



BERKHAMSTED LOCAL HISTORY AND MUSEUM SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 803417

Founded 1950 as Berkhamsted & District Local History Society

CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2009

Society Matters Members voted at the AGM last March to support the suggestion that the membership subscription should be raised as follows from January 2010: Single £7.00 couples £12. This was felt to be necessary because of the increase in the cost of hiring the Civic Centre and the increasing postal costs. Each household receives three newsletters a year plus *The Chronicle* free and a number of other publications at a reduced rate. Subscription slips are enclosed.

Programme The season opened with a talk by Victor Ludlow of the Signals Museum, who spoke to us on 'Flags, Feathers and Further Methods of Communication.' He traced methods used right back to early times but said less about some of the more recent methods used, particularly in time of war. In October Roy Craske gave a fascinating talk entitled 'Redbourn, Then and Now' tracing the development of Redbourn from early times to the present and showing how the village, once of importance in the Stage Coaching days, declined when it gained neither railway nor canal in Victorian times. It would have been nice to hear something of the ancient parish church at Church End. In November Tony Eaton of the Glenn Miller Society kept his audience enthralled with his mystery story, 'the Curious Disappearance of Major Glenn Miller', which had more local connections than was at first apparent. Our Christmas meeting whilst providing members with an opportunity to socialise, with festive drinks and mince pies, will also include a quiz and a couple of short talks. We shall bring out some of the Society's most recent acquisitions for members to see.

Castle Matters During the season, that is Easter weekend and Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays from May to the end of September we had 3387 visitors to the Castle Visitor Room, about 400 more than last year. These figures were boosted by more school groups this year and also by 'A Walk Back in Time' on five occasions. These walks are held under the sponsorship of the Chiltern Conservation Board and last 2 ½ hours including a guided tour of the Castle and of some of the important historic sites in the town. With a charge of £3 and £1.50 (children) they bring important income to the Society. At a recent Castle Liaison Group meeting English Heritage agreed to the opening hours being extended in season from 10am-6pm, which may mean that we require a few more stewards. Grateful thanks to all who have acted as stewards, some 50 of you, during this last year, and also to Brian Norris for organising the rota. Also thanks to those who have helped with the school and other groups. Members who have not been to the Castle recently should go and look at the new information boards that English Heritage has provided. They are a worthwhile addition. We have also received permission to sell postcards at the Visitor Room and are currently choosing suitable pictures and also investigating costs.

Heritage Open Days 12th-13th September These were on the whole well supported. We recorded 266 visits as opposed to 207 last year. For the first time we included Sunnyside Church and the Baptist Church. The most popular was Ashlyns School, the Foundling Hospital. We will be organising it differently next year because the large numbers proved difficult. Grateful thanks to all members and non-members

who helped with the organisation of the HODs, which bring quite a number from outside the town.

Help in the Museum Store In my last newsletter I asked for volunteers to help with the audit of the Society's collection. As a result of that Pam Gill, John Beach and Paul Dottridge have joined the six members of the Society who already work regularly in the Store on different days of the week. We still have a long way to go with auditing our Society's collection, but limited space does not allow any more volunteers at present.

DHT Matters After a lot of hard work by the curatorial staff, directors and volunteers it is hoped to submit the application shortly for the first stage of the Heritage Lottery grant for the refurbishing of the Museum Store, 'A Future for Your Past'. More details on this are available in the latest DHT newsletter.

Various Publications The Society has available for sale at each meeting or from me on **01442 865158** or Ksherw9100@aol.com copies of a number of local history books which are no longer available in Berkhamsted shops. These are at very favourable prices. We also have back numbers of *The Chronicle*.

Foundling Voices Project The interviewing of ex-foundlings is progressing well and now the Committee is keen to use local volunteers to interview those who had contact with foundlings either at Ashlyns or at the Girls' School or at Brownies or Guides. A training session of potential interviewers will be held in Berkhamsted in the New Year. Please contact me for further information. We are also trying to find film footage of Ashlyns and the foundlings in Berkhamsted, so far without success.

Forthcoming Exhibition '60 Years of Preserving History' We are beginning to plan for our forthcoming exhibition to celebrate our 60th anniversary. If any members have early memories they would like to share or photographs we could borrow or copy please do get in touch.

BAT Festival This is planned for mid October and the Society will be staging an extra History evening with some artefacts, a small exhibition and the showing of many slides with old scenes of the town from our collection.

DHT Christmas Quiz Bill Willett has copies of the DHT Christmas Quiz for sale at £1. Do purchase one to boost the DHT funds. The quizzes are usually great fun!

Next Meeting This takes place in the Civic Centre on January 20th 2010 when we welcome Steve Bryant, Senior Curator of Television for the BFI who will speak on 'The Work of the British Film Institute and National Archive.'

Thank you to you all for your support in the past year

A Happy Christmas and a Peaceful and Healthy New Year to you All!

Jenny Sherwood. December 2009