

BERKSHIRE *Old and New*



Berkshire Local History Association

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Berkshire Local History Association

BERKSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION was formed in 1976. Membership is open to individuals, societies and corporate bodies such as libraries, schools, colleges etc. The Association covers the whole area of Berkshire, pre- and post- 1974.

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We would be pleased if authors of articles and letters for forthcoming issues of the Journal would contact the Editor, or any member of the Editorial Committee, for guidance as to length and presentation. Copies of, or notes about, books or journals for inclusion in the bibliography section should also be sent to the Editor. Note of such publications will also be included in the Association's Newsletter.

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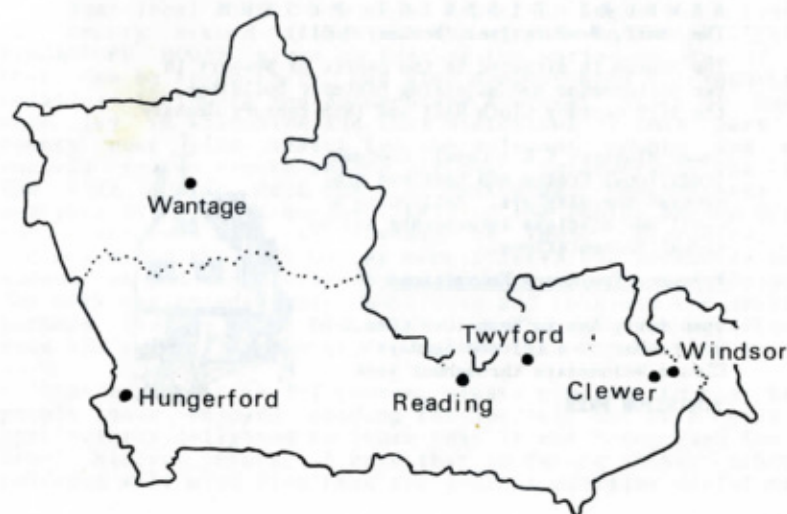
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BERKSHIRE Old and New

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Berkshire Local History Association

Also published by the Association:

Speakers List Issue No 2 (1986), 34p

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1. Berkshire Directories 1784-1939 (1983), 50p

2. Directory of Berkshire Organisations (1985), 50p

3. Special Interests File (1986), 40p

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Editorial Newsletter



It is my pleasure once again to write the editorial for this the fifth issue of BERKSHIRE OLD AND NEW. Once again there has been no shortage of articles and indeed each year there seems to be more and more people and groups engaged in local history research in the county. A measure of this is the number of books and journals published last year and listed in our regular feature, BERKSHIRE BIBLIOGRAPHY.

'Where shall I begin and where can I find the information?' These are, perhaps, the first perplexing questions which confront the beginner who wants to discover the history of a particular locality. This year's articles illustrate just how extensive and scattered the records can be. Two articles - ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS OF CIVIL REGISTRATION and A VISIT TO THE AERARY - discuss the records held in two very different types of record offices, the muniment room belonging to St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle and the various register offices in the county, respectively. The story of the House of Mercy, an Anglican home for 'fallen women' is told from the convent's own records in TO RESCUE THE FALLEN: THE EARLY YEARS OF THE CLEWER SISTERS. Privately held records were also important for research into the history of TWYFORD'S FRIENDLY SOCIETIES. The records of the company, which provided a new cemetery in Reading last century, however, have long been lost and contemporary reports of various kinds have been the main source for the article, READING CEMETERY: A PRIVATE ENTERPRISE.

Most local historians would expect to begin their research at the county record office and the article on THE HISTORY OF A HUNGERFORD HOUSE gives an idea of the varied nature of records that can be found there, and also demonstrates the importance of relating fieldwork and documentary sources. Part of Hungerford once lay in Wiltshire and thus historians of this part of the county must also search for the relevant county and diocesan records in two county record offices. In contrast, the article, THE 1522 MUSTER ROLL FOR WEST BERKSHIRE, concentrates on the analysis of this one document held in the Public Record Office and the picture that it reveals of Tudor Berkshire. Quite independently the 1522 muster certificates for Berkshire have been worked on and transcribed by members of the Oxford Polytechnic. The work has recently been published and this and the article may perhaps inspire other historians, who haven't the opportunity to read the original document, to tackle this interesting record.

As editor it is, of course, always pleasing to hear how much people have enjoyed reading the journal, but this year I was particularly delighted to learn that it was being used for one A-level history class. I hope that in future other schools and colleges will also find that the journal contains useful material.

JUDITH HUNTER
Honorary Editor

Reading Cemetery: A Private Enterprise

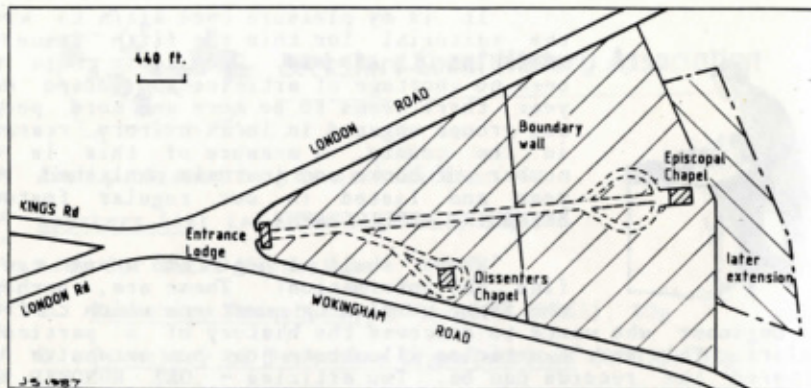


Cemetery, Reading, Berkshire.

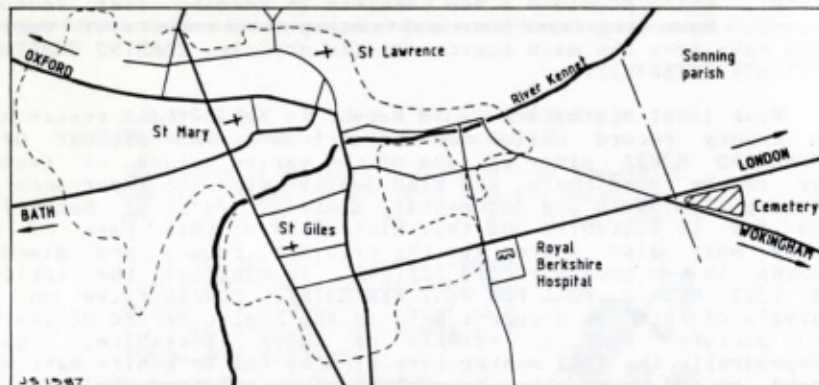
It was reported in the Reading Mercury 6th May 1843, that 'The first interment within the walls of this admirable institution took place on Monday afternoon last'. The burial was of Elizabeth Jacobs, the second daughter of Mr T. Jacobs of Eldon Terrace, who had died on the previous Tuesday, in her twenty second year, after a very short illness. The 'admirable institution' was the new general cemetery, situated just beyond what was the town's eastern boundary, and at least a mile distant from the majority of homes and most of the town's churches.

The Rev W. Legg, minister of the Broad Street Independent Chapel, officiated and in an 'eloquent and appropriate address, dwelt upon the uncertainty of life and exhorted his hearers to hold themselves ever in readiness to meet the call for their appearance in the other world. He alluded, in an impressive manner, to the dying moments of the young female whose remains they were about to inter, and who up to the hour of her death, manifested the most exemplary faith and resignation under her affliction'.

Miss Jacobs had been a member of a respectable dissenting family in the town. This first interment in the unconsecrated part of the cemetery was conducted by a leading non-conformist a month before the consecration of the Anglican part of the cemetery. It was an event of some importance, although only a common grave had been purchased. The hour of interment had been arranged for four o'clock and as the Berkshire Chronicle observed the 'novelty of the occasion attracted a considerable number of spectators'. In conclusion the minister made clear that in the opinion of dissenters formal consecration was superfluous. The Reading Mercury reported 'shortly after five o'clock the body was deposited in the grave, and an appropriate prayer offered by the Rev W. Legg, after which the friends of the deceased, and others who attended the chapel, left the grounds'.



Reading Cemetery



Extent of
built up area.

Borough
boundary.

Reading c1843

Adapted from Veller's 1840 plan to show the relative position of the cemetery to the town and the 3 ancient parishes

During his lengthy address, which included a 'slight sketch of the history of cemeteries', the Rev William Legg also referred to the 'praiseworthy character of the institution in which they were for the first time assembled, and for which the town was deeply indebted to the spirited exertions of the few gentlemen by whom it was originated. The practice of disinterring the remains of by-gone relatives and friends in order to make room for bodies more recently deceased, had long been of necessity resorted to in Reading, and anything more objectionable, or more revolting to the feelings of the living, could hardly be conceived; he had no doubt, therefore that the increased accommodation offered by the completion of the Cemetery would be regarded with universal satisfaction, and he sincerely trusted that the institution would long continue under the same wise and judicious control as that by which it was now distinguished.'

CHURCHYARDS AND BURIAL GROUNDS

The increased accommodation was needed because of the overcrowding of local churchyards and burial grounds. Reading was typical of successful market towns of the period which, having attracted new inhabitants as their commercial importance grew, found themselves with problems caused by overstretched local facilities. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the population was returned as 9,421 (1); by 1841, the year the Great Western Railway came to Reading, the population had increased to 19,074. In August 1841 the Berkshire Chronicle observed that while the population of St Lawrence (the most densely settled yet smallest of the three ancient parishes) had not increased during the last ten years 'that of the other two parishes had advanced in ratio of 25%.' The site of the town was crucial to its importance, but the constricted churchyards of the old urban centre no longer sufficed and attempts to purchase additional ground met with various difficulties. During the 1840s the sanitation problems of Reading gave rise to local debate. The arguments of the wider public health movement, which promoted burial reform, and the creation of cemeteries as one solution to the serious situation encountered in many growing towns, were relevant to the problems encountered at Reading.

In 1842 the Illustrated London News had commented that: 'It appears that the burial ground of the parish churches of Reading are, and have been for many years past, crowded with the remains of those who have died in the town, and it was shown by the evidence, given before Parliament, that this crowding of the churchyards either had, or was calculated to have, a most injurious effect upon the health of the inhabitants of the borough' (2).

In 1843 The Reading Cemetery Company awarded a prize to an essay on cemetery interment. No doubt with the intention of influencing public opinion locally by emphasising the sanitary advantages of the cemetery, this essay was printed together with a Report of the Select Committee on the Health of Towns and selections from the evidence taken before the Committee. Horrendous details were often reported at length in support of burial reform. In his editorial preface to the prize essay, John Richards junior, Clerk to the Company and Registrar, found 'that

the over-crowded state of the Reading Burial-grounds — filled even to repletion — furnished proofs of an almost revolting nature with those which the metropolis had afforded'. He blamed 'no one, as regards the past. In the absence of additional ground for the purpose of burial, the sextons and grave-diggers have been compelled to inter the bodies in the best way the overcrowded ground permitted; and the disinterments that have taken place cannot with justice be said to have arisen through carelessness or negligence on their part, but from dire and unavoidable necessity' (3).

FOR AND AGAINST

Despite the publicity on the merits of the cemetery, the town's churchyards continued in use as burial grounds. However the 1840s saw a deterioration in the sanitary conditions in Reading, which was reflected in the worsening mortality rate. In 1841 it was 24.6 per thousand, but was to become 30 per thousand by 1849. The town's overcrowded churchyards and burial grounds were seen by some contemporaries as contributing to this deterioration.

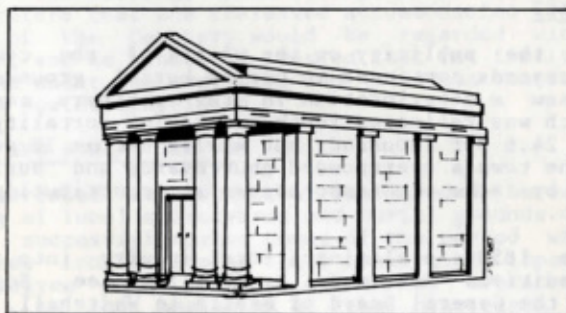
When in 1850 a preliminary local inquiry into the town's sanitary conditions was made by William Lee, Superintending Inspector to the General Board of Health in Whitehall, the amount of evidence dealing with burial grounds and 'town interments' equalled that normally produced in a complete sanitary report. This quantity of detailed evidence, although kept for reference at the time, does not seem to have survived. However Lee's reports published in 1850 and 1852 include some statements by witnesses which do touch on the situation (4).

Those in favour of reform, including some medical men, alluded to the danger to public health from foul overcrowded burial grounds. Several national cholera outbreaks believed, incorrectly, to be caused by the miasma arising from filth and decay, had alerted the medical profession to the need for remedial measures to remove its causes. The medical profession in Reading made persistent efforts during the 1840s to impress the public mind with the gravity of the public health problem, in order to try to bring about some improvement (5).

Not all the medical men felt able to give an equally strong lead, or to be staunch supporters of the cemetery, which was a controversial scheme. F.A. Bulley, a surgeon in practice in Reading, stated that, with a strong feeling as to the bad effects of intramural interments [burying in towns], 'I was induced some years ago to assist in the formation of a Cemetery Company, of which I was for some time a director, but finding that the public feeling had not at that time been aroused to the danger of burying in towns, and did not readily come into my views, and as the clergy had offered some opposition to the scheme, which I thought might injure or impede my professional advancement, I was induced to abandon my office' (6).

Whilst some might be in favour of a general cemetery, others would have preferred setting up additional churchyards, and vestry meetings were held to debate the use of purchasing additional

land. The Dissenters objected to paying church rates for the purchase of more parochial burial ground. Churchyards, paid for by church rates, were solely for burial with the rites of the Church of England, and so excluded funerals conducted by Dissenting ministers. The unconsecrated portion provided by the private cemetery company, substantially increased the amount of burial ground available for nonconformists at Reading. As the unconsecrated area was nearer to the entrance, funerals for Dissenters had no need to enter the consecrated ground.



Dissenting Chapel

When the cemetery was still only a proposition the Reading Mercury had explained that 'A capital is proposed to be raised by shares, and judging from the great price of those in the metropolitan suburbs, the plan offers an apparently profitable investment to shareholders'(7). The purchase of shares was not to be without criticism, as some residents disapproved of what they considered to be trading in death. When the project for the cemetery was first set on foot, William Legg was asked to take some shares and absolutely refused: 'I said I could not be connected with, or trading at all in these things, that it was offensive in my mind so to do' (8).

Lee in his 1852 printed report was of the opinion it was 'unnecessary to consider in this place the propriety or otherwise of the trading principle as applied to interments. The cemetery exists; and if the parish burial grounds are unfit for further use, that an opportunity has been afforded of obtaining new grounds, of which opportunity the inhabitants have not availed themselves' (9). Lee's opinion was that the cemetery was at a convenient distance, being a mile and a quarter from the furthest of the parish burial grounds, and taking into consideration the size and importance of the town and its future growth, he calculated that there was a sufficient amount of unappropriated space.

READING CEMETERY COMPANY

For reasons of sanitary reform and because of moral and aesthetic considerations, there was a national movement to site

new cemeteries away from those city and town centres where the pressure on burial space was leading to unhealthy, unpleasant conditions for the living. A Parliamentary Act was necessary to give authority for the setting up of a new general cemetery, and the Reading Cemetery Act of 1842 established The Reading Cemetery Company.

The contemporary answer to the problem of how to finance the project, was for the proprietors to raise the necessary capital in shares, which were to be personal and not real estate. Although it was a private enterprise company this would not exclude an intention of being for the public good, and it would not be inappropriate perhaps to make a comparison with those public utilities, which began as private companies, and where similarly some of the directors were members of the town council. Unfortunately it has not been possible to see a copy of the prospectus for shareholders, which would have provided more detailed information, but it does not appear to have been a scheme established merely for commercial speculation. The directors reported to the first general meeting in September 1842 that they had not found it an easy matter at the outset to induce a sufficient number of persons to take up the requisite number of shares, in order to enable them to comply with the standing orders in the Houses of Parliament. However these difficulties gradually gave way before the energy and activity of the cemetery proposers, and the opinion generally gained ground that a general cemetery would not only be a great advantage to the public health and morals, by doing away with the existing objectionable system of interment, but that it would also yield a fair rate of interest on the investment made by the proprietors (10). The Parliamentary Act listed in alphabetical order the names of the eleven 'Proprietors incorporated'.

An unexpected source of income for the company was the charges made for the purchase of private burial plots. Perhaps one indicator of good intent was the provision for less expensive burial, although having taken into consideration the likely purchasers and the size of the cemetery, the proposers may have felt that Reading Cemetery was not like the fashionable London cemeteries, which could make expensive charges and ignore those who could not afford to pay.

Nine years later the directors resorted to further legislation in order to raise fresh capital. It was anticipated that a further considerable outlay of money would be required because of incurred liabilities and the increasing demand for extramural places of interment. The tone of the 1851 Reading Cemetery Act reflected the necessity by this time for local acts to take into account national legislation. Successive reforms had made cemetery establishment less complicated and costly since the Reading Cemetery Company's foundation, a situation of which Newbury took advantage in 1847. Legal fees had been a substantial part of the costs of establishing the Reading Cemetery, which included the expenses incurred by the clergy's opposition to the bill. These three acts (Reading 1842, Newbury 1847 and Reading 1851) illustrate the change that took place as central government in this, as in other matters, began to affect local initiatives (11).

READING CEMETERY

There had been some difficulty over the purchase of suitable land, but Hattons Platt, at Earley in Sonning parish, near to the Marquis of Granby public house, was obtained from Mr Cholmeley with compensation to the tenant, J.B. Tubb.

The Berkshire Chronicle 5th August 1843 carried an advertisement notice: 'The Cemetery being now completed and a portion of the ground having been consecrated by the Lord Bishop of Oxford, is open for the interment of members of the Established Church and other parties of all religious denominations. The Ground is surrounded by a substantial wall, with an Entrance Lodge for the residence of the Clerk and Sexton, Episcopal and Dissenting Chapels, and is ornamentally laid out with walks, trees and shrubs'.

Today the town has extended beyond the cemetery which forms a wedge of land between two busy roads. The layout of Reading Cemetery was approximately triangular, chiefly formed by the two highways meeting together; the triangle having an irregular base. The main drive runs from the entrance lodge at the apex of the triangle to the Episcopal chapel. The boundary division between the consecrated and unconsecrated ground is marked by a low wall, at right angles to the main drive.

Now administered by the local authority, the cemetery is mostly full, except for occasional burials in family plots. Although the Lodge remains, first the Episcopal and then the Dissenting chapel fell into decay and were demolished.

The Reading company followed other private cemeteries of the period in providing a choice of types of graves in landscaped surroundings. The primary purpose in setting up the cemetery was for burial, but well-laid out cemetery grounds were also thought of as being morally uplifting places. Respectable townspeople were already in the habit of walking out to this locality. Once the cemetery was opened there was an opportunity to take edifying walks and these quiet perambulations may also have influenced purchasers' selection of private burial plots, for which there was a scale of charges. Reading did not emulate those London cemeteries which had catacombs and the sale of family vaults did not amount to any large proportion in the early years. There does not seem to have been a prejudice against the northern part of the Reading Cemetery, whereas it has been suggested that there was a widespread prejudice against burial in the northern part of those churchyards where there was sufficient space for choice (12).

A critical opinion was strongly expressed by 'A Subscriber' who had written to the editor of the Reading Mercury in October 1842: 'Mr Editor. In no part of the County could a more beautiful spot be chosen for the Cemetery than that in the London Road. But what will travellers passing to and fro think of our taste in seeing it surrounded by a huge dead wall, some seven or eight feet high; composed of materials the worst in appearance, I think, that could by any possible means be selected, and shutting out every vestige of its interior, except the top of the lofty buildings to be erected thereon. What an improvement (in my

opinion) it would be to fix, a few feet above the ground, a neat iron railing, which would not materially, if any, increase the outlay, and give to it the same security, as well as add to its beauty, if as I suppose, it is intended to be not only useful, but ornamental to the entrance of the town'.

In May 1843 the Berkshire Chronicle remarked that 'The grounds of the cemetery are tastefully laid out and in a few months will present a beautiful appearance'. Thirty years later the Ordnance Survey cartographer indicated a large number of evergreen and deciduous trees in the main part of the cemetery (13). The life expectancy of most of the original tree species, which were probably used at Reading, means that many could be expected to have died by now. Since the original map was produced, one hundred and sixteen years ago, more graves have been accommodated; however, some fine specimen trees have considerable height and girth and may be the remnants of late Victorian planting. Particularly attractive are the weeping beeches, and a Cedar of Lebanon, favourite Victorian marker trees, and there is a handsome cut-leaved beech, which was very fashionable.

A thick belt of trees around the margin of the grounds was generally considered inadvisable because it would occupy one of the best positions for border graves (14). The early date of interments in Reading Cemetery's border graves may indicate that they were favoured, partly perhaps because advantage could be taken of the wall surface, on which to erect a tablet, often in addition to the gravestone, although a purchaser in 1843 objected to paying the extra charge for this. One hundred years later, iron-railings set into the surrounding wall were removed as part of the war effort. The passer-by sees the cemetery grounds through these window-like openings and the view of the main drive is framed by the lodge.



Entrance Lodge

LAYING A FOUNDATION STONE

On Wednesday, 26th October 1842, the foundation stone of the Episcopal [Anglican] Chapel at the new Cemetery was laid with grand masonic honours, Mr Richards junior, 'one of the gentlemen

who have taken a most active part in carrying out the company in question', stood 'high in connection with the Masonic body in Reading, by whom he is much respected, and indeed by all who know him in the county of Berks'. This ceremony was proposed 'as a compliment to Mr Richards, and with a view to giving eclat to the occasion'. The public procession by the Masons was a rare event and attracted crowds of Reading inhabitants eager to watch. At 'an early hour the several streets through which the masonic procession was expected to pass were thronged with well-dressed persons, while the windows of several houses along the line were crowded with ladies'. Fortunately it was a fine day, although inclement weather the day before dissuaded some from travelling a distance. In spite of this there was a number of important visitors, so that the whole event warranted a report in the Illustrated London News together with illustrations of the 'Grand Masonic Festival' and 'Laying the Foundation Stone' (15).

This publication warmly supported freemasonry and intended 'a series of articles illustrative not only of the history', but also of its 'great practical results'. This occasion appears to have given the newly established periodical an opportunity to publicize the philanthropic motives of the Society and to seize the advantage of its ability to print illustrations. It would seem that masonry was not as well supported in Berkshire as in other English counties at that time. This event offered the possibility of an impressive public display. The Freemasons had offered to process for the opening of the Royal Berkshire Hospital, but had to withdraw because Lord Sidmouth, the chief benefactor, was not a freemason, so it was inconsistent with the rules to associate masonic honours with the ceremony of laying the foundation stone, and the offer was withdrawn (16). This suggests that many of the directors of the cemetery company may have been freemasons, which seems to be confirmed by the celebratory toasts at the dinner held that evening, at which Mr Richards junior, solicitor to the company, was described as an 'ornament' to the craft, 'to whom the town of Reading was much indebted for his exertions in establishing the new cemetery'.

CONSECRATION

It was June 1843 when 'That portion of this excellent institution which will be devoted to the burial of deceased members of the Episcopal Church was consecrated by the Bishop of Oxford on Thursday afternoon last at 3 o'clock; the weather was extremely pleasant during the performance of the ceremony and a great many ladies were present to witness the proceedings. The Lord Bishop attended by his chaplain and a large number of the clergy of the neighbourhood, walked up the central path leading to the Episcopal Chapel, and went through the form of consecration, after which the Right Rev Prelate repaired to the Chapel, and read the customary prayers &c, in the presence of a crowded and most respectable congregation. The proceedings occupied about three-quarters of an hour. The completion of the Cemetery in so short a period, and in so admirable a manner, redounds much to the credit of the talented architect, and to all who had the conduct of the works; while the spirited exertions of the Directors will be long held in grateful remembrance by the inhabitants of the town' (17).

PATRICIA SMART



Episcopal Chapel

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article is based on part of a more detailed study of the Reading Cemetery 1841-1881, in which fuller acknowledgements will be given. I am grateful to a number of people, who gave of their time and experience and loaned material. In addition, this study would not have been possible without the resources of the Berkshire County Library, Berkshire Record Office and Reading University Library; the patient production of material by staff is appreciated. The Berkshire County Local Studies Library holds many of the sources listed in the references; the view of Reading Cemetery by Rock & Co., 2nd February 1865, is from VIEWS OF READING published by T.G. Davidson (1865). The line drawings are based on photographs in private hands, and Berkshire Architectural Record Committee photographs (Reading E Nos. 9 - 16) deposited in the Berkshire Record Office. Thanks are due to Catherine Olver of the Reading Tree Club, and particular thanks to Joan Dils for her help and encouragement.

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3. The prize essay submitted under the pseudonym "Stet Nominis Umbra", 'A Well Wisher', argued that 'Indeed here self-love, parsimony, taste, and piety, are amply administered units, and the cemetery not only holds out private advantages, but will confer a public good', p.12.

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A Visit to the Aery



The Aery, completed in 1355

On 4th April 1987, a rainy Saturday morning, I and other members of the Berkshire Local History Association were greeted in the Chapter Room of the Dean and Canons of Windsor by Mrs Grace Holmes, Honorary Archivist. The College of the Dean and Canons of Windsor was founded by Edward III in 1348. They were granted use of the Castle Chapel (built in 1240 on the site of the present Albert Memorial Chapel) and at various times were endowed with lands. In 1867 the Ecclesiastical Commission took over all the endowments, except the freehold in Windsor Castle, in exchange for an annual payment, but the College still retains its archives. The Aery is its Muniment Room and Treasury (Latin aerarium) and was constructed in 1353-55 to hold its documents, treasure and relics (1). Together with the adjacent Chapter Room and Chapel Clerk's Office it forms a set of administrative offices for St George's Chapel which are approached by a staircase from the Dean's Cloister.

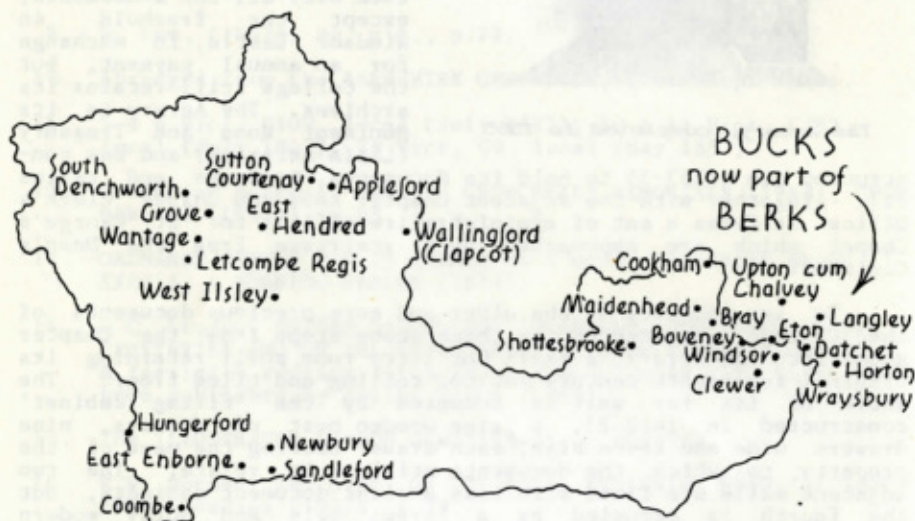
To see examples of the older and more precious documents of the College we ascended the three stone steps from the Chapter Room into the Aery, a small but lofty room still retaining its original fourteenth century vaulted ceiling and tiled floor. The whole of its far wall is occupied by the 'filing cabinet' constructed in 1422-23, a large wooden nest of drawers, nine drawers wide and seven high, each drawer bearing the name of the property to which the documents still in it relate. The two adjacent walls are lined with less ancient document cabinets, but the fourth is occupied by a large, ugly and noisy modern dehumidifier.

A selection of documents was laid out for our inspection on the table which occupies much of the centre of the room. Notable among them was a charter of about 1141 recording that Matilda de Warenguefort (Wallingford) granted Great and Little Ogbourne to the Abbey of Le Bec. To it is affixed her perfectly-preserved seal, the earliest known seal of a woman. Another document dated 1342 carried a fine seal of the Borough of New Windsor, one of four known specimens, bearing on one side the castle represented with three towers, and the royal arms of England, and on the other

side the arms of Queen Eleanor of Castile. Other documents on display included a deed concerning a grant of 1295 of half an acre of land at Clewer, and the First Windsor Book of Charters opened to show the entry recording a grant in 1392 by King John of the river tolls and mill at Bray.

More recent documents relating to Berkshire properties were displayed in the Chapter Room, and included the court records of the Manor of Priorshold in Wantage, 1798-1875; a survey of tenements in Maidenhead, 1818; and plans relating to a survey of property at Sutton Courtenay, 1826.

The Chapter Room itself, finely proportioned and with linen-fold panelling, was constructed in 1852 by Sir G.G. Scott. The windows contain very decorative armorial glass of subsequent deans and canons, including the arms of Canon John N. Dalton, author of the calendar of the Aerary muniments, which was published after his death (2), and father of Hugh Dalton who was brought up in Canon's Cloister. The Chapel Clerk's Office, next to the Chapter Room, retains its fifteenth century wood-panelled ceiling with eighteen finely-carved bosses, and is decorated with prints of Holbein portraits of Sir Thomas More and his family taken from the originals in the Royal Library in the Castle.



Map of Old and New Berkshire showing those places for which the Aerary holds records

Individuals wishing to consult documents in the Aerary should write to Mrs Grace Holmes, The Aerary, Dean's Cloister, Windsor Castle, SL4 1NJ to arrange an appointment (Mrs Holmes is usually

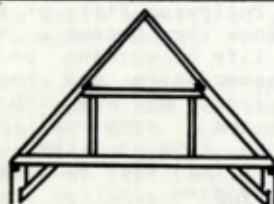
there on Thursdays and Fridays). They should first consult the calendar (2) which contains useful summaries of the documents, and their catalogue numbers, and has a photograph of the Aerary as its frontispiece. The map accompanying this article shows the location of the Berkshire properties of the college, and other Berkshire localities mentioned in the documents may be found in the index to the calendar.

There are copies of Dalton's calendar at the County Record Office, Reading University Library, the County Local Studies Library at Reading Central Library, and at Slough and Windsor Libraries. A copy for the library of the Berkshire Family History Society was bought from the Chapel Bookshop, where the series of Historical Monographs relating to the Chapel can also be purchased.

MICHAEL DUMBLETON
Bracknell and District Historical Society

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Twyford's Friendly Societies

In 1984 David Neave appealed to local historians to locate and preserve Friendly Society records (1). In doing so he was renewing a similar appeal by Eric Hobsbawm, twenty seven years previously (2). This article is the result of an attempt to discover what records might still exist relating to Friendly Societies in Twyford and the surrounding area.

In order to place the activities of these societies in the context of the national movement, which was to become 'the most successful working class organisation in Victorian Britain' (1), the first part of this article outlines the story of that remarkable development, making use in large measure of Gosden's book on Friendly Societies (3) and the booklet published by the Ancient Order of Foresters (4).

THE FRIENDLY SOCIETY MOVEMENT

Friendly Societies are mutual organisations providing relief during sickness, unemployment or retirement and the cost of funeral expenses on the death of a member or his wife, complemented by social activities and a general care for members not usually to be found in a purely commercial organisation. Margaret Fuller has pointed to the social and economic pressures in response to which such organisations came into being (5). In the preface to her book she wrote:

Large numbers of local Friendly Societies sprang up in England during the latter half of the eighteenth century and the following fifty or sixty years. In very many parishes they became a vital element in the often stark life of working people. By means of voluntary association and regular contributions to a common fund, members achieved companionship, beer, fire and a convivial feast day, medicine and money towards the bare necessities of life when they fell sick or grew old and a decent burial when they died.

Elsewhere in the same book she wrote:

An allowance known as burial money was given by every society on the death of one of its members to ensure that no matter how poor he was - as one of their fellows he would receive a becoming funeral ... Indeed, a decent funeral was sometimes valued above sick benefits.

and again:

Poverty was so widespread, the poor laws so inadequate to cope with it, and the poor rates so heavy that Friendly Societies were eagerly grasped as a means of remedying the situation. It was the promise of an alternative to the ignominious out-

relief of the parish or consignment to the detested workhouse which gave members a strong interest in the permanence of their Society.

The first local societies or benefit clubs were independent organisations. Later on the Affiliated Orders appeared on the scene as federations of local branches known as lodges, courts and the like. They operated in the manufacturing towns of the North and the Midlands, looking to those in the better paid jobs for their membership. Independent benefit clubs were more usual in the South where they catered primarily for agricultural workers. There was little statutory control over any of these organisations. They could register and deposit their rules locally, but a great many did neither. Indeed they wished to have as little as possible to do with the State which was for them identified with the Poor Law and pauperism. This coolness towards officialdom was compounded by the State's suspicion of any organisation which smacked of secrecy. (The clubs made use of passwords and signs and the initiation of new members was not conducted openly, no doubt aping Freemasonry.) The Seditious Societies Act of 1799 did not cease to apply to registered Friendly Societies until 1846.

Village inns and alehouses vied for the custom of local clubs, the rent of the club meeting room being very often settled by buying a pre-arranged quantity of liquor. This practice was frowned upon by those who had the best interests of the members at heart but it was a long time dying.

Members' contributions might be as low as 3d (1.5p) a week but rarely as much as 6d and this was to secure sick benefits starting at something like 8s a week (about one-third of a normal wage) and a death benefit of about £8 and something less on the death of a member's wife.

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 made a radical change in the Poor Law, which had for three hundred years been based on out-relief combined with poor houses for the incapacitated poor, administered by the parish which levied a poor rate to finance it. The new enactment replaced this by a very different system run by 'Unions' of parishes. Out-relief to able-bodied paupers was almost entirely abolished and life in Union workhouses made unpleasant with the object of encouraging inmates to go out and find work. This gave added impetus to the work of local Friendly Societies but, because of their small size and lack of understanding of the need for constant recruitment of young members to build up a fund sufficient to meet future liabilities, many of them ceased to exist. Their work became more and more the concern of the Affiliated Orders which operated on a bigger scale.

By the 1890s club conviviality was becoming of less importance to members - in urban areas at least - because of alternatives provided by the Bank Holidays Act of 1871, cheap railway excursions to the sea, the introduction of a 5.5 day week and professional football matches. These social changes had a counterpart in the remarkable growth of societies such as the National Deposit Friendly Society, which did not provide any social activities. Although not founded until 1868 it soon

equalled in size the Oddfellows and Foresters combined. Being more in the nature of a Savings Bank, part of a member's contributions was credited to his 'deposit account' from which a part of any sick benefit was taken. Sickness benefit was not payable after age sixty five when a cash endowment was provided. The sickness rate experienced is said to have been much lower than in 'social' societies.

With the passing of the National Health Insurance Act in 1911, the Affiliated Orders had to decide whether they would become 'Approved Societies' and administer the State scheme as well as their probably lessening voluntary insurance. The Orders were committed to the principle of voluntary thrift and for some time had feared a take-over of their business by the State. However, co-operation proved to be much to their financial advantage because of the increase in membership and funds which came about.

This situation was reversed when the Government took over sole responsibility for a Welfare State and abolished the Approved Societies in 1948. This volte-face on the part of Whitehall, the vastly increased opportunities for other uses of leisure time and the much higher standard of living foreshadowed a marked decline in the Orders' membership.

Friendly Societies membership of 6,800,000 in 1913 and 7,000,000 in 1950 was down to 3,250,000 in 1986 (6). Many of the Orders' branches have been wound up or amalgamated with others, and this is only too clear from the fall in the number of Societies registered - from 25,500 in 1913 to 15,200 in 1950 and 3,814 in 1986 (6). (These figures include the number of branches of the Orders.)

Some writers attribute the choice of names such as Foresters and Oddfellows (or Odd Fellows) for the Affiliated Orders to their being the natural heirs to the old religious and trade Guilds. Neither of these Orders makes any such claim, although the Foresters are the successors to the Royal Foresters of Knaresborough whose rule book referred to 'brothers wandering through the forest of this world and rendering mutual aid and assistance to each other' (4). There may be a link between the Oddfellows and an eighteenth century club of this name whose activities were purely social (3). On the whole it seems more likely that these working class organisations were anxious to use names suggesting an ancient origin and were perhaps following the example of the Freemasons, founded in the eighteenth century, but with dubious claims to an almost prehistoric origin.

FRIENDLY SOCIETIES IN TWYFORD

The 1898 Guide and Directory to Twyford records the existence locally in that year of four Friendly Societies:

The Ancient Order of Foresters
The Independent Order of Oddfellows
The Rechabites
The National Deposit Friendly Society

The Rechabites (a teetotal organisation) had a branch in Twyford with J. Hunt of Waltham Road as secretary. The National Deposit Friendly Society had a branch for Twyford and Sonning, meeting alternately at the Sonning Village Hall and at 37 Brook Street, the home of A.J. Prior, secretary (and author of the Guide). Nothing more is known about the local activities of these two societies.

The Ancient Order of Foresters was established in 1834 and celebrated its 150th anniversary in 1984. Court No. 4973 of the Order, operating under the name of Pride of the Village opened in 1866, meeting on the first Tuesday of each month at the Horse and Groom, Hare Hatch, in the building which appears on the left of the photograph reproduced on this page. Through the courtesy of the former secretary, Mrs Pamela Sumner of Ruscombe, we have been allowed to inspect the surviving early records of the court. These records are now held at the Reading District office in London Street, Reading.



*Meeting of the Ancient Order of the Foresters
at the Horse & Groom, c1890*

The first meeting was attended by sixteen members, (two labourers, two gardeners, three coachmen, three carpenters, two bricklayers, one railway employee and three others). The occupational distribution was wider but not fundamentally different in 1910, when the membership had reached two hundred and thirty two and was nearing its peak.

Labourers	57	Post Office employees	4
Gardeners	42	Agricultural workers	18
Coachmen, cabmen and grooms	21	Craft workers	5

Carpenters	17	Engineers and engineering	16
Bricklayers	9	Distributive trades	12
Railway employees	7	Estate workers	11
		Others	13

In the next twenty years (the recording of occupation ceased in 1931) fewer new members were labourers or carpenters, more were gardeners, agricultural workers or craftsmen.

The catchment area of the Court was fairly wide as was to be expected in a rural area. In 1910, members' addresses came under the following areas:

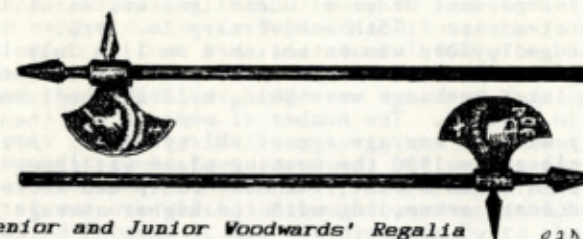
Waltham and Shurlock Row	31
Wargrave	30
Twyford, Ruscombe and Hurst	23
Kiln Green and Knowl Hill	17
Hare Hatch	12
Elsewhere	119
	<hr/> 232 <hr/>

Note: The large number shown as 'elsewhere' seems to stem from those whose occupation took them outside the area. e.g. coachmen, servants and gardeners. Most of them were in their early twenties.

The Officers of the Court were:

Chief Ranger and Sub Chief Ranger	. . . The Chairman and Vice Chairman
Senior and Junior Woodwards	. . . Sick visitors
Senior and Junior Beadles	. . . Stewards
Treasurer	
Secretary	
Arbitrators	. . . Those who dealt with problems arising in the payment of benefits
Trustees	. . . Those who looked after the Court's investments (mainly mortgages)

Meetings of the Court were conducted according to a strict protocol and two 'cudgels' were laid on the table while the court was in session. The cudgels were in the keeping of the Beadles who were also responsible for asking for the password from anybody seeking admission.



Senior and Junior Woodward's Regalia

R.J.D.

In the early years, a Feast Day was the climax of the Friendly Society year. The feast itself was for members only but non-members were able to enjoy the colour, noise and excitement of the jollifications associated with it and with Bank Holidays generally. The Hare Hatch Court's minutes for June 1881 record 'The usual anniversary to be held on Bank Holiday 1 Aug'. The photograph reproduced on page shows an anniversary celebration at the Horse and Groom in about 1890. It seems likely that these Feast Days did not continue after 1914. We have a record of a joint parade with the Oddfellows (stated to be an annual event) in 1904, during which house-to-house collections were made in Twyford, Hurst and Wargrave.

Prominent in the history of the Court have been the Hewletts, father and son. Thomas (1854-1947), Headmaster of Polehampton Boys' School from 1887 to 1919, filled various offices (including that of Chief Ranger) from 1898 until his death at the age of ninety three. His son Victor (1885-1961) was not far behind having served as Treasurer, Sub-Chief Ranger and Chief Ranger over a period of thirty years or more. Other local residents who made their marks are Alfred Beckford, a Senior Woodward, who died in 1986 aged ninety, and Ernest Bye, happily still with us, a Beadle for many years who has served as Sub-Chief Ranger on several occasions and as Chief Ranger. He has been extremely helpful to us in recalling the past. Mr Bye has kindly presented the Jewel and Ribbon awarded to him for his services as Chief Ranger and a sash to the Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society. These items may be the only surviving evidence of the regalia of the Court because the chest containing it was destroyed when the building used at the Horse and Groom was demolished in 1970 and the Court's meetings were transferred to the Queen Victoria at Hare Hatch. Although the cudgels have not survived, others belonging to another Court are held at the London Street office of the Reading District.

A strong inducement to become a Forester was the access to medical advice (for which the poor could not afford to pay) because the Court appointed medical officers who undertook, in return for a capitation fee, to examine applicants for membership and to attend sick members and provide them with medicine. In the early part of this century the contribution was 6s 8d a quarter, and the sick benefit was 12s a week for twenty six weeks, 6s for a further twenty six weeks and 4s for any further period of continuous sickness.

The Independent Order of Oddfellows was established in 1810 and celebrated its 175th anniversary in 1985. The Loyal St Andrew's Lodge Twyford was established on 11th July 1862, and held its meetings at the St Andrew's Old Schoolroom in Sonning. Thirty six years later meetings were being held at the former Rose and Crown inn in Twyford. The number of members was then one hundred and thirty with an average age of thirty seven. After the Rose and Crown closed in 1930 the meeting place was changed to The Bell in Twyford. By this time, the membership had increased to one hundred and forty seven, but with the higher average age of forty six.

The introduction of the Welfare State led to a considerable reduction in the number of members and by 1948 meetings were being held at the Working Mens' Club in Twyford. However, the Lodge found it difficult to continue on its own and decided to amalgamate with the Good Intent Lodge, which still meets on the first Monday of each month at the Methodist Hall in Three Mile Cross. The amalgamated Lodge is one of the sixteen which constitute the Reading District of the Order.

It is unfortunate that none of the pre-1948 records of the Lodge have survived other than the document establishing it. This was on display at the 125th anniversary party of the Reading District at The Oddfellows Hall in Oxford Road, Reading on 4th July 1986. Also on display at that party were regalia of the Order dating back to 1850, the very large banners which at one time were carried in processions, and life-size models of the first Chairman of the Reading District and of the Chairman of the first Ladies' Lodge (1909).

Nowadays the District extends beyond the simple conviviality of Lodge meetings to achieve more in the sporting world. Sick visiting, however, continues as does support for members in need of care and help. How satisfying it is that such concern for the welfare of others less fortunately placed, originating as it did nearly two centuries ago out of the hard lot of the labouring classes, should still be active in the more affluent society of today.



Oddfellows Fete, August 1907

It may seem surprising that as many as four Societies found it possible to secure custom in Twyford and Ruscombe in 1898 (the combined population at that time was about 1,000), but it must be remembered that the catchment area of the Foresters Court was very wide indeed and the Oddfellows Lodge was based at Sonning.

It is most unlikely that any original documents of any independent benefit clubs have survived, but we are fortunate to have first-hand accounts in the HURST PARISH MAGAZINE of two of them. The first was one which, although based on sound financial principles, failed because it did not prove to be to the liking of the ordinary man. Known as the Three Friends Benefit Society and formed in 1862, it operated in the parishes of Hurst, Ruscombe and Wargrave. Its meetings took place in the 'Almshouses Hall' in Twyford. A year later there were nine members only on the books and although the number gradually increased the Society seems to have ceased to exist some time before 1875.

A Festival Day in July 1865 was held in the grounds of 'Mr Toomer's house, The Grove' at the expense of honorary members and other friends. These, together with the members and a few visitors, numbered about forty. Cricket and quoits were played, music provided by the Drum and Fife Band of the Union School of Wargrave, and a cold dinner eaten in a large tent with the Vicar of Hurst, Rev A.A. Cameron, in the Chair. A speaker on that occasion hoped that 'the Society was now in a fair way to surmount its difficulties and to overcome the prejudice it has had to encounter (as compared with ordinary village clubs) from not holding out too fair promises to be secured at too low a rate as they commonly do'. But it was not to be.

Another feature which, no doubt, added to the Society's inability to get its message across was its doctrinaire adherence to temperance. The Parish Magazine of October 1865 included the following somewhat pretentious 'Advice to Prudent Men':

There is nothing like a good Benefit Club ... It must be one that does not require the members to go to the public house every time they have any business to do about it - where, though they may not now be obliged to spend anything in drink 'for the good of the House', they will be tempted to stay and drink to the hurt of themselves.

The writer went on to say, in the same didactic style, but rather oddly since the cost of the Festival three months earlier had been met by honorary members and friends:

A good Benefit Club must be one that does not spend out of its funds nor expect its members to give out of their own pockets a good deal for feasts, bands, flags, ribbons, badges and tomfool dresses, all of which somebody must pay for - either the members out of their common stock or each one out of his own purse, be he a Forester or an Oddfellow or whatever fancy name he may have.

The other side of the coin is apparent from the HURST PARISH

MAGAZINE of April 1882, in which is reproduced a letter from the Rev William Blackley, Rector of North Waltham near Micheldever, pointing out that the actuarial valuation of the Independent Mutual Benefit Friendly Society as at 31st December, 1880 showed nett liabilities of £154,000, but assets of only £7,000. It is not clear why he sent the letter to Hurst for publication because the Independent Mutual's meetings took place at The Horns, Crazies Hill, (Wargrave Parish). Hurst may not have been the only recipient because the Rector wrote that he would be 'sending the correspondence to the newspapers'.

JOHN FINCH
Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

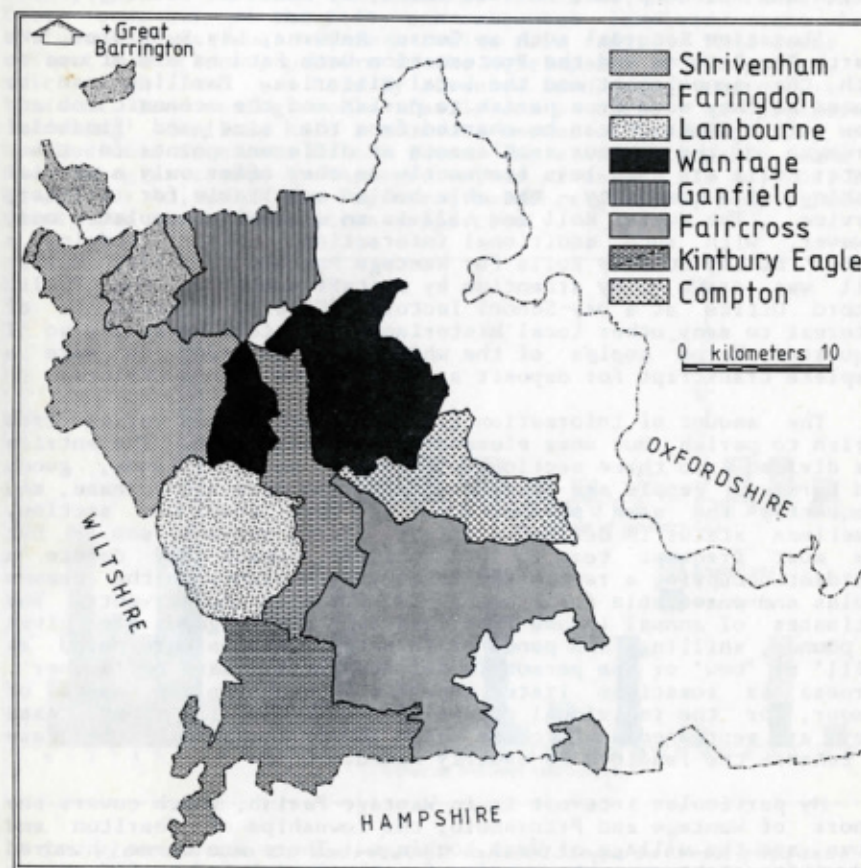
I would like to acknowledge the help given to me by Brother D. North of the Reading District of the Ancient Order of Foresters, Brother E. Bye, past Chief Ranger of the Hare Hatch Court of the same Order, and Mr G. Kilford of the Reading District of the Independent Order of Oddfellows; also Mr John Phillips of Hurst for allowing me access to the 1862, 1863 and 1865 volumes of HURST PARISH MAGAZINE.

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The 1522 Muster Roll for West Berkshire

During the sixteenth century all able-bodied men between the ages of sixteen and sixty were liable for military service within their own counties and, in special circumstances, elsewhere. Early in the reign of Henry VIII fears of foreign invasion caused the government to try to improve the methods of raising, training and equipping these militia. Musters were held at irregular intervals and Muster Certificates, usually called Muster Rolls, were drawn up by the Commissioners and returned to the king's council. The earliest surviving returns date from 1522 when Wolsey caused a Muster to be held in a covert preparation for a forced loan. The Certificate for part of Berkshire survives amongst the papers of the Court of Augmentations (E.315) in the



The Hundreds of West Berkshire covered in this Muster Roll

Public Record Office (1). It is a more comprehensive list than most Muster Certificates and closely resembles the returns for the 'Amicable Grant' or Great Subsidy of 1524-5 (E.179).

The Certificate was compiled by Sir William Essex, William Fetyplace Esquire, Thomas Apporie and John Latton, gentlemen, and it covers the Hundreds of Shrivenham, Faringdon, Lambourne, Wantage, Ganfield, Faircross, Kintbury-Eagle and Compton. This is a large part of the western end of the old county, as can be seen in the accompanying map. There are also one or two parishes which now lie in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire. The complete document is one hundred and thirty one folios, written on both sides, making two hundred and sixty two pages in all. The first five Hundreds are written in an elegant Court Hand, but the last three are in a more cursive script, and have the air of a draft rather than a final copy. Each Hundred is sub-divided by parish and township and, in some cases, by manor or tithing.

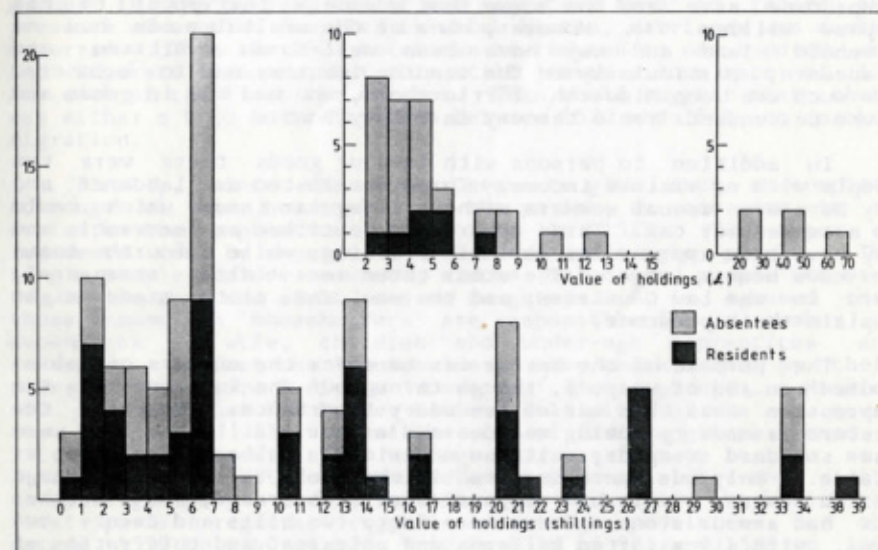
'Location Records' such as Census Returns, Lay Subsidies, the Hearth Tax Returns and the Protestation Oath Returns are of use to both the genealogist and the local historian. Families can be traced as they move from parish to parish and the economic ebb and flow of a district can be charted from the size and financial strength of the various settlements at different points in time. Muster Rolls are used less frequently as they offer only a partial listing of a community - the able-bodied men liable for military service. The Muster Roll for 1522 is an unusually complete one, however, with much additional information. After studying a number of Lay Subsidy Rolls for Wantage Parish, the 1522 Muster Roll was drawn to my attention by a staff member of the Public Record Office at a Day-School lecture. Clearly it would be of interest to many other local historians in western Berkshire so I requested Xerox copies of the whole Roll, in order to make a complete transcript for deposit at the various Record Offices.

The amount of information given for each person varies from parish to parish, but some elements are always given. The entries are divided into three sections within each parish - lands, goods and harness. People are listed by christian name and surname, and frequently the same persons occur in more than one section. Sometimes status is defined - knight, clerk, servant, son - but the most frequent term is 'householder', which may denote a resident occupying a recognised tenancy with rights in the common fields and answerable for a household of family and servants. The estimates of annual income from land and taxable goods are given in pounds, shillings and pence or in marks. Weapons are noted as 'bill' or 'bow' or the person is defined as 'billman' or 'archer'. Harness is sometimes listed separately as complete suits of armour, or the individual pieces are noted, but in other cases they are mentioned next to the entry under 'goods'. In the case of tenants the landlord is usually named.

My particular interest is in Wantage Parish, which covers the Manors of Wantage and Priorshold, the townships of Charlton and Grove, and the village of West Lockinge. There are three hundred and fifty eight separate entries for the parish and a BBC Micro computer was used to speed the sorting and searching. After initial sorting, the entries could be reduced to three hundred and

seven records by combining duplicate entries for goods and harness, or for listings under both lands and goods. Some duplicate entries still remain for persons who held land in more than one township or manor.

It is possible to sort and search the information in a great number of ways but only a few can be mentioned here. The incomes from freehold land seem to vary widely, from the smallest holdings, worth 8d, 9d and 1s per annum, to the largest at £44, £45 and £67. However, as the histogram shows, the majority of holdings were worth less than £10 per annum. The total income from lands in the parish was just over £406, of which resident freeholders held £64. The largest estates were all held by absentee landlords, such as John Bowsar with £44 and the Dean of Windsor with £67. No resident held more than £8 worth of land. The smaller land holdings (less than £10) were distributed fairly evenly between resident and absentee landlords, but in these cases forty one out of the fifty one absentee landlords came from surrounding parishes within a twelve mile radius. This seems to reflect a continuing pattern in the development of the parish, in which much land was held by absentee landlords, there was no resident land-owning noble family and a number of prosperous 'middling' families held a moderate amount of freehold land and had business interests in the town. There are noticeable peaks on the histogram caused by repeated values of 6s 8d, 13s 4d, 20s, 26s 8d and 33s 4d, which may represent holdings of five, ten, fifteen, twenty and twenty five acres respectively.



The distribution of individual landholdings between resident and absentee landlords in Wantage Parish

An entry for 'goods' indicates a person's parish of residence. For instance there are seven entries for Ellen Croker in the whole roll, scattered through various parishes in the Vale, but in only one place, Faringdon, is she entered for 'goods', and in the Wantage entries she is referred to as 'Elyn Crocker of Farrendon'. The Wantage section has one hundred and eighty three people entered for goods, with nearly £1,000 value between them. The smallest entries are for 10s, and about half of those are for people described as 'servant'. In fact all but five of the servants are entered for £2 or less and the figures probably represent their annual salaries. Four of the remaining five servants worked for substantial householders (with annual incomes of £40 plus) and they may have been senior servants acting as their masters' bailiffs or stewards. Sixteen of the 'householders' had an annual income of less than £1; one was a widow, and two more who had some freehold land might have been retired, but the rest must have been the poorest families in the parish, struggling to survive on inadequate incomes.

At the other end of the scale sixteen 'householders' had annual incomes of £20 plus, and the highest was £80. Several of these prosperous men had small areas of freehold land and were probably farming, as were their families a generation later. For example Nicholas Anger had £60 in goods and 1s worth of freehold land, and in 1549 John Anger (his son?) left 'the shepehouse and the shepehouse acre' and other lands, beasts and farming implements, to his son Nicholas (2). In turn Nicholas left 'the shepehouse acre' and the howse that standeth thervvpon' to his nephew William (3). However, nine of the wealthier men had no freehold land and may have been well-to-do craftsmen and tradesmen, particularly in the tanning industry and in butchery. One such was John Aldworth of Priorshold, who had £50 in goods and whose descendants ran a tannery in Priory Road.

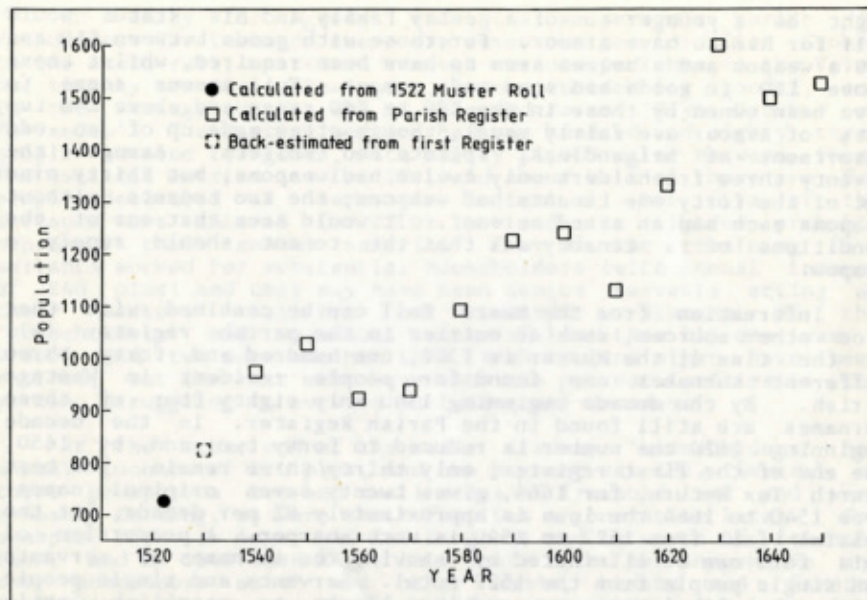
In addition to persons with land or goods there were ten people with no visible income. Three are listed as 'labourer' and may have been casual workers without a regular income which could be assessed for tax. Three others are described as 'servant' and may have been apprentices still in training, while a fourth seems to have been a lodger. The other three were 'alien strangers', born in the Low Countries, and the wool and cloth trade might explain their presence.

The purpose of the Muster was to check the numbers of able-bodied men and of weapons, though throughout the Roll one has the impression that this was of secondary importance. However, the gesture is made by noting weapons and armour. Bills and bows were the standard weapons, with an occasional halbard, poleaxe or glaive. Only one sword is noted in the whole roll. In Wantage parish seventy people had weapons, some with armour, and a further six had armour alone. There were forty two bills and twenty two bows, with six assorted halbards and poleaxes, and this ratio of approximately two billmen to each bowman is the same throughout the Roll. For those with goods below the annual value of £10 it seems to be a matter of chance inheritance or family status if a person possessed armour. For example, Sir Thomas Odams the chantry priest had 'harnes for ij men' although his goods were only assessed at £7. It is likely though that a chantry priest

might be a younger son of a gentry family and his status would call for him to have armour. For those with goods between £10 and £20 a weapon and a helmet seem to have been required, whilst those above £20 in goods had some body armour. Full armour seems to have been owned by those in the £30 to £40 range and above £40 two sets of armour are fairly usual, though often made up of an odd assortment of brigandines, splints and sallets. Amongst the seventy three freeholders only twelve had weapons, but thirty nine out of the forty one tenants had weapons; the two tenants without weapons each had an armed servant. It would seem that one of the conditions of a tenancy was that the tenant should supply a weapon.

Information from the Muster Roll can be combined with that from other sources, such as entries in the parish register (4). At the time of the Muster in 1522, one hundred and forty three different surnames are found for people resident in Wantage Parish. By the decade beginning 1540 only eighty four of these surnames are still found in the Parish Register. In the decade beginning 1620 the number is reduced to forty two, and by 1650, the end of the first register, only thirty three remain. The best Hearth Tax Return, for 1664, gives twenty seven original names. From 1540 to 1664 the loss is approximately 8% per decade, but the initial fall from 1522 to 1540 is much sharper. A proportion of this fall can be eliminated by removing the surnames of servants and single people from the 1522 total. Servants and single people were more likely to move and less likely to establish family groups in the parish, whilst the registers tend to record the presence of settled families in which births, marriages and deaths occurred. Thus the 1522 total can be reduced to one hundred and ten separate surnames, but this still leaves a loss rate of 12% for each of the first two decades. This would suggest that there was either a high mortality rate between 1520 and 1540, or marked migration.

Finally, since the Muster seems to give such a complete coverage of the households in the parish, we can use it to estimate the population of Wantage in 1522. Two types of residents can be counted, householders and single people. The single people include servants, widows, labourers, people who seem to be lodgers and adult sons or daughters. It is assumed that those named as 'householders' are responsible for a number of dependants - wife, children and under-age apprentices and servants. In fact the 'householders' have check marks by their names which seem to indicate 'answering' (for a group?). Hoskins (5) suggests that for Muster Rolls a multiplier of six or seven may be needed. In view of the size of family groups found a little later in wills for Wantage, six was felt to be the more likely number. With one hundred and ten householders and eighty three single people this gives $110 \times 6 + 83 = 743$. Work with the first parish register suggests an average population for the decade 1530 to 1540 of 820, 1540 to 1550 of 975 and 1550 to 1560 of 1,025. Therefore a figure of approximately 750 for 1520 to 1530 seems plausible. In view of this steady increase in the population (11% per decade) the decline in surnames is most likely due to migration rather than high mortality.



Population growth in Wantage calculated from the Muster Roll and from the Parish Register

I shall be continuing to work on the material available from the 1522 Muster Roll, both on the Wantage section, which I will be analysing in detail, and on the complete Roll, which will be transcribed and indexed soon. I am sure that other local historians would find the material both interesting and profitable.

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The History of Hungerford House

The account of the Hungerford High Street Buildings Project featured in the 1986 issue of the journal focussed on No 111 as an example of the work done by the Building Group of the local Historical Association. It illustrated some of the inevitable problems, in particular the dating of the building. The Group's report suggested that, although stylistically the street front of the property belonged to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, the timber framing at the rear indicated this part of the building might be seventeenth century in origin. However, they had not traced the history of the building from documentary sources earlier than 1781 and so, of course, could not substantiate this.

Through a study of the descent of burgage plots, which for some seven or eight hundred years have constituted the sites of Hungerford High Street, it is possible to add to the earlier history of a house on the site of No 111, thus making it clear that a seventeenth century origin (or even earlier) is indeed a possibility.

The earliest list extant of burgage tenures in Hungerford can be dated, from internal evidence, as c 1470 A.D. This, and subsequent lists, were almost invariably drawn up in a particular topographical order, beginning on one side of the street, continuing to its end, then reversing down the other side. Broadly speaking, the order in which a site appears (together with its distinctive quit rent) enables one, other evidence being lacking, to identify the same site through the centuries until quite modern times. In c 1470 Henry Capper held of the Abbey of Goring a half burgage site for which he paid to the Duchy of Lancaster as lord of the manor a distinctive quit rent of 4d per annum (1). To the Abbey, however, he would pay the normal economic rent of the time, which thus became a regular part of the Abbey's income. When the Abbey was dissolved by Henry VIII its property was taken over by the Crown, and a survey of the Abbey's rentals made for the King in 1538 includes a rent in Hungerford from Thomas Taylor, who would thus seem to be the tenant at that date (2).

By 1552 the tenement was occupied by Robert Pope, who leased it with one acre of land in the common fields from the Crown. The property was said to have been 'late in the tenure of John Hawes' (3). In this context 'late' usually refers to some previous list or deed and often goes back several generations. It may do so in this case, since we know from an ancient deed in the Public Record Office that there was a John Hawes living in Hungerford in 1485 (4).

In 1558 the Crown placed the property on the market. The draft particulars for the sale describe it as 'one tenement with backside and one acre of land in the common fields of Hungerford, late in the tenure of John Pightell, tenant at will' at an annual rent of 8s 8d. A memo adds 'this is an entire quillet of itself and parcel of no honour nor manor nor any of the ancient demesnes

of the Crown nor of the Duchy of Lancaster or Cornwall and is far distant from any of the King's or Queen's Majesties' houses reserved for their highness' access' (5). The word 'quillet' derives from the Latin 'quidlibet' meaning 'what you will', a bit of an oddity, something unusual. Presumably this relates to the property's independent status.

A further note was added to the draft particulars on 28th June, 1558 indicating that a sale had been effected to Thomas Huett of Hungerford - 'payment within four days'. Another note stated 'the clear yearly value of the premises 6s 8d which, rated at 20 years' purchase, amounteth to £6 13s 4d'. Finally there was the record 'sum of £6 13s 4d received by me John Thompson'.

Thomas Huett was a clerk in Holy Orders. He witnessed and probably drafted the strongly Protestant will of John Clydesdale alias Hidden in 1549 (6), and may have been the parish clerk or possibly curate. He seems to have added six acres of land to the property before he sold it to Robert Payne in 1573 (7). The latter was still holding it in 1591 (8). 'Old Robert Payne' was buried in 1607 and from this date, or earlier, the premises were held by James Toe until his death in 1619 (9). The will of James Toe is extant. In it he describes himself as a husbandman and leaves the use and occupation of the house in which he dwells to his wife, Joan. To his daughter, Mary, he bequeaths 'all that room or chamber I now lie in, being on the south side of my now dwelling house in Hungerford', to take effect after the decease of his wife, Joan, for a period of twenty one years at a token rent (10). The existence of a separate living room/bedroom on the south side may be noted in relation to the plan of the ground floor.

The Toe family were to remain associated with the property for over a hundred years. They were a respectable family of moderate or average means, several members of which became the town's Constable: Thomas (1646), John (1657), a second John (1679) and others in 1701, 1737 and 1759.

James Toe was succeeded in the ownership of the property by his son, John, who, according to the evidence of the borough's Hocktide Court Book, held the property freehold until his death in 1675 (11). The quit rent roll of 1676 lists a John Toe as liable for payment of 4d, but this is John Toe II who was the executor and residual beneficiary of his father's will (12). The will included a bequest to his other son, Joseph, of a half part of such 'household goods as are within my dwelling house'. This suggests that he probably continued to live in the house with his brother, perhaps occupying one or two rooms in it. An inventory taken at the time of the death of John Toe II in 1686 would seem to confirm this, for it refers specifically to the half portion of household goods which belonged to Joseph (13).

Probate inventories taken at the time of the deaths of both John Toe I and II assume a particular importance when considered in conjunction with the plans of 111 High Street drawn by the Buildings Group. The appraisers, who compiled the inventories, listed the goods of the deceased room by room. In 1675 the rooms were:

Hall
Kitchen
Buttery
Cellar

Chamber over the Hall
Chamber over the Kitchen
Chamber over the buttry

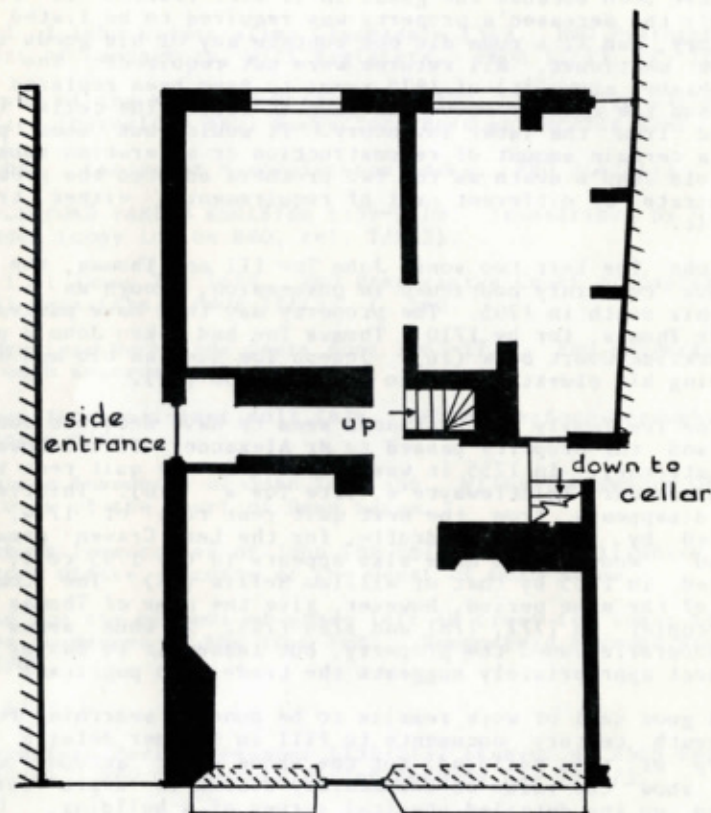
In 1686 they comprised:

Hall
Kitchen

Great Chamber
Kitchen Chamber
Gatehouse Chamber
Shop Chamber

Little room next to the Shop

(14)



High Street

Simplified ground floor plan of
111 High Street

Taken from the plan produced by the Buildings Group
of the Hungerford Historical Association

The 1686 list of rooms in particular would seem to fit reasonably well with the house plan, but compared with the earlier inventory there had been some notable changes. A gatehouse has come into being, built over the covered entrance way and passage. Its original construction may thus date between 1675 and 1686. A shop is mentioned implicitly in 1686 by reference to the chamber above it. At this date a shop was more likely to be a workshop than a retail trader's outlet, though in practice, of course, it tended to be both. We know that John Toe II and his brother Joseph were both collarmakers and may assume that they were partners (15). That the shop was not mentioned in the inventory may have been because the goods in it were treated as Joseph's; for only the deceased's property was required to be listed in the inventory, and if a room did not contain any of his goods it would not be mentioned. Nil returns were not required! The buttery (and chamber above it) of 1675 seems to have been replaced by the shop and the chamber above the shop in 1686. The cellar is also omitted from the later inventory. It would thus seem possible that a certain amount of reconstruction or alteration took place after old John's death as the two brothers adapted the premises to incorporate a different set of requirements, either trade or domestic.

John Toe left two sons, John Toe III and Thomas, the former of whom certainly continued in possession, though as a mercer, until his death in 1705. The property may then have passed to his brother Thomas, for by 1710 a Thomas Toe had taken John's place in the Hocktide Court Book (16). Joseph Toe died an old man in 1737, outliving his eldest son, also named Joseph (17).

The Toe family circumstances seem to have declined soon after this and the property passed to Mr Alexander Thistlethwayte, a local attorney. In 1755 it was recorded in the quit rent roll as 'Mr Alexander Thistlethwayte's, late Toe's' (18). Thistlethwayte's name disappears from the next quit rent roll of 1774, to be replaced by 'Anthony Woodroffe, for the Lord Craven Arms, quit rent 4d'. Woodroffe's name also appears in the 1795 roll, but is replaced in 1805 by that of William Mellis (18). The Commoners' Lists of the same period, however, give the name of Thomas Barley as occupier in 1777, 1781 and 1786 (19). It thus seems likely that Woodroffe owned the property, but leased it to Barley - whose name most appropriately suggests the trade of a publican!

A good deal of work remains to be done in searching for other eighteenth century documents to fill in further details of the history of this building, but the above short account will, I hope, show the value of documentary search in depth for those engaged on the detailed physical survey of a building. Used by themselves, both documentary and field work may leave unanswered questions. Used in conjunction, however, some of the questions may become easier to answer, and answers which otherwise might have to be left as hypotheses may be given firm support.

NORMAN HIDDEN

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Readers may like to know that Phillimore have recently published OLD DEEDS: A guide for Local and Family Historians by NW Alcock £7.95

To Rescue the Fallen: The Early Years of the Clewer Sisters

The stranger passing along Hatch Lane in west Windsor might well cast a questioning glance at the vast range of Victorian red brick buildings which dominate this otherwise ordinary residential area, for this is off the 'tourist track' and the guidebooks yield no clues. But Windsorians know that this is the Convent of St John Baptist (the Clewer Sisters), and the black-habited Anglican nuns who live there are familiar figures in the town. The Communion wafers and beautifully embroidered vestments made in the Convent workrooms are world famous; and many visitors come to the retreats, conferences and quiet days organised by the Sisters as part of their modern work. The Community is ever adapting to a changing world, a world vastly different from that in which they began their original work - the rescue of 'fallen' women.

In most mid-Victorian towns and cities there was gross overcrowding among the poorer classes, with no privacy of any kind so that these people, children as well as adults, lived in perpetual moral danger. Poverty went hand in hand with dirt and disease. With no education, and little means of gaining any, the only means of earning an income for many women was by prostitution, and all too often this vice was accompanied by drunkenness. Parents often turned a blind eye to their elder daughters' means of helping to support a large family, and married women ill-used or deserted by drunken husbands, took to prostitution as a livelihood and to drink to dull the senses.

In a garrison town such as Windsor the problem was as acute as in the depths of Soho: within half a mile of Windsor Castle there was a notorious slum area known as Clewer Fields. In 1860 the Rector of Holy Trinity, Windsor (the Rev H.C. Hawtrey) was to write, "Where two regiments of Household troops are quartered a large amount of evil exists in the shape of beer houses and houses of ill fame ... In one lane alone (Clewer Lane) of about sixty houses there are seven beer houses and at least four houses of ill fame - vice and immorality are rampant in broad day."

With the re-awakening of spiritual life within the Church of England from the mid 1830s (known as the Tractarian or Oxford Movement) it is perhaps hardly surprising that there should also have been a resurgence of 'social conscience'. Although it cannot by any means be claimed that High Churchmen held the field, it is true to say that what Evangelicals such as Lord Shaftesbury did for working conditions for the poor, so the Tractarians and their followers did in a similar way for those moral outcasts whose sin was looked upon as being of the worst kind.

There had been a few attempts at rescue work already, notably the Magdalen Hospital in London, founded as early as 1758. Although the Magdalen was based on religious principles, it was governed by a Committee and run by paid Matrons, as were all other existing penitentiaries. Many of these did not have a religious basis, and were about as compassionate as the notorious workhouse system. But churchmen, influenced by the Tractarian movement, were by the 1840s beginning to have other ideas about rescue work.

was in addition to maintaining a dairy farm and learning plain needlework. Neither was basic education neglected. All this and Heaven too - "We are never satisfied to let them go until they become settled Communicants", wrote the Rev T.T. Carter, who as well as being Rector of Clewer was also Warden of the Community. For many it was their first taste of religion, and for some it was too much, but for others it gave something to hold on to after leaving the House. Although they had the advantage of two years training, yet they were plunged back into domestic service where they would meet all the former pressures and temptations. For some this would prove irresistible, and so the whole sorry story would be repeated.



The Laundry in the Clewer House of Mercy, 1928

There were however, some Penitents who wished to remain in the House of Mercy and lead dedicated lives. These were the Magdalens, in the words of T.T. Carter, "A dedication in a different way from that of a Sister of Mercy, yet having a beauty of its own, as a rose differs from a lily." The Magdalens made a lifelong consecration following a seven year probationary period, which in turn followed the usual training in the House of Mercy. They wore a distinctive grey habit in contrast to the black worn by the Sisters, and adopted the Communal surname of Magdalen. The gravestones of Milly Magdalen and a number of her companions may be seen in Clewer churchyard. They provided a valuable support to the Sisters, as they had passed through the training themselves and had an insight and understanding of the problems which the Sisters could not have.

The Clewer Sisterhood grew faster than all other Anglican communities and this may very largely be attributed in the early years to the magnetic personality of Harriet Monsell. We are told that, "Hers was the brightest and gayest of natures, with a quick, clear knowledge of men and of manners; the sharpest commonsense,

In the words of the Rev Thomas Thelluson Carter, Rector of Clewer, "It was felt that their restoration i.e. fallen women was a higher work than had been supposed, and needed greater powers of influence ... and that instead of being a paid service, it should be carried on as a religious work for Christ's sake." The means by which this objective was achieved was something quite novel in the English experience - the formation of 'Sisterhoods' of dedicated 'Ladies' who would consecrate their lives to the glory of God. As a 'work of mercy', they would rescue those who had fallen from virtue and train them for useful work as servants, and thus enable them to take a respectable place in society.

In February 1849 the Rev John Armstrong, Vicar of Tidenham near Chipstow, published an appeal for the formation of a specifically Church Penitentiary. It was to be influential in the new movement generally, but it also embodied the principles upon which the Clewer Sisterhood was to be founded.

A few months before Armstrong's appeal Mrs Mariquita Tennant, the Spanish widow of an English clergyman, almost by chance, began the rescue work which grew into the work of the Clewer House of Mercy. In December 1848 a girl from Clewer Fields, not a prostitute but the victim of the conditions in which she had been brought up, was taken in by Mrs Tennant to be trained as a servant. Six months later in June 1849 a second girl who, upon leaving home near Salisbury following a family argument, had walked all the way to Windsor and had found herself forced from poverty and hunger to lodge in a brothel, also found herself begging for aid from Mrs Tennant. The following day she brought a friend to Mrs Tennant's temporary residence 'The Limes' next to Clewer Church. So it continued and within a few months there were eighteen girls. These were not all hardened prostitutes, but they were, almost without exception, unruly and undisciplined. The sheer strain of dealing with the girls, beginning with teaching them the very first principles of manners and behaviour, took its toll on Mrs Tennant. She gave up the work in 1851 because of her broken health and retired to Trinity House, Windsor where she died in 1860.

Mariquita Tennant had not founded a Sisterhood in the accepted sense of a Religious Community: her work was done mostly single-handed, although she did have at least one faithful helper for some of the time. Religion however was an important and integral part of the Penitents' training and a good deal of the day was taken up learning the Scriptures. Each girl also had to express genuine repentance for her past life and was required to submit to strict rules whilst in the House of Mercy, as it was called. Spiritual oversight was exercised by the Rector, the Rev T.T. Carter, and his assistant clergy, so that when Mrs Tennant finally gave up the work Carter was immediately involved in finding a successor.

Carter saw this as an opportunity to re-order the work on the lines of a Religious Sisterhood such as that proposed by Armstrong in his appeal, and similar to the Sisterhood which Dr Pusey was directing near Regents Park, and which was a direct outcome of the Tractarian Movement. Shortly before giving up the work Mrs Tennant had bought an estate of fifteen acres in Hatch Lane and

moved there with the penitents. There was ample room for expansion, but somebody was needed with the qualities of leadership and vision to make the plan a reality.



Harriet Monsell, 1839

That person was Harriet Monsell. Recently widowed, yet still in her thirties, this daughter of an Irish peer had the strength of character and determination which is not usually associated with Victorian women, at least in the popular imagination. At her husband's deathbed she had pledged her life to the service of God in whatever way He should choose for her. Now, three months later she came to Clewer to nurse her ailing sister who was married to Carter's curate. Hearing of Carter's need for a lady to take over the House of Mercy, Harriet recognised this as the 'call' she had awaited. On Ascension Day 1851, she was clothed in the habit of a Sister of Mercy and on St Andrew's Day 1852 she was installed as the first Mother Superior by Bishop Wilberforce of Oxford. So within the short space of eighteen months her life was transformed from that of a young widow to that of Mother Superior and Co-Foundress of what was to be one of the most influential Religious Communities in the Anglican Communion.

The work grew rapidly as women flocked to join the Sisterhood and new buildings soon became necessary. These were begun in 1854 and completed in 1858 with the dedication of the chapel on 1st July. This was not the splendid edifice which graces the Clewer skyline today which dates from 1881, but was the smaller, plainer chapel nowadays known as the chapel of the Forerunner. Further buildings were added in the 1870s as more Penitents, as the girls were called, were taken in. The architect for all these was Henry Woodyer, former pupil of the famous William Butterfield.

In 1857 it was estimated that since June 1849 one hundred and seventy seven Penitents had been received, of whom '57 are doing well (and are alive); 88 died with good hope; 16 were middling and 12 doubtful (some of these are married); 21 bad; 9 ran away; 16 stayed less than a month; and 36 are still in the house.' These contemporary statistics make no attempt to conceal the high failure rate, and are fairly typical of all similar institutions dedicated to this work. By the late 1880s there were nearly eighty Penitents in residence and thirty Sisters. From then on the Sisterhood grew so rapidly that a larger chapel had to be built to accommodate them. The Sisterhood now numbered one hundred and eighty, though many of them were dispersed to branch houses. The optimum year was 1911 when the Community numbered three hundred and forty one sisters in over forty branches including houses in America and India.

The girls who were taken into the House of Mercy were by no means all hardened prostitutes. It is important to remember that when the Victorians spoke of fallen women they were using a

euphemism which covered a host of circumstances; though the circumstances were never considered. The only matter of importance was the sin, in this case sexual immorality. It was always the woman who was considered fallen, never the man who had seduced her or deceived her. Many of these girls who came to Clewer were the victims of seduction; many were lower servants, the so-called maids-of-all-work, who were lured by male servants, or in some cases, by the young man of the house. In such cases the result was always the same, namely loss of position, which meant poverty unless prostitution was resorted to. Pregnancy almost always meant confinement in the Workhouse Infirmary, but the child's survival deprived the mother of the chance of another position in domestic service so that the streets offered the only alternative. In this way, as the result of a single fall from virtue, a hitherto respectable girl would be dragged into an ever downward spiral.

Respectable servants who resisted would-be seducers frequently found themselves up against another temptation: drink. This was especially the case amongst cooks and upper servants who, being in positions of greater trust, had access to the cellars and opportunity to indulge during the sometimes prolonged absences of the householder. If suspected, or discovered, then the resultant loss of position often ended in prostitution in order to fund what had become an addiction.

Many of the Clewer cases, however, fall into neither category, but present a sad and pathetic story of girls and women whose lives were ruined by the bad example of drunken parents, of child prostitution and abuse, and of physical and mental cruelty. Such girls had no idea of stable homelife until they came to Clewer, and though the regime was of necessity strict, yet many kept in touch and made return visits, remembering it as their first real home.

The Penitents ages varied from the late teens to late thirties. Not all came voluntarily; some were persuaded to enter and had no real will to lead a different life. Many were recommended by a wealthy benefactor, who would help pay for their upkeep. No one was turned away unless they were found to be pregnant or diseased, when alternative accommodation would be found, usually in a hospital. Now and then a Penitent would be so unruly and disruptive that she was transferred to a similar House elsewhere. (From the mid 1850s with the growth of other Sisterhoods there was a growth of Church Penitentiaries, and indeed Clewer also became responsible for a number in other parts of the country.) The average stay was two years, although some stayed considerably less than that time as no one was compelled to remain against their will. A few stayed for a third year and were known as Raised Penitents. The Penitents lived quite separately from the Sisters but were never left unsupervised. If this sounds hard it must be understood that some of these girls were so violent that it was in everyone's interest to keep them under a watchful eye!

Daily work consisted of all the training appertaining to domestic service, and in the vast conventual buildings there was no shortage of housework, laundrywork and kitchen duties. This

great confidence in her power of managing, which was due ... to that ingenuousness which has been described as the temper which trusts others and expects to be trusted. Her sympathy was a vast power." She was at ease with all whom she encountered and she gave of herself to all equally. By the time she resigned as Mother Superior in 1875 the Community had expanded the scope of its work to embrace the care of orphans (boys as well as girls), convalescent patients, sick children, several girls boarding schools and mission work in a number of slum parishes.

A few pages* will not do justice to the Clewer Sisterhood, but the Rev G.D. Nicholas, first Vicar of Clewer St Stephen which had itself grown out of the Clewer Sisters' missionary work, reflected that, "A great and blessed work, not only in England but the Colonies, has been done of their agency."

VALERIE BONHAM
Windsor Local History Publications Group

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Community of St John Baptist, Clewer for source material.

REFERENCE

- * LIVING BY HOPE: The definitive history of the Clewer Community is being prepared by Valerie Bonham and will be published in 1989.

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One Hundred and Fifty Years of Civil Registration

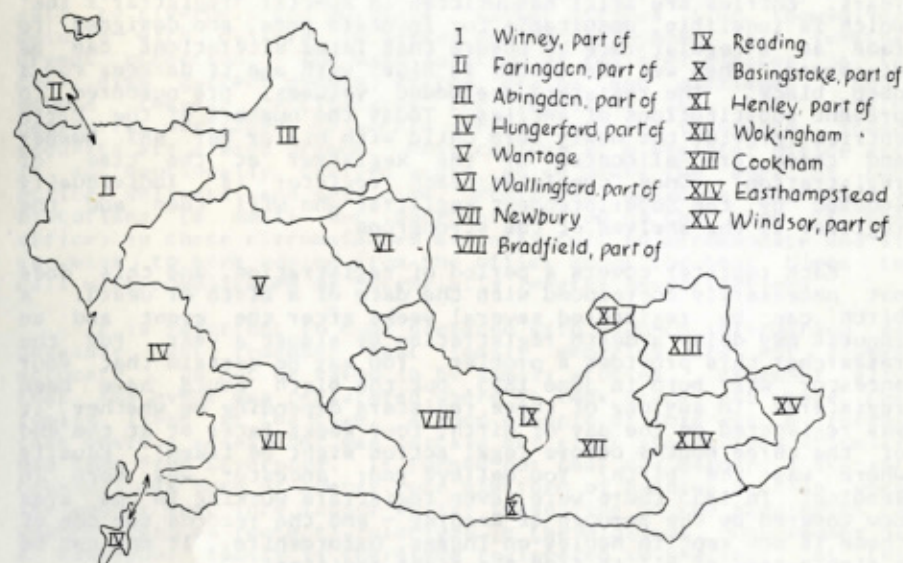
Today some two hundred and sixty million records of births, deaths and marriages in England and Wales are stored in St Catherine's House, London. There are half a million visitors a year to the Public Search Room at St Catherine's House.

What many people do not realise is that these records are not the original entries. All registers of birth, death and marriage are deposited and retained at the local register office for the area where the event took place. These local offices provide a quick, convenient, and a generally cheaper, service than the General Register Office at St Catherine's House. Here local and family historians can generally rely upon being given assistance and guidance, and information about where to go next, from local registration officers, and usually without charge.

The present registration system relies upon two major pieces of legislation; The Marriage Act of 1836 and the Births and Deaths Registration Act of 1836 (1). Both these laws came into effect on 1st July, 1837. After many attempts at reform the system of registering births, deaths and marriages was at last regularised. By this legislation, purely civil marriages (that is without any religious content) were allowed for the first time and the grip of the Church of England on vital aspects of life and the law was loosened to the satisfaction of the Nonconformists, and to a lesser extent, the Catholics. The impact of the change was quickly felt. Dr William Farr wrote to the Registrar General on 6th May, 1839 'The registration of births and deaths proves the connection of families, facilitates the legal distribution of property ... the causes of death ... admit of numerical analysis;' Dr Farr went on to show that examination of causes of death and their relationship to age, locality and gender could help to improve public health and could lead to the discovery of the causes of diseases and their spread.

In 1837 six hundred and nineteen registration districts were established and a Superintendent Registrar appointed to each district. He was to have the functions of collecting completed registers from registrars and clergymen (in the case of Church of England marriages) within that district and of issuing certified copies of the entries from these registers in his custody (in other words, birth, death and marriage certificates). Every three months the Superintendent had to collect copies of all registrations that had taken place in his district and forward them to the Registrar General. These were then bound into volumes and stored centrally. The Superintendents other main responsibilities included conducting civil marriage ceremonies. Legally the bride and groom make their declarations 'before' the Superintendent who does not actually 'marry' the couple as a clergyman does. Finally he was required to attest Notices of Marriage (public declarations of an intention to be married) and to issue the authority for the marriage to go ahead. This applied to all marriages other than those by banns or licence of the Church of England. In Berkshire in 1837 there were fifteen Superintendent Registrar's districts. Nine of these districts

straddled the county boundaries, and some even took in parts of three counties. Almost invariably the new Superintendent Registrar's districts matched the Parish Unions or Poor Law Unions, created as a result of the Poor Law Amendment Act (1834) which established a regular system of workhouses.



The Superintendent Registrar's Districts of Berkshire in the 1850s, taken from Lewis' Topographical Dictionary, 1845, from a map showing Poor Law Unions

Each Superintendent Registrar's district was divided into Registrars' districts (now called sub-districts). These districts were created to make manageable units in which a registrar could travel around easily, bearing in mind the transport difficulties of the early nineteenth century. On the other hand, as the salary of the registrars was to depend on the number of registrations made, the size of the district had to be large enough to provide a suitable income. Registrars were directed to seek out births and deaths that took place within their districts (registration did not become compulsory until 1874). The registrars had to attend all marriages taking place in the district apart from those of members the Church of England, Jews and Quakers; marriages attended by registrars were to take place only in registered buildings. At the end of the nineteenth century it became possible for the Registrar General to allow the minister or priest, or a member of the congregation, of a registered church or chapel to act as the registrar for that building (these are known as Authorised Persons). In 1987 there were five hundred registration districts, 1300 registrars and two-thirds of registration officers were women. Three and half million

certificates are issued by local offices each year, mainly at the time of registration. In Berkshire there are five registration districts (Bracknell, Newbury, Reading & Wokingham, Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead) and eight sub-districts. In many ways registration has changed little in the past one hundred and fifty years. Entries are still handwritten in special 'registrar's ink' which is indelible, unsuitable for fountain pens, and designed to fade at a regular rate to ensure that later alterations can be discerned. When wet the colour is blue; with age it darkens to a deep black. The registers are bound volumes, pre-numbered to prevent substitutions of entries. Today the numbers of the birth entries provide the newly born child with his or her NHS Number and these are allocated by the Registrar at the time of registration. Once completed each register is individually indexed by the Superintendent Registrar who will then add the register to the shelves of the strongroom.

Each register covers a period of registration, and this does not necessarily correspond with the date of a birth or death. A birth can be registered several weeks after the event and an inquest may delay a death registration by almost a year. For the researcher this provides a problem. You may be certain that your ancestor was born in June 1855, but the birth could have been registered in any one of three registers depending on whether it was registered on the day of birth, four weeks later or at the end of the three months before legal action might be taken! Equally where was the birth? You believe your ancestor was born in Reading? In 1855 there were seven registrars working in the area now covered by the Borough of Reading - and the records for one of those is now kept in Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire. It may not be a simple task at all to find the right register!

St Catherine's House does provide a system of indexing, but their indexes are merely a list of names and the registration district. There is no way of checking that the Ann Bradley found in the 1901 index is the Great Aunt Ann you are looking for without paying £5 for a copy of the certificate. Perhaps she is the Anne Bradley found in the 1902 index. However at the local office you can ask a member of the registration staff to check the registers at no cost. You can even make this request by post, sending the necessary £5 for the cost of a copy of a certificate but stipulating that a certificate is sent only if the names of the parents match those of those of your Great Aunt Ann. Whether you make your request for help in person or by post, however, it would help to locate the correct register more quickly if the relevant quarter of the year is given, not merely the year itself.

Marriages pose a different problem. In 1837 each Anglican Church was given a register with five hundred entry spaces. It should have been realised that some churches would fill these registers very slowly and one hundred and fifty years later many registers are still incomplete and remain with the church. They have not been indexed, and no record of these weddings will be found in the local office. St Catherine's House has records of all marriages, but even if you find the record there a request to the local office for a certificate will have little result unless you also know the name of the church where the marriage took place even if the register has been deposited. The difficulty is simply

one of too many registers. St Catherine's House records only indicate the Superintendent Registrar's district which may contain as many as forty or fifty churches.

Generally speaking the smaller offices are more likely to be able to give help and guidance. Larger offices find themselves deluged with callers, in person and by telephone, all seeking urgent attention. The main function of register offices is to deal with current events, births, deaths and marriages. Most people request certificates for immediate use, to obtain passports, mortgages, to settle estates, and get insurance. These requests are always urgent. Most callers at a register office are in an emotionally charged state, which makes the work of the office delicate and sensitive. Prolonged searches for family historians (a small but important portion of the work of the office) in these circumstances are difficult to accommodate and it is wise to seek advice from the office about the best times to call with complicated or potentially lengthy investigations.

It is important to come prepared with as much information as possible, but remember that family memories are not always accurate. Do not be taken in by family stories. Remember also that the event was registered where it took place, not where the family lived at the time. A good example of this was a recent case where a researcher was certain her great grandmother's family had come from Liverpool. It turned out that one member, a distant cousin, was born at number four platform of Reading Station when the mother went into labour whilst travelling on the Paddington to Oxford train en route to relatives in the Midlands. One member of a Liverpool family is therefore registered in Reading! At the other end of life the discovery of a grave will not guarantee success in tracing the death registration. One family historian found the grave of an ancestor in Buckinghamshire, close to High Wycombe, but the death was not found in any of the Buckinghamshire offices. Eventually the entry was found in Reading, because the man had died in Reading Gaol, and had been taken some thirty miles to High Wycombe to be buried.

Many people will know of a sister, brother, cousin or parent who has a birth certificate showing a different date of birth than the day they celebrate as their birthday. In the nineteenth century this was common because of the fee charged for registering more than six weeks after birth. What was easier than to move the date of birth to within six weeks of registration when the parents suddenly remembered their responsibility to register? There was substantial opposition to registration in the early days, and many did not have their children registered, but only baptised. When vaccination was made compulsory more children were kept from the registrar to avoid this dangerous process being carried out (2). The occasional prosecutions for refusing to register seemed to have little effect in the face of uninformed public opinion. Even today some people fall through the net and do not get registered until many years after birth.

Much social history emerges from an examination of the registers. Many early birth registers had no first names entered, parents having delayed giving names until baptism. Illiteracy rates were high, and in rural areas especially, whole pages of

entries show not one informant at a registration being able to sign their own name. No wonder surnames change spellings from generation to generation or even between children of the same parents. Registrars often had to guess at the name given by the person registering a birth or death.

Death registers in the nineteenth century reveal the high rates of infant mortality, as well as successions of entries where no one had reached the age of maturity. The cause of death was often a disease which no longer holds any threat to young life. The registers mark the progress of medical knowledge and social conditions as the application of new ideas triumphed over old evils, such as cholera, typhoid, smallpox and diphtheria. Working life was dangerous too. Railway workers were buried alive in the trenches they had dug, and there were frequently accidents resulting from badly stacked carts, or from fires and steam engines. Violence was not uncommon. In the early years coroners and their juries were not restrained from naming murderers or blaming individuals for the deaths of others well before any court of law had made a decision of guilt or innocence. The language was picturesque. 'Visitation of God' was a common way of describing the cause of a death which could not be readily explained. 'Died at the hands of the executioner' accurately described the death sentence being carried out.

Much can be discovered through the use of local register offices, but of course the registers are not public records, although there exists a statutory right to examine the indexes, these provide very little information on their own. Local Registration Officers cannot be compelled to show you any entry in the registers, but will issue a certified copy of any specific entry. Fees are charged for certificates, and for searches of the indexes if they are general, that is, not for a particular entry the details of which are already known. Finally, all staffing depends on the volume of accountable business conducted each year. Vague searches are not welcomed because much energy can be expended with 'no sale' at the end of it. The researcher with a well prepared approach who checks on convenient times to call, and who can work without interrupting the busy routine of the office is always welcomed.

STEPHEN MIDDLETON
Easthampstead Park Historical Association

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THE REGISTRAR GENERAL'S OFFICIAL LIST (PART 1); The General Register Office £8.00. It lists all the addresses of all the register offices throughout the country, the names of the registration officers, the names of the registration districts now abolished and where their records were transferred.

Information about the operation of the Registration Service can be obtained from The General Register Office, St Catherine's House, 10 Kingsway, London WC2B 6JP.

Local register offices in Berkshire are to be found at Bracknell, Maidenhead, Newbury, Reading, Slough, Windsor and Wokingham.

1837. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition
1	1 st July 1837.	William White Mary Baskford	27 full Age	Bachelor Spinster

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Cer

This Marriage was solemnized between us, William White + Mary Baskford

+ This declaration was read by Mary Baskford in the 13th Day

Examples from Berkshire Registers

Above: an example of an authorised alteration

Below: such information as to the cause of death would not be given today

134	1876 December 4 th Hungerford Berk.	Joseph Drewett	Male	38	Inspector of Berk's Police	Wilfully Murdered
135	1876 December 4 th Hungerford Berk.	Thomas Shorler	Male	24	Constable of Berk's Police	Wilfully Murdered

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