

# **Berkshire Local History Association**



**Newsletter No 132  
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# 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.

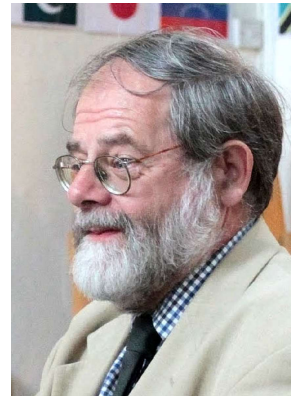
Contributions should be e-mailed to:- newsletter @blha.org.uk and arrive not later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month preceding publication (January, May and September) Word, Text or pdf copy is acceptable, but keep it simple and please do not use spaces or tabs to lay out presentations. Photographs 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* - **One of the grave markers in St Mary's Churchyard Bucklebury made by the Hedges Foundry** (see page 4)

## ***Chairman's Corner***

We live in uncertain times, and as I write, in early December, the effect of yet another strain of virus may change what we choose to do, or what we are allowed to do.



Many local history societies resumed their face-to-face meetings in September, with some holding “virtual” meetings instead or as well. The BLHA hopes for an “in person” AGM at Eton Wick Village Hall on Saturday March 26th, this year, followed by a visit to nearby Dorney Court – see the invitation later in this newsletter.

A recent addition to our website is the invitation to speakers on Berkshire local history subjects to have their information in the Speakers and Talks section. It is hoped that they will prove useful, especially to people who have the task of finding speakers for a series of talks.

The board guiding the “Building Schools for Berkshire” project met in November. It is hoped to re-start the project in the spring, but this is very much dependent on how many people, members of staff and of the public, the Berkshire Record Office is allowed to have in the building at any one time, and whether the researchers are happy to go there. This is a project which the BLHA supports, and it will lead to a volume, published by the Berkshire Record Society, about schools in the county which were built between 1870, the year of Forster’s Education Act, and the outbreak of war in 1914. Work was well under way by the time of the first lock-down, and the project is unusual because most of the research is carried out by volunteer researchers.

The Standing Conference on Archives also met in November. Its members represent the users of the Berkshire Record Office, the councillors of the Berkshire Unitary Authorities who pay for the service, and representatives of the Record Office itself, who usually include Mark Stevens, the County Archivist. I currently represent the BLHA, and we read reports and ask questions, make observations, and occasional recommendations. In November we were hearing about how the BRO was coping with restrictions on access, about obtaining grants for the cataloguing of particular collections, and about the plans to extend the building, so that the Record Office can continue to accept material well into the future. It seemed that there is the

willingness from local government to fund the extension.

On a personal note, over the summer I have been able to continue various local history projects of my own, including work on two books where most of the research had been done before the lockdowns. I'm hoping that both titles will see the light of day in 2022 – especially the one that has been hanging around for almost 50 years! I organised a book launch for the History of Reading Society, and gave them a talk on the history of Reading cinemas, and led a local history walk for the Berkshire Family History Society.

There have been recent developments which will affect a couple of historic sites in the Reading area since I last wrote. One of them concerns Caversham Park, the site of the manor house, and the large house which latterly contained the B.B.C. Monitoring Station. The Monitoring Station closed and the building and grounds were offered for sale. The house seems likely to become apartments, and people living in the area were hoping that public access to parts of the grounds might be negotiated. Reading Borough Council has identified a number of old footpaths in the grounds, and they and the local M.P., Matt Rodda, are hoping to persuade the developer to re-open them. These grounds were landscaped by “Capability” Brown, and a terrace, part of a canal, a Greek temple remain, though not his work, as well as some large old trees.

More excitingly, the anonymous mural artist “Banksy” has offered to donate several million pounds towards persuading the Ministry of Justice to allow the disused Reading Gaol to be used as an arts hub, rather than selling to the highest bidder who might well turn the building into expensive flats. The story of the proposed sale is long and complicated, involving a listed building, remains of Reading Abbey below and around it, Oscar Wilde, various eminent people from the present-day entertainment world lending their support for an arts hub, the Friends of Reading Abbey lending theirs, the Borough Council lending theirs and putting in a bid for the building, and a developer who has now pulled out of the deal. It appears that Banksy noticed the large, blank expanse of prison wall while travelling on a rail replacement coach going along Forbury Road, and decided that it would be a great location for one of his art works. The humorous creation on the prison wall appeared mysteriously over night and attracted a great deal of attention. Latest news at the time of writing is that the M. of J. has said that

it will only consider the bids that are already on the table, ignoring Banksy's millions.

And on top of that, the Borough Council has just (and not for the first time) submitted a bid for Reading to become a city. Uncertain times indeed!

*David Cliffe*

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

A Happy New Year to everyone and many thanks to all those who have sent in contributions. As you will see from the reports several societies have managed to resume face to face meetings; but the latest news on omicron could indicate we may have to continue with, or go back to Zoom for a while.



What I think most local historians miss most has been the ability to trawl through libraries, record offices and newspapers for the small snips of information that set us going in a new direction. Thankfully many of their records are digitised and on line now, so while it may not be quite as much fun we can get at so much more information from our own homes.

As you are probably aware I am a founder member of Project Purley and over the years we have collected around 100,000 items ranging from ancient bones to recent photographs. It is not possible to digitise everything but we have made a start by focussing on images, documents and press cuttings. I know several other societies have done the same, notably Hungerford so can I encourage many others to do the same. We have been sticking to .pdf and .jpg formats as these are handleable by most people with computers, but you do need a comprehensive index.

*John Chapman*

## ***Articles***

### ***Kindness of a stranger***

by Jo Alexander-Jones

2021 has been a difficult year in so many ways, but it has given me some wonderful memories all thanks to the kindness of Berkshire folk. Being an industrial archaeologist can have its pleasures and its pain. The pain comes

in seeing so many of our industrial heritage sites destroyed or changed beyond recognition, but this year the pleasures have definitely won out.

The year started with a call from the wife of one of our founder members offering us his book, slide and photograph collection. That in itself was wonderful, as so often these assets just get thrown out when people pass on. But what made the collection so important was the discovery of the BIAG Gazetteer, a mythical beast thought lost in the mists of time. Even West Berkshire Council's Archaeology Service, who quote the Gazetteer in a number of their Historic Environment Records, didn't have a copy. Neither, sadly, did we as the authors. This copy of the Gazetteer had lain dormant for nearly thirty years with the last entry being made in 1992. My aim became to check on the 260 sites included to see if they were still there and then update the details. That's when the fun began.

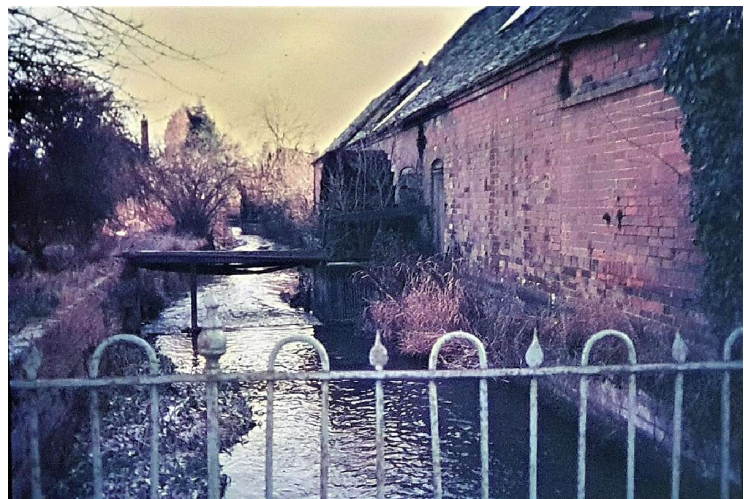
Choosing a location at random, I set off with a friend to explore Bucklebury knowing that there had been a very successful foundry there started around 1820 by the Hedges family. Having been taken over in 1908 by the King family, the foundry ended its working life in 1986 when it was then owned by the Whatley brothers. The foundry was located in a stone building beside the River Pang with the flow powering much of the machinery used on the site. To the western side were workshops associated with the woodworking and the wheelwright parts of the business and to the south was a trying furnace. To the east was the original smithy, which had been absorbed into the foundry, and behind this building, beside the stream, there was a large workshop that had been dated to 1844. Inside the foundry there would have been hearths and benches for making and repairing iron products, mainly agricultural machinery and tools for the local community and latterly more widely. To the south of the workshop was a parallel building, perhaps of the same date, where pumps and engines were made and repaired.

I knew that the churchyard of St Mary the Virgin in the village had some iron grave markers made by the Hedges foundry. We quickly found the graveyard and set about exploring. Well, I had expected a couple of markers, but was overwhelmed as I counted over thirty pieces made in various formats, all of them hiding in what had become an untended meadowland. These markers deserve a study in themselves and I plan to document them having taken many, many photographs of the names and

the maker's marks.

Having stopped for a picnic amongst the graves after all of the photography, we set off to find the foundry site. Now, I am not blessed with the best sense of direction, but I am blessed with a friend who can charm the birds from the trees and off she set in pursuit of the site. The first person approached was a lady on her own who looked a little wary as two elderly women arose from the long grass and came towards her. 'Yes, she did know the foundry site, but what did we want with it?' Having explained about the Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group (BIAG) and showed her our various bits of paperwork she must have decided we were genuine because she said 'Follow me'. We could not have found a better guide, not only did she know the site but she lived in it. In a great act of generosity, she invited us in and allowed us to photograph the original structure. She also told us about her grandfather who had worked at the foundry and showed us her photographs from the time. This lady must have one of the most impressive patio views that I have ever seen, as peeping through the doors is the original waterwheel with its mechanism still intact.

I was able to photograph the exterior of the building and found a vantage points where I could align the view to one of the pictures we had that showed the foundry before it was converted to a home.



This visit alone would count as a great kindness in my book, but it didn't stop there. Through the assistance of the very helpful archaeologists at West Berkshire Council I have been put in touch with the curator at the West Berkshire Museum. It turns out that they have acquired a model of the Bucklebury foundry for their collection and once it is fully catalogued will allow us a special visit to see it. As part of cataloguing our newly

acquired photographic collection, I am restoring the photographs and slides, and will be giving copies to both the museum and to the lady who showed us her home as a small thank-you.

Having been so successful in Bucklebury, we next turned our attention to Kintbury. This lovely Berkshire village has a number of items of industrial heritage, including a mill, a granary and a interesting turnstile. It is also close to the whiting works on Irish Hill where they extracted chalk to be used in a variety of products including paint, colour wash, talcum powder and to bleach ship sails. There is still some of the machinery laying in the now overgrown site. We quickly found most of the items in the Gazetteer, but what eluded us was a brick stamped with the maker's mark 'GTK Kintbury'. I knew the brick's provenance; GTK stands for George Thomas Killick who operated a brickworks in Kintbury from the early 1900 until the 1920s and he stamped prominent bricks as a way of advertising his business.



We searched high and low, asking any inhabitants we met if they knew where the brick was. No, no-one did, some looked interested, some hurried away. We did manage to find a seemingly undocumented brick marked 'AH 1791 IH' in Station Road, but no GTK mark. By 4 o'clock we were exhausted and headed back to the car defeated. Now the car was parked next to a man who was painting his house. Maybe one last try we thought, did he know of a GTK brick anywhere. And halleluiaah, he did. It's embedded in the wall of my conservatory and you'll have to come around the back of the house to see it, he said.

Having let us photograph his prized possession, he then described to us the location of two other GTK bricks in the village which we duly went and captured. Without his kindness we would have left always wondering what had happened to the item in the Gazetteer and guessing that it had been on a building now since demolished.

My final tale of being assisted by strangers comes from Marlston in West Berkshire. We had a photograph and a Gazetteer entry for a lovely multi-tiered metal stile made by the Hedges foundry in Bucklebury which we have mentioned earlier. The location given for the stile was a little vague, but it was somewhere near the church and school in central Marlston. Off we set, camera in hand, to walk the by-ways of the area in pursuit. It was

obvious early on that the hedges had grown substantially since the photograph was taken and try as we might we could not find that stile. However, we did find a local man who told us there was a metal stile in the school grounds but we would not be able to go in and see it because of school safeguarding concerns. Undaunted but mindful of the children, we carried on walking hoping to get a glimpse of the stile through the boundary fence; the stile is just too unusual to give up on it so easily. Forty-five minutes and quite a long walk around the school boundary later, we arrive back to the main road muddied, tired and just a little bedraggled. There was the same man, and this time he takes pity on us and comes over. As it was by then out of school hours, he agrees to take us into the grounds and we trek through what is a forest of saplings, nettles and barely-controlled copse - and there it is, a magnificent metal stile. We would have had no hope of spotting it from the road, nor of finding it if we had chosen to sneak into the grounds alone. This man was our hero; he took our photographs by the stile and all was accomplished without endangering a single school child (or being caught by a teacher).

As a finale to the last episode, it turns out that the stile we found is not the one mentioned in the BIAG Gazetteer. Careful examination of the pictures of now and then show that the original stile had four steps and a short handle whereas the one we saw had five steps and a much longer metal pole. So, come the good weather, it is back to Marlston to hunt out the missing item and maybe meet another kind stranger who can help us out.

## *Sheep and Place Names*

by Nigel Suffield-Jones

Sheep bred on the Berkshire Downs were important to the local economy, and an informal sheep market was held in East Ilsley from the reign of Henry II (1154 -1189). This grew in importance over the centuries, until a specific charter was granted in 1620 to hold a sheep market in the village. Sheep markets and fairs flourished, with, in their heyday, 14 sheep fairs a year, and markets held on alternate Wednesdays from February to July. Sheep pens were erected at many places in the village, and are specifically recalled at Pen Meadow. Thousands of sheep were driven into the village, mainly along drove roads recalled at names such as Drove Lane, Hermitage, Driftway, Compton, and Halfmile Drove, Lambourn. Numbers increa-

sed annually until the 19th century, with at its height, 80,000 the largest number of sheep penned in a day, and an annual average of about 400,000. The East Ilsley sheep markets were practically the largest in the whole country.

In the Middle Ages the wool from Berkshire sheep was the mainstay of the cloth industry in Newbury. Minor names in our area recall some of the many specializations that the production of cloth required. Once the raw wool had been combed, the spinners, as at Spinner Green, Easthampstead, set to work. This work was often done by women in their cottages, remembered in our modern 'spinster'. Weavers, as at Weaver's Wood, Cold Ash, and Weavers Lane, Inkpen, wove the wool into cloth, with Slaymakers, a field name in Wargrave in 1840, recording the makers of the shuttles for the looms, a slay being defined as 'an instrument to beat up the weft'. Next came the wool trampplers, recalled at Fuller's Copse, Pangbourne and Walkers's Shaw, Burghfield. Originally, they literally walked or trampled on the cloth in a trough of water combined with fuller's earth, to shrink, strengthen and then purify it. With the scarcity of manpower following the Plague of 1348, water-powered fulling mills were introduced, using a drum attached to a water wheel to beat the cloth with wooden hammers, and for a short period in the late 14th century the mill at Tidmarsh was used in this way. Nearby in 1839 was Rack Close, referring to land on which cloth-stretching frames ('racks') were located.

In many parts of the country weaving was a cottage industry, with the weavers usually working from home, although in Newbury there were many weaving workshops, many of them fairly small. The surname Webber refers to men, but women were certainly involved too, as implied in the -st- of Webster, like for spinster, above. However, the distinction in the surnames between Webber and Webster seems to have been lost early on. Packers, as at Packer's Copse, Shaw, collected the woven cloth from the weavers, and took it to the clothiers in central locations, such as at Newbury.

Later in the Middle Ages some clothiers set several looms in their own homes, including the Winchcombe family, recalled in particular at The Winchcombe School and Winchcombe Road. John Winchcombe the Elder had married his master's widow, and so rose from poverty. When he died, in 1519, his son John, known as Jack of Newbury, steadily grew the

business. Born in 1489, he became a substantial figure in the cloth industry, with 30-50 looms within his premises producing cloth on an industrial scale on a site now occupied by Marks & Spencer. All that now remains is the gabled end of the Tudor building in Marsh Lane, and the name Jack Street at the other end of the block, but at the period the premises extended from 22-24 Northbrook Street well towards Victoria Park. The general function of this part of Newbury is remembered at Weavers Walk.

## ***Miscellanea***

Our AGM is coming up - see the item on page 28. Thanks to the Eton Wick Society we will be able to visit Dorney Court. (right) - make sure to put the date in your diary!.



## ***New Books***

### ***Pubs and Breweries of Reading***

It has been 22 years since John Dearing's book, "Reading Pubs," appeared in the "Britain in Old Photographs" series, published by The History Press. This new book is totally different in emphasis. Much additional research has gone into it, much of it from John Dearing, but this time he has been joined by David Cliffe, who used to look after the local studies collection at Reading Central Library, and Evelyn Williams. Evelyn's MBA dissertation compared the brewing industries in Reading and Dusseldorf, one of Reading's twin towns. She is also a long-standing member of CAMRA, and the Brewery History Society, as is John.

The production of the book has been financed by the History of Reading Society – their first venture into self-publishing.

The book sets out to list and describe all of the Reading inns, from the earliest records up to the end of 2020, when the book went to press, and then to list and describe all of the breweries, in alphabetical order. This is what has given rise to the title "Abbot Cook to Zero Degrees: an A to Z of Reading's Pubs and Breweries." The Abbot Cook is the first pub descri-

bed, and the Zerodegrees restaurant and microbrewery the last.

Thirty pictures illustrate the text, chosen for their interest, and because they haven't been used in recent publications about Reading.

In the case of some establishments, there is not a lot to say, but the stories of others take up several pages. And besides the facts, the book has the folklore, with anecdotes and memories from people who were drinking in Reading many a year ago.

These accounts are followed by a street directory, listing the pubs and inns in the order in which they stood along the streets, one side, and then the other. This in turn is followed by a set of maps of the central area, showing which buildings the hotels, inns and pubs occupied. Finally there is a comprehensive index, which includes not only subjects, but the names of everyone mentioned in the text – brewers, owners of pubs, and licensees.

Copies can be bought in Reading at the Reading Museum Shop in the town centre, or from Fourbears Books in Prospect Street, Caversham, for £12. Copies can be sent by post for £13, inclusive of postage and packing, and payment can be made by bank transfer or by cheque. For payment details, please contact [davidcliffe438@btinternet.com](mailto:davidcliffe438@btinternet.com)

## ***Society Contributions***

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

During the autumn, the society cautiously re-established some of its regular face-to-face contact activities. After 18 months of enforced closure, The Centre for Heritage and Family History is once again open for individual research and also for certain events. Subject to securing additional volunteer help, the intention in 2022 is to extend opening hours further. Some local branches have also resumed face-to-face meetings with encouraging levels of enthusiasm and support. But the future for the society would seem to rest in providing a stimulating mix of in-person and online experiences, thus reaching different demographics according to individuals' locations and interests.

The New Year offers a rich programme of online courses and workshops, social history talks, some online and others face-to-face at The Centre, and

other events likely to benefit local and family historians.

Online talks look at Georgian Reading, Yeomanry House and the history of Reading Football Club and many of those associated with it. Talks at The Centre (with tea and cake afterwards!) take transport as their theme, and feature the key role of Reading Railways in 1940 in relocating those evacuated from Dunkirk, Smith's Coaches (remember that distinctive blue and orange livery?), and early days of Reading's second railway. (This would later become part of the Southern Railway.) And in March, Joan Dils is the tutor on a three-session course looking at understanding and deciphering old handwriting.

All events are detailed on the website — <https://berksfhs.org/whats-on> — and in the e-mailed Events newsletter, available to non-members and members alike. See <https://berksfhs.org/newsletter>. Places at some events are necessarily limited, and tickets can sell out very quickly. Society members can also opt to receive regular In Touch electronic newsletters, as well as the quarterly magazine in print form.

On 6th January, family history website Findmypast releases the eagerly awaited 1921 census for England and Wales, with transcribed and digitised details of over 38 million people recorded across some 8.5 million households. This is the last census release for at least 30 years and gives vital perspectives on family and community structures, employment, and the societal changes marking the beginning of the Roaring Twenties. To mark the launch of the 1921 census, Berkshire Family History Society hosts two online talks delivered by census experts at Findmypast, providing a rare opportunity to hear first-hand about this important new resource. Open to all, these talks are likely to prove extremely popular. Early booking is strongly advised.

After the early summer launch of the transcribed parish registers of Newbury, St Nicolas in fully searchable CD format, autumn project work has focussed principally on preparations for the final edition of Berkshire Burials, publication of which is imminent.

The society has been greatly encouraged by member response to the launch of the new complimentary online service — YourTrees. Designed as a back up to a member's primary family tree program (eg Family Tree Maker, RootsMagic, Legacy, Family Historian), YourTrees also unifies

members' interests and pedigrees into one collective dataset, enabling members not simply to publish their family trees but also to create a permanent research record. Where tree owners allow, society members may browse shared content for research purposes, collaborate in areas of mutual interest, and the society preserves digital legacy copies of all trees provided. Find out more on <https://yourtrees.berksfhs.org>

*Derek Trinder*

## ***Berkshire Gardens Trust***

In contrast to last year, we have had a successful and active spring and summer, actually visiting several gardens including Haines Hill and Waltham Place in East Berkshire, The Dell at Bucklebury Place, Kirby House at Inkpen, guided walks at Hamstead Marshall in West Berkshire and Crockmore End above Henley. Our website provides an insight into these various sites with a mixture of planting and features. An added bonus was that nearly all the visits were in good weather!.

We were also delighted to be able to hold our October AGM plus Autumn Lecture at Purley Barn with real members and guests, followed by 'tea and cake'. Vanessa Berridge, the launch editor of "The English Garden" magazine and an internationally published garden writer and historian, spoke warmly about The 3 generations of women gardeners at Kiftsgate (near the National Trust's Hidcote) in Gloucestershire. Vanessa had some wonderful illustrations as she spent a year researching and exploring the gardens through the seasons.

In addition, we held another zoom lecture in mid-November, entitled "About the history of Public Parks". This was given by David Lambert, a landscape historian and campaigner on historic parks and gardens since the mid-1980s. David, a former conservation officer for the Garden History Society for ten years, who was involved with the first parliamentary select committee's inquiry into - and has advised English Heritage on public parks, shared with us some of the successes and challenges associated with the maintenance and evolution of public parks for the 21st century.

David's lecture in particular served to promote the Gardens Trust's Unforgettable Gardens project. We are certainly lucky that we have several quite different parks and gardens across the county, from Salt Hill and Herschel Park in Slough to Victoria Park in Newbury and many others,

both large and small. BGT intends to start to feature some of these on our website in the coming months. If any BHLA members are interested in contributing to any aspect of this heritage project research, we would be happy to provide more details via [bgtmembership@gmail.com](mailto:bgtmembership@gmail.com).

Behind the scenes, the Trust's rejuvenated website continues to be updated with new pictures and topics. Recent additions include articles by members about their family involvement with garden designing and gardening, the RHS and the Royal Family, as well as information about future visits and lectures. We also continue to respond to general enquiries as well as planning applications across the county as much as we can. Again, please let us know if you can help in your local area!

You can find out more about the Berkshire Gardens Trust, check out the topics covered in this newsletter and find out about our scheduled events for the late winter and spring 2022 via <https://www.berkshiregardenstrust.org>. These include zoom lectures at £5 a time, starting with the hidden gem of Shaw House near Newbury and its gardens on Friday 21st January, while on February 11th you can learn more about the role of women in botany and art (both lectures are at 2pm).

*Fiona Hope Secretary, BGT*

## ***Berkshire Record Office***

Since the last edition, we reopened to visitors between 10 am and 4 pm, but no longer with a lunchtime closure. Visitors are still asked to maintain social distancing and wear a face mask, but we have opened access to catalogues, library material and microfilm/fiche. If you would like to make a visit, please see our website for details on how to book.

The Heritage Open Days theme this year was 'Edible England', and we contributed some recipe cards using recipes from the archives as well as a video on "Making the Berkshire Pie". We had a go at making the pie which was a World War Two recipe by the Women's Institute and it was pretty tasty! You can view the video on our YouTube Channel.

A change to our newsletter – "The Berkshire Echo". We will no longer be producing the four-page newsletter from 2022. Instead, we will be moving to a more digital experience for our readers in the form of links to stories on our website which we hope to do monthly. If you would like to join our

mailing list, you can subscribe via our website.

We recently held an exhibition by the Berkshire Archaeological Society (BAS) to celebrate their 150th anniversary. The exhibition looked at the history of the society and travelled round Berkshire appearing at the Maidenhead Heritage Centre and West Berkshire Museum before coming to us. You can find out more about BAS and its anniversary on their website: <https://www.berksarch.co.uk/index.php/2021/02/bas-150-events-information/>.

We received news that as part of a group of nine archive services, we have been awarded funding from the Wellcome Trust for a new project. Entitled 'The New Jerusalems: post-war new town archives in Britain and Ireland', the funding will enable us to catalogue and make improvements to the packaging of Berkshire's very own New Town, Bracknell. We hope to get someone in post during 2022.

Finally, our exhibition marking 250 years of caring for the River Thames is still available to view online if you would like to see it. Do keep an eye on our website and social media feeds on Twitter Facebook and Instagram for all the latest information.

*Ivone Turnbull, Senior Archivist, Berkshire Record Office*

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

We recommenced face to face meetings in Goring Village Hall in September and a good turnout of members has enjoyed three live talks. We are hoping that the current Covid Omicron variant does not scupper our Christmas event as there are plans to serve mince pies and hot punch after the talk on Charles Dickens.

In September Dan Allen enlightened us about the life of soldiers' wives and children in the Victorian army at home and abroad. They had a pretty hard time in reality and we were surprised to learn that if a wife was not lucky enough to be posted overseas with her husband, she was sent back to her home place of settlement where, with no income, she was dependent on the parish to survive. She might not even see her husband again as he could be abroad for many years.

October saw Professor Paul Henderson at the lectern to speak on James Sowerby: enlightenment, art and science. He described how, despite his

impoverished beginnings, James Sowerby (1757-1822) became an outstanding and prolific natural historian and illustrator, the David Attenborough of his day. The talk was illustrated with examples of Sowerby's exquisite and detailed paintings of life forms encompassing plants, fungi and animals along with minerals and fossils. Professor Henderson brought along copies of his biography of Sowerby in which much of the beautiful artwork is reproduced.

Nicola Tallis enchanted a large audience in November with a wonderful talk on Lady Jane Grey, based on the research for her own book, much of which used sources not previously cited by other biographers of this unfortunate queen. Forced on to the throne aged 17 by the great power players of the royal court, she reigned for only 13 days before being thrown into the Tower of London and finally executed in February 1554. Nicola exploded many of the myths that have grown up about Jane and showed us what an extraordinarily intelligent, independent and courageous young woman she was.

We have even had an outing this autumn, with about 25 members venturing on the (virtually empty) train at Goring to visit Didcot Railway Centre. Led by Transport History Group Co-ordinator Mike Hurst, who has been a volunteer at the centre for many years, they toured the outdoor site and were treated to a visit around the workshops. Everyone agreed how good it had been to participate in such an event again. No further visits are currently on the horizon, but it is hoped to start them again in Spring 2022.

*Janet Hurst, Secretary*

*[www.goringgaphistory.org.uk](http://www.goringgaphistory.org.uk)*

## ***Hungerford Historical Society***

The Hungerford Historical Association celebrated a small return to normality with its' first live talk since February 2020 and a tour de force from its' own Secretary, Helen Lockhart, that kept the 100 plus audience of members and guests riveted.

The subject of her fascinating talk was the life and times of the scandalous and charismatic eighteenth-century socialite, Elizabeth, 6th Baroness Craven, who lived at Benham Park in the Parish of Speen on the outskirts of Newbury. It explored Lady Craven's identity as aristocratic landowner's wife, glamorous society hostess, female philanthropist and interesting local

figure, within the context of her magnificent Palladian country house, Benham Park, designed by leading designers of the period Capability Brown and Henry Holland. The talk examined her tempestuous marriage to Lord Craven, with infidelities, their scandalous separation, her departure from Benham Park and her return with a second husband. Lady Craven's scandalous and extravagant lifestyle was revealed in salacious detail in eighteenth century press reports and in accounts of her by contemporaries, including the gossipy and waspish observations of Horace Walpole.

The talk also drew on Lady Craven's memoirs and analysis of her portraits by Joshua Reynolds, Angelica Kauffman, George Romney, Thomas Beach and Ozias Humphry.

She was born in 1750, daughter of Augustus 4th Earl of Berkeley, at Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire and at the age of 17 married William Craven who two years later became the 6th Baron Craven. In 1772-75 the Cravens built and moved into their Palladian country house, Benham Park. Here they raised their seven children; 3 sons and 4 daughters.

However, the marriage was tempestuous with infidelity on both sides and they separated in 1783, with Lady Craven losing custody of her daughters. She then departed for the Continent to pursue life as a socialite, traveller and writer. In 1786 she travelled through the Crimea to Constantinople and wrote her travel journal. In 1791 Lord Craven died and in the same year she married the Margrave of Anspach who had connections through his mother to both the Prussian and British royal families. They returned to England pursuing their interest in horse breeding and residing at Brandenburg House in Hammersmith and also at Benham Park where he died in 1806. In 1819 Lady Craven moved to her villa at Posillipo on the Bay of Naples and in 1826, at the age of 76 published her memoirs. She died there in 1828.

Sporting footnote: The original Craven Cottage was built by Lord Craven in 1780

## ***Project Purley***

We began the autumn season with meetings continuing on Zoom and then in November took the plunge and returned to face to face talks.

In September, we welcomed Joy Pibworth as speaker with a talk about Jane Austen's schooldays in Reading. The Abbey Gate is well known, and well publicised by Reading as the schoolroom of Jane Austen and of course

the Abbey complex celebrates its 900th anniversary this year, so the talk was nicely topical. This was a very well-illustrated talk by a passionate Janeite who was able to deftly place the school and the education its pupils would have gained there against a setting of Georgian Reading and in particular, the Forbury area in Georgian times.

In October, we welcomed Janine Fox, West Berkshire Museum's curator, who spoke about the museum's collections. These owe much to the policies of past curators and the wealth of donations received over the years. Janine spent some time discussing the items which were acquired from significant collectors and archaeologists and how they steadily shaped the museum's holdings. The collection until 1974 was largely Newbury-centric, but after the formation of the West Berkshire Unitary Authority, the remit widened to West Berkshire as a whole. It is clear however, that there is still some catching up to do for our particular locality. Nevertheless, Janine showed images of a number of items associated with Purley and its environs. In recent years, the collections policy has widened further to include more focus on collecting for the future, including what Janine described as rapid response collecting. In the last few years, acquisitions have included the placards from Black Lives Matters protests in Newbury, and ephemera relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. Above all, the museum is keen to tell the stories of its objects and they seem to be doing this very well. It was a very interesting talk.

In November, our first meeting back in The Barn, saw speaker David Downs talk about 150 years of Reading Football Club. To create a 'welcome back' atmosphere, whilst also maintaining the necessary social distancing in the venue, we interspersed seats with small tables and served complimentary wine, juice and nibbles before and after the talk. It made for a very relaxed atmosphere, especially as we also celebrated three significant birthdays of members with small cakes. David is Reading Football Club's official historian, a retired employee of the club and a long-time commentator on club matches for Hospital Radio Reading. In addition, perhaps unsurprisingly, he is a life-long fan with a large and varied collection of memorabilia spanning all 150 years. The talk was interspersed with David's stories and recollections and a uniquely personal account of some of the most pivotal moments in the club's history.

Our December meeting, due to take place as this newsletter is being prepared for publication, is a curry and quiz evening in The Barn – another

first for the society as we adapt to changing Covid environment.

Aside from activities, we are also gearing up for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022 and are planning an exhibition and also an afternoon tea and vintage fashion show. We are also researching and bringing together the various aerial photographs taken of Purley over the years and documenting the changes each different set of images show. Plenty to keep us busy in 2022!

*Catherine Sampson*

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

We returned to "live" meetings in the Abbey Baptist Church in September, and drew a large audience because this was the first opportunity for the general public to buy copies of our latest publication, "Abbot Cook to Zero Degrees: an A to Z of Reading's Pubs and Breweries." (For details, see earlier in this issue). The book has three authors, and they spoke about how the book arose, and their part in its research and publication. John Dearing began by telling us about the early history, the impact of the Abbey, of stage coaches, and of the 1830 Beer Act. Following an increase in breweries and pubs came a period of consolidation and the take-over of many of the smaller breweries by larger ones – especially by H. & G. Simonds. Then the larger local breweries tended to be swallowed up by even bigger national concerns. While the recent past had seen the loss of many pubs, John spoke of the return of micro-breweries and real ale pubs, which will hopefully rejuvenate the idea of pubs as community hubs and things turning full circle.

John's previous book on Reading pubs had to leave out a lot of material because of publication constraints, and he and David Cliffe saw the benefit of writing a longer, more detailed book. David then brought to the activity his expertise garnered through his time as a local studies librarian. He described how he was able to access photographs, deeds, maps, wills, and similar material to trace old pubs and had found out where they had changed names and locations. As a good librarian, he also undertook the task of listing all names for a comprehensive index for the book, and along with the other authors carried out the necessary, but not always enjoyable, task of proof-reading the text.

The third author, Evelyn Williams, had for a long time nurtured an

interest in brewing, and told us about her imaginary Athelstan Brewery, which may one day feature in a novel. With her knowledge of local authority documentation she described how she used the 1903 Licensed Premises Survey for Reading Borough to document the public houses of the time, and along with David, compiled them into the street directory and a really useful set of maps in the back of the book. Following the talks, and a look at some interesting and amusing photographs which did not appear in the book, the authors happily signed copies as members and visitors queued to get hold of the first copies off the press.

In October, Margaret Simons brought us the fascinating story of the women's suffrage movement in Reading, which was unfamiliar to most of our members. She explained that she preferred the term "suffrage" in the title of her talk, rather than "suffragette" or "suffragist," as men were involved in the movement, supporting women at public meetings and in Parliament. National campaigning started in 1866: in that year Mrs. Eliza Ratcliffe of the Burlton House Ladies' School on Castle Hill added her name to the first mass petition. When in 1878, George Palmer, newly elected M.P. for Reading, made his maiden speech in the Commons, he declared his support for the movement and deplored the fact that his mother was disqualified from voting. There were public meetings, out of doors and in the Town Hall, when Millicent Fawcett and Mrs. Pankhurst appeared, and branches of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies and the Women's Social and Political Union were formed. The latter opened shops in West Street and in the Market Place, from where literature was distributed. They engaged with workers at Huntley and Palmers biscuit factory, and received support from men as well as women. The NUWSS had committee rooms in Kings Road, and a stall in the Market Arcade. In 1908, 70 members of the Women's Suffrage Society, headed by Councillor Edith Sutton and the Reading banner, marched through London to the Royal Albert Hall to a meeting. A group of Tilehurst women met later in the year, though not all of them were supportive of the cause. At a meeting in the Town Hall in 1910, as well as Mrs. Pankhurst, Professor Edith Morley from the Reading University College spoke – the country's first female professor. A political rally of 6,000 people was held in January 1910, when Lloyd George arrived to speak in favour of the Parliamentary candidate, Rufus Isaacs. The largest undercover space that could be found was the tram-sheds in Mill Lane, and attendance was limited to the male electorate.

Nevertheless, two women managed to infiltrate the meeting, and to reproach Lloyd George for not supporting universal suffrage. At the end of the meeting, Kenneth Duke Scott, of Hurst Nurseries, a notable supporter of women's suffrage, seized Lloyd George by the collar and berated him. In the following year, Mabel Norton, a suffragette from Priest Hill, Caversham, went to London and smashed five windows with a small hammer, cheered on by a crowd. She handed herself in at a police station, and was sent to Holloway. Campaigning of this kind was suspended during the First World War, after which the 1918 Representation of the People Act gave the vote to women property owners over 30, and all men over the 21.

For the Society's November meeting, its Chairman, David Cliffe, gave an illustrated talk on the history of cinemas in the town – having published a book on the subject in 2017. He began his presentation by outlining the various inventions which had to come about before we could have moving pictures, and then the improvements such as colour photography, the soundtrack, wide screens, and stereophonic sound. The main part of the talk was a description of the places where films had been shown, such as fairground booths, and the Town Hall where, in 1904, a film of people leaving Huntley and Palmers biscuit factory drew the crowds. Several picture houses opened in 1909, some of them short-lived. The first purpose-built cinema was The Caversham Electric Theatre, later called The Glendale, which opened in 1911. The 1930s brought four large suburban cinemas, built by a local chain, Simmons Theatres, all of them subsequently bought by the ABC chain. Competition from television took its toll, with the 9 cinemas in 1939 reducing to 2 in 1999, with the MGM and Odeon closing as the Warner Village (now Vue) Cinema in the Oracle Shopping Centre opened (10 screens). The situation was brought up-to-date with the opening of The Biscuit Factory in the Broad Street Mall (3 screens) in 2021.

*Caroline Piller*

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

We continued to meet via Zoom during the remainder of 2021.

September saw the return of one of our regular speakers, Colin Oakes, this time talking about Celtic religion in a talk titled “Druids, Bards and

Mistletoe”. Colin explained that little is known for certain about Celtic religion as nothing was written down by them at the time – what details we have were written by the Romans, notably Julius Caesar and Pliny. The religion was handed down orally and was ritual based, including human sacrifice. Mistletoe played a significant part, possibly due to the hallucinogenic properties of its seeds. There were three levels of official in the Celtic religious system – druids (senior priests), bards (poets) and seers (prophets). The Romans allowed Celtic religion to continue alongside Christianity but without Bards or human sacrifice. Elements of Celtic religion became assimilated into the Christian religion – the festivals of Christmas, Easter and Halloween became Christian celebrations. The languages of Wales, Scotland, Ireland and Cornwall all have origins in the Celtic language.

In October, Mark Bowman gave a talk on “1752 and all that (derivation of the modern calendar)”. This very interesting talk covered the history of the calendar from the ancient Roman calendar through the Julian calendar of 46BC and the Gregorian calendar of AD1582 to the present day. Mark explained the effects of the various changes made at each revision on aspects such as the length of the year and the date on which the year started. Adoption of the Gregorian calendar across the world was a gradual process and some countries still use alternative calendars today. Britain did not adopt it until 1752 while some other countries did not adopt it until into the 20th century (e.g. Russia in 1917 and Greece in 1923).

At our November meeting, one of our members, Catherine Glover, gave a very detailed talk titled “Leases, Lodges and Liberals: Sir William Harcourt and his ‘Fireside’ in the New Forest”. The subject of this talk was centred on a House of Commons debate of 1888 on salaries and expenses of Civil Service departments, during which an MP accused another of using his position as an MP to gain a favourable deal for a property in the New Forest. Catherine explained the background to this claim by showing how parts of the forest had been leased out by the Crown for the building of large houses. The claim which formed the subject of the talk, and made by Robert Hanbury MP, was that Sir William Harcourt, then Home Secretary, had obtained an unusually long lease of 99 years, enabling him to build Castle Malwood Lodge, when the normal term of lease at that time was only 31 years.

*George Taylor*

# *Thatcham Historical Society*

## Face-to-face talks resume

With additional precautions in place including mask-wearing, social distancing and good airflow we have managed to hold two face-to-face meetings this year.

### Dunkirk

Our October speaker meeting, the first face-to-face speaker meeting held since February 2020, was presented by Sue Ellis on the topic of Dunkirk. It was noted that although everyone says Dunkirk the actual evacuation covered a wider area. The evacuation of soldiers used a range of vessels including 17 from the RNLI. Others included the Sundowner, a yacht formerly owned by Charles Lightoller, the second officer of RMS Titanic. The Sundowner alone brought back 120 soldiers. The SS Clan Macalister was the largest vessel to be involved although sank in shallow waters. The operation managed to rescue 98,780 soldiers from the beaches and a further 239,446 from the harbour areas with some 70,000 soldiers left behind, many becoming prisoners of war.

### History of Cold Ash

Our final face-to-face meeting of the year, saw local historian Tony Higgott present the history of Cold Ash. Tony started the talk by showing the parish boundaries. There has been human activity within Cold Ash going back thousands of years. Evidence of this can be seen in Ramsbury Corner, a Hill Fort along with Bronze Age finds near the Castle Pub. Activity from the Roman period has also been recorded.

Cold Ash itself was within the Thatcham Parish boundary and was served by Thatcham Parish Church. Although it is known people were in the area the first known mention of Cold Ash itself is from the 16th century. One of those records is in the Thatcham parish records where it notes the burial of Richard Brown, Gent of Cold Ash, on 13th June 1594. At the time settlement in the area was sparse.

The Rev. Bacon and his daughter Gertrude were discussed, both science pioneers often taking dangerous adventures in gas balloons. Collaroy Road was shown to appear in the 1841 Tithe map but then was simply labelled New Road. Photographs from around Cold Ash were shown including Northcroft Farm, perhaps a mistranslation as it was once Northway's Farm.

The Children's hospital, used for those with respiratory problems was shown and Hill House which became a children's home.

Our next meeting, depending on Covid, is our AGM on 31st January 2022. Latest updates will be on our website [www.thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk](http://www.thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk).

*Nick Young*

## *Wargrave Local History Society*

Wargrave Local History Society's September meeting was a zoom presentation by Terry Grouk on The Hidden History of Wargrave Hall, the large riverside house where he lives. It was built about 1770, for John Matthews of Binfield (about whom little is known), and after he died in 1778, the house passed down through the family to his grand-daughter, Sarah. It was then sold in 1849 to Ebenezer Fuller-Maitland. Several generations of his family owned it, sometimes letting it to tenants rather than living there, until it was sold to Edward Goulding in 1906. He was a lawyer and MP, and important meetings of members of the Government took place here, particularly concerning WW1 and Irish Home Rule - the visitor's book including Winston Churchill, Andrew Bonar Law, Lords Birkenhead and Beaverbrook, amongst others. Subsequent owners included a Mrs Felton-Peel from 1926 to 1932, and then Major Fryer - a keen supporter of Morris dancing - until the 1960s, although during WW2 US Air Force officers were billeted there. The property was later converted to 5 apartments, which is how it is now. Terry plans to make the results of his research as a booklet in due course.



*WLS Exhibition*

Wargrave Local History Society's September meeting was a zoom presentation by Terry Grouk on The Hidden History of Wargrave Hall, the large riverside house where he lives. It was built about 1770, for John Matthews of Binfield (about whom little is known), and after he died in 1778, the house passed down through the family to his grand-daughter, Sarah. It was then sold in 1849 to Ebenezer Fuller-Maitland. Several generations of his family owned it, sometimes letting it to tenants rather than living there, until it was sold to Edward Goulding in 1906. He was a lawyer and MP, and important meetings of members of the Government took place here, particularly concerning WW1 and Irish Home Rule - the visitor's book including Winston Churchill, Andrew Bonar Law, Lords Birkenhead and Beaverbrook, amongst others. Subsequent owners included a Mrs Felton-Peel from 1926 to 1932, and then Major Fryer - a keen supporter of Morris dancing - until the 1960s, although during WW2 US Air Force officers were billeted there. The property was later converted to 5 apartments, which is how it is now. Terry plans to make the results of his research as a booklet in due course.

In October the Society was able to return to meeting 'in person', when Dr Margaret Simons sharing the results of her research into the effects of

World War 1 on the local area. Apart from the departure of men to the front, one of the main impacts on local people was the price of food, which had already started rising. Changes in economic activity meant many workers were put onto short time, or lost their jobs. The combined effect was that many poorer families were in difficulty, and special arrangements had to be made to ensure that children were fed. Other restrictions included watering down alcoholic drinks and restricting pub opening hours. Billeting of members of the forces also affected local people, particularly as Reading was a transit hub for the troops. In 1916, Reading also became the home of the Royal Flying Corps' School of Aeronautics, based at the university's Wantage Hall, with an airfield at Coley Park, whilst many Reading firms were involved in the war effort, such as the 60,000 shell cases made at Huntley & Palmers. The Royal Berkshire Hospital cared for war wounded, as well as civilians, the former workhouse became Battle Hospital, and many auxiliary hospitals were created in large houses and village halls, local women 'doing their bit', tending to the injured in the auxiliary hospitals as well as taking on the work of the men serving in the military.

The society was founded in 1981 and to mark the 40th anniversary, the November meeting took a look back over that period, starting with what the village was like then. Derek Bird, of a long-established village family, had suggested a group in 1975, but it was to be an "Old Wargrave Exhibition" at the 1981 Village Festival based on Derek's collection that generated a lot of interest. A meeting was arranged for November 12th 1981, when the room could only just accommodate everyone who wished to attend, and Wargrave Local History Society was born, with Derek as its first Chairman. A programme of meetings and visits developed with further involvement in Village Festivals, but in February 1985 Derek died quite unexpectedly. He was just 38 years old. A team had been working on a project suggested at the inaugural meeting - a book about Wargrave's history. The result was The Book of Wargrave that recorded both 'researched history' and the memories of villagers, and dedicated to Derek. It was an instant success, and as further material became available, The Second Book of Wargrave followed a few years later. In due course, the society acquired a lot more photographs - not least, the personal albums of Wargrave's benefactress Harriette Cooke-Smith, with images from the 1870s to the early 20th century - and these enabled the publication of a volume, with larger pictures with extended

captions, The Illustrated Book of Wargrave in 2011. Another project, jointly with Wargrave Royal British Legion, was the creation of a memorial to the crew of an American 'Flying Fortress' bomber who died when it crashed November 1943. It was officially unveiled in November 2014 by Theresa May, with the Military Attaché from the US Embassy in attendance. The review touched briefly on a few of the major topics - and the anniversary being celebrated with wine and special birthday cakes made by Wendy Smith - one with candles, and the other bearing images of the Society's 3 hardback books. Little could those present at the meeting 40 years ago have imagined the technology that would have enabled the society to continue with a programme of talks during the pandemic, but would maybe recognise that their intentions in founding the society have - and are being - fulfilled.

In December the usual Christmas Party members enjoyed festive fare created by Wendy Smith, whilst watching a history of the magic lantern and some early video recordings.

The Society's planned programme is at [www.wargravehistory.org.uk/](http://www.wargravehistory.org.uk/) - where the latest information can be found, or email [info@wargravehistory.org.uk](mailto:info@wargravehistory.org.uk) to confirm meeting details.

*Peter Delaney*

## ***Opportunities***

For public lectures, visits, workshops and exhibitions

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

Full details and book at <https://berksfhs.org>. Berkshire Family History Society is a registered charity number 283010.

Thursday, 13th January – 2-3.30 pm Talk: **The Dunkirk Evacuation: Reading Railway's pivotal role**, with Paul Joyce, The Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library, £5.00

Saturday, 15th January - 2.30-4.30 pm **DNA Special Interest Group** facilitated by international DNA expert, Debbie Kennett, Zoom, £5

Monday, 17th January – 2-4 pm 1 to 1 **Online advice Sessions**, Free

Wednesday, 19th January - 7.15-9.30 pm Talk: **The new 1921 census**

with Mary McKee from Findmypast, Zoom, £3

Tuesday, 25th January - 7.15-9.30 pm Talk: **The new 1921 census** with Jen Baldwin from Findmypast, Zoom, £3

Thursday, 27th January – 2-4 pm Talk: **Georgian Reading** with Professor John Missenden and Richard Bennett DL, Zoom, £5

Thursday, 10th February – 2-3.30 pm Talk: **Smith's Coaches of Reading** with Paul Lacey, The Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library, £5.00

Saturday, 12th February – 11-1 pm Workshop: **World War Two RAF Records for Family Historians** led by Richard Marks, The Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library, £10.00

Tuesday, 15th February - 2.30-3.30 pm **Guided Tour: Tour of Holy Trinity Church**, Reading Led by Ron Cutting, £5

Saturday, 19th February – 11-1 pm Workshop: **Researching German Ancestry** led by James Thornber, Zoom, £10

Monday, 21st February – 2-4 pm 1 to 1 **Advice Sessions**, Zoom, free

Thursday, 24th February – 2-3.15 pm Talk: **The History of Yeomanry House**, Reading with Katie Amos, Zoom, £5

Saturday, 5th March – 11-1 pm Course: **Understanding Old Handwriting** (the first of three weekly sessions on 5th, 12th and 19th March). This course looks at those documents from the 17th-19th centuries that are most useful to family historians, showing participants how to read the handwriting styles used. Led by Joan Dils, Zoom, £30

Tuesday, 8th March – 2.30-4.30 pm Course: **Beginners' Family History** (the first of six weekly sessions on 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th March and 5th and 12th April). Led by Chad Hanna and Gillian Stevens. Zoom, £35

Thursday, 10th March – 2-3.30 pm Talk: **Reading's Second Railway-the early days** with Paul Joyce, The Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library, £5.00

Monday, 21st March – 2-4 pm 1 to 1 **Advice Sessions**, Zoom, Free

Thursday, 24th March 2-3.15 pm Talk: **150 years of Reading Football Club** with David Downs, official club historian, Zoom, £5.00

## ***Exhibition at the Museum of English Rural Life***

Until January 22nd Six artists with responses to the commons have made installations for the Museum's galleries. For them, this concept should not be confused with a simple or binary understanding of the links between humans and nature

The commons defines the natural capital that we all share: land, air, and water. It is a reciprocal social system that cares for and preserves these resources.

## ***150 years of Reading FC***

An exhibition of items collected over 150 years of Reading Football Club in the Madjeski Gallery at Reading Museum. Runs from 19th February to 6th August.

## ***Jackson's of Reading***

One of the icons of Reading's shops. Jackson's named its corner and a bus stop. Reading Museum are showing you more about Jacksons until 7th May.

## ***2000 years around Newbury***

A Local History course at West Berkshire Museum with Tutor David Peacock who presents an introduction to the history of the Newbury area over 2,000 years, covering a different period each week.

It includes major events, people and architecture from the Romans to the Victorians, with examples from local towns and villages. The course also provides details of the wide range of sources available to those studying the history of the area. David Peacock has researched, written about and taught the history of West Berkshire and the Newbury area for many years. He is the author of the 2011 edition of *The Story of Newbury*; his Ph.D. investigated Jack of Newbury and the Tudor cloth industry.

This course is suitable for a wide range of students: those seeking an introduction to the history of the area, as well as those with specialist knowledge of particular periods or places. There will be an opportunity to request specific topics.

Students should bring along a notebook and pen, along with any questions they may want answered.

Places are limited so to allow some social distance between participants in the Museum's Cloth Hall. We request that students wear a face covering throughout the course.

8 weeks from Tuesday 18 January (not including Tuesday 22 February, half-term school holiday) until Tuesday 15 March 2022, 1.30pm-3.30pm every Tuesday afternoon.

## ***Windsor Guildhall Museum***

Our museum gallery is closed at the moment whilst we undertake some changes to move the tourist information centre into our gallery.

More information on this is coming soon.

Keep following us for news of upcoming events and to continue to see our collection online.

[windsormuseum.org.uk](http://windsormuseum.org.uk)

## ***44th Berkshire Local History Association Annual General Meeting (AGM)***

Our next AGM is to be held on 26th March 2022 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 11.00 a.m. with the AGM starting at 11.30 a.m.

After the AGM business there will be a short talk on the very early history of Dorney Court, followed by a light lunch at 12.30 p.m.

In the afternoon we have arranged for a bookable private tour of Dorney Court, an early Tudor manor house, starting at 2.00 p.m. There is limited space 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.

For those not wishing to visit Dorney Court, there is the historic chapel of St Mary Boveney a short walk from the Eton Wick Village Hall.

A Booking Form has been included with this newsletter, and full details are published on our website.

# 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@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 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,** Mrs P J Taylor, Walnut Cottage, Ebbs Lane, East Hanney Oxon, OX12  
0HL [07726 842413]
- 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,** Paul Seddon, 1 vine Cottage, Stubbings  
Lane, Maidenhead SL6 6QN [paul@c21networks.co.uk]
- Marcham Society** Simon Blackmore, 2 Walnut Mews, Mill Road, Marcham, Oxon OX13 6NZ  
tel 01865 392090 [spblackmore@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]

**Oxfordshire Local History Association** Liz Wooley, 138 Marlborough Road, Oxford OX1 4LS [chair@olha.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**, George 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**, Heather Kay, 5 Augustfield, Charvil Lane, Sonning, RG4 6AF [kaydenis@googlemail.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**, Anne Taylor, Canon Cottage, Bishops Farm Close, Oakley Green, Windsor SL4 5UN [taylorad22@btinternet.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

**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](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 2022 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>	£18.00.	£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 2022.

The DEADLINE for copy is 15th April 2022 - preferably we would like to have it a bit 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.

## Berkshire Old and New

Berkshire Old and New, the journal of the BLHA, is published once a year. It has changed over the years, as you will see from a look at the back issues on the BLHA website, but the aim remains to print good-quality, research-based articles on any aspect of Berkshire's history, supporting the study of local history. It is a sad fact that the supply of articles has diminished. Some long-standing contributors have retired or died, and fewer new writers have emerged. But we intend to continue the journal in one form or another for as long as possible. If you have an article - or ideas for one - contact Jonathan Brown at [journal@blha.org.uk](mailto:journal@blha.org.uk).