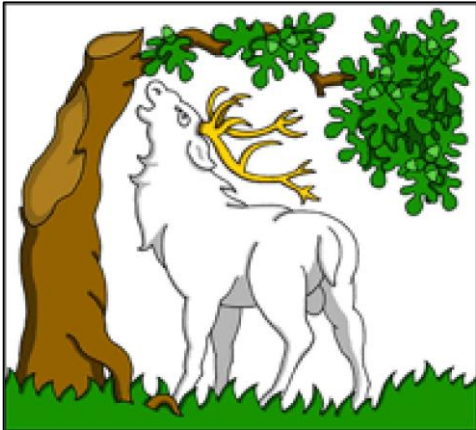


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Berkshire Local History Association



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May 2025

Berkshire Local History Association Newsletter

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Next Newsletter:

Publication: September 2025

Submission Deadline: 15 August 2025

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: BLHA AGM at Biscuit Factory Cinema, Reading (Jo Alexander-Jones)

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Chairman's Corner

For me, this is a strange, in-between time. The annual report for the AGM has been written and sent off, so there isn't much point in repeating any of that, the AGM hasn't yet happened, and the deadline approaches for the May newsletter. So, I thought I might say a little about the AGM in the cinema on a Thursday in April, something that will probably never happen again – how it came about and what happened along the way. I first heard that the Wessex Film and Sound Archive in Winchester had received a grant from the British Film Institute to put together a programme of old films from Berkshire at one of the regular liaison meetings between the Royal Berkshire Archives, Reading Borough Libraries, and myself representing the BLHA. The Wessex Archive was seeking the help of the RBA in finding somewhere to show the programme, and suggesting someone who might be prepared to do a bit of research into the films, and to give a commentary for the silent films when it came to the screening. I suggested the Reading Biscuit Factory cinema, and rashly volunteered to provide the commentary. From the beginning it struck me as bizarre that the Wessex Archive was thinking of one screening only after so much work.

Following our 2024 AGM at Wargrave, the committee had thought that we might move to Reading for the next year. I'd had some experience of meetings on the boat moored on the River Kennet by the Bel and the Dragon restaurant and bar. It had often been used for wedding receptions, it had enough seating, and refreshments could be brought in from the bar alongside or could be provided on board if we paid extra. It seemed ideal – somewhere unusual, and it was adjacent to the small Riverside Museum. Ideal, that is, unless there was heavy rain. I can remember an event which was spoiled by rain beating on the metal roof, which drowned out the words of the speaker. Sadly, it was suddenly announced that the venue was due to close to the public completely.

So, I wondered whether the WFSA could be persuaded to let us show their programme of archive films again, and whether the Reading Biscuit Factory would host our AGM and show the films for us. This began to look possible, and the Thursday date was agreed upon – perhaps not ideal for everyone, but the auditorium was free. Then came the scare that the whole of the Biscuit Factory cinema chain was in financial trouble and might shut down. Here I should perhaps explain that the name of the Biscuit Factory cinemas has nothing to do with Huntley and Palmers of Reading. Their first cinema was in the old Crawford's biscuit factory in Edinburgh. We were assured that the future of the Reading Biscuit Factory was secure. So, my fingers are well and truly crossed with regard to Thursday next week.

I have to say that I have enjoyed several happy mornings, afternoons and

evenings at the Reading Biscuit Factory. It tends to show some good films, sometimes at odd times of day, which are not mainstream, and perhaps in foreign languages. Young people like it because you can get something to eat and drink, sit down with your friends, and talk and play games without going to the cinema at all. There are performance areas and they host various community activities – such as quizzes, lectures and comedy nights. The first screening of “Berkshire on Film” for the public sold out a month in advance, and was greatly enjoyed. Before the show I remember sitting in the open-air, upper storey seating area on a fine evening, slightly apprehensive, watching the sun go down over Oxford Road. I needn’t have worried – everything went well. I trust that something similar will happen next week.

In a different venue, over the winter I’ve attended a number of the meetings of the Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group, where I enjoyed talks which were very much about local history in Berkshire, and weren’t crammed with technical detail. I heard talks about a medieval factory which made tiles in Reading, about the geology of the Reading area and its effect on the buildings in the town, and about the Berkshire cloth industry in Tudor times.

Here in Reading we’re having a Walks Festival – over 50 different walks, some with a local history theme, and a series of three talks about Silchester in the Museum on Saturday mornings. They’re presented by Prof. Michael Fulford, who has led the archaeological investigations there over many seasons. The money raised will go towards the redevelopment of the Silchester Roman Gallery at the Museum, so that new finds can be displayed. I believe that all the talks were fully subscribed. And the Museum also has up-and-coming events in connection with the 250th anniversary of the birth of Jane Austen, who was at school in Reading.

Then recently I have received some good news about the “Building Schools for Berkshire” project. The aim here is to produce a well-researched volume for the Berkshire Record Society on schools which were built or extended between the Education Act of 1870 and the end of the 1914-18 War. BLHA supported the previous volume produced in this way on 18th century schools across the county. The volumes are the combined effort of amateur researchers, a general editor, and a small management board, led by Peter Durrant, the former County Archivist. Much work had been completed when progress was brought to a halt by the Covid pandemic, but it has been very slow to resume since then. Peter now reports that some potential new researchers have come forward, some of them members of The Historical Association, and some sixth formers at St. Joseph’s College. It now looks as though the book will see the light of day before too much longer.

For the BLHA, Ann Smith is planning a local history walk in June, and later in

the year I'm hoping that we'll be invited to a book launch for the latest volume from the Berkshire Record Society. Last year we were invited to the launch of the book which looked at the fate of the Greyfriars friary in Friar Street after the Dissolution. This year, it will again be about Reading, this time about the records of the Quakers, with the book launch in the Quaker meeting-house in the town centre. And over at Langley, I'm still hoping to arrange a visit to the Kedermister Library. I've visited three times now – an extraordinary survival from the early 17th century, in an area where you wouldn't have expected it.

Hopefully there are things which all members anticipate with pleasure, across Berkshire this summer.

David Cliffe, Chairman BLHA

A Word from the Editor

The advantage of being the editor is that you get to write the last word, and as such I get to write after our AGM and film show. I think the AGM went better than many I have experienced with contributions from many and some lively discussion. Often these things can be a little procedural. So, thanks to all who attended. As David detailed above we had a local history film show and I think his comments rather belittle the time and effort he put in to making this happen. Without his efforts we would not have experienced these wonderful little snippets of old Berkshire focussed in many cases on the ordinary rather than the big events. The picture is of the event, apologies for it being rather dark, but it was in a cinema!

We are pleased to have a new group joining the BLHA; the Hedgerley Historical Society. John Lovelock has written a short article for us about them and their work, which you can find in the Society Contributions below.

Notices and Articles

BLHA Little Marlow Walk – Friday 20 June at 10.30

Join BLHA members on a circular four mile walk along the Thames path and round historic Little Marlow. The walk is flat with no stiles and ends with an optional pub lunch. This is a free walk, but please reserve a place by contacting Ann Smith membership@blha.org.uk or 07977 034552.

Society Money Matters

At the recent AGM a couple of matters concerning finances were mentioned, which trustees would like to bring to wider attention:

Society grants: The Society holds a small amount of money to make grants for the following purposes:

1. Small grants, for less than £50, to cover the costs of travel, photocopying, photographs, permissions and like expenses, incurred while engaged on a Berkshire history project
2. A loan to cover the cost of publishing work on a Berkshire history topic, to be repaid from sale proceeds

If you would like to apply for a grant from either fund, please write, in the first instance, to the Society's Treasurer, Dr David Lewis (DGLX10@hotmail.com).

Funding educational grants: Owing to increases in the fees charged for formal educational courses, such as the Oxford Local History Diploma, a suggestion was made that the Society might provide a subsidy to allow a greater number to benefit from a period of directed education.

To do this, the Society would have to create a new fund specifically for this purpose, and invite contributions from the public, ideally in the form of a legacy.

As a registered charity, the Society is able to receive a bequest without the deduction of inheritance tax, which makes such gifts, where tax is payable, particularly attractive to the donor.

Since deciding to leave a legacy is especially personal, if you would like to support the continued study of Berkshire history, for initial advice, please contact the Society's Treasurer Dr David Lewis (DGLX10@hotmail.com).

Brian Boulter – Past BLHA Chairman



It is with sadness that we inform you of the passing of one of the founder members of the BLHA, Brian Boulter, who died in February 2025.

Brian hailed from Leicester and was by profession a food scientist, working largely in the milling and baking industries. While working, in 1982, he was awarded an extramural certificate course in English Local History jointly by Oxford and Reading Universities. His dissertation was on

Maidenhead, from its incorporation in 1582 to 1640, all taken from original sources.

In 1976 Brian was a founding member of the Berkshire Local History Association. He subsequently served on our committee, became one of our Vice-Presidents and in 2017 became our President.

In addition to his BLHA roles, Brian was chairman of the Maidenhead Archaeological and Historical Society and a long-standing member and committee member of the Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group. His love of local history and industrial archaeology saw him research subjects such as brewing and transport, and he contributed many articles to local journals, and to 'An Historical Atlas of Berkshire' (1998 and 2012). He was part of a major project to record the site of Temple Mills, Marlow, in 1973, ahead of demolition.

After his retirement, he became an active local history tutor, especially for the Workers' Educational Association, and in this role encouraged many in to the world of local history with his enthusiasm. In 1995, he became curator at the Maidenhead Heritage Centre and from small beginnings, he oversaw the management of the Maidenhead Heritage Trust's collection, including the successful application for Accredited Museum status and oversaw the transfer of all his meticulous paper records to the digitized format. He was always heavily involved in the many and varied activities at the Centre, being in particular demand for the popular programme of school visits.

In 2015 Brian was awarded with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the British Association for Local History.

Brian moved to Abergavenny in 2018 to be closer to his family, and kept in contact with his Berkshire colleagues through his son Chris. Our regards have been sent to Chris, who informed us of Brian's passing.

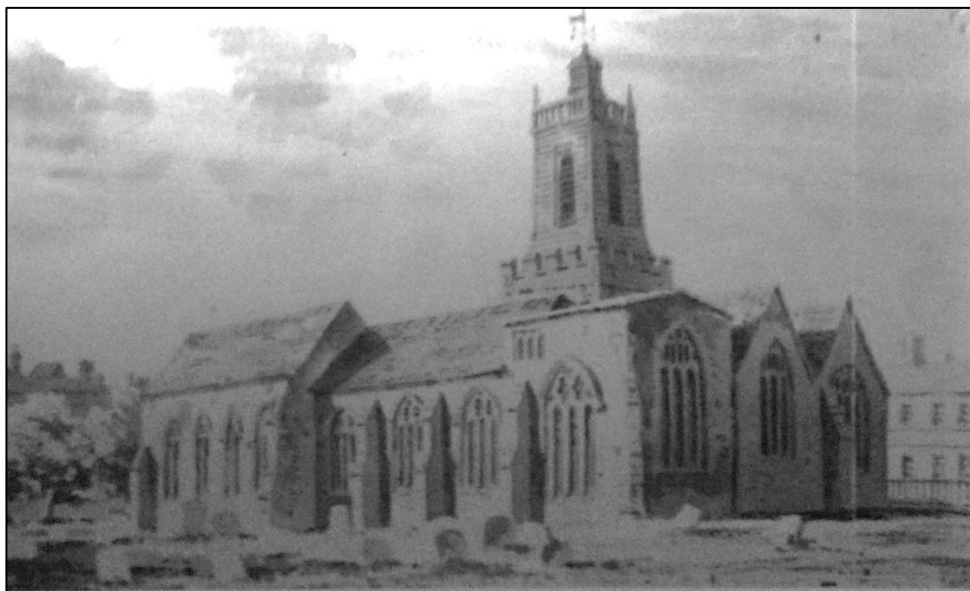
12th Century Parish Church of St John the Baptist, New Windsor

Dr David Lewis

Although unimaginable today, in 1820 Windsor corporation agreed that a couple of well-connected local property developers could demolish the town's ancient parish church, men with a contract in-hand, who were to replace it with a faux-gothic structure to accommodate near enough the same number of people, but at a huge cost. Sensible modernisation to some, extravagant, ignorant vandalism to others, that eventually, with the swing of a workman's hammer, consigned an enormous part of Windsor's medieval history to dust.

This was a structure little documented but one so central to the town's inhabitants, their religion and periodic prosperity, that it was of incalculable

local historic significance. Not all is lost, however, as reading from its many, very obvious architectural accretions, as depicted in pre-1820 images of the place, and relating these to the town's scant pre-1660 documentary sources, some information can be recovered. Valuable evidence about the town's past that cannot be known otherwise.



The pulling-down of the ancient church was a terrible waste, justified at the time by the supposed (but contested) structural weakness of its tower. More probably, its destruction could be explained by the all too recognisable impulse to modernise, revamping the town to seem progressive and up-to-date, at the time, in step with the castle's Regency remodelling. If the castle was to represent the dawn of a new age, its town needed to remove all relics of its superstitious and out-of-date past.

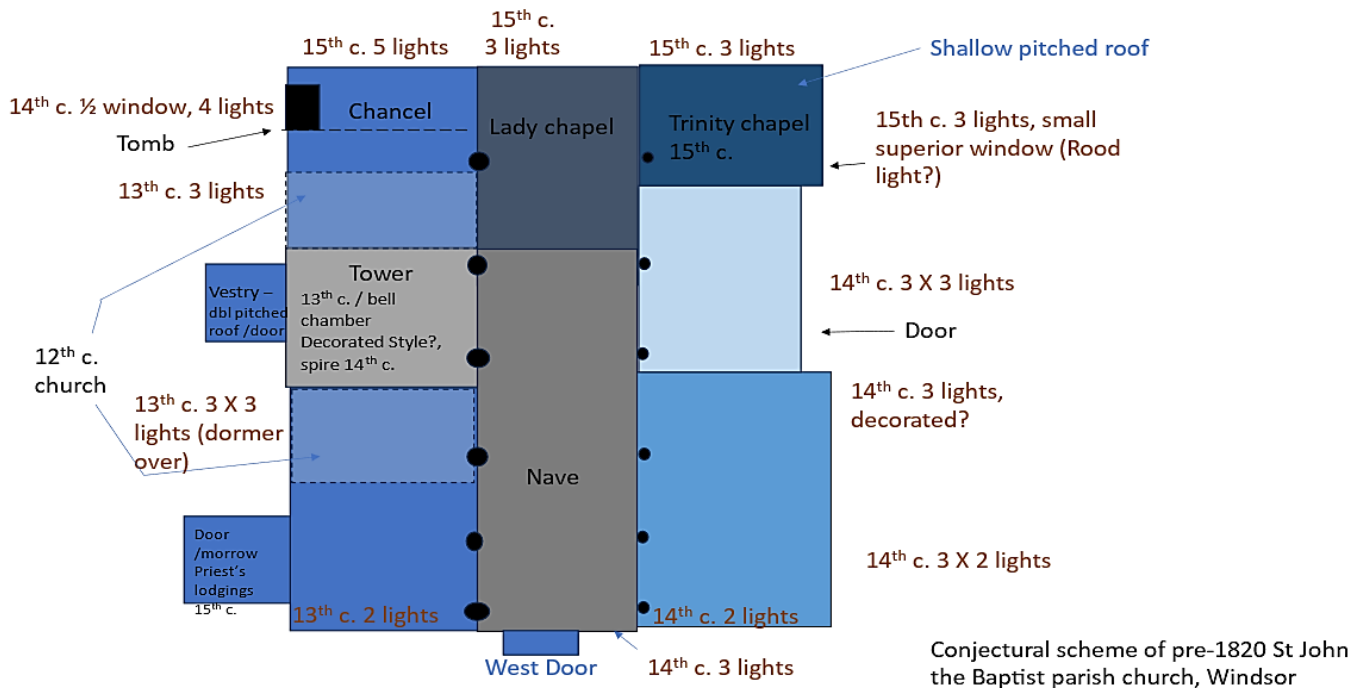
The parish church of St John the Baptist had probably come into existence in c. 1135 when the castle support community, recently relocated to the castle's lower ward, had expanded, rendering the restrictive bounds of the castle walls an impediment to any further growth. The emergence of an exterior stand-alone community necessitated the creation of a new parish, then separated-out as a northerly portion of the existing (and large) Windsor parish, the new portion named (inventively) 'New Windsor parish'. No more than a large village in size, this community's requisition of a roughly level and compact site east of the castle was subject to formal planning. Evidently, the progressive switch to urban living, known from elsewhere in England, was to influence Windsor and indeed, was anticipated to accelerate, requiring a formal plan to allow for still more future growth.

This new parish required a parish church, together with the other necessary features of a new town, resulting in a plan with a distinctive 'T' shape. The new settlement was set against the (probably Roman) road between Staines and

Upton, the bar of the 'T' occupied by a market place and parish church, facing a series of residential plots, sixteen feet wide against the street. The boundaries of these plots (known as burgage plots) survive in large part to the present day, providing tell-tale evidence of Windsor's early 12th century urban planning. That the parish church formed part of this arrangement can be taken from its unusual north – south orientation against the Staines / Upton Road, when more usually parish churches adopted an east - west orientation. The church was stone built, and probably formed part of a church building campaign that encompassed Clewer and Upton parishes, but it was small, a vicarage, probably appropriate to the size of the nascent community it served. Recognising the community's status, it was subsidiary to the manor of Windsor's principal church in (what became known as) Old Windsor, a rectory dedicated to St Peter and St Andrew.

The earliest documentary record of St John's existence comes in 1182, when clearly, it had been in existence for some time. In 1170 its living or advowson (effectively, its ownership) had been granted to the abbey of Waltham Holy Cross by Henry II, in atonement for the murder of Thomas Becket, and this arrangement continued until 1528, when the church was adopted by the town corporation. The borough mayor then appointed the parish vicar, and importantly, the town assumed responsibility for the structure's maintenance, explaining reference to its repair in the town's accounts, these records surviving from 1509.

The best information about this church and its history, however, can be taken from the few surviving images of its appearance shortly before its demolition. Helpfully, these images were recorded from different angles, and by comparison between them, not only can their accuracy be confirmed, but most significantly, it becomes possible to suggest the structure's sequential development. This is taken from the design of its window tracery, roof alignment, building dimensions and other architectural features. Clearly, this was a structure that had passed through a series of recognisable enhancements, some sponsored by townsmen for burials, changing emphasis of belief, or the town's expanding population, and others by corporate intent, most importantly, its Lady chapel. This final addition to the medieval structure dates to the late 15th century and was built at the borough's expense, supported before 1536 by Windsor's freemen, about 100 or so of its most prosperous male inhabitants. The town accounts note that these people were required to pay 4d per annum for the chapel's wax candles, incense, liturgical dress and other fittings, together with the cost of any necessary maintenance of its altar or repair to its structure.



The medieval church had eleven saintly altars, eight maintained by two keepers, the most important being those sited in its Lady chapel, which had two images of the Virgin, one a pieta, and one of the Virgin's mother, St Anne. Unusually, in Windsor the Lady chapel appears to have been located east of the chancel, this arrangement arising from the position of the church tower as part and parcel of the original church. A Trinity chapel was added after 1451, built and maintained by the town's Trinity fraternity. This was a type of community self-help organisation, which became extremely wealthy before its abolition in 1548, owning about a third of all town land. It funded its own priest, called the morrow mass priest, and was sufficiently wealthy to build a huge social hall, the Trinity House (now the site of the Prince Harry pub, Market Street), complete with a kitchen and a resident caretaker, or bailiff. The Trinity fraternity is frequently referred to in pre-Reformation Windsor wills, with requests (and associated endowments) for prayers after death, remembrance often accompanied with an anniversary held in the Trinity House, complete with food and drink and donations to the poor, occasionally preceded by a procession about the town. The church once had a spire complete with a peal of bells, but this was destroyed by (probably) lightning in 1525, seemingly replaced with a less costly, lantern-type arrangement, that perhaps reflected the uncertain future ownership of the building, soon to be transferred from Waltham abbey.

Occasional reference is made in the sources to the appearance of St John's interior: its font, its wall decorations depicting on the south wall St Michael and elsewhere, St Mary on horseback, its several pre-Reformation niches for images of the Virgin, and its substantial round 'Norman' columns supporting the nave. A plan of its 18th century box pews survives in the Royal library.

Undoubtedly, St John's ad-hoc development had resulted in a difficult to use 19th century space, but its demolition was a radical solution to a problem that ironically, is yet to be resolved. The tower of its replacement church, the one now standing on its site, is structurally compromised, and reportedly, is in danger of falling down. Plus ça change!

Do You Know Where This Is?



John Lovelock of the Hedgerley Historical Society has asked if anyone can identify the milestone in this postcard from 1906, and importantly where it is now. It features Miss Gertrude 'Gertie' Millar who was a 'pop star' at the turn of the 20th century and later became the Countess of Dudley. The postcard was left to the Society. John has driven the A4 from Sonning to Maidenhead, but has yet to find what looks to be quite a large stone.

The back has a message to a friend but gives no clues about the card's origin. Although there is a printed comment with 'Rotary Photographic Series'.

The photographers are Foulsham & Banfield who specialised in portraits of theatrical and film personalities.

Berkshire Archaeology

Teresa Hocking, HER Officer, Berkshire Archaeology

This year marks the 21st anniversary of Berkshire Archaeology and its Historic Environment Record (HER).

Berkshire Archaeology was established in April 2004 and provides an archaeological advice service for the Unitary Authorities in the east of Berkshire – Reading, Bracknell, Wokingham, Slough and Windsor and Maidenhead. We are a team of four archaeologists - Principal Archaeologist - Fiona Macdonald: Archaeology Officers Edwin Wood and Linden Ellicott and myself the HER Officer. Employed by Reading Borough Council, we are part of Cultural Services.

Our aim is to ensure that the archaeology of east Berkshire is widely

appreciated and preserved for future generations to enjoy. The range of services we provide includes development management, planning policy and monument management advice, public archaeology, and outreach. We also manage a database of records about the local historic environment – the Historic Environment Record (HER). These records are used to provide information for planning and development control, for research, as well as for general interest.

Back in 2004 Berkshire Archaeology started with two staff members, based in the Reading Central Library, with a small database of monument and archaeological event records known as the Berkshire Archaeology Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). Since then, we have developed it into a Historic Environment Record (HER) reflecting a national more integrated view of the broad historic environment and meaning that more datasets are available in one place. The Berkshire Archaeology HER database now includes monuments; buildings; finds; sites; designations (listed and scheduled monuments and buildings); locally listed buildings; historic landscapes and archaeological investigations. We also hold a small range of resources including books, journals, maps, and a growing digital library of archaeological reports; as well as having convenient access to other source material, as we have an office located in The Royal Berkshire Archives.

Over the years our outreach activities have included talks to local groups and societies and participation in various Heritage events. Most recently the Principal Archaeologist presented at the 2024 Berkshire Archaeological Society Day School.

To ensure that we comply with national standards, we have successfully completed three HER audits (2012, 2017 and 2023) run by Historic England. Following each audit a 5-year action plan is agreed to guide future HER development. A summary of our most recent HER Audit results can be found [here](#).

Since 2004 the number of HER records has steadily grown. There are now over 6,770 monument records ranging from collections of prehistoric stone tools and sites; Roman roads and buildings; villages and towns of Saxon origin; Medieval manors, moated sites and settlements; and Post-medieval/Modern industry and defences.

To ensure accessibility to all, a large selection of our monument and findspot records are published, and regularly updated, on the online Heritage Gateway portal. Whether it is for research or just local interest, have a look at the [Heritage Gateway](#) to see what is available. Once you have checked the Heritage Gateway and if you are doing more in-depth research on a specific

topic or area and wish to find out if we have additional information, please contact me and I may be able to assist you.

The HER database is continually updated with details on new sites and finds, and additional information on existing sites. As well as the records created from archaeological investigations, we are keen to enhance the HER with new information from other sources and are aware of the important work and knowledge of local researchers. So, if you have conducted research in Reading, Bracknell, Wokingham, Slough or Windsor and Maidenhead and have identified key monuments, sites or buildings of interest (and would be happy to share that research) then I would be keen to discuss adding this to the HER database. To contact Berkshire Archaeology please email us at info@berkshirearchaeology.org.uk or view our [webpage](#).

News from Friends of Reading Abbey (FORA)

John Painter, Secretary

FORA launched our 2025 programme with our Spring Lecture, held in memory of Prof. Brian Kemp, our co-founder and late President, held on Saturday 28 March at St James's RC church, Reading. It was given by Dr Ruth Salter, from the Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Reading, on Abbey Infirmaries and attracted an audience of 77.

Our next public outing will be at Reading Water Fest, on Saturday 28 June, where again we shall have our gazebo and display in the Abbey Ruins, along with other local heritage groups. This year our display will be the entries to the FORA Schools' Art Competition, on the theme Reading Abbey, Past Present and Future, held to commemorate the 40th anniversary of our foundation, in 1985, and part-funded by the Earley Charity. All schools in greater Reading were contacted in October 2024, and the competition attracted 15 entries which have been judged by local artist and typographer Martin Andrews, retired President of the Reading Guild of Artists. The entries will be on show in St James's church in the week preceding Water Fest.

Our AGM and Autumn Lecture will take place on Saturday 25 October, 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.

Our members' Summer Outing will be on Wednesday 23 July, to Harmondsworth Great Barn and Syon Park and House, in west London.

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 sold the gaol in Spring 2024 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.

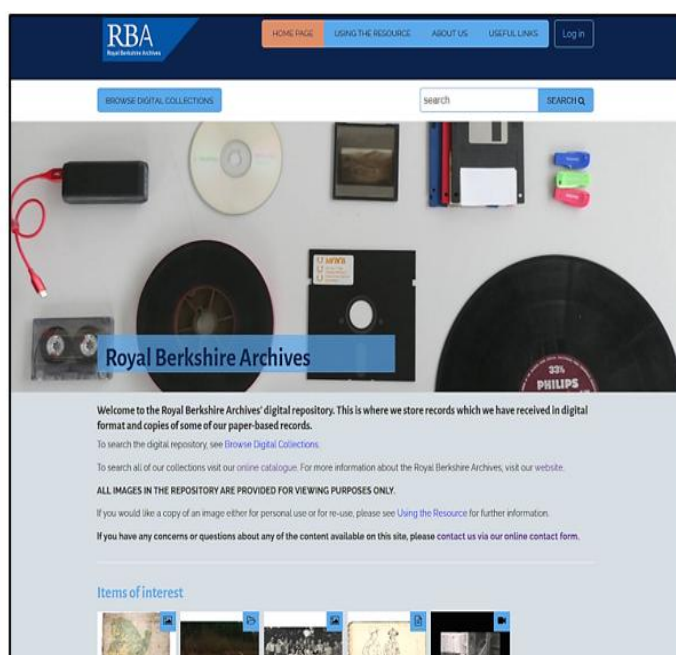
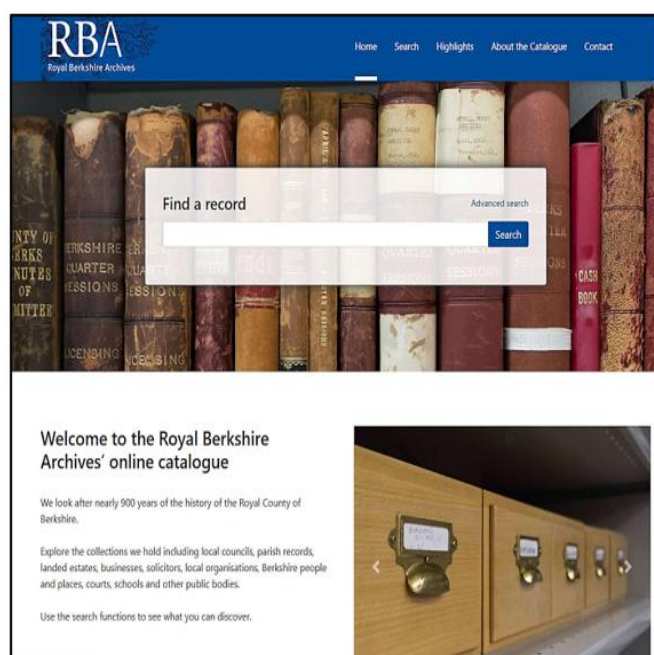
We are pleased to work in partnership with the Confraternity of St James to promote the St James's Way long-distance pilgrimage trail from Reading Abbey to Southampton, and the newer St Frideswide's Way from Oxford to Reading Abbey, launched in June 2024. Both are being developed as part of the Camino Ingles, and FORA supports the installation of a mouteira (stone direction sign) in Chestnut Walk, as a prominent way of promoting St James's Way at a key public point in its route from where it leaves the Abbey Ruins to join the Kennet towpath, and with a design which has a direct connection with the Camino network across Europe.

As part of our 40th anniversary celebrations, we have commissioned a blue plaque outside RISC in London Street to draw attention to the Reading Abbey stones in the building. This has also been funded in part by the Earley Charity, for which we are most grateful.

News from the Royal Berkshire Archives

Ivone Turnbull, Senior Archivist

The Royal Berkshire Archives (RBA) is working on a new exhibition relating to the River Thames that will showcase archives relating to the river. It will be at the RBA between June and August this year. We are also working with a depositor and Reading Museum to celebrate 150 years of Jacksons. A mini display will be at the RBA in September, and a full exhibition will be at the Museum at the end of the year.



Our online catalogue recently underwent a facelift which we hope will be easier to use by our customers, particularly as it is now mobile device enabled.

It also includes highlights of some of our more popular collections such as Broadmoor records or enclosure records. These showcases then take users straight to the online catalogue for that collection. [Take a look and see what you can discover.](#)

Have you seen the RBA's digital repository yet? The repository stores records which we have received in digital format, as well as copies of some of our paper-based records. However, it does not contain digital copies of all our collections. [Why not see what digital records we have by searching our digital repository?](#)

If your local history group is interested in learning how to read old handwriting found in historical documents, the RBA can provide a half day workshop to groups of up to 10 for a fee. [If you would like to find out more about this, please contact us.](#)

Caring For Your Collection - The Mills Archive Trust

On 24 May and 7 June, between 2:00 pm and 4:00 pm, the Mills Archive Trust will be hosting a two-part webinar series covering the fundamental skills needed to protect and share archival records.

For over two decades, our UK accredited archive has preserved the history of the traditional and modern milling industry. We want to share these skills, whether you are an individual collector or part of an organisation.

In our first session, we will cover how to organise and catalogue archival records. In the second, we will help you preserve them—including old documents or digital files—from decay and make them accessible online. To join the 'Caring for Your Collection' webinars and for more information, visit this [webpage](#). Alternatively, go to our [website](#) and choose explore on the main menu.

The price of the complete training is £50. Each workshop is £35 separately. If you cannot attend either of these dates, let us know and we will make recordings available to you. We will provide you with a reference guide to accompany the talks. Links to the Zoom meeting will be sent to your email address before the sessions. Please share this link with people that would be interested. For more information, email us at friends@millsarchive.org.

Society Contributions

Berkshire Family History Society

2025 is proving to be a busy year for the Society. Our usual programme of events and activities is as busy as ever, with the ever-popular trip down the Caversham Chalk Mines, which has become a regular annual event we organise in conjunction with the 89th Scouts Group, as in demand as ever. This year's trip, which takes place on 29 April, sold out within two days of posting the event live on our website. Sadly, most events require a lot more publicity to promote them!

We celebrate our 50th birthday this year with a conference "The Victorians" on Saturday 7 June at Wokefield Place, and a series of special visit and tours each organised by one of our branches. The first event took place in early April, guided tours of St George's Chapel and St George's Archives and included a rare chance to visit the small first floor chamber from which Queen Victoria observed the marriage of her son, Edward Prince of Wales. The conference and all tours are open to members and non-members alike. For more details visit our [website](#).

A considerable amount of effort is being expended on securing new accommodation for the Society when our lease at Reading Central Library comes to an end. We anticipate moving by the end of the year. Whilst our property search and discussions continue, we are taking the opportunity to reduce our holdings and generally do all those things that need doing before you eventually get to a packing and moving stage.

Catherine Sampson, Chairman

Berkshire Gardens Trust

The Trust continues to provide informed and constructive comments on as many as possible of the proposed planning applications likely to affect the setting and features of designed parks and garden landscapes in Berkshire. Our Chair, Bettina Kirkham, is also involved with the Gardens Trust, our national 'umbrella body', which is currently mounting a robust and objective response to the proposed changes to planning policy that would see the rescinding of the requirement for the Government to formally consult the Trust about such applications. Such vigilance, mostly through volunteers, helps to preserve and enhance these spaces, so vital for our wellbeing. (See * below).

In addition, the Trust has got off to a good start with two recent Spring Garden Visits. The first was to Compton Elms, Pinkneys Green. We enjoyed a rare opportunity to enjoy this private, atmospheric garden filled with snowdrops,

primroses, hellebores, fritillaria, interspersed with anemone and narcissi under a canopy of ash and beech. The rest of the garden is made up of a collection of 'rooms' framed by yew and box hedging, a small kitchen and cutting garden, bordered by fruit trees and back borders that are set off by fantastic view across farmlands to Knowl Hill.

The second visit, by kind permission of His Majesty the King, and the Constable and Governor, Lieutenant General (Retd) Phil Jones was to see the gardens of Windsor Castle. This is the first of two visits this year. The second will be on Tuesday 10 June (booking details to be announced later). Windsor Castle has beautifully tended green spaces and different garden areas beneath the walls of the castle. The grounds are under the guiding hand and leadership of Adam Scott, Gardens and Nursery Manager for Windsor Castle and Bagshot Park. The visit included Jubilee Gardens, created by Tom Stuart-Smith in 2002 to mark the Golden Jubilee of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth and the Moat Gardens, the private gardens of the Castle Constable and Governor, carved out of the dry moat around the Round Tower centuries ago. In addition, we saw the East Terrace, created by King George IV in the 1820s with formal gardens and incredible views towards London. These private gardens of the Monarch they have been completely remodelled in the last two years and are now known as the Venus Terrace. The tour ended with a visit to the Castle greenhouses, and an opportunity to buy some of the Spring plants and bulbs (last autumn, Adam's team planted some 26,000 bulbs around the Castle).

The Trust's May visit will be a guided tour of Orleans House Gallery, Marble Hill Park and the garden at Turner's House in Twickenham by Ricky Pound. Ricky is a Trustee at The London Luminaries and House Manager of the Twickenham Museum. Last year he took our Trust on a very successful tour around Chiswick House and gardens. In August, we have a private visit Upton Nerve Manor House, a Grade I listed building, nestled in 16 acres of secluded grounds that include the Grade II listed walled garden and terrace, traditional herb garden, the breath-taking Dell, and the sweeping driveway lined with ancient oak trees. Tea and light refreshments will be provided.

(*) If you would like to know more about the Trust, comment about the proposed Government Planning Policy Changes referred to above or book for one of our events, please visit our [website](#).

Fiona Hope

Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group

With a spring in our step, we started our 2025 programme with a talk by John Harrison on local industries in Wokingham, followed in early February by one of our chairman's walks along the Kennet and Avon canal, this time from Hungerford to Kintbury. Later in February we had a talk on Thomas Telford and we learned what a dynamo the man was with his innovative engineering works across the globe. March had David Peacock visiting us for a talk on the Tudor cloth industry in Berkshire. Then in April we sallied further along the Kennet and Avon canal from Hungerford to Bedwyn.

Coming up in the next few months a talk on Victorian Buildings in Reading and a visit to Didcot Railway Centre. Who knows we may even venture further westward along the canal towpath.

Jo Alexander-Jones, Secretary

Goring Gap Local History Society

The New Year began with a talk by Melvin Seaborne, or Sem as he prefers to be called, who is a member of the Icknield Way Morris Men, a group based in Wantage, where records of Morris dancing go back to the 1500s. He told us all about the history of Morris dancing which is based on rhythmic stepping and the execution of choreographed figures by a group of dancers in costume who usually wear bell pads on their shins and/or feet. It often seems to also involve the consumption of alcoholic beverages and is entertaining both for the dancers and their audience. Originally a male preserve, there are now troops of lady dancers.

In February we moved to a different art form when Marie-Louise Kerr spoke about Oxfordshire on canvas, showing slides of paintings of the county through the ages, culminating in some views by John Piper. She had also selected some scenes of the Goring Gap, which was a great favourite with artists who came to paint the Thames and the surrounding hills. There are three water colour sketches of Goring by the great JMW Turner in the Tate, dating from his visit to the village by boat in 1805. These and other works are a great source for the local historian as they record places that have changed or even disappeared, often done before the age of photography.

The following month our speaker, Roy Larkin, took a very oblique look at World War One. His work as a historian of commercial road haulage had led him to look at how materials were transported during the conflict. Visits to the National Archives to carry out research opened his eyes as to the costs of moving goods and people around and he began to investigate the whole

subject. The amount of money spent by the Government and the War Office was huge and Roy's talk 'Where the money went in the Great War' is recommended.

Our first outing of 2025 was to Shaw House at Newbury, where we had a guided tour of this splendid Elizabethan building, now owned by West Berkshire Council, and fully restored in 2007. The renovations had exposed many lost features of the original house, which are cleverly revealed by hinged panels on the walls of rooms that can be opened by the visitor, such as doorways and windows and timber framework. Shaw House played an important part in the English Civil War, but has had many roles since then, most recently as a girls' school. Now it is an events venue and houses the local Registry Office. Our visit was much enlivened by seeing the outfits of the guests for a series of weddings out of the windows as we did our tour! Shaw House was a great place to visit. There is a small cost for guided tours, but entry is free to casual visitors at weekends when it is open to the public. And there is a lovely café in the old basement kitchen.

Our next visit is to Portsmouth where we shall be seeing the original D-Day Map Room at Southwick Park before moving on to the 'D-Day Story' museum at Southsea. Our interest in marking the 80th anniversary of the end of World War Two continues in June when there will be a coach outing to Bentley Priory in Middlesex, which was the HQ of Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain.

Janet Hurst, Secretary

Hedgerley Historical Society

The Society held its first meeting in February 1976. Now, almost 50 years later, the Society is in good health with almost 250 members and good attendances at monthly meetings.

The [May 2025 to April 2026 Programme](#) has just been published and includes talks on The Regent's Canal, Stoke Poges, the Lost Gardens of London, Taplow Court, Shackleton's Antarctic and Northolt Airport.

Following an excellent Study Day on Brickmaking last year, the 2025 theme is 'Who Owns Hedgerley - from The Templars to the Stevensons'. A number of outings are planned including to St Paul's Walden and Frogmore Paper Mill in Hertfordshire, Wotton House, Quainton, Taplow and The Vache in Bucks, Cranford Park and Harrow School Middlesex. Our annual coach outing this year is to Bristol. Guest speaker at our Autumn lunch is former BBC Arts Correspondent Nick Higham. Special events are being planned for our Golden

Anniversary in 2026.

'A South Bucks Village - the History of Hedgerley' was first published in 1980 and revised in 2007. A third revised edition is currently in preparation and publication is scheduled for March 2026.

John Lovelock, Secretary

The History of Reading Society

Our December meeting was on Zoom, and it was good to see that we were joined by a number of members who don't usually appear at in-person meetings.

The subject of the talk was "More than Biscuits, Beer and Bulbs." Jo Alexander-Jones had chosen to talk about four Reading manufacturers, one of which did in fact make biscuits, Serpell's, about which not much is generally known, in contrast with Huntley and Palmers. The other three firms were Huntley, Boorne and Stevens, who were tinsmiths; Barratt, Exall and Andrewes, who became the Reading Ironworks Company; and Poulton's, who made bricks at the Katesgrove and Waterloo Kilns.

The origins of each firm were traced, and their premises were illustrated with maps, plans and photographs. Some of the firms moved their premises, and some of the photographs had never been published, so it was a particular treat to see them. We saw detailed plans of the ironworks, on both sides of the River Kennet, with the Foundry Bridge between the sites, and some of the photographs of Serpell's factory were particularly interesting. We were also told what is now on the sites of the various factories, works and claypits.

The personalities behind the firms were illustrated wherever possible, and we often learned interesting facts about their lives – such as the meanness and pomposity of Charles Andrewes from the ironworks, and the seemingly dreadful H. O. Serpell, the first man to divorce his wife on the grounds of insanity under the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1937.

In fact, the demise of some of these companies was as interesting as their beginnings and success, a subject not often dealt with.

In the case of all these enterprises we were shown illustrations of what they produced, and of what was left to be seen today. These included biscuit tins, bricks, terra-cotta panels, houses in Christchurch Road, Kendrick Road and Elgar Road, drain covers, lamp-posts at Caversham, a village pump at Sonning, an iron milestone in Reading, a brick wall behind the After Dark Club, and an iron monument in the Old Cemetery.

The amount of work behind this talk was impressive, with each enterprise examined from different angles, and copiously illustrated. Much of the information can be viewed on the website of the Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group, which of course covers the county. It's a long time since I looked at it, but I can now confirm that this also is impressive. Being an old-fashioned kind of soul, I'd rather have had it all in a book, but never mind!

January brought an online picture quiz. Over the years the Society has been given several collections of photographs taken by former members in years gone by. It is hoped in time to make them viewable from our website, but here was a chance to let the members see some of them, for the first time. The quiz – no prizes – proved to be great fun, and we may well run another quiz next year.

The title of February's talk was "Living through the Civil War: The Impact on People in and around Reading," by Catherine Sampson. It was packed with interesting facts and statistics, based on original research by Catherine, and really deserves to be repeated and published.

We were given the surprising statistic that in the country as a whole, more people died in the Civil War than were to die in the First World War, and of those who died in the 1640s, 40% died of disease rather than from the fighting.

The strategic importance of Reading meant that it was occupied by one army or the other for most of the war, and from time to time, as one army left, another arrived, most dramatically after the Siege of Reading in 1643. But the focus of the talk was what happened to the "ordinary" people in the town and the villages round about. Banks and ditches were built around the town, and buildings were requisitioned to be used as barracks. The inhabitants were forced to give up rooms in their homes for soldiers, and some residents buried their valuables to prevent theft or confiscation, in the hope of retrieving them later. People lost their horses, and means of livelihood, and the armies did not pay as promised.

Before the war, the Reading cloth industry was already in decline, but it was reckoned that around half of the population still made their living from it. Now, with access to London by road and water largely blocked, it suffered. The Royalist army demanded the town's tailors make uniforms for their army, but then refused to pay. The "Oracle Workhouse," set up by John Kendrick to house the clothing industry, was used for other purposes. Markets suffered and corporation records show that trade reduced to around a quarter of its pre-war level. There was greater demand for poor relief, and the corporation records include petitions to the mayor from people whose houses had been destroyed.

There are gaps in the church records for some of the period, but surviving records have instances of soldiers marrying local women, and sometimes marrying women whom they had brought with them. Research had shown that bastardy rates did not increase, as might have been expected. There are instances of people dying from typhoid, even among the well-to-do, and in 1646 there was an outbreak of plague. The corporation had the houses of sufferers boarded up, and moved whole households to “pest houses,” some containing over 100 people.

The talk gave a balanced account of what happened here, comparing what happened to Reading, the countryside round about, and to the country as a whole. In our area there was no starvation, or burning of houses or crops – other towns fared much worse.

During question time at the end, one member of the audience, a former Mayor of Reading, said that he had heard that that a previous mayor had been kidnapped by one of the armies, and a ransom had been demanded. Catherine could confirm that this indeed had happened.

In March our season of face-to-face meetings began with a talk on three “Big Little Houses” in Tilehurst, presented by Katie Amos, following the AGM. The first two houses had been built for wealthy middle-class families late in the 19th century. “Dellwood” in Liebenrood Road had started as the home of a Mr. Seon who had been born in Bermuda, and subsequently by a military man and the owner of a private school. It had five bedrooms and stood in two acres of grounds. After the First World War it had been bought by Reading Corporation and was turned into a maternity home. Tragedy struck in 1954, when a boiler fault caused a fire, in which all but two of the 15 babies sleeping on the upper floor lost their lives. Two of the nurses on duty had heroically tried to rescue them. The infants had been buried together in a single grave, and to mark the 50th anniversary of the event, the council had installed a memorial seat by the grave. Inevitably, members of the audience remembered the fire, and some of them had themselves been born in “Dellwood.” The home is now closed and the future of the building is in doubt.

The second house, “The Laurels” in School Road, is now a part of Park Lane School. The first occupants were clergymen, followed by a very different character, Horatio Hamp. His divorce proceedings were widely reported in the national press in 1892. The Partington family were the last owners of “The Laurels” as a private house. During the 1939-45 war it was used as an air raid precautions and first aid post, afterwards becoming part of the school. One member of the audience recalled his school days there. Over the years, parts of the extensive grounds had been sold off for housing, and in 1960 the new Tilehurst Library was opened there.

Kentwood Farm House, our third house, dated from 1723, though the farm itself was in existence in the previous century. It comprised 200 acres, and for much of its time was owned by absentee landlords. One of the most colourful owners must have been Gladys Milton Palmer, a member of the biscuit-making family, who married the son of the Rajah of Sarawak. She was a film producer. When she decided to convert from Christianity to Islam, she chartered an aircraft, so that the ceremony could be conducted in mid-air. Gradually the farmland was sold off for house building, and some of the farmhouse owners were also property developers. It was one of them, Manfred Nowak, who had the old house converted into apartments. Katie had been able to visit one of the ground-floor flats, and recalled a very large old fireplace.

It was apparent throughout the talk that a wide variety of resources had been used in putting it together – directories, electoral rolls, land tax returns, sale catalogues, local papers, photographs inside, outside, and from above, and maps and plans among them – a fascinating evening.

David Cliffe, Chairman

Hungerford Historical Association

It was a chilly evening for Hungerford Historical Association's (HHA) first 2025 talk but nothing compared to the perishing cold experienced by Major Simon Carew Price's soldiers during the Battle for Tumbledown Mountain during the Falklands War, the subject of his talk. Major Price served in the British army for 51 years including in Germany, Northern Ireland, The Gulf and The Falklands. Major Price's talk gave a vivid soldier's eye view of this battle and of the wide variety of issues to contend with in wartime. His personal experiences of this historic event were much appreciated by his large audience.

Alan Turton, former curator of the English Civil War site Basing House, Hampshire, and a founding member of the Battlefield's Trust, entertained HHA in February with his talk explaining the response in Wiltshire to the 'war without an enemy'. Wiltshire was generally pro-Parliament during the Civil War. Agriculture and cloth weaving were the main forms of employment when King Charles I began running into serious difficulties with Parliament resulting in the Civil War in 1642. The economic crisis, expedited by the 30-years war playing out on the continent, led to disagreements between Parliament and the King who wanted to raise taxes and reform customs. The cloth merchants of Wiltshire were already losing access to profitable markets in Flanders and were not in favour of the King's plans to further penalise their profits. No wonder they sided with Parliament.

Hugh Pihlens drew a good crowd as always to the March talk for Hungerford Historical Association. Founder of HHA, his in-depth knowledge of the history of Hungerford is carefully catalogued on the [Virtual Museum](#) and was evident in this talk. Illustrating the breadth of history that he has researched, the topic of Hungerford monuments and gravestones might seem a bit dry to some, but that would ignore Hugh's talent for presentation. Hugh selected ten memorials and gravestones, mainly from in and around St Lawrence's Church which, though rebuilt in the early years of the 19th Century, has been the site of the Parish Church for many centuries before that. His choices illustrated the variety of people that have lived in the town. The strangest story was of poor Henry Cundell who died in 1864. One of many Hungerford Cundells, he was born at Parsonage Farm in The Croft in 1840. He moved to South Africa in his early twenties but was sadly killed, according to his memorial, by a thunderbolt that struck his farm in Port Natal.

Coming up there will be a talk on 28 May from John Dymond 'The rise and fall of a Downland Village' and on 25 June Dr Caroline Ness and Dr Hugh Pihlens will talk on 'Jemima Lye and her sampler', after the Association's AGM.

Dr Caroline Ness, Chairman

Hurley History Society

Since our AGM in November, we have been fairly inactive over the Christmas period. However, in January we had our first evening talk in the Priory Room, this year given by Sue Ellis on Richard III. 25 members turned up and were given an interesting insight into the years leading up to Richard becoming king and his short life as king of England.

Our next talk on the History of Wargrave by local historian Peter Delaney who is well known for his knowledge on Wargrave's past. Again, a very interesting illustrated talk on 'Wargrave Past and Present'.

This was followed in March with a talk by Mike Cooper on Reading Abbey and the Castle. Again, although most of us attending only live 10 or so miles from Reading, Mike gave us many facts and figures about Reading in its early days.

Our April talk will have been on The History of White Waltham Airfield by Richard Poad from the Maidenhead Heritage Centre. Then, in May, our final talk of the winter season will be on The History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

For the warmer summer period we move on to outdoor visits with guided visits to Eton; Silchester and the Cookham Abbey excavations.

Two other exciting events are also occurring this year. Copies of two largescale copies of the 1609 map of Hurley Parish have now arrived in the village which we hope to hang on public display in the church and village hall. The second is a Historical Display, on the village, in the Priory Room during the Hurley Fete. The Society are taking over the Priory Room next to the church and will be displaying photographs of old Hurley, old maps; old artefacts dug up etc; a small display on Station Victor, and videos. The display will be stewarded by members and open all day from 9 – 5 for visitors who wish to learn more about Hurley. Admission is free but donations are always welcome.

Contact me at the email address shown in the ‘History Societies’ section below for further information. We always welcome new members to any of our events. Membership costs £10 per annum payable to the ‘Hurley History Society’.

David Burfitt, Secretary

The Marcham Society

To celebrate the first 30 years of our Society, we will be holding an Exhibition in the Marcham Centre on Sunday 19 October, with displays that include local history, archaeology and natural history.

[The Marcham Centre](#) is a modern spacious village hall and our committee is busy making plans and preparing exhibits and the layout.

We would like to invite similar local history societies to attend and also to set up a ‘stall’ to advertise and sell their publications.

Simon Blackmore, Membership Secretary

Project Purley

In January, we welcomed Malcolm Summers as our speaker with an excellent talk on the history of the Greyfriars Church in Reading. One of two large Medieval religious institutions in Reading, whilst Reading Abbey is well known, the Greyfriars Friary receives far less attention. The church is the only surviving part of the friary and it stands at the west end of the road now named Friar Street after it. This is its second site. The first buildings were constructed slightly further along the Caversham Road towards Caversham, but being in the floodplain of the Vastern Ditch, suffered from regular flooding. The current site was obtained by 1285 and the friary built by at least 1311. The friars were expelled in 1538 as part of Henry VIII’s dissolution of the monasteries. In 1543, Reading’s mayor successfully petitioned the king to be able to use the nave

and aisles of the church as a town hall, the remainder of the church and the friary's other buildings and land were sold to Robert Stanshawe. The church proved unsuccessful as a town hall however, and in time became a house of correction and a hospital for the poor, and eventually a jail, before it fell into disrepair. The building was rescued and restored by public subscription, spearheaded by the minister of nearby Holy Trinity Church. It is now a thriving parish church and has continued to be extended and modernised to the present day. This was a fascinating talk which was beautifully illustrated and presented.

February's speaker was Katie Amos, the Local Studies Lead for Reading Central Library, who has spoken to us previously about the history of some of the larger houses in and around Reading. This time she was talking about Dellwood, The Laurels and Kentwood, three of Tilehurst's larger properties. In a well-illustrated and researched talk, Katie explored the history of each house in turn, beginning with Dellwood, an ex-maternity and care home. It transpired that we had several 'Dellwood babies' in the room. Katie traced the occupancy of the house from its construction in 1894 as a private home. Sadly, disaster struck in 1954 when a fire broke out on site, which killed 13 babies. Two children were saved from the fire, one of these, it transpired, would later become the window cleaner of one of our members. The Laurels, now the infant department of Park Lane School, originally sat in much larger grounds, much of which has now been redeveloped. No former pupils were in the audience, but we did have one retired teacher. Kentwood Farmhouse, just off Kentwood Hill, was the house most of us couldn't quite place, the building not being visible from the main road and so easily missed. The current house dates from 1723, but the history of the site can be traced back to the Domesday Survey.

We welcomed one new member on to the committee at March's AGM, although we still have one vacancy which we hope to fill by co-opting someone during the year. After refreshments, Mike Hurst gave an evocative and light-hearted talk on 'Getting About in the 1960s', which soon had everyone chipping in with their memories. The old cars section proved particularly popular as many of our members drove the same model of cars as Mike and his family. This was a very popular talk which brought back very happy memories for many of those present.

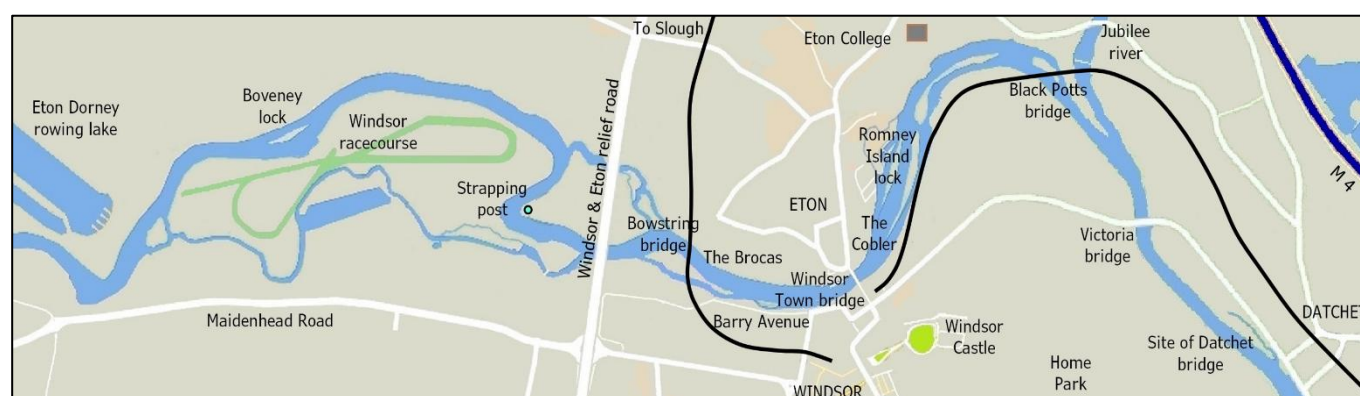
Looking ahead, on 5 May, we are holding a special VE Day event to commemorate the 80th anniversary. The afternoon includes an exhibition on 'Purley in World War Two', a talk in two halves by Mike Cooper, tea/coffee and cake, music and images. Tickets cost £5 and to date sales are going very well. We have also traced and invited a number of descendants and relatives of

past Purley residents who served/died in the war, some of whom are travelling quite some distances to join us. The Rain or Shine Theatre Company are back in June with a performance of 'The Rivals' and our July trip is to Douai Abbey.

Catherine Sampson

Wargrave Local History Society

For Wargrave Local History Society's January meeting, Blue Badge guide Graham Horn gave a presentation about the River Thames, from the Dorney rowing lake to the Albert Bridge through Windsor and Eton. He looked at the locks and bridges, boats and ferries, and the people to be found in and around the water. Much of the land on the north side of the river belongs to Eton College, including the international standard Eton-Dorney rowing lake which was completed in 2002, and used for the London Olympics and Paralympics in 2012. On an island on the other side of the river, a little downstream, is Windsor racecourse, which dates from 1865. The next bend in the river is relatively sharp, and so to help horse-drawn boats navigate this safely, a strapping post was provided - barges being swung around on a rope from the post. After passing under the Windsor and Eton relief road, the river is crossed by Brunel's bowstring bridge for the railway branch that opened in 1849 – one of two competing lines to Windsor, each of which needed to cross Eton College land. Jacob's boatyard had been sited on Corporation Ait, and then the College boathouses were on the opposite bank just before the Town Bridge, after which Romney Lock is passed before the Black Potts bridge carrying the second railway line, the river then turning southwards alongside Windsor Castle's Home Park.



The fascinating subject of villager and society member Julia Freeman's presentation in February was *The Life and Travels of the Wife of a Bridge Engineer*. Her husband Anthony Freeman was the third generation of bridge builders in the highly respected firm, Freeman, Fox and Partners, with many notable projects worldwide. Anthony's grandfather, Ralph Freeman was born in London in 1880, studying engineering before joining Douglas Fox and Partners in 1901. The projects he worked on included the Victoria Falls bridge

in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and others in South Africa. Becoming the senior partner in the company in 1921, he was the consulting engineer for the Sydney Harbour Bridge, his iconic design taking 8 years to build. The company became Freeman, Fox and Partners in 1938, and Ralph Freeman (senior) was knighted in 1947. His son, also Ralph, also became an engineer, his work including many suspension bridges, including both of the Severn Crossings and the Humber Bridge, and both of the Bosphorus bridges. His son Ralph Anthony Freeman (known by his middle name to distinguish him from his father and grandfather) was working on the Avonmouth bridge just west of Bristol, when he and Julia met, and she soon picked up what civil engineering involved! They spent, with their family, time abroad, Anthony's projects including the elevated mass transit railway in Hong Kong, the Rama IX bridge in Bangkok whilst nearer home he was the engineer responsible for adding a road deck to the Britannia Bridge across the Menai Strait in north Wales. Whilst working on a project in France he was injured in a fall, and air-lifted back to hospital at Basingstoke - where he soon set up an office in his hospital bed! A further project was the large Vasco da Gama bridge in Portugal, but an accident there left him with severe brain damage, from which he never recovered. Julia said that she had been left with many happy memories of a man who liked his work and was never happier than when 'designing stuff' (at home for the family as well as the major engineering work), and wanted to share that memory with others.

It is always something special when a long-time village resident shares their memories, and in March (following the Society's AGM), Maureen Prince



reminisced about living at The Holt (an area between Hare Hatch and Kiln Green just north of the Bath Road) and in Wargrave. (The photograph shows Maureen with, in the background, the main Bath Road (A4) between Twyford and Maidenhead). Maureen was born at Holt Cottage, and between the ages of five and eleven attended Knowl Hill Church of England School, using the Thames Valley Reading to Maidenhead bus service. One day in 1945, having got off the bus with several other people, a milk lorry crashed into the back of the bus, injuring several waiting to cross the Bath Road. Maureen lay unconscious and badly injured in the road, and remained in a coma for 3 weeks in

Maidenhead Hospital. At age eleven she transferred to the Piggott School in Wargrave, where her sporting achievement included being captain of the school hockey team, and being awarded the Victrix Ludorum cup. Maureen learnt touch typing at evening classes, and then learnt Pitman shorthand and bookkeeping at college, after which she worked in the office for Henry

Wynmalen's firm Buckwyn Construction Ltd, at Hare Hatch. Henry Wynmalen died in 1964, and his widow, Julia, invited Maureen to become her private secretary. Julia's interests were in Guernsey cattle, sheep and poultry, and as she spent several months annually in her native Peru, Maureen ran the estate, which she did from 1966 to 1996. Meanwhile, Maureen had married and when she took over as Clerk of the Woodclyffe Hostel, and secretary and treasurer for the Woodclyffe Hall she and John moved to Wargrave. A library had first been started there in 1924, and Maureen took an interest in its work, undertook training for library work, and took over in 1972 - retiring in 1999. She also recalled her time with various village societies and charitable organisations. She resigned as the Clerk to the Woodclyffe Hostel Trustees in 2004, moving to Recreation Road. To mark her 39 years of service, she was presented to the Trustees – adding that, so far, she has had an interesting and busy life, and has many friends - as well as her two long haired dachshunds!

Sutton's Seeds has been a household name in British horticulture and farming for 200 years, and in April Dr Richard Marks recounted its history from a small local family business to a company with an international customer base. Reading was for a long time associated with the '3B's' - biscuits, beer and bulbs - and Suttons was the last mentioned of those. Richard began by describing the fraudulent way seeds were sold pre-19th century, mixing old ones not likely to germinate in with the fresh ones, or even adding seeds that looked similar but had been killed so as not to grow! The practice became more obvious with the changes in farming methods, and Suttons - established in Reading in 1806 as corn and seed merchants – decided to use scientific methods to produce tested and unadulterated seeds for use by farmers, expanding the cater for the growing trend of home gardening. With the coming of the railways, and their telegraph system, and then the penny post, Suttons was able to offer a same day delivery mail order service to these customers. They developed seeds suited to particular conditions, and so could guarantee the quality of the product – at home or abroad, having tested them on extensive trial grounds (most notably between the A4 and the railway just to the east of the Reading borough boundary). Richard's presentation explained how the company catered for agricultural and horticultural customers, and how and why in the 1980s (no longer controlled by the Sutton family) it left Reading and moved to Devon. Richard's gentle style, drawing on his extensive research, made for an interesting and enjoyable presentation.

For more detailed reports about these meetings, or for more information about the society, visit the [website](#).

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 Archaeological 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, Earley, 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

(goringgaphistory@gmail.com)

Hanney History Group

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

Hedgerley Historical Society

John Lovelock: 13 Coppice Way, Hedgerley SL2 3YL – 01753 647187

(jdlovelock@btinternet.com)

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

Bob Bosley: 7 Baxendales, Newbury RG14 7SA (bobbosley@outlook.com)

Oxfordshire Family History Society

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

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
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