



The Rectory Lane Cemetery Project

We've 'won' the Lottery so what is next?

Many of you will already know that 2017 has been a big year for the Cemetery as the application for nearly £1million from the Heritage Lottery Fund was sent in February. Various meetings, visits and liaison have taken place since then answering the questions of the award-granting team for the East of England Region.

And in July we heard that the Friends of St Peter's Berkhamsted had been awarded £907,000 for the transformation of Rectory Lane Cemetery from a 'Dead Space to a Living Space'.

Now the real challenge begins! Over the next 3 years the space will be transformed to include a Garden of Remembrance, a Wildlife domain and a dedicated area for picnics and live performances. Better pathways and facilities for disabled visitors are also planned. These will be in addition to maintaining and restoring many of the original features such as the walls, memorials and features such as the Sexton's Hut which will become an information resource for visitors.

Of course, the HLF funds will go a long way to buying the professional services and skills*** needed but perhaps more important than that is the involvement of you, our community.

We will still need to raise a further £30,000 in what the HLF calls 'matched funding' (thankfully this does not mean another £907,000!)

There are lots of opportunities for volunteers to give as a lift – how you ask?

- Market stalls helpers – once a month on a Saturday morning
- Guides who can help to share the interesting features of the site
- Neighbourhood Leaflet droppers
- Fund raisers
- Social media gurus
- Gardeners who can help our 2 hour working parties every first Sunday of the month

This is just a taster and by no means exhaustive. You probably have a skill we didn't know we needed so please do get in touch if you would like to help this exciting project. And keep an eye on the website StPetersberkhamsted.friends.org. We realise people's availability varies but **every** contribution will be appreciated!

To get in touch please email jamesmgmoir@aol.com or visit www.stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk
www.facebook.com/stpetersberkhamstedfriends

Heritage Open Day

Sunday 10th September

On this day, we are hosting an Open day where visitors will be able to hear about the plans that will transform the Cemetery. In this three-acre beautiful space, the volunteers from the Friends of St Peter's RLC project will be on hand at 10 focal points to describe the plans, answer questions and record any feedback that you may have. The map on the website shows where they will be between 14.00 – 17.30. Please feel free to pop in at any time between these hours for self-guided tour

Why we do this

An extremely touching letter from a recent visitor

I think there comes a time in later life that you think of those things I really must do, I had promised myself to find and mark the grave of my twin siblings in my home town Berkhamsted.

I always visit St Peters Church, where there is a lot of family history. On a visit (in 2016), I picked up a Parish magazine YB and was delighted to read about the Rectory Lane Cemetery project, consequently I contacted James Moir who was happy to meet me recently with the parish records and we tracked down the area I remembered visiting as a child. It was a very moving moment.

Thinking of that day has sent me tumbling down a rabbit hole of childhood memories. I remember it was a sunny day July 1944, I was seven, I went to the Chapel Street Infants school, I came home for lunch as a neighbour who was a taxi driver I think Mr Wilmore also had a daughter Barbara whom he bought back so I was lucky enough to get home too.

When I got to our back door, a neighbour Mrs Groom opened the door so I was very surprised, I asked where's my Mum? She said she wants to see you upstairs, I thought 'my Mum in bed?!'

When I peeked around the door Mum was propped up in bed and said "Go and see who is in the cot - it's your new brother and sister!!"

Two tiny babies with very black hair, one each end of the cot, were quietly sleeping there, I noticed a lot of cotton wool peeking from their necks and they were covered in warm blankets.

I was so excited of course I had no clue my Mum was pregnant, she looked tired but happy, Mum asked me to run up the road to our neighbour Mrs Keen to ask please could we borrow her twins' first hats as my Mum had had twins, I ran what felt like the wind!

I was quickly upstairs again and Mrs Groom helped me to put the little white crochet hats on - they looked so sweet.

I went back to school and couldn't contain my excitement telling everyone that I had a new brother and sister it was hard to sit still!

When I got home Mrs Groom was still there so I said can I see my Mum and those twins she said go up and see your Mum. She was propped up in bed and I looked over to the cot it was empty where have they gone I asked?

Mum said they were very poorly so they went to heaven with the angels. In later years I learnt that the midwife had christened them before they died, Anne and Anthony. They were put in small white coffins and buried about three graves down on the top left of the Rectory Lane cemetery, against the wall.

Mum took my sister Joy and I sometimes to have a look at the plot on the way home and told us not to forget them, Mum always used to say what age they would be every July 21st.

Now my family and I can have the opportunity to mark their passing with a plaque on the cemetery wall above their graves. Thank you for all involved in this lovely project, I wish I was closer to give a hand.

Best regards Valerie
(Bull Potter Mowbray)

