



BERKHAMSTED LOCAL HISTORY AND MUSEUM SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 803417

www.berkhamsted-history.org.uk

Founded 1950 as Berkhamsted & District Local History Society

Summer Newsletter 2021

At the (on-line/postal) AGM in March we welcomed **Sandra Jenkins** to the committee as Programme Secretary and as H.O.D co-ordinator alongside Jenny; we look forward to working with her.

Welcome to our new members! Thank you for joining us. The total number of member Households, including the Life members, stands at 129. We also have currently 21 households that have yet to pay their subs. When you have read this please pass to neighbours and friends who might be tempted to join our Society or come to our events.

Heritage Open Days

These grow year by year! This year the theme is Food or edible England. They run from **10th September to the 19th**. Heritage Open Days celebrates local history for everyone to enjoy for **FREE**. Thanks to Sandra and Jenny for organising these events for your delectation.

The Battle of Berkhamsted Common.

A guided tour of the area of the Common that Lord Brownlow proposed to enclose.

11th at 10.00 am. Meet at the Car Park on B4506 at the Aldbury turn

The Lost Wharves of Berkhamsted

A guided tour of yesterday's canal – highlighting its importance in the development of our town.

11th 10.00 am 15th 10.00 am.

Meet at Old Mill House Hotel, London Road HP4 2BN

A Radical Village – Nonconformity in Northchurch

Tracing the rise of religious dissent in the village from Quakers to Baptists

11th 14.30 pm Meet at Northchurch Social Centre, Bell Lane HP4 3TS

St Peters Church and the Court House

Learn more about the historical and architectural features of these ancient buildings. 12th 15.00 pm. Berkhamsted High Street HP4 2AX

A Walk Back in Time

Guided tour from the Castle to and along the High Street

13th 14.00 pm 16th 14.00 pm. Meet at Castle Gate

Berkhamsted's West End Poverty and Industry

A look at this less well-known part of Berkhamsted. A small exhibition of kitchen utensils and photographs. 16th 18.00 pm 18th 10.30 am.

Meet at Sacred Heart Church Car Park HP4 1HX

A Walk in the Past – Berkhamsted Place

The remnants of this successor to the Castle, the Elizabethan Walled Garden, the Great Barn, the Victorian Vinery. This is bottled History!

17th 10.00 am 18th 14.00 pm. Meet at the top of Castle Hill HP4 1LH

Berkhamsted Foundling Hospital (Ashlyns)

Two former foundlings talk about their life at Ashlyns 1935-55. An on-line event available all week. See www.heritageopendays.org.uk for the link.

Amersfort

A fine Arts and Crafts house with a garden designed by Ernest Wilmott and Gertrude Jekyll. 13th 10.00 am and 14.30 pm. Amersfort Hall, the Common, Potten End HP4 2 QF (Look out for the White Posts)

Watercress

A tour and photographic exhibition of the former Berkhamsted beds

12th 10.30 am 16th 10.30 am. Meet at St Johns Well Lane HP4 1JQ

Visit to a Working Watercress Bed

19th 11.00 am. Meet at HP1 2BS (Boxmoor)

Castle Street Crawl

Join Henry Nash for a nostalgic Stroll down Castle Street in around 1890 when it was packed with food shops and drinking establishments.

11th 14.00 pm. Meet at junction Castle Street/High Street

Rectory Lane Cemetery

Picnic and family entertainment. 12th 11.00 – 16.00 Rectory Lane entrance HP4

2DH. See Rectory Lane [website www.rectorylanecemetery.org.uk/eventbrite](http://www.rectorylanecemetery.org.uk/eventbrite)

or more information www.rectorylanecemetery.org.uk

Berkhamsted Castle

Castle Tours 11th – 12th see: www.berkhamstedcastle.org.uk

All places must be pre-booked:

Sandra Jenkins 07942321901 or admin@BLHMS.onmicrosoft.com

This is the final episode of the 'Mystery' Picture!

Colin Garrett writes: *I can confirm that the house pictured in the Spring 2021 Newsletter is indeed Cherry Trees in Potten End. In the 1950s it was owned by Mabel Marsh who was a friend of my mother. They were both probably members of the Potten End WI. Miss Marsh used to drive around Potten End in a pony and trap - she had no car. She had help in the garden from a Mr Cook who was once stopped by the Police when he was riding his bike in the village with a loaded shotgun across the handlebars! He sometimes helped my parents but was eventually so decrepit that he needed a fork to lean on to keep him upright. The other horse-drawn vehicle in the village was Mr Groom's bakery van which made house calls about once a week.*" We always love to hear your local memories, so please send them in.

Other News:

Jenny Sherwood has moved to Kidderminster in Worcestershire to be nearer to her daughter. She remains on the committee as archivist and is still very active in our affairs, electronically that is. We wish her well in her new home, which we hear has a lovely garden.

Books: We have a few dozen brand-new copies left of *The Bookstacks 2002* publication -a high quality collection of lovely colour photographs, with descriptions, by Eric G Meadows called [Berkhamsted - A Gateway to the Chilterns](#). Some of the pictures are of the surrounding villages and countryside, but most of the book is about urban Berkhamsted. Many of the pictures, for example of St Peter's or the Town Hall, are instantly recognisable, but others if it were not for the captions, you might have a job to place. You might even spot yourself in the High St Photographs!

Views of Hall Park, Gaveston Drive, Durrants Road and Billet Lane show that there are all sorts of attractive parts to the Town of which perhaps we need a book like this to remind us. What I found particularly interesting were the unusual viewpoints, that **Eric Meadows** had found for some of his shots. One of them shows the tower of St Peter's glimpsed between buildings of Berkhamsted School, with the elegant music school in the foreground.

The photographs were taken over the four seasons of the year. Wisely, the author was careful to visit Berkhamsted to take his photographs on days when the sun was shining, so there is no damp, or gloom in the book. RRP £20, Hardback, we can offer them to members for a special price of **£10**. It would make a good gift. Contact Mary on 01442 824362 / 07704822587.

NEW for 2021: RAFFLE. We will be introducing a raffle at our new season of talks. Tickets will be £1 each strip (cash only so please remember to bring some). Various local history themed prizes plus chocolates, a bottle of wine etc.... all proceeds to the society. Prize donations welcome.

Castle Affairs. Adrian Barham writes:

This Summer, with Covid, the Visitors' Room has been closed and the information boards have been placed as banners outside the Cottage. **Ken Wallis** has been placing seats and flower boxes on the platform outside the Visitors' Room – see *photo*. A gate Visitor Counter has been installed at the gate and in the period June-September last year, and moreover, in the middle of the Pandemic, 41,000 people were recorded. This must equate to over 75,000 in a normal year which is astonishing.

The litter-picking event in June as part of Keep Britain Tidy's "Great British Spring Clean" event went well and it got Daily Mail coverage!

Many thanks to **Andrew Holder** for organizing the Castle Visitors Room rota. Although this year the panels on banners and model of the castle had been placed outside this seemed to get more visitor involvement.



Dacorum Heritage (previously Dacorum Heritage Trust). **Norman Groves** writes:

In the spring Newsletter we reported that Dacorum Heritage (the body established to care for and catalogue heritage collections from several Borough history societies including ourselves), is undergoing re-organisation that potentially seriously affects the BLHMS. In 2021 the DH has been re-assessing its ideas in discussion with Dacorum Borough Council, their funders. The Council had approved DH funding for 2021/22.

The Council has now commissioned an independent Study to help to develop a long-term plan to preserve heritage items and records, and to formulate a financially sustainable way forward. The BLHMS is being consulted as part of this study, probably around the end of July. The study is much needed, as the Council seriously under-supports heritage services compared to surrounding Boroughs and has not increased their grant to DH for many years.

Previous re-organisation proposals from the DH, in 2020, included the plan to stop the current method of arranging the relationship between DH and the collecting societies, by moving from Loan Agreements to Storage Agreements. Little information has been provided about Storage Agreements, and the Society has objected to the concept of stopping Loan Agreements on the basis that it will lead to a major diminution of the range and quality of heritage services in the future, as collecting societies do not currently have the resources to individually and consistently maintain cataloguing procedures, and the heritage service for the Borough will be splintered into non-coordinated parts.

Market Stall: We have booked the charity Market stall outside Aitchison's on Saturday 11th September to promote the society and will be selling a range of local history books at discounted prices.

Talks Programme 2021-2022

All speakers have been confirmed for the upcoming season. Wednesdays, 8pm start in the Wellcome Great Hall, Berkhamsted Town Hall. Visitor's welcome. We hope by then that Covid restrictions will be over, and we shall be back to some form of normal. The following is a summary of the talks.

15.09.21	Zena Dickinson	Luton Hoo, Past Present & Future 'My talk covers my 35 years at Luton Hoo - from my start in the Estate Office to running the Mansion House. This was initially for 1 year but ran into 8! The ups and downs of organising corporate events / weddings and many films. So, a tale of both past histories trying to blend in with all things 'modern'!
20.10.21	Elaine Saunders	Policing Berkhamsted before 'The Police' It will cover how policing was organised before the creation of the county constabulary, the type of men holding office and the challenges they faced in carrying out their duties. It will focus particularly on interpreting Berkhamsted's surviving Constables' Book (which is unique in the county) by explaining what the entries mean, what trends it revealed and how valuable a resource it proved to be in the study of early policing'.
17.11.21	Lydia Carmichael	My life in the Foundling Hospital School 'I was given up to The Foundling Hospital when I was two months old and then I was sent to live with a foster family in the country in Kent for five years. After this I was taken to The Foundling Hospital School (now Ashlyns) in Berkhamsted, where I was a boarder for ten years - not a good time'.
15.12.21	Mark Lewis	Cribs, Cards and Christingles The Origins of Christmas Traditions and Customs. A talk which explores how our colourful Christmas traditions and customs came into being and how they are celebrated. The presentation also includes some of the lesser-known folklore including Jesse Trees, Chrismons, Mumming Plays and Wassailing. We will provide Festive drinks and snacks at this event, before and after.
19.01.22	Carol Fulton	House Histories This talk will cover how to find out more about the history of a property using some of the key documentary records available and will include tips for finding out more about any home, irrespective of age. Case studies including one for a house in Berkhamsted will be used to demonstrate how information can be obtained from various sources to piece together a history showing when a house may have been built, how it has changed and who owned and lived there in the past and will highlight some of the interesting stories that have been uncovered whilst carrying out research.
16.02.22	Tony Statham	Families & Estates of Berkhamsted There were three estates, ' <i>Berkhamsted Hall</i> ' which was the home of the Pechells in the early 1800s, a well-to-do family of Huguenot descent. Later, <i>The Hall</i> was a private home for the Curtis family and the Greene's as in Greene King brewery; Edward Greene was brother to Charles, headmaster of Berkhamsted School and father to Graham Greene. Above this on the crest of a hill is ' <i>Ashlyns Hall</i> ' home to the Smith family (bankers) and the ancestry of Augustus Smith. Other families linked here were the Wethereds, the Longmans (publishing) and Sir Richard Cooper, a chemical manufacturer and breeder of pedigree sheep etc. The third estate was ' <i>Haresfoot</i> ', another Georgian mansion and now a school. This was the home of the Dorrien family (also bankers) who later became Smith-Dorrien as in General Sir Horas who had a distinguished military career. Inevitably the proximity of these estates and families led to various relationships and marriages between them making it all quite a complex scenario.
16.03.22	Kate Harwood	'Allotments' Allotments have a long and fascinating history, starting with the decline of feudalism after the Black Death in 1348 and the rise in cottage gardens, to the enclosures of the Tudor period onwards which forced many into food poverty, then on to the moral campaigns of the Victorians and the necessity of feeding the country during two world wars. This talk traces the development of the allotment movement and its rise and fall to the present day'. The AGM precedes this talk.

Mary Casserley
Chairman BLHMS July 2021