



# 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

## Winter Newsletter 2019

Since the far-off days of the Summer newsletter the committee were invited to a Summers evening private tour of Norcott Court Dudswell, still owned by the Rost family and we thank Julius Rost showing us round his historic home. We have had a good season of coach trips this summer organised by Bill Willett, we run these with the Probus Club. In August we went to Chastleton House and after lunch in Moreton in Marsh we went on to Snowhill. In early September we visited Cliveden, the historic home of the Astor family and then dropped down to Cookham to visit the Spencer Gallery. We lunched by the river (Thames) and then went on a Stanley Spencer village guided tour. We hope you will support us next year when we are already planning trips which always have an historic theme.

We held a stall on the market in June, and another in November (this time inside the Court House) to promote the society and to sell our local history books. Janice Boakes provided a superb map of the town showing with a red dot every household where the men of Berkhamsted lived who went of to fight in WW1. Both stalls were a great success.

### **Berkhamsted Heritage Hub & Network reaches an important stage**

The investigatory and direction-setting phase of the Heritage Hub Project reached the end of the National Lottery programme on 30th November. A great deal of discussions with consultants (Fourth St Place Consultants Ltd) and others, 13 workshops, and two special studies of collections, has resulted in an agreed strategy, which focuses on next steps to:

1. Create a Virtual Hub
2. Create a town-wide Heritage Interpretation Network
3. Celebrate Heritage through events, performances and activities
4. Designing visitor heritage interpretation facilities (at St Peter's Church and the Castle).

For a readable 14-page summary of the Strategy, please follow the links on the Society's website, where you can also find the full main report and appendices from Fourth St (with a lot of input from us). Be careful if printing the last two, as they add up to 227 full-colour pages.

For the BLHMS, the two special studies undertaken by Emily Toettcher, the Curator of Amersham Museum, have been especially useful, as they uncover the structure and content of our collection (and others) , and look at the organisational, documentation, legalities, technical requirements to audit and digitise. Emily is providing guidance so the Society can make best use of the collection in the future. In the summer she also prepared and delivered six 3-hour workshops on relevant issues regarding managing successful community and heritage-related organisations. Extensive notes from these will be available on the website.

The original Hub Project Group (of the Society, Town Hall Trust, Archaeological Society, Dacorum Heritage Trust, and Rectory Lane Cemetery Project) had a final meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> December, and following that the next-steps are to form a new Steering Group, with a number of sub-groups, to look at refining cost estimates and making appropriate implementation funding applications.

There are several Trusts that can be approached, but realistically (in the absence of a legacy, or big sponsorship) the prime funding source will still be the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which has a new but more-limited structure in 2019. The first "testing of the waters" will be submission of an Expression of Interest, which will illustrate if the NLHF will consider including the Hub in their portfolio of "possibilities". Timing for these next steps is under preparation, and progress will be displayed on the Society's website.

### **Norman Groves**

For the team including Jenny Sherwood, Janice Boakes and James Moir.

This year's Heritage Open Days ran over two weekends (8 days total) superbly organised by **Jenny Sherwood** as usual. Many thanks to all who volunteered. We also provide guided historic tours of Berkhamsted for clubs and societies as requested. Our most recent was for mid-Herts U3A, unfortunately in the pouring rain. Thank you to Janice Boakes and Bill Willett for volunteering.



*Evelyn Waugh*



*Beechcroft*

Chesham Road, Berkhamsted with a Hockliffe No. 3 Steam Roller 10.3.1955 prior to demolition. Photo by R M Casserley.

'Beechcroft' the family home of WW Jacobs, was described in Evelyn Waugh's diaries as 'A large, modern house on the outskirts of Berkhamsted' WW Jacobs was a man of letters, Evelyn's brother Alec had at this time recently married his daughter, Barbara. Evelyn's first flirtation was with her younger sister, Luned.

**Wednesday 7 January to Saturday 10 January 1920** *"Spent in the unpleasant atmosphere of 'Beechcroft'. After scurrying to Euston, we found our train was a 'Saturday only' one, looked up by their imbecile grandfather. So, we had two and a half hours to waste at Euston. We went to the Refreshment Room where the children overate themselves revoltingly. Eventually we got a train of sorts and arrived in time for a rather depressing high tea, after which we dressed and went off in a car hired from a local pub for the occasion – the Jacobs spend money on their guests if they don't entertain them. The studio dance at the Dixons was fancy dress but we went in mufti and it was quite delightful. The floor was just right – quite smooth but with the essential grip. Our host was a wizened, pleasant little oik who makes the delightful brooches the Jacobs deal so extensively in and the band was only a piano, but it was quite enough for so a small floor. There were fifteen couples which just fitted nicely. The supper was sufficient. One Dulcie Buchanan, the belle of Berkhamsted, was there. I could only get one dance with her as she was eternally compassed about by a great cloud of admirers. It is said that at the club the best tennis player plays croquet with her because she doesn't like tennis. She was a beautiful dancer. At the end they had a cotillion with 'Favour' 'Flirtation' and 'Fanfare'. All very jolly.*

*The next morning after waiting half an hour or so for breakfast, the entertainment offered me was to sit before the fire of their dining room with not a window open all day. The only variation being a shopping expedition for the tyrannical Annie. Our heads having been turned by this debauch we embarked upon further reckless dissipation by sitting before the fire until eight, when we went to the local cinema. Luned and I again held hands....." Evelyn Waugh*

The Chronicle XV11 is underway. If anybody would like to contribute a research article, review or anything they would like to share about the area's local history, please do let us know. Deadline for copy is mid-February.

**Jenny Sherwood** and **Janice Boakes** continue to diligently archive the Northchurch Society artefacts into our collection.

The Oral histories interviews now have additions by **Bert Hosier** (Hedgehog) and **Tony Lingard**. If anyone knows someone we can talk to and record their memories of Berkhamsted, please get in touch.

I would like to thank **Trish** and **Ken Wallis** for their sterling and loyal dedication to running and manning the bookstall at the meetings, and to **Robin Gee** and **Ian Cheese** for manning the door.

Our season of talks continues with good numbers of attendees (around 70-80). In September we began with Adam Smith who told us of the history of Tring Park Mansion, October saw committee member and cartographer Bill Willett lead us through the history of maps of Berkhamsted. November saw Tony Eaton talk on the 1940 invasion, and December's talk was by Chris Brown- 'The hilltop villages-their Artists and Local heroes', members were fuelled by mince pies and wine. We look forward to seeing you in the New Year for talks on: The Loxleys, which incidentally has changed to a new and intriguing title: 'The Man from Northchurch? - The Top-Secret Life of Peter Loxley', 'The railway comes to Tring', and 'Armoured cars and tanks in Kensington 1915'.

Our Facebook page is updated every few weeks by **Linda Rollitt** with topical news and photographs linking to days gone by. It attracts 1000's of views and 'likes' and remains the best way to reach out to people all around the world. It is well worth a look. The Society website [www.berkhamsted-history.org.uk](http://www.berkhamsted-history.org.uk) has many links and is a good way to learn more about Berkhamsted. Particularly worth a look are the Birtchnell columns from the Parish magazines from the 1940's onwards. **Jenny Sherwood** (archivist) writes a research piece for the current parish magazine *Your Berkhamsted* which is now published every two months. Likewise, **Richard North** (treasurer) writes for the *Northchurch Parish newsletter* monthly. All excellent ways to get your fix of more local history!

Your membership renewal form is included with this newsletter; please consider renewing by direct payment or standing order as this makes Robins job much easier, he has also asked members kindly not to renew with him at the beginning of a general meeting. If you would like to hand in your renewal form with a sae at the meeting for him to process and return their membership cards for collection at the next meeting.

The society wishes you all a jolly and Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy  
New Year  
Mary Casserley, Chairman December 2019.

