



Registered Charity No. 1160314

# The Friends of St Peter's Newsletter

## Number 15 – Autumn 2020

### Introduction by the Chairman of the Trustees

Since the last Newsletter we have welcomed Father Stuart Owen and we are delighted that he became a Trustee of the Friends on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2020. I commend to you his "First Impressions of Berkhamsted" on page 2.

This Newsletter also contains James Moir's Personal Reflection on the Rectory Lane Cemetery project and an article by Christopher Green on the Bryceson Organ and there are two short contributions, one on the 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations – The Churchyard Project and the other on Amazon Smile. I am very grateful to all our contributors. Finally, you will find below an update on the David Pearce Memorial Lecture.

As always, we welcome ideas and suggestions from our members, and indeed other readers, 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.

*By Peter Williamson*

### David Pearce Memorial Lecture

It was with great regret that the Trustees had to take the decision in March not to proceed with the lecture that was to have been given by Sir Robin Knox-Johnston on 3<sup>rd</sup> April.

We remain very keen to find a new date but we believe that it is unlikely that we will be able to hold a "live" event in the first half of 2021. We are therefore considering the possibility of holding the lecture by online broadcast in the spring. We are hoping that we will be able to make a decision about this soon and we would welcome views, before Christmas please, as to whether or not a "virtual" event would be an attractive proposition. Please email me at the address below

*By Peter Williamson*

### Patron and Trustees

#### Patron

Carolann Smith Dorrien

#### 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: Steve Elliff ([selliff@berkhamstedschool.org](mailto:selliff@berkhamstedschool.org))

The Rector of St Peter's ([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))

Justin Apthorp ([justin@apthorp.me.uk](mailto:justin@apthorp.me.uk))

Peter Matthews ([peter.b.matthews@gmail.com](mailto:peter.b.matthews@gmail.com))

### The Bryceson Organ at St Peter's

The Bryceson organ has been in St Peter's since 1992, at first as a 'long loan' but in 2016 gifted to the church by its owner, the distinguished organist and one time resident of Berkhamsted, Christopher Bowers-Broadbent. Although there have been times when the organ was played regularly for services in the Lady Chapel, there has always been a case for a thorough restoration and this possibility is now being actively explored by the Friends. Nicholsons, the long-established Malvern based organ builders have already been asked to assess the work required to restore the Bryceson organ and bring it into full working order. Their findings are awaited and the Friends are still keen to make the restoration of the Bryceson an early priority.

The organ is a single manual instrument with 19 pipes, a pedal board and four stops. Originally hand-blown it now has a rather unsightly electric blower precariously attached to one side. The pedal board was completely reconstructed some years ago using a few remaining pieces of the original pedal mechanism that came to light amongst discarded woodwork in the old chancel.



Henry Bryceson began building organs in 1796, passing the firm on to his sons in the 1860s. The firm was wound up in 1893 and sold to Alfred Kirkland who continued to use the name Bryceson on organs until the 1920s. Brycesons seem always to have been a relatively small firm of organ builders but they supplied church and house organs quite widely throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The National Pipe Organ Register (NPOR) records more than 200 instruments built or extensively rebuilt by the firm. Brycesons had a stand at the

*Continued overleaf*

## The Bryceson Organ – continued

Great Exhibition in 1851 where they won a medal, and in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century they were quite innovative, being among the first in this country to experiment with pneumatic and electro-magnetic actions.

The Bryceson in St Peter's has on it a brass nameplate inscribed 'BRYCESON & Co. LONDON'. This may give us an indication of when it was built. The names used by Brycesons on their organs changed several times during the history of the firm. Examples of Bryceson organs on which the name 'Bryceson & Co' is used are recorded in the NPOR with dates in the range 1860 to 1872, so this is quite possibly the period during which the St Peter's organ was built. Its restoration will enrich a long tradition of music making in St Peter's.

Perhaps the earliest indication of this tradition is a pattern scratched on one of the great piers that support the tower, thought to represent a fragment of medieval musical notation. Much more recently in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and until the restoration of the church by Jeffry Wyatt in 1820 there was a musicians' gallery in the crossing beneath the tower. As for the instrumental music performed there we know the church had a barrel organ and there are records of payments to musicians, including a bassoon player in 1813. The barrel organ was part-exchanged for a new organ in 1849 but we have no record of who built this new organ or where it was placed in the church. Then during the first phase of the Butterfield restoration of the church (1868-72) a new organ was supplied by Walkers and located in St Catherine's Chapel. When the east end of the church was re-ordered in 1887 it was moved from there to the north transept where it remained until the 1980s when it was replaced by the present organ, built by Peter Collins and more recently restored and enhanced by Vincent Woodstock. The instrumental repertoire of the church has also been enhanced by the acquisition of a Kawai concert grand piano. A fully restored Bryceson organ will add a new dimension to this repertoire.

*By Christopher Green*

## Fr Stuart's First Impressions of Berkhamsted



In 2010, two years after I'd become Vicar of All Saints, Edmonton, we had our Quinquennial Inspection. This was a rather dispiriting experience, which ended up with All Saints winding up on the Historic Buildings at Risk Register .

The tower and the roof both needed significant restoration work, and the ball park figure for each was estimated as being around a third of a million pounds . This felt like a hugely daunting challenge. I'd arrived in this new parish with all sorts of exciting plans about the future, and now a significant proportion of my time was going to get swallowed up in fundraising and project management .

At a moment when I was still feeling rather more daunted than inspired by what lay ahead, I had the great good fortune to meet Nick Holtam, then Vicar of St Martin in the Fields, and now Bishop of Salisbury. Fr Nick had not long completed a mammoth £36 million refurbishment project at St Martin's and was visiting Edmonton to speak at a school foundation day service. As we talked about building projects and fundraising Fr Nick said something which really struck a chord; he said something like, "Never despise the little things: selling tea towels, holding jumble sales, they don't just raise some money, but they help to keep people involved and help to maintain a project's momentum." He was right.

Like St Peter's, All Saints is an historic parish church; one of the oldest buildings in the Borough of Enfield, and by a long stretch the oldest building in Edmonton. For hundreds and thousands of our neighbours , it was where they'd attended school services and come along to sing carols sometimes at Christmas ; it was a place where families had baptised their children, celebrated weddings , come together in the shock of grief for funerals; and it spoke of a kind of permanence in a community which was always relentlessly, restlessly changing. A lot of our neighbours cared deeply about the building and its welfare.

Facing a challenge which could have all too easily overwhelmed the All Saints congregation, we turned outwards to the wider All Saints community, and formed The Friends of All Saints Edmonton in 2010. The generosity that the Friends group released was inspiring and encouraging; not just financial generosity, but generosity of time, generosity of creativity, generosity of spirit and energy. In the years since its inception, the Friends did (and continue to do) all sorts of 'little things' which over time made a big difference. Perhaps most importantly of all, the Friends did a great deal to share All Saints and its stories with people; telling good stories can go a long way to getting things done.

I'm delighted that St Peter's also has a Friends group, and it was good to meet the other Trustees recently, albeit in a 'virtual' fashion. From all that I've seen so far, it's clear that the Friends of St Peter's are also committed to telling the story of the building, so that the building can continue to tell its stories to generations to come.

## Rectory Lane Cemetery A Personal Reflection from James Moir

It's been seven years of hard graft, but for me the Cemetery Project had been germinating for half a century or so. I distinctly remember as a boy wandering around the Cemetery with my father trying to find his parents' grave. We did find it in the undergrowth, but 50 or so years later I couldn't recall where it was, except that it was somewhere against a boundary wall and probably on the right side of the Cemetery as you were walking up the hill. In around 2008 I asked my children, when we were having a coffee at the nearby Gatsby, to see if they could locate it, but after a short while they came running back, my son saying he had been bitten by a dog – but I suspect they had been spooked by the experience of being alone in the still neglected space.

Through my work I'd also had a minor professional involvement in the Cemetery. As a naïve trainee surveyor at Dacorum Borough Council at the start of the millennium with a general budget for 'Cemeteries' I had spent some of that fixing a collapsing section of curved wall by the 'Agricultural gates' off Three Close Lane – only to find a few years later that it was not even the Council's responsibility as it was in the upper part of the Cemetery (only the original 1842 Cemetery was 'closed'). However, unsurprisingly, no complaints were received from the PCC! After that, working in the Council's Conservation Department, I attended early meetings of the intended 'Friends of Rectory Lane Cemetery'. Also, having overseen the production of the Berkhamsted Conservation Appraisal in 2012 the only structures in the Town it declared to be at risk were the gates and memorial arch in the Cemetery.

Then in November 2013, I was visited by Christopher Green and David Pearce and invited to become Convenor of the Group. That was the true start of this seven-year affair with the Project.

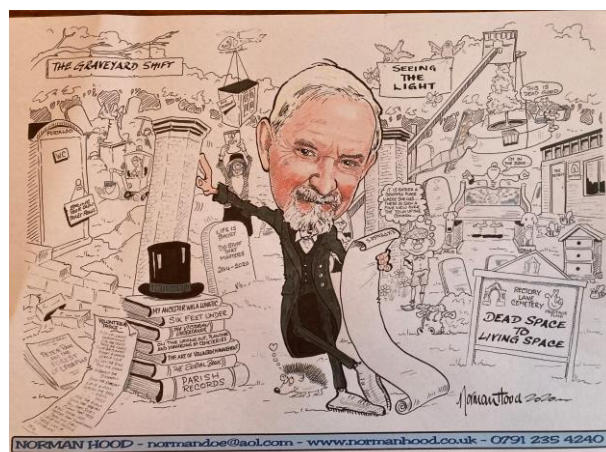
Although I had had these previous personal and professional links, from this point on it quickly became a campaign where the space and all it represented and the potential that might be unlocked was something to be fought for; where it might be proved that the community could 'take back' for its own enjoyment a place that had simply been viewed as a perpetual burden.

It is impossible to evaluate accurately the highs and lows of the Project from a personal perspective. There have been exciting milestones throughout – the first Graveyard Shift, the opening of the Seat of Remembrance, the procession along the High Street as part of the 'Shine the Light' event, the magical first performance of The Heroine Project Presents, a reading of Lola Peach-Martins' poem, the twelve year old authoress Mia Hickman addressing questions posed by the family audience attending the BerkoFest Book

Festival, walking along the new resin-bound paths, switching on the lighting of the restored Rectory Lane gates. But of course there's also the disappointments, the failure to get the Cemetery registered with Historic England, unsuccessful grant applications, having to cancel the National conference in 2020, not being able to persuade the HLF to include the cost of re-opening the original Three Close Lane gateway. (I haven't given up on this one yet!)

And then simply also the continuous underlying tension, and worry; the ghastly, almost unbearable 'waiting' (nearly 4 months) to hear whether all the work that had gone into preparing an application had been given the thumbs up; the mud and weather in 2018/9, the endless cajoling of artists and craftspeople to complete the project, and the particular challenges 2020 then brought. Perhaps the all-time low was being called a 'scumbag' on Facebook by someone who had never visited the Cemetery but simply decided that holding a book festival in the Cemetery was desecration. But this also eventually had a positive spin, in reminding me that burial places still hold a powerful place in people's imagination, and that one must tread carefully – forever – in not offending some people's sensibilities.

Apart from the sad loss of David Pearce, we have, at least, all come out of the 7-year Project alive. When I say 'we', I'm really referring to the "do-ers", those who have also given free hours of help and support. Just quiet, efficient, modest, kind people who have stuck with the Project throughout – basically the salt of the earth. I'd apply to them the remarkable inscription on one of our Victorian memorials: **Loved, Loving, Lovely (Plot 340)**. I won't name contributors individually, except for two people; the first Kate Campbell – who has done such a splendid job as Community Engagement Officer throughout the 3 years and will now take the Project forward through its fourth year. Secondly, I have to thank Paul Crosland for his huge support, as a long-standing volunteer and more recently as Convenor.



Cartoon presented to James Moir by the volunteer team.

A visitor to his mother's grave in the Cemetery in 1936 wrote 'It is rather a beautiful place where she lies. There is such a fine view over the town up the Common.' That was written by my Dad about his mother, who was buried in the Cemetery exactly ninety years ago. I feel I can stand now in the same spot and say these same words with considerable confidence. And perhaps, hopefully a good time hence, be buried here too.

## Programme of Events

This section of the Newsletter is not included owing to the Covid pandemic lockdown.

### 800th Anniversary Celebrations The Churchyard Project

St Peter's is planning a year of celebrations in 2022 and one of its aims is to enhance the churchyard as a community space to make it more welcoming and valuable for everyone whilst retaining its beauty as a calming space for personal and community reflection.

After the castle, St Peter's is Berkhamsted's oldest building. Its adjacent churchyard is a beautiful green sacred space which has been at the heart of Berkhamsted for centuries and is bounded on all four sides by listed buildings of beauty and significance to the town.

If you have any ideas for enhancing this area for everyone while maintaining its beauty and peacefulness, please send them by 4<sup>th</sup> January to: [churchoffice@greatberkhamsted.org.uk](mailto:churchoffice@greatberkhamsted.org.uk) (titled Churchyard project)

Post on paper into the Court House letterbox  
Via Facebook @StPetersBerkhamsted

## Amazon Smile

### No cost donation to the Friends

The Friends of St Peter's, Great Berkhamsted have registered with Amazon Smile which is an initiative by Amazon to allow charities such as ours to earn money from their supporters' purchases from the online retailer. The idea is simple, Amazon will donate 0.5% of the value of your purchases to your selected charity at no additional cost to you. Should you wish to support us whilst shopping with Amazon please simply follow these steps

- Enter **smile.amazon.co.uk** into your internet browser and press Enter
- Click on the Get Started button
- Select us using the search function – using "St Peter's Berkhamsted" would be sufficient to find us
- Select our charity from the list and then tick a box which tells you that to generate a donation in future you will always need to come into Amazon via **smile.amazon.co.uk**
- Enter normal log in details if already an Amazon customer or create a new Amazon account
- Once you are in the website you can shop as normal in the knowledge that any purchases will generate a donation for us

Whilst 0.5% of anything isn't a particularly large amount all donations to the Friends are extremely welcome to help us achieve all our objectives.

With Christmas around the corner I hope some of you will be able to help us in this way.

Thank you.

*By Steve Elliff*

## 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:

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