



Berkshire Local History Association



Newsletter No 136
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Berkshire Local History Association

Newsletter

Editor John Chapman

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We welcome contributions from all of our member societies and institutions telling us about their activities over the previous four months.

We also welcome queries, articles, book reviews and notice of events which are open to the public and not just regular society meetings. These can come from anywhere or anyone provided they have some relevance to the history and heritage of the Royal County of Berkshire including those areas which governments have 'stolen' from us in recent years.

When sending material please focus on the text rather than using tabs or spaces to set it out.

Send by email to newsletter@blha.org.uk or post to John Chapman, 5 Cecil Aldin Drive, Tilehurst, Berks RG31 6YP

Cover picture

HM King Charles III and Queen Camilla on coronation day

Chairman's Corner

The Association's 45th AGM was held in the Marcham Centre. We had intended to be at Marcham for our 2020 meeting, when we would have met in the church, but that was not to be. In the mean time, the new Marcham Centre had been built, and that was where we made our way on March 25th.

Even before we got to the doors, we were met with kindness, by people showing us where to park, and so the kindness continued throughout the day.

The "business" part of the meeting is reported on elsewhere in this issue. When that was over, we were treated to four talks about the village and its history. The changing boundaries of Berkshire over the years were described, with some tongue-in-cheek humour, and then the location of the village, its underlying geology and its landscape. The emblem of the Marcham Society – an ammonite – was explained, and there was the opportunity to touch a fossilised ammonite from the local corallian limestone during the meeting. We had approached the Marcham Centre along Barrow Close, and now we were learning the reason for the name – we were sitting over a prehistoric burial ground! We heard about the doings of the monks from Abingdon, the arrival at and departure from the big house by the Women's Institute, and some interesting and sometimes eccentric personalities.

Then came lunch, and a chance to look at the stalls of the various local societies.

During the afternoon walk round the village, we were able to look inside some old buildings which aren't open to the public, and to walk in the grounds of the former W.I. Denman College – now Marcham Park. The Marcham Society had obviously gone to considerable trouble to arrange all this. A good number of their members were with us, and I guess that they, too, were taking the opportunity to see what they wouldn't normally get to see.

The funniest incident of the day, for me, came on the visit to the archaeological hut. Sites in the village were under investigation, and the hut was where the finds were cleaned, sorted and recorded. A young girl was being photographed, holding a piece of Iron Age pottery, intrigued by

the finger-prints of the potter on its rim. When the archaeologist mentioned that it had probably contained human bones, she almost dropped the pot in horror!

If you couldn't be there, or would like to be reminded of the day, you can see photographs in the April edition of the Marcham Society's newsletter by clicking on the link below,

<https://blha.org.uk/newsletters/Marcham/2023Vol6No4.pdf>

and the pictures used in the four talks can be seen by clicking on the lower of the two links.

https://blha.org.uk/newsletters/Marcham/HISTORY_OF_MARCHAM.pdf

During the walk, the sun shone for us, and the meeting ended in the traditional way, with tea and home-made cake. I think we all came away happy, and grateful to the Marcham Society for making it all happen.

On a different theme, those who use Reading Library for local history research will probably be aware that the council has plans to re-locate the Central Library to a site near the Civic Offices in Bridge Street. Many will remember the opening of the "old" library . . . in 1985! I'm pleased to report that a professional archivist has been engaged to survey the local studies collection, which includes many rare and irreplaceable items. Only a fraction of the collection is readily accessible to the public, and the provision of adequate and appropriate storage space will be important. I know, because when I was in paid employment I worked there and helped plan and implement the move in 1985.

Another encouraging move is the bringing back of regular liaison meetings between representatives from the Berkshire Record Office, a representative from the Reading Central Library, and a representative of the BLHA, who will probably be me.

It's also good to know that the Department of History at the University of Reading will be awarding the Berkshire History Prize this year. This is funded jointly by the B.R.O. and the B.L.H.A., and is awarded for an outstanding undergraduate dissertation on the history of the county. An award for 2022 will be made retrospectively, and it is anticipated that there will be one for 2023, to be presented at a ceremony in July.

David Cliffe

A Word from the Editor

I am afraid that for a number of reasons this newsletter is both late and somewhat sparse. I have had computer problems using Microsoft Word so was unable to read several contributions. In addition, I have been faced with some serious family situations, so please accept my apologies.

John Chapman

Book Reviews

Reading Abbey – a pilgrim church

by John Mullaney MA

The book begins by examining architectural aspects of Reading Abbey, with detailed diagrams of its layout. Dr. Kevin Hayward, one of the country's leading petrologists, examined the stonework and mortar found in the abbey ruins and has contributed to several of the chapters.

John does not shy away from discussing some of the more controversial aspects of the Abbey, including the burial place of Henry I, the height of its central tower, or looking at some unexplored areas, such as whether its chapter house may have been the burial place of abbots and other dignitaries, possibly in an undiscovered vault. The seals of Reading Abbey are looked at afresh, with new images provided by various archives.

The book then moves to looking at the Abbey as a centre of prayer. John discusses pilgrimage and the role of Reading Abbey both before and after its dissolution.

Reading Abbey – a pilgrim church is richly illustrated: there is hardly a page without a picture or a diagram. At over 250 pages, in A4 landscape format, this is a substantial work which brings together several strands of the story of Reading Abbey.

John is grateful for comments and advice from Professor Anne Curry and John Painter, among others.

The 'Friends of Reading Abbey' have kindly agreed to support and promote the book, which is dedicated to, and in aid of, the 'Friends'. Once costs have been covered, all the proceeds from sales will go to the "Friends of Reading Abbey".

The print run will be determined by the number of copies ordered in

advance. The full publication price will be £29.00, but by ordering, or registering an interest in advance, we can offer a substantial discount.

You can express an interest by ordering a copy from the English Catholic History Association website www.echa.org.uk

Miscellanea

45th Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2023

This year's AGM took place at Marcham on Saturday 25th March. We were made very welcome by the members of Marcham Society.

Joan Dils, our President, began by thanking all who joined and opening the formal AGM proceedings. She also noted with regret the passing of Elias Kupfermann, a long-standing member of the Association's Committee.

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 comprise:

President	Joan Dils
Vice-President	Ted Collins
Chairman	David Cliffe
Secretary	Jo Alexander-Jones
Treasurer	David Lewis
Membership Secretary	Ann Smith
Newsletter Editor	John Chapman
Journal Editor	Jonathan Brown
Website Manager	Dave Osborne
Committee Member	Margaret Simons

Having completed the formal proceedings of the AGM, members of the Marcham Society gave an interesting talk on the history of the village and surrounding area. They told us about The Iron Age and Roman excavations that had taken place and about a number of local historical characters.

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

After lunch the Marcham Society hosted a walk around the village to visit local buildings of interest. The owner of Marcham Priory kindly allowed us into her garden and the Priory itself, which is believed to have been built between 1570 and 1590. We visited the finds from the local dig, the dovecote, the church and were allowed into the grounds of what was previously the Women's Institute HQ at Denman College and is now in private hands.

Please note that the 46th BLHA AGM will be held in Wargrave on Saturday 23rd March 2024.

Jo Alexander-Jones

Elias Kupfermann

It was with sadness that members of the BLHA committee learned of the death of Elias. He died on December 12, at the early age of 57. Earlier in the year he had played a major part in organising our AGM at the village hall at Eton Wick, where he lived. He had been co-opted onto the committee in 2014, and was duly elected at the AGM in 2015.

His passion for local history and archaeology had been evident since childhood, and his area of study was Maidenhead, Windsor and Slough, where he was to become something of a local legend.

Among the many projects on which he worked were the excavation of a Roman villa at Castle Hill, Maidenhead, where he grew up; the restoration of Herschel Park at Slough; and the excavation of an Anglo-Saxon monastery near the church at Cookham. It was in connection with the excavation that he appeared on the TV programme "Digging for Britain" with Prof. Alice Roberts, which was first screened in January 2023, shortly after his death.

He was a trustee of Slough Museum, curator at the Horlicks archive, and as a senior archivist at Cumberland Lodge, in Windsor Great Park, he helped reorganise the archive of that charity.

Elias held three university degrees: a B.A. in archaeology and history, an

M.A. in museum studies, and an M.Phil. from the Centre for English Local History at the University of Leicester. At the time of his death he was studying for a doctorate at Royal Holloway, University of London.

His publications include “Vanished Windsor” (2010); “Royal Windsor – Images of a Bygone Age” (jointly with Carol Dixon-Smith, 2014), and “Maidenhead through Time” (2014). For the BLHA, he wrote “A Case of Witchcraft in Elizabethan Windsor,” which appeared in “Berkshire Old and New” in 2016. His passing is a great loss to local history in the county.

David Cliffe

Pacifists

I am a PhD student researching the interwar peace movement and conscientious objection in World War Two. I am keen to find written interviews, oral recordings, memoirs and letters relating to pacifists and conscientious objectors which might shed light on what influenced them to become pacifists and also why they went on to claim exemption or agree to join the armed forces. I can be reached by email at phillines53@gmail.com or on 07525-858824. Many thanks,

Phi

Society Contributions

Berkshire Family History Society

The society has extended the opening hours of The Centre for Heritage and Family History in Reading Central Library and now also added the 1921 Census as one of the subscription data sources available to visitors to explore for free. You don't need to be a member to use the Centre and pre-booking isn't required, just turn up, but please check our website for opening hours before you make your visit. Re-cataloguing of our reference library continues, and the ongoing catalogue can now be accessed both in the Centre and via our website. Help for everyone from beginners to seasoned researchers is available from our Research Assistants, should a visitor want it. We also run a programme of pre-bookable and on spec advice sessions in the Centre, at libraries across Berkshire and via Zoom.

Looking ahead, we continued to offer talks each month through the society's six branches together with a more extensive programme of talks, walks, workshops and courses offered from the Centre. Some of these are online and some face-to-face. The society's AGM is in June and will once again be online.

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. Places at some events are necessarily limited. Society members can also opt to receive regular In Touch electronic newsletters, as well as the quarterly journal in print form.

Catherine Sampson

Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group (BIAG)

So far this year we have held four meetings. The unusual topic of the 50th anniversary of the A329(M) from a man who was part of the engineering team was very informative. Teresa Hocking from Berkshire Archaeology told us about how they work in managing the archaeology of east Berkshire and focussed on the sites and artefacts from the industrial era just for us. Thames Water came to talk about the hidden heritage of the company and their assets and especially the history of Fobney pumping station in Reading – we're just in the process of setting up a walk and visit to Fobney with the speakers. Our last talk to date was Ann Smith talking to us about the history of Woodley with lots of information about the airfield and its buildings.

Last month we attended the AGM of the West Berkshire Heritage Forum and enjoyed a talk by Phil Smithers, West Berkshire's Finds Liaison Officer and a tour of Shaw House, where the meeting was held.

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

Project Purley

Project Purley's January meeting welcomed Mike Cooper as the speaker, with a talk on Tilehurst during the Second World War. Mike has spoken to us several times previously, this talk was wide ranging in scope, but limited

in geographical area, with Mike highlighting how the war affected Tilehurst differently from Reading or the rest of the country. It was a very interesting and very well researched talk, as we have come to appreciate from Mike, interspersed with humour. Tilehurst was the scene of two mock battles. The first in 1941, with the Reading Home Guard (though we don't know who won). The following year, the 7th (Reading) Battalion of the Berkshire Home Guard took on the Infantry Training Centre, apparently not helped by curious locals, and not appreciated by them when they were taken hostage as human shields and had their homes invaded as part of the mock battle!

In February, we welcomed back historian Richard Marks who gave a talk on the "History of Sutton Seeds". Suttons Seeds was an iconic institution in Reading for decades and many of our members had connections to the firm or were very familiar with its products. Richard explained how it began and what it was like to work for the company. He explained how the company built its global reputation for reliable seeds and plants, which were guaranteed across the world, and why it eventually moved away from the area.

There was change on the committee at March's AGM with Catherine Sampson stepping down as Chairman and Ann Betts as Secretary, under our constitution's five-year maximum rule for officers. John Chapman has taken on the role as Chairman and Margaret Dray, Secretary. After complimentary wine, juice and nibbles, John gave the evening's talk which was a comprehensive look at how Purley communicated with the rest of the world, focusing mainly on postal services.

Our thrice-yearly journal continues to receive very good feedback and also continues to include new research and discoveries.

Looking ahead, our April speaker is Catherine Sampson who will give a talk on the River Estate in images, showcasing some of the newer additions to our image archive and what they tell us about the history of the estate.

We are also supporting the Coronation celebrations in Purley, with a small display of exhibition boards on the life so far of King Charles III and previous coronations. This will be open to the public on the afternoon of Monday 8th May, as part of other activities planned for that day at the Goosecroft Recreational area and in the Barn.

Catherine Sampson

Friends of Reading Abbey

The annual Professor Brian Kemp Memorial Lecture was on Saturday 18 March, at 2.30pm, in St James's RC Church, Forbury Road (next to Reading gaol, in the Abbey Precinct), given by Dr Jamie Ingram, an archaeologist affiliated to the University of Southampton, on the topic of The Medieval Pilgrim

My zoom talk on 28th February was attended by over 30 people. Thank you to those who logged in. It was about the Reading and Caversham Pilgrimage Trail, which FORA was active in developing and launching in 2021, along with Living Reading (REDA's previous incarnation), Reading Borough Council, and the Confraternity of St James. It runs from the Abbey Quarter into Caversham to visit sites linked to the Shrine of Our Lady of Caversham, which was at Caversham manor at Dean's Farm in Lower Caversham.

The Reading and Caversham Pilgrimage Trail is one of 40 walks featured in the first REDA Reading Walks Festival, which will run between 10-14 May 2023. It is one of two walks which FORA is leading in the Festival, on the morning of Friday 12 May; the second is around the Abbey Quarter on the afternoon of Sunday 14 May.

Reading's MPs, Alok Sharma and Matt Rodda, met with the Prisons Minister, Damian Hinds, on 27 February. Mr Rodda has said that he hoped this meeting would be an important opportunity to try to change Government policy on Reading gaol, and to encourage the Ministry of Justice to work with Reading Borough Council, local arts and heritage groups, Banksy and the MPs to save the gaol and to turn it into an arts and heritage hub. He hoped the Minister will rethink the Ministry's current policy of trying to sell the gaol to the highest bidder and to turn it into flats.

John Painter

The History of Reading Society

For the December meeting our President, Joan Dils, gave an account of "Earley in the Nineteenth Century." Around 1800, the Liberty of Earley was a hamlet with a population of 436 and no church. There were three estates belonging to wealthy landowners. The 1821 census showed a large number of children, but more men than women – this probably because

some of the mothers were in service, living in the houses of their employers in towns. The area, like much of southern England, was poor, and the enclosure of the commons, where people could gather firewood, must have made life harder for some families. Changes in the provision of poor relief, by the parish and later by the Reading Poor Law Union, were described. By the mid-century, the New Town area was being developed, and the population increased – what is now the New Town Primary School was originally the Earley Board School. The Whiteknights Estate was divided up, with six houses in extensive grounds, and at the same time there was an increase in the number of tradesmen and middle class families. On the edge of Earley, the Reading Cemetery Company laid out its grounds, and new churches dedicated to St. Peter and St. Bartholomew were built. There was a railway station on one side of Earley, and there were trams to Reading from the cemetery on the other side. Almost inevitably, the border of Reading, which was providing water, sewerage and gas to the area, was extended to take in the built-up area of Earley. The boundary moved from the cemetery eastwards to the Three Tuns at Earley Crossroads. Mrs. Dils commented that John Donne had said that no man was an island, but no community was an island unto itself either. The century had seen many changes, and throughout the talk, they were illustrated by figures from censuses and church registers, by maps, and by topographical photographs.

The first talk of 2023 was a history of Southcote Mill and its area, presented by Graham Puddephatt. The mill and fishery mentioned in the Domesday Book were pretty certainly not on the present-day site. The building of Southcote Lock on the Kennet Navigation, 1718-23, and the neighbouring weir, meant that there was a fall of water, just right for a corn mill. A few decades later, John Rennie, who engineered the Kennet and Avon Canal through to Bath, made mention of a nearby newly-built wire-mill of Bath stone, with a water wheel. The shell of the building still stands, by the towing-path. This mill was run by the Pocock family, and is known to have supplied items to the shipyard at Buckler's Hard in Hampshire. It was intriguing to think that a little lower down the river, at about the same time, Musgrave Lamb was producing sailcloth in a factory on Katesgrove Lane, also for the Royal Navy.

Great changes came in the late 1840s, when Reading Corporation was taking steps to provide a piped water supply for the town. They bought the site, and used turbines to pump water up to the water tower on Bath Road. The system became operational in 1852, but the water was as yet unfiltered.

Apparently, it was usual for small fish to appear, when you turned on your water tap in Reading! Filtration equipment was installed on the site in the 1890s. To augment the water supply, three boreholes were drilled down into the chalk, and diesel engines were used to drive the pumps by 1948. With the opening of Fobney Water Works a little farther upstream, the installations at Southcote were gradually taken out of commission, and for a time, some of the water tanks there were used for fish-farming.

The talk ended with memories of the site from various people, and plans for its future. There had been many illustrations along the way – plans, buildings, and pictures of the various installations. We also saw a rare photograph of Tom Rolt, the inland waterways enthusiast, passing through Southcote aboard his boat “Cressy,” and the only known photograph of the lock-keeper’s cottage there.

The February meeting was about six extraordinary women represented in the archives and collections of Reading University. The talk was given by Kaye Gough and Jenny Knight, who are volunteers at the Museum of English Rural Life. Kaye explained how the museum came into being in 1951, and how the university’s Special Collections are now housed in an archival store nearby, so that anyone wishing to see the items will need to apply to the Museum’s reading room in Redlands Road.

The six women chosen for the talk came from different walks of life. First came Elizabeth Waterhouse, the artist and author, who had lived for a time at Foxhill House on what is now the University’s Whiteknights campus. She and her more famous architect husband moved to Yattendon Court in 1879, from where she ran evening classes for local people, many of them farm workers. Metalwork, watercolours, and embroidery resulted, with many of the designs being influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, and some items are now in the university’s collections.

Sister Lavinia Dugan Smith was remembered as a teacher, and as a collector of agricultural and domestic implements. For a time she was a nun in the Community of St. Mary, Wantage, and she taught at Abingdon. Then she bought a house at East Hendred, where she began collecting. Local people, knowing of her interests, would bring her rural bygones for her collection. Every item was carefully documented. In 1933 she opened part of her house as a village museum, and gradually the collection grew. She died in 1944, and the collection eventually found its way to the Museum of English Rural Life.

From a different stratum of society, we heard about Nancy Astor (1879-1964), whose papers and correspondence now reside among the university's Special Collections. She was rather more famous than her husband, Waldorf Astor, and was the first elected female Member of Parliament to take her seat in the House of Commons. She championed women's rights, but some of her views were rather more controversial. Cliveden, the mansion above the Thames near Maidenhead, had been a wedding present from Waldorf's father.

The next heroine was Lady Evelyn Balfour, known as Eve, who was one of first women to take a degree in agriculture at the Reading University Extension College, the forerunner of the University of Reading, in 1917. She was a pioneer of organic farming, and a co-founder of The Soil Association. Most of her life was spent in Suffolk, farming and teaching. She is remembered for her classic book, "The Living Soil," and for a variety of potato named after her, and she died in 1990, aged 90.

Doreen Thorp came from a more ordinary background. She joined the Women's Land Army in 1939: she was only 16 at the time, and must have lied about her age. During her time there, she took many courses in farming, including a spell at the National Institute of Agricultural Engineering in Yorkshire. She was discharged from the W.L.A. in 1947, and was in great demand as a teacher and practical demonstrator. Throughout her career she had kept detailed records of all of her activities throughout her career, and all of her papers and photographs have come to the Museum of English Rural Life.

The final extraordinary woman was Jill Betts, who died as recently as 2016. She had taken a degree in botany zoology and geography at Reading, and spent many years teaching overseas. When she returned to this country, she became a researcher at the Museum, and had worked on the enormous wall hangings designed by Michael O'Connell for the Agricultural Pavilion at the 1951 Festival of Britain. Some of the hangings have now been conserved, and can be seen at MERL.

Returning to in-person meetings, we met in March for the AGM, and afterwards, Richard Stowell gave a talk entitled "From the White Man's Grave to Cemetery Junction: the Life and Times of Mary Smart." A larger-than-usual audience heard the story of the daughter of a freed slave in Sierra Leone, who by a strange quirk of fate, became one of the first people

to be interred in the new Reading Cemetery which opened in 1849. Her family lived in a village called Regent, in the hills above the capital, Freetown. The Church Missionary Society was very active in Regent, and Mary's family were Christians. At the same time, the C.M.S. was also active among the church people of Reading, where one of the earliest branches had been established, the Berkshire Auxiliary Branch, in 1823. Missionary activities in tropical Africa had been frustrated because of the heat and the mosquitoes, and few of the missionaries arriving from England ever returned home. By the 1840s, the C.M.S. was training Africans to become teachers and evangelists. One of the Church of England missionaries involved in this work was the Rev. Nathaniel Denton, and it was he who brought Mary Smart to Reading to train as a teacher, along with another girl, of whom nothing seems to be known – not even her name.

They were to stay at a ladies' seminary at the top of Castle Hill, a respectable and middle-class establishment. But sadly, Mary died, little more than a year after her arrival in 1848. She was looking forward to returning home, but never saw her family again. The causes of death were erysipelas and "congestion of the brain." An account of her last days, told in sentimental and pious tones, appeared in "The Church Missionary Intelligencer."

The talk, which might well have been rather gloomy, was anything but. Our speaker had worked in Sierra Leone, and had been intrigued by the names of the people living there, and the African names of Mary Smart's family in the nineteenth century. He had been able to trace and meet the descendants of Mary's family. A tremendous amount of research had been done, including the seeking out of contemporary accounts of what life was like in Sierra Leone, for Africans and Europeans, and what it was like in Reading in 1848. One could not help but wonder what must have been in Mary's mind, aged 16, during the sea crossing, and then on arriving in a strange place. There were many examples which showed the attitudes of English people towards people of different races, from "heathen lands." Other quotations illustrated attitudes to the poverty, crime, overcrowded graveyards and lack of clean drinking water and drainage with consequent disease in 1840s Reading. We were left with a lot to think about.

The April meeting of the Society did not go according to plan – when the speaker failed to turn up! However, our resourceful treasurer, Malcolm

Summers, stepped into the breach and gave us a well-researched talk on Dr. Jamieson Boyd Hurry, complete with illustrations he had somehow managed to deliver via the Internet. The audience had been expecting to hear a talk on the history of the printing industry in Reading.

Dr. Hurry's achievements were multifarious, and his legacy to Reading is considerable. The son of a Congregational minister, as a boy he travelled round the country, and around the world. Having completed his medical training, and a brief spell at St. Bart's Hospital in London, he spent several years as a ship's doctor, and this love of foreign travel seems never to have left him. He arrived in Reading in 1885, where he joined the practice of Dr. George May junior. The list of organisations within the town in which he played a leading role is extraordinary, and includes the Pathological Society, the Dispensary Trust, the Literary and Scientific Society, the Natural History Society, and the Cemetery Company. He was a great supporter of public libraries in Reading, and of the University College.

He married the daughter of Arthur Hill, the philanthropist and benefactor, and they lived at a large house in its own grounds, "Westfield," in Southcote Road. Here he established his educational garden, which was opened occasionally to school parties and to the public.

The list of Dr. Hurry's publications is also impressive. There were many articles in medical journals, and he was perhaps ahead of his time in seeing links between poverty, poor food, bad housing and ill-health – what he called "vicious circles." But most notably for us, he published many books on Reading Abbey, including the classic history in 1901. On top of that, he paid for several plaques and memorials, to be seen to this day in the Abbey Ruins. He also commissioned a series of ten large paintings depicting scenes from the history of the Abbey, and presented them to the town. They are now in the care of the Museum and Art Gallery.

The talk may have been a stop-gap, but it was obviously greatly appreciated. The talk on the printing industry has been promised for next year.

David Cliffe

Wargrave Local History Society

At Wargrave Local History Society's January meeting, Joy Pibworth enlightened members about the time when the author Jane Austen was at school

in Reading. Education was not regulated in the 18th century, children like Jane would often be taught at home by their mother. Jane's sister, Cassandra, was 2 years older than her, and their cousin, Jane Cooper, was 2 years older than Cassandra. As the two older girls spent time together, it was decided they should attend the same school and Jane Austen persuaded her parents that she should also attend. When Jane Cooper's father, Edward, became vicar of Sonning he wanted his daughter to be schooled nearby, and the Austen's were happy to do the same, having family living in Wargrave who could provide a 'safety net'. Many small schools advertised in the Reading Mercury, including one in 1781 known as The Ladies Boarding School in the Forbury, which was housed in the Abbey gateway and an adjacent building, and the 3 girls were sent there from July 1785 until December 1786. Joy gave a fascinating insight into how such schools were run.

In February Dr Margaret Simons' presentation on Suffragettes was the result of her detailed research into the campaigns. The fight to gain the franchise took about 50 years, having both male and female supporters and detractors. In 1866 a Women's Suffrage Committee organised a petition to Parliament and an amendment was proposed to the 1867 Reform Bill to replace "male person" by "person", to grant women the vote if they qualified in the same way as men, but the amendment was defeated. Such Reform Bills came before Parliament almost every year until 1914, but amendments to include female voters were always defeated. Margaret explained the differences between the various groups – some using legal and peaceful means to achieve their aims, and others using militant tactics. Locally the most notable of those was on 1st June 1914, when Wargrave church was attacked by arsonists, who left suffragette messages at the scene. The start of WW1 on August 4th saw an end to such action, the war bringing all classes of people together, and at the end of the war women were eventually granted the vote by the passing of the Representation of the People Act in February 1918. At the ensuing election the women turned out in numbers but it is debatable if women would have gained the right to do so had it not been for the war.

The business of the AGM in March was followed by a "Bring and Tell", when several society members told of an item of interest they were able to show. The visitor's book for Wargrave Hall included the signatures of

members of the government in when discussions were held just before the declaration of war in 1914, and when the question of Irish Home Rule was considered in the early 1920s, whilst letters from Buckingham Palace and Sandringham told the story of the “Princess Elizabeth Wedding Present Parcels”, made of food gifted to Elizabeth at the time of her wedding in 1947, and appreciated by recipients at a time of food rationing. A stoneware foot warmer, as issued to railway passengers in the 1920s, a silver Coronation spoon awarded as a prize at village sports in 1953, Peruvian spoons used to secure women’s clothing, and an 18th century pewter plate were amongst other things with a story to relate.

The work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission was the subject of Jane Burrell’s presentation in April. She represented the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation, part of the MacRobert Trust. Which provided education on the work of the Commission. The Trust had been established by Lady MacRobert, following the loss of her 3 sons in quick succession whilst serving in the RAF during WW2. Her response had been to donate £25,000 to buy a bomber for the RAF – to be known as “MacRobert’s Reply” – a tradition still maintained. Before WW1 those who died on active service were normally buried in common graves, not marked with the names of the deceased. However, in 1914, Fabian Ware, working for the Red Cross unit in France, became concerned at the lack of recognition of the burial places, often lost as the trenches of warfare moved to and fro. He set about recording the names and locations, and by 1915 gained recognition of the War Office, and the support of the then Prince of Wales. This led to the formation of the Imperial War Graves Commission in 1917, with Fabian Ware in charge. He established its principles, based on of equality of treatment - irrespective of rank, creed or colour, the body would be laid to rest close to the place where they died. The markers are of a standard style, usually made of Portland stone, with a religious symbol, the name, rank and date of death (where known), and a short personal inscription if the family wished it. For those with no identifiable grave, there were large memorials with stone panels listing each of them. In addition, as it was recognised that many of the family members of the deceased would not be able to visit these overseas memorials, and so memorials such as the Cenotaph in Whitehall were also created. The CGWC looks after these memorials, world-wide, ensuring the names are kept legible in perpetuity, the grounds tended, and records maintained of each of them. With 1.7

million Commonwealth casualties to be commemorated, the size of the task is immense. Jane's husband, Philip, then showed how to research those who are remembered in this way, using the names of casualties recorded on Wargrave's village memorial for his examples.

Opportunities

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

Holy Brook Walk - Wednesday 31 May

Steve Vale, from the Loddon Valley Ramblers, has kindly offered to lead a walk along the Holy Brook specifically for FORA members, along the Holy Brook, from Theale into central Reading. This walk is not included in the Walks Festival. It is 5 miles long, starting at 10.30am at Sheffield Bottom car park, near to Theale station, and will follow the route of the northernmost stream of the Kennet into central Reading in time for lunch. The Holy Brook runs in culverts through the centre of Reading, under the Civic Offices, Oracle, and Central Library, and powered the Abbey Mill and flushed the Abbey Reredorter (toilets). Please let John Painter know if interested and put this date in your diary.

Caversham & District Residents Association

Tuesday 23rd May A short AGM followed by a talk from our Chairman David Cliffe entitled *Ferries and Bridges: Crossing the Thames at Caversham over the centuries* at the New Testament Church of God (opposite Waitrose) at 7.30pm. Admission free (retiring charity collection)

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.

Friday, 5th & 12th May – 2-4 two-week *Course: House Histories* with Dr Margaret Simons

Zoom, £20

Thursday, 11th May – 2-3.30pm *Talk: Britain's Railways in World War Two* with Richard Marks, The Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library, £5

Thursday, 11th May – 7-9pm *Workshop: Merchant Navy Records*, with Tony Wright, Zoom, £10

Saturday, 13th May – 11am–1pm *Workshop: Getting the Most out of the Maps Website* with Craig Statham, Zoom, £5

Tuesday, 16th May – 10am-12.30pm *Walk: Tilehurst Walk* with Terry Dixon, £5

Thursday, 18th May – 7-9pm *Tour: Caversham Caves*, £20

Thursday, 25th May – 2-3.30 *Talk: The History of the Gas Industry in Berkshire* with Jo Alexander Jones, Zoom, £5

Monday, 5th June – 2-4pm: *Online Family History Advice Clinic*, Zoom, Free

Thursday, 8th June – 2-3.30pm *Talk: Tilehurst in World War Two* with Mike Cooper, The Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library, £5

Thursday, 22nd June – 2-3.15pm *Talk: A Trip Around the Inner Distribution Road in Reading: Before and Afterwards* with Joe Doak and Graham Turner, Zoom, £5

Friday, 23rd June – 2-4pm *Tour: Reading Abbey Quarter* followed by a cream tea with John Painter, £10

Tuesday, 11th July – 2-4pm *Walk*: **Walk Around Woodley** with Ann Smith, £5

Thursday, 13th July – 2-3.30pm *Talk*: **The History of Coley House & the Coley Park Estate**: with Katie Amos & Mike Cooper, The Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library, £5

Thursday, 13th July – 2-3.30pm *Workshop*: **World War Two RAF Records** for Family Historians with Richard Marks, Zoom, £10

Friday, 14th July – 2-3.30pm *Walk*: **Caversham Road Walk**: An Area shaped by Victorian Aesthetics and Innovation with David Neale of the Bell Tower Community Association, £5

Sunday, 16th July – 2-3.30pm *Walk*: **University of Reading Northern Whiteknights Tour** with The Friends of Reading University, £5

Wednesday, 26th July – 7-9pm *Workshop*: **WW1 Navy Records for Family Historians** with Richard Marks, Zoom, £10

Thursday, 27th July – 2-3.15pm *Talk*: **Berkshire & South Oxfordshire Churches** with Catherine Sampson, Zoom, £5

Thursday, 10th August – 2-3.30pm *Talk*: **Shaw House: Berkshire's Hidden Gem** with Sarah Sommerville, The Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library, £5

Saturday, 12th August – 2-3.30pm *Walk*: **University of Reading Central Whiteknights Tour** with The Friends of Reading University, £5

Thursday, 24th August – 2-3.15pm *Talk*: **The History of Douai Abbey** with Father Geoffrey Scott, Zoom, £5

Windsor and Eton Walks

Berkshire Local History Association will be hosting three walks to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III. They will be led by Windsor historian Dr David Lewis FSA, starting at 10.30 and lasting about 2 hours. There is a limit of 15 places on each walk.

Monday 5 June Windsor

The town of Windsor is much older than its famous castle but owing to development, almost all its historic vernacular buildings have been swept away. Considerable evidence of its history remains, however, in the layout of its streets, street names, buildings hidden behind modern facades and functional elements concealed within the street scene. This walk aims to reveal and illuminate the town's interesting history, that without expert guidance might easily be overlooked.

Monday 26 June Windsor Castle

The castle is often dismissed as a nineteenth-century reinvention: a Gothic dream of what a medieval castle was supposed to look like. This walk around the outside of the castle aims to disprove this notion, unpicking the layers of history evident in its layout, design and fabric that date from the mid-twelfth century, as modified by almost every monarch since the Conquest.

Monday 17 July Eton College

Although now famous as a school, Eton college originated as a type of late medieval monastery, founded in 1440 to pray for the soul of king Henry VI. It's educational function only coming to the fore when king Edward IV sought its closure; it was never completed as originally intended. But as a royal foundation its architecture and fabric were intended to impress. This walk around the outside of the college will reveal its exceptional and turbulent history, one of only three medieval colleges in England that were specifically exempted from the monastic closures of Henry VIII's Reformation.

£5.00 payable in advance or £12.00 for all three walks. You can book and pay on the BLHA website www.blha.org.uk or send a cheque payable to Berkshire Local History Association, and post it to Membership Secretary, 151 Old Wooshill Lane, Wokingham RG41 3HR. Any queries phone 07977 034552.

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@mhcl.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

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Next Newsletter

Our next Newsletter is due to be published on 1st September 2023.

We look forward to your contributions.

Deadline for submission of copy 15th August