

# **Berkshire Local History Association**



**Newsletter No 110  
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***Berkshire Local History Association***  
***Newsletter***

Editor: John Chapman

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We ask all member societies and institutions to provide a short report on their activities for inclusion in the Newsletter. We are always interested in brief news reports on other matters and notice of events likely to be of interest to our members.

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!

Contributions should be e-mailed to:- [newsletter@blha.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@blha.org.uk) and arrive not later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month preceding publication (January, May and September) Word, Text or pdf copy is acceptable, but keep it simple and please do not use spaces or tabs to lay out presentations. Photographs and images should be sent separately

Alternatively material may be posted to the Editor: John Chapman, 5 Cecil Aldin Drive, Tilehurst, Berks, RG31 6YP

Cover picture - The Berkshire and Reading Memorial by Forbury Gardens

# Membership

Berkshire Local History Association exists to provide a meeting place for all those interested in the history and heritage of the Royal County of Berkshire. We cover the areas of Berkshire both before and after the 1974 review of local government. We are a registered charity.

We have three classes of membership

**Institutional** - for institutions, including libraries, archives and museums

**Society** - for local history and similar societies

**Individual** - for individual or couples living at the same address

We publish a **Journal** (Berkshire Old and New) once a year containing detailed articles on Berkshire's past - all members get one copy

We publish a **newsletter** three times a year in January, May and September and you can opt for a hard copy version by post or an electronic version by e-mail

We hold an **Annual General Meeting** in Spring each year with an exhibition and followed by a **Presidential Lecture**

We usually hold a **Day School** in the autumn with a number of eminent speakers

We organise **day trips** to visit archives and places of interest (usually with privileged access to material)

We award a number of **prizes** to authors of articles and students at the University.

We offer **grants** to assist authors to publish their results.

We maintain a **website** to keep you up-to-date with society activities [[www.blha.org.uk](http://www.blha.org.uk)]

We maintain a **Bibliography** of publications held in our public libraries relating to the history of Berkshire

We work with a variety of organisations to protect and document the heritage of Berkshire

## Membership fees

The rates for 2014 are:-

	version of newsletter		no of copies	
	electronic	hard copy	Journal	Newsletter
<b>Institutional</b>	£18.00	£20.00	2	3
<b>Society</b>	£18.00	£20.00	2	3
<b>Individual and Family</b>	£9.00.	£12.00	1	1

A surcharge of £2 will also be levied on those who opt to pay by cheque.

Applications for membership should be addressed to the Membership Secretary [membership@blha.org.uk](mailto:membership@blha.org.uk)

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## Forthcoming Events

We do not list meetings of our local societies, but see our website [www.blha.org.uk](http://www.blha.org.uk)

12/13 Sept **Heritage Open Days** (events all over Berkshire) - see page 22

21-24 Sept **Christchurch Past & Present** - Oxford - see page 24

25 September **The Home Front** (lecture) - Tilehurst Library - see page 24

18 October **BFHS Workshop** - Theale Green School - see page 21

22 October **Bond Memorial Lecture** in St George's Chapel, Windsor - see page 21

## Next Newsletter

The next Newsletter is due to be published in January 2015.

The DEADLINE for copy is 15th December 2014 - preferably we would like to have it much earlier.

## Chairman's Corner



This will be the first Newsletter edited by John Chapman. I know he has many good ideas for its future, and would like to wish him well. As a well-known military historian, his services must be in great demand at present, so taking on this task cannot have been easy.

Members of the committee are particularly keen to let the member societies know what the Association is doing, and what it can do for them. We want the Newsletter to be read as widely as possible by members of member societies. And we would like to hear what the societies are doing. There are around 40 of them, but we only hear regularly from about a dozen in the Newsletter.

A recent change in the committee has been brought about by Elias Kupfermann volunteering his services. He is well-known in Windsor, Maidenhead and Slough as a local historian, and I would like to welcome him. There are a number of jobs which need to be done, and I hope he soon finds his niche, and can be formally elected at the next A.G.M.

Incidentally, I notice that the Constitution of the Association says that the officers and committee members should “normally” retire after five years. To my surprise, I find that I was first elected in 2009, so I’ve already done my five years! And as for most of the rest of the committee . . . . . It needs thinking about.

I was pleased to be invited to present the Berkshire History Prize this year: please see the short report and photograph later in this issue.

The Berkshire Schools Gazetteer has made steady progress, with over half the necessary research now complete. Some specimen entries for parishes have already been written, so that we can establish the format for the publication. We are still looking at a couple of years’ research, and some time after that for the completion of the text, before publication. This project, carried out largely by volunteers, is funded by the Record Office, the Record Society, and ourselves, with Joan Dils and me representing the Association on the management board.

We have had disappointingly few applications for grants for undertaking research from the Anthony Cross Fund, but we are about to make our first loan towards the publication of a local history book, using the money inherited from the Reading Local History Trust. Details of the funds and how to apply are on the website, or you can ask David Lewis, our Treasurer.

I will leave it to Ann Smith, of Reading Central Library, to tell you about the proposed move-round, whereby the local studies section will move down one floor. At any rate, there’ll be fewer stairs to climb! I am assured that the collection will remain intact and in the same building. The Lottery-funded First World War project

being run from there continues to make progress. The element which includes the digitisation of local newspapers, directories, etc., is more or less complete, and the results can be seen and searched in the Library. The book, "Berkshire in the First World War," is almost written. This is a co-operative effort from about 30 authors, some of them experienced, and others not so experienced. I think it will be a remarkable and very worthwhile achievement.

Over the summer, I have been cataloguing the Library's images of various areas of Berkshire – Cookham, Crowthorne, and Sandhurst among them. This steady plodding gets interrupted when someone gives the library some new pictures. It seems only courteous to show the donors that we are grateful by letting them see their material on the website.

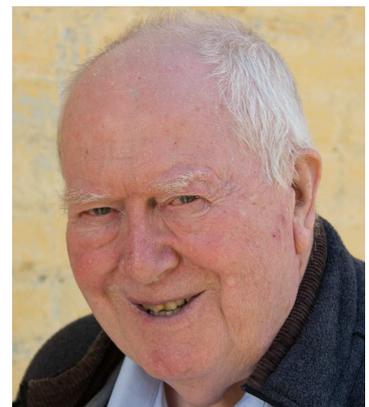
Then, like many, I look forward to the Heritage Open Days, which this year are September 11th-14th. I see that this time, you can have a tour of the Quaker Burial Ground, Garden and Meeting House in Church Street, in the middle of Reading. I'm sure that many people don't know it's there, and since it has been there for rather a long time, it should be interesting.

Looking further ahead, next year's A.G.M. and symposium is taking shape, so please mark the date on your new calendars and diaries: Saturday March 14th. Three eminent speakers have already accepted our invitation to take part. They are Dr. Kate Tiller, Dr. Gillian Clark, and Dr. Alan Crosby. All have had a long association with Joan Dils, in whose honour the symposium is being held, and I expect they will be telling us, among much else, how a love of local history, fostered by our Vice-Present, has changed their lives. I know it has changed mine.

*David Cliffe, Chairman, B.L.H.A.*

## ***Words from the Editor***

Having agreed to take over as editor from Margaret Simons I felt that our committee should have a say as to where the Newsletter is going. One clear message emerged: the Newsletter should provide our member societies with ideas; on possible speakers or visits, on things that are happening in the county and beyond, on opportunities for training or research and how to contact other societies for further information.



So; I have rearranged some of the sections and we have decided to fix the size at 32 pages; but mainly we want to get more contributions from our member societies and institutions about their activities, and summaries rather than detailed reports of talks they have received. We will also be trawling through other magazines and websites to bring matters of interest to your attention.

You should be looking at our website [www.blha.org](http://www.blha.org) in conjunction with the Newsletter. For instance you will find a list of talks and speakers that one or other of our member societies has mentioned. We do not endorse or recommend these talks, but ask you to contact the society concerned, if it looks interesting, to get contact details for the speaker. Also we will be using the website to hold details of forthcoming meetings of member societies rather than an A4 insert into the Newsletter.

As a first step can you check very carefully the contact details we have for our member societies and institutions (see pages 25-27) and let us have any updates or corrections.

*John Chapman*

## **Miscellanea**

### ***Information please***

In recent months two hitherto unknown war memorials have come to light - Crosfields School in Shinfield and St Ann's School in Caversham. The Crosfield's memorial relates to Marlborough House School which used to be on Castle Street in Reading and history teacher Paul Mason is researching the names. St Ann's School is being looked at by by Brendan Carr at Reading Museum and both would be very interested to hear from anyone who has any knowledge of or stories about any of the men named on the memorials. You will be able to see lthe two lists at [www.berkswm.org/BWM5-109.html](http://www.berkswm.org/BWM5-109.html) and [www.berkswm.org/BWM2110.html](http://www.berkswm.org/BWM2110.html). contact Paul Mason at [paulmason@crosfields.com](mailto:paulmason@crosfields.com) and Brendan Carr at [brendancarr@reading.gov.uk](mailto:brendancarr@reading.gov.uk)

### ***The Berkshire History Prize***

The prize was awarded this year to Chloe Bonner, for her dissertation, “The Effects of the Reformation on Society in Berkshire.” It is funded jointly by the Record Office



and ourselves, and it is awarded on the recommendation of the Department of History at the University of Reading. It is not necessarily awarded every year – only when something exceptional comes along, so it was with great pleasure that Dr. Peter Durrant and I attended the Degree Day ceremonies in July and made the presentation.

*Dr Peter Durrant and David Cliffe present the prize to Chloe*

### *Cover photo*

Our cover photo is of the Berkshire and Reading Memorial located at the entrance to Forbury Gardens in Reading. It does not bear any names. Initially the Berkshire War Memorial Committee had hoped to raise £8000 to erect a Winged Victory; but the appeal was abandoned in 1922. A new committee was formed in April 1931. A new design by architect Leslie Gunston was much simpler and the memorial made by Messrs Collier and Catley was unveiled 27th July 1932. Leslie Gunston was a cousin of the poet Wilfred Owen.

## ***Spotlight - on Project Purley***

With this issue of the Newsletter we are starting a new series of articles featuring some of our local history Societies. We would love to include your society in a future issue so how about putting pen to paper!

Project Purley is the name adopted by the local history society set up in 1982 to study the past and present of Purley on Thames in Berkshire. The name was chosen to indicate a wider interest in everything to do with our parish than just local history.

When the Queen's Silver Jubilee was celebrated in 1977 the Parish Council organised an exhibition and invited parishioners to loan their mementos of Purley. A remarkable collection of artefacts and photographs appeared but no record was kept and the objects were returned to their owners later. However it stimulated an interest in the history of our parish and a church youth group, the Pathfinders, did some research. When Jean and Cliff Debney came to live in Purley they assembled a group of family history enthusiasts and began transcribing some of the available Purley registers and reconstructing old families. Around the same time a natural history group emerged and when the church was to be extended an archaeology group was formed, under the leadership of John Chapman, as the professional archaeologists did not have the funding to do a proper dig. In 1982 it was agreed to merge these groups and Project Purley was born.

Old documents, maps, photos, personal reminiscences and many other sources are being used to piece together the past of the people, places and buildings of the parish. Anything from earliest times to today is of importance and interest. There are three levels to members' activities. First there are regular monthly meetings usually with a talk, but often during the summer taking the form of a walk-about or a visit. Second there are project groups where a few members get together as a team to work on a particular subject or facet and many individual researchers doing their own thing but able to draw on the resources and experience of other members. Finally there is the social side with an annual BBQ in July and party in December.

Over the years a vast amount of material has been collected and recently the Parish Council gave us space in a large cupboard in our Barn to store our archive and other day to day necessities like a projector screen, tea and coffee and display screens.

Project Purley has staged many exhibitions to commemorate national and local events which have been received enthusiastically by the general public of the parish and beyond. Several of its members give talks to other societies and take part in wider activities such as those of the Berkshire Local History Association, The Berkshire Family History Association and the Berkshire Archaeological Society.

We have published a large number of A5 booklets documenting aspects of our history but two years ago we embarked on a major publication entitled *Purley in Old Images* which has sold over 450 copies, telling the story of Purley through old photographs and images. Our website [www.project-purley.org](http://www.project-purley.org) keeps members up to date with details of meetings and events as well as providing a home for much of the results of our researches in the form of articles and tables. Three times a year we publish a Journal containing one or two major articles, sections of reminiscence and biography, nature notes and reports of all our events.

Among the major events of the year are visits from the Rain or Shine Theatre Company in June and December which we organise and sponsor to raise money for local charities. They usually play to packed houses with a matinée for school children and, in recent years, we have been able to give away £8500.

The society is run by a small executive committee who meet on a regular basis. Catherine Sampson is the current Chairman, Lee Hall the Treasurer, Ann Betts is Secretary and Editor of the Journal, John Chapman is Archivist and designer of the Journal, David Downs organises the Rain or Shine Events.

One of our major current activities involves the cataloguing and indexing of our archive objects (We have done about 6000 to-date, so only about 50,000 to go!!) We have three parts to the archive, first the physical archive which includes copies of ancient documents (originals are always offered to the Berkshire Record Office), newspaper cuttings, minutes and reports of the Parish Council and other groups within the parish, programmes, display panels from past exhibitions, maps and a host of other papers and a few artefacts. Second is the electronic archive consisting of electronic copies of photos, transcripts of documents and articles and finally a database listing all the objects with descriptions and provenances which is searchable.

Currently we have 91 members, mostly living in the parish; but a few much further away.

## ***New Books and Reviews***

### ***WAR AND AUSTERITY: READING'S MUNICIPAL TRANSPORT, 1939-1950,***

*by Ray Smith and John Whitehead. Reading: Millane Publishing, 2014.*

This is a book primarily for bus and trolleybus enthusiasts. It is comprehensive, detailed, and meticulous – everything that could be desired – without being narrow-minded or obsessive. To say that it was well researched would be an understatement.

People are never forgotten: those who managed the undertaking, those who worked for it, their trade unions, the councillors who made the decisions, and those who paid their money and travelled on the vehicles. The book has appeared in time for the authors to have known many of the people they mention.

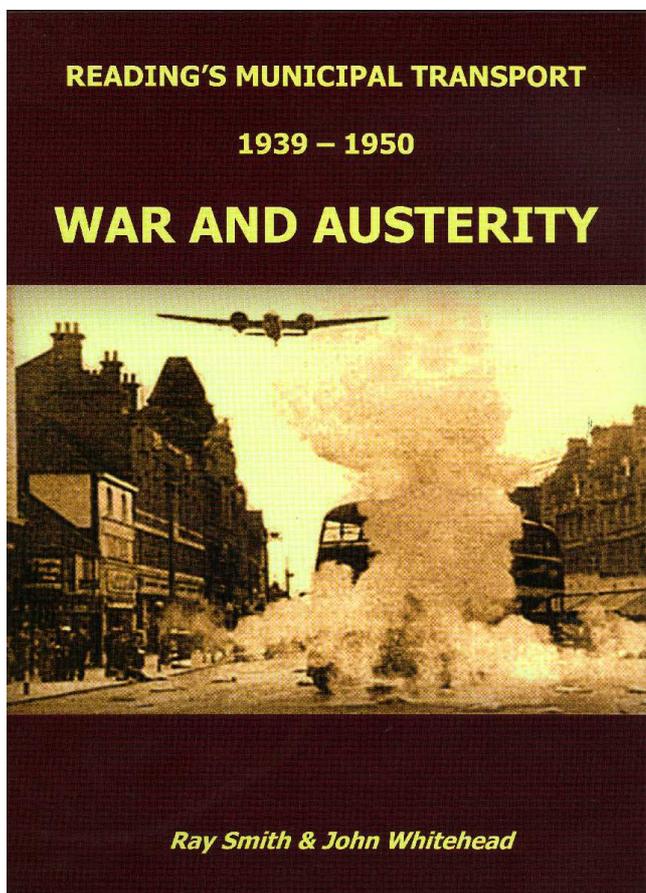
I certainly am not in a position to comment on the details regarding the vehicles and the running of them, but I read the book, chapter by chapter, over several months, with a view to seeing what it revealed about social conditions in Reading during the period it covers – a mere 11 years in 140 pages!

The Second World War occupies 6 of the 11 years. We start with the closing of the tramways in 1939. The trolleybuses had started in 1936, and were seen as the shape of things to come. The extension of the system to serve the Whitley area during and just after the war is recorded, though trolleybuses never did cross Caversham Bridge, as had been intended. Motorbus routes continued to develop, but during most of the period under consideration, the buses and trolleybuses often had difficulty in coping with the demands made on them.

Like most people, I suspect, I began by looking at the pictures, starting with the arresting photograph on the front cover, which appears to show a plane that has just dropped a bomb on a bus in the middle of Broad Street. It was a defence exercise! Photographs are well reproduced, and of a reasonable size. The book is in hard covers, and printed on good quality glossy paper throughout, which means that the pictures can be placed in appropriate places in the text.

For “old Reading” enthusiasts there is a great deal of fun to be had looking at the backgrounds to the pictures. Many long-gone, but well-remembered Reading establishments appear – such as the Reindeer pub in Southampton Street, the Tower Café in Tilehurst, the Rex Cinema in Oxford Road, and Fossett’s tripe shop on St. Mary’s Butts. I was intrigued to see a “level crossing” traffic sign by the railway bridge over Vastern Road – presumably a line from the Great Western Railway’s sidings to the corporation’s power station went over the road.

There are many insights into what went on in Reading during the war. Some transport services were curtailed, and various objects were painted white in an attempt to prevent accidents during the back-out. On the other hand, many new servi-



ces had to be introduced. It is reckoned that 1,000 people a day had to be got to Reading West railway station, from where they were taken by train to the new private siding of the Royal Ordnance Factory at Burghfield. In the beginning they were the construction workers, and later, munitions workers. There were also special runs to the Co-op jam factory at Coley, the Pulsometer Engineering Company at Norcot, Huntley and Palmers, and the Royal Army Pay Corps at Balmore House, Caversham, to name but a few.

All this had to be achieved despite shortages of fuel, no new vehicles being built, shortages of spare parts for existing vehicles, and shortages of staff.

The book is good at putting events in Reading into a national and international context, as the war progressed – notably the build up of American troops before D-Day. The poster advertising for men to join the Palestine Police Force, appearing on a photograph taken around 1947 was unexpected.

It's also good a letting you know about local events, and when they happened – when the council first allowed the cinemas to open on Sundays, when the tram-lines were taken up in various streets, when the Olympic torch was carried through, and when the original Whitley Pump was removed. These are not indexed – though there is a reasonable index referring to the transport undertaking itself.

Quality of this kind does not come cheap. If you want to buy a copy of the book, it will set you back £30. Unless you're a transport enthusiast, you will probably not want to pay that much. However, there is a copy for loan at Reading Central Library. If you are interested in the history of Reading in the not-so-distant past, this book should keep your brain stimulated for many hours, as you pick your way through the text and pictures, preferably with a notebook and pencil to hand.

It is a labour of love, produced over many years and without compromise. I would guess that the publishers, Millane Publishing, are the authors themselves, determined to produce the book that they wanted, unrestricted by the demands of commercial publishers. They are to be congratulated. Dare we now expect a further volume? The inter-war years, maybe?

*David Cliffe*

## ***Reading Blue Coat School***

Reading Bluecoat School was the subject of the May meeting of the History of Reading Society and the speaker was Peter van Went a former teacher at the school and, since his retirement, its archivist; during this time he has written a book about the school's history which can be obtained from the school for £6-99.

In 1646 a wealthy London merchant, Richard Aldworth, left the sum of £4,000 to Reading Corporation to establish a boarding school for the benefit of 20 poor boys for their education and upbringing. It was to be modelled on Christ's Hospital in London

where he had been a governor.

Eventually, in 1660, the school established itself as the Aldworth Hospital Charity School in the former Talbot Tavern in Silver Street, Reading where the curriculum was reading, writing, arithmetic and religious instruction; on Sundays the boys would attend a service at St.Laurence's Church, this tradition continued until 1946. The boys were required to wear a uniform of blue gown, yellow stockings and buckled shoes; traditionally blue was the colour of charity. The school continued to benefit from donations from local worthies; Thomas Rich of Sonning gave £6,000 in 1666, ironically, the school would move to his family seat in 1947.



*Holme Park, Sonning. Once the site of the Bishop of Sarum's Berkshire Palace and later home to the Palmer family*

The school continued to expand and in the 1700s the Reading Corporation, as trustees, decided to replace the Talbot Tavern with a modern building. During the 1800s the school would move again to premises at Bath Road, Reading then at the edge of the town.

After the Second World War, there were 150 boys 100 of whom were boarders, so larger premises were required and thanks to much local fundraising, the school moved to the Holme Park Estate at Sonning on Thames where today over 700 pupils, both boys and girls are educated.

*Sean Duggan*

# Great War Centenary

The next few years are going to see a huge programme of commemorations of events in the Great War. Many have already occurred and many groups and societies are already busy writing booklets, organising exhibitions, researching the names on their local war memorials or collecting stories about men from Berkshire or the Berkshire Regiments who took part. In this section we list a few of the projects we are aware of and look forward to receiving more information in the future.

Our cover picture is of the Berkshire and Reading Memorial which sits across the entrance to Forbury Gardens in Reading.

Here, in no particular order, are a few of these projects:-

## *Englefield*

Richard Smith has produced an A4 booklet entitled *Englefield in the Great War*. In 23 pages he covers an enormous amount of ground, reproducing lists of men serving from the parish magazine, summarising Berkshire military units and producing biographies of men from the village or who worked on the Estate who served and not forgetting the War Hospital in Englefield House. Copies may be obtained at the Tea Room in Englefield village or you can download it at [www.englefieldhistory.net/downloads](http://www.englefieldhistory.net/downloads).

## *Windsor and Maidenhead*

The Royal Borough has received a grant to fund a project entitled *For King and Country*. This involves about 40 volunteers who have been compiling stories about men from the Borough who served and linking them to memorials and locations which can be found on a map of the area.

## *West Berkshire*

Phil Wood has been assembling a website which pictures all the WW1 graves and memorials across West Berkshire and lists all the names. It also includes press cuttings and other reports of activities in the many villages of the District. Go to <http://westberkshirwarmemorials.org.uk>

## *Europeana*

This project, run by Oxford University, is collecting digital copies of personal photographs and papers and has run two road shows in Reading for people to bring their material for recording and copying. It currently holds around 600,000 items from all across Europe. To see the material visit [www.europeana-collections-1914-1918.eu](http://www.europeana-collections-1914-1918.eu)

## *Reading Museum*

Has an exhibition running until 14th September entitled *Reading at War* which covers conflicts from Iron age to modern day but with an emphasis on WW1. See [www.readingmuseum.org.uk/events/details/429/](http://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/events/details/429/)

### ***Stockcross***

Their local history society put on an exhibition in St John's Church on August 9th giving information about men who served coming from the area.

### ***West Berkshire Brewery***

Have just launched a new ale 'Tommy's Ale' commemorating four Berkshire men who were killed. Launched at the Heroes at Highclere event on 3rd August it is on sale at the Allied Arms in St Mary Butts, Reading (among other places) and sampled by your chairman and your editor.

### ***Berkshire War Memorials***

John Chapman has been trying to catalogue the war memorials in Berkshire and those in other parts of the country with Berkshiremen's names on them. So far he has listed about 1100 memorials in Berkshire alone. Many are illustrated with photos and a few have lists of men mentioned. See [www.berkswm.org](http://www.berkswm.org). Please let your editor know of any you know about which are not listed.

### ***Reading Old Cemetery***

Liz Tait has been documenting the large number of WW1 graves and memorials in the old cemetery at Cemetery Junction. See <http://cemeteryjunctionwargraves.org.uk/>

### ***Reading University***

The Friends of the University held an open day on 27th April at the London Road campus with displays from many schools and societies and an open air service to dedicate a plaque to Wilfred Owen. An open day at MERL displayed projects from 2nd year history students.

### ***Wokingham Remembers***

Wokingham Remembers started with a question: who were the men named on the Town Hall's War Memorial? The answer is were not as we expected, having believed they were solely men from the town. We soon discovered the names were given by those after the war who wanted to remember their loved ones. They could well have moved into the area after the war and presented the name e.g. of their husband. Therefore, this is not just a local list. Other names came from villages around the town, spreading out into the Crowthorne area. Therefore, although the central theme is the Great War and its effect on Wokingham town, we also provide a wider look at the tight affiliation of local villages in the area. Also, we cannot provide a story of the men unless we can attempt to describe the times they grew up in, both locally and nationally. Just who were these people of the Edwardian age and were they really so different to us? And crucially, what happened after the war? see [www.wokinghamremembers.com](http://www.wokinghamremembers.com)

### ***Wokingham Heritage Memorial Trail***

Officially launching on 14th September, Wokingham Town Council has been working with churches and other Towns and Parishes within Wokingham Borough to create a

Heritage Memorial Trail. This trail covers the war memorials within the Borough which include open air sites, an unusual Memorial Window at St Sebastian's Memorial Hall in Wokingham Without, Wokingham Town Council's indoor wooden panel together with Woodley Town Council's planned new memorial which is being facilitated by local residents and the Town Council working in partnership.

The project will provide exhibition stands for those towns, parishes and churches involved which will offer a permanent display, sharing some of the stories of the men who went to war on their own individual memorials. These 'pop-up' mobile exhibition stands will also be designed to be displayed collectively as a larger scale exhibition, available to schools and community groups.

### ***Berkshire Record Office***

Berkshire Record Office holds various records which document the local impact of World War 1. These include arrangements for civil defence, guarding bridges, food control and agricultural work. There are also lists of those who served overseas, together with some private records that either detail life at the front or changes required back home as a result of the war. Finally there are some records of local remembrance memorials. See [www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk/local-history/world-war-1](http://www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk/local-history/world-war-1)

### ***Abingdon at War***

Stories of the town 1914-1918 and Exhibition opens 5th August. What did Abingdon do in the Great War? Come and see our new exhibition highlighting Abingdon people and their contribution to the war effort as service men and women or civilians. Recent research into the town's families, businesses and industries has provided a new and fascinating insight into life on the home front, with excerpts from contemporary newspapers providing lots of information on work and daily life.

Learn about the town's war bond drive and the purchase of the Abingdon Gun, the men and women who worked at the Pavlova leather works and those who served in the forces. To find out more about the early days of the war follow our daily twitter feed from 13 August 2014, or see @abingdonheritage for day by day accounts of life in Abingdon 100 years ago. The exhibition combines local memorabilia and personal stories with the harsh reality of wartime weapons to respectfully mark the anniversary and commemorate all who served both at home and abroad.

### ***Thames Valley Police***

Thames Valley Police have put together a commemorative website for the men from the several forming police forces who served and died in WW1. It also contains a lot of useful information about the several forces and their role in the Great War. Go to [www.thamesvalley.police.uk](http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk) and search for 'centenary' in the box top right.

# Society News

## *Berkshire Family History Society*

The society exists to help all researchers living in and around Berkshire - wherever their ancestors came from - as well as researchers worldwide with specific Berkshire interests.

From Tuesday 2nd September, the Research Centre, conveniently located at Yeomanry House in Reading, launches a monthly discussion group (7 pm to 9.30 pm) - and on each first Tuesday of the month thereafter. The Centre is open on all four Heritage Open Days (11th to 14th September) and during usual opening hours. Resources at Berkshire's foremost facility for family history research include Findmypast, Origins, The British Newspaper Archive and Ancestry Library Edition and more online material and CD publications for Berkshire and other counties.

Monthly Branch meetings resume in September—in Abingdon, Bracknell, Newbury, Reading, Windsor and Woodley—open to all and free to attend. Autumn's programme features some well-known speakers, including Paul Blake, Meryl Catty, John Hanson, Celia Heritage, Ian Waller and Liz Woolley.

In coming months, the society expects to publish a new CD editions of Berkshire Marriages (3rd). More Berkshire transcriptions have just gone online at findmypast. Ongoing work includes parish register and First World War centenary publications.

See [www.berksfhs.org.uk](http://www.berksfhs.org.uk) for more about the society, its activities and publications.

*Derek Trinder*

## *The History of Reading Society*

In March Joy Pibworth joined the committee as the Society's secretary to replace Eddy Hooper who gave many years' excellent service, also, he and his wife Joan hosted our committee meetings. Committee member John Whitehead has kindly agreed to host the meetings. On 9th April we had a talk about crime in the Oxford Road, Reading given by Roger Hovell JP; also that evening we had a book sale that raised over £50 for the Society. On 21st May we had a talk about the history of the Reading Bluecoat School given by Peter Van Went (see page) On 18th June we visited Brock Barracks, Reading our guide was Major Andrew Bowes. On 16th July we visited St.Michael's Church, Tilehurst our guides were Rosemary and Gordon Cooper.

The Society hopes to release a calendar for 2015 (for the first time) at this time we don't know the purchase price. The subject will be old postcard views of Reading provided by the membership; it will contain 13 views of not well known views of the town. It will be on sale at the Society's meetings up to December.

The next talk will be on 17th September at 7.30pm on the subject of Council

Housing in Reading from 1945 to the present day, the speaker will be Dr. Margaret Simons. As usual, it will take place at Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square, Reading.

*Sean Duggan*

### ***Hungerford Historical Association***

A group of volunteers from the Museum of English Rural Life at the University of Reading entertained over 70 members and guests of the Hungerford Historical Association to a dramatic presentation of events in 1830 when agricultural labourers fought against new threshing machines which made them unemployed. The rioters were also demonstrating for a living wage and to improve their living conditions. The riot was eventually suppressed and one rioter was executed whilst the others were transported to Australia.

The next meeting of the Hungerford Historical Association will be the AGM on Wednesday, 25th June at 7.30pm in Hungerford Corn Exchange.

### ***Pangbourne Heritage***

We had a very successful photographic exhibition in Pangbourne Library starting on August 1st and then moving to the window of the Age-UK shop. It generated considerable interest to passers by in the village and included face to face sessions on military family genealogy. Our June meeting was a talk by Lyn Davies who lived in a house formerly occupied by Dylan Thomas. He described the many family links with the Thomases and the genius of Dylan. At the April meeting we welcomed Nick Brazil talking about the many literary and artistic people with connections to the Pangbourne area. The new season starts on the 22nd October with the AGM at St James the Less church.

### ***Project Purley***

Project Purley welcomed the Oxfordshire-based historian Tony Hadland to its April meeting to talk on 'Pop Pirates of the 1960s', very appropriate given that Radio Caroline had just celebrated its 50th Anniversary. Even more appropriately Tony broadcast numerous sound clips through a vintage radio – something that brought back many memories for some of our members and had many of them singing along.

In May the customary summer seasons of visits and events kicked off with a trip to Waddesdon Manor near Aylesbury, one of the former homes of the Rothschild family. It was a gloriously sunny day and perfect for exploring the extensive grounds. We had pre-ordered refreshments and lunch and these turned out to be extremely good value and gave us an opportunity to relax and chat before our afternoon tour of the house and its contents. All in all it was an excellent day and many of us plan to return.

June turned out to be a very busy month for the society. On the 6th we hosted the annual summer visit of the Rain or Shine Theatre Company to the Barn. This year's performance was *The Merchant of Venice* and, as ever, it was well attended and of a

very high standard. £570 was raised for the Alexander Devine Hospice fund, taking the total Project Purley has raised for local good causes to almost £8,500 since the first performance in the summer of 2005. A week later the society supported '*Purley in the Park*', a fundraising fete for Purley Primary School, with a small exhibition. Finally on the 20th, forty-five members enjoyed the society's annual barbecue hosted by two of our members in their 1930s designed garden. This event is always very relaxed and hugely enjoyable and this year we enjoyed the rare occasion of the barbecue falling on a balmy summer evening.

At the end of July the second of our summer visits takes us to the House of Commons, as guests of our local M.P., and then on to Kew Gardens. August brings a well deserve rest before our season of talks recommences in September.

*Catherine Sampson*

### ***Sandhurst Historical Society***

March's talk 'Spies in Petticoats' by Carol Brown told us stories about women agents in France during WWII. SOE (Special Operations Executive) was formed in 1940 with 10,000 people working on translations, forging etc. There were 83 training houses throughout England where women got 3 weeks training before being sent to France. Later the 3 week course became more intensive which quickly weeded out those unsuitable for the work. Initially the women were just supposed to be couriers. However, they became far more involved by blowing up places of strategic importance, organising reception committees and sending radio messages. The life expectancy of a radio operator was just 6 weeks. Some agents were careless in not hiding their equipment away so were caught and executed and others were betrayed. After the war, Nancy Wake went to great pains trying to find out the fate of missing agents. There were around 39 women agents and approximately 300 men. There is a memorial to these brave souls at St. Paul's, Knightsbridge.

John Price gave us a talk in April on the brilliant mathematician and astronomer Edmund Halley who was born in 1656. He was educated at St. Paul's School and Queen's College, Cambridge. Aged only 21, he spent 18 months at sea charting the southern sky. He determined the rotation of the sun from the spots on its surface and helped to measure the level of the tides. He also wrote extensively on magnetism, the trade winds and other phenomena. In 1691 he designed a diving bell and was one of the first to suffer from "the bends". Much of his work was done in conjunction with Sir Isaac Newton who trusted Halley implicitly. In 1682 he observed the movement of a comet, working out that it would reappear roughly every 75 years, hence the name Halley's comet. In 1720 he was appointed Astronomer-Royal at Greenwich and he died there in 1742.

May's talk by Christine Weightman on 'A Victorian Bobby's Notebook', unfortunately now lost, was found in a roof space. A unique item with a beat by beat account,

albeit with some mistakes in dates and numerous crossings out, of a policeman's observations in Ascot between March and May, 1841. He went out morning and afternoon for a total period of 35 hours per week. Our 'Bobby' believed to be one, John Carter, was a 35 year old shoemaker. His tasks included taking prisoners to court and attending parish meetings. His main cause for concern was the prevalence of beggars. Another of his responsibilities was to police the 4 inns on his 'patch' as well as keeping an eye on the ale houses. In addition our Bobby liaised with policemen from neighbouring parishes. Domestic violence/fights were particular problems. In 1856 John Carter brought his last prisoner to court and was never heard of again. However, in 1864 his name appears in Kelly's Directory as licensee of one of the inns he policed! By 1841 22 of the 52 counties had police forces but Berkshire thought it unnecessary and too expensive. By 1856 all counties had, by law, to have a police force.

Rebecca Lambert came to talk to us in June about excavations at Runfold Quarry and Tongham Nurseries. These revealed late prehistoric and early Roman settlements in the Blackwater Valley dating back to the bronze and iron ages. It is thought that these could have been here for 3 to 5 hundred years. There were many settlements in the north east of Surrey, possibly due to the presence of timber and light soil for agriculture. There was also a river close by providing water for the crops and a means of trading with other settlers. 18 round houses were discovered at Tongham – the estimated life of these being 40 to 50 years. Also 2 large waterholes came to light nearby as well as evidence of pottery making, flint work and weaving wool plus a late iron age hearth was found at Runfold. There was little change in these settlements until 100AD.

### ***Shinfield and District Local History Society***

Our May meeting included a talk by Stan Cornford entitled “A stroll around St George’s Chapel, Windsor”. This was a change from the usual presentations given nowadays in that it was literally ‘a talk’ – i.e. no pictures. Stan called upon his detailed and intimate knowledge acquired over many years as a steward of St George’s Chapel to take us on a guided tour, creating mental pictures of the many features as we went. He led us through the history of the chapel from commencement of its building by Edward IV in 1475 to the present day. Each monument and chantry chapel was described together with details of the lives and deaths of some of the notable persons buried or commemorated in St George’s Chapel and their connections with the wider history of Britain. Not only was Stan’s talk full of historical interest but it was delivered in a thoroughly entertaining way.

Our June Meeting was taken up with planning a display based on those men named on the Shinfield War Memorial who died in World War 1. The display is to be mounted in St Mary’s Church, Shinfield, in conjunction with a flower festival on 6th and 7th September 2014.

Our July meeting saw a return visit of Tony King, one of our regular speakers,

this time to give his presentation on “The Edwardians”. As usual, Tony’s talk was packed with detail covering all aspects of life during the Edwardian period and up to the outbreak of World War 1. The presentation started with the formative years of Edward VII’s life and his accession to the throne in 1901. Tony then described the social structure of the time from the Crown down through the aristocracy, captains of industry, upper class, middle class, working class, to the workhouse. The main areas covered during the remainder of the presentation included the growth of motor transport (speed limit raised from 4mph to 20mph in 1903); welfare (workhouses, Barnardo’s, Ragged Schools, Foundling Hospital, introduction of state pension in 1909); 1908 Olympic Games; Suffragettes; development of wireless by Marconi; seaside holidays (piers, bathing machines); shopping revolution (Selfridges, F W Woolworth, and Wait, Rose and Taylor (a small grocery shop later to become Waitrose)).

*George Taylor*

### ***Swallowfield Local History Society***

17th April 2014 **‘They failed to return’** speaker Tony Eaton

Another fascinating evening with this superb raconteur. Based on known facts he talked about two mysterious deaths. Amy Johnson and the mystery surrounding her final flight, together with the death of Leslie Howard aboard a civilian aircraft at the beginning of World War 11. Anyone who has heard Tony will know we had an evening of secrecy and baffling facts.

22nd May 2014 **The Siege of Reading** speaker Mike Cooper

Mike joined us once again to explore the evidence and facts he has found about this historic occasion which did spill over into Swallowfield. He is an enthusiastic young man and we had an interactive session where we split into teams and planned our own assault on Reading - who was right? A really most enjoyable evening.

19th June 2014 **Eversley Barn Antiques** - speakers Hilary Craven and David Pearsall

We had a really interesting evening with Hilary Craven from Eversley Barn Antiques and her colleague David Pearsall. We listened, looked and guessed what some items could be used for. David is the President of the International Metalist Society and his passion for very old and fascinating objects kept us enthralled throughout the evening.

Visitors are always welcome. 8 p.m. start on the 3rd Thursday of the month in the Rose Room at the Parish Hall, Swallowfield RG7 1QX

*Maggie Uttley*

## *Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society*

In April our chairman's brother - Mr Tom Fort, writer and broadcaster - gave us a most entertaining talk about the A303 road and its historical and interesting associations. Probably not many of us knew until then that near Andover there is a cross known as Deadman's Plack where Edgar, Saxon king of England, killed his friend Aethelwold who had betrayed him by marrying Edgar's intended bride. At Monxton, in 1723, the eccentric rector, Thomas Rothwell, never left his room but spent his time working out mathematical calculations while his curate was left to keep things going. Other fascinating facts were revealed as we drove westwards - providing us with a most amusing and enjoyable evening.

Sally Botwright was our knowledgeable guide when we took another trip to London in May - the highpoint on that occasion being the Guildhall, where we were able to go inside and learn its history.

Our meeting that month was a talk by Mr. Stephen Rowley '500 years of Morris dancing'. According to earliest records, around 1480, Morris dancing took place in a royal setting. It became very fashionable and was taken up by churches celebrating religious festivals. At St Laurence Church in Reading there is a record dated August 10th 1513 that Morris dancers were paid for a Dedication Day performance. But later the Puritans considered all dancing to be unchristian. By the 19th century its popularity had waned; but there was a revival of interest in the 20th century - and in Reading in 2013 a new team, the Redding Moreys Dauncers, was created to celebrate 500 years of Morris dancing.

Our speaker in June was going to talk about Jacksons of Reading, but unfortunately he had to cancel. Instead the Editor of our Journal, Pauline Humphreys, came to the rescue and gave us such an interesting talk about the House of Lords (where she used to work) that it more than made up for our original disappointment. Thank you, Pauline, for such a fascinating evening.

We never have a meeting in July, but instead we have a Ploughman's Lunch and once again Malcolm and Doreen Scott were our hosts. The weather could have been kinder, but their garden looked lovely and a good time was had by all. The Scotts have hosted this event for several years now and we owe them a great debt of thanks.

The Society has set up an exhibition in Twyford's Library to commemorate Word War I; it has involved a lot of work, so we are hoping that it will draw in plenty of people to view the many items supplied by members.

Our final event in July was a visit to Nuffield Place, home of that remarkable man Lord Nuffield. The weather was glorious so we had a very enjoyable and interesting afternoon.

*Denise Wilkin*

## *Wargrave Local History Society*

Elizabeth Hazeldine spoke to the April meeting about Fillets Court and the Families who Passed Through the Estate. The Manor, on the edge of Henley, is first mentioned in the 1340s, when it was granted to John de Molyns. The estate changed hands several times and by the 17th century passed to Bulstrode Whitelocke. The wood was the really desirable asset – Bulstrode made £980,000 in his first year. In the 1830s the house was replaced by a new one, much as it now appears, where the Phyllis Court Club was established in 1906. Despite a long and complex ownership history, the Manor was only used as a home by one of its owners (the Whitelockes during the Civil War) – the others all acquired it for its situation, and what else came with it.

In May, Caroline Stanford gave a fascinating illustrated talk on The Work of the Landmark Trust, which has its Head Office at Shottesbrooke. It was formed in 1965 by John and Christian Smith, and exists to rescue significant historic buildings that are at risk, and having carried out restoration work, give those buildings a new and secure future by offering them to for use for self-catering holidays. The Trust's philosophy is to use the highest quality repairs and materials, in the process supporting the traditional skills used in its construction. They avoid conjecture, but will sometimes remove later additions, or reverse changes made during a building's history. Caroline showed us a wide variety of Landmarks – large and small. More information about the Trust can be found at [www.landmarktrust.org.uk](http://www.landmarktrust.org.uk).

The history of Broadmoor Hospital was Mark Stevens topic in June. He had come to know it through its archives, although many records are considered closed, and so it is the Victorian era that could be studied. Many people think of it as a place where the “bad and mad” were sent, but Broadmoor was set up to treat a new category of patients – the ‘criminally insane’. Crowthorne provided an ideal airy and healthy situation, fairly close to London, and Mark told us of the compassion of staff, the types and conditions of the patients, and their attempts to escape!

This year's visit was to Bentley Priory - an 18th century house that became the Headquarters of Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain in 1940. Following a brief history of the site, members toured the museum that recreates the scene at that time, and the Italianate gardens with views to the North Downs, before enjoying afternoon tea – an essential part of any Society trip!

Our meetings start at 8 pm at the Old Pavilion on Wargrave's Recreation Ground. Visit our website [www.wargravehistory.org.uk/](http://www.wargravehistory.org.uk/) for more information about the Society.

*Peter Delaney*

# ***Museums and Libraries***

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

The Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) and Reading Museum have been awarded £129,150 to work together on *Reading Engaged*, a new joint project aimed at strengthening engagement with local communities.

The Arts Council England award will allow Reading Museum and the Museum of English Rural Life to strengthen their partnership working, as both Museums have worked together on a previous Arts Council England project, Reading Connections.

The new joint project will aim to develop new types of displays with community groups and new ways of working with volunteers. The funding will also support audience research that will help both museums develop new programmes that are more responsive to the communities they serve.

MERL is developing an object handling collection, and related strategy, policy and procedures and the project will also contribute to the Our Country Lives project by allowing us to thoroughly research the themes and topics of the new galleries. Other joint activities will include working together on new merchandise for both Museum shops and on staff training.

Updates will be posted on the MERL blogs at Our Country Lives - the new MERL blog and The MERL Project Blog

Following our exciting Heritage Lottery Fund news we've been busy setting the wheels in motion to get the project underway. We'll keep you informed of progress via future newsletters and the blog, but in the meantime, life goes on - we're still running a busy programme of events this summer and work on other projects continues...

## ***Reading Local Studies Library***

Reading Local Studies Library is on the move! You may have read in the local papers that Reading Council is creating a centre for young people on the top floor of the Central Library. This means that the Local Studies section has to move down to the 2nd floor. Don't worry - we will not be disposing of books, newspapers, maps and other resources. Some items that were on open shelves may go into reserve stock but will still be accessible.

We do not know when the move will happen but it will be over a few months in the Autumn and Winter. Some local books will have to be stored for 6 weeks while building work takes place, so please phone or check the library website before you visit the library to make sure. And please let people in your local history societies know about the proposed move.

In the Summer, the library has had visits from American academics who were studying the letters of Mary Russell Mitford. They are hoping to digitise some and

make them available to a wider audience via the internet. We have been given some marvellous local history materials on Twyford, Ruscombe and Hurst by Mrs Sheila Rudd. And our First World War project has been extended to February 2015, giving us more time to research and to improve the digitisation of the local newspapers. They will be on the Berkshire Stories website, which is currently under construction. Look out for news of when it goes live.

*Ann Smith*

### ***Vale and Downland Museum***

Tucked away behind Wantage Market Square, you'll find the town's main tourist attraction, The Vale & Downland Museum. From the outside, this 17th century cloth merchant's house and former doctor's surgery looks unassuming. However, once inside, you'll discover the space opens out into a large foyer area with a gift shop, coffee shop and art gallery and bright contemporary signage leading to the main galleries. Here, you'll find everything from fossils to a Formula One racing car. Telling the story of the local people and landscape, the collection has objects to fascinate all ages, family trails and dressing up clothes galore. Gallery highlights include an Anglo- Saxon skeleton, the remains of the medieval market cross and a bronze bust by Sir Joseph Edgar Boehm of Robert Lloyd Lindsay, Lord Wantage, one of the founders of the British Red Cross.

For the local historian, the main attraction will undoubtedly be the resource room housed in the recent extension. Here you will discover a treasure trove of local history books and research documents and the chance to browse through the museum's extensive collection of old photographs. Thanks to the work of museum volunteers, the records have recently been reorganised making access easier. Anyone wanting to use these facilities will need to book an appointment by emailing [museum@wantage-museum.com](mailto:museum@wantage-museum.com) or telephoning the museum on 01235 771447. Groups can also book tours of the main galleries led by members of the museum's volunteer education team. Afternoon talk and tea sessions are another popular option. These consist of an in - depth talk in the galleries on a particular aspect of the town's history, eg The Wantage Tanneries, followed by tea and cake in the coffee shop.

*Dorothy Burrows*

### ***West Berkshire Museum***

After several years of closure the West Berkshire Museum opened its doors once more on 25th August. The museum, which is in Newbury's Wharf Street, has benefitted from an amazing £2.26 million transformation which includes restoration of the historic Cloth Hall and Corn Stores, creation of a new link building and visitor facilities, and complete refurbishment of all display and activity spaces to increase the total exhibition area by a third.

In preparation for the works, volunteers checked and packed almost 20,000 artifacts equating to over five tonnes of collection material. The displays in the ten



*The new face of the museum*

new Story Stores are planned to be changed regularly so every few months so the collections will be used to their full potential. Alongside this museum staff have also been developing and trialling learning opportunities with local schools that will be provided within the new museum.

We welcome the new manager/curator, Victoria Barlow replacing Amanda Loring

The museum will be open from Wednesday to Sunday (and Bank Holidays) 10am-4pm and admission is free

## **Opportunities**

*For visits, activities, talks, conferences or projects*

### ***Bond Memorial Lecture***

Dr Stephen Brindle from English Heritage will be delivering the Maurice and Shelagh Bond Memorial Lecture in St George's Chapel, Windsor at 7 pm on Wednesday 22nd October. Admission is free but you must apply for tickets to The Chapter Office, Windsor Castle, Berks, SL4 1NJ enclosing an SAE. You will need to bring photo-id for the lecture. which is on *The First St George's Chapel*.

### ***'The early twentieth century: Conflict and change':***

***Saturday, 18th October***

October sees the key one-day conference at Theale Green School, near Reading, Berkshire. Dr Nick Barratt, renowned family historian, broadcaster and academic, heads a 12-strong team of professional speakers and researchers bringing wide-ranging expertise from family and local history research, the media and academia to this event.

Few periods in history saw national and international change and upheaval on the scale witnessed over the early decades of the last century. This conference combines social, economic and community history with contemporary genealogical resources, materials and research techniques to give family and local historians a broader appreciation of the turbulent times in which their ancestors lived.

After Dr Barratt's keynote address, researchers can pursue themes and topics of greatest interest in a parallel track programme that offers opportunities to discover more on women's suffrage, migration, adoption, housing, schooling and domestic

service, as well as on the military conflicts overshadowing the early 20th century.

Alongside the talks, delegates can consult a range of advice desks, several featuring conference speakers and seek one-to-one research help and guidance—including photographic and costume dating, military history and memorabilia and contemporary family history research. Historic materials from the years 1900 to 1930 feature in displays staged by over 20 national and local organisations.

The £37.50 registration fee secures access to keynote and personally chosen parallel-track sessions, expert advice, displays, bookshop—and covers lunch and refreshments. See full details at: [www.berksfhs.org.uk/conference](http://www.berksfhs.org.uk/conference)

*Derek Trinder*

### ***Heritage Open Days 2014: 11 – 14 September***

It is hard to believe it but Heritage Open Days celebrate their twentieth anniversary this year and this year's events have a suitably festival feel in celebration of this big milestone. Once again in mid-September thousands of unique and historic sites across England will be throwing open their doors to visitors for free, including many not normally open to the public. This year events include Elizabethan garden parties, a 1950s tea-dance, walks, tours and picnics.

As I write so far over twenty sites across Berkshire have advertised their participation in the scheme on HOD's website although this is likely to rise substantially in the run up to September 11th. I am certainly tempted to head down to Bisham Abbey and the nearby All Saints Church which will be opening their doors to visitors on the Thursday, whilst closer to home a guided historical and architectural tour of Sonning takes in both the church and buildings associated with the Rich and Palmer families. Reading's Ribbon of Green is the inviting title of a guided walk organised by the Berkshire Gardens Trust which takes in some of Reading's historic parks, gardens and open spaces. The walk ends in Caversham Court Gardens which is also participating in the Heritage Open Days. Alternatively you can take in a tour of Reading's Quaker burial ground, meeting house and garden in Church Street, a site of worship since 1714. It would be remiss of me not to also mention the open day for anyone interested in researching their own family's history at Berkshire Family History Society's Research Centre at Yeomanry House – especially as I shall probably be taking a turn to help at some point.

There's plenty to see further a field too but a couple particularly caught my eye. Whale Island, Portsmouth is an island constructed by convicts which became the first naval gunnery school ashore. You can tour the grounds, visit the Victorian buildings, the Church of St Barbara and museum, and inspect the state gun carriage. Slightly closer to home is Cadland House Gardens, which boasts spectacular views across the Solent to the Isle of Wight from the gardens designed by Capability Brown circa.1775. Guided tours will be taken throughout the day, and Head Gardener Peter Chadwick will be on hand to field any questions. Light refreshments will be available and

picnics are welcome. All sounds like a pretty good day out to me.

For full details of all the events, opening times, and any restrictions check out the website: <http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/>.

*Catherine Sampson*

There are far too many events across the County to list here so look out for your local newspaper and especially for the excellent booklet which Reading BC publishes

*Editor*

### ***The Berkshire in WW1 Project***

(or BWW1 for short) We are a project team who are developing a set of resources, for current and future generations, based on collections within Reading Central Library that show the impact of The First World War on Berkshire.

The resources we are working on cover 1910-1925 and explore themes such as: The lives of our soldiers, impact of war on daily life, women's changing roles, refugee camps, caring for the wounded, and the impact of war on Berkshire. The project started in August 2013 with volunteers undertaking research for a series of case histories that will be published in a book toward the end of 2014. Contributions were also made to Reading at War Exhibition.

We have completed scanning of 64,000 pages of newspapers, street directories, photographs, maps and documents. This includes: photographs from our collection; Reading Mercury, Reading Standard, Reading Observer and Berkshire Chronicle; Berkshire and The War 1916-1919 in 4 bound volumes; Kelly's Directory of Reading, Smith's Directory of Reading, Kelly's Directory of Berks, Bucks and Oxon Electoral Rolls for 1918 and 1921; 1:25 Survey Maps 1912. 50,000 pages between 1914 and 1920 are currently being catalogued by volunteers through PastView software and uploaded on to our website Berkshire Stories – to be launched early 2015. This is a massive task so please contact me if you are interested in volunteering. I will train you in the use of PastView and then you can work from your computer at home. The newspaper articles are fascinating and it is an opportunity to understand the period based on reports of the time. All the scanned documents are available to search from the BWW1 computer in my office in the Local Studies Library by appointment; this will be available to the public when cataloguing work is complete.

We are just starting to compile educational resources and work locally with students. History students from University of Reading undertook WW1 road shows earlier in the year, working alongside artist collective OpenHand OpenSpace, MERL and The Potts VC Trust. Through BWW1 Heritage Detectives secondary students have the opportunity to undertake work experience based on BWW1 Project and have been learning research, writing and editing skills. There are still places available.

To further engage young people in learning about the war period and the impact it had on our community Berkshire in the First World War project has just launched a writing competition for young people aged 18yrs or younger. Writing about people's

lives and experiences is one way we can honour and commemorate our families and ancestors, at this time. Details [www.bww1.org](http://www.bww1.org)

The project is run by Reading Central Library and Reading Borough Council and funded by Heritage Lottery Fund. We would like to keep the project alive, beyond HLF funded part of the project, which finishes at the end of February 2015, to continue to contribute to local WW1 Commemorations 2014-2018. Please let me know if you are interested in contributing to its continuation. I would like to offer a massive thank you to all our volunteers and library staff for their ongoing dedicated work.

You are welcome to join our emailing list for events, research enquiries and updates for the Berkshire area. I would like to invite you to contact me, John Arcus, Project Coordinator. I am available: 9-5 Monday to Thursday, 01189372521, [john.arcus@reading.gov.uk](mailto:john.arcus@reading.gov.uk), [www.bww1.org](http://www.bww1.org), Local Studies, Reading Central Library, Abbey Square, Reading, RG1 3BQ.

*John Arcus*

### ***Lecture - The Home Front: Reading in the First World War***

There will be a presentation by Ann Smith at Tilehurst Library. on Thursday 25th September from 10.30 – 11.30. Coffee and biscuits will be available. Please ring Tilehurst Library to book your place on 0118 901 5112. Based on BWW1 Project and Reading at War Exhibition at Reading Museum.

The library is located on School Road in Tilehurst

### ***Christchurch Past and Present***

September 21-24 Residential (£365) or day tickets (£65)

An opportunity to explore Christchurch in Oxford for a fascinating programme of talks, tours and demonstrations. Explore Christ Church's hidden spaces, discover many of its extraordinary treasures and learn about an institution which is continuing to evolve and inspire.

If you require more information on any of our events please do not hesitate to contact our Visitor Manager, Helen Camunas-Lopez, by calling 01865 286998 or by emailing [helen.camunas-lopez@chch.ox.ac.uk](mailto:helen.camunas-lopez@chch.ox.ac.uk)

# History Societies

- Arborfield Local History Society:** Secretary Tina Kemp, Kenneys Farm, Maggs Green, Arborfield RG2 9JZ [tina@geoffkemp.force).co.uk]
- Berkshire Archaeological Society:** Andrew Hutt, 19, Challenor Close, Wokingham, Berks, RG40 4UJ [info@berksarch.co.uk]
- 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 tel 01235 850427 [audrey.long@waitrose.com]
- Bracknell & District Local Historical Society:** Geoffrey Moss, 31 Huntsman's Meadow, Ascot, SL5 7PF [MossSandalwood@aol.com]
- Burnham Historians:** Mary Bentley, 38 Conway Road, Taplow, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 0LD tel 01628 665932 [burnhamhistorians@btinternet.com]
- Cox Green Local History Group:** Pat Barlow, 29 Bissley Drive, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 3UX. tel 01628 823890 weekends only. [alan.barlow2@btinternet.com]
- East Garston Local History Society:** Jonathan Haw, Goldhill House, Front Street, East Garston, Hungerford, RG17 7EU [jonathanhaw@btopenworld.com]
- East Ilsley Local History Society:** Sue Burnay, White Hollow, High St, E.Ilsley, Berks RG20 7LE tel 01635 281308 [info@eastilsleyhistory.com] [www.eastilsleyhistory.com]
- Eton Wick Local History Group:** Teresa Stanton, 35 Eton Wick Road, Eton Wick, Windsor, SL4 6LU tel 01753 860591 [teresa.stanton@talktalk.net] [www.etonwickhistory.co.uk]
- Finchampstead Society:** Mohan Banerji, 3 Tanglewood, Finchampstead, Berks, RG40 3PR tel 0118 9730479.
- Goring & Streatley Local History Society:** Janet Hurst, 6 Nun's Acre, Goring on Thames, Reading, Berks RG8 9BE tel 01491 871022 | Mob: 07799 583524 [gslhs@w-mark.demon.co.uk]
- The Hanneys Local History Society:** Ann Fewins, 'Lilac Cottage', East Hanney, Wantage, OX12 0HX. tel 01235 868372 [annfewins@beeb.net]
- The History of Reading Society:** Joy Pibworth / Sean Duggan [sduggan34@googlemail.com]
- Hungerford Historical Association: Secretary:** Mrs Shelagh Parry, 9 Cottrell Close, Hungerford. RG17 0HF. Tel: 01488 681492. [shelaghpparry@btinternet.com] [www.hungerfordhistorical.org.uk]
- Longworth & District History Society:** Pam Woodward, 22 Cherrytree Close, Southmoor, Abingdon, OX13 5BE. tel 01865 820500 [prwoodward@btinternet.com] [http://www.longworth-district-history-society.org.uk/]
- Maidenhead Archaeological & Historical Society:** Brian Boulter, 43 Bannard Road, Maidenhead SL6 4NP [bboulter@tesco.net]
- Mid Thames Archaeological & Historical Society:** Jane Wall, 143 Vine Road, Stoke Poges, SL2 4DH [sec.mtahs@yahoo.co.uk]
- Mortimer Local History Group:** Mrs Janet Munson, The Laurels, Ravensworth Road, Mortimer, RG7 3UD [munsonsinmortimer@yahoo.co.uk]
- Newbury District Field Club:** Ray Hopgood, 23 Lipscombe Close, Newbury, RG14 5JW [secretary@ndfc.org.uk]
- Oxfordshire Family History Society:** Tony Hadland, 4 Barcote Cottages, Buckland, Faringdon, Oxon SN7 8PP
- Pangbourne Heritage Group:** Rosie Nurick, 1 Thames Avenue, Pangbourne, RG8 7BU tel 0118 9842565

- Project Purley:** Catherine Sampson, 32 Waterside Drive, Purley on Thames, Berks, RG8 8AQ  
tel 0118 9422 255 [clspurley@aol.com] [www.project-purley.eu]
- Sandhurst Historical Society:** Janice Burlton, 16 Scotland Hill, Sandhurst, Berks GU47 8JR tel  
01252 872504 [janiceburlton@hotmail.co.uk] [www.sandhurst-historical-society.org]
- Shinfield & District Local History Society:** Ann Young, 'Roselyn', School Green, Shinfield,  
Reading, Berks RG2 9EH. tel 0118 9882120. Reporter George Taylor [georgetaylor29@btinternet.com]
- Sonning & Sonning Eye History Society:** Diana Coulter, Red House Cottage, Pearson Road,  
Sonning, Berks, RG4 6UF tel 0118 9692132 [diana.coulter@orange.net]
- Stanford in the Vale & District Local History Society:** Philip Morris, 71 Van Diemens,  
Stanford in the Vale, Faringdon, Oxon, SN7 8HW tel 01367 710285
- Swallowfield Local History Society:** Maggie Uttley [kcuttley@aol.cm] [www.slhsoc.org.uk]
- Tadley Local History Society:** 5 Church Road, Pamber Heath, Tadley, Hampshire, RG26 3DP  
[www.tadshistory.com]
- Thatcham Historical Society:** Alf Wheeler, 22 Park Lane, Thatcham, RG18 3PJ  
tel 01635 863536 [enquiries@thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk] [www.thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk]
- Theale Local History Society:** A.D. Spurling, The Fifteenth, Broadlands Close, Calcot Park,  
Reading RG31 7RP [thealehistory@aol.com]
- Twyford & Ruscombe Local History Society:** Audrey Curtis, 39 New Road, Ruscombe RG10  
9LN tel 0118 9343260 [audreycurt@goolemail.com] reporter Denise Wilkin
- Wargrave Local History Society:** Peter Delaney, 6 East View Close, Wargrave, Berks, RG10  
8BJ tel 0118 9403121 [peter.delaney2@btinternet.com]
- Windsor Local History Group:** Sue Ashley, 49 York Avenue, Windsor, SL4 3PA [nutritionsas-  
hley@hotmail.com] [www.windlesora.org.uk]
- Friends of Windsor and Royal Borough Museum:** Jinny Melville, 15 Gloucester Place,  
Windsor, SL4 2AJ [www.windsormuseumappeal.org.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 tel  
01344 775920.
- Wraysbury History Group:** Gillian Hopkins, 45 Staines Road, Wraysbury, Staines, TW19 5BY  
tel 01784 482947 [gillian\_hopkins@tiscali.co.uk]

Would you all please check these entries and let us know of any changes. The entry should show:-  
The name, postal address and e-mail address for formal correspondence with the society and  
optionally a telephone contact number.  
Your website url (if you have one)  
Optionally the name and e-mail address of the person who will send in reports of your  
society's activities (if different from official contact)

e-mail changes and corrections to newsletter@blha.org.uk

# Archives, Libraries & Museums

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

**Allen County Public Library:** Genealogy, PO Box 2270, Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA tel 001 468 012270 [www.genealogycenter.org]

**Berkshire Record Office:** 9 Coley Avenue, Reading, RG1 6AF tel 0118 901 5132  
[www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk] [arch@reading.gov.uk]

**Bracknell Library Local Studies:** Hue Lewis, Town Square, Bracknell, RG12 1BH. tel 01344 352400 [bracknell.library@bracknell-forest.gov.uk]

**Centre for Oxfordshire Studies:** Helen Drury, Central Library, Westgate, Oxford, OX1 1DJ tel 01865 815741 [enquiries@oxst.demon.uk]

**Eton College Library:** Eton College, Windsor, SL4 6DB [archivist@etoncollege.org.uk]

**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]

**Hungerford Virtual Museum:** – [www.hungerfordvirtualmuseum.co.uk]

**Maidenhead Heritage Trust:** Fran Edwards, 18 Park Street, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 1SL.  
[administration@mhc1.demon.co.uk]

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

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

**Reading Central Library:** Local Studies Librarian, Abbey Square, Reading, RG1 3BQ tel 0118 9015965

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

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

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

**Windsor & Royal Borough Museum:** The Guildhall, Windsor, SL4 1LR. tel 01628 796846  
[museum.collections@rbwm.gov.uk] [www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/museum\_index.htm]

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

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

**Vale & Downland Museum:** Dorothy Burrows, Church Street, Wantage, OX12 8BL tel 01235-771447 [vale.downland@gmail.com] [www.wantage-museum.com]

**West Berkshire Museum:** Museum Collection Store, Unit 3, Bone Lane, Newbury, RG14 5SH  
[museum@westberks.gov.uk]

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

# **Berkshire Local History Association**

*Registered Charity 1097355*

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**Vice-Presidents:-** Brian Boulter, Joan Dils,  
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**John Chapman** (Newsletter Editor)

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