



# 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

## BLH&MS Winter newsletter 2023

### Membership update

As of 6<sup>th</sup> Dec 2023, have **215** paid-up members (**154** households) {62 couples & 92 single memberships}.

### Old Photographs

In the recent survey some people asked to see more old photographs. Many of our images are used on the Facebook page. You do not need to be a member of Facebook to read the posts. Linda Rollitt records each item on our website. From the main menu, go to publications and then scroll down to Facebook and you can search previous posts. [Facebook Archive](#)

For this newsletter we have pulled some images of the top of Water Lane over the years.



Inter-war years the domed Court House theatre.



1832 etching by Buckler.



After 1934, the dome has been removed.



Early 1900's the Tudor jetted building remains.

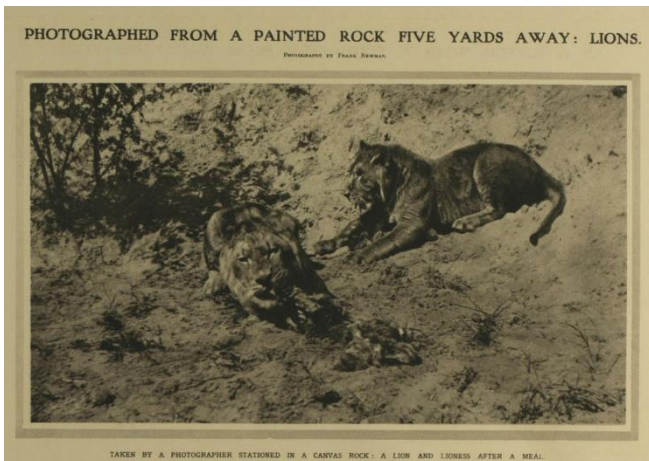


1971 with the new Tesco's building replacing the theatre.



## Recent enquiries

In September we received an enquiry from the Great Grandson of Theodore Frank Newman (born 1886). This led us into the fascinating life of the first child of photographer JT Newman. He followed his father's occupation but also became an inventor. He branched out from still photography to making motion pictures. He was one of the few skilled photographers to go to India on the visit of King George V and Queen Mary for the great Delhi Durbar (late 1911). The films which he took were afterwards shown at the Scala Theatre London. He experimented with inventive ways to hide his camera when taking wildlife films. The image below was taken from inside a canvas rock and featured in the London Illustrated News on 27 June 1914. He was making films showing how animals live, the article explains how he made over 6000 feet of film which were exhibited as part of "cinema college".



Below is another of his images which shows his 11-month-old son with a cheetah at the zoo, is this early photoshop??



The Great War put an end to his film making career and he turned his attention to the world of invention. His outstanding success was in the manufacture of a new metal, lighter in weight yet more durable than that previously used for aeroplanes. This was manufactured under his supervision at Slough. When he died in 1951 the newspaper report said that his metal was still in use at the time. This wasn't his only invention, in 1917 he was advertising Dressings for Potato seeds to guard against disease. He called this invention Anti-Blightol and he had other dressings for cereals "Rust-Ex", "Smut-Ex" and "Bunt-Ex".

Unfortunately, he found himself in debt and was declared bankrupt in 1919. In the 1920's he was sentenced to hard labour on at least three occasions for borrowing money even though he was an undisclosed bankrupt. This led to the breakup of his marriage and numerous name changes and house moves. He had three sons from his marriage and in 1928 he had a daughter with Maud Gash from Nettleton. They married in 1947 and remained together until his death in 1951. His funeral took place in St Mary's Northchurch where he is buried with his parents. His daughter Clarissa went on to become an artist under the name of Beshlie Heron. She was a good friend of Augustus John, below is a portrait he painted of her.



## Facebook Update

We are grateful to Linda Rollitt who continues to post interesting snippets of history on our social media. The following post was posted on 16 November. It was shared 20 times and reached a staggering 37,451 people.



The last nightwatchman in 1840s...

"By all accounts he was a genial old fellow who, true to tradition, wore a heavy cloak and carried a horn lantern, rattle and stout bludgeon. (His) rounds started at 8 o'clock in the winter. Until dawn he was virtually in charge of the town. Besides calling out the hour and state of the weather, he fetched the doctor in case of need, watched for outbreaks of fire (a constant danger when most of Berkhamsted cottages were straw-thatched), called the ostler and postmaster when royal mail coaches arrived in town, and generally preserved law and order. Inebriates depended upon the night-watchman to see them safely home, and ne'er-do-wells found it discreet to keep out of his path." (Beorcham Berkhamsted Review, Nov 1946). Back Lane (aka Church Lane) would have been part of the nightwatchman's beat....

## Survey of BLHMS Members' Views - Feedback report

We recently asked you to give your views on the Society's activities. This is the first time the Society has sought such feedback. Attached is the report.

Of course, please remember that if you have any issue you wish to raise at any time, please get in touch. We would like to say a huge "THANK YOU" to all the volunteers that organise and deliver the Society's activities. Your hard work is very much appreciated.

[Survey results](#) (Ctrl + click to follow link)

If you would like to see the full survey comments please contact us.

## Summary of indicators for the future

Overall, the activities of the Society seem very well received. Quality, range and value for money are all seen as positive, scoring more than 4 out of 5. The talks programme, Chronicle, exhibitions & displays, Heritage Open Days, newsletters, and email alerts all seem particularly appreciated currently. The survey gave indications of how these activities can be "tweaked" to maintain their value and interest. So, in summary, the key suggestions for the Society to consider focusing on for the future include (not in any particular order):

- Maintain and build on the current selection of activities.
- Improve the sound quality of presenters at talk evenings.
- Introduce a higher proportion of local topics in the talks programme.
- Give more opportunities for members to be actively involved in activities.
- Consider group visits to other "out of town" local heritage venues.
- Consider how to build up interest and use of the website.
- Develop resources which are appealing to younger people.
- Look at more town tours throughout the year if possible.

## Society activities update

- We are working with Berkhamsted & District Archaeological Society to integrate their members with us.
- Thanks to the hard work of the Wednesday volunteers, we have managed to catalogue over 1200 items into our collection this year.
- James Moir has secured a Paul Mellon Arts Centre grant to carry out further research on the architect CH Rew and his career.
- Thanks to Sandra Jenkins for organising another successful Heritage Open Days. This year we estimate we had 450 attendees. A big thank you to all this year's tour guides.
- We welcome 8 new members since our last newsletter.

**Wishing you a Merry Christmas  
and a prosperous New Year from  
Mary Casserley, chairman.**

