

Berkshire Local History Association



**Newsletter No 133
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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.

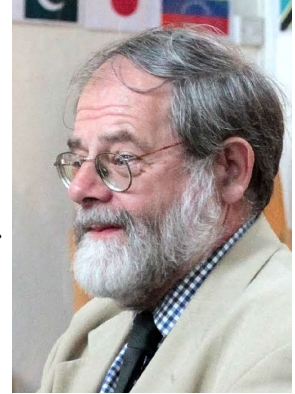
Contributions should be e-mailed to:- newsletter @blha.org.uk and arrive not later than the 15th of the month preceding publication (January, May and September) Word, Text or pdf copy is acceptable, but keep it simple and please do not use spaces or tabs to lay out presentations. Photographs and images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

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

Cover picture - **HM Queen Elizabeth II in Her Coronation Robes as we celebrate her Platinum Jubilee in June 2022**

Chairman's Corner

It seems that there will never be an ideal day to hold the BLHA AGM! Last year, our online meeting turned out to be on the Saturday that was chosen for the Duke of Edinburgh's funeral. This year's event clashed with the Brian Kemp Memorial Lecture of The Friends of Reading Abbey, which several committee members and presumably several other BLHA members would have liked to attend. It was ever thus, I suppose!



Nevertheless, a fair number of members turned up at Eton Wick Village Hall, on a warm and sunny spring day, and it was good to see real faces again. On the way, I think many of us were surprised, after driving over cattle grids, to find ourselves on unfenced roads across extensive areas of meadow land, where cattle grazed, and a few horse-riders were enjoying themselves – the Dorney and Eton Wick Commons. Windsor Castle was on the horizon, though we were in a part of Berkshire which until 1974 had been in Buckinghamshire.

Despite this, or because of this, we were given a really warm welcome at the village hall. (I was slightly taken aback when a lady asked: “Would you like another cup? – No, don’t get up, I’ll bring it.”)

I wish that we – the BLHA committee – had made it more obvious to the members where to find the papers and agenda for the meeting. After a bit of asking around, we decided it best to read out the reports from the various officers. Most of them were brief, and the essential business of the day was completed in less than half an hour.

Then followed the launch of the Berkshire Heritage Online Fair, to be held on Saturday 6th August. It will be the online equivalent of an exhibition, with different societies each having a stall, where you can meet people with similar interests, and ask questions. The event is being run jointly by the Berkshire Family History Society and the BLHA. Those present were invited to take away a leaflet – and now you can find out more later in this newsletter.

There was ample time (and there were ample sandwiches) for lunch, time for exchanging news and ideas, and time for looking round the stalls of

some of the member societies, and seeing what they had been up to.

Next year, on Saturday March 25th, we're hoping to be at Marcham, near Abingdon, for our AGM. This is at the opposite end of the county, in a part of Oxfordshire which until 1974 was in Berkshire, and I'm expecting an equally warm welcome there.

David Cliffe

A Word from the Editor

What with Covid, Easter and the AGM we were a bit behind with the May Newsletter; but many thanks to all those who sent in contributions and apologies to anyone whose contribution got lost in a sea of e-mails.

I am particularly grateful to those who sent me their Journals or Newsletters - I am always on the lookout for articles to pinch and make available to a wider audience.

I am always sorry that we usually have little space available for photographs. I try to fit in one or two at least but give space preference to words.

John Chapman



44th Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2022

This year's AGM took place at Eton Wick and Boveney Village Hall on Saturday 26th March. We were made very welcome by the members of the hall and the Eton Wick Local History Group.

Joan Dils, our President, began by thanking all who joined and opening the formal AGM proceedings. Having shared reports on the various aspects of the Association's activities, the election of the Officers and Executive Committee was completed unopposed. Going forward the Executive Committee will be the same as last year (see page 32)

Having completed the formal proceedings of the AGM, there was a session introducing the forthcoming Berkshire Heritage Online Fair. This was followed by a short talk from David Lewis on the early history of the area where Dorney Court now sits, which was well received and set the scene for the visit to the Tudor mansion after lunch.

During the lunch attendees could visit the ten displays that had been provided by the attending local groups to share information and to, maybe, purchase some of the excellent publications on offer.



David Lewis talking about Dorney Court

Fed and watered the group who were visiting Dorney Court set out on this gloriously sunny day to experience a private tour of this early Tudor manor house. The tour had been expected to last an hour and a half, but was so enjoyed that it went on for over two hours.

Please note that the 45th AGM will be held in Marcham on Saturday 25th March 2023.

Jo Alexander-Jones

Book Reviews

Sent from Reading: Reading's part in overseas missions 1790-1950.

By John Dearing

2021. ISBN 9781739938802. 180pp, paperback; £12 from the author, 27 Sherman Road, Reading RG1 2PJ.

The period from 1790 to 1950 covered by this book is what might be called the last great age of European and American missionary activity, when people were sent out to Asia, Africa and other parts of the world where the Christian gospel and church had not yet been established. Since the mid-twentieth century, there has been a new movement. Churches have grown and become established in many of those regions, the European empires have given way to independent nations, and now there is a world-wide partnership in Christian mission.

Almost all places in the West, and all denominations and branches of the church, were affected by the missionary movement, with churches sending out their members, their sons and sometimes their daughters for service in the mission field. Reading was no exception, and John Dearing shows in this study what a range of people with connections with the town were involved. Some played quite significant parts in the formation of the

societies which sponsored the missionary work, such as the Church Missionary Society and the Baptist Missionary Society. Dearing keeps a firm hand to guide us through the various organizations, their sphere of operations and their mergers, otherwise it is easy to get lost in a forest of abbreviations.

These were national, mainly denominational societies, and this wide-ranging missionary movement is further demonstrated by the different links with Reading had by the people who feature in John Dearing's story. There was Charles Simeon, born in Reading, who became a leader of the Church Missionary Society. Thomas Valpy French had Reading family connections, as is clear from his name. He was not born in Reading, but was educated at Reading School, where his grandfather had been headmaster. Thereafter, he moved away, and later went as a missionary to India. Others were ministers at one of Reading's churches for no more than a few years, perhaps, before moving away, but during their brief time in the town had promoted overseas mission. Some of the links might seem a bit tenuous for some, but, they were part of the interconnectedness of the missionary movement.

The Roman Catholics are not part of this study, which deals only with the Protestant churches, and mainly with the Church of England, who did provide most of the missionaries. There were some leaders among the local churches which developed strong traditions in overseas mission, most notably St Mary's, Castle Street.

There are not many studies of local involvement in overseas missions, and this carefully constructed book is very useful to have.

Jonathan Brown

Reliance Motor Services of Newbury: a centenary album.

by Paul Lacey

2022. ISBN 9780956783295. 96pp., £18 inc p&p.*

Reliance Motor Services was one of a number of small and medium-sized bus and coach companies operating in Berkshire. Based in Newbury, it operated a number of regular services to such places as Cold Ash and Brightwalton, as well as contract services for schools and workplaces. In addition, the company provided coaches for trips to the coast, Ascot races

and so on.

This all meant that Reliance had quite a variety of buses and coaches during its 60-odd years in business: single-deckers, double-deckers, minibuses; some bought second-hand, others new. For those with a serious interest in the history of bus and coach design and the business of operating them, this one modest company had a lot to offer. Even if your interest is of the most fleeting, the changing shapes and settings have their own fascination.

Reliance was founded in 1922 and lasted until 1986. Paul Lacey, who has been researching and publishing the history of local bus and coach services for many years, has published this book to mark the company's centenary. It is not a history of the business: there is another book for that: Barrie Hedges and David Wilder, *Reliance Motor Services: the story of a family-owned independent bus company* (2020). This is a photograph album, as comprehensive as possible, covering the different types of buses and coaches Reliance had. There are some showing the afterlife of a few coaches in service in Malta. There is also a full list of the 180 or so buses and coaches that Reliance had.

Plainly, this is mostly for the enthusiast readership, so captions have good technical detail, with a mixture of more general information.

The one serious drawback is that Paul Lacey does not seem to use an editor or proofreader. The text is riddled with elementary typesetting and editorial errors from beginning to end. Such a pity.

*Available from the author at 17 Sparrow Close, Woosehill, Wokingham, Berkshire RG41 3HT.

Jonathan Brown

Miscellanea

Berkshire Heritage Online Fair

will take place on Sat 6 August 10-12am and 2-4pm.

This will be on Zoom hosted by Berkshire Family History Society and Berkshire Local History Association. The aim is to attract people from anywhere in the world who are interested in the historic county of Berkshire. They may be involved in research, want to ask specific questions or offer materials which are of interest to people in your organisation. They

can connect with local history societies, museums and heritage groups via Zoom breakout rooms.

If your organisation would like to take part, see details on the BLHA website www.blha.org.uk and email Ann Smith membership@blha.org.uk by May 30th.

Slaymakers

In the January 2022 BLHA Newsletter, Nigel Suffield-Jones' article on "Sheep and Place Names" mentioned "Slaymakers, a field name in Wargrave in 1840".

The document that mentions this is the tithe apportionment, and the plot (381) is alongside the road from the east end of the village towards the Bath Road that I can just see from the back of my house - and it is still an open field.

The tithe apportionment says that it is 9a 2r and 16p in extent, and describes it as "Slaymakers and piece taken from the road", belonging to Joseph King, and occupied by Elizabeth and John Davis.

Elizabeth is aged 70 in the following year's census, and John is just 25, both being described as 'Farmer'. They did not live by this land, however, but in the centre of the village at what had been known as Turner's Farm. Martha Turner had married William Piggott, and their children were Robert, Ann and John - John gave the land for the village workhouse, Robert established the village schools, which Ann also supported in her will, but the farm passed to her great nephew, Joseph King in 1827. The field is still surrounded by trees, and close to 'King's Farm Cottages' (which seem to date from the late 19th century).

John Davis married in 1842 (to Mary Harling), when one of the witnesses was Eliza King, so the relationship between owner of the farm, including Slaymakers, and its occupier seems to have been a good one.

In the Crazies Hill area of the parish is a house called Hurdle Makers - where that trade was carried on - but would the slays have been made in an open field - maybe in the way that the bodgers practised their craft in the Chilterns?

What, possibly, could also be relevant is that the name Slaymaker also appears as a surname in Wargrave's parish registers at various times from

1638 onwards - an 1864 baptismal entry for Jane Slaymaker gives the father as William Slaymaker, labourer of Highfield (which is close to the plot 381).

So was the plot of land named Slaymakers because of a trade carried on there, or after the name of a family who were associated with it? (maybe deriving their surname from someone who was a maker of slays in time past, but not necessarily in Wargrave?).

(There do not seem to be any 'Slaymakers' recorded in the census returns for Wargrave, however).

As often, a simple reference does not necessarily have a simple answer!

Peter Delaney

Footnote - A weaver's slay is a frame strung with parallel wires, used on a loom to keep the warp threads separate; modern weavers call it the "reed".

Articles

The British Association for Local History (BALH)

The abbreviation of the national body, the British Association for Local History, BALH is confusingly similar to that of the Berkshire Association BLHA and others. They all share the same purpose: the support and promotion of local history and historians.

To further confuse us, BLHA is a member of BALH as are some Berkshire local history societies. Why? One important benefit for local associations and societies is BALH's insurance scheme, better than an individual group can negotiate, and cheaper even with the BALH membership fee.

The national body provides other services. It publishes *The Local Historian* four times a year with articles by amateur and occasionally professional local historians, reviews and details of local publications and journals such as *Berkshire Old and New*. The January 2022 edition of the journal included an article on domestic service in early-twentieth century Berkshire and one on Arnold Bennett and the Potteries, both of great interest for me and probably other exiled Potters as well as Berkshire historians. *The Local Historian* gives members and societies the chance to submit publications

for review, member societies to advertise their journals and newsletters, the best articles in a society journal and the best local society newsletter each year receiving awards, unfortunately not financial. A new award is for the Local History Photographer of the Year. There are also Personal Achievement awards for individuals making outstanding contributions to local history, including service with local societies. Berkshire members have won best article and personal achievement in the last few years although we still await one for our Newsletter. Also published at the same time as *The Local Historian* is *Local History News*, the magazine of BALH. It includes useful information about local history events and activities nationwide, giving local societies the chance to advertise their wares and BALH members to keep abreast of interesting developments.

What else does BALH offer to attract us as individuals? Well, an annual History Day, this year held in London for those attending in person, but on also on line for those like me who find travelling to and in the capital a challenge. The day includes the AGM (happily short) two lectures, one in the morning on a practical subject (the fourteenth taxation of aliens and the list of slave owners compensated in 1833 with their web sites were two contributions I have found particularly useful in recent years), and one in the afternoon by a guest speaker. This year the morning talk will be on by Mark Forrest, author of a recent BALH guide to post-medieval manorial records, and Dr Janina Ramirez (perhaps best known through BBC television programmes) will give the afternoon talk. The date for your diary is Saturday, June 11th. 10.30-4.00. It is open to non-members, individual members paying a reduced rate both for attending in person or on line. Book on line via the website. Incidentally, there are some benefits for all members of local history societies but these do not extend to copies of the journal and newsletter.

The association's website, updated last year, is another valuable resource. Find it at www.balh.org.uk It has many good things to offer local historians and browsing is free. So do log on (if that is the correct term) and be surprised. You will certainly learn something useful.

Joan Dils

Twyford Almshouses

Sir Richard Harrison built the Almshouses at Twyford in 1640 'to accommodate six poor persons, men or women, of the parish of Hurst' (Twyford then being part of that parish). Unfortunately he did not endow these almshouses or execute any deed concerning them and in 1707 one of his granddaughters, Lady Frances Winchcombe, endowed them, out of the income from a house and 80 acres of land in Wiltshire willed to her by her grandfather (the Brockenborough Estate), the five trustees being required "to keep the buildings in repair and to give each almsperson 40 shillings yearly and a gown every other year". The trustees were requested to attend and inspect the Almshouses twice yearly and to visit the almspeople within forty days of Michaelmas and Lady Day, the sum of £1 being allowed for beverage and refreshment.

Owing to deaths and changes of ownership, the estate gradually fell into disrepair and the responsibilities towards the Almshouses were not maintained. However, in 1807 the heir at law to the Brockenborough Estate agreed to sell it for ten shillings to Lord Braybrooke and others who on their part undertook to carry out the responsibility of maintaining the Almshouses as originally provided for in 1707.

In 1886, the Twyford and Hurst Almshouses, together with several smaller charities, were consolidated by the Charity Commissioners into the Hurst Parochial Charities to be administered by fourteen Trustees.

In 1963 the Trustees wished to modernise the Almshouses, but their available funds had been used up by the recent renovations of the Hurst Almshouses. The Twyford Almshouses were in a particularly bad condition - four of them being condemned - but renovation would have cost at least £10 000.

At one time it seemed inevitable that they would have to be sold and new houses built elsewhere, the Charity Commissioners having indicated that they would not object to this. Such an extreme measure was avoided when the Berkshire County Council acquired the garden-land on the east side of the buildings to make a new road (The Grove) and the Trustees sold the corresponding garden-land on the west side for shopping development. The renovation of the Almshouses, which form such an attractive feature of Twyford's London Road was completed in 1966.

A Berkshire Son of Note

Article borrowed from an obituary in The Times December 2021 by the TRLHS journal

John Midwinter stood before a gathering of senior executives from Post Office Telecommunications in the early 1970s and gave a clear and insistent presentation on why the company should adopt optical fibres in its systems. He received a polite hearing but was told in no uncertain terms: ‘We’re going to be left with a lot of egg on our face if you’re wrong.’ His reply was an unwavering assurance that no egg would be left on anyone’s face.

Interest in using light as a means of communication can be traced to antiquity, from smoke signals and beacon fires to more recently Aldis lamps and the invention of the laser. In 1966 Charles Kao and George Hockham proposed that strands of pure glass the thickness of human hair could carry light and thus information, over long distances. Many engineers were sceptical. ‘A lot of people just openly laughed at the paper’, Midwinter recalled.

Kao and Hockham’s hypothesis was that the opacity of glass, caused by imperfections rather than by the inherent qualities of the glass itself, could be reduced spectacularly. Signal loss, or attenuation, is measured in decibels; a loss of three decibels means that a signal power is reduced by half. At that time the purest glass lost 1,000 decibels per kilometre (dB/km), meaning that it was effectively opaque after only a few metres. Kao, who in 2009 received the Nobel prize in physics thought it could be brought down to match the 20 decibels of coaxial cable systems, meaning that about 1 per cent of the signal would get through after 1km, enough for it to be boosted and sent on, making optical communications a possibility.

Yet progress was ‘extremely slow’, Midwinter recalled. That changed in 1970 when Corning Glass Works, an American company, produced a fibre with attenuation below Kao’s magical 20 dB/km. Midwinter was able to confirm this, adding: ‘The real starting gun had now been fired and the period up to about 1975 saw many of the key ingredients for success fall into place.’

There were still hurdles to overcome not least because the rival ‘mm waveguide system’, a more conventional rigid copper technology that was seen as the next generation of wideband transmission, was at an advanced

stage of development. By comparison, Midwinter noted, optical-fibre systems ‘were the subject of ridicule by ‘real engineers’.

There was no alternative but to move ‘out of the lab’. During the winter of 1976-77 eight 1km lengths of optical fibre cable were laid in congested ducts between the Post Office Research Centre at Martlesham Heath, Suffolk, and the telephone exchange at Kesgrave in Ipswich. It was undertaken in snow, sleet and rain by young researchers, ‘who fortunately knew little of the reasons why the task was supposed to be impossible’. Their work was a success and ‘made a hugely positive impression on our network planners in London’ who ‘started to take the potential of optical fibre seriously’.

Within a few months, the mm waveguide system, which required expensive new ducts to keep the cables straight, was dead. Optical-fibre cable, which could be pulled into existing copper-cable ducts, started to be rolled out and in February 1980 the first undersea cable was laid, a 9.5km length in Loch Fyne. In 1984 BT, as the newly privatised organisation was now known, became the first telecommunications operator to deploy optical-fibre systems in quantity.

The rest of the world followed and the first transatlantic cable system, TAT-8, was laid in 1988. By then Midwinter, who also worked on the lasers, transmitters, receivers and other equipment that underpins today’s digital infrastructure, had taken up a chair of opto-electronics at University College London. As a parting gift from BT he received a small coffin containing samples of alternative transmission media, including mm waveguides and coaxial cables, with the inscription ‘Laid to rest by optical communications’ that he often produced in lectures. Today, more than 95 per cent of the world’s data is transmitted over optical fibres and more than 500 million km are installed each year.

John Edwin Midwinter was born into a farming family in Newbury, Berkshire, in 1938, the younger of two sons of Henry Midwinter and his wife Vera (née Rawlinson); his brother, Peter, died at a young age. He was educated at St Bartholomew’s Grammar School, Newbury, where he hated team sports but won a fifth-form prize for physics. He was expected to go into the family business but became interested in electrical engineering while working on radar with the RAF during National Service. On demobilisation he took a First in physics at King’s College London before joining

the Royal Radar Establishment at Malvern, undertaking research on lasers and nonlinear optics.

After completing his PhD in 1968 Midwinter was part of the 'brain drain' of poorly-paid British academics who moved to the US, but the New York dockers were striking and for the first few weeks he had to rely on the generosity of neighbours for everything from cutlery to curtains. He recalled that, in those pre-optical fibre days 'if we wanted to phone home to Newbury, we had to book the call a day or so in advance; it was extremely expensive and hence something we did very rarely'.

In 1971 he returned to Britain, joined the Post Office Research Centre and published *Optical Fibres for Transmission* (1979), an essential textbook for anyone studying optical-fibre communications. He was recruited to the department of electronic and electrical engineering at UCL by Professor Sir Eric Ash (obituary, September 6, 2021), combining research in digital optics with undergraduate teaching and PhD supervision. By the early 1990s he was exploring the use of multiple wavelengths, or colours, for routing of optical information. In 2000-01 he was President of the Institution of Electrical Engineers (now part of the Institution of Engineering and Technology).

Professor John Midwinter OBE FRS, electrical engineer, was born on March 8, 1938. He died from heart failure on November 13, 2021, aged 83.

Society Contributions

Berkshire Family History Society

One highlight of the first quarter was January's release of the 1921 census for England & Wales on the Findmypast family history website. Online talks organised by the society that same month, and featuring two census specialists from Findmypast, proved very popular. The contents of that census have helped many in breaking down some brick walls, as well as furnishing surprises for others. Inevitably, some transcription errors have surfaced, underlining the important principle of viewing images of original returns — and their associated extra materials, which include the household address. While detailed content remains available only on a pay-per-view basis at present, some information is accessible using the free search facility.

A 20-year transcribing project has ended with the publication of a 13th Edition of the Berkshire Burial Index. This is likely to be the ‘final’ version for a while. It now contains more than 1,125,000 names, mainly from pre-1974 Berkshire parish records, but also includes entries from nonconformist registers, municipal cemeteries, and prison and workhouse registers. For those who need a ‘less than county-wide’ dataset, it is worth a reminder of the availability of data downloads — not just for burials but for baptisms and marriages too.

Society events continue as a mix of face-to-face in The Centre for Heritage and Family History and online using Zoom. The spring programme is the busiest yet with a rich assortment of online courses and workshops, social history talks, and guided walks. Online social history talks feature some of Reading’s more notable businesses — including the Simonds family and the eponymous brewery, printing, ironworks and brickmaking. Face-to-face social history events have a Royalty theme — apposite in this Jubilee year — with Windsor Castle and Queen Victoria’s daughters still to feature. Local branches currently offer a mix of online and face-to-face meetings. The Centre for Heritage and Family History is open regularly for individual research and offers monthly one-to-one advice sessions too.

Find details of all events on the website — <https://berksfhs.org/whats-on> — and in the society’s 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 Berkshire Family Historian magazine in print form.

Finally, for a third year in succession, the charity’s Annual General Meeting takes place online via Zoom — on Wednesday, 22nd June at 7.00 pm for a 7.30 pm start, allowing access for members, wherever in the world they may live.

Keep up with the latest news of the society’s activities at <https://berksfhs.org>

Derek Trinder

Berkshire Gardens Trust

We continue to progress research privately and publicly owned parks and gardens under the Garden Trust's Unforgettable Gardens banner. This activity enables us to focus on the origins and evolution of a variety of landscapes and their key features to illustrate different aspects of our local heritage. Research work also helps inform our comments in respect of local development plans and planning applications which could which potentially affected designed landscape sites throughout the county. Over the last few years, the number of applications we have responded to has doubled, as have the positive results in terms of the planning authorities refusing planning permission or requiring changes to be made, which is good news for Berkshire's heritage.

The Berkshire Gardens Trust is offering several county-wide events over the coming months and we look forward to welcoming you:

The first 3 visits are in West Berkshire at Bucklebury House, Bucklebury (Thursday, 2nd June), Purley Hall (Friday, 17th June), between Pangbourne and Purley in West Berkshire, preceded by a Zoom lecture (Wednesday, 15th June) and Earlstone Manor, Burghclere (Wednesday, 13th July).

In the late summer there are 2 visits in the east of the county with a guided introductory tour to Cliveden gardens (Monday, 16th August) and Dorney Court (Wednesday, 14th September), which is also preceded by a Zoom lecture (Monday, 12th September).

And last but not least, our Autumn Lecture and AGM will be in the afternoon at Purley Barn on Thursday, 29th September.

If you are interested in coming along to join us at any event, you can find out more by visiting our website (www.berkshiregardenstrust.org) and click on "2022 Events", emailing BerksGTenquiries@gmail.com or ringing 0118 984 3504. You can also use these contact points to alert us to any planning issues affecting parks and gardens near you or to offer help on any aspect of our activities. We look forward to hearing from you!

Fiona Hope

Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group (BIAG)

With Spring came the new BIAG programme of events. We kicked off with a very well attended talk by Joe Doak on the development of the Huntley &

Palmers Biscuit Factory in Reading. We were taken through the physical development of the site and how the changes linked with the social, economic and political environments of the times. We were lucky to have a number knowledgeable people on the Zoom call who had personal experience or relatives who knew the factory, including the great-grandson of Howard Palmer, the chairman during WW1, who was able to give us a perspective from the management side of company. February's talk was by members of the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL), who spoke on rural crafts and how MERL manages its legacy in this area. The talk included films of rural workmanship from the last two centuries and featured activities being carried out and commentary from those still continuing the practices. A lively debate ensued on what now constitutes a rural craft and on how many practices once considered industrial are now moving in to the craft arena. Our last talk to date featured the work of the West Berkshire archaeology team and how they record and manage the heritage environment, with a focus on industrial heritage to please us. Covering a number of lesser-known industrial sites and country-wide firsts for the county we engaged in a wide-ranging discussion on various aspects of heritage management and on specific sites around Berkshire.

Aside from our events programme, the members of BIAG have been tirelessly following the demise of Reading's last gas holder and preparing an update to the information on the history of gas supply in Reading on our website. We have also been working with other local heritage groups with the aim of getting more of our county's industrial heritage sites locally listed.

More information on our programme of activities, membership and Berkshire's industrial heritage can be found on our website www.BIAG.org.uk

Jo Alexander-Jones

Goring Gap Local History Society

A spike in Covid cases locally meant that our January talk reverted to Zoom. Unfortunately the booked speaker didn't do online talks, so his session on mumming was deferred until next December. Alan Winchcomb, our chairman, stepped into the breach and delivered a lighthearted talk about the Swinging Sixties, a time that many of us remembered well, ending with a few reminiscences from the audience. It was fully illustrated

with nostalgic pictures from the time.

We were able to return to the Village Hall in February, where, in direct contrast to our visit to the 1960s, we went back a couple of millennia to find out about the Roman invasion of Britain and life before and after the Romans arrived, with examples of Roman remains, archaeological finds, and sites of Roman occupation in Oxfordshire. The Roman forts of Dorchester and Alchester (Bicester) and the road later named Akeman Street from Corinium (Cirencester) to Verulamium (St Albans) were evidence of Roman military presence in Oxfordshire. Domestic life on the Roman pattern can also be seen in villas, temples and farms throughout the countryside. Our speaker was Marie-Louise Kerr, who describes herself as a 'curator without a museum' and who has extensive experience of working in the heritage sector.

In March our intended speaker was unable to come and we were fortunate that Catherine Sampson, who was booked for April, agreed to take his place. Her talk on Royal Weddings included a look at the marriage arrangements of kings and queens in the past. Spouses were rarely chosen for love. Factors such as pedigree, religious belief, political and social allegiances, temperament, looks and the ability to breed were far more important. There were even two Acts of Parliament to comply with. Marriage venues such as Westminster Abbey, St Paul's Cathedral and St George's Chapel, Windsor were described. The talk was illustrated with many entertaining stories about royal relationships.

We hope that our future talks will be held in the Village Hall from now on. There are two more in the current 'season' before our summer break. In June a coach outing has been arranged to Sandhurst Military Academy, but before that Transport History Group members will be taking to the seas on a boat trip from Southampton around the Solent.

The Society will be celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee with an exhibition in Goring Community Centre from 3-5 June on Life in the Fifties. This will also be part of the Goring Gap Festival which is taking place that same week.

Then it will be time for the AGM in July and hopefully the start of a more normal year of activities.

Janet Hurst, Secretary
www.goringgaphistory.org.uk

Hungerford Historical Association

Fuelling the Town - A History of Hungerford's Filling Stations

Local historian Roger Day gave a most enjoyable and superbly researched talk, accompanied by a wide range of fascinating slides showing old prints and photographs, for the January meeting of the Hungerford Historical Association.

As Roger explained Hungerford's location had always been a popular stopping-off place for travellers along the Bath Road (A4). This continued with arrival of the motor car in the early 20th century, making the town an ideal place for local businesses to start selling fuel.

The oldest of these businesses, originally an iron foundry, was started in 1824 by Richard Gibbons and remained in the family for 90 years, with motor engineering becoming the company's main line of work. The business was taken over in the 1930 and renamed Kennet Motor Works. In the 1950s it was bought by the Regent Oil Company and by 1963 was run by Bill and Joy Cunningham. In the years that followed it was a Texaco filling station and is now owned by the Co-op Group.

The Shell establishment on the opposite side of the A4 was owned by the Cottrell family from 1869. The business was bought in 1922 by Alfred Campbell and Billy Norman and was then known as Eddington Garage. Redeveloped and modernised, the site was bought by Total Oil in the 1980s, operating as a filling station and convenience store.

Manor House petrol station was located along the High Street on the present-day site of Coffee #1. In the 1950s this site had been a doctor's surgery, but it was pulled down in the 1960s and replaced by a petrol station, which survived for about a decade but was then knocked down and replaced by a supermarket.

At the start of the twentieth century James Stradling became agent for Benz motor cars, opening his first branch at 14 Charnham Street. A few years later he moved to a larger site at 21 Charnham Street and leased more space on the opposite side of the road. Following WWI he relocated his workshop to a site formally owned by the Bear Hotel. In the 1930s a modern garage complex was built on the site, which is now Dick Lovett's BMW dealership.

Public houses like the old Sun Inn on Charnham Street also sold petrol. Roger displayed a watercolour c.1930s, showing three petrol pumps outside

the pub facing the A4. This site was redeveloped in the 1950s and is now the location of Dick Lovett, Mini.

After, his informative and entertaining talk, Roger was enthusiastically applauded by the audience.

Helen Lockhart

‘The Ship, the Lady and the Lake: the extraordinary story of the rescue of a Victorian steamship in the Andes’ 23 February 2022

Meriel Larkin is an extraordinary local lady. In the 1980s she found, rescued and restored an abandoned iron-hulled Victorian steamship in the Peruvian Andes. Meriel’s tale was one of courage, determination and sheer force of will, taking her on a sometimes exhausting, intrepid adventure through an inhospitable terrain.

Originally commissioned by the Peruvian navy, the Yavari was constructed in West Ham, London in 1862. It was then taken apart and transported to South America where it was carried in 2,766 pieces across the Andes to Lake Titicaca by mule. Here, 12,500 feet above sea level, the Yavari was rebuilt and for 100 years was a working ship that ran on Llama dung. By the time Meriel found the ship it had been converted to diesel but was now a sad sight ready for the scrap heap. A survey revealed the remarkably good condition of the iron hull and this determined English woman set about finding the engineers and volunteers, not to mention the funds, to restore the ship to her former glory and become a tourist attraction.

Meriel illustrated with over 50 images the difficulties and the successes of the project that took around 25 years to complete. Prince Philip had seen the ship on his world tour of 1962. He encouraged Meriel to rebuild the ship in a letter now framed in pride of place on the ship’s bridge. During the restoration project, Michael Palin filmed Meriel aboard the Yavari during his Full Circle TV documentary in 1997; the series has been shown several times since.

Meriel and her volunteers faced many challenges out in Peru; communication with London for equipment and supplies was far more difficult in the 1980s and 90s and did not help the situation. Perseverance and a love for the people and communities with whom she worked kept her going. The ship is now a tourist attraction offering bed and breakfast accommodation. The link with West Ham was celebrated in 2015 when a group of 12 disadvantaged young people from the area were given the chance to

experience the challenge of travelling to the ship on Lake Titicaca by trekking along the original mule-train route across the Andes.

‘Samuel Taylor Coleridge in Calne’ by Nick Baxter 28 April 2021

Nick Baxter, author and retired history teacher, gave the Hungerford Historical Association a detailed and insightful account of the time the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge lived in Calne, Wiltshire, from November 1814 to March 1816. The famous Romantic poet lived in an elegant Georgian terraced house opposite the church with his friends John and Mary Morgan and Mary’s sister Charlotte. Separated from his wife in London and by now heavily dependent on laudanum and alcohol, Coleridge suffered a nervous breakdown shortly before moving to Calne from the village of Ashley near Bath. His time spent in Calne proved to be restorative and, as he regained his health, his work became productive once again.

Coleridge wrote his much respected ‘Biographia Literaria’, a collection of poems ‘Sibylline Leaves’, and finished his famous poem ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ whilst living in Calne. His play ‘Remorse’, premiered at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane in 1813, was performed by travelling players in Calne in August 1815 during celebrations of the victory over Napoleon at Waterloo. Nick brought Coleridge and his friends to life, explaining his care for them during a smallpox scare in the town, his financial assistance when they were in debt, and his friendships with Lord Byron and William Wordsworth. Coleridge appeared to have been close to Charlotte, describing her and her sister Mary as his ‘dear loves’; so there may have been much to keep him in their company. Largely estranged from his family, his son Hartley managed a visit during the summer of 1815 against the wishes of his Uncle.

Sadly Coleridge’s friends, including Paul Methuen of Corsham House and the Marquis of Lansdowne of Bowood, could not help him when his addictions resurfaced. Following drunken scenes and embarrassments, not to mention trouble with his publishers, he decided to return to London. He managed this with the financial help of The Literary Fund and Lord Byron. From this time Coleridge lived in Highgate with his friend and physician Dr James Gillman and his wife Ann. He was to die there 18 years later.

Illustrated with a wealth of paintings, historic maps, contemporaneous ephemera and recent photos providing interesting comparisons of the town

in the past and present, Nick held attention with an absorbing description of the life Coleridge was leading during his time in the locale. He concluded that Calne was the place the poet regained his self-worth and was at his most productive for some years.

The next talk for HHA will take place via zoom on 26 May 2021 “Designing the part - Dame Ellen Terry (1847-1928)” by Dr Veronica Isaac of the V&A London. Limited numbers of guests at £4 per screen; see the HHA website for details.

Caroline Ness

Project Purley

We began the year, with a talk by Wokingham historian Ann Smith on Reading’s historic shops. The talk took members on a wonderful circuit of virtual Reading, pointing out along the way the shops and shopkeepers which over the years have contributed to Reading’s economy and its community. It was a fascinating talk that touched so many memories of day-to-day life in Reading and was much appreciated by the audience.

In February, the speaker was Catherine Sampson, whose talk took attendees on a “Stroll through Berkshire’s Graveyards”. The location was a last-minute rearrangement onto Zoom, Storm Eunice making the planned face-to-face meeting an unattractive proposition. As the title suggests, the talk took attendees on an armchair tour of a number of burial grounds across the historic, pre-1974, county of Berkshire, mostly churchyards, but one a private cemetery. We began in St Mary’s churchyard in Purley, where Catherine used old photographs and documents to point out the common historic features of churchyards and then we explored a theme of water-related burials which took us from Purley to Basildon St Bartholomew and then onto Maidenhead All Saints, Longcot St Mary and Bisham All Saints churchyards, hearing stories at each location. A journey around some of the county’s best pre-Reformation memorials took in Fyfield St Nicholas and a rare surviving Cadaver memorial, amongst other locations. Pausing in the churchyard of St Mary’s, Aldermaston, we noted the cast iron grave markers and followed the trail of markers and church railings made by the Hedges Foundry at Bucklebury. Along the way we noted typology changes in memorials – particularly around skulls and cross bones and angels.

The Rain or Shine Theatre Company returned to Purley again on Friday

25th February, only their second visit in two years due to Covid. They presented matinee and evening performances of their adaptation of “Around the World in 80 Days”. There was a good audience turn out for both performances and all seemed to enjoy the very high-energy performances from this very talented theatre company.

Our March meeting began with our 40th AGM after which we celebrated our significant birthday with cake and wine and juice. There was also had a display of memorabilia and photo albums. Our speaker for the evening was David Downs whose talk was titled “Who Killed Alfred Oliver?” This referred to a notorious crime which occurred at 15 Cross Street, Reading, on the evening of Saturday June 22nd, 1929, which David had a family link to. Unusually, the talk began with a dramatic re-enactment of the murder scene, after which the “victim” – David himself – picked himself up off the floor and continued with the talk. This was a delightful evening and we hope that the Rabble Theatre Group are able to re-stage their play on this subject later this year, last year’s having had to be cancelled due to Covid.

In June, we are holding two events to celebrate the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee. On 2nd and 3rd June we are holding an exhibition – “Purley during the Queen’s Reign” exploring the changes within Purley during the last 70 years in image, words and objects. This is free to attend and open to all. On the Friday afternoon we are holding a vintage fashion show and afternoon tea, celebrating fashion through the Queen’s reign. This is a ticketed event and sold out on the launch day – so proving to be very popular. We have several summer events lined up to take us into our talks season which will start in September.

Catherine Sampson

History of Reading Society

The 2021 Presidential Address was given in December by Joan Dils, who had chosen for the title, “In their Own Words.” The talk, held via Zoom, shed light on everyday life in Reading and other Berkshire towns during the Tudor period, through the records of Ecclesiastical Courts. They dealt with cases concerning many aspects of life – such as marriage, breach of promise, adultery, wills, defamation of character, drunkenness and brawling. How cases were initiated and conducted was described, and who had to pay for them. Joan also described the punishments which might be

inflicted – fines, public penance, and “carting,” whereby the offender or offenders were paraded round town on a cart and subjected to public humiliation. The talk was enlivened by the reading out of extracts from the Act Books – as, for example, by the different ways people described the time when something had happened – “a day or two afore Candelmasse Day,” “on a Saturday night about candell trimming,” and “Sunday senight before the last change of the moon before michaelmasse, between dinner and evensong.”

In January, and also via Zoom, “A Brief History of Reading Gaol” was the title of the talk by Mark Stevens, the County Archivist. He described what happened on the Forbury Road site between 1785 and the present day. The new 1840s building brought in the “separate system” whereby inmates were not allowed to communicate with one another. They had one hour a day for exercise, and an hour in the chapel, where they were expected to contemplate their crimes and repent. Over time, it became apparent that this did not reduce the re-offending rate, and a harder regime was brought in, involving hard labour, hard fare, and hard board, with hammocks being replaced by plank beds. Inevitably, mention was made of the incarceration of Oscar Wilde, 1895-1897, of “De Profundis” and “The Ballad of Reading Gaol,” and of the executions which took place there. From the time of the First World War onwards, the building was put to a variety of uses – holding Irish Nationalists after the Easter Rising, a driving test centre, a borstal, a prison again, and latterly a young offenders’ institution. This closed on 2013, since when the gaol has stood empty, awaiting a new role.

February’s talk, held in the Abbey Baptist Church, had the intriguing title of “A Tale of Two Windows.” It was given by John Missenden, who has long been associated with the conservation of old buildings in Reading, and the subject of his talk was Georgian architecture in the town. Starting with the arrival of the Hanoverian kings and the origins of the style, he showed many examples of Georgian buildings in and around the town, and their architectural details – from the grandeur of stone country houses like Basildon Park and Prospect Park to the terraces of brick and stucco houses in Reading itself. The development of windows was a case in point, and the use of locally produced bricks of different colours was remarked upon. Houses in Church Street and Queen’s Road were noted, the sweeping terraces of Castle Street, Castle Hill and London Street, and slightly later examples from Oxford Road and Eldon Square.

March brought a talk on the history of hospitals in Reading, beginning with the infirmary of Reading Abbey. Following the Dissolution came a long period when hospitals were almost unknown outside London, until voluntary hospitals funded by public subscription began to arise in the eighteenth century. The Reading Dispensary opened in 1802, and then in 1836, Lord Sidmouth gave the land for the Royal Berkshire Hospital. Our speaker, Lionel Williams, had worked for many years as the Chief Medical Photographer at the Royal Berks., and was now Secretary of the Berkshire Medical Heritage Centre. He proved to be the ideal person to guide us through its history. Survival rates improved as new treatments were brought in, more patients were admitted, and the building was extended. Later hospitals – Battle, Prospect Park, and Blagrove were not forgotten. Battle Hospital closed in 2005, and the R.B.H. site was extended further until it stretched for a quarter of a mile, north and south. Nevertheless, increasing demands have led to suggestions that a completely new hospital might be built on the edge of town. The presentation ended with two short videos, once concerning the stolen hospital clock which was eventually recovered, and the other, “The Battle to Beat Polio,” about the iron lung, donated by Lord Nuffield.

Swallowfield Local History Society

We are delighted that our Society is alive and in action once again. Barbara Stanley gave her presentation ‘A Life in Education’. This lively and interesting talk, full of personal knowledge and experiences throughout her career gave us a true insight of the skills needed to be working in the world of Education.

At our AGM in March we were delighted when Ken Hussey accepted the Invitation to become President of our Society. The Committee and the Members present at the AGM agreed the time had come to acknowledge the enormous contribution Ken has made to the History Society. He was a founder Member and has been Chairman of the Committee for many years. His health has declined recently and his mobility severely curtailed, this means that he is now not able to carry out the duties of a Chairman to its full capacity. His commitment and strength of determination has made the History Society the success it is. Together with his ideas and the development of the archives we now have, make him a truly ideal candidate for the

Presidency.

We have a full programme planned for the future of speakers, dinners and a visit in the planning stage.

It is truly great to welcome Members and friends back to the meetings, the chat and atmosphere gives us the determination to continue to plan ahead for the future.

Maggie Uttley

Twyford & Ruscombe Local History Society

On 12 July Roy Elkin spoke to us about Tower Bridge. This bridge, the first over the Thames and almost 50 miles upriver from the sea, is unique among all the Thames bridges in that the central span can be raised in two halves to allow the passage of vessels into the Pool of London.

The Tower Bridge Act of 1885 empowered the Corporation of London to build a bridge over the Thames, to a design of the then City Architect, Horace Jones. It was originally submitted by him shortly after the plans were first drawn up for the project. John Wolfe Barry, an eminent civil engineer, was appointed to assist Jones - a fortunate decision, as Jones, knighted by the Prince of Wales after the laying of the foundation stone, died in 1887.

Barry not only improved on the original design whilst Jones was alive but on his death took over and was assisted by Henry Marc Brunel (the third generation of engineers with that famous name). George E.W. Cruttwell was made the resident engineer. Work on the new bridge began in April 1886, the Prince of Wales laying the foundation stone on the north side of the bridge in the Tower Gardens on 21st June 1885.

Barry's improvements included the enlarging of the central span, opening from 160 feet to 200 feet, and incorporated stairs in the towers and a high level footway 110 feet above the roadway for pedestrians to cross when the bridge was up. This was a very necessary improvement, for the Act had stipulated that it should be raised and open for two hours at each high tide for the free flow of river traffic through the bridge. When this part of the Act was repealed the high level walkway was closed to the public in 1911.

Because of the need to keep a wide central opening always free for shipping only one pier could be built at a time and the building took eight years to complete, being opened with great ceremony by the Prince of Wales

on behalf of Queen Victoria on 30th June 1894. John Barry received a knighthood for his services.

The steel towers of the bridge were encased in granite and Portland Stone, both to protect them and to blend in with the adjacent Tower of London. The bridge consists of a pair of balanced bascule leaves each weighing over 1000 tons which can be raised or lowered in three to five minutes, and two suspension sections called shore spans each 270 feet long. The total length of the bridge, which cost over £1,000,000, is about a quarter of a mile. The original steam engines raised the bridge hydraulically - and never failed during their working life - but for economy of manpower the bridge was converted to work by electricity in the mid 1970s.

Joan Poulter

Wargrave Local History Society

Wargrave Local History Society's January meeting was a fascinating presentation on Reading's Hospitals, by Lionel Williams, a trustee of the Berkshire Medical Heritage Centre who had worked at the Royal Berkshire Hospital for 40 years. Reading's first hospital was part of the Abbey, founded by Henry I in 1121. Following the dissolution of the monasteries in 1537, there was no treatment for the poor available locally until Reading Dispensary was founded by 3 local doctors in 1802. It was funded by voluntary subscriptions, with premises in Chain Street. In 1836, Richard Benyon offered funds towards a hospital for the area, Lord and Lady Sidmouth offering a 4-acre site for it. William IV and Queen Adelaide became its patrons - so it became the Royal Berkshire Hospital. Lionel told us of its history, and other local hospitals such as Battle, Prospect Park and Blagrove.

Village resident Torie Griffiths gave an interesting insight into My life of Crime: reflections of a former Crown Prosecutor in February. When she qualified as a solicitor, local police processed prosecutions - Torie joining the Greater Manchester force - but the process "left much to be desired". The Crown Prosecution Service was formed in 1986 and Torie explained how the new system was independent of the police, although worked closely with them. At each stage the police and prosecutors look closely at the information gathered, so the case is reviewed many times. Prosecuting suspects on behalf of the Crown at the Magistrates' Courts in Berkshire

could be challenging, and certainly never dull!

The March meeting began the AGM and then a look at Snippets of Local History. The Society archive includes scrap books of newspaper articles about Wargrave from the 1960s onwards, and the presentation looked at examples from the 1970s and 80s, ranging from the light hearted, such as a knobbly knees contest judged by the popular singer Mary Hopkin, to difficulties with the sewage treatment works, causing pungent smells or river pollution. Local residents took Thames Water to court over the latter in 1988 – and won. Proposals to infill or develop a village chalk pit were also controversial – eventually all failed and it is now a nature reserve.

In April, Richard Marks spoke of the Arrival of the Railways in Reading. The commonly held view is that building railways caused a lot of property destruction. Whilst true in London or industrial cities, it could be rather different in rural areas. Using information prepared for the GWR Act, Richard showed that in Bath hundreds of properties were affected and over 600 people displaced, but in Reading only 47 people had to move, and 97 properties demolished – mostly cowsheds! The railway even replaced those, as farms were seen as a potential source of railway traffic. Some trades prospered – such as Huntley and Palmers who grew to be a major Reading business, but when the railway extended north from Oxford, the eight Reading footwear factories could not compete with the economies of scale in the Midlands – for Reading shoemakers the arrival of the railway was a disaster.

Information on the society's future activities – including a historic Wargrave exhibition as part of the Wargrave Village Festival, can be found on the society website at <http://www.wargravehistory.org.uk/>

Opportunities

For talks, events, exhibitions etc which are open to the public

The Thatcham History Trail

A self-guided trail round Thatcham's historic centre was launched in April by Thatcham Historical Society and the Town Council. It takes 30-45 minutes and you can use QR codes on your smartphone.

Eton Wick and River Thames walk

Join BLHA members for a six mile walk along the River Thames and Jubilee River, looking at Boveney Chapel, Eton Wick, Dorney Court and Bray film studios. On Friday June 24th. Lunch will be at Crocus Garden Centre near Dorney Court.

Free but please reserve a place by emailing Ann Smith membership@blha.org.uk or phone 07977 034552.

Collected

The current exhibition in the John Madejski gallery at the Museum of Reading is entitled “Collected” and tells the history of Reading Football Club from its formation in 1871 until the present day. Admission is free and the exhibition continues until August 6th.

On show are caps, cups, medals, mugs, photographs, posters, shirts, souvenirs and a bottle of water, all charting the unique development of the oldest football club south of the Thames.

David Downs

The Centre for Heritage and Family History

Face-to-face activities have resumed at the society’s Centre for Heritage and Family History. At the same time, the society continues to offer a wide-ranging programme of online courses, workshops, talks and other events for the benefit of local and family historians, wherever in the world they may be. More information and booking details at <https://berksfhs.org>

Saturday, 7th May and Saturday 14th May 11-1 pm

ONLINE COURSE: **Researching House Histories** (£20) led by Dr Margaret Simons

Thursday, 12th May 2-3.30 pm

TALK: **Windsor Castle 1100-1700** (£5) with Dr David Lewis

Thursday, 12th May - 2.30-4 pm

WALKING TOUR: **Caversham Court Gardens** (£5) a guided tour with Vickie Abel and Dr John Evans

Monday, 16th May — 2—4 pm

1 to 1 ONLINE ADVICE SESSIONS (Free) (bookable)

Thursday 19th May — 11—3 pm F2F

ADVICE SESSIONS (Free): **Beginners’ Family History** (no booking needed) with Hilary Waller and Vanessa Chappell

Saturday, 21st May — 11 am—1 pm

ONLINE WORKSHOP: **World War One Army Records** (£10) led by Barbara Taylor and Trevor Hancock

Thursday, 26th May — 2—3.15 pm

WEBINAR-ONLINE TALK: **More than Biscuits, Beer and Bulbs — Reading's Other Industries** (£5) with Jo Alexander Jones

Tuesday, 7th June — 10 am—Midday

GUIDED WALK: **Crime and Punishment in Reading** (£5) led by Terry Dixon

Thursday, 9th June — 2—3.30 pm

TALK: **Queen Victoria's Daughters** (£5) with Colin Parrish

Saturday, 11th June — 11—1 pm

WORKSHOP: **Munition Workers in World War One** (£10) with Richard Marks

Saturday, 18th June — 11—1 pm

ONLINE WORKSHOP: **The New Poor Law 1834-1929** (£10) with Joan Dils

Wednesday, 22nd June — 7—9.30 pm

WEBINAR-ONLINE MEETING: **47TH Annual General Meeting of the Society**

Thursday, 23rd June — 2—3.30 pm

WEBINAR-ONLINE TALK: **The Simonds Family and Simonds Brewery** (£5) with Raymond Simonds

See <https://berksfhs.org/whats-on> for full information on every Berkshire Family History Society event (including local Branch meetings whether face-to-face or hosted on Zoom), and details on how to book and take part. The society is a registered charity no. 283010.

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 [07776 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@shottle.plus.com],
[http://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, Catherine Glover, Suvukuja, Basingstoke Road, Spencers |Wood RG7 1PH tel 07762 251686 [catherine_e_m_glover@icloud.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.org.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)

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

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Membership

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

We have three classes of membership

Individual - for individuals and couples living at the same address

Family - for families living at the same address

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Membership fees

The rates for 2022 are:-

	version of newsletter		no of copies	
	electronic	hard copy	Journal	Newsletter
Individual	£9.00	£12.00	1	1
Family	£9.00	£12.00	1	1
Corporate	£18.00.	£20.00	2	3

Contents

Chairman's Corner	1	Berks Gardens Trust	14
From the Editor	3	Berks Industrial Archaeology	14
44th AGM	2	Goring Gap	15
<i>Book Reviews</i>		Hungerford	17
Sent from Reading	3	Purley	20
Reliance Motor Services	4	Reading	21
<i>Miscellanea</i>		Swallowfield	23
Berkshire Heritage Fair	5	Twford & Ruscombe	24
Slaymakers	6	Wargrave	25
<i>Articles</i>		<i>Opportunities</i>	26
BALH	7	<i>Contact details</i>	
Twyford Almshouses	9	History Societies	29
A Berkshire son of note	10	Archives, Libraries & Museums	31
<i>Society News and contributions</i>		Your Committee	32
Berks Family History	12	BLHA Membership	33

Next Newsletter

The next Newsletter is due to be published in September 2022.

The DEADLINE for copy is 15th August 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 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.