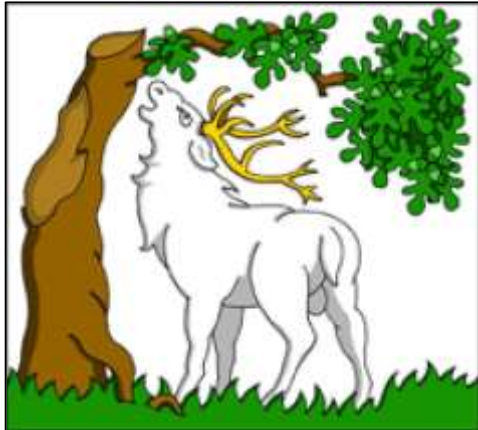


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Berkshire Local History Association



**Newsletter No 139
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Berkshire Local History Association Newsletter

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Next Newsletter:

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Content for the newsletter should be sent to newsletter@blha.org.uk

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: St Mary's Church Centre, Wargrave – location of 2024 AGM (Peter Delaney)

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Chairman's Corner

The 2024 Annual General Meeting was held in St. Mary's Church Centre, Wargrave, on March 24, a day of unsettled weather and blustery winds. But a warm welcome awaited us in the hall, with a cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit or two.

The meeting itself was fairly uneventful, with President, Vice-President, officers, and most of the committee members being re-elected. John Chapman, who had served on the committee for more years than I can remember, and who had been our Newsletter Editor for the last ten of them, had decided to stand down. He was thanked for his years of service, and to his obvious great surprise was presented with a hamper of Berkshire produce.



Photo: 2024 AGM (Peter Delaney)

The thought has occasionally crossed my mind that it would be good to have an extra committee member or two. It's wonderful to have Jo Alexander-Jones take over as Newsletter Editor, but it's not ideal having one person acting as both Secretary and Newsletter Editor. It shouldn't be necessary.

Committee meetings these days are via Zoom, so it doesn't matter so much where you are in the county – unlike the old days when some had to travel 30 miles there and 30 miles back to meetings. The present members work well with one another, and occasionally meet for dinner at a country pub, for some “proper” conversation.

Another deviation from the routine at this AGM was a short discussion on the usefulness of “diary dates” in the newsletter, and which used to appear on the website. We had discussed this at the February committee meeting. Very few local societies sent in their programmes, and it took the Newsletter Editor a great deal of time to seek out the diary dates from the different websites. Maybe members would be content to look things up for themselves. So, we thought we’d ask those present at the meeting whether they valued the list of events, in the newsletter and on the website. From the responses, the diary dates were useful. The newsletter gave you notification of what was forthcoming, and the website told you what had happened in the recent past, which was useful if you were planning talks for a local society. One member said it was the diary dates which had attracted him to the AGM! It was agreed that the diary dates should continue, for another year at any rate.

Since the weather outside looked decidedly threatening, it was decided after lunch that we should go round the church next door, and then return to the Church Centre, rather than go for a walk round the village, for a talk on Wargrave history. This turned out to be amusing as well as instructive. The two Peters, Delaney and Halman, gave us a kind of double act, in which the speaker changed as the topic changed.

The Wargrave Local History Society had made us welcome from first to last. The venue was ideal, and the ladies who served the tea and coffee and who had made the cakes were kindness itself. It was a pity that not everyone stayed for the afternoon session, particularly because at the end everyone was given the surprise gift of a book (!) Thanks, Wargrave.

Next year’s venue is likely to be in Reading. For something different, I’d thought of having it on “The Majestic Bel,” a large boat on the river Kennet, sometimes used for wedding receptions. I’d given a talk for the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust there. The adjacent hotel might have provided lunch, we could have visited the small museum and the turbine house nearby, and I could have led a short walk along the river. Only a few days after the meeting I read in the local paper that the establishment was about to close, so the committee will have to have a re-think!

David Cliffe, Chairman BLHA

A Word from the Editor

The start of 2024 saw two of our member societies no longer meeting: Arborfield Local History Society and the Finchampstead Society. It is sadly a trend as venues become more expensive to hire and many groups see their membership not being reinvigorated with new and younger joiners.

One of the aims of our Association is to keep local groups in contact with one another and to help share ideas. I hope that this newsletter is a key resource in this aim and to keep it lively and informative we need everyone's help to provide information on ongoing activities, local projects and innovative ideas to encourage membership.

Also, we mustn't forget the Speakers List on our website, where you can find people who give talks on Berkshire topics. It would really help if you can ask good speakers at your groups to sign up to the List so we can all benefit from their talks and topics.

I am planning to include some articles on Berkshire topics in our upcoming editions. While our county is full of well-known sites and personalities, it would be nice to hear about the smaller, more quirky parts that sometimes get missed. In this edition David Lewis, our treasurer, has written a fascinating article about a small passageway in Windsor. Another of my plans is to feature one or more of the abundance of local museums, archives and resources we have and what they offer to us. If you want to contribute on of these topics, or any others, please send content into the BLHA Newsletter account.

Jo Alexander-Jones

Notices and Articles

BLHA Waltham St Lawrence walk

Friday 14 June at 10.30

Waltham St Lawrence was the home of Robert Gibbings and the Golden Cockerel Press 1924-33. Join BLHA members on a walk round the historic village, looking at The Bell, St Lawrence's Church, The Street and walking to the collegiate church of St John the Baptist, Shottesbrooke. The walk will take about 2 hours, note there are four stiles between Waltham St Lawrence and Shottesbrooke. After the walk there will be an optional lunch at The Bell.

This is a free walk, but please reserve a place by contacting Ann Smith membership@blha.org.uk or on 07977 034552.

Berkshire Heritage Fair 2024

On 24 February we hosted the latest Berkshire Heritage Fair in partnership with the Berkshire Family History Society. Taking on feedback from last time, we organised the 'rooms' into themes and this ensured that every group taking part had visitors coming to speak to them. On the topic of visitors, numbers were up by 25% on last year reaching over 200 in total.

We have received a lot of positive feedback on the quality of the discussions that took place and the helpfulness of the experts, to whom we send our thanks as without them there would be no fair. Onward to planning 2025!

Margaret Railton Obituary



Margaret was a local historian and author of books on the Royal Berkshire Hospital, Battle Workhouse and Hospital, Early Medical Services: Berkshire and South Oxfordshire from 1740, and six books about the history of Waltham St Lawrence, where she lived. They were about the church, Ralph Newbery and The Bell Inn, royal occasions, the band, the parish magazine and a history of Waltham St Lawrence 1952-2002. She died in September 2023 at the age of 94 and will be much missed.

Forthcoming Books of Interest

From Prison To Parish Church: Greyfriars Reading 1861-1865

The latest planned publication by the [Berkshire Record Society](#) is edited by Malcolm Summers and due to be published in the Autumn. While publications can be purchased individually, in 2024 the Society is celebrating its 30th anniversary and is offering new individual subscribers two volumes as part of the membership rather than the customary one per annum.

'Christianity in Reading' – John Dearing

'Not another one!' - Do I hear? I fear so, but this new book from J B Dearing Publishing (as yet untitled) fills a gap in the bookshelves by providing a comprehensive survey of the history of Christianity in Reading from the so-called Dark Ages to the present day. Starting with the scanty evidence surviving from the late Roman and early Saxon periods the story moves on to the Middle Ages, the founding of the abbey, the Franciscan church and the three surviving mediaeval parish churches. We then move on to the Reformation, the beginning of the dissenting movements, the Evangelical

revival of the 18th century and the explosion of new churches to cater for Reading's expanding population in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

In the course of the story some familiar names crop up, St Birinus, Ethelred the Unready, William the Conqueror and, of course, the abbey-founder, Henry I, followed in later centuries by Abbot Hugh Cook Faringdon, Archbishop William Laud, George Fox, John Bunyan and John Wesley. But there also many others who may be less familiar to the reader such as Christopher Fowler, William Talbot, John Cennick, James Sherman, William Phelps and the way-out sect of Agapemonites.

Publication is expected later this year or early next. If you would like to register your interest and claim a 10% discount on the cover price, please contact the author giving your name, address, contact email and phone number to 27 Sherman Road, Reading RG1 2PJ, or via email to john@jbdearing.co.uk.

A Passageway in Windsor

Dr David Lewis

Narrow passageways between tenements are a common feature of medieval towns. Originally, when the street was first laid out with evenly spaces plots, these were intended to provide access to rear gardens, important small holdings used to grow food and keep livestock, such as a pig or perhaps or some chickens. And in Windsor several of these ancient pathways survive in its street scene, the earliest dating from the late twelfth century, but now used to access car parks or as a short cut to other streets. Few people now using them could know of their antiquity or imagine the townspeople who once passed through.

There is one such passageway, however, that is particularly curious. It leads from the cemetery of the parish church to the corner of what used to be Windsor's market place, now called Church Lane (see photo). It is unusual because it is both gated and built over, tunnel like, and seems never to have provided access to gardens behind, because it abuts directly onto the church cemetery. Indeed, the name of this street suggests that it originally formed part of the curtilage of the parish church, but in the late thirteenth century, as temporary stalls on the market place gave way to



permanent shops set along named streets, so Church Lane came into existence. Reference is still made to the Church Wardens in an eighteenth-century notice set above the entrance to the passageway.

This feature is of considerable antiquity, it is specifically referenced in a 1426 property deed, and by 1521 it formed the link between the Holy Trinity chapel in the parish church and a substantial hall built by Windsor's (wealthy) Trinity fraternity, set on the corner of the market place. Comprising not only a huge open hall, this structure included accommodation for an under bailiff and kitchens used to cater for town feasts and funeral breakfasts. It is referenced by name in many pre-Reformation Windsor wills, as the place where food, drink and clothing were distributed by executors to the town's poor. But in 1548-9 such fraternities were suppressed by law, the hall then being used to put on plays – perhaps including Shakespeare when a player, as he almost certainly visited Windsor – and repurposed to become an inn called The Three Tuns, possibly an irreverent reference to its 'trinity' origins.

The Vale & Downland Museum

The Museum is located in Church Street the busy market town of Wantage, which until 1974 was in the county of Berkshire.

The scope of services is very broad ranging, from galleries interpreting the cultural heritage of the Vale of White Horse region, to a café serving hot drinks, home-made cakes, and lunches. It also acts as meeting point for local groups and a springboard for residents and visitors to enjoy and appreciate the countryside around Wantage. Admission to the museum galleries is free but we welcome donations (suggested donation of £5).

If you are interested in researching the history of Wantage and the local area, your family history or simply finding out more about your street or favourite local pub, we have resources to help you.

Whatever your query, please contact us to make an appointment to visit our research library. Visitors can access our reference books, articles, photograph collection and map collection. We also have an extensive collection of wills and transcripts. Volunteers will be on hand to help guide visitors through our resources and assist with queries. We also have a selection of local history articles available to download.

Suzie Tilbury, Curator

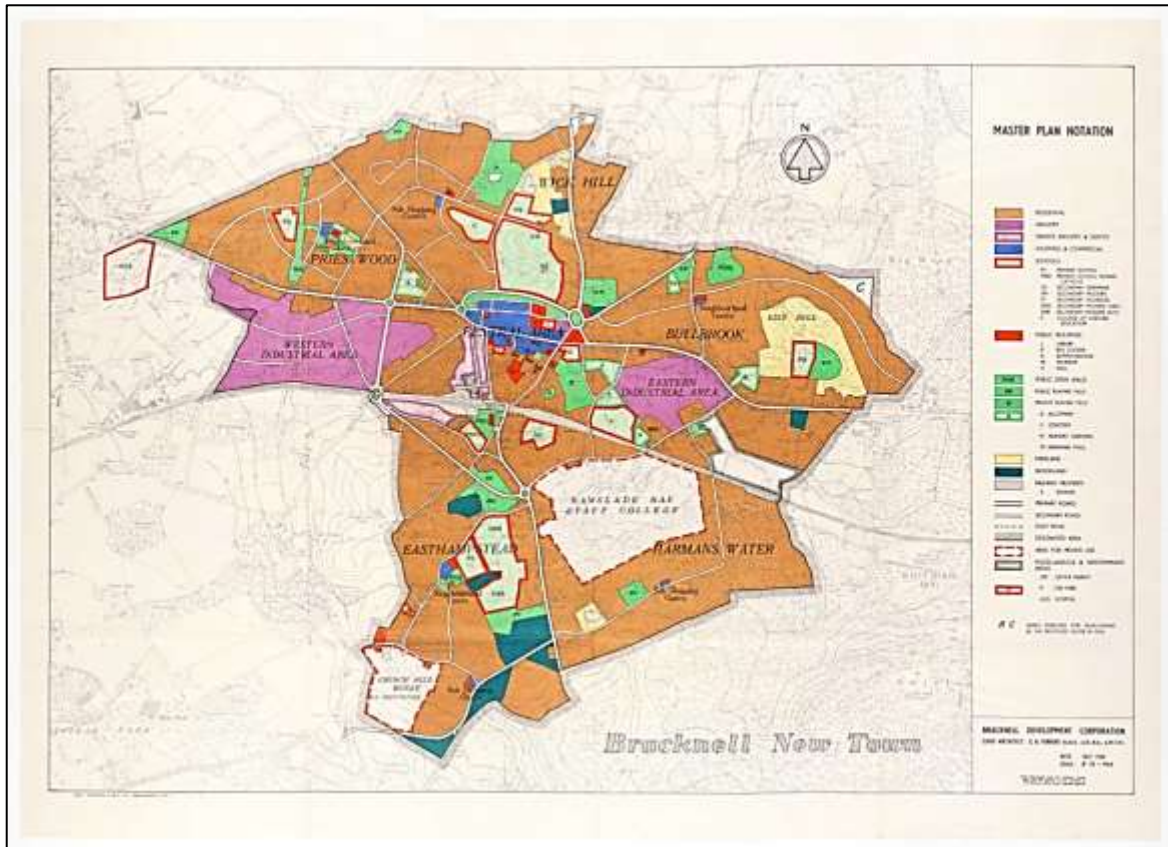
researchlibrary@valeanddownlandmuseum.org.uk

[Vale and Downland Museum website](#)

Celebrating Bracknell

Bracknell was designated a New Town on 17 June 1949 under the New Towns Act 1946 and is celebrating its 75th anniversary.

As part of the celebrations Bracknell Forest Library will be hosting an exhibition entitled 'Bracknell: A New Jerusalem' between 23 May and 4 July. It explores the story of Bracknell New Town and was designed in partnership with the Royal Berkshire Archives.



The Archives have been busy cataloguing and conserving records of the Bracknell Development Corporation (BDC) 1949-1982 as part of the 'New Jerusalem' project ([website](#)) funded by the Wellcome Trust. The exhibition will highlight the work and the people of the BDC involved with planning and building the new town. Visitors will also have the opportunity to see copies of photographs and other documents to look at them in more detail.

The exhibition is accompanied by talks on the town – see What's On below for details.

Society Contributions

Berkshire Family History Society

Following on from our move to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) last year, we are now in the process of closing our limited trading company and moving its operation to within the society. This streamlines our volunteering processes and removes some duplication which will make our volunteers' lives easier. It also removes some of the technical and legal complexities of the previous set-up. From a customer's perspective, everything carries on as previously, just the bank account name has changed. As the changes go through, we have taken the opportunity to refresh our website.

The Centre has been busy with researchers and event attendees since the start of the year. In conjunction with Katie Amos, Lead Local Studies, we have run several bespoke tours of our Heritage Centre and Reading Local Studies Library for groups and these seem to have gone very well. The feedback we received suggests that those who attended had far more confidence afterwards to come in and do some research and more knowledge of what is available and how it can be accessed. If your society would like to have a bespoke tour – 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.

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 there.

In February, we were delighted to once again organise and host an online Berkshire Heritage Fair with the BLHA. The day ran very smoothly and the feedback from both attendees and the participating organisations was very positive. Thank you to everyone who took part and made it such an interesting and valuable day.

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.

Catherine Sampson, Chairman

Berkshire Historic Churches Trust

The Berkshire Historic Churches Trust's annual Englefield Lecture, given this year by Professor Nicholas Orme of Exeter University on the subject 'Going to Church in Medieval Berkshire' was held in St Mark's Church, Englefield, on Saturday 13 April.

On a lovely sunny afternoon, we welcomed over sixty people – including several members of Berkshire's local history societies – to a fascinating and wide-ranging survey of a generally little-explored topic. Many stayed to enjoy a cup of tea and a slice of (extremely delicious) cake afterwards.

The Trust holds a number of events each year, often with a historical slant. To find out more – and to find out how you can support the Trust's work and help to keep Berkshire's churches in good shape, contact the chairman at berkschurchestrustchair@gmail.com.

Peter Durrant, Chairman

Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group

January saw our group entertained by Jon Willis, chair of the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust's Crofton Branch who spoke on their ongoing mechatronics project. This project is using 21st century technology, as used in Formula One racing, to monitor and improve the knowledge of the 200-year-old engines that drive the water pumping at Crofton.

On a lighter, but no less interesting note, Sue Ellis, spoke to us in February about the history of pubs, beer and brewing. In her talk 'Not all Beer and Skittles' she amused us with how brewing began, the things that have impacted its history and stories of local hostelries. Below is a picture of Sue keeping us all engaged while we try not to think too much about a beer!



Sadly, our planned walk along the Kennet & Avon canal in March was scuppered by the weather which left the towpaths unpassable; we intend to re-run the walk later in the year.

John Dearing enlightened us on architects in the Reading area and their impact on our industrial heritage. His focus was on Spencer Slingsby Stallwood who was instrumental in the design of Huntley Boorne Stevens' Reading factory and the Cocks Sauce Factory in the town, along with other architects who had influence in the area.

Jo Alexander-Jones, Secretary

Friends of Reading Abbey (FORA)

In March we had our highest-ever turn-out of over 130 people for our Spring Lecture, given in memory of our late co-founder and past President, Professor Brian Kemp of the Reading University History Department. The lecture, at St James RC church in the Abbey Quarter, was by Prof. Helen Parish, a former colleague of Brian's at Reading University and now Senior Tutor at Wadham College Oxford, on the subject of 'Monks, miracles and memory: the dissolution of Reading Abbey and the writing of history in Reformation England'.

Reading Abbey was founded in 1121 by monks from Cluny Abbey in France, and Lewes Priory, Cluny's daughter house in England, and FORA subscribes to the Federation of European Cluniac Sites (FESC), which was set up in 1994 to promote awareness of Cluniac foundations across Europe. This year is FESC's 30th anniversary and they have invited its members to run and publicise activities to celebrate this. We did so, with the support of Reading Borough Council, and are pleased that our proposal has been accepted by FESC, and we can use their logo for our events to celebrate the Federation's 30th anniversary this summer.

Looking forward FORA will hold a public lecture on the theme of Reading Abbey in its European Context on the afternoon of Saturday 28 September. This is being organised by the Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies (GCMS) and History Department at the University of Reading, along with FORA. The AGM on Saturday 26 October will be followed by the Autumn Lecture, which will be given by David Sanchez, from the Thames Valley Archaeological Service, on their 2019 excavations which discovered the medieval tiliary in Silver Street, Reading, where tiles for Reading Abbey may have been made.

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

John Painter, Secretary

Goring Gap Local History Society

Our new season of talks began in September with the welcome return of Tim Healey, a very entertaining yet erudite speaker, who told us all about the myth and mystery of apples, which he termed England's favourite fruit. He described the history of apples, which date back to 8000BC in Kazakhstan, and their influence on culture through the ages, culminating in the Beatles' Apple record label and a certain well-known brand of computers being named after the fruit. His talk also included the role of apples in ritual and folklore, as well as their appearance in works of art.

Our speaker in October was Edward Caswell, a very enthusiastic archaeologist who is the Finds Officer for Oxfordshire County Council. He described in detail how the Portable Antiquities Scheme (with headquarters at the British Museum) works and illustrated his talk with photographs of the wide variety of artefacts that have been brought in by members of the public to the county museums service. These range from prehistoric arrowheads through to Victorian buttons, but also include some fine gold and silver items.

Our November talk was also on an archaeological theme when Victoria Reeve, Thames Water's archaeologist, explained what the legal obligations of the utility are when developing or working on pipelines and boreholes. Assessment of each site is mandatory before any work can start and, if necessary, a full dig is carried out. Many interesting finds have been made, including a Saxon cemetery. Victoria also noted the many important buildings that Thames Water owns, such as Victorian pumping stations.

The year concluded with a talk on Shaw House at Newbury, delivered by Sarah Somerville. The property now belongs to West Berkshire Council but it was built c. 1581 by the Dolman family, who lived in it until 1728 when the house was sold to the Duke of Chandos. This brick-built property is relatively unchanged and saw action in the English Civil War as well as offering hospitality to members of the Royal family. After passing through the hands of several owners, the house was bought by Berkshire County Council after World War II and became a girls' school. It is now used for functions.

The topic of the first meeting of 2024 was completely different, dealing with RAF and USAF airfields in Oxfordshire. RAF historian Aldon Ferguson gave a fascinating account of the many bases and their different functions in World War II. We were also able to provide some information on nearby RAF Woodcote which was completely unknown to the speaker and subsequent to the meeting he visited the Society's archives to take detailed notes. Two of our members also produced some aviation photographs from their family collections, one set of which dealt with the military use of balloons in the early

1900s. Copies of the pictures have been donated to the appropriate archives' collections.

In February Ian Keable, a member of the Magic Circle, described how magicians have been portrayed in paintings, prints and cartoons through the centuries. In addition to the art history lecture, we were surprised to be entertained by some cleverly performed conjuring tricks!

Percy Manning lived in Oxford in late Victorian times and private means enabled him to indulge his hobby of collecting historical artefacts, photographs and a huge selection of other miscellaneous items relating to Oxfordshire. He was also into the Morris and recorded folklore tales. Dying prematurely in World War I, his collections were bequeathed to the University of Oxford and now can be found in the Ashmolean Museum and the Bodleian Library. His story was related to us by Mike Heaney, a librarian at the Bodleian, who has written a book about this eccentric character and was successful in obtaining a Blue Plaque on Percy's Oxford home.

What of the future? There are two more talks to come in our 2023/24 programme and the annual coach outing in June when we are visiting Chavenage House in Gloucestershire. We are also co-organising a talk on garden history in the Gap Festival in June. Then it will be the AGM once again and time to put together our annual journal. Meanwhile our archivist is still cataloguing the large amount of material that we received during the pandemic. Good progress is being made, but such is the quantity that new book shelves have had to be installed in the archives room. We are pleased to report the completion of one big project – the digitization of the Goring Parish Council minutes, which go back to the 1890s. This was a mammoth job. The minute books will now be deposited in Oxfordshire History Centre.

Janet Hurst, Secretary

The History of Reading Society

Over the years, the Society must have heard many talks about Huntley and Palmers, who were once the town's biggest employers, with the biggest biscuit factory in the world – but our December talk was different. It looked at the workforce – where they came from, where they lived, what they did in the factory, how much they earned and how much it varied between different departments and on whether they were male and female. In fact, the talk had been subtitled "Life and Love at H. & P."

Our speaker, Joe Doak, explained how, as the company grew, people came into Reading to work, mainly from surrounding area, but by the twentieth

century the company was running hostels for workers from overseas. After the Second World War, people had arrived from Poland and Ukraine, and from the Caribbean. All of this had a marked effect on the make-up of the town's population. We could hear the recorded voices of some of the workers, talking about what it was like to work at the factory.

The company was closely managed by the Palmer family, and although at the start they were Quakers, politically Liberal, benevolent and paternalistic, later generations were decidedly antagonistic towards trade unions, with matters coming to a head in a series of strikes in 1911, 1916 and 1924.

The rise, and eventual demise of H. & P. were summarised, together with the strengths and failings. There was a good question-and-answer session at the end, with topics including the importance of the British Empire in the firm's prosperity, relations with Serpell's, the other biscuit manufacturers in town, and the many uses to which H. & P. biscuit tins had been put.

The first meeting of the New Year, again via Zoom, was on the history of the Quakers in Reading, given by Matthew Callow. He was speaking from the meeting-house in Church Street, and half way through the talk was able to give us a "virtual" conducted tour of the building.

The Religious Society of Friends began in the mid-17th century, the time of the Civil War, when there was much religious questioning, and trying to make sense of the suffering caused by war, and the end of the monarchy. The first Quaker missionary arrived in Reading in 1654, and George Fox visited the town in 1655 and 1659. Thomas Curtis was one of the leading members of the Society in Reading, and opened the first meeting-house in his garden in Sun Lane (now King Street) in 1671.

The sufferings of the early Quakers have been much written about, but it was perhaps surprising to learn that in their early days the persecution was not entirely undeserved. Today they are thought of as intelligent, quiet, and considerate people, but there was a time when they were radical, puritanical and confrontational – and very unpopular. Various Acts of Parliament were used against them, and in 1655, around 50 Reading Quakers found themselves in gaol. The Quaker community numbered around 150 – the Reading meeting was by far the largest in Berkshire, and this has continued until the present day.

The splitting off of the "Separatists" from the orthodox Quakers was mentioned, and their coming together in 1714, at a new meeting-house, built on the site of the old one. The present Church Street meeting house dates from 1835.

Quaker principles were explained, and their effect on politics and commerce, nationally and locally. The Palmer family were mentioned in the 19th century, and Phoebe Cusden in the 20th.

We had some good questions from the online audience – the role of the Reading Quakers in education, the people buried in the graveyard, what happened at a typical Quaker meeting today, and the influence of Quakers on present-day politics and society.

At the end of the meeting the Society was invited to visit the meeting house and adjacent burial ground, and we intend to take up the invitation next year.

Our February talk had the title “Early Closing Day” – about the bombing of Reading in the Second World War, and in particular, about the bombs dropped on the town centre in 1943. The significance of the title was that they were dropped on a Wednesday afternoon, when most of the shops were shut, so that casualties were smaller than they might otherwise have been.

Nevertheless, 41 people lost their lives, many of whom were in The People’s Pantry, and 151 were injured. The various aspects of the preparations for war carried out by the corporation and various voluntary bodies were described, among which were air-raid sirens and shelters, Civil Defence posts, fire watching, fire brigades, and the provision of food. The People’s Pantry was staffed by members of the Women’s Voluntary Service, where you could have a nutritious meal at a low price, subsidised by the government.

Our speaker was Mike Cooper, who had published a book of the same title in 2016, which was reprinted in 2017. Since then, more information had come to light, and in particular, the log of the bomber pilot, Heinz Holzmann, had been located in Germany. Mike had written an article in “Berkshire Old and New,” the journal of the Berkshire Local History Association, published last year.

The changes in the strategy of bombing raids over the course of the war were described, and the kinds of bombs dropped, the machine-gunning of the streets at the same time from the low-flying aircraft, and the use of incendiary bombs. Nevertheless, despite the details in the log, we shall probably never know the precise instructions given to Unteroffizier Holzmann on that fateful day. Was his target to be Reading in the first place, was it a terror raid, or was it somewhere more specific, such as the railway? Other towns in England were bombed on the same afternoon.

Photographs were shown of the buildings damaged by the 4 bombs that fell. Besides The People’s Pantry, they included Wellstead’s department store,

The Arcade, Blandy's the solicitors, part of the Town Hall, and St. Laurence's Church.

In March we returned to face-to-face meetings in the Abbey Baptist Church, where, after a short AGM, we had a talk on the history and work of the Reading Civic Society. What could have been a low-key affair turned out to be anything but, in the hands of Richard Bennett, the Chairman.

The presentation was unusual in that much of the story was told largely from snippets from the local press over the years, beginning with abortive attempts to form a society before civic societies as such existed. Reading Civic Society was formed in 1962, at a time when there were many plans for the redevelopment of the town centre, and when there seems to have been little regard for old buildings.

We were shown photographs of successes and losses where the Society, often together with other local societies, had been involved in campaigns to save good buildings from destruction. Many in the audience still remembered these campaigns and had taken part in them.

More recent projects included the information board by the river in the Oracle Shopping Centre to show where the Simonds brewery had stood, the blue plaques on buildings where notable people in the town's history had lived, and the restoration of the plaque to the memory of Laurentius Braag, one of the Danish prisoners-of-war, on the south wall of St. Mary's Minster Church. Also impressive was the society's present-day work with schools, helping young people notice their built environment.

The Society's work on planning matters was described – scrutinising planning applications and sometimes researching building histories so as to make informed recommendations to council officers. It was reassuring to hear that relations with Reading Borough Council were good, which was not the case everywhere.

The talk was highly informative . . . and very entertaining.

David Cliffe, Chairman

Hungerford Historical Association



Karen Sperrey, a former Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary of HHA, entertained and informed around ninety members and visitors at the February meeting with her in-depth recounting of the restoration of her 16th Century timber-frame cottage in East Garston (pictured left).

Members met in March to listen to Roger Day speak about a Wiltshire-born photographer, mountaineer and early motoring enthusiast, George Perry Ashley Abraham.

Abraham was born in Devizes in 1846 and brought-up by his grandfather who worked on the Kennet & Avon canal. The dawn of photography occurred during his early childhood and as this technology developed, so did George's fascination with it. In his teens he started work with a photographic shop and studio in Devizes but soon moved to London as an apprentice. Abraham's Keswick photography business was successful, though not without fierce competition from another similar business close by. It is evident from Roger's research that much of George's time was spent out-and-about because his real love was landscape photography.

Caroline Ness, Chairman

Hurley History Society

Since our AGM in November the Society has been quite busy. Throughout the year we have grown to a membership of over 50 which after 3 years existence is very pleasing.

Recently, we have published and are selling the collection of Mary Howarth's booklets entitled 'Revelations of the Manor and Priory of Hurley'. Her six booklets were written about the Priory and its Monks; the Lovelace Family and their involvement in the Glorious Revolution; Also, the history of the Olde Bell and a booklet about Hippolyta da Costa, the founder of the free Press in Brazil, who was buried in Hurley. All, in a ring bound collection selling at £35.

Our next project is the restoration and digitisation of the 1609 map of Hurley, in conjunction with the RBO. We hope eventually to display a full-sized copy in the village.

Our winter series of monthly talks are still on going and have been well attended by our members. In January Sue Ellis gave us a very interesting talk about the origins of Magna Carta and how still some pieces of Magna Carta are still incorporated into present day legislation. Our February talk was by Mike Cooper on the Siege of Reading 1643 and about which, we residents of Hurley living only 10 miles away, knew absolutely nothing about!! Then, in March, we were entertained to a visit to our local boatyard and a joint talk by Richard Freebody on the history of making wooden launches followed by a talk from Phil Mullins on the history of the Freebody Family. Our final talk of the winter will be by Richard Poad from the Maidenhead Heritage Centre, on the river Thame from Henley to Windsor.

Our summer programme will continue with a guided walk around Runnymede and the various Memorials, in June. Then a second guided walk around Historic Hurley, visiting parts that we didn't in 2023 including a walk across the weirs to the ancient capstan winch used for pulling barges through the flash lock weir. Also, a visit to our churchyard and short talks about some of our residents buried there and our War Memorial.

Finally, we hope to visit the Cookham Abbey excavations for an update on progress since last year and an October visit to Reading Museum.

David Burfitt, Secretary

Project Purley

In January, we welcomed back speaker Nick Brazil who gave a fascinating talk on the 900-year-old tradition of swan upping on the river Thames. Nick's talk was a fascinating mix of history, pageantry and science, beautifully illustrated with photographs and etchings, and much appreciated by the audience.

Sarah Somerville was February's speaker on Shaw House, near Newbury, an Elizabethan 'Prodigy' house, built by Thomas Dolman to demonstrate status and ambition, with the best and most expensive materials. It was completed in 1581 and stayed in the family until 1728, during which time it survived a battle of the English Civil War. Later uses include being a private residence, base for British and American soldiers and a school. Now, following over £6 million of conservation and restoration, the house is a visitor attraction and business and conference centre.

Our speaker in March was Dr Richard Marks who spoke about "Biscuits for Queen Victoria: the early history of Huntley & Palmers". Huntley & Palmers were one of the first global brands. Their fortunes and expansion were largely

brought about by attributes common to many successful companies: the courage to grab opportunities as they came by, innovation in products and processes, location, and chance, or luck, or happenstance.

All three talks were extremely interesting, and we would happily recommend them all to other societies.

Five of us attended the BLHA AGM in Wargrave and enjoyed the day immensely. Our thanks go to the BLHA committee and also Wargrave History Society's members who made us feel so welcome and who provided an excellent insight into their community's history.

Looking ahead, we have our programme almost finalised to the end of the year. In April, we are looking forward to Dr Stephen Goss's talk on Caversham Park. Our summer activities begin in June with a D-Day commemoration event on Saturday 8th which starts with a fish and chips lunch after which Mike Cooper will be talking about D-Day and the events of the day itself. We plan to decorate the venue and have been lent a D-Day commemoration lantern for the occasion, which we will light.

The Rain or Shine Theatre Company are back in June with a performance of Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest". We have been hosting this group for nineteen years and have raised almost £15,000 for local good causes as a result. Any profits from this performance will go to the Army Benevolence Fund, as will any profit from the D-Day event. Our annual trip is to the Chiltern Open Air Museum in Buckinghamshire, our first coach trip since Covid.

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

Catherine Sampson

Royal Berkshire Archives

The Royal Berkshire Archives is working with Bracknell Library on an exhibition to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the New Town of Bracknell. More details will be available on our website soon but keep a note in your diaries for 23 May to 4 July as this is when the exhibition will be available at Bracknell Library. Please see the [Bracknell library website](#) for full details.



Is your local history group interested in learning how to read old handwriting found in historical documents? We are planning to offer the palaeography workshop that we offer to public visitors to groups but on a half day option instead of the full day. It would involve

a presentation on the subject together with working through copies of selected documents to enable attendees to gain confidence in reading old handwriting. We can accommodate up to 10 people at a time and there would be a fee involved. If you would like to find out more about this, please [contact us](#).

Yvonne Turnbull Senior Archivist

Swallowfield Local History Society

We continue to thrive with audiences increasing, especially if the subject is a well know landmark in the area. The question-and-answer session after the speaker is always lively and full of content.

Our programme is planned and starts on Thursday 18 April following our AGM in March. It's a very varied programme which includes Huntley and Palmers, Graffiti found in our local churches, Extraordinary Women and the History of Honey.

We meet on the third Thursday in the month (except July and August) in the Rose Room at the Parish Hall in Swallowfield at 8pm, and visitors are always welcome. Do visit our [website](#) for further information.

Maggie Uttley (Chairman)

Thatcham Historical Society

The Society had a good start to 2024 with a well-attended AGM in January, and followed this in February with an excellent talk by Jonathan Sayers on RAF Greenham. This explored the use of the site as an airbase prior to, and during, WW2 – when the gliders used for the Normandy Landings on D-Day, and also for the unsuccessful and ultimately disastrous Operation Market Garden, were assembled, stored and launched at the site. Jonathan Sayers is a local historian who runs a website on RAF Greenham Common, and he was able to present a fascinating montage of photos covering the history of the site. In March Dr Lionel Williams gave a talk on the history of the Reading hospitals, from the 1100s up to the present day, covering the development of hospitals though the ages, including the more modern development and

expansion of the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

The Society meets (usually) on the evening of the last Monday of the month at the Sixth Form Block, Kennet School, Stoney Lane, Thatcham – only altered when the school is closed. Future speakers include Aeryn Townley, a conservator who will explain how conservation cleaning can be carried out in a historical environment, our own local historian Dr Nick Young, who will be talking about Thatcham's history over the last 50 years, since it officially became a town, and Clive Williams, who will be giving a talk on the Craven family, a local family who owned and developed the great estate at Hamstead Marshall, and who rose to prominence as Barons and then Earls of Craven.

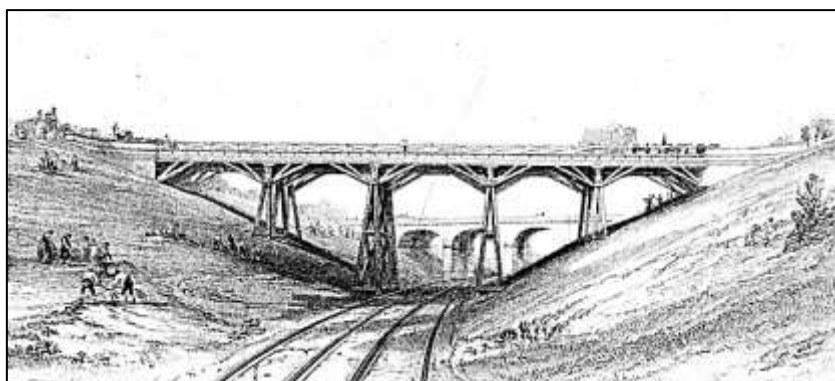
More information on speaker meetings is available on the [website](#). Visitors are most welcome, and the visitor fee of £3 will be included within your membership if you decide to join on the day.

Sue Ellis

Wargrave Local History Society

Wargrave Local History Society's January meeting was a well-illustrated presentation on Chalk, Caverns and Commandos by retired geophysicist Rob Wallace about the formation 94 million years ago of the chalk that lies below the Thames Valley, and the uses these deposits and the workings were put to. In Tudor times, brick making increased - using silica, clay, lime, iron oxide and magnesia which could all be found locally in the chalk or younger rocks above it, and Reading became famous therefore for their production - the last brickworks closing in 1967. One of the mines providing chalk for brick making was located at Emmer Green, running under Kiln Road, with an extensive range of tunnels, and Rob explained how in war-time they came to be used as secure storage for archives, and as a base for auxiliary commando units should it become necessary to fight a guerilla campaign against any invading forces.

In February, Ann Smith recounted the History of Woodley – the name meaning “a clearing in the woods” - basically the area between the old turnpike roads on the north and south, Church Road / Pitts Lane on the west, and the river Loddon to the east. Being part of Sonning parish at the time, it is not specifically mentioned in Domesday, but documents record property belonging to “Osbertus de Woodleghe” in 1220, and land at Bulmershe in the late 12th century and local administration was based on Bulmershe Manors. In 1847 Woodley was described as a “scattered village consisting mainly of farms”, and it remained like that for the rest of the century, Railways arrived in the mid-19th century, with the Great Western to the north and the Reading,



Guildford and Reigate Railway to the south. The picture is of Sonning Cutting.

Land sales in the early 20th century enabled ribbon development of housing along the main roads,

although there was no street lighting, pavements, water mains or mains drainage. In the late 1920s, a 100-acre field became Woodley Aerodrome, with manufacturing taking place there – not just aircraft, but furniture and the innovative Biro ball-point pen. Post-war, Woodley has seen a lot of housing development, with associated shopping parades etc. Ann's presentation covered much more, including Cobbler's City, local public houses and shops -- and proved that Woodley has a long history.

The society AGM in March was followed by further Reminiscences of Wargrave in the 1950s and 1960s by Di Evans. She had embarked on the 6-week course to train as a junior GPO (General Post Office) telephonist on leaving school, having been assessed as having excellent spelling, a good knowledge of national geography, and a clear speaking voice. She then started work, in the Reading Central exchange, being paid £3 13s 0d per week. The rules for staff were tightly applied (including the Official Secrets Act and rules on what could, or could not – be worn) - even relating to the need to use the toilet (known in GPO terminology as “an urgent”), only being allowed 2 minutes away from their work - the facilities being down 2 flights of steps, and another rule forbade any running! Di did not enjoy her time working at Reading Central exchange, so when she was asked if she would be willing to work at the Wargrave exchange, she readily agreed. The first village exchange installed in 1907 (picture shows street where it was located) was replaced by a larger one in 1938, and by the early 1960s that had 5 switchboards, staffed during the day by a supervisor, 5 full-time and 1 part-time staff, with a similar provision at night. Di recounted many ‘incidents’ –



from the sounding of the fire alarm, the fascination of the telephone instrument to young children, notable subscribers, or the use of telephone call boxes - whether using a handful of coins or a 'transfer charge', where the person being called agreed to pay for it. The exchange was replaced by an automatic one in 1969.

Later in the month, we were delighted to welcome members of BLHA to Wargrave for the Annual Meeting, and then in April Mike Cooper came to tell us about Maiwand: The Battle and the Great Game. The Maiwand Lion statue that stands in Reading's Forbury Gardens is well known, and is now seen as more than just a memorial to those of the 66th Berkshire Regiment of foot who died in the Second Afghan War. It has also been part of the local football club away strip, has been a symbol for Reading Library, and became a symbol of unity following the stabbings that took place nearby. The lion itself is hollow, and was made of cast iron in 9 pieces weighing 16 tons. The £1,088 that it cost (about £105,000 in today's values) was raised by public subscription in 1886, the monument being designed by George Blackall Simonds, of the local brewery family. Mike explained that the battle of Maiwand in July 1880, was part of a long-standing conflict in the region between the Russians and British India – known as the Great Game. The British troops – a large proportion of whom were from the Berkshires, were vastly outnumbered, and suffered enormous losses. Sadly, such conflicts have continued in the area – as Mike said "at each point we thought we could do this, but forgot that last time we got it wrong".

For more detailed reports on these meetings, or information about the society, (including our events as part of the Wargrave Village Festival), visit our [website](#).

Peter Delaney

Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society

Caversham Court Gardens was the first talk of the year, given by Linda Humphreys-Evans. It was a cold and flood surrounded evening, but nevertheless a goodly turn out of members heard a stimulating account of the history of the gardens from mediaeval times to the present day. An original house was built for the canon of St Peter's church, but it was found more profitable to lease it to a layman who was responsible for providing a priest. The church is easily accessible from the gardens by a series of steps and the Romanesque corbels at the top of the griffin steps may have come from Reading Abbey after its dissolution in the 16th century. The Alexander/Milward family were tenants of the property until the early 1600s until the Civil War. The gazebo overlooking the Thames was built in 1663 and has been

renovated. The Loveday family lived here from 1665 until 1799 and planted the yew hedge along the Long Walk. During the battle of Reading in 1688 soldiers were billeted on Mrs. Loveday. History boards in the garden show the footprint of original buildings. In 1931 Reading corporation bought Caversham Court, demolished the declining house and built the Arts and Craft-style block, now the tea kiosk. The gardens were refurbished in 2009 with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and opened to the public.

February saw a talk on Railway Postcards. From his extensive collection of postcards Paul King was able to give an illustrated journey along the London & North Western Railway from Euston to Birmingham and beyond. In the late 19th century, the L&NWR was the largest joint stock company in the world linking several railway systems connecting London with Birmingham, Crewe, Chester, Liverpool and Manchester. The headquarters were at Euston and we saw postcards of the Great Hall and large hotels that were built at stations along the route as the footfall increased and the public were able to access the railway. This was often by a Horse family omnibus. In the early days of development, the making of cuttings such as Tring and Boxmoor caused much chaos according to Dickens with the displacement of earth and the building up of embankments. At one point the spoil was estimated to have been $\frac{1}{2}$ the volume of the Great Pyramid. Construction of bridges was necessary but steam trains were very heavy and the suspension bridge design was deemed not strong enough to support them. Consequently, a box bridge was invented and this has been refined for future railway use. Carriages for passengers were open to the elements but in spite of this people travelled in smart attire and fashionable outfits. From unusual items listed in the Lost Luggage department, a gold toothpick and a gold ring it was obvious that this method of transport was for those who could afford it. It was becoming easier to travel between cities, visit interesting places and spend time at the seaside. It was even possible to travel from London and take the Holyhead boat express to Dublin at a time of just over nine hours which it seems cannot be achieved much faster today. The chairman thanked Paul King for an interesting talk and for his donation to the Ukraine Emergency Fund.

Jean Poulter

What's On

For talks, events, exhibitions etc.

08 May (14.00) – **History of Thames Valley Police** with Dave Stubbs. Berkshire Family History Society (Newbury). West Berkshire Museum, Newbury

09 May (14.00) – **Purley Hall and Charles Bridgeman** with Ben Viljoen. Berkshire Family History Society. Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library

10 May (14.00) – **The Industrial Revolution Course (5 weeks)**. Berkshire Family History Society. Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library

10 May (19.30) – **Origins of Writing and Numbers** with Brian Withington. Middle Thames Archaeological and Historical Society. St Andrew's Church Centre, Stoke Poges

11 May to 19 May - **Reading Walks Festival**. Featuring a number of heritage topics

13 May (19.30) – **The Anglo-Saxons and West Berkshire** with Dr David Peacock. The Berkshire Archaeology Research Group. Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham

13 May (19.45) – **Trooper Potts VC at Reading** with Brigadier Tony Verey. Twyford & Ruscombe Local History Society. The Piggott School, Twyford

13 May (20.00) – **General Brock and the Maiwand Lion** with Mike Cooper. Tadley and District History Society. Heath End Village Hall, Baughurst

13 May (20.00) – **Polehampton School: Twyford's New Library** with Andrew Cardy & James Fort. Wargrave Local History Society. Old Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Wargrave

14 May (10.30) – **The Kennet & Avon Canal & Coley Branch Line Walk** with Bob Haskins. BIAG. See website for details

14 May (14.00) – **Walk Around Woodley** with Ann Smith. Berkshire Family History Society. Woodley – see website for location details

14 May (19.45) – **The Swallowfield Harvest home of 1863** with R W Hoyle. Shinfield and District Local History Society. School Green Centre, Shinfield

15 May (19.30) – **Black Arts in Reading: The Story of our Local Printing Industry** with Paul Joyce. History of Reading Society. Abbey Baptist Church, Reading

16 May (20.00) – **Graffiti Found in Berkshire Churches** with James Peddle. Swallowfield Local History Society. Swallowfield Parish Hall, Swallowfield

20 May (14.30) – **The Message in the Maps** with Nick Millea. Goring Gap Local History Society. See website for details

- 20 May (19.30) – **The Construction of the Crystal Palace and The Great Exhibition of 1851** with Doug Irvine. BIAG, St Mary's Church Hall, Castle St, Reading
- 20 May (19.30) – **Thatcham: 50 Years a Town** with Dr Nick Young. Thatcham Historical Society. Kennet School, Stoney Lane, Thatcham
- 21 May (14.00) – **The History of Newbury Race Course** with David Wickens. Newbury District Field Club. St Joseph's Church Hall, London Road, Newbury
- 22 May (10.00) – **Commemorating 80th Anniversary of D-Day**. All day showing of films of Elliotts of Newbury during WW11. West Berkshire Museum, Newbury
- 22 May (19.30) – **My Life as a Cold War Spy** with Major General Peter Williams. Hungerford Historical Association, Corn Exchange, Hungerford
- 23 May – **Bracknell: A New Jerusalem – Celebrating 75 years of the New Town**. Exhibition until 4 Jul. Royal Berkshire Archives. 9 Coley Avenue, Reading
- 23 May (*tbd*) – **Visit to Buscot Park**. Marcham Society. See website for details
- 23 May (19.30) – **The Great Fire of Windsor Castle** with Any Stocker. Sonning and Sonning Eye History Society. See website for details
- 26 May (12.00) – **Shaw House Open Day**. W Berkshire Council. Shaw House, Newbury
- 27 May (19.45) – **Eynsham Abbey** with Steve Parrinder. Marcham Society. Marcham Centre, Marcham
- 28 May (19.30) – **Agricultural Unrest and the Swing Riots in Southern England**. Berkshire Family History Society (Windsor) on Zoom
- 29 May (14.30) – **Guided Tour of Reading Abbey**. Berkshire Historic Churches Trust
- 29 May (19.30) – **Bisham Abbey from Estate to National Sports Centre** with Sheila Featherstone Clarke. Maidenhead Archaeological and Historical Society. United Reformed Church, Maidenhead and on Zoom
- 29 May (19.30) – **A Stroll in the Park** with Peter Holman. Eton Wick History Group. Eton Wick Village Hall, Eton Wick
- 01 Jun (10.00) – **D-Day Lantern Workshops**. Aldermaston History Group. Parish Hall, The Street, Aldermaston
- 01 Jun (11.00) – **Book Fair (new and second-hand)**. Berkshire Family History Society. The Centre for Heritage & Family History, 2nd floor, Reading Central Library
- 04 Jun (19.30) – **The Windsor Witches** with Helen Parish. Henley Archaeological & Historical Group. Kings Arms Barn, Ling's Road, Henley

- 04 Jun (*Eve tbd*) – **The Landscaping of Bracknell New Town** with Sheila Haywood. Bracknell Forest Library, Bracknell. See website for details
- 07 Jun (14.00) – **Historic Caversham Walk** with Megan Aldrich & Helen Lambert. Berkshire Family History Society. Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library
- 08 Jun (11.00) – **Waterfest** in Reading. A number of members are exhibiting
- 10 Jun (10.30) – **Visit to Donnington Castle and Hospital, Newbury**. Reading Civic Society
- 10 Jun (11.00) – **Visit to Villa Ventorum in Somerset**. Berkshire Archaeological Society. See Society website for details
- 10 Jun (10.30) – **Visit to Ewelme Church and Almshouses** with Prof Susan Doran. Marcham Society. See website for details
- 10 Jun (19.45) – **Stratfield Saye / Duke of Wellington Estate** with Gareth Jones. Twyford & Ruscombe Local History Society. The Piggott School, Twyford
- 10 Jun (20.00) – **The Great Train Robbery**. Tadley and District History Society. Heath End Village Hall, Baughurst
- 12 Jun (14.00) – **That Summer – a Wartime Evacuation to Kintbury**. Berkshire Family History Society (Newbury). West Berkshire Museum, Newbury
- 13 Jun (14.00) – **Caversham Park: 930 Years at the Centre of History** with Dr Stephen Goss. Berkshire Family History Society. Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library
- 15 Jun (11.00) – **Beginnings of Bracknell New Town** with archivist Evangeline Mills. Bracknell Forest Library, Bracknell
- 16 Jun (14.30) – **Historic Wargrave Walk**. Wargrave Local History Society. Starting from Mill Green
- 18 Jun (14.00) – **Visit to St George's Archives, Windsor Castle**. Berkshire Family History Society (Windsor)
- 19 Jun to Jun 2025 – **Treasure Through Time: A History of W Berkshire Treasure - Exhibition**. West Berkshire Museum, Newbury
- 19 Jun (*tbd*) – **The Danes in Reading Walk** with John Nixon. History of Reading Society. See website for details
- 20 Jun (20.00) – **Memories of Riseley**. Swallowfield Local History Society. Swallowfield Parish Hall, Swallowfield

- 20 Jun (*tbd*) – **Visit to Chavenage House and Malmesbury Abbey** with Nick Millea. Goring Gap Local History Society. See website for details
- 24 Jun (19.30) – **A History of the Craven Family** with Clive Williams. Thatcham Historical Society. Kennet School, Stoney Lane, Thatcham
- 24 Jun (19.45) – **The Ridgeway and Lowbury Hill from Above** with Hedley Thorne. Marcham Society. Marcham Centre, Marcham
- 25 Jun (14.00) – **Gertrude Jekyll's Garden, Upton Grey Visit**. Berkshire Gardens Trust
- 25 Jun (20.00) – **An Evening with Simon Williams**. Wargrave Local History Society. Woodclyffe Hall, Wargrave
- 26 Jun (19.30) – **Orpheus and the Gentleman Farmer, about Littlecote Roman Villa**. Hungerford Historical Association, Corn Exchange, Hungerford
- 26 Jun (19.30) – **Agincourt: Battlefield Archaeology** with Anne Curry. Maidenhead Archaeological and Historical Society. United Reform Church, Maidenhead and on Zoom
- 27 Jun (13.00) – **Lunch and Talk: Special D-Day Event** with Mike Cooper. Berkshire Family History Society. Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library
- 08 Jul (20.00) – **Stratfield Saye House: A Virtual Tour**. Tadley and District History Society. Heath End Village Hall, Baughurst
- 10 Jul (*tbd*) – **Visit to Pendon Museum and Dorchester Abbey**. Wargrave Local History Society. See website for details
- 11 Jul (14.00) – **Industrial Archaeology in Berkshire** with Jo Alexander-Jones. Berkshire Family History Society. Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library
- 16 Jul (10.30) – **Tour of Historical Wokingham** with Peter Must. Berkshire Family History Society. Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading Central Library
- 17 Jul (10.30) – **John Lewis Heritage Centre & Stanley Spencer Museum, Cookham**. History of Reading Society. See website for details
- 17 Jul (19.30) – **The Swing Riots** with Dr David Peacock. Aldermaston History Group. Officers Mess, Hinds Head, Wasing Lane, Aldermaston
- 17 Jul (*tbd*) – **Visit to Gloucester Cathedral and Blackfriars Dominican Friary** – Friends of Reading Abbey. See website for details
- 18 Jul (13.00) – **Visit to Buscot Park**. Berkshire Family History Society (Abingdon)
- 20 Jul (11.00) – **World War Two RAF Records for Family Historians Workshop** with Dr Richard Marks. Berkshire Family History Society on Zoom

20 Jul (Eve) – **Visit to Gardens at Parmoor near Hambleden.** Berkshire Gardens Trust

22 Jul (19.30) – **James Sadler: King of All Balloons** with Mark Davies. Oxfordshire Family History Society. On Zoom

31 Jul (19.30) – **The Miracle of Bletchley Park** with Gillian Cane. Eton Wick History Group. Eton Wick Village Hall, Eton Wick

31 Jul (19.30) – **People of the Abbey: Analysis of the Human Remains from the Cookham Excavations** with Ceri Falys. Maidenhead Archaeological and Historical Society. United Reform Church, Maidenhead and on Zoom

22 Aug (10.15) – **Visit to Waltham Palace Gardens.** Reading Civic Society.

22 Aug (14.00) – **Bells and Bricks (Two Wokingham Industries)** with John Harrison. Berkshire Family History Society on Zoom

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

John Pritchard (secretary@berkschurchestrust.org.uk)

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.mtchs@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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Vice-President Prof E J Collins

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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	
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Corporate	£18.00	£20.00	2	3