

In and around Berkhamsted



By 'Beorcham'

BROADWATER LOCK

"Now that we have a lake at the bottom of St. John's Well Lane, we ought to find a nice name for it," a fellow townsman said the other day.

What about Lake Superior? We could then call the marsh on the west side of Lower Kings Road Lake Inferior.

On a more serious note, I wonder how many, or how few, know that the canal lock near Lower Kings Road bridge is called Broadwater Lock? The name appears on old large-scale maps. As the narrow but now much used road to the swimming pool has no name, would it not be appropriate to call it Broadwater Road? At the present time there is only a signpost with Berkhamsted spelt with an extra a.

TWO UNLUCKY BLACK EYES

Recently I came across an account of two shameful incidents of a type not uncommon in late Victorian times. A history of the Salvation Army mentions two very nasty experiences when Theodore Kitching was a cadet in the training garrison at Berkhamsted.

I quote: "On the very first night and during an open-air meeting the roughs of this little Hertfordshire town burst one side of the drum which he was playing and blackened one of his eyes. When next the new cadet made his appearance in the open air, the roughs levelled up things by bursting the other side of his drum and blackening his other eye."

Within five days of becoming a cadet, Theodore was promoted to the rank of Sergeant-Major. Further promotions followed, but he did not achieve the fame and rank of his son, General Kitching.

The Salvation Army's first recruiting meeting in Berkhamsted was at the Town Hall in 1887. For ten years nightly meetings and four services on Sunday were held in a former brushworks in Back Lane; then, in 1897, the Salvation Army moved to one of the earliest buildings in Lower Kings Road. It was closed some 40 years ago.

101 YEARS AGO

My thanks to a reader for the loan of a copy of Kelly's Directory for 1882, when the

population of the parish of Berkhamsted St. Peter was about 4,500.

It is difficult to know how the publishers limited the list of "Private Residents" to about 150; the yardstick may have been the size and situation of their houses.

Of greater interest is the "Commercial" list, containing some 250 names. There were 14 beer retailers, 14 bootmakers, 12 grocers, 5 greengrocers, 8 bakers, 2 fishmongers, 15 dressmakers, 8 tailors, 4 butchers, and several men and women described simply as shopkeepers. Surgeons, solicitors and architects were included in the list of tradespeople.

Peter James was "umbrella maker and town crier", James Norman sold sewing machines, bicycles and tricycles, Richard Norris was described as "steam threshing machine owner", and John Hatton was a coal and salt merchant at Castle Wharf, now Alsford's.

We had a grocer who was also a straw plait dealer; another man was a straw hat and bonnet maker. "Tents for hire" is all we find after the name of John King, of Chesham Road. And there was just one pawnbroker, Thomas Gill.

One entry may raise a laugh. James Hatched was described as "fly proprietor" operating from the Crown Inn yard. I was reminded of my boyhood days when a friend and I were asked in Victoria Road if we had seen a fly in the High Street. We knew jolly well that the reference was to a light horse-drawn carriage, but had a giggle which is still remembered.

OVER TO NORTHCHURCH

Turning to almost a whole page devoted to Northchurch in Kelly's Directory of 1882, it is interesting to find the population of that parish was 2,135, slightly less than half the population of Berkhamsted. But that was when the parish of St. Mary included Sunny-side, which was not included in the Urban District of Berkhamsted until 1909.

Only 21 names appear in the list of private residents, but the "Commercial" column contains 72 names, some of the tradespeople having businesses in Gravel Path, George Street and Ellesmere Road.

There were 16 farmers, 14 beer retailers and publicans (one of whom was also a drill instructor), 13 shopkeepers, a horse dealer, a paper stainer, and two marine store dealers, who catered for canal barges.

James Randall was keeper of the Working Men's Reading Room, and St. Mary's Church was in the process of adding a north aisle, with 130 sittings, "the whole fabric being at the same time effectively restored at a cost of about £2,500, defrayed by voluntary contributions of the clergy, nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood.

THE DEANERY MAGAZINE

Have you any copies of the Berkhamsted Deanery Country Parishes Magazine for the years 1934 to 1946? If so, kindly write to me care of the Editor. The request comes from a London writer who would take great care of the copies and return them promptly.

COPY DATES FOR THE REVIEW

Your copy should reach the Gardener's Arms, Castle Street by the Friday night. Please TYPE or WRITE CLEARLY, preferably on large sheets of paper, leaving a wide margin round your copy.

FRIDAY JULY 8