

Berkhamsted Notebook

By TOWNSMAN

Showing the Way

On four recent visits to the County Library I have been asked for information by drivers held up by the traffic lights at Barclays Bank corner. A book under my arm makes me look knowledgeable!

A lorry driver wanted to know the way to Hemel Hempstead. 'Which way to Tring, guv?' asked another. The third man's target was the M1. The fourth enquirer, a lady, had a map in her hand and wanted to know where she was. 'Berkhamsted,' I said, and she looked absolutely flabbergasted.

I feel that we could be more helpful to drivers who arrive at the crossroads with no map and no local knowledge. Coming down Kings Road one sees an ancient board which points the way ahead to Whipsnade and Little Gaddesden, and arrows a left turn to Aylesbury and a right turn to London. Most people have a *general* sense of direction. What many of them want to know is the way to Hemel Hempstead or Tring.

And the car park behind the Post Office would be better used if strangers knew where it was *before* turning into the High Street from Kings Road. The sign on the lamp standard outside Barclays Bank could be better sited.

Rotten Shame

Speaking of signposts, the good name of Potten End is still being taken in vain by half-wits who add a stroke to the P, turning it into an R. This scandal has been going on since I was a boy; not that I started the habit. It is a rotten shame.

Still on the subject of signposts, there is one at Flamstead with the spelling 'Berkamsted.' This highway robbery of an aspirate, I imagine, is the responsibility of the Ertfordshire County Council.

The 'Gamma' Airship

A former Berkhamstedian, now living in Sussex, refers to some suggestions made a short time ago for additional episodes in the event of the Pageant being revived. None, he thought, would be more appropriate to the Castle and its grounds, though very difficult to reproduce, than the arrival of the 'Gamma' airship 53 years ago. He sends the following extract from *The Berkhamstedian* of July 1913:

'A unique honour was paid to us by an Old Boy some four weeks ago. Lieutenant Fletcher, of the Royal Flying Corps, flew here in the "Gamma" and landed in the Castle grounds. We

were the first school to be honoured by a special visit of an airship. The ship arrived in the early morning of May 29 after a short stay at Woodstock. It departed also in the early hours on Friday and looked a fine sight as it circled over the Quad.'

Photographs of the 'Gamma' are still extant. But how could we reproduce such an incident in a Pageant? Airships are rather rare nowadays. Perhaps a satellite would do.

Ninety-Two Not Out

Another reader, who lives at Ilfracombe, has written to say how much she enjoys reading the *Review*. Mrs. F. L. Cooke (*née* Florence Louise Richardson) was born at Gossoms End on 16th November, 1874, and in advance I send greetings on her 92nd birthday.

'I notice there is a competition for a name for Berkhamsted's guide dog for the blind,' Mrs. Cooke writes. 'May I suggest "Tops," as the milk bottle tops made him possible?'

Passed to the Editor, madam!

All Over the Place

A parcel intended for a Berkhamsted tradesman was addressed to High Street, Hemel Hempstead, and returned to the sender with the famous inscription 'Not known.'

It was then readdressed to 'High Street, Berkhamsted, Berks.' Somebody spotted the error, crossed out 'Berks,' and substituted 'Bucks.'

Nevertheless, the parcel was eventually delivered to the correct address in Berkhamsted, Herts.