



BERKHAMSTED LOCAL HISTORY AND MUSEUM SOCIETY

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www.berkhamsted-history.org.uk

Founded 1950 as Berkhamsted & District Local History Society

BLHMS Spring Newsletter 2022

Spring is in the air!

From the archives courtesy of Chris Armstrong:



From 'THE BERKHAMSTED NEWSLETTER' Friday 15th June 1934:

MRS. WINSTON CHURCHILL'S VISIT. Mrs. Winston Churchill, a former scholar of Berkhamsted School for Girls, paid a return visit to the town on Saturday, when she opened a "Gipsy Fair" organised by the Berkhamsted Old Girls' Guild in aid of the School Scholarship Fund. A very large attendance fully justified the great amount of time and labour which had been expended in organising the event, and preliminary details suggest that the proceeds will amount to £200 - a very creditable sum for a worthy cause.

Miss C. M. Mackenzie, Headmistress, presided at the opening ceremony, and expressed gratitude to Mrs. Heseltine and the Old Girls' Guild for their work in connection with the Fair. The Entrance Scholarship Fund was started two years ago with a gift of £6 which, she added, amid laughter, was earmarked, "To be given to any object with the exception of the swimming bath." The school had no endowment fund, and so could not afford those scholarships which add enormously to the interest of the school, but she had felt that, if possible, they should have one scholarship at least.

Through the generosity of the Governors of the school, two scholarships were given last year - one for the day girls and the other for boarders. Concluding, Miss Mackenzie remarked that Mrs. Churchill's last visit to the school was in 1915, when she opened the new wing. "**Youth counts so much!**" Mrs. Winston Churchill formally declared the fair open and wished the organisers every success. She said that even though she was at the school for only four years and paid only one return visit, she still had the most vivid recollections of these times spent at the school. There were many little incidents she remembered, and they related to the old building, which, she understood, was now a Bank in the High-street (the old National Provincial Bank premises- now a restaurant).

"The surroundings of one's youth count so much when one is older," Mrs. Churchill added. If they had been happy, then one was able to face things with greater confidence and with much better ability. However prosperous one may be in later life; something was missing if one's childhood had been sad. Those who were old

girls and had the pleasure of happy memories of childhood would like nothing better than to help others to have the opportunity of being given similarly happy memories.

The Fair was well patronised, one particularly interesting feature being a gipsy caravan decked with articles for sale. In a neighbouring field the scholars gave displays of classical and athletic dancing and sang a group of traditional Hungarian songs. The whole programme was under the direction of Mrs. Coates, and the school songs and dances were arranged by Miss Bryer and Miss Lindsay. Miss D. Henderson, in addition to directing the Hungarian dances, gave a solo Bohemian polka.

BERKHAMSTED AND THE DROUGHT. Although Berkhamsted still appears to be comfortably situated as regards ordinary domestic water supplies, the prolonged drought is not leaving the district entirely unscathed. At this season the watercress beds between King's-road and Crooked Billet-lane are usually the scene of great activity, but this year, as the result of the drought, the watercress harvest has been almost entirely lost. Not only are the beds without scarcely a trace of water, but the river Bulbourne adjoining has completely dried up - an occurrence unknown since the drought of 1921. The same story must be told of the watercress bed in Berkhamsted Park and the adjacent Castle moats - water has entirely drained away and many months of normal rainfall will be required to start the springs again. At Bourne End the drought appears to have had little effect on the watercress industry; but this village is, of course, situated much lower in the valley than Berkhamsted.

"COOPER'S" OUTING. One of the season's largest annual outings was organised by Messrs. Cooper, McDougall & Robertson, Ltd., on Saturday. Between 400 and 500 employees and their friends journeyed to Portsmouth and Southsea by special train, and glorious weather added to the enjoyment of the visit. Large numbers spent the greater part of the day on the Isle of Wight, and it is, perhaps, symptomatic of the times that many made the crossing by air. The passenger lists of two airliners were entirely composed of Berkhamsted's visitors.

St Peters 800th anniversary events are being rolled out throughout the year; we are providing a talk in St Peters Church on Tuesday May 3rd 8pm. Julian Hunt will be talking on the last 800 years of Berkhamsted. We are also commissioning a local film of the church's history to be made, which will be on show daily near the West door of the church. We will have a bookstall at the various events, so come and support the Church in its many other, year-long celebrations.

August Bank Holiday sees a medieval fair in the Cricket club fields, organised by Berkhamsted Chamber of Commerce, again we will take a stall, and hope to show the film in the cricket pavilion.

Heritage Open Days events are underway for the first and second week of September. This year's theme is Industry and innovation. We will let you have the full programme of FREE events in our Summer newsletter.

Recent acquisitions: Include a drain cover stamped HJ Matthews, Castle St, Berkhamsted, and two 1906 JT Newman photographs showing the Asian Squadron

Kings Colonials putting up for the night at the Kings Arms on their way from Enfield to Stowe. If you have any artefacts etc. you wish to donate to the society, please contact Mary Casserley 01442 824362. Please **do not** take them to DHT store as they are 'full' and won't take them for us. They will however take them and add them



to their own collection!

The Chronicle: You will receive your Chronicle along with this newsletter, thank you to Linda Rollitt and Jenny Sherwood for editing another bumper issue. Remember we accept copy of any research you have undertaken, book reviews, memories etc. The deadline for next year is Jan 2023.

Jenny Sherwood. Alan Cummins writes: As many of you know, Jenny no longer lives in Berkhamsted but still retains a keen interest in the history of the town. She is to stand down from the position of archivist but to mark her years of service will be given the honorary title of **Archivist Emeritus**. She wishes to continue on the committee in an ex officio capacity to receive minutes and will deal with enquiries that come to her email address and to continue as co-editor of the *Chronicle*.

The Society owes an enormous debt to Jenny for the tremendous amount of work she has done over the years for us. She joined the society in January 1970, working with her husband Ken and others to save the Town Hall and start the Graham Greene Birthplace Trust. She joined our committee in 1997 succeeding Les Mitchell as chairman from 2000 until 2018. She was made a life member in 2018 when she also took over the role of archivist and has edited the *Chronicle*, with Linda Rollitt, since 2014.

During these years she has researched and written many articles for the *Chronicle*, *Berkhamsted Review/Your Berkhamsted* and other publications and written the medieval and early modern Berkhamsted chapter in *A County of Small Towns* (Herts Univ. Press 2008). She has spent hundreds of hours in the Museum Store researching, cataloguing, answering queries, preparing displays for exhibitions and liaising with DHT - not easy to do during covid. With others she took groups round the Castle and for Heritage Walks in the town, also giving talks to other local organisations (and donating her fee to our Society) and assisting in the lottery application and the Heritage Hub. She initiated the town's Heritage Open Day programme running this for 20 years.

Our society members have a good measure of local knowledge between them, but I believe that no one individual has as much as Jenny, surely our local historian par excellence since Percy Birtchnell. We thank her for all she has done for the Society and will continue to benefit from her knowledge and involvement.

Ashridge guides: Ashridge House have been in touch as they would like to engage a couple of tour guides – both to satisfy demand from corporate/wedding clients and to offer ticketed opportunities to the public. As and when required- there will be payment for this. Anyone interested please contact me 01442 824362.

Berkhamsted Castle: Berkhamsted Castle Trust will be providing the outside information panel banners again this year as these provide better public engagement. 10-6 at weekends from Easter through to September. New volunteer guides and people welcome the public always sought. Training given and you can sit with a friend. Please contact BCT if you would like to know more. Or call Ken Wallis 01442 877592.

Dacorum Heritage and our Collection Norman Groves updates us:
Dacorum Council Heritage Review. This has still not been published (due Sept 2021) A further request to know the outcomes was made to DBC in December, but again no reply received.

DH staff. The new Collection Manager Melissa Maynard works three days a week. There has been continued helpful engagement with DH staff.

Access to Store. After very restricted access over the Omicron peak, DH now say that societies can visit 1:30 – 5:00 pm on Wed/Thurs, provided one week notice given.

The digitisation of many photos etc. (continuing by Janice and John Boakes) has been of great help in assembling the Society's offering for the St Peter's 800th celebrations.

DH Governance. Several long-standing trustees resigned at the last DH AGM. The Charity Commission website shows four new trustees.

Mary Casserley
Chairman Spring 2022