

Berkhamsted Notebook

By TOWNSMAN

In Cold Storage

A great place for archives, Berkhamsted. At Ashridge, thousands upon thousands of documents are stored at the Public Record Office. Nearer home, Kingshill is being groomed for film stardom. It is to provide a country home for the National Film Archive.

So far, so good. But we also have our own archives, and the only time we see the town's old documents, pictures and relics is when we have a 'Bygone Berkhamsted' exhibition.

Why not a permanent show? Towns smaller and much less interesting than Berkhamsted have museums, but we have nowhere to display even a map or an old rate summons. A shame, I call it.

Kingshill

Speaking of the National Film Archive, a Sunday newspaper reported that a storehouse for films was to be built at 'Kingsmill, Berkhamstead, Herts.' I pardon the mis-spelling of Kingshill, but wish Fleet Street would toe the line by not using the long-winded spelling of the town's name.

Despite its 16th century ancestry, little is known about the history of Kingshill, and we do not even know how the name originated. Was there a royal

connection, or was the hill named after a long-forgotten Mr. King?

Anyway, Kingshill undoubtedly inspired the name King's Road (formerly it was Cocks Lane), and for better or worse we also have a Lower's King's Road. If I had my way I would cut out the 'Lower', but this would necessitate renumbering the houses, and as I do not live there I suppose I should mind my own business.

Bright Lights

My note about the switch from gas to electric street lighting brought an amusing note from an old friend. He writes: 'I expect you remember, as I do, the old-time lamplighter who cycled round the streets at dusk to light the gas lamps. It was a novelty when the first clocks were installed; we loved to hear them tick away. Suddenly there was a loud click, followed by a whoosh, as the gas was automatically switched on. But somehow I always felt that gremlins, not clocks, switched the lights off. Returning home by a late train, I found that one lamp after another went out when I was within about 20 yards of it.'

Speaking of public lighting, when the first gas lamps were installed there was a standing order for the lamplighter to

stay at home when there was a full moon. Victorians could be trusted not to squander public money when Nature provided the illumination!

Now we have artificial full moons every night, and light sleepers who would rather be dark sleepers have my sympathy if their bedrooms are floodlit.

Climbing the Heights

Which is the taller—St. Peter's Church tower or the Baptist Church spire? The Baptists, I believe, win by a few feet, but as they are now raising funds for restoring the spire I imagine that they would not be sorry if it were shorter. The cost of scaffolding rises with the height.

The spire, I am glad to hear, is pretty sound, but needs a little attention here and there. That is why workmen are to climb—or perhaps have already climbed—to the top to put one of the town's most familiar landmarks in good order.

I do not imagine that anyone will play a cornet solo at the top of the spire in 1966. As I mentioned a few months ago, Thomas Ellens did just that when the Baptist Church was built a hundred years ago.

In the Looking Glass

From the *Berkhamsted St. Peter Parish Magazine*, September 1915, price one penny:

'The Rector in 1755 must, I think, have taken to wearing his wig awry, for 1s. 6d. was spent on a looking glass for the Vestry Room. We can only hope that the parson took the hint thus delicately conveyed by his churchwardens.'