

Berkhamsted Notebook

By TOWNSMAN

Busman's Holiday

Another reduction in the 301 bus service between Northchurch and Aylesbury—the one section of a long route which escapes competition from the high-speed railway—is not serious so long as Green Line coaches maintain the present service. But what a change from the times, not so many years ago, when one seldom waited more than a quarter of an hour for a bus. The private car is all-conquering, and those without their own transport must stand and wait.

Before we had bus links with Watford, Chesham, Potten End and other ports of call east, north and south of the town, a private Aylesbury firm started a service between Berkhamsted and Aylesbury, using a midget bus which carried about 14 passengers. This service began two or three years after the 1914—18 War, and such was the novelty that Mr. A. H. Sprigge, then owner of the outfitter's shop at the corner of Prince Edward Street, included the words 'Where the bus turns round' in his advertisements.

Earlier still, in 1899, the London and North Western Railway Company ran a motor-bus between Berkhamsted station and Chesham for an experi-

mental period, but soon reverted to a horse-drawn bus. It is fair, I believe, to claim that Berkhamsted was one of the first towns in the country to have a motor-bus. But no trams—we turned them down in the 1880s!

The Baptist Church Spire

It is grievous news that the Baptist Church spire is to come down. I paid my tribute to this landmark two months ago, when it seemed that there was a good chance of saving the structure, and my paragraph brought an interesting comment from a reader. She had always understood that a Victorian townsman, one of the pillars of St. Peter's Church, contributed generously to the Baptist Church building fund to enable a more elaborate structure than was originally planned to be erected.

I have no documentary proof of this story, but I hope it is true.

We need go no farther than Hemel Hempstead to know that a spire is always expensive and difficult to maintain. It is possible that originally there was a spire on Berkhamsted St. Peter's, but the tower has been with us since the reign of Henry VIII, and we should be grateful to the men who built it for walls of stronghold proportions.

Clash of Dates

Much as I enjoy playgoing, I found it difficult to see three local efforts in the space of four days. At Ashlyns School 'Romanoff and Juliet' was running concurrently with 'Born Yesterday' at St. Peter's Hall. The last performances of both plays coincided with the 'first night' of 'The Business of Good Government' in the Parish Church, which, happily, was repeated on Sunday night.

Despite diaries kept at the Civic Centre and the *Gazette* office for listing future events, we constantly have umpteen different events at the same time. I hate to saddle hon. secs. with further duties (I happen to be one myself) but consultations at the start of each season would spread the load.

Our Footpaths

A new resident tells me that she is astonished by the number of roads without footpaths in Berkhamsted: Chesham Road, Whitehill, parts of Gravel Path and Cross Oak Road, etc. 'You don't see this sort of thing in other towns,' she said.

Oh yes, you do! Like all old towns, Berkhamsted 'just growed', and the lack of footpaths wasn't a very serious matter when traffic was light.

For safety's sake I wish there were footpaths beside every road. For the same reason I also wish the footpaths we already have were level and trip-free. We still suffer from ancient frosts which forced up paving stones, and now I suppose we have the economic freeze as a further excuse for taking the rough with the smooth.