

Berkshire Local History Association



**Newsletter No 127
May 2020**

Berkshire Local History Association

Newsletter

Editor: John Chapman

©2020 The authors and The Trustees of the Berkshire Local History Association

PRINTED BY:- Instantprint of Rotherham
instantprint.co.uk

Distribution: Dr Margaret Simons

Website www.blha.org.uk

We ask all member societies and institutions to provide a short report on their activities for inclusion in the Newsletter. We are always interested in articles on other matters and notice of events likely to be of interest to our members.

Contributions should be e-mailed to:- [newsletter @blha.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@blha.org.uk) and arrive not later than the 15th of the month preceding publication (January, May and September) Word, Text or pdf copy is acceptable, but keep it simple and please do not use spaces or tabs to lay out presentations. Photographs and images should be sent separately but please include your society in the name of each photo.

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

Cover picture - 154 Southampton St Reading home of the Samaritans from 1980 to 1993 (see page18)

Chairman's Corner

I was sorry that we had to postpone the 2020 A.G.M. Hopefully, we can hold the brief “business” part of the meeting in October. There did not seem to be any special decisions that needed to be made – but on the other hand, it’s good to have a get-together, to exchange news and ideas, and to see different parts of the county. So I must thank Peter Steere and the members of The Marcham Society, who were all prepared to welcome us on March 28.



At the A.G.M. I was going to announce the venue for the 2021 A.G.M., at the other end of the county, in Eton Wick. We were investigating the possibility of a visit to Dorney Court afterwards. Since the Eton Wick Village Hall is now booked for 2021, perhaps this can go ahead. Thanks are due there to Elias Kupfermann, and the Eton Wick Local History Group for agreeing to be our hosts.

Just before the present emergency, we were preparing to set a date for a BLHA symposium on the Swing Riots in Berkshire. This was to be run in co-operation with the Berkshire Record Society, who are to publish a volume on the subject later this year, and with the Museum of English Rural Life at the University of Reading. All was beginning to fall into place and then . . . We will return to this when the situation becomes clearer, and we will also set a date for a guided walk in the Kintbury/Hungerford area – an area which saw a lot of activity during the unrest of 1830.

My guess is that the restrictions will be lifted only gradually, and that people over a certain age who are not “economically active” may be required to stay at home longer than some younger people, and it may be some time before I can go to pubs, restaurants, concerts, talks . . . and committee meetings.

Many of us who live in Reading will have been disappointed to learn that the old gaol where Oscar Wilde once languished has been sold to the highest bidder – and that the highest bidder was not Reading Borough Council. The council had hoped, together with partners, to re-open the building as an arts hub. The owners, the Ministry of Justice, have not disclosed the name of the successful bidder. Come to think of it, the results of the surveys of the land around the gaol using ground-penetrating radar have not been made public either. Reading Gaol was built over part of the site of the church of Reading Abbey, and the gaol is itself a listed building. Doubtless the information is “commercially sensitive,” and all will be revealed in due course. On Easter Saturday “The Times” carried an article headed: “Save Wilde’s Hellhole for All our Sakes – a Future in which Reading Gaol Becomes a Block of Flats would represent a Crime Against Britain’s Heritage.” Hopefully it won’t come to that!

Meanwhile, on a lighter note, people have been getting on with things. You may have noticed that you can now read all the articles in back numbers of “Berkshire Old and New” on the website – back to 2002 so far. Hopefully in due course we’ll be able

to get back to the beginning. I expect that, like me, many of our members have been getting on with jobs they've been intending to do for a long time, now that they can't get to libraries and record offices. I've been doing a lot of digitising 35mm photographic slides, and I've just got another book off to the printer. If I'm confined to home for much longer, then there'll be nothing for it but to clear out the garden shed! Till we can meet again, stay sensible, safe and well.

David Cliffe

A Word from the Editor

In view of the coronavirus pandemic most local history work came to an abrupt end in March 2020. So we will be taking a somewhat different approach to this newsletter. First we will be using a different printer as the University is closed, but it offers full colour. Second instead of reports on meetings we have invited all societies to send us a short piece which is likely to be of general interest to local historians. Rather than include these under 'articles' we are including them under the name of the submitting society. We are delighted to get so many societies contributing.



John Chapman

Miscellanea

A lesson in French

An English cat called One-Two-Three challenged a French cat called Un-Deux-Trois to a race across the English Channel.

Which one won? One-Two-Three won,
because Un-Deux-Trois cat sank.

Society News and Contributions

Aldermaston History Group

An exhibition was staged by members of the Parish Hall committee in 2017 in Aldermaston Parish Hall, called 'Celebrating our Community – Aldermaston Past and Future', which covered a number of different elements of local history, people, events and activities. This was the stimulus leading to the formation of the History Group.

Many of the participants wondered what might happen to the results of the research which had been collectively undertaken to produce the displays for the exhibition. The creation of a group interested in preserving elements of the past for the benefit of present and future generations seemed the best way forward and built on the germ of an idea which local residents Chris Boott and Tony Girling had previously discussed

about creating a digital archive of local area history.

Aldermaston History Group was formally constituted in February 2018 with some initial funding generously provided by the exhibition organisers and supplemented with a £100 grant from the Parish Council.

The Group's aim was to make local history interesting and accessible to everyone, including arranging talks, collecting oral histories, collating details of history and stories from the wider Aldermaston area and ultimately providing a website with access to digitised material via a cataloguing system.

This was quite an ambitious remit, and, with the website a priority for our 2018 focus, we decided to apply to the National Lottery Sharing Heritage Programme for a grant. Much to our surprise and delight, the Group was awarded a Heritage Fund grant of £9570 to create and run a website, provide training for both website management and content, and separately, training for collecting oral histories.

The key elements of our application were:

- Catalogue – provide a website utilising open source software to create a digital community archive, promoting easily accessible heritage learning opportunities to a diverse audience
- Research – stimulate and support individual or group research projects, enabling people to discover and record their own heritage, and developing skills including collecting oral histories
- Educate – to develop a heritage awareness programme with local schools and also to provide a resource giving everyone the chance to learn in ways which suit them
- Enthuse – engage new and existing audiences throughout the local and wider community at all levels through regular meetings, talks and exhibitions, and by providing an accessible website
- Disseminate – provide accessible digital outputs to stimulate interest in the rich history and heritage assets of the area and give people the opportunity to contribute to the wider community, through volunteering and learning

In addition, we listed a set of specific objectives to deliver in the first year.

We commissioned a specialist company, CommunitySites, to design and build a website with a catalogue and the site went online, with the first tranche of content, in September 2019. We have subsequently had an excellent oral history training session, provided by the Oral History Society in conjunction with the British Library.

Our next immediate priority is to populate the website with additional content to fulfil the objectives of our Heritage Fund grant.

Thanks are due to fellow committee members for sharing their enthusiasm, local knowledge and technical expertise, together with the 40 people we have on our mailing list. Thanks are also due to players of the National Lottery, who made our funding application possible.

New members are always welcome to the Group; the aim is to create a facility for the wider community, for all ages, and to make local history accessible and interesting for everyone.

Peter Hulme
Chair, Aldermaston History Group

Berkshire Archaeological Society

When I joined the Berkshire Archaeological Society in the 1990s, the best explanation of Berkshire's archaeology was in Peake's *The Archaeology of Berkshire* published in 1931. There were individuals working on aspects of Berkshire's archaeology, for example, Luke Over was recording the archaeology round Maidenhead and Cecil Slade was writing about Reading Abbey but nobody was looking at the county as a whole. Since then there have been changes. The Solent Thames Research Framework included details for Berkshire and The Thames through Time series presented the archaeology along the parishes bordering the River Thames from its source to London. Nothing has actually focussed on Berkshire.

Since then I have been working to develop an up to date understanding of Berkshire's archaeology and as a result the Society has published *Living in the Iron Age* in and around Berkshire and *The Land of the Atrebrates: in and around Roman Berkshire*. These volumes took many years to produce and have limited circulation and are still available.

Today the Society has established a Study Group which meets on the first Wednesday of each month, to discuss Berkshire's archaeology. These meetings are currently held online via Skype. To support the group's work the Society has developed the BAS Gazetteer, an information system to record archaeological sites at the level of individual periods of occupation and to create maps. So far, this system holds details of Berkshire's Iron Age sites and we are currently working to load details of Roman and Anglo-Saxon sites.

The first major use of this system is to explain the Roman archaeology across the Berkshire Region and write essays to be published in the Society's website. These essays will cover 12 data collection areas across the Berkshire Region (see map pp 14/15). They are areas round: the Roman town at Wanborough in Wiltshire, the Roman settlement at Wantage and the Berkshire Downs, the settlement at Abingdon, the Roman town at Dorchester on Thames, the Roman town at Mildenhall, the Roman settlement at Thatcham, Silchester, the Middle Thames, The Roman Iron working community south of Bracknell, the Roman town at Staines, the Basingstoke area and the Roman town of Neatham and the River Wey Valley. If you live in one of these areas and are interested in hearing about the results in your area or are interested in joining this effort, please contact me.

Andrew Hutt

email projects@berksarch.co.uk

Berkshire Family History Society

The arrival of coronavirus has changed every historian's life and the lives of those we care about most. The first task for all of us must be to stay safe. And, especially for those among us who are older, maybe our enthusiasm for and interest in history (whatever its form) can help us in navigating our way through this extraordinary time.

The coronavirus outbreak has halted our face-to-face activities for the foreseeable future and The Centre for Heritage and Family History likewise is closed for the time being. However, volunteers have moved very swiftly to introduce new facilities and services for members and the wider public. This report outlines some of these. At <https://berksfhs.org> you will find full details of them all.

The society now publishes a regular electronic newsletter (as well as the quarterly *Berkshire Family Historian*). Subscribers across the world receive their newsletter by email each week. Take up is encouraging (above average for our sector) and feedback extremely positive. If you are not yet a subscriber, simply sign up to receive future issues. The website contains an archive of the earlier newsletters too.

Another key development of recent months is the creation and successful introduction of an online forum, accessible to all society members, and replacing the former discussion list. The new forum offers an important means for historians to keep in touch with one another across a wide range of topics, not all of them confined to Berkshire related matters.

The society acted quickly to adopt ZOOM, a cloud-based video conferencing service, after first adding tightened security controls. This provides a working online medium to bring members and others together for many different purposes. Trustees, society committees and other working groups have continued to keep in touch and meet regularly using this service. Zoom has also enabled the society to reschedule — as online workshops and webinars — some of the previously planned and publicised face-to-face events. These would otherwise have been on indefinite hold with the current ‘lockdown’.

In early April, a sold-out DNA workshop took place using video conferencing, with the group welcoming a number of out of county members and non-members for the first time. The spring beginners’ family history course has been extended into a series of six evening webinars to better suit an online audience. These run during April and May. And two talks in the spring/summer ‘Royalty’ series will take place online too, as well as workshops on Caribbean Records for Family Historians and Merchant Navy Records. Although many of our online attendees have required some support in using ZOOM for the first time, the feedback afterwards has been immensely positive and they have come away far more confident to do more online in the future.

Work continues towards new publications. While our transcribers can no longer work at the Record Office for the time being, they continue to work steadily on material at home. A new Childrey St Mary CD has just joined the society’s parish register collection. You can purchase this CD, and any other currently listed society CD, by using the online Shop. At present, the society is unable to fulfil orders for books, because its stockholdings are inaccessible.

Catherine Sampson

Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group (BIAG)

We began our 2020 programme in January with a talk on the Institute of Civil Engineering’s Panel of Historical Engineering Works (PHEW), from one of our

members who is the representative for the 'South East – Thames Valley' on the panel. He spoke to use about the heritage work of the Institute and how the PHEW operates. The Panel identifies historical engineering works that are worthy of recording, promoting, and in some cases, preserving for posterity, helps to organize groups of civil engineers in the regions who are interested in the history of their profession, and publishes a quarterly newsletter, regional guides and leaflets on the subject. It also works with the regions to commemorate structures and engineers by putting up plaques to bring these to public attention.

February saw an interesting talk from the Reading Bell Tower Community Association who cover the around the Caversham Road area of Reading. The content covered the many industrial sites and companies that have been present in this small area of Reading between the railway and Caversham Bridge. A copy of the talk is on our website along with a longer article on Cox & Wyman, which was a longstanding print firm who site was bulldozed earlier this year.

Following our successful Christmas event we held a film show which focussed on canals and canal traffic, including two very informative films on the Anderton Boat Lift on the Trent and Mersey Canal and the Falkirk Wheel on the Forth & Clyde canal.

More information on our programme of activities and membership can be found on our website www.BIAG.org.uk.

Jo Alexander-Jones

Burnham Historians

New use for a fire engine 50 years ago

First published in the Oct/Nov 2018 edition of Round and About, Burnham's local community magazine

Burnham Historians have received a Slough newspaper cutting from 1966, sent by Mr Edward Lobjoit. Headed 'Students' new taxi goes like blazes' it continues:

"Up to Liverpool on Monday went 12 trainee teachers - in a fully-equipped ex-Burnham fire engine. The pre-war engine, still fitted with a 100 gallon tank, pump and hose, is owned by 22- years-old David Herbert, of 72 Tuns Lane, Slough, who uses it to run a taxi service each term to Edge Hill College in Lancashire.

He bought the 1943 Austin last October from Wellesley Autos, of Hencroft Street, for £80 - after he had beat them down from £250. The logbook shows the first owner as the Secretary of State to the Home Office, and it is believed to have seen service during the war at ICI Paints Division. Later it was with Burnham Fire Brigade for ten years before being sold by auction. The working pump was used by Wellesley Autos for washing down cars before David bought it, and the flashing lights, search-lights and bell are also fully operational. The 27 horse-power engine is still capable of giving 70 mph although petrol consumption works out at about 12 miles to the gallon.

After David bought it, a group of students at Edge Hill College financed the

insurance and work needed to turn it into a long distance bus. He is the principal owner, having earned the money to buy it by driving double-decker buses for Thames Valley last summer.

On Monday morning David set off from Tuns Lane with fellow students Susan Moore of South View Road, Marlow and 'Flicki' Hayns of Burlington Road, Burnham, and Cleopatra, Flicki's pet guinea pig. Then



The students set out for Liverpool in 1966

he shot off to Charing Cross, where other students, who had come from as far as Worthing and Brighton, were loaded aboard. At the college David uses the engine as a runabout and for his teaching practice. It is also used to take parties of school-children and students on trips, and has so far been to the Blackpool lights, potholing in Yorkshire and to football and ice-skating outings."

The Home Office reference is explained by the fact that it supplied vehicles to the National Fire Service which was formed by nationalising the Fire Service in 1941. In August of that year local authority brigades were taken over, with Burnham becoming B6, Fire Force 15 which included Bucks, Berks and Oxon. The Reg No. of the engine was GXH 284, where the prefix XH was a London one.

An Internet image of this preserved vehicle is dated May 1995, but its present whereabouts are unknown.

Mary Bentley

Earley Local History Society

The Earley Domesday

Domesday is written in a heavily abbreviated Latin with small Marks to show where a letter or letters have been left out. The following is an expanded translation of the entry of the royal manor of Earley, Berkshire.

The king (William) holds in demesne (in lordship that is, by and for himself;) he has not let it out to a sub-tenant) Earley. Almar (an Anglo-Saxon) held it in alod (freehold) from King Edward, Then (in 1066, it was assessed for tax purposes) at 5 hides, now in 1086 it is assessed for (the equivalent of) 4 hides, (There is) Land for use by 6 ploughs. In demesne (on the lord's land there. is land for) 1 plough and (there are) 6 villans (villagers) and 1 bordar (smallholder) With 3 ploughs. There (are) 2 slaves (owned by the king) and (there are) 2 fisheries worth (rendering) 7s and 6d (per

year) and 20 acres of meadow (There is) Woodland for (feeding) 70 pigs.

At the time of King Edward (1066) it was worth 100s and afterwards (when William accepted the manor) and now (1086) it is worth 50s.

Friends of Reading Abbey

The Shrine of Saint James at Reading Abbey

Article by J B Hurry published in the Reading Mercury 16th Oct 1915

The “noble and royal monastery of Reading” owed its foundation and much of its prestige to a famous relic, the hand St. James, which was presented to it by King Henry Beauclerc, and attracted many pilgrims to its shrine. Some of these were impelled by the ardour of their faith, some by the desire for healing, some by the promise of indulgences, some by the reputation of the Reading monks, who, in the words of William of Malmesbury, were “a noble pattern of holiness, and an example of unwearied and delightful hospitality”.

In mediaeval days the relics of apostles and saints ranked amongst the most coveted possessions of religious house; they were preserved in shrines of great value and beauty, and brought much wealth to the monastic treasury.

Thus, the relics and shrine of St. Alban’s, the “noble martyr of Jesus Christ,” was visited by numerous British Sovereigns, who left precious gifts behind them. St. Thomas’s shrine at Canterbury attracted over 200,000 visitors a year. At St. Swithin’s shrine at Winchester, the sick were said to be healed at the rate of three to eighteen a day. The image of the Virgin at Walsingham and the relic of her milk gained a European reputation for its numerous pilgrimages, and the immense riches derived from them. King and peasant, foreigner and native, cleric and layman, all wended their way to Walsingham.

Few saints enjoyed a greater popularity than St. James the Greater. The shrine at Compostella, where his body is said to rest, attracted devotees from every corner of Christendom. Whole fleets loaded with English pilgrims plied from Dover. Dartmouth, Bristol and other ports, each ship carrying from thirty to a hundred passengers. An English traveller in the fourteenth century relates how he saw lying in the harbour of Corunna, the port for Compostella, eighty shiploads of pilgrims, of which thirty vessels came from England.

Reading Abbey, with its famous relic of St. James, shared in the popularity accorded to that saint. Henry Beauclerc received the relic from his daughter, the Empress Maud, who brought it with her from Germany, and appears to have attached immense value to the gift.

In Roger of Hoveden’s words,” Henry, King of England, in his joy at gaining possession of the hand of St. James the Apostle, founded the noble Abbey of Reading, enriched it with many possessions, and placed in it the hand St. James.

In his quaint phraseology Capgrave writes “For joye of this hand the kyng foundid a

nobil monasterie of munkys at Redyng.”

This hand appears have been presented to Reading Abbey by Henry Beauclerc in 1125, the gift being accompanied by the following letter:

“Henry, King of England and Duke of Normandy to the Abbot and Convent of Reading, greeting: Know ye that the glorious hand of the blessed James the Apostle which the Empress Matilda, my daughter, gave me on her return from Germany, I. at her request, send to you and grant for ever to the Church of Reading. I command you, therefore, to receive it with all veneration and that you and your successors take care to show it in the Church of Reading all possible honour and reverence, as is due to important a relic of so great an Apostle.”

The Emperor Frederick I. seems to have tried unsuccessfully to persuade Henry II to return the hand to Germany. For Henry thus replies to the Emperor:

“Of the hand of St. James of which you have written us we have put our answer into the mouth of Master Herbert and of William our Clerk. Witness Thomas the Chancellor (i.e. Thomas à Becket) at Northampton.”

This highly prized relic was in the first instance enclosed in a case of gold, of which it was stripped by Richard I. But in order to compensate the abbey for this loss, King John made a grant of a mark of gold to be paid annually at the Exchequer, which Henry III afterwards changed to ten marks of silver.

Subsequently the relic may have been preserved in a valuable gold casket, of which the abbey was very proud. This casket was in the form of a little shrine, and garnished with sapphires, Oriental pearls, rubies, and various other stones (camahut, balamitibus). Its weight was 20lb. 9oz. 7dwt. and its value about £200, equivalent to a far larger sum to-day. If this casket formed the reliquary for the hand, it was probably preserved behind the high-altar in a special chapel, where it would form the central attraction in the processional way followed by the pilgrims to the abbey.

In mediaeval days the visit to Compostella must have involved serious hardships, even for pilgrims in robust health. The small size of the mailing boats, the risk of storms, the horrors of sea sickness, the arrival at Corunna amongst foreigners, the overland journey to Compostella might well daunt even ardent devotees. Probably, therefore, many such were content with the less fatiguing visit to Reading, where the lavish hospitality of the monks, the splendour of the church, the dazzling shrine, the tomb and monument of Henry I, and the promise of indulgences formed powerful attractions.

Pilgrims to Compostella were in the habit of bringing scallop-shells home with them as a voucher of their successful visit, these shells, the *Pecten Jacobaeus*, being exceedingly common on the shores of Galicia, Thus came about the association of the scallop-knells with Reading Abbey, which owned so famous a relic of St. James, and whose shield of arms has a blazon azure three escallops or.



Although the shrine at Reading could not rival Canterbury or Walsingham in popularity, there is abundant evidence that it was *The three-scallop badge of Reading Abbey*

known far and wide as a resort of pilgrims. That evidence consists in the establishment of a fair, and in the promise of indulgences to pilgrims. Fairs owe their origin mainly to the gathering of pilgrims at the shrines of martyrs and saints, especially in connection with annual festivals. As Morley says: "The first fairs were formed by the gathering of worshippers and pilgrims about sacred places, and especially within or about the walls of abbeys and cathedrals on the feast-days of the saints enshrined therein."

The founder had originally granted to the abbey a fair on the feast of St. Laurence (August 10-13). This was confirmed by Henry II in 1156-57, but seems soon afterward to have been cancelled. In its place was granted a fair of the same duration on the feast of Saint James (July 25th-28th); special injunctions were laid down that no one coming to, or returning from, this fair was to be interfered with.

The number of pilgrims seems to have steadily increased, and to have taxed the accommodation originally provided for them in the hospitium. Accordingly, about the year 1190, a much larger building, known as the Hospitium of St. John, was erected by Abbot Hugh II, to replace the original building.

Further evidence is supplied by the indulgences granted to pilgrims.

Thus Hilary, Bishop of Chichester (1147-1165), with the assent of Jocelin, diocesan Bishop (of Salisbury), granted an indulgence for fifteen days to all who visited the reliques of St. James the Apostle at the abbey, upon his festival, or within the octave of the same.

Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of Hereford (1146-1155), granted an indulgence for twenty days to all who visited the reliques of St. James the Apostle at the same annual festival.

A similar indulgence was granted for forty- days, under the same conditions by Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury.

Bartholomew, Bishop of Exeter (1161-1184), granted an indulgence for twenty days to all who visited the reliques of St James the Apostle at the abbey, upon his festival or within the octave of the same.

In 1253 an indulgence was granted by Boniface, Archbishop of Canterbury for forty days to all who visited the altar of St. Thomas the Martyr in the abbey upon the feast of his passion and translation.

Lastly, John, Archbishop of Dublin (1292) granted an indulgence for forty days to all who visited and bestowed donations upon the abbey.

These documents granted by a variety of prelates, in one case an Irish one, show how far the reputation of the abbey had spread as a resort of pilgrims. Moreover, a Harleian manuscript (1708, fol. 15b) expressly states that "the relic attracted many pilgrims."

If we may for a moment allow free play to our imagination, we can picture to ourselves strings and cavalcades of pilgrims wearing coarse homespuns and large hats turned up in front with scallop or cockle shells affixed. Some trudge barefoot through the market place of early Radingia; some ride on mules; the sick and aged are borne on litters. When they reach the great Compter Gate, they buy tapers and votive offerings, cross the Forbury and enter the church, march up the imposing Norman nave, singing hymns and preceded by a monk bearing a processional cross. Almost all the great monastic churches, including that of Reading, were so planned as to provide a parapsidal procession path passing round the chancel. The exact position of St. James' shrine is unknown, but it was probably placed in the usual position at the back of the

high-altar. At any rate, it is on record that at a later date Dr. London, one the Royal Commissioners for the Visitation of Monasteries, lokkyd the relykes behynde ther high awlter.”

At this spot the procession would halt, and every pilgrim would reverently kneel and pray at the relic of the great Apostle. The pathetic cry,” Sancte Jacobe, ora pro me.” Or “ Sancte Jacobe, intercede pro me,” would echo through the choir much as similar invocations may be heard at modern shrines. How better could time and money be spent than in prayer and in obtaining indulgences “a culpa et a poena,” that would remit both guilt and punishment? We may sure that many a pilgrim returned home in peace of mind. “Not in vain he wore his sandal-shoon and scallop-shell.”

Reading Abbey was frequently visited by the reigning Sovereign during his progress through the land, and many records of such events are preserved. One the first royal functions would doubtless be a prayer at the shrine of St. James and a visit to the adjoining tomb and effigy of Henry Beauclerc.

But even more important was the great annual festival of St. James on July 25, associated with the fair mentioned above. Doubtless crowds of pilgrims assembled from far and near. The relic in its precious shrine would be placed on a feretory and carried in procession round the church.

This famous relic is referred to in the report made to Thomas Cromwell by Dr. John London, one of the visitors appointed to report on the monasteries. Writing on September 18, 1538, London says:

“I have required of my lord Abbott the relykes of hys howse, wich he shewyd unto me with gudde will. I have taken an inventory of them and have lokkyd them upp behynde ther high awlter and have the key in my keeping, and they be always rody at your lordship’s commaundement.”

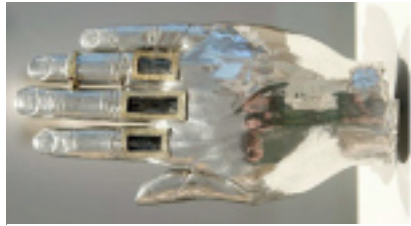
He then proceeds to mention “Saynt James’ hande ’ amongst “the relyques of the Howsse of Redyng.”

The shrine of St. James was demolished at the time when a wholesale desecration of the abbey took place in the sixteenth century. These peculiar treasures associated with the revered memory of a saint or Apostle seemed to excite the special hatred of an iconoclastic age. All reverence for the symbols of holy things vanished from the land. The more costly the shrine which a beautiful piety had provided, the greater the cupidity aroused.

Close to the shrine of St. James was the tomb of the royal founder, surmounted by a life-size effigy of Henry Beauclerc who, according to tradition, had been buried in a silver coffin. The desire to discover this hidden treasure doubtless stimulated the work of demolition. The royal grave was rifled, and the mouldering remains scattered to the winds of heaven.

In October, 1786, some workmen, while making excavations at the eastern end of the abbey, discovered in the church wall a left human hand, which is now preserved in the sacristy of St. Peter’s, Marlow-on-Thames. All the phalanges remain in situ, the

enveloping skin being black and shrivelled; but the metacarpal bones and the tendons at the back of the hand are absent. Two or three of the carpal bones remain, and the tendons in the palm are perfect, and appear to have been torn off just above the wrist. The thumb is bent a little inwards, and the fingers arc bent towards the palm. The hand as a whole is small and slender.



The hand excavated in 1786

There has been much discussion as to the genuineness and antiquity of this hand. Father John Morris regarded it as the undoubted relic of St. James, and speaks of the “precious treasure that has survived the destruction of the abbey built to receive it,” Other writers suggest that it may have been the hand of Queen Adeliza, wife of Henry Beauclerc, or of St. Anastasius, whose hand also formed one of the relics at the abbey. The evidence of identification is unsatisfactory.

Lindsay Mullaney

Goring Gap Local History Society

We managed to hold three talks and two outings this year before the lockdown due to the coronavirus situation.

Our first speaker in January 2020 was Steve Parrinder who told us all about Eynsham Abbey which was to the west of Oxford. It was one of the very few religious foundations in England in continuous use from the late Saxon period to the Dissolution. Its first Benedictine Abbot was a renowned scholar and teacher Aelfric. The abbey was frequently visited by medieval kings given its close proximity to the royal hunting lodge at Woodstock, but little remains of the buildings today. The parish church is on the same site, however. The local connection is that estates in South Stoke and Goring belonged to the Abbey until the Dissolution.

In February Stephen Barker gave us a rather different perspective of World War I when he considered what happened in Oxfordshire after the armistice was signed. There was considerable unrest, as well as moves to commemorate the conflict such as the erection of war memorials to honour those who had died from parishes across the county.

Liz Woolley, one of our regular speakers, came in March to describe the generosity of Lord Nuffield, the motor car manufacturer, to the Oxford colleges. Coming from humble beginnings, William Morris started out with a cycle shop in Oxford before going on to create the Morris motor works at Cowley. He became an extremely rich man and a generous benefactor to many causes, including the Oxford colleges and academic research in fields which were of personal interest, such a medicine and engineering.

A damp day in February saw nearly 30 members heading to London on the train to visit the Royal Mews at Buckingham Palace. After inspecting not only the horses but

many splendid state carriages and other vehicles used by the Royal family, after lunch the group adjourned to the adjacent Queen's Gallery to see the current exhibition on the art collection of King George IV. This comprised paintings, sculpture, furniture, silver and gold work and ornate furniture – a feast for the eyes!

Our next outing took place on 11 March, not long before personal restrictions were imposed due to the Covid-19 outbreak. A merry coach load set out to visit the National Brewery Centre at Burton on Trent and by the end of the visit most of the party was even merrier, thanks to the beer samples that had been consumed after a most fascinating guided tour. This took in the history of brewing, as well as the local industry in Burton, but everyone loved the horses best – gentle giants which in the past used to pull the drays but in modern times are in most demand at weddings.

We had other great trips planned for the forthcoming months, but sadly these have been postponed indefinitely, along with our monthly talks. Currently, like most other local history societies no doubt, we are keeping in touch by email newsletters and hoping that our members stay safe and well until we can meet again.

Janet Hurst, Secretary.

(www.goringgaphistory.org.uk; email goringgaphistory@gmail.com)

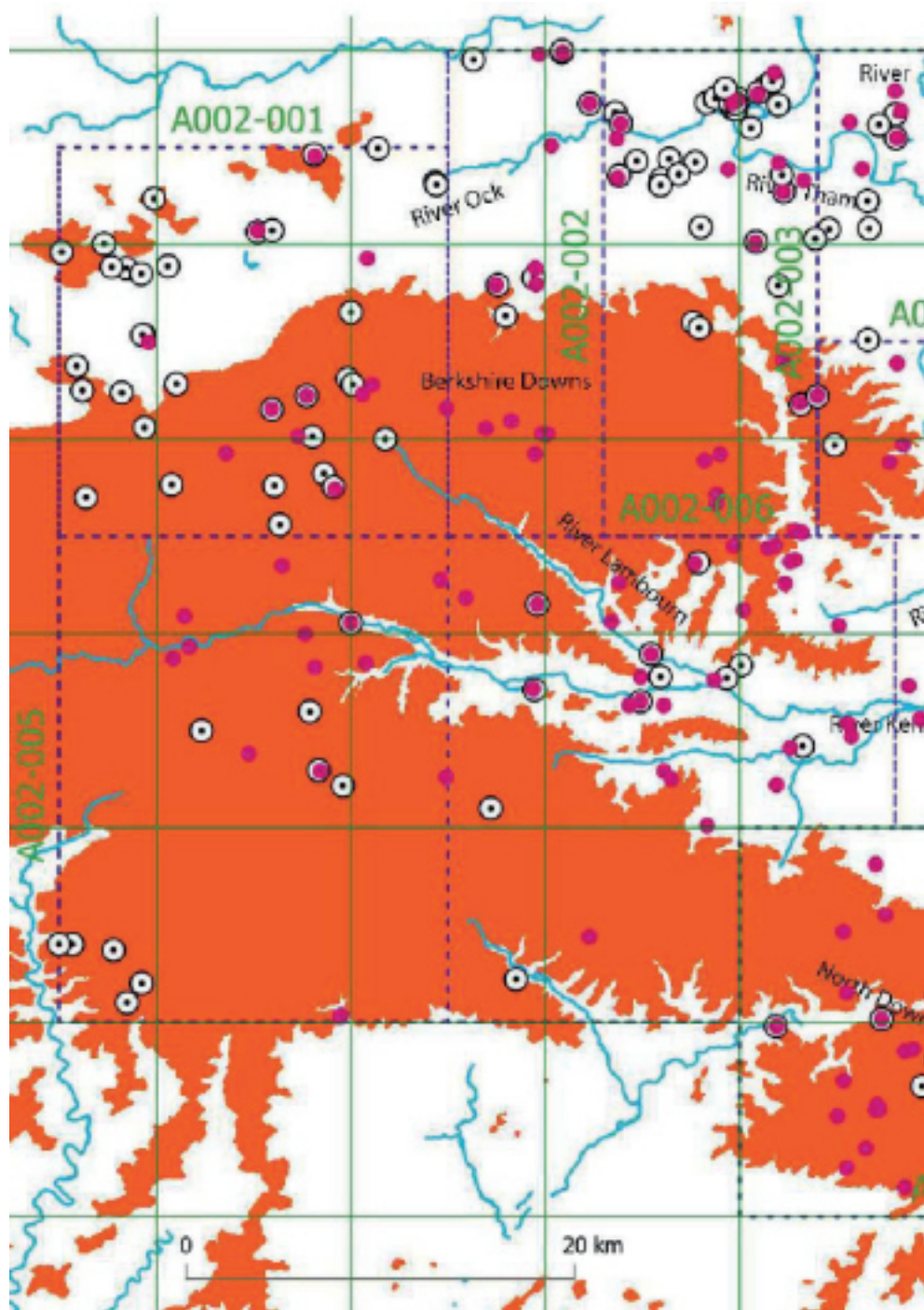
Hanney History Group

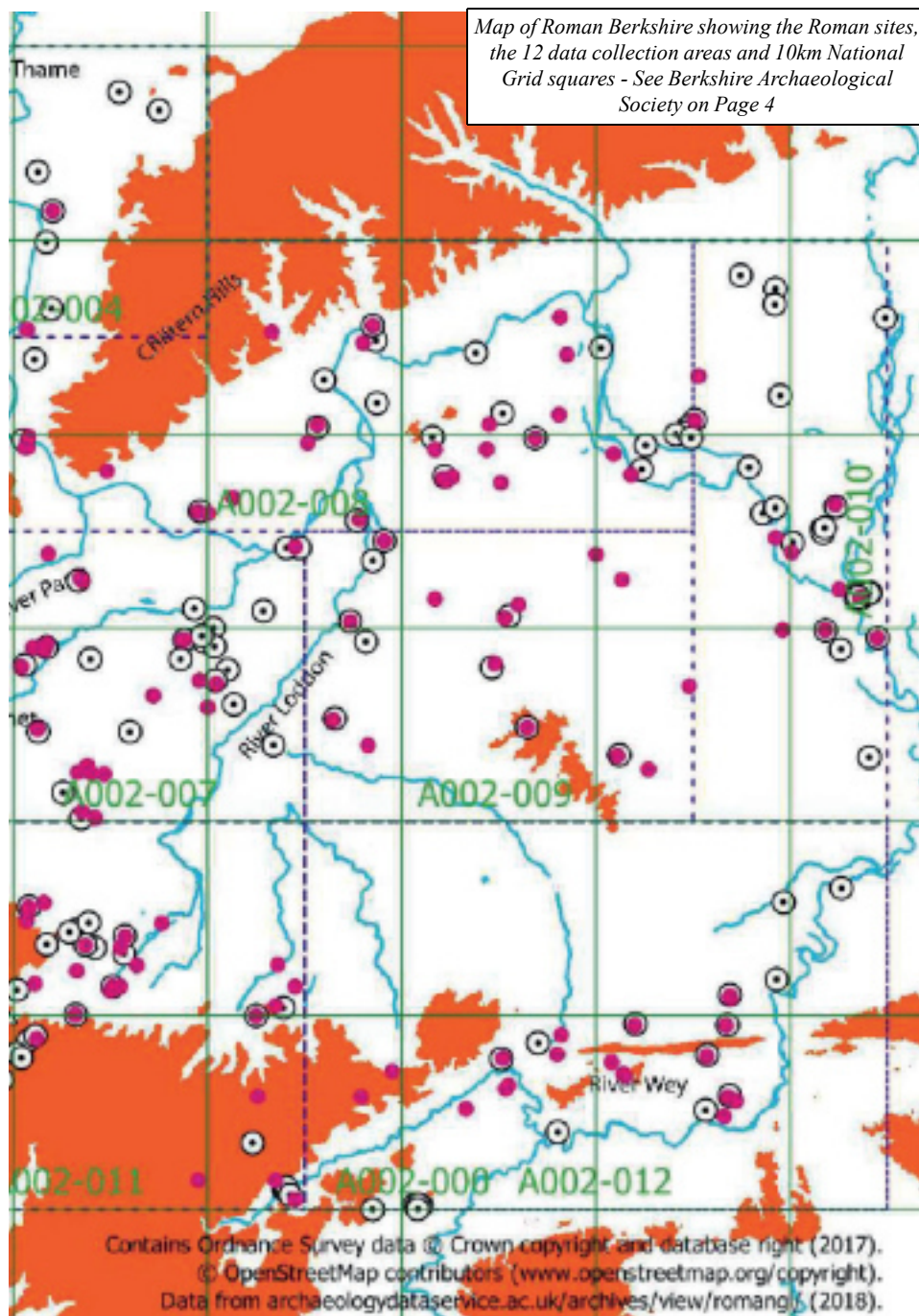
Hanney Characters

One of our earliest “Lockdown” casualties was that Hanney History Group was unable to hear its newly appointed Chairman, Andy Robertson, give a not too serious run through “Hanney Characters through the Ages”, in three broad headings.

The first, “Church & School”, would have shown the intriguing plaque commemorating the death of Elizabeth Bowles in 1718 at the ripe age of 124 – and that nothing else at all is known about her. Extracts from the School Log would have seen the headmaster lamenting that “Arithmetic fails altogether”. For instance, on 12th November 1880, children were not even able to answer this simple test: “I went to town with a ten-pound note and paid 14/- for a hat, 16/6 for gloves and a bill at the butchers for £2/12/10d. How much money had I when I returned?” – disgraceful! At least there were pupils at school that day – some years before, on 31st January 1872, water was “high upon a foot deep along the road from East Hanney. Only 12 children present.” But some things don't change – as a result of a measles epidemic in Autumn 1902, the Chief Medical Officer wrote: “I visited Hanney yesterday and conclude that your school better be closed at once.”

“Toffs & Traders” would have included Sir William Scroggs, who in the 1600s was known as “the most detested Lord Chief Justice England has ever had” for his hatred of Catholics. He was ultimately impeached by the House of Commons for taking bribes and released on £10,000 bail – a fair sum in those days! Or maybe John Pollexfen Bastard, one of the biggest landowners in East Hanney at the time of the 1803 Enclosure – who just happened to be MP for Truro in Devon and lived near Plymouth? At a humbler level, Charles Aldworth moved to Hanney in the 1850s as a





carpenter and coffin maker – known for “doing a beautiful funeral”. But from a local history viewpoint, his son Alfred took the trouble to collect Hanney Parochial Magazines from the 1870s to 1890s, which remain intact and were donated to Hanney History Group as recently as 2015. They give a unique insight into real life in those difficult economic times. But perhaps Hanney’s most unusual trader was James Holmes, who moved to Hanney as a “scholar” in the 1871 census. As a committed Malthusian, he was concerned that rapid population growth would only be checked by starvation. To prevent this, he published a booklet “True Morality” which promoted contraception, and established a business selling contraceptives – delivered by bicycle to the Post Office in Wantage. And for this he was prosecuted both in Abingdon and Reading.

Finally, “Fun and Games” would have mentioned James Holmes’ sons, Fred and John, who established the Berkshire Aviation Company in 1919, offering “joy riding” experiences from a field off the road between Hanney and Steventon. With Alan (later Sir Alan) Cobham they went on to tour England, giving most people their first experience flying – by Spring 1922 they had carried 33,700 passengers. At a less elevated level, in the 1950s the Old Mill House in East Hanney became a select “Country Club” run by Anne de Winton, whose husband, Brigadier Robert de Winton had been assassinated in Italy in 1947. Regular visitors were John Betjeman, Osbert Lancaster and members of the Lambourn horse-racing community celebrating a “win”. But returning to our “Church” heading, another tippler was the Rev ***, Vicar of Hanney, who tumbled so extensively, the story goes, that he regularly had to be carried back to the Vicarage in a wheelbarrow!

A C W Robertson

Project Purley

What's a Rector worth?

Not a lot! I hear you say. well today we usually describe them as invaluable, even though it is not one of the best paying professions around. with the recent huge losses by the church Commissioners, parishes are going to have to be very realistic as to whether or not they can afford one, even at today's prices.

But it was not always like that. While I was browsing in the Lambeth Palace library a few weeks ago I came across some of the personal papers of Benjamin Skinner who was our Rector from 1766 to 1787. The reason his papers were among the archbishop's things was that his wife was the sister of the then Archbishop.

In June 1777 he set down on paper a statement of his income and expenditure and it makes interesting reading. on the debit side he had:-

	£	s	d
Land Tax	13	6	0
Fee Farm rent	3	4	8

Quit rent	2 0
Tenths	1 6 3
Books procured	2 8
Archdeacons procurations	9 8 (Parish share)
Synodals	3 0
Pensions	4
Repairs	1 14 9

total	21 0 0

He did a deal with John Sherwood, a local farmer, who agreed to rent his Glebe lands for £130 and pay all parish taxes, and he hired a curate, Charles Chambers, at £30 pa to do the actual work for him. This left him with a clear profit of £89.

He also held the living of Waddesdon and with a similar calculation estimated its profit at £107 and he had loaned out a sum of £800 for £32 interest pa. In other words he received a total of some £228-2-3 essentially for doing nothing. This was probably equivalent to a salary of about £150,000 pa nowadays if you compare it to a low paid worker then who might earn £25 pa (£15,000 today).

John Chapman

Samaritans

While clearing out old paperwork in St Giles church, Reading in early 2020 the original documents setting up the Reading branch of Samaritans were found and passed to the current Reading Samaritans' Director. Here is a summary of how this charity with the mission to 'make sure there's someone there for anyone who needs someone' began in Reading.

The Samaritans charity was founded in 1953 by Chad Varah, the vicar of St Stephen's Walbrook, who expressed his idea as "In an emergency the citizen turns to the telephone and dials 999. There ought to be an emergency number for suicidal people". Varah knew the service would only work if people knew about it. Luckily, his work writing and illustrating articles for children's comics meant he had contacts at many national newspapers. In December 1953, just a month after launching, the Daily Mirror coined the phrase 'Telephone Good Samaritan'. Although Samaritans is not a religious organisation, the name stuck and word spread far and wide.

In March 1962, less than ten years after the initial idea for Samaritans arose, we find the Reverend Philip Miller of St Giles church, Reading, writing to his colleagues in the deanship advising them that the Reverend A.W.H. Cooke would be supervising the newly formed Samaritans Association in Reading and asking for their assistance in seconding 'lay people who are competent to help' and noting that 'the choice of fit people for this work is difficult but I think many may desire to enlist as friends (supporters)'.

By May 1962 the Reverend Cooke is advising senior members of the church on progress and reiterating the Dean's desire for the Reading Samaritans branch 'to be first and foremost a handmaid of the church'. Reverend Cooke notes that they still require 'a goodly number of volunteers to man the service' and that he has discovered that 'sometimes the most suitable people are most diffident on offering themselves'. He goes on to request that each church in the deanery be asked to contribute £3 towards the cost of installing and paying the rental for two telephones for a year at a total cost of £52, with the rest of the funding to come from public appeal. He also notes that the congregation of St Giles had already 'done their share in finding, decorating and heating a room in their hall'.

The opening of the Reading branch was planned for 24th June 1962 and would be preceded by a series of instructional talks from Samaritans volunteering at St Stephens Walbrook in London who were to be personally nominated by Chad Varah. These talks took place on 2nd and 16th June in St Giles' church hall and included active listeners, friends who were to support the charity and the clergy. However they exceeded their goal and had the telephones continuously manned from midday on 15th June.

On the original form to enrol as a 'Friend of the Samaritans of Reading' the friend was asked to promise to (1) Pray for those carrying out the work of helping the mentally depressed, (2) Pray for those in mental stress, and (3) Assist in any material way (they) can. The form finishes with a prayer for the Samaritans of Reading.

The Samaritans stayed in the basement of St Giles' church hall in Southampton Street until 1968, using a tiny room for the telephone calls and the cupboard under the stairs as a face-to-face interview room. As the operation grew this proved to be too small a location and on 8th July 1969 the Samaritans Office in Trinity Congregational church, Sidmouth Street, Reading was officially opened by Mayor Lovett.

The branch remained in the Sidmouth Street location until 1979 when the church was forced to close through decreasing membership and increasing expenses with the final service taking place on 6th May. On 31st March 1979 the Samaritans were given formal notice of the expected change, although it was made clear that lettings would be honoured by the District Council who took over the building. In response to this situation the Reading Samaritans directors decide to appeal for funding to allow the purchase of a permanent home for the branch. The appeal states that 'last year alone over 2,000 anxious, despairing people telephoned or visited the Reading Samaritans for the first time. Including repeat calls from their existing clients they dealt with approximately 12,000 contacts in the year.'

Over £60,000 was raised and in 1980 154 Southampton Street, Reading was purchased. The five storey Victorian dwelling sits on the corner of Chesterman Street, and is now home to two flats. The branch stayed at this location for thirteen years providing their telephone and face-to-face services with calls rising to over 25,000 per annum by 1990.

By the early 1990s Reading Samaritans had outgrown the premises in Southampton Street and the design of the building was proving difficult with the growing need for repairs and the issue of access for disabled callers. Once again an appeal was made for funds, this time for £125,000 to purchase a bigger and more suitable building. The funds were forthcoming and a building was purchased at 59a Cholmeley Road in Reading's New Town area in 1993. This location was originally a builders' yard and offices and offered suitable rooms for taking phone calls, face-to-face discussions and for administrative activities. It remains the home of the Reading Samaritans, who answered over 40,000 calls in 2019 along with the many outreach events that they run to engage and support the surrounding communities.

Jo Alexander-Jones

Shinfield & District Local History Society

Our AGM was held on 14th January. The Chairman and Treasurer were re-elected to serve for a further year but our long-serving Secretary announced that she would be standing down. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to find anyone to take on the full duties of Secretary so the various tasks are now being shared by a number of members.

At our February meeting, two of our members, Catherine Glover and Professor Richard Hoyle, gave a talk on "The 1941 National Farm Survey: local and national perspectives". The purpose of the survey was to establish the ability of the UK to support itself during the Second World War and was prompted by lessons learned in the First World War. County War Agricultural Executive Committees (CWAECs) were set up to implement policies of central government at county level. A general survey of farming was conducted by the CWAECs in 1940 but, in 1941, a more comprehensive survey of individual farms was carried out under instruction from the Government. Farmers were required to complete a set of forms detailing the size of each farm, the crops and livestock produced, and the equipment and other items (e.g. tractors, horses, ploughs) available. Maps were compiled showing the extent of each farm and who farmed it. Surveyors visited each farm to assess its productivity and the way in which it was managed. Farmers were then graded A, B or C according to the surveyor's assessment of their effectiveness. Those farmers graded B or C were subsequently instructed to improve their performance. Farmers were told what crops they had to grow, many of which proved unsuitable for the land to which they were assigned.

This was a very informative talk, illustrated throughout with examples of maps and completed survey forms relating to Shinfield parish. All subsequent meetings have now been cancelled until September owing to the coronavirus situation. We hope to resume meetings in the Autumn but this will be subject to further review.

George Taylor

Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society

Sounds of Yesteryear

On 9th March Lorne Clark gave a well informed illustrated talk entitled The Sounds of Yesteryear using selected items from his collection of vintage home entertainment equipment that spanned more than 100 years. This amazing demonstration started with an Edison Fireside phonograph, a mechanical wonder that plays cylinder recordings. That was followed with a Decca Portable Gramophone that cost £6 10s in 1922 to an EKCO Portable television costing £49 3s 4d plus £20 2s 8d purchase tax in 1955. There was a wide range of crystal sets, valved wireless sets and an EKCO Superhet radio from 1945. When the time came for 1955 EKCO TV to start it had lost its picture. The problem was in the modern device used to generate the 405 picture which had turned itself off after an hour!

Brunel and the Great Western Railway

On 17th February 2020 Lionel Williams gave an illustrated talk entitled Brunel and the Great Western Railway. Lionel's story started with Brunel's father, Marc, a Frenchman who arrived in England in March 1799 where he married his English wife Sophia Kingdom. Marc was a talented mechanical engineer but a bad manager of money and was imprisoned for debt in 1841. It was in prison he started his plan to take his skills out to Russia but the government paid off his debts because they didn't want to lose him. His son, Isambard, joined Marc when he was eighteen years old working on the Thames Tunnel project.

Brunel's dream was to travel by train from London to New York by steam via Bristol – the Great Western Railway, or as some knew it – Gods Wonderful Railway or Great Way Round. He was appointed Civil Engineer to the project in 1833. The Great Western Railway Bill successfully passed through both Houses in 1835 and received Royal Assent in August of that year.

The preferred route, straight from London to Bristol, was problematic because of the Marlborough Downs where Brunel had decided the gradients were too steep hence the nickname with its more northerly route. The initial plan at the London end was to join the London to Birmingham railway and use Euston station but insurmountable problems led to the creation of Paddington Station.

Up to the start of the railways all towns and cities across the country had their unique middays depending on their distance from the Greenwich meridian: Reading was 4 mins later, Oxford 5mins later, Cirencester 7 mins later and Bristol 11 minutes later. Railway timetables dictated everyone used GMT.

Slough didn't have a station initially because the Provost of Eton College forbade a station to be built within 3 miles of his College because he thought having easy access to London would be injurious to his students' morals.

The first station building at Twyford made from timber opened in July of 1839. A temporary engine shed was moved to Twyford from Maidenhead. Twyford was the terminus of the line until 1840 when the Sonning cutting was finished. It was in 1846

that a brick and stone building of standard design with an all-round canopy was built. The demise of the 7-foot broad gauge in 1892 gave GWR the opportunity to quadruple the line through the station. The stationmaster's house was built in 1900.

Sonning Cutting was a major feat of engineering at nearly 2 miles long and up to 60-foot deep. A team of 1200 navvies and 200 horses were used to dig it between 1838 and 1839. Records at the Royal Berkshire Hospital show a lot of accidents. Reading was an oddly configured station with one station on the up-line and another on the down-line with a cross-over between them.

In 1841 the small market town of Swindon had a population of 2459, by 1881 it had risen to 19,904 and in 1905 Swindon had 50,000 inhabitants. GWR's great engineering works closed in the 1960s.

The Box tunnel, between Chippenham and Bath started in 1836 with 4000 men and 300 horses. It was estimated that 100 navvies died during its construction and at over one and three quarter miles was the longest railway tunnel in Britain. It opened in 1841. Bristol Temple Meads is the oldest railway terminus in the world pre-dating Paddington by 20 years. Brunel reached his London to Bristol objective for an overall cost of £6m. The original estimate was £3m.

It was interesting to note that automatic signal control was developed and tested on the Henley Branch in 1905. The system required a driver to acknowledge a bell which was triggered by passing a railway signal at red. If not acknowledged the brakes would be automatically applied.

Brunel was born at a time when travel was by horse and carriage and sailing ships crossed the oceans. By the time of his death he had helped to transform all modes of transport giving them unprecedented speed. He was probably the greatest pioneering engineer of the modern world.

Jean Poulter

Wargrave Local History Society

The nineteenth century provision of a parish workhouse to support the poor is, of course, well known. In Wargrave this had been built on what was then the edge of the village, on land given by John Piggott in 1770 (John was the brother of Robert, who founded the village schools).

Under the Poor Law Act of 1834, parishes were grouped together to provide for the poor. The newly formed Board of Guardians for the Wokingham Union met in July 1836, and thought that the best plan was to rebuild and extend the Wargrave Workhouse to provide for the (a smaller workhouse at Hurst being described as 'no more than a brick shell and most unsuitable). Some alterations were made, but in 1849 the Guardians decided to build a new workhouse for the district in Wokingham.

Funds were only sufficient for this to cater for the adult poor, however, all of whom had been moved from Wargrave to the new Wokingham site (now part of Wokingham hospital) by mid January 1850. To provide for the children, it had been decided to

convert the Wargrave premises into a District School. It was to be run jointly by the Wokingham Union Guardians with those of Reading. Amongst the staff were a Superintendent, Mr Beechey, who was paid £40 per year, a Matron, Miss Davis, on £28/16/- a year, and a Schoolmistress – 23 year old Ellen Davis at £10 per year. @ £40 p.a. None of them stayed for long.

An insight into the running of the school comes from a “letter book”. That records that, as early as 1851, the Guardians were experiencing problems. A new Superintendent, Mr Rigden had been appointed by March that year. He and his wife also were only in post for a short while, and on 29th September a Mr Barlow, and his wife, taken over. There were still difficulties, for on December 17th 1851, the Guardians wrote that it was 'utterly impossible to co-operate with the Superintendent, Mr Barlow. The Barlows left on 11th February 1852. A new schoolmistress, Eliza Orton, had also been appointed in 1851. She, however, had to be reprimanded three days later, and told that 'no corporal punishment shall be inflicted on female children'. She resigned on 31st May 1852, and was replaced by Miss Sarah E Lord two months later. The new Superintendent was a Mr Dick, from Devon.

The schoolmaster, Thomas Blizard, resigned in May 1853, to be replaced the following month by John Challen, from Beaminster, whilst Sarah Lord, the schoolmistress, resigned in the June, to be replaced from 9th July 1853 by a Miss Davis (it is not known if this is the same Miss Davis who taught there previously). The Government Inspector, Grenville Piggott, (no connection to the village family of that name) made regular visits, and following one on 23rd August 1853 he reported that he found that the schoolmistress, Miss Davis, 'had neither intellectual qualification nor moral weight'. The Board decided to 'dispense with Miss Davis' and 'appoint one of greater experience and maturer age' in March 1854.

An 11 page report, signed by Grenville Piggott, on a hearing into complaints was issued on 26th August 1853. The complaints had been made three days earlier by the schoolmaster, John Challen, against the superintendent, Mr Dick, who had made counter complaints against the schoolmaster. The evidence given at the hearing was that Challen had been a pupil teacher, before obtaining a position at the Beaminster Union (in Dorset). He had been dismissed from there for deceit, almost amounting to fraud. This background had only come to light a month after he was appointed as the schoolmaster for the Wargrave District School.

John Challen's allegations against Mr Dick resulted in evidence being given that he and Mrs Dick (the Matron) had been absent many times. The porter had been instructed not to record Mr Dick's comings and goings, but on one occasion there were 4 members of staff out at night in Henley until midnight. Mr Dick was also found to be a chronic alcoholic. The main part of the report dealt with the activities concerning visits from the Matron of Aldershot Union, Mrs Cloke. She was a former colleague of Mr Challen and they got together again at Wargrave. Mr Dick was found to have had 'criminal intercourse', with Mrs Cloke when she visited Wargrave and spent the night.

John Challen was dismissed immediately. Mr Dick was given one month's notice for absence, intoxication and 'criminal intercourse with the wife of Mr Cloke'. During that month it is recorded that all the books would be audited, with particular reference to the diet book to see whether the children had been fed properly or money had been extracted from that account. Mrs Dick was deemed to be the only innocent party in the affair.

The new schoolmaster was Mr Brice Bennett, from London, who took over from 10th September 1853, and the new Superintendent was Mr Wood, with his wife, from East Grinstead, who started 6 days later. Of George Dick, it was written that he had 'left country - wife will forward mail' ; she was believed by the Guardians to be concealing him.

Further trouble arose in April 1854. The Schoolmaster, Brice Bennett, had written to the Guardians concerning an incident at the School, when the new Superintendent, Mr Wood, arrived very drunk. He had then proceeded to have a fight with the schoolmaster 'in the Girl's Yard, in the presence of some children. As a result, Superintendent Wood was instantly dismissed. (Brice Bennett was well respected in the village and remained until 1858, and then became schoolmaster for the National School (for village pupils, situated on adjacent land – there was much friction between the two). After a while he left, but was a popular man in the village, and was welcomed back as Superintendent, and his wife as Matron, at the District School in 1868.

Not quite the kinds of behaviour one might have 'anticipated' from those running a public institution in the Victorian era !

Peter Delaney

Museums and Libraries

Berkshire Record Office

So, I write this from home as things have changed somewhat since the last article. The BRO is now closed to visitors and staff. My colleagues and I miss not being there - not being able to have visitors or access the collections is very difficult when this is at the heart of all that we do.

Staff are working from home typing up old catalogues that are handwritten or typed on a typewriter. In the long run, we hope to upload them onto our CALM database and make them available online. Some collections will need work to bring them up to current standards, but it will be useful as it should make more information available online. It also helps to keep us busy!

Like many organisations we cannot offer the same services that we normally do and have had to adapt. We're trying to maintain contact with users through our social media feeds on Twitter (@berksarchives - <https://twitter.com/BerksArchives>) and Facebook (The Berkshire Record Office - <https://www.facebook.com/berkshirerecor->

dooffice/). If anyone has a query, they can direct message (DM) us on Twitter or messenger us on Facebook. We'll do the best we can to try and help.

Whilst the BRO is closed, our website isn't so please do use it – it's packed with information on family and local history such as the parish register lists, the wills index, source guides, our newsletter and online catalogue: <https://berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk>.

On behalf of everyone at the BRO, I offer best wishes to everyone in these uncertain times and hope that you all stay well and stay safe.

What's new to the archives?

There are various Anglican parish registers now available: Aldermaston marriages, 1965-2008; banns, 1918-2009 (D/P3); Aldworth marriages, 2005-2015; banns, 1913-2008 (D/P4); Bucklebury marriages, 1942-2015 (D/P28); Cumnor baptisms, 1958-1972; marriages, 1948-1968; banns, 1943-1982 (D/P45); Earley St Peter baptisms, 1931-2013; marriages, 1940-2009; burials, 1916-1996; Marcham marriages, 1959-2012; banns, 1945-2004 (D/P84); Reading Greyfriars baptisms, 1957-1965, marriages, 2009-2017; banns, 1965-2004 (D/P163); Shippon baptisms, 1957-1973; marriages, 1975-2011; banns, 1938-2004 (D/P1C) and White Waltham marriages, 1998-2003; burials, 1937-2008 (D/P142).

Other records which may be of interest are those of Hon Mrs Ernest Guinness (nee Marie Clotilde Russell of Swallowfield Park), 1870s- 1910s (D/EX2410); the Webb family of Tilehurst, 1656-1855, (R/D206); the Arrowsmith and Bannard families of Littlewick, 1863-1980, (D/EZ192); the Reading Branch (formerly Berkshire Branch) of the Embroiderers' Guild, 1948-2013, (D/EX2482); the Women's Institutes of Twyford and Ruscombe, 1919-2008 (D/EX2647); and Warfield and the Pang Valley Group, 1942-2014 (D/EX1925) and the records of Victor Barton of Reading, 1942-1949 (D/EX2742).

What's On

We hope that events in June (the How to Read Old Handwriting Workshop 15th June 2020, and the Behind the Scenes at the BRO 22nd June 2020) will still be able to go ahead. We also hope to put the postponed World War Two exhibition on at some point later in the year. Please keep an eye on our website for details nearer the time as the lockdown will affect all events: <https://www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk/events>.

Ivone Turnbull, Senior Archivist

History Societies

Aldermaston History Group. Chris Boott, Kennet, Church Road, Aldermaston RG7 4LR
[blha@aldermastonhistory.uk]

Arborfield Local History Society, Secretary Rosemary King [roking@henforyd.plus.com]
[www.arborfieldhistory.org.uk]

Berkshire Archaeological Society, Anne Harrison, [secretary@berksarch.co.uk] [www.berksarch.co.uk]

Berkshire Archaeology Research Group, Richard Firth, The Bailiff's Cottage, Barkham, Wokingham RG41 4TG, [tel 0118 978 7434] [firth@doctors.org.uk] [www.barg-online.org]

Berkshire Family History Society, Centre for Heritage and Family History, 2nd Floor, Reading Central Library, Abbey Square, Reading, RG1 3BQ, [tel 0118 950 9553]
[wwwhttps://.berksfhs.org]

Berkshire Gardens Trust. Fiona Hope, 23 St James Close, Pangbourne, RG8 7AP [fiona.hope@btinternet.com] [www.berkshiregardenstrust.org]

Berkshire Industrial Archaeological Group, Secretary, Graham Smith, 114 Shaw Rd, Newbury RG14 1HR [secretary@biag.org.uk]

Berkshire Record Society, Secretary Margaret Simons, 80 Reeds Ave, Earley, Reading RG6 5SR, [margaretsimons@hotmail.co.uk]

Blewbury Local History Group, Audrey Long, Spring Cottage, Church Road, Blewbury, Oxon, OX11 9PY, tel 01235 850427 [audreyrosettalong@gmail.com]

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

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

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

East Garston Local History Society, Mrs Karen Sperry, Church Cottage, Front St, East Garston, Hungerford, RG17 7HJ [karen@kado.cloud]

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

Eton Wick Local History Group, Teresa Stanton, 35 Eton Wick Road, Eton Wick, Windsor, SL4 6LU, tel 01753 860591 [teresams35@virginmedia.com] [www.etonwickhistory.co.uk]

Finchampstead Society, Mohan Banerji, 3 Tanglewood, Finchampstead, Berks, RG40 3PR, tel 0118 9730479.

Goring Gap Local History Society, Janet Hurst, 6 Nun's Acre, Goring on Thames, Reading, Berks RG8 9BE, tel 01491 871022, mob 07799 583524 [goringgaphistory@gmail.com]
[www.goringgaphistory.org.uk]

Hanney History Group, Andrew C W Robertson, Hale Cottage, Mill Orchard, East Hanney, Wantage, OX120JH tel 07899 913281 [andycwrob@btinternet.com]

The History of Reading Society, Vicki Chesterman, 7 Norman Road, Caversham, Reading RG4 5JN, tel 0118 947 3443, [vickichesterman@yahoo.co.uk] [www.historyofreadingsociety.org.uk]

Hungerford Historical Association, Secretary Helen Lockhart, [shelenlockhart@aol.com]
[www.hungerfordvirtualmuseum.co.uk]

Longworth & District History Society, Pam Woodward, 22 Cherrytree Close, Southmoor, Abingdon, OX13 5BE, tel 01865 820500, [prwoodward@btinternet.com], [http://www.longworth-district-history-society.org.uk/]

- Maidenhead Archaeological & Historical Society**, Brian Madge, 11 Boulters Court, Maidenhead, SL6 8TH, [bandgmadge@btinternet.com]
- Mid Thames Archaeological & Historical Society**, Jane Wall, 143 Vine Road, Stoke Poges, SL2 4DH, [sec.mtahs@yahoo.co.uk]
- Mortimer Local History Group**, Mrs Janet Munson, The Laurels, Ravensworth Road, Mortimer, RG7 3UD, [munsonsinmortimer@yahoo.co.uk]
- Newbury District Field Club**, Jane Burrell, Walnut Tree Cottage, Oxford Rd, Donnington, Newbury, RG14 3AG [tel 01635-46497] [secretary@ndfc.org.uk][www.ndfc.org.uk]
- Oxfordshire Family History Society**, Chairman:Malcolm Austen. Secretary: Angie Trueman c/o Oxfordshire History Centre, St Luke's Church, Temple Road, Cowley, Oxford OX4 2HT, [email: secretary@ofhs.org.uk or chairman@ofhs.org.uk]
- Pangbourne Heritage Group**, Ellie Thorne [EB.thorne@hotmail.com]
- Project Purley**, Catherine Sampson, 32 Waterside Drive, Purley on Thames, Berks, RG8 8AQ, tel 0118 9422 255, [secretary@project-purley.eu], [www.project-purley.eu]
- Shinfield & District Local History Society**, Eileen Taylor, Long Meadow, Part Lane, Swallowfield, Berks, RG7 1TB. tel 0118 988 3580. Reporter George Taylor [george.taylor-29@btinternet.com]
- Sonning & Sonning Eye History Society**, Pauline Simmonds, Robins, Thames St, Sonning, Berks, RG4 6UR tel 0118 969 7033 [paulinesimmonds@gmail.com]
- Stanford in the Vale & District Local History Society**, Mike Macfarlane, 53 High St, Stanford in the Vale, Oxon SN7 8NQ [tel 01367 710 358 [mmacfarlane1@btinternet.com]
- Swallowfield Local History Society**, Ken Hussey, Kimberley, Swallowfield RG7 1QX, tel 0118 988 3650, [www.slhsoc.org.uk]
- Tadley and District Local History Society**, Carol Stevens, 5 Church Road, Pamber Heath, Tadley, Hampshire, RG26 3DP, [tadhistory@googlemail.com] [www.tadshistory.com]
- Thatcham Historical Society**, Susan Ellis, Open View, New Road Hill, Midgham RG7 5RY [susan.carver@gmx.com] [enquiries@thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk], [www.thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk]
- Theale Local History Society**, Graham Reeves, 52 Parkers Corner, Englefield, RG7 5JR, [thealehistory@btconnect.com]
- Twyford & Ruscombe Local History Society**, Jean Poulter, 17 Weir Pool Court, Silk Lane, Twyford RG10 9GY, [jeanpoulter@tiscali.co.uk], [www.trlhs.org.uk]
- Wargrave Local History Society**, Peter Delaney, 6 East View Close, Wargrave, Berks, RG10 8BJ, tel 0118 940 3121, [secretary@wargravehistory.co.uk], [www.wargravehistory.org.uk]
- Windsor Local History Group**, Sue Ashley, 49 York Avenue, Windsor, SL4 3PA, [nutritionsas-hley@hotmail.com], [www.windsorhistory.org.uk]
- Friends of Windsor and Royal Borough Museum**, Len Nash, 27 Bourne Ave, Windsor, SL4 3JP, [www.friendsofwindsormuseum.org.uk]

Would you all please check these entries and let us know of any changes. The entry should show:-

The name, postal address and e-mail address for formal correspondence with the society and optionally a telephone contact number.

Your website url (if you have one)

Optionally the name and e-mail address of the person who will send in reports of your society's activities (if different from official contact)

e-mail changes and corrections to membership@blha.org.uk

Archives, Libraries & Museums

Abingdon Library, The Charter, Abingdon, OX14 3LY, tel 01235 520374
[abingdon_library@yahoo.co.uk]

Allen County Public Library, Genealogy, PO Box 2270, Fort Wayne, Indiana USA, tel 001 468 012270, [www.genealogycenter.org]

Berkshire Record Office, 9 Coley Avenue, Reading, RG1 6AF, tel 0118 901 5132,
[www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk], [arch@reading.gov.uk]

Bracknell Library Local Studies, Town Square, Bracknell, RG12 1BH, tel 01344 423149
[bracknell.library@bracknell-forest.gov.uk]

Eton College Library, Eton College, Windsor, SL4 6DB, [archivist@etoncollege.org.uk]

Guildhall Library, Serials Assistant, Aldermanbury, London EC2V 7HH, [Andrew.Harvey-@cityoflondon.gov.uk], [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/guildhalllibrary]

Hungerford Virtual Museum, – [www.hungerfordvirtualmuseum.co.uk]

Maidenhead Heritage Trust, Fran Edwards, 18 Park Street, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 1SL, tel 01628 780555 [administration@mhc1.demon.co.uk]

Maidenhead & Windsor Local Studies Library, Chris Atkins, St Ives Road, Maidenhead, SL6 1QU, tel 01628 796981, [chris.atkins@rbwm.gov.uk]

Museum of Berkshire Aviation Mohawk Way Reading RG5 4UE tel 0118 944 8089
[www.museumofberkshireaviation.co.uk]

Newbury Library, Newbury Central Library, The Wharf, Newbury, RG14 5AU, tel 01635 519900 [library@westberks.co.uk]

Oxfordshire History Centre, St Luke's Church, Temple Road, Cowley, Oxford OX4 2HT, tel. 01865 398200, e-mail: oxhist@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Reading Central Library, Local Studies Librarian, Abbey Square, Reading, RG1 3BQ, tel 0118 9015965

Reading Museum Services, The Curator, Town Hall, Blagrove Street, Reading, RG1 1QH, tel 0118 9399800, [www.readingmuseum.org.uk]

Reading University Library, Kate Devaney, PO box 223, Whiteknights, RG6 6AE, tel 0118 378 8785, [k.r.devaney@reading.ac.uk]

Museum of English Rural Life: The University of Reading, Redlands Road, Reading, RG1 5EX, tel 0118 378 8660 fax: 0118 378 5632, [merl@reading.ac.uk] [www.merl.org.uk]

The River and Rowing Museum, Mill Meadows, Henley on Thames, RG9 1BF tel 01491 415600 [curatorial@rrm.co.uk]

Windsor & Royal Borough Museum, The Guildhall, Windsor, SL4 1LR, tel 01628 685686, [museum.collections@rbwm.gov.uk], [www.windsor.gov.uk]

Slough Library Local Studies, Slough Library, The Curve, William St, Slough, SL1 1XY, tel 01753 875533, [library@slough.gov.uk] [www.slough.gov.uk/libraries]

Slough Museum, The Curve, William St, Slough, SL1 1XY, tel 01753 875533, [info@sloughmuseum.co.uk]

Wallingford Museum, 52 High St, Wallingford, OX10 0DB, tel 01491 835 065 [www.wallingfordmuseum.org.uk]

West Berkshire Museum, The Wharf, Newbury, RG14 4AU, [museum@westberks.gov.uk]

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

Berkshire Local History Association

Registered Charity 1097355

President: Joan Dils

Vice-President Prof E J T Collins

Officers

Chairman David Cliffe

1 Priest Hill, Caversham, Reading RG4 7RZ

tel: 0118-948-3354,

e-mail chairman@blha.org.uk

Treasurer Dr David Lewis ACA

5 Gloucester Place, Windsor, Berks SL4 2AJ

tel 01753-864935,

e-mail [treasurer @blha.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@blha.org.uk)

Secretary Jo Alexander-Jones

7 Milman Road

Reading RG2 0AZ

Tel. 07980 080 3050

e-mail secretary@blha.org.uk

Committee Members

Dr Jonathan Brown (Journal Editor)

John Chapman (Newsletter Editor)

Dave Osborne (Web Designer)

Dr Margaret Simons (Newsletter Distributor)

Elias Kupfermann

Ann Smith (Membership Secretary)

Membership

Berkshire Local History Association exists to provide a meeting place for all those interested in the history and heritage of the Royal County of Berkshire. We cover the areas of Berkshire both before and after the 1974 review of local government. We are a registered charity.

We have three classes of membership

Individual - for individuals and couples living at the same address

Family - for families living at the same address

Corporate - for local history societies and institutions, such as libraries, archives and museums

We publish a **Journal** (Berkshire Old and New) once a year containing detailed articles on Berkshire's past - all members get one copy.

We publish a **newsletter** three times a year in January, May and September and you can opt for a hard copy version by post or an electronic version by e-mail.

We send out occasional **e-mail Bulletins** in between Newsletters with the latest news.

We maintain a **Website** to keep you up-to-date with Society activities [www.blha.org.uk]

We hold an **Annual General Meeting** in Spring each year where local societies bring in displays and copies of their publications. The formal meeting is followed by a variety of activities - talks, walks and visits - dependent on where we are. Meetings are held in different parts of the county.

We hold occasional **Seminars, Workshops** and **Day Schools** with eminent speakers

We organise occasional **Day trips** to visit archives or places of interest (usually with privileged access to material)

We award a number of **Prizes** to authors of articles and students at the University of Reading.

We offer **Grants** towards research and **Loans** to assist authors to publish their results.

We work with a variety of organisations to **Protect and document the heritage of Berkshire**

Membership fees

The rates for 2019-2020 are:-

	version of newsletter		no of copies	
	electronic	hard copy	Journal	Newsletter
Individual	£9.00	£12.00	1	1
Family	£9.00	£12.00	1	1
Corporate	£9.00.	£20.00	2	3

A surcharge of £2 will also be levied on those who opt to pay by cheque.

Applications for membership can be made via the website or by contacting the Membership Secretary by e-mail - membership@blha.org.uk

Contents

Chairman's Corner	1	Hanney	13
From the Editor	2	Purley	16
<i>Miscellanea</i>		Samaritans	17
A lesson in French	2	Shinfield	19
<i>Society News and contributions</i>		Twyford & Ruscombe	20
Aldermaston	2	Wargrave	21
Berkshire Archaeological	4	<i>Museums and Libraries</i>	
Berkshire Family History	4	Berkshire Record Office	23
Berkshire Industrial Archaeology	5	<i>Contact details</i>	
Burnham	6	History Societies	25
Earley	7	Archives, Libraries & Museums	27
Friends of Reading Abbey	6	Your Committee	28
Goring Gap	12	BLHA Membership	29

Next Newsletter

The next Newsletter is due to be published in September 2020.

The DEADLINE for copy is 15th August 2020 - preferably we would like to have it much earlier.

We have had some very interesting contributions this issue and would welcome similar pieces from other societies.

We like to hear of your society's activities over the last four months and will publicise future events that are open to the public (but not regular society meetings)

Please address e-mails to newsletter@blha.org.uk but please include BLHA in the title of the e-mail.

