



# The Friends of St Peter's Newsletter

Number 1 – September 2013

## Inaugural Meeting

The Friends of St Peter's was launched as a Trust earlier this year in St Peter's Church on May 15<sup>th</sup>. The event was attended by the Patrons of the Trust, Carolann Smith Dorrien, whose family have long associations with the town and with St Peter's Church and The Venerable Jonathan Smith, Archdeacon of St Albans. About eighty townsfolk attended and various local groups with interests in the welfare of St Peter's Church and the Rectory Lane Cemetery were represented, including the Berkhamsted Citizens Association, the Local History and Museum Society and the Berkhamsted and District Archaeological Society.



The Chairman of the new Trust, Peter Williamson, formerly Chairman of the Governors of Berkhamsted School, opened the meeting by introducing the Trustees and giving a brief account of the aims of the Friends. David Pearce, Churchwarden of St Peter's emphasised the central place of St Peter's Church in the life of the town, and Christopher Green, Chairman of the St Peter's Buildings Committee and former Churchwarden, outlined the long history of fund-raising that had maintained the fabric of St Peter's in the past. Informal discussion followed, wine was served and those attending were invited to view an exhibition of historic paintings, photographs and documents from the St Peter's archives, illustrating in particular the various campaigns of fund-raising and restoration that have maintained St Peter's Church as one of the finest parish churches in Hertfordshire.

## Patrons and Trustees

### Patrons

Carolann Smith Dorrien

The Venerable Jonathan P. Smith, Archdeacon of St Albans

### Trustees

Chairman: Peter Williamson ([peter.williamson47@btinternet.com](mailto:peter.williamson47@btinternet.com))

Secretary: Cathy Imber ([cathy.imber@btopenworld.com](mailto:cathy.imber@btopenworld.com))

Treasurer: Victoria Booth ([victoriabooth@tiscali.com](mailto:victoriabooth@tiscali.com))

The Revd Dr Michael Bowie ([rector@greatberkhamsted.org.uk](mailto:rector@greatberkhamsted.org.uk))

Paul Crosland ([peejaycee@yahoo.com](mailto:peejaycee@yahoo.com))

Christopher Green ([green@waitrose.com](mailto:green@waitrose.com))

David Pearce ([drap@15pvr.me.uk](mailto:drap@15pvr.me.uk))

Penella Warren ([penella@homequest-rentals.co.uk](mailto:penella@homequest-rentals.co.uk))

## Rectory Lane Cemetery

The oldest part of the Rectory Lane Cemetery was consecrated in 1842 and in 1855 the churchyard around St Peter's Church was closed for burials. For more than a century the Rectory Lane Cemetery was the principal burial ground in Berkhamsted, but from the 1950s lack of space has meant that few burials have taken place there, with the result that in more recent times the level of maintenance has gradually declined. Now, through its Rectory Lane Cemetery Working Group, the Friends are moving towards a major programme of conservation and improvement to create an attractive public open space in a part of the town which lacks green spaces.

The longer term aim of the initiative is the creation of broader areas of mown grass with some planting of ornamental and woodland trees and reinstatement of paths. There is scope also for setting aside part of the area for wildlife conservation and for creating educational and recreational trails highlighting the natural history and historical interest of the site. Many of the town's old families are buried there and can be linked to the history of the town in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

But for the present, the most important task is to record what is there, especially the inscriptions on the surviving gravestones and monuments. The Friends Rectory Lane Group is already actively undertaking this work. Ten members of the Group met in the rain at the cemetery on 29<sup>th</sup> July to discuss the way forward and as a result work is now in hand to expose inscriptions hidden by unwanted plant growth so that they can be recorded and photographed. Part of this work is to be undertaken by the Hertfordshire Family History Society with a view to a publication of the burial records. At the same time work has begun on the preparation of an accurate plan of the cemetery marking individual graves and buildings and significant trees.

Further work that needs to be undertaken as soon as possible is a complete environmental and ecological survey of the area to establish the exact significance of its natural history interest.

All of this work is a necessary preliminary to applications for funding to undertake more substantial works of improvement, including levelling of areas of subsidence, repairs to walls and gateways, reinstatement of paths and repair or removal of damaged monuments.

*If you feel that you could help in any way with this programme of maintenance, recording and improvement please contact.*

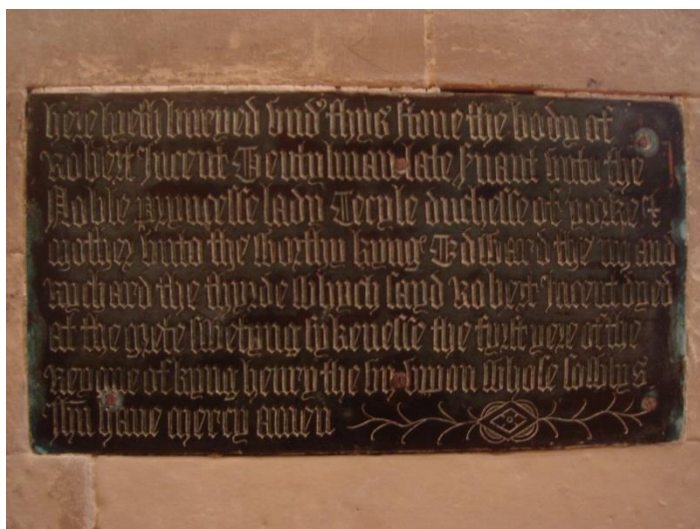
**Christopher Green:**

Tel: 01442 863241 Email: [green@waitrose.com](mailto:green@waitrose.com)

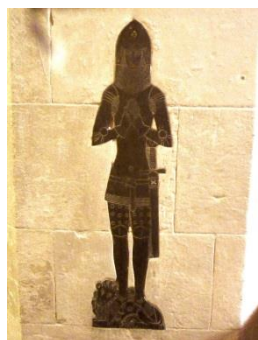
## Mediaeval Brasses

There are interesting mediaeval brasses in St Peter's. The Torrington brasses on the south wall are well known. They have been mounted and preserved from damp by being set on a cedar wood backing. Other brasses are showing the effects of slow corrosion and they need to be lifted, cleaned, and mounted.

Two Incent brasses are set on a pillar in St John's Chantry. One is the depiction of John Incent's mother, Katherine, and the other is a memorial to his father, Robert, who died of 'the great sweating sickness'. This is an interesting historical detail as this virulent sickness was introduced into the country by the soldiers who landed with the Duke of Richmond. He, with his victory at Bosworth, became Henry VII. The sickness, which was not the plague, was certainly introduced into the garrison of Berkhamsted Castle, and was there contracted by Robert Incent.



The Castle association is also important for another brass, that to Sir John Raven, a squire to the Black Prince. Another small brass is at present set in the floor of the vestry, which in former times was the chancel. It dates to the early fifteenth century and is thought to be the head of a priest.



The brass of John Raven

The intention is to mount all these brasses on cedar backings. They are evidence of significant aspects of Berkhamsted's history. Quite clearly there were formerly other brasses in the church, but Time and the casualness of restorers and churchwardens have allowed them to be destroyed. We must look after our heritage more carefully.

The cost of conserving the brasses is expected to be about £3,500.

The Friends will be approaching the Monumental Brass Society and other sources of grant funding, but donations towards the cost of this important work will also be welcome.

*Donations should be sent to Victoria Booth, Treasurer of the Friends at :*

*The Laurels, 19 Crossways, Berkhamsted HP4 3NH (cheques payable to Friends of St Peter's Church)*

## Elizabeth I Coat of Arms

The conservation of the Royal Coat of Arms in St Peter's Church had already been initiated before the launch of the Friends, but has now become the first major funding project to be undertaken by the Friends. The Coat of Arms is displayed on the wall of the north aisle near the west end.



The Royal Coat of Arms was first displayed in churches in the time of Henry VIII to affirm his newly established position as head of the Church of England. This position was reasserted by Elizabeth I who ordered that all churches should display the royal arms. The arms in St Peter's are those of Elizabeth I. They are a rare survival from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The coat of arms is painted on canvas on an oval panel mounted in a larger frame of later date. Attached to the frame, and of the same date is a panel (not on display at present) bearing a short poem celebrating the reign of Elizabeth:

*This mighty Queen is dead and lives  
And leaves the world to wonder  
How she a maiden Queen did rule  
Few Kings have gone beyond her*

We know that this poem was already on display in St Peter's in the 17<sup>th</sup> century because it is recorded by Chauncey in his *Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire* published in 1700.

In its present form this panel and the frame supporting the coat of arms appear to date from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The panel bearing the coat of arms is fixed to the frame with a single hinge so that it can be lifted to reveal beneath it a further inscription:

Robert Harcourt Loader and William Johnson  
Churchwardens 1797

It seems likely that this records the conservation of the coat of arms in 1797, involving the fabrication of the frame and the repainting of the poem on a separate panel.



The present programme of conservation is to be undertaken by the Cambridge fine art conservator Sally Woodcock and will begin in November at a cost of about £3,500. A grant of £1,000 has been awarded by the Church Building Council and the Friends are now seeking further grants and inviting donations to secure the balance.

*Donations should be sent to Victoria Booth, Treasurer of the Friends at :*

*The Laurels, 19 Crossways, Berkhamsted HP4 3NH (cheques payable to Friends of St Peter's Church)*

## Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II

The conservation of the Royal Coat of Arms of Elizabeth I was conceived to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of our present monarch, Queen Elizabeth II.

The intention, subject to the approval of the Diocese, is to put in place beneath the restored Royal Coat of Arms of Elizabeth I, a suitably inscribed board celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, displaying her Coat of Arms and recording the work of conservation. It is also intended that a descriptive account of the 16<sup>th</sup> century coat of arms and its history should be displayed nearby.

*The Friends will be raising funds to cover the additional costs of this project and will welcome donations.*

## St Peter's Church – The West End



One of the longer term aims of the Friends is to raise funds to make possible the re-ordering of the west end of St Peter's. The Parochial Church Council has looked at this possibility in the past, but other priorities or lack of funds have meant that it has never been able to take it forward.

There are various developments that could be explored that would improve the overall appearance of the interior of the church and make it more attractive both as a place of worship and as a venue for concerts, recitals and other events.

Early priorities would be improvement of the seating on the gallery – the existing seating was put in place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to accommodate the Sunday School children and is correspondingly unsuitable for adults. Improved access would be another early priority.

There is no lack of ideas. It is the task of the Friends to find the means to transform ideas into solid achievement.

## Can you help?

At the launch of the Friends, one of the questions most often put to the Trustees was 'What can we do to help?'

Here are some of the opportunities to help make the Friends an effective and successful group. Anyone taking on one of these roles would be working with the Trustees as a member of the Trust's management team.

### Grants Secretary

Someone to take on the task of identifying sources of funding and preparing applications to grant awarding bodies.

### Rectory Lane Cemetery Group Convener

The Friends role in maintaining and improving the Rectory Lane Cemetery is already attracting active support and a working and advisory group is taking shape. A convener for this group is needed to coordinate the practical work of maintenance and guide plans for the development and improvement of this important public open space.

### Newsletter Editor

The Trustees plan to keep members informed of activities and developments through a newsletter like this one, published three times a year. An editor would take responsibility for assembling copy, formatting and liaising with printers.

### Public Relations

Someone to develop the public profile of the Friends, to identify opportunities to promote the activities of the Friends and to prepare publicity material.

### Help at events

Help is always needed with setting-up, welcoming, serving refreshments and clearing up. These tasks are vital for the success of our events and the care of our venues.

*If you are interested in finding out more about these opportunities, contact one of the Trustees. Contact details are on page 1 of this newsletter.*



### Clearing and Recording in the Rectory Lane Cemetery

This is an on-going activity.

If you would like to be involved, please contact:

**Christopher Green:** 01442 863241 [green@waitrose.com](mailto:green@waitrose.com)



## The Cowper Society

For over forty years the Cowper Society has extended the hospitality of St Peter's Church to all the community, and has raised money for projects that have benefited both church and Berkhamsted life generally. This has been a contribution that has been greatly appreciated. However, being affiliated to the Parochial Church Council, the Society has not been able to apply for wider and much-needed national funding. The Cowper Society continues its valuable work; and now, with its network of friendships and goodwill and with the experience of its members, it gives its support to the newly-created 'Friends'.

## Programme of Events 2013-2014



2013	Sept	7 <sup>th</sup>	Berkhamsted Choral Society Concert
		28 <sup>th</sup>	Organ recital, Jane Watts. 8.00
	Oct	12 <sup>th</sup>	Bridgewater Sinfonia Concert
	Nov		<b>Rectory Lane Working Party</b>
		23 <sup>rd</sup>	Bridgewater Sinfonia Concert
	Dec	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Chiltern Chamber Choir – <i>Bach Mass in B minor</i>
2014	Jan	13 <sup>th</sup>	Organ Recital. 1.00 p.m. Church
		27 <sup>th</sup>	Organ Recital. 1.00 p.m. Church
	Feb		<b>Rectory Lane Working Party</b>
		10 <sup>th</sup>	Winter Talk. David Pearce 8.00.p.m.
		24 <sup>th</sup>	Winter Talk. 8.00.p.m.
	Mar	10 <sup>th</sup>	Winter Talk. 8.00 p.m.
		24 <sup>th</sup>	Winter Talk. 8.00 p.m.

Speakers will include:

*Jenny Sherwood talking about Berkhamsted Families*  
*Julian Bly talking about Antiques.*

All Winter Talks will take place in the Court House.

## Objects, Funding and Charitable Status

The Friends of St Peter's was established as a charitable trust by a Trust Deed dated 5<sup>th</sup> March 2013. The Trustees are currently negotiating for recognition by the Charity Commission as a Registered Charity.

The charitable object of the Trust as set out in the Trust Deed is 'the preservation repair maintenance restoration improvement and ornamentation of the fabric of the Parish Church of Great Berkhamsted ... and of the Churchyards occupied by or belonging to the said church.' The fabric of the church is defined in the deed to include 'the church organ, bells, electrical wiring, heating installation and ecclesiastical furnishings and fittings.'

To achieve the objectives set out in the Trust Deed the Trustees have two main aims. Firstly, to encourage members of the Friends to play an active role in the care of St Peter's Church and its Churchyards; and secondly to raise funds to meet the costs of specific works. The main sources of funding will include the subscriptions of members, public appeals to support particular initiatives, and grants from a variety of charitable trusts and other organisations dedicated to the care of heritage and environment.

## 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](http://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:
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and annually thereafter until further notice, charging my account:

Account Name:
Sort Code:
Account Number:

Date:

Signature: