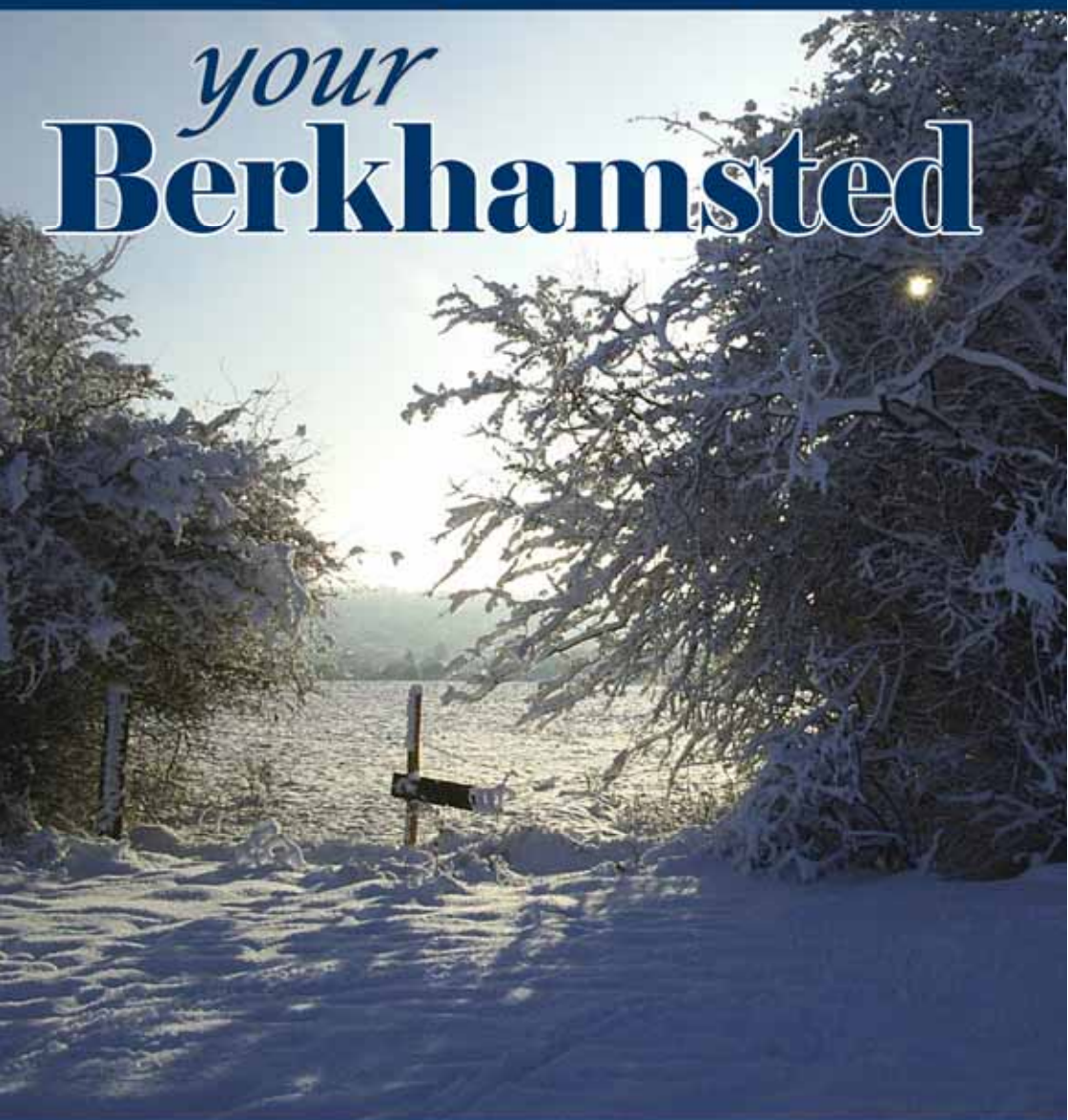


*the magazine for town and parish*

# *your* **Berkhamsted**



Local history - air carsh in Ashridge

Twelve things to do this Christmas in Berkhamsted

My Berkhamsted with local tenor Phillip Conway-Brown

Berkhamsted's future - important public consultation

December 2010

50p

# ***From the Editor*** December 2010



*The Parish Magazine of  
St Peter's  
Great Berkhamsted*

**In this month's *Your Berkhamsted* we are, of course, celebrating Christmas.**

Cathy Edmunds has some suggestions on ways to spend your Christmas in Berkhamsted, including great local walks and food. Meanwhile, Fiona Powell has been learning from the Berkhamsted Lions about when Santa's elves will be in town this year.

We are pleased to welcome a new contributor to the magazine this month. Dan Parry's account of a tragic air crash in Ashridge over sixty years ago offers an interesting insight into our area's history.

Save Your Berkhamsted residents' association informs us of a public consultation on the town's future which will affect all of us who live here, we bring you the third chapter of our serial *Little Spirit*, and tenor Phillip Conway-Brown tells us about his Berkhamsted.

**Ian Skillicorn, Editor**

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**We welcome contributions, suggestions for articles and news items, and readers' letters.**

**For all editorial and advertising contacts, and for copy dates, please refer to page 30.**

Cover photo: "Berkhamsted in Winter". Photo page 7: a B-17G aircraft taken from the National Museum of the USAF. Photo page 9: courtesy of Luis Costa

*Responsibility for opinions expressed in articles and letters published in this magazine and for the accuracy of any statements in them rests solely with the individual contributor. Your Berkhamsted has no affiliation with the Save Your Berkhamsted campaign.*

## Your Berkhamsted Leader by Fr Michael Bowie



I was captivated by the unfolding rescue of the Chilean miners. At first I thought my interest might be heightened by personal connection.

But the story fascinated people who knew no more about Chile than a good bottle of wine. For me, there was something elementally compelling and moving about the rescue. I think it was partly the human scale of it: 33, the number of those trapped underground, is the number in a school class, a room full of people, a medium-sized meeting, a small church service; it is easy to understand the mixture of claustrophobia and hope and the familial repercussions of their situation. Events on the scale of tsunamis and earthquakes, fires and floods are more difficult to comprehend: we should, for example, continue to be aware of the urgent needs of the poor people of Haiti.


I watched, as I'm sure many of you did, the live coverage on BBC 24, as the men were pulled from the ground and reunited with their families. I couldn't stop watching it, willing them to get all *Los 33* above ground. Other things had compelled my attention through the weeks – the immediate impulse to set up shrines, to celebrate Mass, to burn candles and pray for each of the men; the invocation of the local statue of the Virgin Mary – Our Lady of the *Candellaria* who was asked, together with *San Expedito* (who is, in Chile, the patron saint of getting things done), to watch over the men. There was also the pride in the rescue-technology, developed by the Chilean navy: 'at last', I

heard one Chilean remark, 'we can be known for something other than Pinochet and earthquakes; we have shown we can pull together and solve a problem ourselves'.

But, for me, the best commentary on this story came from Giles Fraser in the *Church Times*: he saw this rescue as a perfect metaphor for the core story of Christianity. We usually call it 'salvation' (a churchy word) or 'redemption', from the (now happily quaint) vocabulary of freeing slaves. But the central narrative of Christianity (which has its physical beginning in the birth of Jesus) is, in modern English, 'rescue'. Christianity is not, primarily, about being nice or behaving ethically. Those things we *can* do by an exercise of will. However, as St Augustine understood, we are often so addicted to pleasing ourselves in destructive ways that, too often, we don't make the effort. We get stuck underground, cut off from light and life, on a treadmill of competitiveness and alleged success. The point of Christmas is to remind us that there is a source of light, and rescue, readily available to us, because God came down into the pit and worked with us until, at Easter, he broke out into the full glare of light and offered us the chance to come with him. If we use that truth to guide our lives and our choices, to put successes as well as problems into perspective, to see how we should regard others and their needs as well as our own, the potential of our lives is hugely enhanced. Christmas is our welcome to the light at the end of the tunnel. yB

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# *Air crash at Ashridge*

**Dan Parry** recounts the fate of a group of American airmen whose aircraft crashed in Ashridge sixty seven years ago this month

Just up the A4506, the ghostly remains of ancient fields, farms and forts litter our local countryside. The likes of Gallows Hill, Witchcraft Bottom and Moneybury Hill ooze history from their very pores. Berkhamsted, (the farmstead among the birch trees, or perhaps among the bergs, i.e. hills, depending on whom you believe), is surrounded by ancient evidence of feasting and famine, of settlements and trackways; and of war.

For ten young Americans, New Year's Eve 1943, began as another day in action, fighting their war thousands of miles from home. It was to end in a fatal collision in lonely woodland above Aldbury, where memories of their sacrifice still haunt the area. Scars of the crash linger just a wingspan or two from the warming mugs of tea served up by the staff of the National Trust café.

Pilot 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. John Quillman commanded one of the most experienced crews in the 305<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group of the US Eighth Air Force. With 23 missions under their belt, two more would give them a ticket home. It was not an impossible prospect. Their B-17 aircraft had a legendary reputation for its ability to absorb damage. While the RAF's heavy bombers flew at night, the Americans believed that by filling their

aircraft with guns they could fend off German fighters during the day, when they would have a better chance of seeing their target. The formidable B-17 Flying Fortress – star of the film *Memphis Belle* – carried no less than 13 heavy machine-guns, and consequently required many

men to operate them all. Seven of Quillman's 10-man crew were responsible for protecting the heavy aircraft from the dreaded threat of enemy fighters. Even if attacked, all was not lost. Fire, mechanical failure, mid-air collisions and air attack all took their

toll, yet time and again B-17s returned from a raid missing part of the tail or with an engine stalled and feathered. Pilots had kept their plane hanging in the air under the most difficult conditions.

On December 31<sup>st</sup> 1943, the 305<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group took off from Chelveston in Northamptonshire, tasked with destroying an airbase in Bordeaux, home to the long-range enemy aircraft that roamed the Atlantic, harrying Allied shipping. It's believed that while they were over the target area, Quillman's crew were spotted by a force of 18 fighters. When an enemy plane came racing towards the cockpit, head-on and approaching at a closing speed in excess of 400mph, its machine-guns carved up the cabin, killing the co-



*Tree stumps and scarring at the crash site today*



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pilot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Ralph Blake, and leaving Quillman with serious stomach injuries.

Losing blood, unable to call on the help of an

experienced co-pilot and having lost some of the power from two of the four engines, Quillman had no choice but to get back to England as soon as possible. The question of whether he could nurse his plane, his crew and himself through the three-hour flight home must have pressed upon him every inch of the way.

Possibly helped at the controls by one of the other crewmen, Quillman fought to control the heavy bomber, his fearful young crewmates thinking of God only knows what. Eventually he crossed the Channel, yet still they were far from safe. With the light worsening, fog settling in and dwindling fuel it would be no small task to return to Northamptonshire. Quillman decided he wasn't going to get as far as Chelveston and instead tried to come into Cheddington, Buckinghamshire, a notoriously difficult airfield at the best of times. Here was safety at last. But the stricken bomber needed a pilot at his physical best. Unable to control his airspeed Quillman came in too fast and was forced to abandon the attempt.

Going round again, this time Quillman was unable to clear poplars at Wigginton, their branches apparently ripping away



part of the aircraft's body and making the Fortress harder to control than ever. Flying at low level in unfamiliar hilly ground on a foggy evening in the dark depths of December, the

end was inevitable. Screaming in above Aldbury, the aircraft plunged into the woods south of the Ashridge monument. A local nurse scrambled up the hill to help the wounded, and searching beside the burning wreckage she found men with dreadful injuries. The fire was so intense that nearby houses were pelted by machine-gun bullets triggered by the heat. The next morning local boys went up to investigate, among them Peter Barford, still living in Aldbury today. They discovered that one of the crew, possibly the tail gunner, had walked away from the crash with barely a scratch. They also found that three men had been killed – in addition to Blake the co-pilot – and that those who had died had all been in the nose of the plane. Navigator 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Jean Rapetti and bombardier 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Adolph Erickson both lost their lives – so too did John Quillman. All are now buried in the States, the ruins of their aircraft long since cleared away. Today Ian White, the UK contact for the 305<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Memorial Association, says it's time the crash site was marked with a permanent memorial. Until that happens, shattered tree stumps and scarred chestnut trees are all that remain to pay testimony to Quillman's heroic attempt to reach safety, and to the lives of him and his comrades.

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# *Twelve ideas for Christmas*

**Cathy Edmunds** suggests twelve things that you can do this Christmas in Berkhamsted



## **1. Rent a Christmas tree**

Do your bit for the environment this year and rent a Christmas tree rather than buy one! It will then be replanted and you can rent it again the following year. We struggled to find local suppliers of this service, but there are some national companies, including:

[www.thelittletreecompany.com](http://www.thelittletreecompany.com)

## **2. Explore Ashridge**

Go for a post Christmas brisk walk through Ashridge Forest to walk off that Christmas dinner. The National Trust are holding an organised walk on the 27th December at 10am, starting at Base Camp and ending at the visitors centre, for mulled wine and a mince pie. For more info visit [www.friendsofashridge.org.uk](http://www.friendsofashridge.org.uk)

## **3. Donate a Christmas present**

Take unwanted Christmas presents to one of the charity shops in the High Street. There are plenty to choose from - but don't dump them outside the shop!

## **4. Shop local**

Reduce your food miles and support local suppliers at the same time by buying your Christmas dinner from local farmers and farm shops. Here are a few suggestions: Turkey from Manor Farm Game in Chesham; sprouts and other vegetables from Sunnyside Rural Trust in Northchurch, P.E.Mead Farm shop and Coffee Shop in Wilstone, near Tring. The Farmers' Market on 19th December is an excellent place to buy all your last minute accessories and vegetables from locally produced sources.

## **5. Follow the trail**

Get relatives out of the house following the blue plaque history trail around the town. Learn things you didn't know about Berkhamsted at the same time!

## **6. Give them a call**

Pick up the phone and call someone you love and can't spend Christmas with.

## **7. Make it personal**

Why not make at least one gift this Christmas? Something personal is always so much more appreciated. It could be as simple as some homemade sweets or fudge put in a glass jar with a homemade label and recycled fabric to cover the lid. For those with more time, or for the more adventurous, why not look on the Re:create website for some tips or enquire about any activities they are doing before Christmas. [www.recreateberko.co.uk](http://www.recreateberko.co.uk)

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### **8. Take a moment...**

Christmas can end up being very busy and stressful, with so many things to do, so take an hour or two out for yourself. Indulge yourself as a Christmas treat from you to you. Get your haircut, go for a massage, go for a cup of coffee and take a book you've been meaning to start but having got round to yet. Then maybe take that time to reflect and remind yourself what Christmas is really about, hidden underneath that overwhelming façade of presents and preparations.

### **9. Workout in nature!**

Why not buck the trend this year and cancel your gym membership! Instead, use the fabulous facilities by the canal, near the skate park where Berkhamsted has been provided with free gym equipment dotted as a circuit in that area.

### **10. Make it Open House**

Invite someone who you know is spending Christmas on their own to Christmas dinner. If you don't know anyone, then why not investigate inviting an Overseas Student. Visit [Hostuk.org.uk](http://Hostuk.org.uk) or phone them on 0207 739 6292 for

further information.

### **11. Discover new places**

Use your time during the holidays to visit somewhere in or near the town that you've always thought about but never got to. Berkhamsted Castle, a particular restaurant or café, a shop, part of Ashridge Forest, Berkhamsted Common, a walk along the canal, the Windmill at Pitstone, the town library... So many of us take time to visit places further afield but never actually visit the attractions we have on our own doorstep!

### **12. Remember someone's special day!**

If you know someone whose birthday is during the Christmas period, make an effort to remember their card and if you give a gift, wrap it specifically in birthday paper rather than left over Christmas paper... It will be a small but really important thing to them. This one is on behalf of three of the editorial team, two of whom share a birthday on the 29th December and one whose birthday is on the 20th December ! *yB*

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Please email your letters to the Editor at [editor@yourberkhamsted.org.uk](mailto:editor@yourberkhamsted.org.uk) or post them to: Your Berkhamsted, Parish Office, The Courthouse, Berkhamsted, HP4 2AX

## *Letter to Santa*

**Fiona Powell** learns how we can post letters to Santa and raise money for charity this Christmas

Santa's Elves will be in Berkhamsted again for the town's Festival of Light on the 5th December. Children visiting the Elves Posting House at the Civic

Centre will create and post a letter to Santa; make a Christmas decoration; and receive some magical reindeer food to take home. There will be a drink and cookies, and the Espinosa dancing elves

will deliver the letters direct to Santa when he arrives along the High Street at 5.30pm.

The ticket cost is £4 per child and the event is organised by the Lions of Berkhamsted. All of this money will go to charity, since it is run by volunteers, with additional materials and time kindly donated by Re:create, Berkhamsted Arts and Crafts and the Pottery Project.

'The Posting House was a very popular event last year,' said Head Elf and Lions member, Emma Pearce. 'We recommend you arrive early to avoid disappointment'.

The Posting House doors open at 3.30pm, at the start of the Festival of Light. This year's festival will also include charity stalls, mulled wine, and local bands and

choirs. After the lights have been switched on there will be a Festival of Carols at St Peter's church at 6.00pm.



Santa's Sleigh, previously coordinated by the Berkhamsted Round Table, will for the first time this year be run by the Lions Club. Not only will Santa travel along the

High Street with his sleigh for the Festival of Light, but Santa is planning to take his sleigh out 16 times in December, fundraising with the assistance of members of local community groups. Proceeds from these collections will be shared between the Lions and the groups taking part.

In 2009/10 the Lions raised over £14,000 from 16 events, including The Elves Posting House. The club is a member of Lions Clubs International, which is one of the largest and most active service organizations in the world. They welcome, by invitation, men and women of any age, and have no affiliations to politics or religion. All the money they raise is donated to charity (expenses are not charged to the charitable trust) and they donate 90% locally and 10%

overseas. Berkhamsted organizations that have benefited from their support include The Hospice of St Francis, Iain Rennie Hospice at Home, Hope for Children, St Johns Ambulance, the ATC, the Swan Project, 1st Berkhamsted Scouts and Raiders Football Club. *JB*

### **SANTA'S SCHEDULE**

(Please note this schedule is provisional and subject to weather conditions)

**Wednesday 1st**  
George Street

**Thursday 2nd**  
Rudolph's Rest Day

**Friday 3rd**  
Charles Street

**Saturday 4th**  
Northchurch

**Sunday 5th**  
Festival of Light

**Monday 6th**  
Rudolph's Rest Day

**Tuesday 7th**  
Swing Gate

**Wednesday 8th**  
Gravel Path

**Thursday 9th**  
Rudolph's Rest Day

**Friday 10th**  
Durrants Road

**Saturday 11th**

Chiltern Park  
**Sunday 12th**  
Potten End

**Monday 13th**  
Rudolph's Rest Day

**Tuesday 14th**  
Shootersway

**Wednesday 15th**  
Hall Park

**Thursday 16th**  
Rudolph's Rest Day

**Friday 17th**  
Chesham Road

**Saturday 18th**  
Bridgewater Road

**Sunday 19th**  
Rudolph's Rest Day

**Monday 20th**  
Shrublands

**Tuesday 21st**  
Kings Road

**Wednesday 22nd**  
Westfield

**Thursday 23rd**  
London Road

For more information about the Berkhamsted Lions, please visit [www.berkhamsted-lions.co.uk](http://www.berkhamsted-lions.co.uk)

# Little Spirit

‘...everyone’s mission to others begins at home with the self.’

## Chapter Three: Christmas Spirit by **PJ Marvell**

From high up in the balcony, the old curtain wrapped around his shoulders, Little Spirit peered across the church and smiled. During his months hiding at the church he had never seen it looking so magical. A great tree had been erected and covered in shiny glass balls, topped off with a bright golden star, long banners decorated with trumpeting angels hung down the nave, and all the flower-stands were bursting with red and green.

The comings and goings at the church had increased over the past weeks, and Little Spirit found it more difficult to move in and out of the church unseen. So, he stocked up on food - fruit from boxes left outside shops, cakes and sandwiches abandoned on the tables of coffee shops – after only a few trips he had enough for a month.

The strange man with black pointed shoes visited the church almost daily. From the most shadowy corners, Little Spirit tracked him. The man now ignored the door to the tower but would sit on different pews, frequently checking his watch and scribbling notes. He worried Little Spirit more and more, no-one else who came into the church behaved like this, most people had a job to do, or came to marvel at the great windows or to sit quietly.

A few weeks later, as the first snowflakes fell, Little Spirit sat himself at the corner of the balcony ready to watch over the church for the day. It was as he knelt down

to spy through the bars of the balcony, that a huge fist appeared and grabbed the collars of his coat.

‘Up!’

The young boy felt himself being wrenched upwards and another hand clamping itself over his mouth. He struggled and looked downwards to see the point of a black shoe.

As he wriggled the man simply clamped him harder. The church was empty, so the man bundled Little Spirit down the stairs and dragged him to the door to the tower, pressing his face against the door.

‘I want you,’ said the man slowly, ‘to get me the key to this door. I’ll be back for it in one week.’

Little Spirit looked at him blankly.

‘Key,’ said the man pointing to the lock. ‘Seven days,’ and he traced a seven on the wall with his finger.

‘No!’ blurted the boy and shook his head.

‘If you don’t get the key, I will tell them you are here,’ hissed the man with a twisted smile. ‘TELL-YOU- HERE.’

Little Spirit nodded. The man picked him up roughly, bundled him back up to the balcony and then walked calmly out of the church. *(continues on page 19)*



## ***A Busy December for St Peter's Choir*** by Fiona Powell

December is a busy month for St Peter's Church choir. Its 54 members, 28 of whom are junior choristers, will be singing in 9 services, with different music at each.

Matthew Brown, aged 6, is the newest entrant into the choir, having joined in November. Miles Nicholas recently received acknowledgement of his 25 years in St Peter's choir. Jean and Stuart Wild have notched up even more!

The first ever choir concert tour took place last year, with a tour to Venice, where the choir gave concerts and sang Mass at a selection of prestigious churches,

including Santa Maria dei Miracoli, The Redentore Church and the Basilica of San Marco. Preparations are well under way for the forthcoming tour to Vienna in May 2011, where the choir will perform at St Stephen's Cathedral, St Peter's Church, The Votive Church and the Schonbrunn Palace.



Adrian Davis and Jean Wild lead the St Peter's Choir, and offer a warm welcome to new members. If you're interested in joining choir drop in to a choir practice on Tuesday or Friday evening to have a chat.

You never know, you may find yourself looking forward to the choirs Vienna trip in the new year!

## ***Carol, Nativity and Christingle Services—December 2010***

There is a lot going on in and around Berkhamsted to remind us of the true message of Christmas. See the *Association of Berkhamsted Churches* leaflet for details of all services, including Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services.

**Festival of Light Carol Service (ABC)**

**Pre-school Nativity**

**Hospice of St Francis Carol Service**

**Café Carol Service in Town Hall**

**Worship & Nativity Play**

**Carol Service**

**Carols by Candlelight**

**Carols by Candlelight**

**Carol Service**

**Nine Lessons & Carols**

**Christingle Service**

**Crib Service**

**Crib Service**

**Crib Service**

**Christingle Service**

Sun 5th 6.00pm, *St Peter's Church*

Sun 12th 10.30am, *Berkhamsted Baptist Church*

Mon 13th 8.00pm, *Sacred Heart RC Church*

Sun 19th 10.30am, *Kings Road Church*

Sun 19th 11am, *Holy Trinity Church Potten End*

Sun 19th 3.00pm, *St John's Church Bourne End*

Sun 19th 6.00pm, *Berkhamsted Baptist Church*

Sun 19th 6.30pm, *Sunnyside Church*

Sun 19th 6.30pm, *St Mary's Church Northchurch*

Sun 19th 6.30pm, *Holy Trinity Church Potten End*

Wed 22nd 2.30pm, *Sacred Heart RC Church*

Fri 24th 4.00pm, *St Peter's Church*

Fri 24th 4.00pm, *Holy Trinity Church Potten End*

Fri 24th 5.00pm, *St Mary's Church Northchurch*

Fri 24th 5.00pm, *Sunnyside Church*

## December Parish Diary

Fri 3rd	10:00am	Little Fishes Service—St Nicholas, <i>St Peter's</i>
Fri 3rd	7:00pm	Petertide Wine-Tasting, <i>downstairs in the Court House</i>
Sun 5th	11:00am	Cowper Society meeting, <i>The Court House</i>
Sun 5th	6:00pm	Rotary and Festival of Light Carol Service, <i>St Peter's</i>
Tue 7th	10:00am	Chuckles toddlers—Christmas Story, <i>All Saints'</i>
Tue 7th	8:00pm	Parochial Church Council, <i>The Court House</i>
Fri 10th	1:00pm	The Cowper Society: Recital <i>Rainbow Ensemble</i> John Reader <i>piano</i> (6 players), <i>St Peter's</i>
Sat 11th	8:00pm	The Cowper Society: Berkhamsted Music Society concert, <i>St Peter's</i>
Tue 14th	10:00am	Chuckles Toddlers—Christmas Party, <i>All Saints'</i>
Wed 15th	7:30pm	Thomas Coram School Carol Service, <i>St Peter's</i>
Fri 17th	9.30am	Victoria School Carol & End of Term Service, <i>St Peter's</i>
Fri 17th	12 noon	Thomas Coram End of Term Service, <i>St Peter's</i>
Sat 18th	7.30pm	The Cowper Society presents: Berkhamsted Choral Society, <i>St Peter's</i>
Sun 19th	9.30am	Sung Eucharist with Sunday School Nativity, <i>St Peter's</i>
Thu 23rd	7:30pm	The Cowper Society presents: Chiltern Chamber Choir <i>Praetorius Mass for Christmas, St Peter's</i>

## Think Fairtrade at Christmas

Fairtrade has come a long way since its inception in 1992. It began with the aim of providing a Christian response to poverty in the developing world.

Church stalls have been central to the growth and success of Fairtrade. Unlike buying in a shop, when buying from a volunteer run stall any profit and donations are sent to Traidcraft Exchange, the charitable arm of Traidcraft. Traidcraft Exchange provides funds for developing educational facilities and business cooperatives to aid local people (see [www.traidcraft.org](http://www.traidcraft.org)).

There are some lovely gifts - little stocking fillers, silver jewellery, silk

scarves - as well as a range of day-to-day products available. The stalls carry a good selection, but it's worth noting that it is possible to take orders from the Fairtrade catalogue for free delivery to you.

### ***Berkhamsted Fairtrade Stalls***

***Saturday 4th December*** — Artisan, Arts and Crafts Market, Great Hall of the Town Hall

***Sunday 5th December*** — All Saints, Sunnyside and St Peter's Church

***Every Sunday***— St Mary's Northchurch

## *Regular Church Activities*

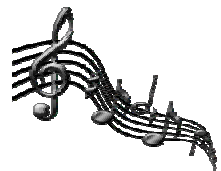
- 3rd Mon Pastoral Network, 7:45pm, The Court House. Contact Philippa Seldon 871534
- Tue Chuckles Parent & Toddler Group, 10-11:30am. All Saints Church Hall. Song Time or short service as announced. Contact Jenny Wells, 870981
- Tue St Peter's Choir, Children 5:15-6:15pm. St Peter's. Adrian Davis 875674 or Jean Wild 866859
- 1st Tue Tuesday Club, 7:45pm A lively women's group with guest speaker. The Court House. Contact Barbara McKenna 871159
- 3rd Tue Mothers' Union, meet in members' houses at 8pm. New members always welcome. Contact Kathie Lally, 863526
- 4th Tue Mothers' Union Prayer Group, 2:30pm. 17 Shaftesbury Court. Tell us if anyone needs your prayers. Contact Jenny Wells 870981
- Wed Julian Meeting, meets about twice a month. 11:30am. All welcome. At Jenny Wells, 57 Meadow Rd, 870981 or at Ruth Treves Brown, 1 Montague Rd, 863268
- Wed Pathfinders Club, 7-8:30pm. The Court House, Yrs 5-8. Penny Nash 865217
- Thu Home Group, 8pm on 2nd and 4th Thurs.
- Thu Bellringing, 8pm, St Peters. Contact Helen Ruberry, 890949
- Fri Little Fishes Parent & Toddler Group 9:30-11:30am. The Court House. Weekly, with short service on 1st Friday in St Peter's (10am). Tracy Robinson 863559
- Fri St Peter's Choir, Children 7-8:30pm, Adults 7:30—8:30pm. St Peter's. Adrian Davis 875674 or Jean Wild 866859
- 3rd Sat ABC Prayer Breakfast, 8am for breakfast & prayers. Various local churches.

## *News from the Pews ... a light-hearted view*

**Julian Dawson**

My brief correspondence on pews has led to a frantic, even torrid outpouring of representations from the OPPS, which as you will recall is the no nonsense acronym of the Oak Pew Preservation Society. Chunterings and mutterings about abuse of our Victorian heritage. Well, it is all very well. But do these people have any conception about what it is like to move these things? No, I didn't think so. So my campaign builds apace. There will be

petitions. There will be representations at the highest level. I shall keep you posted on developments. The fight will go on, in the shady aisles, in the nave, in the sunlit chapels. We shall never surrender.



# Registers

## Baptisms

17 October Finlay James Brian Powell (St Peter's)  
17 October Henry Peter Newman Doyle (St Peter's)  
24 October Elliot John Groom (St Peter's)  
24 October Isabelle Farah Snowdon (St Peter's)  
24 October Theodore Geoffrey Lloyd Evans (St Peter's)  
24 October James Michael Davies (St Peter's)  
31 October Evie Rose McEachran (All Saints)

## All Saints Baptisms from July—September 2010

25 July William Joseph Few (All Saints)  
29 August Henry Thomas Fearn (All Saints)  
19 September James Dylan Mountjoy (All Saints)

## Weddings

25 September Brenden Mercer and Gabrielle Thompson (All Saints)

## Funerals

28 October Anne Dorothy Joan Calnan (St Peter's)

Sunday Services	St Peter's		All Saints—December	
	8:00am	Eucharist (not 26th Dec)	5th	10:00am Morning Worship
	9:30am	Sung Eucharist & Sunday School	12th	10:00am Holy Communion
	6:00pm	Evensong	19th	10:00am Morning Worship
	<i>First Sunday in month Family Service at 9:30am</i>			Nativity
			19th	4:00pm Carol Service
			26th	10:00am Holy Communion
	Christmas Services		Christmas Services	
	24th	4:00pm Crib Service	24th	4:00pm Crib Service
	24th	11.30pm Midnight Mass with Carols	24th	11.30pm Midnight Holy Communion
	25th	8:00am Eucharist	25th	10.30am All Age Worship with Holy Communion
	25th	9.30am Sung Eucharist		

## Key Church Contacts

Parish Office, Hilary Armstrong and Kate Perera, Court House, 878227.  
Fr Michael Bowie, 864194 (day off Fri). Team Rector, St Peter's.  
Fr John Pritchard, 870016 (day off Thurs). Asst Curate, St Peter's.  
The Revd Caroline Weaver, 866324 (day off Fri). Methodist Minister, All Saints.

Further information available from our church websites:

www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk and at www.allsaintsberkhamsted.org.uk

*(continued from page 14)*

By the window of the balcony, Little Spirit sat trembling. Despite being far from home, he had made his journey in safety, stowed away on a ship. He had befriended the ship's cook and helped him in the kitchen in return for secrecy and a hot meal once a day. The church he was hiding in now was the first time he had stayed in one place for over a year. He had grown to love the church and explored every inch of it; every stone, every window, every pipe of the organ, he had studied the pattern on every prayer cushion and sat on each of the pews. He knew how much people cared for the church and he simply could not steal the key. But he couldn't bear to leave either.

Curtain on, Little Spirit sat on the balcony for the rest of the day, pondering. His father had taught him this discipline, *think long, action swift*.

At 6pm exactly he snuck down the balcony stairs and hid near to the door to the tower. He glanced across, and as expected, the door was ajar. As Little Spirit crept towards the door, he heard voices from the vestry. In a flash, he locked the tower door, stuffed the key in his pocket and dived under a pew.

'Goodbye, Vicar,' called the Curate, 'I'll lock up.'

Little Spirit watched the Vicar leave, followed swiftly by the Curate who locked both doors to the church, but not the door to the tower. Because the tower door was shut, he had completely forgotten that he had left it unlocked.

Gripping the key tightly, Little Spirit

returned to the balcony. Part one of his plan was complete.

A week later, the boy sat on the balcony, but today he had thrown off the old curtain and looked like any other parishioner waiting for a service to begin. Steadily the church began to fill; men and women, girls, boys, babies and grandparents took their seats. Unusually the last ones to arrive joined Little Spirit on the balcony and it was then that he saw him, the black pointed shoes glimmering from the opposite side of the balcony.

The church rang out with the joy and the love of Christmas, the children chattered and sang their way through the procession of the animals to the crib. The Curate and the Vicar wore golden robes and for a short while, the boy called Little Spirit forgot his worries and joined the celebrations. But the service ended too quickly. The man was waiting for him.

'Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!' the boy heard repeatedly as he slowly made his way towards the man. Finally, Little Spirit stood before him, gripped the key in his pocket, stared at the man and bolted. He raced down the stairs and weaved through the parishioners heading out of the church. Glancing behind he saw that the man was gaining on him. Little Spirit reached the door to the tower, unlocked it and stood in the doorway. The points of the man's shoes arrived first, followed by his outstretched hand.

'No!' said Little Spirit, 'NO!' and he slammed the tower door and locked it. Leaning heavily on the back of the door he grinned and said 'Merry Christmas!'

*yB To be continued next month*

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# **Phillip Conway-Brown**

We hear from the tenor, who lives in Berkhamsted

***The place in the local area I like to visit to relax and reflect is...***

I'm not great at just relaxing in one place, but I am a keen runner and there are several spots where I love to be running; the fields above the

Berkhamsted cricket club is one and in the woods by Ashridge College is another.

***When I want to indulge myself I go to...***

I go up to the Berkhamsted golf range and hit a few balls in the hope that in my dotage I'll have time to actually make it onto the golf course.

***I think the most beautiful sight in Berkhamsted is...***

I feel obliged to say my wife and children! Apart from them, however, the canal on a snowy winter's morning is stunning.

***I moved to Berkhamsted because...***

Like many people I know, we moved out of London to bring up a family. Berkhamsted is both child friendly and small enough still to have a good community feel about it.

***If I could change one thing about Berkhamsted, it would be...***

The monstrous buildings that run along the high street from the old Town Hall to Tesco's.



***You'd be surprised to know this about me but...***

I've been in more movies than Tom Cruise – OK singing on the soundtracks, but still!

***My biggest influence is...***

On a personal level I would have to say

my father for his humility and kindness and my wife for her patience and spirit. Professionally, I have the privilege of working alongside some of the greatest singers in the world. A handful never fail to inspire.

***If I could pass any law it would be...***

If you're going to get blind drunk you should be obliged to stagger home without giving offense and preferably in silence!

***Berkhamsted is crying out for...***

When I arrived in Berkhamsted, I said the town was crying out for a Thai restaurant. Within two years there were several. I think now is the time for a really good chocolate shop.

***When I was a child I wanted to be...***

I always sang as a child, but never thought I would do it professionally. I remember wanting to be an astronomer and to be the youngest person to swim the Channel. It never happened, but I could still be the oldest to do so! yB

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# *A Christmas Carol* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

## I

The shepherds went their hasty way,  
And found the lowly stable-shed  
Where the Virgin-Mother lay:  
And now they checked their eager tread,  
For to the Babe, that at her bosom clung,  
A Mother's song the Virgin-Mother sung.

## II

They told her how a glorious light,  
Streaming from a heavenly throng.  
Around them shone, suspending night!  
While sweeter than a mother's song,  
Blest Angels heralded the Savior's birth,  
Glory to God on high! and Peace on Earth.

## III

She listened to the tale divine,  
And closer still the Babe she pressed:  
And while she cried, the Babe is mine!  
The milk rushed faster to her breast:  
Joy rose within her, like a summer's morn;  
Peace, Peace on Earth! the Prince of Peace is born.

## IV

Thou Mother of the Prince of Peace,  
Poor, simple, and of low estate!  
That strife should vanish, battle cease,  
O why should this thy soul elate?  
Sweet Music's loudest note, the Poet's story,  
Didst thou ne'er love to hear of fame and glory?

## V

And is not War a youthful king,  
A stately Hero clad in mail?  
Beneath his footsteps laurels spring;  
Him Earth's majestic monarchs hail  
Their friends, their playmate! and his bold bright eye  
Compels the maiden's love-confessing sigh.

## VI

Tell this in some more courtly scene,  
To maids and youths in robes of state!  
I am a woman poor and mean,  
And wherefore is my soul elate.  
War is a ruffian, all with guilt defiled,  
That from the aged father's tears his child!

## VII

A murderous fiend, by fiends adored,  
He kills the sire and starves the son;  
The husband kills, and from her board  
Steals all his widow's toil had won;  
Plunders God's world of beauty; rends away  
All safety from the night, all comfort from the day.

## VIII

Then wisely is my soul elate,  
That strife should vanish, battle cease:  
I'm poor and of low estate,  
The Mother of the Prince of Peace.  
Joy rises in me, like a summer's morn:  
Peace, Peace on Earth! The Prince of Peace is born! *JB*



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***To all our readers***



***We wish you a  
happy and peaceful  
Christmas and New  
Year.***

***Best wishes from,***

***Your Berkhamsted  
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# *Changing face of Berkhamsted*

The **Save Your Berkhamsted** association tells us about an important public consultation, which ends this month

Dacorum Borough Council has just published its Draft Core Strategy and the document is available for your comments until 15th December. The core strategy will form the basis for a new Local Development Framework which will be used to guide development in the borough for the next 20 years.

The document can be found on the Dacorum Borough Council website under the link to Planning and Building Control, then News and Current Issues and finally Consultation on Draft Core Strategy.

Alternatively, you can go to the [www.saveyourberkhamsted.co.uk](http://www.saveyourberkhamsted.co.uk) website and copy and paste the appropriate link on the homepage into your browser to go straight to the document. Section 22 covers the proposals for Berkhamsted and proposes that there would be development of around 50 homes per year though to 2031.

Over the past year, the Save Your Berkhamsted Residents' Association has been representing the views of local residents to both Berkhamsted Town Council and Dacorum Borough Council and, strengthened by a petition of more than 1500 signatories, has made residents' concerns known via a number of formal meetings with the 2 councils.

We are particularly concerned at the scale of the developments proposed, especially the strategic developments. Any development that would build 200 homes on only 14 hectares would have a major

impact on traffic, availability of schools, doctors, dentists and care for the elderly as well as impacting negatively on the environment and local wildlife, green belt and agricultural land. There are also local issues about adequate water pressure and problems with drainage and sewage treatment.

There is also major concern that these developments would be completely out of character with the surrounding density and style of housing .

We believe that the character of our historic market town needs to be preserved and any housing developments need to fit in with the existing character of the area. There needs to be substantial investment in infrastructure before the developments go ahead.

We believe that we need to preserve areas of trees which support Berkhamsted's notable bat population and other wildlife. Save your Berkhamsted Residents' Association is continuing to represent the view of local residents to Dacorum Borough Council but the publication of the Draft Core Strategy allows everyone to comment.

Now it is the turn of local residents. It is vitally important that as many people as possible respond to the Council's request for comments. Please take the time to make your views known before the document is published and set in stone!

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384234, members or Cole Flatt, 124 High St.)

**Thursday 23rd December at 7:30pm,**  
Chiltern Chamber Choir with  
Bridgewater Sinfonietta - Praetorius  
Mass for Christmas, directed by Adrian  
Davis. (Tickets £13, Seniors £11, U18  
free, Dacorum Card 20% discount from  
members or Cole Flatt, 124 High St.)

### ***Oxfam's eco-friendly Christmas***

Oxfam's Christmas range has a strong  
emphasis on environmentally friendly  
products.

The Christmas cards are 100% recycled as  
are the boxes holding them and also the  
attractive range of rollwrap.

Eco-friendly toys will be particularly  
welcomed by carbon-conscious parents.  
The toy phone, which does not require  
batteries, will be popular for the little ones  
as well as the pull-along dog. A dynamo-  
powered radio is also on offer as well as a  
zoo animal torch.

Many of the make-your-own craft lines  
are made from recycled materials, as is  
some of the jewellery including a bead  
necklace made from recycled magazines.  
A popular range of eco-friendly toiletries  
has recently been expanded and offers  
excellent gift ideas.

Oxfam is acutely aware of the effects of  
climate change. The catastrophic floods in  
Pakistan, where the charity is helping 1.25  
million people, make the point all too  
clearly.

### ***Cowper Society presents at St Peter's in December***

**Saturday 11th December at 8:00pm,**  
Berkhamsted Music Society - Raphael  
Wallfisch ('cello) & John York (piano) -  
Schumann Fünf Stücke im Volkston,  
Barber Sonata Op 6, Chopin Intro &  
Polonaise, Schumann Adagion & Allegro  
and Chopin sonata Op 65.  
(Tickets £12, Dacorum Card £10, U18  
free from Treasurer 862798 or  
[www.berkhamstedmusic.co.uk](http://www.berkhamstedmusic.co.uk))

**Saturday 18th December at 7:30pm,**  
Berkhamsted Choral Society - Messiah  
Choruses and Carols for choir and  
audience, conducted by Graham Wili.  
(Tickets £12, Seniors £10, Students &  
Dacorum Card £6, U16 free from

So visit the Oxfam shop for great gifts and cards and help the desperately poor, the environment and yourself.

## ***Fundraising concerts in aid of Henry Fraser***

Chroma Chamber Ensemble presents two fundraising concerts in aid of Henry Fraser, featuring pianist Martin Cousin on Friday 17th December.

### **4pm Children's Concert**

"Fairies, Fangs and Fantastical Folk" - a magical musical journey for 4 - 9 year olds featuring music for piano with strings intertwined with fairy tales. Tickets £8 adults, £5 children

### **8pm Evening Concert**

A candlelit evening of music for piano quartet featuring pianist Martin Cousin. Mozart - Piano Quartet in G minor. Jo Cutler - Slippery music. Brahms - Piano Quartet in C minor. Tickets £15, £12 concessions.

For tickets:  
email chromaconcerts@me.com or call  
Clare O'Connell on 01422 862953.  
Tickets include a glass of mulled wine!

## ***Christmas Fairs in Berkhamsted in December***

**1st December** –Simply Christmas Craft evening at Sunnyside Church– from 7.30pm

**4th December** – Berkhamsted Arts and Crafts Market at Berkhamsted Town Hall

9.30am – 4.30pm

**5th December** – Ashridge Christmas Fair at Ashridge Visitors Centre 10am – 4pm

**6th December** –The switching on of Berkhamsted Christmas Lights in the High Street 3pm – 6pm

**8th December** - More Than a Mama Christmas Evening Fayre at Berkhamsted Town Hall – 7.30pm – 9.30pm

**19th December** – Berkhamsted Arts and Crafts Market at Berkhamsted Town Hall 9.30am – 2.30pm

## ***Library Consultation***

There are proposals to change the opening hours of the library in Berkhamsted. The proposed changes would result in a severe cut to our local library services, including half and full day closures during the week.

If you would like to have your say on the proposals pop into the library and fill in a comments card.

## ***Public Consultation***

Residents have until December 15th to comment on Dacorum Borough Council's Draft Core Strategy. Full details on the importance of this consultation to local residents can be found on page 27.

*We welcome your news of community events for these pages. The copy date for January's issue is December 3rd. Listings may be edited for reasons of space.*

# THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

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*Readers who do not have access to the  
internet/email, or who prefer to contact  
the editorial team by post, can write to us:*

***Your Berkhamsted***

**The Court House**

**Berkhamsted**

**HP4 2AX**

## ***Your Berkhamsted Needs You!***

The editorial team is actively seeking contributions from Berkhamsted residents who can tell us about any aspect of the town.

### **Local groups**

Do you belong to a local group in the town? Would you like to let our readers know about the activities/work you do and how local people can get involved?

### **Local heroes**

Do you know a local resident who is an inspiration to others through their actions or character?

### **Local history**

Do you have an interesting story to tell about Berkhamsted's past?

***We would love to hear from you, so please get in touch with your ideas***

## ***Your Berkhamsted Contacts***

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**Copy Dates:** 3 December      3 January      4 February

# *The Christmas Story* by Fr John Pritchard

Professor Hans Kung wrote “Today, for many people all over the world, religion has become not the *opium* of the people but the *liberation* of the people. Western intellectuals are often prejudiced against religion. They think that religion does not matter. All other things matter, but not religion.” SGH Lecture 1986

It’s a fine line going into schools and teaching the stories of religion and engaging with young and old in the traditions of our culture. This work is particularly encouraged in our church schools. You might be aware of the statistics, 25.3% of all state primary schools in England are Church of England schools - that’s 4,470 schools. 5.8% of all state secondary schools in England are Church of England schools - 220 schools. 18.6% of all primary pupils and 5.8% of all secondary pupils attend these schools and these percentages in each case seem to be growing. Yet at this wonderful time of the year, at Christmas, you don’t see quite so many people opting into the story, but gradually, more children opting out of the story because of their own defined cultural and religious beliefs. The traditions of our communities are widening as we become more engaged with living in a developing “plural society”.

J S Furnivall defined the plural society in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century as “a medley of peoples – European, Chinese, Indian and native, who do mix but do not combine. Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. As individuals they meet, but

only in the marketplace in buying and selling. There is a plural society, with different sections of the community living side by side, within the same political unit.”

I believe that religious discourse, theology and practice contribute to the betterment of our individual lives and community life together, and that is in part the basis of “teaching the faith” to all people. Within our social structure the practice of prayer or silence, the encouragement in faith and careful learning, is meant to lead members of faith communities to an intellectual and emotional understanding of purpose and experience. From that place of learning and practice we try our best to perceive good, act for good and contribute in a way which is beneficial towards all humanity whether on a local or global scale. From a Christian perspective, our faith asks that we are engaged in speaking of “hope” for every human being. It might seem illusive, but the hope of Christianity, is not just for Christianity, but for all humanity. And also for Christianity, a significant beginning of that story is found in the Christmas Story.

The celebration of Christmas is perhaps just one opportunity for many of us to acknowledging the good influence possible in our religious practice and education.

My concern is less about evangelism towards people of other faiths; rather that people now face a genuine option in our society between religion and no religion at all. Does that help us? *JB*

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