

# **Berkshire Local History Association**



**Newsletter No. 109**

**May 2014**

**Berkshire Local History Association  
Registered Charity 1097355**

**CONTENTS**

<b>CHAIRMAN'S CORNER.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>WORDS FROM THE EDITOR.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>NOTICE BOARD .....</b>	<b>5</b>
AGM 2015 IMPORTANT NOTICE.....	5
***NEW NEWSLETTER EDITOR*** .....	8
<b>SPECIAL FEATURES .....</b>	<b>9</b>
WELLINGTON COLLEGE .....	9
THE STATE VISIT OF PRESIDENT MICHAEL D HIGGINS AND MRS SABINA HIGGINS APRIL 2014 .....	12
<b>NEW BOOKS AND REVIEWS .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>SOCIETY NEWS.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>HERITAGE, FAMILY HISTORY, MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>COURSES.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>PICTURE GALLERY .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>HISTORY SOCIETIES .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>ARCHIVES, LIBRARIES &amp; MUSEUMS.....</b>	<b>34</b>

THE DEADLINE FOR COPY FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER IS 1 August 2014.

**Front Cover:** Copenhagen, sculpture in bronze, at Wellington College, by courtesy of the Editor.

© COPYRIGHT: Trustees of the Berkshire Local History Association and Authors 2013.

## Chairman's Corner

If you missed the A.G.M. in March, then I'm sorry – because it was so good! We had the opportunity to see some magnificent and historic buildings in well-tended grounds, not accessible to the general public, on a day of brilliant sunshine. I, and several others, arrived at Wellington College in the time-honoured fashion, from Crowthorne Station, and walked through the park. The rooms for the meeting itself, and for the stalls of member societies, were comfortable and pleasant. The only problem came when it was time to turn down the lights for Professor Collins's talk on "The Great War in the Berkshire Countryside." No-one had told us where the light switches were!



As for the "business" part of the meeting, we did manage to reduce the time it took by circulating the reports of the officers before the meeting, so they didn't need to be read out during the proceedings, but I think that next time, we may decide to do things the other way round.



The Chairman's report has traditionally come first, and most of it is a summary of the activities of the Association over the past twelve months. Inevitably, there is the temptation to discuss things at that stage, with the risk that the same topics will arise again when the reports of the other officers are being considered. Putting the Chairman's report last may well be a good idea.

The committee had learned that the day of the A.G.M. came just before the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of a Vice-President and long-standing committee member of the Association, Peter Johnson, so over lunch the opportunity was taken to present him with a suitable card. It was a delight to have him there.

(Incidentally, the lunch, again in pleasant surroundings, was worth a lot more than the £5 we paid for it – especially to people with good appetites!)



There had been some anxiety before the meeting over whether Wellington College would be able to provide a guide for a tour of the quadrangles and buildings. In the event, Zoe Bishop filled the gap – and though this wasn't in her usual line of duty, she fulfilled the role admirably. So we saw the statues and fountains, the insides of the main buildings and the chapel, the Duke of Wellington's cloak as worn at Waterloo, and so on. There were refreshments after the walk, and before people drifted away, after a very memorable day.

And now, I suspect many of us will be in the throes of commemorating the outbreak of war, a hundred years ago. I've been trying to avoid it, but not altogether successfully. I haven't yet been to see the new exhibition at Reading Museum, called "Reading at War," but I have become involved in the project at Reading Central Library, which our Association supported when the application was made for Lottery Funding. The newspapers, directories and other publications which were sent away for digitising are now returned, and hopefully the results will soon appear in the library website. There is, however, another side to the project. A team of volunteers have been researching the effects of the First World War on Berkshire, and writing chapters for a book, to be published in hard copy. Many of these articles are now written, and I've found them surprisingly varied, and well researched. They look at aspects of the conflict that I hadn't considered before – recruitment, conscientious objectors, military training, internment, prisoners of war, refugees, war hospitals and convalescent homes, social life at home, the status of women before and after the war, industry, agriculture, food shortages, medals and memorials among them. It should be well worth reading.

The Berkshire Schools Gazetteer, to which our Association makes financial contributions, is now well on the way. The members of the Management Board now have some prototype specimen entries to consider. In the end there will be one for every Berkshire parish. We are having to decide how much information should appear in the printed book, and what should happen to the rest of the information which has been collected. A website or a CD may be the answer. We are looking at maybe a couple of years before the Berkshire Record Society publishes the book.

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, the early records of the Association, comprising committee minutes and Newsletters, have now been handed over to the Berkshire Record Office for safe keeping. One of our Vice-Presidents, Brian Boulter, was able to supply a few more documents to make the story of the formation of the B.L.H.A. more complete.

As happens all too often, I feel obliged in this column to mention the passing of a valued member of the Association. Pat Preece died in March, at the age of 88. I first met her when, at the invitation of Pat and Jim Smart, I joined the editorial panel of "Berkshire Old and New." Pat was the jolly lady who knew more than anyone else about woodland industries, and the management of woodlands in this part of the country. At least we have some useful articles on this and other subjects to remember her by, in our journal, and in others.

Personally speaking, I'm still working on my book on the street names of Macclesfield – the town where I was born. I have two further books in my computer about the town and its surroundings which hopefully will see the light of day while I still have the energy to make it happen! I'm doing a bit of work for The Mills Archive at Watlington House in Reading, and rather more work for Reading Central Library. For the Library, the pictures of the area around Furze Platt, Cookham and Bisham have been catalogued and await scanning. Then, for my amusement, and hopefully for the amusement of others, I continue to write the odd article for the "Reading

Chronicle” and for the “Caversham Bridge.” I have two new talks in preparation, one for the Berkshire Family History Society on Reading cinemas, and another for the Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group, a second talk on old industries of Reading which I’m putting together for them. With all of this, and summer holidays too, I shall not have the time to be bored!

*David Cliffe, Chairman, BLHA*

---

### **Words from the Editor**

Welcome to the May edition of the Newsletter and my last as editor. Yes, after announcing my intention to step down from the role at the AGM in 2013 I am pleased to say that John Chapman, already on the committee of the BLHA, has agreed to take over as from our September issue. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to the Newsletter during my time as editor, I could not have done it without you, and I know you will all give John plenty of support and send him plenty of copy. Please see the announcement in the Noticeboard section of the Newsletter regarding email addresses etc from now on. I must add that I will not be bowing out completely, I will still be on the committee and I will still be involved in the printing and despatch of the Newsletter.

There is a lot of interesting material in our 109<sup>th</sup> edition including two special features. As you will have read from our Chairman’s account of the AGM it was a splendid day, so for those of you who were unable to attend I thought it might be interesting for you to have the opportunity to share in the experience by including pictures and a short history of the College as told to us by Zoe Bishop. The other feature this time is an account by Ann McCormack, our Secretary, on the state visit to Berkshire of the President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins. For those of you who like a study day see the Noticeboard section for what Windsor Castle is offering this month and next.

I would like to finish my last ‘words’ as editor by wishing you all success with your summer programmes which I look forward to reading about in the September issue.

*Margaret Simons*

---

### **Notice Board**

#### **AGM 2015 IMPORTANT NOTICE**

Our AGM in 2015 is on Saturday 14th March, at St Laurence’s Church, Reading and will take the form of a Symposium in honour of Joan Dils. The usual formalities will open proceedings and lunch will be followed by a number of talks on local history.



What is hoped will be a very enjoyable day will then be rounded off with a reception. Details of speakers and other arrangements to be confirmed in the Newsletter.

*Ann McCormack* Hon Secretary

### **Archive Visits**

Unfortunately due to a lack of interest the Association had to cancel the planned visit to the Chiltern Open Air Museum on Saturday 10th May 2014. The visit which was to have included a guided tour of about 1½ hours would have been enlightening and interesting and we apologise to those of you who had hoped to attend the day.

Perhaps members would like to suggest places that they would like to go to and we will see if we can arrange something. Please forward your ideas to a member of the committee who will forward them to Jameson Wooders.

*Margaret Simons*

### **BLHA Website Upgrade**

The BLHA website has now nearly finished its overhaul and the new look will be available soon. An announcement will be made by e bulletin, so please if we haven't got your email address or something has changed contact the BLHA Secretary.

*Dave Osborne*

### **Festival of Archaeology 2014 Saturday 12th July - Sunday 27th July**

The Festival is co-ordinated by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) and is entirely reliant on the participation and support of heritage groups, societies, and organisations UK-wide. Over 1000 events were organised nationwide in 2013.

Please look online at <http://www.archaeologyfestival.org.uk/registration> for participation guidelines, insurance information and events information and ideas.

Register online at or <http://www.archaeologyfestival.org.uk/registration>. The closing date to maximise publicity opportunities was 31 March 2014, but events will be accepted online until 10 July 2014. If you wish to discuss the Festival in more detail, or if you are interested in finding out more about the CBA, please do get in touch. Further details can also be found at [www.archaeologyfestival.org.uk](http://www.archaeologyfestival.org.uk)

Join them in celebrating the Festival of Archaeology 2014 and send them details of your event(s).

### **Heritage Open Weekend 11<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> September 2014**



I thought I would take this opportunity to remind readers about the annual Heritage Open Weekend. Last year, for the first time, I took the opportunity to visit several of the Reading sites which were open to the public for the occasion. Many of these places

are not open to visitors at any other time of the year, so it is worth watching out to see what will be on this year. I had such a good time that I've decided to keep these dates free in 2014 to see what further historic treats await me in the Royal County.

Readers will remember an article in the May 2013 Newsletter in which our Chairman, David Cliffe, gave us an insight into his visit to Reading Synagogue, as part of the Heritage Open Weekend. I'll mention here just a few of my own highlights:

The Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Watlington Street. Formerly, St John's Church (Anglican) it is now the home of the Polish Catholic community in Reading. The spire is a distinctive feature on the Reading skyline and the building is all the more beautiful thanks to wonderful restoration funded by several heritage organisations. There was a helpful leaflet, as well as friendly and informative guides. After the visit, there was the option of a cup of tea and a selection of home-made cakes.

Another church visit happened totally by accident but what a gem it was. Tucked away behind the trees on the Oxford Road, it could so easily be missed. Holy Trinity Church is part of the Anglo-Catholic tradition and has many very special architectural features. The altar was designed by Martin Travers and I was amazed to see that it is also the home to Pugin's rood screen, fortuitously rescued after being discarded from its original position in St Chad's, Birmingham. But the first vision which greeted the visitor on entry was an array of beautifully-crafted, traditional Anglo-Catholic vestments, of the type no longer seen even in Roman Catholic churches.

The variety of visits on offer invites us to take a wider view of what exactly is meant by 'heritage'. I was intrigued to learn that the programme included a talk on the wind turbine in Green Park, which took place right at the foot of this now-famous Reading landmark. Wind turbines are rarely out of the news and the subject tends to polarise political opinion. For this reason alone, it was a fascinating to hear an informed talk from a guide who was open to cross-examination. Statistics for wind turbines are mind-boggling; for example, the Reading turbine can produce enough energy to power 1,500 homes. I thought the saddest fact about the wind turbine was that entire structure was made in Germany!

We can't say if any of the above-named venues will open again this year. The full programme for the county (and the entire country) should appear on the Heritage Weekend website by mid-July:

<http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/>

Some of the visits will be suitable for families and children. Let me commend the experience.

*Ann McCormack*

### **Historic UK**

I received the following information from Trevor Johnson at Historic UK which members might find interesting.

As a website, [www.historic-uk.com](http://www.historic-uk.com) , receives up to half a million page views a month and we are hoping that our *new look* Destination UK section will allow visitors to better appreciate the rich history available to them in your area.

In our endeavour to provide the most comprehensive collection of historic destinations in Britain, we thought that you may like to know that in addition to our current coverage of Castles, Cathedrals, Battlefields, Anglo-Saxon and Roman sites, we have just launched our brand new interactive map detailing the Museums of Britain.

Due to the large scale nature of the project, we are anxious to learn if we have missed any museums in your area? Please let us know of any omissions.

Once this is complete, we will then integrate the museum details into our interactive map of Historic Berkshire.

Over the coming months it is our intention to include further historic attractions including abbeys, palaces, stately homes, ancient and prehistoric sites.

Further to the many requests that we have received on the topic, our next task will be to collate and present a comprehensive listing of Local History Societies. If you are aware of any group or society that may like to be included, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Finally, please remember to let us know if you would like us to promote any living history events for you. You will find a link to do so on our Living History Events Diary page.

*Trevor Johnson*

### **\*\*\*New Newsletter Editor\*\*\***

The BLHA are pleased to announce that a new editor has come forward for the Newsletter. John Chapman, who some of you may already know, will take over with immediate effect, the May edition will be my last. It goes without saying that I and the Association are very grateful that John is taking on the role; I feared I may be standing up again at the AGM in 2015 and giving you my report.

All copy for the next issue should be sent to John at [Newsletter@blha.org](mailto:Newsletter@blha.org) , his address for hardcopy or any other correspondence relating to the Newsletter may be found in the usual place on the last page.

*Margaret Simons*

### **Windsor Castle**

#### **New Adult Learning Programme**

Members may be interested in information I received from Nadia Holland, Learning Coordinator from the Royal Collections Trust.

Nadia contacted the Association on behalf of the Royal Collection concerning a series of study days and short courses which might be of interest to members of the Berkshire Local History Association. The Royal Collection has recently launched a new programme of adult education events at Windsor Castle (and London) covering a



variety of different subjects and historical periods. The programme has been collected into a *What's On* brochure which can be seen at the following link:

<http://digitalpages.digitalissue.co.uk/00000082/00008128/00088355/> .

If members would like to receive a printed version of the brochure please let Nadia know and she will be delighted to post as many copies as you wish, [nadia.holland@royalcollection.org.uk](mailto:nadia.holland@royalcollection.org.uk)

In May Windsor Castle will hold two study days and a short course on the dates following:

Treasures from the Royal Archives: Queen Victoria in Public and Private on 20th May

A Journey through Time: Royal Clocks at Windsor Castle on 28th May

The Royal Banquet: Cooking and Dining across the Ages on 31 May & 7 June

*Margaret Simons*

### **World War One Website**

I am writing to let you know about the launch of a new website, <http://warletters.net> that some members of the Berkshire Local History Association might find useful.

For local historians interested in the First World War and wanting to put their work in a wider context the site has links to a vast range of free, primary and secondary historical sources about the First World War, all available online.

These include official histories, government reports and documents, service records, bibliographies, theses, legislation, memoirs, letters and diaries, films, maps, images and much more.

The site has separate sections for the Western Front, Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, the war at sea and the war in the air.

*Mark Tanner (Editor)* [www.warletters.net](http://www.warletters.net)

---

## **Special Features**

### **Wellington College**

When the Duke of Wellington died in 1852, the question arose as to what sort of national monument should be erected to commemorate him. It was deemed a 'living' memorial would be best and thus Wellington College was founded with the purpose of educating those children whose fathers had died on active service (Crimean War).

The great sponsors of the school were Prince Albert, the Earl of Derby, PM at the time and whose family name Stanley, is memorialised in the house of that name and, of course, Queen Victoria herself.

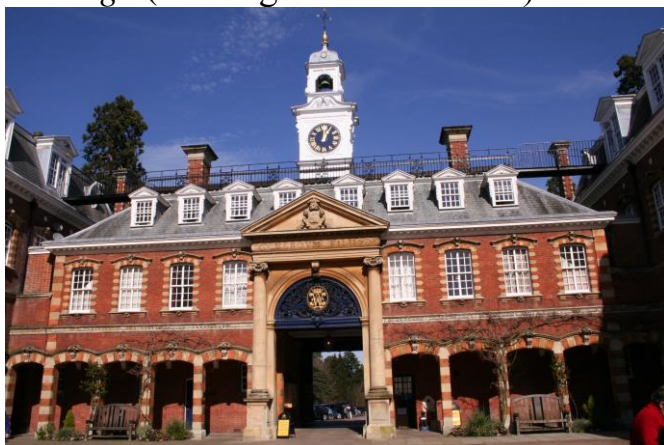
Money was raised by public subscription to build the school with all men in the army losing a day's pay! Prince Albert took an intense interest in the project and was elected first President.

The architect of the College was John Shaw, who was architect of the Royal Naval School, which is now Goldsmith's College in London, a favourite of Albert. It

was built in the style of 19<sup>th</sup> century Baroque, uncommon at the time, and the original buildings were those around the Front and Back Quad. One of the features of school was that a boy had his own room from first to last, unlike many other schools where pupils worked communally and slept in dormitories.

The school opened in January, 1859 as a Royal & Religious Foundation, with 76 pupils and 4 teachers including the first Master, Edward White Benson. It is one of the few schools founded by the Royal family.

On the approach to the Great School Wellington's bust and the two school mottos are clearly evident: *Heroum Fili: Sons of heros; Virtutis Fortuna Comes: Fortune favours the brave* or *Fortune is the Companion of Courage* (Wellington's own motto).



Stones commemorating the various royal visits times can also be seen here if one lowers one's eyes. Victoria's foundation stone was the first and this was joined in 1909 by one from her Edward VII. Other stones highlight the visits from Queen Elizabeth.

Great School was the original teaching room of the College; it was divided into three with benched desks, raked as in a modern lecture theatre. A pupil's progress was marked by moving up to the back of the first section and so on. It was refurbished after the Second World War as a memorial to Old Boys who gave their lives.

Rolls of the Fallen lie behind each house panel; the name of each pupil is inscribed on parchment. The memorials are opened on special occasions such as the week long Remembrance services in November – over 700 old boys gave their lives in the two wars.

Other items of interest in the Great School include: Wellington's cape from the Battle of Waterloo and his sword; a copy of the famous Winterhalter picture of the Duke paying homage to Queen Victoria and the young Arthur, Duke of Connaught, at his christening. The Duke of Connaught was President of the College for many years. His arms, along with many others are shown in the stained glass windows of the Chapel.

The Old Hall was the original dining hall of the College, both Great School and Old Hall have been extensively restored, as memorials in one form or another and now function as public rooms used for a variety of lessons and events. The Hall houses a replica Victoria Cross medal and a book of those from the school who have been

awarded the prestigious medal – second only in number to Eton. The 1999 film of *An Ideal Husband* used Old Hall as the setting of the Women's Liberal Association meeting.



Rolls of Fallen



Wellington's cape



Winterhalter's picture

South Front & Masters Lodge – the College was subject to a devastating air-raid during October 1940, when bombs fell on South Front and the original Masters lodge. The boys had been evacuated to their air-raid shelters and when the all-clear was sounded, Longden, 6<sup>th</sup> Master of Wellington, came out into the porch of the Lodge to go to visit them. The porch had been seriously weakened by the bombing and collapsed on top of him killing him instantly. The Lodge was demolished on the instructions of the King (George VI). The present Lodge dates from the mid-1950s.

The original Chapel, dedicated to the Holy Spirit, was situated where the Orangery is now, but Benson (first Master of Wellington) was determined to have a purpose-built chapel. In fact, he achieved his aim incredibly quickly. For the foundation stone of the present chapel was laid in 1861 by Prince Albert, and the chapel was built by 1863. Originally it consisted of the central aisle and apse, but as the school expanded in number, first the north transept was built, with the organ where now there is Sir Edwin Luyten's (known for the Cenotaph, Whitehall) memorial to those who fell in the First World War, and then on the south side what we now call the Benson aisle. The architect of the chapel was Gilbert Scott (known for the Albert Memorial and St Pancras Station) and its style is unlike the rest of the school; neo-Gothic but built in brick. Scott was also the architect of the current Reading prison and the architect for the restoration of the Abbey Gateway in Reading after it collapsed in 1861.

The bomb that fell on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1940 destroyed many of the stained glass windows in the Chapel and Hugh Easton (OW) (who also designed the Battle of Britain memorial window in Westminster Abbey) was commissioned to replace them. The windows in the East (alter end) by Easton provide a decorative record of the early history of Wellington.

Today the school has 16 boarding houses named after Wellington's generals (apart from Apsley which is named after one of his homes). There are approximately 1,025 students from all over the world currently at the College which is fully co-ed. The current and nth master is Dr Anthony Seldon. In the grounds can also

be seen a beautiful bronze of Wellington's horse, Copenhagen, it was sculpted by Nic Fiddian-Green, a Wellington parent, to commemorate the Duke's loyal horse Copenhagen. The bronze was given to College as a gift by the families of the 2012 leavers, a memorial then not only to the students whose names can be found around the base of the sculpture, but to a horse, who is said never to have flinched in the face of battle and who carried the Duke for the entire 12 hours of the Battle of Waterloo, before riding home.

A number of questions were asked on the day and we can provide the answers that Zoe has been able to find here.

In the Old Hall: the 3<sup>rd</sup> Masters portrait is the Rev Pollock who went on to be Bishop of Norwich.

Historical books sold in our shop: A History of Wellington College 1859-1959 by David Newsome £10; Wellington College The First 150 Years by Patrick Mileham £15. The shop is open Monday to Friday 9am-5.45pm and Saturdays 11.30-5pm during term time. Association members can call the shop on 01344 444099 to order a copy and they will be posted out if requested (postage would be charged).

Finally, I would like to thank Zoe Bishop for letting me have her notes and all I have done is rearranged some of the information slightly and omitted one or two things which were pertinent to the tour only.

*Margaret Simons*

### **The State Visit of President Michael D Higgins and Mrs Sabina Higgins April 2014**

Windsor is accustomed to historic events and grand occasions, it being the favoured home of the Sovereign, and the place where she spends the majority of her time. There can be two or three State Visits a year to the town but Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2014, was truly a very special historic occasion. This is not just the unbiased opinion of your Irish Hon Sec, mesmerised by the sight of giant Irish Tricolours lining the procession route, alternating, of course, with giant Union flags. Political and media commentators, as well as historians, on both sides of the Irish Sea were also vociferous in their praise for the occasion. To drive up past Victoria Barracks and turn into High Street, the sight of both national flags, displayed equally, was an awesome sight, given the chequered history between the two islands – but this was the first ever STATE visit of an Irish President to Britain, and some of the main events took place here in Berkshire.

When Elizabeth II came to the throne in 1952, the new Republic of Ireland was headed by its second President. This was a time when relations were a bit distant, even hostile, between the two governments. No meeting of any kind would take place at this level until after the 7<sup>th</sup> President of Ireland took office in 1991. Mary Robinson

was the first serving Irish President to visit the United Kingdom and meet Queen Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace in 1993. Two years later, President Robinson and Queen Elizabeth became joint patrons of Co-operation North (later named Co-operation Ireland), a charity engaged in peace-building and the breaking down of sectarianism and racism in Ireland. The commitment to this organisation ensured that meetings would continue at this high level and the relationship flourished during the presidency of Mary McAleese. This helped to lay the groundwork for the very popular and successful visit of Her Majesty to Ireland in 2011. The cultivation of these warmer relations, together with changing attitudes of both politicians and general public, were key to achieving this landmark event. However, the behind-the-scenes efforts of countless diplomats and civil servants on both islands, over many years, must not be overlooked.



For the return visit, on the morning of Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> April, President and Mrs Higgins, accompanied by Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall, made the journey by car from the Irish Embassy in London. They were welcomed to Berkshire by The Queen and Prince Philip at a site on the Datchet Road, next to the Victorian brick walls of Windsor & Eton Riverside Station.

This short ceremony took place on a specially constructed stage, bedecked with the national flags. From over the walls in Holme Park, came the sound of the gun salutes, before the commencement of the procession, which, from a spectator point of view, was a particular highlight.

The day being a bit chilly despite the sunshine, the heads of state rode in the Australian State Coach. This is an enclosed coach, drawn by six horses. There are high glass sides to facilitate a good view. It is one of the more modern of the state coaches, fitted with electric windows, heating and hydraulic stabilisers. The occupants would have been comfortably shielded from the rather refreshing breeze and the undulations, twists and turns of the Windsor Streets. It is often remarked that there is no spectacle to beat the pomp and ceremony of a British Royal occasion and the Irish delegation were not to be disappointed. The crowds were treated to the dramatic combination of the images and sounds of a military parade, numerous horses trotting in unison, ceremonial uniforms, shining brass and marching boots. Perhaps the most spectacular sight was that of the mounted regimental bands, adorned in the most ornamented of decorated uniforms. The Corps of Army Music has two bands with mounted capability, the Band of the Life Guards and the Band of the Blues and Royals. These soldiers have to demonstrate ceremonial equestrian skills as well as musicianship - simultaneously. For those spectators who had forgotten their national emblems (not your Hon Sec), small Union Jacks and Tricolours were freely distributed by representatives of the Royal Borough. The procession headed through Thames Street and High Street, by the Guildhall (where we enjoyed a recent AGM) and past Windsor's newest monument – a life-sized bronze figure of an Irish Guard – before



heading into Park Street and up the Long Walk to Windsor Castle. In the splendid surroundings of the Quadrangle, the most dramatic displays of military pageantry took place. President Higgins presented a ceremonial red coat to the mascot of the Irish Guards, an Irish wolfhound named Domhnall (Donal). This was in response to a similar gesture in 1973, when the Irish Guards presented a coat to the mascot of the Fifth Battalion of the Irish Army. Later in the day, Her Majesty took the delegation on a tour of articles of Irish interest in the Royal Collection at Windsor. The following morning, the Duke of York took the President and Mrs Higgins to view the colours of the disbanded Irish regiments of the British Army.



It may interest members to know that their county was at the centre of Irish media attention throughout the state visit. The dramatic backdrop of Windsor Castle was an irresistible picture for Irish television both day and night. Many column inches in the Irish press have been dedicated to descriptions of the town, the castle and the surrounding area. Perhaps this will encourage Irish tourists to include Windsor - or other historic sights of Berkshire - on their English tour? The Irish delegation also visited the racing stables of Andrew Balding in Kingsclere near Newbury. Horseracing is a passion shared by both the Queen and the President, who is a regular at the annual Galway Races Festival in July/August, though Mr Higgins is a mere punter, not an owner and breeder like Her Majesty. There were many highlights of the state visit which took place outside of Berkshire. The Ceiliúradh (Celebration) which took place at the Royal Albert Hall on the last night of the visit is perhaps worth a mention. This was an evening of Irish music, poetry and dance, interspersed by a number of speeches. Here the President offered formal thanks for the hospitality he and his delegation had received. Many positive and complimentary remarks were made about England and the English, by the various speakers, and these were spontaneously and warmly affirmed by the predominately Irish audience.

The election of Michael D Higgins as President of Ireland broke a few records. It was the first presidential election to have as many as seven candidates and Michael D (as he is known in Ireland) was the first candidate ever to receive over a million votes in an Irish election. Irish Presidents are required to be non-political, though most have come from a political past. He was the candidate of the Irish Labour Party and had had a long and distinguished career as a parliamentarian, poet, broadcaster, sociologist, writer, university lecturer and human rights campaigner. He is fluent in both Spanish and Irish, the latter being put to frequent use during his trip. Eloquent and forthright, he has never shied away from controversy, though he has adapted to his new impartial and constitutional role with professional ease. For the curious, there are some entertaining items to be found on the internet, cataloguing his more outspoken past!

Both heads of state delivered some fine words that week, carefully crafted, diplomatically astute and sensitively expressed. During his speech to Parliament, the



President documented the example that British democracy had given to the world, from Magna Carta (800<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015) to the present day, while also recognising the Irish contribution to this development. In doing so, he moved seamlessly between the Irish and English languages, asserting the aspiration for Irish freedom, for which his father had fought, and demonstrating the pride in the revival of the ancient language. However, the over-arching message concentrated on the future:

As both our islands enter periods of important centenaries we can and must, reflect on the ethical importance of respecting different, but deeply interwoven, narratives. Such reflection will offer us an opportunity to craft a bright future on the extensive common ground we share and, where we differ in matters of interpretation, to have respectful empathy for each other's perspectives.

At the State Banquet at Windsor castle that evening, this overall theme was summarised in the following remarks made by the Queen:

...There is a balance to be struck between looking back at what has happened and cannot be changed and looking forward to what could happen if we have the will and determination to shape it...we shall remember our past but no longer allow our past to ensnare our future...

These are indeed pertinent comments as we enter the centenary of the Great War (1914-18). Ireland has recently reviewed the Ulster Covenant (1912), The General Strike and Lockout (1913). As well as World War 1, which has always been problematic for Irish historians and politicians, Ireland must soon re-evaluate the Home Rule Act (1914), The Easter Rising (1916), The Irish War of Independence (1919-21) and the Irish Civil War (1922-3). Historians will be busy! It is expected that, as a consequence of these two successful state visits, some of these tumultuous events can be commemorated by British and Irish leaders standing side by side - which would constitute yet another historical event.

*Ann McCormack*

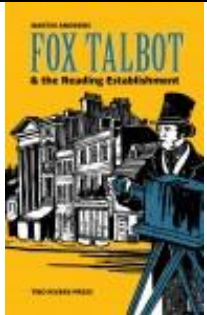
---

## **New Books and Reviews**

Two new books on the history of Reading have recently come my way. One is a "History of Greyfriars Church, Reading," by Malcolm Summers. It is packed with information, some of which, in the later chapters, will only interest members of the church. But it is also detailed on the earlier years of the building's history – as the church of the Franciscan friary, as the guild hall, and as the town's Bridewell, before it was "restored" as an Anglican church in 1863.

The other book which has pleased me a great deal is "Fox Talbot and the Reading Establishment," by Martin Andrews, and published by Two Rivers Press. William Henry Fox Talbot was the pioneer photographer who had a studio in the town between 1844 and 1846. It's written in an imaginative and entertaining way, but gives us the facts, many of which have not appeared together in the same publication before.

Another bonus is that it reproduces the Fox Talbot photographs of Reading, which make Reading the first town in the country, if not the world, to have had its streets and buildings photographed.

	<p>Format:paperback: 216x138mm ISBN:978-1-901677-98-0 Pages:148; 37 illustrations; 16 photos Price:£10.00</p>	<p>A limited edition of <i>History of Greyfriars Church, Reading</i> (Publ. Downs Way Publishing 2013) £10 is available from <b>Greyfriars Bookshop</b>, 0118 951 6703 email: <a href="mailto:bookshop@greyfriars.org.uk">bookshop@greyfriars.org.uk</a>. Opening hours Mon-Fri: 9-5 Sat: 10-1 Greyfriars Bookshop, Friar Street, Reading RG1 1EH.</p>
---	---	--

*David Cliffe*

---

## Society News

### Berkshire Family History Society

At Theale Green School on Saturday, 18th October, the society stages a major one-day conference, *The early twentieth century: Conflict and change* with support from Berkshire Record Office and *findmypast*.

Designed for local and family historians, this event draws together UK social, economic and community history and contemporary genealogical sources and materials to place lives of our early 20th century ancestors into the context of the tumultuous times in which they lived.

Dr Nick Barratt leads a team of a dozen pre-eminent speakers from academia and the world of professional genealogy. Addressing the period 1900-1939, key conference themes include military history (hard to leave out with the centenary of the start of the First World War) but also education, suffrage, healthcare, migration, domestic service, photography/costume, adoption and twentieth century research and resources. This important event provides:

- a parallel-track programme with a choice of sessions to attend, according to individual areas of interest;
- most frequently requested topics in the main hall (seating up to 200 people), with parallel talks and discussion workshops in smaller groups (around 30 people each);
- advice desks, many involving conference speakers, covering photographic/costume dating, military research and memorabilia, and session-linked help and advice with family and local history research; and
- associated displays on conference themes and topics, plus a bookstall.

The £37.50 registration fee includes lunch. Early booking is strongly recommended—to ensure and secure places for sessions of delegates' first choice. There is free parking too.

See latest information and booking forms at [www.berksfhs.org.uk/conference](http://www.berksfhs.org.uk/conference) . Alternatively, collect conference literature and booking forms from the society's Research Centre in Reading, next to Berkshire Record Office.

Linked with the conference, the society has organised 10 visits during 2014 to nine destinations, each with its particular links to the early years of the 20th century—and some of these will be new for most if not all local and family historians. These must be booked in advance, are open to all, and more details can be picked up from the Research Centre or booking forms downloaded from [www.berksfhs.org.uk/cms/Conference/visits.html](http://www.berksfhs.org.uk/cms/Conference/visits.html)

The fully searchable CDs published by the society remain highly popular. Further editions of Berkshire Baptisms (2nd), Berkshire Marriages (3rd) and Berkshire Burials (12th) should be ready for publication during this year. Additional society transcriptions will also be published and searchable online at [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) very shortly. The latest published parish register CDs are those for Fawley St Mary and Wargrave St Mary, and work is ongoing on four more Berkshire parishes. The website has details of all current projects and publications.

The society's monthly meeting programme operates through the six local branches to provide more than 60 richly varied talks relevant to all local and family historians throughout the year. Meetings are free to attend and open to everyone.

This year's 39th Society Annual General Meeting takes place at Bracknell on Friday, 20th June at 7.30 pm. Information on all meetings and outreach activities can be found at [www.berksfhs.org.uk](http://www.berksfhs.org.uk) together with much Berkshire data of interest, some of which is published in the Members' Area only at the present time.

*Derek Trinder*

### **Goring and Streatley Local History Society**

Our first speaker in 2014 was Professor Gregory Stores. He took a rather different look at the author Charles Dickens, examining his role as a social reformer and showing how his observations of the sick informed his novels. In February we welcomed Ellie Thorne from the Berkshire Record Office who described the wide range of holdings in the archives. She illustrated her talk with examples from Streatley where possible. As our society covers two villages one in Oxfordshire and the other in West Berkshire, our research requires the use of more repositories than usual.

March saw our annual members' session which focuses on local findings. Society chairman Alan Winchcomb gave a well-illustrated virtual tour of Goring, describing the history of various buildings and other features such as the lock and the river bridge. He was followed by Michael Brodie whose topic was the proposed 1960s road bypass of Streatley, which would have run through a tunnel under the High Street. Thankfully this amazing proposal came to nought when the A34 was developed instead.

Mike Hurst, who runs the Transport History Group of the Society, was the speaker in April on the appropriate topic of 'Goring's Wonderful Railway'. Amongst many other interesting facts, this revealed that pressure groups in the Goring Gap are

nothing new, with local lobbying leading to a station here in 1840 when the GWR was constructed and a passenger footbridge in the 1890s when none was planned.

The Transport History Group has started its programme of outings, with Beaulieu the venue in March and Portsmouth Historic Dockyard in April. Due to the works at Reading Station, no 'steam specials' have been allowed on our railway line for months, but now a few are beginning to come through and one will be stopping in Goring in September on a journey down to Devon. Interest in this outing is already considerable in the local community, following the success of our 'Jubilee Special' in 2012 when the contingent from the area filled several coaches.

Our current big project is the research for an exhibition in November to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of World War 1. Like many other organisations we hope to show the impact of the conflict on home life in our villages, as well as to honour those who served. This is proving to be challenging as sources are limited and the period is beyond living memory.

Janet Hurst, Secretary (01491 871022, [gslhs@w-mark.demon.co.uk](mailto:gslhs@w-mark.demon.co.uk))

*Janet Hurst*

### **The History of Reading Society**

'They'll Kill You For A Pound' was the title of the talk for our April meeting and the speaker was local JP and magistrate Roger Hovell. Roger spoke about crime around Reading's Oxford Road. He undertook a year-long study of crime and attitudes among people working in the area as part of a Cambridge University Masters degree in applied criminology; he visited every business in the road to speak to shop owners and workers to hear how their businesses are affected by crime. He learned that nearly half the businesses in the area had been affected by crime during a two year period; however, many said that they still have positive perceptions of the area and feel it is a good area to trade. Many residents felt less safe at night than by day.

Roger also talked about policing in the town which began in 1836; constables replacing the watchmen appointed by the commissioners for paving who had been ineffectual in law enforcement. More recent measures to combat crime in the area include neighbourhood watch schemes, teams of street marshals wearing red t-shirts and black caps were introduced to support the police, a ban on the consumption of alcoholic drinks along the road, a community office was opened on Oxford Road where the public can 'drop in' to speak to local police officers about their concerns and regular public meetings attended by local councillors and police officers.

Before the talk there was a second hand book sale that raised nearly £40 for the society; thank you to all who contributed stock. The subject of our next talk will be the history of Reading Bluecoat School, the speaker, the school's archivist, Peter Van Went at Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square, Reading on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> May at 7.30pm. All are welcome, entry £2 to non-members.

*Sean Duggan*

## **Hungerford Historical Association**

### **Town and Manor, Hocktide and All That**

Over 150 members and guests of the Hungerford Historical Association (HHA) listened to a most interesting and educative talk on the Town and Manor of Hungerford, its history and customs at the meeting on Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> January by local Historian, Dr Hugh Pihlens.

Dr Pihlens emphasised how these ancient rights and privileges have developed since the times of Simon de Montfort and John O' Gaunt in the Middle Ages. The Hocktide and Tutti Day celebrations were explained to a most appreciative audience. Dr Pihlens explained that Tutti Day is when the Hocktide Court holds its end of year meeting and the Town and Manor accounts are submitted, as well as the election of its officers, which include the Constable, Ale-Tasters, and Tutti Men.

### **The Role of the Modern High Sheriff**

On Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> February Dr Christine Hill Williams, a deputy Lieutenant for the Royal County of Berkshire, gave an informative and educative talk to an appreciative audience of members and guests of the Hungerford Historical Association on the role of the modern High Sheriff, a role she had in Berkshire in 2009/2010. The High Sheriff is the Queen's representative in all matters relating to law and order and it is one of the oldest secular offices in the country after the Monarch and the Archbishop of Canterbury and they are the only people allowed to carry a sword into a court room. Their duties include issuing the Proclamation on the death of the Sovereign; acting as returning officers during a General Election; escort to the Monarch and Judges during visits to the Royal County; and the right to sit in the High Court and Crown Court in Reading.

### **The Western Kennet Valley in the Great War**

Over 80 members of the Hungerford Historical Association listened to an excellent, original talk by local historian Roger Day. Roger researched the local Army units that were raised in Hungerford and Marlborough and also Transport Units that were billeted in Hungerford and surrounding areas. Other subjects included farming and prisoners of war at Chiseldon and the Royal Flying Corps aerodrome at Yatesbury. Many original photographs were produced showing Army lorries lined up along Hungerford High Street and also in Marlborough.

Roger will be publishing a book on this topic in August 2014 to co-incide with the outbreak of the First World War.

The next meeting of the Association will be on Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> April at 7.30pm in the Corn Exchange when Kate Pyne of the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) in Aldermaston will talk on the History of AWE over the years. Guests are welcome.

*Shelagh Parry*

### **Maidenhead Archaeological & Historical Society**

We continue to arrange an interesting and popular programme of winter talks and summer coach outings. Like many societies, our membership is getting collectively older and finding members to join the committee can sometimes be a challenge. We support the Maidenhead Heritage Centre, where the archaeological material from our past excavations is now displayed and stored, together with reports on our members' historical research and photographic recording. Recording threatened buildings is now our main practical activity, along with research into their former occupants. It offers a chance to explore and recall the changes that occurred in the last century. The Maidenhead Waterways project to make the Chapel Arches stream navigable has started and we wonder what artefacts they might find when dredging begins.

*Brian Boulter*

### **Sandhurst Historical Society**

There being no meeting in December 2014 began with a talk in January by Colin Gray on Fleet Pond. Colin is chairman of the Pond Society. With an area of 52 acres this pond is Hampshire's largest freshwater lake. The total area of this reserve is 141 acres, of which 118 acres are designated as a site of Special Scientific Interest. In 959 AD King Edgar gave the land with Fleet Pond to the Prior and Monks of St. Swithan's. It is believed that 2 large ponds were formed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by constructing embankments which dammed streams flowing from Bourly Hill. The Monks managed the ponds until the 15<sup>th</sup> century after which they were leased to various tenants. In 1836 the pond was bought by the London & Southampton Railway Company for £50. Shortly after Fleet Pond Halt station was built so that day trippers from London could come down to picnic and swim in the summer and ice skate in the winter.

The pond is now owned by Hart D.C. Wildlife is here in abundance with many species of birds including the cuckoo together with roe deer, cattle, harvest mice, 5 species of bats, grass snakes etc. Silt is a huge problem; a survey taken in 2000 indicated that the bed of the pond was between 2 and 3 metres deep in silt. Measures are now being taken to address this serious problem. Volunteers from all walks of life come at weekends to give a helping hand in managing the pond and surrounding area. February's talk 'Out of Sight, Out of Mind' by Julian Pooley gave us an insight into mental health from 1750 into the 1800's. Surrey had more mental asylums than most other counties, possibly because many of the inmates came down from London. In 1845 all counties were obliged to have an asylum or, as we would now say, hospital. Brookwood was opened in 1867 housing 650 patients.

In the 1850's case studies were carried out and each case was accompanied by a photograph. In many of the cases this would have been the only photograph ever taken of the patient. It was also noticed that the photographs showed similarities, especially flat faces akin to Mongols.

There was much forward thinking around this time as patients were encouraged to learn a trade in order to help them integrate. Among others there was shoe making,



farming, playing a musical instrument and joining in sports activities. Each hospital had its own workshops, laundry and chapel.

Mr. Pooley told us that some of the records kept still smelt of antiseptic!

*Janice Burlton*

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

Our AGM was held in January with the usual outcome of all serving officers being re-elected for a further year. Following the AGM we briefly reviewed progress with our projects.

February's meeting was cancelled due to forecast heavy rain with the possibility of flooding to local roads. This meant postponing the scheduled talk on "Historic pathways".

Our March meeting was devoted to a more detailed review of our various projects.

In April Jane Sellwood gave her talk on "Historic pathways" postponed from February. She explained that until 1750 walking was the only mode of travel for the vast majority of people with distances of up to 10 miles per day being typical. Drovers and traders would walk up to 15 miles per day. Jane mentioned long distance routes such as the Berkshire Downs/Chilterns Ridgeway, the Sussex Downs and Weald Ridgeway, footpaths linking abbeys and routes used by drovers and pilgrims. The formation of sunken roads was described with examples from the Chilterns where erosion had resulted from timber removal. Roman roads tended to become modern major roads rather than pathways, one local exception being the Devil's Highway from Silchester. This was a very interesting and well-illustrated presentation.

*George Taylor*

### **Stanford in the Vale & District Local History Society**

Our recent AGM(11<sup>th</sup> February) was an important milestone for the Society, as it was almost exactly ten years to the day since the first meeting was held.

During 2013 two issues (Spring and Autumn) of the 'Stanford Historian' were published. BLHA members may care to note that all back issues are held by both Reading Central Library and Berkshire Record Office. Current issues are on sale at the Vale and Downland Museum, Wantage.

Over the past year the Society's programme has included talks on : Local Road Transport – 1700 to 1900; Lost Villages of North Oxfordshire; Update on the restoration of the Wilts & Bucks Canal the Malting Industry of Abingdon, and 125 years of Raleigh Bicycles. Unfortunately we do not advertise our programme on the BLHA list as our meeting place is getting rather small for our increased membership. We would hate to disappoint someone who turned up from far afield by announcing a full house.

Although Stanford and its 'District' – the villages and hamlets of Gainfield, Hatford, Shellingford, Goosey, Denchworth and Chamey Bassett have now been within the Admin County of Oxfordshire since 1974 obviously the greater part of our

area's history has been recorded when it was part of Berkshire – the main reason for our membership of BLHA.

However, people dwelt in what is now Stanford long before Berkshire existed as a named entity. Thanks to the immense amount of work undertaken over the past few years by David Ashby (of Southmoor) and his volunteer helpers, we are now getting a much better idea of Stanford's past; not just in late medieval times, which was the main reason for David choosing our village for the subject of his 'Bachelor's' archaeological investigation, but in much earlier times. It seems that Stanford in the Vale was a much larger Romano-British settlement than previously thought. David has now completed his Master's thesis, but the Stanford Archaeological Project will continue, with the assistance of Society member, more trial pits will be dug and GPR and LiDAR work will take place in 2014.

Examples of other 'active' work that members of the society are currently undertaking are as follows:

- (a) Publication of a village walk leaflet. The walk will commence from the recently re-opened 'Horse & Jockey' pub (A417). This was seriously damaged by a fire in the summer of 2013.
- (b) Transcription and translation of local medieval records (pre 1558).
- (c) Work on the area's 'local people database' (1100 – c1900). This currently has some information on over 10,000 individuals.
- (d) On-going additions to the Stanford digital photographic archive, based on the collections originally collected by the late Violet Howse and her daughter Jasmine. The originals are now held by the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

*Philip Morris*

### **Swallowfield Local History Society**

Lost Railways in Berkshire - In January we welcomed Rupert Matthews to hear his talk about the history of our lost railways. His presentation was so full of fascinating anecdotes and facts, we had had no idea so many small stations disappeared for a variety of reasons.

The Girdler Family as told by Brenda Goddard at our February Meeting shows how research and delving into every nook and cranny reveals information, myths and stories that have been passed down through the generations. The evening was made very special especially for Brenda because two relatives from Essex, who she had never met, arrived having heard that the Girdler family was the subject for our meeting. They shared the same Grandfather and had spent many, many happy days and weeks with their Grandparents in Lentonville, The Street, Swallowfield. The excitement, discussion and stories exchanged during the evening was infectious and we all thoroughly enjoyed seeing the family history unfold.

At the Annual General Meeting in March the business element of the evening passed swiftly and smoothly which gave us time to enjoy the Quiz, sample the wine and refreshments, and have time to talk to each other. Thank you to everyone

involved in making sure the History Society continues to inform, entertain and impart knowledge throughout the year.

*Maggie Uttley*

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

After a very successful Christmas party in a new venue at the Piggott School, we started the New Year with Mr. Jameson Wooders' 'Life in early Modern Twyford and Ruscombe 1650-1750'. Mr. Wooders had done a hreat deal of research, and the results were greatly appreciated by our members.

February saw the return of Mr, Tony Strafford, who gave us a fascinating talk entitled 'Ladies in the Tower'. In fact we heard about some of the men who had been imprisoned and executed there. A very good speaker who gave us a most interesting evening.

Our AGM – always well-attended – was held on 10<sup>th</sup> March. The business part went through smoothly, and members were then able to chat to each other over a glass of wine.

We are now looking forward to our next meeting, when our Chairman's brother – Mr. Tom Fort, writer and broadcaster – will be talking to us about the A303.

*Denise Wilkin*

### **Wargrave Local History Society**

In January, Fred Freeman gave a most enjoyable account of some of his memories of *Life as the Village Chemist*, having run the village pharmacy for 29 years. The chemist's business is thought to have been started before WW1 by Guilhermia Smith, daughter of Charles Watson, a former village doctor (who had lived next door). When Fred took over, the business was still an old village pharmacy with the original type of fixtures inside - mahogany drawers all down one side. These had the old drug names on them, theoretically in alphabetical order, and the shop was full of the traditional bottles of chemicals. In those days, most prescriptions were made up by the pharmacist on site, unlike today, when medicines come pre-packed - and are more expensive. Decimal coinage and metric measures came in the 1970s. Fred recounted the problems of relocating the pharmacy within the village, and delighted the audience with anecdotes about his customers!

February's meeting was an illustrated presentation by Patsy Roynon on the *History of Loddon Drive*. We were especially fortunate that Patsy was able to join us, as the whole area had been under flood water for some time. She took the audience on a 'virtual walk' starting by Wargrave Station. The opening of the latter in 1900 prompted the initial development of Loddon Drive. Access to this private road is by a low bridge under the railway, which being liable to floods can cause problems. Pedestrians can use a raised catwalk under the bridge, but even that was under 18" of water in mid- February this year. From the 1910s, several houseboats were moored along the banks of the Loddon, and gradually those developed into land-based homes. Access to 'the island', bounded by the St Patrick's Stream and the rivers Thames and

Loddon, is via Bridgman's Bridge – named after the resident who had it made the 1936 . In 1924, the Sonning Land Company proposed to develop the whole of the island. Their prospectus offered building plots along Loddon Drive, and a network of other roads, but there were virtually no buyers, and the planning authority refused permission due to concerns about drainage and services. In the 1950s, however, a number of homes were built in this area - again often starting as houseboats before being brought onto the land and then developed. The area has long been liable to floods, and Patsy concluded by showing a number of pictures of the road and house gardens under water.

After the usual AGM business in March, the forthcoming programme was announced and short audio-visual items were shown on the Wargrave Allotments, the Silver family of Wargrave and Magic Lanterns.

For more information about the Society, visit [www.wargravehistory.org.uk](http://www.wargravehistory.org.uk)

*Peter Delaney*

---

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

### **Berkshire Record Office**

#### **Small Objects of Power: Medieval Seals**

Our in-house display over the spring and summer will celebrate the beauty of these tiny examples of medieval art. Seals were used to authenticate many legal documents and they are a permanent reminder of the many powerful people and institutions that held sway during England in the middle ages.

The display will include our recently acquired seal of the town of Southampton, which appears on a Sunningwell charity deed of 1447. It also includes the earliest representation of the Reading borough arms, a Papal bull, the seals of two Archbishops of Canterbury and of the Order of the Knights Hospitaller in England. The documents to which the seals are appended date from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries.

The display is on between April and the end of August.

#### **Oscar Wilde and Reading Gaol**

We're pleased to report that we will also be able to put on another display at the Record Office later this year. This will relate to the Victorian history of Reading Prison. We've been given a small amount of money by the Lottery to put on the display, and also to hold a public event with invited speakers. This event will take a format similar to that for our 'Enemies of the State' project, about Irish patriots interned in the prison.

As part of the project we have been able to commission a professional photographer to undertake a survey of the prison as it looked at closure. We hope to use some of these photographs as part of the display.

*Mark Stevens, Senior Archivist*

### **Maidenhead Heritage Centre**

It is 21 years since the first Heritage Centre opened. 15 years and 6 moves later we purchased and converted a Victorian beer house to become our permanent home. With the help of grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund, local and national charities, our own fund-raising and above all the enthusiasm and commitment of our Volunteers and Friends, the town now has a thriving Heritage Centre and Museum, with a major archive of material relating to the Air Transport Auxiliary of World War 2.

Now the opportunity to acquire brand new and larger premises has arisen. The local council has produced a feasibility study for the redevelopment of the area around Maidenhead Town Hall. This redevelopment would include our site and we would be rehoused on the ground floor of a new building close to the Library and the Town Hall and opening onto a "Town Square". Long and possibly difficult negotiations lie ahead, and we must be able to make a single move into the new premises rather than occupy temporary premises for a period of time. It will probably be 4-5 years before anything happens. Whenever it does we are determined to end up with an even better Heritage Centre, but still with the friendly atmosphere we have built up over 21 years.

All that is in the future, in the present we are preparing a major exhibition on "Maidenhead's Motor Industry" this summer. Arrangements are being made to display (but not all together) a G.W.K. car, a Marandez sports and a Burney Steamliner, all made in the town. Unfortunately a Vanwall racing car is proving elusive.

That will be followed in the autumn by "Maidenhead in the Great War", which will feature the effects of the war on the area.

Finally we are now taking bookings for our popular River Cruises on 4, 9, and 11 September. Contact our Administrator if you or your society would like to join us for a day on the Thames.

*Brian Boulter, Hon. Curator*

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

Preparations for the 2014 MERL Village Fete are well underway and it's exciting to be able to start sharing some of the new features of the event, which will focus on food this year!

The other Friday the Village Fete team hijacked the regular Friday Toddler Time session to launch the 'MERL Biscuit Bake-off' which will be judged at the Fete on May 31<sup>st</sup>. One of Reading's famous 3Bs, biscuits are part of the town's – and MERL's – heritage. Our beautiful Victorian building is the former family home of the Palmer family of Huntley & Palmers, and we hold their archive in the University's Special Collections. Introducing a 'Biscuit Bake-off' competition to the Fete seems the perfect way to encourage the people of Reading to get baking biscuits!

Regular Toddler Time attendees were invited to bring in their favourite homemade biscuits to be tasted by long-term MERL supporter and descendant of the Palmer family, Andrew Palmer and his wife Davina. Despite the chaos as families arrived armed with plates of biscuits, Andrew and Davina had a great time trying out everyone's delicious offerings!



Everyone was also very interested to try the biscuits baked by Deiniol Pritchard, a Food Science student at the University. These were inspired by a recipe for 'University Rusks' from the records of 'Huntley & Palmers'

Andrew Palmer trying Anzac biscuits baked by Leo

Everyone is welcome to enter the 'Biscuit Bake-off' at the Fete. There will be 'traditional' and 'freestyle' categories, and several age groups – from Under 5s to adults! Just bring your favourite homemade biscuits to the event on the day. You can find details of how to enter on our website <http://www.reading.ac.uk/merl/whatson/merl-fetebiscuitbakeoff.aspx>. In the meantime, we're going to be posting a different biscuit recipe on the blog each week, so watch this space for inspiration and start practising.

This extract has been taken from the MERL website.

### **Reading Local Studies Library**

Reading Local Studies Library is continuing with the Berkshire in World War One project. The deadline has been extended until February 2015 to allow the project manager John Arcus time to work with schools and young people, and to finalise publications and the website. Volunteers have been visiting the National Archives, Hendon Aircraft Museum and taking tea with the Mayor of Reading,

The library will host a display of Two Rivers Press books in May to mark their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We have also started a subscription to The British Newspaper Archive. The database is available in the Local Studies Library and is searchable by keyword. The titles of interest to members of the BLHA are The Berkshire Chronicle 1825-1870 and The Reading Mercury 1770-1905 (not until 1958 – this is a typo on their list of holdings. I got very excited when I thought that they had included 20<sup>th</sup> century newspapers, but there are no search results from those years). It will also be useful for research outside Berkshire, as the Newspaper Archive has at least one newspaper from every county and major city in England, and a few from Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

*Anne Smith*



## Reading Museum

### Exhibitions

#### Reading at War

**Saturday 5 April – Sunday 14 September 2014**

Marking the centenary of the First World War's outbreak, Reading at War is a focal point for our town to explore how war throughout history has shaped Reading's character.

The exhibition draws from the Museum's collections of artefacts and images to explore the impact of war through the ages. Earlier conflicts represented include the ninth century Viking raids and the English Civil War siege of 1643. The more recent account of the Second World War will focus on the devastating air raid on Reading town centre in 1943 that killed 41 people.

By setting our First World War collections within a wider history of how conflicts in our own time have impacted on Reading people, Reading at War will also provoke thought and ask visitors to consider questions of why we remember and how war affects our lives today. The Victoria Cross of Reading's Trooper Fred Potts will also be on display during the exhibition.

This exhibition has been supported by Arts Council England.

### Walks, Talks and Workshops

These are just some of the events that may be of interest to BLHA members. For details of all our forthcoming events and exhibition details please go to [www.readingmuseum.org.uk](http://www.readingmuseum.org.uk)

#### Friday 9 May

##### Drop-in Reading Abbey Ruins Tours

Your chance to join a short guided tour of the Abbey Ruins, Reading's most significant historic monument. These new bite-sized 10 minute tours will combine an introduction to the history of the site with an opportunity to find out about the ongoing conservation programme.

You are advised to wear appropriate shoes due to the uneven terrain. No flip-flops or high heels will be allowed. Safety hard hats will be provided.

Adults and older children, 10 minute tours, between 12pm and 2pm.

**Free, just drop in.** Meet at the gates into the Ruins on Chestnut Walk (the riverside footpath between Abbey Street and Forbury Road)

#### Saturday 19 July

##### Exploring Military Medals

Members of the Thames Valley branch of the Orders and Medals Research Society will be exhibiting a selection of First World War medals at the Museum. The medals will reflect the contribution made by local people during the war, across all of the

armed services and many different countries. Representatives from the group will be available to help identify any medals that people care to bring along, and advise on further avenues for research.

**All ages, 10am – 3.30pm**

**Free, drop in\***

**Sunday 10 August**

**First World War Family History Roadshow**

*in collaboration with Europeana 14-18*

Help create Europe's largest virtual memory bank by bringing in your First World War family stories and memorabilia for identification and digitisation by our panel of experts.

**All ages, 11am – 4pm**

**Free, drop in\***

**Tea and Talks at Two**

Discover more about Reading at War with a regular series of informal talks on Wednesday afternoons throughout the summer. Speakers will be some of Reading's leading local historians as well as museum staff, including Dr Margaret Simons on the role of women and curator Jill Greenaway on the archaeology of war. After the talk enjoy a cream tea in our Palmers café (pick up your voucher from reception when paying).

**Adults, 2pm £5, pay on the day, booking essential (0118 937 3400)**

Pick up the Reading at War events leaflet or check the Museum website for full programme details [www.readingmuseum.org.uk](http://www.readingmuseum.org.uk).

*Matthew Williams, Museum Manager*

---

## **Courses**

Summer schedules will already be well underway by the time you read this, but there may still be time to book on a day school and keep a look out for the announcements of courses for 2014/15, which will be hitting the doorsteps soon. For more information visit [www.conted.ox.ac.uk](http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk) and [www.southern.wea.org.uk](http://www.southern.wea.org.uk) to out find out what there is on offer near you.



UNIVERSITY OF  
**OXFORD**

CONTINUING  
EDUCATION



## **Advanced Diploma in Local History via the Internet**

**Become a proficient researcher  
of community history with this  
one year course. There is full tutorial  
support offered in small groups.**

**Apply by 1st July**

**Starts 9 September 2014**

**See our website below  
[www.conted.ox.ac.uk/pp9](http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/pp9)**

Other local Further Education colleges often run courses for adults; there are five in Berkshire, so keep a look out as there may be something of interest. Look out for these logos.



## Picture Gallery

### AGM and Wellington College



Members at lunch



The Old Hall



College buildings



The South Front



To the Chapel



Copenhagen and Chapel



## The Visit of President M.D.Higgins



HM The Queen welcomes President Michael D Higgins at the Datchet Road



Arrival of the state coaches at Windsor Castle



More Irish treasures in the Collection



President Higgins presents a new ceremonial coat to Domhnall, the Irish wolfhound, and mascot of the Irish Guard

## History Societies

**Arborfield Local History Society:** Programme Secretary Ray Hill, 12 Melrose Gardens, Arborfield Cross, Reading RG2 9PZ [rayfhill@aol.com]

**Berkshire Archaeology Society:** Andrew Hutt, 19, Challenor Close, Wokingham, Berks, RG40 4UJ [info@berksarch.co.uk]

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

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

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

**Bracknell & District Local Historical Society:** Geoffrey Moss, 31 Huntsman's Meadow, Ascot, SL5 7PF [MossSandalwood@aol.com]

**Burnham Historians:** Mary Bentley, 38 Conway Road, Taplow, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 0LD tel 01628 665932 [burnhamhistorians@btinternet.com]

**Cox Green Local History Group:** Pat Barlow, 29 Bissley Drive, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 3UX. tel 01628 823890 weekends only. [alan.barlow2@btinternet.com]

**East Garston Local History Society:** Jonathan Haw, Goldhill House, Front Street, East Garston, Hungerford, RG17 7EU [jonathanhaw@btopenworld.com]

**East Ilsley Local History Society:** Sue Burnay, White Hollow, High St, E.Ilsley, Berks RG20 7LE tel 01635 281308 [info@eastilsleyhistory.com]  
[www.eastilsleyhistory.com]

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

**Finchampstead Society:** Mohan Banerji, 3 Tanglewood, Finchampstead, Berks, RG40 3PR tel 01189730479 [].

**Goring & Streatley Local History Society:** Janet Hurst, 6 Nun's Acre, Goring on Thames, Reading, Berks RG8 9BE tel 01491 871022 | Mob: 07799 583524  
[gslhs@w-mark.demon.co.uk]

**The Hanneys Local History Society:** Ann Fewins, 'Lilac Cottage', East Hanney, Wantage, OX12 0HX. tel 01235 868372 [ann@clivefewins.co.uk]

**The History of Reading Society:** Vicki Chesterman, 7 Norman Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 5JN tel 0118 9473443 [vickichesterman@yahoo.co.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 Boulter, 43 Bannard Road, Maidenhead SL6 4NP [bboulter@tesco.net]

**Mid Thames Archaeological & Historical Society:** Jane Wall, 143 Vine Road, Stoke Poges, SL2 4DH [sec.mtahs@yahoo.co.uk]

**Mortimer Local History Group:** Mrs Janet Munson, The Laurels, Ravensworth Road, Mortimer, RG7 3UD [munsonsinmortimer@yahoo.co.uk]

**Newbury District Field Club:** Ray Hopgood, 23 Lipscombe Close, Newbury, RG14 5JW [secretary@ndfc.org.uk]

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

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

**Project Purley:** Catherine Sampson, 32 Waterside Drive, Purley on Thames, Berks, RG8 8AQ tel 0118 9422 255 [clspurley@aol.com]

**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.

**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, Reading, RG7 1QX. tel 0118 9883650 [slhsoc@yahoo.co.uk] [www.slhsoc.org.uk]

**Tadley Local History Society:** 5 Church Road, Pamber Heath, Tadley, Hampshire, RG26 3DP [www.tadshistory.com]

**Thatcham Historical Society:** Alf Wheeler, 22 Park Lane, Thatcham, RG18 3PJ tel 01635 863536 [enquiries@thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk]; [www.thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk]

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

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

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

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

**Friends of Windsor and Royal Borough Museum** Jinny Melville, 15 Gloucester Place, Windsor, SL4 2AJ [www.windsormuseumappeal.org.uk]

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

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

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

### **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]

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

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

**Berkshire Local History Association**  
**Registered Charity 1097355**

**President**, Professor E.J.T., Collins  
**Vice-Presidents**, Brian Boulter, Mrs Joan Dils, Peter Johnson, Dr. Margaret Yates

**BLHA Website:** [www.blha.org.uk](http://www.blha.org.uk)

**Committee Members 2014**

<b>Chairman</b>	<b>Mr David Cliffe.</b> 1 Priest Hill, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7RZ. 0118 9483354 Email: <a href="mailto:chairman@blha.org.uk">chairman@blha.org.uk</a>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Dr. David Lewis ACA.</b> 5, Gloucester Place, Windsor, Berkshire, SL4 2AJ. 01753 864935 Email: <a href="mailto:treasurer@blha.org.uk">treasurer@blha.org.uk</a>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Mrs Ann McCormack.</b> 4 Silwood Close, Ascot, Berks, SL5 7DX. Email: <a href="mailto:secretary@blha.org.uk">secretary@blha.org.uk</a>
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	<b>Mrs Amanda Harvey.</b> <a href="mailto:membership@blha.org.uk">membership@blha.org.uk</a>

**Members of the Executive:-**

Sue Burnay – Berkshire Bibliography, John Chapman – Newsletter, Margaret Simons, Jameson Wooders.

**Web designer**, Dave Osborne. Email [webdesigner@blha.org.uk](mailto:webdesigner@blha.org.uk)

**Journal Editor**, Dr. Jonathan Brown

**Membership Rates for 2014.**

Corporate £18.00, Individual and Family £9.00. For those opting for electronic access to the Newsletter only. For those who still wish to receive hard copy Newsletters, membership is £20.00 and £12.00 respectively. A surcharge of £2 will also be levied on those who opt to pay by cheque. Membership includes an annual copy of *Berkshire Old & New* and a copy of the Newsletter thrice yearly; corporate members receive three copies of each issue of the Newsletter and two copies of the Journal.

**The next Newsletter will be published in September 2014 (Copy by 1 August 2014).** A word limit of 400/450 words is in place to allow for as many of you to contribute as possible, please note that when space is limited contributions over this amount will be subject to the editorial pencil! Email: [newsletter@blha.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@blha.org.uk) or post to. Mr John Chapman, 5 Cecil Aldin Drive, Purley on Thames, Tilehurst, Reading RG31 6YP.

**PRINTED BY:-**      **Reprographics Department,**  
                         **Whiteknights House, University of Reading,**  
                         **Reading, Berkshire RG6 6AH**