



BLH&MS Spring Newsletter 2025

NEW VENUE INFORMATION

From September 10th, 2025, our monthly talks programme will be held across the road at the Civic Centre.

Membership update

We welcome 7 new members, bringing our total membership to 231.

Peter Grimer Legacy

We don't have a clear update for our members as we are still waiting for the solicitors to complete the transfer of the two residential properties. A legacy such as this is a fantastic opportunity for our society and is not something that volunteer trustees often have the pleasure of dealing with. It also comes with a great responsibility to use the assets wisely and to make sure that we have the governance and systems to manage the potential income. On Monday 7th April we met in the council chambers to start discussions on suitable ways forward. We will obviously continue to keep members informed of our next steps.

Old Photographs

In this edition we thought we would share some images of activities in the Castle ground:



Skating in the Castle Moat 1890



Race in the Castle grounds March 1915



Edward, Prince of Wales, inspecting ex-servicemen in the castle grounds 1935

Jimmie Honour



We are sorry to announce that Jimmie Honour died peacefully at home on Saturday 25th January. He was 95.

In retirement, Jimmie was a Berkhamsted Art society member for many years before the pandemic and frequently exhibited at the BAS exhibitions.

He was also a keen member of the Potten End Monday art group and a past president of Berkhamsted Local History & Museum Society.

He was born in Tring and was a Chartered Architect and ran an architectural practice in Leighton Buzzard from 1960 to 1996. Notably, he restored All Saints church in Leighton Buzzard following a devastating fire in 1985.

Berkhamsted Station underpass makeover continues.

We advised in our Spring Newsletter last year of a number of information posters by Mary Casserley at the Station underpass. Observant commuters and passengers will have

noticed that further images have now been added on the opposite side. The new images show locations within walking distance of the station.



Funding for this project came from West Midlands Trains, organised by The Friends of Berkhamsted Station (who plant up the areas in front of and behind the station). Mary is delighted to have had the opportunity to donate more of her images free of charge to this project for the good of the town.

Ashridge – Adelaide Tower



We are pleased to announce that our contract with EF Corporate Education Ltd, the owners of Ashridge House, has been extended for a further 2 years. We started working at the Adelaide Tower in January 2023, in that time we have accessioned, digitised and stored almost 5000 items. Every Wednesday morning our team of dedicated volunteers meet to work on our collection. Some of the items we have processed are too large for us to digitise.

A great example is a map/plan dated 1864 which shows the proposal by the Bridgewater's for a people's park in Berkhamsted. The proposal, which is believed to be linked to the enclosure plans for the common, shows a park running north of the canal from Mill Street to Billet Lane. The plans show proposals for two cricket grounds (one for Northchurch and one for Berkhamsted), flower beds, a gymnasium, a bowling green, a dance lawn, a croquet ground, lawn billiards, a bathing and skating area, two waterfalls, a quots ground, archery ground, and a fountain. Other items like this red glass beaker have been photographed and stored. This beaker was produced to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Mechanics' Institute in 1896, it only has one tiny chip.

Researcher and typist extraordinaire

We are deeply indebted to Chris Armstrong who spends much of her time searching the newspaper archives for interesting articles on Berkhamsted. She then types up her findings which add to our digital archives, which allows us to quickly search for names and places etc. But more importantly, her research allows us to learn more about the history of the town.

As an example, in January Chris found the article below in The Bucks Gazette of Saturday, May 1, 1824.

GENTEEL RESIDENCE, Situate next the High Road, between GREAT BERKHAMSTED and NORTHCHURCH

TO BE PEREMPTORILY SOLD BY AUCTION,

BY MESSRS. GOMM AND HAILEY,

At the KING'S ARMS INN, GREAT BERKHAMSTED, on SATURDAY, MAY 15, at Three o'clock in the Afternoon, in one Lot, (by Order of the Executors of Mr. Wm. Norris Deceased.)

AN Eligible FREEHOLD ESTATE, situated in the parish of NORTHCHURCH, comprising a good Brick and Tiled Dwelling House, pleasantly situated next the High Road, between Great Berkhamsted and Northchurch, with a Frontage of 50 Feet, containing a GROCER'S SHOP, Front Parlour, Front Kitchen, Back Kitchen, Wash-house, with a Well of excellent Water and Lead Pump; five Bed Chambers, two Cellars, Wood-house, capital four-bay Barn, with a good Thrashing Floor; Store Room, Furze Barn, Pig Sty, Shed, and other Domestic Offices; Yard and Garden, 90 Feet long by 52 Feet wide, fenced on both sides; also a good Pew in the parish Church of Northchurch.

The above Premises occupy an excellent Frontage to the High Road, and command all the depth therefrom to the river Bourne, in which is excellent Trout Fishing, and from the situation, presents a genteel and comfortable Residence at a small expense. The Back of the House commands most delightful and diversified Prospects over the Park and Grounds of Berkhamsted Castle. The situation is truly convenient; and the whole of the Premises are in a perfect state of repair. The Estate being in the hands of the Executors, immediate Possession may be had.

May be viewed by applying on the Premises, where Particulars and Conditions of Sale may be had; also at the Inns in the Neighbourhood; of Mr. J. Duncumb, Solicitor, No. 10, Clement's Inn; and at Mr. J. Duncumb's Office, Great Berkhamsted; also of Messrs. Gomm and Hailey, Estate Agents and Surveyors, Berkhamsted.

So where was this very interesting property, what happened to it and does it still exist? Looking at the Tithe map it was difficult to immediately identify the property. We then checked the Northchurch burial register for 1823 and 1824. Then checked the names looking for Wills. The only one we found was for William Norris buried 24 Mar 1824. His Will was proved in April 1824. He left properties in Gossoms End. The witness to his will was James Duncombe (the solicitor dealing with the sale).

William's Will also bequested a cottage (now demolished) that adjoined his property to William Rolls. William's wife, Lydia, can be found living there in 1841. He divided the yard behind his house and gave part of it to William Rolls, this can be seen on the tithe map as 412a. This allowed us to locate the site of the property, which turned out to be 61-64 Gossoms end. What is now 4 sperate properties has a frontage of 50 feet.



61-64 Gossoms End picture by Eric Holland (DACH : BK 1830) 1971

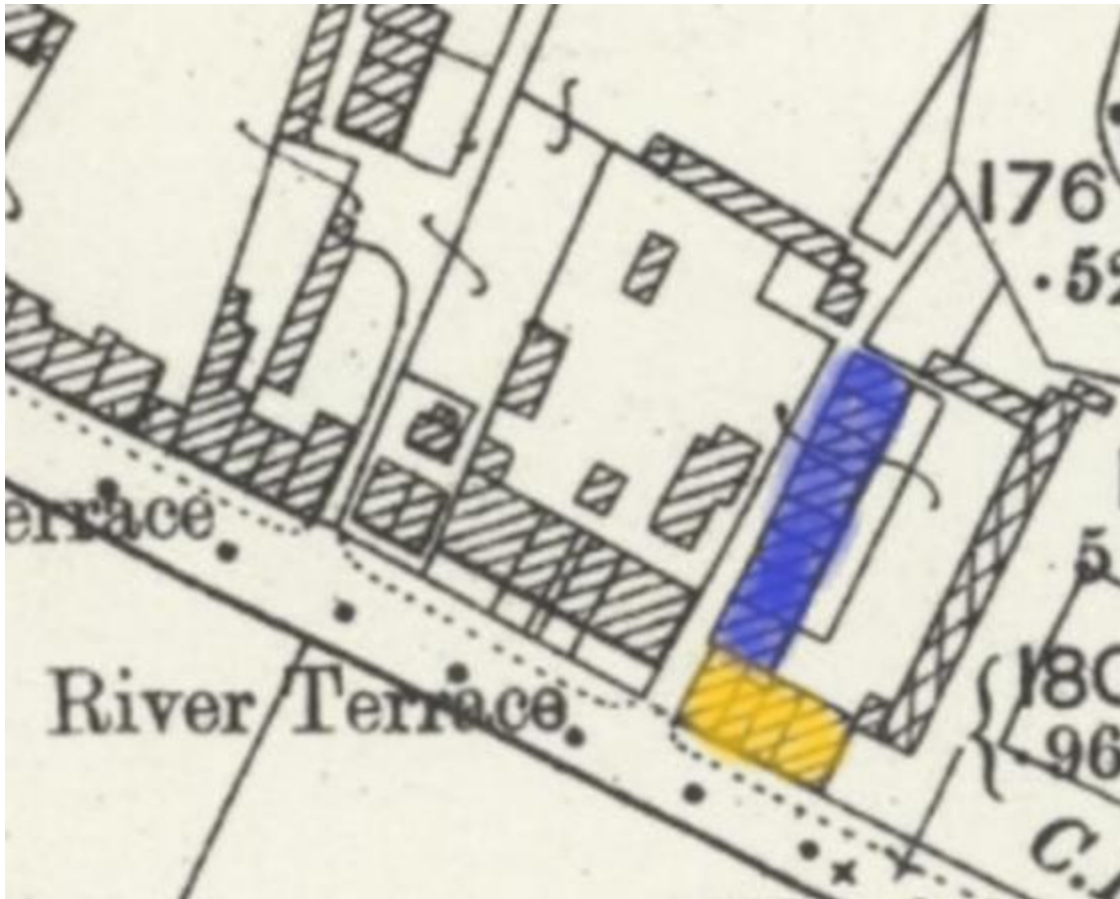
When Eric Holland did a survey of the old properties in Berkhamsted and Northchurch in the 1970's, he described them as:-

No.64 18c? Front door bricked in

No.63 and 62 timber framed, possibly one jettied 16/17c?

No61 18c

By 1839 the property and land was owned by Robert Sutton of Rossway. We can only assume that he was the purchaser at the above mentioned auction. Some time later the "genteel residence" was divided into 4 cottages and the land to the rear was used to build a row of eight 2 up 2 down cottages, known as River Terrace. These cottages and the 4 cottages on the High Street shared a washroom at the rear. In 1911 land tax survey, the properties were described as "in a poor state of repair". In 1958 the properties in River Terrace were on a list of substandard properties to be dealt with under the Clearance Scheme. Luckily the older cottages on the High Street were saved.



Map showing River Terrace (highlighted in blue) and the original property, now 4 cottages (highlighted in yellow)

We look forward to seeing you at our NEW venue of Berkhamsted Civic Centre on Wednesday 10th September of our 75th celebrations and our guest speaker Richard Mabey.

Mary Casserley, Chairman

Berkhamsted Local History And Museum Society

Registered Charity No. 1210846

Founded 1950 as Berkhamsted & District Local History Society

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