

Berkshire Family Historian

the quarterly journal of the Berkshire Family History Society

September 2014

vol 38

Family names appearing in this issue

*excluding living people,
authors of sources and
members' interests*

Adnams 22
Batcheler 30
Bestly 18
Blunsdon 18
Campbell 31
Castle 19
Chesterman 18
Colingwood 31
Cope 29
Couldrey 31
Covington 31
Day 31
Dennis 31
Dines 31
Farbrother 31
Foreman 31
Gibbard 26+
Giles 31
Gray 31
Griffin 31
Hadland 20
Harper 31
Hatt 31
Haycroft 31
Herbert 24+
Hobden 24+
Hughes 26+
Jennings 23
Jennings 31
Jones 19
Kimber 31
Luker 22
Nalder 31
Owen 24
Petty 31
Plenty 22
Prince 17
Richards 18+
Rolfe 29
Samman 31
Shaw 30
Shorter 23
Smith 22, 24
Spindler 31
Tayler 19
Toms 31
Tuttle 29
Wilde 17
Wooldridge 17

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This issue should come with your membership card fixed to the front, if you renewed your membership as requested in June.

If you haven't renewed, this will be the last copy of the *Historian* that you will see – unless you act fast. The deadline for renewal is 30 September.

The society's Executive Committee for 2014-15

RICHARD ASHBERRY (5694)

Richard joined the Exec as treasurer in 2012, and has been re-elected to that office for 2014-15. A society member since 2004-05, he came from a career in local government finance. He is a member of the Projects committee, the 2014 Conflict and change conference committee, the Windsor Branch committee, and is a Research Centre assistant. He also burns the society CDs and prepares them for sale.

SANDRA BARKWITH (3550)

Sandra joined the Exec in 2012 as the representative of Bracknell and Wokingham Branch. She has been a member of the society since 1998, has served on the Bracknell and Wokingham Branch committee, and was formerly the Exec's minutes secretary. She is also a Research Centre assistant.

VANESSA CHAPPELL (6075)

A society member since 2006, Vanessa has chaired the Vale of the White Horse Branch and been an Exec member since May 2011.



VICKI CHESTERMAN (4870)

Vicki became a member in 2002, and joined the Reading Branch committee in 2004. She has been programme secretary for Reading since 2005, except for a year's compulsory absence from the committee, and is on the 2014 Conflict and change conference committee, organising the speakers and arranging some of the visits.



KEN HOUGHTON (6213)

Ken joined the society in 2006, and in 2008 was elected to the Windsor Branch committee, within which he has been responsible for setting up the projector, laptop and screen, displaying the noticeboard and looking after the branch publicity. He joined the Exec in 2013.



JUDITH MITCHELL (2031)

Judith became a committee member of Windsor Branch in 2011, having previously been involved in a couple of projects. A society member since 1989, she is on the Research Centre committee, and manages the Strays Index.

TONY ROBERTS (7118)

Tony (right) joined the Exec for the first time in 2012, having been a Research Centre assistant. He has been a member since 2010, and has been the society's secretary since 2013. He is also on the board of Berkshire Family History Enterprises Ltd as company secretary.



CATHERINE SAMPSON (6979)

Catherine joined the society in 2009-10, and was initially involved in writing parish histories for CDs. She has been projects co-ordinator and an Executive trustee since October 2011, and she chairs the Projects and Publications committee. She also chairs the 2014 Conflict and change conference committee.



EILEEN SCHOFIELD (7477)

Eileen (left) was a senior manager in the NHS for many years and so had to wait until she took early retirement before she could develop her interest in family history. She joined the Newbury Branch in 2012 and now joins the Exec as the representative for Newbury.

GILLIAN STEVENS (3959)

Gillian returned to the Exec last year. She works as events co-ordinator with Margaret Crook, and continues to be closely involved with the Computer Branch and the website.

TONY WRIGHT (6776)

Tony has represented the Computer Branch on the Exec since 2012. He is a key figure on the technical side of producing the society's CD publications, as well as giving advice at the Tuesday evening RC sessions and at library surgeries. He has been a member since 2009-10.

Vice-presidents

CHAD HANNA (382)

Chad has been re-elected as a vice-president of the society. In this capacity, as well as those of IT manager and webmaster, he attends most meetings. Chad is also chairman of Berkshire Family History Enterprises Ltd, and leads the team working to develop and maintain the society website.

DR PETER DURRANT MBE (9005)

Peter is Berkshire's county archivist and he is also an honorary member of the society. He has been re-elected as a society vice-president, and he will continue to provide his advice to the Executive Committee on an informal basis.

DEREK TRINDER (4369)

Derek has been elected a vice-president of the society, having served as the society's chairman from 2009 until 2013. In June 2014 he stood down from the Exec, having completed a second five-year term, but he continues to represent the society in local media and FH-related organisations. Derek is also a director of Berkshire Family History Enterprises Ltd, and a member of the website and conference teams. Like Chad, he will continue to attend Executive Committee meetings.

New hon member

JOHN GURNETT (303)

John, whose career included periods as an indexer on *The Times* and as a Radio 2 producer, was an early and active member of the society, organising conferences and teaching evening classes. He also served as secretary, and edited the *Berkshire Family Historian* for many years, overseeing its transition from mono-chrome A5 to the present-day two-colour A4 format.

AGM report

The 39th Annual General Meeting of the Berkshire Family History Society was held on Friday 20 June 2014 at 7.30pm at the Priestwood Community Centre in Bracknell, attended by 51 people. All resolutions and votes were carried successfully.

SECRETARY'S REPORT TO SOCIETY MEMBERS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30 APRIL 2014

conference, visits and much more to come

This report has been abridged. A full copy may be seen on request to:
secretary@berksfhs.org.uk

MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS REMAIN ROBUST

Membership numbers have held steady this year, and are within three per cent of this time last year, reflecting members' appreciation of the society's benefits.

Many of you responded to renewing your Gift Aid declarations, which is of great value to the society. If, as a UK taxpayer, you are able to make or to renew a Gift Aid declaration, this helps the society considerably at no cost to you.

DELIVERING PUBLIC BENEFIT – *at the heart of what the charity does*

In accordance with the Charities Act 2011, all registered charities have a duty to report a summary of their main activities and achievements in relation to the objects of the charity. Berkshire Family History Society's charitable purposes include:

- advancing education of the public in research into family history and genealogy, primarily but not exclusively within the boundaries of the pre-1974 Royal County of Berkshire;
- working to promote the preservation, transcription, indexing and ready public accessibility of related records and information.

Benefits are:

- ready accessibility to members and the public, whether in Berkshire or beyond;
- a wide range of regular meetings, outreach events and other activities in local communities;
- availability free of charge at the point of delivery, in most cases.

CONFERENCE: *The early twentieth century: conflict and change*

This conference of stimulating talks, displays and workshops takes place on Saturday 18 October 2014 at Theale Green School, with an associated programme of 10 visits running from February to October 2014. The theme is on social change during

the first 30 years of the twentieth century, focusing on employment, healthcare, housing, migration, education, social class, women's suffrage, adoption, and the First World War. The conference will be opened and closed by Dr Nick Barratt, and talks will be given by 11 of the foremost experts in these fields.

PROJECTS AND PUBLICATIONS – *setting standards in making Berkshire records more accessible*

This last year has seen steady progress working towards a third edition of *Berkshire marriages*, a twelfth edition of *Berkshire burials* and a second edition of *Berkshire baptisms*. Transcriptions of Fawley St Mary parish registers and Wokingham St Paul MIs were published, together with a revised edition of Ascot All Saints MIs. It is expected that the coming year will see publication of a number of new CDs currently in preparation: Brimpton St Peter parish registers; new editions of the baptisms, marriages and burials CDs mentioned above; three further sets of parish registers; six of MIs; and the second volume of our MIs collection. There is also a continuing project on Berkshire war memorials.

It is almost three years since the first society parish register transcriptions were published on the Findmypast website, generating useful royalty income for the society. During the year additional transcriptions of baptisms, marriages and burials were supplied to Findmypast, bringing the total accessible records of these to 144,000, 228,000 and 750,000 respectively. These records are now available online, and more are in prospect, but for data protection and other reasons online data will *never* be as complete as the information offered in society publications or at the Research Centre.

SHOP, WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA – *reaching researchers worldwide in the digital age*

Online purchasing is becoming the norm for many people, and the society must offer a simple online shopping experience. Besides some 430 memberships and renewals, around 10 online and mail orders are packed and sent out every week to customers worldwide.

It is four years since www.berksfhs.org.uk was re-launched, and the web team is looking at further refinements to enhance the site visitor's experience. More data has been added to the Members' Area, with more to follow very soon. More than 700 members are now registered to access the Members' Area of the site.

The society has also made useful progress in social media. Our Twitter followers have grown to 330, and some branches have set up Facebook pages. The society would like to see more members engage with online social networks.

BERKSHIRE PAGES OF GENUKI – a virtual reference library for Berkshire

Robert Monk has done a very thorough job in building up the Berkshire pages, including towns, villages and the Berkshire churches database. Do visit these web pages if you have not yet done so, and if there is further information that you can contribute, please let him know.

DISCUSSION LIST – a continuous lively dialogue between members

This key resource, especially for members beyond Berkshire, offers the chance to dip into the collective experience of other members. This lively forum has recently covered hospitals and infirmaries, where to get guidance on Tudor script, and how to claim your ancestor's WW2 medals, as well as more mainstream topics like photograph dating, or reading a gravestone.

BERKSHIRE FAMILY HISTORIAN – a quality quarterly publication

Penny Stokes has once again given us four top-class magazines in 2013-14. Most back numbers of the earlier volumes are available and searchable by surname or place name in the Members' Area of the website.

SERVICES FOR MEMBERS AND THE PUBLIC – lists, searches and members' interests

Surnames from *Berkshire marriages*, *Berkshire burials* and the *Probate index* CDs are online in the Members' Area, and those from *Baptisms* are coming very soon. Berkshire Name Search trawls a master index of society databases, and work is progressing on providing an improved version.

THE RESEARCH CENTRE – Berkshire's foremost facility for family history research

The centre continues to attract significant numbers of visitors. Nowhere else in Berkshire offers comparable resources, with fellow researchers' perspectives derived from practical experience on how best to use them. Now in its fifteenth year at Yeomanry House, the centre is firmly established as a valued research facility. It is the single largest out-going for the society, as user-generated income falls well short of day-to-day running costs.

The British Newspaper Archive has proved to be a particularly popular resource with visitors. The database has now topped 8,100,000 pages from over 250 titles, and is growing rapidly. The library and magazine holdings are still being overhauled. The current library catalogue may be searched online.

In September 2013 during Heritage Open Days the Research Centre's facilities were free to all, and 90 visitors were welcomed. We look forward to welcoming even more during this coming September's Reading Heritage Open Days.

The future of Yeomanry House is still under consideration by Reading Borough Council. The society has been given an assurance by the council that it will receive six months' notice in the event that its lease renewal is not successful. The uncertainty has continued for more than a year now, during which time the Executive Committee and Research Centre sub-committee have prepared contingency plans to ensure that the society can maintain a research facility for the membership.

PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION – essential to raise awareness and interest in the society

Conference flyers, an A4 conference supplement and A5 conference and visit leaflets have been the main items produced this year, while the four-page A5 leaflets, with key society details, branch programmes and Research Centre information, continue in use.

The society supported open days of the Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire and West Surrey FH societies, achieving variable commercial returns in the face of declining attendances at this sort of event. Attendance at Bracknell Family History Fair (January) again was disappointing, but the visitor numbers at *WhoDoYouThinkYouAre?Live* (February) were only slightly down on last year. Although these two events did not bring the expected volume of sales of our products (unsurprisingly, as there was little new to offer this year) they did enable us to actively promote our forthcoming conference, and great interest was shown in this, and its associated visits, from visitors.

AGM report cont'd

Ongoing interest in family and community history from BBC Radio Berkshire continued to give the society some live programme opportunities to reach a county-wide audience during the year.

BRANCH MEETINGS AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES – a local presence for members and the public

Overall, some 1,740 people came to 64 branch meetings in the year. Support from local members fell 10 per cent, unevenly across branches. The challenge facing every branch is to engage with more local members, regularly, and to bring the local branch meetings to the attention of the wider community regularly. Branch members have taken outreach programmes of help and advice to libraries and other venues across the county during the year.

MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE – how does it work, exactly?

The society is a registered charity, managed by an Executive Committee (the trustees), elected annually by members. The committee met seven times last year. Locally elected committees run the branches; they are responsible to the Executive Committee, to which each branch provides its own representative.

SOCIETY FINANCES – another solid performance returned by your society

Although global and national economic recovery remains optimistic, the austerity mindset of recent years continues to make the society's prospects hard to forecast. Family history is not an inexpensive hobby, and family historians are consumers first and researchers second. A degree of reassurance is provided by yet another year of encouraging society results.

Income has reduced this year, but much of this is accounted for by a dip in the number of new products published and sold by the society; the coming year should see a considerable upswing in this part of the society's income. Member donations held steady. Once again royalties, principally from Findmypast, have continued to provide steady income, together with the subscriptions and Gift Aid.

Continued controls on costs have kept society expenditure down, and this year has seen a decrease in resources expended.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE WITH CONFIDENCE – what's in store for family history societies?

This can be summarised in this choice: societies can adapt and evolve, or they can wither

and die: no safe middle ground here and no easy fixes. Today's technologies have changed the rules, with instant communications and opportunities for collaboration. Many times more researchers find ancestors outside societies, and without societies' help, than from within as members. We have to do much more to engage with these family historians. They still need information, education and other services; the question is, are family history societies sufficiently geared up to provide these things?

Such needs can be met by publishing quality information in a variety of formats; by inspirational educational programmes and seminars; through community initiatives; even ancestral tourism. And if these can be made to be fun and entertaining too, so much the better. Berkshire Family History Society is well placed to meet these challenges. We already have parish register and BMD transcriptions made and checked to the highest standards. We have collectively within our society a depth and breadth of genealogical knowledge that can be utilised to provide new family historians with a genuinely insightful and solid foundation to conduct their research. We have a Research Centre and branches from which we can reach out to potential family historians. If Berkshire Family History Society can embrace just a few of these, it will continue to make a genuine difference to the benefit of many more researchers. All we need is the willingness and courage to grasp these opportunities, to make Berkshire Family History Society a main force in the genealogical world and if we do so, the society has a bright future ahead of it, and the income to sustain it.

THANK YOU TO EVERY VOLUNTEER – for without willing volunteers there would be no society

I would like to thank the many members who regularly and generously give their time and expertise to the benefit of others. It is a concern for the trustees that relatively few of the society's newer members appear willing to come forward to take over key roles from those who have filled them for more years than they might care to remember. A shortage of skilled and dedicated volunteers is not unique to Berkshire Family History Society, but the implications are potentially far-reaching. Only collaborative volunteer effort can create and deliver new products and services. Finding new opportunities and initiatives for the society is straightforward enough; finding enough committed and reliable volunteers to give the society chance to realise them is another matter.

**Tony Roberts
Secretary**

AGM report cont'd

BERKSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Statement of financial activities for the year ending 30 April 2014

| | Note | 2014 £ | 2013 £ |
|---|----------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| INCOMING RESOURCES: | | | |
| Incoming resources from generated funds | | | |
| Voluntary income | | 38,767 | 46,442 |
| Activities for generating funds | | 118 | 168 |
| Investment income | | 550 | 422 |
| Incoming resources from charitable activities | | 7,918 | 8,411 |
| TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES | 3 | <u>47,354</u> | <u>55,443</u> |
| RESOURCES EXPENDED: | | | |
| Costs of generated funds | | | |
| Costs of generating voluntary income | | 12,262 | 11,863 |
| Investment management costs | | 643 | 3 |
| Charitable activities | | 19,748 | 27,659 |
| Governance costs | | 535 | 35 |
| TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED | 4 | <u>33,188</u> | <u>39,560</u> |
| NET (OUTGOING)/INCOMING RESOURCES | | <u>14,166</u> | <u>15,883</u> |
| TOTAL FUNDS BROUGHT FORWARD | | 88,483 | 72,599 |
| TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD | | <u>102,649</u> | <u>88,483</u> |

Balance Sheet at 30 April 2014

| | Note | 2014 £ | 2013 £ |
|--|------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| FIXED ASSETS | | | |
| Tangible assets | 6 | 2,662 | 2,475 |
| TOTAL FIXED ASSETS | | <u>2,662</u> | <u>2,475</u> |
| CURRENT ASSETS | | | |
| Debtors | 7 | 12,390 | 16,524 |
| Capital Bond Account | | 10,259 | 10,000 |
| Deposit account | | 31,109 | 30,894 |
| Cash at bank and in hand | | 52,283 | 32,163 |
| TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS | | <u>106,041</u> | <u>89,581</u> |
| CREDITORS: | | | |
| amounts falling due within one year | | | |
| Accruals | | (3,554) | (1,073) |
| Provisions for liabilities and charges | 8 | (2,500) | (2,500) |
| TOTAL NET CURRENT ASSETS | | <u>99,987</u> | <u>86,008</u> |
| CREDITORS: | | | |
| Amounts falling due after one year | | | |
| Provisions for liabilities and charges | | | |
| TOTAL ASSETS LESS LIABILITIES | | <u>102,649</u> | <u>88,483</u> |
| FUNDS OF THE CHARITY | | | |
| Unrestricted funds | | | |
| General | | 98,649 | 84,483 |
| Education | 9 | 4,000 | 4,000 |
| TOTAL FUNDS OF THE CHARITY | | <u>102,649</u> | <u>88,483</u> |

A full copy of the accounts, including the notes referenced left, may be seen on request to: treasurer@berksfhs.org.uk



U P D A T E

Projects and publications

Work on producing *Berkshire marriages* Edition Three continues, so it is best to check the website for up-to-date news, as my confident predictions so far of when the CD will be ready have proved a jinx for those working hard on getting it finished. As I write this, we are in the final stages of checking registers for *Berkshire baptisms* Edition Two before it begins its long build process. This next edition will contain entries from over 100 parishes, at least 43 of which are new to this edition. We will provide a list of all the parishes and years of baptism coverage as usual in the *Historian* when publication is imminent.

Transcribing and checking continues for what will be the final edition of *Berkshire burials*. This promises to be a bumper edition, and will include some of the barely legible registers which have been taxing our volunteers' deciphering skills of late.

In addition to the above, a number of parish monumental inscription projects are steadily

moving forward as teams and individuals take advantage of the sunny weather to record inscriptions and photograph monuments. Several more monumental inscription CDs are planned for completion this year. A CD of the monuments of Sulhamstead Abbots St Mary, Sulhamstead Bannister St Michael and Upton St Mary should be published in the summer, and it is hoped that the monuments of Wokingham St Sebastian will be ready before Christmas.

We've also been busy preparing a new CD of Berkshire-wide war memorials, which will include the data previously published many years ago on fiche, with updates, new monuments and a number of photographs. The memorials commemorate those who lost their lives in a variety of conflicts, and include many not easily accessible to the public or now destroyed. Look out for a further update in the next *Historian*.

Catherine Sampson
Projects co-ordinator

From the editor

Going on holiday doesn't always mean an escape from family history. I spent a few days in Iceland this summer, and came across three remarkable facts about Icelandic nomenclature and genealogy. The country has a population no larger than that of Reading and Wokingham combined, but nonetheless it has succeeded in making life quite difficult for family historians.

First, surnames are mostly patronymic, and do not identify the family line. Daughters take (usually) their father's forename with "dottir" as a suffix, and sons take the same forename with "son" as a suffix. (Very occasionally the surname is matronymic.) Thus children will probably have entirely different surnames from their parents, and siblings of different sexes do not share a surname.

Second, Icelandic law prescribes a list of approved forenames, drawn up in 1996 with the aim of preserving the language of the sagas. There are 1,853 options for girls and 1,712 for boys, but if you name your child off-list, she or he risks becoming a non-citizen, unable to obtain official documentation such as a passport. John Henley described such a case in *The Guardian* of 26 June 2014.

Our tourist guide told us that this results in a small pool of names, and nicknames are needed to distinguish individuals with the same forenames. These nicknames tend to be based on occupations or physical characteristics. Hmmm... isn't that how British surnames started to catch on in the thirteenth century?

The third and to my mind most intriguing fact is that an extensive DNA study carried out in 2001 by deCODE genetics and Oxford University found that, whilst most Icelandic men shared Y-DNA types with Scandinavian males, 62 per cent of Icelandic women had closer mitochondrial ties with the British Isles. It seems that when Iceland was first settled by Vikings in the tenth century, the colonists set off as unaccompanied males, stopping off to raid the British coastline for female slave wives.

You can read more detail on www.decode.com, but as far as I can tell, the study offers no sociological explanation for this.

Penny Stokes

Coming soon!

The early twentieth century Conflict and change

A conference for family and local historians

Saturday 18 October 2014 at Theale Green School

Have you booked your place yet? If not, don't delay – book now!

The society's conference on Saturday 18 October 2014 at Theale promises to be a stimulating day of talks, workshops and displays for family and local historians. This is the society's first conference for some years, and considerable effort is being put into making it as special as possible. Few periods in history have witnessed events and changes to match those of the early years of the twentieth century, and this conference provides a unique opportunity to better understand these tumultuous times. Conference speakers will explore strands of the UK's social, economic and community history and draw them together with the burgeoning wealth of today's genealogical resources.

Talk topics ranging from education and suffrage to employment records and the First World War – and a whole lot more besides – will be delivered by an impressive collection of academics and genealogists who are expert in their fields. Many will also be available for one-to-one advice. The conference has parallel tracks, so that you can follow themes that are of particular interest to you.



Eminent social historians Joan Dils (left), Jayne Shrimpton (centre) and Margaret Simons (right) are amongst those who will share their expertise, insights and tips with conference attendees.

The renowned family historian, broadcaster and academic Dr Nick Barratt will open and close the conference, and will also be available to meet and talk with conference delegates.

Nick Barratt came to public prominence as genealogical consultant to the early series of the BBC programme *Who Do You Think You Are?* While still owner of Sticks Research Agency, he is currently head of Medieval, Early Modern, Legal, Maps and Plans at The National Archives. Dr Barratt is also president of the Federation of Family History Societies, a trustee of the Society of Genealogists and of the Foundation for Medieval Genealogy, and a vice-president of the Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives (AGRA). He is a regular contributor on history and family history matters for several broadcast media organisations, including the BBC.



His publications include *House history starter pack* (2002), *The family history project* (2004), *Tracing the history of your house* (2006), *The family detective* (2006), *Who do you think you are? Encyclopaedia of genealogy* (2008), *Lost voices from the Titanic* (2009), *Guide to your ancestors' lives* (2010) and *Greater London: the story of the suburbs* (2012).

A cameo of three of our speakers

LUCY LETHBRIDGE



Lucy Lethbridge's book *Servants: a downstairs view of twentieth-century Britain* published in 2013 shares the title of her talk. She also writes for *The Observer*, *The Sunday Telegraph*, *The Independent on Sunday*, *The Times Literary Supplement* and other publications.

"*Servants is full of eyebrow-raising and laughter-inducing vignettes. But what is most fascinating is Lethbridge's account of the dark side of the master-servant relationship.*"

The Daily Telegraph, March 2013

Don't miss Lucy at 3pm.

PETER CHRISTIAN



Peter Christian's talk *Getting the best from Findmypast* is already a popular choice with conference attendees.

Peter is a writer, lecturer and recognised specialist in online family history research. A Fellow of the Society of Genealogists, between 1996 and 2001 he edited its journal, *Computers in Genealogy*, and also set up that society's first website. He is a trustee of GENUKI and was for many years internet columnist for *Ancestors* magazine. Peter's books include *The Genealogist's internet* (2012, fifth edition) and *Census: the expert guide* (2008) with David Annal. **With the recent changes to the Findmypast website, this talk is particularly timely.**

IAN WALLER



Ian Waller will be appearing twice on the day. At 11.15 the audience will benefit from his expertise on twentieth-century research, and then at 2pm Ian will talk on adoption before 1927.

A full-time genealogist, researcher and lecturer and Fellow of the Society of Genealogists, Ian is owner of Link Line Ancestral Research, a broad-based genealogy and archive research service based in Luton. He is chairman of the Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives (AGRA) and has written many articles for UK family history journals. His publications include *My ancestor was an agricultural labourer* (2007) and *My ancestor was a Mormon* (2011).

If one or both of these subjects grips your interest make Ian one of your speaker choices.

Read about all of the speakers and their topics before you make your choice at

www.berksfhs.org.uk/cms/Conference/conference-programme.html

Between 12 noon and 2pm attendees will have the opportunity to chat and absorb the morning over lunch, have a one-to-one session for advice with one of our experts, and browse the displays and stands. Displays will cover many of the key areas of twentieth-century research discussed during the day, with focus areas ranging from medical records and care, housing, military research and the war, costume and photograph dating (don't forget to bring a photograph with you), leisure, employment, transport and of course general family history research. Organisations supporting the conference with stands range from the Berkshire Record Office to the Berkshire Medical Heritage Centre.

Theale Green School is an ideal venue in many ways for the society's conference. Light and airy, with large rooms and plenty of parking, the school is located just five minutes' drive from junction 12 of the M4. It is easily accessible from across the historic county of Berkshire and beyond. If you want to make a weekend of it why not stay overnight at one of the many hotels or bed-and-breakfasts in the area, and join us on the Monday for a special behind-the-scenes tour of the Berkshire Record Office? Contact the conference team at conference@berksfhs.org.uk if you would like details of local hotels offering conference delegates a discounted stay.

HOW DO I BOOK?

The conference cost of just £37.50 per person includes refreshments throughout the day and lunch, and also access to the talks, displays and free advice. The event is being subsidised by the society as part of its ongoing commitment to growing expertise in family and personal history. Like the associated visits programme, the conference is open to members and non-members.

For full details and a booking form visit:

www.berksfhs.org.uk/cms/Conference/the-early-twentieth-century-conflict-and-change.html

VISITS PROGRAMME

In the months leading up to the Theale conference, the society takes to the road with visits to nine venues linked to early twentieth-century research. Five visits have already taken place – more on three of these shortly. Coming up next:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Friday 12 September | Milestones, Basingstoke |
| Monday 20 October | Behind the scenes at Berkshire Record Office, Reading |

LATEST VISIT REPORTS

Nuffield Place: the home of William Morris, 15 May 2014

On a hot and sunny day in the mid-May, 15 of us visited Nuffield Place, two miles west of Nettlebed in south Oxfordshire.

Nuffield Place was originally named Merrow Mount. It was designed in 1914 for Sir John Bowring Wimble, a shipping magnate, and in 1933 William Morris, founder of the Morris Motor Company, bought the house from Sir John's widow. Having just been raised to the peerage he took his title from the local village and renamed the house Nuffield Place. Lord Nuffield lived there



with his wife, Elizabeth, until his death in 1963. Nuffield Place and its contents passed to Nuffield College, Oxford, by which it was opened to the public on a limited basis. The home and personal possessions are just as they were left: a time capsule of days gone by. Three years ago Nuffield Place passed to the National Trust, and is now open to the public on a regular basis.

Nuffield Place reveals the down-to-earth lives of its occupants through the comfortable sitting room with a small black-and-white TV, the dining room with chairs embroidered by Lady Nuffield, Lord Nuffield's humble bedroom with a secret built-in workshop and a small ante-room belonging to Lady Nuffield with some more of her sewing and knitting crafts. The house is surrounded by pretty gardens that are in the process of being restored back to the Arts and Crafts style that Lord and Lady Nuffield would have seen when it was their home.

At 11am we met at the entrance and were given a 15-minute talk about the house, its history and its occupants. After coffee and delicious cake in the café we had a guided tour of the gardens before we wandered around the house in small groups. Back to the café for lunch, after which came more exploring of the house and gardens, plus of course a visit to view the Morris car in the garage.

Gillian Stevens

St George's Chapel and Archives, Windsor, 19 June 2014



Our group of 36 members, family and friends were all checked in and ready to be escorted to the dungeon promptly at 12.30pm. On our way we briefly stopped in front of the West Door for a photo opportunity, after which we descended a steep flight of stairs to the dungeon, one of the oldest parts of the castle consisting of a large round room with "cells" set around, into each of which were placed tables and chairs to accommodate six guests. Whilst we cradled a glass of wine or fruit juice, we were welcomed by the archivist's assistant and volunteers, who all brought enthusiasm and obvious love for their subject to the day.

The history of the College of St George at Windsor Castle was outlined to us, beginning with its foundation by King Edward III by letters patent of 6 August 1348. The dungeon had held prisoners in very poor conditions – at one time over 160, all cramped together with no light. The no-light part was something we experienced when all the lights went out. This was not a power failure, but set up to show us just how little light there was in the dungeon. In one cell could be seen the beginning of a tunnel, dug by a prisoner who was due to be hanged. Unfortunately, he was digging in the wrong direction – into the hill on which the castle is built. He didn't escape, and met his end shortly afterwards.

A lunch of sandwiches, fruit and wine was enjoyed by all. We left the dungeon, climbed the

steep steps out and moved on to an adjoining building, which houses the library and archives. At this point we were divided into three groups, and each was led to a separate location: the library, the search room and a hall with a display cabinet along one side.

The library holds over 6,000 rare books, deeds, manuscripts and letters, some of which date from the thirteenth century. We were shown some of the early books, with their beautifully hand-written text and illustrations. Here we were also given further information about the history of St George's College and its archives, with one or two anecdotes, including what happened to Henry VIII's remains: they were lost for many years and were eventually discovered when a resting place for Charles I was being sought. Both are now buried within the same plot at St George's Chapel. The display cabinet contained books, figures, stained glass and a variety of artefacts. All items were numbered, so that we were able to read more from an information sheet handed out to us. This part of the tour over, we were led over to the chapel itself, where we were left to suit ourselves and mix with tourists in general.

I'm grateful to the staff and volunteers of the Archives for making this an enjoyable visit for us. This is confirmed by the feedback I have received from our group.

Ken Houghton

Brock Barracks, Reading, 5 July 2014

On 5 July a party of 23 historians braved the threat of inclement weather to enjoy a very informative visit to Brock Barracks in Reading. Brock Barracks is currently the home of the 7th Rifles (a Territorial regiment) as well as sea, air and army cadet units. Over the years it has been home to the Royal Berkshire Regiment as well as to Territorial forces, and even American glider units.

Sgt Major Ian Tindall started our visit with a detailed history of the Territorial Army in Berkshire. We were told all about the expansion and reduction of the Territorial forces, and the rearrangement, renumbering and renaming of the various battalions over the years. This was followed by a film of barracks life in 1935. This proved to be a little gem, as it was found in a box with an A4 sheet of paper naming the activities and people shown. Barracks life seemed to revolve around drill and general duties such as gardening and cleaning. After this we were taken on a tour of the buildings and memorials, which included the Cenotaph and the Suttons Seeds Memorial amongst other regimental memorials. We were taken into the officers' mess, a lovely building currently undergoing redecoration, which had impressive stained glass windows recalling the regiments and divisions that have called Brock Barracks home.

Everyone seemed to have an enjoyable time, learning lots, and for some, visiting the site where their relatives had been stationed, or in the case of one attendee, revisiting the site where he was stationed in 1947.

Vicki Chesterman



Around the branches

Newbury Branch **newbury@berksfhs.org.uk**

Tim Green, son of Sylvia Green who greets members and guests at our meetings, has a local company specialising in oak construction. A few years ago he was asked to quote for the dismantling of the old stable block which had housed American paratroopers before they flew to France for D-Day. The stables, which had housed Easy Company of the 506th Regiment of 101st Airborne Division, had been bought by the Stevens County Historical Society's museum in Toccoa, Georgia. There were many difficulties on the way to disassembling the building, during which relics of the occupation were discovered. Transporting the building to America was achieved on a USAF Galaxy. Tim and his company then travelled out to re-assemble the building on site, making many contacts and friends in the process. It made an absorbing story for our meeting in June. The Kennet Valley at War Trust, with which Tim is involved, has a small museum at Littlecote House, near Hungerford.

Bracknell and Wokingham Branch **bracknell@berksfhs.org.uk**

In May we enjoyed a talk with the intriguing title of *Raleigh-ing to the cause* by Tony Hadland, official historian of Raleigh bicycles. Beginning in Nottingham in 1885, Raleigh grew to be the largest manufacturer of its type in the world by 1913. The story progressed through government investigation into the military potential of bikes; the trial of adaptations such as mounting a machine gun on the handlebars, and designing folding bikes for parachutists. Tony Hadland has an obvious passion for his subject, and his book *Raleigh: past and presence [sic] of an iconic bicycle brand* was published in 2011.

On 20 June 2014 Bracknell Branch hosted the society AGM, followed by a talk entitled *Online resources for researching professions and occupations* by Peter Christian. He covered sources for occupations such as *The genealogist's internet*, Genuki, TNA's "looking for a person" search, commercial data services, *The London Gazette*, newspapers, trade directories and professional bodies. Thousands of occupations have consultable lists of

names, such as the British Book Trade Index, the Coal Mining History Resource Centre, which lists mining disasters, the Clergy Database and the Blacksmiths Index for Bristol. Peter's lecture notes can be seen at www.spub.co.uk/lectures/berks.pdf.

The branch runs FH helpdesks monthly at Wokingham and Bracknell libraries, and Wokingham Library has asked for a talk about WW1 on 13 September as part of the Heritage Open Days programme. This will be followed by an additional drop-in session on this subject.

The branch is organising a trip to the Weald and Downland Museum on Saturday 16 August as part of the conference programme.

Computer Branch **computerbranch@berksfhs.org.uk**

Brian Wilcock and Catherine Sampson gave us an informative evening with talks on the Berkshire FHS website and projects, respectively, in May. Catherine told us about the society's numerous projects, their value to users of our CDs, research services or Findmypast. Hopefully she has enthused some members to think about helping, as there is always a need for more volunteers. Brian talked us through the website, showing us areas that perhaps we had not yet discovered and some of the hidden gems in the Members' Area. To any branch which has not already booked Catherine and/or Brian for a talk, I would thoroughly recommend it, not only for an interesting evening, but also to encourage more members to help the society.

In June we had three talks: the first on Ancestry's card catalogue by Tony Wright; the second by Gillian Stevens on the different Ancestry websites and how to search them; and the third by Rebecca Day on family trees. All were nearly sabotaged by an attack on the Ancestry servers two days earlier. Only those subscribers with a remembered login could gain access. Fortunately, prior preparation had enabled us to get round the problem. After much anxiety the talks were well received, with a number of members commenting "I've learned something new this evening". The lesson learned by the organisers was that it is vital when preparing a talk not to do it at the last moment, and also not to rely on the internet.

Reading Branch
reading@berksfhs.org.uk

At our May meeting John Hanson's talk was entitled *Getting the best from genealogical websites*, in which he outlined sources of free data, providing many useful lines for members to follow up. In June we welcomed Catherine Sampson and Brian Wilcock to speak on the society's projects and website. Brian gave us an online tour, highlighting the many areas of information on the society, backed up with projections of various pages, many of which were unfamiliar to most members present. Hopefully members went away from the talk with a clearer idea of what was available on the website. Catherine explained the valuable job done by volunteers in building collections of transcribed material into CDs and packages of data which could be passed to Findmypast, the latter paying royalties to the society every time a subscriber accesses Berkshire data. Catherine described what was currently being worked upon and appealed to members to join her team.

For a description of the visit to Brock Barracks please see page 13.

Vale of the White Horse Branch
vale@berksfhs.org.uk

Our May presentation had a local theme, as Bruce Hedge gave us a comprehensive talk on Abingdon's malting industry. According to the Universal Directory of 1796: *There are great quantities of malt made here and sent down the Thames in barges to the London markets.* It was a significant source of wealth to several well known families in the town, including Tomkins, Spenlove and Morland, the latter being brewers who became well known nationally in recent years. Bruce illustrated his talk with pictures of former malthouses, with their distinctive windows to air the drying floors and the kilns at either end.

We have continued our FH surgeries with varying numbers of attendees. The most recent one at Wantage Library on 31 May was very successful and we were pleased to receive a thank-you email from one man whose research problem we'd helped resolve.

Tying in with the forthcoming visit to RAF Halton, we had a talk on 16 June from Francis Hanford of the Trenchard Museum on *Preparation for war*, in this case army manoeuvres in 1913

which involved the fledgling Royal Flying Corps. Alfred Rothschild kindly made his estate at Halton available to the Brigade of Guards and Number 3 Squadron, who used his sheep pasture as a landing strip. Rothschild even recalled his caterers to feed them, and laid on a miniature circus to entertain the officers. We learned how one of the aircraft, a Blériot Experimental 2A, came in too high, hit a hedge and broke its propeller, resulting in the first

Windsor, Slough and Maidenhead Branch
windsor@berksfhs.org.uk

Tony Pilmer, formerly of Slough Library, spoke at our May meeting on the subject of Georgian and Victorian Slough. His talk followed our annual meeting, at which our current chairman and committee were re-elected.

Rarely do speakers put so many questions to the audience, and reward those who give the correct answer with a chocolate bar, but this was the nature of Tony's presentation, which was all very humorous and entertaining. We began with a map showing Slough as a small hamlet in 1822, in the shadow of its larger neighbours, Chalvey and Upton. The London-to-Bath coaches stopped at Colnbrook, and later at the Crown Hotel in Slough High Street. With the arrival of the railways Slough began to expand. We saw early landmarks and the development of Slough through photographs and drawings, and listened to the stories attached to them. One section was given over to the notable resident, William Herschel. References were also made to the brick-making industry (which prompted the building of the Grand Union Canal extension), the Cox's Orange Pippin apple and the Rose and Crown, Slough's oldest pub in the High Street.

Dickens' London was our talk for June, given by John Neal, who served in the Metropolitan Police for 27 years. He was familiar with Charles Dickens' residences and haunts in London, and showed many photos he had taken himself. We learned how the young Dickens would wander the streets of London noting characters and scenes he would later bring to his stories.

There were many quotes from the novels, together with illustrations of his homes and places of work, many of which had been sourced from old journals and books, rather than the internet. Some of the buildings no longer exist, but we saw a selection of before and after views.

For the report on the visit to St George's Chapel Archives, please see page 12.

Events

Volunteers from the Computer Branch staffed a stand at MERL's popular annual fete on 31 May, with two laptops and three displays: steps to starting your family history; the society's conference in October; and, to recognise MERL's food theme for this year, pages extracted from a nineteenth-century cookery book. We enjoyed the many food choices available, Morris dancing, a silver band, bicycle-powered smoothies, hand-carving, letterpress printing and traditional games such as splat the rat. The fete is highly-recommended for all ages, so look out for next year's at www.reading.ac.uk/merl, which also explains how MERL can help inform you about the lives of your ancestors.

While this issue of the magazine is at the printers we will be attending the Buckinghamshire FHS Open Day in Aylesbury on 26 July, followed in October by three more on successive weekends: the Oxfordshire FHS open day at Woodstock on 5 October; the Hampshire Genealogical Society open day in Basingstoke on 12 October; and the West Surrey FHS fair and open day in Woking on 1 November. For times and venues see page 25.

Once again we shall be opening the Research Centre to all (free) for the Heritage Open Days weekend, on 11 to 14 September, from 10am until 4pm. Visitors may try out the databases and visit the library. They will be wooed by helpful volunteers (yes, please step forward if you can help us on one of those days) and refreshments.

The date and venue for next year's *WDYT YA? Live* has been announced: it will take place from Thursday 16 to Saturday 18 April (after Easter and the schools will be back) at a new venue: the NEC in Birmingham. It is the society's intention to be present but, as with all off-site events at which the society is represented, we need volunteers to man the stands.

Margaret Crook and Gillian Stevens
Events co-ordinators

Family History Natter

*informal discussion sessions around a particular topic
led by Chad Hanna and Gillian Stevens*

**7.00 - 9.30 at the Research Centre
on the first Tuesday evening of each month**

in place of the normal open session (other Tuesday evenings as usual)

2 September: Births, marriages and death records –
how can you obtain a marriage certificate without paying?

7 October: Census records – *no surname, wrong surname, no problem*

4 November: Wills and probate records – *manure heaps, feather beds,
who cares I am dead*

Open to all, free of charge,
so bring your friends, family and neighbours

**Berks FHS Research Centre,
Yeomanry House, 131 Castle Hill, Reading RG1 7TJ**

The view from next door

Mark Stevens

of the Berkshire Record Office
ruminates on life in Reading Gaol



In this world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it.

That is one small example of the wit and wisdom of Oscar Wilde, poet, playwright and aesthete, but there are many more. Oscar's one-liners – stand-up comedy before its time – are one reason why modern culture remains in thrall to him. Another is because of his own tragedy: a successful career and family life ruined by a foolhardy choice of lover and a doomed court case. That the state then persecuted him for his sexuality only completes his martyrdom.

This autumn the BRO will be looking at Oscar Wilde through the lens of Reading Prison, the county gaol which opened in 1844 and was closed by the Ministry of Justice last year. Oscar cannot have had fond memories of Berkshire, but the county remains very fond of him. It is a pleasure to include him in our history.

The county gaol that Oscar knew in 1895 was quite different from the young offender institution that the prison became. Built as a model prison along the lines of the government's new edifice at Pentonville, it housed around 130 men and 10 women from across Berkshire and neighbouring counties. Life for the convicts was based on the "silent system", whereby they spent most of their days alone in their cells, emerging only to exercise or to work, always without permission to speak to their fellows.

Although Oscar found gaol to be wretched, he fared better than most. He was excused the work of oakum picking – teasing out the fibres of tarred

ropes – and allowed to work on the prison garden. He also became the prison's unofficial librarian,

curating a small collection of secular texts.

He was deeply affected by the suffering of his fellow prisoners. *The ballad of Reading Gaol*, one of his most memorable works, detailed his reflections on the execution at the gaol of Charles Thomas Wooldridge. His prison letters, written after his discharge, berated the authorities for imprisoning children in an adult gaol, while he also condemned the birching of a fellow inmate, James Prince, whom Oscar considered to be mentally ill. To a small extent Oscar's anger helped inspire the Prison Act of 1898, which did away with hard labour and attempted to humanise the prison system.

We will be telling this story in more detail through our exhibition *Oscar Wilde and Reading Gaol*, which will be open at the BRO from 22

October. There will be artefacts on show from the Victorian gaol as well as examples of the fine publishing style favoured and inspired by Oscar.

Oscar has become something of a cause célèbre for the rights of personal freedom today; while others find his courting of celebrity to be a similarly relevant fable. Yet behind the symbolism are questions about what society intends to achieve by custody and punishment, as well as an opportunity to explore the intricacies of life within our county gaol.



The bouncing bailiff

Were bailiffs more mobile than most people?

Alan Richards

wonders what propelled his ancestors around Berkshire farms, and eventually to Canada

Richard Richards came to Canada in 1882 from West Hagbourne, where he had been a bailiff at York Farm. He settled at Bowmanville, Ontario, where he had a small farm on the edge of town and delivered milk door-to-door.

In the 1891 census, he is described as a “dairyman” and in a local assessment he is a “gentleman”.

The biggest question I have about Richard, my great-grandfather, is: what lured him to Bowmanville and what assets did he have? His home in Bowmanville was modest, and his children all were of moderate means, so it doesn't seem likely that he was independently wealthy, but he certainly was not poor like many earlier settlers in the province.

Canadian farms don't have bailiffs, but Richard and his ancestors in England seem to have followed that occupation, in which capacity they bounced around Berkshire: from Hinton Waldrist to West Hendred, to Ardington and then Harwell and finally to West Hagbourne. Of course, as each son reached adulthood, he would be looking for a job, which could account for some of the moves, and enclosure might also have been a factor.

Research from Canada, including correspondence with some people in Berkshire, has provided some clues to the case of the bouncing bailiffs, but I would love to have definite answers. Here's what I have found out so far about my Berkshire ancestors.

According to several sources, some Welsh drovers taking livestock to English markets in the sixteenth century settled in Berkshire. My grandfather, Alfred Richards, one of Richard's sons, told me his ancestors were Welsh, but so far I have no documented evidence of that.

The earliest Richards ancestor I can trace was Thomas, who married Martha Bestly in Hinton Waldrist in 1702. From parish registers it seems they had a son, Thomas, who married Margery (last name unknown). Thomas and Margery had at least six children, including another Thomas, baptised in Hinton Waldrist in July of 1737.

A book entitled *Hinton Waldrist through the centuries*, by Jasmine Howse, mentions several

men named Richards living there from 1723 to 1783: the 1723 reference states that Richard Richards was paid for making a handrail to the pulpit of Hinton Waldrist's church. In another book by Ms Howse, *Longworth through the centuries*, there is mention of a Richard Richards as the smith of Hynton in a will dated 1671.

The Thomas baptised in 1737 married Mary Chesterman in Longworth in 1761, but Mary's death is recorded in Hinton Waldrist in 1823, so it seems this couple did not move far from home. Thomas and Mary had four sons baptised in Hinton from 1762 until 1766, namely John, Edward, Richard and Thomas. Finally, after three generations of ancestors named Thomas, it appears I am descended from Edward, born in 1764. His brother Thomas, born in 1766, may have been the one found in an inquest record as having died at the Lamb and Flag in Longworth in 1838. Does anybody have access to that inquest?

So, it appears Edward is my ancestor. The name has figured in the family tree: my father was George Edward and I am Alan Edward.

From the *Berkshire burials* CD and other sources, I found that Edward was 71 when he died in 1834 and was buried in West Hendred.

One glitch appears in my research concerning Edward: on a 1785 marriage record from West Hendred his name is shown as Edward Richardson. Original records were seen by a researcher in 1981, who reported that Edward signed with an X. The researcher also found no Edward Richards in marriages performed in the general area about that time “and that in itself is unusual”. My conclusion is that the clergyman who filled out the marriage record was unfamiliar with the Richards family and wrote Richardson by mistake.

Edward's bride was Martha Blunsdon (1758 - 1841). While Edward and Martha both died in Ardington, they were buried in West Hendred. I have not found evidence that Edward was a bailiff, but he was prominent enough in the community to be overseer of the poor in West Hendred in 1805, and in Ardington in 1820 and 1821.

Edward and Martha had children baptised in West Hendred from 1786 until 1798. The first, Thomas, died at one month old. Another Thomas, born in 1798, appears to be my ancestor.



Ardington farmhouse



Richard Richards is shown here in about 1913 with his son George and daughter Ida, and Ida's son, Ron Todgham, who grew up to become president of Chrysler Canada.

Havinden's book states that Richard Richards made butter for the London market. A census record for Bowmanville notes that my grandfather, Alfred Richards, made butter for extra income while working as a foreman in a rubber factory.

And now we've reached the generation of the immigrant, Richard Richards, son of Thomas of Ardington Estate and nephew of Richard of Ardington Wick. This Richard was born in Ardington in 1842, the fifth of seven children. In the 1861 census Richard, aged 19, and his brother Edward, aged 24, appear to have taken over the farm, and his parents, Thomas and Elizabeth, have moved to Ardington Wick, where they have seven servants, including a dairymaid, a carter, a shepherd and two cowmen.

And this is where great-grandfather Richard's bouncing begins. In 1871, he is in Harwell, operating a 140-acre farm along with his younger brother, John Tayler Richards. His wife, Eliza Jones, a Shropshire girl, and three children are there too. Brother Edward is out of work, living with another brother, Thomas, who has landed a job as bailiff at Abbey Farm in Goosey.

In 1881 Richard is in West Hagbourne, as bailiff of York Farm. During their time in West Hagbourne two of their children died, and two others were born. In September of 1882, the family was on its way to Canada, travelling from Liverpool to Quebec City and then on to Bowmanville.

Why might they have chosen Bowmanville as their destination? Was it something to do with their many years' experience with dairy cattle? Records here in Canada have not answered that question; perhaps someone in Berkshire will have the answer.

According to the 1841 census, this Thomas was a farmer in Ardington. A decade later, he was still a farmer, employing seven labourers and working 175 acres.

Thomas married Elizabeth Tayler of Grafton, Oxfordshire, on 30 April 1836 in Ardington, in the presence of Gabriel Castle and Sophia Castle.

Elizabeth's ancestors were prominent farmers in the Grafton and Clanfield area for several generations, and her brother, William Tayler, was the subject of a scholarly book entitled *Diary of William Tayler, footman, 1837*, edited by Dorothy Wise of Clanfield, and published by St Marylebone Society. In a book by M E Havinden about the parishes of Ardington and Lockinge, I found that this Thomas Richards was a tenant farmer at Ardington Estate Farm in 1854, 1863 and 1868. His brother Richard, a bachelor, operated Ardington Wick Farm, which included a herd of dairy cattle, in 1854, but by 1863 it had been taken over by the owner, Lord Wantage.

If you have any suggestions, contact Alan Richards at alanilderton@gmail.com or 9 Ilderbrook Circle, Ilderton, ON, Canada, N0M 2A0.

Setting up home in the austerity years

Part III

Tony Hadland

concludes his picture of domestic economy in Reading based on his parents' household bills of the late 1940s and 50s

The Hadlands did much of their shopping for clothing and household goods at Heelas (then an independent concern), with whom they had an account. In the summer of 1949 purchases included three casseroles, lingerie and a romper suit. Terry Hadland also bought haberdashery at Heelas. Her treadle-operated sewing machine had been bought at the Singer Sewing Machine shop in Worcester before they moved into 48 Armour Road. At £26 11s 3d it was an expensive purchase, but enabled huge savings to be made. A lot of wool was purchased from Heelas and elsewhere for knitting projects.

By the end of 1949 the Hadlands had monthly accounts with Wellsteeds of Broad Street and St Mary's Butts (a predecessor of Debenhams); from E Hill & Sons, originally leather factors of Broad Street and Queen Victoria Street; and from William McIlroy Ltd of Oxford Street. In 1952, they opened an account with A H Bull (Cole Brothers Ltd) of Broad Street, which was "under the same management as John Lewis and Company, Oxford Street, London W1". The following year Heelas joined the John Lewis fold.

But there were restrictions on the quality of clothing. In November 1949 John Hadland's "fancy striped worsted lounge suit" – 11 guineas from Reystone Valet Service of

2a Norcot Road – was "utility standard". A couple of months later he marked the new decade by buying from the same tailor a Harris Tweed sports jacket for £6 15s and a pair of fancy grey worsted trousers for £3 10s. Not to be outdone, Terry had a grey worsted coat and skirt for 12 guineas from the same tailor a few months later, on the eve of my first birthday.

Perhaps for this same occasion my Mobo push-along horse was bought for £1 9s 10d from Hills, along with a folding pushchair costing £3 18s 7d. Decades later, my own sons enjoyed the horse, and nostalgia has saved it from the skip.

Being an ex-Royal Engineer John Hadland repaired many household appliances himself. Thus, in August 1949, we find him buying by mail from a firm in Kentish Town, a new element and insulating beads for Terry's electric iron.

The arrival of a child meant more mess and less time, so in September 1949 the Hadlands bought a second-hand Electrolux cylinder vacuum cleaner from M & H (Electrical) Ltd of Oxford Road for 12 guineas.

FOOD

Groceries, fruit and greens, bread and meat were mostly bought from within walking distance of the house. Bulky items were routinely delivered. Terry was responsible for these

purchases and this is her budget for a typical week in 1952:

Greengrocery – 5s 9d
Grocery – £1 5s
Milk – 8s 2d
Bread – 2s 9d
Laundry – 5s
Window cleaner – 6d
Papers – 2s 1d
Meat – 7s
Church – 9d
Savings – 1s
Total = £2 18s

Weekly window cleaning may seem surprising in an era of austerity, but this was before the Clean Air Act of 1956, and there was soot in the air from coal fires. Windows got dirtier more quickly, and pride was taken in having clean glass. The relatively high laundry bill highlights the fact that the Hadlands did not yet own a washing machine.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

As John Hadland worked for H & G Simonds brewery, he was entitled to buy alcoholic beverages and soft drinks at trade prices. In June 1949, less than three months after the birth of their first child (me), the Hadlands ordered a bottle of "Fine Old Sherry, a bottle of port and a dozen bottles of Simonds Brown Ale" from the brewery. This was for the grand total of £3 10s 4d but, after credit for a returned case and bottles, reduced to £2 18s 7d. In

November a further order went in for half-bottles of Gordon's gin and OP brandy, and bottles of liqueur Scotch and squash. The following month an order was placed for a bottle of Booth's gin, another bottle of liqueur Scotch, more port, sherry and squash. Plainly, Christmas was going to be jolly, despite the rationing and shortages – or perhaps my birth had already driven my parents to drink.

THE COMING OF TELEVISION

On 9 April 1951 John bought their first "Broadcast Receiving Licence (including television)". At £2 it was twice as expensive as the plain radio licence, but it meant that from just after my second birthday, I grew up with television.

The first TV set was a Pye console model that stood on the floor. My father was a stickler for good sound quality, and console models had better sound than table-tops because they had a much bigger loudspeaker. Our Pye TV's loudspeaker was probably bigger than its diminutive nine-inch screen.

At this time, there were only two TV transmitters in the country, one being Alexandra Palace, which was receivable in most parts of Reading. Armour Road was more than 300 feet above sea level and reception was good. There was only one BBC channel, so the TV did not have a channel selector. When the set was switched on it took several minutes for a picture to appear.

Televisions of that era were notoriously unreliable and,

when it was only 19 months old, the Pye needed a new line output transformer. The set was repaired by Edwards of 497/9 Oxford Road, Reading, for the sum of £2 10s.

AND SO TO BED

By August 1952 I was more than three years old and needed a proper bed. Bull's supplied the bed ends, mattress and spring base for a total sum of £11 10s. This bed was still in occasional use in the early twenty-first century, and was only disposed of when 48 Armour Road was sold to pay for Terry's residential home fees. It is somewhat ironic that the house bought with a mortgage from Reading Borough Council in 1947 was sold 65 years later to pay care home fees to the very same council.

TOYS AND SIMPLE LUXURIES

There was much spending by John and Terry Hadland in the run-up to their first Christmas with a child. The Thermos flask and jug, gas lighter, flannels, soap, perfume, diaries and a dress were plainly gifts for adults, but there was also a rag book, a teddy, a baby coat, mittens, hat, leggings and (not quite so exciting) a potty for me. These came from McIlroys and Heelas, and I still have the much-loved teddy. The following year I was given a Triang pedal car, bought from Hills, for £1 9s 6d. My father modified it by fitting a pair of battery-operated bicycle lamps, thus making it the only pedal car in the neighbourhood with working headlamps.

My birth gave John the ideal excuse to buy a model railway, with which I was never allowed to play except under his strict supervision. Model railways were extremely expensive at the time, not least because of their high metal content during a time of shortages. But from the run-up to Christmas 1950, Trix Twin model railway equipment featured in the monthly bills from Hills, Heelas and McIlroys. One engine alone in November 1950 cost £5 15s 6d – about a week's wages for the average working man at that time. The initial outlay on model railway equipment that Christmas was in the order of £13 and over the next few years the layout was substantially expanded. Terry did not miss out that Christmas though, as the Heelas receipt for a Ciro pearl necklace attests.

A McIlroy's bill for Christmas presents for family and friends for Christmas 1951 highlights what luxuries were items such as soap, cologne, bath cubes, talcum powder and even hot water bottles. Brand names such as Cussons, Goya, Reckitt, Potter & Moore and Cuticura are evocative of that time.

One of the last bills in the ring-binder of my father's invoices is for a toy piano purchased from Hills. It was one of my presents for Christmas 1952. More than 60 years later, as I finger the keys of a very different keyboard, we come to the end of this story of how one young couple, my parents, set up house in Tilehurst in the austerity era.

Newbury Girls' School and the First World War

Judith Thomas
views the war effort from
the schoolroom

Plenty brings home to Newbury her German exchange partner, who, it is intended, will be with her “for several months”. As late as July 1914 Isabel Adnams returns to England, having “enjoyed the Rhineland and its culture”. Meanwhile school life continues as normal. Just one tiny hint that the European situation might be of concern: First Aid lectures are arranged in March 1914 for the staff, Old Girls and six pupils.

The next edition of the *Record* in March 1915 reports that the Upper School had attended a joint lecture at the Boys’ Grammar School in September 1914 by Mr Sharwood Smith, the headmaster, on the causes of the war, but the war itself still seems to have had very little impact on the girls. Various Old Girls recount how they are helping towards the war effort by taking up nursing and teaching refugee children, One laments the lack of social life at her college, as “only seven men are up this term”. The main difference at school was the cancellation of the annual Christmas play, and the forced abandonment of lacrosse matches against other schools (“the only other school which plays lacrosse in this district has given up outside matches”). The play was replaced by recitations, patriotic poems and national anthems (British and French).

Well-intentioned as these efforts were, they had no impact on the war effort. As the war dragged on, the school decided to make a special effort to relieve the distress it had caused. Miss Luker discovered that fishermen in large ports needed help, having been thrown out of work “because of the danger of seafaring these days”. Newbury Girls’ School prided itself on its democratic institutions, and a whole-school meeting decided that working parties would be held after Games on Tuesdays in order to mend old garments and make new ones. There was a noble response to the call for old garments: Miss Luker provided new wool, and eventually a “great display of garments were arranged on top of lockers in the lower corridor – hats, shoes, coats, dresses, undergarments for all ages and sizes, knitted scarves and hats made by the girls, warm and cosy, mainly in red and

The pupils of Newbury Boys’ Grammar School were being prepared for fighting physically and mentally. The girls, however, of Newbury Girls’ Grammar School, played a basically supportive and comforting role in the war, reflecting society at the time.

The boys had raised the subject of Germany’s warlike ambitions in their debating society as early as 1911, suggesting that war with Germany was inevitable, and later debating whether conscription should be universal, and what peace terms the Allies should impose. The school’s Shooting Club allowed the boys to practise for the Services, and there was no question of sporting matches being abandoned for the duration, as they were likely to improve the boys’ fitness for fighting.

Unlike the boys’ school magazines, the girls’ school magazine, the *Record*, gives few hints before 1914 that war could be at all imminent. In 1913 two former pupils are spending what we would now call a gap year in Germany, and they write to their former headmistress, Miss Luker, of their experiences: of attending concerts and operas, and of visiting cathedrals. In March 1914 Kathleen

scarlet". So many garments were produced that two parcels were sent to London as well as three to Portsmouth.

By the time of the November 1915 *Record*, the war was having an increasingly sobering effect on national life. It had been decided unanimously in the summer term that outside cricket matches should cease, and that the money thus saved should be used to entertain local Belgian refugees (the arrival of 250,000 refugees from Belgium in the UK was the largest single mass reception of refugees in British history) and any wounded soldiers being treated locally. So, on Saturday 19 June 1915, Belgian Day took place. Great efforts were made to decorate the school with flowers and flags, and a comb band (of home-made instruments) played waltzes and selections from *The Quaker girl*, a popular Edwardian musical comedy. Tea was served in the grounds, and the choir wore the national colours of Belgium. The fourth form acted the Mad Hatter's Tea Party, and the staff performed a farce entitled *Between the soup and the savoury*, written by Gertrude Jennings in 1910 although, as the characters were Cockney servants in a kitchen and they constantly dropped their aitches or added superfluous ones, the Belgians may have been somewhat bemused. The wounded soldiers then took part in party games such as eating a biscuit whilst whistling a popular song, and finally, in a tug-of-war against the girls (the girls won), and the Belgians (the soldiers won).

Ten days later the Girls' Cricket XI played "HM Cripples" from Newbury Hospital. One of the soldiers had been a Hampshire professional and, despite their insensitive name, they declared that they "would never allow a girl's lob to make their bails click". The girls bowled four "cripples" out for a duck, but still lost the match.

In the same *Girls' School Record* a first-hand account, the only one of any actual warfare, is given by a former pupil who had moved to Southend-on-Sea, of a terrifying Zeppelin raid on that town: "the sky was a blaze of red and two bombs fell on our hockey field" on 10 May 1915, bringing the war a little closer to those experiencing it from the safety of inland Newbury.

The regular Tuesday after-school working parties resumed, the school becoming in March 1916 a sub-depot of the Newbury and District Voluntary Organisation for War Relief, and all garments were inspected, to conform to the government's pattern.

We learn just how many scarves can be made from 6lbs of wool (10), or mittens from 4 lbs (32).

In contrast to the articles in the boys' school magazine, where letters from Old Boys appear recounting their carefully edited experiences of fighting on the various fronts, only one serious article appears, written by Hilda Shorter of the Lower V on the position of women after the war. She presciently foresees how women are unlikely to want to "go quietly back to their old position in society"; how so many more women will remain unmarried and "will have to face problems their mothers were spared".

Wounded soldiers were entertained once more in December 1916. They were prevailed upon to perform popular songs of the time, such as *Gilbert the filbert*.

By March 1917 the *Record* was produced only in a handwritten version, "owing to the increased cost of printing and shortage of paper and labour", and this is the last we hear of the Girls' School in the war. (The Boys' Grammar School magazine continued uninterrupted by such considerations.) The next issue of the *Record* was not until December 1920, as it "became impossible to issue further numbers".

In 1917 £5 6s 5d was sent to the Newbury Voluntary Organisation for War Work, a silver collection was made for the Russian Red Cross, and £5 was raised by the Girls' Patriotic Union of Secondary Schools to send to the Star and Garter Home for Disabled Soldiers and Sailors. The Union had been founded by the Association of Head Mistresses shortly after the outbreak of war, recognising schoolgirls' "ardent wish to take part in the service of their King and country", and their first report contained the headings "Care of Sick and Wounded; Contributions Raised; Saving and Self-Denial; Relief of Distress". This programme was followed almost to the letter by the girls of Newbury Girls' Grammar, physically quite untouched by the war, but responding generously with their time and money.

Sources

Newbury Girls' School Record 1914-17

Grant, Peter Russell (2012) *Mobilizing charity: non-uniformed voluntary action during the First World War* (Unpublished Doctoral thesis, City University London)

Permanent City Research Online URL:

<http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/2075/>

The Online Centre for Research on Belgian Refugees:

<http://belgianrefugees.blogspot.com>

From south to north

***Phil Turner
muses on the
economic imperatives
which drove his
Berkshire ancestors
up north***

In general, life today is better for all of us than it has ever been in the past. We take so much for granted: plentiful supply of cheap food, clean water, power for comfort, the health service if we are sick, ease of travel and work in the place we have chosen to live, albeit the latter is not as certain as it once was. However, this was not always the case. Life in the 1800s clearly was not easy, and in essence very little was provided, so nothing was taken for granted.

My family's direct line is split between my father's paternal line from Berkshire and the remainder from at least 11 other counties and, probably, Ireland and Scotland also. They have one thing in common – they had to work to live, and they were prepared to move around the country to do so.

My Berkshire family is rooted in agriculture: nothing special, no landowners, no prosperity, not even rising above general labourers. It was tough work with scant reward at the end of the day, an existence identical to that of thousands of others. One thing they were prepared to do when the opportunity arose was to move away from the land of their birth. This was achieved in the wake of the industrial revolution, when agriculture was not enough. Roads, railways and canals had to be built, deep-water harbours improved, reservoirs constructed, and this was the great opportunity to raise themselves out of abject poverty. Railways made travel in the second half of the nineteenth century possible, and many people – my own included – took the opportunity to do just that.

Via the ports of Grimsby, Hull and Ardrossan my family eventually found themselves in north Northumberland, working on the construction of the reservoir at Catcleugh up on the Carter Bar – a wild and lonely place even today, and in 1890 as inhospitable a place as anywhere, to match anything written by the Brontës.

The area, at 1,000 feet above sea level, was sparsely populated, a few houses only in and around the nearby hamlet of Byrness straddling the

highway from England to Scotland, a few miles away. It is to this fairly desolate place that my ancestors from both sides of my father's family came together.

The reservoir, damming the Rede, was started around 1890 and completed around 1905. Two shanty towns (Newcastle and Gateshead) containing a number of large huts, were built either side of the Rede to house the construction workers and their families. All that remains today is one of the original huts, constructed in 1891, which is used as a visitor centre and museum.

It is actually my paternal great-grandmother who is the star of the show for me (my great-grandfather was killed in a site accident in 1898). Elizabeth Hobden was born in Sussex in 1850. Her first "husband," Daniel Smith, died in Lincoln. Here she met George Herbert, and followed him to Ardrossan in Scotland, then to Byrness and Catcleugh.

On the site she was the keeper of Hut 44, in which some 25 people lived. Some were her children, but most were single men. It was her job to look after all who lived in the hut, tending their needs, feeding, cleaning and washing for them. Family rumour has it she was the only midwife on the site; if so, I'm sure she was kept busy.

After the death of George Herbert in 1898 she married, in 1900, John Harris Owen, one of the hut's lodgers. Oddly, in the 1901 census she claimed to be a widow, perhaps in memory of her dead "husband", thinking she hadn't mourned him long enough? She also claimed to be born in France, a naturalised British subject. Maybe she was, because I cannot actually pinpoint her birth to an exact date. However, in 1905 she, her children and husband John Owen moved further north to Rosyth in Scotland, where they were constructing the new naval base. She was again a hut keeper.

John Owen died in 1911, and Elizabeth in 1913, and both are buried in the local cemetery in Inverkeithing.

She was clearly a strong-willed woman, a product of her time perhaps and, family rumour has it, “a good woman”. This is strange, because whilst she lived with three men and had 11 children along the way, she married only one of them.

There is, you may be thinking, nothing remarkable about any of the above, and you may well be right. However, in the late 1800s to move away from the relatively more genteel south to the harsh landscape of north Northumberland with its few (if any) advantages, was not something to be undertaken lightly. North Northumberland is truly a wild and beautiful place of rolling moorland, wonderful in summer, but bitterly cold in winter, when biting winds howl down from the Arctic icecap and cut to

the marrow – and that is today! What then in the 1890s, when there was no cheap food, water on tap (pardon the pun, it was intended), power for comfort, insulation or warm clothing to keep out the winter chill? Elizabeth Hobden and the others were remarkable people.

In the remaining hut at Catcleugh is the black umbrella and cape she wore at George Herbert’s funeral. In the nearby church a brass plaque has been erected in memory of all the people who died during the construction of the reservoir. Next to it is a stained glass window depicting what I would call “navy kiddies” working, erected in 1903, this time in memory of all the workers on the site.

Dates for your diary

| | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|--|---|--|
| 11-14 Sept | 10.00 to 16.00 | Yeomanry House, 131 Castle Hill, Reading RG1 7TJ | Heritage Open Days: open house at the Research Centre, Berks FHS | computerbranch@berksfhs.org.uk |
| 12 Sept | 10.00 to 15.00 | Basingstoke RG22 6PG | Conference visit to Milestones Museum | www.berksfhs.org.uk/cms/Conference/visits.html |
| 4 Oct | 10.00 to 16.00 | Marlborough School, just outside Woodstock | Oxfordshire FHS Fair Berks FHS attending | www.ofhs.org.uk/OpenDay.html |
| 12 Oct | 10.00 to 16.00 | Everest Community Academy, Oxford Way, Basingstoke, RG24 9FP | Hampshire Genealogical Society Open Day Berks FHS attending | www.hgs-online.org.uk |
| 18 Oct | 09.15 to 16.30 | Theale Green School, Church St, Theale RG7 5DA | Berkshire FHS conference: The early twentieth century: conflict and change | www.berksfhs.org.uk/cms/Conference |
| 20 Oct | 13.00 to 15.30 | 9 Coley Ave, Reading RG1 6AF | Conference visit: behind-the-scenes tour of Berkshire Record Office | www.berksfhs.org.uk/cms/Conference/visits.html |
| 1 Nov | 10.00 to 16.30 | Woking Leisure Centre, Kingfield Rd, Woking GU22 9BA | West Surrey FHS Fair and Open Day Berks FHS attending | www.wsfhs.co.uk/pages/openday.php |

Insult or information?

Richard Oliver

*wondered how his ancestors came to
be baldly labelled "berks" in a
Hampshire parish register*

Berks! A rude word, I know, and not the sort one would like to see applied to one's precious ancestors. Yet there it was, in the baptismal register of Portchester, Hampshire, recording the 1801 birth of a son to John and Elizabeth Gibbard, whom I was beginning to suspect of being third great-grandparents of mine. The apparent insult was written faintly but unmistakably alongside their names.

I had been led to Hampshire by a note in the 1851 census, in which Maria Hughes (possibly a daughter of the same couple, Hughes being her married name) claimed to have been born in Portsea, and her age suggested 1804 as the time-frame. Her possible maiden name of Gibbard was only a surmise. Three of her grandchildren carried it as a forename, but that could have all sorts of explanations.

Indeed, it became clear that Portsea was a truly improbable place for any Gibbard to get herself born. In the British Surname Index (Archer Software) there were only 700 Gibbards among almost 30 million people and, while there was some concentration where Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire meet, most other parts of the country, including Hampshire, were empty of the name.

All the same, I thought: 1804 was a unique moment in history, for Portsmouth and the surrounding country. Portsmouth was the hub of the British effort to defeat Napoleon, the principal port of the Royal Navy, from where soldiers and sailors from all over the country would set out to do battle with Boney. What if Maria's father were just passing through on his way to serve under Nelson at Trafalgar, or with Wellington in the Peninsular War? And his pregnant wife had followed to wave him goodbye?

I contacted Glen Gibbard in Canada, an expert in the history of his unusual surname, and he did locate a Maria Gibbard in London, in 1829, marrying one Richard Hughes, a "taylor" – who was my undoubted ancestor – so at least I now knew my

Maria's maiden name for sure.

Rummaging in records I found myself in contact with a wise person who knew all about Hampshire in those far-off days, and when I mentioned Portchester, and the rude scribble of "berks", she said: "The Berkshire Militia were stationed in the area around that time."

I went hot-foot to The National Archives, and spent a full day reading through the muster rolls and pay-lists of this regiment. To my surprise I at once found Private John Gibbard, who seems to have been in the service for 10 years. The Berkshire Militia were marching back and forth through the entire south of England, from Kent in the east to Devon in the west, to wherever it looked most likely that the French invaders would come ashore. They were stationed also at sundry bases in Somerset and Gloucestershire.

My search for Maria Gibbard's beginnings were taking a promising turn, but then I found her in the 1861 census and was at once flummoxed. She gave her place of birth as Bicester, in Oxfordshire. How could that be, when she was supposed to have been born in Portsea? There wasn't a trace of her in the Hampshire records, and she certainly wasn't in the Oxfordshire Family History Society database of baptisms. Still, Oxfordshire was a new lead, so I next sat down with the baptismal records for Bicester.

Interestingly, though Maria was absent, there was a little cluster of Gibbard boys, all born between 1801 and 1812, to a couple named John and Elizabeth – the same two forenames as that couple of "berks" I discovered at the start.

I worked out that Maria could also belong in the list, though born and baptised elsewhere, because there was an intriguing gap between two boys – between 1801 and 1805 – in which a daughter could easily have been conceived and born.

Neither of these parents, John nor Elizabeth, lived beyond the 1830s, but the sons did, particularly John and Thomas Gibbard, so they could be tracked through the census, their



*Maria Hughes (née Gibbard) 1804-82
A drawing by her grandson, Reginald Arthur*

marriages and the births of their children. Information from these sources included new facts, including this: that both had lived in St John's Wood, in London, at an address in Cochrane Terrace.

Now this was turning into an open-and-shut case: the woman I suspected of being their sister, Maria Hughes, had earlier given birth to her first-born son, Thomas John Hughes, at an address in St John's Wood: Cochrane Terrace.

A sad story attaches to Thomas Gibbard. He was a licensed victualler at an address in Islington, London. It seems that he and his wife Mary drank their way through his stock, as both died in their fifties of liver disease, within a year of each other. Their only daughter, Elizabeth, married in 1865 and named her father as "deceased". Her mother, Mary, died shortly after the marriage, and her death certificate gives her as "widow of Thomas Gibbard".

But Thomas Gibbard *was* still alive. It seems his family had shut him away, some miles distant, and told everyone he was dead.

He died a year later, one presumes an alcoholic

wreck, but still, there was a silver lining for me, his second great-grand-nephew. On his wife's death certificate, appeared the clincher: the witness, present at the death, was named as Maria Hughes. Yes, the deceased's sister-in-law. QED.

A postscript to this story takes us back a generation, to John Gibbard the militiaman and later blacksmith in Bicester. It was he and his wife who were marked as "berks" in that old register. I finally located his marriage, in a small village near Bovey Tracey in Devon. His bride was Elizabeth Hellyer and, as he was not a local, he had to obtain a temporary settlement by swearing his life story before magistrates.

Their report reads:

The Examination of John Gibberd (sic) private militiaman...3rd day of October 1796... says that, he was born in Fifield in Oxfordshire, and at the age of seventeen bound himself Apprentice...then left his Master and went to Windsor and work'd as a Journey Man Whitesmith, by the week, for some time, and then went as a Substitute in the Berkshire Regiment of Militia, in which he is now serving, and sometime since came into the Parish of Chudleigh, and there Married..."

Windsor – so that was why he was in the Berkshire Militia!

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Marking the anniversary

Several museums in and near Berkshire are marking the anniversary of the start of the First World War with special events and exhibitions from different perspectives.

Be sure to check opening times, charges and booking requirements by direct contact with the museum before planning your visit.

Reading at war

5 April to 14 September

Sir John Madejski Art Gallery, Reading Museum

Blagrove St, Reading RG1 1QH

0118 937 3400

www.readingmuseum.org.uk

Artefacts and images from the museum's collections exploring the impact of war through the ages, with particular reference to WWI, when Reading's workforce, particularly women, were mobilised to support the war effort and to care for wounded soldiers in the town's war hospitals. The Victoria Cross of Reading's Trooper Fred Potts is on display.

Paradise regained: Stanley Spencer in the aftermath of World War One

2 April to 2 November

Stanley Spencer Gallery

Kings Hall, High Street, Cookham SL6 9SJ

01628 483279

www.stanleypencer.org.uk

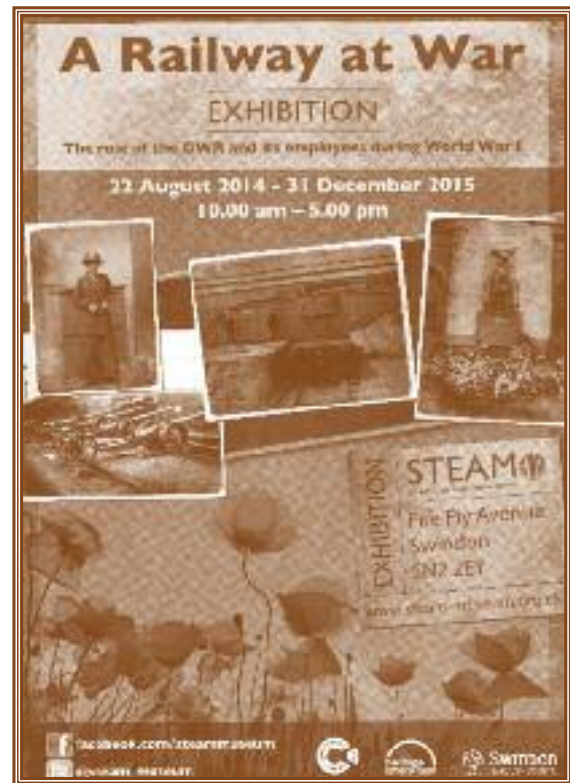
Sandham Memorial Chapel (NT)

Burghclere RG20 9JT

01635 278394

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sandham-memorial-chapel

Stanley Spencer (1891 - 1959), official war artist in both world wars, served with the Royal Army Medical Corps and the Royal Berkshire Regiment in WWI. He painted huge, profoundly moving compositions featuring ordinary soldiers with country-boy faces, in everyday scenes of mundane tasks in camp rather than action. Sandham Memorial Chapel has a permanent display of 16 colossal murals.



Maidenhead and the Great War: the Home Front

17 September to 22 November

Maidenhead Heritage Centre

18 Park St, Maidenhead SL6 1SL

www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk

The effect of the war on Maidenhead, including food shortages and rationing, the changing role of women, the problems of housing large numbers of troops and refugees.

A railway at war

22 August to 31 December

Steam: the museum of the Great Western Railway

Fire Fly Ave, Kemble Dr, Swindon SN2 2EY

01793 466637/466626/466646

www.steam-museum.org.uk

The GWR and its employees built many items for the war effort, and its employees were affected by war – not only the men who went to fight, but also the men and women who were left behind. A range of never-seen-before material and objects will be on display.

The country goes to war

5 February to 30 November

The Wardrobe: The Rifles Berkshire and Wiltshire Museum

58 The Close, Salisbury SP1 2EX

01722 419419

www.thewardrobe.org.uk

National memory, local stories: a display of how local schoolchildren have interpreted some WW1 artefacts.

Wantage (not just) Betjeman Literary Festival

**25 October to 2 November
Vale & Downland Museum,
Church St, Wantage OX12 8BL**

01235 771447

www.wantagebetjeman.com

Picking up the WW1 theme with writers, artists, historians and performers presenting work.

Abingdon at war

starting 5 August

Abingdon County Hall Museum

Market Place, Abingdon OX14 3HG

Stories of Abingdon people and their contribution to the war effort as service men and women or civilians, with excerpts from contemporary newspapers. Combines local memorabilia and personal stories with the harsh reality of wartime weapons.

Remembering 1914: men from this area who served in the Great War

to 26th October

Tom Brown's School Museum

Uffington SN7 7RA

www.museum.uffington.net

A tiny and unusual museum housed in the 395-year-old schoolroom that featured in Thomas Hughes' book *Tom Brown's school days*.

We will remember them

First World War family history workshops with Surrey History Centre and Surrey Libraries

Godalming Library 22 September

Epsom Library 24 September

Staines Library 26 September

01483 543599 SMS: 07968 832414



Photo by Philafrenzy, made available under Creative Commons

Residents of Reading will be familiar with the Maiwand Lion in the Forbury Gardens. But how many people know what it commemorates?

Maiwand was and still is a village in the province of Kandahar, in Afghanistan. On 27 July 1880 it was the scene of one of the bloodiest battles of the Second Afghan War, in which the 66th (Berkshire) Regiment of Foot faced vastly superior Afghan forces, and were overwhelmed. The lion was erected in 1886 to commemorate the 11 officers and 317 men who died. They came from all over Berkshire, and their names are inscribed on the plinth.

Reading has also commemorated Maiwand with a window in St Mary's Church, and the pub sign of the Bugle in Friar Street is a bugler of the 66th. Maiwand Gardens in Tilehurst was named in 1990. Many miles to the south west, the tiny parish of Shalbourne (once Berkshire, now Wiltshire) erected its own Maiwand memorial (below) to commemorate three fatalities from the village: George Tuttle, Joseph Cope and Charles Rolfe.



Readers write

*your pictures
your stories
your queries*

*Send them in to
editor@berksfhs.org.uk*

from **Keith and Diane Quayle**
keithquayle@inet.net.au
Perth, Western Australia

We have been trying for many years to track down my wife's grandfather, about whom there has been an ongoing mystery. I'm almost certain he changed his name for some reason, and that was fine for him, but really unfair to his descendants, who have no idea where they came from, including his children and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

One solid bit of evidence is this pair of photographs taken by Walter Shaw in Camberley around 1902. If we could find where Walter Shaw's original records are, they might provide other clues. Does anyone have the original records of Walter Shaw? It seems that he took numerous photos, especially for Sandhurst.

It's likely that these young ladies lived in Wokingham when the pictures were taken, and if anyone could identify them it would be marvellous. They are our last resort.



Ewart Davies found this in the parish register of Sutton Courtney,* 1809, reviving flood memories from earlier this year.

Memorandum

On the nineteenth day of January one thousand eight hundred and nine: the thermometer below 24 degrees for the greatest part of the day there fell a rain which froze immediately on touching the ground or any plant: in a day or two after it was succeeded by a deep fall of snow which lay on the ground till the twenty fourth when it began to thaw, & rain, which melted the snow so suddenly, the ground being covered with ice under it from the frozen rain abovementioned, that there was the highest flood ever recorded; it exceeded the flood in 1775 by more than 15 inches perpendicular: boats passed from the Swan publick house to the Otneys & Abingdon; several of the inhabitants were brought out of their houses in boats: much damage was done by the waters, many cattle drowned & the roads rendered for a time impassable. The River Thames covered the high meadow opposite the church yard and flowed into the street.

Jn. Batcheler, Curate of Sutton Courtney

* as it was then spelt. Today it is usually Sutton Courtenay.

Source: Berkshire Record Office D/P 128/1/4, page 42

from Susan Chapman née Dennis
susan@hillberry.eu

Nearly all of my ancestry-chasing has been done so far on the internet, although I've made one trip to the BRO in Reading, which raised more questions than it answered.

My great-grandfather, Charles Dennis, was born in Clewer in 1855. He married Rachel Sarah Foreman at Christ Church, Hampstead, Middlesex, in 1881.

Charles Dennis' parents were Richard Dennis, born 1829 in Clewer, and Jane Day, born 1833 in Winkfield. I have no record of Richard's birth, but he appears on the 1841 census as Richard Dines, aged 13, living with his uncle, Charles Campbell. I'm sure this is my Richard Dennis, because all the later census records show them living together until the death of Charles Campbell in 1862. (I find it very touching that they looked after each other, and that Richard named his first-born son after his uncle Charles rather than after himself.)

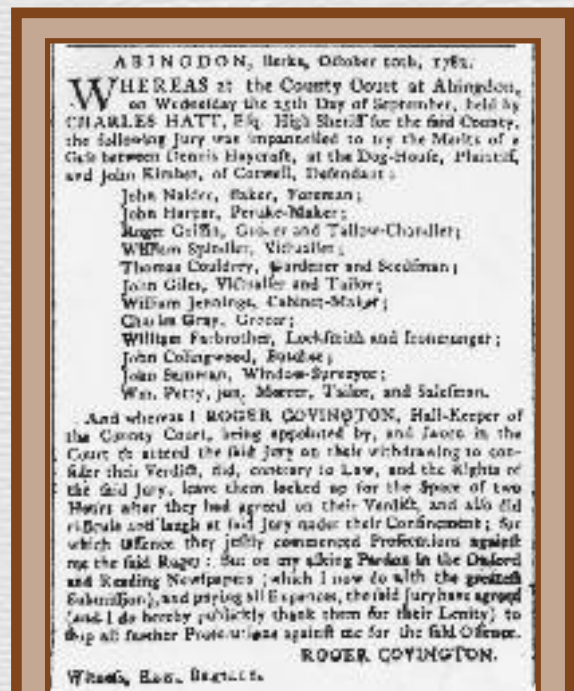
Richard Dennis married Jane Day at St Peter's, Easthampstead, in 1854. The certificate shows Richard's father also as Richard Dennis, labourer.

I have the record of a marriage between Richard Dennis and Diana (Dinah/Diney) Campbell at Clewer on 18 March 1821. They would seem likely parents for my Richard Dennis. There's a register entry for their daughter Sarah, born in June 1821, giving father's occupation as waggoner, but I haven't found an entry for a son Richard, although there is an entry in 1827 for William, son of William (labourer) and Dinah Dennis of Bier Lane.

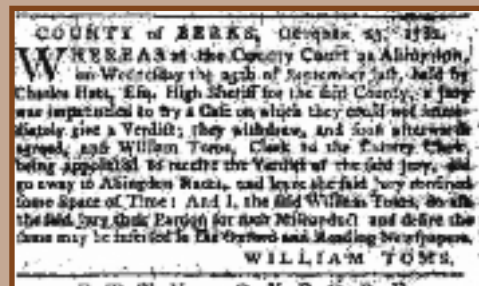
I have a death certificate from 1837 for Richard Dennis, labourer, of Bier Lane, Clewer, stating that he died from consumption aged 40, which gives him a birth date of around 1797. There is also a record of the burial of Dinah Dennis in 1836, confirming my assumption that my Richard Dennis, born in 1829, was an orphan by 1841.

Until recently I could find no credible Richard Dennis born anywhere near to Clewer in 1797, but I think some additional records came online while I was away, and I have found a record for a Richard Dennis born 1797 in Chieveley. If my Richard Dennis 1797 was a waggoner in 1821, it's quite possible that he could have travelled the distance between Chieveley and Clewer, I think.

My problem, of course, is proving that this is the correct connection. Any ideas?



Two extracts from *Jackson's Oxford Journal* highlight the perils of jury service in Abingdon in the 1780s.



Bookends



Reviews by Grace Gillions and Tony Roberts

Prices quoted are for:

a) direct sales from the bookshop at the Research Centre

b) mail order purchase within UK, including p&p by second class post

c) mail order purchase from overseas, including p&p airmail.

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LOCAL INTEREST

Winterbrook and Cholsey's East End

Tony Rayner (Pie Powder Press, 2013),

paperback, 20x21cm, 220pp

Shop £12.50 UK £15.51 airmail £24.25

Many of the items reviewed on these pages have wide-ranging appeal and potential interest to family history researchers all over the country. Even the author of *Winterbrook and Cholsey's East End* would admit that his book is not likely to be one of them.

Tony Rayner makes no apology for the limited appeal of his publication, which was produced on behalf of Cholsey 1000 Plus, a local community association. In his introduction he explains that he has written "the people's book" about an area that he lives in and clearly loves; the result is a small but handsomely produced volume with the feel of someone giving a series of chats to friends and neighbours who share his passion for this tiny piece of South Oxfordshire. Nearly 150 like-minded folk contributed to the venture, and several became friends of the author while reminiscing over coffee and cake. It is on this intimate level that the book will be most enjoyed, for while the exhaustive detail will mean little or nothing to outsiders, anyone who enjoys a close affinity with Winterbrook and/or Cholsey will find much to savour.

The book is divided into two sections, one for each settlement, and within these sections

are more than 50 chapter headings covering individual buildings, local families, historic trades and businesses. Many of the chapters are just a page or two long, and some topics appear in more than one category; all are illustrated with evocative old photographs, maps, charts or documents.

At the heart of the book are histories of the houses, which Rayner has researched in breathtaking depth. Wherever possible he includes conveyancing documents, inventories, wills and deeds to track ownership; he also has a wealth of anecdotal evidence about the various residents. One particularly engaging chapter concerns the Danish Bacon Company and the Norwegian royal family, while elsewhere are detailed somewhat tenuous connections with Jerome K Jerome, Sir Laurence Olivier, Basil Rathbone and the Duchess of Cambridge. Pride of place among the local celebrities is reserved for Agatha Christie, who famously made her home at Winterbrook House where she died in 1976.

There is so much information here that one might wonder if the author, out of gratitude to his contributors, could not bear to lose a single snippet; the structure might perhaps have benefited from less benevolent editing, but then this would have been a different book.

Grace Gillions

MILITARY HISTORY

The trench: life and death on the Western Front 1914 - 1918

Trevor Yorke (Countryside Books, 2014), A5 perfect bound, 95 pp.

Shop £ 7.95, UK £10.43 airmail £16.85

This book about trenches and trench life in the First World War explains why they were built, how they were constructed and what daily life was like in them when facing new and terrifying weapons. It is written in simple and straightforward language, and is illustrated throughout the text, often using the author's own drawings. The book also gives some brief outlines of the political and strategic background to the war, which helps the reader who does not have a detailed knowledge of the war or its origins to understand the context in which it was fought.

Throughout the book are boxes giving information on specific items, which allow the author to explain in more detail the weaponry and artillery, trench construction, battle strategies, personalities and maps without disrupting the flow of the main text. The author's own illustrations are clear and unfussy, conveying essential information without over-labelling the diagrams. There are also a number of contemporary photographs of life in the trenches.

The author specialises in explanatory books for the reader who has an average interest in his subjects. He has written more than twenty books on the styles and building of housing found in particular historical periods, as well as others explaining the design and construction of churches, abbeys, castles and the like. As such the author's works are useful introductions to a variety of topics, leaving the reader to decide whether or not to pursue a more detailed study into any of those topics. This book is in the same vein.

The book has an introduction by Michael Morpurgo (author of *Warhorse*), and then goes through its topic in five principal

sections that cover the manoeuvres leading to the stalemate of the Western Front, the design and construction of trenches, life in the trench, trench warfare, and finally demobilisation and the war's aftermath. At the end of the book are appendices describing the origins of the war, places to visit in France and Belgium, and in Britain, some specialised museums. The book is rounded off with a short glossary covering some of the terms used in trench warfare, and a brief index.

While the book necessarily deals with the Western Front, as its title proclaims, there is a one-page box that acknowledges that the Gallipoli campaign was also primarily one of trench warfare.

The only criticism I would have of the book is that it is almost exclusively about the British experience on the Western Front, and little is said about the trenches of the Germans opposing them, other than that the German trenches were initially of better construction. Also I felt the small box in the text about mining was insufficient to describe what was, at the time, one of the major offensive activities associated with trench warfare, and one that called out for one of the author's useful diagrams.

However, overall this book was easy to read, well laid out and illustrated, and a very good guide to what life in the trenches was like during that war. For family historians not familiar with the background to the war, and the nature of trench warfare, it is an excellent guide to understanding the lives their First World War soldier ancestors led, why the carnage was so great, and why they were there. As such the book is thoroughly commended to our readers who wish to know more about the Western Front, and the experiences of their ancestors at it.

Tony Roberts

Berkshire FHS Research Centre

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- Berkshire probate
- Berkshire trade directories
- National burial index 3rd ed

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Members' surname interests

directory maintained by Bob Plumridge

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|-----------------|----------------|-----|-----------|----------------|----------------|-----|-----------|
| 7672 ALLEN | Wantage | BRK | 1750-1900 | 7265 JEFFES | North Leigh | OXF | pre 1600 |
| 7691 ARGYLE | Abingdon | BRK | All | 7520 LANGRISH | Portsea | HAM | pre 1860 |
| 7685 ATKINS | London | LND | All | 7265 LAYFIELD | Dublin | IRL | pre 1800 |
| 7520 BERRY | All | All | pre 1860 | 7685 LICKFOLD | London | LND | All |
| 7685 BLANNING | All | SOM | All | 7265 LINE | All | LND | pre 1800 |
| 7691 BLISSETT | Chilton | BRK | pre 1900 | 7644 LOOKER | E/W/G Shefford | BRK | All |
| 7685 BRENCHLEY | All | KEN | All | 7685 LUFF | All | LIN | All |
| 7644 BROWN | E/W/G Shefford | BRK | All | 7265 PAIN | Cannington | SOM | pre 1800 |
| 7685 BRUCE | All | NFK | All | 7265 PICKERING | All | LDN | pre 1800 |
| 7685 COCKRILL | All | ESS | All | 7618 PILLINGER | All | BRK | pre 1800 |
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| 7685 COUZENS | Isle of Wight | HAM | All | 7644 PRATER | E/W/G Shefford | BRK | All |
| 7618 CRYER | All | BRK | pre 1800 | 7644 ROLFE | Boxford | BRK | All |
| 7265 DRAKE | High Gate | MDX | pre 1800 | 7644 ROLFE | E/W/G Shefford | BRK | All |
| 7644 DUCK | E/W/G Shefford | BRK | All | 7672 ROSE | White Waltham | BRK | 1700-1900 |
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| 7644 ELDERFIELD | East Garston | BRK | All | 7644 SEYMOUR | E/W/G Shefford | BRK | All |
| 7644 ELDERFIELD | E/W/G Shefford | BRK | All | 7644 SMITH | E/W/G Shefford | BRK | All |
| 7618 FOWLER | All | BRK | pre 1800 | 7685 STORR | London | LND | All |
| 7618 GILLS | All | BRK | pre 1800 | 7644 THATCHER | E/W/G Shefford | BRK | All |
| 7691 HALL | Chilton | BRK | pre 1925 | 7685 THOMPSON | All | BDF | All |
| 7691 HALL | Abingdon | BRK | pre 1890 | 6570 TIDBURY | All | BRK | 1700 |
| 7691 HALL | Blewbury | BRK | pre 1920 | 7520 VENNING | All | All | pre 1800 |
| 7691 HALL | Reading | BRK | pre 1890 | 7644 WELLS | E/W/G Shefford | BRK | All |
| 7685 HAMMOND | All | BKM | All | 7691 WHIBLEY | All | BRK | pre 1870 |
| 7685 HOLE | All | KEN | All | 7644 WINKWORTH | E/W/G Shefford | BRK | All |
| 7644 HONEY | E/W/G Shefford | BRK | All | 7685 WISE | Bristol | SOM | All |
| 7520 HONOR | Reading | BRK | pre 1860 | 7644 WITHERS | E/W/G Shefford | BRK | All |