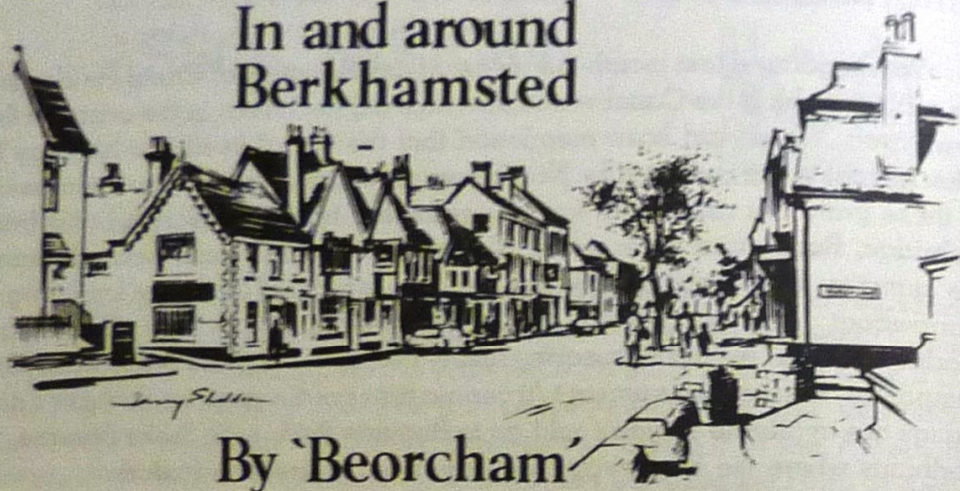


## In and around Berkhamsted



By 'Beorcham'

### NO MEAN CITY!

Sixty years since its birth, the Citizens' Association has marked the diamond jubilee by bringing out a book which is pleasant to read and a fount of information for future local historians.

At first some people thought the use of the word "citizens" was rather pompous, but Berkhamsted is no mean city. And what a compact town it was in the early 1920s. At that time the urban district did not include Northchurch. The population was 7,300 and there were 1,700 houses, of which 1,200 were let at weekly rents, ranging from two shillings (10p) for a two-roomed house to 12 shillings (60p) for a six-roomed house.

There were no baths or indoor lavatories in most of the houses, and 900 houses were still without a bath in the 1950s. The housing shortage seems to have been as great in the 1920s as in more recent times.

### A CHANGING TOWN

Berkhamsted has always been proud of its surroundings, and the Citizens' Association has devoted much of its time to the countryside, notably the Common. For many years the annual subscription was only one shilling (5p). I was probably the youngest member to serve on the rights-of-way committee which brought out a splendid fieldpath map of the whole district in 1938. Eleven years later, a booklet, "Footpaths around Berkhamsted", was a best-seller, with additions the walks were reprinted in the 'Review' in 1969-70.

High Street traffic and parking have always occupied much of the Citizens' Association's attention. Occasionally the train and bus services have

been criticised, and there was much amusement when a spokesman for British Rail referred to Berkhamsted as a "wayside station". As for the canal, the Waterways Board accepted no responsibility for maintaining the tow path other than for its own purposes, but there has been some volunteer labour and in recent times trees have been planted at strategic points beside the canal.

### LOCAL POLITICS

Many non-members were grateful for the Citizens' Association annual meeting at which candidates for the Urban District Council were invited to address the townspeople and answer questions. But interest in local politics waned when the power was shifted from the Urban District Council to the newly-formed Dacorum District Council. To quote from the new book, "public apathy grew, partly as a result of the smaller number of candidates for election to the DDC, and the very limited responsibilities left to the Town Council." In 1977 the Association decided to discontinue "meet the council candidates" meetings.

Yes, there have been many changes. But I, for one, would never wish to live away from Berkhamsted. I hope the Citizens' book will be a good seller, and my congratulations to Hugh Gardener, the compiler, and others named in the foreword. The price of the book is £1.95 (£1.50 to members).

### FISH STREET

Mr Sidney Chappell, a former Berkhamsted shopkeeper who is now 92 years old and lives in Cornwall, is still an avid reader of the 'Review'. He writes:

"After reading your list of unfamiliar street names in the June 'Review', I can add one more to your list. In my boyhood days Middle Road was known as Fish Street, due I think to the fact that Mr Griffin, whose fish shop was in Monk's House (now a restaurant), used to smoke his kippers in some sheds in Middle Road. I still remember the fishy smell. The sheds were later occupied by Mr Richardson, the basket maker, who I think eventually moved to premises in Kitsbury Road."

Mr Chappell adds that he is still fairly fit and enjoying life in Cornwall.

### BEWARE OF DRAG

Another correspondent has drawn my attention to a reference to Berkhamsted in "Here be Dragons", a book by Ralph Whitlock and published by Allen



and Unwin two years ago. Here is an extract:

"A strange legend asserts that St Paul, visiting Britain, called in at Berkhamsted and banished for ever all snakes, dragons and thunderstorms. A painting of St George and the Dragon decorated a pillar in the parish church."

The Rev J.W. Cobb, in his "History and Antiquities of Berkhamsted" (1855) wrote: "There is a curious local tradition that the neighbourhood was visited by St Paul, who drove away from it for ever all serpents and thunderstorms. Unfortunately the latter part at any rate of this tradition is utterly falsified by experience."

And I have never seen a snake in our district, nor a dragon. Have you?

#### ARE YOU A BATCHELOR?

Miss Anne Batchelor, of 62 Rennwell Croft, Leeds, is researching for her family tree, which may have originated in Berkhamsted. She has ascertained that Theophilus Batchelor was a gas fitter in Victorian times. Thomas Baker Batchelor (his son) was a bricklayer's apprentice in 1871. George Batchelor was a stoker at the gas works. John Batchelor, who brought his two sons to visit relations in Berkhamsted between 1915 and 1925, was an engine driver with the LMS.

## THE COWPER SOCIETY

This brings up to date the programme for 1985 announced in the April issue of the 'Review'. All events should prove very popular.

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| 1 Sept.       | Berkhamsted and Boxmoor Band. St Peter's Lawns. 3pm-4pm<br>Collection   |
| 4 Oct.        | Elgar - his homes and his music. A talk illustrated by slides and musical excerpts, by Mr William L Reed. Berkhamsted School Music Room, 8pm Collection.                    |
| 16/17/18 Oct. | A Man for All Seasons, produced by David Sherratt.<br>Chiltern Chamber Choir. Music by Scarlatti and Handel. St Peter's Church, 8pm. Admission £2, Students and OAPs £1.50. |
| 23 Dec.       | Chiltern Chamber Choir. Handel's Messiah, as originally scored by the composer. St Peter's Church, 8pm. Admission £2, Students and OAPs £1.50.                              |

#### ALL EVENTS IN AID OF THE ST PETER'S RESTORATION APPEAL

And in 1986, in aid of the All Saints' Organ Fund

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| 6 March | Ashlyns School Choir. All Saints' Church, 8pm. |
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