



Registered Charity No. 1160314

# The Friends of St Peter's Newsletter

## Number 5 – Autumn 2015

### Introduction by the Chairman of the Trustees

Since the publication of the last Newsletter in the spring we have welcomed Peter Matthews as a new Trustee, representing Berkhamsted Town Council. He replaces Penella Warren who is no longer a councillor but I am delighted to be able to report she will continue both to be actively involved and to attend Trustees' meetings.

Our Social Evening on 30<sup>th</sup> September was extremely successful, certainly in terms of the attendance which was by far the highest to date. The evening started with a showing of "A County at War" which is the highly acclaimed film of life on the Home Front in Hertfordshire commissioned by the Lord Lieutenant to commemorate the First World War. This was followed by a wonderful talk by David Pearce entitled "Our Parish Memorials of the First World War". Our thanks are due to Penella Warren for arranging the showing of the film and, of course, to David Pearce. Donations received by the Friends totalled £90 after expenses and sales of the film attracted donations of £155 for the Army Benevolent Fund. There is more about both the film and the talk later in this Newsletter.

We are now planning our next social event which will be held in the spring or early summer. Full details will be published as soon as possible.

Finally, a reminder that we would greatly welcome your ideas as to what you would like to see the Friends doing for you and for the whole Berkhamsted community. Please do get in touch – my email address is below.

Peter Williamson

### 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.co.uk](mailto:victoriabooth@tiscali.co.uk))  
The Rector of St Peter's ([rector@greatbrkhamsted.org.uk](mailto:rector@greatbrkhamsted.org.uk))  
Paul Crosland ([peejaycee@yahoo.com](mailto:peejaycee@yahoo.com))  
Christopher Green ([greenc@waitrose.com](mailto:greenc@waitrose.com))  
David Pearce ([drap@15pvr.me.uk](mailto:drap@15pvr.me.uk))  
James Moir ([jamesmgmoir@aol.com](mailto:jamesmgmoir@aol.com))  
Peter Matthews ([peter.b.matthews@gmail.com](mailto:peter.b.matthews@gmail.com))

### Memorial Restoration

The poor state of the memorials in Rectory Lane Cemetery was one of the key issues raised in the questionnaire last year.

The 'before' and 'after' photographs show the work recently carried out by Messenger Conservation on two of these. The 'felled' cross which has been repaired and re-instated on its base commemorates Alexander Arthur Sutton (1861-1941) who served in India, Africa and the First World War and is buried with his wife Annie, who died unexpectedly aged just 48.



The other memorial commemorates George Blincow (1858-1928) who was station master in Berkhamsted from 1903-1921, and was responsible for managing the movement of thousands of troops and horses during the First World War from nearby camps. The memorial edgings had loosened and the slab had slumped, so the repairs involved some levelling and securing the cornerstones.



Both graves, located next to the main path through the Cemetery, record the important roles of two Berkhamsted individuals in World War 1, but whose contributions would have remained unnoticed and uncelebrated but for the interest and generosity of descendants.

Since the project commenced last year, three memorials in the Cemetery have now been repaired. Please contact James Moir at [jamesmgmoir@aol.com](mailto:jamesmgmoir@aol.com) if you have a family memorial that requires some TLC and that you would like to see properly cared for and maintained.

## Parish Memorials of the First World War

At the last Social Event held on 30<sup>th</sup> September, David Pearce gave a fascinating talk about Parish War Memorials. Here are a few excerpts from his talk, but full transcripts of the talk are available on request.

The memorials of the First World War are more than just epitaphs in stone and brass. With them we move from the glorification of family names to a communal undertaking of remembering.....

The memorials tell us something of the individual stories; they hint at what we can discover. They do more than merely record deaths; they are the bugle calls of heroism and patriotism. They are **personal**.....

And we know the stories because for the **first time in war** the captains of companies - exhausted, emotionally committed - wrote to wives and parents. It was a family war. There was a brotherhood, not only of those serving, but of those waiting. All were committed - from the King down.....

Memorials are **personal**. Read them; each comes bright with its own snapshot flash. No longer the stereotyped epitaph - the 'short and simple annals of the poor'. These Memorials are quite unlike the gravestones of former times where, for the most part, lives were lived and lost by the will of God - 'Where I am now so shall you be'. **These** deaths were **not** part of a natural order - but caused by something Man had brought on himself - that all wanted to shout about - in anger, in pride, in outpourings of grief.....

Up until the Victorian turn of the century, the **rankers** joined the army from the disadvantaged poor. Men who had no resources, no prospects, no status, were often criminal. Wellington's: 'But my God they frighten me'. **Now**, they were often the best their country could produce; men of infinite capacity, loyal, educated, professional. Joining up because it was the only thing that a decent man could do.....

So, the first point to make is that this was a War, like no other, of **intense personal intimacy and involvement**, where the pride and sorrow entered lives at every point - the church, the wider parish, the shop, the council, the Mechanics Institute, school and home. No one escaped the realisation. No one was untouched. The Memorials are witness to national feeling. The lives of the sons of the Parish and town were stopped in a sudden moment - in Neuve Chapelle, at Ypres, Dud Corner, Loos, Passchendaele, Tyne Cot, Mons. Unknown, unheard of, places are engraved on the memorials in our English churches. They have become household names. Europe had become part of the English mind-set. Gallipoli was, as it were, the new Crimea, but the soldiers who died at Gallipoli were **not** the nameless rankers of 1854, 1855, but, now, members of everyone's family. The names are there, in church, beneath the town cross, in town hall; and we realise that many of the names are the same as those of our neighbours today. **That** war has **not** gone away...

My second point is to do with **Regimental Pride**. The Regiments of country and county were supported by a new **local** loyalty. Men from **here** joined the Bedfordshire or Hertfordshire regiments. Volunteer Battalions were created from the 1880s, the Territorial units in 1908; and in their local identity was a county esprit, and dedicated comradeship. The men fought with their mates, and so the **Regiments**, too, are recorded proudly on the Memorials.....

We do not remember just for two minutes. We remember all the time. Truly, the men and women of that age are brought vividly into our company. Daily at the Menin Gate. Daily as we pass our town crosses. The ghosts are there. The men and women who kept faith with England; we keep faith with them. ....



Memorial in St Peter's Church

## Coat of Arms

### Commemorating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee

The restoration of the Royal Coat of Arms in St Peter's Church was undertaken to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012. Since then the Friends have been taking forward an initiative to record this fact alongside the restored Coat of Arms. A board has been commissioned to hang immediately below the Coat of Arms. It will bear the words:

The Tudor Royal Coat of Arms of  
QUEEN ELIZABETH I  
was restored to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of  
QUEEN ELIZABETH II

It will also bear the Royal Coat of Arms of Queen Elizabeth II and the dates of the Queen's accession and Jubilee year 1952 - 2012. The work is being undertaken by the distinguished heraldic artist Baz Manning and the expectation is that it will be completed and put in place sometime next year. The Friends hope to arrange a number of Tudor events to be associated with the introduction and unveiling of the new board. Watch out for posters and flyers promoting these celebrations. The new commemorative board is being largely funded by donations and if you would like to contribute to this historic record of the ongoing links between Church and State, please contact our Treasurer, Victoria Booth (contact details on page 1).

## Rectory Lane Cemetery Heritage Open Day

Around 30 people came to the Heritage Open Day; some to see the progress of the project since last September and some who had never visited the space before. Newly-trained volunteer guides took tours during the afternoon to outline the history and an overview of works planned.

We began at Cowper's Well in Rectory Lane where visitors could see what remains of the well and heard about how it may be reinstated to provide a local water source. If achieved, the Rector's Gate in the west wall would need to be reopened.

Moving through the brick gate piers, visitors heard about the plan for those, and how the original 1842 section of the cemetery was originally designed with a formal parkland layout. The current plans include creating a performance area in a space (without any interference to remaining memorials) near to the monkey puzzle tree.

As we were making our way from North to South we stopped at what remains of the Yew tree walk and looked at the Foundation stone. The Countess of Bridgewater donated the land – formerly part of the garden of Egerton House (now the Rex cinema) and various other members of the community added their £ s d – something that had to be explained to the younger members of the group (i.e. anyone under 45!). However I added that whatever the outcome of the Heritage Lottery Fund Bid, extra monies will still be needed to transform the cemetery from 'Dead Space to Living Place' and any denomination would be most welcome.

We stopped next at the lovely arch which marks the entrance to the 1894 extension to look at the impressive memorial commemorating various members of the Cooper family. Two of the visitors on the tour that I led had worked for both the original Coopers agricultural business and also for Wellcome when they took over.

Further up the hill, I outlined the plans for a garden of remembrance, and refurbishment of the sexton's hut including a computer system to help people with their heritage searches.



The tour concluded at the top of the hill in the 1921 section where it is hoped that more wildlife areas such as a bird hide and a bee hive could join the 'bug hotel' established last year. There was general approval about the work so far and the planned future developments.

On the afternoon visitors could also follow three themed trails where veterans of both world wars and former notable residents are buried; each individual grave displayed a personal history. Children's graves were signposted by small windmills. A 'treasure hunt' type quiz was also devised by the Mosley family for children and adults.

For anyone missing the Open Day or having questions about the project, please contact the team via the Friends of St Peters' website <http://www.stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk> to offer help and support or to find out about people buried in the cemetery.

Elaine Mercer

## Appeal for Help

### The Friends of St Peter's...

supports the work of maintaining and enhancing St Peter's Church and the churchyards that belong to it.

Could you imagine the town without the Church, churchyard or cemetery – all given over perhaps to housing or car parking?

Is that likely? It is a hugely expensive operation simply to maintain these places as assets that the town can be proud of, and that visitors can appreciate and experience. There is so much more that could be done in presenting all their benefits to a wider audience, who otherwise might take them for granted.

### Marketing

We would like some help to communicate our message in an easy and engaging way. We need to advertise events such as our popular social evenings and to feed stories to the press about the exciting projects we are undertaking. We want all the town to know what we are trying to achieve and for our support base to grow well beyond it.

### Website

We already have a nice website – have a look at [www.stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk](http://www.stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk). But we do need to keep this up to the mark with the latest news and as a first point of call for anyone visiting the town or seeking information about our activities.

Any contribution of time can be as flexible as you like to suit your availability. Like to know more? Please contact James Moir on [jamesmgmoir@aol.com](mailto:jamesmgmoir@aol.com) or 07545 786372

Programme of Events  
November 2015 – April 2016



16 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Organ Recital	8.00 p.m.
21 <sup>st</sup> Nov	Bridgewater Sinfonia Concert	7.30 p.m.
6 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Rectory Lane Cemetery working party	2–4 p.m.
7 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Organ Recital	8.00 p.m.
12 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Bridgewater Sinfonia Concert	7.30 p.m.
23 <sup>rd</sup> Dec	Chiltern Chamber Choir Concert	7.30 p.m.
	Bach Christmas Oratorio	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Jan	Rectory Lane Cemetery working party	2–4 p.m.
25 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Organ Recital	8.00 p.m.
7 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Rectory Lane Cemetery working party	2–4 p.m.
8 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Organ Recital	8.00 p.m.
6 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Rectory Lane Cemetery working party	2–4 p.m.
12 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Bridgewater Sinfonia Concert	7.30 p.m.
20 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Chiltern Chamber Choir Concert	7.30 p.m.
3 <sup>rd</sup> Apr	Rectory Lane Cemetery working party	2–4 p.m.
14 <sup>th</sup> Apr	'Dead Space to Living Place'	8.00 p.m.
	Talk by James Moir to BCA (Town Hall)	

Social Event - 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015

A record gathering of members and friends were fascinated by the revelations shown on the film 'A County at War - Life on the Home Front in Hertfordshire.' Photos and old films from private collections, archives and museums had been skilfully woven together to produce a touching account of the enormous changes experienced by the people of Hertfordshire during 1914 – 1918.

Hertfordshire had been a very rural county at the outbreak of war with a population of just 300,000. Within weeks there was an explosion of activity with troops camping or billeted in every town or village. Hertfordshire became an important staging area for troops to train before being sent to France.

We saw soldiers marching, horses being requisitioned, large houses being turned into hospitals and women going to work for the first time. Field kitchens were established creating a huge demand for food both at home and in France. The horses needed to be fed and exercised. New weapons were developed in Hertfordshire such as tanks and military aircraft. Munitions factories sprang up throughout the county.

We have all seen films and documentaries about life in the trenches but the story of life for those at home also needs recognition and 'A County at War' was both moving and memorable.

Penella Warren

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: