

*the magazine for town and parish*

# *your* **Berkhamsted**

A tall, dark wooden totem pole stands as the central focus of the cover. It is intricately carved with several figures, including faces and what appears to be a bird at the top. The pole is set in a lush green environment with trees and a pond in the background. The title 'your Berkhamsted' is overlaid on the top half of the image, with 'your' in a script font and 'Berkhamsted' in a bold serif font.

Local landmarks: Berkhamsted School and John Sayers Almshouses  
A new artistic community

Large housing development proposed for our town  
Berkhamsted Heritage Open Days

August 2011

50p

## ***From the Editor*** August 2011



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

### **Welcome to the August issue of *Your Berkhamsted*.**

**T**his month we take a closer look at two well known landmarks in our town, Berkhamsted School and the John Sayers Almshouses. We also have news about the Heritage Open Days that are taking place early next month. Don't miss your opportunity to learn more about some of the fascinating buildings in Berkhamsted - there is more information on page 13.

There are now a number of art galleries in Berkhamsted. Jenny Thorburn tells us about the latest and asks if this could be the beginning of Berkhamsted as the St Ives of the Chilterns.

Many residents are concerned about the proposed "South Berkhamsted Concept" development of 1000 homes. We have more information on this from "Save Your Berkhamsted", with details on how to have your say, on page 23.

**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 for September to November's issues, please refer to page 31.

Page 16: photo by Tony Firshman. Page 17: photo by Robin McMorran Page 25: photo by Rowena Pike. Back cover: Your Berkhamsted photography competition winner Chris Richards.

*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 Basil Jones



**I** recently attended a lecture by Sir Tom Stoppard entitled "The privilege of an artist" in which he explored what it was that made

the artist and more importantly what is Art. He did not come up with any fixed conclusions but left us with various ideas to help us tussle out this intriguing subject. He admitted straight away that he had led a charmed life beginning as a Jew in Moravia who was sent to Singapore when he was ten to escape the Nazis and then whisked away to India to escape the Japanese.

As a young man in England he wrote his first play in his twenties and then with modest means he has been able to indulge himself as an artist ever since. His lecture lasted an hour and I have a full transcript for any who may be interested, but he gave us certain pointers to stimulate our thinking.

A Russian 19th century critic called Vissarion Belinsky said "Every work of art is the breath of a single eternal idea breathed by God into the inner life of the artist." Elevated claims but as Tom Stoppard says they are actually commonplace. Or as another Russian said when going for trial in one of the purges and asked "What makes you a poet?" - "Oh, erm, well, I thought - I think it was God".

Karl Marx saw things rather differently. His vision was that a man would be a baker in the morning, a lawmaker in the

afternoon and a poet in the evening. But Stoppard goes on to say that in the general scheme of things in the Anglo Saxon world the artist is allowed to say "I paint pictures" or "I dance" etc., There is a sense of privilege and almost a respected place. That is how we have organised our society.

I will end this little piece by quoting words which he put into the mouth of James Joyce: "An artist is the magician put amongst men to gratify - capriciously - their urge for immortality. The temples are built and brought down around him, continuously and contiguously, from Troy to the fields of Flanders. If there is any meaning in any of it, it is in what survives as art, yes even in the celebration of tyrants, yes even in the celebration of nonentities. What now of the Trojan War if it had been passed over by the artist's touch? Dust. A forgotten expedition prompted by Greek merchants looking for new markets. A minor redistribution of broken pots. But it is we who stand enriched, by a tale of heroes, of a golden apple, a wooden horse, a face that launched a thousand ships--"

But not quite, I must have the last word as usual! The Church's Liturgy is the greatest living work of art provided it is performed to the best of the abilities of those present. It may have Colour, (Vestments etc.), Painting (stained glass), Dance (Movement), Perfume (Incense), Music and Singing (Hymns etc.), Poetry (The Word etc.). Most importantly it is incomplete as a work of Art without YOU to bring it alive and give Glory to the inspirer of all artists. *JB*

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## ***Around the town***

The latest news from around Berkhamsted

### **Berkhamsted's Heritage Open Days**

For a number of years the Berkhamsted Local History & Museum Society has staged Heritage Open Days as part of the nationally-sponsored

Open Days, providing opportunities to visit and enjoy guided tours of local buildings which are not normally open in this way.

Many local residents will believe that they already know their Berkhamsted and that they have nothing new to learn, but behind familiar facades there is much hidden history. An added bonus of these Heritage Open Days is that they are all free.

Berkhamsted's Heritage Open Days are from 8th to 11th September and include tours of the Castle, Berkhamsted School Old Hall and Chapel, St Peter's Church and Court House, and the National Film & Television Archive, Kingshill. There is more information on pages 13 and 14.

### **Thanks from Berkhamsted & District Branch RNLI**

Wally Finch, Chairman of the Berkhamsted & District Branch RNLI, would like to thank the commuters of Berkhamsted for their generosity at the



recent single-day collection at Berkhamsted Railway Station. The total amount collected was £356.13.

The next event will be an Open Gardens Day on 6th August at Potten End. Refreshments will be available.

All monies taken will be going direct to the RNLI.

### **The Children's Society**

Calling all Gardeners and Chelsea Flower Show fanatics! The Harpenden Committee for The Children's Society has got Ms Alex Denman of the R.H.S. to give a talk on the challenges of organising "The Greatest Show on Earth". This will take place at Aldwickbury Park Golf Club, Harpenden, AL5 1AB on Thursday 1st September at 7.45pm. Tickets £20 – to include canapés and a glass of bubbly, served from 7.00pm. Available from Ann Browning 01442 864968 or 01582 767836. Don't miss it!

More locally:- The Berkhamsted Committee is supporting the National Coffee Morning for The Children's Society. They will host a Coffee Morning at The Court House, Berkhamsted on Thursday 8th September between 10.00 am and 12 noon. Delicious coffee and cakes. All welcome!

*(continues on page 7)*



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### **Halton House Open Day**

Halton House will be open to the public on Sunday 4th September from 10.00am to 4.00pm.. This is a rare opportunity to see this lasting reminder of Victorian decorative style. Further information will be available nearer to the 4th September at: [www.raf.mod.uk/rafhalton](http://www.raf.mod.uk/rafhalton)

### **Oxfam Children's Wear Event**

Oxfam's popular Children's Wear Event will return to Berkhamsted Civic Centre on Friday 9th September with one important difference - credit cards will be accepted but not cheques. The event opens at 9.00am for just two and a half hours and offers a splendid selection of clothes for the new season, as well as toys and games. All the money raised goes to support the overseas aid charity's work.

The Oxfam worker in Ethiopia was puzzled by the woman standing gazing down at a hole in the ground by her feet. Then a pair of hands supporting a bucket appeared out of the hole. On enquiring she learnt that there was a chain of ten women below ground accessing an underground spring, the only source of water for their drought-stricken village.

Oxfam has particular expertise in the field of water and sanitation and is involved in water-supply programmes across the globe. Water is being trucked in to many desperate locations in East Africa.

Children's Wear organizer Nicky Evans hopes to match her last total of £7000 which would pay for seven of the large bladder tanks to hold the water for distribution, as well as tapstands and specially designed Oxfam buckets. So help the family budget and desperate

families overseas by visiting the Oxfam Children's Wear Event.

### **Berkhamsted Choral Society with Chorleywood Choral Society**

There will be a concert at St Peter's Church on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September at 7.30pm: Peace and Passion: A Choral Celebration. Selections from Messiah (Handel) and other English anthems including Zadok the Priest. Conductor Graham Wili. Tickets: £13, Seniors, £11, Student and Dacorum Card £6, U16s free. Box Office: 07500 431643 or from Cole Flatt & Partners.

### **Bike 'n Hike 2011 - 10th September**

Now is the time to begin preparing for this year's Bike 'n Hike, which is being organised by Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Historic Churches Trust for Saturday 10th September.

For the past 20 years, always on the second Saturday in September, cyclists and walkers have visited churches and chapels throughout Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire enjoying a day out and at the same time raising money for church restoration and repair.

This year the Bike 'n Hike celebrates its 20th anniversary and the organisers would like to make it a record breaking year. So what are you waiting for? Enjoy a pleasant day cycling or walking to churches and chapels in our area and at the same time boost our church's funds as well as those of the Trust.

For more information please contact Chris Clegg on 875818, visit the website at [www.bedshertshct.org.uk](http://www.bedshertshct.org.uk) or email [bikenhike@bedshertshct.org.uk](mailto:bikenhike@bedshertshct.org.uk). *yB*

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## *Facelift for charity boutique*

A unique Berkhamsted shop is being given a fresh new look, just in time to celebrate its fifth year of business in the town. Number Twenty, in Lower Kings Road, is a unique retail business, run by The Hospice of St Francis.

The business has defied tough economic conditions and makes a significant contribution to hospice funding whilst at the same time giving its discerning customers an exciting choice of designer products.

The shop is managed by Sarah Coles and deputy Nicola Harvey, who are assisted by a team of 25 volunteers. It is run as an independent gift shop, paying rents and rates on an equal footing with other local retailers and purchasing from suppliers in the usual way.

Sarah and Nicola both have long backgrounds in retailing and have their own interior design consultancies. They both worked closely to develop the concept of Number Twenty alongside Lin Underwood, retail manager at the hospice.

The shop's sleek contemporary look, which has been designed by Berkhamsted based graphic artist Katie Hunt of Solo Design, has been created to reflect the style of merchandise the shop sells today. The new design also reinforces the link to the hospice and the local community.

Sarah says: "Number Twenty pioneers local designers and trends. We have a commitment to stock local products made by local people and we champion our suppliers. Very often people approach Number Twenty with items they are



*Life's a Party*

producing and we actively encourage this approach. As competition in the retail sector is increasing it is vital to stay ahead of the game."

Designer names such as Robin Farquhar, Hannah Turner, Jan Constantine and Ken Eardley can also be found on the shelves. Life's a Party (pictured above) owner, Sofie Phillipson, is based in Marsworth and sells bunting and home accessories at Number Twenty."

Adds Sarah; "People want something a little bit different and a little bit special, and most importantly, our emphasis is on raising money for the hospice and this works because we are at the heart of the local community."

Sarah, who won the Dacorum Small Business of the Year Award in 2007, continues; "Nicola and I have recently been on buying trips sourcing new products and there will be some great new ranges arriving soon. Do come and visit us. Customers are being more careful, but our success in this field depends on the innovative mix of the right products, reasonable prices and great customer service." yB

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## *Stepping into the past*

**Dan Parry** takes us on a tour of Berkhamsted School

**A**mong Berkhamsted's many highlights some are particularly accessible and allow - invite even - frequent attention: Ashridge, the castle...the Boat to name but a few. Others are a little more exclusive. In a list of the town's top ten most charismatic features surely somewhere near the top must come the wonderfully evocative though slightly sinister historic Tudor hall at Berkhamsted School. Walking up Castle Street, before you get to the church you come across a blue plaque bearing the date 1541. This is the outside wall of the old hall...but what lies within? To the uninitiated one might imagine something between a contemporary centre of excellence and, dare I say, Hogwarts. Venturing inside, in the company of Rachael Guy, Head of Learning Resources, together we went in search of ghosts.

In the last 500 years thousands of people received their first taste of the world in the classrooms of the school, and I wanted to know whether we could still discover something of the joys, the horrors, the ambitions and the realities that they encountered along the way. The first thing I found was that this wasn't Hogwarts. The buildings might be quaint and the presence of privilege is obvious, but evidence of forward-thinking is everywhere. Where once there was a public school dominated by a traditional way of things (boarding was once far more common than now), today Principal Mark Steed (who prefers 'independent school') is introducing a timetable based on 20-minute packages believed to be unique in the country.

Nor does Rachael's library have a forbidden section packed with books of dangerous spells, though it does have an out-of-bounds attic filled with secret treasures. Here beneath the roof lie handwritten ledgers bearing the accounts of years gone by, along with other ancient gems. Even while we were there, we unearthed a long-forgotten cache of rolls of film, complete with the old 8mm camera presumably used to shoot them.

As well as sobering black and white photos of former pupils from the years leading up to the First World War, the school's archive also includes the solid leather collar worn by the infamous Peter the Wild Boy, the feral child rescued in 1725 from a forest near Hanover.

Visiting the chapel, the drama and dance studio, the artist-in-residence's exhibition room, the common rooms and the HQ of the school's cadet force, we found the same breezy, easy-going atmosphere throughout them all. The facilities are extensive to say the least. But far from a remote bastion of elitism, the school appears to foster an attitude of positive can-do-ism that's more about self-belief than pushy ambition. Mark Steed has successfully promoted a refreshing atmosphere, grounded in the real world, which gives young people the resources to pursue their own choices and which perhaps thus frees them from the competitive expectation associated with some of the country's other venerable independents.

*continues on page 12*

*continued  
from  
previous  
page*

This sense of grounding perhaps arises from a variety of sources. As well as involvement in the wider community (local

councillors even sit on the governing body), the school uses its extensive resources in actively supporting state education through its sponsorship of the Wren Academy in Finchley. The future's bright then, not just for Berkhamsted but for Wren too.

It's a future built on the heritage of Berkhamsted's rich past. The pupils who've come and gone in the last 500 years did not leave without etching something of themselves into the fabric of the school, literally in some cases. Here and there timeless graffiti has been cut into stonework or carved on the ancient desks still occasionally to be found in forgotten nooks and crannies.

Finishing up in the old hall, it was clear that here was a relic of times gone by. The windows are a shade too high for children to see out of. The room, lofty and large, might be described as foreboding. This is not an intimate, modern classroom and nor does it pretend to be. Amid the portraits of past masters and the valuable



collection of ancient books there is an air of something different compared to other, fresher corners of the school. This is the room with the 'little green baize

door' immortalized by Graham Greene.

For Greene, this came to symbolize the gulf between the security of family life found on one side of the door and the anxieties he associated with the wider world that lay on the other.

In Greene's case his difficulties partly stemmed from the fact that his father was headmaster at the time. In wandering through the door and away from the hall, I couldn't help speculating that he might have been happier in the modern incarnation of the school.

Today the world is not allowed to become a source of anxiety but instead is invited in and asked to make itself at home.

In a place with such a long history, there will always be room for the ghosts of the past. It's just that amid the enlightened views that permeate the school there are fewer dark corners for them to hide in.

*JB*

# ***Berkhamsted Heritage Open Days***

**Jenny Sherwood** on rare opportunities to learn more about our town

**F**or a number of years the Berkhamsted Local History & Museum Society has staged Heritage Open Days as part of the nationally-sponsored Open Days providing opportunities to visit and enjoy

guided tours of local buildings, which are not normally open in this way. Many local inhabitants will believe that they already know their Berkhamsted and that they have nothing new to learn, but behind familiar facades there is much hidden history. An added bonus of these Heritage Open Days is that they are all free.

## **Berkhamsted Castle**

Just a ruin, but the best example of a motte and bailey castle remaining in the country is Berkhamsted's royal castle, rich in history. Guided tours take place on Sunday 11th September at 10.30am, 12.30pm and 3.00pm.

## **Berkhamsted School Old Hall & Chapel**

Founded in 1541 by Dean John Incent. Old Hall built in 1544 is the original school hall, one of the largest at that time. The Chapel built in 1895 by local architect C H Rew, is based on the Chapel of Santa Maria dei Miracoli in Venice. Tours 11th September at 10.30am and 2.30pm, led by an Old Boy of School House.



## **St Peter's Church and Court House**

This church, probably the second largest in the county, was consecrated in 1222. There are many memorials linking the church with well-known Berkhamstedians

through the ages. The Court House is Tudor and has been used for many purposes through the ages. Guided tour 11th September 3.00pm.

## **St. Mary's Church Northchurch**

The oldest part of this church, whose parish once stretched from Dudswell right to Bourne End, is Saxon. There are a number of interesting monuments to notable people, particularly one to Peter the Wild Boy. The Prince of Wales is patron to the living of St. Mary's. Tours 11th September 2.30pm and 3.30pm.

## **Claire Lloyd Properties, 173, High Street, formerly Figgs the chemist**

This is the oldest known urban timber framed building in the country, its timbers dating from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. Originally thought to be a shop, it is probably part of a large hall house. Stairs are narrow and steep so not suitable for the very young and elderly. Open 11th September 10.30am to 4.00pm with small group tours throughout the day.

*continues on page 14*

### **Berkhamsted Town Hall**

Victorian Gothic market house and town hall.

Architect Edward Buckton Lamb, built 1859, extended 1890, restored 1983-1999. Permanent exhibition depicting history of the market

house, town hall and Mechanics' Institute. Open 11th September 10.15am to 1.30pm. Guided Tour at 11.30am.

A map showing sites of all HODs in Berkhamsted and boards depicting the history of St. Michael and All Angels Church, Sunnyside and St John the Evangelist's Church, Bourne End will be on display in the Town Hall during the HOD weekend.

### **St John the Evangelist, Church Bourne End**

Built in 1853-4 as Chapel of Ease for parish of Northchurch, it is one of the first churches designed by Gilbert Scott. Largely financed by Sir John Culme Seymour, Rector of Northchurch for 50 years. In 1889 the chancel and sanctuary were elaborately decorated in memory of Elca Rose Curtis of the Hall, Berkhamsted. Open 11th September 2.30pm to 4.00pm.

### **St. Michael & All Angels, Sunnyside**

The centenary of the consecration of the present church was celebrated in 2009. Its history goes back much further. It began life in a barn leased as a mission room in George Street and then later as an iron



church, 'The Tin Tabernacle.' The present church was built on land donated by Earl Brownlow. Open 11th September 2.00pm to 4.00pm. Tours as required.

### **Ashlyns School, formerly the Foundling Hospital 1935-55**

The building contains stained glass windows, a staircase and many memorials from the original London Hospital. Tours will be led by former foundlings. Stout shoes and a torch are recommended for visits to the crypt. There will also be an opportunity to see 'The Foundling Voices' exhibition with recordings of memories. Open 11th September from 1.00pm to 5.30pm. Guided tours at 1.30pm and 3.45pm. Booking is essential to Jenny Sherwood, 01442 865158 or email [KSherw9100@aol.com](mailto:KSherw9100@aol.com)

### **National Film & Television Archive, Kingshill**

The original structure of Kingshill House dates back to the 17th century. The stables, outhouses and adjoining farm buildings are now home to the National Film Archive, the John Paul Getty Junior Conservation Centre. Guided tours given by Archives staff. Open Thursday 8th September tours at 10.30am and 11.30am. Numbers are limited. Booking is essential. To Jenny Sherwood, as above.

Further details of the HODs on Society's website, [www.berkhamsted-history.org.uk](http://www.berkhamsted-history.org.uk) and on [www.heritageopendays.org.uk](http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk) yB



# *First year finishes with second year home hunt*

**Sam Limbert** continues his column on university life

**A**lmost without blinking, my first year at university is over. After finishing exams in June, it was strange moving out of my university halls as it barely seemed five minutes ago that I'd moved everything in. There may have been problems with the halls (aren't there at every university though), but that room will always be my first room at university. I had some good laughs in my flat and made some good friends.

Whether it was throwing sweets down the corridor into a glass, watching the international students be moments away from setting our kitchen on fire or playing an interesting game of Pictionary after our Christmas dinner, there have been loads of memories from my first university flat that I'll take away with me.

Leaving halls has meant that I had to go house hunting for a place to stay in for my second year. My flat mate for next year and I have spent countless hours trawling in and out of estate agents, browsing websites and trying to work out budgets for next year. At the time of writing, our hunt is nearing an end as we finally seem to have found a place that works for us.

Finding a place to rent is all part of the university experience, especially when it comes to dealing with different people. A number of times, we were talking to estate agents, mentioned we were students and immediately they acted differently towards us in discussions. I've also learnt the art of 'thanks but no thanks'; politely thanking someone for showing you round a property when realistically you know as

soon as you walk in that there's no chance of you living there!

This year has definitely been an adventure in terms of living away from home for the first time, cooking for myself, managing finances, meeting new people, and doing the odd bit of learning and essay writing as well!

For those of you who've enjoyed reading my column from university, you'll be glad to know that it'll be continuing in the next academic year as I passed all of my first year modules, so you can expect more Guildford-based musings in the near future. *yB*

**The editor of Your Berkhamsted is actively seeking new contributors for the magazine.**

Did you know that everyone who works on bringing Your Berkhamsted to you each month is a volunteer?

We would extend a warm welcome to anyone who would like to join us, whether you would like to contribute on a regular basis or just write a one-off article. We are always interested in discussing ideas for features about Berkhamsted life. These could be about the town's history, interesting modern day developments or local people of note (past or present). We are also happy to promote projects, events and works by local groups.

Please email the editor for more details at [editor@yourberkhamsted.org.uk](mailto:editor@yourberkhamsted.org.uk).

# St Peter's Church Choir tour to Vienna

Robin McMorran reports on the choir's recent tour

Shopping for purple thread isn't normally top of my list whilst preparing for a trip, but one of the hazards of going on tour with a church choir is

that a button will almost certainly fall off your cassock just before you pack it. I was getting ready to go on the 2011 tour of Vienna with the Choir of St Peter's, Great Berkhamsted; a purple button had fallen off my purple cassock, and matching purple thread was nowhere to be found! A hasty visit to Shepherd's Bush Market eventually solved that particular problem; ecclesiastical vestments repaired, I set off to join the choir in Austria.

After months of planning and rehearsal, St Peter's Choir, led by our illustrious *Kapellmeister* Adrian Davis, was lined up to perform a selection of English and European choral music in some of the most prestigious venues in Europe. Privileged as we were, we were also exporting one of Britain's greatest cultural assets: the rich tradition of Anglican choral music. The Austrians' self-satisfaction for having given the world Mozart and Schubert may be justified, but we took a certain sense of pride in bringing to them the music of Tallis, Byrd



and Howells, composers probably relatively unknown in Central Europe. In the spirit of the best cultural exchanges, we were going to *show them a thing or two*.

There is a story that the Austrian composer Anton Brückner went to view the body of Beethoven prior to its re-burial in 1868; Brückner later realised one of his spectacle lenses had fallen out, and was overjoyed because it had *probably* dropped into Beethoven's coffin to be buried forever with the great composer. Brückner was revelling in glory by association, as if the greatness of Beethoven would somehow rub off onto him. An English parish church choir singing in Viennese churches today enjoys a similar sense of glory by association; the Austrian capital is steeped in history, every building and street boasting an almost nonchalant association with A-listers such as Johann Strauss, Gustav Klimt or a dynasty of Holy Roman Emperors. So when our first gig was in the towering gothic splendour of the Stephansdom (the cathedral of Vienna) we were all too aware that this was the church where Mozart's funeral was held. In the distinguished company of umpteen dead Hapsburg Emperors, we filled the gothic

arches with William Byrd's *O Sing Joyfully*. The occasion was also marked by the world premiere of a new work, *Video Caelos Apertos*, a visionary text from the mass of St Stephen set to dramatic music by our own Adrian Davis. We concluded our concert with the irresistibly rousing *O Thou the Central Orb* by Charles Wood, which, frankly, blew the roof off. My cassock buttons, I am pleased to report, held out throughout.



*The Stephansdom, Vienna*

repertoire of choral evensong canticles, the Magnificat from the glorious *Collegium Regale* service by Herbert Howells. Our range of music was not,

however, restricted to our own local produce, as we also included works by other European composers in our programmes: Palestrina's *Tu es Petrus* featured strongly, and let us not forget that Anglican composer Charles Wood

was himself an Irishman. Our organist Jonathan Lee exhibited his skill at the various organ consoles around the city with incredible performances of Mendelssohn's Sonata in A. In tribute to Austria's great musical heritage, the choir sang one of Brückner's best-known motets, *Locus Iste*, enjoying a particularly poignant moment when Adrian Davis directed the choir in a spontaneous performance in front of Brückner's memorial at the Belvedere Palace in his honour (Brückner, in the end, found his own glory). At the Peterkirche, Jess Malcolm's voice resounded around the oval church with an ethereal quality, delighting the audience with her solo Benedictus from the *Little Organ Mass*, composed by that other great Austrian, Joseph Haydn.

An important aspect of this tour was education. Everyone in the choir broadened their musical experience, but most importantly the trip offered new

*continues overleaf*

Starting as we meant to go on, our next performances took place in equally magnificent venues. Our Sunday morning engagement was Mass at the Votivkirche, a neo-gothic church built in 1879 in thanksgiving for the escape of Emperor Franz Josef from an assassination attempt. After that, we found ourselves singing in the Peterskirche, a temple of baroque excess, walls dripping with gilded angels and marble clouds (Father Michael was probably trying to work out a way of FedEx-ing a selection of cherubim back to adorn St Peter's Berkhamsted). Another performance found us in the rococo palace of Schönbrunn, the extravagant former residence of Austrian royalty, singing Anglican anthems to visitors in Maria Theresa's royal chapel. With each appearance we rose to the occasion with stirring examples of British choral heritage: Thomas Tallis's gem *If Ye Love Me*, John Ireland's tear-jerking *Greater Love*, and of course we were duty-bound to sing at least one canticle from our

challenges to our younger singers. A number of our choristers demonstrated their skills with solos in pieces such as Greene's moving 1743 anthem *Lord Let me Know Mine End*. Singing with St Peter's choir enables children from many different backgrounds to develop music skills with the support of the Royal Schools of Church Music (RSCM), and trips like this provide an experience and a sense of achievement that will stay with our choristers for life. Chris Limbert, Alice Jullien, Charlotte Booth and Joe Grego all made a fantastic début on the Austrian music scene this year.

The choir tour was an educational experience for us all, however. Adult singers, choristers and parents enjoyed tours around Schloß Schönbrunn, discovering the rich heritage of the Austrian nation, led by our highly knowledgeable and

engaging guide Brigitte Timmermann. In the Vienna Woods we were shown around the sacred cloisters of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Heiligenkreuz Monastery (where we also managed a short impromptu performance). Vienna itself had no shortage of *Bierkeller* and *Beisl* bars, offering outstanding Austrian cuisine, beers and wines (*in Vienna veritas*, you might say) – there is much to recommend the city as a holiday destination, although it must rank as one of Europe's priciest locations.

Choir tours are a great experience for singers of all ages and abilities, and open opportunities for everyone to discover different cultures whilst proudly sharing something of our own. Some might say that taking music to the home of Mozart and Schubert is like taking ice to the Eskimos – *but this means nothing to me, O Vienna.* *yB*

|           |                      |  |
|-----------|----------------------|--|
| Registers | <b>Weddings</b>      |  |
|           | 17 June              | Daniel James Orum and Germaine Nanette Dutton ( <i>St Peter's</i> )  |
|           | <b>Baptisms</b>      |  |
|           | 5 June               | Hannah Georgie Stuart ( <i>All Saints'</i> )   |
|           | 25 June              | Rafael Fraser Branscombe; Max William Benedict Murray; Arthur Miller ( <i>St Peter's</i> )   |
|           | 26 June              | Jacob Alexander Baylay-Ray; Alexander James Baylay-Ray<br>Freddie William Evans; Sebastian Alexander Hawkes;<br>Sophie Elizabeth Anne Noble Roscoe ( <i>St Peter's</i> )   |
|           | <b>Confirmations</b> |  |
|           | 12 June              | Sophie Padmore, Richard Edward, Merlin Howells, Sophie Nash, Mark Igbineweka, Adam Brierley, Peter Smith, Cathy Smith, Thomas Nash, Katey Adderley, Holly Bowyer, Mark Bowyer, Duncan Brigginsshaw, MicheilaBrigginsshaw, CarolynneCharman, Luisa Clarke, Matthew Size, Pamela Dalgas, James Doyle, Zoe Doyle, Helen Hanbidge, Nick Hanbidge, Emma Harris, Helen Holmes-Higgin, Peter Horsley, Salli Humphries, Jonathan Liddle, Michelle Liddle, Jamie Matthews, Charlotte Tarpey, Georgie Wilkinson, Miles Wilkinson ( <i>St Peter's</i> ) |

August Parish Diary

Tues 2nd Church Walk led by Pat Hearne, *All Saints*  
Sun 7th 11.30am Special Parochial Church Meeting, *St Peter's*

*Parish Diary information can be found at [www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk](http://www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk)*

St Peter's Choir

Please note there will be no choir in St Peter's during August, they will return—refreshed we hope—in September.

|                 |  |                                |                      |                         |
|-----------------|--|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Sunday Services | St Peter's                                     |                                | All Saints' - August |                         |
|                 | 8:00am   | Eucharist                      | 7th                  | 10:00am Morning Worship |
|                 | 9:30am   | Sung Eucharist & Sunday School | 14th                 | 10:00am Morning Worship |
|                 | 6:00pm   | Evensong                       | 21st                 | 10:00am Holy Communion  |
|                 | Choir holiday in August                        |                                | 28th                 | 10:00am Morning Worship |
|                 | First Sunday in month Family Service at 9:30am |                                |                      |                         |

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.  
The Revd Caroline Weaver, 866324 (day off Fri). Methodist Minister, All Saints.

Further information available from our church websites:  
[www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk](http://www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk) and at [www.allsaintsberkhamsted.org.uk](http://www.allsaintsberkhamsted.org.uk)

## *The Upstairs Gallery*

**Jenny Thorburn** unveils the new gallery at the Way Inn



**W**hen I first came to Berkhamsted 20 years ago, looking for somewhere to live in the town, the café upstairs at the Way Inn was one of the few places for a delicious reasonably priced lunch in town. Now the café is no more and the Way Inn is looking for a new use for the space. 20 years on I am looking for new adventures too – I have been studying art for a while, and wanting somewhere to show my work.

Sometimes one's prayers get answered, even when you don't know they are prayers. I was puzzling over how to show my art locally, and thought "well one solution is to have a gallery, but no that is far too big an undertaking, and anyhow I don't know anything about running galleries". Having dismissed the thought, a

few months later the opportunity threw itself at me, when I was having a chat with Joan Fisher, who is a trustee of the Way Inn and was thinking about what to do with the upstairs room. Quickly two other artists/crafters, Joanna Bryant and Marie Jahn joined in and we were off planning the gallery.

I have discovered that as an artist you want to get your work 'out there'; to show it, to sell it to other people. Also you need to be in touch with other artists – your peers, your community. All of us need the spiritual refreshment of encountering something lovely made by another human being. There are few visual arts resources in this area, such as galleries showing local art work.





Our intention is to contribute to the local artistic community and art lovers by being a contemporary art and crafts gallery, showing the excellence of artists and crafters in the Chiltern area. We will also provide information about art in the area, and we will have workshops and lectures at the gallery.

It'll be a place to come and buy something beautiful for your home or a gift that has been made by hand, by someone in our community.

The room has been refitted, repainted bright white, with gallery lighting, picture hanging and display shelving – though you may recognize the tables and chairs from café times. We are planning to open in September, and hope to be open Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 4pm.

The money that the gallery makes from providing the exhibition space to artists

and commissions on sales will go to support the running costs and activities of the Way Inn, and surpluses will go to local charities.

We are all volunteers, and we will be looking for more volunteers from September onwards to help run the gallery. If you would like to help please do contact us. Who knows – with other new art ventures in the town, this could be the beginning of something – Berkhamsted as the St Ives of the Chilterns? For information about volunteering, please email us at [upstairsgalleryberkhamsted@gmail.com](mailto:upstairsgalleryberkhamsted@gmail.com)  
yB

We welcome news about your local group. If you would like your group to feature in Your Berkhamsted, or have news for our Around the town pages, please see the contact details on page 31.

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# *The South Berkhamsted Concept*

**G**rand Union Investments (GUI), fronted by PR company Quatro, are proposing a 1000 home pseudo-village at the top of Swingate Lane. This is in addition to the 1200 homes proposed in Dacorum's Core Strategy.

2200 new homes amounts to an increase of around 30% on existing housing stock. Save Your Berkhamsted Residents Association (SYBRA) was formed two and a half years ago to oppose the Core Strategy proposals and represent residents' interest in development consultations. Our primary objective is to ensure that the character and "feel" of Berkhamsted and its surrounding countryside is preserved. This new development on Green Belt land represents a major threat to the character of our town and surrounding countryside.

The "South Berkhamsted Concept" website and recent presentations in the town were, in our opinion, full of gloss and short on facts and figures, but their basic premise appears to be that "if Berkhamsted is going to get 1000 new homes better to do it our way." Their own projections indicate that closer to 3000 homes are actually required! There are no proposals for new employment opportunities in the "concept" so we can also expect a significant increase in commuter traffic via the A41 and through the town. GUI's main presumption is that the A41 is now the definitive town boundary and that virtually all land up to the A41 is therefore fair game for development. SYBRA's view is that the open space between our town and the A41 is the "green lung" that protects the town from traffic pollution and we should fight

tooth and nail to preserve it!

The proposed new East-West link road is supposed to alleviate the traffic impact on the town centre and whilst it may speed up access from this development to the A41, people will still want to visit the town centre to shop, eat, drink and socialise. Any development on this scale can only lead to a dramatic increase in traffic around the town. Berkhamsted's creaking infrastructure, with already huge traffic and parking problems, simply cannot cope with the additional demands this development would involve. Significant development of this type and indeed the proposals outlined in the Core Strategy, will place a burden on the town's infrastructure which will destroy the character of our town.

The level of housing development in Berkhamsted will ultimately be decided by a Planning Inspector who will take account of the required level of development across Dacorum as a whole. The South Berkhamsted scheme is opposed by both Berkhamsted Town Council and Dacorum Borough Planning. Even so, both Dacorum's Core Strategy and the South Berkhamsted scheme will be presented to the Planning Inspector for a decision. Berkhamsted could end up with one or the other or both! This is the opportunity for residents to make their views heard. SYBRA will continue to represent residents' opposition to these proposals but we recommend you also make your views known direct to your town council.

[www.saveyourberkhamsted.co.uk](http://www.saveyourberkhamsted.co.uk)

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## *Record breaking total for Petertide Fair*

**Prunella Murray** has good news about this year's Petertide Fair



*Residents enjoying this year's Petertide Fair*

An impressive £9,690 was raised at the 30th annual Petertide Fair on Saturday (11 June 2011) held at St Peter's Church, Berkhamsted.

Berkhamsted residents turned out in force to support the traditional fair enjoying hot dogs, Petertide Ale and Pimms whilst browsing the various stalls and sideshows. Children were entertained by a miniature train giving rides across the churchyard, Punch & Judy and face painting.

The Fair total will be added to £6k which has already been raised through various fundraising events this year and the total will be split between this year's Petertide charities, the Sunnyside Rural Trust and

McCabe Educational Trust.

Petertide Fair Chairman, Judith Limbert, commented, "I am absolutely thrilled with the amount we've raised for this year's charities which has exceeded all our expectations! We were particularly fortunate that the sun shone which encouraged record numbers to attend the fair.

"Furthermore, I am delighted that through our fundraising we will significantly improve the lives of others here in the local community and also in Nepal."

More information can be found at:

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# *John Sayers Almshouses*

**Joanne Lloyd Evans** investigates the history behind a familiar landmark

**O**bservant Berkhamstedians will have noticed the almshouses on the High Street at the corner of Cowper Street that bear the clear inscription:  
“The guift of John Sayer Esq. 1684”

I have always wondered as I walk past who has lived there over the centuries and who John Sayer was, so I finally did some research and found that the benefactor had an interesting history.

John Sayer was a wealthy resident who lived in the local manor, Berkhamsted Place. When he died in 1682, he left £1,000 in trust for the poor widows of Berkhamsted and his widow, Mary, augmented the bequest by several hundred pounds. £269 was used to construct the row of almshouses that still stand today on the High Street, and the remainder was invested in land to provide the almswomen and other poor parishioners with an income. There was accommodation for six widows at a time, each with two rooms of her own.

Candidates for rooms had to be at least 55 years old, have lived in Berkhamsted or Northchurch for at least ten years and be “of good fame, constant frequenters of divine service”. By accepting accommodation at the almshouses, the widows also had to submit to a number of rules and restrictions which seem quite strict and patronising by modern standards. If they wished to go away from the town to visit friends, they had to seek permission from the trustees, who never granted permission for more than one woman to be away at a time, and not for

more than one month in the year. The youngest of the six widows was responsible for helping other almswomen in times of illness and she was also required to “keep the court clean between the wall and the house” and to unbolt and bolt the outer gate each morning and night at a fixed time. But who was John Sayer and where did his money come from? Little appears to be known of his early life and I could not find from my research his date of birth or if he was born in the area or moved here later. He had a relative called Sayer, who was the rector of Northchurch, but this does not prove that he was from a local family.

What is well known is that Sayer served King Charles II as his master cook. Charles II was forced into exile in France and the Netherlands after the execution of his father in 1649. The Latin inscription on his tombstone in St Peter’s Church implies that Sayer followed Charles II into exile and was a faithful servant through his troubles. He presumably returned to England with his king upon the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.

Sayer is mentioned in the diaries of Samuel Pepys, who described an encounter with Sayer shortly after the restoration in September 1661 as follows:  
“... I went with Captain Morrice into the King’s Privy Kitchen to Mr Sayer, the Master Cook, and there had a good slice of beef or two to our breakfast; and from thence he took us into the wine cellar where, by my troth, we were very merry,  
*(continues on page 28)*

and I drank  
so much that  
I was not fit  
for  
business ...”

As the  
king’s  
Master  
Cook, Sayer  
received  
£150 per  
year  
(c.£12,750 in  
today’s

money) and £40 for livery. Charles II was  
often late in paying his bills and Sayer  
had to sometimes ask for his payment in  
arrears and on other occasions it appears  
that Sayer actually lent money to the king.

He clearly had other sources of income as  
he was able to take the lease of  
Berkhamsted Place. Berkhamsted Place  
was an Elizabethan manor house built in  
about 1580 by Sir Edward Carey, the  
keeper of the Jewels to Queen Elizabeth I.  
The Queen granted him the lease of  
Berkhamsted Castle, but this had fallen  
into disrepair by this point and so he had a  
manor house built on the hill overlooking  
the castle, using many cartloads of stone  
and flint from the castle ruins.

At the Restoration in 1660, the lease of  
Berkhamsted was taken on by the 2nd  
Earl of Portland, but he was not to live  
there for long. A large fire broke out in  
1662 and it destroyed two-thirds of the  
manor. John Sayer financed the  
reconstruction and the central part of the  
house was quickly rebuilt but the two  
wings which formed the side of the  
courtyard were never restored. Sayer took



ownership of  
the house  
shortly after  
it was rebuilt  
and become  
steward of  
the manor.  
He upset  
many  
parishioners  
of  
Berkhamsted  
by his  
interpretation

of certain ancient manorial rights. The  
rector, churchwardens and others  
complained to the kind that Sayer had  
unjustly kept market and other tolls for  
himself, when they had previously been  
used to help maintain the church, the  
school and the poor of the parish. The  
Court of Exchequer found in favour of  
Sayer, which is probably not surprising  
given his close relationship with the king.

He lived there with his family until his  
death in 1682. The Sayer family remained  
in residence at Berkhamsted Place until  
1716.

His elaborate marble tomb can be found in  
the Lady Chapel of St Peter’s church.  
Remarkably, almost 330 years after they  
were built, the almshouses are still run as a  
charity and are still used for their original  
purpose. Renovations were carried out  
during the 1960s to change the layout of  
the living accommodation so that there is  
now accommodation for four women,  
rather than six.

It still provides subsidised accommodation  
for single Christian women in need who  
have a connection to Berkhamsted. yB

# *The local beekeeper*

**Crispin Baker** continues his monthly beekeeping diary

**A**ugust and time to harvest the honey. But before we do, let's take time to consider the final element to that sort after bumper crop. The weather! Beekeepers are obsessed with the weather at particular times of the year and for the ideal harvesting conditions we want sunshine and warm showers, i.e. perfect for flowers to produce lots of nectar.



Despite the April heat wave and drought conditions followed by unseasonally cold temperatures in May and June, our exhortations to the clouds were rewarded with showers in June and July. As a result the abundant blackberry flowers went on and on, supported by rosebay willow herb, sweet chestnut and lime.

However, all good things come to an end and once the bees are no longer bringing in a noticeable surplus it's time to separate them from their precious stores and we do this by installing a one way bee access gate underneath the supers (honey storage boxes) called a porter bee escape. The bees regularly leave the supers to fetch more honey for storage, but now can't return, thereby draining the supers of bees and leaving the beekeeper free to relieve the hive of bee-free boxes of honey! However there are inevitably

always a few bees who never seem to vacate the supers and these have to be removed as the supers are then taken away from the apiary as quickly and stealthily as possible. Bees can follow you a long

way and at that time of year there are often a lot of bored bees hanging around with not a lot to do other than guard their winter stores, so at any whiff

of robbery, over-zealous bees can make a simple operation become, how shall we say, complicated!

Extracting the honey from the comb into storage buckets must take place as soon as possible, preferably while the honey is still warm and viscous from the hives, and this is carried out using a honey spinner. The frames from the supers are uncapped and placed in a spinning wire cage inside a large bucket and spun so that the honey is removed with centrifugal force. It's a long job and involves getting the kitchen floor very sticky, however there are perks because at the end of the day there is honey for tea!

That's all folks, next time we'll hear about feeding and winter preparations.

Bee Happy! Bee friendly plants for this time of year: Borage, echinops, golden

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*The last word* by Keith Treves-Brown

All Saints’ church is a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP); the building has been shared by Anglicans and Methodists under the terms of a sharing agreement made as long ago as 1980. For many years the two congregations had separate Sunday services, but for the last four years we have had combined services using roughly alternate Anglican and Methodist rituals. In any four consecutive Sundays there will normally be a Eucharist led by an Anglican priest, a sacrament led by a Methodist minister, a service led by an Anglican lay reader and a service led by a Methodist local preacher. I use the word “sacrament” rather than “Holy Communion” for the service led by the Methodist minister because quite frequently over the past year it has been Infant Baptism.

There used to be both a Methodist minister and an Anglican priest-in-charge at All Saints’. The Methodist minister, although resident in Berkhamsted, was strictly speaking appointed to the Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted circuit, and had responsibility also for Tring Methodist church and sometimes shared pastoral responsibility at the Mount prison. The priest-in-charge was a curate under the direction of the rector of Great Berkhamsted. However when Revd Martin Wright left he was not replaced, and pastoral responsibility for everyone at All Saints’ devolved onto the Methodist minister, currently Revd Caroline Weaver. Although Caroline has been

resident in Berkhamsted for only three years she lived in Hemel Hempstead before her ordination, and has been a minister in this circuit for twelve years. She will be moving on this year and is going to a circuit in north Bedfordshire where she will have charge of six village churches and be a chaplain at Cranfield University.

At the end of August we will welcome the new minister appointed to this circuit, Revd Rachael Hawkins. Rachael is married to Andrew and they have two children, Thomas and Samuel, of primary school age. She was brought up in Beverley in Yorkshire, went to Newcastle University, and worked in several different parts of the country as a speech and language therapist before going into the ministry. She has been stationed in Farnborough since she was a probationer (the Methodist equivalent of a deacon). In the eight years she has been there she has had experience of an LEP with the URC and of working alongside an Anglican priest in establishing a Christian community centre. Here she will have slightly fewer responsibilities than Caroline in that she will not be going to the Mount prison.

With this background we feel sure that Rachael will want to play a full part in the life of the churches in Berkhamsted. We ask all YB readers to welcome her and pray for her ministry here. *yB*

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*Berkhamsted memories*



Cleaning the church clock, 1979  
by Chris Richards