



Registered Charity No. 1160314

The Friends of St Peter's Newsletter

Number 24 – Autumn 2025

Introduction by the Chairman of the Trustees

At this time of year, the themes of remembrance and remembering feature prominently in both church and nation. In this month we mark Remembrance Sunday of course, when St Peter's welcomes lots of visitors to share in the Service of Remembrance. It's also a time of year when we remember family members and friends who have died, as the Church commemorates All Souls' Day.

There's also something about autumn itself which can foster a spirit of remembering, reminiscing perhaps. The darkening hues of the season herald our transition into another year's final act and perhaps our minds drift back over the year that is passing and the memories it's leaving us with. Or maybe that's just me being my usual melancholic self!

What and how we choose to remember shapes who we are, day by day. Our memories form the stories we tell about ourselves and about our place in the world. The more uncertain and unpredictable our lives feel, the more important those stories are to us, helping us to make some sense of the present moment.

Churches, in many different ways, are buildings whose form and content tell all sorts of stories. One of my roles as parish priest, obviously, is to share the story of faith that St Peter's tells, but that is not the building's only story. A parish church is part of the story of many people's personal lives, where weddings and baptisms are celebrated, school Harvest Festivals and Leavers' services take place, where we come to light candles as fragile beacons of our longings and fears, and where we gather to say farewell to people whom we have loved. A visitor to St Peter's who's just 'having a look around', might still find some story that resonates with them in our stone legacy of eight centuries of hope.

In the stories we tell we find the meaning that makes our hard days a little easier to navigate, and our happy days yet more joyful. In more different ways than I can imagine, St Peter's is a place which can help people with their story-making. And so to all those who support the Friends of St Peter's, thank you for the contribution you make which helps to keep the doors of St Peter's open so that people can continue to visit and find a place to remember, a place to renew their stories.

by Father Stuart Owen

New! Crossword on Page 4

2 x £25 prizes to be won!

Artisan and Makers' Market

The Friends of St Peter's is a fundraising organisation. So, crazy idea of the month – let's run a Sunday Market. Get some stall holders; persuade the world they'd like to attend, and bring in some regular income for FoSP from the pitch fees – can't be that difficult! 🙄

Actually, it wasn't. I just needed to learn a few new skills – build a website; delve into the depths of social media, design some publicity leaflets & banners and we're off. (www.berkhamstedartisanmarket.co.uk)

I visited all the local markets a few times, talked to the stall holders, gave out business cards referring them to our brand new website and asked them to get in touch if they'd be interested in having a stall. Instagram was also a god send. Think pyramid selling. Follow someone popular locally, their followers see your posts and follow you, and then their followers and so it goes on, and word spreads. However, when it came to TikTok - big failure. My granddaughter set me up and followed me and told me to follow Waitrose. The result is that I'm now followed by a load of 14yr olds and bombarded by silly Waitrose videos, made by their staff, which I can't get rid of.



Evenings spent on Instagram & Facebook and market visits got us an amazing 37 stalls booked in for our first market on Sunday 12th October (I'd set 10 as the go/no-go number) and currently 35 for our second market on 30th November.

Now where to locate them on the High Street, dodging lampposts, bins, cycle racks, power columns and the odd bench or two. You would not believe the number of times I paced the High Street, clipboard in one hand, phone in the other, peering intently at the ground, measuring the distances between various bits of street furniture. Some very strange looks, but no one asked. (You can look very official and a bit scary if you carry a clipboard and hang around). My phone has a very useful laser measuring app.

I owe a big thank you to Adam from Cook & Butler on Lower Kings Road who runs the brilliant Antiques and Vintage Market on the first Sunday of the month, and who shared his street plan and lots of other stuff.

...Continued overleaf

Artisan and Makers' Market continued

On 12th October, it's a case of the blind leading the blind, my first effort at organising a market and 37 stall holders, who don't know Berko High Street arriving at 7a.m. to unload. They'd been allocated pitch numbers and sent a Google Earth screen dump of roughly where their pitch was located, but I still felt the need to mark up the High St, so at 5.30 a.m. I'm a lone figure in the dark, chalking numbers on the pavement and doing even more measuring. Only to discover that my amazing folding 3m measuring stick, carefully made with bits of an old venetian blind stuck together with gorilla tape, was actually 30 cm short 😞 now you understand why the High Street needed to be measured many times. Well, alone, at least until the amazing Paul Crosland arrived to give me a hand, and be the tall person who helped put up gazebos whilst I, anything but a tall person, was useful as ballast and stood on the feet.

At 7a.m. the stall holders start arriving and surprisingly to me, chaos did not ensue and it was the start of a brilliant day. We were lucky with the weather, the High Street was buzzing. The stall holders made loads of money and are keen to return, the coffee shops did well, and overall it was a fun day with some great comments from the stall holders. Several sold out, and one took the most she'd ever taken at a market.



However, the downside was the cake stall holders who insisted on giving me bags of what they had left, as they cleared down – and I'm not one to look at a cake and not eat it, hence being good ballast

The next Market is **30th November** and we've added in an extra one on **14th December** at the request of some of the stall holders, so do come down and support them and enjoy the atmosphere.

Markets are great for the town; the town centre comes alive, the High Street businesses benefit, as does the Town Hall Trust, so our intention is to run a regular market on the 2nd Sunday of the month from March next year and bring in some regular income for the Friends.

The pitch fees paid by the stall holders all go to the Friends so we raised around £1000 on the day. The Town Hall Trust, to whom we would normally pay a fee for putting on a market, have waived the fee for 3 markets.

Now to embark on November and December. 😊

By Anne Foster

Mending the Leads

We are raising funds for the renewal of lead on the church roof. These are words we have often heard in recent years, but the citizens of Berkhamsted have heard them many times before. The Churchwardens' accounts are full of references to work on the lead of the church roofs. In the 1590s payments were being made almost every year for 'mending the leades', or buying the solder to do it. Many of the payments were to local men and much of the work seems to have been done without engaging a skilled lead worker. However, from time to time a plumber was approached to undertake a major piece of work. So, in 1613 the plumber Thomas Foster was paid £32-1s-10d to replace the lead over the Lady Chapel. To meet this cost, the Vestry, the historic predecessor of the PCC, had the power to levy a tax on parishioners. To pay Thomas Foster they set a rate of 4d per acre for the owners of arable land and 12d per acre for meadow, and raised £36-19s-8d. Eighteen years later in 1631 we learn that 'the church walls and leades were in great decay' and the Vestry was raising funds for 'reparation' on an almost annual basis. The plumber Richard Poolye who had replaced the lead over the north aisle in 1628, was engaged in 1632 to work on the roof of the 'Scholars' Chapel', or as we know it, St John's Chantry.



St Peter's Church drawing by John Buckler 1830

Roofs were neglected for the rest of the 17th century. To such an extent that one day in the 1720s, just after the scholars had left their chapel following their daily service, the main beam supporting the roof broke and the roof fell in. Fortunately no one was killed or injured. We don't know who undertook the repairs or how much it cost, but we do know that repairs to the roofs of the church were undertaken from time to time throughout the 18th century. Interesting evidence of this is preserved above the Lady Chapel where workman inscribed names and dates on the beams that support the roof. The oldest record here is of Wm Hunt 1724. There are four more names from the 18th century, John Bourne 1758, Wm Burn carpenter and Richard Burlingham, both with a date of 1778 and Robert Loder who was Churchwarden from 1788 to 1800. There are also dates in the early 19th century which may relate to the restoration of the church begun in 1818 under the direction of Jeffry Wyatt. The lead of the nave roof, now replaced with copper, had cast in it the names of Thomas Archer and John Griffin, Churchwardens between 1810 and 1819.

The most far-reaching restoration of St Peter's was begun in 1868 under the direction of William

Butterfield. He transformed some of the church's roofs. The roof of the chancel was completely reconstructed with the steep pitch we see today. The roof of the south transept was also reconstructed with a pitch steeper than the original medieval roof.

Restoration and reordering of the church continued at intervals up to the First World War. Local architect Charles Rew was actively involved and his name is inscribed on the lead of the north transept roof recording its replacement in 1898, together with the Rector Arthur Johnson, the Churchwardens Thomas Penny and Edwin Pearson, the plumber H. Holt, and S. Beddell, possibly the plumber's mate. The church archives include a Faculty for the replacement of the gutters in 1903, but after that, nothing until the 1950s. In 1956 a faculty was granted to repair the nave roof timbers and to replace the lead on the nave roof with copper. In the event, when the lead was removed from the late medieval roof of the nave in May 1958, the timber was found to be so decayed that the parish had to set about its complete replacement. This work formed part of a wider re-ordering of the church which was funded by an appeal that raised the equivalent in today's money of about £480,000.



1958 - no health and safety restrictions then!

But there's rarely any respite in the care of roofs. An infestation of deathwatch beetle was found and treated in 1970 in the roofs of the south aisle and St John's Chantry and the present boarded ceilings were put in place. Then in 1978 an attempted theft of the lead from the north aisle revealed that the timber there was also infested with deathwatch. A year later the lead on the south aisle, St John's Chantry and St Catherine's Chapel was replaced with copper, and in 1995 the lead on the south slope of the chancel was renewed.

Now, thirty years later, we need to replace the lead on the north transept and the copper on the south aisle, St John's Chantry and St Catherine's Chapel. We are beginning with the lead on the east slope of the north transept. It will probably cost us over £60,000, so the cost of all the work needed to repair all the roofs of the church is likely to be at least £250,000. This is the challenge that faces us, whether we care about St Peter's as our place of worship or value it as an historic landmark and a rich historical archive in the heart of our town.

By Christopher Green

Rectory Lane Cemetery

Rectory Lane Cemetery continues to provide a welcome space for members of the local community – as a place for reflection, relaxation, socialising, exercising, communing with nature, and commemoration. Our volunteers keep it looking wonderful, whether mowing, grave gardening, sweeping and raking, planting, composting, beekeeping, pond managing. It is still looking colourful even now. At the time of writing we have been shortlisted for the **Green Flag Best of the Best Volunteer Team Award** – we will hear on 20th November. Fingers crossed – they certainly deserve it. We've also been shortlisted for the **Green Flag Best of the Best Biodiversity Project Award** and are hoping to be successful in the **People's Choice Awards**!

Remembrance Sunday was a moving event – the two-minute silence broken only by the sound of birdsong.



It's gratifying that more people are choosing our Garden of Remembrance for the interment of their loved ones' ashes and the commemoration of loved ones, with glass tiles engraved with moving dedications. If you're interested in either of these services just contact team@rectorylanecemetery.org.uk.

The regular Wednesday work parties are still going – small but mighty! Sometimes worryingly small, though, so please do think about joining us – green physical exercise, a sense of achievement and comradeship guaranteed. Dogs on leads welcome and tea and biscuits at the end!

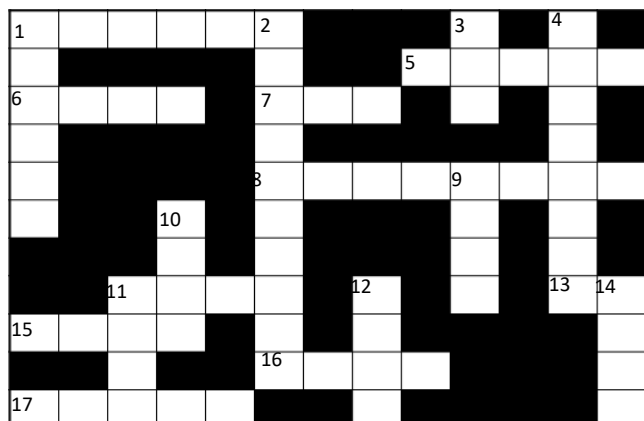


We were pleased to participate in the first Artisan and Makers' Market organised to raise funds for FoSP – we sold a lot of our Cemetery honey and some beautiful, dried flowers made for us. The rest of the honey will be sold inside the church at the Festival of Light later this month.

By Kate Campbell

The Crossword

This crossword is based on St Peter's Church and memorials within it.



ACROSS

1. Rector's first name (6)
5. Church _____, restored in 2025 (5)
6. Saint with pet swan in church window (4)
7. Primary colour of church ceiling (3)
8. Middle name of James Smith's wife – St. John's Chantry (8)
11. Object just inside West door (4)
13. Before noon (initials) (2)
15. John Sayer's royal job (4)
16. Long central part of church (4)
17. _____ Potter, Churchwarden 1735 (5)

DOWN

1. Institution below church on Castle Street (6)
2. South Aisle brass – couple's surname (10)
3. Species of tree at corner with Castle Street (3)
4. Word on banners in St Peter's (8)
9. Floor cover in centre of church (backwards) (4)
10. Charles _____, Churchwarden in 1860 (4)
11. Number of clocks on church tower (4)
12. Number of angels on church pulpit (4)
14. _____ Lord Somerville, Memorial in the North aisle (4)

Please send your crossword answers, together with your name and email address or phone number, to Steve Elliff at:

SEElliff@Berkhamsted.com

or
The Old Dairy, Castle Street, Berkhamsted

Two prizes of £25 each will be awarded to the first two correct entries received. Please submit your entries by the end of December 2025. Winners will be notified in January 2026.

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:

⁴ 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:

Please return this form to: Paul Crosland,
11 Upper Hall Park, Berkhamsted, HP4 2NW