



# Berkhamsted Notebook

 By TOWNSMAN 

## Canal Field

Less public interest than I expected was aroused by reports that Canal Field, beyond the swimming bath, has been recommended as a site for the proposed Social Centre. Such few comments as I have heard have been rather anti. Isn't the site off the beaten track? Cannot a more central site—as central as the Town Hall—be found?

Well, ask the people who served on a steering committee composed of a few members of the Urban Council and representatives of local societies. They explored every avenue from Woodlands to Shrublands and went siteseeing (sorry!) up and down the High Street. What sent them galloping to pastures new was a demand for the proposed building to have its very own parking area for 100 cars. You don't easily find that sort of space in a town which keeps on bursting at the seams. Neither can you be certain where the town centre will be in years to come.

My private view is that the Social Centre will be a roaring success only if it is built on a very good site, and I would not call Canal Field a *very* good site just yet. My enthusiasm may mount

if and when better approaches are provided, so I shall go on pacing the canal towpath at a steady four knots an hour in the hope of seeing improvements.

By the way, I have a hunch that we shall go on using the old Town Hall for at least another eight years. Oh, I know my Berkhamsted! We started talking about a Social Centre 25 years ago, and are still in the process of tuning up for a rehearsal of the overture.

## Over the Border

When we step or drive out of Hertfordshire into Buckinghamshire, leaving the Bedford for the Oxford telephone area, we also pass from the diocese of St. Albans into the diocese of Oxford.

If certain proposals to be discussed at Oxford next spring are adopted, our Buckinghamshire neighbours may find themselves in a new diocese of Aylesbury. The Oxford diocese could be facing the most radical change since it was created in 1542; at present it covers three counties, and the proposal is to have three dioceses instead of one. Aylesbury and Reading would become cathedral cities.

Berkhamsted, in the diocese of

Lincoln until 1845, was transferred to Rochester for 32 years. Then, in 1877, the diocese of St. Albans was created, comprising both Hertfordshire and Essex. But Essex was constituted a separate diocese in 1914 and in that year Bedfordshire was transferred from Ely to St. Albans.

## Gravel Path

'Can you tell me how and when Gravel Path received its name? It seems an extraordinary thing for a road to be called a path.'

To my regret, I am unable to answer this question for a reader. I cannot recall seeing the name in old documents, but a track from Raven's Lane to the Common certainly existed centuries ago, and was sufficiently important to warrant building a substantial bridge over the railway 130 years ago.

Perhaps a resident of Gravel Path can help with fact or theory.

## Roc-o-long

A reader has shown me a copy of the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* for 4th April, 1923, containing an illustration of children riding an unusual breed of rocking horse. The caption states: 'The "Roc-o-long," a toy invented by Mr. L. N. Reader, of Berkhamsted, is a wooden horse that can be made to canter.'

Does any Reader, with or without a capital R, remember the inventor and his invention?