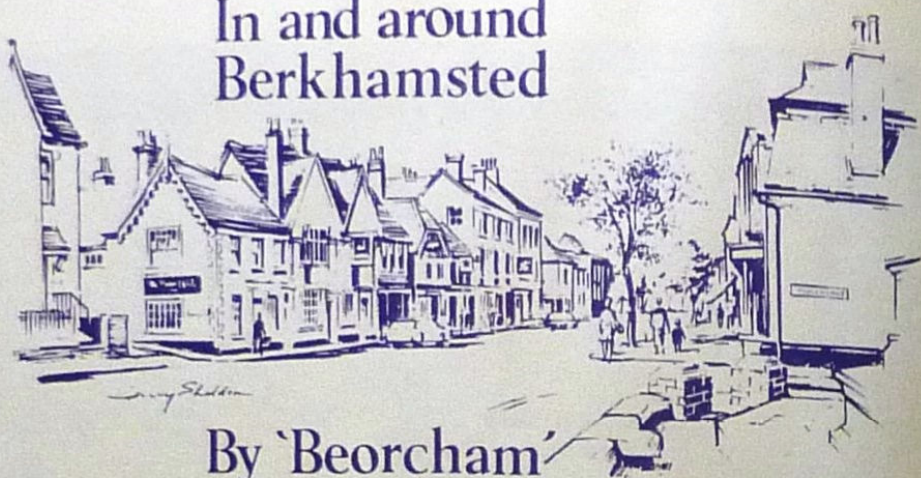


## In and around Berkhamsted



By 'Beorcham'

### 1066 AND ALL THAT

If you buy books for yourself or to give to friends, I strongly recommend Dorian Williams's new book (his 25th!) entitled "Between the Lines."

His TV and radio broadcasts have made him known to millions of people all over the world, but it is in and around Tring and Berkhamsted where we know of his activities at Pendley, the first residential centre of adult education. And what wonderful Shakespeare festivals we have enjoyed year after year!

There must be hundreds of Berkhamstedians who will never forget Dorian Williams's script and production of the Pageant of 1966, nine centuries after William of Normandy became William the Conqueror at Berkhamsted. As Dorian says in his new book, the pageant had the whole town behind it. There was never an empty seat. Starting with a 1914 episode and working back to Norman times, the pageant was completely effective.

Dorian adds that as long as he lives he shall recall with excitement the finale when William the conqueror, with his entourage, climbed up Tower Hill, a 2,000-strong audience cheering at the end of a memorable evening. Some time afterwards one of the performers paraphrased the Crispin speech from Henry V and wrote: "From this day to the ending of the world, but we in it shall be remembered, and gentlemen in Berkhamsted now a-bed shall think themselves accursed they were not here."

I, too, was deeply moved; Berkhamsted was at its best, hundreds of people made friends, and in 1966 we had civic pride which, I fear, has been somewhat diluted in the passing years.

### WRONG DIRECTION

People of many nationalities follow the "Tourist Information" signs which direct them to our excellent library in Kings Road.

On a very hot Saturday a foreign cyclist asked to be directed to Berkhamsted Avenue. Told that we have no road of that name, the cyclist pulled out his diary and pointed to an entry. It was Berkhamsted Avenue, Wembley, Middlesex.

The librarian gently told the tourist that he had another 20 miles to go, and gave him a photocopy of the appropriate London A-Z page. The librarian's report says it is a pity that there is not more local accommodation registered with the Tourist Board. There are many enquiries now that Berkhamsted is in the national directory.

Pamphlets and brochures for the summer season have been very popular, and the library currently provides the latest edition of "Let's Go" and bargain break brochures for autumn through to spring.

### NAMESAKES

Speaking of tourists, on three occasions this year I have taken GI's on short tours of the town where they were billeted 40 years ago. In addition I had the pleasure of meeting a resident of Barkhamsted, our namesake in Connecticut.

His first remark was that our town is much bigger and busier than his township. He is a retired shopkeeper, and I recollect seeing his shop (sorry, store) when I spent a day at Barkhamsted 18 years ago.

Since that time several Berkhamstedians have been to our American namesake. Oddly enough, it is just as far from Hertford, Hartford, the state capital, as Berkhamsted is distant from our county town.

### DOCTORS COMMONS

The name of Doctors Commons Road intrigues many people, and sometimes the question is asked whether there is any link with the ancient society of ecclesiastical lawyers in London known as Doctors Commons.

It will be news to many readers that a few acres of grassland south of Charles Street were known as Doctors Commons, and Doctors Commons Road was the name first suggested for Charles Street.

It was another new road in the vicinity which was called Doctors Commons Road; it was mentioned in Loosley's Directory for 1901, when there were five houses in the road.

It is likely that the nine acres known as Doctors Commons was among the gifts to Berkhamsted School by its founder, John Incent, who was a lawyer before he became Dean of St Paul's. It is known that he gave "all his lands which he had there by his parents or by purchase."

### A DIFFERENT COUNTY?

There is strong feeling at Tring that the town should be transferred to Buckinghamshire, where the county and district offices at Aylesbury would be only seven miles away. It is thought that tradition would be the only opposition.

A few years after the 1939-45 War some Berkhamsted councillors had similar ideas. I recall a public meeting in St Peter's Hall, and much was said about the long distance to Hertford, the county town. But then, as now, very few people ever went to Hertford. One questioner wanted to know if we would be transferred from the diocese of St Albans to Oxford if we went into Buckinghamshire.

Berkhamsted was much smaller then, with its own urban district council. Full reports of the monthly meetings provided a serial story, with councillors and officers who were known to everybody. Nowadays I often do not know who's who.

## MUSIC AND FUN

Talking to one of our oldest inhabitants, I was interested to be reminded of the people who were members of concert parties in years gone by. One of the many entertainers who helped to raise hundreds of pounds for good causes was Edwin Winter.

He started as a singer of sentimental ballads, but in the middle of "A boy's best friend is his mother" he burst out laughing and from that moment he was seldom serious before an audience.

He and a cheery group of youngsters had sufficient engagements to make a profession troupe jealous. And they never

lacked bright ideas. The best was a barrel organ, so called, which emitted the music of concertinas, banjos and even bagpipes. Everybody was mystified until the troupe decided that the novelty was wearing off. The canvas was ripped off to expose Edwin and his instruments as "the works".

The troupe was popular at local dances. A servants' ball lasted from 9 pm. until 6 o'clock the following morning, and even then some of the revellers wanted a few more lancers and valetas.

A popular piano tuner, Edwin advertised "distance no object" and received an order from New Zealand!  
Yes, those were the days.

Because of Printer's holiday arrangements, copy date for January issue will be November 30th 1984.