



# BERKHAMSTED LOCAL HISTORY AND MUSEUM SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 803417

[www.berkhamsted-history.org.uk](http://www.berkhamsted-history.org.uk)

Founded 1950 as Berkhamsted & District Local History Society

## Summer Newsletter 2022

Hello everyone. I'm pleased to report we have 190 members (137 households) {53 couples & 84 single membership}. This figure includes 8 new members

### Bert Hosier Obituary

**Richard North** writes: BLHMS Honorary Life-time Member, Bert Hosier, commonly known as 'Hedgehog'<sup>1</sup>, passed away peacefully at the end of May. Bert was born in 1928 in an isolated brickyard cottage near Aldbury where his father, Joseph, worked as a brickmaker. His Mother, Lizzie, was a former cook at Langley, the large house that used to stand in Gossoms End. Bert's first six years were spent in Aldbury before his father found new work at the brickworks in Shootersway, which meant a move to Northchurch. The family eventually settled at 11 New Road where he lived for over 20 years, attending both the village school and St Mary's church, where he used to sing in the choir. In 1957 he married Doris Ranford and they later set up home in Rectory Cottage, Northchurch, before moving to a bungalow in Southbank Road with its magnificent views from the bay window over the canal, church, and the south side of the valley.

Bert was probably the last of the 'Northchurch Characters', his fame coming from the series of local history-related articles he wrote under this penname, 'Hedgehog', from the 1980s until recently, in the monthly St Mary's Northchurch Newsletter. Many of these articles were later condensed into his book *Hedgehog's Northchurch*, published in 1994. Bert had the knack of collecting snippets of local information from people he spoke to, books that he had read, or things that he had observed, and then squirrelling them away (or whatever hedgehogs do!) for use as the basis for one of his subsequent articles. Living so close to the countryside, he was never happier than spending time on Northchurch and Berkhamsted Commons watching the wildlife.

As well as being an accomplished writer and observer, Bert was also an excellent presenter, giving talks for many years on local history to various organisations and schoolchildren in the area. Local recognition came last year with a road in the new development off Durrants Lane being named Hedgehog Way in his honour.

<sup>1</sup> Hedgehog is a name given to anyone who was born and bred in Hertfordshire. Richard wrote the article on Hedgehog for the Gazette, and we attended the funeral at St. Mary's Northchurch in late June where Bert's grandson, Ben gave a moving tribute.

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## Grant Award

**Norman Groves** reports: BLHMS is delighted that it has been awarded one of only 10 grants made nationally to heritage organisations under the Brighter Day Scheme run by the Association of Independent Museums (AIM). The new scheme is funded by the Worshipful Company of Arts Scholars Charitable Trust and both they and AIM are much thanked for their support, which will make a difference. The scheme aims to enable small museums to undertake work put on hold during the pandemic. This is the case for the Society which has found it difficult to make the desired speedy progress in digitising its large collection in long-term storage, so that much better use can be made to excite and engage the public. Digitisation of such items as photos and postcards is already paying good dividends, with high quality images being used in the Society's scree animation about the history of St Peter's Church, Berkhamsted, which celebrates its 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022. The AIM grant will enable the Society to tackle for the first-time larger items such as artwork and maps that require specialist equipment by professional experts.

## RIBA Honorary Fellows 2022

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) award Honorary Fellowships yearly to people who have made a significant contribution to architecture but are not architects. This includes people who have helped improve the quality of design and influence the delivery of the built environment in a more sustainable way, those involved in its promotion and management, and those who nurture the interests of future generations. This year we were delighted to learn that BLHMS committee member **Dr James Moir** who led the effort to secure funding for the transformation of the cemetery "from a dead space to a living place", who project managed the works and who remains the convenor of the project, was a recipient of this honour. James is a heritage and historic buildings consultant who has dedicated his life to the preservation and conservation of our historic environment. He has worked on major historical sites across the UK and is a champion for the importance of craft in the profession. CONGRATULATIONS James!

## Heritage Open Days 9<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> September 2022

**Sandra Jenkins** has organised another exciting year of FREE talks and tours. They will be taking place in and around Berkhamsted between 9-18th September 2022. This is a wonderful opportunity to discover some of Berkhamsted's history.

**All events are free, but places are limited and must be booked via Eventbrite.**

Tickets/places available from August 1<sup>st</sup> 2022

### **A Walk Back in Time' - A guided tour of Berkhamsted's historic town centre.**

Starting at the Castle gates visitors will take a walk back into town hearing about some of the people and places of interest. HP4 -1LJ

**Friday 9 September: 1400, Friday 16 September: 1400**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/315376257877>

### **Historical graffiti and inscriptions in St Peters**

St Peter's is fortunate to have a rich & fascinating collection of medieval and later inscriptions – music, faces, names, crosses, and text. Learn the history of these once acceptable graffiti, & how many were carefully executed. St Peter's Church, High St Berkhamsted. HP4 2AX

**Thursday 8th September: 1900**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/316455134827>

### **Heraldry in St Peter's Church Berkhamsted**

The talk will include a general introduction to Heraldry with descriptions and examples of coats of arms displayed in stained glass windows, memorial tablets, and hatchments, with a discussion of links to local Berkhamsted families. St Peter's Church, High St Berkhamsted HP4 2AX. **Thurs 8th September: 1900**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/335528594057>

### **The Lost Wharves of Berkhamsted - A guided tour of yesterday's canal**

Visitors will learn of the importance of the canals to Berkhamsted. Bank Mill Lane, Berkhamsted. HP4 2NB

**Saturday 10 September: 10.00am, Wednesday 14 September: 10.00am**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/316389438327>

**The Battle of Berkhamsted Common:** The Power of the People - How the Common was saved from Enclosure. A Guided tour showing the extent of the area proposed for enclosure by Earl Brownlow and its background history.

Car Park on B4506 just south of the turning to Aldbury Map reference SP978 114

**Saturday 10 September: 1430**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/316447080737>

### **Berkhamsted Foundling Hospital - Memories of Childhood**

Two former Foundlings will tell us what life was like for the children in Berkhamsted Foundling Hospital 1935-55. Walking round the present Ashlyns School they will recall memories and feelings of those days. Ashlyns School, Chesham Road, Berkhamsted. HP4 3AH. **Sunday 11 September: 13.30pm.&15.00pm**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/373518904097>

### **Berkhamsted's West End Poverty and industry but also some hidden surprises.**

Visitors will learn about the less well-known part of Berkhamsted the West End the poverty and industry but also some hidden surprises. Car Park at Sacred Heart Church Park St, Berkhamsted HP4 1HX

**Monday 12 September: 1030. Thursday 15 September: 1800**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/316474783597>

**Amersfort, a fine Arts and Craft house**, with a garden designed by E Willmott and planted by G Jekyll. Visitors will enjoy a walk around the garden and hear about the history of the design and planting schemes. **Amersfort Hall, The Common, Potten End, Berkhamsted HP4 2QF**

**Tuesday 13 September: 1030 & 1400**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/335169379637>

### **A Walk into the Past: Berkhamsted Place, Successor to the Castle**

On this guided tour, visitors will experience some of the grandeur and ambience of what remains of this 'royal' mansion. It also includes an Elizabethan walled garden, The Great Barn and vinery. The Bothy, Berkhamsted Place, Berkhamsted. HP4 1HQ

**Friday 16 September: 1030, Saturday 17 September: 1030**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/369461889457>

**A Radical Village - the Baptists in Northchurch.** This guided tour outlines the story of the Baptists in Northchurch. Meet at Northchurch Social Club car park. HP4 3RD

**Saturday 17 September: 1430pm**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/316530289617>

**The Old Hall & Chapel, Berkhamsted School.** Visitors will have the opportunity of seeing the original schoolhouse built in 1544 (Grade I listed), to learn something about the history of the school (founded in 1541) and see the beautiful little Victorian chapel.

Berkhamsted School, Castle Street, Berkhamsted HP4 2BB

**Sunday 18 September: 1030am & 1430pm**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/335180743627>

**Berkhamsted Castle Guided Tours.** The Castle Trust will again be running free guided tours of the Castle on the weekends of 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> September. Bookings can be made online via the castle website from late August.

<https://www.berkhamstedcastle.org.uk/events/whats-on/>

### **St Peters 800<sup>th</sup> Events**

Have you seen the BLHMS Exhibition on the History of St Peter's & Berkhamsted? It is centred around an audio-visual presentation made by the same team that made the film for the Rectory Lane Cemetery Project so is first class. It takes you back to the building of the castle and church, the development of the church and the effect it has had on the town over the centuries. This spectacular experience, along with a splendid talk by Julian Hunt was our contribution to its events. The film is on rotation throughout the day and continues throughout the summer. There were three wonderful talks, one by ex-St. Peters churchwarden and chairman of the buildings committee **Dr Christopher Green** on the history of the church which he is shortly to publish as a book. The third talk was by **Dr Suzie Imber** (ex-Berkhamsted School pupil and Cllr **Peter Matthew**, they spoke of Berkhamsted in 50 years into the future! Suzie is Associate Professor of Planetary Science at the University of Leicester and winner of BBC's *Astronauts-Do you have what it takes?* Royal Society award winner. She has held posts at NASA and is involved in instrument design for the ESA's next mission to Mercury.

The 800th Festival Church fete on Sunday 26th June was a cracking event. We at the BLHMS held a bookstall and spoke with many prospective new members.

### **Medieval Fair 25th - 26th August**

Berkhamsted Chamber of Commerce are hosting a two-day Medieval Event over the August Bank holiday weekend (25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup>) at the Cricket Club. Events will include a falconry display, Medieval cookery demonstrations, etc. BLHMS will be having a stall promoting the society with a local history bookstall on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> August

## Acquisitions BLHMS

has recently acquired a pair of early William Cooper & Nephews posters. The first is this colourful poster used by the company in Uruguay and Argentina showing a gaucho with cattle and sheep, together with images of the company's Dipping Powder and two tins of chemical treatments. The second poster is an earlier (c.1870s), text only poster advertising Cooper's Dipping Powder, which has been overprinted with the name of the local retailer, "J. Green, Chemist, Swindon". We also had a box of "Foundation News" magazines from the Wellcome Foundation donated by Ray Bird who worked there for decades. Many of these were printed at the Clunberry Press, and most have articles on the Coopers Factory. Remember, if you have any items you would like to donate to our archives, please get in touch with Mary 01442 824362/ 07704822587. Please don't take them to DHT store as they are unable to take any more items as they are full.



## Curious building in Park Street, can you help? Our archivist **Janice Boakes**

writes: Scanning our photograph collection can be a very distracting pastime. I recently came across this image of an old building in Park Street which is believed to have been demolished in 1969.



Initially I was intrigued because the back of the image described it as an old Tannery and once the yard for David Osborne builders. The building looked to be built of brick and stone with ecclesiastic style windows. It didn't look like it had been built as a tannery. I immediately looked at the tithe map to see if it was showing because to me it looked older than 1839, but unfortunately, it's not represented there.

Looking further in our collection I found a typed note made by Eric Holland in 1971. He described the building as "PARK STREET (Tannery) This two-storey building demolished in the late 1960's, had an ecclesiastical look. Said to be a tannery was of brick and stone construction with tile roof and decorated ridge, and end stack. In E wall were two upper windows with pointed heads. Probably late 18c or early 19c.". The only other reference to the Tannery in our collection is an image of "Mr C Fry of the leather factory, Park Street". Clifford Fry shows on the 1939 register as an accounts clerk, living at 12 Park Street, he died in 1971. As always, I then turned to Percy Birtchnell to see if he mentions it at all. Writing as Townsman in Jan 1965 he said "Information, please. Park Street, though still a cul-de-sac so far as vehicles are concerned, has been busy since the footbridge to the park and Dell Field was opened. People who pass this way often comment upon a building at the lower end of

Park Street. It looks as if it may once have been a church or chapel. It was, I believe, built by the Osborn family a century ago for use as a workshop and store. Here, so I am told, the first paving slabs used on our footpaths were cast by a new method which won great admiration. I have also heard that for a time the building was used as a Tannery. Perhaps someone will confirm, deny, or supplement this scanty information". He doesn't appear to have received any replies and here I am 57 years later asking the same question!

I'm wondering if an older unused/derelict building was repurposed by the Osborn family. Could they have added brickwork, roof and windows to a previous stone building? I find it hard to believe they would have used stone to build a workshop and store. Was it derelict in 1839, which might explain why it doesn't show on the tithe map? Development of Park Street started in about 1867. At the time of the tithe map the area that later became Park Street was split into two plots, the west one owned by the Duchy of Cornwall and the east one by Mary Goodwin. Mary also owned two cottages on an adjoining plot on the High Street.

In the Buck Herald 5 Feb 1870, there's an interesting item "ANCIENT MASONRY – Last week, Mr. Nash, of this town, in removing for the purpose of rebuilding on the site, in the High Street, two old houses, the property of the Misses Squire, came upon two ancient doorways – long since stopped up and hidden. They, with portions of the walls, are believed to have been part of an old hospital which formerly stood there, in connection with St John's Church, long since removed. A sketch has been taken by gentleman whose pencil embellished the Cornhill Magazine". The man who made the sketch was Robert Barnes (see Tailpiece in The Chronicle Vol XIX March 2022). I have been unable to locate this sketch or the exact location of the "two old houses", but they do not appear to be on the map in the location that we believe the hospital stood (Pizza Express now). Could they have been the two cottages owned by Mary Goodwin in 1839? The archaeological dig of the Pizza Express site concluded that "Pottery and radiocarbon dating suggests that the cemetery was being used from the 11<sup>th</sup> century until the 15<sup>th</sup> century and that there were two phases of activity, the first associated with St James's Church and the later with the Hospital of St John the Baptist". The graveyard has clearly been found but what was the exact location of the Church and Hospital. Could the hospital have been further to the West and the image we have above shows some of the original stone work, later reused? I guess we will never know. Unless you have further information.....

## **The Queens Diamond Jubilee**

We helped Berkhamsted Living with an article relating to the Queen's coronation 70 years ago. You should all receive a copy in the post. A quick look in the Parish Review June 1977 for Her Majesty's Silver Jubilee finds the town celebrating with the following: "Children's concerts and art exhibitions, BAODS production of "No, No Nanette", Art exhibition in St Peters churchyard, Flannagan's fair on the moor, All day cricket match v. Pinner C.C. Round Table Fete in the Castle grounds followed by a dance in the evening, Jubilee parade, Reading of 1952 Accession Proclamation, Berkhamsted Bowmen demonstration, Pram Race, BCA Cheese and wine evening, Midnight matinee at the REX, and a Victorian cricket match" What a lot that was!

**Berkhamsted Castle Trust** Chairman **Adrian Barham** writes: The Castle continues to attract a steady flow of school and other group visits – principally at the Year 2 (age 6-7) level, where "*Towers, Turrets and Tunnels*" seems to be part of the curriculum – as well as at Year 7 (age 11-12) level. We also welcomed the annual Easter service from the Northchurch Baptist Church.

A considerable amount of conservation work was done by English Heritage to the Castle walls over the winter months and is continuing. However, there is concern that cracking in the walls to the east of the bailey shows that there is significant movement that may need extensive remedial work, at considerable expense. The Trust has just provided EH's conservation



consultants with a copy of the laser measurements of the standing ruins that we arranged for RSK Geophysics to take in 2019, and we will compare this data with the current position to determine the risk of significant failure of the walls.

We will shortly meet with Dr Jeremy Ashbee, Head Properties Curator for EH, to sign off the final version of the Conservation Management Plan for the Castle and to start work on commissioning a site development plan, to guide future presentation / interpretation and on-site works.

EH has agreed that Drama Impact from Tring can hold a matinee performance of *The Taming of the Shrew* in the Castle grounds on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> July at 2pm. The Castle will therefore be closed to the public that afternoon to allow the performance to take place. Tickets are available online at <https://dramaimpact.com/>

The recent pandemic has unfortunately had an impact on the number of volunteers assisting with stewarding and other duties at the Castle. Several of the Trustees have been assisting **Ken Wallis** with locking up the Castle each evening, but we are looking to expand the volunteer roster to spread the duties across more people. Anyone who is interested in helping with from time to time with locking up, or with stewarding, should please email [volunteer@berkhamstedcastle.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@berkhamstedcastle.org.uk). Full training is provided, and EH kindly provides volunteer rewards as a thank you for your assistance after a minimum qualifying period.

After considerable discussions we are nearing an agreement with EH about replacement benches on site. A specification for sustainable, domestically sourced timber benches has been agreed. Benches will include an engraving of the Duchy of Cornwall's coat of arms on the top rail and will also be capable of being engraved with short memorial messages.



### Castle volunteers

Society members have been the backbone of the volunteers that sit in at the Castle on Open days. What with one thing and another – Pandemic particularly, some people have left and so more volunteers are wanted. The rota is run by Andrew Holder (via The Castle Trust) and he would be pleased to hear from you. If you wish you can get as deeply involved as you like by helping the visitors with the history and importance of the castle and Ken Wallis will give you tutorials on becoming a guide as well, or just overseeing the grounds. The panels are now reproduced on banners that hang outside the cottage and the Visitors' Room is no longer used. **BUT** here's the rub; if you do a few sit-ins you get an annual **English Heritage Pass** (plus 1 guest) giving you free admission to all their properties throughout the country. Now that's a real deal and incentive! Andrew is at: [andrew.holder@berkhamstedcastle.org.uk](mailto:andrew.holder@berkhamstedcastle.org.uk) **Recording Oral histories.** If you know of anyone who would like to set their memories of Berkhamsted down via our digital tape recorder, please phone Mary. 01442 824362. Likewise, we are open to contributions to the next issue of the Chronicle, copy date Feb. 2023. Don't forget we have a mine of information on our regular Facebook page and website. Rectory Lane Cemetery provide regular and good updates on Berkhamsted history on their Facebook page too. Well worth a browse.

**Mary Casserley Chairman BLHMS**