



NEWSLETTER

No. 69

WINTER 2012

www.dacorumheritage.org.uk

THE FUTURE OF PICCOTTS END MEDIEVAL WALL PAINTINGS

This is one of three 15th century timber-framed cottages, close to the centre of Hemel Hempstead, which are Grade I Listed because of their containing unique wall paintings. The Pre-Reformation Catholic paintings were discovered in March 1953 by the owner Arthur Lindley. It is believed that the murals were only on view for about 50 years before they were covered by wallpaper prior to the Reformation. Some of the images show evidence of deliberate damage.



The cottages were situated on the pilgrim route to Ashridge Monastery, which was dissolved in 1539 at the time of the Reformation. The Rector of the College of Bonhommes at Ashridge and Henry VIII's 'gentleman priest', Thomas Waterhouse, spent his last days at the original Bury, the former Manor house of Hemel Hempstead.

An opportunity arose to purchase the property from Arthur Lindley which was progressed jointly by DHT and Dacorum Borough Council with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in 1998/9 but this failed, at the very last minute, because a purchaser with ready cash pursued his wish to purchase. The second attempt to purchase embraced the possibility of letting the adjoining cottage for tourism, in partnership with the National Trust, but another sale stopped this before it could be fully explored. Local residents were very supportive during this endeavour by contributing towards the cost of an Options Appraisal for the proposed purchase. A third possibility to purchase the cottage and the wall paintings arose in the autumn of 2011 and this remains a possibility, entirely due to the patience of the current owners.

An initial discussion with the HLF at Cambridge on 25th January 2012 established that they were sympathetic to considering a DHT Application to purchase but that, they would be more sympathetic if an educational outreach programme could be linked to a local museum if established in the locality.

DHT has therefore, of necessity, devoted considerable energy to the matter of establishing a Dacorum Museum in the Hemel Hempstead Conservation Area. This is because sustainability is of paramount importance. The environmental sensitivity of the wall paintings has prompted DHT to considering limiting visits to specified days throughout the year and occasionally by special arrangement.

DHT is grateful for the current owners' patience for it was fourteen months ago that we were given twelve months to find funding for the purchase of this important cottage. Our recent Pre-Application to the Heritage Lottery fund with regard to a Dacorum Museum has been sympathetically received which we find very encouraging and this endeavour will be vigorously pursued.



Roger Hands, Chairman, The Dacorum Heritage Trust Ltd.

Photos: Top – 'Christ in Majesty' holding an orb in one hand and blessing with the other. Bottom – 'St. Catherine of Alexandria' depicted with her wheel and sword. Both images show the deliberate damage to the faces.

THE DACORUM HERITAGE TRUST LIMITED

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LESLIE MITCHELL 1929 - 2012

President of Berkhamsted Local History & Museum Society

Leslie was not a native of Berkhamsted having spent the first six years of his life in Redhill, Surrey, where his father was on the maintenance staff of the Foundling Hospital, which at that time was housed in St. Anne's School, Redhill, whilst awaiting the completion of the new Hospital in Berkhamsted. He was the youngest of the family.

Berkhamsted was a sleepy country town in 1935. The house in Curtis Way, where the family lived had gas lighting on the ground floor and candles were used upstairs. The High Street was still to have gas lighting until after World War II. Although still an infant Leslie was allowed to go to Victoria Boys' School with older siblings rather than Chapel Street Infants' School, to help him adjust to his new environment. He left Victoria School just short of his 14th birthday and took up an apprenticeship with Clunbury Press where he stayed until that closed. After that he worked for a while for a London firm.

As a youngster he was active in the Youth Club at St. Peter's Church. When he was called up in 1947 he went into the Military Police and had the interesting experience of being based in Vienna, at that time divided into zones governed by the four Allied powers. He had many tales to tell of his time in the Vienna of The Third Man.

In fact Les was a great raconteur and had a wealth of knowledge of the history of his adopted town, which he decided was much more interesting than that of Redhill! Shortly before Percy Birtchnell died in 1986, Les took over as Secretary of what was then the Berkhamsted & District Local History Society (founded



Les is holding a boys Foundling Hospital uniform, at Ashlyns School, Berkhamsted.

1950). He was also involved in the Berkhamsted Museum Trust and active in winding up the Berkhamsted Institute, the former Mechanics Institute. For some years he was a Director of the Dacorum Heritage Trust. For many years he was Chairman of the History Society and was especially touched to be elected unanimously as the President of the Berkhamsted Local History & Museum Society two years ago.

Leslie was also a family man, proud of his children and grandchildren. He kept up with friends he had met in different spheres of his life, was a member of Victoria School Old Boys, Coopers' Pensioners, his former Regiment, the Old Coram Association, the Northchurch Society and of course the History Society. His progress along the High Street could be slow as he stopped to chat with so many on the way. Much evidence of his work can be seen among the Society's archives. Fortunately he has left for posterity memories of his earlier life, published in various editions of The Chronicle.

Leslie was a kindly man, a true gentleman, very generous, and a dear friend to many. The large congregation, which gathered in St. Mary's Northchurch on 1st November bears testament to the esteem and affection, in which he was held, by the people of Berkhamsted and Northchurch.



Les working at The Museum Store.

Jenny Sherwood

Chairman, Berkhamsted Local History & Museum Society

Photo: Taken by Tricia Willis.

CURATOR'S CORNER

Please Note: When communicating with Nina Glencross, as Acting Curator, please remember that her workload has increased enormously, and therefore we ask you to email rather than ring if possible. Please don't just arrive at The Museum Store; we don't want you making a wasted journey. Please bear with us.

Website Design. We urgently need the help of a Webmaster, who would be willing to donate time to set up a website for us. Ideally after the initial design work has been completed and the site is up and running, it would be administered by DHT staff or volunteers, in a similar way to the 'herts memories' and 'our dacorum' websites. We



are hoping that there is someone who has this knowledge and would like to volunteer to use their skills to help us bring artefacts and stories of Dacorum to a much wider international audience. Please contact Nina if you can spare a little time to help us.

Christmas Cards. Our beautiful Christmas cards are available from The Museum Store. Please contact us to order yours now. A pack of 10 (same scene) are priced (very competitively) at £1.00 (plus £1.10 p&p for standard UK 2nd class delivery). Cheques made payable to 'The Dacorum Heritage Trust Ltd.'

Company Secretary. Recently, our Hon. Company Secretary, Mark Pelopida has given notice that he will be resigning at the end of this year, owing to the pressure of work in his 'day job' as a partner at Machins Solicitors. All at DHT are very sad that Mark will be

leaving us, we wish him well and we will all miss his sense of humour and the huge contribution he has made to our little company.



DHT is therefore looking for candidates for the post, especially from those folks who have previous experience, a legal background or are familiar with current company law and would be able and willing to donate their time and expertise to a local community based charity.

Mystery Post Card. We have discovered that we have a post card showing an Edwardian scene; we don't know where this was taken or who the family are in the photograph, with nothing written on the back, it hasn't been posted. Does anyone recognise this house?

It would appear that the house is one of a terrace, and the properties either side seem to be on the same level. It looks as if there are dark coloured Venetian or Roman blinds in all the front windows, and the windows are reflecting quite a bit of light, which may indicate that this house faces south. Images reflected in the windows, it seems that there are buildings opposite that look similar to this row and there is a tree across the road from the front door.

The plaque between the bay windows doesn't seem to have anything written in it, and there doesn't seem to be a house number. There is a step down into the front garden from the pavement. The iron gate little fence posts on top of the low wall is very distinctive.

Does anyone have any ideas; is this house in your road? Are these people part of your family? Of course this may not be in Dacorum or even be still standing.

CORONATION DAY MEMORIES

In this Diamond Jubilee year we have looked back to celebrations in the 1950s to commemorate Her Majesty's Coronation.

The men in the photograph seem to be wearing either fancy dress or costumes of some sort, and most of them are sporting rosettes, which perhaps they have won.

'This is a photo of the riotous street party held in Masons Road, Adeyfield, Hemel Hempstead. I know the Queen was not there, but my Dad was - he is the one standing with the cup to his lips, he was known as Jack (Lee). But who are the others?'

John Lee,
Volunteer, Dacorum Heritage Trust



BERKHAMSTED V. WEST INDIES

A cricket match between Berkhamsted Cricket Club and the West Indies took place on Monday 30th April 1928 at Kitcheners Field, near to Berkhamsted Castle. The West Indians, as they were known at the time, declared at 174 for 7 after 49 overs, beating Berkhamsted Cricket Club who only managed 112 for 9 after 37 overs. It is just possible to detect the join line in this panoramic view.



Photo: from the Berkhamsted Local History & Museum Society collection cared for by Dacorum Heritage Trust.

HERITAGE DIARY 2013

Hemel Hempstead Local History & Museum Society's Season of Lectures and Events.

January - No meeting.

27 February – AGM, buffet supper and 'Fun Quiz' organised by Roy and Margaret Wood.

27 March – 'Through the Eyes of Youth' a presentation by pupils of Hemel Hempstead School, and 'The Golden Age of Spain – Myth or Reality?' by Joan Hands.

24 April – 'The History of Holy Trinity Church - Part 2' an illustrated talk by Barbara Chapman.

22 May - 'Secret Wireless Interception and Secret Intelligence Work During World War II, in this Area', talk by Stan Ames.

26 June – 'The History of Tring Park – From Wren, via the Rothschilds to Tring Park School for Performing Arts', an illustrated talk by Sarah Bell.

24 July – 'Paper Railways – Dickinson's Railway Connections' an illustrated talk by Mike Stanyon.

August – No Meeting.

25 September – 'Local Villains' illustrated talks by Elizabeth Buteux, Jean Stevens, Joan Hands and Members of the Committee; followed by a buffet supper.

25 October – 'Edwin Trowell – A Most Unusual Local Man' an illustrated talk by Roy Wood.

27 November – 'The Battle of Britain' an illustrated talk by Chris Wren.

Wanted – We are keen to hear from anyone who has an interesting tale about our area. It is a chance to have your article printed in this newsletter, the weekly Gazette Heritage Page or on the 'Our Dacorum' website.

We want to inspire new contributors, so if you have a story about Dacorum that you would like to share with others we would love to hear from you. Contact the Editor.

Contact Details – Roy Wood (Hon. Secretary)

12 Winifred Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP3 9DX
roy.wood3@ntlworld.com or 01442 398285

Meetings are held at 8.00 pm. on the fourth Wednesday of each month (unless otherwise stated), at Carey Baptist Church Hall, Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP1 1LH, which is opposite the Civic Centre, there is free car parking nearby. New members will be made very welcome.

The editor would like to apologise for not including Hemel Hempstead Local History & Museum Society details in the last issue.

Please note: there was an error in the Heritage Diary page last issue, that Wigginton History Society's meetings are held in St. Bartholomew's Church **not** St. Botolph's Church, Wigginton. Apologies to all the folks in Wigginton History Society.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



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Saving Our Heritage

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



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