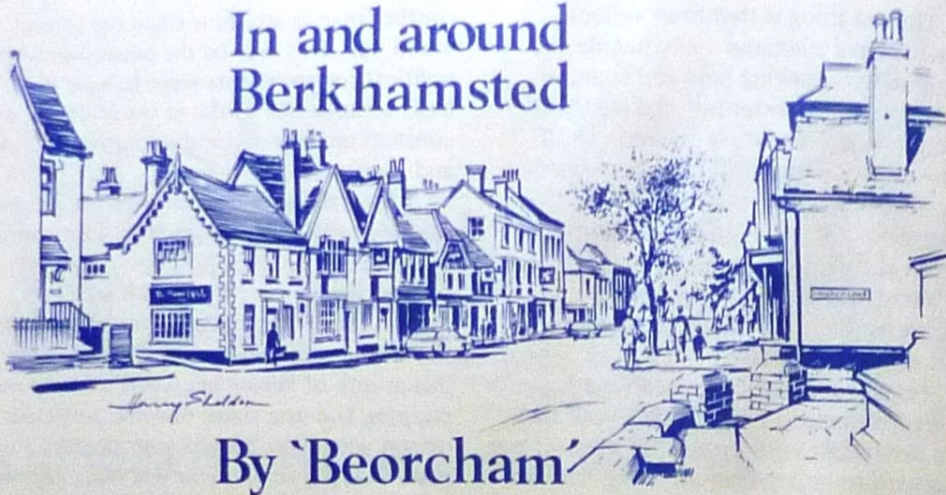


In and around Berkhamsted



By 'Beorcham'

OUR CHANGING HIGH STREET

The news that the Waitrose store is taking over the Woolworth building means that there will be only two businesses (Waitrose and Sketchley) between W.H. Smith's and Water Lane.

Hundreds of Berkhamstedians remember when there were six different shops. Lossley's Directory for 1934 listed the Court Cafe at the corner of Water Lane, W.F. Matchett (draper), Miss Robinson (milliner), H. Kingham & Sons (grocers), S. Howship (confectioner) and Taylors (chemists).

Continuing westward, we had the International Stores (now W.H. Smith), D. Steele (baker), W. Rickard (hairdresser), Eastmans (butchers), the Waterworks office, the White Hart, the Town Hall, Boots the chemists, E.H. Sedgwick (solicitor), G. Loosley & Sons (stationers) and L.A. Pike (greengrocer).

Everything east of the Town Hall (slightly shortened by a modest widening of Water Lane) has been completely rebuilt, and the shops west of the Town Hall have new frontages. Thanks to the Town Hall

arcade, however, there are now as many shops between Water Lane and Lower Kings Road as there were before the Second World War.

THE TOWN'S NICKNAME

"We don't hear 'Berko' very often nowadays. Who started it?" an old friend asked the other day.

I don't know, but the nickname has been shouted at football matches as long as our oldest inhabitants can remember. It is seldom heard nowadays, and not for a very long time have I heard the posh version, Berk-ho.

It is possible that the town of Berkovitsa, in Bulgaria, is affectionately known as Berko. As for Berkhout, in Holland, it's all Dutch to me.

By the way, Little Berkhamsted, near Hatfield, is (or was) popularly called "Little Berks."

SIR HUGH GREENE

Some years ago Graham Greene had much to

say about his early years at Berkhamsted in his autobiography, "A Sort of Life." And now his brother, Sir Hugh Greene, is the subject of a biography entitled "A Variety of Lives", by Michael Tracey.

Five of the six children of Charles Greene, housemaster and then headmaster of Berkhamsted School from 1910-27, were born at St. John's, Chesham Road. When the family moved to School House there were six indoor servants, including nurses for the children.

Even as a child Hugh enjoyed being alone with his thoughts. He managed to cope with his schooldays better than Graham, and academically progressed surely and steadily through the school. But he remembers few of the boys and only two of the masters with any affection.

Hugh, we are told, developed a distaste for H. L. O. Flecker, who succeeded Charles Greene as headmaster. When Hugh edited an issue of the school magazine, Flecker commented, "Greene, you have the mind of a *Daily Mail* journalist."

In fact, Hugh became a famous war correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph*, and in an extraordinarily varied and active career he was Director General of the B.B.C. for nine years.

Among the illustrations is a photograph of a children's fancy dress party at the home of Hugh's rich uncle, The Hall, which ended its days as the preparatory department of Berkhamsted School.

The book, published by the Bodley Head at £15, is a very detailed and interesting biography. I feel bound to add that on the rare occasions when I have seen Sir Hugh and Graham in Berkhamsted, they looked very relaxed and seemed to be pleased to be here.

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.

ONE OF THE OLD BRIGADE

Paying a visit to his hometown, Mr. Tom Cox, who now lives at Rhyl, has been telling me about his 38 years as a member of the Berkhamsted and Northchurch Fire Brigade.

As a volunteer he qualified for the pre-war retaining fee of £1 a year and five shillings (25p) for a call. For some years after the town acquired a motor fire engine the brigade drilled with the old horse-drawn steam engine, and until August 1939 there was no telephone at the fire station. The brigade was called by the waterworks' hooter, and one of the firemen, Bert Nash, whose forge was next door to the waterworks, called over the wall to know where to go.

The honorary captain of the brigade was a well known novelist, Frank H. Shaw, who lived in North Road.

A BYGONE CRAFT

I fancy that many Berkhamstedians will visit Luton Museum following a very interesting talk to the Local History Society. In the 19th Century Berkhamsted and Northchurch were two of many Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire towns and villages which plaited straw for Luton hat makers. The rise and fall of this cottage industry was splendidly described by Mrs Marion Nichols, keeper of social industry at Luton Museum.

The decline was due to changing fashions and cheap imports, and it is interesting to find a warning in the Berkhamsted Parish Magazine a century ago. The rector, the Rev. J.W. Cobb, said that children acquiring the art of plaiting would, by the time they were

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IN AND AROUND BERKHAMSTED

By 'Beorcham' (continued)

grown up, find the bread taken out of their mouths, and that because parents looked upon the earning of a few pence at present was of more consequence than their future welfare.

"The cry for good servants is heard on all sides," Mr Cobb continued, "and children now brought up to straw-plaiting, with good home training and good home example, could supply the deficiency in respectable service. They would enjoy comforts, not to say luxuries, which are now entirely beyond their reach."

WATER SPORTS

Mr. Keith Jary, of Winston Gardens, is well known locally for his work for the Town Hall Trust. He is also the editor of a new book of world-wide interest. "Water Sports for the Disabled" shows how people can forget their handicaps by angling, canoeing, rowing, sailing, coastal cruising and other water sports. There are 250 photographs and line drawings to supplement first-hand accounts by disabled people.

This well written and edited book, price £9.95, has already attracted attention in the

U.S.A., France, Norway, Japan and Australia.

LONG GREEN

I am pleased to see more people using the ancient path through Long Green now that it is no longer cluttered with old vehicles and rubbish. The views over the Bourne valley are splendid, especially in autumn. But I advise stout footwear if you continue your walk to Sugar Lane, Bourne End; for most of the way the path is narrow between hedges, and if horse riders have been there you must expect soft mud.

Unfortunately, the track through Sandpit Green, from Ashlyns to Swing Gate Lane, is not the pleasant walk it was in years gone by; on my last visit it was very sticky and some rubbish was still being dumped on the green.

The track through the two greens is a continuation of Shootersway, a sort of by-pass said to have been used by ne'er-do-wells who did not wish to be seen in the town. There is a possibility that the rural track may become part of a by-pass — if we ever have one.