



Registered Charity No. 1160314

The Friends of St Peter's Newsletter

Number 16 – Spring 2021

Introduction by the Chairman of the Trustees

This Newsletter contains very interesting articles by the Rector on the 800th Anniversary of St Peter's in 2022 and by Christopher Green and Robin McMorran on the Hutchinsons. I also draw your attention to Rectory Lane Cemetery News and the Trustees are delighted that the Berkhamsted Citizens Association Townscape Committee has chosen the RLC Project as the winner of their 2021 Environment Award.

Since the last Newsletter the Trustees have decided that the postponed David Pearce Memorial Lecture should be held in 2022 as part of St Peter's 800th Anniversary celebrations. Let us hope that by then it will be possible to hold a live event with a full theatre. Further details will be announced in due course. In the meantime we are considering a possible social event later this year, subject to clarity about the rules concerning post-lockdown gatherings.

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

The 800th Anniversary of St Peter's

By Fr Stuart Owen



One of the many things which appealed to me about the prospect of becoming Rector of St Peter's, was the opportunity to be part of the church's 800th anniversary celebrations in 2022. Early on in my time at All Saints, Edmonton, we celebrated the 875th anniversary of the parish. Looking back through my files from ten

years ago, there are some things I remember very well, like the flower and small choirs festivals, and the regular organ recitals, which continue to this day. We had an '875 for 875th' initiative, to encourage existing church members to get involved in 875 minutes of church activities over the course of the year.

My favourite memory (because it was my idea, of course), was our forty-two mile sponsored walk

The 800th Anniversary of St Peter's continued...

From Edmonton to Saffron Walden. The 4am start would have been bad enough in the best of times, but as one or two of us had been rather too vigorous in our celebration of the marriage of William Windsor and Kate Middleton the day before, the first few miles were largely walked in silence.

As plans for next year's celebrations take shape, I would imagine I'll have a similar experience when I look back on our planning from the happy vantage point of 2032; there will be the odd misstep, the plans that remained just that, but also a lot of successes and happy memories.

Which rather raises the question of what we think 'success' will look like. What are these celebrations for? First and foremost, we're hoping to celebrate all that's best in Berkhamsted – St Peter's celebrating the town, with the town. You'll all know, far better than I do, what a thriving civic life we have, in terms of arts groups, sports clubs, and young people's organisations. In an ideal world, 2022 will see every single one of those groups cross the threshold of their parish church, to share something of what they bring to our common life. At the present moment, over a dozen of those groups have already expressed an interest in being involved.

It's my hope and expectation, that as we seek to widen the links between this parish and its parish church, it will also provide an excellent opportunity to increase awareness of the great work done by the Friends of St Peter's, and we'll recruit some new members along the way.

At the moment we're in the process of making connections. By the time the next newsletter is produced, we'll have much more information about specific events and activities which will be taking place. Anyway, I'd better go now because I've got one very particular bit of planning that I need to make some progress with... organising a drinks licence.

Patron and Trustees

Patron

Carolann Smith Dorrien

Trustees

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

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The Rev. James Hutchinson

By Christopher Green and Robin McMorran

In February 1851 James Hutchinson was instituted as Rector of Berkhamsted by the Bishop of Rochester. He was the last rector to be presented by a royal patron - Albert Edward, Prince of Wales and Duke of Cornwall, eldest son of Queen Victoria who succeeded her in 1901 as Edward VII. The local Duchy of Cornwall estates were sold in 1862 to the Brownlows of Ashridge, and subsequent rectors were presented by the Earls Brownlow.



James Hutchinson was born on 23rd September 1805 in the village of Irchester near Wellingborough in Northamptonshire. We learn from Norris's book on St Peter's (1923) that before coming to Berkhamsted, James was Chaplain to the Duke of Cambridge and from 1836 to 1849, British Chaplain at Rome. It seems quite possible that he

held these two posts simultaneously. The Duke of Cambridge at this time was Prince Adolphus (1774-1850), the seventh son of George III. He had spent his early years pursuing a military career in Hanover but retired to England in 1837 following the accession of Queen Victoria. The British Chaplaincy in Rome had been established on a stipendiary basis in 1828 but regular worship was interrupted during the siege of Rome by the French in 1849, which may account for James Hutchinson seeking a new appointment in England in 1850.

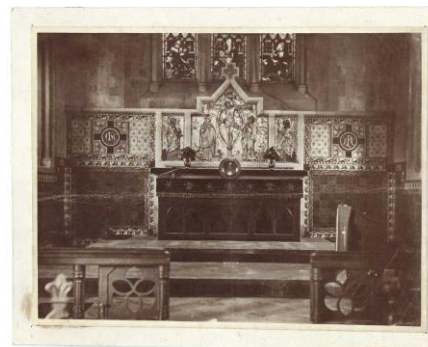
Sophia Jane Murdoch was born on 12th August 1820 at Sulhamstead in Berkshire. Her father James Murdoch was a banker. In 1851 the family were living in London but during the 1850s they moved to Berkhamsted to occupy Whitehill, a large house now long gone, on White Hill the lane that winds up steeply from New Road to Gravel Path. They were not the first banking family to make their way to Berkhamsted. Around 1800 Ashlyns Hall had been built for the Nottingham banker James Smith, and the Dorrien family of Haresfoot had produced a Governor of the Bank of England - George Dorrien, Governor 1818-1820.

James Hutchinson, as Rector of Berkhamsted, will have moved in the same social circles as these affluent families who occupied the large houses on the outskirts of the town, and in 1861 he married Sophia Jane Murdoch in St Peter's church. He was in his mid-fifties, she was just 40. There is every sign that together they were well-loved in the parish and active in the life of the church and the town. James's predecessor as Rector was John Crofts who had occupied the living for over forty years. During his incumbency St Peter's had been restored, not to everyone's satisfaction, by Jeffry Wyatt, a new Rectory had been built, and a detached churchyard had been established, to become what we now know as the Rectory Lane Cemetery.

In the early years of his incumbency James Hutchinson seems to have concentrated on extending the mission of the Church, assisted initially by his curate, Henry Twells who is perhaps best known for the hymn 'At even ere the Sun was set', and later in life was the Rector of Baldock and an Honorary Canon of Peterborough Cathedral. Together, in 1851 they began to hold services in a cottage in Frithsden. This perhaps led on in due course to the building of the church of Holy Trinity Potten End, overseen by James Hutchinson and brought to completion in 1864.

James Hutchinson seems to have had an interest in architecture. He was present at the inauguration of the ornate new Berkhamsted Town Hall which had been designed by the Gothic Revival architect Edward Buckton Lamb (1806-1869).

Not long after the completion of the church at Potten End, James, with his Churchwardens at St Peter's, began to think about the restoration of the parish church. In 1868 a Restoration Committee was formed and the distinguished architect, William Butterfield was engaged to undertake the work. James had the good fortune to be supported throughout his incumbency at St Peter's by able and energetic Churchwardens. In the early years by General John Finch (1792-1861) of Berkhamsted Place, now particularly remembered for improvements to the Bourne School and his involvement in the building of the Town Hall. He was succeeded by Robert Smith-Dorrien who remained in office for much of the rest of James Hutchinson's incumbency and was largely instrumental in taking forward the work of restoration at St Peter's. His fellow Churchwarden for most of this time was William Longman, doyen of one of London's great Victorian, family publishing houses. Many citizens of the town contributed towards the restoration of the church and its furnishing. James's wife Sophia with her sisters gave a lectern in a style to match a new pulpit which had come at the same time from the curates who served under Hutchinson. Later, this lectern was gifted to Holy Trinity, Potten End, no doubt with Sophia's blessing, when the brass eagle lectern by Barkentin & Krall was given to St Peter's in 1880 in memory of Robert Smith-Dorrien by his family.



James Hutchinson retired as Rector in 1871 while the first phase of restoration at St Peter's was still in progress. His incumbency and the affection of his parishioners

is commemorated in a very fine reredos which according to Norris was already in place in 1872. It depicts the Crucifixion of Christ in exquisite mosaic

Continued on page 4

Rectory Lane Cemetery News



A call went out recently to ask for donations of snowdrops and tete-a-tete narcissi to brighten up the Rectory Lane entrance. A big **Thank You** to everyone who brought bulbs along and to those who stayed to help plant them. It was a lovely community effort and has made such a difference.

Covid-compliant small guided tours in April

As socialising outdoors in groups of six is now permitted, small guided tours have resumed in April. Many people have been visiting the cemetery independently, but others will have been waiting until things were a little more secure, and it is hoped that these tours with an experienced guide will be popular. There will be one guided tour each Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoon in April. They are free, but must be booked so that the numbers can be managed. Places can be booked using Eventbrite or contact Kate Campbell: community@stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk or telephone 07866 024254.



A tour last year

2021 Environmental Award!

The RLC Team was delighted to discover that Berkhamsted Citizens Association Townscape Committee had chosen the Rectory Lane Cemetery Project as the winner of their 2021 Environment Award. The judges were very complimentary about the project: *This year we were agreed unanimously that a candidate merited our highest award, the plaque. So, for its outstanding design, its sensitive remodelling and refurbishment, the quality of its materials, its environmental attributes, and simply the finest community project seen in Berkhamsted in recent years, we have decided to give our most prestigious award to the Friends of St. Peter's for the Transformation of the Rectory Lane Cemetery from 'Dead Space to Living Place'.*

We are very grateful to the Citizens Association for according us this accolade and look forward to unveiling the plaque which will be fixed at the entrance to the Cemetery on Rectory Lane.



The daffodill was the symbol for Marie Curie's **National Day of Reflection** recently, when people were encouraged to come together to reflect on our collective loss, support those who have been bereaved, and hope for a brighter future. Some chose to visit the Garden of Remembrance on that day. The Celebration of Life wall is there for everyone who wishes to commemorate and celebrate people in their lives.

This Memorial wall is a wooden structure within the Garden of Remembrance and consists of two narrow outer panels, up which climbing roses are being grown, and two wider inner panels, onto which commemorative tiles can be fixed.



A local glass artist, Jessica Ecott, has designed a beautiful, painterly design of flower borders, which she is recreating in over 450 fused glass tiles for the two panels. One of the two designs is shown here.

Individual tiles can be purchased, in sequence, and engraved with text – to commemorate a loved one, an important life event, something you wish to celebrate and have a long-term reminder of.



Over time, as these individual glass tiles are added, we will be creating a beautiful and growing artwork that keeps the cemetery alive as a space for remembering and gives passers-by and visitors pause for thought. For more information please contact Kate Campbell, Community Engagement Officer by email: community@stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk or telephone 07866 024254.

Programme of Events

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

The Rev. Hutchinson continued

designed by the renowned glass company Powells of Whitechapel. It remains in place in St Peter's today, although the former sanctuary area is now used as a vestry and is not generally accessible.

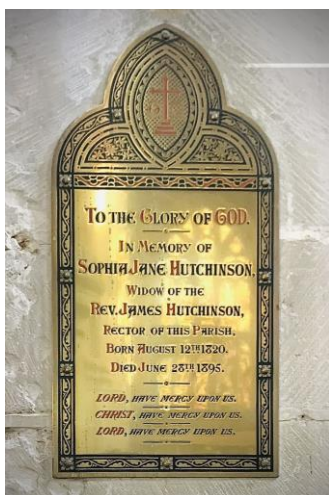
It seems possible that Hutchinson's retirement was dictated by failing health. He died in 1873 less than two years after his retirement as Rector and is buried in the Rectory Lane Cemetery.



He was also commemorated in St Peter's by his wife Sophia who commissioned a mural depicting the Ascension, painted on the wall above the chancel arch. The mural was removed in the re-ordering of 1958-60 but a brass plaque recording Sophia's gift is still in place.



Sophia evidently remained in Berkhamsted after her husband's death. The 1881 census records her living in Gravel Path. She died in 1895 and is commemorated in a brass plaque in St Peter's. She



is buried with James in the Rectory Lane Cemetery. Their tomb is covered by a tomb slab reminiscent of the 13th century tomb slab preserved in St Catherine's Chapel. Is this just a coincidence or does it perhaps reflect James Hutchinson's interest in architecture in general, and the history and architecture of St Peter's in particular?

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:

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