



# 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

## \*\*\*\*\*BLHMS Winter newsletter 2022\*\*\*\*\*

Welcome to all our new members, we are delighted to have you.

It is with great sadness that we learnt of the death of our Queen, Elizabeth II on September 8<sup>th</sup>. Her example of integrity, dedication and service has been an inspiration to us all and a constant in our lives. The Queen was a Patron of Berkhamsted School. We remember the wonderful time she visited the school and St Peters church in 2016, the year of her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and the 475<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the school. The school will mark her life with the planting of an English Oak within its grounds, which we trust will stand for centuries as a reminder of her life, her contribution to our country, and her example as a human being.

Here's a connection between Berkhamsted and the late Queen Elizabeth. **Barry Sapwell** writes: *"I was brought up in Berkhamsted. Between 1965-1979 we lived at 8 Greene Walk. During most of that time we had a lovely neighbour at number 9, Madame Smith: I recall her French accent. She was very strict and dressed immaculately. She used to teach the late Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth French! (I assume many years prior to living in Berkhamsted). Every year on Madame Smiths birthday she'd receive lilacs hand delivered from one of HRH's gardens"*

On Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September various members of your committee witnessed Cllr **Wendy Conian**, Mayor of Berkhamsted read the read King Charles III Accession Proclamation outside the Civic Centre. This was followed by general acclamation of "God Save The King", and a chorus of the National Anthem. Brief prayers for Her Late Majesty and for the new King were read by the Rector of St Peter's church, Fr Stuart Owen. Followed by a Requiem Mass in St Peters for the late Queen Elizabeth II.

Now let us inspect the yellowing pages of an old publication -The Parish magazine *Parochial Review*. It began in July 1872, as the *Berkhamsted Parish Magazine*, printed at William Cooper and Nephews' works in Ravens Lane. Later, printed by Mr. T. W. Bailey and then by Mr. A. E. Loosley.

January 1874 the Rev. J. W. Cobb writes the Church decorations were lavishly praised, especially the wreathed pillars. Mrs. Cobb supervised the decorations, assisted by the Misses Longman (daughters of the eminent publisher, who lived at Ashlyns), and the Misses Smith-Dorrien. Church schools end-of-year treats saw children each receiving a bun. At midnight on Christmas Eve the St. Peter's Drum and Fife Band marched along the High-street to "salute the happy morn" playing music and singing carols. On Boxing Day, the band travelled by train to Cheddington, playing at farmhouses, dining off roast beef and plum pudding in the village school.

We recently acquired this superb, beautifully executed original signed watercolour by Edward Popple (1879-1960) "*Berkhampstead High Street 1920*"

Edward Popple 1879-1960 was born Berkhamsted. A multi-talented man, being a teacher, artist in watercolours and etchings, musician, naturalist, and horticulturist. He attended Victoria Boys School (as it was then) and later returned, teaching there for an exceptional forty-eight years, thirty-six of which as headmaster! He retired in 1946. Some of his etchings capture the energy and force of the elements, but this watercolour is the exact opposite and oozes an air of peace warmth and calm on a summer's day on a high street recognisable today.

The painting is on cream watercolour paper and measures 245 x 315mm. Framed.



Thank you to our super-efficient Heritage Open Days coordinator **Sandra Jenkins**, who successfully organised 25 Free events, attended by 300+ people in and around Berkhamsted. Well done to all who volunteered leading tours/talks and events.

Local artist **Brian Bennett** died in November age 94 just after he had returned home after working the room at his private view in Bucks County Museum, Aylesbury. His second solo exhibition this year.

Brian was born in Olney, Buckinghamshire, and devoted much of his life to painting scenes in the Chilterns. Brian was Head of Art at Berkhamsted School for 30 years until he retired in 1987, he was elected President of the Royal Institute of Oil Painters.

His oil paintings capture his love of the Herts/Bucks countryside and the wildflowers and plants which make such a contribution to its beauty. He

worked mainly outside '*en-plein air*', and he developed a very distinctive method of painting with a bespoke knife.

His paintings have attracted a large following and feature in collections worldwide. His exhibitions include the Royal Academy, Royal Society of British Artists, National Society of Painters, and Royal Institute of Oil Painters. I'm sure many of you saw Brian Bennett's work at the Berkhamsted Art Society's bi-annual shows over the years, and a lucky few of you may even own one.

### **Progress Report on AIM Brighter Day grant Digitisation project Norman Groves & Janice Boakes write:**

The Society was very pleased to have been awarded this financial support and can report that the project is well on its way to a successful conclusion. This is a huge benefit as it means that, together with our in-house programme for small items, we are well on our way to digitising most of our photos, art, maps, and plans.

Steps taken to date include:

- Reviewed our collection to define in detail the most appropriate "difficult to digitise" larger-sized art, prints, drawings, maps, and plans.
- Identified a suitably equipped and skilled service supplier - The National Archives Digitisation Service
- Considered and agreed the digitisation standards, including metadata.
- Negotiated with the accredited DHT, where our collection is stored, about project processing and exit arrangements, including Modes records
- Purchased equipment for transit, especially A0 and A1 sized portfolio cases
- Individually condition-checked and recorded details of each item, during loading

In October **Norman Groves** took 900+ items to the National Archives at Kew, where they are currently being processed.

We would like to thank staff at DHT for their active help in making this project work.

The project is of huge value to the History Society and the town, as it will unlock research into, and use of, many of our more awkward-to-handle and previously "hidden" paper-based items. There are many stories to be told now many more people can study the resources. An example of how new benefits can flow can be gauged from the video film the Society made this year to chart the history and impact of St Peter's Church, and which celebrated its 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Our film, which used many digital images from our ongoing in-house project, was meant to be on public view for just the month of May, but the church authorities appreciated the high degree of public interest and asked that it be shown on a loop throughout the whole celebration year of 2022.



examples of documents

Part of the Museum Store at DHT, which has no display space, and limited processing space.



The camera-based digitisation workstation at National Archives

Just before going to press, we were very sad to hear that noted photographer and supporter of Berkhamsted Castle Trust, **Martin Evening**, died after complications from his cancer. He was aged 63 and left a wife and daughter. Martin photographed the Castle in a variety of weather conditions and seasons. His photographs form a key part of the visuals of the Castle on the Trust's website and were used on calendars and Christmas cards to help raise money for the BCT. Martin loved doing the Berkhamsted Castle project, and his skill and artistry shines out in every one of the beautiful photographs he took of our site. They are often complimented.

There is a small selection of Martin's pictures of Berkhamsted Castle on his website:

<https://www.martinevening.com/index/G0000oCfpbDSPWxw>

Hot off the press! **Christopher Green's** new history book has finally been published - ***St Peter's Church Great Berkhamsted 1222-2022*** Celebrating St Peter's 800th Year

In this compelling exploration of St Peter's history, published to mark the 800th anniversary of St Peter's Church, heritage expert Dr Christopher Green unravels the hidden history within Berkhamsted's ancient parish church. By analysing the clues found in the architectural details around the church, he builds a fascinating narrative of the origins and evolution of St Peter's – a must-read for history enthusiasts and curious minds alike. Copies are £15

We wish you a warm, merry, and healthy Christmas and New Year. Our talks resume on Wednesday January 18<sup>th</sup>. 2023 with the wonderful **Julian Hunt** talking about the Grand Junction Canal. (Later becoming the Grand Union Canal)

Mary Casserley - Chairman

