

# Nicholas Breakspear Week in Abbots Langley

Coordinated by Alan Johnson

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> September to 1<sup>st</sup> October 2000

Further information

from

Abbots Langley  
Parish Council

Abbots Langley  
Local History Society

St Lawrence Church,  
Abbots Langley

St Saviour's Church  
Abbots Langley

*The organisers of Nicholas Breakspear Week  
acknowledge with many thanks the  
encouragement and support received from*

The Abbots Langley Parish Council

The Abbots Langley Local History Society

The Abbots Langley Millennium Group

The Librarian and staff of Abbots Langley  
Library

The Revd Canon Brian Andrews

Father Andrew Pyka SDS

Mr Peter Howarth

*Your attention is also drawn to another  
commemorative event:*

**Nicholas Breakspear/Adrian IV:**

**A one-day conference  
at St Albans School  
on Saturday 15th July 2000,  
from 9.15am to 4.45pm**

*Further information from*  
Peter Brindley  
129 Verulam Road  
St Albans AL3 4DL  
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**Sunday  
24th September  
to  
Sunday  
1st October 2000**

is

# **Nicholas Breakspear Week**

**in Abbots Langley**

an opportunity for the people of  
the village to celebrate the ninth  
centenary of the birth in Abbots  
Langley of Nicholas Breakspear  
(1100 - 1159), the only Eng-  
lishman to become Pope.



## Nicholas Breakspear

Nicholas Breakspear was born in the year 1100, at Bedmond Farm in the parish of Abbots Langley, Hertfordshire. Presumably after the death of his wife, his father, Robert Breakspear, became a monk of St Albans Abbey. When Nicholas was about 18 years old, he too applied to enter St Albans Abbey. But he was refused admission on the grounds that he had had too little schooling to qualify for entrance.

Undeterred by this refusal, Nicholas went abroad to study. He went briefly to St Denys in Paris, then to other places and finally came to Avignon. Here in 1130 he became a monk in the Augustinian Abbey of St Rufus. He was elected Abbot in 1137 and came to the notice of the Pope, Eugenius III. Recognising his qualities, the Pope made him Bishop and Cardinal and sent him on a mission to war-torn Scandinavia. Nicholas restored peace and order to the local churches and monasteries and set up two new archbishoprics. After four years, now widely recognised as a man of integrity and strength, he returned to Rome to find that Eugenius III had died and had been succeeded by Anastasius IV, a quiet, peaceful old man of ninety. Within the year Anastasius too was dead, and in November 1154 Nicholas found himself unanimously elected Pope. He took the name Adrian IV.

The story of Pope Adrian's short pontificate will emerge during this Nicholas Breakspear week, in particular, his dealings with the emperor Frederick Barbarossa and the English King Henry II. Nicholas Breakspear, Pope Adrian IV, died on September 1st 1159.

## Nicholas Breakspear Week in Abbots Langley

**24th September - 1st October 2000**

*Nicholas Breakspear Week gives Abbots Langley the opportunity to celebrate the ninth centenary of the birth of this great man of Europe. He was the only Englishman to become Pope and he was born and brought up among the farms and cottages of twelfth century Abbots Langley.*

There will be a **pictorial display** in the village library and in other places illustrating the main events of Nicholas Breakspear's life and travels. Throughout the week itself there will be a **banner across the High Street**. There will also be **floral displays** around all the road signs in Breakspear Road, Popes Road and Adrian Road.

On **Sunday morning, 24th September**, in both St Saviour's and St Lawrence Churches, the week will be announced at the main morning services, i.e. the 9.30am Parish Eucharist in St Lawrence Church and the 11.00am Sung Mass in St Saviour's. A short introduction to the life of Nicholas Breakspear will be read. The two churches will co-operate closely in remembering Nicholas, recognising that his life was set in times long before the Reformation divided Protestant from Roman Catholic.

On **Sunday afternoon, 24th September**, there will be a historical walk on the Nicholas Breakspear theme, beginning in St Lawrence Church at 2.30pm and visiting the plaque by the roadside in Bedmond, near the site of Breakspear Farm where Nicholas was born, the road sign floral

displays in the village and the bust of Nicholas Breakspear in St Saviour's.

On **Thursday evening September 28th** the Abbots Langley Local History Society presents a **lecture by Revd Canon Anders Bergquist: From Bedmond to Trondheim to Rome: the career of Nicholas Breakspear**. This takes place in St Lawrence Church at 8.00pm.

Each day in St Saviour's Church, after the 10.00am morning Mass, further instalments of the **Life of Nicholas Breakspear** will be read. The bust of Nicholas as Pope Adrian IV, normally in the vestibule, will be placed in a more prominent position and suitably decorated.

The climax of the church celebrations will come on **Sunday 1st October** as follows:

11.00am in St Saviours: **Solemn Mass** in memory of the life and papacy of Nicholas Breakspear, Pope Adrian IV. Bishop James O'Brien, Roman Catholic Bishop in Hertfordshire, hopes to be present.

Later that day there will be two of the daily monastic services with which Nicholas would have been familiar as monk and Abbot:

At 4.00pm in St. Saviour's there will be **Vespers of Sunday** in the style of the monastic offices sung by monks during the medieval period.

At 8.00pm **Compline will be sung** in St Lawrence Church, bringing the week to a close at the site where Robert Breakspear and his wife first brought their new son to church and named him Nicholas. ASJ