



Berkshire Local History Association



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Berkshire Local History Association Newsletter

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We welcome contributions from member societies and institutions covering their activities over the previous four months.

We also welcome queries, articles, book reviews and notice of special events that are open to the public. These can come from anywhere or anyone provided they have relevance to the history and heritage of the Royal County of Berkshire, including those areas that were previously part of the county.

When providing material focus on the content rather than the format.

Cover Picture: Carter's Steam Fair – Public viewing of items for sale at White Waltham

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Chairman's Corner

This edition will be the first with Jo Alexander-Jones as editor. John Chapman had been doing the job for many years, and had decided that the time had come for him to step down gracefully. He was warmly thanked by all at the September committee meeting, and our Association owes him a great deal. I'm pleased that he will remain as a committee member. Jo, who is already our secretary, gallantly offered to take on the extra role. She and Dave Osborne, our web designer, have been at work, and have new ideas as to the layout of the newsletter, and I hope you like the new look, whether you are reading it on paper, or on a smaller or a larger screen.

During the autumn, "Berkshire Old and New" appeared, with articles on Methodism in Reading, "Oscar Wilde, Class and Blackmail for Homosexuality," the 1943 air-raid on Reading, and the records of Coleshill House. I hope you've received your copy and had a chance to read and enjoy.

In October we held a study day on Robert Gibbings and the Golden Cockerel Press, our first study day since the pandemic. An account appears later in this edition.

Your committee has several ideas for future events, some of which have been under consideration for a long time. One of them is for a meeting for people involved in running community archives, or who are considering doing so. Those taking part could discuss storage, cataloguing, and access, whether on line or in person. Then there's the idea of putting together a programme of archive movie film to show life across the county, based on the collection of the Wessex Film and Sound Archive. (In the past I put together a similar show for the History of Reading Society, which went down well.) If the programme proved popular, with the appropriate publicity it could be shown publicly in different places. And then there is the study day on the "Swing" Riots of 1830, hopefully in collaboration with the Berkshire Record Society, who have plans to publish a volume on the subject, and maybe with the Museum of English Rural Life.

The cutting of the cake to mark the 75th anniversary of the Berkshire Record Office, and the change of name to the Royal Berkshire Archives, was reported in our last edition. On November 13th came a more formal ceremony, when the Duke of Gloucester unveiled an inscribed stone tablet, which was to be set in the wall, next to the tablet marking the opening of the building in 2000. It was the same Duke who had opened the Reading Central Library in 1985. He had trained as an architect, and I remembered him as a young man diving enthusiastically into the rolling stack, where he had spotted an interesting old

volume on seats and mansions. It seemed sad that the building, less than 40 years old, is likely to be demolished when the newer Central Library is ready.

Later in the month, I was back at the R.B.A., this time a more informal meeting with Mark Stevens, the County Archivist, one of his Senior Archivists, and Katie Amos, who looks after the Local Studies Collection in the Central Library. These liaison meetings happen three or four times a year, and are useful for finding out what's going on, and for helping one another. On this occasion, I was naturally interested to hear about the accommodation planned for the Local Studies Collection in the new building.

A few days after that, I attended a meeting of the Standing Commission on Archives, where the representatives of the local authorities which fund the Royal Berkshire Archives, and of local history and family history societies whose members use the archives, meet to discuss achievements and plans for the future. After the meeting we were invited to see something of the conservation work being done on the records of the Thames Commissioners. Spread out before us were the plans of various pound locks along the river which had been drawn by the extraordinarily-named Zachary Allnutt. Because of where I live, I was particularly interested to see his plan of Caversham Lock, showing where the old flash lock had been.

I attend these meetings, of course, as the representative of the BLHA and its members.

In connection with the Berkshire Record Society, you will find later in this edition an invitation to join the "Building Schools for Berkshire" project, which our Association is happy to support. It's a chance to carry out research, using documents which are mostly in the Royal Berkshire Archives, maybe on a part of the county that interests you. The result will be a volume in the B.R.S. series. Some years back, a volume on 18th century schools across the county was researched in the same way, to create a worthwhile volume.

Looking forward to February, the BLHA will be taking part in the second Berkshire Online Heritage Fair on Saturday 24th. In fact, we and the Berkshire Family History Association run the event jointly. The first of them was very successful, despite a few technical problems, and the second will be even better. It's aimed mainly at people living outside the area and across the world who want to find out more about the history of the county. Various institutions, local history societies and the BFHS will be taking part, to give information and offer advice.

David Cliffe, Chairman BLHA

A Word from the Editor

As I compile my first newsletter, I am aware of the honour and just a little fear in stepping into the shoes of John Chapman, who has been editor since 2014. I want to take the chance to thank John for his past work and I am pleased that he will remain on the Committee to provide me with advice and guidance. So, as we move in to 2024, I shall wish all who read this a Happy New Year and offer my thanks to everyone who has kindly contributed content.

Jo Alexander-Jones

Notices

Berkshire Local History Association AGM 2024

This year's AGM will take place on Saturday 23rd March at 11.30 in St Mary's Church Centre, Wargrave where we will be kindly hosted by the Wargrave Local History Society. More details on the event are included with this newsletter and available on our website.

Berkshire Online Heritage Fair 2024

Following on from the success of the first ever online heritage fair, we are delighted to announce a new fair on 24th February 2024. The fair brings together many of Berkshire's heritage organisations - from museums and archives to libraries and local history societies, covering the length and breadth of our county. It is a fantastic and unique opportunity to connect to local experts who may be able to help you deepen your understanding of the places your family lived, the organisations they were connected to and the businesses and individuals for whom they worked. And it's free to attend.

We will be using Zoom video conferencing and each organisation or groups of organisations will have their own breakout room. Attendees can move from room to room to pose questions, ask for advice and share information with the experts present. You may have specific questions you would like to ask, information or images you are seeking, or you may have information you would like to share. Last time, the experts were able to break down long-standing brick walls, track down images of past ancestral homes and businesses, decipher documents and explain their context and provide lots of potential leads. There will be no formal talks or presentations - this is about informal discussions, sharing information and building connections. A full list of participating organisations and a summary of how they may be able to help you will be available online.

If you're an organisation who would like to get involved and haven't yet contacted us – it's not too late – please email Ann Smith at membership@blha.org.uk

Bookings are now open and you may book to attend one or both sessions (10-12 and 2-4) at the [Berkshire Family History Society Website](#). If more than one member of a household would like to attend, please book places for each and separately if you intend to use separate computer devices (preferably in separate rooms). Places are limited, so please book early.

Building Schools for Berkshire

BLHA, in partnership with the Berkshire Record Society and the Royal Berkshire Archives, is sponsoring a project to investigate elementary school building between 1870 and 1914.

This was an important period for school building. Following the 1870 Education Act, more children than ever before were brought into the education system, and new schools were provided in areas where there had previously been a lack. Existing schools were frequently enlarged. As the century progressed, new standards for accommodation demanded by the Board of Education resulted in enlargements and alterations, and new approaches to educational provision led to significant changes in school design. After 1903, the newly established Berkshire Education Committee embarked on a major campaign of school-building.

We plan to produce a gazetteer of schools built, altered, and/or enlarged during this period, with a number of more detailed case studies, and a general introduction outlining the development of school building in Berkshire. This will be published by the Berkshire Record Society.

Research is being carried out by a small group of volunteers, prepared to give a few hours a month working mainly on sources in the Royal Berkshire Archives, under the general direction of Peter Durrant and Mike Evans.

We are looking for a few more people to join the team. Would you be interested in helping? If so, get in touch with Peter. Full instructions and guidance will be offered to anyone taking part.

Contact: durrant.peter@gmail.com

Study Day: Robert Gibbings and the Golden Cockerel Press

Around thirty people came on the day – twenty of whom were paying guests, and the others members of the Long Wittenham Local History Group. They had helped run the day, opened the car park, put up signs at the car park, baked cakes, unlocked doors, helped us carry things, and set up the exhibition of books, photographs and tools. We couldn't have done it without them.

Long Wittenham had been chosen because this was where Robert Gibbings had spent the last years of his life. A very heavy Victorian printing-press had come from his nearby studio, and was to feature in the proceedings at the end of the afternoon. The Local History Group had provided a map of the village, showing his cottage, where he was buried, and the two pubs where we could have lunch. The weather was kind, with an odd shower falling whilst we were indoors, and several of us had a self-guided tour of the village before the lunch.

The talk that followed was given by Martin Andrews, who had published the definitive biography of Gibbings. Gibbings had run the Golden Cockerel Press during its "golden" years, 1924-33, at Waltham St. Lawrence. Not only did he manage the business, but was himself a designer, and he knew many of the most notable artists and writers of the time, and he persuaded them to design and to write for him.

Half way through, we walked over to the church, where the tea, coffee and home-made cakes were more than ample. The various points of interest in the building were pointed out, such as the leaden Norman font, the piscina, now in the vestry, with carved angels and the miniature effigy of a knight, and



the various capitals over the pillars, two of which were decorated with carved monsters. Outside the church, the way to Robert Gibbings' grave was pointed out.

During the afternoon we heard much about this extraordinary character – his adventures overseas, and his time as a lecturer in typography and book production at Reading University. We were able to see and to handle some of the books, and to learn something of the art of wood engraving and of printing on a hand-fed press. At the end of the afternoon, we were invited, under instruction, to work the press ourselves. The plate was one of those used for the book, "Sweet Thames, Run Softly," published in 1940, and everyone was able to produce a souvenir of the day, worth hanging on the wall, and went home happy.

Twyford's Heritage Osier Bed

Graham Starkie

This was an 8-year project, started in 2015, conducted by members of the Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society to gain firsthand knowledge of the past local business of growing basketmaking willow – known as osiers. The project nearly terminated after the first year but was rescued by erecting a deer-proof fence to protect tender early growth from nighttime marauding roe deer.



Successful annual crops were grown with some of the produce used by local basket makers and florists. Some was used to demonstrate how the much-valued white willow was made by stripping the bark off green osiers when the sap was rising. In the past 'stripping' was a late spring activity that consumed the time of many local families. It is recorded that there were times when school holidays were moved so that whole families could take part.

A project highlight was the finding of an original Twyford-forged strippingbrake (photo left), the tool used to strip the bark off the willow. White willow was an export to London on the railway to make commercial, domestic and culinary basketware.



Probably the most significant realisation, contrary to popular belief, is that farmers probably grew osiers because it allowed them to make use of those margins of land that suffered occasional flooding, a situation that was unsuitable for traditional arable crops.

Details of the project were reported throughout in the History Society's winter issues of the Society's Journal; a period which included the Covid-19 pandemic. A compilation of the reports and miscellaneous papers used in support of the project is being compiled and will become available as a Society published monograph entitled 'Twyford's Heritage Osier Bed' available from the Twyford and Ruscombe History Society. The project came to an end in 2022.

Churchwardens Accounts for Stanford in the Vale 1552 – 1705

John Chapman

This is the 29th in the series of Berkshire Record Society publications, edited by our President Joan Dils.

Berkshire is lucky in that we have a higher proportion of Churchwardens' Accounts that have survived than most other counties. Out of 9000 English parishes barely 200 such accounts have survived, and only 29 other places in Berkshire get a mention. Stanford in the Vale lies in what we term 'occupied Berkshire'. For almost every year we learn of the parish income and what the money was spent on such as 2/6 for paying bell ringers on Coronation Day 1674 to £28/7/8 paid to a freemason in 1632. So, unless you are into family history or have a passionate interest in minutiae the actual records would bore you to death.

But this is anything but a boring book. Joan Dils uses the information to explain the development of parish government from just after Henry VIII when things had hardly changed since the Reformation to the end of the Stuart period working her way through the trials and tribulations of late Tudor times, the early Stuarts, the Commonwealth and the Restoration.

In her 47-page introduction Joan does a brilliant job in explaining what parish governance is about, who the various participants are and what their roles are, all set into a background of English Church life through a period of great

change and controversy. She also gives due credit to the many people who have helped her capture the basic information. Perhaps we can persuade her to publish a much smaller book sometime in the future just based upon the introduction - it would be a great read.

The Hills and Saunders Glass Plate Negative Archive

Georgina Robinson

Last year marked a significant milestone for the Photographic Archive at Eton College. A successful internal conservation bid funded the preservation of one of its most comprehensive and delicate collections - the glass plate negatives produced by Hills and Saunders.

Hills and Saunders were prominent figures in the photography world during the mid-19th century, boasting seven branches in London and the surrounding counties. They were the primary photographers for some of England's most notable establishments.

Robert Hills (1821-1882), a former hairdresser and wigmaker, transitioned to photography in 1859 and established the Oxford Photographic Gallery. By 1860 the business employed fifteen staff members, and Hills welcomed a new business partner, John Henry Saunders (1836–1890).

In 1863, they captured Queen Victoria's visit to Oxford, leading to an invitation to photograph the royal family at Windsor. By 1867, a Royal Warrant bolstered their expansion, with new studios opening in London, Aldershot, Cambridge, Harrow, Eton, and Sandhurst. However, technological advances allowing personal cameras for the masses led to a decline in business by the 1890s. The Cambridge branch went bankrupt in 1892, and the Oxford branch was sold to Gillman and Soame, a long-time rival, in 1931.

Despite this decline, the Eton and Harrow branches continued to trade for decades, supported by exclusive contracts with nearby schools requiring professional photography for house and team group photographs. Eton's branch persisted until Gillman and Soame acquired it in 2019.

Due to their long business relationship, many early photographs of Eton College by Hills and Saunders are preserved in the College's photographic archive. One notable collection showcases early photographic technology—the glass plate negatives. If you've ever admired a photograph from the late 19th or early 20th centuries, chances are it was captured using a glass plate negative. Hills and Saunders produced thousands of such photographs from the 1860s to the 1940s. Even when other technologies emerged, the crisp images from glass plate negatives surpassed many alternatives. Even when

a cracked or damaged glass plate negative appears, it can still yield a clear and detailed print.



Image 1: Before processing, glass plate negatives have an 'inverted' appearance
Image 2: Despite extensive flaking, the main image remains remarkably clear in this house group photograph of Charles Hugh Everard, 1883

In September 2023, the College Archives team commenced cleaning and rehousing the vast glass plate negative collection while digitizing and cataloging them along the way. The negatives cover a range of subjects, from house and sporting groups to events and special occasions. This project ensures their preservation in line with best practices, guaranteeing that this wonderful collection of photographs will endure for many years to come.

“Fair-well” to Carter’s Steam Fair

Jo Alexander-Jones

October 2023 saw the end of one of Berkshire’s traditional entertainment businesses – Carter’s Steam Fair. All were invited to view, and purchase, their remaining rides, equipment and ephemera such as posters and signage all displayed in their yard in White Waltham. In 2022 Carter’s had announced their final tour and had hoped to sell their collection as a going concern, but in the end opted for individual purchases when no overall buyer emerged.

Steam fairs arose from the traditional medieval fair where goods were bought and sold and agricultural hiring took place. The early fairs grew and additional attractions began to be included such as circus acts and animal menageries, but the fairs’ attraction began to wane as trade and commerce became centred elsewhere. The interest in Victorian fairs was revived with the introduction of steam-powered rides. Frederick Savage of Norwich designed the first steam-powered roundabout which was used at the Aylesham Fair in Kent in 1865. Savage’s most iconic ride was the ‘gallopers’ he created in

1891. Gallopers, where the horses rise and fall as they circle, are not to be confused with a carousel. The former is British and runs clockwise, while the latter is used on the Continent and in America and runs anti-clockwise. Also, the horses on a galloper are all different and individually named.

Carter's Steam Fair began in 1977 when show promoters John and Anna Carter bought a set of 1890s Jubilee Steam Gallopers and started taking them to steam rallies and fairs. Over time they added more rides and soon became known as specialists in vintage fairground rides and restoration. Their unique collection of traditional rides and side stalls made them the largest travelling vintage funfair in the world with equipment dating from the 1890s to the 1960s. Over the past forty years the family has been rescuing and restoring vintage fairground rides and attractions that would have otherwise gone to scrap, and taking them on tour around the South East for everyone to enjoy.

Carter's moved to the yard in White Waltham, Berkshire in 1999 and used this site to house the fair during the winter months. Although described as a 'steam' fair, there were only two rides in the collection that were powered by coal-fed steam engines; all the other rides were powered by electricity.



The Jubilee Steam Gallopers (above left) were built around 1895 by Robert Tidman & Sons in Norwich and were one of the steam-powered rides. Most of the horses are carved from wood by Andersons of Bristol in 1910 and each is subtly different. When the Carters bought the gallopers the steam engine was missing, but one was found in Maidenhead that fitted exactly even to the bolt holes lining up. To provide the music for the ride a 46-key Gavioli organ from around 1900 was bought from Roger Daltry of 'The Who' fame.

In the early 1980s Carter's acquired the Steam Yachts (above right) which was the other steam-powered ride. It had been built in 1921, but much of the intricate carving had been lost as had the original engine which was scrapped when boiler safety inspections were introduced. An engine was finally sourced called 'Yorky'. The two yachts on the ride were made to swing under steam

power to an almost vertical angle, thrilling and scaring in equal measure.

It was a lovely day out, albeit a sad one. It would have been nice to own a galloper horse, but I went away with only memories and photographs.

Friends of Reading Abbey

John Painter, Secretary

The Friends of Reading Abbey (FORA) was founded to promote awareness of the Abbey's importance, to encourage interest in and understanding of its history and architecture, and to support the preservation of the ruins. Reading Abbey was a famous royal abbey of Benedictine monks, founded on a lavish scale in 1121 by one of the greatest of medieval English kings, Henry I. It contained the tomb of that king and remained under royal patronage until its dissolution in 1539.

FORA completed its activities in 2023 on 28th October with its AGM, followed by its public autumn lecture, given by Professor Lindy Grant, emerita of Reading University, on "Burying the Royal Dead: Reading Abbey and Royal Pantheons in the High Middle Ages", which attracted an attendance of seventy-five at the Abbey Baptist Church.

The 2024 programme starts with our spring lecture on 2nd March, to be given by Dr Helen Parish of Worcester College Oxford, on a theme related to the dissolution of the Abbey in 1539. This is the annual Professor Brian Kemp Memorial Lecture, which will be held at St James's RC church in Forbury Road, at 14.30, free and open to allcomers.

Our year will end with our AGM on 26th October and our next autumn lecture, to be given by David Sanchez, of Thames Valley Archaeological Services, on the 2019 excavations that discovered a medieval tilery in Silver Street, Reading, which may have produced tiles for Reading Abbey. David has recently spoken to the Friends of Reading Museum on this fascinating subject, and whetted our appetite.

In between we will be making our usual appearance with a stand at the Reading Water Fest next June, where we will be running our bookstall. We will be organising other events for our members during the year, including our annual summer outing. We will also publish three Newsletters over the year, alongside sending our members regular (bi-monthly) updates on matters affecting the Abbey Quarter.

For more information, including on membership, check out our [website](#).

Society Contributions

Berkshire Family History Society

The big news from the autumn is that we have now become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) which allows us to hold property, and take out leases and loans, amongst other things in our own name. The leasing ability is particularly important to us, as successive leases over the last twenty plus years have had to be taken out on our behalf by Trustees, in their own names, rather than in the Society's. This puts us in a better footing moving forward but it does mean that our official name has changed to Berkshire Family History Society CIO and our charity number has also changed, which means new bank accounts, revised literature and websites etc – we are still on that journey of change. We will continue to be known as Berkshire Family History Society.

The Centre has been busy with researchers and event attendees during the autumn. The 1921 census remains very popular, and its index continues to improve in quality. The addition in this census of recording the name and address of the employer is certainly adding another level of detail which is fascinating for both family and local historians. You don't have to be a member to make use of the Centre and pre-booking isn't required – just turn up. The opening hours are on our [website](#), as is the full list of subscription-based websites that you can consult for free whilst you're here.

If your society would like to have a bespoke tour of the Centre (and we can usually arrange a tour of the Local Studies section of the library at the same time) – do get in contact with me. We can design a bespoke visit for you, including if desired a talk on Family History, refreshments and a tour for a small charge per person. We already have several groups booked in for 2024.

Looking ahead, we continue 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. All events are detailed on the [website](#) 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 or electronic forms.

Catherine Sampson, Chairman

Berkshire Historic Churches Trust

Berkshire Historic Churches Trust has joined BLHA. We're not exactly a local history society, and we're not primarily engaged in research – but churches have such an important place in the history of Berkshire and its communities that it seemed appropriate to build better links with the county's local historians.

Our mission is to help keep Berkshire churches warm, watertight and welcoming. We raise money so we can give it away in grants to help repair roofs, walls, windows, floors, rainwater goods (gutters and downpipes) and heating systems. Recently, mindful of the fact that a church without toilets or basic kitchen facilities will struggle to attract the sort of events that will keep it alive in the community, we have started to give grants for those as well. Over the past forty years we have given around three-quarters of a million pounds for these purposes.

But we also want to encourage interest in these wonderful buildings, so we put on events both to raise funds and to raise awareness – the annual Englefield Lecture, for example (this year to be given by Professor Nicholas Orme on the subject of 'Going to Church in Medieval Berkshire'), visits and study days, and a regular newsletter. And our annual 'Ride and Stride' event in September, though primarily to raise funds, also offers a chance for those involved to visit churches and meet those who care for them.

Becoming a 'Friend of Berkshire Churches' costs a mere £30 a year. Find out more about us by visiting our [website](#), or give our chairman a call – berkschurchestrustchair@gmail.com

Peter Durrant, Chairman

Berkshire Record Society

Our most recent volume, no. 29, Stanford in the Vale Churchwarden's Accounts, 1552-1705, edited by Joan Dils, was published in October 2023. Berkshire is fortunate in having several sets of churchwardens' accounts dating from the sixteenth century. Joan Dils had already published an acclaimed edition of the churchwardens' accounts of St. Laurence, Reading, 1498-1570 (Berkshire Record Series volumes 19 and 20). Joan's edition of the Stanford accounts, based on an original transcript by the Stanford historian Violet Howse, is both enlightening and extremely satisfying to read. It records the effects of religious change during over 150 years following the Reformation. We learn about the restoration of the Catholic liturgy in the 1550s, the repair of the church (following the collapse of the steeple) in the

1630s, and much about the farming regime in this open-field village, about local building materials and techniques, and local festivities. The value of the accounts is enhanced by the inclusion of a rare and remarkable memorandum by the vicar and religious conservative, John Fawcener, which provides an invaluable account of the administrative, financial and social customs practised in his parish on the eve of the Reformation, many of which would not survive.

This volume is a must-read for anyone interested in the impact of the Reformation in Berkshire and in parish life generally. Copies may be bought via our [website](#). Our website now enables you to join the Society online. *[John Chapman's review of this publication can be found on page 10 – Ed]*.

Our next volume, which will appear in the first half of 2024, is "The Commonplace Book of William Savory of Brightwalton and Newbury", published here in full for the first time. Savory (1768-1824) strove to become a professionally accredited surgeon-apothecary and man-midwife with his own medical practice in Newbury. Following his marriage in 1791 he compiled a manuscript volume from notebooks, correspondence and diaries. It is a compelling account of his upbringing in Brightwalton, full of observations about the villages, people and events of Downland Berkshire. We read about Savory's schooling, medical apprenticeship, training in London's teaching hospitals, and the day-to-day care he gave his patients, all valuable testimony for historians of medicine. Savory's family pen-portraits and personal reminiscences are followed by selected highlights from the years 1780 to 1791, interspersed with a variety of material in verse and prose, including magic spells, folk remedies and horoscopes. Cultural historian Stuart Eagles draws on Savory's multi-faceted insights into eighteenth-century life in his comprehensive introduction. A rich source for local, family and social historians, this informative and entertaining volume is enlivened by Savory's sense of humour. Above all, it is a study in personality focused on one fascinating young man.

Professor Ralph Houlbrooke

Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group

We kicked off our latest talk programme with a presentation on the "Four Berkshire Bridges" by Edwin Trout, especially relevant because the 3rd October saw the 100th anniversary of the building of Reading bridge. This was the start of a watery themed autumn programme. David Cliffe followed with "Reading – a Town on Two Rivers" and then David Peacock with "300 years of the river Kennet navigation". We ended the year by working together to

develop a presentation called 'What is Industrial Archaeology?' to help answer all of the questions we get from those who can't quite work out what it is we are interested in and what we do.

We have been lucky to secure St Mary's church hall in Castle Street, Reading again as our venue for our 2024 programme of talks. Space is at such a premium that we were concerned that we might become homeless.

Outside of our normal events and activities we have been working behind the scenes on a gazetteer listing the industrial sites in the county. A few years back we re-found the BIAG gazetteer that had been started in the 1980s. With the help of Beth Asbury, archaeologist at West Berkshire Council, we are building on this original and may join with other industrial archaeology groups to produce a comprehensive map of industrial locations still present in the country – that is if we can get enough volunteers to assist!

Jo Alexander-Jones, Secretary

The History of Reading Society

Our autumn series of talks began in September with "Biscuits and Royals" – a talk by David Downs on the history of Reading Football Club. He had published several books on the subject over the years, and was still involved in the club's activities. It was founded in 1871, and the team were known as the Biscuit Men, or Biscuit Boys, but with the closure of Huntley and Palmers biscuit factory, they became The Royals, on account of being in the Royal County. The various ups and downs of the club were traced, with a great deal of humour, and for the post-war era, with many personal memories. The weather, on the night, was blustery and wet, but a good number turned up for the talk. At the end, they were reluctant to leave, because Mr Downs had brought with him an impressive array of memorabilia which we were invited to look at after the talk itself.

The society's treasurer, Malcolm Summers, gave our next talk, about Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd. He gave the talk a sub-title, "Reading's most famous man you've never heard of." Edward Talfourd, father of Thomas, was a linen draper in Broad Street in 1795 when his son was born. He later became a brewer in Yield Hall Lane. Thomas was a pupil at Reading School in the days of Dr Valpy, and after starting work as a schoolmaster, decided on a career in the law, becoming the pupil of a London lawyer. He went on to become a barrister on the Oxford Circuit, a Serjeant-at-Law and a High Court Judge. His powers of oratory were much remarked on at the time.

In London he met and became friendly with several leading literary figures,

including Charles Lamb, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Dickens. His own literary output was impressive – besides being a law correspondent for “The Times” and producing many articles for legal journals, he wrote plays for the London stage. His greatest success was “Ion,” performed to great acclaim at the Haymarket Theatre in 1836. It was also popular in the United States, and was revived in London in 1861. Other plays followed.

Between 1835-41 and 1846-48, he also found the time to be MP for Reading, and had many friends here. One of his reasons for not standing in 1841 was the likelihood that his friend Charles Dickens would agree to become an MP, but this was not to be. During his time in Parliament, he was instrumental in seeing a copyright bill pass into law.

His death, in 1854, was unexpected and dramatic. He was addressing the jury at Stafford Assizes when he was seized by an apoplectic fit. He was mourned by many, nationally and in Reading. Though not now much remembered, off the Wokingham Road in Reading, we still have a Talfourd Avenue.

Malcolm, our speaker, had just published the first full biography of Talfourd, and copies of the book were available afterwards.

November brought the Presidential Address. This time, Joan Dils had chosen as her subject, “The Parish of St. Giles, Reading, during the Reformation.” There was mention of the boundaries of the parish, and comparison with the other two Reading parishes. At the time, Reading was the 9th or 10th wealthiest town in the country, and St. Laurence’s Parish had around 265 houses, St. Mary’s around 99, and St. Giles’s 57. St. Giles’s was comparatively rural, with fields, farms and orchards, and with most of the buildings along what are now London Street, Mount Pleasant and Southampton Street.

Information from different sources was cited – including old maps, churchwardens’ accounts, other church documents, court rolls, and wills and inventories. Wills were left by the wealthy minority, and showed that many of them were clothiers. The weaving of woollen cloth was the major industry at the time, and each of the clothiers would have had many employees.

Local politics were discussed, in which the burgesses and capital burgesses were self-perpetuating, with no elections, and associated topics were the income of the parish, and the rents and tithes.

The Reformation meant the end of some church festivals, changes in the style of worship, and changes to the church interior. People no longer left money for the saying of prayers and masses for souls in purgatory. Stone altars were smashed and taken away, to be replaced by wooden tables, the rood screen

was removed, the mural paintings were whitewashed over, and the wardens had to buy new service books. John Eynon, the Vicar, was taken away and executed alongside Hugh Faringdon, the last Abbot of Reading, and William Grey was able to buy up many of the Reading properties which had belonged to the abbey.

With the accession of the Catholic Queen Mary in 1553, many of the changes in church worship were reversed – but that was a story for another occasion. Wisely, our President, having imparted so much, left us wanting more.

It was noticeable at these three meetings that we were attracting more visitors than usual, some of whom decided to join the society. This must be down to our secretary's use of social media – it seems to be working to the society's advantage.

David Cliffe, Chairman

Hungerford Historical Association

Drawing upon her detailed research of the extensive, unique family archive of the Verney family of Claydon House in Buckinghamshire (now a National Trust property, but the archive belongs to the Claydon House Trust), Dr Niki Miles described the difficulties in making practical arrangements for a life in exile during the English Civil War of the seventeenth century in her talk in October entitled "Sir Ralph Verney & the Practicalities of Living Abroad During the Civil War & Interregnum (1643-1653)". From her starting point caring for the Verney collection of seventeenth century clothing, Niki uncovered a multitude of documents relating to Sir Ralph Verney's self-imposed exile in France after he refused to sign Cromwell's Covenant, even though he was a protestant and had sided with the Parliamentarians at the outset of the war. Niki illustrated her fascinating talk with portraits, inventories, documents, maps, and fine examples of dress from the Verney collection including rare survivals of sixteenth century robes, breeches, doublets, stockings, caps and slippers.

Geologist Chris Carlon is a familiar face to HHA members who have happily listened to him speak on various subjects in the past. This time his subject was the project to build Hungerford's Catholic Church, Our Lady of Lourdes, which celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2024. To set the scene, Chris commenced with a brief history of the Catholic Church in Britain, from Roman Britain to the current day. Hungerford's St. Lawrences church was founded in the 11th century and was a Catholic church until the Reformation. By the time of its 19th century rebuild it was an Anglican place of worship, leaving the town's Catholics no specific building for themselves. In 1939 the parish funded

the purchase of 3 acres of land adjacent to Salisbury Road and transformed a pre-fabricated asbestos lined building into a church as a temporary home. "Temporary" lasted for seventy-three years because when in 2005, with much renovation required, the bold decision was made to build a new church. We now know this as the striking landmark, Our Lady of Lourdes on Priory Road. Chris illustrated for his audience the trials and successes on the journey from inspiration to completion.

Caroline Ness, Chairman and David Whiteley, Treasurer

Hurley History Society

The Hurley History Society was formed in 2019 and we have about fifty members. 2023 is the first year that we have expanded our activities to include several summer visits and walks as well as carrying out and completing our first historical preservation project.

Once again, we have visited Windsor Castle and St. Georges Chapel for a guided tour by blue badge guide Debbie Keenan. Fifteen members attended the tour around the Chapel and managed to visit the grave of our Late Queen Elizabeth. Later in the summer we were lucky enough to be able to arrange a guided visit to the small Culden Fawr Chapel near Aston on the private Culden Fawr Estate.

Then in July, myself and Debbie Keenan organised a walking tour around Hurley for interested residents, looking at the old buildings in the north end of the village. Especially of interest was a visit inside the 14th century, Grade 1 listed Dovecote and also the Crypt of Ladye Place where it is recorded that the Glorious Revolution of 1688 was instigated by Lord Lovelace and a group of barons to bring over William of Orange to take the English Crown. The 2-hour walk ended in Hurley Church where members were shown a video of those buildings that we had seen on the walk as they looked prior to the 1930s.

September saw a group of us visiting Wallingford and the museum together with a guided walk around the old town. Then to finish the summer season we visited the archaeological excavations at Cookham Abbey being carried out by Reading University. Members were given a guided talk and guide around the site before it was to be closed for the winter. An updated video by Professor Gabor Thomas was shown to our members at our AGM.

Then after Christmas we are hoping to start holding a series of talks followed by a visit to the oldest boatyard on the Thames.

Our first historical and preservation project was to draw together in one volume the booklets written by local historian Mary Howarth. The ring-bound book consists of a collection of six booklets, totalling 300 pages, on the history and lives of Hurley Priory; the history and lives of the Lovelace family and Lady Place Manor; and the Olde Bell Hotel. Anyone interested, may purchase a book from me at a cost of £35 (+postage).

Our next project is to try and raise funds to restore the 1609 map of Hurley Parish which is kept at the BRO and is not in very good condition.

David Burfitt, Secretary

Oxford Family History Society

As we know part of 'old' Berkshire is now in Oxfordshire so here is some information on one of this county's fine resources (Ed).

We hold meetings and talks online via Zoom for members and in person at Exeter Hall, Kidlington (which are also streamed via Zoom) on a wide variety of topics. All details can be found on our [website](#). We are also pleased to say that we will be attending the Berkshire Online Heritage Fair on 24th February 2024 so please pop along and speak to us there.

Just a reminder that amongst all of our resources we sell transcripts of parish registers and some Monumental Inscriptions covering towns and villages that were historically in Berkshire.

OFHS advisors hold one-to-one sessions in many libraries around the county some close to Berkshire. This is free to anyone - you don't have to be a member - we welcome anybody, not only at advisor sessions, but also as members, regardless of whether they have Oxfordshire ancestry or not, you just need an interest in Family History/Genealogy.

Plans for 2024 - After many months of behind-the-scenes work, we have managed to come to an agreement with an organisation which will develop our new searchable Oxfordshire database, codenamed BOND (Big Oxfordshire Name Database). The database will eventually contain all our suitable digitised records – including Monumental Inscriptions; name-rich sources transcribed from many books/documents from the medieval period to 20th century gathered as part of the surname project; wills; parish records; war memorial; photos and many other sources. More can be found [here](#).

Angie Trueman, Executive Committee

Project Purley

In September, we had a good turnout for our first meeting of the autumn season which combined a fish and chips supper with short talks on past Coronations and Jubilees. Seven members shared their memories or research into past Jubilees, the oldest memory being of George V's Silver Jubilee in 1935. Several people also displayed associated memorabilia which gave an additional focus for what was a very enjoyable evening.

October's meeting was a talk by member Rob Wallace on "Roads Built and Unbuilt in Purley and surrounding areas". It was a fascinating talk which used maps and various other sources to illustrate our older roads, those constructed more recently and some which never advanced beyond preliminary plans. In November, we welcomed Peter Halman from Wargrave History Society who gave a talk on "The Thames from Oxford to Windsor: shaping history through the centuries". This was a superbly illustrated talk which was hugely enjoyed by those attending which brought together the many uses of the river and its strategic, political, economic and social importance. Hugely recommended.

The Rain or Shine Theatre Company were back for another of their highly energetic performances in December, this time the play being their adaptation of Shelly's "Frankenstein". Unusually, the cast consisted of just two actors this time round which meant both took on multiple roles, with continued rapid costume and accent changes – some causing much hilarity. As usual profits went to a local charity – this time the Cats Protection League. Our Christmas party will be a quiz evening accompanied by a hot supper.

Looking ahead to next year, we have our talks programme planned until the summer and are just finalising our summer visits. Sadly, we have just been advised of next year's hall hire charges and once again face a massive hike in charges. By April 2024, we will be paying 300% of what we were paying in March 2021, which inevitably means we will have to raise our subscription amounts again and review the range of services we offer. How are other societies coping with these rising prices?

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

Catherine Sampson

Thatcham Historical Society

The year kicked off with Professor Mike Fulford's presentation on the Roman Town at Silchester. Our speaker line up has been diverse, featuring Sue Ellis discussing Operation Mincemeat and Professor Gary Sheffield delving into "The Long-Term Impact of the First World War". Local history talks have been a highlight, with Mark Thomas exploring the history of the Old Bluecoat school and Dr Nick Young sharing insights into Thatcham in 1953. Nick has also been actively leading our online Zoom talks, covering local history in two sessions, while Sue has contributed another.

Beyond talks, our society remains engaged in various events, including participation in the Thatcham Festival and involvement in the Coronation festivities. During the day on the Sunday 7th May and Monday 8th May, Thatcham Historical Society held a Coronation Exhibition on local history, specifically focusing on the monarchy, with various items of memorabilia and photographs from over the years on display.



The exhibition went well, the team greeted a constant flow of visitors over the two days. Visitors took a keen interest in learning about the building itself, the Old Bluecoat School, the local history, memorabilia from the reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and material about King Charles III. We had a number of young visitors who completed a history trail and gained a coronation certificate from the society, and plenty who had their own memories of both Thatcham and a few who could recall the last coronation.

On behalf of the Old Bluecoat School Thatcham, Town Mayor, Jeff Brooks, also unveiled a plaque dedicated to Councillor Barbara Collins Wootton, who

in 2004 was instrumental in saving the Old Bluecoat School from being sold, helping to ensure it was restored and remained for the benefit of the community. Committee member Dr Nick Young said “It has been a pleasure to meet so many people over the last few days, to share our history and listen to people’s stories, and to help raise awareness of the excellent work the Old Bluecoat School charity carry out.”

A local history talk was given on the 8th May in the evening. Local historian Dr Nick Young talked about, with many photographs displayed, of how Thatcham once looked and how it is today, Then and Now. The history covered many locations and topics including French Gardens, Coopers Cottage and Chamberhouse Mill.

Our forthcoming spring events are included in the What’s On section of this newsletter. There may be additional events, online talks etc. so please keep an eye on our [website](http://www.thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk) and social media, or email us via enquiries@thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk for more details.

Dr Nick Young

Wargrave Local History Society

Wargrave Local History Society’s September meeting was Malcolm Summers’ illustrated presentation on the 700 years history of Greyfriars Church in Reading. Although not one of the three old-established Reading parishes (St. Giles’, St. Laurence’s and St. Mary’s), the history of the site can be traced back to the 13th century.

The order of Franciscan friars, commonly known as Greyfriars from the colour of their habits, was founded in Italy in 1209, and are recorded as preaching in Reading Market Place in 1233. The friars petitioned the Abbot, who reluctantly granted a plot of land and a wooden friary was built on marshy ground alongside the road to the river bridge. When a new Abbot arrived, he granted an extension to the land “up the hill”, so - from 1285 - the friary was rebuilt in stone, with the nave on the highest part of the land, the other buildings being on the north side. It is this late 13th century / early 14th century Franciscan nave that forms the present Greyfriars church. After the dissolution of the monasteries, before it became a church, between times, as Malcolm explained, the building was used as the town’s Guildhall, a poor house, a prison, a barracks, and a prison again!

For the October meeting, in a late programme change, the Thames Valley and Great Western Omnibus Trust archivist recounted the history of Royal Blue -

from horse drawn carriages to express coach services to the south and west, bringing happy memories to many people of travel on day trips and holidays. Thomas Elliott had started the business in the 1880s in Bournemouth with horse drawn carriages, adding his first larger horse-drawn coach in 1888, about the same time adopting the name Royal Blue.

Work then was mainly local tours, but after Tom died, in 1911, his sons could see the possibilities of motor vehicles. Pleasure trips stopped in 1916, resuming in 1919. At the end of September 1919, railway workers went on strike and many visitors were stranded in Bournemouth. The Elliott brothers 'came to the rescue', using their charabancs for journeys from Bournemouth to London, the east and west Midlands, Bristol, Exeter, and many other places. This success led to the Elliott brothers advertising a new venture in May 1920 - a regular weekend express service between Bournemouth and London. It was successful, and so became a daily service. The late 1920s were a time for expansion in long distance coaching, and Royal Blue became one of the major companies for this type of work, reaching as far as Plymouth, Margate, Derby and Nottingham. Services were again suspended during war-time, restarting in 1946. At the end of the 1960s Royal Blue became part of the National Bus Company, and so a part of "National Express".

In November, Lionel Williams spoke about Brunel's forward-thinking ideas that made the GWR one of the most progressive railways in the country, and its later ways to innovate. He had been the assistant engineer to his father, Marc, for building the world's first under-water tunnel, in east London, surviving a flooding of the works in 1828. He then became engineer for what became the Clifton Suspension Bridge, before being appointed as engineer for a railway from London to Bristol – the Great Western Railway - the GWR - sometimes known as "God's Wonderful Railway". As it was less direct than an earlier proposal, it was also called the "Great Way Round", Brunel's route having gentler gradients for higher speeds - becoming known as "Brunel's Billiard Table". Lionel explained why Brunel adopted the Broad Gauge, and then described the building of the railway, the types of carriages passengers travelled in, etc, before detailing some of the later innovations introduced by the GWR. The presentation concluded with a little-known aspect of Brunel's work, which was to produce a 'flat pack kit' of timber parts to construct a 1,000-patient hospital during the Crimean War in the 1850s – the conditions otherwise being so poor that there was a risk Britain would lose the war due to disease rather than on the battlefield.

For our December meeting, Di Evans shared her “Reminiscences of Wargrave”. She began by asking the capacity audience “Are you sitting comfortably?” – from the “Listen with Mother” children’s radio programme - as she recalled her time growing up in the village. She had attended the old infant school, which was an old Victorian building of two classrooms with no electricity, gas lighting, outside toilets (the boys’ one not even having a roof!) and minimal heating, although the open fire in classroom two was useful to thaw out the bottles of milk in winter.



Wargrave Old Infant School

School dinners were cooked and served at the junior school, pupils walking crocodile fashion each way up the hill – she in due course moving to that school, and then the senior school in the village. Amongst other activities she recalled was a coach visit to London to see decorations for the 1953 Coronation – there were only three children on board, and as they entered The Mall, the driver pulled the coach sun roof right back, and asked the children if they would like to sit on the roof as they went up The Mall! Di told us villagers she remembered the wide variety of shops available in the 1950s and 60s, various sporting activities, such as the Hockey Club and the Regatta – and we hope she will return to tell us more about these and her time as one of the operators at the Wargrave telephone exchange. As is our custom at this time of year, refreshments of festive fare prepared by one of our members, Wendy Smith, were enjoyed during the evening.

Peter Delaney

What's On

For talks, events, exhibitions etc. open to the public

9th January (20.00) - **Chalk, Caverns and Commandos** with Rob Wallace. Wargrave Local History Society, Old Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Wargrave, RG10 8BG

11th January (14.00) – **Tilehurst: a History** with Mike Cooper. Berkshire Family History Society, The Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library

16th January (13.30) – **Churches, Castles & Commons** (in Newbury area) 8-week course with David Peacock. West Berkshire Museum

17th January (10.00) – **The Kennet & Avon Canal & Coley Branch Line** (walk) with Bob Haskins. Berkshire Industrial Archaeological Group

17th January (19.30 online) – **The History of Quakers in Reading** with Matthew Callow. History of Reading Society

17th January (19.30) – **The Mount Family and Washing Estate** with Josh Dugdale. Aldermaston History Group. Officers Mess, Hinds Head, Wasing Lane, Aldermaston

19th January (19.30) – **Swan Upping: a 900-year Royal Tradition** with Nick Brazil. Project Purley, The Barn, Goosecroft, Purley on Thames RG8 8DR

20th January (11.00 online) – **The Old Poor Law** (workshop) with Joan Dils. Berkshire Family History Society

22nd January (14.30 online) – **The RAF and USAF in Oxfordshire** with Aldon Ferguson. Goring Gap History Group

22nd January (20.00 online) – **Free Antiquarian Resources on the Internet** with Phil Isherwood. Oxfordshire Family History Society

23rd January (14.00) – **Tour of Shinfield St Mary Church** with Chris Young. Berkshire Family History Society

24th January (19.30) – **Wilton House** with Ray Steadman. Hungerford Historical Association, Corn Exchange, Hungerford RG17 0NJ

25th January (14.00 online) – **Women in World War Two** with Bill King. Berkshire Family History Society

29th January (19.30) – **Crofton and their Mechatronics** with Jon Willis. Berkshire Industrial Archaeological Group, St Mary's Church Hall, Castle St, Reading RG1 7RD

6th February (14.00) – **Tour of Reading St Laurence Church** with David Cliffe. Berkshire Family History Society

- 8th February (14.00) – **A History of Woodley** with Ann Smith. Berkshire Family History Society, The Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library
- 13th February (20.00) – **A History of Woodley** with Ann Smith. Wargrave Local History Society, Old Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Wargrave, RG10 8BG
- 16th February (19.30) – **The History of Shaw House** with Sarah Somerville. Project Purley, The Barn, Goosecroft, Purley on Thames RG8 8DR
- 17th February (14.30) – **The Silchester Environs Project** with Prof. Michael Fulford. Berkshire Archaeological Society, RISC, London Rd, Reading RG1 4PS
- 19th February (14.30) – **The Art of Trickery** with Ian Keable. Goring Gap History Group.
- 19th February (19.30) – **Not all Beer and Skittles: a short history of pubs, beer and breweries** with Sue Ellis. Berkshire Industrial Archaeological Group, St Mary's Church Hall, Castle St, Reading RG1 7RD
- 21st February (13.00) – **Lost and Found: local history and folklore of West Berkshire** with Robert Fitzmaurice. West Berkshire Museum
- 21st February (19.30 online) – **Early Closing Day: Air Raids on Reading in WW2** with Mike Cooper. History of Reading Society
- 22nd February (14.00 online) – **Maiwand and the Great Game** with Mike Cooper. Berkshire Family History Society
- 24th February (10.00 online) – **Berkshire Heritage Fair** hosted by Berkshire Local History Association and Berkshire Family History Society
- 26th February (19.30) – **RAF Greenham Common** with Jonathan Sayers. Thatcham Historical Society. Kennet School, Stoney Lane, Thatcham RG19 4LL
- 26th February (20.00 online) – **Harvesting Men: Why and How I wrote about the WW1 fallen of my Village** with Trine Wilcock. Oxfordshire Family History Society
- 28th February (19.30) – **Restoring Church Cottage, East Garston** with Karen Sperry. Hungerford Historical Association, Corn Exchange, Hungerford RG17 0NJ
- 1st March (10.00) – **The Mount, Redlands and Alexandra Road Conservation Areas - Walk** with Terry Dixon. Berkshire Family History Society
- 2nd March (14.30) – **Professor Brian Kemp Memorial Lecture: The Dissolution of Reading Abbey in 1539** with Dr Helen Parish. Friends of Reading Abbey, St James' Church, Forbury Road, Reading RG1 3FD
- 7th March (14.00) – **A History of Wargrave** with Peter Delaney. Berkshire Family History Society, The Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library

9th March (11.00 online) – **Education c.1860 - c.1914 (workshop)** with Joan Dils.
Berkshire Family History Society

11th March (19.00 online) – **Coal Mining Ancestors (part 1)** with Mike Cooper.
Berkshire Family History Society

11th March (20.00 online) – **Migration through the UK** with Debbie Bradley. Oxfordshire
Family History Society

13th March (11.00) – **Visit to Ewelme Church and Almshouses** with Professor Susan
Doran. Marcham Society

15th March (19.30) – **Biscuits for Queen Victoria: The Story of the Early Days of
Huntley and Palmers** with Richard Marks. Project Purley, The Barn, Goosecroft, Purley
on Thames RG8 8DR

18th March (14.30) – **Percy Manning: The Man Who Collected Oxfordshire** with
Michael Heaney. Goring Gap History Group.

18th March (19.00 online) – **Coal Mining Ancestors (part 2)** with Mike Cooper.
Berkshire Family History Society

19th March (10.00) – **Kennet & Avon Canal from Thatcham to Newbury (walk)** with
Bob Haskins. Berkshire Industrial Archaeological Group

20th March (19.30) – **Reading Civic Society** with Richard Bennett. History of Reading
Society, Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square, Reading RG1 3BE

21st March (14.00 online) – **The Battle of Britain** with Richard Marks. Berkshire Family
History Society

23rd March (11.30) – **Berkshire Local History Association AGM**. St Mary's Church
Centre, Wargrave RG10 8DH

25th March (19.30) – **Reading Architects and Our Industrial History** with John
Dearing. Berkshire Industrial Archaeological Group, St Mary's Church Hall, Castle St,
Reading RG1 7RD

25th March (19.30) – **History of Hospitals in Reading from 1121 to the Present Day**
with Lionel Williams. Thatcham Historical Society. Kennet School, Stoney Lane,
Thatcham RG19 4LL

25th March (19.45) – **Everyday Life and Accidental Death in 16th century Oxfordshire
and Berkshire** with Steven Gunn. Marcham Society, Main Hall, Marcham Centre,
Marcham

25th March (20.00 online) – **A History of Brewing in Oxford** with Liz Woolley.
Oxfordshire Family History Society

27th March (19.30) – **Abraham Keswick** with Roger Day. Hungerford Historical Association, Corn Exchange, Hungerford RG17 0NJ

15th April (14.30) – **The Early Days of Elizabeth 1** with Nicola Tallis. Goring Gap History Group.

17th April (14.00) – **Tour of Garford Village** with Mike Greig. Marcham Society

17th April (19.30) – **The History of Woodley** with Ann Smith. History of Reading Society, Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square, Reading RG1 3BE

19th April (19.30) – **From Domesday Book to Listening in for doomsday: Caversham Park's 930 years at the Centre of History** with Dr Stephen Goss. Project Purley, The Barn, Goosecroft, Purley on Thames RG8 8DR

24th April (19.30) – **A Catholic Monk, Espionage and a Spanish Homecoming** with Roger Hunt. Hungerford Historical Association, Corn Exchange, Hungerford RG17 0NJ

29th April (19.30) – **The History of Reading's Hospitals and Health Services** with Lionel Williams. Berkshire Industrial Archaeological Group, St Mary's Church Hall, Castle St, Reading RG1 7RD

History Societies

Where Societies have websites, clicking on their name will give access

Aldermaston History Group

Chris Boott: Kennet, Church Rd, Aldermaston RG7 4LR (blha@aldermastonhistory.uk)

Berkshire Archaeology Society

Andrew Hutt (chair@berksarch.co.uk)

Berkshire Archaeology Research Group

Dr Roger Sym: 197 Halls Rd, Reading RG30 4PT – 0118 9427703

(roger@psrltd.demon.co.uk)

Berkshire Family History Society

Centre for Heritage and Family History, Central Library, Abbey Square, Reading RG1

3BQ – 0118 9509553 (secretary@berksfhs.org)

Berkshire Gardens Trust

Fiona Hope: 23 St James Close, Pangbourne RG8 7AP fiona.hope@btinternet.com

Berkshire Historic Churches Trust

Peter Durrant (berkschurchestrustchair@gmail.com)

Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group

Jo Alexander-Jones (secretary@biag.org.uk)

Berkshire Record Society

Margaret Simons: 80 Reeds Ave, Harley, Reading RG6 5SR

(margaretsimons@hotmail.co.uk)

Blewbury Local History Group

Audrey Long: Spring Cottage, Church Rd, Blewbury, OX11 9PY – 01235 850427

(audreyrosettalong@gmail.com)

Burnham Historians

Mary Bentley: 38 Conway Rd, Taplow, Maidenhead SL6 0LD – 01628 665932
(burnhamhistorians@btinternet.com)

Cox Green Local History Group

Pat Barlow: 29 Bissley Drive, Maidenhead SL6 3UX – 01628 823890 (weekends only)
(alan.barlow@btopenworld.com)

East Garston Local History Society

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)

Eton Wick History Group

Teresa Stanton: 35 Eton Wick Rd, Eton Wick, Windsor SL4 6LU – 01753 860591
(teresams35@virginmedia.com)

Friends of Windsor and Royal Borough Museum

Len Nash: 27 Bourne Avenue, Windsor SL4 3JP

Goring Gap Local History Society

Janet Hurst: 6 Nun's Acre, Goring on Thames, Reading RG8 9BE – 01491 871022
(goringgaphistory@gmail.com)

Hanney History Group

P J Taylor: Walnut Cottage, Ebbs Lane, E. Hanney OX12 0HL – 07776 842413

History of Reading Society

Vicki Chesterman: 7 Norman Rd, Caversham, Reading RG4 5JN – 0118 9473443
(vickichesterman@yahoo.co.uk)

Hungerford Historical Association

David Small: 01672 870467 (david@dagsmall.co.uk)

Hurley History Society

David Burfitt: Nutwood, Mill Lane, Hurley SL6 5ND - 01628 823503
(davidburfitt@gmail.com)

Longworth and District History Society

Pam Woodward: 22 Cherrytree Close, Southmoor, Abingdon OX13 5BE – 01865 820500
(prwoodward@btinternet.com)

Maidenhead Archaeological and Historical Society

Paul Seddon: 1 Vine Cottage, Stubbings Lane, Maidenhead SL6 6QN
(paul@c21networks.co.uk)

Marcham Society

Peter Blackmore: 2 Walnut Mews, Mill Rd, Marcham OX13 6NZ – 01865 391275
(spblackmore@googlemail.com)

Middle Thames Archaeological & Historical Society

David Kneller: 15 Vine Rd, Stoke Poges SL2 4DW - 07950 139309
(sec.mtahs@yahoo.co.uk)

Mortimer Local History Group

Janet Munson: The Laurels, Ravenworth Rd, Mortimer RG7 3UD
(munsonsinmortimer@yahoo.co.uk)

Newbury District Field Club

Carol Swanborough: 31 Crawford Place, Newbury RG14 1XG – 07815 854526
(secretary@ndfc.org.uk)

Oxfordshire Family History Society

Angie Trueman: c/o Oxfordshire History Centre, St Luke's Church, Temple Rd OX4 2HT (secretary@ofhs.org.uk)

Pangbourne Heritage Group

Jane Rawlins: Chapel House, Thames Avenue, Pangbourne RG8 7BU
(eb_thorne@hotmail.com)

Project Purley

Catherine Sampson: 32 Waterside Drive, Purley on Thames RG8 8AQ – 0118 9422255 (chairman@project-purley.net)

Shinfield and District Local History Society

Catherine Glover: Suvikuja, Basingstoke Rd, Spencers Wood RG7 1TB – 07762 251686 (Catherine_e_m_glover@icloud.com)

Sonning & Sonning Eye History Society

Heather Kay: 5 Augustfield, Charvil Lane RG4 6AF
(kaydenis@googlemail.com)

Stanford in the Vale & District Local History Society

Michael Macfarlane: 53 High St, Stanford in the Vale SN7 8NQ – 01367 710358
(mmacfarlane1@beinternet.com)

Swallowfield Local History Society

Maggie Uttley: 2 Hornbeams, The Street, Swallowfield RG7 1QY (kcuttley@aol.com)

Tadley and District History Society

Carol Stevens: 5 Church St, Pamber Heath, Tadley RG26 3DP
(tadshistory@googlemail.com)

Thatcham Historical Society

Susan Ellis: Open View, New Road Hill, Midgham RG7 5RY
(susancarveth@gmx.com)

Theale Local History Society

Graham Reeves: 52 Parkers Corner, Englefield, Reading 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)

Wargrave Local History Society

Peter Delaney: 6 East View Close, Wargrave RG10 8BJ – 0118 9403121
(secretary@wargravehistory.org.uk)

Windsor Local History Group

Anne Taylor: Canon Cottage, Bishops Farm Close, Oakley Green, Windsor SL4 5UN
(taylorad22@btinternet.com)

Archives, Libraries and Museums

Abingdon Library

The Charter, Abingdon OX14 3LY – 01235 520374

Allen County Public Library

Genealogy, PO Box 2270, Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA – 001 468 012270

Ascot Local Studies Library

High St, Ascot SL5 7JF – 01344 630140

Bracknell Library Local Studies

Town Square, Bracknell RG12 1BH – 01344 423149

Eton College Library

Eton College, Windsor SL4 6DB – 01753 370590

Guildhall Library

Aldermanbury, London EC2V 7HH – 0207 3321868

Hungerford Virtual Museum**Maidenhead Local Studies Library**

St Ives Rd, Maidenhead SL6 1QU – 01628 796968

Maidenhead Heritage Centre

18 Park St, Maidenhead SL6 1SL – 01628 780555

Mills Archive

Watlington House, Watlington St, Reading RG1 4RJ - 0118 9502052

Museum of Berkshire Aviation

Mohawk Way, Reading RG5 4UE – 0118 9448089

Museum of English Rural Life

The University of Reading, Redlands Rd, Reading RG1 5EX - 0118 3788669

Newbury Library

The Wharf, Newbury RG14 5AU – 01635 519900

Oxfordshire County Council Library Services

County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

Oxfordshire History Centre

St Luke's Church, Temple Rd, Oxford OX4 2HT

Reading Central Library

Abbey Square, Reading RG1 3BQ – 0118 9015965

Reading Museum

Town Hall, Blagrove Street, Reading, RG1 1QH – 0118 9373400

River & Rowing Museum

Mill Meadows, Henley on Thames, RG9 1BF – 01491 415600

Royal Berkshire Archives

9 Coley Avenue, Reading RG1 6AF – 0118 901 5132

Slough Library Local Studies

Slough Library, The Curve, William St, Slough SL1 1XY - 01753 875533

Slough Museum

The Curve, William St, Slough SL1 1XY – 01753 875533

St George's Chapel Archives & Chapter Library

The Vicar's Hall Undercroft, Windsor Castle, Windsor SL4 1NJ – 01753 848725

University of Reading Library

Pepper Lane, Whiteknights, Reading RG6 6EB – 0118 3788770

Wallingford Museum

52 High Street, Wallingford, OX10 0DB - 01491 835065

West Berkshire Museum

The Wharf, Newbury RG14 4AU – 01635 519562

Windsor & Royal Borough Museum

The Guildhall, Windsor, SL4 1LR – 01628 685686

Windsor Local Studies Library

Bachelors Acre, Windsor SL4 1ER 01753 743940

Wokingham Local Studies Library

Carnival Hub, Wellington Road, Wokingham, RG40 2AF – 0118 781368

Berkshire Local History Association

Registered Charity 1097355

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The Association promotes the history and heritage of the Royal County of Berkshire, covering both the areas of Berkshire before and after the 1974 review of local government. We are a registered charity – those wishing to donate or leave a legacy to enhance the work of the group should contact the Treasurer.

We work with a variety of organisations to protect and document the heritage of Berkshire. We are always happy to publicise events and details of libraries, museums and archives, even if they are not members, as we understand the pressures of local government finance and the desire of our members to visit.

What we do

- Publish an annual Journal (Berkshire Old and New) with detailed articles on Berkshire's past
- Produce a Newsletter three times a year. Members can opt for a hard copy by post or an electronic version by email (see below)
- Maintain an informative [website](#)
- Hold an Annual General Meeting in spring, with the formal meeting being followed by a variety of activities - talks, walks and visits
- Organise seminars, workshops, day trips and day schools with eminent speakers, and visits to archives or places of interest, usually with privileged access to material
- Award grants and prizes, with the purpose of helping and encouraging local history research and publication. Details are on the website

Membership

There are three classes of membership:

Individual	Individuals and couples living at the same address
Family	Families living at the same address
Corporate	Local history societies and institutions, such as libraries, archives and museums

2024 membership rates:

	Newsletter Delivery		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