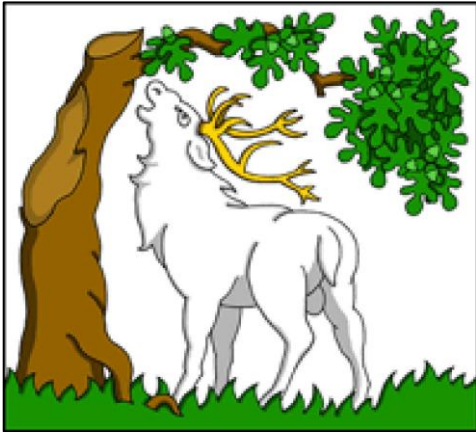


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Berkshire Local History Association



Newsletter No 140
September 2024

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, please focus on the content rather than the format.

Cover picture: St. Lawrence Church, Waltham St. Lawrence (Jo Alexander-Jones)

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Chairman's Corner

Since I last wrote from my "Corner," where I sit at a long table strewn with papers and watch the buses going up and down the hill, I've had a pleasant surprise. The British Association for Local History (BALH), to which our association, BLHA, is affiliated, has given me an "outstanding individual contribution" award. The citation mentions promoting the history of Reading through work in the Local Studies Library, my support for others in the field of local history, and leading walking tours of the area.

I knew something of how these awards came to be made, because back in 2015 I wrote a letter of recommendation for a lifetime achievement award to go to Brian Boulter, a long-time member, Vice-President and President. The recommendation, along with those of others, secured the award. I have a good idea of who must have recommended me for an award, and I thank them.

In 2015, the awards were presented at the Annual General Meeting of the BALH, where you shook hands with someone, and people applauded as you were handed the piece of paper. In May 2024 the AGM was on line, and the piece of paper arrived in the post. It was all a bit low-key, but nevertheless I'm very heartened and encouraged and grateful.

Then in July, the award of the Berkshire History Prize was also low-key. The prize is awarded by the BLHA and the Royal Berkshire Archives on the recommendation of the Department of History at the University of Reading. It is given for an exceptionally good dissertation on Berkshire local history, it isn't necessarily given every year, and a copy of the dissertation is given to the RBA so that anyone interested can read it. The winner in 2024 was Hannah Woodhead, and her chosen subject was "Did the Geographical Nature of Reading Influence Suffragette Activity?" It might be interesting to compare it with the paper on "Women's Suffrage in Berkshire" by Dr Margaret Simons, which appeared in the 2020 edition of "Berkshire Old and New."

Unfortunately, the recipient was going to be away on Graduation Day, so Hannah was sent a congratulatory letter, and the prize money was sent to her by bank transfer . . . no speeches, presentation of envelopes, shaking of hands or glasses of champagne.

In June, around ten of us set off on a local history walk, led for the BLHA by Ann Smith, our Membership Secretary. The starting point was the Church of St. Lawrence in Waltham St. Lawrence. As we were making our way through woods and fields towards Shottesbrooke, Ann explained how, when she had

tried to plan the walk in the spring, the path had been under water. Today we were all right, and the rain held off until we were safely inside The Bell Inn back at Waltham. At St. John's Church in Shottesbrooke we were met by Dr David Lewis, our Treasurer, who explained the origins of the church, and what made it a collegiate church in the Middle Ages. There was much to see. On our return, some of us extended our walk in order to see the house in Milley Lane where Robert Gibbings had lived, when he was running the Golden Cockerel Press, 1924-1933. His life and work had been the subject of a meeting we held last year in the village hall at Long Wittenham, where he had lived at the end of his life.



St John the Baptist Church, Shottesbrooke

At some time in the near future, the Association is hoping to arrange a visit to the Kedermister Library, which is attached to St. Mary's Church at Langley, near Slough. Though historically it's in Buckinghamshire, since the 1974 boundary changes it has been in Berkshire. The survival of the church, the library, the churchyard and old almshouses amid the recent housing and industrial estates is remarkable. In the early 17th century Sir John Kedermister of Langley Park added a south aisle to the church, with a family pew, and a library of theological works, mostly in Latin, for the use of the local clergy. The books are in bookcases with wooden doors, with painted decoration, inside and out, and the effect is sumptuous. For visitors like me, the book we're most

likely to remember is “The Pharmacopolium,” containing 17th century recipes in English for remedies and cures. We’re hoping to fix a date for the visit fairly soon, when we can have guides to the church, the library and the churchyard.

Another project in which I am involved is the presentation of a programme of old movie films which were shot in Berkshire from the 1920s to the 1960s. It has been funded by the British Film Institute, and the programme has been put together by Zoe Viney Burgess, Film Curator at the Wessex Film and Sound Archive in Winchester, which looks after the films. For better or worse, I have volunteered to introduce the various items and to give a commentary where appropriate. The event is “Berkshire on Film,” to be shown at The Biscuit Factory Cinema in Reading, on October 3rd, and is open to the public. It seemed to me that it would be something of a waste to show the programme once only, in one place, and your committee has suggested that we might run it again after our next AGM. I’m hoping we can make the necessary arrangements. It will certainly be a different kind of AGM!

In the meantime, we have much to look forward to, including the Heritage Open Days. Here in Reading, two new publications are promised – there may be others I don’t yet know about. From the Berkshire Record Society comes a new book about Greyfriars Church, Reading, and from Two Rivers Press comes, “A Reading Scrapbook,” on the history of the town as illustrated by 300 years’-worth of printed ephemera. Watch our newsletter for reviews. We also have the prospect of a new Central Library, and something happening at the old Gaol.

David Cliffe, Chairman BLHA

A Word from the Editor

Firstly, I want to congratulate David Cliffe, our chairman, on his being awarded an outstanding individual contribution award from the British Association for Local History (BALH). In his section above he is too modest to mention that it honours those who have made an outstanding and significant voluntary contribution and have an enthusiasm for local history alongside an inclination to share this with others. In my experience David has all of these qualities in abundance and we are very lucky to have him head up this association. If anyone wishes to know more or hear the presentation the BALH has a [recording](#) on their website.

On a secondary note, following a review, the Committee has decided that the 'What's On' section in the newsletter will no longer be included. While many groups send in their information, many more do not plus we often see changes

which are not then reflected in our publication. A new ['Diary Dates'](#) section has been added to our website which links to the event pages of member societies. If your society is not already on this page then there is a form where you can provide a link to your events information.

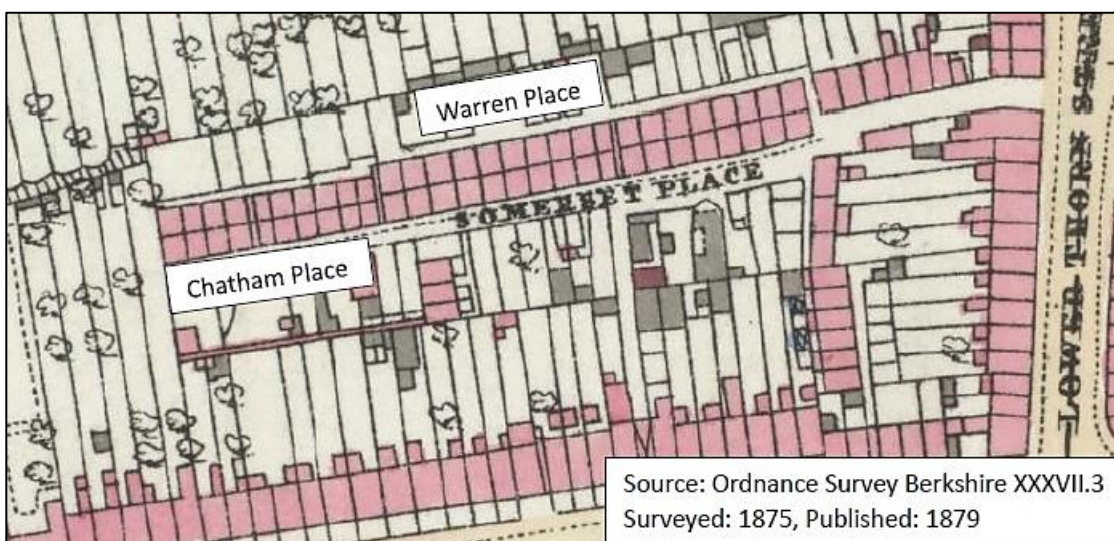
Jo Alexander-Jones

Notices and Articles

'The Pits' – A Tale of Back-to-Back housing in Reading

Dr Margaret Simons

There was once a place in Reading known as 'The Pits', a name given to the houses that were built in Somerset Place, Warren Place and Chatham Court, Chatham Street, during the 1820s and had acquired this name due to their increasingly dilapidated state. These houses all of a type known as a back-to-back, were constructed around a shared central or back wall. It was a cheap method of construction and was popular when the demand for housing by the labouring classes outstripped supply in the growing towns and cities of the earlier 19th century. More commonly associated with those centres of manufacturing found in the midlands and the north, they were also found elsewhere. Often poorly constructed they provided a quick return on the financial outlay for builders and investors.



The 56 houses known as 'The Pits', was unusual for Reading where back-to-backs were more usually found in groups of 10 or less a situation perhaps best explained by the availability of a large piece of land that was developed by only one or two builders. The landowner John Weldale Knollys leased this land to Alfred Compigne for a term of 99 years. John Leaver, a shoemaker cum-builder, subsequently acquired a parcel of this land and insured 36 dwellings here in 1825, the builder of the other houses is not known. These

houses were typical of the type; shabbily constructed and with poor sanitation, yet they were home to many a family during the 19th and early 20th century.

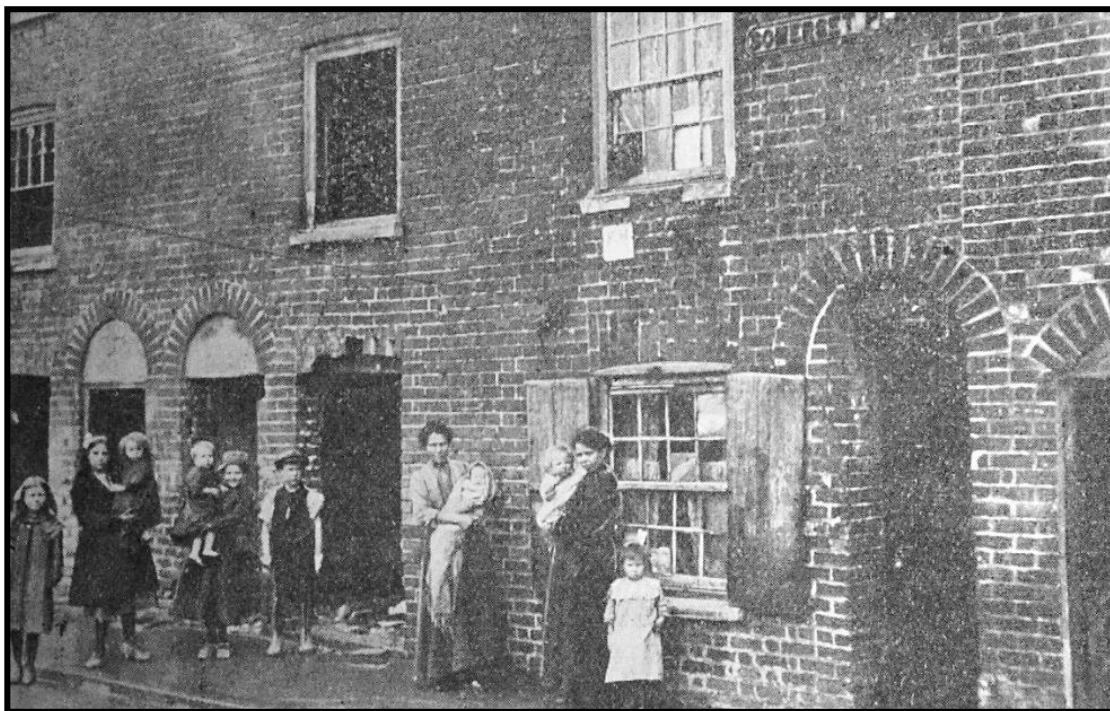
In 1846, 654 houses or nearly 16 per cent of the total housing stock of Reading, were classified as back-to-back. Each dwelling was normally only one room wide and deep, though on the ground floor this could be partitioned to form a scullery. Each room of the house would be placed one directly on top of the other, but the number of floors varied. There was uniformity and regularity in the housing, but the dimensions often varied between developments and place, some in Reading were little more than 10 ft in width. The ground floor was the general living space, the upper room/s were reserved as sleeping spaces and it wasn't unusual for a third floor to be incorporated into the roof area. Access between floors was by means of a steep staircase - which may or may not have been enclosed - with one room often accessed via the other. Privacy was limited, the only private amenity was the fireplace for warmth and cooking all other amenities had to be shared. In 1850 those who lived in 'The Pits' shared two taps and four privies not to mention the mice, rats and cockroaches. Cows were kept here too, adding to the already insanitary conditions.



Reading Standard (17 January 1914 p 17)

In 1888 houses in Somerset Place and Warren Place were let at weekly rates between 2s 6d and 3s, rents that suggested low earnings and poor-quality housing. From 1890 onwards the Medical Officer of Health regularly inspected the houses under Section 30 of the Housing of the Working

Classes Act (1890). They were frequently served with notices stating they were unfit for human habitation, but for those without steady incomes this low-cost property was their only option. As one resident of Somerset Place in 1914 put it, when rent books showed weeks of non-payment landlords would not 'give you a house now...unless you have paid up every bit. I have tried all over Reading. You can't demand a house; you must show your references and your rent-book.'



Reading Standard (17 January 1914 p 17)

From 1912 this Reading 'rookery' was brought to the attention of the town by the Reading Standard in a number of articles. Orders were served on the owners to demolish these properties and the area was slowly removed, but many residents still had to live there until they found somewhere else to live. From today's perspective it is hard to imagine that with all their faults these places were home and often to generations of the same family.

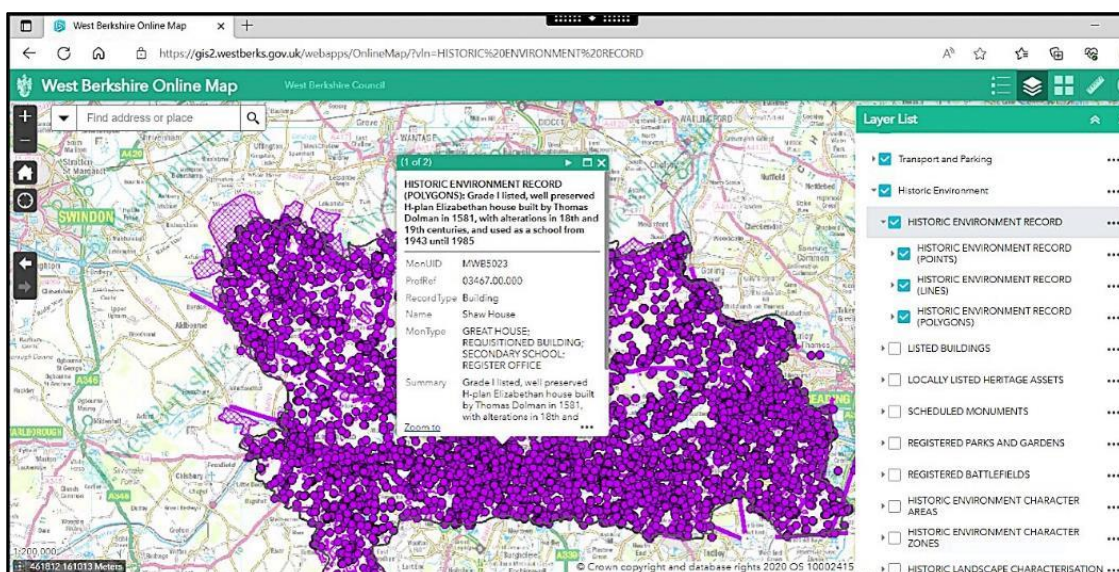
What West Berkshire Council's Archaeology team can do for you!

Beth Asbury, Assistant Archaeologist (HER and Outreach)

West Berkshire Council

Are you carrying our local history research in West Berkshire? Did you know that West Berkshire Council maintains a database of known buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas and landscapes of archaeological, architectural, artistic and/or historic interest, along with associated documentary sources such as books, maps and unpublished reports? This is the [West Berkshire Historic Environment Record](#) or HER, the primary index

for the physical remains of past human activity in West Berkshire. It is my role as part of the curatorial archaeology team to manage the HER, which the Principal Archaeologist, Sarah Orr, uses to advise on [development and land-use changes](#).



The HER is also a public record that contributes to research and education, and we want to promote public participation in the exploration, appreciation and enjoyment of local heritage. We make many of our HER records freely available on the [Heritage Gateway online portal](#) and on the [Council's online map](#) (shown above). We give talks to local groups, contribute to exhibitions at West Berkshire Museum, run activities for the annual Festival of Archaeology and were at the online Berkshire Heritage Fair in 2022, for example. I regularly post about West Berkshire's history and historic environment on social media.

Please follow us!

- [West Berkshire Heritage on Facebook](#)
- [West Berkshire Heritage on X](#)
- [West Berkshire Heritage on Instagram](#)

The HER is a dynamic information system, which means it is constantly being updated with the results of new fieldwork and research. However, our records are only as good as our sources and this is where you can help us! If you are researching aspects of West Berkshire's historic environment, please let me know, so I can add the information to the HER, ensuring that your knowledge is not lost, and is taken into consideration in future development proposals and research projects. Please also get in touch if you spot any missing or incorrect information in our records.

Sarah and I are joined by Dr Philip Smither, the Portable Antiquities Scheme's (PAS) Finds Liaison Officer (FLO) for all of Berkshire. The Scheme is run by the British Museum and Museum Wales to encourage the recording of archaeological objects found by members of the public in England and Wales. All the finds recorded by the PAS are made publicly available on its [online database](#) and some West Berkshire artefacts are currently on display in West Berkshire Museum's ['Treasure Through Time' exhibition](#).



If your research interests are in eastern Berkshire, the HERs of the other five councils (Bracknell Forest, Reading, Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead, and Wokingham) are maintained by Berkshire Archaeology, based at the Royal Berkshire Archives.

New Life for the Carnegie Public Library, Newbury

Originally this Carnegie public library opened in 1905. It was designed by the Newbury Borough Surveyor and built by local builders and is now included in the West Berkshire Council local list of heritage assets. The building sits in the Newbury town centre conservation area and having had many incarnations has stood empty for the last five years.

The building has been purchased by Greenham Trust who will be leasing it to the Corn Exchange (Newbury) Trust, to repurpose and return this beautiful local heritage building to the community, transforming it to become a new arts hub for Newbury providing creative opportunities to local people of all ages.



The Corn Exchange has a feature on [memories of the old library](#), which as well as the memories shows some of the renovations done to date.

Can You Help?

Katie Amos, the Local Studies Lead for Reading Borough Libraries has asked if anyone recognises this unidentified picture of a watermill from their collection. She has also contacted the Mills Archive to ask their advice. If you have any ideas you can let Katie know at Katie.Amos@reading.gov.uk



West Berkshire Local Listings

Following a Consultation, the recommendation to add eight new heritage assets to the Local List has been approved by West Berkshire Council. The new Locally Listed assets are:

- A pump and well house at East Ilsley - a 1930s flywheel pump which is still in working order.
- A pump and pump house at Burghfield - the pump in School Lane may have supplied the school with water in the early 1900s, while the pump house at Bunces Lane contains the remains of a pump base, and carries a dedication to Queen Victoria in the year of her son Edward VII's Coronation (1902).
- No 6, Northbrook Street, Newbury - a shop built in 1886 for the draper William Clark, and designed by Walter Henry Bell, a local architect.
- The Crabtree Community Centre, Hermitage, - formerly part of the WW2 American military hospital complex.
- White Lodge, Donnington - a former late 19th century lodge or gate house for the Donnington Grove estate, now residential.
- A Victorian Post Box at Welford - a scarce National Standard No 2 wall mounted box from 1859-61.
- A metal stile at Marlston - 19th century metal stile made by the Hedges Foundry of Bucklebury.

2024 Bond Memorial Lecture

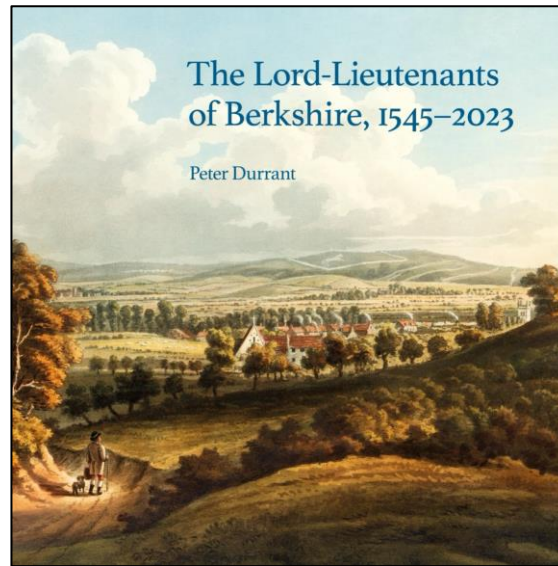
The [2024 Maurice and Shelagh Bond Memorial Lecture](#) will take place on Wednesday 16 October at 7.00-8.00 in St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. Dr Joanna Laynesmith FRHistS, University of Reading, will speak on 'Elizabeth Woodville: the controversies of her queenship and her Windsor connections'. Dr Laynesmith is an author who has been a guest on Radio 4's In Our Time, and has appeared on Time Team. Admission is free, but by named tickets only. To obtain tickets you can send a list of names to chapteroffice@stgeorges-windsor.org or via a stamped addressed envelope to The Chapter Office, 2 The Cloisters, Windsor Castle, SL4 1NJ.

Berkshire On Film

On 3 October at 19.30, there will be a screening of '[Berkshire on Film](#)' at The Biscuit Factory in Reading. This is an archival film that includes footage of the county held by Wessex Film and Sound Archive (WFSA). The coverage includes material from Newbury, Reading, Windsor, Slough, Wargrave, Sonning, Datchet, Bray, Cookham and Wokingham.' The event features an introduction from Dr Zoe Viney Burgess, Film Curator WFSA and commentary from our very own David Cliffe who has been instrumental in pulling the event and the content together. Screening will be followed by Q&A.

The Lord-Lieutenants of Berkshire, 1545-2023 – Book Review

Peter Durrant MBE DL has recently published this book. It is available from the website for [The Berkshire Lieutenancy](#).



Having been the County Archivist for Berkshire for some 25 years, and as a Deputy Lieutenant for the Royal County since 2018, Peter Durrant is well positioned to craft this new short and well-illustrated book. In it he tells the story about the changing role of the Lord Lieutenants of the Royal County of Berkshire and the 42 people (41 men and 1 woman) who have served in the role since the reign of Henry VIII.

The Lord Lieutenant is the Monarch's personal representative in Berkshire. As such it is their first and foremost duty to uphold the dignity of the Crown.

Defence was from the start a primary concern of Lord Lieutenants. However, no longer do they have that responsibility (no doubt to their relief), though they are able to wear a military uniform. The end of Queen Victoria's reign marked changes and the role has continued to evolve. Today they, and their Deputy Lieutenants, support the territorial and volunteer forces but mainly focus on promoting social cohesion and celebrating public and voluntary service.

During the second Elizabethan age further changes took place, people were appointed from wider backgrounds than the landed gentry. The first woman, and the only one to date, Mary Baylis (2008-2015) had a background in public service including as very active Justice of the Peace (JP).

So, what happened when Berkshire County Council in 1998 was abolished? The then Lord Lieutenant when he enquired "Where is Berkshire now?" was told "You are Berkshire now". All Lord Lieutenants since have very much taken that to heart in their work as they have worked to enhance the county identity. The book explains about the grant of a new coat of arms for Berkshire in 2019.

Richard Bennett DL

Society Contributions

Berkshire Family History Society

As I write this, we probably have about 12 more months left in our current premises on the second floor of Reading Central Library before we need to vacate, and so we have been actively looking for new premises for some time now. Reading Central Library is due to locate to a newly constructed extension off the Civic Offices on Bridge Street and the current premises is already up for sale for redevelopment into flats. The timing for the library's relocation is currently late 2025/early 2026, although the project timeline has already experienced some slippage and more may occur.

In the meantime, our research zone has been busy with researchers and event attendees, and we continue to run quarterly Centre tours to demonstrate what is available there and how it can be accessed. We also offer bespoke tours and if this appeals to your Society – please get in touch with me at catherine.sampson@berksfhs.org.uk. 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, <https://berksfhs.org>, as is the full list of subscription-based websites that you can consult for free whilst you're here.

In September, we are once again extending our opening hours for the Heritage Open Days. Free Centre tours are available on some days, there is an exhibition on Reading's Broad Street in 1881 and video screenings of Reading before and after the construction of the Inner Direction Road on Saturday 7th. Plus, we are giving advice not just on tracing your family history but also on tracing the history of your house. Again, full details can be found on our website.

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 — berksfhs.org — and in the e-mailed Events Newsletter, available to non-members and members alike.

Catherine Sampson, Chairman

Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group

We had a lovely talk from Lionel Williams in April where he told us about the history of Reading's hospitals, and the machinery that was used and also

developed in the Royal Berkshire Hospital. May saw a circular walk along the Kennet and Avon canal and the Coley branch line, followed by a pub lunch which proved very enjoyable, then a talk later in the month by Doug Irvine on the construction of the Crystal Palace and the Great Exhibition. Doug's talk gave a fascinating insight into the plans and methods used for the construction and the minds of Victorians as they worked to create a huge structure in a material never before used on this scale. It is such a pity that the Crystal Palace burnt down after having been moved to its final site in South London as it would have made a wonderful visit.

Our final event before the summer break was to visit Didcot Railway Centre. Ann Middleton, a member of both BIAG and the Railway Centre, managed to get us access in to so many restricted areas where experts in the construction and restoration of railways talked to us on their work and future plans. It was so good that what was meant to be a few hours had us leaving the site quite a while after all of the normal visitors had left for their homes, but no-one was complaining.

Going in to Autumn our programme's focus is again on walks with water and talks about the Kennet and Avon canal, but starting with a talk and linked walk on the geology that shaped the design and buildings in Reading.

Jo Alexander-Jones, Secretary

Friends of Reading Abbey (FORA)

This year's Reading Water Fest, held on Saturday 8 June, was a success, despite indifferent morning weather. FORA had a stand in the heritage area of the South Transept, alongside Reading Museum and the Friends of Reading Museum (FORM), the Reading Civic Society, the Confraternity of St. James, and the Progress Theatre.

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 our Water Fest display this year was focused on Cluny Abbey and the spread of Cluniac monasticism in Europe and Britain. Our children's trail was promoted as 'ClunyKids' and attracted forty entrants, our largest number. To celebrate the FESC anniversary we promoted a special performance on the acoustic stage in the South Transept by local musicians Simon Mayor and Hilary James, which was generously funded by the Earley Charity. The FESC and Earley Charity links were featured in a special flier by the stage. Simon and Hilary concluded their set by

singing *Sumer is Icumen in*.

At this year's Water Fest we made contact with Mr Channing Bi, the owner of Ziran and therefore the new owner of Reading Gaol; and a representative from VisiAR Augmented Reality which offers the opportunity, by scanning a QR code on a mobile phone, to walk around the Abbey Quarter with the phone showing a 3-D representation of the Abbey buildings overlaid on the current layout, using Reading Museum's 3-D model of the Abbey Quarter.

Our Summer Outing for members took place on Wednesday 17 July, with a coach trip to Gloucester to visit the cathedral and the Blackfriars Priory, both in the city centre. It was attended by thirty-eight people, who had an entertaining and informative - and sunny - day. Pictures have been published on the [FORA Facebook page](#).

As part of our programme of celebrations for the 30th anniversary of the European Federation of Cluniac Sites (FESC) we are holding an additional public lecture on Saturday 28 September, on the theme 'Reading Abbey in the Context of Cluny'. This has been organised in conjunction with the Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies (GCMS) and the History Department at the University of Reading. It will be given by Caroline Johnson, a post-graduate member of GCMS and also a FORA committee member, at St. James's RC Church in The Forbury, at 2.30 pm (doors open 2.00 pm). As per usual, entry will be free to anybody interested, but with a retiring collection.

This year's AGM will be held at the Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square, on Saturday 26 October, at 2.30 pm (doors open at 2.00 pm). It will be followed by our Autumn Lecture, which this year will be given by David Sanchez, the Projects Coordinator for Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd (TVAS), on the results of the 2019 excavations of the medieval tilery in Silver Street, and whether any connections can be made with Reading Abbey. David gave a similar talk last autumn to the Friends of Reading Museum, which was well received.

John Painter, Secretary

Goring Gap Local History Society

Our 2023/24 season of talks ended with two very enjoyable presentations. In April we were delighted to have the Tudor historian Dr Nicola Tallis return to speak about the subject of her latest book – the early life of Queen Elizabeth I. The road to becoming Queen for Henry VIII's younger daughter was far from guaranteed as she spent most of her youth facing a highly unpredictable future. By the time of her accession she had already endured more tumult than

many sovereigns face in their entire lifetimes.

To conclude our series of talks, Nick Millea, the Map Curator of the Bodleian Library, took us on an engaging journey through various maps, each with their own intriguing characteristics, in his presentation *The Message in the Map*. He began with conventional maps of the Goring Gap and concluded with somewhat unsettling detailed 20th century Russian maps of our area.

June heralded our annual coach outing, which this year was to Chavenage House near Tetbury in Gloucestershire. It is good to report that for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic the trip was so well supported that it was over-subscribed. A full coachload had a thoroughly enjoyable time at Chavenage. The Elizabethan house is a delight and relatively unchanged since it was built. We were given guided tours by members of the family who own it and heard entertaining stories about the importance of the property in the English Civil War – it is haunted by King Charles I no less – as well as its role in more recent history. The house now derives its main income from television and film productions and will be familiar to many who watched the latest series of *Poldark*. After a delicious home-made lunch, the group made its way to nearby Malmesbury for a guided tour of the Abbey and a quick wander round the town before departing for home. It will be hard to beat this itinerary in future Society outings!

It has been a busy summer. In June we co-organized a talk on garden history in the Gap Festival with our friends from the neighbouring South Stoke Historical Society. Given by former director of the Oxford Botanic Garden Dr Timothy Walker, the event was a sell-out. The talk was extremely informative but delivered with great humour and beautifully illustrated throughout. We hastened to book Timothy for another of his talks in our future lecture programme. After that we collaborated with the Friends of Goring Library to put on a guided walk of the village which focused on the history of the businesses. This too was over-subscribed and 24 people came along who were taken round in two groups. The event concluded back at the library with a history quiz and tea and cake.

In July it was back down to earth with the AGM, where we were relieved to elect a full committee for the forthcoming year. To assure a quorum, the formal business is always followed by refreshments, this year cheese and wine – always popular. Sometimes we have a short talk at the AGM, but this time the Archivist and the Secretary put together a display of maps of Goring and Streatley through the ages which kept everyone happily occupied. We also had an intriguing display of portraits of local inhabitants, drawn by a talented local artist in the 1990s, which were donated to the Society on his death. The

mystery is that none of them are named and we were hoping that our members might recognize some of the subjects. Alas, very few were identified.

As I write this in August, we have just conducted another guided walk, this time for the Berkshire Family History Society, which focused on the famous people and personalities who have lived in Goring and Streatley, of which there have been many over the years, ranging from Oscar Wilde to Bomber Harris, along with artists and writers, not forgetting television actors and rock stars. On the occasion of this walk, the guides' work was made easier by the closure of Streatley High Street to put in new gas mains. Although the inconvenience was very unpopular with the locals and those who travel through the villages as a way to cross the Thames, it did mean that there was little traffic to drown out the commentary!

Our new season of talks starts in September and off we go again on another year of activities.

Janet Hurst, Secretary

The History of Reading Society

At our April meeting, Ann Smith gave us "A History of Woodley." A few years ago, she had edited a book with the same title, from work done by members of the Reading and Wokingham U3A, who were joined by Woodley U3A when that branch was formed. Where previous publications on Woodley had been limited in scope, this volume gave us the whole history. Use had been made of old documents and maps, but also of people's memories and old diaries to give us a full and fascinating picture.

This was reflected in Ann's talk, which was well balanced. We began with the earliest surviving record of the name – a character named Osbertus de Woodlegh in 1220, and moved through the centuries to times that many in the audience could remember – the airfield, Bulmershe College, the building of houses, and the building of the A329M and the bridge collapse at Loddon Bridge Road.

Changes in the twentieth century meant that Woodley, which had been a rural village for centuries, became in effect a small town. Until the 1920s, most of the land and the farms were part of large estates owned by three families – the Palmers, the Whebles and the Goldings. The dividing up and selling off of the estates led to ribbon development, then housing estates and a shopping centre. The provision of piped water, mains drainage and electricity eventually arrived.

We were shown pictures of public houses, listed buildings, schools, and the premises of many different firms which built aircraft, manufactured ball-point pens, baked bread, and made furniture and tin boxes.

The talk, like the book, was well illustrated, and at the end of the talk, copies of the book went on sale. The numbers sold exceeded expectations; such was people's interest.

The talk in May, "The Black Arts in Reading," was given by Paul Joyce, who had worked in the printing industry in Reading. He took us back to the beginning, to 1723 when the first printing press in the town was set up to produce its first local newspaper, the "Reading Mercury."

Rivals emerged in the following century, supporting different political interests – the "Chronicle," "Herald," "Observer," "Standard" and "Evening Post" among them. During the earlier period, local papers relied very much on news from London, and it was noticeable that their offices were all close to the railway station. We were also reminded of the importance of newspaper sellers on the streets, now only a distant memory.

There were lots of illustrations of front pages and advertisements, the buildings the papers had occupied, and rare pictures of the interiors of their printing works. Technological changes were outlined – from letterpress and loose blocks of type to linotype and filmset, from the platen to the cylinder, and from hand operation to steam power and electricity. The presses were used for other kinds of work, some of them for producing newspapers for nearby towns.

Premises of other notable printers were illustrated, with examples of their work – such as Blackwell's, Snare's, Horniman's, Ingall's, Rusher's, G. R. Smith's, Lovejoy's, Bradley's, Heppell's and the Valpee Printing Company. There was the multi-talented H. T. Morley of Kings Road, and Greenslade's, the colour printers farther along the road. There was Poynder's, the "artistic" printers who designed their own "Reading" typeface, and who were taken over by Lamport Gilbert.

And then there were the larger firms of national importance. There was a photograph taken inside the printing works of Huntley, Boorne and Stevens, manufacturers of air-tight biscuit tins. We tend to forget that at one time they all had to have paper labels. Petty and Sons of Leeds opened a works on Katesgrove Lane. When it burned down in 1900 they were able to buy The Queen's Hall in Valpy Street as their "Southern Printeries." The firm left Reading in 1957. The Co-operative Wholesale Society built a very large printing works on Elgar Road in 1933, where our speaker had worked. They

were closely followed by the Berkshire Printing Company, whose new works on Oxford Road opened in 1934 and did all the printing for Brooke Bond tea, and Oxo. Wyman's, later Cox and Wyman's, in Cardiff Road, large-scale printers of paperback books, disappeared from the scene only in recent years.

The talk brought home the importance of the printing industry to Reading's economy, and talking afterwards, it was obvious that a number of us wished that the talk and images could be turned into a book we could take home!

David Cliffe, Chairman

Hungerford Historical Association

It was a most intriguing title for a Historical Association's talk; "My Life as a Cold War Spy". This was Major General Peter Williams's subject for our May talk, generating visions of James Bond and George Smiley. Peter did mention such comparisons did not apply to his life as a Liaison Officer during the 30 years of the Cold War.

Whilst he was at school, the film "Dr Zhivago" was released, telling the story of medic and poet Zhivago and his relationship with the Julie Christie character Lara in the years after the Russian revolution. The lovely Lara piqued his interest in Russia and the Russian language, which he decided to study at the military language school. He related an amusing tale of his difficulty in learning Russian vs. learning Russian through the medium of English for a Japanese student. The latter maintained it was no contest!

Following Russian, Peter studied German for a while before being posted in the early 1980s to the British Military Liaison Mission (BRIXMIS) based in West Berlin, but patrolling in East Germany from the mission's forward operating base in Potsdam. Most of his audience remembered that era, but he explained in graphic terms the geography, life and politics of the two Germanys, East and West.

Back in 1946, bilateral agreements had been reached between the four powers that defeated Nazi Germany – the USA, Britain, France and the Soviet Union – for liaison missions from each country to be permitted to enter the other's occupation zone. Thus, authorised Russian officers could enter the British Zone and, in Britain's case, our officers were able to enter the Soviet Zone (which became East Germany in 1949). The rules of entry were quite strict in terms of behaviour and access, but in teams of three, the liaison officers roamed fairly widely.

The reason for the access agreement lay mainly in limiting mistrust between

Russia and the western powers. The aim therefore was to check that “the other side” was not doing anything ‘abnormal’ and so potentially threatening.

Peter’s team was made up of himself, an officer, and two sergeants, one to drive and one a trained observer. They were provided with the necessary reconnaissance equipment and a vehicle, the latter suitably modified to cope with the various challenges that they faced. They used Range Rovers, Mercedes G Wagons and Opel Senators and it was clear that Peter’s preference was for the Opel, being faster and more manoeuvrable.

It is difficult for those in a free society to imagine what life in a totalitarian state is like, but this is what faced Peter when he was posted to the Potsdam HQ. Knowing other liaison officers, particularly the Russians, was important, as was being wary of the apparent real danger of Russian “femme fatales”! Much of the team’s time was spent in hostile East Germany, entering Potsdam from West Berlin across the Glienicke Bridge, itself made famous in various post war spy films.

Their job in roaming around East Germany was to Hoover-up as much information about military activity as they could. This needed sharp eyes, imagination and courage, because they were constantly being watched themselves by the police and, more importantly, by the Stasi, the East German secret police.

They were regularly stopped for questioning and not infrequently detained for a period. These were regarded as normal occurrences, but the behaviour of the Stasi was more sinister. Peter related an incident from 1982 when, straying rather too close to a radar station, the car he was travelling in was deliberately rammed by a Stasi truck. The car was written-off, but fortunately Peter and his fellow passengers, a Brigadier and his driver, were uninjured.

Less fortunate was a French liaison officer who was killed in March 1984 in another Stasi ramming incident and, separately, an American officer who was shot dead by a Soviet sentry a year later – this was a potentially hazardous occupation.

This liaison work continued after the fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989, but came to an end on the eve of German reunification in October 1990.

In 2011 Peter returned to the radar station to meet the driver of the truck that had rammed his car almost three decades earlier, who told him that participants in these Stasi directed ramming operations, aimed at killing or wounding the members of western military liaison missions, were incentivised with extra holidays and bonuses. This must have been a very sobering thing

for Peter to learn.

Peter's presentation, well-illustrated and given with humour, was received enthusiastically by his 100 strong HHA audience of members and visitors.

In June the meeting was the AGM and a social evening which had a presentation of a BBC archive film including Littlecote Roman Villa. The Association's new season starts on 25 September with a talk about the life of the Duke of Wellington.

Caroline Ness, Chairman

Hurley History Society

The Society has still continued to grow throughout the summer with over 55 members at the present time. Our summer programme of walks and visits is still proving to be popular with an average of 25 members & friends attending.

Since our very popular visit to Freebody's Boatyard in Hurley, the only Thames boatyard still building only wooden boats, we have had a very interesting talk by Richard Poad, from the Maidenhead Heritage Centre, on the History of the Thames between Henley and Windsor (our patch!!)

This was followed in June with a guided walk around the monuments on Runnymede, by blue badge guide Debbie Keenan followed by lunch in the café. The 2-hour walk visited the monuments of Magna Carta; the JFK Memorial; and the relatively new monument entitled "Writ in Water" designed by Mark Wallinger and representing Clause 39 of Magna Carta reflected in water.

Then in July the committee organised a walk across the Hurley weirs to visit the Flash Lock Winch on the Buckinghamshire bank, guided by Giles Robinson our local lock keeper. On returning to the Berkshire bank, we visited Hurley Churchyard where various members of the Society gave brief talks about well-known people buried in the churchyard including The Wethered Family; Giulio Trapani, one time owner of the Old Bell Hotel; Hippolyta da Costa who was credited with creating "The Free Press" in Brazil. The evening concluded with an illustrated talk by David Burfitt on those members of our community who are remembered on our War Memorial.

August saw the Society having a return visit to the continued excavations at Cookham Abbey to see the latest excavations and what Reading University have uncovered. We will hope to be having an illustrated talk on the findings at our AGM in November.

Then the final visit of the year will be to Reading Museum and also to the Museum Store to see the artefacts that are deposited and stored there from

Hurley Priory.

Having completed the production and collation of Mary Howarth's booklets into a bound copy for sale (books available at £35), we have now moved on to the restoration and refurbishment of the 1609 map of Hurley Parish. It is hoped to display a full-sized, framed copy in Hurley before the end of the year, for residents and visitors to examine.

Our AGM is being held on 12 November in our Village Hall. Information and further details from David Burfitt, Secretary, at davidrburfitt@gmail.com.

David Burfitt, Secretary

Newbury District Field Club

Founded in 1870 we have a series of "transactions", books recording what the society did up until 2003. An interesting overview of membership numbers, the outings and some of the lectures. Originally you had to be proposed and seconded to join the Field club. Today numbers have dwindled as there are few "gentlemen and ladies of leisure" but we continue to meet once a month in local church halls, in the afternoon. We are grateful to Newbury Museum for hosting our collection of "transactions" and other local history books. This arrangement has been in place since the museum extension was built in 1935.

Our next events are all at St. Johns Church, Newbury RG14 7PY all starting at 14.00 and are 'The life of Captain Hawkes' with Tom Allen on 16 September, 'Restoring a 17th century grade II listed timber framed cottage' with Karen Pryer on 21 October and 'Mystery Woman from the 1880s in East Woodhay' with David Skyme on 18 November.

Carol Swanborough

Oxfordshire Family History Society

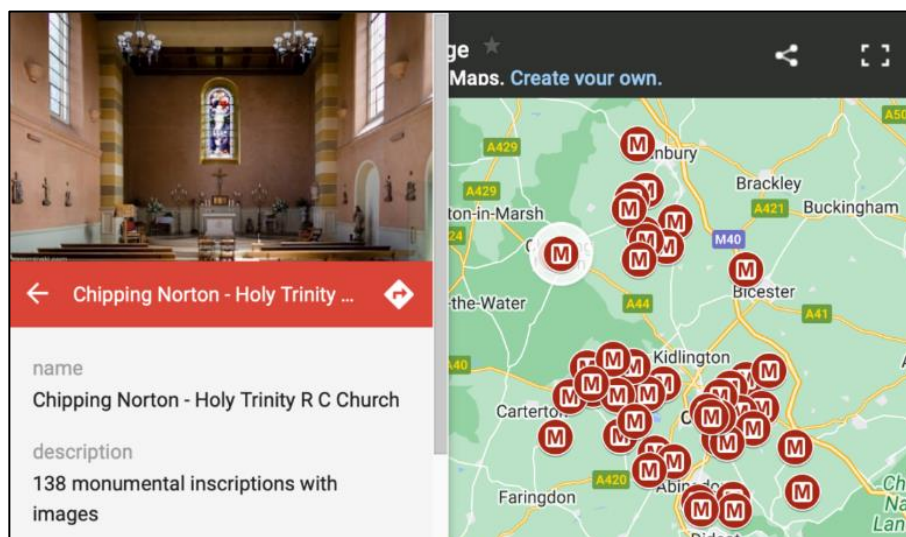
We are ready to release our Big Oxfordshire Names Database (BOND) during the week commencing 9 September. BOND is a name rich data source of anyone who left their mark in Oxfordshire with search facilities which will bring to light ancestors across multiple sources previously all held separately. It will be available to members of the society. The initial release covers:

- Parish Registers transcriptions: Baptisms, Marriages, Banns and Burials
- Monumental Inscriptions (MIs) with images
- Surnames - Developed from hundreds of books/lists containing Oxfordshire names amounting to nearly 200,000 lines of people data dating from the

medieval period to the 20th century

- Surname variants and Oxfordshire places

Below is a map showing BOND coverage of monumental inscriptions. Clicking on the 'M' in a red circle provides more information.



BOND represents the next generation in OFHS's family history data; collated, indexed and made available via our website to members in support of their genealogical research. For further information please contact publicity@ofhs.uk.

OFHS [Family History Fair 2024](#) will be on Saturday 26 October between 10.00 and 16.00 at Cherwell School, Oxford. It is free to attend and there is free parking.

To join the Society the membership is £10 per annum for a UK household and £15 per annum for an Overseas household, membership can be obtained on-line at www.ofhs.uk/become-a-member.

Project Purley

In April, we welcomed Dr Stephen Goss, an academic who moved to Reading from his native Ireland five years ago. His talk was on the history of Caversham Park, and it is difficult to think of another local estate which has been as connected to national and international history for such a long period of time. Recorded in Domesday in 1086, its first significant owner was William Marshall (c. 1146-1219), an Anglo-Norman soldier and statesman. Stephen followed the ownership or occupation of the property to the twentieth century and its time as a school and then purchase by the BBC during the Second World War. At least one of our members had worked for the BBC there and

was able to share her memories of the site. It was a very interesting talk, packed with information and very well delivered. [Editorial note: It is now believed that the original manor house was by the Thames, near the present-day Dean's Farm].

After a break in May, June was a busy month with back-to-back events on Friday 7th and Saturday 8th June. The Rain or Shine Theatre Company gave an outstanding performance as usual, this time their production being "The importance of being Earnest" based, of course, on the play of that name by Oscar Wilde. The Society has been hosting productions in the village by this travelling theatre company for over fifteen years now and as usual we made a donation to charity afterwards, this time the recipient being The Army Benevolent Fund.

The next day, committee members were again busy – this time setting up and hosting our D-Day event in the village's Memorial Hall. This commemorated the events of 6th June 1944, as Operation Overlord saw thousands of troops from the UK, the USA and Canada wade ashore or land in Normandy to begin the liberation of France. We began with a fish and chips lunch, after which Mike Cooper gave an informative talk on D-Day itself. To add to the occasion, a lamp of peace was lit and hung outside, and the Union Jack was flown on the flagpole. We also had a small display on the events of D-Day and of memorabilia. It was a very enjoyable occasion which we opened up to members and non-members alike.

July brought our annual coach trip – this time to the Chiltern Open Air Museum in Buckinghamshire, which is well worth a visit. This open-air museum covers an area of forty-five acres which includes a working farm with sheep, goats, chickens and ducks, and there is a Dig for Victory allotment and woodlands. Thirty-seven historic buildings show how people lived and worked in the past and many had their own period gardens which were beautifully maintained and attracted considerable interest. The buildings were spread over the site with a village green in the centre surrounded by buildings and a tearoom. There were many highlights including the Caversham toilets (still in use), the tin chapel, the cottages and their gardens and the prefabricated bungalow.

Looking ahead, we have our normal programme of talks between September and November and a Christmas part in December. We are now beginning work on recognising the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and hope to co-ordinate a village-wide commemoration event.

Catherine Sampson

Royal Berkshire Archives

At the time of writing, the Royal Berkshire Archives was getting ready for Heritage Open Days 2024 with a free tour for individuals to go behind the scenes into the strongroom and conservation areas. Archival documents on display connected with the HOD theme of Routes, Networks and Connections are also part of the tour. Whilst the HOD tour is an annual event for individuals to attend free of charge, we do offer such tours for groups for a fee. So, if your society or club is interested in finding out more about what we do and seeing areas normally closed off to visitors, why not get in touch?

We are pleased to say that the exhibition entitled "Bracknell: A New Community" held at Bracknell Library earlier this year, will be made available here at the Royal Berkshire Archives this autumn. Dates are yet to be finalised, but it is likely to be from the end of September. Full details will be made available on our website in due course.

The Wessex Film and Sound Archive (WFSA) is the regional film archive for many areas in the south east including Berkshire. In collaboration with WFSA, we will be holding a screening of archive film with an introduction from Dr Zoe Viney Burgess, Film Curator WFSA, commentary from local historian and BLHA Chairman, David Cliffe, as well as Q&A. The event will be held at the Reading Biscuit Factory on 3 October 2024, 19:30-21.00, and tickets can be booked via the Reading Biscuit Factory website (readingbiscuitfactory.co.uk).

Ivone Turnbull, Senior Archivist

Swallowfield Local History Society

The Swallowfield Local History Society continues to thrive with good attendance at the monthly meetings on the third Thursday of the month in the Rose Room at the Parish Hall.

The speakers and subject matter have created great interest with good sessions at the end of the presentation with many questions and the appropriate answers - revealing the level of interest and knowledge of local events and people which increased everyone's knowledge of what happened 'in the past' in the village in which we live.

To give you a taste of two of the presentations given this Spring:

- Graffiti found in Berkshire Churches
- Memories of Riseley

The evening always ends with time to chat, meet old friends, enjoy a cup of tea or coffee - the whole evening is relaxed and welcoming to anyone who wants to come and join us.

Maggie Uttley (Chairman)

Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society

May saw a talk on Trooper Potts VC by Richard Bennett, Brigadier Tony Verey and Captain Andrew French of the Berkshire Yeomanry Museum and a walk and talk around our villages hosted by our chairman James Fort. The management team created a busy schedule for the summer break to promote the Society locally through two village activities. On Sunday 16 June we joined the Boy Scouts Donkey Derby on King George recreation ground and then on 17 August we were at the Twyford Parish Council's Fete on Stanlake Meadow. We had our summer lunch on 13 July at Burattas.

The Autumn programme includes Richard Marks talking on Victorian Industry around Reading on 9 September, Living through the Civil War with Catherine Sampson on 14 October, Village News from Tom Fort on 11 November and our Christmas party on 9 December.

Graham Starkie

Wargrave Local History Society

For Wargrave Local History Society's May meeting, the history of the Polehampton Trust was recounted by Andrew Cardy and James Fort – both having previously been its chairman. The charitable trust owes its existence to the will of Edward Polehampton, who had died in 1722. Although the name Polehampton is well known in Twyford, surprisingly little is known about Edward himself. It would appear that he was born in about 1650, although his birthplace is not recorded.

The legend is that as a 9-year-old Edward was making his way to London in freezing cold weather to seek his fortune when he was found on the doorstep of the Rose and Crown public house in Twyford. The landlord took him in and cared for him, before Edward continued his journey. He became a painter - especially of carriages. His business was clearly successful, taking on apprentices by the 1680s but little is known of his private life. Edward made his will on 27th July 1721, leaving a large part of his assets to the benefit of the people of Twyford. His assets included property in various places, including Smithfield, in the City of London, Hampton, and parcels of land at

Twyford, and he provided for a schoolmaster to be paid £40 per year to teach 10 poor boys, up to the age of 15. Edward died in 1722, but little happened other than the school. Until the late 19th century, when the distinguished lawyer Sir Henry Verrey set about getting a proper legal basis for the charity. The Victorian school building on Trust land provided education for boys up to 13, and remained in use until the early 1970s, and more recently it was suggested the building be adapted as a village library. Andrew and James also explained the other work that the Polehampton Charity does for those in the local area.

June was the time of the Wargrave Village Festival, for which the first of Wargrave Local History Society's events was the ever-popular Historic Village Walk. As usual, this was a sell-out event, with people of all ages - from under 6 months to over 80 - hearing about people and events from over 900 years of Wargrave's past, and the places associated with them as they took a gentle afternoon stroll from Mill Green around the church and High Street area.

A little over a week later, and the society hosted An Evening with Simon Williams, in the Woodclyffe Hall. Simon is probably best known for his wide range of work on television, from Upstairs Downstairs to Doctor Who, or on radio in The Archers - as well as acclaimed performances on the stage. He delighted the audience, telling how he took up acting as a career (as had his father, Hugh) with stories from the world of acting, and people working in it. After the interval, Simon answered a wide range of questions from the audience - all illustrated with entertaining anecdotes about himself, other actors, and the profession. He engaged with the audience who had a most enjoyable evening.

At the end of that week, at the Wargrave Village Festival Fete, the society mounted a display in Mill Green. The themes for this year's display of historic photographs about the village including about the village festival itself, it having begun in 1975.

In July, the Wargrave Local History Society visited Pendon Museum in the village of Long Wittenham, and Dorchester Abbey. The original concept that has resulted in Pendon Museum was an idea of Royce England, a young Australian. In the late 1930s, he realised that the rural landscape was changing, and he set out to create a 3-dimensional miniature version of the Vale of White Horse. Each building represented has been painstakingly researched and re-created to 1/76th of the original, whilst other displays to the same scale include one of I K Brunel's timber viaducts on Dartmoor. The museum is a fascinating portrayal of the social history of aspects of life in the 1930s - many of the structures only now surviving in miniature form - as well as the skills of the model makers who have built it over the last half century. The group then moved on to Dorchester, where a delightful tea and cakes

had been prepared for the members in the Abbey.



Although the society does not have a formal meeting in August, this year a group of members were led on a local history walk of Woodley. Our guide was Ann Smith, who had told us of the History of Woodley at our February meeting, and now could show us 'for real' many of the places she had spoken about then. There is much more to Woodley than its shopping precinct or trading estate!

For more information about the society, visit our [website](#).

Peter Delaney

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)

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