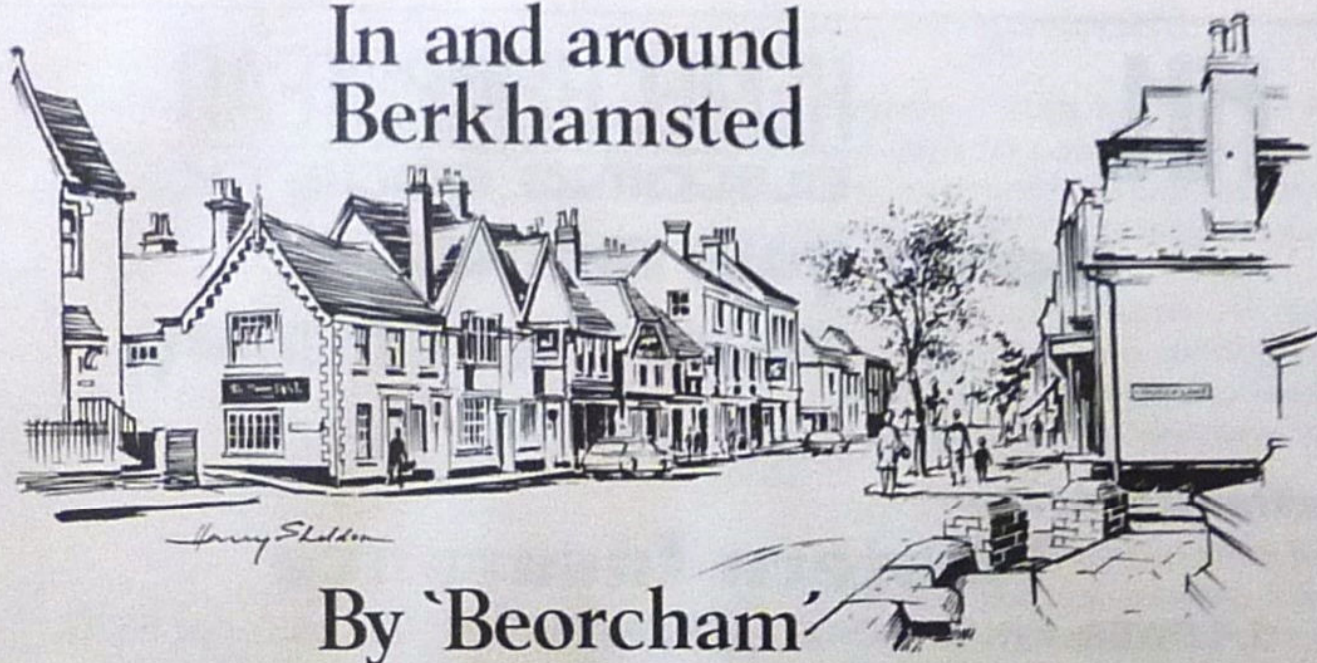


# In and around Berkhamsted



By 'Beorcham'

## UNITED WE STAND?

Under the heading, "Impossible Dream of United Dacorum", a Berkhamsted Mail writer recently said that he had always found Berkhamsted to be a rather strange town, Tring fiercely independent, the villages going their own way, and Hemel Hempstead people still regarding themselves as residents of the borough, not Dacorum.

Certainly the grouping of towns and villages into large areas has been unpopular in many parts of the country. We now know few of our councillors and officers, and much of the Dacorum news is of little interest to us. But many people jump to the conclusion that other parts of the district are better treated than their own.

Every type of government, large or small, is criticised, and much of the grumbling is confined to very small matters.

Mind you, Berkhamsted is far and away the best town not only in Dacorum but in the whole of Hertfordshire. So there!

## BRIGHTER BERKHAMSTED

I wonder how many, or how few, societies are as active and hard-working as our Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society?

In the enlarged hall at the Civic Centre the society recently had a full house every night for a splendid "Carousel". With the large cast, chorus, dancers, orchestra, set constructors and seamstresses, nearly 120 people were involved in a production which brought the loudest and longest applause I have heard in Berkhamsted for a very long time.

From that mammoth effort I turn to a smaller but also excellent production, this time in the Court House. The Cowper Society's evening of words and music devoted to John Sayer, our 17th century provider of almshouses, was highly entertaining as well as informative. Like many other members of the audience, I pitied those who missed a very good evening. Any chance of a repeat performance?

## ROSES ALL THE WAY

The Rose Annual for 1984, published by the Royal National Rose Society, contains an article

of great local interest. The author, Mrs Doreen Thorn, paid a visit to Berkhamsted to meet her godson, the Rev. Malcolm Scott, vicar of St. Michael and All Angels. He took her to the church to see the stained glass window in memory of Edward Mawley, a secretary and president of the National Rose Society many years ago.

Mr. Mawley lived at Rosebank, Gravel Path, and won many prizes for his roses at local show. He helped to start the National Rose Society and was soon exhibiting all over the country.

Although employing a jobbing gardener, Mr Mawley always looked after the roses himself. During his long service as secretary of the Society the membership rose from 40 to 6,000.

Mrs Thorn ends her article with this tribute: "Truly Mr Mawley was a remarkable gentleman. No wonder the then members of our Society presented this lovely window (in Sunnyside Church) to his memory. How pleased he would be to know that we are 'Royal' and still going strong."

## THE NEW FOOTBRIDGE

Now that we have a third footbridge over the canal, a humorist suggests that it might be called the Bridge of Small Size (or Sighs). Seriously, if it is to have a name I would suggest Broadwater Bridge. It spans a pound (the word for a level part of a canal between two locks) which has long been known as Broadwater.

The Park Street footbridge is not only useful but very pleasing to the eye. Not so our earliest footbridge, the one which provides a short cut from the High Street to George Street. It was opened in 1930 after four years of talk and little action. In 1929 there was great to-do when the Grand Junction Canal Company demanded the strengthening of the banks of the canal at an additional of £120. Pea-nuts? Not in 1929.

## KINGSHILL DEVELOPMENTS

Further extensions to the National Film Archive at Kingshill, with the possibility of extra jobs, remind me that very little is ever said or written about one of the town's old large houses.

An 18th century map mis-spells the name Kingsell. At different periods members of the Dorrien and Smith-Dorrien families lived at Kingshill, though their favourite home was Haresfoot.

In late Victorian and Edwardian times Kingshill was the home of Mrs Lionel Lucas, a wealthy sister of Sir Julian Goldsmith, M.P. On many occasions fetes and garden parties were held at Kingshill, but she is best remembered for purchasing Butts Meadow and giving it to the town.

Almost certainly Kingshill inspired the change of name from Bridewell Lane to Kings Road. A map of 1877 shows a narrow lane with a few houses near the police station and three cottages near the junction with Shootersway. Now our busiest side street, Kings Road was truly rural, with a horse-pond just beyond what is now the Berkhamsted School for Girls, and a chalk pit on the west side of the lane about 150 yards from Shootersway. With those few cottages, the big house and various farm buildings, Kingshill must have had the character of a small hamlet.

## INITIAL JUSTICE

For many years the initials C.R.M. and C.R.W. were on the doors of two small rooms at the back of the Civic Centre.

I doubt whether actors and actresses who used them as dressing rooms knew that the initials stood for Charge Room Men's and Charge Room Women's. That was when the petty sessions were held at Berkhamsted every alternate Wednesday.

Anyway, the initials have now been removed.

## WHITE AND BLUE

A friend tells me that some relatives stayed with him for a few days and were especially pleased with their walks around the town.

They particularly Hockeridge Wood and kept on talking about an area where lots of whitebells were among the bluebells. Not all that rare,

surely, but for many years I have taken the Ashley Green footpath in springtime to see how the bells were faring. This year in my favourite patch there were dozens of whitebells among the thousands of bluebells. Last year the whites were very few and far between.