



The Friends of St Peter's Newsletter

Number 2 – June 2014

One Year Old – The Chairman writes:

The Friends of St Peter's was launched in May last year. Since then, the Friends have made good progress. Particularly important has been the support of those who have stepped forward to take on the roles that are essential for the ongoing success of the Trust. In the September Newsletter last year under the heading *Can You Help?* we identified four specific opportunities to help make the Friends an effective and successful group.

It is hugely encouraging to report that three of these opportunities have been taken up. **James Moir** has become the Convenor of the Rectory Lane Cemetery Group and has been very active exploring sources of grant funding and ways to bring the interest and potential of the Rectory Lane Cemetery to a wider public. **Penny Fray** has agreed to take on the role of Newsletter Editor and is already helping with the preparation of this issue; and more recently **Elaine Mercer** has offered to take responsibility for Public Relations. Finding people to take on these vitally important roles is making the Friends a stronger and more efficient body. Also important for the financial management of the Trust has been the official recognition of its charitable status by HMRC. An application for full charitable status will be made in due course.

The Friends have also begun to fulfil the purpose for which they were formed. During the past year they have raised over £10,000 through the generosity of their supporters and through success in attracting grant funding. As a result, the Friends have been able to offer grants to the PCC of St Peter's towards the cost of the conservation of the Royal Coat-of-Arms of Queen Elizabeth I, and to cover the full cost of making and installing a new Zimbelstern stop in the church's Peter Collins organ. The Friends have also attracted grants that will enable them to cover the full cost of forthcoming repairs to the church clock.

The Trustees would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped to make this a successful first year in the life of the Friends, with special thanks to Berkhamsted Town Council and the Trustees of the Pest House Charity for grant support and to the John Aphthorp Charity for a very generous donation.

Patrons and Trustees

Patrons

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

Trustees

Chairman: Peter Williamson	(peter.williamson47@btinternet.com)
Secretary: Cathy Imber	(cathy.imber@btopenworld.com)
Treasurer: Victoria Booth	(victoriabooth@tiscali.co.uk)
The 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-rentals.co.uk)

The Smith-Dorrien Connection

The Smith-Dorrien family has had a long association with Berkhamsted and with the parish church. Memorial monuments to family members can be seen within St Peter's, in the churchyard and in the Rectory Lane Cemetery. During April a new memorial to one of the family's most distinguished members has taken its place in St Peter's churchyard.



The chestnut tree planted in memory of General Horace Smith-Dorrien. Behind it, the base of the memorial to his mother is visible.

This is a Sweet Chestnut tree which has been planted on the north side of the church among the several trees that already form a striking feature of the churchyard. It was chosen by Carolann Smith-Dorrien, Patron of the Friends, to commemorate her grandfather General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien and to mark the centenary of events in August 1914 in the early weeks of the First World War when, at the Battle of Le Cateau, his leadership averted military disaster for the retreating British Expeditionary Force.



General Horace Smith-Dorrien at Haresfoot with his mother

Horace's grave is in the Rectory Lane Cemetery and its restoration is among the projects with which the Friends hope in due course to be associated.

The Friends of Rectory Lane Cemetery James Moir writes:

Picture this – it's the third Saturday in the month and you've just collected your tickets from the Rex. It's a sunny day in Spring; coming down the steps of the cinema you decide on a whim to turn right and make your way up Three Close Lane rather than taking your normal route home along the High Street. As you walk up, you become aware of activity on your right – at first it's the smell of smoke, then a glimpse of something on fire through the railings. Alarm bells ring – this is that old cemetery isn't it? – it must be some arsonist. It's not surprising, you are thinking, because it's always deserted, all that tangled undergrowth, rubbish lying around, rusty benches, a spooky place day or night with its toppling tombs and lichen-covered gravestones. 'I can't walk away', you feel, 'I should call the Fire Brigade'.



The arch in 2010 (above) and now (below)



You turn right into the gates, and you stop in your tracks. On your left, up the hill, a party is raking up undergrowth. On the far side, ivy is being stripped from the boundary wall - there's nearly a full barrow waiting to be trundled down. You look to the right, and there's the tended fire, consuming the scrub and cuttings. And in the old hut – the door is open – someone is brewing tea.

In front of you, a couple are carefully cleaning one of the gravestones, revealing its sculptural form and gleaming white marble. The inscription is to members of a family called Loveless – it somehow seems appropriate that effort is going into restoring it. The couple wave you over, tell you of the plans to make this enormous, three-acre site into a welcoming oasis of green space. The prime objective, they say, is to learn more about its history and tell the stories of families that lived in and shaped the town. They point out they are working in the 1894 extension to the original Rectory Lane Cemetery - 'which is down there', they say, 'pointing towards the High Street; that bit was opened in 1842 as the overflow to St Peters. Up there, at the top of the hill, you'll find all the graves are post 1921 when the cemetery was extended again.'

They share some ideas about how this place could look in the future. 'Walk down there through the archway', they suggest, 'and perhaps imagine a yoga group working out under the monkey-puzzle tree. Or take a rest on a sculptural seat by the Bridgewater Monument. There's a grassy space by the yew trees too to picnic on. And as you go out, take a look at the splendid cemetery gates - if you inspect them carefully, you'll see they've been moved from somewhere else. They will form a really majestic, welcoming entrance once restored.'

'Don't you think it's got a hint of magic about it?' they ask you. Perhaps, as they point out, it's not that surprising - after all, this had once been the back garden of Egerton House, home to the Llewellyn-Davies family and frequently visited by JM Barrie.

'Why don't you come along and join us' they say 'We'll be here again on the 9th June and do put the 14th September in your diary when we'll be holding a special event here as part of Heritage Open Days. Or e-mail James to say you'd be interested in finding out more.' That fire looks much more inviting now....



The Rectory Lane gates

Can You Help?

One of the questions most often put to the Trustees is 'What can I do to help?'

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.

Caring for the Rectory Lane Cemetery

This is an ongoing activity. If you are interested, contact James Moir Jamesmgoir@aol.com

Grants

The Trustees are very grateful for the help and support given by Emma Norrington in the identification of possible sources of funding and the preparation of grant applications.

Funding News

The Friends have just been awarded a grant of £1000 from the County Council Locality Budget towards the cost of a Heritage Event on September 14th 2014.

Royal Coat-of-Arms Re-visited

During conservation, paint used in the original depiction of the coat-of-arms as we see it today was analysed and the results provide fascinating and unexpected insights into its history. Of particular interest is the presence of Prussian Blue in the painting. The earliest known use of Prussian Blue is in a painting dated 1709. Thus, the coat-of-arms as we see it cannot be the repainting referred to by Chauncy in his *Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire* published in 1700, but in which the description of St Peter's Church refers to 'their present Majesties' and must therefore have been written during the joint reign of William & Mary (1688-1694). The analysis of the paint also revealed that it is not an over-painting on earlier paintwork. It would seem therefore to be a copy of an earlier original. The pattern of nail-holes around the edge of the canvas on which the coat-of-arms is painted matches exactly the pattern of nail-holes around the oval space that is now occupied by an inscription dated 1797.



The record of the 1797 restoration. Normally concealed beneath the coat-of-arms

Thus, the painting of the coat-of-arms would seem to pre-date the work undertaken at that time, which must have involved the removal of the canvas from the wooden panel and re-mounting it to cover the new inscription. However, the arrangement as we see it today, with the coat-of-arms on a hinged panel that covers the 1797 inscription, does not date from that time. The canvas is now mounted on plywood, a product not widely available until the early years of the 20th century. So our coat-of-arms has a long and surprisingly complicated history. Originally painted sometime in the 16th century during the reign of Elizabeth I; repainted at least once in the 17th century, as recorded by Chauncy; a copy newly painted in the 18th century as the paint analysis reveals; re-mounted in 1797; re-mounted again in the early 20th century, on plywood; restored and conserved in the early 21st century. What is clear in all this is the care taken for more than three hundred years by successive generations, including our own, to preserve this record of the historic link between State and Church.



The coat-of-arms after conservation

The Zimblestern

The Zimblestern is an organ stop originating in Europe in the 16th century, and found mainly in church organs in Germany and the Low Countries. Zimblestern means literally 'cymbal star' and there are many incarnations, but all use high pitch bells (often six) and a rotating device visible outside the organ casing - traditionally a star. Zimblesterns are used in important services particularly during the Gloria at the Easter Vigil but can enliven grand organ pieces, such as the works of JS Bach.

The St Peter's Zimblestern was built by **Tony Firshman**. He describes it as 'wildly over-engineered and should last for millennia'. Tony used oak from a redundant pew to make the frame. The action is a threaded axle turned by an electric motor. Oak cams move clappers which hit fixed bells in succession. The bells were supplied by a German company (Aug Laukhuff) and are specially designed for Zimblesterns. They are only tuned roughly but still cost over £300 for the set of six. The bells are struck repeatedly in rapid succession and the sound complements the overall organ sound in a remarkably effective way. Rough tuning is sufficient as the sound is an effect and not meant to be in tune with what is played on the organ.



The Zimblestern - the works

Specialist brass clappers came from the Whitechapel Bell Foundry who advised that the best sound is achieved when the clapper material is the same as the bell material. They were right, and the sound is bright and clear. The axle extends out through the front of the organ case and the star is fixed to it. The star was also made using oak from the old pew. The colours match the existing red and blue of the organ pipes and the points of the star are covered with gold leaf.



The Zimblestern - the star

The oak strips holding the clappers are suspended on pieces of leather from a dog lead! And the springs are pieces of steel from a hacksaw blade! The renovated electric motor, made by Lucas, is probably from a van or a truck. A flexible belt drives the axle. Power is switched on and off, via a foot pedal, which matches the existing organ pedals. The Zimblestern was in place for Easter and our organist, Jonathan Lee, obviously greatly relishes his opportunities to make use of it.

Programme of Events June – October 2014



- 8th Jun Rectory Lane Working Party
 12th Friends Evening – Talk by Norman Groves
The Devil's Own in Berkhamsted – and their WWI trenches on the Common (see below)
 14th Petertide Fair 10.00-3.00
 21st Bridgewater Sinfonia 7.30 pm
 11th Jul Lunchtime recital 1.00 pm
 19th Concert - Singers Workshop 3.00pm
 6th Sep Berkhamsted Choral Society 7.30 pm
 14th Rectory Lane Cemetery Event
 27th Bridgewater Sinfonia 7.30 pm
 29th Organ Recital – Andrew Lucas 8.00 pm
 4/5 Oct Bierfest Weekend
 13th Organ Recital 8.00 pm
 27th Organ Recital 8.00 pm

The Devil's Own in Berkhamsted and their WWI trenches on the Common

Apart from sending many of its sons off to the Front in WW1, Berkhamsted and district also became for five years the main training base for nearly 13,000 men from the Inns of Court Officers Training Corps. Close ties were forged with the local people and many town buildings became strongly associated with this regiment, including St Peter's and the Court House (in front of the photograph shows the Corps band in probably 1917). A huge tented camp grew up north of the station. With the help of many photos taken at the time, and the words and poetry of the soldiers themselves, this presentation tells some of their (our) story at a dark time in the country's history as tragically, of course, many trainees who stayed in Berkhamsted never got a chance to return.

Objectives, Funding and Charitable Status

The Friends of St Peter's is a Charitable Trust. It is recognised as such by HMRC and is in the process of applying to the Charity Commission for full recognition as a Registered Charity.

The charitable objectives of the Trust are '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.'

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.

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: