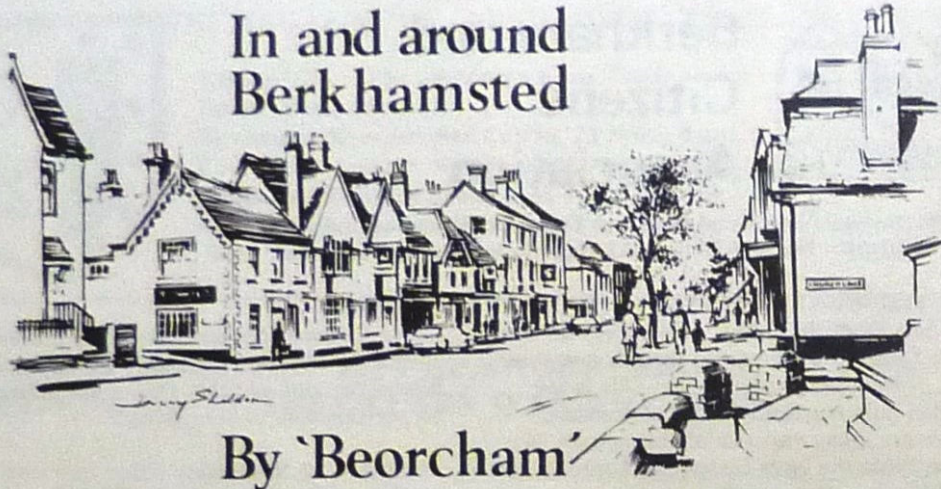


In and around Berkhamsted



By 'Beorcham'

A CANADIAN DUDSWELL

Although Hertfordshire is one of England's smallest counties, no fewer than 82 villages (a record) entered this year's Best Kept Village competition. I was especially pleased that Dudswell was the runner-up in Group 3, and henceforth I shall think of it as a village instead of the West End of Northchurch. Dudswell has certainly grown in modern times and may now be larger than its namesake in Quebec.

You have never heard of a Dudswell in Canada? It is about forty miles south of Quebec City, and only a short distance from a place called Tring Junction. Note the French spelling of 'junction'. Almost certainly someone from Dudswell or Tring carried these names across the Atlantic, and I shall be pleased to hear from anyone who has been to our Canadian namesakes.

CANAL-SIDE FORGE

In Victorian times our Dudswell was one of the best known overnight stopping places on the Grand Junction Canal, as it was then called. Many years ago I interviewed Albert Pocock, who had just retired after 66 years at the anvil of his canal-side forge at Dudswell. He shod as many as 100 boat horses a week, often being aroused at 4 a.m. by bargees anxious to make an early

start. Donkeys and mules were also used to tow the boats, and Albert told me that the donkeys always worked in pairs. Woe betide anyone who tried to separate them. Unless accompanied by their mates the donkeys would never enter the forge. Albert added the coal for the forge arrived by the boatland, and as many as ten tons of iron were ordered at a time.

A very large warehouse, shown on a map of 1877, still stands between the towpath and the aptly named Wharf Lane. Facing the lock stands one of the most photographed old houses in the district. Until the 1980s it was the Swan public house, receiving supplies from Locke and Smith, whose brewery was in Water Lane, Berkhamsted.

Later on the bar parlour was used as a shop. Behind the former pub stands a very old house in Jenny's Lane, presumably the original way to Norcott Hill before a new road was made at a higher level to go over the canal and railway.

As one who always enjoys wandering along the lanes and paths in and around Dudswell, I must look out for the new trees which the County Council gives to the best kept villages.

COWPER'S WELL

Mrs Dumbell, of Bridgewater Road, has kindly given to the Local History Society a large photograph by J. T. Newman of a subject which, as an illustrated postcard, was a best seller many years ago.

The subject is Cowper's Well, which survived for many years in the Rectory garden after William Cowper's birthplace was demolished. From all over the country admirers of the poet came to see the well with its cumbersome machinery. When John Cobb was rector (1871-83) he invited the Rev. G. S. Cautley, vicar of Nettleden, to write an epitaph which was inscribed on a marble slab and affixed to the well, beginning with the lines:

The shy perennial fountain here the ivy-tods among,
Just emblem of his modesty and pure undying song.
With daily crystal draught refreshed our poet's fragile youth
Amid the precious opening buds of genius, grace, and truth.

With the addition of this tribute one would have expected the well to be properly maintained, but the structure was completely demolished in 1894. Today such a loss would create a great outcry. A fragment of the marble slab is in the possession of the Local History Society.

HIGH STREET CHANGES

The recent closing of a shop ("Kitchen 46") next door to the Town Hall reminded me of its varied uses in years gone by. Enormous changes have been made to what was one of a pair of old houses. In late Victorian times it was a draper's shop for S. Newton and his successor, W. Good. During the first World War it was the Khaki Tea

House; next came Lloyds Bank for a very short time, followed by Boots the Chemists. In more recent times it was a delikatessen with a restaurant upstairs.

Before the accompanying shop was devoted to house decorators' needs it was Wren's sports shop. For over half a century it was a solicitor's office, and in Victorian times it was a baker's shop kept by one of the Timson families, who moved to what is now Smith and Graver's shop. So many changes, and perhaps I have not mentioned all of them.

It is interesting to recall that in 1888 the Town Hall Committee purchased the two shops as well as land behind the Town Hall on which the Sessions Hall was built. The cost of these acquisitions was met by the issue of debentures to the total amount of £2,100. They were not repaid until the adjoining properties were sold by auction shortly after the 1939-45 War for about £4,100. The balance was used for essential repairs following the very heavy use that was made of the Town Hall throughout the war.

WORLD-WIDE INTEREST

In the *Review* for May I mentioned that Paul Whately, of Sterling, Virginia, U.S.A., called to see the great west window of St. Peter's Church. He was drawn to Berkhamsted by the knowledge that over 110 years ago new glass for the window was donated by Thomas Whately, brother of George Frederick Whately, Paul's great grandfather.

I have now received an air mail letter from another descendant, Mrs Jane H. Bell, of Durban, South Africa. She asked for copies of some articles I wrote for the

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)*

Review twenty years ago, when an Australian descendant of George Whately visited Berkhamsted.

Mrs Bell says that at a family reunion in Virginia, 21 members of the 'clan' were present. A cousin in Maidenhead is working on the family tree.

The brothers of Victorian times were both surgeons, and so were some of George's descendants.

SNOB'S ALLEY

I was stopped in the High Street the other day by a man who asked if it was true that the little alley from High Street to Back (Church) Lane was once known as Snobs Alley.

No. That was the name (or nickname) of an alley which was the start of an ancient right of way from the High Street to Butts Meadow. In the 1880's a shop was

demolished and Prince Edward Street replaced the alley.

Who were the snobs? Probably bootmakers, of whom there were many on years gone by. Maybe there some ostentatious vulgarians, too!

DOWN UNDER

An Australian woman, paying her fourth visit to relatives at nearby Hawridge, told her hosts that in a Sydney suburb she recently met a young woman who had newly arrived in Australia. "By your accent," she said, "I guess you come from somewhere near Berkhamsted."

The new arrival was dumbfounded for a few seconds. Then she said, "I do, I do."

How's that for world-wide fame? And isn't "In and Around Berkhamsted" international this month?