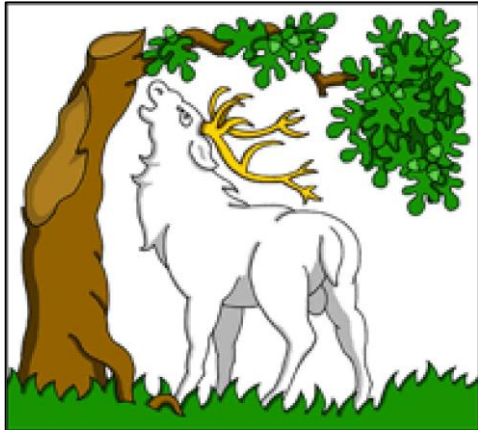


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Berkshire Local History Association



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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, please focus on the content rather than the format.

Cover picture: Whitchurch Bridge (Jo Alexander-Jones)

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Chairman's Corner

It is likely that the 2025 Annual General Meeting will be in a rather different kind of venue, and a bit later in the year than the usual Saturday, though the agenda for the meeting itself will have to be along the same lines as ever. The committee had planned to hold it in Reading, on a barge on the River Kennet, which was used for wedding receptions and for meetings of the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust, among other things. To our dismay, the hotel group which owned it has decided to close the whole venue down. So instead, the AGM will be on Thursday April 17th, meeting from 10.30 onwards at the Biscuit Factory Cinema – which is in the Broad Street Mall shopping centre (formerly the Butts Centre), on the corner of Oxford Road and Queen's Walk – with the Penta Hotel on the opposite corner. There won't be room for the stalls of local societies, but the great attraction is that, following the meeting, we will be able to watch a programme of archive movie films shot between the 1920s and the 1960s across Berkshire.

The programme was put together by Zoe Viney Burgess of the Wessex Film and Sound Archive, which is based in Winchester. The same films were shown at the same place in October, with great success – and with me giving a running commentary during the silent films. It was fully booked, a month before the show. Some of the films are very short, like the parade at the Wokingham Carnival in 1933 with the Dagenham Girl Pipers. There's also the Newbury British Legion Fete, Wargrave Regatta, Sonning Races, road-building at Bracknell, Slough and Windsor Carnival and various views of Windsor, among much else. Reading is well represented, with film of royal visits, the students' rag parade, advertising for Huntley and Palmers biscuits, public health services in 1956, and my own favourite, the only moving pictures I've never seen showing electric trams going through the streets in 1938. There will be another chance to see the films at a screening for the general public that evening, but that may be your last chance, for a while at least. So I do hope you can be with us in April – booking details will be sent out shortly. I'm still hoping to organise a visit to the Kedermister Library at Langley later on next year, and we may well have another local history walk at some time.

The Association's journal, "Berkshire Old and New," appeared as usual in September, with articles on two very different parts of the county. There was a piece on "the Reading Fight," otherwise known as "the Reading Skirmish" or "the Battle of Broad Street," one of only two military actions in England during the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688. The other was the second part of "The Coleshill Estate Archive in the Royal Berkshire Archives." These appeared together with the usual Berkshire Bibliography for the past year.

Two new books of Reading interest have appeared during the autumn – at least, the two I have come across, but there may be others. From the Berkshire Record Society, we had “Greyfriars, Reading: from Prison to Parish Church,” edited by Malcolm Summers. Malcolm had already written a history of the friary which gave its name to Friar Street – this new volume is the story of what happened to the buildings after the Dissolution, told through the original records. The book was launched at the church on a Saturday afternoon in early December, to which all members of the Association had been invited, and the afternoon was very enjoyable. The other book, “A Reading Scrapbook,” coming from the Two Rivers Press, was written by me. I believe that someone will be writing a review for the newsletter, so I need say no more here.

Please may I remind you that this is a newsletter for the whole county, both as it was before the 1974 boundary changes, and also afterwards. If you have come across new publications likely to interest members of the Association, please let Jo, our newsletter editor know. I’m sometimes aware that some editions of the newsletter have much about Reading, and not so much about the rest of the county, so let’s have your news, whichever part of the “old and new” county interests you. Similarly, Jonathan, our journal editor, would love to hear from you if you’re researching some aspect of the county’s history that fascinates you and which you think might make an interesting article for “Berkshire Old and New.” Or maybe you already have an article up your sleeve. It could be the chance to get published that you have been waiting for!

David Cliffe, Chairman BLHA

A Word from the Editor

Thanks again to those who have contributed, and I would like to echo our chairman’s words in encouraging everyone to provide notices and articles. It’s our newsletter to spread the word on our activities. This issue sees a goodly number of new publications linked to the county. On sadder news, we see the demise of one of our member groups, the Cox Green Local History Group.

Notices and Articles

The Remarkable Origins of Windsor’s Beer Brewing Trade

Dr David Lewis

For many years the local pub has been a quintessential part of every-day life, and despite recent closures, it has remained a fixture of the urban space, and no less part of rural life. The Dog, and The Golden Arrow, The Crown and

many other such names are shorthand for an open venue where beer provided the flux for the exchange of values, ideas and identities.

The history of these ever-popular spaces with their beer drinking dates back to the early fifteenth century when the consumption of traditional ale, typically brewed in small batches, at home and by women, as part of a domestic routine, was displaced by the arrival of a new continental taste sensation, 'Dutch' beer. Although in modern parlance 'ale' and 'beer' are interchangeable terms, originally, they referred to two quite different drinks.

Beer was substantially different to ale both in taste and in its method of production. The addition of hops, a type of preservative, transformed the keeping qualities of fermented grains, extending palatability from mere days, as applied to ale, to weeks, as applied to beer. The brewing of beer was also more complex than the production of ale, as it used more advanced yeasts, a different fermentation process and required the careful management of temperatures. Beer's better keeping qualities suited to large scale production, and particularly because the same quantity of raw materials would produce a greater amount of finished product than could be extracted from the production of ale. Where one quart of malt would produce eight gallons of ale, it could alternatively make thirty gallons of beer, and as both commanded the same price at retail and had similar alcoholic strengths, beer represented a significant profit opportunity for its brewers. There were draw-backs, however. Beer brewing required a level of capital investment in the purchase of large-scale brewing vessels, used in purpose-built breweries and it also required the hiring of skilled brewers, trained in the specialist craft of beer brewing. Typically, these men came from the Low Counties, individuals familiar with the sensitive production processes, crucial to the success of a brew.

The new and trendy drink of beer, with its slightly bitter taste coming from hops, proved hugely popular and was routinely consumed in enormous quantities, even by children. It was considered a safe drink, since part of its production process – as with ale – required its water to be boiled. First introduced into the eastern coastal ports by Dutch seafarers, the consumption of beer spread rapidly, reaching the Capital by the early fifteenth century. In 1406 a Brewers company had been formed in the City of London to regulate the beer brewing trade, based on an earlier brewers' fraternity, established in the church of All Hallows, London Wall. Distribution of the brew was made through houses owned by these brewers, places known as inns, as opposed to taverns that sold wine, and to be recognised by their adoption of a distinctive name and image, advertised on a hanging sign. One of the earliest of these London inns was The Cock-in-the-hoop, an inn located at London Wall, the 'cock' referring to the beer barrel's stopper, placed during drinking hours on

the barrel's metal stays, 'the hoop'. Other inn names came to adopt a slightly comic quality, such as The Nun, an inn name that was followed by The Two nuns, and then by a successor, The Three nuns.

The late medieval history of Windsor was hugely influenced by these commercial developments, amplified in Windsor's case by its late fifteenth century emergence as one of England's most important destinations for religious pilgrimage. The town's religious renaissance had started in 1440 following the construction of Henry VI's Eton College, dedicated to the Annunciation and endowed by the Pope with substantial indulgences, greater than had been granted to any former European king or institution. In 1485 this attraction was followed by the translation of King Henry's tomb from Chertsey abbey to St George's chapel, within Windsor Castle; his tomb being popularly venerated as a place of miracle working, through the invocation of Henry's name in prayer. Thousands of visitors started to arrive in Windsor in search of healing, via saint Henry or alternatively, to give thanks for a blessing already received through his intercession, these thirsty crowds providing a ready-made and profitable market for Windsor's brewers.

The earliest of these local men appears to be a man called David Browning, noted in 1424 as a London brewer, although information about his activities in Windsor and how he came to the town are sketchy. He is known as a founder of the London Brewers company, and to be the owner of an inn called The Angel in Queenhythe, a significant detail because this quay on the river Thames serviced up-stream traffic from London. No information has survived about his brewery in Windsor, but it might be significant that two Windsor inns were known as The Angel, pointing perhaps to his proprietorship.

What is known for certain is that by 1523, the date of a Windsor's tax (or subsidy) return, its two wealthiest inhabitants, by a long chalk, were beer brewers; Thomas Bennet and Andrew Symonds, indeed, Symonds was so successful at his trade, that in this return he took the name Andrew Bereman (Beer-man). By the early sixteenth century beer brewing had become the foremost component in Windsor's economy, based on the town's pilgrim trade, a dominance reflected in its political appointments, as brewers near continuously occupied the town's mayoralty between 1500 and 1550. Interestingly, the 1523 subsidy return also notes that several Windsor inhabitants were noted as alien Deutch-men, some taking English names rather than using their original Dutch name. Presumably this was for reasons of personal safety, since 'foreigners' were habitually identified as the root cause of social unrest. Plus ça change. These men were almost certainly specialist beer brewers, employed by the likes of Bennet and Bereman, working in Windsor's breweries.

Andrew Bereman owned an inn close to Windsor Bridge called The Saracens Head, a very well positioned establishment, which served those arriving in the town by the most popular means, river transport. His customers were predominantly wealthy Londoners, allowing Bereman to become a major benefactor to the town, with the founding of almshouses and the provision of a huge endowment to enlarge the town's Trinity fraternity, a social / religious organisation that, inter alia, supported the poor. Bereman's eldest son, William Symonds, emulated his father in his occupation of the town's mayoralty, but otherwise was considerably less saintly. In 1543 he was responsible, in cahoots with Stephen Gardiner, Henry VIII's chief minister, for the execution by fire of the 'Windsor martyrs': a crude (but unsuccessful) attempt, to stall the progress of the Reformation, through claims of Protestant heresy, pinned on the reformist archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer. Symonds was central to the engineering of this deadly plot, facilitated by means of his position as the town's leading brewer, a trade that was thought threatened if the reformists had their way, and religious pilgrimage was banned.

Windsor records are full of references to named inns, and by the mid-sixteenth century as many as thirty can be identified, thirteen on the High Street alone, despite Windsor being no more than a small provincial town. In several places inns formed a contiguous row against the street frontage, such was the demand for beer. From the 1490s, for example, three inns occupied the corner of the High Street and Peascod Street, the town's main thoroughfare: The Swan, The Crosely and The Maidenhead. Further along the High Street, towards the river, a triple sized plot was taken by the town's largest inn, The George, with its street-front gate house and internal courtyard, a hostelry well-known for the putting on of plays. Almost certainly, The George was familiar to Shakespeare when visiting the town with his troupe, as an actor, and probably accounts for the setting of his comedy 'The Merry Wives of Windsor', not in the spacious George, but in its diminutive neighbour, The Garter Inn. This former family dwelling was extremely cramped, at just over ten metres wide against the street, two perches, in medieval terms, but in Shakespeare's play it was imagined filled with oversized and gaumless aristocrats, a comic circumstance amplified when the guest's female love targets roundly outwitted them, through the ingenious manipulation of circumstance. The Garter remains the most famous of the early inn names in Windsor, despite its reduced dimensions.

Notably, many of the names used for early Windsor inns can also be found in London; unsurprising perhaps because there was considerable communication between the two centres, and popular names were most likely to travel. Very roughly, these Windsor names can be broken-down into three main themes: animal names, royal names and those associated with the

church, and there are a surprising number:

Animals	Royal	Religious	Other
The Ram	The King's Head	The Christopher	The Maidenhead
The Bull	The King's Alms	The Three Tuns	The Crosley
The Bear	The George	The Cross Keys	The Rose and Crown
The Black Bear	The King Harry	The Angel	The Sugar Loaf
The Black Eagle	The Garter	The Cardinal's Hat	The Mermaid
The Green Dragon	The Chequer	The Adam and Eve	The Saracen's Head
The White Lion	The Crown		The Pestle and Mortar
The Red Lion			The Ship
The White Horse			The New Inn
The White Hart			The Bell
The Goat			The Broad Arrow
The Swan			The Hartshorn
The Talbot (a small dog)			The Stag and Hounds
			The Rose

Colour references in early inns are restricted to black, red and white, names with the 'Golden' prefix came much later. A few of the late medieval / early modern names, noted above, relate to a single venue that changed its name, The White Horse and The White Lion are in this category, but for the vast majority the original name endured over several centuries. The Three Tuns for example, (re)built on the site of a hall belonging to the town's medieval Trinity Fraternity in 1726, adopted a name that seems to reference its Trinity origins – the three tuns (or barrels) - first recorded in the late seventeenth century, although it may well have earlier origins. This name survived until 2020, when its owners changed it to 'The Prince Harry', seemingly to attract the attention of US television audiences, thrilled at the prince's marriage ceremony in Windsor. Views differ on the recent loss of this historic inn name.

The earliest recorded Windsor inn name is The Crown, which once occupied a site below the castle walls on Thames Street, and first noted in 1485. The town's oldest standing inn, although now converted to housing, is The Stag and Hounds on St. Leonards Road, once an eighteenth-century fare stage on the London to Reading horse-drawn coach service.

It might also be found somewhat surprising that, following the death of Henry VIII and his huge endowment to the college of St George, this single organisation came to own a great number of local inns. Evidently, the college were aware of the profits being earned by local brewers, and were anxious to take their share. Indeed, by 1547 the college already held a significant portfolio of local property, gifted in support of post-mortem remembrance, and with the King Henry endowment, the Dean and Canons came to form an important, although indirect, administrative authority in the town, equivalent in power to the borough corporation. This duopoly continued well into the nineteenth century, when the college gradually sold-off its local property holdings.

Brewing and inns were an integral part of Windsor's economy from the late fifteenth century, cash generating businesses that, over time, lent themselves to the development of a further 'new' business: that of commercial banking. That historical next-step, however, is another story.

Edith Morley - The first female professor at any UK university

Graham Starkie – Twyford & Ruscombe Local History Society

Born in the Victorian age, she lived in Bayswater central London in a house rented by her family from her grandmother. Having four brothers it was not long before Edith noticed the differences between what she and they were allowed to do. She became impatient of restrictions placed on her by the mores of Victorian living. "She had not liked being a girl"---wearing gloves and covering her face with a veil to protect her complexion.



After a local kindergarten she was sent to a private boarding school where her ability soon became evident. She studied German, French, English Literature and the History of Art. In 1892 she joined the Ladies Department of Kings College to study English and English literature, there being no science subjects available to women. Her father insisted that some domestic subjects such as cooking and sewing should be followed to properly equip a young woman of the times. She continued her studies at the Oxford Honour school of English and English literature. There was no common room or social life for women and although she was successful she was awarded only an "equivalent" degree. Neither was she allowed to wear the hood like the male laureates. Eventually she was awarded an honorary MA at Oxford in 1926.

Her struggles getting an education shaped her views socially and politically and led her towards Fabianism, a British socialist organisation whose purpose was to advance principles of social democracy via gradual reform. A champion of women's rights she argued that marriage and motherhood held women back at that time from pursuing professional careers. She was an active Suffragist, campaigning for reform, refusing to pay taxes because she had no vote and boycotting the 1911 census for the same reason.

When she was appointed professor of English language at University College Reading, she was the first woman appointed to a chair at a British university. Male prejudice was such that she was denied a male assistant - no male academic could be expected to work under a woman. She retired from Reading University in 1940 and was noted to have been a formidable academic presence. In 1950 she was made Officer of the British Empire for her work establishing Reading Refugee Committee assisting Belgian Jewish refugees during World War II.

The Edith Morley lecture is held annually at Reading University in her memory. Sources to be found in Edith Morley's Papers in the University collections. Her memoirs, 'Before and After: Reminiscences of a Working Life' were published by Two Rivers Press and the University of Reading in 2016 (*Ed*).

Englefield History Net

This well constructed and informative [website](http://englefieldhistory.net) dedicated to the heritage of Englefield. It looks at the area's history, institutions, places, people and amusements and also features the facility to download six books on the area and a selection of pieces from the Parish Magazine. Hard copies of these publications are also in the County Archives and the Reading Central Library. Richard Smith, who runs the site is happy to take enquiries using info@englefieldhistory.net.

The Marlow Society

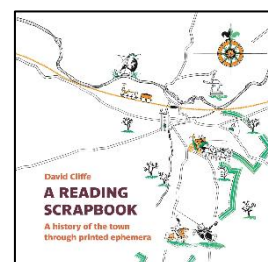
Geoff Wood of The Marlow Society has kindly written up a little about this, one of our neighbouring county of Buckingham's groups. The Society was formed in 1960 out of a grass roots group set up to save Marlow Bridge from the wreckers. It now has over 400 members, an executive committee of twelve, and is active in planning, environment, social events, and local history. The local history section (LHG) became really active in the 1990s and built up a massive physical collection of documents and photos about all things Marlow, Bisham, Little Marlow, Marlow Bottom and Medmenham, forming the society's area of interest. The LHG has an executive committee of five very active members who carry out research, respond to requests for information, put on guided walks during the summer months, and host talks on a wide variety of history topics, live in the summer months and on Zoom in the winter. Our principal current task is digitalising the archive and we now have a massive digital database to draw on, much of which is on the society's new [website](http://englefieldhistory.net).

New Publications

A Reading Scrapbook: A History of the Town Through Printed Ephemera

Reviewed by Jo Alexander-Jones

Written by David Cliffe, our chairman, this book shows us how real people lived, their occupations, entertainment and more all through scrap of paper that were never meant to survive. Using materials from local sources, David brings over 300 hundred years of history to life. For me the materials and approach brought me closer to the past inhabitants of my town than had many other history books because it talks about things that my

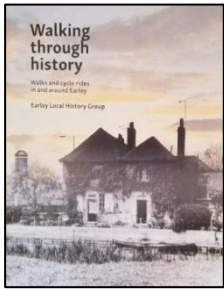


ancestors would have experienced as they were never in the ruling or managing classes. I found it both enjoyable and informative.

The book is published by Two Rivers Press and available from local and major booksellers.

Walking Through History: Walks and Cycle Rides in and around Earley

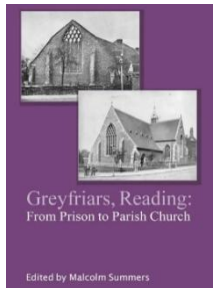
Reviewed by Ann Smith



Published by Earley Local History Group, the book has 16 local walks and 3 cycle rides. Earley has a lot of history, which is sometimes hidden by modern development. The aim of the book is to inform walkers of the history behind each route. The maps and route instructions are clear, with many historic and modern photos. The first chapter is an introduction to Earley's history and the book ends with a chapter on the manors of Earley. These are meant to be read at home. The book has a lot of information in 220 pages. My only quibble is the small font size, which challenges my aging eyes!

Available from Earley Town Council, Museum of English Rural Life, Reading Museum, Merch at Reading University, The Oakwood Centre, Woodley News and Waterstones.

From Prison to Parish Church: Greyfriars Reading 1861-1865



We have previously mentioned the planned publication of this book, which is the latest of the [Berkshire Record Society's](#) (BRS) volumes. Edited by Malcolm Summers, this volume (no. 31), can now be purchased from the BRS website.

The BRS prints scholarly editions of important documents on the history of Berkshire. A number of their older volumes are currently available at a substantially discounted price to BRS members.

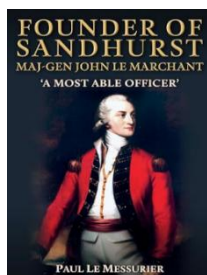
Northcourt Avenue: its history and people



Penny Kemp has updated her book of this lime tree lined avenue and its associations with figures who have contributed to the town and the wider world - artists, sportsmen, business men, academics, inventors, philanthropists and politicians. She examines the architecture of the unusual Arts and Crafts houses and the 1920s and 1930s homes typical of suburban Reading. This second edition has new information, details of the houses that have disappeared or have been built since 1996. Copies can be obtained from Penny (email:

pjkick13@gmail.com or message via 07831423000). All profits go to the local residents' association and local charity.

Founder of Sandhurst, Maj-Gen John Le Marchant



This book by Paul Le Messurier, tells the life of John Le Marchant who rose through the ranks to become an accomplished cavalry officer. His experiences led him to design new equipment and training for the cavalry culminating in his proposing there be a military establishment where army officers could be given professional training. The Royal Military College was founded in 1801, ten years later relocating to Sandhurst, Berkshire. Published by Amberley Publishing, it is available from major booksellers.

Church Notes of Berkshire 1665-66

Elias Ashmole, an antiquarian and herald, made copious notes and detailed drawings of the monuments, effigies and glass in churches across our county during the time of the Restoration. Much of what he saw has subsequently been lost, damaged or moved. This edition, transcribed by Adrian Ailes for the [Harleian Society](#) details Ashmore's findings with footnotes to give context along with a full name and place index.

Society Contributions

Berkshire Family History Society

We remain based on the second floor of Reading Central Library, although we anticipate this coming to an end and relocating to a new premises towards the end of 2025. Currently, we continue to seek a suitable location.

In the meantime, our Centre remains busy with researchers and event attendees. 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. We have sessions arranged for the Women's Institute and U3A this quarter. If your society is interested in seeing how the Centre's resources can help your research, do get in contact with me. We can design a bespoke visit, 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 here.

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. Among the highlights this year will be special events to commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE Day in May and VJ Day in August. Almost certainly topping them all, however, is an all-day conference themed on "The Victorians" which is planned for Saturday 7th June at the Wokefield Estate, just outside of Reading. The conference will be part of our celebrations to mark the Society's 50th anniversary and we are also planning some bespoke visits and tours, on top of our usual events programme. 2025 looks to be a very busy year!

Catherine Sampson, Chairman

Berkshire Gardens Trust

Berkshire Gardens Trust's year has already started with a January zoom lecture by researcher and author Paul Rabbits, on the history of public parks and gardens. BLHA members may also be interested to know that we are continuing research on public parks in the county, such important spaces for all of us but often seemingly underfunded and resourced. We also continue to monitor and comment on planning consultations across Berkshire, many of which relate either to the actual features or the setting of designed landscapes, including the proposals for development at the former BBC premises of Caversham Park, Reading, with its Grade II designed landscape, where some substantial improvements to the original proposals has hopefully now been achieved following the constructive criticism by BGT and others.

Last summer and autumn there were visits to a number of parks and gardens including Berkshire's Upton Grey and Boxford House, Parmoor in the Chilterns and London's Chiswick House, the Chelsea Physic Garden and the RHS Lindley Library. 2025 events include a zoom by Bruce Ginsberg, owner of the wonderful Earlstone Manor in Hampshire, on the history of topiary and other esoteric designs. Visits to two private gardens near Maidenhead are already scheduled for later this Spring. In contrast, we also hope to welcome Adam Scott, Gardens & Nursery Manager at Berkshire's Windsor Castle and Bagshot Park in Surrey, to talk about the history and development of the gardens at Windsor Castle as a prequel to a visit to the Castle grounds in early summer 2025. BGT's website <https://berkshiregardenstrust.org> provides more information on all of our activities and forthcoming events.

Fiona Hope

Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group

We kicked off our Autumn programme with a walk and supporting talk from Dr Ross Garden on the geology of Reading. Ross took us around the town



looking at stonework and describing how it had impacted and reflected the development of the town – shown here is remnants of a column capital of Caen stone at Reading Abbey. In October our chair, Bob Haskins, led another walk along the Kennet & Avon canal, part of a series where he is slowly moving westwards – this time we covered Kintbury to Newbury –

looking at the industrial heritage along the banks. Continuing the watery theme David Cliffe spoke on the First Mile of the Kennet navigation from Kennet Mouth; it may seem a short distance but David had unearthed so much industrial history supported by many illustrations that we almost overran our allotted time with questions.

November saw Brandan Carr from Reading Museum speak on Reading's Digital Revolution; a forerunner to the museum's exhibition opening in March. We capped off the year with our AGM followed by my presentation on Reading's electricity supply industry prompted by driving past the SSE site on Vastern Road as it was being demolished.

Jo Alexander-Jones, Secretary

Friends of Reading Abbey (FORA)

At Waterfest in June 2024 we focused our displays on Reading Abbey's links with Cluny to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the European Federation of Cluniac Sites (FESC). We also held a dedicated public lecture on Saturday 28 September, on 'Reading Abbey in the Context of Cluny'. This was organised in conjunction with the Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies (GCMS) and the History Department at the University of Reading, and was given by Caroline Johnson, a post-graduate member of Graduate GCMS and also a FORA committee member, at St. James's RC Church in The Forbury.

Our 2024 AGM on 26 October 2024 was attended by 36 members, who conducted the business of the meeting, and elected the new Committee and officers for 2024-25. The AGM was followed by our Autumn Lecture, given by David Sánchez, Thames Valley Archaeological Services, on 'Tiles for the

Abbey – a medieval tiliary and occupation at 40-68 Silver Street, Reading’.

Our second members’ outing of the year, to Westminster Abbey, took place on Monday 28 October, with guided tours both of the Abbey church and to the Abbey Library and Muniment Room where a seal from Reading Abbey is held.

In 2025 our Spring Lecture, held in memory of Prof. Brian Kemp, our co-founder and late President, will be held on Saturday 28 March at St James’s church, at 14.30. It will be given by Dr Ruth Salter, from the Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Reading, on Abbey Infirmaries. Our AGM and Autumn Lecture will take place on Saturday 25 October 2025, at the Abbey Baptist Church. The Autumn Lecture will be given by Dr Euan Roger, from The National Archive, on either Chertsey Abbey or St George’s Windsor.

A continuing interest in 2025 will be Reading Gaol, closed in 2013, which occupies the eastern quarter of the Abbey precinct. The Ministry of Justice finally sold the gaol in the Spring to the Ziran Foundation, owned by Mr Channing Bi, who held a briefing on 25 November 2024 with his development team on his plans for the Gaol site, which they now are calling The ReCentre.

Another continuing interest will be Reading Council’s decision to use Government Levelling-Up grant to relocate Reading Library to the extended Civic Offices in Bridge Street, by 2026. The Council put the library site up for sale, for residential conversion or redevelopment, in July 2024. The library is part-located in the Abbey Precinct, on the site of the Abbey Stables. The current building dates from 1985, when stones from the Abbey site were found and put on display alongside the building in Abbey Square. FORA has raised three matters with the Council, relating to future archaeology on the site, the future of the stones, and ongoing access to the permissive path alongside the Holy Brook which can be accessed from behind the library, which the Council has told us will be considered as part of the planning process for the site.

We will continue to work in partnership with the Confraternity of St James to promote the St James’s Way long-distance pilgrimage trail from Reading Abbey to Southampton, and the newer St Frideswide’s Way from Oxford to Reading Abbey which was launched in June this year. Both are being developed as part of the ‘Camino Ingles’.

2025 marks the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the Friends of Reading Abbey in 1985. This – FORA 40 – will be a particular focus. 2025 will also be the 250th anniversary of the birth of Jane Austen, who was educated at the Abbey School in the Abbey Gate.

In 2024 we got a grant of £2,000 from the Earley Charity towards our Federation of European Cluniac Sites celebrations, on which we spent just under £1,000. The Earley Charity have been very generous in letting us keep the remainder, which we plan to spend on two important activities next year to celebrate our 40th anniversary. The first of these is a Schools' Art Competition on the theme 'Reading Abbey, Past Present and Future', about which all schools in greater Reading were contacted in October 2024 with a deadline for entries of the end of January 2025. These will be judged by a small panel chaired by local artist and typographer Martin Andrews in Spring 2025. A display of entries will take place in June / July 2025. The second is putting up a blue plaque outside RISC in London Street to draw attention to the Reading Abbey stones in the building.

John Painter, Secretary

Goring Gap Local History Society

Our 2024/25 season of talks began in September with a talk from Stuart Ackland of the Bodleian Library Map Room who explained why maps look the way they do. Maps are two-dimensional representations of three-dimensional Earth. This is called projection and features such as area, shape, distance or direction cannot all be accurately shown on the resultant map. Stuart told us how cartographers manage the challenges of presenting the important information needed to enable travellers to get around and help scientists to understand our world, illustrated by a wide variety of examples.

In October the speaker was one of our members, Katrina Cooper, who is an environmental project manager for the RSK Group, the largest private environmental consultancy in the UK. Katrina worked on the Newbury Reinforcement Pipeline, which is used to store gas reserves, and was responsible for securing all the environmental and planning consents and for managing the environmental work from design to commissioning. In the course of the project, archaeological surveys were carried out and she described some important findings that were made on the route of the pipeline at South Stoke and Aldworth.

Unfortunately, our scheduled speaker for November cancelled at short notice and we were grateful that another member of the staff of the Bodleian Library was able to step in. Annabelle Hondier is Assistant Curator of the John Johnson Collection, one of the largest and most important collections of printed ephemera in the world. It offers a fresh view of British history through primary, uninterpreted printed documents which, produced for short-term use, have survived by chance. These include advertisements, handbills, playbills and programmes, menus, greetings cards, posters and postcards. What

others would have thrown away John Johnson kept! It was fascinating to learn about life in past centuries through the lens of such a diverse range of media.

The end of the year soon came round and in December, we had a talk on a completely different local history topic. Ed Caswell, although Oxfordshire Finds Officer for the Portable Antiquities Scheme, is an expert on the Bronze Age (c. 3300 to 1200 BC). This period was characterized by the use of bronze tools and weapons, the development of complex societies, and the invention of the wheel and writing systems. His talk focused on the settlements in this area and how their inhabitants lived, which turned out to be rather akin to that of the pioneers who colonised the Wild West in America. After the lecture seasonal refreshments were served and members enjoyed socialising in the run-up to Christmas.

Our annual Journal was distributed in October. As 2024 marked the anniversary of D-Day, a turning point in World War II, this led some of our contributors to investigate and record what went on in the Goring Gap during the conflict. The large number of mansions and villas in Goring and Streatley built during the Victorian boating boom, proved ideal housing for organisations and people needing to avoid the perils of London bombing. Hundreds of evacuees arrived in September 1939 who were billeted in local homes. These included families and whole London County Council schools, followed in May 1940 by 340 pupils from the Royal School for Deaf and Dumb Children who were evacuated from their premises in Margate and occupied three Goring mansions and the Old Rectory in Streatley. That summer then saw the arrival of the infants and juniors of a London children's charity, the Alexandra Orphanage, who moved into Elmcroft. All of these hundreds of children had to be educated, putting enormous strain on the local primary school, necessitating the requisition of yet more large houses to use as classrooms. Add to this mix the Royal Veterinary College which came to Streatley in 1939, occupying diverse properties, some of which had to be turned into laboratories and operating theatres, and the exiled Belgian Air Force which occupied Thames Bank 1942-1946, where crew were taught English and received technical training to enable them to participate in RAF activities. It is estimated that 1500 men passed through the Depot during this time. At the cessation of hostilities, the villages must suddenly have become very quiet places.

Although we have had no outings in the autumn months, the committee has been busy organizing some trips for 2025 and is beginning to make plans for 2026, when the Society will reach its 60th birthday. The diamond anniversary will be duly celebrated, but in what form has yet to be decided!

Janet Hurst, Secretary

The History of Reading Society

The Society's summer activities were a "Danes in Reading" walk in the town centre in June, and in July a trip to Cookham, to visit the John Lewis Heritage Centre, and the Stanley Spencer Gallery. The walk, led by John Nixon, looked at sites associated with Danish and Norwegian prisoners-of-war, known as the "Gentlemen Danes," who were here during the Napoleonic Wars. In Cookham, it was the material on the Heelas department store, taken over by the John Lewis Partnership in 1953, that was of particularly Reading interest.

The autumn series of talks began with "Fords, Ferries and Bridges," by our Chairman, David Cliffe. It was the story of crossings over (and through) the Thames between Reading and Caversham over the centuries. He began by considering the establishment of the two settlements, their growth, and the need for regular crossing points – old records mentioned fords, and in the thirteenth century, a bridge, and ferries for poor people and pilgrims. The mention of pilgrims led to the mention of holy sites. By far the most famous was Reading Abbey, but across the water there was the chapel of Our Lady of Caversham, there was a parish church, a bridge chapel, or maybe two, and the holy well of St. Anne. These Caversham sites were held by Notley Abbey. Our Lady's chapel held a statue, and holy relics: miracles had been reported. From time to time, disputes arose as to who was responsible for keeping the Caversham Bridge in repair, with the Abbot of Reading being responsible for the southern half before the Dissolution, and Reading Corporation afterwards. Liability for the northern half lay for a long time with the Lords of the Manor of Caversham, and they changed many times. Matters became more straightforward after 1889 when Oxfordshire County Council was established.

The town suffered occupation and a siege by Parliamentary and Royal Forces during the Civil War, when part of the bridge was taken down. It was rebuilt using timber, and the timber section remained until the bridge was again rebuilt in iron, opening in 1869. The Victorian bridge was too narrow, and was nicknamed "The Iron Nightmare," but at least it was toll-free.

The extension of the boundaries of Reading in 1911 led to the building of a second bridge, Reading Bridge (1923), which was necessary before the Caversham Bridge could be taken down and replaced by a newer, wider bridge, which opened in 1926. For pedestrians, the Clappers path existed, connecting Reading to Lower Caversham. It involved crossing over the flash lock, which was replaced by the present pound lock in 1779. The mill stream had also to be crossed, and some of the Caversham millers tried to exercise their right to charge for crossing their bridge, whilst refusing to make it safe, a

state of affairs not resolved until 1889.

The latest permanent crossing to be built is Christchurch Bridge, for pedestrians and cyclists, which opened in 2015. After the talk there was some discussion of its usefulness, and how it had been intended for the deck of the bridge to be extended over Vastern Road, to reach the railway station on the level. Perhaps this will come about when the site of the old power station is redeveloped. The presentation ended with a brief account of the various schemes for a third Thames bridge in the area.

October brought a talk by Lionel Williams, who a few years ago had given us a talk on the history of hospitals and health services in Reading. Mr. Williams is currently secretary of the Royal Berkshire Medical Heritage Centre, and the subject of his talk this time was First World War hospitals in Reading. As the talk progressed, it became apparent just how important Reading became in caring for the casualties of war. The statistics were horrific – the number of casualties who survived long enough to reach the town, and their survival during and following treatment.

We were shown a page from a manual for the use of stretcher-bearers of the Royal Army Medical Corps. It said that the first thing to do when rescuing a man was to give him a cigarette! The patient might have been taken first to a dressing station close to the battle front, then to a casualty clearing station, and then to a field hospital at what was considered to be a safe distance behind the lines. From there he might be taken to a hospital ship, and from the docks at Southampton transferred to a hospital train to Reading.

Arrangements for receiving casualties in Reading changed as the increasing number of those in need of treatment became apparent. The Royal Berkshire Hospital at first offered 50 beds, but at the same time it still had to treat the members of the local civilian population. The Reading War Hospital was set up, and it took over most of the Union Workhouse in Oxford Road. It was later to become Battle Hospital. Other spaces around the town were requisitioned for use as auxiliary hospitals for less serious cases, and convalescent hospitals – private houses, schools, church halls, and a public library. In time, there were over 1200 war hospital beds in the town, and a monthly newspaper was started for patients and staff, "The Ration." Some of the sites had to remain as hospitals at the end of the war because of the influenza pandemic.

One of the benefits resulting from the conflict which many of us had been unaware of was the advance in treatments which were pioneered at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. In particular a new kind of splint for broken legs was developed, an improvement on the long wooden splint used hitherto, strapped to the leg and round the waist. A much shorter metal splint round the leg

improved survival rates in a spectacular way. And then there was Dr. Leonard Joyce, who observed that in patients with open wounds, those whose wounds developed a particular smell had much more chance of survival than others. By infecting more of these patients with the bacillus that was causing the smell, more made a complete recovery. The results of the experiment appeared in "The Lancet," and Dr. Joyce gained recognition for identifying "the Reading bacillus." This, of course, was in the days before antibiotics.

The whole presentation was copiously illustrated with old photographs, and ended with a short video about Dr. Joyce's discovery. It was informative, sobering – and it happened in Reading.

November brought the annual Presidential Address, by Joan Dils. Her subject was "Another Look at Prosperity and Piety in Late Medieval Reading." This could, of course, have been rather dull, but proved to be anything but. The subject was vast and varied, and here we were concentrating on the prosperity and piety. Using records from the Poll Tax in 1381, and the Lay Subsidy of 1524, we could see how the town grew in wealth. Over the period it was reckoned that Reading moved from being 48th to 9th in prosperity among provincial towns. The amazing statistic came with a great caveat – the payments were coming from comparatively few wealthy men. The wills of some of these individuals were examined, who were able to leave expensive gifts to relatives, friends and the church, sometimes worth over £1,000, when a working man earned around 6d. a day. We were able to see examples of how these wealthy people dressed, from brasses in Reading churches, some of them looking very like the characters in the current television dramatisation of "Wolf Hall." The connections between manufacturers and merchants in Reading and London were mentioned.

The main reason for the wealth was the production of woollen broad cloth, three yards wide and nine yards long, much of it going for export. It was reckoned to take 25 people to produce one broad cloth, which sold for around £90. It also needed two weavers, because the cloth was too wide for one man to throw and catch the shuttle on his own. Other processes in cloth production were described, as were the occupations of women in the town's economy.

The comparative wealth of town's three parishes was described, with St. Laurence's being by far the wealthiest, and the importance of religion in people's lives. Customs included "taking your rights" (the holy mass) at Easter, and what that entailed, the handing round and kissing of "the pax" as a sign of peace, and the saying of "obits" (prayers for the dead) once a year. Funeral customs and memorial brasses were not forgotten, and the interiors of the churches were described, and the importance of the rood screen. Then there was the belief in purgatory, and the saying of prayers for the dead, and the

giving of gifts to the church, and alms to the poor, all of which could lessen the time a person would have to spend being purged. In the question time that followed, there was mention of the Lollards, who refused to believe in purgatory, and how they were punished by the church authorities. These practices came to an end during the Reformation.

So the talk delivered what its title promised, opening our eyes to many different aspects of how life was lived. These were the late Middle Ages – “though people didn’t know it at the time,” as Joan wisely said.

A feature of these three talks was the sale of second-hand local history books, from the collection of the late Sidney Gold, who had left them to the society. The titles had been listed and offered to libraries and the Royal Berkshire Archives, in case they filled gaps in the public collections. The remainder, several hundred items, are being offered to members at reasonable prices. More titles will be brought to the sales when in-person meetings resume in March next year.

David Cliffe, Chairman

Hungerford Historical Association

In October we had a talk by Alan Ford on ‘Mariners, Teapots and Gems: Adventures in Family History Research’. Alan’s interest in genealogy started in 2018 when, prior to a visit to Newfoundland, he was asked about his Great-great-grandfather John Mortimer who was born there. That prompted him to follow a trail in Newfoundland that gave him an insight into his forebear’s life. A talk solely about the mechanics of genealogical research would have lacked depth so Alan illustrated the various techniques he used to tell a number of stories about his ancestors.

November saw a talk by Jo Alexander-Jones entitled ‘So, what is Industrial Archaeology?’. This was a light-hearted look at what an Industrial Archaeologist does, the relatively recent history and activities of the field in general and how the Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group find, record and share their love of our nation’s industrial heritage.

Caroline Ness, Chairman

Hurley History Society

2024 was a very successful year for our relatively fledgling society. After three years our membership has grown to over 60 most of whom are active in some form or other. Last winter our programme of talks was well supported and during the summer our programme of monthly visits or walks was also very

popular. At our AGM in November the same committee was returned to office, and we received an illustrated report on the excavations at Cookham Abbey and also on initial GeoPhys surveys of a field in Hurley.

Our first project, compiling into one bound compendium all the booklets written by Mary Howarth on Hurley Priory, The Lovelace family and the Olde Bell was launched in 2024 and sold over half the copies produced. This meant that we have moved on to our next project, the refurbishment and digitisation of the 1609 map of Hurley Parish. It is intended to produce a 40" framed version to be displayed in the village. It may be also available online.

Our programme of winter talks in 2025 included Richard III; the History of Wargrave; Reading Abbey; the History of Waltham; Commonwealth War Graves Commission. During the summer we shall visit Eton and visit their museums; another return visit to Cookham Abbey and we shall be mounting a historical display about Hurley during Hurley Fete at the end of July.

David Burfitt, Secretary

Oxfordshire Family History Society

Following the successful launch of the Big Oxfordshire Names Database (BOND) we have continued to release more data and to enhance the search capabilities. There are three articles on our website's [news section](#) covering the releases. The new Surname Project aims to load an extra 32,000 records with a strong medieval flavour, something which is rare in other counties. There will be several cartularies, collections of documents once owned by religious houses and nobles with multiple manors, recording many of the more ordinary people in the county. We are lucky to have been given access to Carolyn Fenwick's poll tax of 1377,79 and 81 – remarkable records of people in Oxfordshire as surnames were beginning to develop, listing a few thousand women as well as men. Moving forward there are Oxford City Apprentices from 1513, Oxford City Properties (mainly 18th century) with actual house addresses and some non-conformist birth registers. We are also loading the beginning of the people recorded in Canon Oldfield's Quarter Session records which span the 17th - 19th centuries – great for spotting criminal families, Catholics, errant fathers and those who fiddled their weights and measures.

Angie Trueman, OFHS Publicity Coordinator and Webmaster

Project Purley

Our September meeting was a Members' Evening, a format we haven't held for some years now. Members were invited to display and talk about a hobby

or collection, or indeed multiple collections, if they so wished. A number of members arrived with interesting looking boxes and bags out of which emerged coin collections, medals, cigarette cards, cameras, hats, postcards, wooden animals, framed découpage, needlework and textile conservation work, family history and other fascinating ephemera. Those who talked, described the background to their collection and why they had chosen to bring the particular items on display. One dug deep and brought along a treasured hobby from boyhood – a book of train numbers he had written down at railway platforms in the 1940s, an interest many will remember with great fondness.

October's meeting brought a talk by Ellie Thorne on Pangbourne's shops and businesses. Ellie began by looking at the occupations in Pangbourne between 1830 and 1900 based on directories and the census. There was a surprisingly wide range of shops and businesses with the expected baker, butcher, bootmaker etc often found in a village such as Pangbourne, which served as a hub for the local area, and the less usual such as a dealer in flints. By comparison, Purley's occupations for this period were dominated by agricultural labourers and servants, reflective of our dependence upon agriculture and the needs of the larger houses. The second part of the talk covered the period 1949 to present and looked at the different types of shops in Pangbourne over the last 75 years. The talk was beautifully illustrated and many of those present remembered the businesses long since closed.

In November, we welcomed back Dr Richard Marks for a talk on "Berkshire's Forgotten Railways". Before the 1970s, Berkshire had a strong railway service, with most places having easy access to a railway station. However, the situation changed significantly in the late 1960s and 1970s when extensive railway cutbacks resulted in the closure of many stations and lines. Richard described the effects of these closures on the county and its inhabitants, as well as the underlying reasons for the discontinuation of lines and stations.

Project Purley's Christmas party, on 20th December, followed a similar format to previous years with a catered buffet, table quiz and raffle. As usual, it was a very enjoyable evening.

Sadly, in the second half of the year, two of our longer-term members died, Ben Viljoen was a former chairman and treasurer of the Society and our journal designer for many years. Margaret Dray was a current committee member and former secretary. We will miss them both enormously. Looking ahead, our talks programme is planned through to the autumn and our summer visits are currently being firmed up. We plan to commemorate the 80th anniversaries of both VE and VJ days with special events.

Catherine Sampson

Wargrave Local History Society

Wargrave Local History Society resumed its meeting programme after a summer break with a presentation by Peter Hague about Cliveden. The house is a large Italianate country mansion on a hill overlooking the River Thames valley near Taplow, built in 1666 for George Villiers, the 2nd Duke of Buckingham, who used it as a hunting lodge. Peter then outlined the ownership of the house, the damaging fires, through to 1893, when it was purchased by William Waldorf Astor, a wealthy American who had moved to England. Waldorf was elected as an MP in 1910, and subsequently his wife Nancy held the seat. Social gatherings at Cliveden included many prominent people, in the late the 1930s known as the “Cliveden Set”, whilst in the 1960s it became linked to the Profumo scandal, involving the then Minister of War, Stephen Ward, an osteopath and Christine Keeler who worked as a prostitute, leading to the downfall of the government of the time.



Society meetings when villagers share their memories of Wargrave in time past are always popular, and in October Maureen Prince, who was born and grew up in the parish, told the story of her father, Alf Beckford - a true Wargravian, born at Hare Hatch in November 1894, where his family had lived for over a century. On leaving the village school aged 14, starting a hairdressing apprenticeship at Charlie Lunn's shop (shown left) in Wargrave High Street, learning how to make umbrellas and parasols when the shop was less busy. He served as an electrician with the Royal Signals Corps during World War 1, returning to hairdressing afterwards, in due course returning to Wargrave. As well as cutting hair, he sold tobacco, cigarettes and briar pipes, and catered for anglers by selling fishing tackle, rods and bait. Apart from

the shop, Alf was involved in many aspects of village life, joining the Wargrave Rifle Club, winning his first prizes aged 19. During WW2, he worked as a volunteer fire fighter, and he was in the Home Guard, and he served on the committee of the Wargrave Branch of the British Legion for many years. Alf also served on the Wargrave Parish Council and as a School Manager for the Piggott infant and junior schools – and was still cutting customer's hair until he was aged 89.

For the November meeting Simon Polley and Janet Robertson gave a presentation about Hall Place, at Burchetts Green. The site was recorded in 1234 as “La Halle”, owned by John de Hurley, and remained with his descendants until 1372, when Hurley Priory’s became the owners. Following the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536 the estate had a variety of owners for the next century, until passing to Jacob Bancks in 1690. Originally from Stockholm, he came to England in 1681 and become an English citizen. He developed the estate, dividing it into 4 sections, and planting avenues of lime trees. Jacob died in 1724, and the East family (later Clayton-East) who then acquired it remained for about 200 years. The history was not straightforward, due to various gentlemen dying without leaving a direct heir, or in tragic circumstances – or both. After World War 2, the estate was sold to become the Berkshire Institute of Agriculture, which opened in 1949, becoming Berkshire College of Agriculture in 1968, and now providing more general further education courses for about 1600 students.

Our December meeting was the Christmas Party, which began with members enjoying delicious home-made mince pies and mulled wine prepared by Wendy Smith, after which the society's secretary showed some more items from the archives - this time, instead of photographs and documents, examples of 3-dimensional objects in the society's collection. They ranged from part of a timber beam (possibly 17th century), retrieved from after the 1914 church fire, to the Victorian copper printing plate used by the proprietress of the coal wharf alongside the Thames, commemorative medallions presented to each of the bell ringers after the 1914 fire (made from recovered bell metal), and a boat lamp bearing a metal label saying STARBOARD – however, it has a blue glass, which hints at its history. It was created by the local boatyard as a way to identify the local police station in the blackout conditions of World War 2. Some items were small, some large, some old, some relatively new (into the 21st century) - but all with a ‘Wargrave connection’. For more detailed reports about these meetings, or 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)

East Garston Local History Society

Karen Pryer: Church Cottage, Front St, East Garston, Hungerford RG17 7HJ

(karen@pryer.com)

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

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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
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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
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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
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Theale Local History Society

Graham Reeves: 52 Parkers Corner, Englefield, Reading RG7 5JR
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Twyford & Ruscombe Local History Society

Jean Poulter: 17 Weir Pool Court, Silk Lane, Twyford RG10 9GY
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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