

# **Berkshire Local History Association**



**Newsletter No 129  
January 2021**

# Berkshire Local History Association Newsletter

Editor: John Chapman

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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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 - Dorney Court, to be viewed after the AGM (see back page)*

**The AGM has been planned in the hope that the current COVID-19 situation will have eased to allow face-to-face meetings. However, as the situation is fluid, we have also planned a back-up online AGM that will include short talks on relevant heritage topics as well as the normal AGM business. We will post updates on our website should we need to change to the back-up option.**

## Chairman's Corner

Since I last wrote, we've had a few weeks of stricter rules, and now a slight relaxation of the rules, in our attempts to keep the Covid-19 virus at bay. And now we have vaccines coming along, which seems like the light at the end of the tunnel, so to speak. Still in this tunnel, it's difficult to see very far ahead, and to make firm plans for events that bring people together.



The BLHA Committee, anxious to keep the show on the road, as they say, held a meeting via "Zoom" which has come up with a "Plan B" for the 2021 A.G.M. We are still hoping, on Saturday March 27, to meet at Eton Wick, to enjoy a talk from our President, Joan Dils, and after lunch to go on to Dorney Court, the nearby Tudor manor house. It must be more than 40 years since I was there, and remember it being like visiting friends at their house. The remains of lunch were still on the table when we arrived – I hope it hasn't changed too much!

If we're not allowed to meet, we'll hold the meeting via Zoom, and will still be able to enjoy Joan's talk.

By now, you should have had chance to read the 2020 edition of "Berkshire Old and New." We managed to muster only two articles for this edition. I enjoyed them both, and I know that quantity isn't everything, but I can't help noticing that other county local history associations do rather better. I regularly receive the journals from Oxfordshire, and from Cheshire where I grew up. Both of these usually have six or seven articles, and run to over a hundred pages. So please, reseachers, consider letting us publish the fruits of your labours. We can well afford to print some more pages, and after all, getting worthwhile articles published is part of our remit. Our editor, Dr. Jonathan Brown, will be happy to advise you about numbers of words, timescales, etc.

Here in Reading, we've had a good crop of new books this year. We've had the long-awaited and exemplary history of Reading from Joan Dils. Then as mentioned in the report from the History of Reading Society, we've had books on the Franciscan Friary at Reading, and on Oliver Dixon, the horse trader, who was well-known in aristocratic and royal circles. From the Two Rivers Press we've had "Bricks and Brickwork in Reading:

Patterns and Polychromy” by Adam Sowan, and the Scallop Shell Press has brought us “A Tale of Two Towns: Calleva and Reading” by John Mullaney, and “Henry I and His Abbey” by Lindsay Mullaney.

2021 will be the nonacentenary of Reading Abbey – and the foundation of the Abbey is probably the most important thing ever to have happened to Reading. It dominated the town for over 400 years. (Huntley and Palmers biscuit factory might be said to have dominated it for around 130). Various organisations are making plans to mark the anniversary. The Borough Council is planning to celebrate on Saturday, June 19th, at the annual Waterfest. Reading University has secured funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council for a postgraduate research project into the archaeology and heritage management of the Abbey, to start in 2021. The Friends of Reading Abbey are likely to be kept very busy. They have already begun a series of “Mayor’s Talks,” viewable on line, in which the Mayor of Reading, David Stevens, talks to an expert on some aspect of the Abbey’s history.

The fate of Reading Gaol, built over part of the site of Reading Abbey, is still unclear. The Ministry of Justice announced that the Gaol had been sold to an un-named developer, and a few months later announced that the deal had fallen through. One of the local M.Ps, Matt Rodda, set up an online petition, calling for the Ministry to have the buildings kept “as an arts hub and to celebrate Reading’s heritage.” “Celebrate” is probably not the word Oscar Wilde would have used! The Borough Council are supporting the arts hub idea, and various figures in the world of entertainment are lending their support – most notably Dame Judi Dench, and Stephen Fry.

When local societies send in reports of their meetings for the newsletter, it would be good if they could also sometimes keep the rest of us posted as to what of interest is happening in their patch. I’m always aware, when writing in my own little “Corner,” that I usually know what’s going on in Reading, but not in other parts of the county, and the Association is for the whole county, and anyone interested in it.

I hope we can be more active, in various ways, in 2021, whilst staying safe and well. I’d like to thank our members for their interest and support, and I hope to see many of you at the AGM, whether out and about, or on line.

*David Cliffe*

## ***A Word from the Editor***

It seems that Zoom is now the popular buzzword. I have been on a number of zoom sessions with workshops, lectures, AGMs and meetings. Several societies have indicated that a zoom engagement is in many ways better than an actual meeting - no hall fees, you don't have to out in the cold and the rain, but above all the host can mute troublesome guests.



We have had a remarkable collection of contributions this time, not as many society reports as usual but some interesting items. At least I found them interesting!

I have noted that a number of groups and societies are trying to get people to document their experiences of the last few months. If we fly forward 100 years I am sure we will look back on 2020/21 as a pivotal year for many quite different reasons. The pandemic will dominate many folks thoughts but it will be the long term effects of what it produced which will count. Take shopping for instance, the switch to on-line shopping will have a profound effect upon our high streets with the disappearance of large retail outfits but with the flourishing of small specialist shops and cafes, not just in the towns but in the smaller centres.

We will be finally leaving the European Union on our day of publication - the future is bound to change but why and how? Will I be buying more of my wine from Chile or Australia? Then we have climate change and a realisation that it is going to affect our gardening habits and holiday destinations.

So can I beg you to do what you can to record 2020/21 in Berkshire for our posterity. Don't just do it on your computer as that will last only a few years. Use high quality paper or even kill a goat or two to get vellum as Henry II did for his Pipe Rolls; and make your children understand how history is made by recording it and securing the records.

*John Chapman*

***HAPPY NEW YEAR***



# Articles

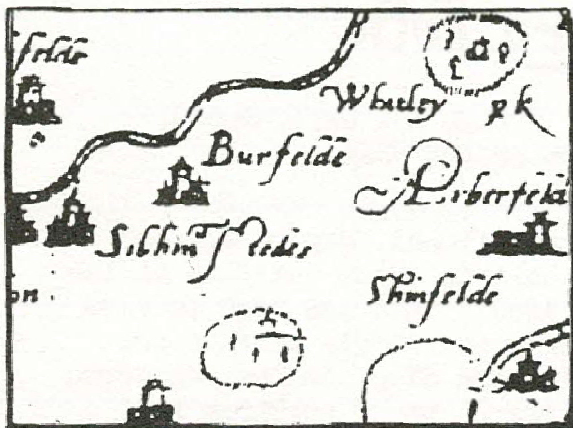
## *Where is Stedes?*

Our lead article this time results from a query by a former Berkshire resident now living in New Zealand. She had a map which showed a village called Stedes close to Theale but it seemed to have disappeared - Why?. We found her answer in an article by Eugene Burden in the 1986 edition of Berkshire Old and New.

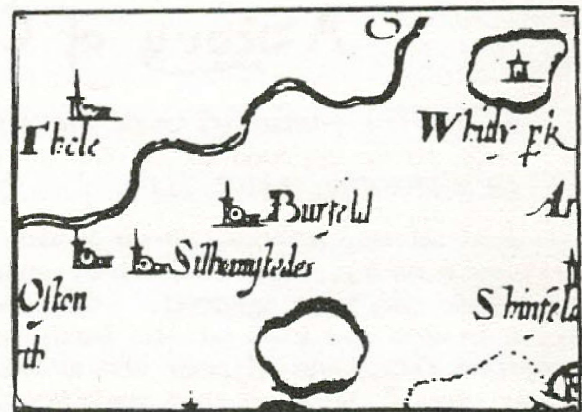
The village of Stedes seems to have been born as a result of a calligraphic flourish and only finally laid to rest when the first accurate map of the area was published. Same early maps of Berkshire show the village located south of the Kennet near Theale. This article traces its history and conjectures on its rise and fall.

When Saxton surveyed Berkshire, he must have noted the two parishes of Sulhamstead Abbots and Sulhamstead Bannister since his 1574 map of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire shows two village symbols with the joint name of 'Silbestedes' (Figure A). On the first separate map of Berkshire in 1607, Hole faithfully copied this as 'Silhamstedes' (Figure B).

Speed published his map of Berkshire in 1611 and his calligrapher



*Fig A Saxton 1574*



*Fig B Hole 1607*

divided the word and linked the two parts with a flourish derived from the long 'S' in Saxton's map. One village symbol was associated with 'Silham-' and the other with '-stedes' (Figure C).

When Jansson published his map in 1646, he seems to have been misled by this and marked one symbol 'Silham' and the other 'Stedes' (Figure D). Thereafter, one can trace two lines of copyists: those

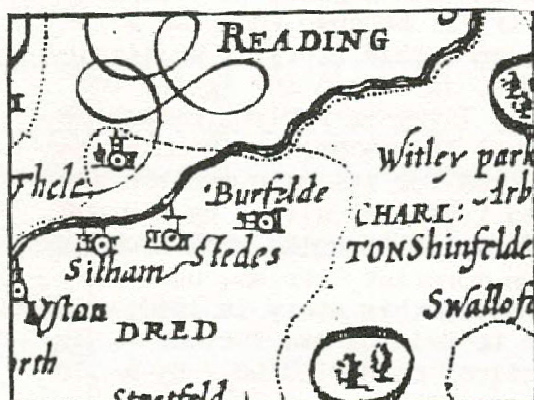


Fig C Speed 1611

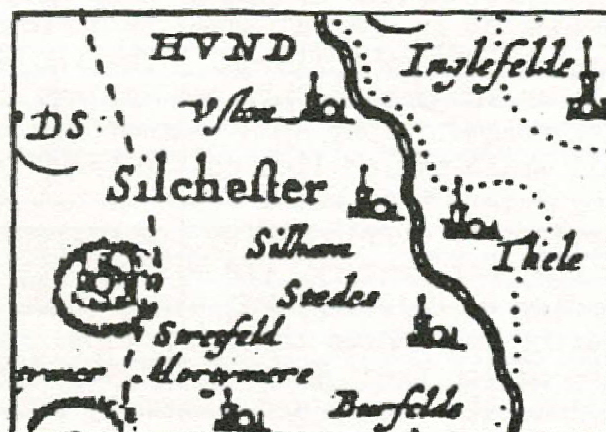


Fig D Jansson 1646

following Saxton:- Blame (1645) and Seller (1695), and those misled by Speed:- Blame (1671 to 1731) and, possibly, Morden (1695). However, to avoid errors, Morden sent proof copies of his maps to 'the most knowing Gentlemen in each County'.

The 1695 first edition map shows numerous corrections, and one can conjecture that one correction turned 'Silham' into 'Sulhamstead' but left 'Stedes' uncorrected (Figure E). This oversight was later corrected and in the 1722 edition, 'Stedes' was erased and 'Sulhamstead' became 'Sulhamsteeds'. Saxton was finally vindicated.

In spite of this, the error on Morden's 1695 map was continued by other map makers. The maps of Moll (1724 - 1753), Simpson (1746) and Read (1746) all show both 'Sulhamstead' and 'Stedes'.



Fig E Morden 1695

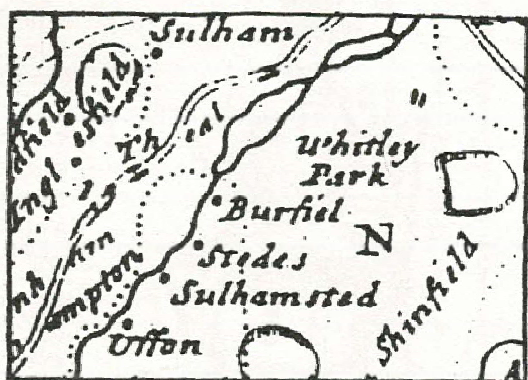


Fig F Moll 1753

One of its last appearances was on the Moll map of 1753 (Figure F).

The fate of Stedes was finally sealed in 1753 when Rocque published Sheet III of his large scale 18-sheet survey. This clearly showed and named the parishes of Sulhamstead Abbots and Sulhamstead Bannister, but Stedes had disappeared.





*Fig G Roques map of 1761*

Ogilby, as the pioneer maker of road maps, was not confused. His map of the London to Bristol road (1675) showed the turn to 'Cellamsted'. Subsequent copyists (Senex (1719) and Owen and Bowen (1720)) showed the same turn until 1775 when Jefferys showed adjacent turns, one to 'Tellamsted' and the other to 'Shulhamsted'. Paterson finally got it right in 1785.

*Eugene Burden*

## ***Educating Pangbourne***

*By Lesley Crimp*

The Reverend Heather Parbury once asked me why Pangbourne did not have a church school, understandably she was interested to know the answer. The short answer is that it is a long story dating back to 1685, when John Breedon, Lord of the Manor of Pangbourne, gave to his executors a piece of land for the purpose of establishing a free school for 12 poor boys, leading to an apprenticeship in a useful trade. The endowment also provided for a school master, and would be administered by the church and overseers of the poor. All very laudable, had the original wishes been fulfilled.

By the 1850s, the school house [known as the Breedon school] was in a





*Classes lining up outside the school around 1900  
(thanks to Jane Rawlins of Pangbourne Heritage)*

state of collapse, the school master had flounced off and started his own school, not having been paid for months if not years. A court case resulted in the trustees winning the right to re-establish the Breedon school, but the court costs were paid out of the apprenticeship fund, leaving very

little to educate the boys.

Nationally, there was concern about the level of illiteracy, and thereby little chance of advancement for either boys or girls whose parents could not afford to pay for even the most basic lessons. In 1870 a law was passed by which all children should receive a free elementary education to the age of 12. In rural areas, or places where absentee landlords or indifferent clergy [as in Pangbourne] there was little interest in promoting this, and it took a forceful intervention by the local professional classes and village tradesmen to break the stranglehold of the clerical trustees, and insist that a free school be built to cater for all children, with a school master appointed by a new governing body.

This was not before time, as by 1890, only 6 boys and no girls received a free education, and 8 pupils had been apprenticed in the last 14 years! A public enquiry was requested as the funds that should have been used for the purpose of the Breedon Educational Foundation appeared to have been squirreled away by the trustees.

No time was lost in planning a new school, to be built on Pangbourne Hill by Leonard Stokes, an architect of renown. In 1895 the Breedon school was closed due to lack of funds, and reopened on the site under the management of the new school board until the new school was ready. The original trustees of the Breedon Educational Fund, including the Reverend Finch, were declared not fit to hold office due to the lack of transparent accounts, or any at all, and the fund was transferred to the parish, and is known today as the Breedon Trust, to which both boys and girls can apply for grants.

The new headmaster took over in 1896 and initially was horrified at the lack of discipline and achievement shown by his pupils. However, the move to new premises was welcomed, and the governing body headed by General Waddington showed a keen interest in the improvement of chances for the young pupils in spite of the shaky start. By 1901 there were 151 junior aged children and 83 infants. The school was grouped according to standards, but only 2 juniors were at the top level, and the infant room was very overcrowded. Most teachers were not certificated, but this was beginning to change, and in 1902 Local Education Authorities replaced School Boards and a more centralised approach improved standards.

The school log books give an insight into the difficulties experienced by headteachers in maintaining staff levels, controlling epidemics which forced the school to close for weeks, and the effects of the first World War which began in 1914. Mr Varley retired in 1922 after 28 years of service to the school, and Mr Harber took his place. A year later Miss Patience Annetts became a certificated teacher at the school, one of the last of the Pupil Teacher regime, and remained there for her entire career, beloved of many of her infant pupils.

Gradually as Pangbourne became less dependent on agriculture or domestic service as a source of employment, the opportunity for children to extend their education at secondary level, and seek employment either with a business or trade meant their life chances improved. They could find employment within the village, nor more importantly, look further afield. There was still a lot of poverty, and children who lacked the basics, warm clothes and hygienic living conditions, but the establishment of the school on the hill gave them a start in life and improved expectations. It was a brave move on the part of the village community to set up a school in the face of opposition, and a leap of faith on the part of the rising middle classes to support the idea of education for all children regardless of background.

If you wondered why the development on the side of Pangbourne Hill is called Stokes View, now you know. The original building has been adapted to provide for a number of apartments. The headmaster's house has been rebuilt, and the school dinner hall [not part of the 1890's building] knocked down and replaced with new houses in a similar style.

Incidentally, Robert Stone, the miller, was one of those promoting the

idea of free education and the building of the new school. His grandson, Percy Stone junior, took over the redundant Breedon school building for his sales of milled products in the late 1940's, and his son Richard expanded and altered the business to Floristone. The school entrance has remained virtually untouched in spite of the many changes of management.

## ***Reading Trades Union Council 130th Anniversary 2021***

***By Keith Jerrome***

A Trades Council was established in Reading in 1874 in response to the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1871 which introduced prosecution for participation in strikes. It succeeded in 'Uniting the great number of Trade Unions in the Town.' It was brought together by a wide variety of skilled workmen, but it seems not to have endured.

In 1871 the population of Reading had been 32,323 and at the time of the establishment of the Trades Council in 1891 had reached 60,054. Already the Reading Ironworks of Barrett, Exall and Andrewes in Katesgrove Lane had closed (with 370 workers at its height). Workers from the Boiler Shop at BEA convened the meeting in 1860 at the Blackhorse Temperance Hotel in Queens Road to found Reading Co-operative Society. From 1855 these workers had become members of Reading Lodge of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, (The new model union). However the partnership of William Exall and Alfred Palmer created the new technology for the mass production of biscuits at 'The Factory' which by 1914 was one of the biggest in Europe (4,053 employees in 1889) and provider to the British Empire and the wider world of quality biscuits. The trade union branch, established in 1911 became the biggest branch in the union. The struggle to establish the Union at H&P began when 50 workers, men and women, some with up to 40 years service were sacked for 'disloyalty to the company.' They had joined the union! After the Trades Council Handbill title this became known as 'The Fight for Life and Liberty'

In spite of the claim in 1842 by the Owenite Universal Society of Rational Religionists to be the Socialists of Reading, after Chartism it was 40 years before a claim could be made for socialist organisations in Reading. First the ILP (The Independent Labour Party) and in 1891 the SDF, (The Social



Democratic Federation). Often described as Britain's first Marxist Party the Reading Branch became one of the largest, publishing a Reading Supplement to the party paper Justice. Activists from the SDF contributed to the formation of the Trades Council that year complaining in Justice that the Council was dominated by Liberals and Tories.

Between Chartism and Socialism the period is often described as that of working class 'Self Help', driven by the draconian legislative hammer of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. From poor relief being undertaken by the Parish, the 1834 Act nationalised provision under Commissioners who set about ensuring a level at the lowest possible cost to those paying the 'Poor rate.' Establishing the workhouse (Known as 'The Bastille') began a strand via the Workhouse Infirmary, Poor Law Infirmary (in Reading, Battle Hospital) and our poor social care system which led ultimately to the Act of 1946 establishing our NHS.

Key drivers of 'Self Help' included legislation like the Friendly Societies Acts, which allowed working class organisations, trades unions, working men's clubs, savings banks, building societies and insurance a financial identity. Emerging from Chartism to self-help is described by Dorothy Thompson as: 'If a humane and dignified system of poor relief did not emerge in local or national government, the skilled workers and others in regular employment were able to make their own provisions through these organisations.' However a very large part of the population was neither classed as skilled or in regular employment.

Ann Cook commented that the Reading Branch of the ASRS (Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants later the NUR and today RMT) had been established in 1875. 'But the overwhelming majority of the local working class including the large proportion employed at Huntley and Palmers were slow to realise the benefit of numerically strong trade unionism.' This quote is often repeated and taken to mean trades unionism came late to Reading. That is not the case. Reading had a wide range of craft unions from the eighteenth century and from 1855 a strong Lodge of the Engineers and ASRS was the first and early branch of the third phase of general unions. The General unions were built by those, 'neither skilled nor in regular employment'. It is true however that the H&P workers came late to general unionism which had begun with the Great Dock Strike of 1889. The Trades Council was active in working with unions in recruitment in workp-

laces. In H & P the Fight for Life and Liberty in 1911 was followed in 1916 on 7 July by 'Unprecedented Scenes at the Biscuit Factory'. Biscuit tins and mix were thrown into the river, the works fire brigade attempted to turn their hoses on the women strikers but the women retaliated, grabbing the hoses sending firemen into the Kennet. The result was an increase in wages for men and women, girls and boys. That was on a Friday and on Saturday a mass meeting took place in the Market Place chaired by Ben Russell, Secretary of the Branch of the N.U.G.G.L and membership of the branch passed 1,000 within a matter of days.

In 1914 Lorenzo Quelch was elected as a Socialist to Reading Borough Council. The SDF had mounted a challenge to the local state from 1891 by first electing with Fred Hodgson to the School Board and then the Board of Guardians.

In January 1918 the Labour Party Conference agreed to form constituency based branches of the Party so on 16 April, as Secretary of the Trades Council, Len Quelch organised a conference of delegates from the Trades Council, Trades Unions and Socialist Organisations with Councillor John Rabson in the Chair. The organisation formed on that day was The Reading Trades Council and Labour Party and it remained in that form until after World War Two. A feature of this structure was that individual members could for the first time join the Labour Party other than as a member of an affiliated union.

The Annual Report of R&DT&LC 1915 stated: 'The most far reaching work inaugurated during the year (1914) has been the opening of a Trades Union Club and Institute which movement was initiated by the NUR No.1 Branch.' This Club at 40 Oxford Road provided the base for a large and active Labour movement. In 1918 it provided 'Billiards-2 tables, Games, Refreshments and Baths.' In 1924 the former shop and workshop of jewellers Bracher and Sydenham in Minster Street were acquired providing offices for unions, in addition to extensive social facilities. Included were baths and changing facilities used by railwaymen required to 'Stop-over' in Reading. The Trades Council and Labour Party. In the 1930's a large Labour Hall was added at the rear where on Sunday morning Ian Mikardo MP gave report backs from his week in Parliament from 1945.

'Mik' featured in the greatest triumph of all as a delegate to the Labour Party Conference 1945 from Reading 'TC & LP' Trades Council and

Labour Party. The resolution he moved began life when he and Walter A. Cannon took it through the NUR branches (there were five), then through Reading Labour Party where it triumphed over all resolutions without amendment as it did before the Conference Agenda Committee where, unamended, 30 other resolutions were added on. Mikardo began by welcoming the NEC recommendation that the next election should be fought on the socialist principles of the party to include:

(a)The transfer to public ownership of the land , large scale building, heavy industry, and all forms of banking, transport and fuel and power; and

(b)Appropriate legislation to ensure that the national assets, services and industries shall be democratically controlled and operated in the national interest with representation of workers engaged therein and of consumers.

The Reading D.L.P. resolution was carried. Nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy, the policy on which the General Election of 1945 was fought.

## ***Miscellanea***

### ***Oops***

Someone has pointed out that some text is missing from the recent edition of *Berkshire Old and New*. It appears that somewhere between checking final proofs and printing some of the text went walkabout. So here is the missing bit which fits at the bottom of page 35.

Polling day was Saturday 14 December and schools had been closed on Friday to allow for stations to be organised. The average turnout for the country was reported as low, 57 per cent, a result, it was felt, of the many men still serving and a high number of uncontested seats. It was also a wet day and there appears to have been a general apathy towards an election coming so soon after the Armistice when things were still far from normal. However, in Reading the turnout was 62 per cent, reflecting an eagerness perhaps among the supporters of the female franchise. The Windsor turnout was 44 per cent, considerably lower despite the early eagerness.

*Jonathan Brown*



## *Another Mystery*

*We received this from Rory*

I've found a rather odd photo in my late uncle's study, which you might find interesting, amusing and/or fascinating.

Sadly, I don't know the story behind the photo, nor why my uncle would have kept it for c.60 years. I'm pretty certain he wasn't the driver of the



Austin A30 (he was very much a Rover man) nor did he serve in the Reading Police, or Berkshire Constabulary, so why did he keep the pic? The police car is carrying Reading RD plates but I'm not sure of the make.

The only other clues relate to the nearby shops and this is where I'm sure someone will chip in. An off licence, run by F A? ?Elley, with quite a long phone number for the time, which suggests a larger town. A shop called Fowler, a bank/pub and a shop with a name I can't read.

I can find a online 1950s Kelly's directory for Reading/Berkshire but I bet one of you has one. All a bit of a mystery really but with long winter nights

and the joys of Tier 3 Covid restrictions, perhaps this conundrum will help while away a dull evening!

Hope someone can help. - send responses to [newsletter@blha.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@blha.org.uk)

## **New Books**

### ***Windmills of Berkshire and Oxfordshire***

*By Guy Blythman ISBN 9781527271449*

There are accounts of more than 170 windmills or windmills sites in the two counties. This detailed gazetteer written by one of the UK's most active windmill researchers describes what is known of their history.

In addition to 98 attractive (and some rare) illustrations, there are maps, lists of millwrights and copious references. More extensive accounts are given of the following mills:

Arncott, Blackthorn East & West Mills, Bloxham Grove, Chinnor, Great Haseley, Nettlebed, North Leigh, Thame and Wheatley

Chapters include

- 1: The technology of the windmill
- 2: Berkshire windmills
- 3: Gazetteer – Berkshire
- 4: Oxfordshire windmills
- 5: Gazetteer – Oxfordshire
- 6: Supplementary photographs

Published by The Mills Archive Trust cost £15

### ***English Local History***

*by Kate Tiller*

The classic guide to exploring English local history, brought up to date and expanded.

This is a book for anyone wanting to explore local history in England. It summarises, in an accessible and authoritative way, current knowledge and approaches, bringing together and illustrating the key sources and evidence, the skills and tools, the contexts and interpretations for successive periods. Case studies show these ingredients in use, combined to create histories of people and place over time.

A standard text since its first edition in 1992, this new edition features extensive fresh material, updated to reflect additional availability of evidence, changing interpretations, new tools and skills (not least the use of IT), and developments in the time periods and topics tackled by local historians. The interdisciplinary character of twenty-first-century local, family and community history is a prominent feature. Complemented by 163 illustrations, this book offers an unrivalled introduction to understanding and researching local history.

KATE TILLER is Reader Emerita in English Local History at Oxford University, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and the Royal Historical Society and a founding fellow of Kellogg College, Oxford. Over a career of 40 years, based at Oxford's Department for Continuing Education, she developed and implemented courses in local history from community evening classes to new master's and doctoral programmes. In 2019, she was appointed OBE for services to local history.

## ***The Register of Simon Sudbury***

***ed E Donald Logan ISBN 978-0-907239-83-3***

This year's publication by the Canterbury and York Society is the Register of Simon Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury 1375-1381. These volumes give more detail of the goings on in the church than almost any other source. This one includes

Memoranda - letters to the Pope and other clerics, dispensations, Commissions etc

Testaments - mainly wills

Institutions - to parishes in the Diocese of Canterbury

Ordinations -

Royal Writs -

As most of the business is concerned with matters from his diocese the interest from Berkshire is limited. However as usual there is a fabulous index and the following entries might be of interest to Berkshire historians:-

Abingdon Abbey, Prior of Reading, Nicholas Carew, Childrey Chantry, Hurley Priory, Little Marlow Priory, Reading Abbey (7 entries) Reading Priory, Shottesbrook, Whitchurch (Oxf), Warfield, Windsor (6 entries)

I would be happy to copy people with material if interested.

*John Chapman (Newsletter@BLHA.org)*



# ***Society Contributions***

## ***Berkshire Family History Society***

While our communities continue to feel the impacts of coronavirus, the society has been successful in making important operational changes in response to those impacts.

Early adoption of video conferencing allowed the traditional talks, workshops and courses to be extended to engage participants not only in Berkshire but also nationwide and, on occasions, worldwide. The society's 45th AGM took place in early September via Zoom with 65 people attending. The recording of this meeting is available to members on YouTube. In the same month, Zoom also provided the platform for the society's contribution to Heritage Open Days. An illustrated online 'walk' featured 42 of the outstanding, interesting, and sometimes amusing memorials found in Reading and the surrounding area — from the Maiwand Lion to some unusual graves in local burial grounds.

Forthcoming programme highlights include a 'Potpourri' series of five online talks from January to early March. Joan Dils is the tutor for a workshop on The Old Poor Law, and Richard Marks one catering for those whose ancestors worked on the railways. By popular demand, another beginners' introduction to family history research starts in March. The six society branches will also be pursuing their local activities online. The website — <https://berksfhs.org> — has all the details.

The past year has seen 35 editions of the society's electronic newsletter. In Touch brings information, updates on events and publications, and key family history news to its subscribers and neatly complements the quarterly Berkshire Family Historian magazine. The website holds archive copies of both these publications and of magazines from a growing number of family history societies around the world.

The enforced closure of the Berkshire Record Office has limited volunteer transcribing and checking of parish records for much of this year. This has not prevented the society from the successful autumn launch of data downloads — in recognition of the reality that not everyone's computer can take CDs these days. The launch phase focused on burials and monumental inscriptions and over 330 downloads are already available, to provide

choice, flexibility and immediate access to data for those with interests confined to specific parishes, or to a particular time span. Prices are modest, starting from £2, and reflect the volume of data included. For researchers interested in a wider range of pre-1974 Berkshire parishes, the Berkshire Burials CD may offer you better value. We anticipate adding baptism and marriage downloads in the coming year too.

As this report was in preparation, Findmypast added the Berkshire Probate Index dataset, built by the society eight years ago, to its collection of Berkshire transcriptions accessible online. Data downloads, society CDs and other publications are available via the online Shop, at <https://shop.berksfhs.org>

The year has also seen important changes to the society's new membership and renewal processes. A rolling membership year has replaced the former fixed term membership year, so that everyone can now enjoy a full 12 months' membership from whatever point in the year that they decide to join us.

There is no doubt that 2020 brought many unexpected challenges for local and family historians. The society and its volunteers has endeavoured to respond quickly to meet many of these. We look forward to a gradual resumption of 'normal services' alongside the new as we enter the New Year. And we hope that the archives, libraries and research centres that are central to our interests will be operating with fewer constraints before long.

*Derek Trinder*

## ***Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group (BIAG)***

As mentioned in the last newsletter we ran a Twitter Conference as part of the 2020 Heritage Open Day events. The event entitled 'IA in Berkshire and Beyond: Our Industrial Heritage Explored in 280 characters' was a success drawing in an audience from around the UK and even a couple of European groups. It also attracted people who had not previously known about BIAG, which was great. If you are interested in the content search in Twitter using #BIAG20. I also spoke last time of our offer of free membership in 2021 because we had had so little expenditure this year. I'm pleased to say that we have nearly doubled our membership to date. Our focus now is on building an exciting, and currently online, programme for 2021.

Further information on BIAG and membership can be found on our website [www.BIAG.org.uk](http://www.BIAG.org.uk).

*Jo Alexander-Jones*

## ***Goring Gap Local History Society***

### **Gloom and Zoom**

What a year this has been. Until March the Society was having a very good season with excellent speakers at our well attended monthly talks and members enjoying a range of outings. By a squeak we managed to have our March talk on Lord Nuffield (car magnate William Morris) and an enjoyable coach outing to the Brewery Museum at Burton on Trent before lockdown was imposed, but since then Covid-19 has ruled our lives completely.

Like all other local history societies we had to cancel all our scheduled talks and outings. In April I started to compile a monthly newsletter which was sent out by email via the Mailchimp platform. It was a steep learning curve adapting to the software, but what goes out is passable if not high quality! I thought this would be a temporary stop-gap way of keeping in touch with members, but now I am in the middle of putting together the Christmas issue for 2020! As well as news and notices, I try to research a story or two to include, trying to find a link with the past that relates to present circumstances. Most of these come under the heading ‘there is nothing new under the sun’.

A lot of my inspiration comes from the pages of the parish magazine, which was rather lively at the end of the 19th century, and local newspapers. I have recounted what happened here during the ‘flu pandemic of 1918/19, with many of the measures taken being just the same as in coronavirus lockdown, and when our local recreation ground was invaded by travellers, I was able to find a parallel in the outrage when the railway navvies moved in for a year or so when the GWR line was being doubled in the 1890s. In fact the men caused none of the projected trouble and some correspondents in the papers said the local villagers were worse behaved! It was also interesting to find that a club room was set up for the navvies, to give them somewhere to go in the evenings. When there was a lot in the news about political corruption, I told the tale of the Wallingford parliamentary candidate who rented a house here, and who was taken to court for

bribery and ‘treating’ by his losing opponent. It was a funny story actually, as these two candidates offered free food and drink at certain pubs in the vicinity in return for promised votes. At the trial several men testified to the fact that they had made an agreement with both men, in order to maximise the benefits. So much for underestimating the local yokels!

Features on old shops and businesses are very popular and I can find plenty of photographs to illustrate these. Having covered pestilence, I’ve also written about fire (Swing Riots) and flood – plenty of those in Goring and Streatley over the years. None of the material is serious historical research, but it hopefully keeps the troops entertained. It certainly keeps the Society Secretary out of mischief.

When lockdown was first imposed the committee were hopeful that we would be able to resume face to face talks in the autumn, but when this was shown to be wishful thinking, like all other organisations we’ve had to go down the Zoom route. It has proved surprisingly popular and we get a good attendance at each lecture. The committee members involved in putting on the show had a few teething problems to overcome, but then they like a challenge! All of next year’s programme is now scheduled to be virtual.

One bright beacon in the Covid gloom was that we actually managed to participate in a creative arts and history exhibition attended by people in the flesh. The church at Goring is dedicated to Saint Thomas of Canterbury and 2020 marks the anniversaries of both his murder and the ‘translation’ of his body to a glittering shrine in Canterbury Cathedral. The vicar of the United Benefice of Goring, Streatley and South Stoke, invited the Local History Society to take part in the commemoration of ‘Becket 2020’. A whole host of events was planned, of which two took place early in the year before lockdown, but the rest had to be cancelled. However when restrictions were lifted in July, the organizing group decided that the exhibition in the church, planned as part of the Gap Festival in June, could perhaps go ahead after all. The Gap Textiles Group had already made their artworks on the theme of pilgrimage, the History Society speedily put together three pop-up panels on Thomas Becket, the history of the church and Goring Feast, an annual event held in July in medieval times to mark the saint’s translation. The talented flower-arrangement team created some wonderful displays representing phases of the saint’s life and we were off! Stringent Covid-secure arrangements were put in place and the exhibition was open to the

public from 10-13 September. It was very well attended and so many people remarked that it was wonderful to do ‘something normal’.

Luck was on our side as on 14 September, the government imposed new restrictions that would have prevented the event from taking place. We are hoping that some of the other cancelled events, including a pilgrimage to Canterbury Cathedral, will be able to go ahead in 2021 or 2022. In the meantime, we will keep on Zooming.

*Janet Hurst, Secretary*

## ***Project Purley***

Well 2020 is one year we won't forget in a hurry.

As reported in the last newsletter, the society moved its talks programme onto Zoom in April and this has allowed us to continue to meet monthly with those members able to use video conferencing. From the beginning, we provided 1-1 and small group sessions for any member who wanted additional help to use Zoom, and these still continue but far less frequently. With summer visits and socials out of the question this year, we have held talks every month bar August and whilst finding speakers willing to talk on Zoom is more challenging than face to face, we have managed. And it has been worth the effort. After our first Zoom talk, almost every single member who attended emailed afterwards to say how much they had enjoyed the talk and how appreciative they were that we were able to meet on Zoom.

September saw our first ever AGM on Zoom, six months later and also less social than usual. We took the opportunity to ask our members to agree a new clause for our constitution giving the Executive more flexibility in such unprecedented times. After the AGM, Chairman Catherine Sampson gave a talk on Royal Women. This focused on the lives of three members of the Tudor Court who all fell foul of the court at some stage in their lives and utilised differing coping mechanisms to survive. All three had Berkshire connections which took us to Windsor Castle, Abingdon and Bisham Abbeys, the manors of Battle and Cholsey, Caversham Park and also nearby Greys Court in Oxfordshire. In October, we welcomed historian Richard Marks who spoke about Bomber Command in the Second World War. It was an excellent, well balanced and informative talk which attracted a number of questions afterwards. Ben Viljoen was November's spea-



ker on the early history of Purley Hall. This was a richly illustrated and meticulously researched talk which added greatly to our knowledge of one of Purley's largest properties. Ben overlaid old maps and garden plans onto modern Google Earth images to show that the 17th century garden layout was still identifiable in the modern landscape. We are generally now attracting about 50 members to our online talks, which is broadly comparable, perhaps a little less, to our face to face audience numbers.

For the society's Christmas meeting we have something a little different planned. Shinfield Players have kindly agreed to give a bespoke performance of their recent Murder Mystery "Family Fortunes". Written especially for Zoom, the players are kindly giving their time for free and Project Purley will make a donation to their chosen charity for 2020, Blood Bikes. It promises to be a lovely evening and one we are greatly looking forward to.

On other news. The society's journals have continued throughout the pandemic, albeit now printed digitally by an internet-based company, giving the benefit of full colour throughout. Several members have been keeping Covid-19 diaries since March for the society's archive and these continue. We are also actively gathering in articles from those who live in Purley, on how the pandemic has impacted on their lives. The village's facebook site, with the administrators' permission, is being preserved so that we have a long term record of life in Purley throughout the pandemic on a day by day basis. Work has also continued on adding material to our website and in cataloguing more archives. Our focus is now additionally moving to June 2022 and how we will help commemorate, God willing, the Queens' Platinum Jubilee.

*Catherine Sampson*

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

The Society was able to resume its programme of talks in September, using the "Zoom" platform – not quite the talks as planned, since not all the speakers were able or willing to use Zoom.

The September talk was "The Lost Empire of Earley: Oliver Dixon's," by Caroline Piller. This complemented her recently published book, "The Life and Times of Oliver Dixon: a Reading Horseman Remembered." Oliver Dixon grew up on a farm in County Mayo, Ireland, and was brought to

Reading around 1879, when he was about ten years old, by horse dealer Michael Donovan. Oliver displayed an exceptional talent for assessing horses. Donovan bought the business from horse dealer George Reeves of Mockbeggar Farm on Crescent Road, which eventually Oliver was to own. In 1899 Oliver sold part of his land to the Reading School Board, to build the Wokingham Road Board School – later renamed Alfred Sutton School.

Oliver built up a substantial business dealing horses, enlarging and improving his premises on Crescent Road. He was well known and well liked in different social circles, including the aristocracy and royalty. He was a devout Catholic, and a great supporter of many communities in Reading. Oliver died at home, Mockbeggar House on Whiteknights Road, in 1939.

All that remains now is a field, a gate post and a bus stop named after his house. Caroline's presentation showed us many photos and maps of what Oliver's empire looked like over the years, which was a real eye-opener! The talk was particularly well received because many in the audience hadn't come across Oliver Dixon before, and hadn't considered the importance of horses before motorised transport, and the number of stables and repositories across Reading. Caroline's book on the subject, "The Lost Empire of Earley," is available from [vikenzobooks@virginmedia.com](mailto:vikenzobooks@virginmedia.com) or phone 0118 9661950.

In October we heard about "The Cup that Cheers: Tea Before Victoria," from Joy Pibworth. Tea consumed in Britain before the 1840s came from China. It was first imported into England in the early 17th century, but its popularity did not take off until after the marriage in 1662 of Charles II to Catherine of Braganza, a confirmed tea-drinker. After which the popularity of tea grew enormously, was reflected in art and triggered a demand for tea ware of all sorts.

Since tea was taxed at 119% it provoked much criminal activity. Smuggling, although accepted by respectable people, was a serious problem. The violence of the Hawkhurst Gang in the 1740s proved so repellent, and the gang's punishments so effective as a deterrent, that eventually tea smuggling withered away. Yet even in the 1780s, the "Reading Mercury" noted instances of brutality towards excise officers, and even the discovery of four smugglers and their contraband tea near Newbury.

The "Reading Mercury" also reported on the Adulteration Act of 1777

which made illegal the addition of the noxious products often added to tea leaves. In 1784 the Commutation Act was passed, which lowered the tax to 12½% and was also reported in the “Reading Mercury.” Tea was becoming affordable. A contemporary social commentator remarked, with some distaste, that “The lower orders are altered in every respect for the worse by tea and wheaten bread,” yet boiling water led in time to improvements in health.

John Horniman, who was born in Reading to a Quaker family in 1803, went into the tea business, inaugurated sealed packets, and led to Horniman’s tea becoming the biggest selling brand in the world.

The third talk came from Malcolm Summers, “The Grey Friars of Reading.”

From 1233 there was a community of Franciscan friars living and working in Reading, until the Dissolution of the Monasteries and Friaries by Henry VIII. The only remnant of their house is the nave of the second friary church, now Greyfriars Church.

The Franciscans, known as the Grey Friars from the colour of their habits, were formed by Francis of Assisi in 1209, and reached England in their rapid spread through Europe by 1224. In 1233 they came to Reading, where they were allowed to settle and build on Abbey land. The first friary was most probably built just down the hill from Friar Street, beside the Caversham Road, roughly in the area where Tudor Road to Stanshawe Road to Greyfriars Road is now. The land was subject to periodic flooding, and so in 1285 the Abbey granted an extension of land at the top of the hill, where Greyfriars stands.

The friary, like other religious foundations, would have had a variety of buildings within its perimeter wall, such as a dormitory, refectory, infirmary, chapter house, and a cloister. Unfortunately, with all the house building through the nineteenth century, nothing now remains of these. The friary church was in three parts: the nave (for the public), the quire (for the friars) and a walking place between them for access, with a bell tower above.

The Reading friary was built to house a warden and twelve friars. They lived on the charity of the local people and spent much of their time out among the community, as preachers, confessors and as beggars. They

would aim to help the local people in any way that they could, and in return the local people provided them with their daily food.

The main records that survive about the Reading friary are wills, at least 41 of which survive that mention bequests to the friary. Occasional other documents and references help us to know a little more about the friars. There are five wardens known by name, and just over 20 friars.

The friary was shut down on 13 September 1538 as part of Henry VIII's closure of all religious houses. The king confiscated anything of worth, sold off the land and its buildings (to John Stanshawe) and allowed the town's corporation to take over the nave of the church as a guild hall. Over time, the building became a poor house (known as a hospital), a house of correction and a bridewell – both of these last two were types of prison. The friary church was restored in 1862-63 and became a parish church, serving the expanding population of Reading.

Copies of Malcolm's book, "Reading's Grey Friars," are available from Amazon.

The 2021 series of talks will begin on January 20th, with a talk on Reading Abbey, founded 900 years ago. Other talks are about the Home Guard in the Second World War, suffragettes, cinemas, the gas works, and other industrial sites lying between the railway and the River Thames. In September there will be a talk on pubs and breweries in Reading, to coincide with the culmination of the Society's latest publication project

*David Cliffe*

## ***Shinfield & District Local History Society***

After several months of not meeting we decided, in September, to try Zoom. One of our members, Richard Ingham, volunteered to act as guinea pig and give a talk on "French field names in Berkshire and beyond". Richard explained that the French language was not imposed in Britain following the Conquest of 1066 but tended to be more prevalent amongst town dwellers, where it was applied particularly in relation to food and food preparation. Nevertheless, French names gradually appeared in rural communities. Richard gave examples of French field names from across England, including several from Berkshire, and put forward the hypothesis that adoption of French for some field names came from the large religious houses with their extensive land ownership.

The Zoom trial in September was deemed a success so we decided to continue with meetings in this format. In October, our Chairman, George Taylor, gave a talk on his recollections of growing up in Shinfield in the 1950s and the many changes to the village from that time to the present day. Starting with life at home the talk progressed through recollections of the village school, play, shops and visiting traders, transport, village events, landmarks and features – lost and gained, ending with housing developments and, in particular, the massive changes of recent years.

In November, Dr Manfred Brod gave a talk on “The Devil loose in Bradfield: Dr Pordage and his mystical society”. Dr Brod told the story of Dr Pordage, rector of Bradfield in the mid-17th century, and the society he established there which believed that demons and angels “visited” the rectory. Dr Brod suggested that these apparitions were the result of alchemy. This was a fascinating talk on a subject previously unknown to our members.

Our December meeting took the form of a Christmas quiz devised by one of our members, Mary Wheway. This provided a much welcomed light hearted end to what has been a very difficult year for everyone.

Whilst the use of Zoom was initially met with varying degrees of enthusiasm it has, at least, allowed us to continue monthly discussions and talks. Additionally, it has facilitated several non-members joining our meetings and has allowed us to re-establish contact with former members who have moved away from the area.

*George Taylor*

## ***Wargrave Local History Society***

As normal meetings are not possible at present, Wargrave Local History Society tried the Zoom process in September, when Joan Dils’ spoke about Berkshire in the Civil War from 1642 to 1648 – how the county was affected, how the people reacted, and coped, during the period of conflict (rather than an account of specific battles. The Civil War resulted from the conflicting principles of two political views. Most people did not want to fight at all. In Berkshire, the gentry had a divided allegiance, some being Parliamentarians and others Royalists, whilst some families had divided loyalties. Berkshire’s, geographical location and relative wealth were factors in how the local people were affected - both sides would seize property



from the gentry or the church, and then raise funds by demanding payment for the owner to 'redeem' their property..

As the experiment worked well, we used Zoom again to enjoy Joy Pibworth's presentation on The Heroes of Woodley Airfield, looking in particular at the aviation background to many of the present road names in the area. Joy outlined the early history of aviation around Reading. After World War1, interest in private flying grew and local enthusiasts formed a flying club, for ladies as well as men. A Reading garage, Phillips and Powis set up a base on the 100-acre field at Woodley in 1929. Joy explained how this became Miles Aircraft, who continued building aircraft there until 1948, In 1980 the site was sold to Bryant Homes –the road names preserving the site's aviation heritage.

In November John Painter's gave his talked on Reading's Abbey Quarter. John is secretary of the Friends of Reading Abbey, who have supported Reading council's work on the ruins into a safe condition in time for their 900th anniversary in 2021. The abbey was founded in 1121 by Henry I, and the abbey church took 44 years to construct, although other monastic buildings had been completed by 1126. John told of its time as a religious house, including the relationship with the townspeople of Reading, followed by the dissolution and then its use as a royal palace, until the reign of Edward VI, when the roof and glass were removed. Further destruction took place in the Civil War period, but some buildings remain – St Laurence's (as a town a church) and the hospitium, which became Reading Grammar School and also a civic building. By 2009 the ruins had to be closed for safety reasons but, aided by a Heritage Lottery Fund grant, the restoration meant the abbey grounds could be reopened in 2018.

December saw members enter the spirit of our online Christmas Party, with a 'History of Christmas presentation and a light-hearted local history quiz.

The Society has also kept in regular contact with its members with a news-sheet, including an item in some way related to that particular month from our archive.

*Peter Delaney*

# ***Opportunities***

For visits and talks open to the public

## ***The Centre for Heritage and Family History***

While The Centre remains closed for the time being due to the coronavirus situation, Berkshire Family History Society has arranged numerous online events. Pre-booking is required, open to members and non-members.

**Thursday, 14th January — Healthcare in a Georgian Town**

**WEBINAR-ONLINE TALK**

(first in a series of five) from 2 to 3.15 pm with Penny Stokes. Full details and book at <https://berksfhs.org>

**Saturday, 16th January — DNA Special Interest Group**

**ONLINE DISCUSSION GROUP**

2.30 to 4.30 pm facilitated by international DNA expert, Debbie Kennett. NOTE: Society members receive priority for this event. Any remaining tickets on general sale from 8th January. Full details and book at <https://berksfhs.org>

**Saturday, 23rd January — The Old Poor Law**

**ONLINE WORKSHOP**

The workshop runs from 11 am to 1 pm and the Tutor is Joan Dils. Full details and book at <https://berksfhs.org>

**Thursday, 28th January — ‘King of All Balloons’:**

**James Sadler — Oxford pastry cook and first English aeronaut**

**WEBINAR-ONLINE TALK**

(second in a series of five) from 2 to 3.15 pm with Mark Davies. Full details and book at <https://berksfhs.org>

## **Saturday, 6th February — Railway Records for Family Historians**

### **ONLINE WORKSHOP**

The workshop runs from 11 am to 1 pm and the Tutor is Richard Marks. Full details and book at <https://berksfhs.org>

## **Thursday, 11th February — The Upper Thames Patrol**

### **WEBINAR-ONLINE TALK**

(third in a series of five) from 2 to 3.15 pm with Bill King. Full details and book at <https://berksfhs.org>

## **Thursday, 18th February — Reading c1740-1800: commerce, culture and chapel**

### **WEBINAR-ONLINE TALK**

(fourth in a series of five) from 2 to 3.15 pm with Joan Dils. Full details and book at <https://berksfhs.org>

## **Saturday, 6th March — The Arrival of the Railways in Reading**

### **WEBINAR-ONLINE TALK**

(fifth in a series of five) from 2 to 3.15 pm with Richard Marks. Full details and book at <https://berksfhs.org>

## **Monday, 16th March — Beginners' Family History**

### **Online Course**

Six week course begins, each session 2.00 to 3.30 pm, designed for those who are new to family history research and led by Chad Hanna and Gillian Stevens lead these sessions. Full details and book at <https://berksfhs.org>

# 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,** Dr Roger Sym, 197 Halls Rd, Reading, RG30 tel  
0118 942 7703 [Roger@PsrLtd.Demon.co.uk]
- Berkshire Family History Society,** Centre for Heritage and Family History, 2nd Floor, Reading  
Central Library, Abbey Square, Reading, RG1 3BQ, [tel 0118 950 9553]  
[https://.berksfhs.org][secretary@berksfha.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 Sperrey, Church Cottage, Front St, East  
Garston, Hungerford, RG17 7HJ [karen@kado.cloud]
- East Ilsley Local History Society,** Eric Saxton, School House, Church Hill, East Ilsley RG20 7LP  
[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.or-  
g.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. [prwoodward@btinternet.com] Jill Muir, [jill@shotte.plus.com],  
[http://www.longworth-history-society.org.uk/]
- Maidenhead Archaeological & Historical Society,** Brian Madge, 11 Boulters Court,  
Maidenhead, SL6 8TH, [bandgmadge@btinternet.com]
- Marcham Society** Simon Blackmore tel 01865 391275 [simonblackmore@googlemail.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**, Jane Rawlins (archivist) Chapel House, Thames Ave, Pangbourne RG8 7BU contact 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 Mradows, 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*

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**Vice-President Prof E J T Collins**

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## **Committee Members**

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**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](http://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
<b>Individual</b>	£9.00	£12.00	1	1
<b>Family</b>	£9.00	£12.00	1	1
<b>Corporate</b>	£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](mailto:membership@blha.org.uk)

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## Next Newsletter

The next Newsletter is due to be published in May 2021.

The DEADLINE for copy is 15th April 2021 - preferably we would like to have it much earlier.

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](mailto:newsletter@blha.org.uk) but please include BLHA and your society name in the title of the e-mail.

## ***43rd Berkshire Local History Association Annual General Meeting (AGM)***

The next AGM is to be held on 27th March 2021 and will be hosted by the Eton Wick Local History Group at the Eton Wick Village Hall. The programme will follow the usual format: arrival and refreshments in the hall from 10.45 a.m. with the AGM starting at 11.30 a.m. The programme will include a talk by our President Joan Dils.

A light lunch will be provided around 12.45 p.m., followed by a bookable private tour of Dorney Court, an early Tudor manor house, starting at 2 p.m. There is limited space (40 people) on the tour and there will be a charge of £10.80 per head payable in advance to reserve a place. Bookings will be on a 'first come, first served' basis.

A Booking Form has been included with this newsletter, and full details are published on our website (<http://www.blha.org.uk/annual-general-meetings/>).