



Berkshire Local History Association



**Newsletter No 113
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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 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

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

Cover picture - Stonemason Jonathan Rayfield carving the Victoria Cross which will grace the pedestal of the Potts statue. (see pages 9 and 23)

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]

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
Institutional	£18.00	£20.00	2	3
Society	£18.00	£20.00	2	3
Individual and Family	£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

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Forthcoming Events

We do not list meetings of our local societies, but see our website www.blha.org.uk

Watch out for **Heritage Open Days** September 10th to 13th

12th March **2016 BLHA AGM**

Next Newsletter

The next Newsletter is due to be published in January 2016.

The DEADLINE for copy is 15th December 2015 - preferably we would like to have it much earlier.

Chairman's Corner



The economy, Mr. Osborne tells us, is “motoring ahead.” I do not suppose for one moment that this means any more money for local councils at any time soon. Things are not looking too bright for libraries, museums and record offices at present. Reading Borough Council is seeking to reduce spending by £39 million over the next three years. It has “launched” a website as part of a consultation lasting until 16th October. I imagine the situation will be similar with the other Berkshire unitary authorities.

One of the problems, if you were thinking of taking part in the consultation, is that it sets out many options, but no firm proposals. There is much talk of something called “digital by design,” which seems to mean using computerised equipment to take the place of people. When it comes to branch libraries, “co-location” seems to be the buzz-word. Strangely, the Berkshire Record Office doesn’t seem to get mentioned, though I’m sure it will not be immune from cut-backs, funded as it is by the six Berkshire unitaries. As I read on, my heart sank.

What made me read on was the mention of the use of volunteers at Reading Libraries for “local studies cataloguing and research.” I don’t know about research, but the cataloguing bit is me! In reality I only catalogue the “loose” illustrations in the local studies collection. It’s something I started when I was paid for doing it, and in my retirement, for the last three years, I have continued doing it, voluntarily and unpaid, in the hope of finishing the job. Maybe the “research” bit is when members of staff ask me where to find things, or occasionally, whether the library holds what the customer has asked for!

I’m not too happy about doing a job that I feel the local authority ought to be paying for, and having read the report on the website, I’m not happy that it reads as though anyone can do what I’ve been doing. Now, of course, I could teach someone how to do what I do, but it needs a particular kind of person.

When I started, this illustrations collection was a bit disorganised, but I could see that it was a very large and valuable one. It covers the whole county. I decided that it should be one of my priorities, and to deal with the most vulnerable items first – the movie film, and photographs on glass. There wasn’t all that much of this kind of material. But there was a huge number of photographs, prints and drawings. I sorted them by area, and started cataloguing them onto the library’s online catalogue. Once catalogued, copyright permitting, they are scanned, and the scan is attached to the catalogue entry. Then they are checked, put into protective sleeves as necessary, filed in storage boxes and put in air-conditioned storage. Illustrations in books and albums, by and large, are not so vulnerable, though a few albums where the photographs were fading badly have been dealt with. Pictures of Reading were done first, and then those

of the Wokingham area so that we had the adjacent suburbs of Earley and Woodley covered. After that, it was alphabetical, starting with Abingdon. At present I'm on Wallingford, and have Wantage and Windsor to tackle after that. It will probably take another couple of years – I manage about 2,000 images a year.

Part of the pleasure of doing the job is working out what an image illustrates, and how people will look for it. Do we know the place and the date, the photographer or artist, or the names of people in the picture? Are there unusual gas-lamps, telephone kiosks, or vehicles in the street? Maybe drains are being laid, a bridge is being rebuilt, or a building is under demolition. I try to put the right words in the catalogue entry, so that someone interested in, say, holy wells, war memorials, horse-trams, floods, or timber-framed buildings will be able to find the pictures of them.

Where I cannot tell what I am looking at, I have resorted to putting articles in local papers, or contacting local history societies to ask. Google Street View is sometimes useful, but I often seem to find that a traffic roundabout has been built over what I was looking for. Then of course I need to find out what things are called. The captions on picture postcards are sometimes wrong, and occasionally what someone has written on the back of a photograph has proved to be wrong. In short, to do a good job, you need to put in the time, to take the trouble, and to believe in the worth of what you're doing. I certainly don't want to be the cause of any suggestion that anyone could do – or would want to do – what I have been doing. So maybe I should take part in Reading's consultation!

Away from politics and gloom, the B.L.H.A. committee meets again in September. There is sure to be some discussion on how well we are meeting our objectives, in the light of the visits of some committee members to the meetings of member societies. I went to two, at Newbury and Thatcham, and was warmly received at both places. Then there will be the editing, printing, pricing and distribution of the special volume, containing the three talks we heard at the Symposium held in March to consider. And the arrangements for next year's A.G.M. at Longworth will need to be made. This should be in complete contrast with the last one, which took place in the middle of Reading – near to bus stops and the railway station, but with no easy car parking. I look forward to a trip out to the west of the old county: I enjoy going to different places, and seeing Berkshire as it really is. It can certainly help when I'm cataloguing those old photographs.

As I write this at the beginning of August, the summer is still here, and I'm looking forward to going somewhere different on the Heritage Open Days. Yesterday, there was something really different in Reading. It was a rally of old buses to celebrate the centenary of the beginning of services in Reading from the Thames Valley Traction Company. The oldest preserved vehicles were in front of the old station house, now occupied by the Three Guineas pub. Down the steps in what was Station Hill but is now no longer a hill were vehicles of slightly later vintage, taking people on free trips out to Streatley in one direction and Charvil in the other.

Occasional services went beyond Charvil, to Maidenhead. The Thames Valley and Great Western Omnibus Trust, which had organised the day, had got a decent article and a picture in the “Reading Chronicle,” and there were plenty of happy people around. It was a sunny day, and paintwork on the old vehicles, and the metalwork on the radiators and headlamps really glistened and shone. It was a really good, free day out. I met a number of members of various local societies there. I hope that you can enjoy some memorable days out in your area.

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

Words from the Editor

I am afraid that for this edition I have had to wield the blue pencil as I have been inundated with material and enough photographs to fill another edition. Thank you all for your contributions and I hope you will understand if your piece did not make it this time.

John Chapman



Miscellanea

The 2015 Annual General Meeting

The day outside was cold, but in St. Laurence’s Church, it was warm.

As people arrived for the A.G.M., there was tea, coffee, and the chance to chat, and to look at the stalls of local societies and their new publications. In addition, this year, we had a table with copies of the many publications in which our Vice-President Joan Dils has had a hand. The Symposium, later in the day, was to be held in her honour. There was a take-away bibliography of her publications, and a small display of photographs of Joan, taken at different times and places.

St. Laurence’s was the wealthiest of Reading’s three medieval parishes, and the church has a number of interesting monuments. It is one of the few churches in the country where the churchwardens’ accounts survive from before the Reformation, which makes them particularly valuable. Joan’s two-volume edition of the accounts had recently been published by the Berkshire Record Society, which made it particularly appropriate for the Symposium to be held here. In view of the three talks planned for the afternoon, it didn’t seem sensible to add a fourth, on the history of the church. Instead, the Association produced a short take-away history, with a plan, so that those who wished could have a self-guided tour during the lunch break.

The building is now used for work with young people, and has been equipped with good heating, lighting, kitchen, lavatories, seating and an audio-visual system. It was comfortable, with everyone able to hear and see.

The A.G.M. was comparatively brief. Prof. Ted Collins took the chair, as usual.

David Lewis reported that the Association was in good financial shape, and from the Chairman's report it was apparent that the committee had been doing a bit of heart-searching. Were we serving the community well? Many people, even members of local societies, didn't seem to know what we did, despite newsletters, e-mail bulletins and a website. According to our Constitution, we exist to promote local history in the whole community – so what are we doing for those who aren't members of the Association, or of local societies? There was also the seemingly perennial problem of attracting people who will serve on the committee, and undertake some task or other, in between the committee meetings.

Picture SYMPOSIUM 28 – The Treasurer, Chairman, President and Secretary at the A.G.M.

The Joan Dils Symposium

After the formal meeting came the lunch break. A longer break than usual had been allowed, to give people chance to look round the church, and to go to the short talks and demonstrations of morris dancing and bell-ringing which had been arranged for our entertainment. The churchwardens' accounts for 1513 contain the earliest mention of morris dancing in this part of England, and there are many references to the bells and bell-ringing. The Redding Moreys Dawncers demonstrated dancing as it would have been in 1513, as far as anyone can tell, and the Shinfield Shambles team danced for us outside in the cold, on Town Hall Square. Then the St. Laurence's bell-ringers took people up the tower, explained the principles of change ringing, and gave us a demonstration. Some venture farther up the tower, to see the bells themselves. When they were being rung, the old stone tower had a perceptible sway!

The happy atmosphere continued into the afternoon, as more people arrived for the Symposium. Around 100 sat down as Brian Boulter, another of our Vice-Presidents, bade us welcome and told us a little about the life and achievements of Joan Dils, who has been an inspiration to many local historians – including our three speakers.

The first talk was "Priests and People: Changing Relationships in South Oxfordshire, 1820-1920," by Dr. Kate Tiller. She pointed out some surprising differences between "then" and "now" in how the clergy lived and related to the communities they served. The area of study, just north of Reading, was familiar to many of her listeners.

Dr. Gillian Clark then spoke about "Berkshire Connections with the Foundling Hospital." As well as learning about the working of the institution founded by Thomas Coram, there was the human drama of mothers, desperately trying to find someone to look after a child. Sometimes, mothers later found themselves able to take the child back, and there was a system of tokens which enabled them to prove which child was theirs.

Our final speaker, Dr. Alan Crosby, took us to the southern edge of the county for

his talk – “A Disappearing Landscape: the Heathlands of the Berkshire, Surrey and Hampshire Borders.” Everyone in the audience must have heard of places like Aldershot, Sandhurst and Broadmoor, but why were these great Victorian institutions there? The evidence for the barrenness and emptiness of the area until comparatively recent times will have surprised many.

The three talks were certainly varied, and all present must have been aware that we were getting the best kind of local history from accomplished speakers. Preparations are in hand for a commemorative volume, to contain the text of all three talks, to be published by the Association.

Then David Cliffe, BLHA Chairman, proposed the votes of thanks. The day had obviously involved a great deal of planning and preparation, and had needed many helpers on the day. He invited Peter Johnson, a Vice-President, to present a framed document to Joan, as a memento of the day. Joan, obviously delighted, said a few appropriate words. Then Peter Durrant, the recently-retired County Archivist, was invited to come forward and to receive a similar framed document. He had been a good friend of the Association over many years, and the BLHA and Berkshire Record Office had worked together on several useful projects. Peter was obviously not expecting this, and was surprised and delighted.

After that, there were unstinted refreshments. Glasses were charged, and toasts were drunk. It had been a long but happy and memorable day. We will probably never see another one like it!

Thanks are due to Margaret Simons and Chris Widdows for allowing the use of their photographs.

David Cliffe

Congratulations

As reported in the previous issue, our President, and one of our Vice-Presidents, both received awards at the meeting of the British Association for Local History, held in Birmingham in June. Professor Ted Collins won his award for the best short article, which was entitled “The Great War and the Berkshire Countryside,” and published in last year’s edition of “Berkshire Old and New.” Brian Boulter won a richly-deserved Lifetime Achievement Award. Perhaps one day we can ask him to write down some memoirs – he was involved with the Association right from the beginning. They are pictured here receiving their awards from Prof. David Hey, President of the BALH. Thanks are due to the British Association for allowing us to use their photographs.

David Cliffe

Your Meetings Calendar

We no longer publish an extra sheet with the newsletter listing meetings of a few societies. However we do maintain a calendar on our website, but your entries will not be there unless you send them in - emails to webdesigner@blha.org.uk

Freedom of Panorama

A little while ago someone in the European Commission had the bright idea to withdraw the Freedom of Panorama. This is a right which applies in most of the countries of the EU and allows anyone to take photographs of anything from a public place, eg the public road. This is not a right enjoyed in France and one of their MEPs Jean-Marie Cavada, tried to persuade the Commission to adopt the French system for the whole of the EU, ie you need to get the permission of all the owners of buildings and their architects before you may take a photograph.

For local historians recording their area this would have been an impossible limitation and I am sure many of you have subscribed to the petition which has been going around. Well, common sense prevailed for once and the European Parliament voted the proposal down on the 10th July. The Commissioner responsible has confirmed that "what you can see with your eyes as a citizen, on public places and streets in Europe, you should be allowed to also photograph with a camera"

What I liked was the quote from a campaigner - "certain members of the European Parliament have the combined intelligence of a dim-witted baboon that has undergone several botched lobotomies"

John Chapman

Tudor and Stuart Handwriting Course with Joan Dils

A group of six members were very lucky to receive the expertise of our Vice President Joan Dils at her home last Spring, when she ran a course in 16th and 17th century palaeography. The group consisted almost all of beginners who very soon were able to pick up the nuances of handwriting from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with Joan's help. What made the classes really interesting were the Berkshire examples Joan picked out for us to study. Examples included the inventory of William Laud Senior, the father of Archbishop Laud and in similar vein the seventeenth century accounts of the construction of altar rails at Bray church which were carried out under the church reforms under Archbishop Laud. We also looked at documents relating to the Corporation of Abingdon which were illuminated so beautifully and also an early indenture to the Reading Cloth Hall. In all it was a fascinating course and I think all who attended were delighted to learn from Joan's great wealth of knowledge of this period.

Elias Kupfermann.

Historic Photographs

We recently heard from Jeff Krotz of Burnham about his photographic project:

Last November I acquired approximately 2500 Amateur "glass Stereoscopic Slides at auction. I spent 8 days re-cataloguing the images and have begun to archive them by washing and drying the 100+ years of dirt and grime from their emulsion, I then began to copy digitally the images using my old Illumitran 3s Slide copier (500 done so far?).

I've retouched 50 so far! So on it goes. After looking up and hunting the locations on the net I've identified where and what the images are of. The original slides were detailed with dates and locations and some names so puzzling these images has been a small adventure. Images are of the UK, France, Italy, Spain, Malta and Ireland. I'd like to re visit these same locations and re photograph from the same spot these photos were taken.

The Berkshire ones so far are from Faringdon, Donnington, Eastbury and Ufton. You can get a preview on my Facebook page www.facebook.com/photoartnowandthen . If you would like to purchase a copy there is a price at the top of the Facebook page. The goal is to eventually release a book for sale of the South East Counties, *"The English Hoard" Lost Historical Images of South East England*.

Jeff Krotz [photoartnowandthen@outlook.com]

The Berkshire History Prize

The prize is funded jointly by the BLHA and the Berkshire Record Office. It is awarded for an exceptional undergraduate dissertation on Berkshire history at the University of Reading. Though not necessarily awarded every year, this year, it was. The winner was Ellen Barrow, for her dissertation, "Exploding the Male Myth of Female Biology in 19th-century England" – it includes case studies from Broadmoor Asylum.

Despite there being a queen on the throne, Ellen shows how the country remained patriarchal, and so, too, did the medical staff at Broadmoor. The Victorians believed that the woman's place was very much in the home, bearing children. She had no need of employment elsewhere, education, or legal rights, and should remain passive and obedient.

Women's brains were smaller than those of men, and their reproductive organs affected the workings of their minds and bodies. Reasons attributed for the crimes committed by women admitted to the asylum included "puerperal mania," "over-lactation," and, of course, "hysteria."

Women's "obvious" inferiority stemmed from "original sin" in the Garden of Eden – the penalties of which included the pains of menstruation, childbirth and the menopause, mental instability, uncleanness and guilt. The beliefs harboured by educated Victorian gentlemen now seem utterly ridiculous – but the paper ends up by wondering if all of the "male myths" have been totally "exploded."

There's a copy of this unusual dissertation in the County Record Office. It's packed full of information. Some of the most interesting bits are in the Appendix at the end. It'll take you about an hour to read it – an hour well spent, whatever your gender.

David Cliffe

Spotlight - on

Windsor Local History Group

The Windsor Local History Publications Group was founded by a small group of WEA students and tutors 'with the aim of fostering research in the field of local history and publishing its results'. Judith Hunter chaired the first meeting on 14 January 1976 and their first publication was *The Changing face of Windsor*.

In 1982 the group started publishing the *Windlesora* journals, under the chairmanship of Gordon Cullingham, but Judith Hunter remained the driving force for many years.

The name was changed to the present title 'Windsor Local History Group' in 2004 on the initiative of the then chair, Hester Davenport who also led a number of WEA classes on local history.

Besides the annual *Windlesora* the group have published or co-written other books on local history: *Windsor 1000 years*, *Streets of Windsor & Eton*, *Vanished Windsor*, *Windsor and Eton Express 1812-1830: The Charles Knight Years*, and most recently *Windsor during the Great War*.

To date we have 14 members who have an extensive knowledge of local history, but we can accommodate up to 20. Two of the founder members are still active within the Group, Beryl Hedges, our present vice chair, and Joyce Sampson, the second chairman and treasurer.

Currently the group also offer a wide variety of talks and we have a website called: www.windsorhistory.uk.

Dr Brigitte Mitchell

New Books and Reviews

Queer Saint - the cultured life of Peter Watson

by Adrian Clark and Jeremy Dronfield,

This was published on 2 April 2015 by John Blake at £25. ISBN 978 1 78418 600 5.
(see article on Page)

100 Years of Reading Weather

ISBN 978-0-0569485-1-9

By Roger Brugge and Stephen Burt

Weather observations have been made at Reading University since 1901 giving a unique record of our weather for over 100 years. The two authors who are part of the Meteorological Department of

the University have studied all these results plus log books and other records to come up with a remarkable collection of information. From snowy winters to scorching summers we are reminded of events of long ago, some forgotten but many still in people's memory.

How many people knew of the fatal tornado in Reading in 1840? But I guess most of our members will remember floods and the great storms of 1987 - they all join a chronology of over 800 notable weather events.

Are you a pub-quizzier - if so this is for you as every imaginable pub quiz question on the weather has the answer here and it will let you into meteorologists' most closely guarded secrets so you can plan your BBQ, school fete, holidays etc in the sure knowledge of a beautiful day - or are they human and get it wrong sometimes?

The book is available from Waterstones in Reading or from <https://www.colweather.org.uk/downloads/Book-Reading-Weather.pdf>

John Chapman

The Watsons of Sulhamstead House ***by Adrian Clark***

Owners of great country houses in the early 20th century had a huge impact on the villages and counties in which they were situated. Although they have not received much attention, the Watsons of Sulhamstead were a good example of this.

George Watson made a fortune out of his business, Maypole Dairies, in the early part of the century. By August 1910 he was ready to buy a large house and he alighted upon Sulhamstead in the village of Sulhamstead Abbots, previously the home of the Thoyts family. With the house, Watson acquired 2,000 acres spread across three parishes, six estate farms and dozens of cottages and servants. There were shooting rights and five miles of trout-fishing on the Kennet. Watson installed himself, his wife, Bessie, and his three children, Norman, Florence and Victor (always known as Peter). They were all, in their different ways, remarkable people.

George Watson's business was so successful that he was described as "minting gold". By the time he died, in 1930, he was a baronet and had given the unbelievable sum of £30,000 to the notorious Maundy Gregory to obtain him a barony. (Watson's executors brought a successful court case against Gregory to get this money back after Watson's death). There were five large Rolls-Royces, Bentleys and Daimlers in the extensive garages at Sulhamstead – one for each member of the family. The house had been modernised and a huge organ had been installed (now happily in use in a parish church on the Isle of Man). George was High Sheriff of Berkshire in 1920, as was his son Norman, in 1940.

The estate accounts survive for part of the 1920's and 30's in the archives of Reading Record Office and they show how rich one needed to be in the depressed years between the Wars to maintain a vast estate like Sulhamstead. Each year the books only balanced because the family paid in cash.

Before he died in July 1930, Sir George had already settled what is estimated to

have been about £1million on his son, Peter. A new book, published in April, records the extraordinary life which this amount of money enabled Peter Watson to live. It gave him an income of about £50,000 a year, which made him one of the richest men in England. With no estates, no wife, no children, no servants, (and certainly no job) Peter Watson led a gilded life of extreme luxury. He bought himself Rolls-Royces, travelled all over the world, was idolised by Oliver Messel and Cecil Beaton, became a great friend of Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud, founded one of the greatest literary journals of the century (*Horizon*), assembled a legendary art collection, in London and in Paris, and finally helped to found the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. Beneath all this, however, his dark private life led to him probably being murdered by his boyfriend in 1956 when he was 47.

In the meantime, the second (and last) baronet of Sulhamstead, Sir Norman, was also leading a fascinating, if somewhat unusual, life. On the face of it he was a normal member of the Home Counties upper-middle classes. Educated, like Peter, at Eton, he was old enough (born in 1897) to fight in the First World War, surviving after transferring to the Royal Flying Corps. He used his experience to build up the business of the Heston Aircraft Company. But, again, there was another life. He only married right at the end of his life, when he was 77, to a woman who seems to have realised that he had a lot of money which she could help him spend. He never had any children and money was spent on extraordinary schemes in Canada to develop a ski resort at Lake Louise, which is still there. He even imported into Canada cows from Switzerland to make the Canadian Rockies resemble the Alps. (A less than flattering portrait of Sir Norman is contained in Sir Rodney Touche's "Brown Cows, Sacred Cows: a true story of Lake Louise".) Much of his life was spent skiing, and he published a book called "Round Mystery Mountain: a Ski Adventure".

Born in 1894, Florence had been George and Bessie's first child. She was clearly a rebel. During the First War the house accommodated wounded servicemen and Florence chose one to marry. After having two children, he decamped with a kennel maid and Florence never remarried. Until her death in 1988 she lived often with lady companions, breeding Irish Wolfhounds and training horses. A formidable woman, she also fought and won a famous court case, against the Jockey Club, to force them officially to accept lady trainers. (There is a book about her called "Mission Accomplished: the life and times of Florence Nagle" by Ferelith Somerfield).

All this came to an end with the outbreak of the War. The RAF set up a base at nearby Theale, and in 1941 Norman let the officers use the main house as their Mess. Lady Bessie retired to one of the gate lodges, where she died in 1942. Beginning in 1943 Norman sold the house and estate and Sulhamstead ceased to be a family home. George, Bessie and Florence lie buried in the churchyard of the vanished church of St Michael, Sulhamstead Bannister.

What became of the family's life at the house? After Sir George died, Sir Norman carried on living there with Lady Bessie. A busy social life continued, with

shooting parties and so on. Even now, as the Police Training College, it is possible to see Sulhamstead as a lived-in house, with many of its original rooms surviving.

Evidence of a Monumental Investigation
The Beaver Monument in Wokingham Berkshire

by Barbara Young Keddie

There is an unusual tomb in the churchyard of All Saints in Wokingham. Unusual in that as well as commemorating those who were entombed, the inscriptions cover six generations of the Beaver family going back to the early 17th Century. The book contains twelve research reports filling out details of the family. It is not easy reading; but it contains a wealth of information culled from many years of painstaking research.

John Chapman

Great War Centenary

This September/October we have two significant centenaries to commemorate: The VC s won by Fred Potts and Alexander Buller Turner, not to mention the campaign at Gallipoli and the Battle of Loos where the Kitchener Volunteers first saw action.

Fred Potts and the Berkshire Yeomanry

The Battle of Loos

The Battle of Loos which took place between the 25th September and the 13th October 1915 was the first major engagement for the Kitchener volunteers; the men who had flocked to the Colours in August to October 1914 after Lord Kitchener had made his famous appeal.

No less than three battalions of the Royal Berkshire Regiment were involved; the 1st, 5th and 8th. The intention was to penetrate the German line on a six mile front between Lens and La Bassée with infantry so that the cavalry could charge through the gap and overwhelm the Germans from behind. The break-through never happened.

The 1st Battalion was a regular battalion that had been engaged since they landed in France on the 13th August 1914, participating in the retreat from Mons, The First Battle of Ypres and at Festubert. They had already lost a significant number of men who had been replaced mainly by reservists. Their attack began at 2am on the 26th September attacking Fosse 8 in what was one of France's chief coal mining areas. Lt Alexander Buller Turner led a bombing party down what was known as Slag Alley, almost by himself he drove the Germans back over 150 yards throwing bombs with great dash and determination. Sadly he was mortally wounded and died the next day. He was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry, one of three members of his family who won that award. He had been born in Reading but moved around with his army father until settling in Thatcham and attending Wellington College. The Government are commemorating all the British VC winners with a pavement slab - Turner's will go to his hometown of Thatcham.

The 8th Battalion were to attack the village of Hulluch on the 25th September after a release of gas and a heavy bombardment. Unfortunately the gas blew back at them and the bombardment failed to cut the German barbed wire defences. The Germans counter-attacked at 3.30pm by which time the Battalion had lost almost all its officers. When Colonel Walton had to go to hospital suffering from gas poisoning, command was given to 20 year old Second Lt T B Lawrence who had been a private only a few months before. He won the MC for his efforts. The Battalion was relieved on the 28th. However, on October 13th they were sent in again with more chlorine gas but failed to gain ground. In the first attack they lost 12 officers killed and 2 wounded, 56 other ranks killed, 176 wounded and 268 missing. The second attack saw the loss of 11 officers and 142 other ranks.

The 5th Battalion entered the fray on the 13th October attacking Hulluch

Quarries, just to the left of where the 8th had been engaged. Among their officers were Cecil and Pat Gold of Holyport and Frederick Mount of Wasing. Attempts to bomb the Germans were frustrated because many of the 'lemons' had had their firing pins bent in transit and the 'cricket balls' had been supplied without strikers. Losses were 11 officers, 37 other ranks killed, 91 wounded and 12 missing.

For the next few weeks the local papers were full of articles and letters about the Battle. It brought home to many villages the reality of war after all the enthusiasm of the latter months of 1914 and recruitment came to an abrupt halt.

Articles

The History of Lloyds Bank in Pangbourne

By Ian Crimp

With acknowledgements to Lloyds Banking Group Archives and Mr.D.L.Barber

In the not too distant past Pangbourne had four major banks in the village and in view of the recent closure of HSBC, Barclays and previously Nat West banks I feel it is timely to record the history of Lloyds Bank Pangbourne.

A conveyance dated 8th.January 1896 transferred Woodborough House, Pangbourne, from Mr.S.A.Hill of East Grinstead to Mr.D.H.Evans (Founder of the London Store) of Shooters Hill, Pangbourne, for the sum of £730. The property comprised a house and 34 poles of land and was occupied by Mr.Child. It was formerly in the occupation of Thomas Deare. The site was at the corner of Reading Road and The Square adjoining Howarth House (now Howarth Lodge). Woodborough House was set back level with Howarth House and both had gardens fronting on to the Reading Road.

Before the end of the century Mr.Evans had built the range of shops with accommodation above, which today includes Lloyds bank. Sellwoods took the premises at 1, Reading Road and the accommodation above.

Mr.Evans eventually ran into financial difficulties and in 1917 Legal & General Assurance Society foreclosed on their mortgage. Lloyds Bank purchased the freehold title of 1, Reading Road on 15th.March 1920 paying £1,200 to L&G and £150 to the tenants, Sellwood Brothers. Sellwoods were allowed to continue to occupy half the ground floor on a 7 year lease with effect from 20th.December 1920 at rent of £30 p.a.

The branch opened on 1st December 1920. The clerk-in-charge was my father Mr.F.H.Crimp who had transferred from Bromley branch at a salary of £295 p.a. At that time Pangbourne was under the supervision of Reading branch where the Manager was Mr.F.C.Webster. From that time my parents together with family moved into the Bank House above the branch.

Total expenses in 1921 were £632 which included salaries of £403. By the end of 1922 there were 90 current accounts, 78 deposit accounts and 25 savings accounts.

Average lending totalled £4000 whereas in the previous year it had been below £1000.

In addition to my father there were two clerks. Heating was by an anthracite stove. The first strong room was built in 1923 and required many alterations to the branch, including an iron stairway to give access to the flat, backyard and coal store, a telephone was installed, number Pangbourne 83. The strong room was installed n by John Lewis & Co. of Reading. The cost of the Ratner strong room door was £14.7.4

The branch had started to make profits in 1925 - £75 for the half-year to June and £130 to December. The business continued to grow and in 1928 there had to be a major re-build taking in Sellwoods shop, where the lease had expired. The new teak frontage was put in at that time and a new layout for the public space was implemented including a Manager's office.

Following steady expansion my father F.H.Crimp was appointed Manager on 1st.March 1929. Goring-on-Thames sub branch (now TSB) was opened on September 15th.1930 under the supervision of Pangbourne. A clerk and watchman (guard) travelled daily by train to Goring.

Following the outbreak of War, many London firms were evacuated to the district, including Tate and Lyle. Other notable organisations also opened accounts, this included The Nautical College (as it was then known), Sparta Estates, Tidmarsh and St.Andrews School. This brought much more work to the branch. My Father was unfit for military service and continued to run the branch amid wartime difficulties. There had been 5 clerks employed before the war and this increased to 14 by 1941.

There were constant staff changes, due to Ministry of Labour allocations which gave rise to a heavy burden of training. In 1943 a junior girl aged 15 left to join the Land Army, as she said she found banking very difficult and could not read the customers' signatures!

My father retired on 31st.May 1945 due to ill health, having been with Lloyds bank for 38 years, 25 of which were spent at Pangbourne branch. He was succeeded by Mr.H.B.Savill from Malvern branch who was then succeeded by Mr.A.Johnson from Hythe branch. Mr.W.H.Bean became manager in June 1954.

A radical change occurred in September 1958, when machine accounting replaced hand written ledgers for current accounts. Mr.Bean moved to Surbiton branch in August 1959 and was replaced by Mr.R.A.Pain.

In 1963 after a year of detailed planning, the Manager's flat was taken over for office use. The street door to the flat (on the right of the fascia), was removed but the staircase was retained to give staff access to the Manager's office, machine room and upstairs offices. The Manager's room on the ground floor was removed to make way for a lift. This gave room to enlarge the counter with 3 till spaces for cashiers. The Manager, secretary and machinists moved to their new accommodation on the first floor. The lift gave access to the Manager and a hoist was installed to carry ledger tins, vouchers etc. to the first floor.

In December 1965 Mr.Pain moved to Dover branch and was replaced by Mr.N.-A.Clifford from Warwick branch. In 1972 Mr.G.C.Catmull succeeded Mr.Clifford. In 1972 Goring-on-Thames became a full branch after 42 years under Pangbourne. Goring is now part of TSB. In December 1971 Pangbourne branch was listed as of special architectural or historic interest; at that time plans had to be made for substantial re-building. The upper floors had originally been designed for domestic use only. The weight of stationery, machines and ledgers was putting considerable stress on the building. A steel beam with stanchions either side, together with new foundations was installed, together with air conditioning. The contract price with McCarthy Fitt of Reading was £34,935!

Mr.Catmull retired in 1984 and was succeeded by Mr.D.L.Barber from Langley branch. Mr.Barber was the last Branch Manager before responsibility was taken over by Reading Market Place branch.

I now tell an anecdotal story from the war years. During WW2 steel bars were placed across the glass windows of the bank for extra security. Apparently one day, in the early hours of the morning, my mother awoke to hear the sound of sawing. Believing that somebody was trying to break into the bank she woke my Father saying she could hear this noise. He quickly dressed and brandishing a suitable implement rushed downstairs. He discovered a cow that had escaped from the meadows was rubbing its horns on the metalwork!!

Society News

Berkshire Archaeological Society

This year the Berkshire Archaeological Society has worked hard to achieve their objects which are to advance the education of the public in the fields of archaeology and history in the past and present County of Berkshire. To do this we have delivered a varied series of Saturday lectures and a Day School with reports on archaeological investigations on sites across the County.

The Society has run seminars on timber-framed buildings and Berkshire's Saxon sites which have led to field visits. A lecture on the extent of Saxon Oxford culminated in a tour led by Oxford Archaeology's Julian Munby and Anne Doods. We have kept in touch with Reading University's progress from Silchester's Insula IX to Insula III and an excavation at the Neolithic Henge in the Vale of Pewsey. The Spring Tour to the Heart of England visited contrasting Cathedrals at Coventry and Hereford, and museums at Ironbridge.

We have increased our work in the field and work with members from local groups on geo-physical investigations and excavation. Our second excavation at Blounts Court unexpectedly revealed that the chalk floors found the previous year were laid over the sixteenth century tiles, not under, and just the corner of an even earlier mortared-flint building, led us to plan to visit again next year.

This year we have gathered our boxes of library books into a store and continue to look for a place to display them for Members' use. We are grateful to the Society Members who store our equipment, offer transport, keep our records, write newsletters, organise trips and lectures to make this a growing, successful society. We welcome new members and invite local societies to work with us on joint projects where the sharing of expertise will help us achieve our aims for the Society.

Ann Griffin

Eton Wick History Group

Ten years ago, in 2005, the 60th Anniversary of the end of World War II, Eton Wick's Village Hall Committee, together with the village's History Group Committee commemorated the event by inviting the veterans of that war who were currently resident in the village to a Celebratory Lunch in the Village Hall. It was likely that about 130 of Eton Wick's men and women had served in the war but in the intervening years a number had moved away or died and so there were 53 ex-service personnel at that lunch, which was also attended by the then Mayor of Eton, Douglas Hill, the then Bursar of Eton College, Commander Andrew Wynn RN (Retd.), and Lt. Col. M. L. Wilcockson who was then the CO of Eton College's Combined Cadet Force, all of whom gave very moving speeches. Copies of a book containing records of their life

and service were given to the veterans.

A viewing of an amateur film which had been made of the Celebratory Lunch prompted the History Group Committee to plan a 70th Anniversary 'Recall' event to enable those veterans who still lived in the village to have an opportunity to see the film of that very memorable occasion. Formal invitations were sent to the remaining 17 of the original 53 veterans and 7 were able to attend; invitations were sent to relatives of the deceased, where appropriate; and the evening was also open to the History Group's regular audience; in total, approximately 80 people attended the event in the Village Hall on 8th July and they stayed to enjoy a splendid buffet of refreshments generously provided by Mrs Margaret Everitt and her son, Andrew.

A pull-out insert titled 'Recall 70 years on' will be distributed in the next edition of Eton Wick's 'Our Village' newsletter; it will contain a commemorative article by Frank Bond, together with the text of Commander Wynn's very moving speech at the 2005 Lunch, followed by a message from him which was read out after the film was shown: he referred to the debt we all owe to the veterans and to the spirits of their comrades; and he saluted Eton Wick's surviving veterans; his message ended with the Royal British Legion's Exhortation : "They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old. Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them."

Teresa Stanton

Goring Gap Local History Society

The first important item of news is that the Society has changed its name. In 1966 when our organisation began we were called the Goring Local History Society. A few years later, Streatley was added to the name. Recognising that both our membership and local history are not confined within the parish borders of these two villages, we have become the Goring Gap Local History Society. This has not been without considerable debate and opposition from some members. However at the AGM, the new name was voted in by an overwhelming majority. Next year marks our 50th anniversary and a local history festival is planned for Saturday 1 October 2016. Watch this space for further details.

We have had only two talks since the last report. In April Dr Simon Draper of the Victoria County History team in Oxfordshire described his findings about the parish of Newington, an interesting place with multiple hamlets including a detached chapelry 4 miles to the east of the main settlement and a patch of woodland in the high Chilterns. The work will be published soon in a new 'red book', but in the meantime the draft text can be read online. Ken Fostekew of the Berkshire Aviation Museum at Woodley visited us in May and showed an amazing set of recently discovered photographs of the No.1 School of Aeronautics which was set up in south Reading in 1915. This establishment provided training for young men who joined the Royal Flying Corps in World War I. The students were instructed in aircraft maintenance and taught special-

ist skills such as observation and ground recognition, wireless telegraphy and air to ground photography. Later women were also trained at the school.

The rest of our time has been spent going on outings. The Transport History Group went by train in April for rather a special day at the Morgan Car Factory and Museum in Malvern, and in May, a few braved the bad weather for a visit to Burlesdon Brickworks Industrial Museum at Swanwick near Southampton. June saw our annual coach outing, which this year went to Berkeley in Gloucestershire. In the morning we visited the house and museum of Dr Edward Jenner who pioneered vaccination against smallpox. After a wander round the village, lunch and a look at the fascinating parish church with its wall paintings, the group split into two for superb guided tours of Berkeley Castle. After a welcome cup of tea it was back on the coach for home, after a very enjoyable day.

Looking to the future, Mike Brodie will be conducting guided walks of Streatley on Sundays at the end of August. The Transport History Group will be visiting the Beeches Light Railway, taking a round trip on the paddle steamer Waverley from Bournemouth and going to Milestones Museum at Basingstoke. In September the new programme of monthly talks begins.

Janet Hurst, Secretary

History of Reading Society

In April Andrew Bird gave a talk on the Royal Flying Corps in Reading during World War One. The number one school of aeronautics was established at Reading in 1915 as a training school for the RFC, the predecessor to the modern RAF. Students enrolled on courses there from Britain and the Empire.

Many of its students were taught at Wantage Hall, commandeered from University College, Reading. In 1915 there were 200 officers and 1800 other ranks enrolled on its courses; by 1918 15,000 officers and 100,000 other ranks had passed through the school. Cadets were taught theoretical aspects of powered flight; mock fuselages of aircraft were wedged between the branches of trees to simulate height whilst trainers shouted instructions from the ground. By the end of the war in 1918 the RFC wanted to continue at the site but University College said no so the school moved to Halton, Buckinghamshire where it is today.

In May Katie Amos, who works at Reading Central Library, gave a talk about the Timms family of Reading and London. During her research Katie discovered that William Henry Timms was her four times great grandfather. He is of interest today because of his twelve views of prominent buildings around Reading which were published in 1832; the drawings of churches are of particular interest because later many were drastically restored by the Victorians. Katie, with the help of a local historian, Sidney Gold, began to trace William Henry's descendants. One of his sons,

Charles Alfred born in 1819, began his career as a painter, however, during the 1850s he switched to photography where he specialised in producing portraits. A grandchild of William Henry's, also William Henry and his younger brother, Arthur, became eminent designers of furniture in London. In 2014, Katie published a book on the subject.

In June the society visited Reading's Hebrew Synagogue. We were welcomed by Sue Krisman who guided us to the sanctuary where worship is conducted. Jack Album, whose family were founder members of the synagogue, explained the layout of the synagogue and the form of worship. The members were invited to explore the building and later we adjourned to the Herman Gollancz Hall for a talk by Sue on the Reading Synagogue's history.

In July the society visited the Reading Blue Coat School at Sonning our guide for the visit was Peter Van Went a retired teacher at the school and its archivist. Peter spoke to the society last year about the school's history and suggested a visit to the school. The members were shown round the old house, Holme Park, where the school moved to in 1947 leaving cramped premises at Bath Road, Reading. An interesting curiosity were the two statues of Blue Coat boys in the east porch which once adorned the façade of the Bath Road building.

For 2016 the society plans to produce a calendar of colour photographic views of Reading from the collection of former society member the late Norman Wicks which date from the 1970s and 1980s showing many altered and vanished locations.

Sean Duggan

Pangbourne Heritage

The last three events for the Group this season have been very good. The Village evening walks on 10th. June were attended by members and led by myself, around the historic village, and Lesley Crimp around the Meadows and the outer parts of the village. Our aims were a reconnaissance for a new walking Guide for the Village. Our Gazebo at the Village Fete, on 20th. June, was set up by Jane Rawlins, assisted by other members, with material from our archive including displays of historic photographs of Pangbourne and previous exhibitions. Comments were also invited about a previous Pangbourne Guide and what should be included in the future one. There was a constant stream of visitors and we welcomed three new Members.

Our last meeting was on 8th. July when seven of us visited Wallingford Castle and Museum, arranged by Lesley Crimp. We were guided around the Castle Park and Meadow by Jane Dewey, the Museum Curator, and one of her colleagues, who explained the historic importance of the Castle dating back to Anglo-Saxon times, and traced for us the lines of the castle walls and moats.

That was our last meeting in the current season as there will be no meeting in August. The next Members' meeting will be on Wednesday, 9th. September at the Church of St. James- the -Less, when we shall report progress on the new Guide and

invite discussion about what it should contain and future work.

Anne Woodage

Shinfield & District Local History Society

The speaker at our May meeting was Colin Oakes who gave a talk on “Calendars: the many ways of counting our days”. Colin is a qualified archaeologist and guides walking tours of London as well as giving talks on a huge range of topics. This particular talk covered the origins and development of many varied calendars including Hindu, Chinese, French Republican, Jewish, Roman, Julian and Gregorian. The name “calendar” is thought to have originated with the Roman calendar and is derived from the title of the official who announced significant dates. In the ancient Roman calendar the year was divided into 10 months, each divided into three parts – Kalends, Nones and Ides. Julius Caesar added the months of July and August to make the 12 months we know today. In 1852 Pope Gregory introduced a new calendar to remove differences between the Julian calendar and real time but this was not adopted in Britain until 1752 owing to Elizabeth I’s refusal to follow anything with Catholic origins. Dates prior to 1752 follow the Julian calendar, for which the year started on 25 March, and are quoted as “Old Style”, later dates being “New Style”. In the process of converting from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar 11 days were removed from September. One hangover from the Old Style is the UK Tax Year which starts on 6th April (i.e. 25th March + 11 days).

Most of our June meeting was taken up with preparing a response to a request from Wokingham Borough Council for suggestions of road names for a new housing development in Shinfield. Two of our members subsequently met with WBC and other interested parties.

In July Barry Boulton, one of our members, gave a talk on “Local trades and businesses”. This was based on research he has carried out into trades and businesses and related occupations in the parish of Shinfield. The talk covered the period from pre-Roman settlement in the area, through the Roman period, Domesday Book and on to the 20th Century. Reference was made to a range of documented sources including overseers’ papers, settlement examinations/certificates/removal orders, wills, school records and census records. Of particular interest were some of the occupations recorded in censuses, e.g. Barker (leather tanner), and Hillier (roofer). Also of interest was the story of a boy apprenticed to the Royal African Company engaged in the slave trade in Guinea and who, in 1723, was hanged for piracy. The village charity school arranged apprenticeships, the first in 1711, often at quite some distance from the parish – e.g. Isleworth and Southampton. The school accounts for 1706 to 1834 provide information about local tradesmen who supplied items for the school or who did work there. Moving into the 20th century Barry drew on recollections of local inhabitants regarding shops and visiting tradesmen.

George Taylor

Twyford & Ruscombe Local History Society

March was a sad month for the Society when two of our members died: John Moulds, our President and Edna Bowman (who used to write the articles for the Newsletter). Both are greatly missed.

At our April meeting we had the pleasure of welcoming Dr. Margaret Simons, who talked to us about *The Making of Modern Reading*. With a wealth of detail Dr Simons described how Reading constantly reinvents itself. There have been boundary changes, but since 1977 the boundary has remained fairly stable.

In May Mr Gordon Goodey spoke about *Anglo-Saxon Berkshire*. At various times tribes from Northern Europe invaded England and so came the Angles and the Saxons; the Jutes, Goths and Franks and others. Later came the Vikings and, in 1006, the Danes invaded. The history of this time is remarkably involved and Mr Goodey must have done an immense amount of research in order to give us such a detailed account.

In June, with a view to publicity, we decided to sponsor a donkey [Wellington Boot out of Waterloo] at the Scouts Donkey Derby and we had our own pitch on the Recreation Ground with a gazebo to display our literature: also a fascinating exhibition produced by one of our members, Graham Starkis, about the village's history in the osier trade. This elicited considerable interest.

At our June meeting Mr Tony Verey gave us a very enjoyable evening talking about *his eminent Twyford family* and their time at Bridge House. He spoke with humour and surely even newcomers must have been intrigued; but for the oldies it was a case of going down memory lane with him and they loved it! Some of our members, as scouts, remembered being allowed to camp out at Bridge House and other kindnesses shown to them by the family. Sadly the time came for the Vereys to leave Twyford and Bridge House became a nursing home. Right now it is going a step further and a comprehensive refurbishment and extension is in the throes of turning it into a Continuing Care Retirement Community (a care concept which seeks to provide alternative types of accommodation that promote independence.)

A visit to Mapledurham Mill is planned for 17th July and our annual ploughman's lunch will take place at the end of the month. This will signal 'close of play' for the holiday period and our next meeting will be in September.

Denise Wilkinson

Wargrave Local History Society

Dr Phillada Ballard gave an illustrated presentation on Culham Court in April. Pre-Domesday the estate was part of the manor of Wargrave, the property passing to the Nevilles in 1552, then to the Lovelace family of Hurley, before it was sold to Richard Stevens in 1679. A London lawyer, Culham became his country retreat. By the mid 18th century, the family were in financial difficulty, so the estate was sold in 1760, to another lawyer – Richard Michell. He began restoration of the house, but following a

disastrous fire, the present house was built further from the main road, with good views across the Thames. Phillada described the house and grounds, its later owners, and its royal visitor.

In May, Sheila Viner told the history of the Water Mills on the Thames and Loddon, describing 20 Thames watermills from Old Windsor up to Sonning, with 8 more on the Berkshire part of the Loddon. Watermills were used for many industries (not just producing flour), and changed their 'product' according to the economic times. The most surprising was at Marlow, where alongside a saw mill, oil mill, corn mill and paper mill, there was a thimble mill, with a knurling machine invented by John Lofting that revolutionised thimble manufacture. The entire site was replaced by modern flats in 1965. Sheila remarked on the loss of jobs, and wondered where those who had worked the mills had gone. A common hazard for mills was fire, as at Hurley, rebuilt after a fire in 1887, but closed after a further fire in 1904, whilst at Arborfield, where there were both corn and paper mills, fire also took hold more than once.

Wargrave's Village Festival took place in June, when the ever-popular local history walk sold out. The Society's second event was "All About Antiques", when well-known antiques expert Thomas Plant – familiar to many from BBC television – delighted the audience with recollections of his work as an antiques and collectables auctioneer, as well as 'behind the scenes' stories from his television career. With stories ranging from the psychology of teddy bear collectors, to maybe not recognising an item's true potential, Thomas entertained the audience in a lovely warm style. The Society's stall at the Festival Fete included a display about the 1943 American bomber crash, whilst many questions from visitors enquired about the village's history during the afternoon.

Members had an enjoyable and fascinating day at Bletchley Park in July, where several of the huts used by the wartime codebreakers have been restored, and displays show how the messages were encrypted and how the problem of decoding them was solved.

Contact me, Peter Delaney, by visiting our website www.wargravehistory.org.uk/ for more information about the Society.

Peter Delaney

Windsor Local History Group

The WLHG meet on the first Friday of every month at a variety of venues, including members' homes. At present there are just 15 of us, interested in researching and recording local history. Our main aim is to produce an annual journal called Windlesora, which is a compilation of articles with a local interest, and written mainly by the members, however, we also invite non-members to write for Windlesora.

Sometimes we have a theme, last year's Windlesora 30 had a number of articles about the Great War, Windlesora 31, will feature the many anniversaries we commemorate this year, from Magna Carta, Agincourt, Waterloo to Gallipoli, always with an

eye to the Windsor connection.

One item on our monthly agenda is called Local History Zone. Recently we have been discussing River Street, an area of Victorian and pre Victorian houses, and one of Windsor's notorious nineteenth century slums. It was demolished in 1929 to make way for Windsor's first car park.

At our April meeting we looked at River Street in 1851 with the aid of the census returns. At that time the short street from the castle wall to the river was called Bier Lane; the name may derive from the biers carrying bodies of the deceased down to the river to be transported by barge to Clewer Church for burial. Bier Lane was part of the Clewer parish, and the road to Clewer was often impassable during bad weather or floods. The road has had other names in the past, (it once was called Beer Lane) - there was a brewery on the other side, the Windsor side, of the road, and Bereman Lane after Andrew Bereman, Windsor bridge keeper and mayor in 1510. Bear Lane also featured at one time.

In 1851 there were 34 houses in this short street, three were unoccupied, the rest housed 260 people, 75 of them children under 16, most of them attending school. Some of the houses were hugely overcrowded. Nr 25 recorded eight family groups, 21 persons in all.

Nr 21 was a lodging house run by Thomas Goodchild, a widower with a notorious reputation. He has a son of 13 and a young female servant living with him, as well as 25 lodgers. Four were young single women with no job description, indicating that they were probably earning their living on the streets. In a town with two barracks prostitution was a big problem, and brought Windsor under the control of the Contagious Diseased Acts of the 1860s. The male lodgers were hawkers or travellers, who could not even give their exact age or place of birth.

Only one person declared himself to be 'out of employ', but the most common job descriptions were labourers, shoemakers, shopkeepers, carpenters, gardener, or for women, laundress or dressmaker; there was one hawker of goldfish, and one soldier, but a number of ex-soldiers have been identified by me during the research for my PhD on Windsor as a garrison town.

At the back of Bier Lane were a number of courts and alleys, such as Garden Court, Red Lion Row, Distil House Row and Providence Place, bringing the total population for this area in 1851 to 560. This will be a topic for discussion at future meetings.

Brigitte Mitchell

Museums and Libraries

Opportunities

For visits, activities, talks, conferences or projects

Heritage Open Days

Takes place this year on the 10th to 12th September. There will be events all over the county and many of our societies and institutions will be taking part - so watch your local media for information on events near you.

Thames Stories - Art and Archaeology

Reading Museum until 4th October

Objects from the museum's art and archaeology collections tell tales and answer questions about the River Thames. Has the river always been where it is today? What has been found in the Thames and by whom? Why have so many artists made paintings of Caversham Bridge?

A Sense of Place

Reading Museum 24th October to Spring 2016

An exhibition of the very best of our twentieth century landscape paintings as well as a chance to see the huge Reading Tapestries by John Piper. Look out for related workshops, events and study days in early 2016.

Berkshire Historic Environment Forum

The next meeting of the Forum will take place on Saturday 31st October 2015 in The Barn, Goosecroft Lane, off Beech Road, Purley on Thames RG8 8DR.

The Forum will try to relate the archaeology to the history of some of Berkshire's parishes by looking at such questions as Who lived on the land? When did they live there? What did they do there? History tells us about named people who have appeared in the historic record, archaeology tells us about anonymous people who left remains in the ground. It is often very difficult to reconcile these two views of the past

This meeting is an opportunity to discuss the work that members of the Berkshire Archaeological Society have undertaken on sites in and around Berkshire and to consider possible future projects. We aim to stimulate interest by members of local societies in the rich heritage of their areas and to make them more aware of the archaeological work that has taken place over the years. Also to encourage local groups to co-operate in further investigations and sharing information.

There is no need to book ahead - just turn up. For more details contact Andrew Hutt (andrew.hutt@talktalk.net) or John Chapman (j.chapman458@btinternet.com)

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]

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 [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 Gap Local History Society: Janet Hurst, 6 Nun's Acre, Goring on Thames, Reading, Berks RG8 9BE tel 01491 871022 [goringgaphistory@gmail.com] [www.goringgaphistory.org.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: Vicki Chesterman, 7 Norman Road, Caversham RG4 5JN [vickichesterman@yahoo.co.uk] [www.historyofreadingsociety.org.uk]

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 Madge, 11 Boulters Court, Maidenhead, SL6 8TH [bandgmadge@btinternet.com]

Mid Thames Archaeological & Historical Society: Jane Wall, 143 Vine Road, Stoke Poges, SL2 4DH [sec.mtchs@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: Wendy Archer, The Old Nursery, Pump Lane, Marlow, SL7 3RS [chairman@ofhs.org.uk]

Pangbourne Heritage Group: Lyn Davies, 1 Hartslock Court, Pangbourne, RG8 7BJ
[lynndaw87@aol.com]

Project Purley: Catherine Sampson, 32 Waterside Drive, Purley on Thames, Berks, RG8 8AQ
tel 0118 9422 255 [chairman@project-purley.eu] [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: Ken Hussey, Kimberley, Swallowfield RG7 1QX
[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: Graham Reeves, 52 Parkers Corner, Englefield, RG7 5JR
[thealehistory@aol.com]

Twyford & Ruscombe Local History Society: Audrey Curtis, 39 New Road, Ruscombe RG10
9LN tel 0118 9343260 [audreycurt@googlemail.com] reporter Denise Wilkin

Wargrave Local History Society: Peter Delaney, 6 East View Close, Wargrave, Berks, RG10
8BJ tel 0118 9403121 [secretary@wargravehistory.co.uk] [www.wargravehistory.org.uk]

Windsor Local History Group: Sue Ashley, 49 York Avenue, Windsor, SL4 3PA [nutritionasshley@hotmail.com] [www.windsorhistory.org.uk]

Friends of Windsor and Royal Borough Museum: Malcolm Lock, 1 Duncannon Crescent,
Windsor, SL4 4YP [malcolmlock@hotmail.com] [www.windsormuseumappeal.org.uk]

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 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: 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: The Wharf, Newbury, RG14 4AU [museum@westberks.gov.uk]

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

Berkshire Local History Association

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