



The Friends of St Peter's Newsletter

Number 3 – Autumn 2014

Introduction by the Chairman of the Trustees

The summer has been a busy period for the Friends of St Peter's. A well-attended social event was held on 12th June when Norman Groves and Brian Shepherd gave a fascinating talk entitled "The Devil's Own in Berkhamsted and their WW1 trenches on the Common". This was followed, on 14th September, by "The Graveyard Shift" which was a Heritage Open Day held at the Rectory Lane Cemetery. An article by James Moir on this most successful event appears elsewhere in this Newsletter and I commend it to you. The Trustees are extremely grateful to all those who organised and participated in these two events.

I am very pleased to be able to report that the necessary repairs to the East face mechanism of the Church clock have been successfully completed and an article on this also appears later in this Newsletter. The Trustees are now engaged in discussions with an heraldic artist in relation to the creation of a Coat of Arms and board to commemorate the diamond jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. It is intended that this will complement the impressively renovated Coat of Arms of Queen Elizabeth I and more about this exciting project will be published in due course.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who do so much for the Friends, especially our donors and volunteers. We depend on your generosity which is greatly appreciated.

Peter Williamson

Welcome

The Trustees and Members of the Friends are looking forward to the arrival of Revd Canon Tim Pilkington as the new Rector of St Peter's. The Institution and Installation of Father Tim will take place at St Peter's on Monday, December 1st at 7.30 p.m. All are welcome.



Revd Canon Tim Pilkington

An Introductory letter from Father Tim appears overleaf in this Newsletter

Patrons and Trustees

Patrons

Carolann Smith-Dorrien
The Venerable Jonathan P. Smith, Archdeacon of St Albans

Trustees

Chairman: Peter Williamson
(peter.williamson47@btinternet.com)
Sec: Cathy Imber (cathy.imber@btopenworld.com)
Treas: Victoria Booth (victoriabooth@tiscali.co.uk)
Rector of St Peter's (rector@greatbrkhamsted.org.uk)
Paul Crosland (peejaycee@yahoo.com)
Christopher Green (green@waitrose.com)
David Pearce (drap@15pvr.me.uk)
Penella Warren (penella@homequest-rentalrentals.co.uk)
James Moir (jamesmgmoir@aol.com)

Rectory Lane Cemetery Project



Work parties take place in the cemetery on the first Sunday of the month 2-4 p.m. If you would like to help with the work in the cemetery, please contact James Moir. jamesmgmoir@aol.com

St Peter's Clock

During 2013 the clock on the tower of St Peter's Church became unreliable, stopping unpredictably at irregular intervals. Smith of Derby, who now maintain the clock, established that the problem was in the dialworks on the east face. In June this year, abseiling from the top of the tower, they removed the hands; then from inside the tower they withdrew the shafts that drive them. Inspection revealed that at some time in the past one of the shafts had been struck by lightning and that this was the underlying cause of the problem. Before the end of August, repairs were complete, the dialworks were back in place and the clock was working again. The cost was met by a grant from the Friends, drawing substantially on a generous donation from the John Apthorp Trust and on a grant from Berkhamsted Town Council.



There has been a clock on the tower of St Peter's Church for more than four hundred years. The first record is in the Vestry Book in 1588 and there are records at intervals through the 17th and 18th centuries. During this long period, the clock appears to have had a single dial on the west face of the tower.

However some thirty years before the Butterfield restoration, a new clock had been installed in the tower. In 1838, the parish ordered a clock from Thwaites & Read of Clerkenwell to celebrate the accession of Queen Victoria. It first appears in prints illustrating the visit of the Queen and Prince Albert to Berkhamsted in 1841. One hundred and seventy three years later, this is the clock we still have today. Originally it had only two dials, one on the east face and the other on the west. However, quite soon a dial on the north face was added which is visible in a drawing dated 1851.

The church clock is greatly valued by the citizens of Berkhamsted. It is one of the many ways in which St Peter's Church is central to the life and history of our town. There were many expressions of concern when it stopped. Putting it back in good order has been a joint effort by town and parish in which the Friends of St Peter's have had a key role.

Introductory Letter to Friends of St. Peter's

Our first visit to Berkhamsted earlier in the summer was carried out in the deepest secrecy. Alys & I parked outside Café Rouge & made our way along the main street when suddenly we caught sight of the west end of St. Peter's. Edging closer we dared to peep inside and then, with a keen eye upon the mullions (for I once inherited a church with what were rotten mullions) we traced a path around the outside. Our first impressions were of a building at the heart of the community, clearly well loved and maintained, and with a huge potential for further development, not least at the west end.

Long before Ordination my primary interests were historical and I remain fascinated by ancient buildings and the stories they tell, of the connections they have with the life & development of their local communities. My holiday reading this year included Ken Follett's "The Pillars of the Earth" which tells the story of the building of a cathedral in the turbulent times of twelfth century England. Fiction though this is, it reminds us that we can learn much from our medieval ancestors in certain ways that are relevant for us today, not least as we prepare to celebrate Christmas, that season in the Church year which celebrates one of the twin pillars of the Christian faith, that God in Jesus Christ assumes human flesh, which in the trade we call "incarnation"; God assumes human flesh in order to bring our material world into the life of God.

Our medieval builders of churches and cathedrals show us wisdom much needed today in the way they held together both the spiritual and the physical, where the physical was seen a gateway into the divine mystery and source of all life we call God. We could say that churches & cathedrals are like icons, which are never seen as ends in themselves but are meant to point us towards God, as windows into eternity. That is why in today's world, where the focus is so often on "me and my needs", parish churches stand as much needed signs for something far more profound.

As I come to join you as priest and rector not just for the congregation of St. Peter's but in that traditional Anglican sense of being priest for the whole community, I look forward to working with you to ensure that when our great celebrations arrive in 2020, the people of Berkhamsted will have a fine building which provides a place for people of all faiths or no faith to connect with what is deep inside them, a space to engage with the sacred and experience something of God's presence.

As the new Rector for Berkhamsted it affords me great pleasure to send you Christmas greetings and good wishes, and to thank you for a splendid first year of commitment and hard work. Your commitment to being a Friend of St Peter's is not just about preserving an ancient building but it is vital to its community, to all who visit from near and far, and to all those who worship or work in this town of Berkhamsted. I look forward to working with you in the years to come with both relish and zeal.

Fr. Tim Pilkington - Rector designate - October 2014.

The Rectory Lane Cemetery Project

Launch of the Rectory Lane Cemetery Project

The Graveyard Shift: Sunday Sept 14th 2.00-6.00

The Launch of the Rectory Lane Cemetery as part of Berkhamsted's Heritage Open Days was about telling a story and capturing the community's thoughts about the narrative.



The Cemetery, as the atmospheric setting for the story, had been gradually taking shape for weeks beforehand, as overgrown areas were hacked back, new paths mown and monuments revealed. The story began with a flourish, as a splendid Victorian hearse pulled by two black horses swept into the site, followed by a dramatic release of doves. At each entrance, the narrative began to unfold as 'mood boards' filled in details about all the nooks and crannies of the story's landscape and the history and significance of the site.



Then the characters populating this story were introduced—individual biographies of Personalities who had shaped the town of Berkhamsted, and First World War soldiers memorialised in fourteen War Graves were illuminated by colour-coded trails.

The poignancy of the soldiers' stories was reinforced through poetry – John Macrae's *In Flanders Field* written in May 1915 and brought to life as a powerful piece of flower sculpture near their graves, or through some of the songs such as the 'Unquiet Grave' and 'Green Fields of France' sung by Daria Kulesh and her folk band *Kara*.

In this story, too, characters literally came to life. Some had imagined that Mr Ghost could only be a fictional figment... but in fact, he lived in Castle

Street and was employed as a gravedigger at Rectory Lane Cemetery in the C19th. One surreal moment occurred on the day when Mr Ghost actually came face-to-face with a relation of one of his real descendants...



And for every good story there has to be a good plot. In the Cemetery there are about a thousand of them! This was a key opportunity to have the input of visitors into the story. The Heritage Tent buzzed as a hub for enquiries for people seeking help in tracing their ancestors.

Although so much came out on the day, this is still a story without a clear ending. The whole point of the event in fact was to ask people how they would like the narrative to continue. Clues as to what might happen next were littered about the site. Preserving the stories behind each of the graves will need careful conservation and management. Professionals were on hand to demonstrate approaches to cleaning and repairing the memorials and the skills required to preserve the lettering on them. 'Thought Bubbles' across the site challenged visitors to think, for example, about how far the restoration of tombs should be taken.

We would like the story to be told more clearly, in a more inviting and permanent manner, with an ever-increasing audience. We particularly wanted to capture the imagination of young children – as they will be the ones who will continue to shape the narrative in years to come.



Building the Bug Hotel at the top of the site

So how did the 400 people who attended think the story should unfold? They gave us lots of feedback in the questionnaires they filled in. You'll need to read the next instalment to find out what they said.... PTO



With thanks to two brilliant professional photographers, David Levenson and Andy Spain.

We are also very grateful to Charlie Jarrett of Malcolm Jones and Metcalfe, Undertakers in Berkhamsted, who commissioned the hearse and doves, and also wrote and published the booklet on Memorial Symbolism.

This event was made possible with funding from Heritage Lottery Fund, Hertfordshire County Council Locality Budget, Dacorum Borough Council and Berkhamsted Town Council.

Christmas Truce 1914

Our esteemed Patron Carolann Smith-Dorrien appeared in the television programme 'Find My Past', broadcast on 1st August 2014. Her grandfather, General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, is buried in Rectory Lane Cemetery. As one of the most senior commanders of the British Expeditionary Force, he called an end to the Christmas truce in 1914 which lasted from Christmas Eve until Boxing Day.

Programme of Events November 2014 – March 2015



- 10th Nov Organ recital, Simon Pusey 8.00 pm
- 15th Bridgewater Sinfonia Concert 7.30 pm
Ravel, Elgar, Vaughan Williams
- 21st Lunchtime recital Simon Hayne on piano 1 pm
- 24th Organ recital, Ryan Leonard 8.00 pm
- 30th Rectory Lane Working Party 10am–2pm
- 7th Dec Rectory Lane Working Party 2.00–4.00pm
- 8th Recital Giles Fowler: Trumpet and Adrian Davis:
Organ 8.00 pm
- 13th Berkhamsted Choral Society Concert 7.30 pm
- 23rd Chiltern Chamber Choir Concert 7.30 pm
Monteverdi *Vespers*
- 5th Jan Winter Talk on Icons by Dr Derek Bird 8.00 pm
- 12th Organ recital, Richard Dunster-Sigtermans 8 pm
- 26th Organ recital, Julian Larkin 8.00 pm
- 16th Feb Winter Talk on International Economic
Diplomacy 8.00 pm given by
Creon Butler –Economic Advisor to the Treasury
- 9th Mar Winter Talk on Heraldry by John Abbott 8.00 pm
- 14th Bridgewater Sinfonia Concert 7.30 pm
Khatchaturian, Tchaikovsky, Shostakovitch
- 29th Chiltern Chamber Choir Concert 6.30 pm
Bach *St Matthew Passion*

Become a Friend

To join the Friends please use this application form (or a photocopy of it). Alternatively, you can download an Application Form from the Friends website:

www.stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk

Personal Details:

Title:
Full Name:
Address:
Postcode:
Telephone:
Email:

Subscriptions

Individual	£12
Family	£20
Corporate	£50

Gift Aid

My subscription payments **should/should not** be treated as Gift Aid donations (delete as appropriate)

Bankers Standing Order

Bank Name:
Bank Address:
Postcode:

Please pay The Friends of St Peter's Church
Great Berkhamsted, A/c No. 64109216, NatWest Bank
(60-02-21) the sum of:

£	Amount in words
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Beginning on :

Date:

and annually thereafter until further notice, charging my account:

Account Name:
Sort Code:
Account Number:

Date:

Signature: