

IN AND AROUND BERKHAMSTED

by Townsman

In March—or was it early April?—I took photographs of the old house and adjoining shops between the Co-op building and Cowper Road corner. I was just in time to record a vanishing bit of old Berkhamsted; shortly afterwards not a brick or stick was left standing. And now a vast new building, comprising shops and offices, is soaring high above the hoardings which for months have enclosed the site.

Of course, you remember the old house and the stone steps which straddled part of the footpath. You remember the shops and the fire which caused so much damage two years ago. At the far end you remember the one-storey shop which replaced one of two shops which were pulled down about forty years ago. The corner shop was not rebuilt, hence the area, empty but for weeds and an air raid shelter, which was fenced in at Cowper Road corner.

You may remember seeing the nameplate 'Unity Cottages' on the side of the house at the east end of the row. The cottages, four in number and very small, stood behind the house and were pulled down nearly forty years ago.

Then there was Unity Hall, behind the shops, which started as a workshop, became a hall for Co-op meetings and other functions, and ended its days as a furniture warehouse in sparks and acrid smoke.

COACHES AND COATS

In Victorian times one of the shops was used by a coach-builder—first Pethybridge, then Pocock—and about the turn of the century Messrs. Hughes, Hawkins & Co. moved in to manufacture ladies' coats, costumes and capes. The business prospered and was transferred to the Bulbourne Factory in Lower King's Road.

Older residents recall three rare characters who traded in the demolished row of shops.

Joe Callard, for much of his life a chorister at St. Peter's, kept the shop at Cowper Road corner. I don't know when his business closed down, but in 1929 he still advertised himself as a corn merchant and family miller, with 'all kinds of dog biscuits and bird seeds kept in stock.' His windows attracted much attention, especially after business hours, when one often saw rats and mice helping themselves to the corn and biscuits. Rats were also seen running around the outbuildings in Cowper Road.

Joe's next-door neighbour was Mr. W. (Pastor) Wright, a grocer, whose shop smelt of spice and all things nice. A quiet little man, he worked hard in his shop and harder still for his church in Box Lane, Boxmoor.

BILLY ROBERTS

At the opposite end of the row, Mr. W. Roberts occupied the house and adjoining shop. He was a fishmonger, a very good one, and kept a small aquarium. I often wondered what the live goldfish thought of the larger fish which reposed on marble slabs. Billy possessed a very loud voice and some of his comments, to say the least, were salty and sharp. His blackboards were famous, bearing pithy and often topical comments in his own beautifully chalked script. His most familiar slogan, however, was 'No nasty smells.'

One day he displayed a large notice bearing the words: 'Wanted, a boy with brains, if possible.' Many passers-by enjoyed this attack on the young. But Billy wasn't pleased when the *Gazette* reproduced an extract from the *Teachers' World*, stating that the advertisement clearly indicated the need for recruiting some brains into the business.

Mr. Roberts had brains—no one ever doubted that—and he and his wife had the goodwill of people of all classes, including the gentry, a word we never use today.

Joe Callard, Pastor Wright, Billy Roberts—we shall never see their like again.

MARLIN CHAPEL

I don't think any printed reference has been made to the felling of the tall ash tree which for generations had dominated the ruins of Marlin Chapel. The tree was removed without causing much damage, if any, to the remains of this remote chapel-in-the-fields, which was built in the 13th century by the lord of the little manor of Maudelyns (Magdalen). The manor house stood on the site now occupied by Marlin Chapel Farm, and much of the surrounding moat survives to this day, sometimes with a little water to dissuade invaders!

Anyone who has walked the path from Shootersway to Marlin Chapel in wet weather will understand why the lord of the manor, in his remote home near the parish boundary, thought it better to worship in his own chapel than to trudge

through the mud to the parish church. Whether his chaplain, who lived in Berkhamsted or Northchurch, enjoyed the mudlarks is another matter!

VICTORIAN POSTBOX

If you post your letters at the top of Cross Oak Road, you are familiar with the new box which has been provided near the signpost. Being modern, it may be considered an improvement on the old wall-box on the opposite side of the road. But a number of people probably share my regret that it has gone, for it was of Victorian vintage, the last of its period in Berkhamsted.

Incorporated in the wall which formerly enclosed the Cross Oak estate, the 'VR' box survived several bashings from motorists. After at least 70 years' use, I understand that it was in a decayed state and unfit for transplanting. What a pity there is no local museum to house relics of this kind.

Some neighbouring villages and towns still have Victorian postboxes. There is one at Bourne End. Another, at Great Gaddesden, is in the garden wall of Glebe House, one of the most beautiful homes for miles around. So beautiful, in fact, that I did not notice the postbox until a few weeks ago; in previous rambles I had eyes only for the house and garden.

Tring, by the way, has a Victorian postbox in the wall of the house next door to the Museum.

NEWS FROM EXMOOR

Antiquary's Exmoor is the title of a recently published book by Mr. Charles Whybrow, an old boy of Berkhamsted School and son of the late Mr. G. H. Whybrow, author of *The History of Berkhamsted Common*.

On retiring from the Colonial Service, Mr. Charles Whybrow lived in Berkhamsted for a few years and was an active member of the Citizens' Association and the Local History Society. Then, nearly 20 years ago, he moved to Bratton Fleming, on the edge of Exmoor, where he has made interesting discoveries. As writer, editor and lecturer, he is known over a wide area.

Berkhamsted's loss was Exmoor's gain.

LATE NEWS

On Monday and Tuesday, a new coffee and eating house in the High Street proved very popular, especially to the juniors, who crowded into it fifty at a time.

Good news, isn't it, after all we have heard about the need for a coffee bar for the town's teenagers. But wait a moment. The news item quoted above is taken from the *Berkhamsted Times*, dated 30th December, 1887. In another column appears an advertisement for 'the Prince Edward Coffee Tavern, nearly opposite the Town Hall, now open to supply refreshments of the best quality at London prices. Tea, coffee and cocoa always ready.'

Another item in the same issue of the *Berkhamsted Times* states: 'At the general market on Saturday evening last, seven butchers had stalls, and beef was to be had at "ten pounds for three bob".'

MAN-MADE HILL

If you wander over what we once called the Park you have no doubt seen a nice little recreation ground at the east end of the Dell Field allotments, between Normandy Drive and the railway.

I wonder how many people know the origin of the high bank on the railway side of this open space? An old friend has just told me that his father, as a very small boy, remembered earth being piled up on this site when the fourth railway line was laid in 1875. The earth was taken from the last of the three Northchurch tunnels; that's the one you can see right through from a certain point in Billet Lane.

UNFURNISHED

A short time ago several French schoolgirls were taken on a conducted tour of Berkhamsted Castle.

'But where is the furniture?' asked one of the girls.

BERKHAMSTED FILM SOCIETY

Berkhamsted Film Society have arranged an interesting and exciting programme for the coming season. All meetings will be held in the King's Hall, starting at 8 p.m. on the day in question. The films are

'Zulu'—29th September.
'If'—28th October.
'The white hell of Pitz Palu'—17th November.
'Viva Maria'—16th December.
'A midsummer night's dream'—19th January 1971.
'Blow Lip'—17th February.
'The Whisperers'—16th March.
'Far from the madding crowd'—7th April.

New members are very welcome to join the society. The fee is 30 shillings (fifty shillings for husband and wife; 20 shillings for a student). Please contact Mrs. Mary Emeny (Berk. 5805) or Mr. J. Edwards (Berk. 2013).

5 Way Savings

MASTERPLAN	7% = £12. 0.0%*
PAID-UP SHARES	5% = £ 8.10.2%*
SUBSCRIPTION SHARES	5½% = £ 9. 7.3%*
DEPOSITS	4¾% = £ 8. 1.8%*
S.A.Y.E. SCHEME	7% = £12. 0.0%*

* Where tax is paid at 8/3 in the £

INVEST IN STRENGTH — SAVE WITH CONFIDENCE

Assets over £5,000,000 — Reserves over £258,000

Call, write or telephone for Investment Booklets
Manager and Secretary: C. R. Hunt, F.B.S.

H E M E L B U I L D I N G
H E M P S T E A D S O C I E T Y

AUTHORISED FOR TRUSTEE INVESTMENT

Chief Office: 43 Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead Tel. 54155/564
Branch Office: 119 High Street, Berkhamsted Tel. 2778

Member of The Building Societies' Association

WEST HERTS CHRYSANTHEMUM
DAHLIA AND FLORAL ART SOCIETY

1970

SECOND 1970 FLOWER SHOW IN BERKHAMSTED

Saturday 26th September
In St. Peters Hall. Doors open 1.30 p.m.

Entries from non-members invited

Schedules and entry forms from Show Secretary, Mr. A. E. Garrard, 107 Windmill St., H. Hempstead, or Secretary, Mr. L. Lawrence, 90 Vauxhall Rd., H. Hempstead.

DENNIS C. RANDALL

RESTORER OF ANTIQUES

FURNITURE: FRENCH &
WAX POLISHING

CONSERVATION OF
OIL PAINTINGS

ALL WORKS OF ART

PERSONAL ATTENTION

BERKHAMSTED 4070

COLLIER COTTAGE
NEW ROAD, NORTHCHURCH

MILTON HOUSE PLAYGROUP

Doctors Commons Road,
Berkhamsted

For children
3 to 5 years old

Principal

Mrs. A. R. HAIGH

Telephone 4672