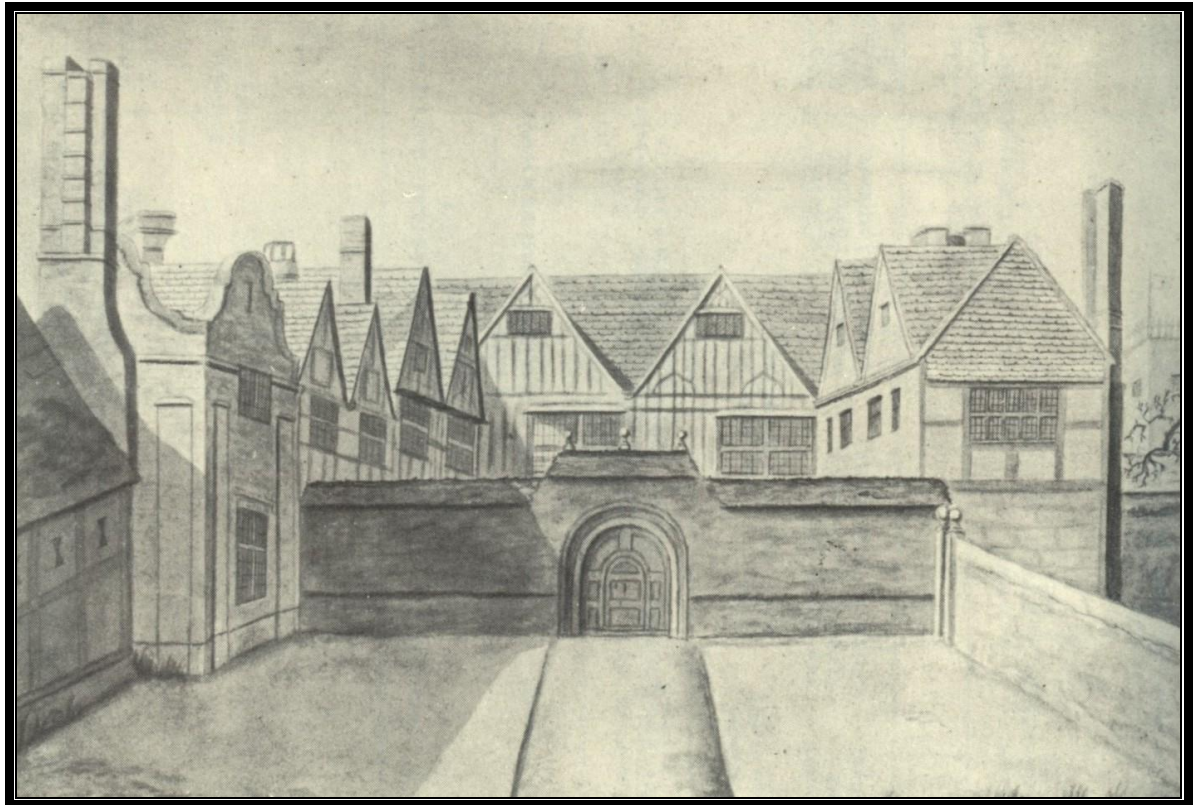




# **Berkshire Local History Association**



**Newsletter No. 95**

**September 2009**

# Berkshire Local History Association Registered Charity 1097355

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THE DEADLINE FOR COPY FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER IS 1 December 2009.

**Front Cover. The Old Rectory, Caversham by Barbara Seton supplied by Anne Keenan**

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## **Chairman's Corner**

Your committee met in late June, and took forward the concerns of members which were expressed at the A.G.M. – in particular museum closures, and the future of further education in local history.

We also thought about ways of encouraging local history research. One of the stated objectives of the Association is “to raise funds and receive contributions for the purpose of undertaking local history studies or research.”

First, we thought about prizes and awards. Together with the Berkshire Record Office, we are considering a history prize, to be awarded to a University of Reading student for the best undergraduate dissertation which makes substantial use of B.R.O. records. Consultation is taking place with the Record Office, and the University’s Department of History. At the same time, we are considering the other awards which the Association can make – the Anthony Cross Award and the Judith Hunter Prize.

Then there is another joint project with the Berkshire Record Office which is intended to further our stated objectives: to record all schools which existed in Berkshire before 1833. The end result will be an electronic database, a hard-copy publication, and a photographic record of pre-1833 buildings and memorabilia. Here is a chance for people across the county to be involved in research, with a useful and worthwhile tangible result, under the guidance of a professional researcher. Currently we are seeking funding from The Pilgrim Trust – with fingers crossed.

It’s good to be part of an organisation where things are actually happening – including, of course, the Association’s day school at the end of January. Because my job means I must work on most Saturdays, I usually miss out on Saturday meetings, but I’ve already booked a day’s leave for January 30<sup>th</sup>.

A few weeks back I went on the History of Reading Society’s evening visit to St. Giles’s Church, where we were able to go into the basement of the tower, which is usually locked, and see the odd bits of carving which were a part of the medieval church. A few weeks later, during another evening visit, I was able to return the compliment, and show members of the society the newspaper store and the strong room at the Central Library, where members of the public aren’t usually allowed.

Now I'm looking forward to the Heritage Open Day at the B.B.C. Monitoring Station at Caversham Park. Usually this tour is fully booked before I hear about it, but this year, I have been successful in securing a place. It's always satisfying to get inside a building, or part of a building, which you've been curious about, but isn't usually open to the public, and the Heritage Open Days, this year from September 10-13, is a way of doing this.

*David Cliffe, Chairman, BLHA*

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### **Words from the Editor**

Well, what a job I have had trying to include all your contributions this time around – another bumper issue. The Newsletter can only continue to improve and I would particularly like to thank Peter Delaney for his account of the Local History Day at the Friends meeting house. Attending such a meeting really makes you feel inspired about local history especially when surrounded by like minded souls. Bamber Gascoigne put in an appearance during the morning slot to promote the usefulness of IT to local history projects, something in which he clearly has an interest.

You will see that the Dates for Diary insert is packed with meetings and events, such were the number of contributions that I had trouble fitting everything in. It clearly shows how busy and exciting the autumn programmes are. Please don't forget that the weekend of the 11-13<sup>th</sup> of September is heritage weekend and there will be many places of interest made accessible during this time, so look out for details of what's on near you.

*Margaret Simons*

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### **Request for Information**

**Catherine Hayne** is seeking information about her grandmother Mrs Celicia Elizabeth Andrews. She has traced her to the 1911 Census under Abingdon where she is described as "Head Teacher" with the address given as just Cothill. Her enquiry regards the existence of the school which the Berkshire Record Office could not find; presumably a "National School". Catherine would like to hear from anyone who knows

of its existence, and where it was in the village. Please contact the editor if you have any information.

**Hazel StJohn** is trying to find any information at all on Theale School at which her Mother and Father were pupils from 1915 to 1921. She has information about the Headmaster from details given her by her parents, but as they are now deceased she seems to have come to a halt. She is also trying to find any photographs of the school from that time and has photos of some of the teachers and children of the time, but would love to find out more if possible and is hoping that a member may be able to refer her to any site/source which may help in her search. Please contact the editor if you have any information.

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## **In Memoriam**

### **J Kenneth (Ken) Major 1928-2009**

Ken Major, architect, industrial archaeologist and extra-mural tutor died on 25 July. Most people will remember Ken as one of a duo (with Lawrence Cameron), committed teachers, researchers and indefatigable field -trip leaders who single-handedly established industrial archaeology as one of the most popular and fruitful adult education classes in Reading over a period of almost thirty years.

Ken gained a degree in architecture from Durham University but it was a chance meeting in 1961 which began his life-long interest in mills (wind and water driven), their recording and preservation. He wrote six books and became an acknowledged national authority in the field, using his skills in Berkshire to study watermills in the Pang Valley. He was also involved in the restoration of the Kennet and Avon Canal and many other aspects of the role of water in Berkshire's economy. Students in Ken's and Lawrence's classes were given opportunities to share in discoveries; one expedition to the Kennet which I was able to 'infiltrate' opened up a whole new understanding of the ancient water meadows in the Coley area, clearly visible in the rays of the evening sun.

Much of his pioneering local research is accessible in Reading Library, a legacy which will be of value to Berkshire studies for years to come. His papers have been donated to the Mill Archive at Watlington House. I feel sure members would wish to extend our sympathy to his wife, Helen.

*Joan Dils*

## Notice Board

### AGM 2010

Following the success of our AGM at Stanford in the Vale in March we are pleased to be able to tell you that next year it is most likely going to be jointly hosted by Wargrave and Twyford and Ruscombe. More in our next issue.

### Are you publishing local history?

We are interested in any small publications or articles that individuals or societies are producing and would like you to send copies to our secretary for review. It is intended to introduce annual awards for research and publication in local history for the county, to be awarded annually at our AGM.

**Berkshire Historic Environment Forum 2009 - Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October**  
**St. Nicholas Church Hall, Newbury**  
**Berkshire Archaeological Society**



Patron: H.M. THE QUEEN

President: Professor Michael Fulford FBA FSA

The objects of the Berkshire Historic Environment Forum are:

- (i) To share knowledge and concerns about Berkshire's Historic Environment
- (ii) To encourage cooperation between individuals and organisations
- (iii) To promote care for Berkshire's Historic Environment amongst the general public
- (iv) To support local societies in pursuance of similar objectives

As part of its activities the Forum runs an annual meeting – which this year will take place on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October in St. Nicholas Church Hall, in Newbury starting at 10:00 and ending about 16:00.

The agenda for the meeting is in three parts:

**Part 1: Having a vision and strategy to develop your historic environment:** which includes presentations by Councillor Ian McCracken on the Bracknell Forest Heritage Strategy and on the Thatcham Vision project

**Part 2: Presenting your historic environment to the public:** which includes presentations on various heritage centres and museum shops being run by voluntary organisations

**Part 3: Developing an electronic archive to support your historic environment:** which includes presentations on the Purley Electronic Archive and other work being undertaken by local societies to capture

information about their historic environment and make it available on the Internet

All local societies with an interest in their historic environment are invited to send representatives to this meeting. To register or for more information please contact Andrew Hutt by email: [andrew\\_hutt@talktalk.net](mailto:andrew_hutt@talktalk.net) or by phone 0118 973 2882

*Andrew Hutt*

### **British Association for Local History - Local History Day 6<sup>th</sup> June 2009**

The raffle prizes at the BLHA AGM in March 2009 were tickets to the British Association for Local History 'Local History Day' in London in June, and so winning them created the opportunity to make a first visit to one of their events. Arriving on a rather damp Saturday morning at the 'Friends Meeting House' opposite Euston Station, a welcoming cup of coffee was available, and a chance to peruse the bookstalls. It was a chance to see the publications from local history societies from across the country, that we would not otherwise get to sample - and to purchase a bargain!!

The morning session in the main hall was largely a discussion on Local History and the Media. Nick Barratt (associated with the BBC series Who Do You Think You Are?) and Alan Crosby (editor of The Local Historian, and regular contributor to Local History News) each gave an interesting and enlightening talk on the way that the media sees local history, and the constraints that producers and publishers face. The media in general do not see 'local history' as interesting to the wider public, and so it has to be 'made entertaining' - even if the truth is maybe compromised as a result. Examples of the problems encountered by various groups became apparent in the discussion that followed. The morning concluded with a fairly brief BALH AGM.

After lunch - with the chance to meet and share experiences with a range of fellow local historians, the afternoon session began with the BALH Awards. Some were to 'individuals' for their services to local history (our 'own' Joan Dils was so honoured last year), whilst others were for published articles. Most of these were of a very 'parochial' nature, but they looked at subjects that would have a much wider interest than just in the area they related to. One, for example, considered the lives of mill workers at Bridlington, then the way they found entertainment in the late 19th century, narrowed this to the Bridlington Quay parade Band, and

then specifically to the life of its conductor. Another, shorter, article, looked at how the development of housing around the infant Clapham Junction station was a bit premature - as the title said "Clapham Junction swallows a street" - the new homes being demolished to provide land for the station expansion.

This was followed by a lecture on English Almshouses by Professor Nigel Goose, in which he looked (in a rather more formal way to the morning talks) at the way almshouse provision had changed from medieval times to the present. Nigel had analysed the provision - both as a proportion of the eligible population, and also as a proportion of charitable giving, at various times through this period - having to make due allowance for population growth, inflation, and similar factors.

*Peter Delaney, Wargrave Local History Society*

### **Electronic Access to Newsletter**

Our most recent copy of the Newsletter is now available electronically via our website. However, access will only be available to members via a password; any member interested should contact our membership secretary, details on back page.

*Margaret Simons*

### **Heritage Open Days 2009, 10-13th**

September, Heritage Open Days celebrates England's fantastic architecture and culture by offering free access to properties that are usually closed to the public or normally charge for admission. Every year on four days in September, buildings of every age, style and function throw open their doors, ranging from castles to factories, town halls to tithe barns, parish churches to Buddhist temples. It is a once-a-year chance to discover hidden architectural treasures and enjoy a wide range of tours, events and activities which bring to life local history and culture.  
<http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/>

*Lucy Rumens, Marketing and Tourism Manager West Berkshire Heritage Services*

### **Individual Membership**

If you are a member of a society, but would like to receive your own copy of our Newsletter and the journal *Berkshire Old and New*, why not take out an individual membership? For just £9.00 per annum you will receive three issues of the Newsletter (in January, May and September)

and one copy of the Journal. All enquiries should be made to our membership secretary Gill Clark.

*Margaret Simons*

### **Local History Day Schools**

#### **Parish Community and Government in Berkshire 1700-1830 - Saturday 5 December,**

This is a practical hands-on day school in the Berkshire Record Office using original documents to investigate aspects of 18th-century parish life. The day runs from 9.15 to 4.30. For further details contact OUDCE Tel 01865 270368 or email [ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk)

#### **People and Places in Tudor and Stuart Berkshire - Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2010.**

The day school in association with the OUDCE, Berkshire Record Society and the Berkshire Local History Association is to be held at the Museum of English Rural Life, Redlands Road, Reading. Chair: Joan Dils.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought challenge and change to many communities, and recent research has thrown light on some of the ways in which Berkshire was affected. The day school will discuss varied themes including sources for local research, patterns of consumption, the role of the church courts and the contribution of women to the domestic and local economy. Papers will be given by Pat Naylor of the Berkshire Records Office, Professor Ralph Houlbrooke of the University of Reading, Jamieson Wooders and Joan Dils.

The day begins at 9.45am and ends at 4.15pm with the usual breaks for tea, coffee and lunch.

*Joan Dils*

#### **Proposed closure of the School of Continuing Education at Reading University**

Since our last Newsletter the decision has been made to go ahead with the closure of the School of Continuing Education; although there will be a small number of courses run by the School in the next academic year or two these are to provide for existing students.

However, as the saying goes, every cloud has a silver lining and the newly formed branch of the WEA in Reading will be providing a programme of courses in the Autumn with work already underway for courses in 2010. Anyone interested in having a look at what is on offer should visit the WEA website at [www.wea.org.uk](http://www.wea.org.uk), entering a Reading search parameter on the home page.

*Joan Dils/Margaret Simons*

## **WEA Windsor Branch Special Event**



**THE SURPRISING MEDIEVAL HISTORY OF WINDSOR-Saturday,  
October 17, 2009  
at ST GEORGE'S SCHOOL, WINDSOR CASTLE  
(opposite Windsor Riverside Station, parking limited)  
10am–4.30pm: registration from 9.30am**

The history of Windsor has often concentrated on the castle, but the settlement of Windsor is older than the castle and recent research has uncovered the diverse and surprising past of a thriving community. Papers will be given by Dr David Lewis, Dr David Mercer and Dr Clive Burgess who will talk about the town, the castle and the Royal Colleges of Windsor. There will be the usual breaks for coffee, lunch and tea and the inclusive cost for the day is £35.

For more information contact Tony Davenport, 01753 866198 e-mail: [tony.davenport1@gmail.com](mailto:tony.davenport1@gmail.com)

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## **Special Feature**

### **Caversham Court: a brief history - Part 1**

Caversham Court is a public garden that has recently been restored. It is located on the north bank of the River Thames in Caversham. The site has a rich and fascinating history. Many interesting people and important families have lived at Caversham Court over a period of at least 800 years.

In Saxon times Earl Swein, eldest son of the powerful Earl of Wessex, controlled the land to the north of the River Thames. The King at the

time, Edward the Confessor, did not have children and Harold, Swein's younger brother, was chosen as his successor (both Swein and his father had pre-deceased Edward).

William, Duke of Normandy, contested Harold's right to the throne and invaded England. Following King Harold's death at the Battle of Hastings, King William honoured his chief allies with lordships and manors from Harold's estates. Walter Giffard, Lord de Longueville, became tenant-in-chief of 107 lordships, including the manor of Caversham which is described in the Domesday Book. The manor of Caversham included the area of the present gardens.

Walter Giffard's grandson, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Buckingham (1083-1164), founded Notley Abbey on one of his Buckinghamshire estates. He gave the Augustinian Canons land and tithes in Caversham, to support the abbey financially. The Canons established St Peter's Church and lived in its rectory, which stood in the present gardens. At some stage the Canons moved to another dwelling in Caversham, and they then let the 'Old Rectory' estate to lay people. William Rolte, Sergeant-at Arms to Henry VIII was leaseholder in 1528.

After King Henry VIII ordered the demolition of abbeys, shrines and chapels, Notley Abbey's estates were given to Christ Church, Oxford. Tenants of the Old Rectory at Caversham were required to supply a priest to serve St Peter's Church. Christopher Skeffington, clerk to the Royal Kitchens, was leaseholder in 1554. This was an important post and Skeffington would have been reasonably wealthy.

William Alexander (c.1540-1611/2) and his sons Richard (d.1601) and William (d.1654) leased the Old Rectory estate from Christ Church Oxford during the Elizabethan and Stuart periods. The house is believed to have been enlarged at this time, and a secret priest's hole was incorporated underneath one room. A ceiling plaque with the family coat of arms, and a newel post from a staircase, are preserved in Reading Museum.

The Alexanders dealt in property and were money lenders. They appear to have sub-let parts of the estate, without the authority of Christ Church, during their tenureship. The father and sons were also involved in a number of court cases relating to their financial dealings during this time.

Robert Newport, who was implicated in the gunpowder plot but was not charged, lived with the catholic Alexanders in 1605. Newport, also a

catholic, failed to attend the compulsory Anglican services at St Peter's Church during a 2 year period, but the rector at the time did not report his absence as William Alexander controlled the tenancy of the parsonage.

*Please do visit the gardens to enjoy walking beside the Thames, the fine lawns, the specimen trees and interesting borders. You will also be able to see the 17<sup>th</sup>C gazebo, the 19<sup>th</sup>C vinery and vaults, and the 20<sup>th</sup> century Arts and Craft-style tea kiosk. The footprint of the old house has been laid out in brick and stone, and interpretation boards help to tell the story of the site.*

*Anne Keenan – Project Development Officer*

### **The re-opening of Caversham Court: Friday, 7 August, 2009**

The garden between the river and St Peter's Church, just above the bridge, was described as Caversham's best kept secret by a speaker at its re-opening to the public on 7 August 2009. Caversham Court is one of the gardens looked after by Reading Borough Council's Parks and Open Spaces Team and during the last year it has been closed to the public while it has been restored, and its past explored, with the help of a grant of over one and a half million pounds from Heritage Lottery Fund's Public Parks Programme, a dedicated project team and the experience of English Heritage.

Even before the restoration there were signs of the previous occupants of the site: a date over an entrance gate, the Tudor brickwork of a stable block, a pair of stone corbels at the head of some steps, a 20ft-high brick wall built as a series of bays and buttresses, a yew hedge and a summer house or gazebo at the water's edge, long boarded up. When the first visitors arrived for the opening ceremony, whether they came through a new wrought iron gate from the church yard or under a stone arch from the main road and through massive wooden gates, they saw immediately something new: the footprints of the Tudor and the eighteenth century houses, outlines of the rooms in brick and stone. They felt that they were not in a public park but in the gardens of a private house on the river bank.

From this centrepiece the design and layout of the garden falls into place. Its closeness to the church marks it out as the site of the original rectory, the brick wall and the yew hedge sheltered the kitchen garden, and the broad walk led to the causeway to the summer house.

The project team have provided interpretation boards around the garden and installed lighting under some of the most beautiful of the trees, under planting them with snowdrops for the spring. A timeline on the causeway gives names and dates of owners and occupiers and inside the summer house there are photographs and information panels. The pillars at the head of the steps leading down to the lawns and herbaceous border are now topped with stone griffins. The old vinery and its heating system have been excavated and displayed. Walls and arches have been repaired with brick and stone work that matches the original, the copper weather vane on the summer house carrying the date 1663 is as close a match with the original as possible, a mediaeval chalk wall under the causeway has been repaired and reinstated. The foundations and the beer cellars of the Tudor house, and the wine vaults of the later one, have been unearthed, recorded and covered up again. Some of the features in the garden carry Grade II listed status.

Much information about the houses and their occupants has been collected during the project, not least from local people about their own experiences, and even on the opening day visitors were coming forward with new stories and documents to add to the timeline. It is fortunate that among the owners of the houses were the litigious William Alexander whose court cases are with the National Archive, diarist John Loveday whose papers have been edited and published by his descendant, Sarah Markam, and William Blackall Simonds, senior member of the local brewery and banking family.

On the opening day everyone was enthusiastic about what had been achieved and the day itself was a great success. The sun shone, the church bells rang and visitors were entertained by croquet on the lawn, Scottish dancers and a jazz band. There had probably not been such crowds there since Henry Caversham Simons opened his garden to friends and provided champagne from his wine cellar while they watched the regatta from a vantage point opposite the winning post.

The Friends of Caversham Court had an information point on the lawns from which they handed out leaflets, answered questions and took bookings for official tours of the garden. The Friends is a group from the local community, which has worked with the project team throughout to provide help, support and publicity. It was instrumental in promoting sponsorship of seats and trees (mulberries, hornbeams and limes), yet to be planted. The gardens are no longer a secret but are now included in the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest as a Grade II landscape. It will be maintained by the Parks and

Open Spaces Team but the Friends will have a role in monitoring it and promoting it as the very important historic site that it is.

The garden is now open from 8am to dusk each day.

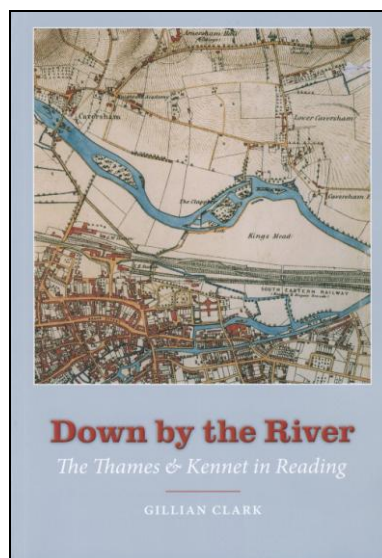
*Gillian Clark*

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## New Books

**Clark, Gillian, *Down by the River: The Thames and Kennet in Reading***  
(Reading, 2009) £16.00 ISBN 9781901677584

It is an unfortunate matter of fact that the history of the upper reaches of the River Thames (arguably England's most famous and most important waterway), is one which has been largely neglected by historians in recent years. Gillian Clark has made an important contribution towards redressing this sad state of affairs in her well researched and wide ranging study of the long history of the riverside communities around the Berkshire



town of Reading in *Down by the River, The Thames and Kennet in Reading*. Chapters 1 - 4 cover the period 1100 – 1820 and describe the more important people and events which shaped their lives. However, the major portion of *Down by the River* is devoted to an examination of the patterns of change throughout the nineteenth century following the coming of the railway in 1840, an event which profoundly altered not only the social and urban landscape of Reading, but also the nature of trade on the Kennet and the Thames. These changes and the personalities they involved are described in vivid detail founded on a broad range of empirical sources. The concluding chapters examine the gradual decline, from 1900 to 1960, of the economic significance the two waterways had on the livelihoods of the riverside communities. My enjoyment of *Down by the River* was marred by the absence of a bibliography, but nevertheless Gillian Clark is to be congratulated for writing such an interesting and informative account of life on the Thames and Kennet. It is a 'must read' for anyone with an interest in either the Thames or the Kennet.

*Rosemary Stewart Beardsley*

## Society News

### History of Reading Society

Our AGM, on 18<sup>th</sup> March, was followed by Robert Dimmick tracing the history of the Dusseldorf Association, which was set up by Phoebe Cusden, later Mayor of Reading, soon after World War II to foster cultural links between Reading and the German city. It started by encouraging youth exchanges, which led to the ‘twinning’ of the two towns.

On 15<sup>th</sup> April Martin Murphy spoke on Leonard Coxe, a headmaster of Reading School in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. A humanist and poet, he died in 1549 having spent virtually a lifetime rubbing shoulders with all kinds of notables of the time across both Britain and Europe, including Erasmus, having earlier been a lecturer at the University of Cracow, in Poland.

Our well-attended 20<sup>th</sup> May meeting entitled “We Cannot Park on Both Sides” and presented by Ray Parkes and Mike Cooper, recounted the local volunteers who actively supported the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. The era was highly-charged politically and over fifty, mainly young intellectuals from Reading University and late of Reading School, risked life and limb helping a cause they believed in. Some did not return. In their memory a society exists which supports local annual reunions of survivors.

The first annual ‘outdoor’ meeting took place on 17<sup>th</sup> June, visiting St. Giles Church, in Southampton Street, one of the ancient churches of the town. After a ‘free run’ look around, Rev. Michael Melrose gave a very detailed talk on the church’s history, to which our own John Dearing added a few points. We were then able to visit the sacristy to view very old vestments and communion plate. This extremely ‘high’ church (in more ways than one!) is all the poorer, because, sadly, Rev. Melrose died a few weeks after our visit.

Our second ‘external visit’, on 15<sup>th</sup> July, was to Reading Central Library, at the invitation of David Cliffe, in charge of the Local Studies Section, and also to be enlightened on the detailed records maintained in an adjacent section regarding Berkshire archaeology. The latter is a full-time task, as it involves monitoring every civil engineering and building project from seeking of planning permission to completion. The Local Studies Section contains, arguably, the very best of local research material to be found anywhere in the area – books, maps, photographs,

directories, local newspapers, and suchlike. Some is priceless and kept in the strong room and we were privileged to be taken down to see it.

Our indoor meetings are held on Wednesday evenings mid-month (apart from August) at Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square starting at 7.30pm prompt. Entry is free to members; Non-members £2.00. Inexpensive specially arranged car parking nearby is available for members. Meetings finish at 9.00pm. This year our programme runs through to December as we are altering our 'season' to commence in January from 2010. Details are listed on cream programme cards available at local libraries, bookshops, etc. Every summer we have outside meetings (for members only) in June and July and no meeting in August. Our next meetings are on 16<sup>th</sup> September and 21<sup>st</sup> October.

Readers are invited to ring 0118 947 2470 or email Edward.W.Hooper@btinternet.com for further details of the Society.

*John Whitehead*

### **Mortimer Local History Group**

At our April meeting we discussed the project of transferring our photographs on to disc. This will take a lot of time and dedication to complete, but has now been started and we viewed the results on computer which proved to be very popular. We also showed our large collection of maps which provoked a lot of useful comment and much interest.

Our annual general meeting in May again resulted in all our committee being re-elected.

We had a most enjoyable evening in June visiting the farm in Padworth of one of our members, John Miller. He had arranged for us to be transported across his land by tractor and trailer. His farm has high level stewardship from DEFRA as he has replanted hedges, has rare breeds, is organically farmed and contains wild flower meadow on land which has never been ploughed. The low lying fields are very suitable for the type of willow which is used in the making of cricket bats, a local industry, and John had invited an expert to talk about this, showing the beautiful English made bat in various stages of construction. We also saw water control features in the River Kennet including salmon ladder installed by Test Valley Fisheries as a millennium project, but unfortunately the salmon have not yet appeared! This was followed by a visit to Padworth Church, a beautiful small Norman building with an apse and large

Norman arch and we were treated to tea and cake afterwards at the farmhouse.

We were out again for our July meeting when we attended the open day of the Roman site at our adjacent village, Silchester. Part of the site, the amphitheatre, is in our parish of Mortimer West End. Some of our members were involved in arranging the open day which was very well attended with queues for the car park! The archaeological dig takes place each summer with students from Reading, Cambridge and other universities taking part. There were guided tours of the dig showing progress and the discovering of more proof of an Iron-Age town, and experts were showing how evidence is analysed with state of the art equipment. It was pleasing to see how interested the children were; they loved the hands-on experience of sorting through the soil samples for pottery, tile and bones.

*June Woodward*

### **Project Purley**

In April a late replacement speaker was Jean Fostekew, Archivist of the museum of Berkshire Aviation. Aided by her husband Ken, who is the curator at the museum, based in Woodley, Jean gave an interesting illustrated talk on the history of the museum which contains much information and history of aviation, particularly its early days in Berkshire. Jean had much to tell us, and it is quite apparent that a visit to the museum would be of great interest.

May brought a prestigious visit to the Royal School of Military Survey based at Denison Barracks at Hermitage. Twenty members attended and spent a most interesting time, with a talk given by Brigadier Walker. Members learned how the young soldiers are trained in special map making to be used in areas of conflict. Their expertise reaches a very high standard of accuracy. Members learned a great deal of the work carried out at the barracks, and the visit ended with a buffet lunch before departure from a most interesting visit.

In June there was a guided walking tour of Newbury with Jane Burrell and Phil Wood. After lunch at the Lock Stock and Barrell pub on the banks of the Kennet and Avon Canal, members were taken round parts of this 11<sup>th</sup> century town. The town prospered with the cloth industry, until the civil war when Newbury suffered two battles at Wash Common and Speen. However with the advent of the railways and the canal, Newbury was brought back to prosperity and grew in stature. Members were taken

to see many historic buildings and much of the history was learned on this interesting tour.

Also in June we welcomed once again the theatre company Rain or Shine who performed to packed audiences "The taming of the shrew". This is a most popular event and Project Purley were able to donate £700 to the Hospital Radio Service.

July is our BBQ month. This year the weather was particularly unkind, but through the kind hospitality and hard work of our hosts Ben and Dorothy Viljoen who took some thirty members into their home, we had a great time with an indoor BBQ!

Well done and many thanks to Dorothy and Ben.

*Millie Bordiss*

### **Sandhurst Historical Society**

On the 7<sup>th</sup> May some of our members plus a few visitors enjoyed a very pleasurable day at the Chelsea Royal Hospital. This was made all the more interesting by having one of the Pensioners escort us round. He was most entertaining throwing in quite a few anecdotes. After our tour of the Hospital ended we moved on to the National Army Museum situated next to the Hospital. This too was well worth a visit.

The subject of our talk in May was Wessex Archive. David Lee explained to us how the archives were stored though it was a little alarming to hear that these could be subject to spontaneous combustion! However when all the archives have been transferred to discs this will no longer present a problem. He said that anything of historical interest could be stored there.

In June we had a talk by Dr Andrew Hutt on Dovecotes, Pigeon Lofts and Pigeon keeping. This all stemmed from medieval times when every Manor had a large collection of birds, maybe two to three hundred doves. There was a logical reason for keeping these doves and pigeons – food! The eggs and the birds were consumed. Attempts are being made to restore some of these dovecotes.

We have our AGM in September which is for members only.

At present we are without a Secretary which is placing extra pressure on the rest of the Committee so, if there is anyone out there willing to undertake this not very daunting task we would be very grateful.

As always new faces are most welcome. We meet on the last Thursday of most months - &.30pm at the Sandhurst Community Hall.

*Janice Burlton*

### **Sonning and Sonning Eye Society**

#### **Village Voices: an oral history experience**

The weekend of the 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> September will see the culmination of three years of hard work when the Sonning and Sonning Eye Society will present ‘Village Voices: an oral history experience’ in the Pearson Hall. This fascinating exhibition will form part of the Society’s fifth anniversary celebrations as well as contributing to the 2009 Heritage Open Days Weekend.

At the Society’s first Annual General Meeting on 27 November 2004, it was suggested, “that the Society speak to the life-long residents of Sonning and Sonning Eye to record their memories and preserve them”. Five years later a dedicated team of volunteers has recorded over 100 hours of memories of local people and collected a wealth of invaluable information about the history of Sonning and Sonning Eye. With such a treasure trove of material it was important to select key themes that could form the focus for the exhibition. These themes include schooling, shops, farming, recreation, memorable events, Sonning in the Second World War, home life, the Fire Brigade, The Mill and the river. This exciting interactive exhibition will be a fascinating opportunity to experience what village life was like through the reminiscences of others.

This historic insight into 20th-century life in Sonning and Sonning Eye will enhance the public awareness of the rich history of our area and will also encourage young people to have pride in their local environment and its unique history. The Society is grateful to Awards for All as well as all the local organisations and residents for their generous support for this project. Following the formal opening by Theresa May MP the exhibition will be open to the public in the Pearson Hall during the following times:

Friday 11 September      12 Noon – 5.00 pm

Saturday 12 September    12 Noon – 5.00 pm

Sunday 13 September     12 Noon – 5.00 pm

We hope to see you there!

*Mark Green /Diane Coulter*

### **Thatcham Historical Association**

A packed room greeted Michael Arris tonight (29th June) for his talk entitled “Duke of Wellington’s Country House at Stratfield Saye.” It was

noted that there were several people with the same title, Duke of Wellington, who lived or had connections with Stratfield Saye, but that the talk would concentrate on the first Duke of Wellington, Field Marshall Arthur Wellesley. The First Duke, also known as the Great Duke, was born in 1796 and died in 1852.

The house and grounds consist of 5000 acres and can be dated back to before William the Conqueror. The house owes much of its style to George Pitt who played a pivotal role in its development. Within the house are a great many rooms. The hall contains portraits of all the Dukes. Lighting within the house was provided by oil and installed in the 1820's. The lighting was so efficient that it was not converted to electricity until 1945. The library has changed little since the First Duke and was developed by George Pitt in 1845. There are at least 3000 books, many of which are in French. Some of the books come from Napoleons' own library.

Also within the house are 9 lavatories installed in the corner of rooms in 1841. It was noted that Prince Albert was very impressed with these lavatories and the heating system. The First Duke went hunting with Prince Albert, often with Queen Victoria nearby. Indeed there is a painting within the house showing Queen Victoria in a carriage near the hunting party. That carriage is still used by the Royal Family today. Prince Albert and Queen Victoria must have visited often and in January 1845 stayed for 3 days. The Dukes of Yorkshire and Bedfordshire were forced, due to space, to sleep in bedrooms in the stable block.

After 1831 when the Dukes wife died, he visited Stratfield Saye more frequently. All but the 1st and 6th duke are buried in the church within the estate. A vote of thanks was given by chair, Sue Broughton, and refreshments followed.

*Nick Young*

### **Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society**

At the April meeting Mr Ken Wells, Curator of the Thames Valley Police Museum, paid a welcome return to talk about Police Scenes of Crime. As a Scene of Crime Officer at Bracknell Police Station he had much experience in dealing with suspicious deaths. In the days before modern technology the work was much more laborious and involved much finger printing and checking of footwear prints and various other tests, although with the advent of photography this became of great importance. Mr Wells gave examples of vital evidence provided by forensic tests and this interesting and humorous talk was much enjoyed, giving as it did an idea

of the detailed and meticulous work of the scene of crime officers, and some strange incidents which can occur.

At the May meeting members were entertained by Mr Gerry Westall who with the help of two videos related the history of Suttons Seeds. The first video told of the project of the Society of Friends in providing seeds for the unemployed. It also included a film of the offices of Sutton Seeds in 1931, showing a great contrast to the modern computerised offices of today. The second video related to the development of seeds within the UK with detailed illustrations of the work involved and demonstrated the way to later sales. A most interesting and enlightening evening on an industry long connected with this area.

At the June meeting Mr Tony Weston delighted members with the "Secrets of the Box". This Box had come to the family through his great grandmother and when it had been possible to have it opened in restoration contained papers etc pertaining to a family in the midlands quite unrelated to his family. Through examining the contents of the box – letters, bills, accounts, invoices, through research he had been able to build up a picture of a fairly comfortable life-style of a family the head of which was in the trade of paper production, had a factory and apparently attended a yearly conference in London. It was a fascinating study, presenting one or two puzzles as well as providing an insight into how rewarding, if somewhat time consuming, such research can be.

The Ploughman's Lunch on 11<sup>th</sup> July at Elfin Grove, Springfield Park was very enjoyable in spite of somewhat inclement weather.

*Edna Bowman*

### **Wargrave Local History Society**

Angela Spencer-Harper introduced us to characters and events from her latest book, *The Old Place*, for her talk to the April meeting. It's what Angela calls 'factional history' - each chapter being based on the discovery of an artifact in south east Oxfordshire, or the memories of local residents. Her book brings to life the times associated with these objects or memories. The items Angela told us about ranged from a mesolithic age axe (found in 1949) through to John and Betty Searby's struggle establishing a business making a new style of trailer for selling all kinds of produce in the 1950s. In between we heard of a Roman denarius found in 1864 when the Maharajah's Well was being dug, the Black Death in 1348, the Civil War Henley area in 1643 was the setting for the next tale. Based on the diaries of Sir Bulstrode Whitlock, of Fawley Court, it illustrated the stresses when two brothers - one a

Parliamentarian and the other a Royalist - meet in Henley Market Place, and the memories of wartime evacuees.

Stephen Loyd's illustrated presentation on *Ruscombe Wood* in May showed us a 'natural' history of the area. The wood was an important contribution to the 'industry' of the area, as it was used for growing willows, used for basket making. The undisturbed woodland includes many flower varieties dating from Victorian times. For them to survive, however, coppicing is needed, so that they do not get overwhelmed by other plants, or are in too much shadow. The 6 acre site includes a range of habitats, from open grassland to ponded wetland, and a hazel coppice, surrounded by an ash coppice on the perimeter. Stephen took us pictorially through the year, month by month, with stunning photographs of the enormous variety of plants to be seen in the woodland.

In June the Society arranged an 'Historic Village Walk' as part of the Village Festival - so popular that it, and a duplicate, sold out very quickly! In July we enjoyed a guided tour, by the owner's wife, of Milton Manor, an elegant 18th century Inigo Jones style house, extended in 1764 for Bryant Barrett, lace maker to King George III, just west of Didcot.

The Society has recently obtained 3 photograph albums that had belonged to Harriette Cook Smith - an important benefactress for the village. The pictures, dating from the 1870-80s, had been rescued from imminent destruction in Northamptonshire and are a valuable addition to our archives.

All are welcome to our meetings, which begin at 8 pm - normally in the Hannen Room, Mill Green, Wargrave. For more information about the Society, visit [www.wargrave.net/history](http://www.wargrave.net/history), or contact me, Peter Delaney, on 0118 9403121

*Peter Delaney*

### **Winnersh and District Historical Society**

Our AGM was held in April as usual. Two committee members stepped down, but no-one offered to join the committee. It was followed by a photographic quiz of the Winnersh parish area, prepared by Colin Wells. Many photographs were from unusual angles which made it more difficult. As the A329 splits Winnersh into north and south, with two churches and two primary schools, some members may decide to walk around one day and become more familiar with the area.

In May, Colin arranged a visit for us to the National Grid. They are responsible 24hrs a day for organising the amount of electricity where it is needed and with only one hour's notice of probable surges. They track

the amount daily on usual life style, but something like the FA Cup Final at Wembley would need a large amount of electricity, so the National Grid must be aware. Any breakdowns on cables and pylons are repaired as soon as possible. The National Grid also includes gas, and works with the USA. It was rather technical, but a very interesting evening.

On June 20th, Winnersh Parish Council held their second fête which was again very successful. Our society put on a large display of photographs, which brought back many memories from local people. Brian put on his new display of Huntley and Palmers and its history. There were also some superb cards sent home to their families by the forces in WW1.

Our meeting on Monday produced more memories. Members brought some special items to show us, and told us about their history, which made a very pleasant evening.

July saw us at Ellis Hill Farm at Newlands where Keith French showed us around. It is part of the land which was earlier owned by the Simonds family who were bankers and brewers. They built the estate, including houses for their workers complete with running water, supplied by a pumping system to reservoirs from underground streams. Produce was also grown using water from similar reservoirs. Keith has collected a vast quantity of farm machinery over the years, and is hoping to have a building to show the history of farming. He also feels it is important to have a green space between the large numbers of houses in this area. His wife runs a farm shop and café, with a pig roast on open days. They breed Saddleback and Berkshire pigs, and have their own butcher.

*Stella Young*

### **Wokingham History Group**

Our March meeting allowed us a glimpse into the world of WW2 aviation, and “The Remarkable Story of the Air Transport Auxiliary”; a group who transported virtually every type of plane to airfields across the country, Richard Poad from Maidenhead Heritage Centre gave us a faultlessly comprehensive and entertaining evening explaining the origins of the service, the variety of work they carried out, and the background story of some of the characters (predominantly female) who performed this important work.

“A History of Policing” was the subject of our April meeting. Ken Wells, Curator of the Thames Valley Police Museum, began with a look back at his career, from his days as a mounted policeman to his job as a forensic officer; entertaining throughout, his talent for amateur theatre was not wasted during the evening. He also covered the development of local

policing, aided by some uniform props and an early incident book, the reading of which he ensured provided comic entertainment.

Our May meeting was given by our Chairman Trevor Ottelewski; “What’s Wrong in Wokingham” was used to illustrate the subject of street clutter and general neglect in historic towns. With Wokingham as the example, we had an illustrated tour through the town’s conservation area highlighting the amount of unwelcome signage and street furniture that blights the visual beauty of the area. Examples included unnecessarily large route signs, an excess of sign posts and estate agents boards, redundant signs, unsympathetic shop signs, guttering filled with weeds, and waste bins in visually sensitive locations. The point being made was that great improvements are possible with very little financial cost to the ratepayer.

“A History of Cinemas and Cinema Buildings” was provided by Tony King in June. He provided us with a well illustrated history of the development of movies, from pioneering film makers, to the emergence of Hollywood and its moguls. Wokingham’s Methodist church had enjoyed the philanthropy of J. Arthur Rank, a Methodist, who provided funding for church endeavours. With regard to cinema building, it would appear that Wokingham’s first cinema “The Electric Theatre” in Broad Street was among the earliest phases of cinema building (it survives today as a building society office).

The July meeting incorporated our AGM, after which our re-elected Chairman, Trevor Ottelewski, gave a well illustrated talk about our local National Trust property, “Finchampstead Ridges and Simons Wood”; he described the history of the site, some of the issues such a property faces, ongoing maintenance programmes and future projects, and finally a tour around the property showing seasonal highlights and changes that take place.

*Barbara Young*

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## **Heritage, Family History, Museums and Libraries**

### **Berkshire Record Office**

#### **School meals and other food**

The latest issue of *The Berkshire Echo* takes food and drink as its theme. In fact the next *Echo* will too - we found so many things about food in our collections. For example, it's rare to find dinner menus in our hundreds of school archives, but we found a number for Burleigh Wood

Nursery School in Ascot. If you can remember your school dinners, you'll probably recognise some of the favourites from the menus: stewed beef or mutton, shepherd's pie, rice pudding or currant sponge and custard. There were also one or two more unusual items, such as scrambled eggs with jacket potatoes and butter beans, or treacle tart with cornflakes.

Berkshire was a predominantly rural community until quite recently (and still is in some parts), and much food was grown on the land as well as consumed by its population. At the time the *VCH* was written in the early 20th century, nearly 300,000 acres in the county were being farmed, and the black Berkshire pig could be found in abundance. No parish history would be complete without some mention of the way the land was worked over the centuries. In the future, parish histories might have to include a chapter on supermarkets as well!

**Are you interested in local or family history? Would you like to make a difference?**

The BRO is looking for volunteers to help us check the index of wills and other probate documents for Berkshire 1711-1857. We hold the collection, and volunteers will need to be able to visit Reading to help with the work. We're looking for people who would be prepared to read manuscript documents and check their contents against the published electronic index, making corrections to the index as necessary. We plan to work on Monday afternoons, probably once a fortnight, beginning in the autumn.

You need some experience of working with archives, but we plan for volunteers to work in pairs so you will also have some help. Ideally you will be confident at reading eighteenth and nineteenth century documents, and able to work independently and consistently to agreed editorial standards. You will also need to be able to use a laptop. In return, we can offer you a sociable research experience, working with real documents from an important and varied collection. You will also be joining a team that will create an index of lasting value for the future. If this sounds like something that you would enjoy, please give your details in at the BRO reception, or email them to [arch@reading.gov.uk](mailto:arch@reading.gov.uk).

*Mark Stevens, Senior Archivist*

**Maidenhead Heritage Centre**

Our autumn exhibition will be "Buried Treasure", featuring objects from local excavations. Archaeologists have found a Roman villa, a medieval pottery factory and the settlement that was to become Maidenhead. This

will be followed by “The Coming of the Railway”, with a model of Brunel’s brick bridge, which brought prosperity to Berkshire. Now it is to bring Crossrail and fast electric trains.

Our aviation history group is working on a database for the 1200 pilots of the Air Transport Auxiliary. When veterans received their commemorative medals, we displayed some of our collection at the reception at White Waltham airfield, which preceded the award ceremony at 10 Downing Street.

As part of Heritage Weekend, there will be a guided walk along Maidenhead High Street. As with most towns, if you look above the cloned (and often empty) shop fronts, you can still see traces of the inns, shops and market, which served locals and travellers for many centuries.

*Brian Boulter*

### **Museum of English Rural Life**

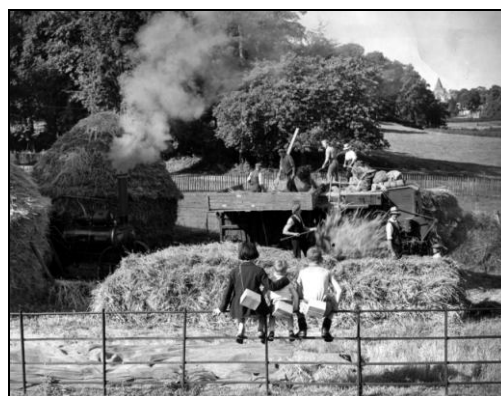
As I write this at the beginning of the school summer holidays, the awful weather makes it fairly easy to think about preparing for our packed programme of events this autumn!

Staff across the Museum are busy preparing for two major events in the next couple of months, including our Annual Lecture which this year will take the form of a panel debate on ‘Great British Food and its future’ in association with the Newbury and District Agricultural Society, as part of their centenary celebrations. On October 20<sup>th</sup> a panel of distinguished guests including Mark Price, the MD of Waitrose, Lady Cranbrook, Vice-President of the CPRE, Richard MacDonald, Director General of the NFU and Christine Williams, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Human Nutrition at the University of Reading will join in the wider national debate on sustainability and the future of British food, reflecting the theme of this year’s Royal Berkshire Show. To attend, please book your free tickets in advance and take the opportunity to submit a potential question to the panel if you wish.

MERL is very excited to be part of the University’s first stand for many years at the Royal County of Berkshire Show. To link to the NADAS centenary, the stand will reflect 100 years of Agriculture at Reading. It will feature an exhibition on the history of MERL, a steam engine, a drop-in family workshop, as well as displays by the Departments of Agriculture and Food Biosciences. There’ll even be the now famous MERL smoothie maker and an ice-cream maker! If you’re going to be at the Show on September 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup>, why not pop along and say hello?!

Also at the Show we will be celebrating the completion of the JISC-funded Digitisation of Countryside Images project. Photographs from the Farmer and Stockbreeder and Farmers Weekly collections from 1920-1965 have been digitised from glass plate negatives. They are a wonderful record of English arable and livestock farming and husbandry practices for a period of unparalleled transformation of the English countryside, and include several local images. Thanks to this project many are now available to view on online exhibitions on the MERL website. To hear more about the project and meet some of the people involved, please join us on our stand at 11am on the Saturday.

Our new major exhibition this autumn, ‘The Children’s War: evacuees in the countryside 1939-45’ opens on September 8<sup>th</sup>. The exhibition looks at the impact that evacuees had on the countryside and how much rural life affected their own lives, and includes interviews with people who were evacuated. Aimed primarily at



schools, children will have the opportunity to come and meet some of the evacuees, one of whom went to live with a poacher in Mortimer! Look out for details of related talks and seminars in our What’s On guide or on the website.

*Alison Hilton, Marketing Officer*

### **Reading Central Library**

In the last newsletter, I wrote that I was beginning to think about a “local history day” at the library in the autumn. (In fact, for me, almost every day is a “local history day”!) The day has now taken shape. It will be run in conjunction with a pictorial exhibition, about the Newtown area of Reading, which will be in the second floor exhibition area, and will last from Monday November 23 to Saturday, December 5. The idea came into my head when I had an offer from a photographer who had been commissioned to take pictures of Orts Road, Kennet Side, Leopold Road, etc., before they were demolished under a slum clearance order about 1980. The photographs were much more than a documentary record – I felt that they captured something of the spirit of the area, and I hope that our visitors will agree.

The morning will begin with talks by a photographer, a historian, an archivist, and a librarian, about urban development and re-development,

with Newtown as a case in point. We will explore, and possibly explode, the myth that Huntley and Palmer's built Newtown for their workers. And we will look at ways of finding out who bought the building plots, who designed the buildings, who lived there, and what they did for a living.

After lunch we shall walk round the area, looking at the detached houses of the wealthy and the terraced houses of ordinary people, visiting the school and seeing inside the hall, and the wall in the yard with the grooves in it where slate pencils were sharpened, and visiting the church and hearing something of its work in the community. The number of participants for the local history day will be limited to 25, for various practical reasons, and tickets will cost £5. They will be available from the beginning of October. If you wish to register an interest, please send an e-mail message to [david.cliffe@reading.gov.uk](mailto:david.cliffe@reading.gov.uk)

Apart from all this, there have been some interesting additions to the library's collections. Two of them, by coincidence, have theatrical connections. Firstly, the library has been given a splendid collection of photographs of productions of the Reading Repertory Company, between the 1930s and the 1950s. I have been amazed to discover that it was an amateur company, because the sets and costumes are so skilful and imaginative. And then last Saturday, whilst hunting for something else, I came across a leaflet from the Royal County Theatre, Reading, advertising the Christmas show of 1892. The production included a pack of trained foxhounds! And, even more of a coincidence, when I turned on the computer after finding the leaflet, the first message I saw was from the History of Reading Society, asking if I would give them a talk on the theatres of Reading! I thought that destiny must have decreed that I should give the talk, so I accepted the invitation.

*David Cliffe, Local Studies Manager*

## **Reading Museum Service**

### **Exhibitions**

Modern British Masters: drawings and paintings on paper continues until 1 November

Treasures from the Museum's collection of twentieth and twenty first century art. Enjoy a wide range of works by leading British artists, from war-time portraits to 1960s landscapes and 1990s abstracts. See how artists have explored the properties of pastel, charcoal, collage and new types of paint to make great drawings.

The exhibition includes gifts from the Contemporary Art Society and works acquired with help from The Art Fund and Reading Foundation for Art. Artists include Charles Ginner, Stanley Spencer, David Bomberg, John Piper, Keith Vaughan, Elizabeth Blackadder, and Alan Davie.

British Masters Drawings Day School - Saturday 17 October  
A day school led by Sandra Smith to complement the exhibition.  
Adults, 10am – 3pm, £15 per person  
Contact [sansmithuk@googlemail.com](mailto:sansmithuk@googlemail.com) or call 0118 947 3042

### **Reading A to Z**

5 December to Spring 2010

An A to Z of our fascinating town in objects and artworks selected from the Museum's collection. The exhibition covers a thousand years of Reading's history, from Abbey to Austen to Zaandam and Zinzan. Explore the people, places and products that have influenced how Reading is today. What would you include? What have we left out? Come and share your own ideas!

For details of all our forthcoming events and exhibition details please go to [www.readingmuseum.org.uk/news](http://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/news). To receive our latest 'what's on' diary why not join our free mailing list, call us on 0118 939 9800.

*Matthew Williams, Senior Curator*

### **Slough Library's Local Studies Collection & [www.SloughHistoryOnline.org.uk](http://www.SloughHistoryOnline.org.uk)**

Over the past few months we have been busy working on a number of exciting projects. The Slough-based National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has given us a collection of photographs, scrap books and pamphlets relating to the history of their headquarters, the Mere, and the family who built it.



The Mere was built for the publisher George Bentley in 1883. Bentley was the head of the Bentley publishing firm who produced some of the books of Charles Dickens, Benjamin Disraeli and Wilkie Collins. Richard Bentley, George's son, took over The Mere and the family business when

his father died in 1895, and in 1898 the firm was dissolved and the stock and assets handed over to the company Macmillan. Richard then focused his time on expanding The Mere estate and studying local history, meteorology, botany and other sciences.

The collection gives a wonderful insight into the building and running of a Victorian town house. Gems include beautiful hand coloured plans of the gardens, details of furnishing around the house and photographs of their car collection.

The NFER was also kind enough to give us a grant towards preserving and digitising this exciting collection and the first batch of material can now be seen on [www.SloughHistoryOnline.org.uk](http://www.SloughHistoryOnline.org.uk).

Slough Library has also accepted over one hundred Ordnance Survey Maps from the 1870s to 1970s, covering Slough and district. We have also been given a collection of microfilm from the Slough Observer which includes 1970s and 1980s editions of their various editions. Full details of our newspaper holding can be found on the local history pages of our website, [www.slough.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.slough.gov.uk/libraries).

We have also been working hard to co-ordinate Slough and Districts events for Heritage Open Days. This year thirteen buildings were opened to the public, some of which were opened to the public for the first time. These buildings included the medieval Upton Court, the Stuart Kedermister Library, the Victorian Mere and the twenty-first century St. George's Church. We also had a couple of local history walks around Salt Hill and Upton Park.

We also continue to help local and family historians with their research, so if you would like to know more look at our heritage website, [www.SloughHistoryOnline.org.uk](http://www.SloughHistoryOnline.org.uk). Our contact details can be found at the end of this newsletter.

*Tony Pilmer, Local Studies Librarian*

### **West Berkshire Heritage Service**

#### **Building on the Past – Special Exhibition at West Berkshire Museum**

The Cloth Hall and Corn Stores buildings which house West Berkshire Museum on Newbury's Wharf are two of the town's most historic, most recognised and most loved buildings. But how much do you know about them? Do you know, for example, that as well as a Museum they have

also been a school, a hospital and a bus station? Or that today's Cloth Hall is the only surviving part of a larger building that was used as a charitable workhouse for producing cloth around 1630?

In this special exhibition West Berkshire Museum will reveal new research, carried out in preparation for the redevelopment of the Museum by specialist consultants including the dendrochronological dating of roof timbers. Details about the original construction and architecture of the buildings will be included along with objects relating to the history of the buildings.

Other buildings, such as the former Newbury Guildhall, will be identified as possible influences for the design of the Cloth Hall and the significance of the buildings at the centre of historic Newbury will be explored – the Cloth Hall is a very early form of factory and the Corn Stores is an important survivor from the 18<sup>th</sup> century development of the inland waterway system.

Tracing the history of the historic buildings from construction of the Grade I listed Cloth Hall in 1627 and the Grade II\* listed Corn Stores the exhibition will explore the changing fortunes of the buildings over four centuries concluding with a nod to the future and a brief outline of proposals for the redevelopment of the Museum in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The exhibition opens on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September to coincide with English Heritage's national Heritage Open Days programme and runs until Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September. This will be the last special exhibition before an Autumn/Winter closure from 28<sup>th</sup> September to 1<sup>st</sup> April.

Unfortunately public access to the Cloth Hall or first floors of the Corn Stores is still not possible due to continuing health & safety/fire safety concerns.

*Lucy Rumens, Marketing and Tourism Manager*

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## **Courses**

### **Oxford**

The Oxford University Department of Continuing Education have a number of part-time courses in their 2009/10 prospectus. For more information please call 01865 270360, email [pp@conted.ox.ac.uk](mailto:pp@conted.ox.ac.uk) or look at the website on [www.conted.ox.ac.uk](http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk)

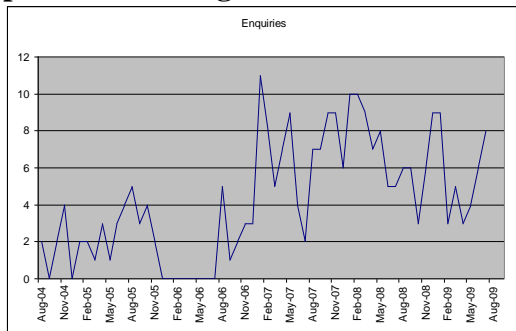
## BLHA Website (www.blha.org.uk)

### Unique visitors\*

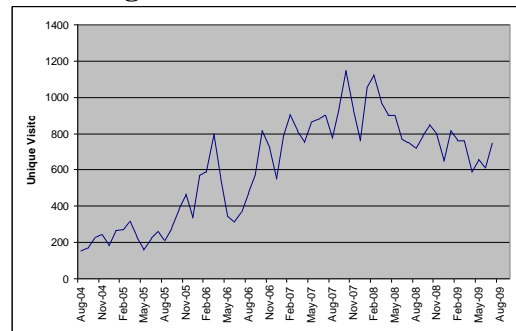
Total unique visitors since 1 August 2004	36759
Average daily visitors	24
Average weekly visitors	166
<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of unique visitors</b>
2004 Total	983
2005 Total	3405
2006 Total	6680
2007 Total	10456
2008 Total	10287
<b>Month</b>	
May-09	659
Jun-09	612
Jul-09	751

\* *Unique visitors means that it is not counting when a visitor returns to the site.*

### The number of enquiries over the period since August 04 until now.



### Visitor activity to the BLHA website since August 2004



### Geographical breakdown (of last 100 visitors)

	Num	Perc.	Country Name	
▼	74	80.43%	United Kingdom	
▼	6	6.52%	United States	
▼	4	4.35%	Unknown	-
▼	3	3.26%	Canada	
▼	2	2.17%	Austria	
▼	1	1.09%	Ireland	
▼	1	1.09%	South Africa	
▼	1	1.09%	France	

The statistical analysis shows that the most popular pages on the website (aside from the home page) are the queries page and the newsletters page.

Dave Osborne, [websitedesigner@blha.org.uk](mailto:websitedesigner@blha.org.uk)

## History Societies

**Arborfield Local History Society:** Patricia Steed, The Old Post House, Eversley Road, Arborfield Cross, Reading, Berks, RG2 9PG

**Berkshire Archaeology Society:** Andrew Hutt, 19, Challenor Close, Wokingham, Berks, RG40 4UJ

**Berkshire Archaeology Research Group:** Debbie Slay, 58 Woodrow Drive, Wokingham, Berks, RG40 1RT. debbie.slay@ntlworld.com

**Berkshire Family History Society:** Research Centre, Yeomanry House, Castle Hill, Reading, RG1 7TJ. www.berksfhs.org.uk

**Berkshire Industrial Archaeological Group:** Secretary, Peter Trout, 7 West Chiltern, Woodcote, Reading, RG8 OSG or Mr. Weber, bentwebershops@waitrose.com

**Blewbury Local History Group:** Audrey Long, Spring Cottage, Church Road, Blewbury, Oxon, OX11 9PY. 01235 850427 audrey.long@waitrose.com

**Bracknell & District Local Historical Society:** Jeff Wood, 1 King Edwards Road, Ascot, SL5 8PD. 01344 883325

**Burnham Historians:** Mary Bentley, 38 Conway Road, Taplow, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 0LD. 01628 665932 bhme@gme.prestel.co.uk

**Cox Green Local History Group:** Pat Barlow, 29 Bissley Drive, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 3UX. 01628 823890 weekends only.

**Datchet Village Society:** Marjorie Clasper, 3 Riverbank, Southlea Road, Datchet, Berks. 01753 545110 www.datchet.com

**East Ilsley Local History Society:** Sue Burnay White Hollow High St, E.Ilsley, Berks RG20 7LE 01635 281308 east.ilsley@btinternet.com

**Eton Wick Local History Group:** Teresa Stanton, 35 Eton Wick Road, Eton Wick, Windsor, SL4 6LU. 01753 860591 teresa.stanton@talktalk.net  
www.etonwickhistory.co.uk

**Faringdon & District Historical Society:** Rosemary Church, 1 Orchard Hill, Faringdon, SN7 7EH. 01367 240885 www.faringdon.org/hysoc

**Finchampstead History & Heritage Group:** Roger Black, 240a Nine Mile Ride, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3QD. 0118 9732373

**Goring & Streatley Local History Society:** Janet Hurst, 6 Nun's Acre, Goring on Thames, Reading, Berks RG8 9BE. 01491 871183 (evenings only)

**The Hanneys Local History Society:** Ann Fewins, 'Lilac Cottage', East Hanney, Wantage, OX12 0HX. 01235 868372 annfewins@beeb.net

**The History of Reading Society:** Edward Hooper, 6 Tower Close, Emmer Green, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 8UU 0118 9472470

**Hungerford Historical Association:** Jane Francis, 5A Park Street, Hungerford, RG17 0EF 01488 685259 Dr Lois Pihlens, 2 Canal Walk, Hungerford, RG17 0EQ. lois@pihlens.co.uk. Archives Fred Bailey, 15 Homefield Way, Hungerford, RG17 0JZ. fred@hungerford.fsnet.co.uk

**Longworth & District History Society:** Pam Woodward, 22 Cherrytree Close, Southmoor, Abingdon, OX13 5BE. 01865 820500 prwoodward@btinternet.com

**Maidenhead Archaeological & Historical Society:** Trevor Jones, 70 Lambourne Drive, Maidenhead, SL6 3HG. 01628 672196

**Mid Thames Archaeological & Historical Society:** Sheila Orton, 1 Saffron Close, Datchet, Slough, SL3 9DU. 01753 543636

**Mortimer Local History Group:** June Woodward, 19 Victoria Road, Mortimer, RG7 3SH. 0118 9332819 woodward.mortimer@virgin.net

**Newbury District Field Club:** Tony Higgott, Hope Cottage, Ashmore Green, Thatcham, RG18 9HD. 01635 861010

**Oxfordshire Family History Society:** Tony Hadland, 4 Barcote Cottages, Buckland, Faringdon, Oxon SN7 8PP

**Pangbourne Heritage Group:** Rosie Newrick, 1 Thames Avenue, Pangbourne, RG8 7BU 0118 9842565

**Project Purley:** Tony Trendle, 15 Purley Magna, Purley, Reading, Berks RG8 8EL. 0118 9421036 tonetrend@aol.com

**Sandhurst Historical Society:** Jack Martin, 5, Ceders Close, Sandhurst, Berks GU47 8HF. 01252 874146

**Shinfield & District Local History Society:** Ann Young, 'Roselyn', School Green, Shinfield, Reading, Berks RG2 9EH. 0118 9882120.

**Sonning & Sonning Eye History Society:** Diana Coulter, Red House Cottage, Pearson Road, Sonning, Berks, RG4 6UF, 0118 9692132

**Standford in the Vale & District Local History Society:** Philip Morris, 71 Van Diemens, Standford in the Vale, Faringdon, Oxon, SN7 8HW, 01367 710285

**Swallowfield Local History Society:** Ken Hussey, 'Kimberley', Swallowfield, Reading, RG7 1QX. 0118 9883650

**Tadley Local History Society:** PO Box 7264, Tadley, Hampshire, RG26 3FA. www.tadshistory.com Alan Cooke, delete this name

**Thatcham Historical Society:** Alf Wheeler, 22 Park Lane, Thatcham, RG10 3PJ. 01635 863536 enquiries@thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk  
www.thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk

**Theale Local History Society:** A.D. Spurling, 7 Broadlands Close, Calcot Park, Reading RG31 7RP. thealehistory@aol.com

**Twyford & Ruscombe Local History Society:** Audrey Curtis, Chantry Cottage, Halls Lane, Waltham St Lawrence, RG10 0JD 0118 9343260  
audreycurt@googlemail.com

**Friends of Wantage Vale & Downland Museum:** Church Street, Wantage, OX12 8BL. 01235 760991 museum@wantage.com

**Wargrave Local History Society:** Peter Delaney, 6 East View Close, Wargrave, Berks, RG10 8BJ. 0118 9403121 peter.delaney2@btinternet.com

**Windsor Local History Group:** Sue Ashley, 49 York Avenue, Windsor, SL4 3PA. nutritionsshley@hotmail.com, www.windlesora.org.uk

**Friends of Windsor & Maidenhead RBCM,** Pamela Marson, 256 Dedworth Road, Windsor, SL4 4JR. pamela.marson@btinternet.com, www.rbwm.gov.uk

**Winnersh & District Historical Society:** Brian Eighteen, 50 Watmore Lane, Winnersh, Berks, RG41 5JT. b.eighteen@btinternet.com

**Wokingham History Group:** Trevor Ottlewski, Uani, Holly Bush Ride, Wokingham, Berks 01344 775920.

**Wraysbury History Society:** Gillian Hopkins, 45 Staines Road, Wraysbury, Staines, TW19 5BY 01784 482947 gillian\_hopkins@tiscali.co.uk

## **Archives, Libraries & Museums**

**Abingdon Library:** The Charter, Abingdon, OX14 3LY. 01235 520374  
abingdon\_library@yahoo.co.uk

**Allen County Public Library:** Genealogy, PO Box 2270, Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA 001 468 012270

**Berkshire Medical Heritage Centre:** Medical Museum, 32 Pitts Lane, Reading, Berks, RG6 1BT. 0118 9262724 marshall.barr@btinternet.com

**Berkshire Record Office:** 9 Coley Avenue, Reading, RG1 6AF. 0118 901 5132 www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk

**Bracknell Library Local Studies:** Hue Lewis, Town Square, Bracknell, RG12 1BH. 01344 352400

**Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies:** County Hall, Walton Street, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP20 1UU. Archives: 01296 382 587 archives@buckscc.gov.uk Local Studies: 01296 382 250 localstudies@buckscc.gov.uk

**Centre for Oxfordshire Studies:** Helen Drury, Central Library, Westgate, Oxford, OX1 1DJ. 01865 815741

**Crosfields School:** Shinfield Road, Reading, RG2 9BL

**Eton College Library:** Eton College, Windsor, SL4 6DB

**Guildhall Library:** Andrew Harvey, Principal Library Assistant Printed Books, Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London EC2V 7HH. Andrew.Harvey@cityoflondon.gov.uk www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/guildhalllibrary

**Maidenhead Heritage Centre:** Fran Edwards, 18 Park Street, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 1SL.

**Maidenhead & Windsor Local Studies Library:** Chris Atkins, St Ives Road, Maidenhead, SL6 1QU. 01628 796981 chris.atkins@rbwm.gov.uk

**Newbury Reference Library:** Fiona Davies, Newbury Central Library, The Wharf, Newbury, RG14 5AU. 01635 519900

**Reading Central Library:** Local Studies Manager, David Cliffe, Abbey Square, Reading, RG1 3BQ. 0118 9015965

**Reading Museum Services:** The Curator, Town Hall, Blagrove Street, Reading, RG1 1QH. 0118 9399800 www.readingmuseum.org.uk

**Reading University Library:** Val Davis, Library Assistant, PO Box 223, Whiteknights, RG6 6AE. 0118 378 8785 v.j.davis@reading.ac.uk

**Museum of English Rural Life:** The University of Reading, Redlands Road, Reading, RG1 5EX. 0118 378 8660 Fax: 0118 378 5632 merl@reading.ac.uk www.merl.org.uk

**Windsor & Royal Borough Museum,** Tinkers Lane, Windsor, SL4 4LR. 01628 796846 museum.collections@rbwm.gov.uk www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/museum\_index.htm

**Slough Library Local Studies:** Tony Pilmer, Slough Library, High Street, Slough, SL1 1EA. 01753 787511 library@slough.gov.uk www.slough.gov.uk/libraries

**Slough Museum:** 278-286 High Street, Slough, SL1 1NB. 01753 526422 info@sloughmuseum.co.uk

**West Berkshire Museum:** The Wharf, Newbury, RG14 5AS. 01635 30511 museum@westberks.gov.uk.

**Wokingham Library Local Studies:** Denmark Street, Wokingham, RG40 2BB. 0118 9781368.

**Berkshire Local History Association  
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**The next Newsletter will be published in January 2010 (Copy by 1 December 2009).** A word limit of 400/450 words is in place to allow for as many of you to contribute as possible, please note that when space is limited contributions over this amount will be subject to the editorial pencil! Email: [newsletter@blha.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@blha.org.uk) or post to Dr. M. Simons 80, Reeds Avenue, Earley, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 5SR.

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