



Berkshire Local History Association



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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 articles on other matters and notice of events likely to be of interest to our members.

Contributions should be e-mailed to:- newsletter @blha.org.uk and arrive not later than the 15th 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 but please include your society in the name of each photo.

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

Cover picture -

Wargrave High Street c 1903

Chairman's Corner

As I write this, on a surprisingly snowy April morning, the History Department at the University of Reading is also having to come to a decision - on whether or not to award the Berkshire History Prize. This is awarded for an outstanding undergraduate dissertation on Berkshire local history which has made use of material at the Berkshire Record Office, and the prize is funded jointly by the BLHA and the BRO. Of course, the accessibility of this material has been very restricted over the last year, so it may mean that they cannot make an award this time.



In this Newsletter I'm hoping to read about how some of our local societies have been faring during the restrictions. Monthly meetings in halls of various types and sizes will have been put on hold, as will summer visits and excursions. These are the main activities of local history societies. Some of them will have stopped meeting altogether, preferring to wait until more "normal" times return, while others will have taken to holding "virtual" meetings via "Zoom," or some similar application.

It will be interesting to see what happens when we are allowed to get back to those halls of different types and sizes. The owners of the halls, of course, will have lost a year and more's income from hiring fees. Hopefully no societies will actually "go under," but I can't help wondering how happy people will be happy to go back and sit in close proximity to one another, even if and when they have received two doses of a vaccine.

Will people still be willing to spend time travelling to and from meetings, and to pay car parking fees and walk through dark streets? Or to wait in bus shelters or on draughty station platforms?

"Virtual" meetings have other advantages. Some have told me that it's easier to hear what the speaker is saying, and from my own experience, it's often easier to see the pictures. Also, local societies don't have to pay travel expenses, and can engage speakers who live in other parts of the country. It is noticeable that here in Reading, some older members join the "virtual" meetings who are unable to travel to meetings in person, and it has been good to see them. And because the meetings are only open to paid-up members, new members have joined. Consideration is being given to holding some meetings, especially in the winter months, as "virtual" meeti-

ngs, even when we get back into the hall.

Those who like to keep an eye on what other organisations, local and national, are offering online, must have noticed the wide range of “virtual” presentations now available – talks, seminars, and sometimes courses involving a number of sessions. Some are free to join, but others need to be booked and paid for. The British Association for Local History, to which the BLHA is affiliated, has become much more active in this way, and I recommend a visit to their website.

So, it will be interesting to see how things go – which may vary from place to place. I can see that in future there may be a demand for “face-to-face” meetings to be relayed from halls, or recorded and made available via the Internet. But I guess that not only are there technical problems in doing this, but that speakers would need to give their permission, which may not be forthcoming. If it were known that a talk were readily available on a screen, potential audiences might make do with that, making it less likely that a speaker would want to put in the many hours of research necessary to give an hour’s talk on perhaps only one occasion.

Obviously, there’s nothing like a face-to-face meeting, or a visit in person to a historic site. It’s a social event. You never know quite who is going to turn up, and you can catch up with old friends and acquaintances, and make new ones. You can exchange information, by word of mouth and on paper or between book-covers. The chances are that there will be experts there, and you can ask for information and advice, and you can buy and sell things to raise funds. From the speaker’s point-of-view, you can have a good idea of whether or not you can be heard, and whether the audience is “with you.” This happens almost subconsciously from body language and small gestures and sounds, and more obviously from laughter and applause. It’s all lost with “virtual” meetings.

So, I hope to see some members, if only on a screen, for a shortened 2021 AGM. Next year’s meeting, at Eton Wick, is already booked, and should be more like meetings of old, involving an interesting talk and a visit to Dorney Court, eating and drinking, sociability, and maybe even a little fun!

David Cliffe

Our 43rd A.G.M., April 2021

This would, in normal times, have been our 44th A.G.M., but because of the pandemic we had to cancel the 2020 meeting at Marcham. This year,

the continuing restrictions meant that we had to cancel the meeting at Eton Wick, but by then, more people were used to taking part in on-line meetings, and it was decided to hold an A.G.M. via Zoom, whilst recognising that not all members use the Internet. Only a week before the chosen date, we heard that the funeral of H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh was to be held on that afternoon. Rather than delaying yet again, it was decided to hold the “business” part of the meeting in the early part of the afternoon, to conclude well before the funeral itself. The talks, which were to have followed, will be given on a future date as a special event.

This is a short account of that short meeting, from the perspective of the Chairman.

For understandable reasons, it was only a small number of people joining the meeting. I had taken the precaution of checking the constitution of the Association, to make sure we were following the rules.

The technology did not always behave as it should. People occasionally disappeared and reappeared, and our poor Treasurer had to use the telephone to answer questions. Even so, his replies came through all right. Thanks are due to our web designer for hosting the meeting, replying to e-mails and taking telephone calls.

So the minutes of the 2019 A.G.M., the reports of the committee members and the accounts for two financial years were accepted. The President, Vice-President, officers and committee members were duly elected for another year, and the meeting lasted around thirty minutes.

However, I was pleased that the meeting wasn't just a formality. Some pertinent questions were asked, and replied to. In particular, someone asked about bringing back the list of speakers which had been useful to people planning programmes of talks. It had disappeared from the website some while back, and it has now been put on the agenda for the next committee meeting in three weeks' time. The A.G.M. gives an opportunity for members to ask questions, and to tell committee members what they want, and the opportunity was taken.

Over the course of the meeting, various people were thanked, as is right and proper. The appearance of all the articles in the back numbers of “Berkshire Old and New” was particularly appreciated. And I should like to thank all those who gave up a part of their Saturday afternoon to help the Association along. Inevitably the 2021 A.G.M. was a bit subdued – let us hope for a different kind of meeting next year.

A Word from the Editor

Thank you to all the contributors this edition. We have had a most varied collection of articles, bits and pieces and reviews which I, at least, found interesting and I hope you will too.

The problem that arose of course was that we ran out of space and have had to chip away at a few submissions and there is no room for pictures.



John Chapman

Articles

Thatcham, the origin of the name

Most local history books will tell you that Thatcham obtained its name from a Saxon Chief called Tace who set-up his village, ham, here. Thus creating Tace's Ham which over the centuries became Thatcham. There is also another local myth that when the people were stood thinking how to roof their buildings a figure suddenly appeared, horned and with a tail, and shouted "Thatch-em." Fanciful this might be it leads to the second thing people say, Thatcham got its name because the buildings were thatched. During the Saxon period most buildings in the country would have been thatched!

Two documents, one from c.951AD and another, the will of Ælfeah (Alfeah) from c.975AD, gives us the first written evidence of the place name. It is written as Thæcham. Breaking this down Thæc is a Saxon word meaning roof-covering, i.e. thatch. Some have suggested it was the name of the Saxon chief. I think they have read the original story above and put Thæc in place of Tace. There has also been the suggestion that it was hamm rather than ham and considering the place names that surround us this might be more plausible - Thæcham might mean roof-covering material in a river meadow rather than the hamlet of a Saxon chief. What do you think?

Nick Young

The Barkham Survey

A project of many years standing, of archaeologically fieldwalking every ploughed field both on the London Clay and Bagshot formation in the ancient parish of Barkham, near Wokingham, ended with the last field, being walked in 2019, one that had not been ploughed within living memory. The number of fields we have covered is only 32, but then Barkham is not a very arable parish. Twenty-seven BARG members joined in with fieldwalking.

Using a grid pattern, the 10% sample of surface finds we picked up of what man had left behind in every field walked, indicated that there was activity taking place in the parish during every era of agriculture. This included pottery from prehistory, from the Bronze Age, right through the Romano-British era, the Saxon (Barkham has a tenth century charter indicating the bounds of a Saxon estate), the Norman conquest and after. Greater quantities of vessel sherds were picked up from subsequent periods right into the 19th/twentieth century, where white dinner services were rivalled by blue. Early and later imported German stoneware vessels for carrying liquid refreshment were evident! In addition industrial activity indicating so far undated iron-working in simple furnaces using local ores were found in a high percentage of the fields as well.

Not only pottery but building materials, some dating to Romano-British local activity, but particularly in the medieval period onwards added more information. For instance peg tiles (used before nib tiles) indicated that clay roofing material was in use during the medieval period although for what proportion of houses we do not know. Brick also, some local but not all and some quite specialised, and used for chimneys, fireplaces and even kilns can be also be dated to different periods of manufacture. Most of this material has no-doubt come from farmyard manure heaps.

The finds will be stored in the Museum of Reading, Accession number REDMG 2006 .192

This local survey was also able to suggest from field names the medieval Commonfields used for agriculture, or pasture, resources for fires such as furze; most important, woodland It is possible to an extent to study the effects of enclosure on Barkham in the 1821 Enclosure Act and the following pattern of land ownership between local and non-resident owners

and the descent of land ownership between fathers and children, or to non-local or, latterly Council ownership.

Janet Firth

History of Thatcham Pubs

Since giving the first online talk we have had a number of questions relating to some of the topics discussed, many about the pubs and old buildings. Please note that there was/is a difference between alehouse, beerhouse, tavern, inn, hotel, etc. although the definitions of many are now more clouded. Below I will typically refer to pub to encompass everything.

The White Swan, London Road

Within Thatcham there were at least two, if not three, pubs called the Swan. One is situated near B&Q on the London Road, until the 20th century right up to the White House (Narrow Boat) was within the Thatcham boundary.

This Swan was rebuilt c.1934 but early maps clearly show the pub, some with the name "White Swan". Going back further to 1756 we find the death of the landlord, Thomas Waterman, noted to be at "Ye Swan". It would seem the name chopped and changed between the Swan and the White Swan. The pub stayed in the hands of the same family for some time and we have in 1789 Edward Waterman noting that he is not responsible for his son, Edward, accounts. What had his son done? Something I am yet to find out.

Whatever the name was, official or otherwise, not all was well at the pub. In 1857 the pub was in the hands of the Parker family. The pub had been noted a number of times, and fined, for being open out of hours, especially while church services were taking place. One day during May 1857 it is alleged that Mr Parker had loaded a pair of pistols and told a servant that one day he intended to shoot himself. The servant told Mrs Parker who didn't believe her. Later in the day a gunshot was heard, Mrs Parker flew upstairs to find the body of her husband.

Cross Keys

Little is known of this pub, and if not for one or two snippets, nothing at all would be known. On the corner of Northfield Road and the A4 stood "Bath Cottage", number 55 Bath Road. That is until demolition in the 20th century. An advert in the Reading Mercury from 1787 noted that the cottage was for sale and that it had formerly been a public house known as

the Cross Keys.

Coopers Cottage

Next, we come to one of the three major stagecoach Inns in Thatcham. A large property once stood where Beverley Close and Coopers Crescent now stand. The building had been extended a number of times and had large grounds with outbuildings, meadow and gardens. In 1827 Thomas Cooper, who had been landlord of the "Castle Hotel" at Marlborough moved to Thatcham and established Cooper's Old Company. He controlled his stagecoaches all the way from White Bear in Basinghall Street, London to 6 High Street, Bristol and undercut others with no additional fees and no tips from passengers to drivers. This was made up for with higher wages. Everyone of his coaches stopped at Thatcham whether they were staying overnight or not. His drivers were instructed that each half of the trip was to take 6 hours and that they were not to allow other coaches to pass.

Within a few years the business had run up debt to the sum of £20,000 and Cooper became bankrupt. His friend, Mr Chaplin, purchased the business and Cooper continued to operate on his behalf. By 1840 though the property was up for sale, Cooper moved to Richmond and was employed as the local railway station master.

To give you an idea of the scale of Coopers Cottage (Beverley House), a sale catalogue from 1924 describes various features 3 reception rooms, 9 bedrooms,, 2 dressing rooms, bathroom, office, 2 enclosures of rich pasture, electric, gas, phone (34), stabling, garage, mains drainage, 2 wells with pumps, all for £2,350.

By 1901 the Coulson family moved in, having previously lived in Beverley, Yorkshire and by 1929 it was renamed "Beverley House."

Nick Young

Buildings of the Maidenhead Area

Maidenhead Civic Society is primarily a planning watchdog but our constitution includes taking an interest in buildings of historic interest in our area, collecting information and publishing reports on same. This has been done for Bisham Abbey and All Saints Church, Bisham, St John the Baptist Church, Shottesbrooke and Ockwells Manor house. The information collected has proved useful when commenting on planning issues concerning these buildings, for example when the National Trust needed help in

defending the covenants around Ockwells Manor when there was an attempt to build over 200 houses next to the house. Fortunately this attempt failed in the High Court in 2012 but no doubt will occur again

Apart from the reports listed below, some of which were written when we opened the building concerned for Heritage Open Days (HODS), articles with a link to them appear in the Society newsletter, published four times a year. Some reports can be downloaded from our website, as can the newsletters. Only the Bisham history trail is available in print (£5/copy).

Bisham Abbey & All Saints Church, Bisham

Bisham Abbey is a C13th Knights Templar preceptory, added to by William Montacute, earl of Salisbury in the C14th and by Sir Philip and Sir Thomas Hoby in the C16th. Some of the medieval and Tudor armorial glass survives. The Vansittarts embellished the house with heraldry in the C19th. The earl of Salisbury founded a priory at Bisham in 1337, demolished by 1552. Its location is unknown but a GPR survey of the current tennis courts would be a good idea! Nearby All Saints Church was extended by the Hobys and Vansittarts to provide a suitable resting place once the priory was no longer available.

The Abbey is owned by Sport England and access is difficult to arrange.

St John the Baptist Church, Shottesbrooke

The finest C14th church in Berkshire, founded by Sir William Trussell in 1337, the same year the earl of Salisbury founded the priory at Bisham. Salisbury was one of Trussells' donors. A remnant of the C14th armorial glass put up by Trussell is extant. Medieval brasses on the floor of the church are being damaged by bat droppings and the church is rarely open.

Ockwells Manor House

Built by John Norreys Esquire in the mid C15th, the house was regarded by Nicolas Pevsner as the most refined and most sophisticated timber framed mansion in England, though he admitted the perfection was partly due to the C19th restoration. This project has involved the re-identification of several of the personalities represented in the famous armorial glass of the great hall. Of the eighteen personalities, three had seats in West Berkshire, including Norreys himself (Yattendon, Bradfield and Chamberhouse in Thatcham), two were based in East Berkshire, again including Norreys

(Ockwells in Bray and Clewer) or four if the king and queen in Windsor are included, with another two in nearby Bucks (Upton by Chalvey and Amersham).

Ockwells has always been in private hands so there is no regular access. We hope to publish a history of the house shortly. The following reports have a link to Ockwells.

None of these buildings are normally open to the general public, hence the participation in the HODS scheme. Ockwells Manor house is currently on the market. The Royal Borough now owns land to the south and east of this house (Ockwells Park and Thrift Wood Park). We would like to see more regular access available for interested persons to Ockwells and the other buildings mentioned above which are not far away.

Ann Darracott

Charvil Lakes

I am sure that during lockdown many of you, like myself have found new places to walk and enjoy the lovely countryside which surrounds us. I have walked more around Charvil Country Park and discovered the 75 hectares of former gravel pits (now restored lakes) and remnant pastureland, which borders the River Loddon between Charvil and Twyford.

I was surprised to learn that the lakes are named, Canberra, Orrell and Haupt and when I began to research this, I uncovered an interesting part of our local history.

The lakes were adopted by Wokingham District Council about 10 years ago, who asked residents to suggest names. Mr John Baker made the suggestion and provided the history behind his choice.

With John's kind permission I have reproduced his report here.

On 27th January 1953 local residents had a narrow escape when a twin jet Canberra light bomber plunged into the side of White Bridge on The Old Bath Road opposite Goodey's scrapyard. The crash caused a crater 25 feet deep by 40 feet across and brought down telephone wires, which cut communication between Reading and Twyford. The wreckage was spread up to a quarter of a mile away.

Mr Eric Goodey was standing at the entrance to his yard when he watched the aircraft corkscrew into the ground. Mrs A Pearce the

licensee of The Waggon and Horses heard the aircraft pass overhead then upon running outside saw the smoke from the crash site.

An inquest was convened at The Almshouses , Twyford on 4th February and one witness, P.C Lovegrove, who was off duty at the time, reported hearing a boom followed immediately by the noise of a jet travelling at speed. From out of the clouds he saw an aircraft in a vertical dive going very fast. Mr Sidney Moreland saw a similar sight and when the aircraft hit the ground, he reported seeing a great flame shoot up and the plane blowing to pieces.

The aircraft concerned was a new English Electric Canberra B2, which was collected from the manufacturers just 11 days before the crash. It was based at Abingdon and on the fateful day the crew were Master Pilot Stuart Cardy Orrell aged 32 and Navigator William Gordon Haupt aged 26. Orell was an experienced pilot and on this flight, there had been no communications to indicate the aircraft was in trouble. The Coroner returned a verdict of accidental death due to the disintegration of the plane. RAF documents give the cause of the accident as obscure, there was no evidence of a technical fault and weather conditions were good. The pilot was experienced and fit, and this left the Commander in Chief with insufficient information to establish a cause and the case was closed.

During my research I have been told that this is not the only unexplained crash of a Canberra. Over the years a number of them “fell out of the sky”. The cause was eventually traced to “runaway trim”, where the aircraft would suddenly pitch nose down and dive at a very high speed into the ground. With hindsight, this would appear to be the most probable cause of the accident in 1953, which could have easily devastated Charvil

John A Baker

Master Pilot Stuart Cardy Orrell aged 32 was buried in Spring Garden Cemetery (Also known as New Cemetery) Abingdon. He left a widow Meg aged 28 and a young son David just 2 years old.

Navigator Sergeant William Gordon Haupt is buried at Brookwood Military Cemetery, Woking. He was a single man. His parents Charles and Margaret had also lost an older son, Albert in a similar accident just 4 years

earlier. But that is another story for another day.

So next time you are walking around or fishing the lakes, spare a thought to these young men and enjoy the fitting memorial to them.

Miscellanea

A Mystery

You may remember the piece we included in the January Newsletter about a mystery car that had crashed. We had responses from several people, Peter Delaney and Katie Moss in particular. Here are some of the replies:-

According to the 1956 telephone directory, F A Elley's off licence was at 81 Kings Road in Reading, the phone number then being 3816. By the 1958 edition of the directory, there ia a leading figure '5' added - so presumably the date is no later than 1957/8, when the later directory was compiled (although the frontage may not been updated when photo was taken).

Fowler Sons and Co were listed as outfitters, at number 75 Kings Road in both editions (3002 in the earlier one).

The KRD registration of the police car behind dates from early 1955.

Although the radiator of the car is damaged so as not to be recognisable, the car looks to be an Austin A30 or A35. The A35 first appeared in 1956, its very similar predecessor, the A30, having been produced from 1952 until the autumn of 1956. The main identifying difference between the two was that the A35 had a much larger rear window, and the radiator was painted with a chrome surround, rather than being all chrome plated which is what the car in the picture looks to have).

I cannot see for certain, but I suspect the police car is a Humber Super Snipe.

I had a feeling the pic was taken in Reading, as not many towns would have been on 4 digit phone numbers in the mid-1950s. I think the date must be 1955/56, as this is the best fit with the police car plate and the possibility that the bent car was a '56 A35 (or slightly older A30.)

I imagine that this accident made it into the local papers and I suppose it's possible that this photograph was taken by the press. I guess we'll never know that, nor why this image was kept in a desk drawer for 60+

years.

As it's Reading (very much the domain of Simond's Brewery) interesting to see that FA Elley's office was a Fremlin's outlet, given that they were based quite a way away in Maidstone.

Just to say that I can confirm that the photo was taken in Reading, the beer, wine and spirits seller was Francis Albert Elley of 81 Kings Road, Reading, who had the telephone number 3816, which is just visible in the photo. (Found listed in Kelly's Reading street directory of 1954)

The building with the lamp over the door, was at the time the Warwick Arms pub, at No. 77 Kings Road.

I did go off on a tangent looking for 'Fremuns' which is advertised on the front of the shop, only to find that the company is Fremlins – the elephant picture just to the left of the lamp post was one of their advertising posters.

I've tried searching the British Newspaper Archive for reports of a car crashing into a lamp post, but have had no luck – maybe someone else has done better!

New Books

The Shops, Trades and Businesses of Pangbourne

by Ellie Thorne

Many villages to the west of Reading are envious of all the facilities that Pangbourne offers. While it may be missing a bank nowadays it still has a Square and main Street peppered with pubs, restaurants, shops and businesses as well as a collection of medical facilities.

In this book compiled by members of Pangbourne Heritage Group every memory since 1949 has been dredged to provide the story of what has gone on for so many years. It lacks an index but there are several maps to locate the various places and is a good read. It hints at why W H Smiths has a shop in so small a village and which is loth to sell the book, but there are many other shops where you can buy a copy for £10. Alternatively you can send a cheque for £13 to Jane Rawlins, Chapel House, Thames Avenue, Pangbourne RG8-7 and she will post you a copy.

John Chapman

Early Independents of the Maidenhead Area

by Paul Lacey

I never cease to wonder where Paul gets all his information from. This is the third in the series of books about independent bus and coach operators in the Thames Valley and will appeal to people interested in family and local history as well as transport.

The 1920s and 30s especially was a period when entrepreneurship went viral. We were recovering from the First World War and the flu pandemic. Motor vehicles were coming into their own and providing an opportunity for everyone to travel, and travel they did. We hear of local bus services making it easier to get to the nearest town and coach trips to the coast or to the races for a good day out.

As might be expected the Government had to step in to regulate affairs and this curbed some activity. But the motor car was well out of the reach of most of the population and the demand was huge so many of these small operators survived, some into the 1940s until nationalization reared its head.

As usual Paul tells a good story full of detailed information and provides us with lots of photographs. He covers over thirty operators in and around Maidenhead. If you would like a copy send a cheque for £18 (£15 cost plus £3 P&P) to Paul Lacey, 17 Sparrow Close, Woosehill, Wokingham RG41 3HT

John Chapman

Society Contributions

Berkshire Archaeological Research Group

Members of the Berkshire Archaeology Research Group (BARG) were invited to collaborate with The Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society (TWHAS) at the start of a long-term project at Coldharbour Farm, Crowmarsh Gifford, South Oxfordshire. Previous work at the site by TWHAS in the 1990s had revealed a small Romano-British cemetery, a corn dryer and possible ditch but no sign of where the folks lived.

This return to Coldharbour Farm aims to look for evidence of occupation

and will be using four methods of surveying; magnetometry, resistivity, metal detecting and fieldwalking.

In August 2020, between lockdowns, we were able to undertake all 4 survey techniques on the first of nine fields. Unfortunately, the ground conditions meant little could be seen in the magnetometry results but the previous archaeological trenches were picked up with the resistivity. Fieldwalking gathered a large amount of building material and pottery, with a good concentration of Roman pottery around the corn dryer site. Metal detecting produced 25 coins including; 15 Roman, 5 silver medieval and 5 Modern. The medieval coins included a scarce cut half penny of Henry III minted in Carlisle in AD 1248-1250. Some of the other finds included a 13th century vesical seal showing a pelican feeding her three chicks with blood from her breast (belonging to Ralph), a sword belt hanger, a Georgian fob seal and Roman snake ring.

It was clear from the results that the Roman villa was not to be found in this field but summer 2021 will hopefully see the next field being searched for further clues.

Lindsey Bedford

Berkshire Family History Society

Local and family historians, like everyone else across the country, wait to discover just what any 'new normal' might mean in practice for their ongoing research. One thing is certain. Offline opportunities to conduct original research seem likely to remain constrained for some time yet, if only by the combination of limited access to archives, document ordering and quarantine, and continued social distancing.

With facilities and events at The Centre for Heritage and Family History remaining unavailable to the public for the present, society efforts have focused on enhancing online products and services for everyone. The society has added downloads of Berkshire Marriage records by parish to the burial transcriptions previously made available in this format. This download access has proved very popular, especially for those with research interests confined to a handful of parishes rather than needing the countywide publications.

Online events using the Zoom platform are attracting steadily increasing audience numbers, irchers based in far-flung parts of the UK and overseas. Many of these events sell out quickly and, for this reason, early booking is

always advisable. After the recent successful beginner's course, the coming months feature a course examining the Industrial Revolution in Britain and another on how to research the history of a house. The first quarter of the year saw more online talks, with the aim of bringing greater historical context to genealogical findings. Five further talks take place in the 'Spring Potpourri' series.

Meetings of the society's six branches have continued online too, with local members and visitors joined by others from outside the county, for whom attendance at a Berkshire venue would not be practical. The society branches have also staged their first 'joint meeting', drawing a good audience from the six local groups and out of county members.

Society workshops continue to be popular and invariably sell out quickly. Recent topics covered include The Old Poor Law, Railway Ancestors and getting more from online services like Findmypast and Ancestry. Two future workshops will address the provision for education for our ancestors from c 1860 into the early 20th century, and then the profound reforms made between 1914 and 1960. In August, there is a repeated workshop designed to help those writing up their family history.

While the Research Zone at The Centre remains closed to visitors at present, bookable, one to one 50-minute advice sessions are available online for those who need help with their family history research. Note that these slots can sell out quickly.

There is growing recognition among many family historians that DNA testing can offer a means to check or supplement their research findings with information obtained from a DNA test. As well as providing information beyond that contained in surviving paper records, the test may also offer a potential route to breaking through apparent brick walls that arise all too often in traditional research. The society's DNA interest group, facilitated by international DNA expert, Debbie Kennett, provides a valuable focus for society members, and there is now a specific section devoted to DNA related topics within the society's online forum

As in 2020, the charity's Annual General Meeting will take place online — on Friday, 18th June at 7.00 pm for a 7.30 pm start, allowing access for all members, wherever in the world they may be. And not least, and despite the many challenges presented in the past year by the Covid-19 pandemic

and subsequent countermeasures, it is pleasing to report growth in society membership, alongside the progress outlined above. Keep up with the latest news of the society's activities at <https://berksfhs.org>

Derek Trinder

Berkshire Gardens Trust

Despite the unavoidable cancellation of last summer's scheduled visits, it's been a busy few months for us, with plenty to look forward to as this year progresses.

Firstly our website has received a massive overhaul, thanks to the generous donation of his time by the husband of one of our members, for which we are very grateful. Linked with this work, we now have a separate email for general enquiries and planning, which will hopefully benefit further potential users and local authorities.

In addition, the need to respond to various planning applications and consultations across the county has not diminished, with the overriding objective of protecting our precious designed landscapes, including public parks and gardens which have proved to be so important to everyone's wellbeing during the pandemic. In particular, later this year and linked to our recently launched research project, we have a lecture about the history of Public Parks on Friday, 19th November at 2pm.

We have also run our first series of zoom lectures, as an alternative to hosting lectures in Purley Barn as we have done for over 10 years. The lecture topics have varied from the early history of Purley Hall on the outskirts of Sulham Woods near Tilehurst and Pangbourne, to the gardens at Walpole House, Ealing (home of the diarist Horace Walpole), the one-time house of the artist JMW Turner, in Twickenham and the satirist William Hogarth at Chiswick, all of which have been recently restored. As a complete contrast (and hopefully a boost to those whose overseas holidays have not been possible), our most recent zoom lecture was by Richard Bisgrove, entitled "Gardening Across the Pond.", which Richard discussed some of the Anglo-American exchanges of horticultural knowledge and plants, from the early settlers in Virginia through to prairie gardens in 21st century England.

You can find out more about the Berkshire Gardens Trust, check out the news referred to in this newsletter, our scheduled events for the late spring

and summer (on the optimistic basis that we will be able to visit gardens in person), as well as more zoom lectures at £5 a time, via <https://www.berkshiregardenstrust.org>.

Fiona Hope

Berkshire Record Office

We are pleased to say that we are open once again. We reopened to visitors for two sessions per day from 13th April 2021. If you would like to book a session, you can find out all about bookings and what to expect when you arrive on our Visit Us pages on our website. Let's hope we stay open for good this time!

Whilst we have been working from home, we have been typing up catalogues that were not in a compatible format for the online catalogue. We will need to edit them, but we hope to be able to have more catalogues online this year. We have also been working on maintaining our social media feeds and will be working on developing videos for our YouTube channel too. Whilst we have been closed to visitors, we continued to provide research and copying services – so we have been pretty busy, despite the reduced access to the collections.

A project update - In 2019, we received a cataloguing grant from the 'Archives Revealed' programme, supported by The National Archives, The Pilgrim Trust, and the Wolfson Foundation. You can read more about the grant on our website. The aim of the project was to appraise, sort and catalogue the archive of the Thames Conservancy (the historical body responsible for the management of the river before the Environment Agency and Thames Water). Last year COVID got in the way of things, but our project archivist, Michaela, was able to virtually complete all the cataloguing. Sadly, we are still unable to provide a physical exhibition, but we are providing an online exhibition instead. Entitled: "Where Smooth Waters Glide: 250 years of caring for the River Thames", it will be available online in early May 2021. A link will be made available nearer the time via our What's On page.

Keep an eye on our website and social media feeds on Twitter @berksarchives and Facebook The Berkshire Record Office for all the latest information.

Ivone Turnbull, Senior Archivist

Bracknell Forest Libraries

We hope to be re-opening our libraries from Monday 12th April, which will include access to public computers and study spaces. Visitors to Bracknell Library will also be able to use the local studies collection on the first floor of Bracknell Library. We're excited to have a new microfilm reader for printing and saving images from old local newspapers on microfilm and we can't wait to show you! Visits to our libraires will be limited to one hour to begin with. We recommend that you email Bracknell Library (bracknell.library@bracknell-forest.gov.uk) ahead of your visit to check what resources we have to help you. Library members can continue to access at home the family history websites Find my Past and Ancestry Library edition, which are normally only available using library computers. Please contact us for access details.

Anne Hayward

Goring Gap Local History Society

In March 2021, like most other local history organisations, our traditional activities had to cease and we went online. Monthly talks are now on the Zoom platform and chatting to one another in person in the village hall has been replaced by a regular email newsletter which includes news and a couple of local history tales each time, illustrated by old photos from the Society's archives. Our trips had to be cancelled, but Mike Hurst, who organizes the popular Transport History Group, which usually holds an outing each month, made up for the deficit by compiling occasional bulletins that looked back at past events. As we go to a variety of venues that are loosely connected to transport, be it by plane, train, car or boat, he had a few years' worth of trips to describe, accompanied by background material on places visited. Luckily plenty of photographs were available, which Mike is able to use in his newsletters to give the former travellers a trip down memory lane.

Our well-received Zoom talks will continue throughout the summer, but we hope to resume face-to-face meetings in the autumn, Covid-19 permitting. I seem to be committed to coming up with monthly e-newsletters for the time being, but our annual Journal will also serve as another local history treat for our members in the late summer. We hope that our society will survive this interruption in our normal schedule. It will still be wonder-

ful to actually see everyone in the flesh again. Nothing online can substitute for that.

All that glisters ...

Here's a cautionary tale. One of the members of Goring Gap Local History Society alerted me to a post on a local Facebook page from the landlady of The Bull, a former coaching inn at Streatley. During lockdown she had been clearing out the attic and had found four photographs, three frames, all showing the same man at different times in his life, including a great Edwardian wedding scene. She didn't want to throw them away if they were of interest to anyone, so had offered them free on the social media platform. Highly intrigued, I got in touch with her immediately and said the History Society would be pleased to have the pictures.

The photos duly arrived in a black bin liner and I eagerly removed them for scrutiny, hoping desperately for a local connection. Alas the clue was in the label on the back of each picture which read 'Inn Fillers, Great Milton, Oxon', with an 0844 phone number (note no 1 before the 8, so going back a few decades). Some writing on the back of the one photograph that had been taken out of its frame said, 'Odo Richard Vivian, 3rd Baron Swansea. Born 22 April 1875, died 16 Nov 1934.'

A quick Google search produced a Wikipedia entry for the Baron who was born in London to Colonel Henry Vivian, 1st Baron Swansea and his wife Averil. He studied at Cambridge and on 25 October 1906 (neatly dating the photograph) married Hon. Winifred Hamilton. He served in WWI in the Royal Irish Rifles and the Cameron Highlanders. He was Lieutenant Colonel of the 6th Battalion, Welch Regiment and received a commendation for gallantry. His country seat was Caer Beris at Builth Wells, Breconshire where he died in 1934. He had inherited the baronetcy on the death of his half brother Ernest Vivian.

Odo lived in Wales and had no connection with Berkshire as far as can be ascertained.

The photos had clearly been bought at auction, or as a group online perhaps, and framed by 'Inn Fillers' to be sold to decorate the walls of a pub, simply because they were old images. The frames are really high quality, so we will be keeping those, but does anyone want four pictures of the Earl of Swansea? Surely some archive would be interested, or even a member of the family? Suggestions welcome.

It was worth a punt taking the photos, but the disappointment was keenly felt! What would other local history societies have done?

Janet Hurst

Hungerford Historical Association

Hungerford Historical Association's programme of on-line meetings continued on 24 March with a notably local flavour. Dr Hugh Pihlens chose 1795 as an interesting and novel year to study Hungerford's past.

It takes a skilful historian to single-out a specific year 230 years ago as a subject to enthral a Zoom audience. Dr Pihlens is well-known in the town for his broad historical interests and for managing the Hungerford Virtual Museum. His research into life in 1795 yielded a fascinating picture of the shape of the town, its inhabitants and its working life.

He framed the talk around a map drawn by William Francis in 1794, many years before the Ordnance Survey first mapped the area. This beautifully drafted map shows that the shape of the town, though a third of its 21st century population, was largely as now. This was the year following the Act of Parliament that authorised the building of the canal. So in 1795, there was no canal and of course this was 50 years before the railway.

Transport therefore focussed on roads and the importance of Hungerford's position on two major routes, north-south and east-west. The many coaching inns received around 120 coaches a week and it needs little imagination to understand the number of ostlers and horses involved, not to mention the mess on the roads.

Dr Pihlens spoke about many of the characters that lived and worked in the town – the tanner Edward Westall, the Apothecary William Lucas, the vicar Henry William Majendie and many more. The life of the town was illustrated by the wide variety of trades that prospered, partly as a result of the coaching trade and many of which no longer exist – the mantua maker, the peruke maker and the stay maker. The existence of the “hiring fair”, where workers paraded their skills in the Market Place in the hope of being hired for the forthcoming year, truly harked-back to this bygone era.

The Zoom talks organised by the Hungerford Historical Association have been highly successful and on this occasion, Dr Pihlens had an enthusiastic audience of around 130 including some from Bedwyn Historical Society

and even one family in Australia.

Much of the material that Dr Pihlens referred to can be found on the Hungerford Virtual Museum website (www.hungerfordvirtualmuseum.co.uk) which is a fascinating free-access site.

David Whiteley

Project Purley

We are now settled into a routine with our meetings, both with members and of the committee being by Zoom.

In January, Dan Allen, of the Victorian Military Society, gave a very well-received talk on the Battle of Maiwand and the story behind the Maiwand Lion in Forbury Gardens. It was a very comprehensive and well-illustrated talk, which went into the reason for the conflict as well as the battle itself and its aftermath. In February, Dr John Evans, of the Friends of Caversham Court, gave us a fascinating insight into the house, its occupants and the gardens. Only the gardens remain, but the combination of Council ownership and a dedicated group of volunteers mean that the gardens can now be enjoyed by everyone. His talk was illustrated with some beautiful photographs of the current gardens (including the newly planted ‘Annabel’ hydrangeas in the white garden), and much appreciated by all. In March, our speaker was Christine Wootton from Radley History Club. Her talk, intriguingly titled “It Started with a Letter from Colditz”, took us through the story of years of historical research, interesting coincidences and three books, that all started with one misdirected letter. The talk followed Charles Lockett and his brother Peter, both of whom ended up as POWs during the Second World War. The talk was both fascinating and well-illustrated, and like the talks in January and February, one we would thoroughly recommend to other societies.

Looking ahead, our meetings between April and June, will all be on Zoom, June’s also including the AGM. By July, we hope to tentatively return to some face to face events and have plans over the summer for a socially-distanced walk, an out-doors performance by the Rain or Shine Theatre Company of “She Stoops to Conquer” and a fish and chips supper evening (also outside). All of course, will be dependent on prevailing Covid restrictions. Our normal venue of The Barn, Purley is in reservation to us from September onwards. Whether or not we will be able to return to inside

meetings by then will become clear in the fullness of time. But the possibility of “normal” – albeit a new normal, is a relief and one we are greatly looking forward to.

Aside from activities, our focus on building and sorting our archive continues, although physical storage space is increasingly becoming a problem. Our electronic archive also continues to grow. We are also gearing up for the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee in June 2022 and are planning an exhibition and also a cocktails, canapes and fashion show. Something else to look forward to.

Catherine Sampson

History of Reading Society

Our programme of talks, via Zoom, continued in January, February and March, with the March talk following a short AGM.

2021 sees the 900th anniversary of the foundation of Reading Abbey, so it was appropriate that the first talk of the year should be about the Abbey, given by the Secretary of the Friends of Reading Abbey, John Painter. He outlined the history, and what happened to the buildings after the Dissolution, including the visits of Elizabeth I to The Queen’s House. He dispelled the modern myth that the Abbey Church would have been taller than the present-day office building, The Blade, but showed how it would have towered over the wooden buildings of Reading Town at the time. Many wonderful images accompanied the talk. Mention was also made of the attempts of the Ministry of Justice to sell off Reading Gaol, which was built over part of the site of the Abbey, and of the results of a survey using ground-penetrating radar which revealed some of what was under the prison site.

The next talk was by David Neale, of the Bell Tower Community Association. We learned something of their work in conserving and protecting the local environment between the railway and the River Thames, on either side of Caversham Road. The area was slow to get built up, on account of its being on the flood plain, with much of the building happening in the 1880s and 1890s. We looked at the typical houses, who built them, and what the residents did for a living. And we looked at the two pubs – The Moderation, rebuilt in 1893, and The White Hart by the bridge which was replaced by the Caversham Bridge Hotel, and replaced again by what is currently the Crowne Plaza Hotel.

Much of the talk concerned manufacturing in the area – the Great Western Railway Signal Works, Cox and Wyman the printers, Warrick's Monarch Cycle Works, Buckler Cars, the Coronium Metal Company (making bearings for railway vehicles), Robert Cort (making equipment for the gas and oil industries), and the foundries of H. C. Goodman, Henry Lewis and Samuel Griffith. The building that started out as Dowson's maltings was also considered, and the various firms based there, the last of them being Drew's the ironmongers.

March brought a talk on the gas industry, with particular reference to Reading, given by Jo Alexander-Jones, who had worked in the industry for many years. Starting with the early success of William Murdoch in 1792, we moved forward to the establishment of gas-light companies across the country, and especially in northern England where gas was used to illuminate factories. In London, the Gas Light and Coke Company was established in 1812, and over the next fifteen years, most large English towns followed, Reading included.

The process of producing gas from coal was explained, and its purification, storage in gas-holders, and distribution was explained, as well as the pollution and contamination caused. It was the usual means of lighting, and later for heating and cooking for many years. The whole industry was nationalised in 1949. Then, between 1967-76, coal gas was replaced by natural gas, gasworks were closed down, and the whole industry was privatised in 1986.

The Reading Gas Light Company was founded in 1819, with a works on the site now covered by The Oracle Shopping Centre. Then in 1835, a rival company, the Reading Union Gas Company was founded, with a works near Huntley and Palmers biscuit factory, and in 1863, the two companies merged, with a much larger works a little farther down stream by the River Kennet. Unlike the power station, the Reading gasworks was never taken over by the town council.

The Society is now looking forward to the publication of its next book, "Abbot Cook to Zero Degrees: an A to Z of Reading's Pubs and Breweries." It has been written by three members of the Society, and is much more comprehensive than anything that has appeared before. Extensive use has been made of old directories, newspapers, maps, property deeds, and wills in an attempt to make it as comprehensive as is reasonably possible. It

should be available to buy by the time of the next newsletter . . . watch this space!

David Cliffe.

Shinfield & District Local History Society

We have continued to hold monthly meetings using Zoom. Following our AGM in January, one of our members, Mary Wheway, gave a talk on “Queen Victoria’s Children”; a very comprehensive account of the lives of each of the nine children.

Our speaker in February was Mike Cooper who spoke on “Reading before Reading: From the Ice Age to the Romans”. The talk was based on the area around present-day Reading and included discoveries of habitation in the Green Park area, dated c2900 BC, and in the Grovelands Road area of the town. Discoveries at Green Park included roundhouses and granaries with various artefacts and evidence of burials. The first known human remains in Reading have been discovered at Crane Wharf. Reading was first named in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. This talk gave a good picture of the origins of human settlement in the Reading area.

In March, Dan Allen of the Victorian Military Society, gave a very interesting talk on “The VC – Facts and Fancies”. This talk covered not only the history of the Victoria Cross, with stories of some of those to whom it was awarded, but also several myths associated with the medal. The first VC was awarded following the Crimean War. This and all subsequent VCs were supposedly made from part of a Russian cannon captured in the Crimea but analysis has shown this to not be the case. Dan related several interesting stories of men awarded the VC, including one who was awarded it on the strength of a statement by a German U-boat captain, and another awarded both a VC and an Iron Cross. There were instances of men awarded two VCs and families with several VC recipients. This was a fascinating talk very well delivered.

George Taylor

Thatcham Historical Society

Our plans for 2021 have already been altered due to Covid, an update of our programme is given later. For all the latest events and news please keep an eye on our website, www.thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk.

The last year has certainly been historic and started as we normally would,

an AGM followed by our first and only face-to-face speaker meeting of the year with Mr Brown talking about the history of the Brown family.

Although we were aware of Covid-19 at the time I don't think any of us expected what was to come. We continued to work with Kennet school and were working with them to show off some of the work of the pupils to our members and we also had a good line-up of talks and other events including Heritage Open Days. In March we went into lock down but thought a month or two and we would be back to normal. Sadly, it wasn't to be. We saw all events cancelled and the society made its own history with our very first online talks which have included a History of Thatcham pubs; a brief history of Thatcham; and the historic buildings of Thatcham.

The society was able to manage limited guided tour(s) around St Mary's Church during Thatcham Festival and we hope to be able to deliver similar in the future and do plan on creating an audio / video version too. Indeed, I am already working on audio material for a history of Thatcham series.

Sadly, we have seen members pass away, all will be deeply missed as valued members of the society, the community and dear friends.

For the first time in our history, we held our 2021 AGM online. The committee remains the same. Nick thanked the committee for all the hard work undertaken during the past year and the members for their continued support of the society. A reminder was given that society members that paid their subscriptions in 2020 will have their memberships automatically extended, so in other words your 2020 membership also covers 2021. The committee has decided to cancel all face-to-face meetings until after the summer, we know that many of you were looking forward to face-to-face meetings resuming but we must ensure we everyone is safe.

Nick Young

Twyford and Ruscombe History Society

We are still issuing a news letter every month to our members with articles and quizzes to keep them in touch .

Our " War Memories" book is still being sold. Although we are waiting for the retail opening. To really sell more copies. We have zoom committee meetings but as yet have not managed a zoom lecture for our members'

Jean Poulter

Wargrave Local History Society

Wargrave Local History Society has continued with a programme of meetings during the winter. Some of the previously arranged talks were not able to be given on Zoom, but the process enabled other speakers from further away to give us their presentations. In January, Simon Wenham told us of his research he had undertaken for his book about Hobbs of Henley, to mark the 150th anniversary of the boatyard in 2020. He explained that Hobbs do not have a large archive themselves, so other sources had to be found to establish the facts – the first problem being to verify that the business was founded in 1870. The family, he discovered, had been wharfingers at Hambleton since at least the mid 18th century and he eventually discovered a document from 1900 confirming “established in 1870”. Simon described how the business had expanded, by taking over other yards, and adapted to changing conditions, now considering itself as a ‘hospitality company’.

In February, Kevin Little who lives in Somerset, and formerly the proprietor of Frost’s - the fishmonger in Reading’s Union Street – gave a very entertaining and informative presentation on “Smelly Alley and other items of interest about Reading”. He explained that – despite popular belief – the name Smelly Alley was not due to the fish and meat shops there as a 16th century map included a pathway labelled Smelly Alley alongside an open sewer there. Kevin regaled his audience with many stories of traders and their ‘tricks of the trade’ – including sharp practices by some retailers, the water company who declared the sewer (the enclosed one from which Smelly Alley got its name) was not their responsibility as it belonged to the shop owners - even though for decades the water company had charged for its use! With a light, gentle and entertaining style, the audience were left with smiles on their faces after so many ‘fishy tales’.

The past year was reviewed and a committee elected at the AGM in March. During the past year, members have been emailed a news sheet (with a printed copy to members without internet access). Each monthly issue also having a sheet illustrating an item from the society archive, whilst a different item had been included in each Wargrave News, sent to all villagers (showing the society to still be active). The origins and development of this archive were outlined at the AGM, with many illustrations. Some comes from large ‘family collections’, others from ‘being in the

right place at the right time’, preventing material being otherwise destroyed, and other items come from various individuals and village organisations who know of the society’s interest in recording all aspects of the village. (The covid-19 restrictions also enabled time to be used to catch up with some archive indexing!).

Our programme for the coming year includes some of those who were not able to speak to us during the past year, being presented on Zoom until such time as normal meetings can resume and we hope to include the remainder at a later date.

The first of those was a presentation by Reading Library’s local history specialist, Katie Amos, on Prospect Park Mansion in west Reading – “The history of the Mansion House and its families”. Katie’s thorough research began with the Benjamin Childs and Frances Kendrick. She had challenged Benjamin to a duel – either fight him or marry him. He chose the latter, and they lived at Calcot Park. However, Frances died only a few years later, and Benjamin then arranged for Prospect Hill House to be built (now known as The Mansion House). It was extended by John Liebenrood in 1800, to look much as it does currently, and had various occupiers over time – several renting it for quite short periods, but in the early 20th century was offered to Reading Council ‘for the public benefit’, in much the way the Palmer family had provided Palmer Park to the east of Reading. Its uses changed over time, and fell into a poor state of repair after three arson attacks, but has subsequently been restored and made into a restaurant, with the surrounding ground a public open space. A fascinating story

Peter Delaney

Opportunities

Monday 28th June at 10.15 Swing Riots Walk

A BLHA walk along the Kennet and Avon canal from Kintbury to Hungerford. We will be looking at sites connected with the Swing Riots of 1830. Distance 5 miles with optional pub lunch in Hungerford.

Free event, but please contact Membership Secretary Ann Smith: email membership@blha.org.uk or phone 0118 978 3430 to reserve a place.

The Centre for Heritage and Family History

Saturday, 8th May 11 am - 1 pm **ONLINE WORKSHOP: Education 1860-1914** with Joan Dils

Saturday, 8th May 3-4.15 pm **ONLINE TALK: Jane Austen's School Days in Reading** with Joy Pibworth

Thursday, 20th May 2-3.15 pm **WEBINAR-ONLINE TALK: The Abbey and the Castle – Reading in the Middle Ages** with Mike Cooper

Thursday, 3rd June 2-3.15 pm **WEBINAR-ONLINE TALK: A stroll through Berkshire's graveyards** with Catherine Sampson

Friday, 18th June - **ONLINE COURSE: An introduction to the Industrial Revolution in Britain** with Richard Marks This is the first of five weekly sessions from 2-3.45 pm each week (18th and 25th June, and 2nd, 9th and 16th July).

Saturday, 19th June - **ONLINE COURSE: Researching house histories** with Dr Margaret Simons

The first of two sessions from 11-1 pm on 19th and 26th June. From existing knowledge, the course identifies starting points for research and initial records to consider. Then, next steps and other sources that can give context and flesh out house histories.

Saturday, 17th July 11-1 pm **ONLINE WORKSHOP: Education 1914-1960 - A changing school experience** with Joan Dils

Saturday, 21st August 11-1 pm **ONLINE WORKSHOP: Writing up your family history** with Dr Barry Jerome

ADVANCE NOTICE Friday, 1st October **ONLINE COURSE: Georgian sources for historians** with Dr Margaret Simons

The first of 10 weekly sessions from 2-4 pm each week (8th , 15th , 22nd, 29th October, 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th November and 3rd December). Learn more about one of the most transformative periods in British history.

History Societies

- Aldermaston History Group.** Chris Boott, Kennet, Church Road, Aldermaston RG7 4LR
[blha@aldermastonhistory.uk]
- Arborfield Local History Society,** Secretary Rosemary King [roking@henforyd.plus.com]
[www.arborfieldhistory.org.uk]
- Berkshire Archaeological Society,** Anne Harrison, [secretary@berksarch.co.uk] [www.berksarch.co.uk]
- Berkshire Archaeology Research Group,** Dr Roger Sym, 197 Halls Rd, Reading, RG30 tel
0118 942 7703 [Roger@PsrLtd.Demon.co.uk]
- Berkshire Family History Society,** Centre for Heritage and Family History, 2nd Floor, Reading
Central Library, Abbey Square, Reading, RG1 3BQ, [tel 0118 950 9553]
[https://.berksfhs.org][secretary@berksfhs.org]
- Berkshire Gardens Trust.** Fiona Hope, 23 St James Close, Pangbourne, RG8 7AP [fiona.hope-
@btinternet.com] [www.berkshiregardenstrust.org]
- Berkshire Industrial Archaeological Group,** Secretary, Graham Smith, 114 Shaw Rd, Newbury
RG14 1HR [secretary@biag.org.uk]
- Berkshire Record Society,** Secretary Margaret Simons, 80 Reeds Ave, Earley, Reading RG6
5SR, [margaretsimons@hotmail.co.uk]
- Blewbury Local History Group,** Audrey Long, Spring Cottage, Church Road, Blewbury, Oxon,
OX11 9PY, tel 01235 850427 [audreyrosettalong@gmail.com]
- Bracknell & District Local Historical Society,** Jane 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.barlow@btinternet.com]
- East Garston Local History Society,** Mrs Karen Sperrey, Church Cottage, Front St, East
Garston, Hungerford, RG17 7HJ [karen@kado.cloud]
- East Ilsley Local History Society,** Eric Saxton, School House, Church Hill, Est Ilsley RG20 7LP
[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 [teresams35@virginmedia.com] [www.etonwickhistory.co.uk]
- Finchampstead Society,** Mohan Banerji, 3 Tanglewood, Finchampstead, Berks, RG40 3PR, tel
0118 9730479.
- Goring Gap Local History Society,** Janet Hurst, 6 Nun's Acre, Goring on Thames, Reading,
Berks RG8 9BE, tel 01491 871022, mob 07799 583524 [goringgaphistory@gmail.com]
[www.goringgaphistory.org.uk]
- Hanney History Group,** Mrs P J Taylor, Walnut Cottage, Ebbs Lane, East Hanney Oxon, OX12
0HL [07726 842413]
- The History of Reading Society,** Vicki Chesterman, 7 Norman Road, Caversham, Reading RG4
5JN, tel 0118 947 3443, [vickichesterman@yahoo.co.uk] [www.historyofreadingsociety.or-
g.uk]
- Hungerford Historical Association,** Secretary Helen Lockhart, [shelenlockhart@aol.com]
[www.hungerfordvirtualmuseum.co.uk]
- Longworth & District History Society,** Pam Woodward, 22 Cherrytree Close, Southmoor,
Abingdon OX13 5BE. [prwoodward@btinternet.com] Jill Muir, [jill@shotte.plus.com],
[http://www.longworth-history-society.org.uk/]
- Maidenhead Archaeological & Historical Society,** Paul Seddon, 1 vine Cottage, Stubbings
Lane, Maidenhead SL6 6QN [paul@c21networks.co.uk]
- Marcham Society** Simon Blackmore, 2 Walnut Mews, Mill Road, Marcham, Oxon OX13 6NZ
tel 01865 392090 [spblackmore@googlemail.com]

- 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**, Jane Burrell, Walnut Tree Cottage, Oxford Rd, Donnington, Newbury, RG14 3AG [tel 01635-46497] [secretary@ndfc.org.uk][www.ndfc.org.uk]
- Oxfordshire Family History Society**, Chairman:Malcolm Austen. Secretary: Angie Trueman c/o Oxfordshire History Centre, St Luke's Church, Temple Road, Cowley, Oxford OX4 2HT, [email: secretary@ofhs.org.uk or chairman@ofhs.org.uk]
- Oxfordshire Local History Association** Liz Wooley, 138 Marlborough Road, Oxford OX1 4LS [chair@olha.org.uk]
- Pangbourne Heritage Group**, Jane Rawlins (archivist) Chapel House, Thames Ave, Pangbourne RG8 7BU contact Ellie Thorne [eb_thorne@hotmail.com]
- Project Purley**, Catherine Sampson, 32 Waterside Drive, Purley on Thames, Berks, RG8 8AQ, tel 0118 9422 255, [secretary@project-purley.eu], [www.project-purley.eu]
- Shinfield & District Local History Society**, George Taylor, Long Meadow, Part Lane, Swallowfield, Berks, RG7 1TB. tel 0118 988 3580. Reporter George Taylor [george.taylor-29@btinternet.com]
- Sonning & Sonning Eye History Society**, Heather Kay, 5 Augustfield, Charvil Lane, Sonning, RG4 6AF [kaydenis@googlemail.com]
- Stanford in the Vale & District Local History Society**, Mike Macfarlane, 53 High St, Stanford in the Vale, Oxon SN7 8NQ [tel 01367 710 358 [mmacfarlane1@btinternet.com]
- Swallowfield Local History Society**, Ken Hussey, Kimberley, Swallowfield RG7 1QX, tel 0118 988 3650, [www.slhsoc.org.uk]
- Tadley and District Local History Society**, Carol Stevens, 5 Church Road, Pamber Heath, Tadley, Hampshire, RG26 3DP, [tadhistory@googlemail.com] [www.tadshistory.com]
- Thatcham Historical Society**, Susan Ellis, Open View, New Road Hill, Midgham RG7 5RY [susan.carver@gmx.com] [enquiries@thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk], [www.thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk]
- Theale Local History Society**, Graham Reeves, 52 Parkers Corner, Englefield, RG7 5JR, [thealehistory@btconnect.com]
- Twyford & Ruscombe Local History Society**, Jean Poulter, 17 Weir Pool Court, Silk Lane, Twyford RG10 9GY, [jeanpoulter@tiscali.co.uk], [www.trlhs.org.uk]
- Wargrave Local History Society**, Peter Delaney, 6 East View Close, Wargrave, Berks, RG10 8BJ, tel 0118 940 3121, [secretary@wargravehistory.co.uk], [www.wargravehistory.org.uk]
- Windsor Local History Group**, Anne Taylor, Canon Cottage, Bishops Farm Close, Oakley Green, Windsor SL4 5UN [taylorad22@btinternet.com] [www.windsorhistory.org.uk]
- Friends of Windsor and Royal Borough Museum**, Len Nash, 27 Bourne Ave, Windsor, SL4 3JP, [www.friendsofwindsormuseum.org.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 membership@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**, Town Square, Bracknell, RG12 1BH, tel 01344 423149
[bracknell.library@bracknell-forest.gov.uk]
- Eton College Library**, Eton College, Windsor, SL4 6DB, [archivist@etoncollege.org.uk]
- Guildhall Library**, Serials Assistant, 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, tel 01628 780555 [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]
- Museum of Berkshire Aviation** Mohawk Way Reading RG5 4UE tel 0118 944 8089 [www.museumofberkshireaviation.co.uk]
- Newbury Library**, Newbury Central Library, The Wharf, Newbury, RG14 5AU, tel 01635 519900 [library@westberks.co.uk]
- Oxfordshire History Centre**, St Luke's Church, Temple Road, Cowley, Oxford OX4 2HT, tel. 01865 398200, e-mail: oxhist@oxfordshire.gov.uk
- 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**, Kate Devaney, PO box 223, Whiteknights, RG6 6AE, tel 0118 378 8785, [k.r.devaney@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]
- The River and Rowing Museum**, Mill Mradows, Henley on Thames, RG9 1BF tel 01491 415600 [curatorial@rrm.co.uk]
- Windsor & Royal Borough Museum**, The Guildhall, Windsor, SL4 1LR, tel 01628 685686, [museum.collections@rbwm.gov.uk], [www.windsor.gov.uk]
- Slough Library Local Studies**, Slough Library, The Curve, William St, Slough, SL1 1XY, tel 01753 875533, [library@slough.gov.uk] [www.slough.gov.uk/libraries]
- Slough Museum**, The Curve, William St, Slough, SL1 1XY, tel 01753 875533, [info@sloughmuseum.co.uk]
- Wallingford Museum**, 52 High St, Wallingford, OX10 0DB, tel 01491 835 065 [www.wallingfordmuseum.org.uk]
- West Berkshire Museum**, The Wharf, Newbury, RG14 4AU, [museum@westberks.gov.uk]
- Wokingham Library Local Studies**, Denmark Street, Wokingham, RG40 2BB, tel 0118 9781368

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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

Individual - for individuals and couples living at the same address

Family - for families living at the same address

Corporate - for local history societies and institutions, such as libraries, archives and museums

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 send out occasional **e-mail Bulletins** in between Newsletters with the latest news.

We maintain a **Website** to keep you up-to-date with Society activities [www.blha.org.uk]

We hold an **Annual General Meeting** in Spring each year where local societies bring in displays and copies of their publications. The formal meeting is followed by a variety of activities - talks, walks and visits - dependent on where we are. Meetings are held in different parts of the county.

We hold occasional **Seminars, Workshops** and **Day Schools** with eminent speakers

We organise occasional **Day trips** to visit archives or places of interest (usually with privileged access to material)

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

We offer **Grants** towards research and **Loans** to assist authors to publish their results.

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

Membership fees

The rates for 2019-2020 are:-

	version of newsletter		no of copies	
	electronic	hard copy	Journal	Newsletter
Individual	£9.00	£12.00	1	1
Family	£9.00	£12.00	1	1
Corporate	£18.00.	£20.00	2	3

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

Applications for membership can be made via the website or by contacting the Membership Secretary by e-mail - membership@blha.org.uk

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Next Newsletter

The next Newsletter is due to be published in September 2021.

The DEADLINE for copy is 15th August 2021 - preferably we would like to have it a bit earlier.

We like to hear of your society's activities over the last four months and will publicise future events that are open to the public (but not regular society meetings)

Please address e-mails to newsletter@blha.org.uk but please include BLHA and your society name in the title of the e-mail.