



NEWSLETTER

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www.dacorumheritage.org.uk

A NEW HERITAGE TRAIL FOR HEMEL OLD TOWN

The Old Town Conservation Area of Hemel Hempstead has a charm all of its own and many interesting stories to tell.

A new Heritage Trail celebrates the reopening of the historic High Street after the recent major renovation. Compiled by Dacorum Heritage Trust volunteers on behalf of Dacorum Borough Council, the colourful map focusing on a selection of the most important buildings, the majority are Grade II listed. The text gives an interesting short history and the people who once lived in them.



From early feudal times, through the Middle Ages and Tudor dynasty, to the arrival of the 'New Townees' in the 1950s, the High Street (or Market Street) was the focal point of life in the Gade valley.

The rare chalk stream which flows through Gadebridge Park witnessed the building of the Roman villa with its extensive baths, the construction of the magnificent Norman church of St. Mary's, the several phases of The Bury manor house, the Market House and adjacent buildings, the reconstruction of the Town Hall and the licensing of many public houses and inns along the length of the busy street, not to mention visits by Henry VIII.

The trail leaflet has an illustrated '3D' map on one side, expertly produced by Les Ball and his team at Cityscape Maps. The 20 featured buildings all have new black and gold plaques, together with both old and new images of the High Street over the years.

These include many of the listed buildings for which the area is renowned, such as St. Mary's Church, The Bury, the Old Town Hall and Piccotts End medieval cottages. Other lesser known sites include No 25, once the Cranstone's ironmongery shop, and the Quaker Meeting House in St. Mary's Road. The pubs are well represented, with The White Hart, The Rose and Crown, The Olde King's Arms and The Old Bell all included. Long-lost public houses, such as The Royal Oak and The Sun, are pictured in their heyday.

The overall aspect of the High Street has not changed a great deal from the late 19th century, except for the numbers of people who then thronged the pavements, especially on market days.

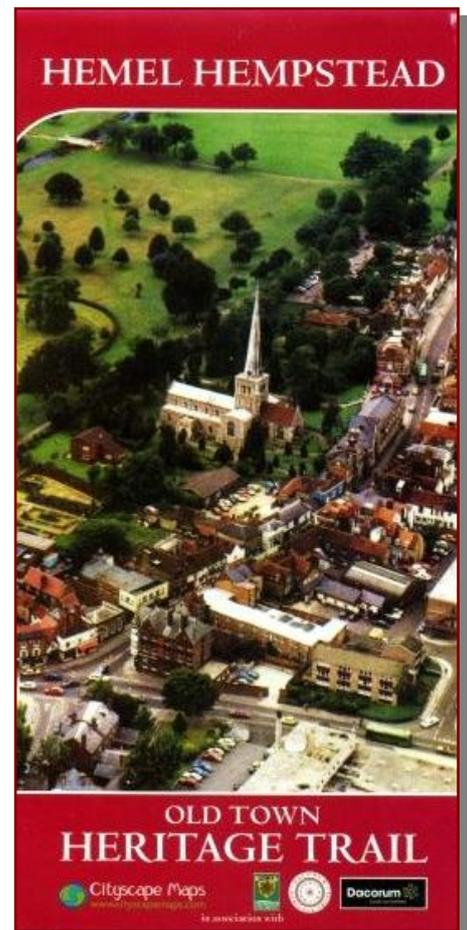
The recent one-way system and renovation of the street will, it is believed, help to attract people to visit the individual shops, hostelrys, the Old Town Hall Arts Centre and St. Mary's Church. The Heritage Trail will prove once and for all that Hemel Hempstead is not just a 'New Town' but also one with a long history of which all its residents can be justly proud.

There are many local history books, which give more details, but why not let your imagination take you down memory lane as you follow the trail – we think it is worth it!

The newly published 'Old Town Heritage Trail' is available free from the Tring, Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead civic offices and the Old Town Hall in Hemel Hempstead.

Joan & Roger Hands, The Dacorum Heritage Trust Ltd.

Photo: Top – the new plaque on The Bury, courtesy of Dacorum Borough Council.



THE DACORUM HERITAGE TRUST LTD.

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A NEW ROLE FOR THE GRADE II* BURY

After 30 years of planning and hard work, the Trustees of the Dacorum Heritage Trust were informed on 23rd July 2014 that their objective of a Dacorum Museum & Art Gallery was one step nearer fruition. At the Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) Cabinet meeting the night before, support for a bid for funding to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the project was given the go-ahead by the Councillors.

The aim is to refurbish, convert and equip The Bury (currently the home of the Registry Office) to turn it into a major local centrepiece for the Hemel Hempstead High Street Conservation Area, complementing Gadebridge Park and linking other existing and historical potential attractions in the area.



The recently published Old Town Heritage Trail starts at The Bury and takes visitors along the High Street as far as Piccotts End cottages with their unique Grade I pre-Reformation wall paintings.

Dacorum Heritage Trust's directors, staff and volunteers are delighted with the positive outcome after many months of preparation for a Phase I Heritage Lottery Fund bid, submitted in early August. They all appreciate the co-operation of DBC and intend to press on with the next stage in the process. The important, but little acknowledged heritage of the whole of Dacorum deserves a centre in which its rich past can be properly displayed and interpreted. By sharing an understanding of our past, we can cement our future.

Derek Townsend, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, has always strongly supported Dacorum Heritage Trust and was delighted to hear this positive news.

Cllr Andrew Williams, Leader of Dacorum Borough Council said: "The Bury Museum & Art Gallery project is a major opportunity to provide new cultural facilities to celebrate not just the extensive history of Hemel Hempstead from its origins to the coming of the new town, but also the rich and diverse heritage of the Borough of Dacorum. We look forward to working closely with DHT over the coming months now the funding bid has been submitted, to help make this exciting vision become a reality".

Roger Hands, Chairman, The Dacorum Heritage Trust Ltd.

Photo: The Bury taken August 2013.

SMEATHMAN BROTHERS – FOR KING AND COUNTRY

During the course of the Great War, 322 pairs of brothers died on the same day as each other. Lovel and Frances Smeathman of South Hill, Hemel Hempstead, lost their two youngest sons on 24th October 1914. There is a beautiful stained glass window in St. Mary's Church dedicated to the memory of these two brave brothers.



Articles from the Gazette:

26th September. All three sons of Mr. and Mrs. Lovel Smeathman are serving as officers with the Colours. One of them is already at the front with the Leicesters, another, who is in the Royal Engineers, has come from South Africa and will shortly be going; whilst the third is with the Herts Territorials. Mr. Lovel Smeathman was a Captain in the old Volunteers.

31st October. Mr. & Mrs. Smeathman's Sad Loss. Two sons killed whilst serving King and Country.

Widespread regret has been occasioned by the news of the deaths of Lieutenant Julian M. Smeathman and Lieutenant Cecil Smeathman, two sons of Mr. and Mrs. Lovel Smeathman, of South Hill, Hemel Hempstead, and the deepest possible sympathy is felt for the parents in the great loss they have sustained.

The news came as a great shock. It was known that Lt. Cecil Smeathman had been wounded, a telegram from the War Office having been received announcing the fact that he was in hospital. On Tuesday evening both Mr. and Mrs. Smeathman, whose interest in anything for the welfare of the community is so well-known, were present at the committee for the relief of Belgian refugees, at the Town Hall, little suspecting that soon they were to hear sad news, which later was followed by even worse intelligence. At the conclusion of the meeting Mr. Smeathman received a telephone message to say that a telegram had been received, which he ought to have as soon as possible. It was

handed to him, and when he opened it he found it contained the news that his son, Lt. Cecil Smeathman, who was wounded on October 21st, had died on Sunday.

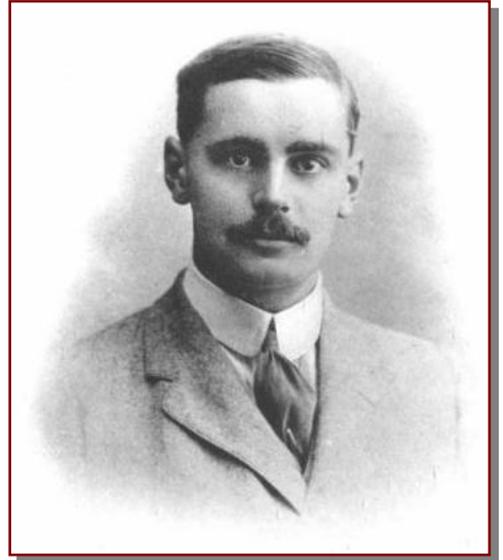
Unhappily, more terrible news was to come. Barely half an hour had elapsed when a further telegram was received, which stated the sad fact that another son, Lt. Julian M. Smeathman had been killed outright whilst serving his King and Country in the firing line on Saturday. The news soon leaked out, and many were the expressions of sorrow and regret heard on Tuesday night.

Both were young, but brave and gallant soldiers, eager to serve their King and Country against the foe. As boys they went to school at Lockers Park for a time, and then to public schools, Julian, the elder of the two, being at Rugby. His love for a soldier's life led him to join the Army, and at the time of his lamented death he was serving as a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. His Army duties took him to South Africa, and he came home for holidays about six months ago. When war broke out his regiment was ordered home to England to go from the Old Country to fight the Germans, and a sad feature of the fatal occurrence is that fact that during his brief stay in England he married Gladys Monica, the youngest daughter of the Rev. Gordon Browne, Vicar of Lymstone, Devon. Heartfelt sympathy goes out to her. He was in Hemel Hempstead about four days.

Lt. Cecil Smeathman was, like his brother, a popular officer. He joined the Army comparatively recently, and was a lieutenant in the Leicestershire Regiment.

It will be remembered that we stated in our columns a short time ago that the three brothers were serving the Colours. The remaining one is Captain Lovel Francis Smeathman, who is serving with "F" Coy. of the Hertfordshire Territorial Infantry.

Photos: Facing page - Cecil Smeathman. Above – Julian Smeathman. Both images from 'Memorials of Rugbeians who Fell in the Great War' by Rugby School.



CURATOR'S CORNER

'Saving the 70s' Exhibition. We will be staging a **major new exhibition.** Our **free** 'pop-up' museum will be in the Marlowes Shopping Centre. Opening on **Saturday 18th until Thursday 30th October.** The 70s saw lots of exciting new things happening locally, come along and visit us to find out more, and see our 70s living room and many other items on display. There will also be family activities.



Opening times: Mon to Fri 10 am. – 4 pm. Sat 9 am. – 5 pm. Sun 11 am. – 4 pm. See our website, posters and local press nearer the time.

WWI Themed Loan Box. Includes authentic objects from the period, as well as replicas, together with information and photographs of people and places in the local area (see photo).

You can hire our loan box for only £10 for a 2-week loan, plus a refundable deposit of £50. Contact Nina Glencross for more information or to book the loan box.

August Bank Holiday – Monday 25th August. DHT will have a WWI themed display at the Lions Fete at Berkhamsted Cricket Club ground. Come along and visit us in the History Den.

20TH ANNIVERSARY – HERITAGE OPEN DAYS IN SEPTEMBER

This national event celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. With interesting sites and properties in Dacorum opening their doors for free. Many include guided tours and small exhibitions. For full details of participating properties please see the local press nearer the time or go to the website www.heritageopendays.org.uk or www.berkhamsted-history.org.uk



heritage open days

As part of the anniversary celebrations Berkhamsted Local History & Museum Society was Highly Commended in the **Star Organisers** class for its contribution over many years.

Visit the HOD website and get involved with the celebrations this September, the 'cake bake challenge' or post a selfie.

Berkhamsted Place. Tudor house. **Tours:** Fri 12th 10 am. & Sat 13th 2 pm. (some slopes, steps & uneven ground, children 7+).

The Old Hall, Castle Street. Berkhamsted School's original School House & Victorian chapel. Tour guide will be a School House 'old boy'. **Tours:** Sun 14th 10.30 am. & 2.30 pm. (entrance steps, children 7+)

Claire Lloyd Properties, 173 High Street (formerly Figgs Chemist). See the 17th C. well and 13th C. timbers. **Tours:** Sun 14th 10.30 am. – 4.00 pm. (stairs are narrow & steep unsuitable for those with restricted mobility, children 8+).

Berkhamsted Town Hall. Formally the towns Market House, Meeting Room and Mechanics Institute rooms. **Open:** Sun 14th 10.30 am. – 12.30 pm. **Tour:** 11 am. (children 7+).

St. Peter's Church & The Court House. 13th C. parish church & Tudor Court House. **Tour:** Sun 14th 3.00 pm. (children 7+).

Berkhamsted Castle. Motte & bailey double-moated castle. **Open:** Sun 14th 10am. – 6 pm. **Tours** 10.30 am. 12.30 & 3 pm.

Ashlyns School. Former Foundling Hospital. **Tours:** Sun 14th 1.30 & 3.30 pm. conducted by former foundlings, (children 7+).

Rectory Lane Cemetery. New this year, with the Friends of Rectory Lane Cemetery. Exhibition, themed trails, children's activities and burial lists. **Open:** Sun 14th 1.00 – 5.30 pm. **Tours:** 1.30 & 3.30 pm. (site has a steep slope).

For details or bookings on the **above** tours please contact Jenny Sherwood 01442 865158 KSher9100@aol.com places are limited.

The Museum Store. Come and see some of the 120,000+ artefacts; (see why Dacorum needs a museum). **Tours:** Fri 12th 2.30 & 4.30 pm. Sat 13th 10.30 am. (Tours c. 1.5 hours, steep stairs, unsuitable for those with restricted mobility, children 8+).

Piccotts End Cottage & 15th C. Wall Paintings. **Open:** Sat 13th & Sun 14th 10 am. – 4 pm. **Tours:** unknown at publication.

Information or bookings for The Museum Store and Piccotts End Cottage please contact Nina (see front page).

Photo: Post card of Berkhamsted Town Hall by Loosely & Sons.



HERITAGE DIARY 2014 - 2015

Constituent Society's Winter Season of Lectures and Events.

September 2014

10 (BH) - 'Tring Silk Mills' Wendy Austin

17 (KL) - 'Childwickbury – Short History' Christine Aitken

17 (T) - 'Infantry Training - Halton Estate 1914-5' Francis Hanford

24 (HH) - 'Ryder Cup - Herts Connection' Margaret Wood

19 (KL) - 'Famous People of the Chilterns' Chris Brown

26 (HH) - 'The Crested China of WH Goss & its influence on Victorian & Edwardian Souvenirs' David Staff

December

10 (BH) - 'A Victorian Christmas' Dr Catherine Grigg

January 2015

14 (BH) - 'De Havilland Aircraft you may Never Have Heard of' Robin Webb

21 (KL) - 'Pre & Early Victorian Kings Langley' Mike Reveley

21 (T) - 'Archaeology of the Bulbourne Valley' Alex Thompson

February

11 (BH) - 'The Halsey's of Gaddesden: A Hertfordshire Family from Time out of Mind' Nicholas Halsey

18 (KL) - 'Kings Langley & Abbots Langley Convicts 1770-1870' Ken Griffin

March

11 (BH) - AGM & 'It's on the Cards' David Clarke

18 (KL) - 'Back to the Front' Roger Yapp

18 (T) - 'The History of the Box Moor Trust' speaker TBA

May

20 (T) - 'Finding Cassio: early history of Cassiobury Estate' Laurie Elvin

The Graham Greene Birthplace Trust's

17th Graham Greene International Festival (Wed 24 – Sun 28 Sep)

See the website (www.grahamgreenefestival.org)

Or contact Yan Christensen at the office:

9 Briar Way, Berkhamsted, HP4 2JJ.

Email: secretary@grahamgreenebt.org

October

8 (BH) - 'WWI Military Tribunals' Jon Mein

15 (KL) - 'Thatching' Robin Webb

22 (HH) - 'When Britain Ruled the Waves – Trafalgar 1805' Peter Clayton

November

12 (BH) - 'O! What a Lovely Berkhamsted! The Devil's Own WWI Training Garrison' Norman Groves

19 (T) - 'Two Victorian Country Houses in the Chilterns' Adam Smith

Contact Details – for more information see the society websites

(BH) Berkhamsted Local History & Museum Society (www.berkhamsted-history.org.uk) Meetings: 8.00 pm. Wellcome Great Hall, Town Hall, Berkhamsted, visitors welcome £2.50 a meeting (£1.00 Dacorum cards)- Jenny Sherwood 01442 865158.

(KL) Kings Langley Local History & Museum Society (www.kingslangley.org.uk) Meetings: 7.30 pm. Baptist Church, The Nap, Kings Langley - Richard Garnett Harper 01923 264689.

(T) Tring & Dist. Local History & Museum Society (www.tringlocalhistorymuseum.org.uk/SOCIETY.html) Meetings: 8.00 pm. Parish Hall, (behind the Parish Church), visitors welcome £4.00 per meeting – Shelley Savage 01442 827702

(HH) Hemel Hempstead Local History & Museum (www.historysochemel.bravesites.com) Meetings: 7.30 pm. visitors welcome – Roy Wood 01442 398285 or roy.wood3@ntlworld.com

The Museum Store will be closed from Monday 13th – Friday 31st October inclusive, while we are staging our exhibition.

The Museum Store is open by appointment only. For enquiries please contact Nina Glencross (Collections Manager).



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The accuracy of the content is the responsibility of the author.

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