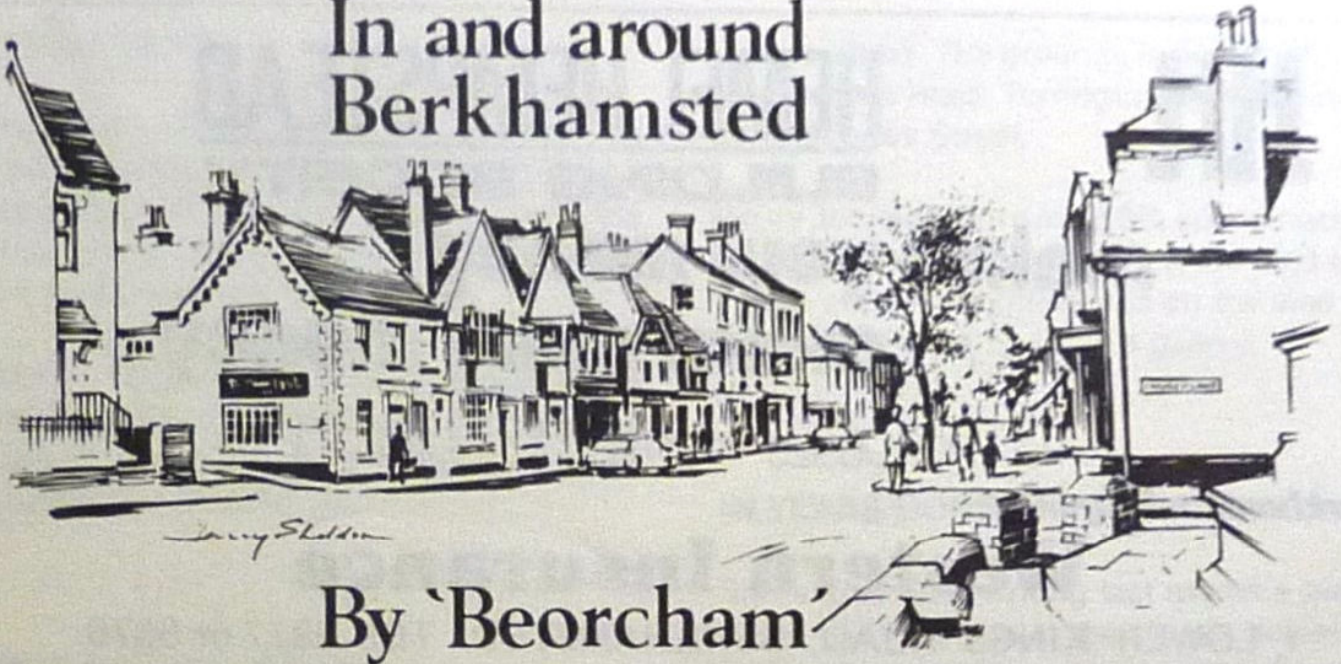


In and around Berkhamsted



By 'Beorcham'

SUNNYSIDE UP

At a recent meeting of the Local History Society, two members of the committee talked about their boyhood days in Sunnyside. It was an hilarious evening, but there was a long silence when someone asked how and when Sunnyside received its name.

Afterwards I consulted a large scale map of 1877, showing the first houses built in Ellesmere Road and George Street. Beyond the railway there were only three houses between Gravel Path and what is now called Ivy House Lane. The houses were named Rosebank, Millfield, and Sunnyside House.

So it seems that just one house gave its name to a district, in the same way as Kitsbury farmhouse named a road and district.

The name, of course, is familiar in many towns. For instance, Chesham has a Sunnyside Road.

OUR FIRST NEWSPAPER

The *Times* newspaper recently celebrated its 200th anniversary, but I doubt whether, in

praises of a newspaper which was started at Aylesbury in 1792 and then, for a few months, transferred to Berkhamsted. It was called the *Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Herald*, and the Berkhamsted printer was W. McDowall.

An early copy must have been in the possession of someone who contributed an article to the *Berkhamsted Times* in 1892, the centenary year. Mention was made of some of the advertisements. A sore throat ointment was to be had of Mrs Elizabeth Waller, Essex Arms, Watford, or from Mr W McDowall at the Printing Works, Berkhamsted, at 2s. 9d. per pot.

McDowall also sold a toothache medicine and Dr Silbly's Reanimating Solar Tincture, or Pabulum of Life, in 6s. 6d. and 12s. bottles.

Mur Luxmore, a surgeon, of Uxbridge, claimed that he was well known to several physicians in London and treated dropsy. Advertisements also appeared for state lotteries, books and Roman antiquities. seven years' time, anyone will sing the

MUDLARKS

Some time ago I praised an improvement to the canal towpath between Lower Kings Road and Billet Lane, but here and there the path is now a sticky mess with a miniature pond under the new footbridge.

I am sure that the people who regularly feed the ducks and drakes will not be deterred by the state of the towpath. But it would be nice to walk without mudlarks.

OUR CHANGING TOWN

Once a quiet side street, Cowper Road now has car parks left and right, the one on the right occupying the site of an early cinema and now reserved for gas workers. Opposite, the Outspan car park gives us views of several old Co-op buildings, all with bricked-up windows. But already some of the small buildings have gone.

In Cowper Road three empty houses are still left standing, gathering more and more free newspapers on the doorsteps. The adjoining Co-op stores, with Progress Hall at the top, was pulled down after a fire several months ago, leaving a carpet of colourful broken bricks which, believe it or not, have attracted a few photographers!

Unfortunately, it seems that no one ever photographed four very old cottages which were pulled down when the now-empty Co-op stores was built in the early 1930s. I recall seeing the "Unity Cottages" nameplate on the side of Billy Roberts' fish shop, at the east end of the row of old shops which preceded the Outspan building.

Now for an item of 18th century interest. In this book on St Peter's Church (1922) R. A. Norris said that Henry Johnson lived in a house, long since pulled down, on the site afterwards occupied by the Co-op stores in

Cowper Road. The grounds included what is now Cowper Road, Torrington Road and right up to Charles Street.

Henry Johnson, born in 1698, spent much of his early life in South America. He died in 1760, and his monument is on the wall of the south side of St Peter's gallery.

IN YEARS GONE BY

Some time after writing last month's piece about bad drainage at the town's busiest pedestrian crossing, I was looking through some old local papers and the first item to catch my eye was the following: "During the rains of this week portions of the High Street pathways have borne a strong resemblance to rivers in a small way, the water collecting in large pools instead of running off at once."

That was soon after we had an Urban District Council in 1898. Dr Bontor, a councillor, said that the crossing by Mr Pike's shop was nothing but a quagmire. And the road to the railway station was dangerous; flints had to be ground into the road by tradesmen's carts.

Dr Bontor also complained that ashes had not been collected at his house for three weeks. They had taken to putting them in the bath and his old silk hat! The surveyor admitted that no ashes had been collected in Highfield Road for three months, and it took two days to deal with that road alone. It was decided to have another horse and cart temporarily.

In the following week's paper I found the following item: "The newest vehicle of locomotion, the motor car, was introduced here on Monday by the Railway. Starting at 10.30 am. it travelled to Chesham in an hour, carrying three passengers. The next day the time was much better. It did the return journey in 25 minutes. Benzolene is used, and the driver is a practical man."

One news item was of great local interest: "We have the pleasure to inform our readers that, notwithstanding the opposition which had been long talked of and expected, against the Grand Junction Canal Bill, the same was carried on the second reading, before a committee of the House of Commons, on Wednesday last, and that without a division." Another item stated that the officers of the Buckinghamshire Militia "have received orders from the War Office to hold

themselves in readiness to join the regiments which are sent for the protection of the coast of Hampshire."

Alas, the newspaper was printed in Berkhamsted for a very short time, but Mr McDowall's press was busy for several years. He printed a number of books, one of which, entitled "Musae Berkhamstedienses", contained poems by "some young gentlemen at Berkhamsted School."