

number 12 / 1995

# BERKSHIRE OLD & NEW





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# Berkshire old & new

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The 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.

### **President**

Professor Alan Rogers, MA, PhD, Cert. Ed.,  
FR Hist Soc, FSA, PRSA.

### **Chairman**

Margaret Taylor.

*Berkshire old & new* is published by the Berkshire Local History Association.

John Gurnett prepared most of the copy for this volume. It was completed by Joan Dils, Brian Boulter, Judith Hunter and Gillian Clark.

The editor of the next volume is Martin Parsons, Old Cottage Southend Road, Southend, Bradfield. He would be pleased if authors of articles and reports for the journal would contact the Editor for guidance as to length and presentation. Copies of, or notes about, books or journals for inclusion in the bibliographical section should be sent to the Editor. Note of such publications will also be included in the Association's Newsletter.

Front cover: Reading Town Football Club, provided by the Museum of English Rural Life.

Back cover: Reading Town Football Club, provided by Reading Town Football Club.

## Ephemera and the local historian

*As the stone which has been kicked by generations of clowns may come by curious little links of effect under the eyes of a scholar, through whose labours it may at last fix the date of invasions and unlock religions, so a bit of ink and paper which has long been an innocent wrapping or stop-gap may at last be laid open under the one pair of eyes which have knowledge enough to turn it into the opening of a catastrophe.<sup>1</sup>*

Not all such scraps of paper lead to the dire consequences which George Eliot required for her plot, but they may nevertheless have a surprising value for the percipient finder. The study of ephemera has come to be an accepted element in our reconstruction and interpretation of the past. The founding of the Ephemera Society in Britain in 1975 gave impetus and respectability to the collecting of material of apparent unimportance which throws light on the activities, customs, tastes, and values of earlier societies.

The definition of ephemera is not easy; a paperback book purchased at a Great Western Railway station bookstall and discarded at the end of the journey, a child's first artistic effort, the attractive wrapping around a birthday gift – all have their value for a time. Maurice Rickards, with some hesitation, offers his own version:

the best we can manage is a generalised description of its qualities: on the whole it is made of paper, generally printed, but sometimes handwritten; generally two-dimensional (though it may be a package or a pill-box); generally transient (though it may also be a marriage certificate or a royal proclamation); generally an incidental, unself-conscious fragment, like a school attendance card (though it may also be a multi-coloured prize certificate).<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately precision is not vital and a subjective element both assists and enhances.

A further stipulation should perhaps be made: it must be the original item. This raises a query: if we are primarily concerned with ephemera as providing evidence or information, would a good copy be adequate? After all, most historical and literary evidence is now reproduced with great accuracy



by today's machines – including facsimiles of medieval manuscripts or high quality art works. But although we can recognise the hand of Charles Dickens or Elizabeth I in a reproduced signature it does not catch the imagination or relate to the time and the personality as the original would. That may also speak through the texture and conformation of the paper, its blots and creases and the laundry list on the back.

Collecting ephemera, either specialised or general, has its own attraction. As Rickards describes it: 'to most collectors the essential is the "history trail" effect, the piecing together, through actual examples, of an evolutionary process – the changing face of fashion, or the changing restaurant menu'.<sup>3</sup> He points out that serial items, such as cigarette cards, were produced specially for collecting, while 'true' ephemera survive by accident, and their value is in their unwitting role as evidence.

Apart from collecting, ephemera may be useful in unexpected ways, or may provide a lead to interesting new projects, such as research into the history of Bellman's Verses following the discovery of a broadsheet. An example of ephemera leading to a specialised study is that of Peter Jones, whose collection has led him to trace the evolution of the picture postcard.<sup>4</sup>

Many specialist collections like his, or the Robert Opie packaging collection at Gloucester, have been built up by individuals; others are the result of the preservation of company records – less ordered, more casual than their official archives, not consciously preserved, but providing a huge primary source of historical material. Holdings at Reading University include the archives of Huntley and Palmers, the records of Ransomes – the agricultural engineers of Ipswich – and two collections from nineteenth century jobbing printers.

Here can be found not only the history of the firm, but also correspondence about local activities, evidence of the company's social concerns, with details of the cricket club, outings for pensioners, and the Christmas handouts. Perhaps in such papers will be found material concerning grants of land for local use – football field, park, or the siting of a public bench, with the negotiations involved.

Education often appears in such records, since some nineteenth century employers were active in setting up night schools and lectures for their workers, as were Ransomes. The history of the local evening institute or village reading room may well be found in printers' handbills of public meetings, notes of resignation from disgruntled committee members, and invitations to the concert organised to raise funds.

Educational ephemera include teaching aids – alphabet sheets, number games, object lessons; prospectuses for private schools, illustrated with pictures of imposing buildings in airy surroundings, where the teaching might resemble that at Mr. Thornton's Establishment at Cheshunt, Herts., for Thirty Young Gentlemen. He offers language instruction 'taught with the strictest attention to Orthography, Reading, Parsing, Quantity, and

Composition'. The fees are 'thirty guineas, exclusive of the Classics and Mathematics' – were they more expensive to teach? – with 'Two guineas, Washing,' per annum.<sup>5</sup>

The social historian will also appreciate the hospital letter to recommend the bearer as an in-patient, as 'a proper object of the charity', or the ticket authorising a handout of fourpence to the needy traveller named on it – a visual reminder of the details of poverty.

Funeralia, especially of Victorian times, also have their interest, both in pictorial appeal and conventions of mourning, as well as other aspects: a bill for £2 12s 6d for providing a stout elm coffin, handles and plate, and including attendance and ground fees at Nunhead Cemetery, contrasted with a card advertising a meeting to pay the funeral expenses of Michael Collins, 1852, 'Music provided'.<sup>6</sup>

Ephemera of crime have both general and local value; they include lists of provisions for the local gaol, bills offering rewards for apprehending thieves, warrants for arrest, and a payment to the bellman 'for calling a thief'.

Some enterprising merchants enlivened their stationery with pictures of their business premises, often exaggerated to convey the superiority and success of their establishments. These illustrations will be of special interest to local historians tracing town developments or family firms. They also give a nostalgic glimpse of ironmongers and general stores, such as that of Spiers and Son of Oxford, who billed 'Rev. Gordon at Ch. Ch. for 50 envelopes, Shaving and hand washing, pair of grey gloves, hard water soap'. They also supplied games and whips, china and glass, and papier maché articles.<sup>7</sup>

Two local examples could be worth further investigation: an invitation to visit the gardens at Whiteknights, Reading, undated, and a bill showing charges for transport of goods on the Kennet and Avon Canal.

Some ephemera will be of particular interest to the family historian: rewards of merit and named certificates; a list of men at Tipton employed in 1887 by the Inspector of Nuisances, with hours worked and rates paid, for collecting night soil and a display bill listing Hampshire men apprehended in the 1830 Riots. Coach time-tables and rail advertisements may also help to explain some family mobility and marriages outside the parish.

Some of these items may well be found in county record offices. Chance obviously plays a part here: a handwritten receipt on a torn piece of paper for a postillion's wages in 1812, showed a very good hand for a lad from a family of casual labourers; this might have been in a collection of ephemera but was in fact lying in the estate accounts in the local record office. Billheads from a building firm are lodged with the county record office, but verses written about the owner's shipwreck off the Halifax coast in 1873 appeared in a sale catalogue of American ephemera.

5, 6, 7

Items in the Rickards Collection, at the Centre for Ephemera Studies, Department of Typography & Graphic Communication, The University of Reading, Earley Gate, Whiteknights.



# Fire-Arms.

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**W**HEREAS many Persons have of late made a Practice of discharging loaded Muskets in the Vicinity of the Town, and several of the Inhabitants have nearly escaped being Shot in their own Houses by Balls entering the same—To prevent such Practices in Future, the Magistrates of the Town are determined to punish with the utmost Severity, any Person who shall hereafter discharge any Musket or other Fire Arms, **EITHER LOADED WITH BALL OR NOT**, in the Vicinity of the Town, or adjoining any public Road or Passage leading to the same, on any Pretence whatsoever.

NEWCASTLE, 9th April, 1804.

M. Angus & Son, Printers.



Such a variety of subjects to be found among ephemera is brought together in the teaching and reference collection of Maurice Rickards, now housed at the Centre for Ephemera Studies at Reading University. Wide-ranging in time and category, items have been selected for their intrinsic interest and significance, a record of some unusual activity or incident, and examples of high quality colour printing and graphic design.

Aesthetic pleasure may be gained from the various scraps or die-cuts used in albums, including flowers, children, steam trains, and mottoes. Exquisite examples of lace paper, decorative cigar labels and tea wrappers in brilliant colours showing the various stages of cultivation, early examples of embossing – all are evidence of the skill and craftsmanship that went into minor items of everyday life, designed for transient use only, but produced, nevertheless, to a high standard. They can be invaluable for a study of changing popular taste, and of the development of chromolithography and the history of graphic design.

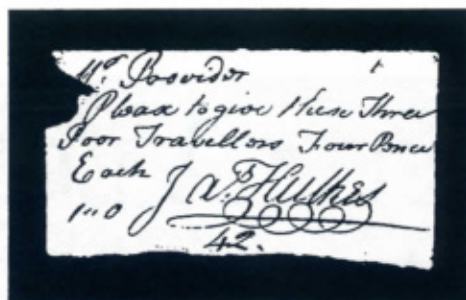
The Centre for Ephemera Studies was inaugurated in 1993 by Lord Briggs, within the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication, under the direction of Professor Michael Twyman. The role of the Centre, to quote its Director, 'is not primarily curatorial. Its functions include the provision of research tools to facilitate the study of ephemera; the organisation of short courses and summer schools; and the encouragement of others, inside and outside the University, to appreciate the significance and uses of ephemera. It also aims to undertake research of its own'.<sup>9</sup> The placing of the Centre in a typography department is obviously significant and extends its value as a reference source for students of typography and of ephemera. Work is on hand for listing and cross-referencing the collection, preparing for eventual cataloguing. Of major importance here is the *Encyclopedia of Ephemera* compiled by Maurice Rickards now being prepared for publication.

As with most projects, funding is a major concern; it is hoped to appoint a full-time researcher, and to instal a computerised catalogue with visual display. As the Director points out: 'Printed ephemera has relevance to virtually every interest and discipline; the Centre provides a link not only with other Departments in the University but with centres of learning throughout the world'.<sup>10</sup> As a research collection, it is not open to the general public; anybody with a special interest is asked to write to the Director, stating the nature of their inquiry.

The local historian's use of ephemera will to a great extent depend on serendipity – one cannot kick every stone in one's way. Perhaps the best approach is an awareness, an eye for the overlooked, and an imaginative appreciation of the significance of an insignificant scrap of paper.

*The illustrations and most of the examples in this article are taken from the Rickards collection. Acknowledgements are due to the Centre for Ephemera Studies for their use.*

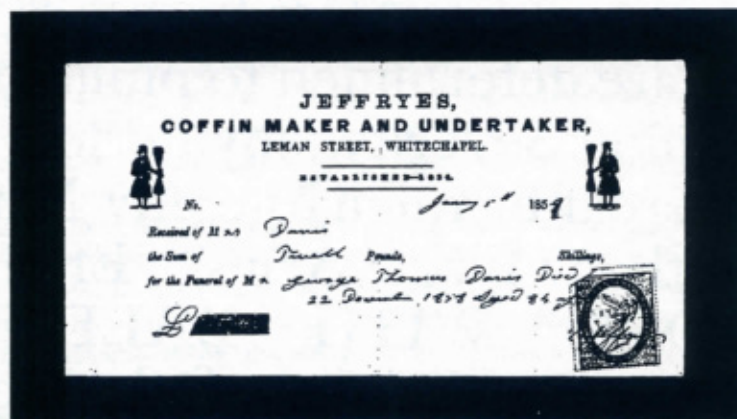




Handwritten charity item c. 1790



Picture of business premises on a bill head



Bill for a funeral 1858



Decorated bill head

# The rise and fall of a Tudor family: Essex of Berkshire

In 1621 Mary Essex, a widow, petitioned for relief to the Lord Chief Justice of Common Pleas.<sup>1</sup> Destitute except for £1,700 due to her by Sir Edward Greville of Warwickshire, she was left with eight children, 'a poor gentlewoman unable to pay the prosecution of her suit'. A year later her son claimed he had 'neither meat, drink nor decent clothing and begged a loan of money that he may get out of town'. Greville (whose own debts were enormous) had sent him a cloak and 40 shillings, but said that the debt was pretended and that his mother could bring no proof.<sup>2</sup> A gentle family fallen on hard times was a common enough occurrence, but the case is interesting to Berkshire historians. The family's wealth and status had marked it as one of the leading county gentry at the time of Henry VIII, and its decline in the early seventeenth century was dramatic. When, in 1609, the Essex family debts stood at £18,000, a Parliamentary Act was passed to sell its lands in order to pay its creditors. This story illustrates very well that phenomenon of our county's history: the turnover of its gentry, or, as Thomas Fuller expressed it: 'I do heartily desire that the Berkshire gentry may be better settled in their saddles, so that the sweet places in this county may not be subject to so many mutations'.<sup>3</sup>

It should perhaps be stressed that the Essex family was not connected to any of the Earls of Essex: Thomas Cromwell, Robert Devereux etc. It was their family name, and they did in fact come from Essex, where they claimed to trace their ancestry to the Saxons.<sup>4</sup> In the time of Edward IV, William Essex [1] held the post of Under Treasurer of the Exchequer, and the family had substantial lands in London. Both his only son Thomas [2] and grandson William [3] made extremely good marriages which brought much property into the family. Thomas married an heiress to lands in the Midlands, and William married Elizabeth Rogers, heiress to extensive lands mostly in Berkshire but also in Staffordshire and Sussex.<sup>5</sup> With wealth and status handed 'on a plate' as it were, the family enjoyed a half-century of distinction as one of the most important of the Berkshire gentry.

<sup>1</sup> See Genealogy of the Essex family page 10. Mary was the widow of Robert, a younger son of Thomas Essex, [5] on the genealogy. Similar references given throughout the text.

<sup>2</sup> *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1619-23*, p. 266.

<sup>3</sup> T. Fuller, *The Worthies of Berkshire* (1660), p.112.

<sup>4</sup> P. Morant, *The History and Antiquities of Essex* (1768), vol.2, p.611.

<sup>5</sup> S. T. Bindoff (ed.), *The House of Commons 1508-1558* (1982), vol.2, pp.106-7; this is the principal source for the biographical details of Sir William Essex [3]. Bindoff's text is based mainly on *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*.



### Rise to prominence in Berkshire

Sir William Essex[3] established the family base in Lambourn, where his wife's family, the Rogers, had accumulated a substantial estate in the fifteenth century. Marriages between his two sisters and well-established medieval gentry families – Isbury and Hulcott – strengthened the family's integration into county society.<sup>6</sup> Lambourn remained the principal seat of the family until its lands were sold in the early seventeenth century. St. Michael's Church contains the tomb of Sir Thomas Essex[4] and his wife Margaret, but there are no more memorials to other family members here.

As one of the leading Berkshire gentry, Sir William served the county in various capacities: as JP, Sheriff, and MP in 1529 and 1542. He also had good connections at the court of Henry VIII whom he had served in the French campaigns (being knighted at Tournai) and was present at the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520.<sup>7</sup> His only son Thomas married the daughter of Lord Sandys, and his only daughter, Winifred, married into the Edgecombe family, one of the leading gentry of Cornwall and Devon.

In 1531 Essex witnessed the will of his neighbour, Sir Edward Darrell of Littlecote, and subsequently obtained the wardship of Darrell's grandson, together with custody of the family's manors. A few years later, both families were united through the marriage of an Essex granddaughter, Elizabeth, to Darrell's grandson. This was a very useful family with which to be linked. Edward Darrell was uncle to Jane Seymour and to her brother Edward, later Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector to the young Edward VI.<sup>8</sup>

### In the tower

During the upheaval of the Reformation, Sir William Essex needed connections at the highest level. He had not openly opposed the religious changes of the early 1530s but both the King and Cromwell knew he did not support them either. In 1536, a wave of widespread rebellions – the 'Pilgrimage of Grace' – broke out in the north of England. Interested about the rebels' demands, Sir William had a copy of them made, but unfortunately his clerk made a further copy and circulated it amongst a group of disaffected priests in Reading. Cromwell may well have feared that this action had the potential to set off a new wave of rebellions. Along with Sir George Throckmorton (who was also under suspicion), Essex was in the Tower by December 1536, and although Cromwell attempted to collect all possible evidence of their treasonable behaviour, both were freed by late January 1537. Whether this was because there was no real evidence of his disloyalty, or whether he

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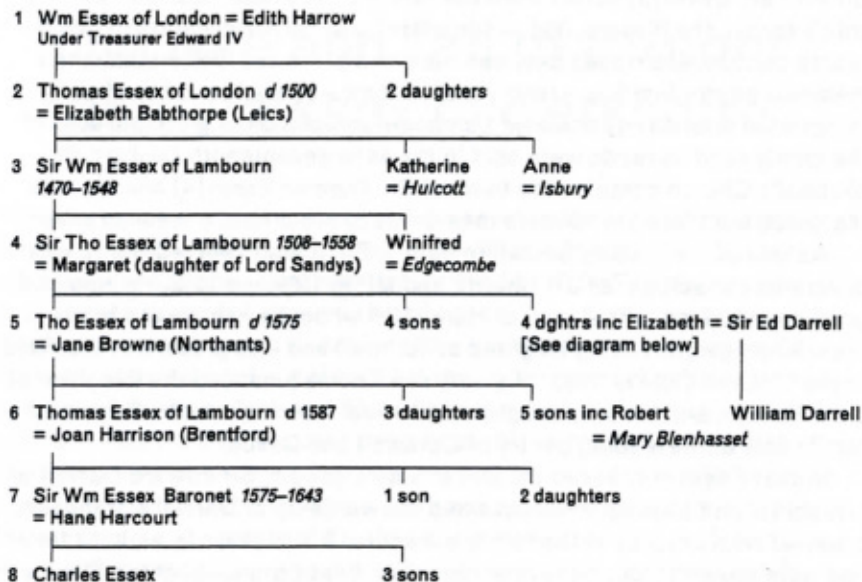
T. Rylands, *The Four Visitations of Berkshire* (1907), pp.124–5.

7

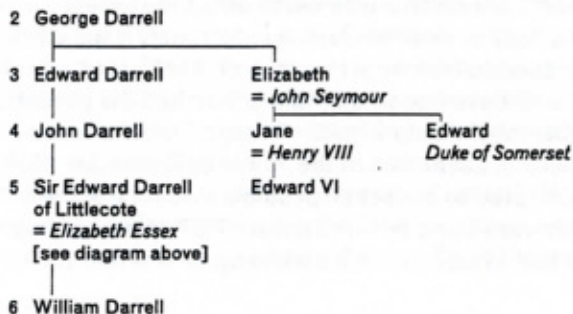
Bindoff, *The House of Commons 1508–1558*, p.106.

8

The connection between the Essex, Darrell and Seymour families is shown on the genealogy.



*Genealogy of the Essex family c1500-c1600*



*The line of the Essex and Darrell families*



made use of his friends in high places is uncertain, but he had to work hard to prove his continuing loyalty to the King.

This episode did not mark the end of Sir William's career, but neither did it further it. In particular, he was not very well placed to benefit from the dissolution of the monasteries – at least not in the late 1530s when there were rich pickings to be obtained for those with the right connections. He was granted ex-monastic lands in 1543 (Ashbury and Brightwalton), but as he had sold four of his wife's manors to the King the year before, his overall gain was not as great as he might have wished.

### **A good age and a great-grandfather**

Sir William Essex died in 1548, aged 78. Most of his inheritance went to his son, Thomas, but there were generous provisions for his grandchildren: each grandson was set up with one or two manors, which Sir William had purchased on their behalf, and the granddaughters received cash legacies. A set of gilt goblets was reserved for his great-grandson, William Darrell. That he had acquired substantial personal wealth is clear from his jewellery: 'my best crosse with a poynted diamondes in yt ... my greatest crosse with a flat diamonde and three rubyes in yt ... three chaynes of fine gold'...were all bequeathed to family members.<sup>9</sup> Provision was made for continued support of 'five almesmen within our almeshouse at Lambourn' (this was Rogers' almshouses, later known as the Place of Hardrett's). Not forgotten either was his relative-by-marriage Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector to Edward VI. Sir William bequeathed him two manors in Wiltshire, almost as an afterthought, 'anything before mencioned to the contrary notwithstanding'. This bequest occurs right at the end of the will, contradicting a previous bequest – earlier on in the text – that these manors should go to a grandson.

### **The beginning of decline**

On the face of it, Sir William had ensured his family a solid basis for their future. The rich inheritance of his wife and mother still amounted to substantial estates, and the local position was strengthened by a grant of ex-Duchy of Lancaster manors of Uplambourn and Plukenets in Lambourn.<sup>10</sup> His grandsons had been provided with 'starter' estates and the granddaughters married into solid Berkshire gentry families – Hyde, Fettiplace, Pusey and Darrell. The stage seemed set for a continuation of earlier progress up the social ladder.

Yet this did not happen. In the later sixteenth century, the Essex family's position among the leading county gentry was looking less assured. Thomas[6] was Sheriff of Berkshire in 1573, but this was an isolated example of county service. No further marriage links were made with other local gentry families. Most seriously, although the Berkshire estates remained intact, lands further afield were sold or mortgaged.<sup>11</sup>

Why was this so, when their wealth and connections seemed to assure them of a lasting prestige? In fact, there was probably no single reason. They were not recusants, although possibly pro-Catholic.<sup>12</sup> They did not build extravagantly; their manor house in Lambourn was described as 'ancient' in 1609.<sup>13</sup> What is apparent, however, is that costly litigation combined with what might be called a 'lack of business sense' did play a part in their decline and the disaster of an under-age heir sealed their final downfall.

Throughout its stay in Berkshire, the family was rarely free from one dispute or another. Its members were involved in a long series of cases – over 20 in total – in the Courts of Chancery, Requests and Star Chamber.<sup>14</sup> Petty arguments escalated into inter-family feuds, sometimes accompanied by actual violence. It is the records of the court cases which resulted that make the family 'come to life'. For example, there was an argument over fishing rights on the Berkshire-Wiltshire border at Sevenhampton.<sup>15</sup> Thomas Essex[4] complained that John Warneford, a neighbouring landowner, 'riotously & with greate force strength & violence stroke & cast hym downe to the ground & then & there did not only pulle and drawe hym with greate cruelltye by the space of one quarter of a myle but also dyd stryke beate & hurte hym'. In answer, Warneford said that Thomas Essex had no right to fish, had threatened him and 'put him in jeopardy of his life or ... dryven him to som other inconvenience'.

Arguments with the neighbours appear to have been the normal state of affairs as far as the Berkshire and Wiltshire gentry were concerned. The above dispute sounds petty, but others were much more serious. The long running conflict with William Darrell of Littlecote over the manor of Axford was extremely bitter, occasionally violent, and lasted over 20 years.<sup>16</sup> Darrell accused his opponents of inciting his tenants to riot, and the Essex family accused him of murder. Long-running litigation must have been a severe drain on the resources of both families; it is not surprising that both were selling or mortgaging land to pay for it.<sup>17</sup>

## 11

A series of licences to alienate appears in the *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, eg. 1142/649, 1576: Badbury in Wiltshire.

## 12

Some families into which the family married were known to be Catholics, eg. Hyde and Blenhasset.

## 13

Lambourn Place Deeds, Berkshire Record Office, D/EX 51.

## 14

References obtained by using published indexes, eg. List and Index Society vols. XXI (Requests), XIII (Star Chamber), VII (Chancery C3 Series).

## 15

Wiltshire Record Society Publication No.48 (1993), pp.20–9, based on PRO STAC 2/14/148.

## 16

*Victoria County History of Wiltshire*, vol.XII, pp.19–20. William Darrell was known as 'Wild' Darrell.

## 17

Essex mortgages noted above; Darrell sold most of his lands, including Littlecote itself – traditionally said to have been as a bribe to Chief Justice Popham to escape prosecution for murder.



A second factor, poor estate management can be suggested as contributing to their decline, or at least not reversing it. Cautious management of their lands could have helped to refill the family coffers. There were several courses of action available to Tudor landowners: entry fines and rents could be raised, leases shortened, woodland felled, lands enclosed. Younger sons could be given demesne lands to farm, and profits were good in the inflationary times of the later sixteenth century. Yet with rare exceptions – one son did farm part of the demesne – the Essex family did not demonstrate a very commercial attitude to their lands. They leased out their demesnes and maintained long leases – sometimes 80 years – on most of their estates.<sup>18</sup> Rents and entry fines remained low, providing the ideal circumstances for the tenants, rather than the landowner, to make the profits.

By the late sixteenth century the Essex estates had been much reduced. The more distant lands were sold, while the Berkshire estates were mortgaged. Then in 1587 a double disaster struck: Thomas Essex [6] died, leaving his eldest son William [7] as an under-age heir. Provision had been made for his wardship to go to his uncle and stepfather, but in the event the wardship went to Sir John Fortescue. Worse was to come: in 1593, Sir Walter Harcourt, whose family was clearly in some financial trouble, induced the young William to marry his daughter Jane. When the Queen came to hear about this, she ordered Harcourt to be sent to the Tower until he should pay compensation.<sup>19</sup> Clearly, Harcourt thought that the young Essex was the heir to substantial estates, or he would not have arranged the marriage. What he may not have known was that the young William was bound, under the terms of his father's will, to pay 'diverse and sundry great legacies', and it was these 'great legacies' which were recorded as one of the principal reasons for the family's final bankruptcy.<sup>20</sup>

### **Sir William Essex [7]: Baronet and bankrupt**

The Harcourt-Essex marriage marked the beginning of the final phase in the family's history, although in a rather ambiguous way. It brought a return to some status, because the Harcourts were very well connected, despite being impoverished.<sup>21</sup> At the same time it brought 'many needy kindred and hangers-on' whom the Essex family could well have done without.<sup>22</sup> The early years of the seventeenth century were critical; while struggling to increase its prestige and status, the family was falling ever more heavily into debt. By the end of 1605, a dispute in the Court of Wards concerning its debts had been under way for three years: 'Mr. Essex being outlawed after judgement,

18

Lambourn Place Deeds, Berkshire Record Office, D/EX 51; Craven papers, BRO D/EC T24.

19

P. M. Hasler (ed.), *The House of Commons 1558–1603*, vol.2, p.19.

20

BRO D/EX 51.

21

Hasler, *The House of Commons 1558–1603*, vol.2, p.250.

22

Hasler, *The House of Commons 1558–1603*, vol.2, p.89. Essex was returned as MP for Arundel (1597) and Stafford (1601).

against whom a proclamation of rebellion is gone forth of Star Chamber, who also stand upon warrant of his good behaviour and oweth 20,000 marks [over £13,000] to several men and will pay nothing'.<sup>23</sup>

In 1609, the point of no return seems to have been reached. A Parliamentary Act was passed forcing the sale of land to pay creditors and appointing a number of trustees to oversee the land sales.<sup>24</sup> The trustees, who included two relatives of the Essex family, were to reserve enough land for the family's immediate needs. The more distant lands had clearly been lost by this stage: all that was left were the Manors of Ashbury, Lambourn and Beckett in Shrivenham. Proceeds from the sale of Lambourn and Ashbury covered the debts, Beckett was reserved for the immediate use of the family, and it was here that they lived during the early years of the seventeenth century.

The family was never free from debt, and its final decline came in the Civil War.<sup>25</sup> Charles [8], the only surviving son of Sir William Essex, became an officer in a Parliamentary regiment under his patron, the Earl of Essex. 'He engaged himself against the King without any malice or rebellion in his heart...he had the command of a regiment of foot, esteemed the best and most expert officer of the army'.<sup>26</sup> Charles did not get the chance to prove himself in war; he was killed by a musket shot at the beginning of the battle of Edgehill.

Thomas Fuller thought the Essex family decline was due to its extravagance: 'there was lately a Baronet of this family, with the revenues of a baron, but riches endure not forever, if providence be not as well used in preserving as attaining them'. Was this a fair comment? Partly perhaps, but misfortune played its part too. The perils of an under-age heir were vividly demonstrated for young William Essex [7] whose marriage linked the family with the impoverished Harcourts. It was unfortunate also that the family was so closely linked with one of the most notorious and litigious characters in the region's history, 'Wild' Darrell of Littlecote. However, these difficulties could have been overcome had the Essex family paid more attention to its estates. To play the 'benevolent landlord' was surely courting disaster.

### Aftermath

Finally, what happened to the Essex estates – did they pass intact to another gentry family? Although Sir William Craven acquired the Lordship of the Manor of Lambourn in 1626, in fact there was very little land attached to it.<sup>27</sup> Most of the land had been sold off in small parcels. These land sales were either to speculators, who sold on again quickly, or to the very tenants who had benefitted from the low rents and long leases. With the dramatic break-up of the Essex estates they were able to buy land and establish their own claims to gentility.

23

*Salisbury (Cecil) Manuscripts, Addenda*, vol.24 (1605–68) (Historical Manuscript Commission 9), p.13.

24

BRO D/EX 51 and D/EC/T 24.

25

Sir William Essex wrote to the Duke of Buckingham in 1627, requesting to be released

from a debtors prison in order to oversee the fortifications of Alderney, to which he had been appointed Governor by Queen Elizabeth; *CSP Domestic*, 1625–9, p.239.

26

Notes on Old Berkshire Families, Bodleian Library, MS Top Berks d5.

27

BRO D/EC T24.



## Petty criminals, publicans and sinners

Criminal jurisdiction at local level has been an interest of central government since the fourteenth century. The office of justice of the peace dates from this time (Wallingford, for example, had *custodes pacis* from at least 1308). Justices were appointed at county and borough level – the two jurisdictions were separate, and remained so until 1971, although county and borough justices may have had concurrent jurisdiction in some boroughs.

Initially, justices' duties amounted to dealing with criminal offences tried before a jury at quarter sessions. As those duties grew, so justices found it convenient to spend time in petty (or 'petit') session, between quarter sessions. These were usually held to cover administrative matters, but also to try lesser offences: crimes which did not warrant the full attention of quarter sessions, but for which no appropriate lesser court had been provided by the law.

This informal system, and its potential, were soon recognised. From the sixteenth century onwards, a number of specific offences was created by statute which the justices had the power to try in a summary fashion (i.e. without a jury), if they felt it was proper. This, together with the growth of 'civil' offences (particularly after the Poor Law Act 1601), and the increasing practice of hearing preliminary enquiries into criminal cases to save time at trial, established petty sessions as meetings of the local justices, hearing local matters. Accordingly, county quarter sessions divided the county into petty sessional divisions. The boroughs, if they had been granted a separate commission of the peace, retained their separate jurisdiction. The move to formality increased: petty sessions became regular meetings, held at regular venues, to conduct the more routine work justices were required to do.

The Petty Sessions Act 1849 (PSA 1849) was an attempt to bring statutory control to these practices. By it, the two tenets of a regular procedure for the sessions, and a regular courthouse, were enacted. However, it was probably as much the Prosecution Expenses (Amendment) Act 1851, which provided for salaried clerks for the divisions, as the PSA 1849, which

accounted for the first series of court records, the minute books, commencing about this time for a number of the Berkshire divisions.<sup>1</sup>

The new uniformity of petty sessions allowed for a greater devolution of quarter sessions powers – mostly jurisdiction over certain criminal offences, but also over the function of licensing. It was now possible to use the 'new' creation of petty sessions as a catch-all, a mini-quarter sessions, dealing with lesser judicial and quasi-judicial affairs.

The surviving court records from this period may carry different titles: petty sessions, special sessions, police courts, or even the more legally correct name of courts of summary jurisdiction. The latter predominates after the Summary Jurisdiction Act 1879, which introduced the requirement of the court to keep a register of in-session business. In the first half of the twentieth century, juvenile and domestic courts were created by statute. Only after the Justices of the Peace Act 1949 (JPA 1949) did petty sessions become known as magistrates' courts.

After the initial burst of legislative activity, which ended with the Summary Jurisdiction Act 1879, the courts were left, once again, to evolve. Now they were officially constituted, petty sessions became a very attractive means of law enforcement. They met often, and they were cheap. This move of volume towards the lower court has very much been the trend throughout the twentieth century. Some offences, including theft and fraud, previously only tried before an expensive jury, have been increasingly tried summarily, and new bodies of offences were created, notably those for road traffic, public order and obscenity, which have utilised summary jurisdiction.

But while petty sessions were being pulled into contemporary social concerns, their administrative structure still lay largely in the historic system of quarter sessions, a more rigid body, which seemed at odds with the fluidity of the lower court. However after the report of a Royal Commission, the JPA 1949 was passed, which significantly changed the way that the (now called) magistrates' courts operated.

Today, magistrates still have jurisdiction over petty crime, over civil offences such as non-payment of maintenance for children, and over licensing (now in practice confined to liquor and gaming licences). For the purposes of this article, the reforms introduced by the JPA 1949 will serve as a cut-off point in our discussion of the development of the magistracy, though occasional reference will be made to its later history in Berkshire.



### **Clerks and administration**

Historically, justices had a clerk to manage their affairs, and this clerk would serve one justice alone. Over the years, with the growth in population and workload, the magistracy grew, and the role of the justice's clerk changed.

The clerk is a judicial and administrative figure combined, employed to advise the justices with regard to the law, and also to see that legal decisions are recorded. As petty sessions themselves became a target of the legislators, so too did their servants. Before the Justices' Clerks Act 1877, there were no statutory guidelines on a clerk's necessary qualifications. That act introduced two separate criteria: to become a clerk to the justices, it was necessary either to be a lawyer, or to have been an assistant clerk. This was very much in keeping with the joint specialisation of the position in law and administration, and allowed the post to be approached from either direction. However, some legal knowledge has always been anticipated in a holder of the post, and the rise of professionalism in the twentieth century, together with the continuation of (mostly) lay justices, led to the eventual abolition of qualification by apprenticeship in the JPA 1949; henceforth, only a barrister or a solicitor of five years' standing could become a clerk.

In practice, many clerks in Berkshire were local solicitors, who worked part-time for the justices. The most obvious example of this is a Wantage firm of solicitors, Fullalove, who recently deposited some of their records in the Berkshire Record Office: they included Ilsley and Wantage court registers. Alternatively, a clerk might work part-time for one division, but hold more than one such post. Only in the busiest places was one clerkship a full-time occupation. A multi-clerkship existed, for example, in the divisions of Windsor County and the Forest (and latterly also Reading County), for the period 1930s–1960s, and explains why there are entries for more than one division in some of the minute books.

The matter of who guards the clerks has varied too. Before the advent of salaried clerks, in 1851 the justices' clerks were a private operation, each clerk very much allied to his own justice(s). After the creation of the petty sessional bench in 1849, the Prosecution Expenses (Amendment) Act 1851 empowered the justices to appoint a clerk. This tied the clerk to the magistracy, as his employers, and therefore to quarter sessions and the Clerks of the Peace, as providers of 'his' salary.

With the JPA 1949, this situation changed. Part of the act set up magistrates' courts' committees, one for each county or county borough, which were to act as co-ordinators and administrators of petty sessions for their

area.<sup>2</sup> Clerks were now under the control of the committee, comprising justices for the area, rather than their divisional justices under quarter sessions. The committee also brought forth a new post – clerk to the committee. Though originally part paid for by local authorities, the committees were not run by them, but instead were under the direction of the Home Office. This division meant that they survived after the abolition of quarter sessions by the Courts Act 1971. This local autonomy remains. The county is still in divisions, but is not part of a greater regional whole, or circuit. The committees even changed boundaries upon local government re-organisation in 1974, Reading borough and Slough division now coming under the Berkshire committee.

### **The names of the petty sessional courts of Berkshire**

The names of the divisions are mostly self-explanatory, being connected with the nearest urban centres. Some divisional names have changed, though, over the years. Hungerford division was in the early 19th century a sub-division of Newbury county division, sitting at Hungerford. The only peculiarity which remained by the time of local government reorganization in 1974 was the Moreton and Wallingford division. This had begun life as the Wallingford county division, though locally was soon retitled Moreton division, due to the seat of the court. By 1954, when the division was united with the petty sessions of Wallingford borough, the Moreton court was sitting at Didcot.

Berkshire Record Office holds records of the following courts which were in existence in or before 1949: Abingdon county division; Faringdon division; the Forest division; Hungerford division; Ilsley division; Lambourn division; Maidenhead borough; Maidenhead county division; Moreton division; Newbury borough; Newbury county division; Reading borough; Reading county division; Wallingford borough; Wantage division; Windsor borough; and Windsor county division.<sup>3</sup>

### **The records**

The bulk of the records of the Berkshire petty sessions date back to the mid-nineteenth century. However, the existence and form of the register of a petty sessions court – the basic record of that court – were not stipulated by statute until the Summary Jurisdiction Act 1879. It should therefore be no surprise that full series of registers and other petty sessions records often appear not to have been kept in Berkshire until nearer the turn of

2

These committees first met in 1952. For minutes of Reading borough magistrates courts committee, 1952–1960, see PS/R 23/17; for minutes of the magistrates courts committee for the rest of the county, 1952–1974, see C/CL/C6/9/1, 2.

3

The borough of Abingdon also had its own petty sessions, but the records are not held in Berkshire Record Office.



the century.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, some records do not seem to have been required by statute, although they may begin soon after the date of pertinent legislation. Thus statute may be a lever towards the survival of historical evidence, even if it does not positively require record-keeping.

Petty sessions records fall into three groups: the records of the court in session, including pre-trial documents; records created because of the court's duties of registration (and licensing); and records created by the magistrates or the clerk of the court and his officials, as they attended to the day-to-day running of the court.

### **The court in session**

Before a case came to court, statements might be taken by the police from the defendant and any witnesses. Warrants (for instance, for arrest) or summonses might be issued by the court. Survival rate for these is not high.

Charges were laid before magistrates in the form of informations and complaints. These could be made by individuals, the police, or local authorities. Again, these do not always survive in large quantities. Statements of witness (or depositions), sworn before magistrates, may also survive.

While a case was being heard, court minutes were taken by the clerk of the court or his representative. These vary in detail and form. They were kept in shorthand in Moreton division around the turn of the century.<sup>5</sup> From the 1940s onwards minutes partly or mainly in shorthand become more common generally; from this period they are also referred to as 'notes of evidence'. At best they constitute the fullest record of the court in session, providing an account of witness statements, cross-examinations and all else that was said in court. However, the speed at which minutes were taken can make them difficult to read and to follow.

The final result of a case was usually recorded in the court register. Since the 1879 act the register has given the name of the informant or complainant; the name of the defendant; the alleged offence; and the result of the trial – committal, fine, or a hearing before a higher court (which, before 1971, might be quarter sessions). Amounts of any fine or costs are also given.

The result of a case would also be the subject of a court order. As with court papers, surviving court orders are relatively few. Orders could be made on behalf of a local authority as part of the 'care and protection' role of the court, under the Lunacy Act 1890 and the Public Assistance Act 1948, for the reception of lunatics and the removal to hospital of persons in need of care and attention respectively. Thus, in 1912, Christopher William Clayson of

BERKSHIRE CONSTABULARY,  
WOKINGHAM DIVISION.

9th. December 1926.

# MISSING

From her home "Styles" Sunningdale in this Division.  
**Mrs. Agatha Mary Clarissa CHRISTIE**  
(WIFE OF COLONEL A. CHRISTIE)



AGE 35 YEARS, HEIGHT 5 ft. 7 ins., HAIR RED (Shingled), NATURAL  
TEETH, EYES GREY, COMPLEXION FAIR, WELL BUILT.

DRESSED—Grey Stockingette Skirt, Green Jumper, Grey and dark Grey Cardigan, small Green Velour Hat, may have hand bag containing £5 to £10. Left home in 4 seater Morris Cowley car at 9.45 p.m. on 3rd. December leaving note saying she was going for a drive. The next morning the car was found abandoned at Newlands Corner, Albury, Surrey.

Should this lady be seen or any information regarding her be obtained please communicate to any Police Station, or to

CHARLES GODDARD, Superintendent,

Telephone No. 11 Wokingham.

WOKINGHAM.

PRINTED AT THE "BERKSHIRE GAZETTE" OFFICES, PEACH STREET, WOKINGHAM.



Crowthorne was removed to the City of London asylum, 'suffering from general paralysis, somewhat weak-minded and deficient in memory'.<sup>6</sup>

If an offender was bailed or bound over to keep the peace, this might be recorded in a security book or bail register; records of bail and security may also appear in the main register of the court. If a pardon was subsequently granted, it may be found loose, or attached to the court register; but it is difficult to assess accurately the survival rate of these items.<sup>7</sup>

The juvenile court was established as a separate sessions by the Children Act 1908. Separate registers (of sessions as opposed to juvenile offences) tend to begin in the 1930s, possibly as a result of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, although apparently not required by it.<sup>8</sup>

The Adoption of Children Act 1926 made legal adoption possible by court order. Proceedings might be undertaken in a petty sessional court, and should have been recorded in the juvenile court registers and minutes, or (before 1933) in the general registers and minute books. Some separate registers of adoption orders have been retained by the courts concerned; at the time of writing registers are held only for Moreton division and Maidenhead borough.<sup>9</sup>

Special licensing sessions were often recorded in the general minute books and registers, as were sessions of the domestic court.<sup>10</sup> The domestic court was established as a separate sessions in 1937 to deal with cases that had previously been heard at ordinary sessions. Thus it could hear applications for affiliation orders; cases of legal separation of married couples and maintenance and custody of their children (though not divorce); and cases of legal guardianship. Separate registers and minutes are also sometimes found, probably due to the assiduity of individual clerks rather than to legislation.

### Registration

The second main group of petty sessions records can be described under the heading of registration, or, more specifically, registration of licences or permits. Legislation of various dates required magistrates to issue these, either by the court's authority or by authority delegated to it by local government bodies. Magistrates' jurisdiction for licensing has extended over a number of areas: alehouses and beerhouses, private clubs where alcohol is on sale, premises licensed to keep explosives, cinemas, bookmakers and betting shops have all incurred the scrutiny of justices.

6

PS/FT 1A/21; also cf. note 23.

7

As PS/R 2/3.

8

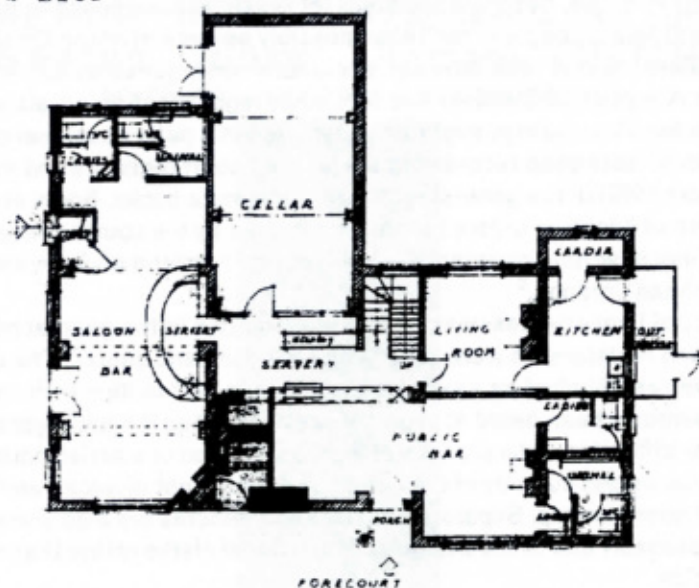
See, for instance, PS/MW 4/1.

9

PS/MW 13/1, PS/M 13/1.

10

Except, perhaps, in boroughs, where special licensing sessions were held by a committee. In Reading borough, minutes of special licensing sessions were recorded in a volume used by other magistrates' committees and special meetings of the Bench.



GROUND FLOOR PLAN  
AS EXISTING

[illegible]

PS/MW 14A/29/2



Registers were generally kept for different types of licence. The most common are alehouse licensing registers, which record name of house, licensee, and transfers or removals of licences; for example, the first licensing register of Ilsey division records that the Greyhound, East Ilsey, passed through the hands of three licensees in 1877: Walter Gale, Henry Bond and the appropriately-named William Brewer.<sup>11</sup>

Various licensing papers also survive. Under the 1910 Act, clubs with licences to sell alcohol had to make annual returns, including relevant portions of club rules, to the clerk to the local petty sessional division. These returns complement the registers of clubs required under the Licensing Act 1902. Club rule books also sometimes survive, either attached to the register or separately. Correspondence with licensees was also sometimes kept.<sup>12</sup> The records of some divisions include plans of licensed premises, required when structural alteration was proposed.<sup>13</sup>

### Administration

There are three main classes of petty sessional administrative records: minutes of magistrates' committee and other meetings; financial records; and the correspondence of the clerk. Other more miscellaneous records may also survive; these vary from court to court. For example, in Reading borough petty sessions there are records of Reading justices' club, whose membership came from across the county, as well as from the county and borough petty sessions of Henley, over the river in Oxfordshire (the records cover the late 1940s and the early 1950s).<sup>14</sup> The records of the Forest division include a 'missing persons' poster of the crime novelist Agatha Christie, issued by Charles Goddard, superintendent of the Wokingham police, when she disappeared from her home in Sunningdale in 1926, and posters of 'habitual drunkards' of the county, produced to aid their identification and ejection by the landlords of Berkshire in the first decade of the century.<sup>15</sup>

The most prominent financial records kept by the clerk were fines and fees account books. Balance sheets and correspondence about fines have also survived for Reading county division as has material concerning police costs.<sup>16</sup> There are also a number of quarterly returns of fines, which were destined for the Exchequer.<sup>17</sup>

Lastly, some clerks' correspondence survives. Specialised correspondence may survive with the records to which it relates, but letter books and complete files are also found. Correspondence may cover any aspect of the court's business; for instance, among the records of the joint division of

<sup>11</sup>  
PS/I 14/1.

<sup>12</sup>  
For a detailed history of licensing procedure, see Hemming, H. B. and Major, S. E. *Paterson's licensing acts* (1929).

<sup>13</sup>  
See, for example, PS/MW 14A/29.

<sup>14</sup>  
PS/R 26/2-4.

<sup>15</sup>  
PS/FT 26/29; PS/FT 26/24.

<sup>16</sup>  
PS/RC 24/3,4; PS/RC 24/5.

<sup>17</sup>  
For instance, PS/AC 24/1-4, returns for Abingdon county division, covering the period 1916-1949.

Moreton and Wallingford (formed in 1954) are files from the 1950s and 1960s relating to the construction of Didcot courthouse, and to interpreters (required in court) and 'Aliens and Commonwealth Immigrants'.<sup>18</sup>

Additionally, series of records of other bodies survive among the records of the Forest petty sessional division. There are assessments of individual parishes among the records of the land tax commissioners for the Forest division, 1846–1924, and minutes of the general commissioners of the Inland Revenue for the Forest division, 1882–1897.<sup>19</sup> Magistrates could act as land tax commissioners under legislation of 1827, and as general commissioners of the revenue under the Income Tax Act 1845. That they used their powers in the Forest division is confirmed by the existence of letters concerning land tax in the clerk's letter books for the period.<sup>20</sup>

Beside these is a collection of records of the Wokingham police from the First World War, which include detailed orders for Operation Gramophone, a planned response to German invasion. There is also a number of posters and public notices relating to the war, along with police correspondence and memoranda.<sup>21</sup>

### Uses of the records

Petty sessions records give evidence for various historical topics. Analysis of the court registers of a single sessions could produce valuable statistics for crimes committed at divisional or at parish level; a larger project could be carried out at county level.<sup>22</sup> The types of crimes committed, despite the less serious nature of cases heard at petty sessions, are also interesting, and it might be illuminating to reflect on the types of behaviour it has been felt necessary to treat as criminal and the way attitudes have changed.<sup>23</sup> (Cycling without lights, for instance, was vigorously prosecuted in the fairly recent past, and non-payment of local taxation is not a new phenomenon.)<sup>24</sup>

The practice of dealing with paupers under the settlement laws at a hearing by a couple of justices was a factor in the rise of petty sessions. This social function of administering the poor law, both before and after 1834, was the background to the court's role in domestic cases in the twentieth century; it also ensures that the records of petty sessions are an inviting (and as yet unexplored) field for research into the final disappearance of that law.<sup>25</sup> The social aspect of this evidence (like the evidence of clubs' registers and other records discussed below in more specific contexts) should prove important.

<sup>18</sup>  
PS/MW 25/1; PS/MW 25/6, 7.

<sup>19</sup>  
PS/FT 22/1–53, PS/FT 22/54–56.

<sup>20</sup>  
PS/FT 25/1–3.

<sup>21</sup>  
PS/FT 26/1–21.

<sup>22</sup>  
Comparison of the first court register in a particular sessions' holdings with the latest to be deposited in the Record Office shows how the periods covered by a register volume have

shortened over a century or so, and is a useful reflection of the rise in the county's population.

<sup>23</sup>  
Researchers may be diverted by such gems as court papers from the case of the theft of 52 copies of *The Sun* newspaper, heard by the magistrates for the borough of Windsor in December 1896 (PS/WI 1A/4/21).

<sup>24</sup>  
See, for example, PS/RC 2/23, 35, 39.

<sup>25</sup>  
cf. Jackson, R. M. *The machinery of justice in England* (1972) p.242.



The information given in licensing registers is sometimes unexpected. Alehouse licensing registers give details on the licensee; registers of premises licensed for music and dancing and, for cinematograph performances, give information about the structure of the buildings (for reasons of public health and safety). The use of a rural parish hall for an occasional cinematograph showing in the 1920s should have resulted in its dimensions, seating capacity, and the number of exits being recorded in the register of cinematograph licences kept by the clerk for that petty sessional division – information which is not always found in the records kept by the parochial church council. Thatcham parish hall, used for showing films in 1920–1921, is described in detail in Newbury county division's register.<sup>26</sup> The value of such registers for the history of local buildings will be appreciated.

Registers of clubs, and the rule books and associated material which survive with them, shed light on Berkshire society at all levels, circa 1900–1960. To take one bundle at random, from the Windsor county division, there are rule books of the following clubs: Old Windsor Working Men's Club; Ascot Ex-servicemen's Club and Sunninghill Comrades' Club; Ascot and District Social Club; Wraysbury Skiff and Punting Club; and Swinley Forest Golf Club.<sup>27</sup> These may be the only records which survive of these institutions.

For the family historian, the discovery of poor law papers outside parish collections is particularly noteworthy. For instance, among the records of Reading county division is a file of settlement papers involving inhabitants of the division for the period 1855–1862.<sup>28</sup> More generally, records of the court in session are bursting with names, providing another source of potential information about an elusive ancestor. Court papers for which a full description is appended to the catalogue, like the series from the early 19th century for Moreton division, should be especially useful for the genealogist.<sup>29</sup> Sometimes such documents can illustrate a family situation, as in the case of Henry and Albert Peirce.

In October 1895, Henry Peirce accused his son Albert before Windsor borough magistrates of the theft of a writing desk and hymn book. The case papers reveal that Albert had moved out of the family home, and had returned one day in his father's absence to collect his books and what he claimed was his writing desk. When his father found out, he informed the police. However, the case was dismissed: possibly the magistrates were reluctant to get involved in such an obvious family dispute.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup>  
PS/NC 19/1.

<sup>27</sup>  
PS/WIC 17/6/1–6.

<sup>28</sup>  
PS/RC 26/2/1–15.

<sup>29</sup>  
PS/MN 1A/1–5.

<sup>30</sup>  
PS/WI 1A/3/20.

Petty sessions records thus provide the opportunity for study at personal, parish and county level; comparison of holdings of record offices across the country would be an interesting contribution to the social and administrative history of England as a whole. Although until now the records seem to have been largely undervalued, cataloguing has shown us that they hold illuminating and easily accessible information on the complex fabric and background of modern society.

### Further reading

The history of petty sessions has not been researched and written on as widely as that of quarter sessions. The following are useful for the legal background and detail about the working of the court:

Bird, R. *Osborn's concise law dictionary*, 7th edn, Sweet and Maxwell, 1983

Giles, F. T. *The magistrates' courts*, Penguin, 1949

Hemming, H. B. and Major, S. E. *Paterson's licensing acts*, 39th edn, Butterworth, 1929

Jackson, R. M. *The machinery of justice in England*, 6th edn, Cambridge University Press, 1972

Moir, E. *The justice of the peace*, Penguin, 1969

Mumford, G. H. F. *A guide to juvenile court law*, 5th edn, Jordan and Sons, 1961

Wright, R. S and H. Hobhouse, *Local government and local taxation*, 4th edn, Sweet and Maxwell, 1914

The following reference work gives a breakdown of parishes in the divisions of Berkshire in 1855:

Roberts, J. L. *The magistracy and lieutenancy of Berks.*, Rusher and Johnson, 1855

The subsequent position may be gathered from some of the Berkshire County Council yearbooks held in Berkshire Record Office, unreferenced at the time of writing but soon to be available for research.

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# The Age of the Clothier: entrepreneurial ambition and achievement in Reading 1500–1650

Throughout much of the period 1500–1650 Reading was a thriving and prosperous centre for woollen manufacture. Though kersies and later Spanish cloths were produced in the town, Reading was renowned above all for its production of long dyed and dressed broadcloths, often known as mingled or medley cloths.<sup>1</sup> At the peak of its success in the early years of the seventeenth century, the town's woollen industry is reputed to have produced some 150 cloths a week, and its output compared favourably with the output of other clothing towns such as Newbury and Worcester.<sup>2</sup> Much of the credit for the expansion of woollen manufacture in Reading from the late fifteenth century onwards must undoubtedly be assigned to the clothier. By the early decades of the sixteenth century, the gild system, and the role of the independent master weaver or clothworker within it, had declined in Reading, and the town's clothiers had assumed almost complete control of the organisation and funding of cloth production, and were responsible, either directly or indirectly, for the provision of employment to a large proportion of the local population. The importance of the clothier in Reading was not, however, solely economic. Many clothiers participated in the government and administration of the town, and helped shape its development during a period of political and religious change. Individual clothiers also contributed generously to civic and religious projects in Reading and to the relief and rehabilitation of the poor.

It was not until the mid-sixteenth century that the term clothier became widely used in Reading to describe capitalist entrepreneurs in the town's woollen industry. Before this, the term 'clothmaker' was more commonly used. The occupation of clothier was accorded high status in the social hierarchy in Reading, where, despite the importance of family and connections, power and status were determined largely by wealth. The clothiers of Reading did not, however, form a homogeneous group except in function. Among them there were considerable gradations in wealth, status, and business organisation. At the lowest level were poor clothiers, barely distinguishable from the master weavers and clothworkers toiling alongside them,

whilst at the top of the scale were some of the richest men in the town, who played an active part in municipal affairs, and whose children intermarried with the local gentry or pursued careers in the church or international commerce.

During the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, many of Reading's leading clothiers or 'clothmakers' were drawn from the ranks of the town's drapers, mercers, and other merchants. Their investment in clothmaking was restricted mainly to circulating capital and their entrepreneurial involvement to the supply of raw materials and the marketing of the finished product. These mercantile capitalists utilised the 'domestic' system of organisation and employed outworkers on piece rates in their own homes to provide the labour and technical skills needed in manufacture. Foremost amongst these early entrepreneurs were men such as Richard Cleche, William Wattes, and William Justice. William Justice originated from Mere (Wiltshire?) and amassed a fortune in Southampton dealing in wine and other commodities before settling in Reading and seeking election to the Merchant Gild in 1509.<sup>3</sup> By the 1520s he was being described as a 'clothmaker' and his prestige was such that with his fellow clothmaker William Wattes he was appointed to represent the interests of clothing employers on a committee established to consider complaints of poor workmanship or dishonesty levelled against individual weavers or fullers. He was clearly one of the wealthiest men in Reading during the early decades of the sixteenth century, appearing with William Wattes among the six men of the town constrained to contribute fifty pounds towards Wolsey's forced loan of 1522. He owned property in Reading, Southampton and London, and his daughter married Thomas Vachell, a member of a prominent local gentry family.<sup>4</sup>

As the sixteenth century progressed, the ranks of the mercantile capitalists were swelled by the more prosperous and enterprising craftsmen working in the woollen industry, many of whom had long practised the domestic system on a small scale by employing spinners or by contracting work to other craftsmen. Initially many of Reading's industrial capitalists undoubtedly operated on a modest scale, running either a weaving or clothfinishing workshop, together with wool sorting and carding lofts on their own premises, and using outworkers for all other processes. Among their number was Richard Constable, who died in January 1560. From his inventory it can be seen that he lived in a substantial house, with some eight living rooms, and that his business operation consisted of a weaving shop with a broad loom and two kersey looms, a dye-house with two furnaces and two flat vats, and a carding shop with three stockarding frames, together with sorting and warping lofts. His gross inventory valuation was £145 17s 2d, of which trade goods, including cloth and wool made up £113 8s 8d.<sup>5</sup>



Increasingly, however, some clothiers invested extensively in vertical integration, often owning their own dye-house, and occasionally an interest in a fulling mill. A few appear to have run both weaving and clothworking workshops despite statutory and municipal restrictions introduced in the aftermath of the mid-century depression in the woollen trade to restrict the size and organisation of the industry.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately it was to ambitious industrial capitalists such as Richard Watlington, Richard Turner and the Aldworth brothers Thomas and Richard, all of whom amassed large fortunes and enjoyed considerable power and status in the town, that control of the Reading woollen industry passed.

Thomas Aldworth, a migrant from Wantage, was perhaps the richest and most influential clothier operating in Reading in the third quarter of the sixteenth century. He was admitted to the Merchant Gild in 1542, numbered amongst the first Capital Burgesses in 1560, and served as Mayor 1551–2, 1557–8, 1561–2, and 1571–2.<sup>7</sup> Little is known of his clothmaking business except that he ran a weaving workshop with four broad looms and a dye-house (inherited from his father-in-law, John Barfoot), and owned or leased a part interest in a fulling mill and burling workshop in Caversham.<sup>8</sup> Like other wealthy clothiers, he invested much of the fortune he had accumulated from clothmaking in land and property, particularly urban property, which was rising rapidly in value at this time. At the time of his death, in 1576, he owned or leased ten houses and a tenement in Reading, together with a house each in London, Wantage and Tilehurst. He also owned land near Reading and Maidenhead.<sup>9</sup>

Richard Aldworth the elder was appointed a Secondary Burgess in 1566, promoted to Capital Burgess in 1573, and elected Mayor 1576–7, 1584–5 and 1593–4.<sup>10</sup> Like his brother, he invested heavily in land and property, leaving in his will land and tenements in Reading, Burghfield and Sulhamstead.<sup>11</sup> Though again few details have survived of the scale and organisation of his clothmaking interests, the inventory of one of his sons, Peter, who died in 1580 whilst in his early twenties, has survived, providing a useful insight into the business affairs of one of Reading's privileged young clothiers. Peter Aldworth lived with his wife Alice and infant son in a modest house of five rooms with a workshop and backyard. His workshops contained nine pairs of fullers' shears, twenty-five course of handles, a shearboard, burling irons, a press, a tenter, and other clothfinishing equipment, together valued at £10 16s 6d. The cloth, wool, and yarn in stock at the time of his death included seven broadcloths, seven coarse cloths and four kersies, and was valued at £117 10s 0d. The gross valuation of his inventory was £342 13s 0d.<sup>12</sup>

The number of clothiers operating in Reading reached a peak in the early seventeenth century. Unfortunately little is known of wealthy clothiers such

6  
Reading Gild Records, BRO, R/HMC/LVI;  
Statutes of the Realm, 2 Ph. & M. c11.  
7  
Bindoff, *The History of Parliament*, vol.3, p.305;  
Reading Records, *Diary of the Corporation*,  
1431–1654, (1892–6), vol.1, pp.220, 253–4, 263, 309.  
8  
Reading Gild Records, BRO, R/HMC/LVI; Ms.

Wills Berks. BRO, D/A1/175/27.  
9  
PCC Wills, PRO, 6 Daughtry.  
10  
Reading Records, vol.1, pp.288, 317, 331, 370, 418.  
11  
PCC Wills, BRO, 58 Dixy.  
12  
PCC Inventories, PRO, Prob.2 412.

as Thomas Deane, Christopher Turner, William Turner (senior and junior), George Thorne (senior and junior), or Robert Winch, a migrant from Bray, but fortuitously the career of William Kendrick, one of the wealthiest and most ambitious of Reading's industrial capitalists, is better documented. William Kendrick was the younger son of the Reading mercer and Capital Burgess, Thomas Kendrick, who established a successful clothing business with his wife, Agnes, née Bye, daughter of an old Reading clothing family.<sup>13</sup> While his elder brother was educated at Oxford University and pursued a successful career in London as a Master Draper and Merchant Adventurer, William remained in Reading and took over the family business. The size and output of his clothing operation in the 1620s were impressive. An inventory prepared in 1625 during negotiations to sell his house and workshops in Minster Street, together with the clothmaking equipment employed there, provides detailed evidence of the Kendrick family's considerable investment in both vertical and horizontal integration. With the exception of spinning and fulling, all the major clothmaking processes were carried out in workshops on the Minster Street site. The inventory records the presence of a dye-house, meddling loft, stockarding house, clothworkers' house and weavers' shops. In the dye-house were three furnaces, a flat vat, two woad vats and racking hurdle and frame. The meddling loft contained beating hurdles and the stockarding house eight pairs of stockarding frames and two handles. There were several weavers' shops containing six broad looms and two kersey looms. In the clothworkers' house were forty-six pairs of shears, one hundred and fourteen course of handles, seven shearboards, five racks and two presses.<sup>14</sup> William Kendrick's cloths were fulled at Burghfield Mills, which he leased or owned in partnership with first Robert, and later James, Winch.<sup>15</sup> Outworkers from Reading and the surrounding villages were used for spinning. The sale of the Minster Street site did not, as might have been expected, mark the end of William Kendrick's career as a clothier. Despite having made a substantial investment in land and property and having obtained a coat of arms in 1623, he appears to have remained actively involved in clothmaking up till his death in 1634. He was appointed a Secondary Burgess in 1611, and a Capital Burgess in 1630, and was elected Mayor 1632–33.<sup>16</sup>

It is clear from municipal records that in Reading throughout the period 1500 to 1650, the leading clothiers of the town, together with the mercers and drapers, many of whom were themselves active in the woollen industry, made a considerable contribution to the government and administration of the town and to the achievement of its independence from Reading Abbey and the Crown. The clothing interest was well represented in both the Merchant Gild and the Corporation, and its power and influence was further

## 13

Reading Corporation successfully obtained dispensation from the Privy Council for Thomas Kendrick to continue clothmaking in the town, despite the fact that he had not been apprenticed to the clothing trade, and was not therefore eligible under the terms of the Statute of Artificers, 1563, to undertake or supervise a manual trade. *Statutes of the Realm*, 5 Eliz. I, c4; *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, vol.4, no.1132.

## 14

Particulars of Goods to be Sold to the Mayor and Burgesses, BRO, Reading Box 67, Bundle 3.

## 15

Reading Records, vol.2, pp.433–5.

## 16

W.H. Rylands, (ed.), *The Four Visitations of Berkshire* (1907), vol.2, p.102; Reading Records, vol.2, p.44, vol.3, pp.14–15.



increased by its wealth and unity of economic interest. Drapers and mercers played a leading part in resisting the power of the Abbey and enhancing the authority of the Merchant Gild, and were also actively involved in the resistance to the authority of the Crown and its agents in the late 1530s and early 1540s, culminating in the achievement of a new town charter in 1542 incorporating the Mayor and Burgesses of the Merchant Gild as the Mayor and Burgesses of the Borough. In 1560, Reading's existing town charters were confirmed and a new charter issued, providing for the appointment of nine capital burgesses and twelve secondary burgesses. The mayor was to be elected annually from the ranks of the capital burgesses.<sup>17</sup>

The oligarchic structure of the Corporation was dominated by the clothing interest and related distributive trades. The first nine capital burgesses in 1560 consisted of four mercers, two clothiers, one draper and two tanners, with a similar distribution, where the occupation can be identified, amongst the secondary burgesses. During the period 1500 to 1650, seventy-eight men are known to have served as Mayor of Reading, among whom there were at least eight drapers, fifteen mercers, twenty-two clothiers and one fuller. Between them, these forty-six men served the town on ninety-six occasions. During the period 1560 to 1640, when the political influence of Reading's leading clothing families was at its zenith, seventeen of the thirty-six mayors whose occupation can be identified were clothiers and between them they took office on at least thirty-nine occasions. Similarly, among the ninety-two secondary burgesses who took office during the period 1560 to 1640, there were at least sixteen mercers, eight drapers, thirty-five clothiers and one fuller, and among the fifty capital burgesses at least thirteen mercers, four drapers and twenty clothiers. The mantle of town government passed from generation to generation in many clothing families. In the case of the Turner and Aldworth families, there were frequently at least two family members, and sometimes as many as four, represented on the burgess body throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The Thorne and Brackston families were similarly well represented in the early seventeenth century. The Bye and Kendrick families, who were related by marriage, were also active in town government throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>18</sup> Clothiers also participated in the administration of town affairs and enforcement of statutory legislation and local bye-laws. In the early sixteenth century, clothiers served as cofferers for the Wharf, Yarn and Wool Beams, and in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as cloth searchers or overseers. Many served as guardians of Reading's five wards in the sixteenth century, or as overseers of the poor in the town's three parishes in the early seventeenth century.<sup>19</sup> With the exception of the position of cofferer, such positions were often filled by men of insufficient means

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Victoria County History of Berkshire, (1906–24), vol.3, p.354–5; Bindoff, *Commons*, pp.457, 649.

18

Based on an analysis of material extracted from Reading Records, vols.1–4.

19

Reading Records, for example, vol.1, pp.154, 216, 251, 235, 245, 249, 259, 315, 375, 396, 438; Distribution of Kendrick Charity to Poor 1635–51, BRO, R/Box 25.

to achieve admission to Reading Corporation, but on occasion, they also appear to have provided civic experience for prospective burgesses from Reading's leading clothing families.

The importance of parliamentary representation was not underestimated by Reading clothiers. Though as taxpayers and employers, clothiers enjoyed considerable influence with Tudor governments, membership of the House of Commons was undoubtedly regarded as providing the best means of defending the cloth industry against regulation and political manoeuvre. During the late fifteenth century, the interests of Reading were frequently represented by royal servants, but in the early sixteenth century, the town reverted to its former practice of returning townsmen to Westminster, and the draper and clothmaker Richard Cleche and merchant and clothmaker William Justice, together with the mercer, Nicholas Hyde, were numbered amongst those elected. The poverty of the town in the late 1530s and 1540s led to a temporary loss of electoral independence, but the clothiers John Borne and Thomas Aldworth, and the mercer Thomas Turner, were returned for the town in the 1550s, a period when representation for the clothing interest was particularly important due to the introduction of major new legislation to regulate the cloth industry.<sup>20</sup>

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries charity was widely regarded as both a social and religious duty and many clothiers contributed generously to community projects and the relief of poverty. Most clothiers' wills included a bequest to the poor, often between ten shillings and two pounds in value, and sometimes, as in the case of the Reading clothiers Richard Constable (1559), John Wilson (1568) and Walter Fellow (1636) to be distributed in the form of bread on the day of the donor's burial. The Reading clothiers Walter Bateman (1630) and Richard Aldworth the elder (1594) rather exceptionally left six pounds and ten pounds respectively for the relief of the poor. Money was also donated by Reading clothiers for the support of the impotent or aged poor. Thomas Aldworth (1576) left three pounds to Reading Hospital while his nephew Peter Aldworth (1580) bequeathed twenty shillings to the poor and impotent in Reading Hospital at the time of his death and a further twenty shillings the following winter. The more farsighted left money to buy land to provide income for the relief of the poor; Thomas Deane (1606) left sixty pounds to buy property with an annual income of three pounds to buy bread for the poor on Christmas Eve, Good Friday and Ascension Day. The Reading clothier, William Kendrick, in his will in 1634, provided almshouses for four men and one woman 'all of them aged and past worke to gett their livinges', with a weekly allowance of one shilling and sixpence for the men and one shilling for the woman for food.<sup>21</sup> Bequests to the Church declined during the sixteenth century, but

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Reading Records, vol.1, pp.86, 112, 145, 242, 254, 257, 231.

21

Ms. Wills Berks. BRO, D/A1/51/103, D/A1/9 p.134, D/A1/68/21, D/A1/44/14/; PCC Wills, PRO, 58 Dixy, 6 Daughtry, 27 Arundel, 30 Wood, 27 Sadler.



Saint Mary's Church in Reading was rebuilt during the years 1550–53 with the help of local clothing families, and in 1586, William Lendoll the younger left a bequest of six shillings and eight pence towards the cost of repairs at Saint Laurence's Church, Reading while in 1594, Richard Aldworth left a bequest of five pounds towards the cost of the new steeple at Saint Mary's Church provided it was finished within three years. Other clothiers presented or left gifts to purchase vestments and silverware. In his will of 1555, John Heth left 'a canopie of Crymson velatt with belles and an altar cloth of white damaske with floweres' to Saint Mary's. His father-in-law, John Bourne, who died later the same year, left books and a cope to Saint Mary's, but only on 'condition that God's service be there maintained as it now is and if that service do otherwise alter then I will it to be sold.'<sup>22</sup>

In Reading, as in other clothing areas, clothing families rarely seem to have remained actively involved in clothmaking for more than three generations. Whilst succession in the clothing trade may have been terminated prematurely in some families by death, business failure or the absence of male heirs, in other cases the break undoubtedly resulted from the accumulation of wealth, which opened the door to new opportunities, and the development of social ambition, which encouraged progression through the social hierarchy. The punitive tax policy of successive Tudor governments and the severe and recurrent trade depressions of the mid-sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries also encouraged the exodus from the cloth industry. Many clothiers invested in land and property, thereby securing not only a profitable and safe investment, but also an opportunity to improve their social standing by retiring from trade and assuming gentle status. Marriage was clearly an important consideration for the ambitious clothier, not only for the wealth or business interests it might bring with it but also for the enhanced status it might confer, as for example in William Kendrick's marriage to Jane Lydall, sister of Sir Richard Lydall of Sonning.<sup>23</sup> Ambitious social climbers also placed great value upon education. The sons of many clothing families were educated at Reading Grammar School, and a few, including John Kendrick, William Laud, Thomas Turner, William Brackston, and Richard Lendoll pursued further studies at Oxford University. A number of clothiers' sons entered the Church, among them the notorious William Laud, whose reactionary ecclesiastical policy as Archbishop of Canterbury contributed much to the unpopularity of Charles I's period of non-parliamentary rule. Others sought apprenticeship in one of London's prestigious livery companies. Two of Reading's greatest charitable benefactors during this period, the clothiers' sons Sir Thomas White and John Kendrick, earned fame and fortune in the international trading community.<sup>24</sup>

34

The reign of the clothier in Reading was inevitably of limited duration. Entrepreneurial investment in clothmaking declined in Reading during the middle decades of the seventeenth century as, faced by a long-term fall in demand for heavy broadcloths and by growing competition in home and overseas markets, particularly from the producers of new draperies, and constrained by their inability to reduce their costs and prices in order to compete with cloths produced in rural areas, the town's clothiers failed either to maintain an adequate market share in the contracting market for broadcloths or to develop and expand the production of lighter woollen or new drapery products. The town's woollen industry suffered a serious reversal of fortune during the trade depressions of the 1620s and 1630s, and deteriorated further during the difficult Civil War years and the trade depressions of the Commonwealth period. Some clothiers were bankrupted, including Walter Bateman, a former mayor, whose debts exceeded his assets when he died in 1631, and James Winch, whose debts to the Corporation remained outstanding from 1635 until his death in 1661.<sup>25</sup> Those clothiers fortunate enough to retain a sizeable fortune sought alternative investments in commerce, agriculture, and other forms of industry.

At the time of his death, Walter Bateman had fourteen unsold broadcloths and Spanish cloths on his hands at home and in London, two cloths at the weavers, and dyed yarn for a further fourteen broadcloths and Spanish cloths stored in his workshops. He owed money to many leading men in Reading and Newbury, as well as to his workmen, and had clearly attempted to maintain

production on credit during a prolonged period of depression in the cloth market. Even his large and affluently furnished house and a lease he owned had been pledged as security for his debts, which amounted to £468 11s 8d. Ms. Wills Berks, BRO, D/A1/44/14; Charity Papers, Reading Box 67, BRO, Bundle 1, no.2.



## District nursing in Berkshire before 1914

For much of the nineteenth century the position of village nurse or midwife was occupied by women whose main qualification was the large size of their own family or the fact that their mother or another female relative had followed the calling before them. The skills and wisdom gained in raising their children could then be applied for the benefit of the community, and some women earned a considerable local reputation for their knowledge of herbal and folklore remedies.<sup>1</sup> The duties of these 'nurses' frequently extended to laying out the dead and providing a 'home-help' type service for patients, which included doing the washing, assisting with the housework and looking after the children.<sup>2</sup> For the poor, they also had the merit of charging very little. Sutton Courtenay in 1851 had three nurses and two midwives of this untrained kind. They included Ann Collins, a 72 year-old widow, who was a nurse, Sarah Southwell, 54, a widow, who was living with an elderly agricultural labourer as his nurse, and Mary Painter, a 56 year-old widowed midwife who lived with her son, a railway foreman, his wife and their three children.<sup>3</sup>

In *Lark Rise to Candleford*, Flora Thompson stressed the value which was placed on these women's services in the mid-Victorian years. When they came into a house they were not social superiors – as some of the trained district nurses later in the century were thought to be – but poor like their patient. They could 'make do with what there was, or, if not, knew where to send to borrow it'.<sup>4</sup>

On a national basis there was a growing acceptance of the benefits of professional nursing care as pioneered by Florence Nightingale and other reformers. This appealed to the philanthropic instincts of the wives and daughters of the well-to-do, and one of the first major initiatives came in 1883 when a Miss Bertha Broadwood set up the Holt-Ockley system of cottage nursing around her home parish of Ockley. It was organised on provident lines, with the subscribers entitled to receive the services of a nurse when they were ill. The nurses were described as women 'of the village class' and they were given a brief training in maternity and district nursing at a special centre at Plaistow in London. They were not expected to attend

1

Pamela Horn, *Victorian Countrywomen* (Oxford, 1991), p.193.

2

Nicky Leap and Billie Hunter, *The Midwife's Tale* (1993), p.1.

3

See 1851 Census Return for Sutton Courtenay at the Public Record Office, HO 107/1688.

4

Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford* (Penguin Books, 1979), p.136.

surgical operations, and the help they gave when they returned to the villages was simple nursing combined with domestic duties. Many lived in with the patients while they looked after them.<sup>5</sup>

But important though this initiative was, and other, smaller schemes like it, the creation of a large-scale district nursing service came only in 1887 when Queen Victoria agreed to devote £70,000 given by the women of England towards her Golden Jubilee to the cause. Two years later Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses was incorporated. Its significance lay not merely in its wide scope but in its emphasis on the importance of training for all 'Queen's Nurses'. This meant a year's general training in a hospital (later increased to two years), plus six months' experience of district nursing, gained under supervision; and, for those working in country areas, there must be at least three months' approved midwifery training, leading to the London Obstetrical Society's midwifery qualification or some other appropriate certificate. A distinctive uniform was to be worn, as well as a special badge and brassard. Queen's Nurses were forbidden to 'interfere with the religious opinions of their patients' and were warned that they must always work under the direction of a medical practitioner. Their professional standing was underlined by the requirement that they be provided with their own home by the local associations which recruited them. A salary of at least £30 a year was recommended, and a uniform allowance had also to be given.<sup>6</sup>

As the influence of the Queen's Institute spread, growing numbers of local nursing associations were set up, normally promoted by upper or middle-class philanthropists anxious to benefit the poor. By 1893 three had been established in Berkshire, at Mortimer, Greenham and Ardington and Lockinge, where support was given by Lady Wantage.<sup>7</sup> In 1896 a similar organisation was created for the communities of Chieveley, Curbridge, Oare, Hermitage, Snelsmore and Winterbourne, with Nurse Doe in charge. She remained in this extensive practice for ten years, before retiring on grounds of ill-health.<sup>8</sup> However, it was from the end of the decade that the greatest progress was made. In Reading, for example, a branch of the Queen's Institute was formed in June 1897, with the Mayor as president. An initial sum of £5,000 was subscribed and further subscriptions of £500 a year were promised. By the end of the year a superintendent nurse had been recruited at a salary of £50 a year and two qualified assistants, who each received £30. The superintendent, Nurse White, had trained at Chelsea and worked at Gateshead before coming to Berkshire. All three nurses were accommodated in a house given rent free for five years, by Messrs. Sutton

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Horn, *Victorian countrywomen*, p.212-13.

6

Horn, *Victorian countrywomen*, p.214.

7

Third Report of the Rural District Board of Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses for 1893 at the British Library, Cup. 401.i.3. At the estate villages of Ardington and Lockinge a voluntary nursing association continued to employ a qualified nurse, who resided in Ardington,

until 1939. It was financed partly from the profits of the public house, which was itself encouraged to sell soup, coffee and tea, rather than alcoholic beverages. See M.A. Havinden, *Estate Villages* (Reading 1966), pp.87, 128.

8

Second Annual Report of the Berkshire County Nursing Association for 1906 at Berkshire Record Office, D/QNA/BC/2/1. These reports are hereafter referred to as Report.



the seedsmen. Between November 1897, when they arrived in Reading, and March 1898, they treated 80 poor patients in their own homes. When inspected by the Queen's Institute in March, they were praised for the quality of their work and the fact that they were 'welcomed by the patients and evidently greatly appreciated'.<sup>9</sup>

According to their rulebook, the Reading nurses were not allowed to act as midwives – unlike those in the villages – and they were to be on duty for eight hours a day. 'The Nurse ... shall endeavour to improve [the] general surroundings [of patients]; and when the relatives of the patients can be taught to keep the room in nursing order they shall be encouraged to do so'. Only the 'sick poor' were to be attended.<sup>10</sup>

Eton, too, had a trained nurse at work in 1897, although in this case the Queen's Institute inspector described her disapprovingly as 'too superficial and self-confident to be a good nurse'. On another occasion she was condemned for being 'inclined to wear what she considers becoming', rather than a proper uniform. But it was grudgingly accepted that 'Nurse Reid' had 'the complete confidence of the parish doctor who leaves a very great deal in her hands'.<sup>11</sup>

Elsewhere, village associations were developed which lacked the funds to employ the fully trained nurses advocated by the Queen's Institute. Instead they recruited 'Village Nurses', who had undergone a shorter period of instruction. They included women like Nurse Bodden at Englefield. She had been a children's nurse before undergoing a nine-months' district nursing course at Plaistow. In 1906 the Queen's Institute Inspector described her as 'a thoroughly nice, kindly, motherly woman and a good nurse. She lives in a neat little cottage with her mother, whose sole support she is. Mrs. Benyon pays entirely for this nurse who attends to the people on the estate'.<sup>12</sup>

The Benyons were, of course, the principal landowners in the area and Mrs Benyon was active in promoting the county's district nursing service; this included chairing the committee of the Berkshire County Nursing Association when it was established in 1905 and providing the finance for an Emergency District Nurses Home in Reading when it opened in April 1906.<sup>13</sup>

Rather less satisfactory was the position at Welford and Boxford where Nurse Greenstreet was employed by the local association. The inspector condemned her as 'slow and unmethodical ... Books and baskets [containing her equipment] not well kept ... Is kind to her patients and liked by them ... Unfortunately she is inclined to give a great deal of time to some and neglect others'. Apart from these deficiencies, her employing association was chronically short of cash and in May 1907, following a proposal to cut Nurse

Greenstreet's salary, she left. Her replacement, Nurse Winchester, remained for a few months only before removing to another district, 'at her own request'. Then came Nurse Roberts, who was paid 15s. a week. She went into lodgings at Boxford, which cost 14s a week and reluctantly the Welford and Boxford Association agreed to meet half the cost of this, leaving her a net weekly income of 8s when her board and accommodation had been paid. Because of the large area she had to cover, special 'houses of call' were established at Wickham and Welford, where those requiring a visit from the nurse could enter their names. Leaflets and cards were printed to inform potential patients of the time and place she could be contacted in each district, while 'a system of flag-signalling at the cross-roads' was instituted. Presumably this was to alert her that she was needed in a particular part of her practice.<sup>14</sup>

Nurse Roberts was clearly not happy with the arrangements and just over a year after taking up employment she left at short notice for a post in South Africa. She was replaced by Nurse Stuart, who received a salary of £60 a year, out of which she had to pay for her own board and lodgings. She remained for a few months but then left 'owing to her inability to bicycle and therefore finding the district too large to manage'.<sup>15</sup> After this came Nurse Vickers. In all, between January 1907 and December 1909, five district nurses were employed by the association.

The problems faced by Welford and Boxford highlight two difficulties experienced by many of the early nursing associations, namely the large area to be covered, which must have been arduous even when the nurse was able to ride a bicycle, and the shortage of funds. The balance in hand at Welford and Boxford in early May 1908, was said to be precisely £1 5s 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d.

At Binfield a far more ambitious arrangement prevailed. There Nurse Skinner was appointed on 1 January 1906. She had trained at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and the Royal Maternity Hospital, as well as at a fever hospital, and lived with a friend, Nurse Teggatt, who 'sometimes takes in a private case'. Miss Skinner was described as a 'very neat methodical capable nurse', and the two women had 'fitted up a nice little ward and district room' in their home, which Nurse Teggatt looked after.<sup>16</sup> The Binfield Nursing Club was formed in November 1905 and relied not merely on the support of affluent well-wishers but upon the subscriptions of villagers who wished to use its services. Labourers whose wages did not exceed 20s a week were required to pay 2s. per annum, plus a further 1s. for midwifery services; artisans and small tradespeople were expected to pay 4s a year, plus a further 4s for midwifery; and prosperous tradespeople and farmers

14

Berkshire County Nursing Association Reports for September 1906 at the Public Record Office. Minutes of the General Committee and annual Meetings of the Welford and Boxford Nursing Association at Berkshire Record Office, D/QNA/WE 1/1, meetings on 23 May, 1907, 10 February, 6 May and 1 June, 1908.

15

Minutes of the Welford and Boxford Nursing Association, meetings for 10 May and 16

December, 1909. The Berkshire Association estimated the total cost of a Queen's Nurse to be £80 to £100 a year and of a Village Nurse, £45 to £60 a year.

16

Berkshire County Nursing Association Reports for September 1906 at the Public Record Office and minutes of the Binfield Nursing Club at Berkshire Record Office, D/QNA/Bi 1/1, meeting on 8 December, 1905.



were required to subscribe at least 5s a year, plus 10s for midwifery facilities.<sup>17</sup> Clearly many people were not deterred by the charges for on 8 January 1906, eighty-four had already joined. During Nurse Skinner's first quarter at work in the parish, she attended 50 patients and paid 530 visits, and by the end of the year she had treated 174 cases, 24 of them for childbirth.<sup>18</sup>

By 1906 these three associations were among fifteen affiliated to the Berkshire County Nursing Association, an umbrella body. Ten of them employed 'Village Nurses' and four, women who were neither Queen's nor Village Nurses. From the beginning the Berkshire Association complained of the difficulty of recruiting suitable candidates for training as Village Nurses. These were required to be 'strong and healthy, and not under 24 years of age', but according to the Association's first report, out of 38 candidates interviewed in 1905 only six had been selected as suitable.<sup>19</sup> This difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff continued and at the end of 1907 it was noted that out of fifteen nurses trained under the Association's auspices, two had already left, despite making an agreement to work for three years after qualification. In both cases, a fine had been imposed.<sup>20</sup> By 1913, forty-one local associations were affiliated to the County Association; they employed a total of 43 nurses, of whom seven were Queen's Nurses and 36 Village Nurses.<sup>21</sup>

Sadly then, despite these efforts, trained district nurses were making only a limited contribution to Berkshire's medical needs in the early twentieth century. Furthermore, the position of district nurse could be one of some delicacy. At all times she had to maintain her professional integrity, and yet she was subjected to close personal supervision by local patrons attached to her particular association. In smaller communities, such as Englefield, that outside influence could be considerable.

Many district nurses experienced a sense of loneliness, cut off as they often were from companionship with social equals, especially in remote villages. This, combined with their relatively low salaries and the far-flung nature of their practices, which necessitated a good deal of travelling, encouraged a number to resign after a short period in office. During 1913, nine nurses (out of the forty three employed under the aegis of the Berkshire Association) resigned. Six went to other work, one left to be married, one gave up because of ill-health and one decided to concentrate on 'home duties'. Two years earlier the turnover had been even greater, with twelve nurses leaving – two of them to go abroad and four for family reasons.<sup>22</sup>

17

Meeting of the Binfield Nursing Club on 28 November, 1905.

18

Report for 1906 and minutes of the Binfield Nursing Club meeting on 9 April, 1906.

19

Report for 1905.

20

Report for 1907.

21

Report for 1913.

22

Reports for 1911 and 1913.

The number of patients treated also varied considerably. In 1907, for example, while Nurse Trowsdale at Cookham Dean treated 36 cases, including 27 of childbirth, Nurse Skey at Mortimer had 164, of whom 28 involved childbirth, and Nurse Bodden at Englefield 145, six of them for childbirth. At Arborfield, where there were 113 cases between April and December 1907, 43 were due to a measles epidemic and six were for midwifery.<sup>23</sup>

In many villages untrained and unqualified midwives or 'handywomen' continued to practise. It was to regularise their position that in 1902 the first Midwives Act was passed. It created a Central Midwives Board to oversee the profession and maintain a Roll of certified and approved practitioners. It was also responsible for setting qualifying examinations, and for removing the names of those found unsatisfactory or incompetent from the Roll. Admission to that Roll could be gained by those with a midwifery qualification from the London Obstetrical Society or from certain lying-in hospitals, or by successful candidates for the Board's own examinations. A third option catered for untrained practitioners. They could be admitted if they were of good character and had worked for at least a year at the time of the Act's passage. This was intended as a once-and-for-all concession and those qualified by this means were known as 'bona fide' practitioners. After 1905 only women accepted under the Act were permitted to use the title of midwife. From 1910 it became illegal for any woman 'habitually and for gain' to attend mothers in childbirth unless she was either certified or acting under the direction of a medical man.

However, particularly in rural areas, difficulties persisted, not least because of the large number of untrained women who had gained certification as 'bona fide' midwives. In 1905, of 22,308 names on the Roll, 12,521 were in the 'bona fide' category. In addition, despite the legislation, unqualified nurses and midwives continued to practise unofficially up the First World War.<sup>24</sup> Thus in 1909 when Wallingford poor law guardians informed Berrick Salome Parish Meeting that after the new Midwives Act came into full operation, 'serious difficulty may be felt, by the working classes especially, if no provision is made for a midwife within easy reach of the poor in your parish', those present decided to 'take no action in the matter'. As Berrick was so small, they argued, it 'would be impossible to raise a sum sufficient to provide a resident midwife or to join a neighbouring parish for the same object'. Instead villagers continued to rely, as before, on a well respected amateur midwife who lived in Roke Marsh and was ready to turn out with 'her little black bag' at any time.<sup>25</sup>

And, of course, for less serious illnesses many country people still depended on traditional remedies, such as goosegrease for a bad chest, brimstone and treacle or nettle tea in the spring to 'cool the blood' and elder-flower mixed with home-cured lard and boracic to make a soothing ointment.<sup>26</sup>

23  
Report for 1907.

24  
Horn, *Victorian Countrywomen*, pp.220-221, and  
Leap and Hunter, *Midwife's Tale*, p.198-199.

25  
R.E. Moreau, *The Departed Village, Berrick Salome at the Turn of the Century* (1968), p.38.

26  
Moreau, *Departed Village*, p.116.



# The Kitchener Battalions of the Royal Berkshire Regiment 1914–1918

At the outbreak of war on 4th August 1914, Britain was militarily at a great disadvantage compared with Germany. While the enemy could call upon a conscript army numbering millions, Britain had only a relatively small professional army of 250,000 men backed up by the slightly larger Territorial Force whose purpose was home defence. Moreover, the strength of the British Expeditionary Force, which was earmarked for fighting a continental war, was less than 160,000 regular soldiers. There was, therefore, a pressing need to expand considerably, and in haste, the country's front-line forces. Responsibility for overseeing this expansion fell to Lord Kitchener, who was appointed Secretary of State for War the day after hostilities began. He decided against developing the Territorial Force and instead opted for creating the so-called 'New Armies', five of which were eventually raised. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Kitchener foresaw the likelihood of a long campaign and consequently enlistment in the New Armies was for three years or the duration of the war. All of Kitchener's men were volunteers and all undertook to serve abroad. Recruits were formed into units attached to existing regiments of the regular army and were known as service, or Kitchener, battalions, of which a significant number were 'Pals' battalions comprising men of a shared local origin, occupation or other association. The men of the Kitchener battalions largely provided the means by which Britain prosecuted the war in Europe until the advent of conscription early in 1916.

## **The Royal Berkshire Regiment**

The Royal Berkshire Regiment raised four Kitchener battalions in 1914 which saw active service overseas. The 5th, 6th and 8th Battalions served on the Western Front and between them were involved in every major campaign fought there by the British Army. The 7th Battalion was sent out to Salonika in Greece and distinguished itself under rather different conditions. For the purposes of this article, commentary is restricted to the three battalions which shared a common experience, that of trench warfare in Belgium and Northern France.

To give even a brief account of the involvement of the three Berkshire battalions in all the main actions on the Western Front between 1915 and 1918 would be beyond the scope of this article. What follows is therefore selective and designed merely to highlight the contribution of the battalions individually to a series of hard-fought campaigns.

The 5th Battalion, as part of the 12th Division, saw action at Loos in September and October 1915 before moving south to Picardy and the Somme. Although not involved on the first day of the July 1916 offensive, they had not long to wait since they were given orders on the 2nd to capture the village of Ovillers the following day. This strongly-defended position, lying at the head of what was known as 'Mash Valley', had been the scene of carnage on the opening day of the battle when British troops were subjected to hostile fire from the front and both flanks as they tried unsuccessfully to advance up the valley. In their turn, the 5th Battalion met with stiff opposition but did manage to penetrate the German front line, only to be withdrawn after suffering heavy losses. Many of the German defensive dug-outs had remained intact despite artillery bombardment. The battalion's casualties for the day (killed, wounded and missing) were 14 officers and 318 other ranks from a nominal strength of 1000 men.

A memorable day for the 5th in the following year was Easter Monday, 9th April 1917, the opening of the Battle of Arras. The 12th Division was attacking due east of Arras in the direction of the fortified village of Monchy-le-Preux standing on its hilltop some five miles away. One of the outstanding feats of the day was the 5th's capture of no fewer than 22 German guns in the storming of 'Battery Valley' after a three mile advance. The battalion was awarded two Military Crosses and nine Military Medals for gallantry displayed on the day.

The 5th Battalion went on to take part in the Battle of Cambrai in November 1917 and both major campaigns in 1918 – the German Spring offensive and the final Allied advance. It thus recorded perhaps the fullest Western Front involvement of the three Berkshire battalions.

The 6th Battalion fought with the 18th Division, one of the few divisions to enjoy any success on 1st July, 1916. The 6th shared in that success with its attack west of the village of Montauban. An advance of some 2000 yards was made, by the standards of that particular day a considerable achievement against well-prepared German positions. The battalion's attack was aided by the explosion of a mine at 'Casino Point', a German machine-gun nest, and despite heavy casualties all objectives were gained and consolidated. Casualties for that and the following day were 7 officers (of whom 4 were killed) and 336 other ranks (of whom 71 were killed).

The 6th was present on the opening day of another, equally costly, offensive in the following year, Third Ypres, or, as it has become known,



Passchendaele. On 31st July 1917, the battalion attacked along the Ypres-Menin road, with the capture of Polygon Wood as its final objective. Although this objective was not reached (in common with many others on 31st July), the 6th did take and consolidate some ground. It was on that day that the battalion Medical Officer, Captain H. Ackroyd, gained the Victoria Cross, the only one awarded to the men of the three Berkshire battalions. He tended the wounded on more than one occasion while under heavy enemy fire (in fact his recommendation cites 23 different sources). Ackroyd was killed in action on 10th August without having learned of his award and is commemorated in the Birr Cross Roads Cemetery not far from the scene of the 6th's action on 31st July.

The career of the 6th Battalion was cut short in February 1918 when, as part of the reorganisation which took place in the British Army at that time, it was disbanded and its men distributed to other battalions of the regiment, mainly the 1st, 2nd and 5th.

The 8th Battalion had the distinction of serving for most of the war in one of the original regular army divisions which had gone to France in August 1914, namely the 1st Division. The battalion's first engagement, at the Battle of Loos on 25th September 1915, was at the same time its costliest and most distinguished in terms of the recognition it drew from the Army Command. Attacking alongside another Kitchener battalion, the 10th Gloucesters, it advanced some 1200 yards and achieved one of only two breaks in the German line to be made that day. All ranks' casualties for the day were 493 for the Royal Berkshires and 459 for the Gloucesters. The British Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir John French, said after the battle: 'It was with great pride that I learnt that those two battalions of the New Armies ... led the advance with the gallantry they did. It is a most promising thing to see the battalions of the New Armies behaving so splendidly.'<sup>1</sup>

The 8th's involvement on the Somme in 1916 was essentially supportive, as, with a difference, it was in 1917 for the Third Battle of Ypres. Here, along with other units of the 1st Division, the men found themselves virtually in quarantine on the Belgian coast, west of Dunkirk, rehearsing a planned, secret amphibious operation which was to involve a landing some five miles south of Ostend. The idea was to neutralise the German submarine bases on this part of the coast and to link up with a break-out from the Ypres Salient. The latter unfortunately never materialised and the operation was abandoned. Although perhaps frustrated, the 8th was fortunate, given the scale of the British losses sustained at Third Ypres, that its men were for the moment still alive to tell the tale.

The 8th Battalion, now transferred to the 18th Division in place of the 6th Battalion, faced the German Spring offensive of 1918 and took part in all

phases of the final Allied advance, starting on 8th August at the Battle of Amiens and ending, for the battalion, on 3rd November in the Forest of Mormal. It is worth recording that at this stage of the war the 8th Battalion could muster only 15 officers and 243 other ranks. The war thus ended for the battalion at a place familiar to the men of the original British Expeditionary Force who in August 1914 had marched down past the forest during their retreat from Mons.

### Personal recollections

The record of the three Berkshire battalions on the Western Front serves as testimony to the bravery and self-sacrifice of the officers and men of the regiment who fought and died on the battlefields of France and Flanders. It was through their efforts, and that of hundreds of thousands like them, that victory was secured. In order to illustrate the human dimension of the war, the recollections and reminiscences of three individuals will be used. They are: Private H. Harding of the 5th Battalion; Private F. Henwood of the 6th Battalion and Lieutenant J.W. Randall of the 8th Battalion.

Pte Harding was with the 5th in the vicinity of Loos in late September 1915 and witnessed at first hand the human cost of the British attack. As he and his comrades made their way towards the stricken mining village, they passed many ambulances and walking wounded coming in the opposite direction. More gruesome evidence of the recent fighting lay ahead, as Harding himself relates:

We then marched over the ground the previous day's attacking forces had taken ... hundreds of British lay dead. They had kept perfect extended order – kilted troops and, up to the Loos-Lens road, the Durham Light Infantry ... We stretcher-bearers moved among the fallen hoping to find some life; there was none. Dozens of pay books were handed in. No rifle had been fired in anger, no enemy were dead. They [the enemy] were in Loos which we had by-passed.<sup>2</sup>

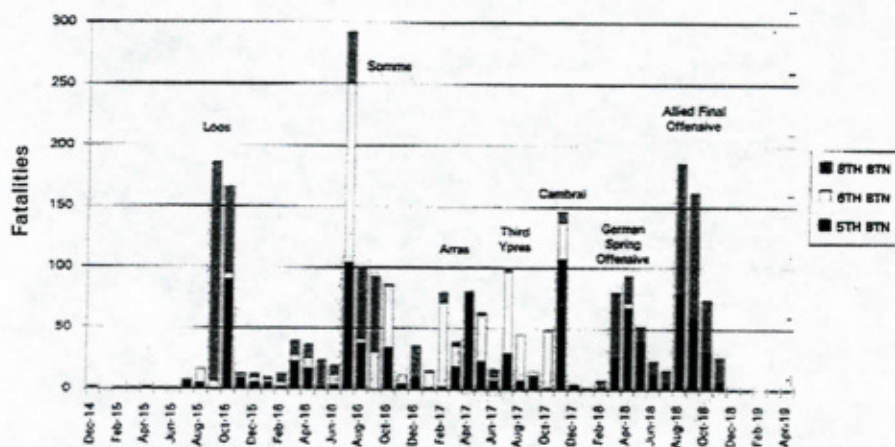
The dangers of 'going over the top' were well known to all who served on the Western Front and those who took part in an offensive showed great courage, as, for example, did Pte Henwood on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. He describes the beginning of 'The Great Push' on 1st July 1916:

We hurried from the dug-outs in the village, up to the assembly trenches. Just as it was breaking daylight we had our rum and put our gas masks on. We had orders to fix bayonets. We were ordered to stand on the fire step and told that we were going to send a mine up before our men took the German front line. Our men were so mad [keen] to get there they rushed forward. One of our companies, being well in front, got to the German parapet and was just landing in the trench when the mine went up and blew most of the company up with it. Just as this happened we





*The Western Front 1914-18*



*5th, 6th and 8th Battalions: Fatalities 1914-19*



16 Men of the 5th Battalion Who Served Throughout the War



were ordered to go over the top. As we did so a German machine-gun, which had been overlooked by the first wave or two, tried to stop us from supporting the other companies. It could not be done. We kept on going forward, but a lot of our men kept dropping wounded or killed. I got to the German front line as soon as possible [only] to find four of us young chaps faced with six big Germans, but by what I could see, they did not mean to fight as all but one, who was an officer, did not have any arms [weapons], and we had them all covered with our rifles. We took one and a half miles of ground that day. I fell asleep in the front line with shells bursting around me.<sup>3</sup>

Cambrai is one of the most noteworthy battles of the Great War owing to the introduction on a significant scale of the tank as a weapon of warfare. As previously indicated, the 5th Battalion was there too, and these are Pte Harding's memories of that important action:

At battalion headquarters the noise of the tanks going into action, plus artillery bombardment, created a new sound in the battle symphony ... Our objectives, Gonnellieu and Villers Guislain, were captured. A burnt-out tank straddled the enemy front line, beside this the tank crew and Sergeant Bob Howard, D.C.M., lay dead. There were many German dead, wounded and prisoners.<sup>4</sup>

At Loos, the Somme and also Cambrai the British forces were on the offensive, seeking to push the Germans back whether by means of weight of numbers, tactical skill, technical superiority or military élan. The position in March 1918 was very different, however, for this was the time of the German offensive, the enemy's last major effort of the war. The 8th Battalion was in the line on that occasion and one of the officers charged with resisting the attack was Lt Randall. He recalls vividly the terror of enduring the massive German bombardment which preceded the infantry assault:

When we were in our positions all we could do was crouch low in the trench and pray hard that a shell would not land right amongst us. We were continually smothered with earth caused by bursts just on either side of us, and as a matter of fact two shells actually did fall in the trench. The first slightly wounded Lieutenant Williams, a shrapnel ball embedding itself just over his eye, and four or five other ranks were wounded, two of them severely.

In addition to all the smoke from the shell-bursts, and the gas, there was an unusually heavy fog, and it was impossible to see more than a few yards when one took a rapid glance 'over the top'... We eventually saw a few German scouts loom out of the mist. These were promptly killed. Then appeared their first line of attackers, in extended order, at short intervals and they came on very steadily and made an ugly rush. 'C' Company and its reinforcements were in great form, however, and

not a man got within twenty yards of us. On three separate occasions were these tactics employed against us, but so well did our men use their rifles that each time they were stopped dead. The Lewis Gun did great execution too, and, as one of the gunners remarked afterwards, 'rolled 'em up in heaps'.<sup>5</sup>

Randall and his men were later forced to withdraw in the face of the enemy's onslaught, but the efforts of the 8th Battalion helped to ensure that the German offensive was ultimately repulsed.

### **Local men of the regiment**

The men of the 5th, 6th and 8th Battalions came from various parts of the country, due mainly to the system of allocating drafts to regiments. Nevertheless, about half originated from Reading or elsewhere in Berkshire. Their backgrounds were often very different, but all were united in the common cause as comrades in arms. Some were particularly well educated. Among them was 2nd Lieutenant H.R. 'Rex' Freston, the war poet, who was born in 1891, the son of parents resident at Clewer, Windsor. He was educated at Dulwich College and Exeter College, Oxford. On receiving a commission, he was gazetted into the 3rd Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment, on 22nd April 1915, and was later attached to the 6th. He was killed by a trench mortar at La Boisselle on 24th January 1916. Others were the sons of churchmen. Captain T.H. Hudson, for example, was the second son of the Reverend T.W. Hudson of Great Shefford, Lambourn, and was himself due to be ordained into the ministry and appointed to Twyford parish had the war not intervened. He served as an adjutant with the 5th Battalion and was killed in action at Loos on 13th October 1915. Hudson's two brothers were also commissioned into the Royal Berkshires. Arthur Hudson, a Captain in the 6th Battalion, was killed at the Third Battle of Ypres in 1917, and Noel Hudson, who became Commanding Officer of the 8th in April 1918 at the age of 24, had the very rare distinction of winning a double Distinguished Conduct Medal and double Military Medal. After the war Noel took Holy Orders and later became Bishop of Ely.

Volunteers were also to be found among the business and professional classes. Lieutenant H.P. Dymore-Brown lived at Queen's Road, Reading, and was related to the prominent brewing family of the same name. He was educated at Reading School, where he excelled at sport, and after leaving school worked at the Wokingham branch of Barclays Bank. Dymore-Brown was mobilised on 5th August 1914, while undergoing training with the Berkshire Yeomanry. He was given a commission in the 9th Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment, in January 1915 and was attached to the 5th, serving in France in October the same year. Dymore-Brown was appointed battalion bombing officer in November 1915 and it was while jointly leading a rifle



grenade attack that he was wounded on 17th January 1916, losing his left eye as a result. He was invalided out of the army exactly eleven months later and died from septic pneumonia, following influenza, on 21st February 1919, aged 23. He is buried in St. Peter's Churchyard, Earley.

Most local men who served with the three battalions during the war came from more modest backgrounds, however. Private George Seymour, who belonged to a long-established West Berkshire family which had moved to Iwer Heath, Buckinghamshire, in the mid-1890s, was a domestic servant before the war, working at Eton College among other places. He enlisted in the 8th Battalion on 15th November 1914, and was one of four brothers to serve during the war. After being seriously wounded and gassed on the opening day of the Battle of Loos on 25th September 1915, he was evacuated to England and discharged from the army on 11th August 1916. He died in 1963. Alfred William North also survived the war; indeed, he is today alive and well and living in Hungerford, aged 96. North was born at Eddington on 11th June 1898, and worked as a stable lad at Templeton House before joining Alexanders, the grocers, of Hungerford as a delivery boy. Having tried unsuccessfully to enlist in Newbury in 1916 while under age, North joined up in 1917 at Reading Barracks and was initially drafted into the Somerset Light Infantry with whom he did his training. After landing in France, he was transferred to the 5th Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment, and served with them throughout the remainder of the war.

Of the men of Reading who served with the regiment, many were former employees of Huntley and Palmer's, the biscuit makers. Sergeant J.W. Lambourne was one. He was born at 7, Leopold Road, Reading, and at the time of his enlistment was living further down the road at No. 35. A pre-war Territorial, he served with the 6th Battalion and was awarded the Military Medal for taking the lead, after his officer was killed, in evacuating wounded men while under enemy fire. Another Huntley and Palmer's man was 2nd Lieutenant G.E. Maggs of the 8th, who worked as a clerk and represented the firm at cricket and hockey. Aged 27, he was mortally wounded by a shell on 14th July 1916, while resting in a trench after helping to repulse a German counter-attack.

These are only a few of the men of the three Berkshire battalions whose careers have come to light during the research for this particular project. Many others have been discovered and we hope some of their experiences will form the basis of future publications.

### **The Laying Up of the Colours**

The early disbandment of the 6th Battalion in February 1918 has already been mentioned. The King's Colour was presented to a cadre of the battalion at Reading Barracks on 31st August 1920, and laid up in St. Giles Church.

The 5th Battalion returned to Reading on 18th June 1919, where the men were greeted on their arrival by their original Commanding Officer, Colonel F.W. Foley. The battalion's Colour was laid up in St. Laurence's Church where it hangs today. The 8th Battalion received its Colour on 6th July 1919, and, like that of the 6th, it was laid up in St. Giles Church. Unfortunately, both Colours are today missing.

*This article arose out of a research workshop organised as part of the University of Reading's Extramural Studies programme for 1993–94. The research group is made up of Colin Fox, Barry Croucher, John Chapman, Len Webb, Ian Cull and Martin McIntyre. We set ourselves the task of compiling a collection of materials relating to the 5th, 6th and 8th Battalions of the Royal Berkshire Regiment and their service on the Western Front in the First World War. These battalions were chosen for their local interest and because the men are representative of the several million non-regular soldiers who fought in the conflict on the British side.*

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Interview with Pte Alfred William North by Martin McIntyre, December 1993.

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#### **Acknowledgements**

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The Western Front: Belgium and Northern France, map courtesy of Brian Peters, Technical Support Unit, Faculty of Education and Community Studies, University of Reading.

16 Men of the 5th Battalion Who Served Throughout the War, photograph (PH 6898) courtesy of the County Reference Library, Reading.



## Winkfield marriage horizons, 1754–1899

Marriage horizons measure the distances over which spouses are found. They have been used as indicators of people's past geographical mobility and indeed may be taken to indicate the extent to which a community was outward looking.<sup>1</sup> If all marriages were between those living within local boundaries, personal mobility was likely to be minimal and the locality relatively isolated from outside influences. An outward looking community is more likely to have been one where spouses came from adjoining parishes, or even from further afield.

This study explores the marriage horizons in Winkfield, Berkshire, between the years 1754 to 1899. A Winkfield man marrying a Reading woman could be said to have a marriage horizon of some 11 or 12 miles. It is possible that he visited Reading to court the woman he married. While there, he might have heard the gossip of the day and, in some Reading inn, might have acquired useful knowledge, perhaps about a new method of hoeing, an improved variety of cabbage or the coming of the railway.

For most of the period under discussion the ecclesiastical parish of Winkfield covered the unusually large area of 10,000 acres.<sup>2</sup> Earlier, Winkfield was part of Windsor Forest; Rocque's map of 1761 shows the northern part cleared, with the southern part remaining woodland. Later maps follow this pattern although with increasing clearance.<sup>3</sup> In 1848 the southern part was still three-quarters waste and heathland.<sup>4</sup> By 1905 waste and heath covered under 30% of the entire parish.<sup>5</sup>

The population of the parish, concentrated initially in Winkfield Street, North Street and Winkfield Row, was 1,465 in 1801 (293 families living in 258 houses), 2,185 in 1851 and 4,263 in 1901.<sup>6</sup> As well as the components of Winkfield itself, the parish included parts of Ascot, Bracknell, Braywood and Cranbourne. The parish became smaller in 1851 with the formation of the parishes of Bracknell and Cranbourne and again in 1864 when the parish of Ascot was created.<sup>7</sup>

1

See for example J. Millard, 'A new approach to the study of marriage horizons, reprinted in M. Drake (ed.), *Population Studies from Parish Registers* (1982) p.142.

2

*Victoria County History* (1927) vol.2, p.241.

3

Map in the Windsor Forest Enclosure Act, 1817, and Walters' map of 1823, quoted in J. Harris and G.M. Stanton, *A history of Winkfield* (1971) pp.65–6.

4

Tithe Award, Winkfield South, 1848, quoted in R. Timbrell, *Chavey Up Down and Around*, p.11.

5

As reported by the Board of Agriculture, quoted in *Victoria County History*, vol.3, p.85.

6

Census data quoted in *Victoria County History*, vol.2, p.241 and in Harris and Stanton, *Winkfield*, p.29.

7

Harris and Stanton, *Winkfield*, p.69; Order of Service at laying of Bracknell Church foundation stone.

Until the late nineteenth century the only place of worship was the parish church; chapels were not built in Winkfield until 1867 (Wesleyan) and 1879 (Baptist).<sup>8</sup> This suggests that nonconformist marriages would not have greatly impaired the comprehensiveness of the Church of England register during most of the period, unless local nonconformists were married at Wokingham (seven miles) or Bracknell (three miles) where there were chapels in 1772 and 1813 respectively.<sup>9</sup>

Public transport included, by 1834, coaches which ran from Reading, via Wokingham and Winkfield, to London, and by 1837, a carrier between Winkfield and Reading.<sup>10</sup> The London and South Western Railway arrived at Ascot (2.5 miles) in 1856.<sup>11</sup> A further 'external' influence may have been the local encampment of 5,000 soldiers in the late 1790s in anticipation of a French invasion.<sup>12</sup>

### The marriage registers

The Winkfield marriage registers from 1754 onwards record the place of residence of both bride and groom. This probably resulted from strict adherence to Lord Hardwicke's 1754 'Act for the prevention of clandestine marriages'. This Act called for records to be kept 'in proper books of vellum or good and durable paper' and it also made printed marriage registration forms available for the first time. These forms provided for a record of the parish of residence at the time of marriage.<sup>13</sup>

Four marriage registers cover the years 1754 to 1899, virtually without interruption.<sup>14</sup> During these years 1,185 marriages were solemnised at Winkfield church and their record forms the basis of this study.

### The treatment of the data

Every marriage entry was scrutinised and the parish of residence of each partner was noted. In seven cases both partners came from outside Winkfield and these have been excluded from the analysis since they tell nothing of Winkfield marriage horizons. All the remaining 1,178 marriages have been used, 874 with both parties from Winkfield and 304 with one party from elsewhere. Most of the outsiders were men marrying Winkfield women; only about one-fifth of outsiders were women.

Where one partner came from outside Winkfield, the name of his or her pre-marital place of residence was noted and its distance from Winkfield estimated by triangulation using National Grid references.<sup>15</sup> In five cases

8

*Victoria County History*, vol.3, p.86.

9

*Victoria County History*, vol.3, p.86; Bracknell Independent Church registers.

10

Cowslade's *Directory of Berkshire*, 1834; Ingall's *Directory of Reading* 1837.

11

R.A. Williams, *The London and South Western Railway*, vol.1, p.182.

12

Harris and Stanton, *Winkfield*, p.41.

13

J. Richardson, *The local historian's encyclopedia*, (1981) p.72; Millard, 'Marriage horizons', p.144.

14

Winkfield Parish Registers, Berkshire Record Office, D/P151/1/5/7/9/11. Microfilm versions were originally consulted at the Durning Library, Ascot, but the original registers were also used.

15

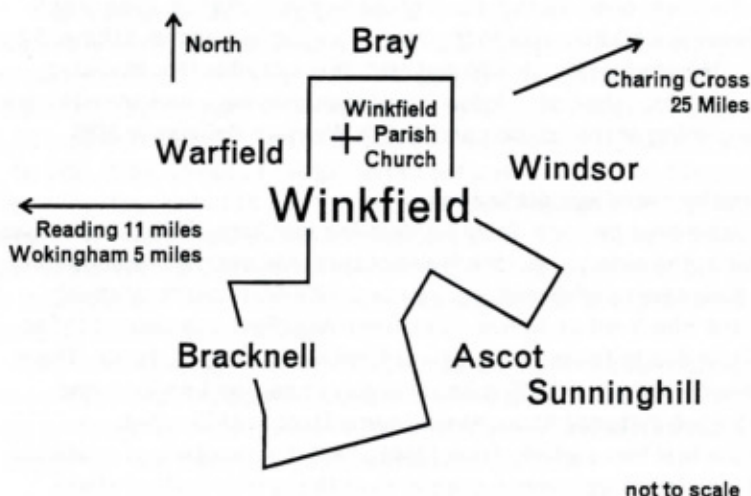
Using triangulation and National Grid references from the Ordnance Survey Atlas of Great Britain, supplemented by various other Ordnance Survey maps and the AA Greater London Street Atlas.



the recorded location of an outsider's place of residence is ambiguous either because no county is given in the register and the stated place name occurs in more than one county or because two places with the same name occur in the specified county. In these cases the place nearest to Winkfield was taken, possibly giving a very slight under-bias to the distance figures.

To discover how marriage horizons changed over time, the data were divided into four sets, each covering roughly the same number of years. In the last chronological period, 1863–1899, marriages were relatively fewer partly due to the loss of territory to other newly-created parishes. This development may also have caused some apparent increase in outsider marriages since some partners in Bracknell, Cranbourne and Ascot might formerly have been treated as living in Winkfield.

For each period the number of marriages involving two Winkfield people and then those involving one Winkfielder and one outsider were calculated (these two types of marriages are known as W/W and W/O for brevity). The W/O marriages were further classified according to the distance of the outsider's location from Winkfield and average distances for each period were calculated. Additionally, the directions from which external partners came were examined. For this analysis a 'quadrant' approach was adopted – classifying locations according to their position within quarters of a circle centred on Winkfield and using lines from the centre to the cardinal points as quadrant boundaries.



*Diagram showing the relationship between Winkfield and some places mentioned in the text*

### Outsider marriage proportions

Over the whole period under study, 1754–1899, 25.8% of marriages involved an outsider. It is noticeable that this proportion was exceeded in the years 1754–1790 and 1863–1899. That Winkfield should be more outward looking in the last half of the nineteenth century, as means of travel and communication improved, is to be expected. The relatively high proportion for 1754–1790 is somewhat less expected and its explanation offers an intriguing challenge.<sup>16</sup> Winkfielders appeared to be least inclined to look afield from 1791–1826 and this may be associated with the French wars of 1793–1815 (when the level fell to 12.8%).

Table 1 *Winkfield outside marriage proportions, 1754–1899*

\* excluding seven cases where both parties were from outside the parish

Period	Total*	W/W	W/O	%W/O
1754–1790	291	211	80	27.5
1791–1826	322	274	48	14.9
1827–1862	335	272	63	18.0
1863–1899	230	117	113	49.1
1754–1899	1178	874	304	25.8

The proportion of outsider marriages varied considerably over this period; a five-year moving average reveals the relatively high level of the earlier years and the lower ones during much of the war with France. (see graph page 57) There is a sudden rise in the level after the war ended, followed by very low levels between about 1820 and 1850. It is possible that the later increase in the proportion of outsider marriages may have had something to do with the coming of the London and South Western Railway in 1856.

### Outsider marriage distances

Using the same time periods, *Table 2* shows the numbers of W/O marriages categorised by the external partner's pre-marital residential distance from Winkfield. Four ranges of distances are used. The first covers relatively local partners who lived up to five miles from Winkfield, the second those who lived from five to ten miles away – still within walking distance. The third extends the range up to 25 miles (roughly to central London), and finally the longer-distance spouses who came from over 25 miles.

During the first two periods, from 1754 to 1826, the numbers of relatively local W/O marriages were much greater than those from further afield.



Table 2 *Winkfield outside marriage distances, 1754-1899*

Period	Total	0-5 miles	5-10 miles	10-25 miles	over 25 miles
1754-1790	80	44	19	11	6
1791-1826	48	23	14	7	4
1827-1862	63	17	17	11	18
1863-1899	113	37	11	32	33
1754-1899	304	121	61	61	61

By 1827-1862 this pattern is less obvious and the last period, from 1863 to 1899, shows considerable numbers at the greater distances, even though local instances of up to five miles remain significant.

In the whole 146 years, 18 'long distance' partners came from over 75 miles: none in 1754-1790; two in 1791-1826; seven in 1827-1862; and nine in 1863-1899. The furthest of these was a woman from Armagh, 320 miles away, who in 1844 married a captain.

Another measure of change over time is the average distance from Winkfield of outside partners. This was eight miles in 1754-1790; 12.8 miles in 1791-1826; 29.9 miles in 1827-1862; and 24.7 miles in 1863-1899. The average for 1827-1862 was boosted by the distant woman from Armagh; excluding her would decrease the average for 1827-1862 to 25.2 miles, still slightly above the 1863-1899 average.

### Outsider marriage directions

As already mentioned a 'quadrant' approach was used to classify the residential locations of outsiders. For the period 1754-1790 the north-east total of 36 includes 20 'locals' from Windsor and Bray; of the south-east total of 19, 13 from Sunninghill; and of the north-west total of 19, 10 from Warfield.

In 1791-1826, 15 out of the 24 north-east cases were from Windsor and Bray, while four out of 18 north-west were from Warfield. In 1827-1862 the Slough / Windsor area remains significant, providing a third of the north-east total, while Warfield accounts for half of the north-west total. By 1863-1899 the locations are much more diverse, the grand total of 113 outsiders coming from over 80 different places.

The north-east quadrant shows the highest numbers throughout and to some extent this may be attributed to Winkfield's proximity to London. Marriage partners from the London area contribute six, three, ten and 14 cases to the north-east total in the respective time periods.

<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">W</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <div>N</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; width: 100px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">19</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">36</div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">6</div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;">E</div> </div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;">S</div> </div>		<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">18</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">24</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">3</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">3</div> </div>		<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">16</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">32</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">9</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">6</div> </div>		<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">25</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">52</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">16</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">20</div> </div>	
		1754-90	1791-1826	1827-62	1863-99		

Table 3 presents the direction data in percentage form and this emphasises the significance of the north-east quadrant. It also demonstrates how northerly (north-east and north-west) and easterly (north-east and south-east) directions were more important than southerly and westerly throughout. The wider dispersion of locations in 1863–1899 is brought out as the four quadrant percentages become less unequal.

Table 3 *Winkfield outside marriage directions, 1754–1899*  
(Quadrant numbers expressed as percentages)

Period	NE	NW	SE	SW
1754–1790	45	24	19	7
1791–1826	50	38	6	6
1827–1862	51	25	14	10
1863–1899	46	22	18	14

In general, the results set out above show that Winkfield people of the marrying kind increasingly looked outside the parish for partners during the years 1754–1899 and that those partners gradually came from further afield. It has also been shown that throughout a greater proportion of extra-parochial partners came from northerly and easterly directions.

This marriage horizon evidence can be taken as a tentative guide to the past general mobility of Winkfield people and indeed to the extent to which the community as a whole was open to outside influence. In this way light may be thrown on obscure matters. It should be remembered that the records used here do not cover Winkfielders who did not marry, or who married elsewhere, or people who may have moved to or away from Winkfield before or after marriage.<sup>17</sup>

Some attempt has been made to compare the Winkfield results with those for other places although these are often on different bases. There seems to have been a general widening of marriage horizons over time, particularly during the second half of the nineteenth century. This corresponds well with Winkfield's experience. All the evidence points to the greater importance of local external partners – say up to five or ten miles distant – especially in the earlier part of the period. A few studies allow comparison of the proportion of extra-parochial partners at given times. Alongside these, Winkfield is notable for its low proportion of 14.9% in 1791–1826 while its figure of 49.1% for 1863–1899 is the highest found for that period.<sup>18</sup>

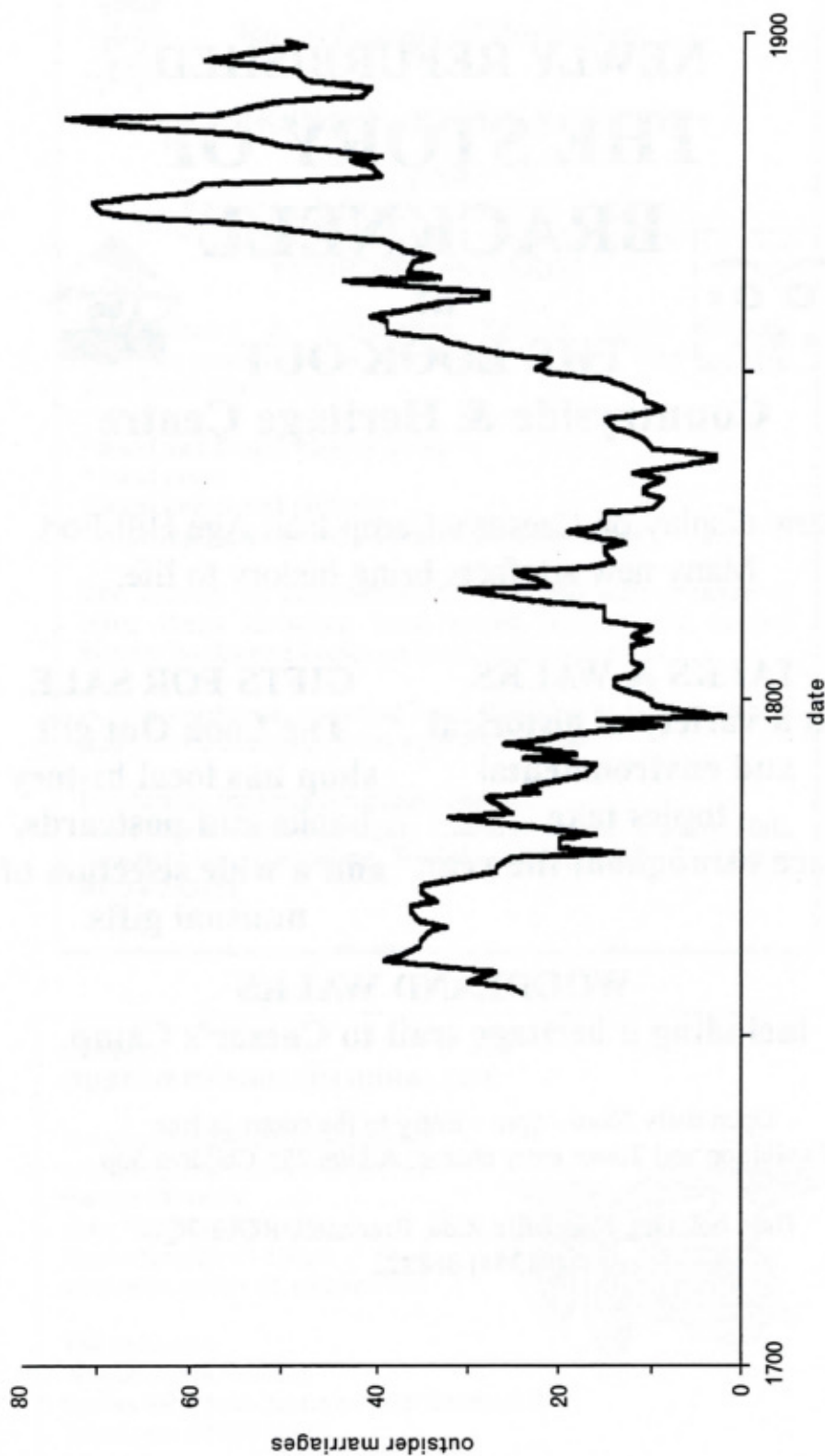
17

For reservations about the representativeness of marriage horizons see: A.J. Pain and M.T. Smith, 'Do marriage horizons accurately measure migration?', *Local Population Studies*, no.33, p.44; and R. Bellingham, 'The use of marriage horizons: some conclusions from a study of Pocklington, East Yorkshire, in the late 18th century', *Local Population Studies*, no. 44, p.52.

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*Marriages involving outsiders 1756-1898*

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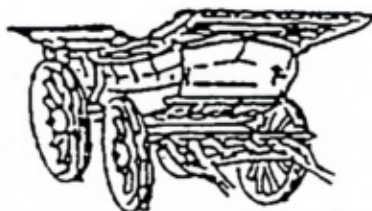
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