls worked at the Bulbourne Factory in Lower Kings Road between the two World Wars. He points out that 750 was almost 10 per cent of the town's population at that time. All the same, my statement is correct.

The business (manufacturing ladies' wear) was started at the turn of the century by H. G. Hughes, whose workshop on the site of the Outspan building was soon inadequate. In 1902 Hughes, Hawkins & Co. moved to a brand new factory in Lower Kings Road, and Loosley's Directory for 1903 states: 'It is capable of holding 300 hands, and about that number of workpeople, chiefly girls, are now employed there. The new industry has made a difference in the supply of girls for

other work in the town.' What was generally called the mantle factory caused many people to ask if gas mantles were made there!

After the 1914-18 War, Corby, Palmer & Stewart extended the factory and added a large canteen. Many of the hundreds of women and girls were part-timers; a large number came from Tring, Cheddington, Marston Gate and Leighton Buzzard. The nightly rush to the railway station did not please home-coming season ticket holders!

This large local industry is now only a memory; all the factory buildings were pulled down to provide a car park. To the bitter regret of many people, the canteen was not spared; it would have provided a large hall for meetings and entertainments which the town lacks now that so many church and other halls have been closed or demolished.

SIGN OF THE TIMES

People who fool about with street signposts deserve a severe reprimand, but I had to chuckle when I saw what someone had done to a metal 'School' sign in Kings Road. Part of the sign had been twisted round, leaving only the first four letters SCHO, and a dab of black paint turn the C to O.

The result, of course, was SOHO, the last place I expected to find in Kings Road.

HANDS ACROSS THE SEA

It is pleasant news that the boys and girls of the Victoria School are exchanging correspondence and goodwill with a school at Barkhamsted, Connecticut, a rural town which is about as far from Hartford, the state capital, as our town is distant from Hertford.

Boys and girls aged five, six and seven have sent their own illustrated descriptions of the school and local activities. Here, for instance, are the comments of Jennifer Day, Melissa Fish and Beth Brynga: 'Barkhamsted is a small country town. We have two schools, the Elementary school and the Regional 7. Next to the Elementary school is a Town Hall. It is where people have meetings. There is a general store next to our school. One of the nicest places in Barkhamsted is People's State Forest. There are lots of churches in Barkhamsted. We are in the Elementary School.'

Beth Brynga adds that the school gym is also the cafeteria, and Chris J., aged 6 says that the children have special jobs to do at snack time, such as tray carrier, milk carrier, straw passer, snack passer, napkin passer, and cleaning up.

Peter Minton tells us that there are six school buses, and Colin Bongard is proud of the old houses at Barkhamsted; he lives in one which is 200 years old, and loves the 'very, very beautiful town'. There are also references to Barkhamsted Reservoir, one half for drinking, the other for swimming, fishing and boating.

EARLY SETTLERS

A number of Berkhamstedians have visited our American namesake. I have very pleasant memories of spending a few hours there in 1965. I travelled by Greyhound bus from New York to Winsted, where I was met by two local historians who took me on a tour of Barkhamsted.

Colonel A. L. and Mrs Wilson represented our town at Barkhamsted when the 200th anniversary was celebrated in 1976.

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IN AND AROUND BERKHAMSTED

By 'Beorcham' *(continued)*

Among my treasures is 'Barkhamsted Heritage', a handsome book of nearly 350 pages which contains a chapter on 'The English Town of Berkhamsted'. This was based on a letter, dated 1885, written by a native of Barkhamsted who 'could not resist the conviction that this fine old Connecticut town was named in affectionate and reverential memory of its English prototype, and that some one or more of its original proprietors or early settlers were immigrants from the ancient and historically famous Berkhamsted, England.'

A very nice thought!

SUMMER VISITORS

Now that the entrance to the Castle grounds is free, we have no statistics, but I imagine that more people than ever before have paid or rather unpaid, a visit this summer. The presence of many school

parties suggests countless essays on the moats and Tower Hill.

One summer evening our Local History Society had the pleasure of taking forty members of the Harpenden Society round the Castle. A slightly larger party from Harlington, a village near Luton, called one Sunday afternoon, first to see St. Peter's Church ('Stunning', said a small boy) and then to spend an hour in the Castle grounds ('The flies are biting' said an old boy). Harlington, by the way, has an annual archive exhibition and publishes fact sheets on such subjects as the railway, roads, industries, schools and village personalities.

As for our own Local History Society, a visit to Olney was followed by an evening at Little Gaddesden, where the rector, Canon Senar, talked about the village and Ashridge and whetted everyone's taste for his book, which is due to be published in the autumn.