



NEWSLETTER

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BERKHAMSTED BOWMEN'S DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY



Berkhamsted Bowmen are celebrating the 60 years since the present archery club was formed in 1950; the sporting club is the oldest archery club in Hertfordshire.

History of Archery in Berkhamsted

Berkhamsted was the favourite home of the Black Prince and the fact that this residence coincided with the peak of the development of the longbow as a weapon of war gives Berkhamsted a special association with archery. Berkhamsted archers were among the victors at the battles of Poitiers, Crécy and Agincourt, and it is reasonable to suppose that many local men were engaged in making and repairing bows and arrows as well as associated equipment.

Jones' 'History of the Black Prince' states that in 1347 Robert Le Parker, keeper of the Prince's Deer Park in Berkhamsted, was ordered 'to choose in those parts twenty four companion archers, the best he could find, and come with them all speed to Dover'. This order was given when King

Edward III and the Black Prince were keeping Christmas at Havering in Essex, and had received news of treachery at Calais.

Berkhamsted had an archer called Little John. He was sent by the Black Prince to Chester to collect 1,000 bows, 2,000 sheaves of arrows and 400 gross bowstrings that had been ordered from the bowyers and fletchers of Cheshire and to take them to Plymouth. Little John was paid sixpence a day for his wages and a reasonable sum for carriage. He left Plymouth for Bordeaux on 19th September 1355 and eventually made his way to the battle of Poitiers. There is a story that Little John and his companions wore uniforms of green and white. John de Paylynton, another Berkhamsted bowman, had his rent remitted 'for good and free service in Gascony'.

Ravens Lane and the brass in St. Peter's Church perpetuate the memory of Sir John Raven, esquire to the Black Prince. Prince Edward Street is part of the road that originally led from the Castle to the town archery practice ground Butts Meadow, formerly known as the Buttericks or the Butterfield. Berkhamsted men were still practising archery in 1716, because it is known that in that year the Butts were repaired at the expense of the parish.

There are no known records of archery in Berkhamsted from 1716 until Victorian times, when William Longman was the leading figure of a club in Berkhamsted. By the mid 19th century, archery had become a sport for the leisured classes and included many ladies who found the exercise beneficial. Mr. Longman lived at Ashlyns Hall, and it was his publishing house and his son C. J. Longman, who were responsible for the publication in 1896 of a very comprehensive book on archery. C. J. Longman was British Archery Champion in 1883.



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The Archers Register for 1889 published an obituary of William Hammond Solly of Serge Hill, Bedmond, Hemel Hempstead. It records 'he was for many years connected with the South Herts Archery Club, where he held the highest distinctions, and also amongst the Aldenham and Berkhamsted Archers'.

'Trifles and Travels' by Arthur Keyser, published by John Murray in 1923 mentions 'annual Archery Meetings held in the picturesque grounds adorned by the ruins of Berkhamsted Castle' after which the prizes were presented by Lady Marion Alford of Ashridge.

The records and trophies of the Berkhamsted Bowmen were unfortunately all destroyed by fire in 1940, when the premises of the Longman Publishing Company in London were destroyed by enemy action.

Notes from the Journal of the Society of Archer-Antiquaries records that in 1931 the then Office of Works, whilst excavating at Berkhamsted Castle, found a bow 2.5 feet down in the muddy silt of the inner moat on the east side. This weapon, now in the British Museum, was originally thought to be a Saxon shortbow but has now been identified as the prod of a cross bow.

20th Century Archery

During the spring of 1950 a Wednesday evening archery course run by the Berkhamsted Centre for Further Education, took place in Rectory Meadow. The equipment was supplied by Hertfordshire County Council and the first instructor was Mr C. P. Jay. The revival of this ancient sport in Berkhamsted attracted so much interest that on 24th May 1950 the club was formed.

Berkhamsted Bowmen were the first modern club formed in Hertfordshire; this was the return of archery to our county and Berkhamsted's important part in Hertfordshire's archery tournaments. The Hertfordshire Archery Association was founded in 1952 following Berkhamsted Bowmen and five other clubs that had been formed. Berkhamsted Bowmen have since then organised and taken part in many inter-club tournaments, fun shoots, 'have-a-go' archery at local events as well as county, regional and national tournaments. A target archery club, members shoot every Sunday throughout the year, during the winter season rounds are also shot indoors on Friday evenings at Chiltern Archery in Buckland Village. The summer season brings members more opportunities to shoot on week-day evenings. The annual beginners course starts in May each year. The club is lucky enough to have its own clout equipment and access to venues large enough to stage these events, and so organises two clout shoots on the sporting calendar.

The club trophies are named after persons past and present who have contributed to the tradition of archery in Berkhamsted. These include the Longman, Sir John Raven, the Dixon and the Emson groups of trophies, along with many more, which give archers plenty of chances to compete during the year.



The club moved their shooting range from Rectory Meadow to a range on the south side of Ashlyns School where they shot between 1951 and 1967 (the distinctive windows can be seen in the photograph). After this the club moved to Berkhamsted Hockey Club's Lockhart's Field, at Cow Roast where they still shoot today, over 40 years later.

The first officers elected were (President) R. J. Dixon, (Vice President) Mrs M. Spence and C. P. Jay as Hon. Secretary and Treasurer.

Bill and Carol Dixon were instrumental in starting the Berkhamsted Bowmen Archery Club. Carol was also a leading light of Berkhamsted and District Archaeological Society since the early 1970s, her interest was sparked when the Archaeological Society were excavating in the adjacent field at Cow Roast.

Carol was very artistic; she designed and created the original hand sewn club badge. She also hand sewed the club trophy cloth, still used at every annual trophy evening. In fact she was so good, she was asked to prepare an emblazoned cloth for use on the prize table at a Grand National Archery Society's International Tournament.

She also created the Club Trophy Record Book, where each trophy has its own hand drawn page with calligraphy text. In addition, during the 1950s and 1960s Carol and Bill designed and drew Christmas cards, depicting the Berkhamsted Bowmen figures in various winter pursuits.

The original history of the club is believed to have been written by Carol Dixon.

Photos: Front Page Top, Club badge designed and embroidered on the trophy cloth by Carol Dixon. Bottom, Rectory Meadow, the first meeting of the Club a demonstration was given by Miss Emson, one time Southern Counties Champion. Above: Ashlyns School, (l-r): Miss Dixon, Miss Gregory, Mrs Spence, Mrs Dixon and Miss Myers.

A LETTER TO THE CHAIRMAN

Our chairman, Roger Hands has received the following letter from Shirley Davison who was the original Vice Chairman of DMAC when it was formed in the 1970s. She remains a staunch supporter of Dacorum Heritage Trust.

Dear Roger,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to contribute to your DHT Newsletter. I am, by the way, still a member of the Friends of Dacorum Heritage Trust and support and admire the work you do. I lived in Hemel Hempstead for 13 years and was a district councillor, involved in setting up the Museum Working Party chaired by Councillor Bill Driver.

I moved to Derbyshire in 1980 but have maintained interest in the marvellous progress you have made since then. I have been to see numerous DHT exhibitions, watched with excitement the setting up of the Paper Trail, and, earlier this year, I paid a visit to your Museum Store in Berkhamsted. What a long way you have travelled since those early days! You now have a place to store those precious artefacts, curators and staff, and the prospect of expansion in the future. Still no 'proper' museum, but Rome wasn't built in a day, and with all your enthusiasm and support, I'm sure your time will come.

In the meantime, I believe you are looking for new ways of using your large collection of artefacts to bring life to specialist exhibitions and to make Dacorum's inhabitants more aware of their local heritage.

I now live in Derbyshire and have been involved in many activities within my community, including school governorship and chairing the local Red Cross, and serving on the parish council. Darley Dale is twinned with a town in France, and we are just celebrating the first twenty years of exchanges.

My latest venture has been in starting and helping to run a charity called 'First Taste'. This organises stimulating activities, (such as music, art and crafts, computer skills, digital photography, horticulture and jewellery making etc.).

Two of our most sought after and beneficial subjects are on reminiscence and local history. We use both professional and volunteer tutors, who understand the needs and limitations of the residents, many of whom have some degree of dementia.

We use slides, old photographs and boxes of objects which lead to a huge amount of interest and discussion and the revival of many memories which, with the help of students, can benefit the residents.

We recently won the Queen's Award for Volunteer Groups and have aroused interest at the national as well as the local level. We hope that Derbyshire County Council will be able to spread the concept throughout its large and diverse area.

I wish you all at DHT every success in your Heritage Lottery Fund bid to turn your excellent Museum Store into a Heritage Centre for Dacorum.

Yours sincerely,

Shirley Davison

It would be quite an achievement if Dacorum Heritage Trust were to be nominated for The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, especially now that we have more talented volunteers doing vital work than at any time before.

CONSERVING THE COLLECTIONS



Our textiles volunteers, Margaret Brown & Ellie Reid are photographing, cataloguing and repacking artefacts from the Kings Langley Local History & Museum Society collection.

Pictured is a red satin dress, bodice has draping from shoulders to centre front waist, high round neck, long sleeves piped into the shoulders. The skirt is pleated to self-fabric waistband all round. Lined throughout with white cotton, skirt fastening with hooks and hand worked eyelets. The centre front bodice is decorated with black edged bows and machine made Bedfordshire lace on the sleeves. The dress is dated between 1859-1864.



Berkhamsted Local History & Museum Society

'60 Years of Preserving History' Exhibition

Tuesday 29th June – Saturday 3rd July, open 10.00 am. – 5.00 pm. at Berkhamsted Civic Centre.

An exhibition to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Berkhamsted History Society.

CURATOR'S CORNER

We wish one of our key volunteers, Jim Robinson, our very best wishes as he moves to Devon. Jim had been instrumental in setting up our collections audit, he shared his skills and knowledge to make the daunting job of auditing over 70,000 items a much more manageable exercise. We will miss him, and we wish him well for the future.

We hosted an Evacuation Experience at Berkhamsted Civic Centre on 30th April, as part of our Education Service. Staff and 53 pupils from Grove Road Junior School, Tring enjoyed a WWII themed day. DHT staff and volunteers organized inter-generational display and discussion learning groups, artefact handling and craft activities. We were pleased to be able to work with Hemel Hempstead Movie Makers who filmed parts of the day; we look forward to the finished film.

'Beside the Seaside' find out about seaside holidays in the past in our 'drop-in' art based workshop. See what people wore, how they travelled and much more! Hemel Hempstead Library on **Thursday 3rd June 2010**, times 10.00 am. – 12.00 noon & 2.00 pm. – 4.00 pm. **Free** for all the family. No need to book.

Festival of British Archaeology **17th July - 1st August**. Look out for more details nearer the time.



England's biggest and most popular voluntary cultural event, last year attracted over a million visitors. Co-ordinated by English Heritage to celebrate England's heritage, allowing visitors free access to interesting properties that are either not usually open, or would normally charge an entrance fee. On **Saturday 11th September** tours of The Museum Store will start at 10.00 am. & 12 noon. There will be other premises open and guided tours at various locations, for more information nearer the time, look in the local press.



Our Curator, Isobel Aptaker would like to thank all those who have sent her cards and best wishes during her recent spell in hospital. Isobel was admitted to the Royal Free Hospital, London at the end of April, with suspected meningitis. After tests and scans it was discovered that she had a blood clot leading to her brain. Following treatment she is much improved and keen to get back to work at the Trust.

Photo: The Hemel Hempstead Volunteer

Fire Brigade with its 'Leyland Cub' petrol driven engine, outside the former fire station in The Broadway, now shops in Queensway. Driver Reginald Saunders; Mr Frazier (passenger seat); firemen standing above ladder (l-r) Mr Jones, Tommy Williams & M. White; firemen sitting on appliance (l-r) Lionel Needham, ? & Mr Stainforth, and fireman H. Hancock standing between the appliances. Photo dated 1938. From Hemel Hempstead Local History & Museum Society collection.



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