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Berkshire Local History Association

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Cover illustrations

Front: St Giles in Reading, the parish where Captain Conaby's death was recorded.

Back: Coleshill estate bills and invoices from 1903/4. Royal Berkshire Archives D/EPB/E227/1-17

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Captain Conaby and the Reading Fight, December 1688

Mike Cooper

On 5 November 1688, William, Prince of Orange, landed with an invading army at Brixham. Just over a month later, on 9 December (Julian Calendar, 19 December in modern usage), his forces fought those of King James II in a brief skirmish at Reading. This was one of only two military actions in England during what would come to be referred to as “The Glorious Revolution”. The only other action was an encounter at Wincanton on 20 November. Most of the fighting was in Ireland during the next three years.

The action is referred to today as “The Reading Skirmish”, a term used in 1688; the “Reading Fight”, a term dating from at least 1714; or “the Battle of Broad Street”. Its importance in the events of 1688-91 is uncertain, but it was the last time a land action would be fought in southern England.

The Fight has been mentioned in a number of secondary accounts. This article will look at some of the primary sources for the event.

On 12 December 1688 St Giles’s Church recorded the burial of a “Capt. Conaby”. They said that the captain was “of the Prince’s”. The following day St Mary’s recorded the burial of “David Conaby”. No other Conaby appears to be present in any contemporary Reading burial records, suggesting that Conaby may not have been a local man, although it is not possible to be sure that the two records refer to the same man. “Of the Prince’s” shows that he was a member of William of Orange’s forces. In his memoirs, Gilbert Burnet, who was William’s chaplain at the time, noted that the only officer killed in the advance on London, at Reading, was a Catholic who had especially volunteered to serve in the invasion.

Dutch army records, cited by Charles Dalton, show the commission of a Richard Carnaby in 1674.

In addition to Conaby, St Giles’s parish records give some brief entries for men buried at the time of the Reading Fight:

9 December. Four King’s soldiers. One Prince’s soldier

10 December. One King’s soldier

11 December. Two King’s soldiers

12 December. Conaby, Capt. Of the Prince’s

14 December. One King’s soldier

None of the other dead are named. This was an age before identity discs and, in some cases, decent record keeping. This also means that potentially, any other male buried in any Reading cemetery within a few days of 9 December could have been a soldier involved in the fight, or a civilian killed in the fighting. Of the other two parish churches at the time, St Mary’s records don’t state anything, but St Laurence’s include a “souldier”, maybe two, earlier in the month.

1 December. Charles Read, a “souldier”

James MacBully, recorded as a guard at “the White Hart”

On 7 December, St Laurence’s recorded “James Appleby slain”.

The burials in St Laurence’s show that troops were in Reading at least at the start of December 1688.

The author Daniel Defoe was in Windsor at the time, and left an account of the Reading Fight in his *Tour thro’ the whole island of Great Britain...* written almost thirty years later. He says he was in Reading the day after the Fight and joined William’s army. A lot of his account is coloured by his politics (he was a fierce opponent of James) but the fact that he was at hand and had access to William’s forces means that he has to be regarded as an important source, and more than one secondary account has used his work uncritically.

Defoe says that with William’s men reaching Newbury, James decided to send troops to Reading. A detailed list of William’s movements puts the advance guard of the invasion force at Newbury on 7 December, so the decision would have to have been taken on or after that date.

According to Defoe, the force sent was 600 “Irish Dragoons”. (Dragoons were equipped and trained to fight from horseback or dismounted, unlike “Horse”, conventional cavalry.)

As King of England, Scotland and Ireland, James could call on troops from Ireland, and in November 1688 he brought troops over from Ireland, and down from Scotland, including dragoons.

James may have intended to place more men in Reading. A contemporary record by Hans Willem Bentinck notes that the Dutch forces located three regiments marching up, and Daniel Defoe mentions that three regiments of cavalry were close enough to Reading to meet men retreating from Reading at Twyford.

Bentinck’s account is accepted as having been written on the evening of 9 December 1688. It is his notes for a briefing letter to William’s wife Mary, then still in Holland. Bentinck was one of William of Orange’s leading administrators and diplomats and was at the prince’s headquarters, then in Littlecote House. The account is in effect an internal intelligence summary from the Dutch Headquarters.

Opposite is the section of his account talking about Reading, used with permission of the University Nottingham Special Collections.

Bentinck writes that on the morning of 9 December, the “Comte de Nassau” (Walrad, Prince of Nassau-Saarbrocken, William’s cousin and at the time one of his senior commanders) sent a force of 150 cavalry and 100 dragoons to see if there were any of King James’s troops in Reading. A surviving record of William’s movements shows cavalry and dragoons at Tilehurst and Purley on 8 December, within an hour or so of Reading. If Captain Conaby was killed on 9 December, this would be the force he was with.

At ten o’clock that morning they found six “Comps” – companies or “troops” – of Scottish cavalry and three of Irish dragoons had arrived in Reading. They attacked them and drove them out of town, killing about 20 and capturing

de Littlefort, le 19^e d'Avr: 66.
le même jour son Altesse se rendit à dix heures de nos postes
qui avoit été délaissé par Mr. le Comte de Massan, vacant
vingt-quatre chevaux, et vacant dix-neuf pour de ce qu'est
surtout, averti des troupes du Roy, ^{sans Reading, c'est à dire} ~~il y avoit~~ ce jour-là, de
hensy de mation, et de ceux les régiments de dragons
de la cavalerie, les régiments de la cavalerie et de ceux de dragons, et de ceux
postes afin, pour à l'entre de la ville, ils les pourrissent
vigourement et les batirent et enlevèrent par
de vint, et firent entre trente et quarante prisonniers, et
semplement de deux, et de ceux, et de ceux, et de ceux, et de ceux
de ceux de dragons, et de ceux, et de ceux, et de ceux, et de ceux
est en marche, pour prendre, et pour ceux, et de ceux, et de ceux
notre parti, et de ceux, et de ceux, et de ceux, et de ceux

Original French text of the draft notes for Bentinck's letters to Mary. This is the entry for 9 December covering Reading (University of Nottingham Special Collections, used with permission)

30-40. Finding a force of three “battalions” of infantry – at full strength up to 3,000 men – three miles beyond Reading, and moving up to occupy the town, they withdrew. With a troop of cavalry of around 50 men, there were in the order of 300 Scots and 150 Irish. It is not certain, but the two regiments were probably the Royal Regiment of Scots Horse and the Queen Consort’s dragons.

William's men were in full occupation of the town on 10 December, when 500 men of the Scots Guards surrendered.

In his account from 1720, Daniel Defoe gives more detail, but at some points it doesn't match the Bentinck notes. Defoe states that he spoke to some of James's officers, and, as he says he was in Reading the following day, may have spoken to townspeople at the time or indeed during his later visit.

Bentinck's account suggests a reconnaissance which found the king's men positioned at a bridge near the entrance to the town. Daniel Defoe doesn't mention a bridge but says that men were placed in the Market Place, in the yard of the Bear Inn, and along the wall of the church yard of a nearby church. He says that Sir John Lannier, their commander, intended to catch the Dutch troops on their way into town. It is possible to read Bentinck as stating that it was the Irish dragoons who were positioned for the planned ambush. Dragoons,

equipped with muskets rather than the shorter carbines or just pistols alongside their swords, would be a good choice for this task. Lannier was one of James's senior commanders.

Defoe also mentions that the "Irish" troops were in a "piazza" outside the town's main church. Assuming that he was using the word precisely, this can only refer to the "Piazza" built along the side of St Laurence's with money left by John Blagrave, and eventually removed in the nineteenth century.

Defoe says that a sentry was placed in the "spire" of the main church and told to ring the bells and fire his musket when he saw Dutch troops. (He failed to do this.) Defoe may not be using the term "spire" literally, and as noted above, we don't know what he thought the main church was. The Bear Inn was on what is now Bridge Street – then Seven Bridges – and, assuming Defoe was right, then the nearest church to the Bear would be St Mary's, with good views to the west and close to the forces placed in ambush.

It is hard to reconcile Bentinck's and Defoe's accounts, unless the former is referring to the bridges along Bridge Street, and assuming that Nassau's horsemen were advancing from the west along what is now Bath Road. In Defoe's account, warned by the townspeople, the Dutch used both the "Newbury road" and Pangbourne Lane (Oxford Road) to surprise the king's force, pushing them back into Market Place and into retreat.

Defoe says "not above twelve" of the king's soldiers were killed. Bentinck, writing that evening, says about 20. Church records seem to show eight of James's men and two of William's killed.

James's men were in place on or by 9 December. Defoe says that despite statements by their officers, they threatened to kill the townspeople on the 9th, leading to a messenger – identified by Manfred Brod as a former member of the Corporation – being sent to get help from William's forces. According to the record of William's movements, his forward mounted troops were at Tilehurst and Purley on 8 December.

In Defoe, subsequent historiography, and in local tradition into the nineteenth century, James's troops have been uniformly described as Irish Catholics. A violently anti-Irish and anti-Catholic ballad from 1688 about the Reading Skirmish makes it clear that the story was current then, and one of a pack of playing cards showing events from the Glorious Revolution refers to the troops as "Irish". The card is dated to 1689-1700 and the figures wear plausible uniforms for 1688.

The Ballad includes the lines:

We were resolved Reading to clear
Having in hand the flourishing sword
The bloody scene was soon to appear
For we did then but wait for the Word

While the Ministers were preaching
We were resolved to have at their town.

The specific incident shown on the playing card – Reading people firing on the Jacobites from windows – also features in a 1703 history of William's reign quoted by John Man in 1816 in *The History and antiquities...of the Borough of Reading*.



Playing card showing the Reading Fight (British Museum)

From Bentinck's account most of the troops in Reading were Scots, although Irish troops – most probably mainly Protestants – were present.

A number of towns across England reacted at the time, believing that Irish troops were on their way to burn them down or murder their inhabitants. When Daniel Defoe arrived at Reading, he was told that Maidenhead and "Oakingham" (Wokingham) had been burnt by the Irish. In Slough, he was told that Reading had been burnt. Some of this may be a reaction to the religious tensions of the time, but it seems clear, too, that it was fanned, or even started, by propaganda from close to William of Orange himself, probably by his second in command, Frederick Schomberg. It has been described as "the Irish Fright", spreading across England and Wales during early December 1688. Reading seems to have been an early example of this in England itself. In Ireland a letter – the "Comber Letter" – now generally accepted as a forgery, claiming that the king's forces intended to massacre the Protestants of Derry, had begun circulation on 3 December, leading to the gates of the city being closed against James's forces and beginning the siege which is still commemorated today.

Even without threats or potential threats of violence, the sudden arrival of maybe over 400 men and horses would have been a problem for Reading. "Billeting" – housing troops on the local population – could be used as a kind of punitive tax. Overnight, Reading's population had increased by possibly as much as ten per cent in the middle of winter.

People in Reading certainly told the story that the town had been close to being burnt. It is present in the ballad the Reading Skirmish, and, writing in 1802, Charles Coates in *History and Antiquities of the Town of Reading* (London, 1802) stated that it was still the custom for all three churches to ring their bells on 9 December in thanks for their deliverance from the Irish. The churchwardens' accounts of St Mary's and St Giles's reproduced by Coates show payments in 1695 and 1714 for this. In 1714 the amount was six shillings, described as for ringing a "Reading Fight".

On the basis that Captain Conaby was the Catholic officer referred to by Gilbert Burnet, it is ironic that he died as part of the force whose arrival Reading marked as a deliverance from murder by perceived Catholics.

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I'd like to thank the staff of the British Museum and University of Nottingham Special Collections as well as Katie Amos of Reading Local Studies and Catherine Sampson of Berkshire Family History Society for their help in researching this article.

The Coleshill Estate Archive in the Royal Berkshire Archives, part 2

Peter Durrant

In a previous article (*Berkshire Old and New*, 40, 2023) I wrote about the archives of the Coleshill estate held in the Royal Berkshire Archives (RBA), concentrating on the earlier records – from the early seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth. Here I will discuss in more detail the extensive records that survive for the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth.

The Records

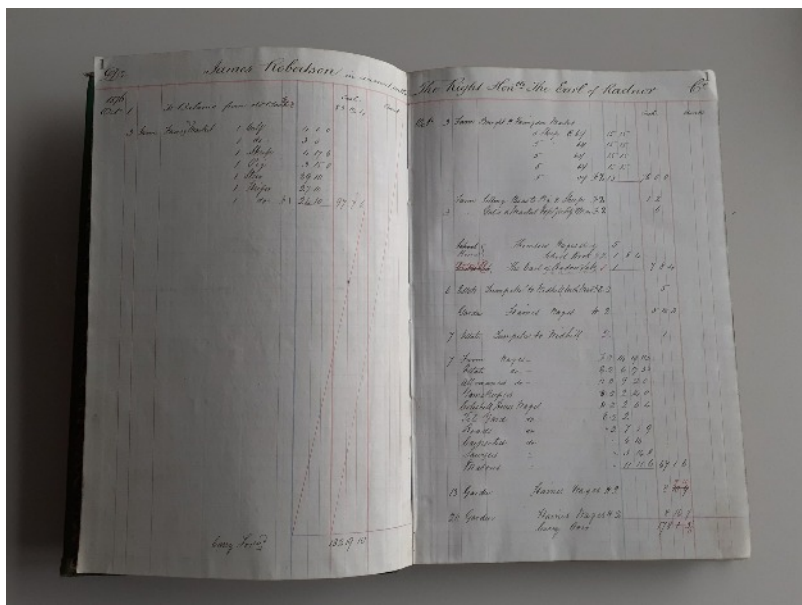
We owe the existence of most of these records to James Robertson, land agent to the estate from 1876 to 1901. Robertson was a Scot, born in Perth in 1833. He was married there and his first child was born there. He came to Berkshire between 1860 and 1863 to take up the post of bailiff at Coleshill.¹ What persuaded him to move over 400 miles south is unknown, but he was evidently content with his decision, for he remained at Coleshill for the rest of his life.

In 1876 he was promoted from bailiff to agent. The occasion of his appointment may have been slightly uncomfortable for him: Edward Moore, his predecessor (and former boss), who had been agent since 1840, was dismissed by Lord Radnor in circumstances that have never been fully explained, but by which Moore clearly felt aggrieved.² Nevertheless, Robertson entered on his new role with vigour. And amongst the first things he did was to reorganise the estate's record keeping.

Some records he inherited – notably the rentals, which had been kept in broadly the same form for over a century, and a few series of wages books – and these he maintained. However, he also instituted a new system of accounting, designed to reflect the main business areas of the estate, and a new and more comprehensive system of recording the payment of wages. These systems were continued by Robertson's successors, John Irons (1901-1908), Cyril Shaw (1908-1915) and F. Leigh Wyatt (1915-c.1945), with only minor variations, until well after the end of the First World War.

Three distinct and separate accounts were set up: Home (covering income and expenditure on the house and gardens, and also including the costs of gamekeepers, expenditure on the church and school – including for a period the schoolmaster's wages – and miscellaneous private expenses), Farm (the Home Farm and mill) and Estate (general estate expenditure). Entries were first made in a cash book, and subsequently re-entered in the appropriate ledger. Between 1876 and 1892 all cash entries were made in a single series of volumes. In the latter year, two separate series of cash books were opened, one for the Farm

account, and one for Estate and Home. Periodically, separate accounts were opened for individual farms – Middle Leaze and Brimstone, 1883-1885; Ashen Copse, 1883-1888 and 1893-1900; and West Mill, from 1890 – reflecting times when they were taken in hand.



The first entries in James Robertson's new cash book, 1876. RBA D/EPB/E184/1

A new series of books was begun in 1900, when the Home and Estate accounts were merged. The Farm account remained separate, and was renamed Home Farm in 1905. The West Mill account remained separate from these. The West Mill account ceased in 1913, and the Home Farm account in 1915 (when it was let). The records of the estate account continue to 1923.

Entries in these books, of course, depended on the information in the original bills and invoices submitted by those individuals and businesses that supplied goods and services to the estate, and these survive by the thousand for the period 1876-1924, adding considerably to the evidence in the cash books and ledgers. They also provide valuable evidence for numerous local businesses operating in Coleshill, in the local market towns of Faringdon and Highworth, and further afield – firms such as T. W. Anns of Faringdon, ironmonger; W. B. Blackhall of Coleshill, smith and farrier; C. R. Deacon of Faringdon, saddler; Hughes Bothers of Faringdon, plumbers, glaziers, painters and decorators; J.

Mauler of Coleshill, blacksmith; Joseph Thomas of Highworth, builder and decorator; John Toomer and Sons of Swindon, coal merchants; and P. Woodbridge of Highworth, saddler and harness maker. There are a few gaps: nothing survives for the years 1881-2 and 1884-5 to 1887-8, and only one document for each of the years 1888-9 and 1889-90, but otherwise the collection is very full.

The documents are arranged by financial year. From 1876 to 1901 this ran from Lady Day to Lady Day. Between 1901 and 1910 it was variable (the actual dates are set out in the RBA catalogue). In 1910 there was a six-month accounting period running from 1 May to 29 September (Michaelmas). Thereafter the accounting year ran from Michaelmas to Michaelmas.

In the early years the vouchers were folded (vertically) and stored in annual bundles, one for each separate account (Estate, Home Farm etc). From April 1900 to April 1908 they were arranged (all accounts together) in monthly bundles. From May 1908 monthly bundles were retained, but they were now subdivided into three groups – Estate, Home Farm and West Mill. (Garden vouchers, though technically part of the Estate account, were sometimes filed in a separate sequence.) The separate West Mill series ran until Michaelmas 1913, after which it was absorbed into the general Estate series. The separate Home Farm account ends in September 1915 (when the farm was let). Thereafter a single series was maintained. The documents were no longer folded and bundled, but kept flat in annual files. The series ends at Michaelmas 1924.

Prior to 1902 no numbering system was used. From April that year, documents were numbered in a single sequence, beginning afresh at the start of each new accounting year. This system was used until April 1908. In May, along with the arrangement in three sub-series, a new method of numbering was introduced, each sub-series having its own sequence, prefixed respectively by the letter E, HF and WM. Where, as not infrequently happened, an invoice covered work for more than one account, it would receive a number in each appropriate sequence (for example, E25; HF15; WM8). The document itself would be filed with the “senior” sequence (the hierarchy was E, HF, WM) – thus an invoice numbered E, HF and/or WM would be filed in the E series, and one numbered HF and WM in the HF series. Invoices apparently missing from the HF series should be sought in the E series, and those missing from the WM series in either E or HF. The numbering of invoices ceased in 1915.

The majority of the documents survive in the bundles or files that were assembled at the time. However, at some date between the 1920s and the 1990s many bundles, mostly from the 1890s, but some of later date, were broken up and the contents scattered. Subsequently, at a date unknown, the scattered documents (by now mostly rather the worse for wear, often damaged and generally filthy) were gathered up, and new bundles created, apparently at random, so that each of the new bundles contained documents from several different years (anything from 1890 to 1920) and many different sequences.

Some 70 such bundles were created, many containing also unrelated, non-financial items that had been similarly scattered.

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Carpenters: 1864-1877; 1890-1920 (E262/1-3)
Estate and roads: 1882-1897, 1903-1912 (E257/1-2; E259/1-3)
Home Farm: 1882-1899, 1904-1915 (E257/1-2; E258/1-4; E254/13)
Sawyers: 1882-1910 (E263/1-4)
Masons: 1884-1923 (E264/1-2)
Gamekeepers, 1889-1931 (E265/1-6)

As with the accounts, there are also separate series for some of the tenanted farms for periods when they were taken in hand, as follows:

West Mill Farm: 1890-1913 (E260/1-8)
Ashen Copse Farm: 1893-1894, 1897-1899 (E260/3; E261/1)

These volumes contain a detailed record comprising employee's name, a daily record of employment (i.e. the nature of the work carried out), number of days worked, the daily rate, and wages paid. Thus we can see, for example, that in May 1883 R. Luker was paid for 12 days as herdsman at 2s 4d per day, W. Iles for 12 days "cattle and sundries" at the same rate, T. Hollick for six days at the Bridgwater Show and a further six for looking after pigs on the estate at 2s 2d per day, G. Cooper for variously horse hoeing, driving the drag (a kind of heavy harrow), driving the cultivator and weeding at 1s 1d per day, S. Luker for 12 days in the dairy at 1s per day, and A. Iles for 12 days weeding in the village at 10d per day.

Summary information from them was carried into a series of Estate Pay books, 1882-1928 (E266/1-6, but lacking the volume for 1900-1906); these are arranged by trade or occupation (e.g. carpenters, masons) and contain only employee's name and wages paid.

The information entered in these volumes was derived from fortnightly wages sheets. Wages were paid fortnightly, and were paid for actual work done rather than as a regular wage. It was therefore necessary to keep a daily record both of the task carried out and the time taken (usually reckoned by the half day). Separate sheets were kept for general estate work, the Home Farm and West Mill Farm, and for specialist trades and occupations (matching the arrangement in the wages books). At the end of each fortnight these wage sheets would be collected together and taken to the estate office, where the books would be made up and wages calculated and paid.

The sheets themselves have survived with remarkable completeness from March 1887 to March 1935, with the year 1888-9 (for which only the final fortnight's bundle survives) being the only major gap. As with the bills and vouchers, however, the bundles of wages sheets for the 1890s seem to have been broken up, scattered and disregarded, until at some late date the loose papers, by now often damaged and rather dirty, were gathered up into new, random bundles, many of which also contained bills and vouchers and other entirely

unrelated papers. These have now been re-sorted into financial year, and as far as possible the original arrangement has been restored.⁴

In addition to the financial records described above, an important series of estate correspondence survives for the period 1892-1923. Out-letters were originally entered in press-copy letter books (7 volumes, 1892-1913; E438-444) and subsequently filed in a form of ring-binder (8 files, 1913-1923; E445-452). In-letters were always filed (35 files, 1901-1923; E453-487). Towards the end of the period a small number of subject files were created (7 files, 1914-1925; E488-494). In the general series files, letters were arranged alphabetically by correspondent. Letters were added until the file was full, when a new file was opened with a similar arrangement of contents.



Bills and invoices from 1903/4. RBA D/EPB/E227/1-17

By the time they reached the Record Office, the files were in a very poor condition. The covers had largely collapsed and the metal parts had rusted badly. It was decided, in the interests of better preservation, that the covers should be discarded. The letters have instead been secured with non-ferrous treasury tags. At the same time, to facilitate safer and easier handling, most of the bulkier files were divided into two parts.

Besides the main series of record described above, there survive a number of other records. By comparison with the main series, these are often frustratingly incomplete. Nevertheless, they collectively add valuable evidence for the working of the estate. As well as miscellaneous bundles (mainly draft tenancy agreements and correspondence) relating to several of the tenanted farms (E312-353; E348; E353-381), the following may be noted:

Farm and cottage rent books: 1901-1933 (E249/1-111; E250/1-6);

Sales accounts: dairy sales, 1886-1916 (E200/1-3); stock and produce sales, 1900-1906 (E422); milk sales, 1909-1913 (E422); general sales, 1908-1931 (E423/1-11), garden produce sales, 1919-1920 (E424);

Tradesmen's books (recording work on the estate by estate employees – carpenters, masons and sawyers): 1889-1915 (E197/1-2);

Stock books, pedigree records and show records: pigs, 1876-1910 (E384-389); shorthorn cattle, 1886-1904 (E388-389);

Horse labour books (a record of horses used and the purpose): 1886-1900 (E337, 339);

Granary books (a record of animal feedstuffs consumed), 1865-1893 (E340, 341);

A collection of some hundred sales catalogues (mainly of livestock) from all over the country, accumulated by the estate over the period 1887-1906 (E397-407).

The Coleshill Estate, 1876-c.1925

It was Robertson's misfortune to be appointed agent for the Coleshill estate at almost exactly the moment when the profitable years of high farming were coming to an end and English agriculture was about to slide into a depression that was to last for most of the rest of the century. The causes of the depression, its character and extent have been the subject of considerable debate amongst historians, but few have denied its significance. It was heralded by several extremely bad summers – the 1870s stand out as one of the wettest decades of the century, with the years 1875-77 particularly bad – but the main cause was falling prices and overseas competition, with rising imports of cheap American wheat and (though to a lesser extent) meat. Some historians have also suggested that farmers had become complacent during the years of prosperity, and were slow to modernise, though it has been argued that this might have been as much an effect as a cause of depression, as it became harder to raise the capital for improvements. The impact of the depression was felt unevenly across the country, both geographically and by sector, farms in the south and east being much harder hit than farms in the north and west, and arable farms faring significantly worse than those engaged mainly in animal husbandry. Overall, however, the impact was undeniably severe: between the mid-1870s and the mid-1890s agricultural output nationally fell by 5 per cent, agricultural income declined by 25 per cent, and net agricultural rent fell by 40 per cent.⁵

Coleshill, of course, was not exempt from these trends. Apart from the Home Farm and (from 1890) West Mill Farm, most of the estate was let to tenant farmers (many handed on from generation to generation), so that the reduction in rents was felt particularly severely. (Some farms were taken in hand for short periods, but generally only from necessity, and they were re-let as soon as possible).⁶ Rental income of £9,604 in 1876-77 fell to £6,680 in 1881-82 (with £2,500 owed in arrears) and to £5,262 in 1891-92.⁷ As a result, there was less money available for investment in improvements. Some Berkshire estates did introduce changes in farming methods. Richard Benyon at Englefield, for example, remodelled his farms, equipping many of them with steam engines, set up his own mixed farm, and played an active role in county agricultural affairs; and Lord Wantage at Lockinge took nine previously tenanted farms in hand and created a huge 13,000-acre ranch supporting 1,000 store cattle and a standing flock of 4,000 Hampshire ewes.⁸ But these estates were much larger than Coleshill, where the scope for investment was less. Some funds were set aside for improvements in drainage, but the major developments of the 1850s – the model farm created by the third Earl of Radnor and Edward Moore, for example, widespread drainage works, and the building improvements at several of the tenanted farms – could not be repeated in the straitened circumstances of the 1880s. Apart from the parish of Coleshill itself, where population remained almost static, all parts of the estates experienced population decline between 1871 and 1901 – from 19 per cent in Little Coxwell to 48 per cent in Longcot. The separation of the Berkshire and north Wiltshire estates from the rest of the Radnor estates (the Longford estate near Salisbury, and properties in London and Folkestone) following the death of the fourth Earl of Radnor in 1889 may have contributed to the difficulties at Coleshill, though the impact has not yet been assessed.

After the turn of the century agriculture nationally enjoyed some degree of recovery, but as in the years of depression the experience was uneven. Arable farming continued to struggle, and whilst output increased by some 4 per cent between the mid-1890s and 1911, this was mostly accounted for by animal husbandry and by the emergence of new products such as milk, eggs, poultry, fruit and vegetables, and it was unevenly spread across the country. In terms of output, Berkshire, which saw a slight fall, was by no means the worst-performing English county, but was well short of the best (the top six counties saw increases of between 9 and 14 per cent). Similarly, a national increase of around 5 per cent in net rents masked very considerable local variation. Coleshill continued to struggle. Farm rents rose slightly to just short of £5,800 in 1901-2 but then fell to £5,686 in 1907-8 and further to £5,363 in 1911-12, and major changes were on the horizon.⁹ The Home Farm was let in 1915, the three farms at Widhill in Cricklade (Wiltshire) were sold in 1916 and West Mill Farm was sold two years later, whilst the consolidation of three separate accounts into one is indicative of continuing retrenchment.

Conclusion

The records were created, of course, to support the efficient management of the estate. That they have survived is due partly to the careful husbandry of successive estate managers, and partly to good fortune. Because they were kept in the estate office rather than the great house they escaped the disastrous fire of 1952. On the other hand, storage in the estate office was at times far from ideal. We have already seen how some of the bundles of vouchers and wages sheets were broken up and scattered, several volumes had sustained considerable damage, and a number of the plans were similarly the worse for wear. However, the staff of the National Trust at Coleshill, aided by an initial inventory prepared by members of the Highworth Historical Society, fully realised their potential value and made the welcome decision to transfer the records to Reading, where they joined earlier estate records already on deposit. Thanks to a generous grant from the National Manuscripts Preservation Trust, very necessary conservation work could be carried out, and as a result, with the catalogue now completed, this wonderful archive offers a remarkably rich source for the study of an important estate over a significant half-century. It merely remains for someone to take up the challenge!

References

- 1 The 1881 census records his age as 48. His first child, Margaret, was born in Perth c.1860; his second, Mary Elizabeth, was baptised in Coleshill on 31 May 1863, her father's occupation given as 'farm bailiff'.
- 2 N. Rosalinde Downing, 'The Coleshill Land Agent, 1840-1876', *Berkshire Old and New*, 22 (2005), pp. 39-48; Edward Wells Moore, The Circumstances which led to my removal from Coleshill, (1876), D/EPB/Z139.
- 3 D/EPB/E231/17; D/EPB/E227/15. One disgruntled creditor felt obliged to get the lawyers in to chase up the money he was owed, though this seems to have been an isolated incident: D/EPB/E224/8-9.
- 4 Such was the confusion in which they were received that it is almost impossible to say with certainty how they were originally arranged, but what seems to have happened is set out below:
1887/8-1892/3: separate annual bundles for Farm and Estate (combined) and for some or all of carpenters, masons, roads, sawyers, woods, gamekeepers and West Mill Farm (E270-275).
1893/4: all gathered into fortnightly bundles (E276).
1894/5-Oct 1899: Estate, carpenters, masons, roads, sawyers, woods, gamekeepers kept together in fortnightly bundles. Home Farm and West Mill Farm (and occasionally Ashen Copse and Brimstone Farms) may also have been included, but this is not certain; they are now kept as separate series (E278-282/2).
Nov 1899-1901/2: all sheets gathered into monthly bundles (E282/3-284).
1902/3-1914/15: all sheets gathered into fortnightly groups, but now integrated with the general series of vouchers, where they are filed (and numbered) by date of payment. They have been left in their original sequences (E226-239).
1915/16-1934/5: Fortnightly sheets, with a summary sheet added, gathered and stapled, then grouped in annual bundles loosely tied with string. The staples had rusted badly, causing extensive damage. They have been removed and the sheets repaired. The sheets

are now arranged in quarterly bundles (ending at Christmas, Lady Day, Midsummer and Michaelmas), secured by a non-ferrous treasury tag.

5 The most useful general survey of English agriculture in this period, which I have drawn on gratefully for this summary, is still *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, vol vii (1850-1914), part 1*, ed. E. J. T. Collins (2000), pp. 138-223.

6 The individual farms were not large. Most - some two-thirds of the total - were in the range 300-500 acres; of the remainder, two were less than 50 acres, one was 167 acres, and three between 240 and 260 acres. Details can be found in the rentals, for example D/EPB/E182/26.

7 D/EPB/E182/27, 32; D/EPB/E16/9.

8 Collins, op.cit, pp 165, 179.

9 D/EPB/E193/2, 3.

A Berkshire Bibliography 2024

Katie Amos

Recent accessions to Berkshire Local Studies Library

A serious reply to twelve sections of abusive queries, proposed to the consideration of the people called Quakers; concluding the works of Joseph Boyse, yet alive, an aged, and eminent preacher among the Presbyterians in Dublin, 1728. By Samuel Fuller, one of the people called Quakers

Officers of the militia, 1778

Ordnance Survey maps. Reading 1898. The Godfrey Edition (Berkshire sheet 37.03)

Wesleyan Methodist Church official handbook and souvenir of old Normandy Fete and Fancy Fair 1903

Abbey Baptist Church, *A brief history of Abbey Baptist Church, Reading*, c2001

Anne E. Bailey, Pilgrim traffic along the 'English' Camino Ingles in the late twelfth century

Judith Baron, Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp 1985-1994 (<https://greenhamwomeneverywhere.co.uk/portfolio-items/judith-barons-archive/>)

Stuart Eagles, ed., *Medicine and society in late eighteenth century Berkshire: the commonplace book of William Savory of Brightwalton and Newbury*. Berkshire Record Society, 2024

Stephen Boorne, *A short history of Messrs. Huntley, Boorne & Stevens*

John Callow, *The history of GMB Southern Region 1889-2021*, 2021

Gerald Cinamon, *Talwin Morris, Blackie and the Glasgow Style* (The Private Libraries Association, 1987)

Gerald Cinamon, *Talwin Morris (1865-1911). A checklist of works related to publishing* (The Private Libraries Association, 1990)

John Early Danks, Slough and District Civic Society

Tim Davies, *Football Business: A contradiction in terms. The case of Reading Football Club Limited.* 2003

Peter Durrant, *The Lord-Lieutnants of Berkshire 1545-2023.* 2024

David Nash Ford, *Turbulent times in Henry VIII's Berkshire.* 2023

David Nash Ford, *The Legends of Windsor Forest,* 2023

Sidney Gold, *Thomas Shewell Morris (1832-1877)*

Sidney Gold, Some notes on James Boorne (1824-1910) of Reading

Mark Hoskins, *The Story of Abbey RFC,* 2022

J. E. Perry, *Short Regimental History of the Royal Berkshire Regiment,* 1940

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Trevor Smith, *Earley Villa and the Boseley Family,* 2022

Fahad Sperinck, *Over water, under ground,* 2023

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Berkshire Archaeology, Listed Buildings in Caversham: a designation summary report. 2011

Berkshire Ridgeway Leisure Study. Report of survey on Sunday 25 July 1971
Camino Pilgrim [record pack - includes Pilgrim Record wallet, leaflet and register form]

Catalogue of paintings, prints and drawings in the collection of Museum of English Rural Life, Reading. 1998

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Family and memories of Jessie Constance Targett

Gold fever. Celebrating 50 years of Wargrave Festival. 2024

Arthur Hill (1829-1909) of Reading

H.M.P. & Y.O.I. Reading, Public information pack.

Talwin Morris: An exhibition. William Morris Gallery, Lloyd Park, Forest Road, London, E17 4PP 23 August - 2 October 1983

Mosaic Art through our town. The Wokingham Mosaics

Cicely (Judy) Murphy, *Memories (sic) of Reading*

Oxford Road – Historical Notes (undated, no author – probably Sidney Gold)

Royal Berks NHS Trust, *A short guide to understanding the stories illustrated in the stained-glass windows*, 2014

Reading Dusseldorf Diamond Jubilee 1947-2007

Reading walk-about guide (Reading Museum & Art gallery)

University Heritage no 7, Foxhill House, 2023

Wessex Archaeology, Crane Wharf Excavation (Unpublished document 1985)

Wessex Archaeology, Forbury Gardens (<https://www.wessexarch.co.uk/our-work/forbury-gardens>)

