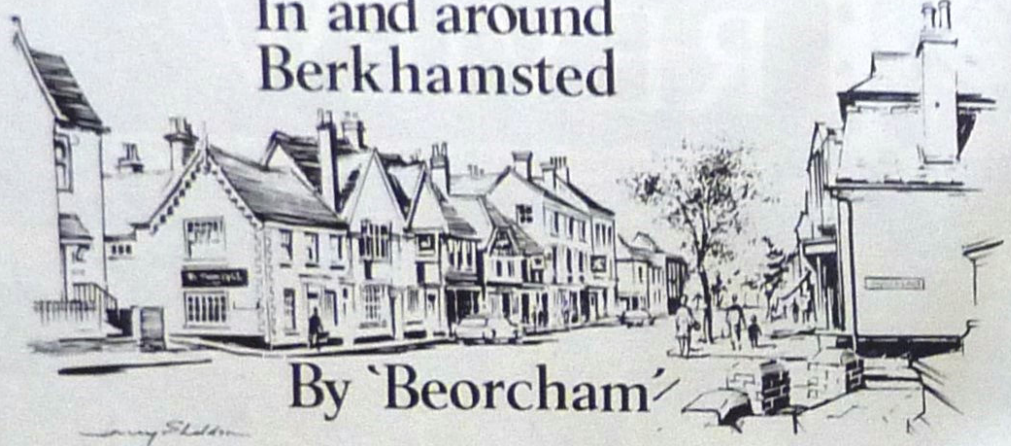


# In and around Berkhamsted



By 'Beorcham'

## THE LOCAL PRESS

Most of us, I fancy, are familiar with the increasing number of free local newspapers, some so thick that they may clog the letter-box.

It wasn't like that when I started writing for the local press at the age of 14. Over the years I have collected a large number of old local newspapers, including a very rare copy of the short-lived **Berkhamsted Express**, started by Arthur D. King in November, 1895.

Huge sheets of paper, 45" by 35", were printed in London on one side only with national news (pages 2,3,6,7). Every week a few hundred or thousand flat sheets were sent to various printers and publishers, some of whom had to fold the sheets to suit their smaller presses, printing pages 1 and 8 and then 4 and 5. All this for a penny a copy!

My copy of the **Berkhamsted Express** contains a report of a Luton man who stole a pair of boots from a Berkhamsted tradesman and was committed to two calendar months' hard labour. One Northchurch and two Berkhamsted men were each fined 16s (80p) for neglecting to have their children vaccinated.

A column was devoted to an enthusiastic meeting at Berkhamsted on Anti-Vaccination. And who do you think was chairman? Dr. Bontor, who believed in vaccination!

Despite a front page full of displayed advertisements David Pike sold juicy oranges at 50 a shilling (5p), and Edward Platt's special finest old Highland whisky at £1 a gallon), the newspaper was not a financial success. It had a very short life.

## DANGEROUS CORNER

By the time the *Review* is published, I hope that the junction of Park View Road with the High Street will no longer be the town's worst blind corner. We all know that it is sometimes necessary for builders to intrude on footpaths for a few days, but for many weeks pedestrians have had no view at all until they were actually on the roadway.

Lower Kings Road, too, has been unkind to pedestrians. I don't know how many excavations have been made in the footpath beyond the entrance to the car park. At a rather sharp bend pedestrians have been forced to walk in the road on several occasions. As for the state of the footpath after so many attacks by drill and spade, let us hope that one of these months we shall be on the level.

## MY MISTAKE!

Black mark for 'Beorcham'. Last month I said that Rothesay was at the corner of Cross Oak Road and Charles Street. I should have said Shrublands Road, not Charles Street. The street name-plate is actually on the front garden wall of Rothesay!

Mind you, it is rather confusing when you see some houses in Charles Street named Shrublands Terrace!

When old roads are extended the new portions are often given different names. Keeping in the same direction we now have Charles Street, Shrublands Road and Durrants Road. Raven's Lane, beyond the canal bridge, is Gravel Path. As for the main road, I doubt whether many people know exactly where London Road becomes the High Street, then Gossoms End, and then Northchurch High Street.

## SLOWER DELIVERIES

Much as I appreciate the courtesy and efficiency of our local post office clerks and postmen, I deplore the deteriorating service since sorting was transferred to Hemel Hempstead. I have almost forgotten the Berkhamsted postmark.

Not so very long ago a local letter was always delivered the next morning, sometimes the same day. Now local letters are usually delivered two days after posting. It's quicker, and certainly cheaper, to deliver one's own local letters. As for the parcel post, it is very erratic, as I know to my cost.

And now many of us are cross to know that there are plans to close two sub-post offices which have given good service, and saved longer walks, for as long as anyone can remember. Closures of this sort are ridiculous in an ever-growing town.

## SOME UNUSUAL PEOPLE

"I've lived here all my life, but now, when I walk along the High Street, I hardly ever see anyone I know," an old friend remarked a few days ago. I did my best to cheer him up and soon we were chatting about some of the old characters we knew in our young days.

There were several old chaps who earned a meagre living in rather curious ways. One man went from house to house selling blocks of chalk which he quarried on Northchurch Common. That was in the days when it was fashionable to whiten doorsteps and hearthstones.

Then there was a man nicknamed Ali Sloper, who pushed a truck around the town with home-made paper windmills which he exchanged for jam jars.

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One of my aunts remembered a Chesham man who came to Berkhamsted to sell brooms and brushes. Sometimes he would select a long handled broom and prance around it, singing a song to show his versatility.

Poor old Dutter was known to everybody. He was often seen removing moss and grass from the footpaths outside houses. He used an old table knife worn down until the blade was only an inch or so long. The householder would give him a copper or two for his down-to-earth job.

"Shiner" was the name of a man who scattered soot over the fields; his appearance was in keeping with his trade. In contrast, Jimmy O'Connell was smart, neat and bright, wearing top hat and tails at week-ends. He did all sorts of odd jobs, and it may or may not be true that he had a nasty fall when he propped his ladder against the branch of a tree he was sawing off.

#### SOME OLD SAYINGS

Johnny Ripon, who pumped the organ at St. Peter's Church, always stood at the top of

Castle Street at 6 p.m. to check his watch with the church clock. Every Saturday he watched football matches from the canal bridge and rushed back to the High Street to be first with the news, calling out "Berkhamsted won three none" or "We lost two one."

Then there was Curly (bald, of course), who was noted for his unusual remarks. Here are some of them:

"The first time I went up a ladder was down a well."

"The wire-netting is still quite good; there aren't any holes in it."

"I tied up my dog loose last night and in the morning there it was gone."

"Hurry up for school! The bell's stopped ringing. Can't you hear it?"

"It will come in handy if we never use it."

In those days many people put an extras on their words, saying "He works at Easties", "I'm going to Pikeses", "He's got a job at Coopersis," etc.

And I shall never forget hearing an old fellow say: "'E sounds as if 'e 's bin rubbin' 'is back up agin that there Grammer School wall."

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#### BERKHAMSTED AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Hon. Secretary: Mr P.C. Birtchnell,  
195 High Street, Berkhamsted. Tel. 3506.

All meetings at the COURT HOUSE at 8 pm

##### Wednesday, September 19th

THE ROTHSCHILDS OF TRING. Mr R. Grace will recall the times when the famous family lived at Tring and had much influence on the town and its people. The talk will be accompanied by a fascinating series of slides.

##### Tuesday, October 9th

A LOOK AT PEOPLE AND PLACES IN NORTHCHURCH. Mr A. Hosier has great

knowledge of his village, has interviewed old inhabitants, written many articles for Northchurch parish magazine, and will show some very interesting slides.

##### Wednesday, November 7th

DAYS OF GLORY: BERKHAMSTED, THE BLACK PRINCE AND AQUITAINE. A talk by Mr W.J. Pearce, recently H.M. Consul in South West France. He is our Society's Honorary Archivist.

##### Tuesday, December 11th

MEMBERS' EVENING. A light-hearted programme of short talks, with refreshments.