



Berkshire Local History Association

Reports from Executive Committee for AGM 2015

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The Executive Committee met three times since the last Annual General Meeting, as required by the Constitution.

I continue to circulate occasional electronic bulletins via email. It helps us to promote our main events, for example, the AGM and the Tudor and Stuart Handwriting course, currently being run by Joan Dils. I also include notices of events outside the Association, if it may be of interest to our membership. I would encourage all members to sign up to receive the Bulletins, as this is an inexpensive method of communicating between editions of the Newsletter. Please feel free to circulate the Bulletins to any individuals or organisations who may be interested in the contents. This will help to make the public more aware of what our Association can offer and help to promote our activities.

Once again, the Agenda and programme for the AGM, the Minutes of the previous AGM, as well as the annual reports from members of the Executive Committee, have been posted online in advance of the meeting. Hopefully, this will be helpful in streamlining the business side of the day. Any comments or feedback on this or the e-Bulletin would be welcome.

Ann McCormack

TREASURER'S REPORT

The financial activity of the Association in 2014 were little changed from 2013.

Subscriptions were maintained at £1,880, and printing and postage – the Association's two largest expenses - were slightly lower than 2013 by about £80, owing to the greater use of the internet to distribute the newsletter.

The Association continues to contribute £50 towards a £100 prize jointly awarded with the Berkshire Record Office, for the best undergraduate history dissertation at Reading University.

The Association is affiliated with the British Local History Association, not least because they provide public liability insurance cover under a national policy, which covers the Association's meetings.

The Association made no grants from either the Anthony Cross or Tilehurst restricted funds during the year.

A loan of £1,000 was made, however, from the funds allocated to the Association by the Reading History Trust, to aid the publication of Elias Kaupermann's book of historic photos of Windsor, '*Royal Windsor - Images of a bygone Age*'. It is anticipated that the loan will be repaid in the first quarter of 2015.

The bulk of the Associations funds are held on deposit at the Charity Foundation Bank, but the interest paid on this deposit is very low, at less than 0.2%.

Overall the Associations finances are healthy, with funds totalling £9,115, of which £6,297 are unrestricted.

Berkshire Local History Association

Income and Expenditure Accounts for the Year ended 31 December

		2014		2013
Income	£	£	£	£
Subscriptions received	1,879.90		1,880.45	
Advertising			50.00	
Journal sales	-		58.50	
Total income		1,879.90		1,988.95
Expenditure				
Printing journal	248.43		320.00	
Printing newsletters	294.10		319.71	
Web hosting	60.00		60.00	
Postage	267.48		247.26	
Stationery	17.20		12.40	
Visits income	0		0.00	
Visits expense	0.00		7.50	
Meeting expenses	60.00		105.50	
AGM expenses inc. prize	205.00		100.00	
BALH subscription	65.00		65.00	
Total expenses		1,217.21		1,237.37
Interest received		6.19		3.40
Surplus / (deficit) for the year		668.88		754.98
Accumulated funds B. Fwd.		5,627.88		4,872.90
Accumulated funds C. Fwd.		<u>6,296.76</u>		<u>5,627.88</u>

Statement of Assets

2013

CAF Cash Account	2,210.68	3,319.40
CAF Gold Account	6,738.97	5,991.37
Cash in hand	0.10	0.10
Membership Sec. Float	100.00	100.00
Debtor	65.00	50.00
Creditor		-20.00
Total	<u>9,114.75</u>	<u>9,440.87</u>

Represented by

Restricted Funds

Anthony Cross fund	750.00	750.00
Accumulated interest	<u>325.15</u>	<u>320.15</u>
	1,075.15	1,070.15
Tilehurst Fund	242.84	242.84
Reading Local History Trust	2,500.00	2,500.00
loan made in 2014	-1,000.00	
Total Restricted funds	2,817.99	3,812.99
Unrestricted funds	<u>6,296.76</u>	<u>5,627.88</u>
	<u>9,114.75</u>	<u>9,440.87</u>

Dr David Lewis ACA, Treasurer
Feb-15

Dr Clive Burgess, Financial Examiner

JOURNAL EDITOR'S REPORT

The 2014 edition of *Berkshire Old and New* was published on time last September. It was well received – at least all the copies have gone. I am gathering articles for 2015, and expect to have this year's journal ready as usual in the autumn. More contributions are, as always, welcome (journal@blha.org.uk).

We hope to publish the papers presented at today's symposium as a separate volume.

Best wishes

Jonathan

NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S REPORT

I took over the editorship from Margaret Simons last May and have produced two editions so far, for September and January. We took a policy decision to standardise on 28 pages plus the cover and I have been using a desk top publishing system. We also looked at getting an ISSN number, only to find we already had one, but we did need a second as the on-line version has to be different from the printed version.

We had ten societies sending in reports of their activity for both edition but as we have 39 society members that could be improved upon – Societies please note!

As this year has seen the centenary of the Great War we have had lots of reports of society events and projects and it is evident that lots of people across the county are taking a serious interest in this aspect of their heritage and putting a lot of effort into research.

We no longer send out an accompanying sheet listing meetings of societies as the ones we received were not really representative of the activities of all of our societies but the information has been posted on our website along with a list of talks given. What we do like to publicise are society special events which have an appeal to a wider audience than just their members.

The electronic version of the newsletter is posted on the website at the same time as the text is sent to the printers so those societies that have opted for the electronic version get a good lead before other members receive the paper version.

Would societies please check the information on them at the back of the newsletter so that we can keep contact information up to date.

John Chapman

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

Currently we have 80 individual/ family members, 37 societies, 22 museums and libraries. Membership has remained fairly static and with only 2 new individual memberships this year but we also have one new society – Berkshire Record Society. Grateful thanks to those who have standing orders as it is very easy to check they have paid. It takes longer to remind those with cheques and BACS.

I have some back copies of both Berkshire Old and New as well as hard copies of newsletters that are for sale just in case you are missing a volume.

WEBSITE DESIGNER'S REPORT

As explained at the last AGM, the need to update the website was well overdue particularly to ensure we were compliant with the EU Cookie Law but also to make the site more appealing and easier to navigate. I hope that you find the new site simple to use.

Regular updates have been made to the site, in particular the diary dates, the speaker's lists and various events.

We have been using a system of delivering electronic email bulletins which hopefully have been useful and we have used the same system to assist with the distribution of the Newsletters to the Member Society Secretaries who we hope are forwarding on to their respective society members. If you are the recipient of the e-Bulletins and Newsletter, please do try to forward these on to the members of your society.

We will retain the existing method of publishing the Newsletter on the website which will be accessed via a password protected area to obtain the current Newsletter whilst the previous editions are available to the general public.

One new area to be implemented during the coming year is the facility to pay your membership fees online using either a bank transfer or secure credit/debit card payment gateway. This will hopefully help to make the annual fee payment simpler and more efficient.

If there are any requests for additional functionality or suggestions on improvement than please make them know to a member of the committee and all will be considered.

Dave Osborne

Website Designer

REPORT ON BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PUBLICATIONS ON BERKSHIRE

The Berks Bibliography is a database available on the BLHA web-site to help users find publications relevant to their research. It is searchable for places, topics and people by selecting options from drop-down lists, so users will not need to type anything. The results of the search will give the title, author and year of publication for all publications matching the selection. Most of these will be

available in the local studies sections of local libraries (e.g. in Reading) or in the Berks Family History Society's library.

The database currently contains about 2600 titles and includes a range of publications (in various formats) relating to historic Berks, i.e. including that part of South Oxfordshire that was in Berks pre-1974, but only a limited number of them have been indexed at the current time. The version currently on the BLHA web-site has 450 publications that are fully indexed and 1700 publications that have partial indexing (based on their titles). The remaining items are not currently indexed.

We are working on completing the indexing of more of these, and updated versions of the bibliography will go on to the web-site in the future. If anyone would like to help in this work, please contact the secretary for more information. If you can spare an hour or so to check a few publications in your local library, help would be most appreciated. Volunteers do not need to take a computer to the library, the keyword lists can be printed out for reference. Full instructions on what is needed are available.

Sue Burnay

Berks Bibliography Co-ordinator

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

At the 2009 A.G.M., the first one I attended, I remember being told that committee members were considering going out, and talking at the meetings of the affiliated societies, to tell their members why the Association was set up, to give them some idea of the range of its activities, and to explain how, as members of affiliated societies, the Association might be useful to them. The committee members would also gather feed-back.

The Association has a hard-working committee, and publishes a Newsletter, and a journal, "Berkshire Old and New," which are highly regarded by those who see them, but the committee members have doubts about whether all those who might be interested in seeing them actually do so. Though "hard" copies of the newsletter and the journal are sent to member societies, we cannot know how widely they are circulated. With many people now using e-mail, we also send out bulletins, for more urgent communications, and make the latest Newsletter available to members of affiliated societies, but as yet, many of their members aren't aware of this. We also maintain a website, where all of the old newsletters can be read.

There has been much deliberation over the extent to which we make the latest Newsletter available electronically, since we'd like it to be seen as one of the benefits of being an individual member, or a member of a member society. The electronic version of the Newsletter is sent out, usually to the Secretaries of member societies, and they are asked to forward it to any of their members who would like to receive it. (The annual journal, "Berkshire Old and New," is currently published in hard copy only.)

At the time of writing, only one of these visits to affiliated societies has been made. The results were encouraging. As we suspected, many people just didn't know about us, and what we did. When they saw a copy of the newsletter, they were enthusiastic. When they heard about the A.G.M. and Symposium, they asked for more details. About half of those present signed up to receive the Newsletter and bulletins electronically. If we can repeat this across the county, the usefulness of the Association can be greatly increased, with articles for the newsletter from many more people, a queue of people waiting to have the results of their research published in the journal, and study days, training courses, and visits fully subscribed.

So, if your society is approached and asked for a "slot" of 15 minutes or so at a meeting, so that a couple of committee members can come and talk, I hope that you'll agree. In due course, it is planned to analyse what we have learned, and to publish the results . . . in the newsletter, of course.

On a different matter, one of the things that struck me when reading the old committee papers was that in the past, committee members did tend to step down at the end of a five-year stint, as the constitution recommends. This happens on other committees on which I serve: after five years, you step down automatically. There is nothing to prevent you from stepping down early, of course, and after a few years "off", there's nothing to stop you standing for election again. It would be good for our Association to have a greater turn-over, with new people coming along, and a pool of experienced former members who might choose to come back. The situation at present is that all the committee members, myself included, will have served for five years by the time of the A.G.M. If you would consider serving on the committee, please have a word with me, or any committee member. We normally meet three times a year, and at the A.G.M. Some "behind the scenes" work is involved, but all the jobs are to some extent what you choose to make of them, and the various jobs are always interesting, and sometimes rewarding.

Turning to the year's activities, I'm sorry to have to report that the trip to the Chiltern Open-Air Museum did not materialise, because we hadn't enough takers. However, I'm happy to report that the course on reading Tudor and Stuart handwriting, run by Mrs. Joan Dils, has been fully subscribed. We are very grateful to Joan for offering to do this for us.

There has been one application for a loan towards publication costs. The book, "Royal Windsor: Images of a Bygone Age," by Elias Kupfermann, is now published and selling well, and repayment of the loan is imminent.

The Berkshire Schools Project, run by the Berkshire Record Office, and involving about ten volunteer researchers, is proceeding. Much of the research has now been completed, and some specimen entries have been written. The resulting book will record, parish by parish, the schools in the county which existed before 1833. Publication will be some years off, because of the volumes already in the pipeline for publication by the Berkshire Record Society. The Association, the Record Society and the Record Office support the project financially, and Joan Dils and I serve on the management board on behalf of BLHA.

The Berkshire History Prize was won in 2014 by Chloe Bonner, for her thesis on "The Effects of the Reformation on Society in Berkshire." Peter Durrant and I went along on the University of Reading's Graduation Day to award the prize, which is funded jointly by the Record Office and our Association. Copies of the winning theses go into the library at the Record Office, making them publicly available.

During the year, Jameson Wooders regretfully resigned from the BLHA committee, but we were joined by Elias Kupfermann. Margaret Simons stepped down as Newsletter Editor after many years,

and we are grateful to John Chapman for taking over – and for doing such a good job. The retirement of the County Archivist, Peter Durrant, at the end of the year, marks the end of an era. He has been a good friend to the Association, serving on the committee for a spell. Now we look forward to working with his successor, Mark Stevens.

As always I must thank the committee members for their commitment and support over the last year. Some of them have to travel fairly long distances to get to meetings, and give a great deal of their time to ensuring that things get done to a high standard. We have been brought together by a love of local history, we believe it's a valuable and worth-while study, and we want to share our enthusiasm with others.

I hope you will enjoy this year's A.G.M. and Symposium in honour of Joan Dils. Being in the middle of Reading will doubtless pose some problems for those arriving by car, but I hope that being in this ancient church will be ample compensation. It seemed particularly appropriate, since St. Laurence's churchwardens' accounts, edited by Joan Dils, have recently been published by the Berkshire Record Society. The accounts contain many references to bells, and an early mention of morris dancing, which is why we have asked some bell-ringers and morris dancers to entertain us during the lunch break between the A.G.M. and the Symposium. Joan is a former Chairman, and now a Vice-President, of the Association. I'm sure that when you hear what she has achieved as a local history tutor and author, you will realise the esteem and affection in which she is held by so many local historians, some themselves eminent in the field, and you will see why the BLHA wanted to hold this Symposium for her.

David Cliffe.