

# Berkshire Family Historian



*The quarterly journal of the  
Berkshire Family History Society*

**June 2024**  
**Volume 47**



**Inside this issue:**  
**Highlight on Kintbury**  
**Newbury's Cunning Woman**  
**US Social Security Number Applications**  
**What Can You Find on Our Website?**

# Berkshire Family History Society

The Centre for Heritage and Family History,

2nd Floor, Reading Central Library, Abbey Square, Reading RG1 3BQ

0118 950 9553 <https://berksfhs.org>

## Chairman & Project Co-ordinator

**Catherine Sampson**

32 Waterside Drive, Purley on Thames,  
Berkshire RG8 8AQ  
0118 942 2255

[projects@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:projects@berksfhs.org.uk)

[chairman@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:chairman@berksfhs.org.uk)

## Vice-chairman

**Nick Prince**

14 Tennyson Road, Thatcham,  
Berkshire RG18 3FR  
07876 346295

[vice-chairman@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:vice-chairman@berksfhs.org.uk)

## Secretary

**Vanessa Chappell**

07590 901315

[secretary@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:secretary@berksfhs.org.uk)

## Treasurer

**Martin Pilkington**

9 Delft Close, Tilehurst,  
Berkshire RG30 6EU

[treasurer@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@berksfhs.org.uk)

## Membership Secretary

**Bob Plumridge**

2 Spring Close, West Hanney  
Wantage Oxfordshire OX12 0HE

[memsec@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:memsec@berksfhs.org.uk)

## Other Contact Details

### YourTrees

**Alan Brooker**

[birthbriefs@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:birthbriefs@berksfhs.org.uk)

### Bookshop

**Tony Roberts/Ivan Dickason**

[bookshop@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:bookshop@berksfhs.org.uk)

### Events

**Vicki Chesterman**

[events@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:events@berksfhs.org.uk)

### Magazine

**Editorial Panel**

[editor@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:editor@berksfhs.org.uk)

### Member Contact

**Alan Brooker**

[membercontact@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:membercontact@berksfhs.org.uk)

### Publications

**Robert Turner**

[publications@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:publications@berksfhs.org.uk)

### Research Centre

**Sandra Barkwith**

[researchcentre@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:researchcentre@berksfhs.org.uk)

### Webmaster

**Paul Barrett/Dave Osborne**

[webmaster@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@berksfhs.org.uk)

## Abingdon Branch

**Dave Purling**

[abingdon@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:abingdon@berksfhs.org.uk)

## Bracknell & Wokingham Branch

**Sandra Barkwith**

[bracknell@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:bracknell@berksfhs.org.uk)

## Computer Branch

**Gillian Stevens**

[computerbranch@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:computerbranch@berksfhs.org.uk)

## Newbury Branch

**Nick Prince**

[newbury@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:newbury@berksfhs.org.uk)

## Reading Branch

**Vicki Chesterman**

[reading@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:reading@berksfhs.org.uk)

## Windsor, Slough & Maidenhead Branch

**Leigh Dworkin**

[windsor@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:windsor@berksfhs.org.uk)

**Publisher: Berkshire Family History Society CIO - Registered charity Number: 1204390**

Printer: *Joshua Horgan Print & Design, Unit 2 Glenmore Business Park, Range Road, Witney, Oxon OX29 0AA*

Non-deliveries should be returned to: *Berkshire Family History Society, The Centre for Heritage and Family History, 2nd Floor, Reading Central Library, Abbey Square, Reading, RG1 3BQ*

©2024 Berkshire Family History Society CIO - Registered Charity Number: 1204390

All articles in this magazine are copyright to the society and to their contributors unless otherwise stated, and may not be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means without the prior permission in writing of the Berkshire Family History Society and the author. The opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editor or the society. The inclusion of advertisements in this magazine does not imply any recommendation or otherwise by the editor or the society.

## Submissions to the editorial panel

All submissions to the editorial panel will be considered to be offered for publication in the magazine and on the society's website, unless accompanied by a clear statement to the contrary. If the written piece asks for a response from readers, permission to publish contact details will be assumed. All articles submitted are done so with the understanding that they may be edited to fit the editorail style and space available.

Copy deadlines are 24 December for the March issue, 24 March for the June issue, 24 June for the September issue and 24 September for the December issue.

*Front cover image*

*Hannen Columbarium at St Mary's Church Wargrave*

# Berkshire Family Historian

The quarterly journal of the Berkshire Family History Society

## June 2024

### Volume 47

#### Family names appearing in this issue

(excluding living people, authors of sources, royalty, corporate names, and glancing reference to famous people).

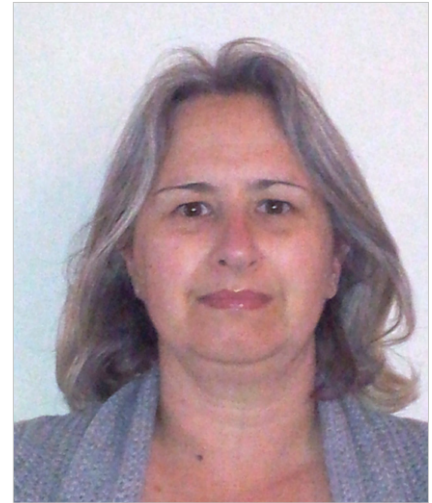
Name	Page	Name	Page
Abramovitch	29	Hawkes	17
Arons	31	Hibberd	26
Bacon	11	Hosford	17
Banister	16	Levine	32+
Benskin	27	Long	28
Bercovitch/Berkowicz/ Berkowitz/Berkwitt	30	Mahon	17
		Mills	28
Brant	inside back cover	Pearce	26
		Pizer	31
Cadogan	17	Pottinger	28
Carter	13+	Povey	16
Cherry	11	Preston	28
Cotterell/ Cottrell	16	Price	26
Crouch	25	Rivers	26+
Devorkin/Dvorkin/ Dworkin	29	Savage	inside back cover
Dundas	11	Siney	26
Dunn	11	Slocock	27
Fisher	26+	Stein	32
Gaier/Gayer	30	Sutton	17
Giles	25+	Thorn	26
Gregory	26	Titcombe	13+
Gunter	26	Tranter	25+
Guppy	27	Walmesley	11

## Contents

<b>Editor's Notes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Chairman's Corner</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The Centre for Heritage and Family History</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Reminder of 2024 Annual General Meeting</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Date for your Diaries</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Events organised from The Centre for Heritage and Family History</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Highlight on ... Kintbury</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>A Family Scandal and a Book That Had to be Written</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>What Can You Find on Our Website?</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>News from the Royal Berkshire Archives</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Book review</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Projects and Publications Update</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>New Product Launch</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Around the Branches</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Combined Branches Meeting</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Newbury's Cunning Woman: Was She Newbury's Last Witch?</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Social Security Number Application Forms</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>What's New on the Website?</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Heritage Open Days</b>	<b>36</b>

# Editor's Notes

Welcome to your June 2024 Berkshire Family Historian. As we plough into summer, the various teams at Berkshire Family History Society are busy behind the scenes preparing the varied events programme that everyone has grown to expect, along with branch meetings around the county and on Zoom and arranging for our attendance at various family history fairs. If you wish to get involved, please contact your local branch or the events team - contact details are on the inside front cover.



We hope that you find this edition is packed with interesting articles to keep you entertained when you need a break from your research. There is a look at an oft forgotten dataset, a browse around our website and a Newbury witch!

The Events programme is yet again packed with talks, walks, and workshops, both online and in person. A new event which proved popular in spring was a workshop on 'Getting the most out of your membership'. It is being rerun in summer and is a must for all members, new and old. Don't forget to book early for events via our website to avoid disappointment as some events sell out quickly.

As always your articles are welcomed. Personal stories can help give encouragement to other researchers, but we would be especially welcoming of articles about hints and tips, interesting dataset you have discovered or one on general 'How to do ..... research'.

**Vicki Chesterman**

[editor@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:editor@berksfhs.org.uk)

# Chairman's Corner

Since I last wrote, our second online Berkshire Heritage Fair has taken place. Afterwards, we received lots of very positive feedback and some heartwarming stories of new information or sources uncovered and new leads to progress. On the 1st April, we formally merged our bookshop into the body of the Society, and in due course Berkshire Family History Enterprises Ltd will be closed. This brings a number of benefits to the Society, not least a simplification of processes for our volunteers. For the bookshop's customers, business continues as usual, although you'll notice the financial transaction is now with the Society rather than the Limited Company. Thank you to all of our volunteers past and present who have given their time and effort to make Enterprises as successful as it was and to ensure its smooth transition into the Society, and to Tony Roberts and Geraldine Marsden, in particular, who continue to ensure the smooth running of the bookshop. Thank you also to all the volunteers who made the Berkshire Heritage Fair such an enjoyable and valuable event.



Our Society AGM takes place by Zoom on Wednesday 19th June. Please come along to this important part of the governance of the society, if you're able to. You will meet other members of the society, hear about the society during 2023/2024 and find out the plans ahead. Questions and debate is encouraged.

**Catherine Sampson**

[chairman@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:chairman@berksfhs.org.uk)

# The Centre for Heritage and Family History

2nd Floor, Reading Central Library, Abbey Square, Reading RG1 3BQ

<https://berksfhs.org> 0118 950 9553 [researchcentre@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:researchcentre@berksfhs.org.uk)

## Opening Hours from 1st January 2024

Monday 10.30am - 3pm

Tuesday 10.30am - 4pm

Wednesday closed

Last Thursday of month 10.30am - 4pm

Friday closed

First Saturday of month 10.30am - 2.30pm



Please note that there was a slight change to Thursday openings from January 2024. If you haven't yet visited the Centre to further your research, we are now offering Research Zone tours on a quarterly basis - please see the "What's On" section on the society's website for more details and to book a place. With new material being added online continuously, the Society's extensive reference library and the resources of the adjoining Local Studies Library - there is plenty to get stuck into. You can pre-book a one-to-one help session on one Monday each month. In addition, our Research Assistants are happy to provide advice to help you with your research whenever you visit, if you so wish.

## Assisting family historians at a distance

If you can't make it into the centre, the Society offers free online advice sessions with our Research Assistants each month. See the events page in this Historian or check the Society's website for more details and to book a slot.



# Reminder of 2024 Annual General Meeting and election of officers and trustees

In accordance with the society's constitution, a reminder is hereby given that the 49th Annual General Meeting will be held, via Zoom, on **Wednesday 19th June** at 7.00pm for a 7.30pm start. To book your place please visit <https://berksfhs.org/events/annual-general-meeting-3/?occurrence=2024-06-19>

The main business of the meeting will be to receive a brief report from the Chair on the past year's activities, to receive from the Treasurer the independently examined accounts for the year ending April 30th 2024 for acceptance and approval, and to elect for the year 2024/25 the society's President, Vice President(s), officers and trustees.

## Change to Charitable Status

This was approved by the membership at our last AGM and we will be updating you on the progress made transitioning to a CIO.

## Dates for Your Diaries

### **15 June 2024 - Wiltshire FHS Open Day \***

10am - 4pm, Community Centre, Emlyn Square, Swindon, Wiltshire SN1 5NP

Free

Find out more at: <https://www.wiltshirefhs.co.uk/about-us/society-events>

### **6 July 2024 - Hampshire Genealogical Society Conference Fair\***

10am - 3.30pm, Victoria Halls, West Green Road, Hartley Wintney, Hampshire RG27 8RQ

£35 one day ticket to conference (£60 for both days)

Find out more at: <https://www.hgs-familyhistory.com/2024/04/golden-jubilee-event-saturday-6th-july-sunday-7th-july/>

## Officers and trustees form the society's Executive Committee

The closing date for nominations to the Executive has passed.



### **21 September 2024 - Liddiard Family Reunion\***

Aldbourne, Wiltshire

Details to be confirmed nearer to the event.

### **26 October 2024 - Oxfordshire FHS Family History Fair\***

10am - 4pm, Cherwell School North Site on Marston Ferry Road, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX2 7EE

Free

Find out more at: <https://www.ofhs.uk/events/event/ofhs-family-history-fair-saturday-october-26th-2024>

\* Berkshire Family History Society volunteers will be present to help with your enquiries

# Events organised from The Centre for Heritage and Family History

## June 2024 - September 2024

Our events programme includes face-to-face events in The Centre for Heritage and Family History and online events using Zoom. As part of our multi-channelled approach, we continue to run two series of social history talks each quarter, one face-to-face and one online, each consisting of one talk per month.

All events are advertised on the Society's website; please do check it regularly as occasionally changes occur, and new events are regularly added. For more information see: [berksfhs.org](http://berksfhs.org)

<b>Family History Advice Sessions – FREE</b>	
Our popular online family history advice sessions continue. These sessions are 1-1, free of cost and are available to members and non-members alike. Pre-booking required.	
<b>Jun</b> Mon 17th <b>Jul</b> Mon 15th <b>Aug</b> Mon 19th <b>Sep</b> Mon 16th 2 - 4pm ONLINE	<b>1-1 Family History Advice Session:</b> with our Research Assistants  Are you just getting started in family history and wanting guidance as to how to proceed? Or are you stuck at a particular “brick wall” and need some help? We will provide whatever help and suggestions we can within your booked slot and will book a follow-on session with you, if needed. Four 25 minute 1-1 slots are available in each session.
<b>Jun</b> Mon 3rd <b>Jul</b> Mon 1st <b>Aug</b> Mon 5th <b>Sep</b> Mon 2nd 11am - 12 noon The Centre for Heritage & Family	<b>Family History Advice Clinic:</b> with Vanessa Chappell  Just beginning your family history research and need some advice? Baffled by so many competing research websites? Banging your head against a brick wall? Or struggling with some other issues?  In these pre-booked one-to-one sessions, each lasting an hour, one of our seasoned advisors will try to help you make some progress.

<b>DNA &amp; Family History – Online      TICKETS £5 (members £4)</b>	
Places are limited, pre-booking is required	
<b>Jul</b> Sat 13th 2.30 - 4.30pm ONLINE  <b>ONLINE</b>	<b>DNA Special Interest Group</b> Facilitator: Debbie Kennett  This special interest discussion group is aimed at those wanting to get the most out of their own personal DNA results. It is facilitated by international DNA expert, Debbie Kennett. Sessions are held quarterly, but there is no obligation to attend on a regular basis and first-time attendees are always welcomed.

<b>Workshops</b>	
See website for full details. Places are limited, pre-booking is required.	
<p><b>July Thu 18th</b> 7 - 9.30pm</p> <p>FREE Members Only</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p><b>Creating an enduring family tree in YourTrees</b> Tutor: Paul Barrett</p> <p>Ever wished that your great grandparents had kept a family history? How many of our great grandchildren might feel the same about us in the future. How durable and easily interpreted is your current family archive? Will it stand the test of time, or ultimately end up in a cardboard box in the attic? This workshop has been developed to help you create a comprehensive enduring family tree, which is relevant to the digital generations, so that you can store a copy on YourTrees. It is aimed that those who have already saved versions of their tree(s) on YourTrees and those that are thinking of doing so, or wondering whether they should.</p>
<p><b>July Sat 20th</b> 11am - 1pm</p> <p>TICKETS £10 (members £9)</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p><b>World War Two RAF Records for Family Historians</b> Tutor: Dr Richard Marks</p> <p>In this workshop, we will decipher some of the terminology used by the RAF which commonly crops up in both official and personal documents. We will look at how the RAF recruited and trained its men and women during the war and what roles people undertook. We will look at how the air force was structured and how this can help the family historian identify what their relative did while enlisted. Also, the aircraft they may have encountered and prisoners of war. We will finally discuss what sort of records are available and where they might be found, as well as how to interpret them.</p>
<p><b>July Mon 22nd</b> 7 - 9pm</p> <p>TICKETS FREE</p> <p>Online</p>	<p><b>Getting the most out of your Membership</b> Facilitators: Vanessa Chappell and Catherine Sampson</p> <p>Are you a relatively new member of the Society? Want to get the most out of your membership? This informal workshop will introduce you to the range of benefits that you have available to you. It will include accessing the Society's transcriptions, the mechanisms to enable you to collaborate and share your research with others, ways to obtain help in breaking down brick walls, and the various discounts and savings available for members. Q&amp;A welcomed.</p>
<p><b>Sep Thu 19th</b> 7 - 9.30pm</p> <p>TICKETS £10 (members £9)</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p><b>Munition Workers in WW1</b> Tutor: Dr Richard Marks</p> <p>The First World War was the first global conflict fought by industrialised nations. Each side was dependent upon a ready supply of munitions. Who were the people who worked in these factories and what did they do to support the men at the front? In this workshop, we will look at where the munitions factories were and what people who worked in them did. We will consider working conditions and experiences, and what records may be available and where to find them.</p>

<b>Research Zone Tour</b>	
Places are limited, pre-booking is required.	
<p><b>Jun Mon 24th &amp; Aug Mon 19th</b> 11am - 1pm</p> <p>FREE</p> <p>The Centre for Heritage &amp; Family</p>	<p>Yet to visit The Centre for Heritage and Family History and would like to know what's available there and how it can help your family history research? This tour will introduce you to the facilities of the Centre and also those within the adjoining Local Studies Library.</p> <p>The Research Zone is open to 3pm, so why not stay on and do some research as well, if you have time.</p>



<b>Guided Walks and Tours</b>	
Please see the website for full details. Places are limited, pre-booking is required.	
<b>Jun</b> Fri 7th 2 - 3pm  TICKETS £5 (members £4)	<b>Historic Caversham Walk</b> Guides: Megan Aldrich & Helen Lambert  This historical walk around Caversham will encompass much of central Caversham and will end at St Peter's Church and graveyard, from where you could walk through to Caversham Court Gardens for tea and cake at the kiosk. It is led by an architectural historian and the long-time chairman of the Caversham and District Residents Association.
<b>July</b> Tue 16th 10.30am - 12pm  TICKETS £5 (members £4)	<b>Tour of Historical Wokingham</b> Guide: Peter Must  Join Peter Must, Chairman of the Wokingham Society, on this look around the market town of Wokingham. Find out about the history of the town and see some of its older buildings. Learn of past businesses and notable people. The walk will take 1 1/2 hours and will be on made-up pathways.
<b>Aug</b> Tue 6th 2 - 3.30pm  TICKETS £5 (members £4)	<b>Tour of Historical Goring</b> Guides: The Goring Gap History Society  Join the Goring Gap History Society for a tour of their village, located by an ancient crossing of the River Thames and Great Western Railway line. It is at the intersection of The Ridgeway, Icknield Way and Thames Path. Learn about the people and businesses that thrived there in the past, distant and not so distant.
<b>Sep</b> Sat 21st 11.30am - 1.15pm  TICKETS £10 (members £9)	<b>Tour of St Mary's Church, Purley on Thames followed by cream tea</b> Guide: Catherine Sampson  St Mary's Church dates to the Norman period although it is believed to be built on the site of its Saxon forerunner. Its architecture and features reflect not just the Norman period, but also its subsequent remodelling and extensions. For over a hundred years, this was an emparked church, accessible only via a private track. Its monuments have connections not just to some of Purley's leading families, but those in Berkshire, and to local and international events. We will finish with a cream tea.
<b>Sep</b> Fri 27th 11am - 1pm  TICKETS £5 (members £4)	<b>The Conqueror, Cromwell and Agatha Christie: Historical Wallingford Walk</b> Guide: Malcolm Gray  Wallingford is a town with a rich history that includes the Saxons, the Normans, the English Civil War and Agatha Christie. Join us on a walking tour of the centre of Wallingford taking in some of the significant people, places and events.

<b>Natter Group - Online - Free</b>	
<b>Jun</b> 4th <b>July</b> 2nd <b>Aug</b> 6th <b>Sep</b> 3rd	Informal discussion group facilitated by Chad Hanna and Gillian Stevens. Topics are chosen by the group on a monthly basis. Free to attend, members only.  Pre-booking is required. Tuesdays 6.45 for 7pm – end time varies.

<b>Industry &amp; Archaeology Talks Series with tea and cake afterwards</b>	
<p><b>Face-to-Face</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>TICKETS £5 (members £4)</b></span></p> <p>Pre-booking is recommended as numbers are limited. However, tickets can be bought at the door, space permitting. These talks are in The Centre for Heritage and Family History on the 2nd floor of Reading Central Library. Book all three talks in the Industry &amp; Archaeology series for £12.50 (members £10).</p>	
<p><b>Jun Thu 13th</b> 2 - 3.30pm</p> <p>Final talk in the <b>Houses and Estates Series</b></p>	<p><b>Caversham Park - 930 Years at the Centre of History:</b> with Dr Stephen Goss</p> <p>This talk reveals how an estate on the north bank of the Thames was a surprising tour de force in global events from the Norman Conquest to the threat of Soviet annihilation. The Manor of Caversham was embroiled in the Reformation, owned by cousins of Elizabeth I, entertained the first two Stuart Kings, and then became a prison for Charles I. Discover its role in the Glorious Revolution, the War of Spanish Succession, and its connections to the American War of Independence. The estate became a refuge in the First World War, and was taken over by the BBC during the Second.</p>
<p><b>Jul Thu 11th</b> 2 - 3.30pm</p> <p>1st talk in the <b>Industry &amp; Archaeology Series</b></p>	<p><b>Industrial Archaeology in Berkshire:</b> with Jo Alexander-Jones</p> <p>As the secretary of the Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group (BIAG), Jo Alexander-Jones, often gets asked ‘so what is Industrial Archaeology’. In this light-hearted talk she will explain how the field developed with examples across the globe. Then, she will look at projects that BIAG have undertaken in Berkshire to show how the members do to find, record and share their love of our industrial heritage. Examples are the Greys Court horse wheel, Hedges foundry in Bucklebury and roadside pumps on the A4.</p>
<p><b>Aug Thu 8th</b> 2 - 3.30pm</p> <p>2nd talk in the <b>Industry &amp; Archaeology Series</b></p>	<p><b>The Watlington Hoard:</b> with James Mather</p> <p>Now in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, the Watlington hoard was discovered on private land in Watlington, Oxfordshire, by metal-detectorist James Mather in 2015. Comprising about 200 coins (some of them fragmentary), 7 items of jewellery and 15 ingots (bars of silver), the find is not particularly large, but it is hugely significant. James will tell the story of how he discovered the hoard and the events surrounding its discovery and why the hoard turned out to be so significant.</p>
<p><b>Sep Thu 12th</b> 2 - 3.30pm</p> <p>Final talk in the <b>Industry &amp; Archaeology Series</b></p>	<p><b>More than Biscuits, Beer and Bulbs – Reading’s Other Industries:</b> with Jo Alexander Jones</p> <p>While Reading is rightly renowned for its baking, brewing and seed businesses, the town had many lesser-known industries that brought with them prosperity and just as importantly jobs, for the wider population. In a time when most companies were privately owned, we will explore a number of these companies and the people who owned them covering industries such as printing, ironworking and brickmaking; names like Cox and Wyman, Katesgrove Foundry and Poulton’s Waterloo Kiln Brickworks.</p>

<b>Potpourri Social History Talks</b>	
<b>Online</b>	<b>TICKETS £5 (members £4)</b>
Pre-booking required. This quarter, our Potpourri talks series is back to our standard format of three online social history talks. All series tickets can be purchased for the discounted price of £12.50 (members £10). Alternatively you can book individual talks for the price of £5 (members £4).	
<b>July Thu 25th</b> 2 - 3.15pm  1st talk in the summer <b>Potpourri Series</b>	<b>Tilehurst's Big Houses: Dellwood, The Laurels &amp; Kentwood:</b> with Katie Amos  This was such a popular talk when we held it face-to-face in April, that we are repeating it on Zoom to allow more people to hear it. Katie Amos, Local Studies Lead for Reading Library, will be taking a look at three properties - Dellwood, an ex-maternity and care home, The Laurels, now the infant department of Park Lane School, and Kentwood Farmhouse, now flats. Each used to be a private house. Katie will reveal the tragedies, scandals and stories behind each one.
<b>Aug Thu 22nd</b> 2 - 3.15pm  2nd talk in the summer <b>Potpourri Series</b>	<b>Bells and Bricks (two Wokingham Industries):</b> with John Harrison  Church bells were cast in Wokingham between the mid 1300s and the early 1600s. The foundry is long gone but some of the bells cast there are still in use and the bellfounding methods used today can be traced back to the way mediaeval founders worked. Brick making thrived in Wokingham during the 19th and early 20th centuries, with some works producing millions of bricks per year. The brickworks too are long gone but they left their mark. This talk describes these traditional local industries and how they changed over time, together with an overview of how their products were used.
<b>Sep Thu 26th</b> 2 - 3.15pm  Final talk in the summer <b>Potpourri Series</b>	<b>The History of Purley's River Estate:</b> with Catherine Sampson  The largest inter-war plotland site in Berkshire, Purley's River Estate has a significant history. It began life in 1935 as a holiday destination for camping and caravanning in usually idyllic former parkland by the Thames. However, very soon many of the plots gained more permanent accommodation, particularly after war broke out in 1939. Entrepreneurship thrived, resulting in a multitude of private businesses and shops over the years, as did a strong community spirit. This talk is accompanied by lots of images of the estate and its people, including its famous adapted dwellings such as railway carriages and buses.
<b>Jun Thu 27th</b> 2 - 3.15pm  <b>D-Day special F2F event</b> - talk with fish and chips lunch  £12 (members £11) includes lunch	<b>D-Day:</b> with Mike Cooper  Our D-Day event begins with a fish and chips lunch and then rounds off our season of talks marking the 80th Anniversary of D-Day, with a talk by Mike Cooper on the main events of D-Day itself. "D-Day" wasn't a single event, but many. Mike will look at the context for the landings, the planning and assumptions behind the actions of both sides, and at each of the landing beaches from the US landings on "Utah" beach to the west, to "Sword" in the East. This can't be a detailed study, but for anyone with a general interest, or with a relative involved in this enormous, complex operation, it'll be an introduction and overview to help you understand the nature and significance of what happened.

# Highlight on ....

**Kintbury** (with Avington) is an ecclesiastical and civil parish in West Berkshire, between Newbury and Hungerford. It is crossed by the river Kennet, the Kennet and Avon Canal, the railway line to Exeter and Penzance, and the A4 (Bath Road). The parish lies within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The main settlement of the village lies a mile or so south of the Bath Road, and the main street, called Station Road (and pictured below around 1905) runs northwards from the river.



Before the creation of civil parishes Kintbury comprised the parish proper and two detached portions, Anvilles (now in Inkpen parish) and Denford (now part of Hungerford ecclesiastical parish). Avington (formerly a separate parish) was taken into Kintbury civil parish in 1934.

Lying in the hundred of Kintbury Eagle, it was in the Poor Law union and Registration District of Hungerford until that district itself was subsumed into the Newbury district. It is presently in the West Berkshire local authority.

Other place names within the parish are Clapton, Elcot, Wallington, Wawcott (Walcot) and Wormestall, Templeton, Titcombe, Inglewood, and Winding Wood.

Adjoining parishes in 1851 were Avington, East Shefford, Hamstead Marshall, Hungerford, Inkpen, Welford, West (now Great) Shefford and West Woodhay.

In 1851 Kintbury parish had a population of 1,887 which had increased to 2,534 by 2011. Prior to amalgamation into Kintbury parish in 1934, Avington had a population of 77.

The Domesday Book of 1086 records Avington as Avintone and a pipe roll from 1167 records it as Avintona. For the censuses 1841-91 Avington was a place in its own right.

## Parochial organisation and churches

Today the vicarage of Kintbury (including Avington, but no longer including Denford) is joined with the united benefice of Enborne, Hamstead Marshall, Inkpen, Combe and West Woodhay under one rector. This Walbury Beacon benefice lies within the deanery of Newbury and the archdeaconry of Berkshire, which transferred from Salisbury diocese to that of Oxford in 1836.

St Mary's Church (pictured below), in the centre of Kintbury village, was heavily restored in 1859, obliterating most of its ancient features, some of which were Norman. It has a churchyard.



In St Mary's churchyard you can find the gravestone to William Winterborne (right). He was executed at Reading Gaol for his part in the Swing Riots of 1830.

Christ Church was built in 1867 at Kintbury Crossways, on the Inkpen Road, as a chapel of ease to the parish church. It was demolished in the mid-twentieth century, but its churchyard survives and is still used.



Avington's church of St Mark and St Luke (pictured opposite) is very small, ancient and almost wholly unspoiled. Built in the 11th century it only consists of a nave, chancel and late 19th century transept. It is still used for services, but only rarely. To visit, enquire at the nearby cottages for a key. The parish registers for St Mark & St Luke before 1725 were destroyed in a fire.

Denford's Church of the Holy Trinity was built as a private chapel in the grounds of Denford Park in 1832. The township was formed into an ecclesiastical parish in 1833, often served from Hungerford, which was nearer than Kintbury, and to which Denford later was joined. The Denford chapel was demolished in the 1950s.



*Avington St Mark & St Luke by Michael Ford CC BY-SA 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons*

### Other churches

Kintbury's Primitive Methodist chapel belonged to the Hungerford Circuit. The chapel baptisms 1810-54 are filed at TNA.

The Wesleyan Chapel belonged to the Newbury Circuit and the chapel baptisms 1838-1969 are filed with records of the Newbury Circuit.

### Local history

In the sixteenth century Kintbury outclassed its neighbour Hungerford in commercial significance. The parish and its outlying townships used to have several mills, and the village was once a centre of the silk industry. The village also prospered from its position on first, the Kennet and Avon Canal and later, the Great Western Railway.

Kintbury today has several pubs (such as the Dundas Arms, the Blue Ball and the Halfway Inn, a late-eighteenth-century toll house on the Bath Road), a few shops, a surgery and a school. There are two village halls: the Coronation Hall and the Jubilee Centre, both in Inkpen Road.

### Schools

The Parliamentary survey of 1833 found a daily school (founded 1831) in Kintbury, the forerunner of today's St Mary's Primary School.

There were also two fee-paying boarding schools, and both Anglican and Wesleyan Methodist Sunday schools.

Later in the nineteenth century another (possibly National) school was set up near Christ Church, but this closed some decades ago, becoming first a restaurant, and now a private house.

### Houses

The large houses of the parish are:

Barton Court: built 1772, Gothic, still privately occupied;

Wallingtons: early seventeenth-century, now a Roman Catholic retreat centre called St Cassian's;

Elcot Park: now a hotel;

Inglewood: a one-time training centre for the lay Catholic order of the De La Salle Brothers, later a health hydro, now converted into flats for the elderly;

Denford Park: home to the Norland College 1967-2003, now redeveloped.

### Families

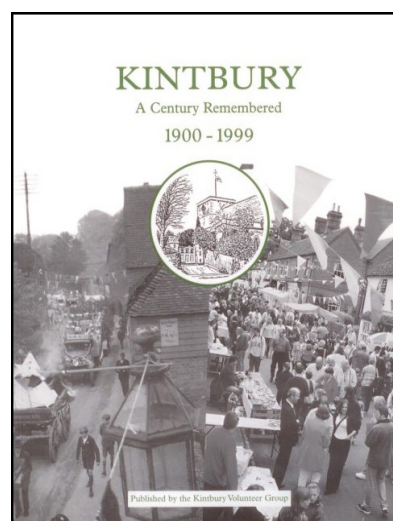
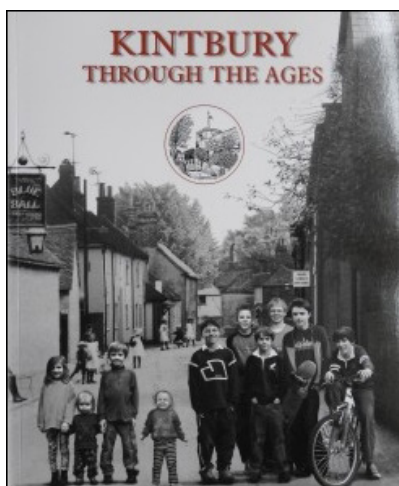
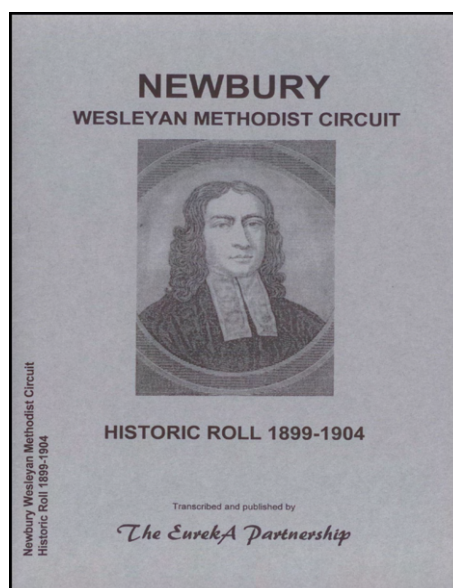
Prominent Kintbury families included the names of Bacon, Cherry, Dundas, Dunn and Walmesley.

Parish	Church or place	Cross ref	Berks FHS Berkshire Baptisms CD (available from shop)	Berks FHS Berkshire Marriages CD (available from shop)	Berks FHS Berkshire Burials CD (available from shop)	Parish CD	Data Download (available from shop)	Berkshire Maps CD	Monumental Inscriptions CD	Godfrey maps	Berkshire Probate CD	Berkshire Overseers papers CD entries	Eureka publication (available from shop)	Additional Notes
Avington	SS Mark & Luke		1726-1965	1699-1971; bns 1756-1812	1700-1994		Burials 1700-1994 Monumental Inscriptions 1835-1999	Yes	Mi's vol 3		Yes	Yes		Registers survive from 1725 and are deposited at the Berkshire Record Office. BTs pre-date these registers and survive from 1699. These are held at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre. Avington hamlet is now part of the parish of Kintbury and the church is privately owned.
Kintbury	Christchurch		see Kintbury St Mary for Baptisms 1873-1952	see Kintbury St Mary for marriages 1837-1892, banns 1900-1932	see Kintbury St Mary for burials 1857-1884	in Kintbury St Mary Parish CD		Yes			Yes	Yes		Baptisms 1873-1952, marriages 1837-1892, banns 1900-1932, and burials 1857-1884, are entered in Kintbury St Mary parish registers. As at August 2019, one marriage register covering the period 1892-1945 had been deposited at the Berkshire Record Office.
Kintbury	Primitive Methodist		no registers	no registers	no registers			Yes						See Hungerford Primitive Methodist circuit.
Kintbury	St Mary		1558-1953	1557-1981; bns 1754-1932	1558-1972	Parish CD	Burials 1558-1799 & 1800-1972	Yes			Yes	Yes		Registers begin in 1558 and are deposited at the Berkshire Record Office. St Mary's registers of baptisms 1873-1952, marriages 1837-1892, banns 1900-1932, and burials 1857-1884 include entries from Kintbury Christchurch.
Kintbury	Wesleyan Methodist		no registers	no registers	no registers			Yes						See also Newbury Wesleyan Methodist circuit.

*Kintbury and Avington information that is on our CDs*

Our shop stocks the following items relating to Kintbury with Avington

- Berkshire Baptisms 4 CD (contains nearly 13,000 baptism entries for Avington St Mark & St Luke and Kintbury St Mary, and over 40,000 names)
- Berkshire Marriages 5 CD (contains over 4,000 entries for Avington St Mark & St Luke and Kintbury St Mary including Banns)
- Berkshire Burials 13 CD (contains Avington St Mark & St Luke 1770-1725 and 1727-1994 and Kintbury St Mary 1558-1972)
- Kintbury St Mary Parish registers CD
- Kintbury St Mary Burials Part 1 of 2 data download
- Kintbury St Mary Burials Part 2 of 2 data download
- Kintbury St Mary Baptisms 1558-1799 data download
- Kintbury St Mary Baptisms 1800-1920 data download
- Kintbury St Mary Banns 1754-1932 data download
- Kintbury St Mary's Marriages 1557-1935 data download
- Denford Holy Trinity Burials 1848-1853 data download
- Denford Holy Trinity Baptisms 1832-1920 data download
- Kintbury a century remembered 1900-1999 (Kintbury Volunteer Group, nd)
- Kintbury through the ages (Kintbury Volunteer Group, nd)
- Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Historic Roll 1899-1904 (Eureka Publications)



# A Family Scandal and a Book That Had to be Written

**Barbara Cole** *tells us of the origin of her book*

“Why don’t you try writing a novel weaving fact with fiction?”

The year before I had completed a course with Exeter University on researching and writing family history and had just written the first of four unpublished books on my children’s ancestry when my daughter laid down that challenge. She holds an MA in English Literature, so to say I was feeling slightly daunted at the prospect is an under-statement. I’d always enjoyed writing though, so I told myself that perhaps one day, if the right idea should present itself, I might have a stab at it.

In the meantime my interest in family history was all-consuming, with the aim to leave an ancestral legacy for my children and grandchildren; to know who came before them. Who were they and what were their lives like?

As we all know from experience, when embarking on the journey to discover our ancestors we must prepare for surprises – both pleasant and sometimes, not so pleasant. Skeletons that our ancestors thought were locked securely away in closets – illegitimacy, brushes with the law, even imprisonment – can now tumble out of them, thanks to technology that those living even a half-century ago could ever dream would become a normal part of their descendants’ everyday lives. Long-held secrets are now common knowledge at the click of a mouse.

So when I began to investigate a branch of my late father-in-law’s family tree, I was expecting it to be fairly straightforward. After all, he was born and bred in Islington, North London – a ‘Barnsbury boy’ – as were his parents and I assumed their roots were firmly planted there, so I wasn’t anticipating anything of any particular note.

How wrong could I be? The first unexpected discovery was that his father was born to a single mother, father unknown. Nothing unusual really; I’d found similar instances in branches of my own family tree, as I’m sure a lot of us have at some point. It was when I researched this paternal grandmother – a kitchen maid when she gave birth – that a whole Pandora’s Box opened up.

To my surprise, Alice Titcombe, the grandmother, was not a Londoner; although she was born in Wales, her parents actually came from a village in Berkshire. That village was Watchfield.

From there, it was quite a simple matter to fill in the generations stretching back from Alice; both sides of her family had lived in and around the Vale of the White Horse for as far back as I could trace. At that point they were just names on a tree; I hadn’t done any particular in-depth research into their lives. Then, at the end of a weekend my husband and I had spent in Oxford visiting the splendours of Blenheim Palace, we decided to return home via Watchfield. It wasn’t too far out of our way and we could then see the place where the Titcombe family came from.

After strolling around this pretty village with its stone and thatch cottages, we made our way on to Shrivenham, passing the old Beckett Estate (now the M.O.D. Defence Academy), where we stopped for a while. My husband went into the Post Office and came out with a booklet on the local area written by the local history society. We just sat for a while, flicking through the book, when two names jumped out at me. Those names were John Carter and Rhoda Titcombe.

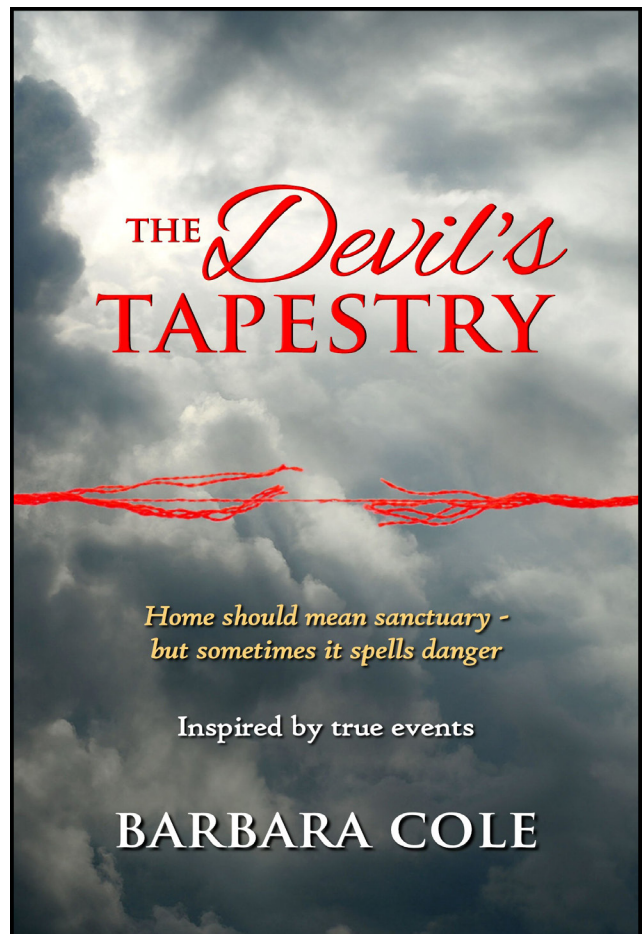
Until then I hadn’t taken much notice of them; they were just a husband and wife on that branch of my father-in-law’s family tree. I had concentrated more on his direct ancestors and these two were just cousins, albeit through a tangled web of family ties. John’s aunt had married Rhoda’s uncle, so that made them cousins-in-law. To confuse matters further, Alice’s mother was the younger sister of Rhoda’s mother, whilst Alice’s father was Rhoda’s father’s nephew; so two sisters married into the same family – the elder to the uncle and the younger to his nephew. That made Alice’s father first cousin to both John and Rhoda. As if this wasn’t mind-boggling enough, the reason why John Carter and Rhoda Titcombe were mentioned in this book just blew my mind.

It seems John Carter had an unfortunate reputation. Born into a Methodist family, whereby his paternal grandfather was a Methodist

preacher, he seems to have been somewhat of a 'black sheep'. Rhoda was his third wife and reports of his appearances in front of magistrates for 'treating his wife badly' must have preceded him when he returned to live in Watchfield after his much younger second wife ran away. His first wife tragically died after falling down some stairs whilst heavily pregnant. Despite the warnings that must have been directed at Rhoda about him, she nonetheless ignored them and they married. But leopards never change their spots, as she very quickly found out.

The events that surrounded John and Rhoda, and what led up to them, struck me as the basis for that challenge my daughter set me. I knew that here are the bones of a story that I could add flesh to, creating some fictional characters and events to blend with the real to make an epic story of it all – a truly shocking story that is sadly still all too familiar.

And this is it - the book I have written about it all. 'The Devil's Tapestry' – which stretches from John's grandfather in Wellington's army in 1814 up to John's sons and grandson in the trenches of World War 1. Their names have been changed and because of the abuse John's wives suffered, I will be donating 20% of my royalties to Women's Aid UK, through the Work for Good fundraising platform. It's available now to buy at bookstores and on Amazon, in paperback and e-book formats. It's a local story which will also support a worthwhile charity.



## What Can You Find on Our Website?

Have you taken time to look around our website? If you do, you will find numerous guides, videos and data sets to help you with your research. There are two ways to access our Resources sections, either by scrolling down the homepage or by clicking on the Resources tab on the homepage. You will find information split into two areas - public and member. What follows is what you see when you click the Resources tab.

### Public resources

These include [Member Articles](#) from past *Berkshire Family Historian's* which are made publicly available one year after publication. [Berkipedia](#) can also be found here. This resource was the basis for our recent 'Around Berkshire' series of articles. There are three subsections to Berkipedia - Places; Unions; and, Churches, cemeteries and more all individually visible when access via scrolling down the home page).

All contain a wealth of information, and the last section will tell you what information we hold for Churches, cemeteries, Workhouses, etc.

Research Guides (called Research Wizard when accessing via scrolling down on the home page) will give you many helpful tips in articles under the following headings:

- How to get started - guides from experienced Berkshire Family Historians about how to start your research;
- About historic Berkshire - an introduction to the Royal County dating from the 7th Century and home to the iconic Windsor Castle;
- Our CDs - Baptisms, Marriages, Burials, Monumental Inscriptions - millions of searchable records;
- Newspapers - a rich source of detail for local



and family historians. Includes a list of all Berkshire newspapers and their years of publication;

- Public archives - Record and register offices, Libraries and Museums;
- Remembrance - Monumental Inscriptions - photos of the County War Memorials;
- Microfiche - over 5000 fiches containing 786 datasets from all over the UK. You will find the catalogue of what microfiche we hold. These cover everything from Monumental Inscriptions, Crew Lists, Criminal Register Indexes, Parish Registers, Overseers Records, Poll Books, Militia Muster Lists to Poor Law Papers. ;
- GENUKI - a virtual reference library of genealogical information of particular relevance to 'Historic' Berkshire;
- Berkshire and the First World War - indexes to the pictorial records of people, locations, military units and civilian organisations;
- Hospitals and institutions - brief histories of Fairmile and Broadmoor Hospitals;
- Useful websites - a collection of websites that you will find useful for family history research. Includes local history groups, local studies centres, gravestone recording sites, family history societies, subscription data websites, BMD, census records amongst many listed.

Berkshire Names Index - here you can check to see if a name you are interested in is on one of our county wide CDs or parish CDs or data downloads. You can search by full name or surname only for baptisms, banns, marriages or burials. Quick links to where you can purchase our CDs or data downloads can be found on this page.

Video Hub (called Pay-to-view Videos when accessing via scrolling down on the home page) - we have pay per view courses, workshops and talks available here. If there were supplementary materials provided for the sessions, these too will be included in the price.

These include: Getting the most out of the maps website; Understanding old handwriting; and, Five generations at Fairmile Hospital. More are added regularly.

### **Member resources**

This section contains information only available to current Society members.

Talks & Tours - Videos (called Pay-to-view Videos when accessing via scrolling down on the home page) - There are many videos here from branch meetings on topics as varied as researching displaced people, trades and occupational sources, 1921 census, organising your work, computer, desk and yourself, to name a few, to cemetery and church tours. Take a look you never know what you will find!

YourTrees - Self help guides to preparing your tree for uploading and how to upload it. There are also some featured family trees available to view.

Berkshire Data - Here you will find information about Berkshire available exclusively to members. Includes Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Reading Lodge; East Hendred Churchwardens' Presentments; Feet of Fines for Berkshire; Hungerford National School; Men Joining Reading Borough Police Force 1865-1903; Railway Plans and People; Reading's Voter's List 1790; Shaw-cum-Donnington War Memorial; Sample Data from CDs in the Shop; Snares Reading Directory 1842; and, Reading Mercury and Oxford Gazette.

Berkshire Poll Books & Electoral Registers - PDFs of Poll Books for 1727, 1768, 1796, 1812 and 1818 and an Electoral Register from 1832 are available to view here. These have also been published by the Society on CD.

Irish Family History Sources - A brief history of Ireland, its geography and land organisation, family history records. There are links to a wealth of websites for Irish research.

In Touch email newsletter archive - Access to over 100 editions of our bi-weekly newsletter dating back to our first edition in December 2019. These contain information about national family history developments, websites and local historical news.

Berkshire Family Historian archive - Find every issue of the *Berkshire Family Historian* dating back to 1975 when the Society began. This is a fabulous resource with personal stories, hints and tips, and Society developments.

Other Societies Journals - Journals from 60 family history societies from around the globe. More are added regularly.

This is just a round-up of what is available in one part of our website. There are more to explore, so why not relax for an hour or two and see what you can discover. Pages 33-35 contain more information about the website.



# News from the Royal Berkshire Archives

*Ivone Turnbull, Senior Archivist at the Royal Berkshire Archives*

We have been working with Bracknell Forest Council's library team on an exhibition to celebrate 75 years of the new town of Bracknell as its anniversary is on 22 June 2024. The exhibition will be at Bracknell Library from 23 May 2024 to 4 July 2024. Please see the Bracknell Library website for details.

We thought we would take a look back at the past year (to April 2023) to give an idea of what we got up to as it's not just dealing with customers. But let's start there. Our stats show that we had 1,121 visitors up to the end of January 2024, the majority of whom came from Reading; we also dealt with 3,959 enquiries – 878 by telephone and 3,081 written. We made 1,223 printouts, 500 photocopies and 340 digital photographs; and we produced 5,937 items from the strongrooms to be viewed. We took in 135 new accessions; catalogued 180 collections and carried out 1822 aspects of preservation and conservation.

We also provided numerous talks and visits; had 38,893 visits to our website; 11,365 visits to

our online catalogue and the National Archives' Discovery catalogue. We uploaded 14 new videos to our YouTube channel – most of which tied in with our 75th anniversary exhibition. We also posted 799 posts across our three social media platforms of X, Facebook and Instagram. So, it has been a busy year behind the scenes!

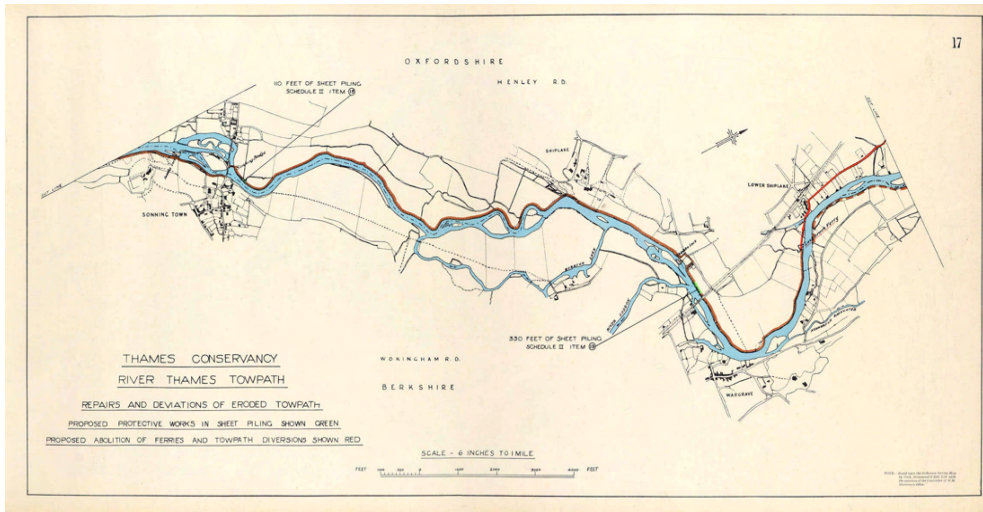
If you are curious to find out more about our exhibition celebrating 75 years of service, you can view it online for free. Entitled "Our Favourites", the exhibition looks at favourite items of staff, researchers and volunteers drawn from the RBA collections. Why not grab a beverage of your choice, sit back and enjoy discovering more about the archives.

Remember that you can receive a regular e-bulletin containing all our latest blogs by simply subscribing to our mailing list. You can also view our website and social media feeds on X, Facebook and Instagram for all the latest information and watch videos on our YouTube channel.

## **So what's New to View at the RBA?**

Readers may be interested to know of recently catalogued family papers such as those of Frederick Povey (1847-1923) of Newbury and his family (D/EX2471); deeds and papers of the Banister family of Finchampstead, 1499-1895 (D/EX687); papers relating to the Cottrell or Cotterell





*River Thames Towpath RBA reference D-TC-C4-2-31 ed, copyright Royal Berkshire Archives, reproduced with their kind permission*

family of Reading, 1790-1815 (D/EX2935); and papers of Sara Popham Hawkes (née Hosford) (1858-1934) and her daughter Isma Hartland Mahon (1886-1972), 1920-1936, which provide an insight into women's lives in the inter-war period (D/EX1651).

For those interested in welfare, there are the records of the Berks and Bucks Joint Sanatorium Committee, 1919-1948 (J/SC) which ran the Peppard (also known as Maitland) Sanatorium for tuberculosis patients in Rotherfield Peppard, Oxfordshire; additional records of Reading Dispensary Trust, 1931-2012, (D/QRD); as well as the Newbury Municipal Charities, 13th century to 1909 (N/Q) relating to the property of St Bartholomew's Hospital.

Various plans are now available including a book of plans of the towpath from Cricklade to Teddington, 1947, (ref. D/TC/C4/2/31) added to the Thames Conservancy archive (D/TC); a plan of Upper House Farm (now Hillfields Farm) in Basildon, dated 1733 (D/EZ218) which we were able to purchase thanks to a grant from the Friends of the National Libraries; and printed maps, prints and postcards relating to Reading and surrounding area, c.1720-2006 (D/EX2956).

We have also catalogued many plans relating to schools such as the records of Green Project Research Consultants of Spencers Wood, 1900-2007, of landscaping work at Berkshire schools, (D/EX2698); plans of alterations of primary schools in the 1950s (D/EX2794); and plans for Shaw House School, Newbury, 1976-1978, and Trinity School, Newbury, 1999 (D/EX2712). A plan produced for Berkshire County Council's Education Committee in 1906 shows the sites of many schools as well as proposed sites for new schools (D/EX1023).

Now available are the records of The Hon Mrs Cadogan's Educational Foundation (formerly Reading School of Industry), 1896-1995 (D/QX32); school magazines of Alfred Sutton Secondary School, Reading, 1962-1964 and 1966 (D/EX2938); managers' minutes for Wraysbury School, 1915-1923 (D/EX2877); photographs and printed miscellanea relating to St Frideswide's Girls' School, Didcot, 1970-1974 (D/EX2914); and photographs of pupils at North Moreton School, c.1900s and 1920s (D/EX2555), Newbury County Girls Grammar School, 1967 (D/EX2948), and Reading Collegiate School, 1932 (D/EX2604).

Other records of potential interest for local history are the sale catalogues of part of the Wytham Estate in Cumnor, 1935 (D/EX2954); Dowles Green Farm, Rushtons Farm and Sawpit Cottage, Wokingham, 1947 (D/EX2873); Bartholomew Manor, Newbury, c.1993 (D/EX2742); sale posters for Cressingham Park and Park Cottages, Reading, 1924 (D/EX2830); and records relating to a house called Delmore, Church Lane, Leckhampstead, 1898-2008 (D/EX2745).

Finally, we have a wages book for labourers and maintenance staff at the Berkshire Lunatic Asylum (later Fair Mile Hospital), 1875-1881, (D/H10).

To keep up to date on what collections we have, please see our online catalogue.



The Royal Berkshire Archives  
9 Coley Avenue  
Reading  
RG1 6AF  
arch@reading.gov.uk

# Book Reviews

## Vicki Chesterman

The two volumes below relate to a couple of parishes in Berkshire [now Oxfordshire]. Both parishes are located on the banks of the Thames.

### **The People of Buckland**

The Eureka Partnership, 2024, 44pp stapled booklet, 210mm x 148mm

Shop: £4.50 / UK: £6.60 / Airmail: £ 11.70

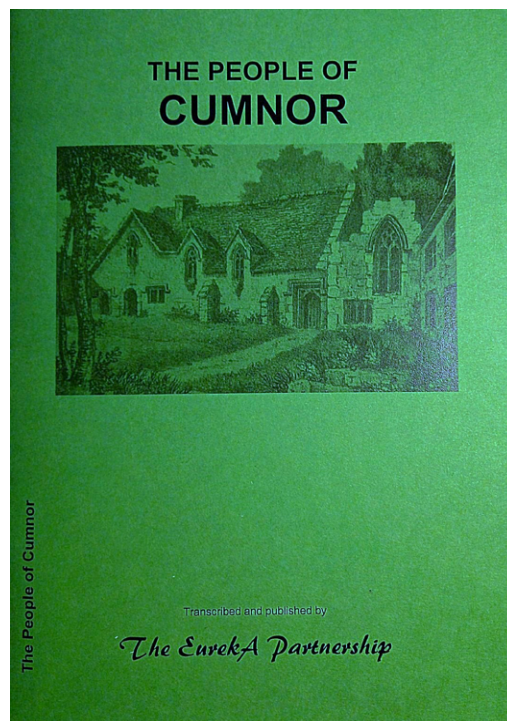
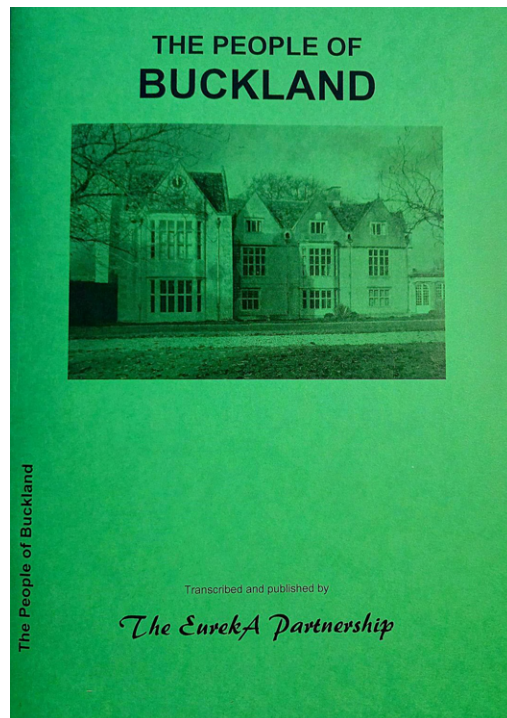
This volume contains a miscellany of records relating to the parish of Buckland which is about four miles east of Faringdon, ten from Abingdon and fourteen from Oxford. Amongst the records included are a Land Tax Assessment for 1716, List of Parish Overseers 1744-1844, Weekly Disbursements to the Poor 1775-7, 1787 and 1796, Poll Book 1796, List of Inhabitants 1799, Poor Rate 1803, Various Marriage Licences 1811-1877, receipts for Child Maintenance, Gamekeeper Deputations 1840-75, Trade Directory 1854, Church Rate 1864 and 1887, Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops Order 1879, List of Jurors 1897 and 1922, and a selection of Newspaper Reports of various dates.

### **The People of Cumnor**

The Eureka Partnership, 2024, 56pp stapled booklet, 210mm x 148mm

Shop: £ 5.50/ UK: £7.60 / Airmail: £12.70

This volume contains a miscellany of records relating to the parish of Cumnor which lies south of Oxford and about five miles north-west of Abingdon. Amongst the records included are a List of Parish Overseers 1633-1684, Churchwardens' Accounts 1693, Churchwardens' Rate 1715 and 1839, Victuallers Recognizances 1765 and 1776, Poll Book 1796, 1812 and 1818, Militia Enrolments 1803, Account for Medical Attendance 1805-6, Miscellaneous Bonds and Orders, Surveyor's Assessment 1808, Notice to Quit 1808, Account of Commons 1808-9, Census Return 1811, Vaccinations 1815, Poor Rate 1818, Gamekeepers' Deputations 1845-1900, Weekly Outdoor relief Lists 1840 and 1860, List of Indoor relief 1841, Parish Surveyors Notes 1843-4, Trade Directory 1854, Marriage Licences 1860-66, Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops Order 1879, Lists of Jurors 1897, Licensed Houses 1903 and a selection of Newspaper Reports of various dates.



As is usual with The Eureka Partnership publications, these booklets are full of names and fully indexed. If you have interests in either parish, these publications are likely to have something to help your research. Names are drawn from all levels of society within the parishes.

# An Update from Projects & Publications

**Catherine Sampson**

As I write this, Berkshire Baptisms Fourth Edition should be finished and in the shop available to purchase. The new edition contains new entries for over 70 parishes, some parishes being new to this edition. It brings the total number of published baptisms to close to 600,00. Thank you to all of our volunteers who have made this possible.

We have had one new volunteer come forward to help with preparing datasets for publication. Is there anyone else who could help so that we can spread the work and get as many of our databases published as possible?

As a background, the Society transcribes parish registers into Excel spreadsheets which are then loaded into mySQL databases from which we produce reports that form the basis of our CDs.

Periodically, we then upload some of this data to Findmypast (FMP). We now have two volunteers who are working on uploading data to FMP, however we are seeking another volunteer, if possible, with mySQL skills to help share the task load as we have a lot of entries we wish to share with them.



The tasks include: reformat the data to match FMP requirements and our previous submissions; filter out events less than 100 years old (baptisms), 85 years old (marriages & banns), 50 years old (burials); filter out events for parishes which have not given permission for online publication; remove addresses from any event less than 100 years old; filter out any records we have previously sent to FMP; add security features so we can prove copyright should our data appear elsewhere; provide reports, such as number of records per parish, and upload batch to FMP as mySQL data export.

Help and guidance is available. If you can help, please contact Tony Wright at [projects@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:projects@berksfhs.org.uk)

## New Product Launch

**Berkshire Baptisms Fourth Edition**

**- COMING SOON**

This CD has transcriptions of over 583,000 baptism records from over 190 parish and non-parochial registers in the pre-1974 County of Berkshire. Dates range from 1538 to 2006 and the entries provide details of over 1,890,000 people. The CD includes three finding aids: Name Index; Name by Date and Officiating Ministers.

A full list of the coverage can be found on the Society's website.

Full price: £20.00, Member price: £18.00

See website for postage rates.



# Around the Branches

Please check the Society's website for up to date details of meetings

## Abingdon Branch

***abingdon@berksfhs.org.uk***

Unfortunately, the planned talk for our January meeting on the life and work of Rosalind Franklin, key figure in the discovery of the structure of DNA, was cancelled at the last minute due to the indisposition of the speaker. Instead, the members had a lively discussion on DNA and their personal experience of its use in their family history research.

On Monday 19th February, the branch held a 'Back to Basics' meeting, with an open discussion/presentation regarding the starting and progressing of family history research. Though primarily for those unfamiliar with family history research and despite a rather disappointing turnout, most members left the meeting having learned something new.

The Abingdon branch had no formal meeting in March; members were, instead, encouraged to look in on the Combined Branches' Meeting on Zoom on 20 March 2024 when Sue Gibbons, late of the Society of Genealogists, gave a comprehensive review of the resources held by SOG for those interested in aspects of Scottish genealogy.

### Meetings ahead:

Branch meetings are generally held monthly, on the third Monday, at Long Furlong Community Centre, Boulter Drive, Abingdon. Doors open at 7.15pm for the meeting to start at 7.30pm.

#### 17th June

**Dads Underground Army** by Bill King

#### 18th July

Outing to **Buscot Park** near Faringdon

#### 16th September

**Anne March Caldwell a Victorian Novelist**  
by JJ Heath-Caldwell

#### 21st October

**Discussion Group**

#### 18th November

**A Stroll through Berkshire's Graveyards** by  
Catherine Sampson

#### Brian Denton



*Join Abingdon Branch members at Buscot Park in July, image: Buscot Park; North Front by Michael Garlick CC 2.0*

## Bracknell & Wokingham Branch

***bracknell@berksfhs.org.uk***

At our January meeting, members told us about the brick walls they are trying to break down and received lots of useful suggestions from the audience.

In February, we enjoyed a talk entitled 'Lost, Stolen Away or Strayed: Missing ancestors and how to find them' given by Sue Ellis. There are transcription errors in censuses and phonetic searches are useful if initial searches fail to trace a family using the surname, as is trying first names linked to birthplace and birthdate. Commercial directories available online can help by using this information to broaden census searches.

Other tips included the following. Family members visiting other members of the family at the time of a census do not appear in their normal residence, similarly many servants were not at their usual address in the June 1921 Census. A suggestion to trace women forced to move away after World War One, is to look at the names of the men listed on the war memorials and then the 1921 Census for that area. Newspapers such as the London Gazette are useful sources, and to find those who have moved abroad, FindMyPast is recommended, with passenger lists available 1890-1960, as is a search of the graves list abroad. A wills and probate Index search can lead to details of death, probate date, family, jobs and effects. If you have a picture of a family member in uniform, their regiment etc. can be traced via <http://www.uniformology.com/>

# Around the Branches

Please check the Society's website for up to date details of meetings

We hold drop-in sessions at Bracknell Library on the second Thursday of the month from 2pm - 5pm and at Wokingham Library on the last Tuesday of the month from 2pm - 4.30pm.

## Meetings ahead:

The June and July meetings are both face-to-face at The New Priestwood Community Centre, Bracknell. Doors open at 2.15pm, and the meeting starts at 2.45pm.

### 21st June

Please check website for details

### 19th July

**Hospitum to Workhouse via the Oracle: Social Care and Welfare in Reading from the Middle Ages to 1900** by Mike Cooper

Sandra Barkwith and Bryan Pledger

## Computer Branch

[computerbranch@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:computerbranch@berksfhs.org.uk)

### Meetings Ahead:

Unless otherwise stated meetings are held online. Zoom opens at 7.15pm for a 7.30pm start.

### 19th June

no Computer branch meeting, instead it will be the Society's AGM

### July or August

No meeting but we may, if the trains behave themselves this year, have an outing to an archive. We would like to have your input as to which archive you may like to visit.

**16th October** - Combined Branches Meeting

**The Earl and the Pharaoh** by Lady Carnarvon

Gillian Stevens

## Newbury Branch

[newbury@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:newbury@berksfhs.org.uk)

Our regular practice post-lockdown is to stick with Zoom meetings in the colder months, and thus it was that we heard from Eilir Daniels on Welsh family history in January, and John Titterton on pinpointing the origin of a surname in February. Both were interesting talks, well

attended. In March, we reconvened at West Berkshire Museum to hear Clive Williams describe his deeply researched book on the Craven family, who at their zenith owned vast tracts of Berkshire as well as property in several other counties.

At the time of writing, we're about to hear a talk on the history of education in Thatcham, followed in May by Dave Stubbs on the history of Thames Valley Police.

This May meeting will also feature our branch annual meeting at which – thankfully – all five current committee members have agreed to stand again.

### Meetings ahead:

**12th June (F2F)**

**That Summer** by Sarah E Roberts

Reminiscence of wartime evacuation to Kintbury

**11th September (F2F)**

**A Nice Quiet Life** by Rob Chicken

An account of his grandfather's service in the merchant navy from 1906 to 1946

**16th October (Zoom) Combined Branches Meeting**

**The Earl and the Pharaoh** by Lady Carnarvon

**13th November (F2F)**

**The Cope Hall Colony** by Carol Brindley

The little-known Cope Hall Colony, a women's organisation set up in 1917 to alleviate social problems heightened by the First World War

**Penny Stokes**

*Elizabeth, Countess of Craven, later Margravine of Anspach, featured in Clive's talk*



# Around the Branches

Please check the Society's website for up to date details of meetings

## Reading Branch

[reading@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:reading@berksfhs.org.uk)

Reading branch has enjoyed a variety of meetings on Zoom since the new year. In January, Sue Paul gave us a Zoom presentation about 'Henry Smith: A Most Notorious, Naughty, False, Lying fellow: A Global Black Sheep or Maligned Character'. This was a very interesting talk which covered not only the life of Henry Smith, but also detailed the East India Company and local and national events in India. It gave us hope that leads to our family history stories can be found in the strangest of sources and that the surname Smith is not as intimidating as we thought.

In February, we had a lengthy session with Captain Graham Bandy about 'Getting to Know your Army Ancestors Through Photographs and Memorabilia'. This proved to be a popular presentation. Graham started by explaining about the structure and changes within the British Army through the past centuries. These included uniform changes, which can help identify military ancestors as there were numerous different uniforms which changed through the decades. Next, Graham looked at cap badges where subtle differences can differentiate different regiments and timeframes. After this, Graham spent time giving feedback to everyone who had supplied photographs for identification. Everyone felt that this was a very useful presentation. It was recorded and is available in the members area of the website in 2 parts.

In March, there was a Combined Branches Meeting on Zoom - a report on this can be found elsewhere in this Around the Branches section.

### Meetings ahead:

We offer a mix of in person meetings at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 280 Meadway, Tilehurst, Reading RG30 4PE and online via Zoom. Doors and Zoom open at 7.15pm for a 7.45pm start.

**27th June (F2F)**

**My Eminent Ancestors** by Laurie Page

**26th September (Zoom)**

**Help, My Ancestor Has Vanished** by Simon Fowler

**16th October** - Combined Branches Meeting

**The Earl and the Pharaoh** by Lady Carnarvon

**Vicki Chesterman**

## Windsor, Slough & Maidenhead Branch

[windsor@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:windsor@berksfhs.org.uk)

2024 kicked off with our Branch Secretary Mike Bailey speaking on "The mystery brooch - how family history research helped solve the puzzle"; in January. We even managed to squeeze in a fascinating bonus talk from Christine Wooton about the research she has done on her mother.

February brought Gill Blanchard on "The Poor and the Parish" and we rounded out the quarter with the Combined Branches Meeting in March when Sue Gibbons spoke on "Scottish Sources at the Society of Genealogists".

Coming soon is "Breach of Promise to Marry" by Denise Bates in April, and Dr Judith Hill on "Agricultural unrest and the Swing Riots in Southern England 1830-32" in May. June sees our annual outing with an afternoon visit to the St. George's Chapel Archives at Windsor Castle.

We eagerly anticipate the next quarter of talks by Zoom, with Dr Nicholas Dixon on "Ancestors on the Map: Finding Locations of Family Photographs" in July. There is a summer break in August followed by Phil Isherwood on "Using a Research Methodology for Family History" in September.

Please check out the Berkshire Family History Society website for further details of these meetings and for the WSM branch future programme.

### Meetings ahead:

Unless otherwise stated, meetings are held online. Zoom opens at 7.15pm for a 7.30pm start.

**18th June 2pm**

In person visit to the **St George's Chapel Archives in Windsor Castle**

**30th July (Zoom)**

**Ancestors on the Map; Finding Locations of family Photographs** by Dr Nicholas Dixon



# Around the Branches

Please check the Society's website for up to date details of meetings

**24th September (Zoom)**

**Using a Research Methodology for Family History** by Phil Isherwood

**16th October (Zoom) Combined Branches Meeting**

**The Earl and the Pharaoh** by Lady Carnarvon

**Leigh Dworkin**



*Visit St George's Archive, Windsor Castle in June with W, S & M Branch*

## March's Combined Branches Special Online Meeting

On 20th March, we were delighted to welcome Sue Gibbons who gave a very interesting and informative talk about 'Scottish Sources at the Society of Genealogists'. It was a subject Sue was well qualified to talk about. She is a life member and Fellow of the Society of Genealogists and was their librarian for almost 20 years.

The talk included general sources covering Scotland as a whole such as the armed forces, apprenticeships, education and occupations, Scots working and emigrating abroad, State papers and Historical Manuscripts Commission reports, land and tax records and wills including inventories and services of heirs, local sources, church registers and civil registration, tombstone inscriptions, census indexes and returns, directories and lists of voters, Scottish Record Society publications, family histories and one-name studies, both published and unpublished internet sources.

If you missed the talk and had wanted to see it, hopefully you managed to instead view the video on the website, which was available for a short period.

Bookings are now open for the next Combined Branches Special Online Meeting on 16th October when the Countess of Carnarvon will be talking about "The Earl and the Pharaoh".

## Royal Berkshire Archives - New Digital Archive

The Royal Berkshire Archives (RBA) has announced the launch of its new digital repository. This is where they store archives they have received in digital format and also some copies of some of some of their paper-based records.

The repository is in its infancy stages at the moment but will grow over time, so one to keep an eye on.

You can access the repository via RBA's website: [www.royalberkshirearchives.org.uk/](http://www.royalberkshirearchives.org.uk/).

# A Combined Branches' Special Online Meeting

Wednesday 16th October 2024

7.45pm start (session opens 7.15pm)

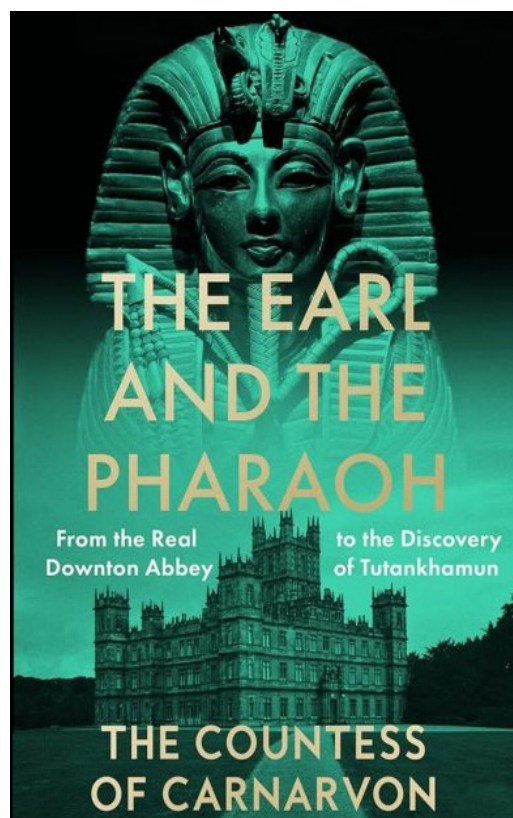
## The Earl and the Pharaoh

By Lady Carnarvon

Lady Carnarvon is the speaker at the October Combined Branches' Special Online Meeting where she will be talking about *The Earl and the Pharaoh*, her new book based on the life of the 5th Earl of Carnarvon.

This talk is about a man whose life and death became front-page news throughout the world between the autumn of 1922 and the spring of 1923 when, with his colleague Howard Carter, he discovered the tomb of Tutankhamun and then, shortly afterwards, died.

The media circus that accompanied the opening of the tomb latched onto the glint of gold, the extraordinary treasures and, of course, the superstitious world of ancient Egypt. The backstory of hard work, the acquisition of experience and knowledge in an inhospitable climate, has been overlooked in a welter of excited prose - it is a tale of discovery. Hear about it all directly from the author of the book of the same title.



Fiona, 8th Countess of Carnarvon, is the wife of Geordie, 8th Earl of Carnarvon. They live at Highclere Castle, known to millions around the world as “Downton Abbey”

Lady Carnarvon is an historian, an international speaker and fundraiser in the UK and abroad. Lady Carnarvon, her husband and son live ‘quietly’ with seven dogs, a number of horses and ponies, a brood of chickens, several bee hives and some rare breed pigs, amongst the normal farm animals in the farm and landscape of Highclere Castle today.

Lady Carnarvon is also an award winning author, having written numerous New York Times Bestsellers including *Lady Almina* and *The Real Downton Abbey*, *Christmas at Highclere*, and *Lady Catherine* and *The Real Downton Abbey*.

# Newbury's Cunning Woman: Was She Newbury's Last Witch?

Judith Thomas puts a spotlight on a Newbury character

Maria Giles was born in 1814, the daughter of a local labourer, William Giles of Northcroft Lane, Newbury, and his wife Mary. She was christened Ann Maria in 1814 in St Nicolas, Newbury, but was generally known as Maria. By 1841 she was an unmarried dressmaker in The City, Newbury with two small children, Samuel and Clarissa. In August 1846 in St Nicolas Church she married Alfred Giles, possibly a relation. They then moved to one of the closes off Bartholomew Street. Her many and various misdeeds were reported in great detail in the local papers, as she was regularly in trouble with the law, not only for the crimes that led to her notoriety as a “cunning woman”, but also for assault, fraud and perjury.

Her first recorded misdemeanour was in August 1841. She had abandoned her two small children to be chargeable to the parish. She was described as being 5 feet 4 inches tall, of a dark complexion. Evidently she did return, as the next year a charge was brought against her of robbery from an “old man” of 65, John Crouch. He claimed she had robbed him of 2s while at The Pheasant beer house.

Other charges of assault and perjury followed. Maria did in fact have a day job, as well as her “cunning” activities. She is described from 1851 onwards as a midwife. She was not a particularly caring midwife, unfortunately, as this work also brought her back into court on a few occasions. In 1853 she attended the inquest of a baby who could have lived if it had had medical attention, but Maria, who said she would call a doctor, did not do so “in consequence of having been called elsewhere”. She was also charged with disposing of the body of another baby as stillborn, and once with child murder. Maria claimed this baby had been stillborn, terribly deformed, and that she carried it under her cloak to Newtown Road cemetery.

But these cases were not what brought Maria to the attention of first the local area, then nationally.

*“Few cunning folk had as many brushes with the law as Maria Giles. Between 1853-1871 she appeared in court no less than eleven times, though not always as a defendant.”*<sup>2</sup>



City area of Newbury Berkshire XLIII.1 Surveyed 1877, Published 1880 Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland

She was already known in 1847 as a “cunning woman” with the first reported mention of this title. In this context “cunning” comes from the Anglo-Saxon “cunnan”, to know, or to possess more knowledge than those around them, acquired either from a supernatural source, or an innate or hereditary ability.<sup>2</sup>

In 1847 the Berkshire Chronicle reported that a “woman called Benskin” repeatedly applied to a cunning woman (Maria Giles) to tell her fortune. Maria foretold that the young woman would receive £10 from her uncle in London. When no money arrived, another sovereign for a charm was demanded, which told the girl that the uncle needed a housekeeper. After travelling to London the girl found her uncle had a wife and no need for a housekeeper.

A whole series of similar cases followed over the years, usually where Maria claimed to be able to recover lost or stolen property, or, more cruelly, missing or deceased family members, by means of magic. By 1871 she had spent nearly five of the last eighteen years in prison, charged variously with obtaining money under false pretences, or under the witchcraft and vagrancy laws. Her second husband, William Tranter, was occasionally a co-defendant.

## Her victims:

1849: John Thorn, an old blind man of Hoe Benham, asked her to find him a wife. A neighbour agreed to marry him, but together she and Maria robbed him of most of the money he trustingly handed over.

1853: Thomas Price, described as a poor carter boy of Peasmore, asked for her help in recovering stolen clothing. He paid £2 8s.

1856: Maria claimed to be able to cure Lucy Gunter's "bewitched" husband, Joseph Gunter, of Aldermaston. She charged £3 16s 4 1/2d for her services. Claiming he was "double bewitched" Maria requested an extra £3.

1857: George Hibberd of Marlborough had lost a silver watch and handed over £3 18s in total to Maria.

1864: Maria claimed to be able to bring back "over hedges and ditches" Mary Ann Fisher's errant husband, Henry Fisher of East Woodhay.

She also claimed she could raise Amey Siney's mother from the grave in order for Amey, of Welford, to inherit her mother's money.

To the judge's regret, Maria, who had been charged with being a rogue and a vagabond, was freed on a legal technicality.

1868: Isaac Rivers, a labourer of Hampstead Norris, handed over several sums of money ranging from 2s 6d to 25s in order to recover a silver watch which eventually turned up in a farmyard.

1871: Hannah Long of Pamber had lost a pair of watertight boots, ¼ lb. tea, and ½ lb. sugar from her cart.

Emma Gregory, also of Pamber, had also lost goods from her cart.

These two cases led to Maria's longest term of imprisonment yet: five years with hard labour.

## How did Maria trick these people?

Each method she used demanded money in advance. When, naturally, there was no success, various excuses were given and more money was demanded.

One method was to claim that she had procured "chemicals" which she turned into drops. These were then sprinkled over, for example, the front

door of the victim's house.

The second method, used for recovering stolen property, was to use a glass and ask the aggrieved person to look into it. The face of the thief should be visible.

Another method was to whisper incantations to a book covered in cloth. The lost articles would then appear in the front of the victim's house the next day.

When it came to curing the "bewitched", Maria used a variety of household ingredients, such as cream and butter, which were thrown around the house and sprinkled on the doorstep.

## How was Maria viewed locally?

She certainly quarrelled with her neighbours. She was evicted once, but always returned from prison to Bartholomew Street. Her notoriety may have even worked in her favour by spreading her reputation.

Mary Ann Pearce, a friend and neighbour, was a willing collaborator to get money from John Thorn by agreeing to marry him.

Mary Ann Fisher was immediately taken to Maria's house after she came to Newbury in tears from East Woodhay and asked if anyone could tell her of a person who could "tell with a few words with the cards to get her husband back again".

Emma Gregory was told in Aldermaston to "enquire a little way down Bartholomew Street".

George Hibberd came from Marlborough, having heard of her reputation. Maria used the chemical trick on him and was not deterred by the distance between Newbury and Marlborough. She just requested a further 10s to render "everything right by return of post".

Maria's victims themselves were not immune from criticism from judges and the newspapers, particularly Isaac Rivers of Hampstead Norris, who was described by the judge as "one of those credulous and absurd persons whose ignorance and superstition was so great that it really might be doubtful whether the law could protect him at all".

Hannah Long was censured by the judge: "*If Mrs Long had not been drunk she would not have lost her things.*"

The girl “Benskin” was described by the newspapers as a “silly noodle”.

Victims from Tadley came in for particularly harsh criticism from the Newbury Weekly News: *“the fact might be accounted for that the parties came from Tadley, and they were unaccustomed to look for anything intellectual from that quarter.”*

### Maria’s character

Was she an uneducated, callous villain, or was she a clever manipulator doing her best to help people? Opinions differed.

Against:

In 1864 in the case of Mary Ann Fisher, the judge summed up as follows: *“You possess a heart that has no compassion. You took from that poor woman not merely every farthing that she possessed but the very garment she was wearing at the time. She was your victim and you showed no mercy.”*

For:

Surprisingly, Maria did attract positive comments, and even defenders.

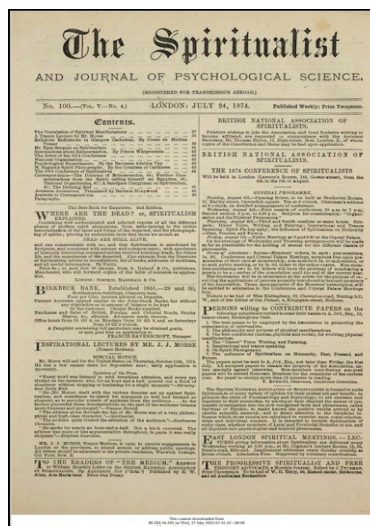
In 1868 the judge in the Isaac Rivers case addressed Maria in these terms: *“You have sent me a letter extremely well written and well expressed, evidently showing an amount of education that makes one deeply regret you should pervert that education to the shocking purpose you have done.”*

However, he concluded: *“But you seem to prefer a course of crime.”*

In 1871 Charles Slocock, a banker and magistrate of Donnington, petitioned the Home Office on the grounds that her most recent sentence (five years with hard labour) was unreasonably severe. It was turned down on the grounds that she had been sentenced before on seven previous occasions, that there was little hope of reformation, and that it was necessary to prevent the credulous from being victimised by her.

In 1872 the Newbury Weekly News printed a letter from Samuel Guppy of Highbury, North London which had recently appeared in the *Spiritualist* and which painted a touching, if unrecognisable, picture of Maria.

Left: Captain Slocock by Camille Silvy NPG Ax59530 © National Portrait Gallery, London BY NC ND 3.0



No.100, July 24th 1874. *Spiritualist* Newspaper. JSTOR, <https://jstor.org/stable/community.27562699> via National Library of Scotland

*“This woman is 58 years of age. Five years penal servitude lands her at 63 – if she lives so long - broken in health and fit only for the poor house. In fact it is an imprisonment with hard labour for life. It appears that, although the good inhabitants of Newbury considered that telling fortunes or suggesting how stolen goods might be recovered, was very naughty, they did not desist from tempting this poor woman... But it so happened that this woman was a most estimable woman, decent, orderly, not given to drink, always willing to attend even poor persons and never deterred by their ailments being contagious. She was in fact a universal favourite. She robbed no-one. She molested no-one.”*



## Maria's family

Of her three brothers one, possibly two, died in infancy. Her sister Caroline married a bargee and lived nearby in the yards off Bartholomew Street. James Pottinger, Caroline's first husband, once gave evidence on Maria's behalf.

Maria's first husband, Alfred Giles, died in 1865 and was buried in Newtown Road Cemetery. She then married a widower, William Tranter, in 1869. William Tranter died in horrific circumstances in 1877 when a pit on Wash Common, where he was digging out sand, collapsed in on him. At the inquest the jury presented their fees to the grieving widow. He was buried in Newtown Road Cemetery.

Of Maria's two children, the older, Samuel Giles, joined the Army, then moved back to Newbury where he worked as a bricklayer. He married firstly in 1865 his stepsister, Annie Tranter, William Tranter's daughter by his first wife.

The couple moved to Hammersmith, then Samuel returned to Newbury where he married his second wife Mary Ann Preston in 1883. They moved to Eastbourne with their daughter Violet, and Samuel died there in 1918.

Maria's daughter, Clarissa Giles, was described as half-witted in 1853 when she was assaulted by a neighbour. She was admitted to the Berkshire County Asylum in 1870 and died there in 1875.

Maria's stepson, William Tranter, met a violent end. His body, shockingly mutilated, was discovered in Potters Bar Tunnel on the Great Northern Railway in 1889. Maria attended the inquest. She described the man as her son by a former husband, although he was actually her stepson.

Maria's last appearance in court was in 1891 when she gave evidence in an affiliation order case. She was recognised by the lawyer and asked if she had not made the acquaintance of the court before as a fortune teller. Maria refused to answer. The lawyer persisted. "*But don't you practise the black arts? Don't you bring them over hedges and ditches?*" Maria's quick wit did not desert her. Amidst laughter she replied, "*Well, I didn't bring this child over hedges and ditches.*"

By this time Maria had married her third husband, John Mills, a labourer, in 1878. They continued to live in the City in Newbury until 1891 when they were living in Kennet Road. John died in 1892 and was buried in Newtown Road. Three

husbands and her sister Caroline were buried there, but no record of Maria's death or burial has been located with any certainty, and one wonders if Newbury's last witch disappeared in a puff of green smoke.



*Newtown Road Cemetery Anglican Chapel courtesy of friends of Newtown Road*

## References:

1. Berkshire Chronicle, the Reading Mercury, and from 1867 the Newbury Weekly News, various dates.
2. Davies, Owen. Popular magic: cunning folk in English history. Hambledon Continuum, 2007.

# Social Security Number Application Forms (SS-5)

**Leigh Dworkin** demonstrates what can be found in these under used US documents

## Introduction

The Social Security Act was signed into US federal law by President Roosevelt 14th Aug 1935. Prior to the act, it was up to the state or the person's family to care for them in old age or if they had physical disabilities.

The Social Security Number Application Form, also known as the SS-5 form, asks for the name of the individual applying, and for married women, her maiden name too; their current address; their employer's name and address; their age, date and place of birth; father's name and mother's name including maiden surname and a dated signature. So a wealth of genealogical information that can reveal a father's original surname when perhaps only the changed surname in the United States is known, a mother's maiden surname and a place of origin that can be specific to the town name, although you can be unlucky and only get the country. The SS-5 is a real gem of a document!

Copies of the SS-5 may be ordered from the Social Security Administration by submitting a Freedom of Information Act request (FOIA), and at the time of writing costs \$21 per document.

Note, it may be necessary to prove that the individual or the parents are not still living, otherwise the vital information that you are seeking may be redacted. In the good old days, it was possible to peel off the black strips but these days the blacking out is done before the photocopy, and so cannot be removed. Pay heed to this to avoid expensive disappointment!

For more information see the informative JGSLI<sup>1</sup> video called "How Form SS-5 Can Help Break through Your Research Brick Walls"<sup>2</sup> with the mellifluous soundtrack by Nolan Altman.<sup>3</sup>

## How to Order an SS-5 Document

This is quite straightforward, given that documentation is available from The Legal Genealogist Blog<sup>4</sup> by Judy Russell.

This may be found by Googling "The Legal Genealogist" "SS-5 2024 style" or visiting <https://www.legalgenealogist.com/2024/01/30/ordering-the-ss-5-2024-style/> June 2024

Now I will share some of the discoveries made from the SS-5 documents and how these discoveries have inspired further research and generated key understanding.

## Sam Devorkin, the brother of my great grandfather Harris Dvorkin or Dworkin

The information for this SS-5 order came from the US Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007 available on Ancestry US, Ancestry Worldwide or Ancestry Library edition.

Sam Devorkin	
in the U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007	
Detail	Source
Name:	Sam Devorkin
Birth Date:	Dec 1870
Birth Place:	Soviet Union
Claim Date:	17 Apr 1953
SSN:	356281864
Notes:	17 Apr 1953: Name listed as SAM DEVORKIN

Figure 1: Sam Devorkin index for ordering the SS-5. The SS-5 had much more information on it compared to the index:

Form SS-5  
TREASURY DEPARTMENT  
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE  
(Revised 7-64)

APPLICATION FOR SOCIAL SECURITY ACCOUNT NUMBER  
REQUIRED UNDER THE FEDERAL INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS ACT  
READ INSTRUCTIONS ON BACK BEFORE FILLING IN FORM

356-28-1864  
DO NOT WRITE IN THE ABOVE SPACE

FILL IN EACH ITEM. PRINT IN BLACK OR DARK BLUE INK OR USE TYPEWRITER FOR ALL ITEMS EXCEPT SIGNATURE. IF THE INFORMATION CALLED FOR IN ANY ITEM IS NOT KNOWN, WRITE "UNKNOWN"

1. PRINT NAME YOU GAVE YOUR PRESENT EMPLOYER, OR IF UNEMPLOYED, THE NAME YOU WILL USE WHEN EMPLOYED: SAM  
2. MAILING ADDRESS (NO. AND ST., P. O. BOX, OR RFD) (CITY) (COUNTY) (STATE): 1236 50. LAWDALE AVE CHICAGO ILL  
3. PRINT FULL NAME GIVEN YOU AT BIRTH: SAM DEVORKIN  
4. AGE ON LAST BIRTHDAY: 81  
5. DATE OF BIRTH (MONTH) (DAY) (YEAR): DEC 27 1870  
6. PLACE OF BIRTH (CITY) (COUNTY) (STATE): Brestovich POLAND  
7. FATHER'S FULL NAME, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER LIVING OR DEAD: JOSEPH DEVORKIN  
8. MOTHER'S FULL NAME BEFORE EVER MARRIED, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER LIVING OR DEAD: DORA ABRAMOVICH  
9. (MARK (X) WHICH) MALE FEMALE: MALE  
10. COLOR (MARK (X) WHICH) (OF OTHER, SPECIFY) OR WHITE NEGRO OTHER: WHITE  
11. HAVE YOU EVER BEFORE APPLIED FOR OR HAD A SOCIAL SECURITY OR RAILROAD RETIREMENT NUMBER? (MARK (X) WHICH) YES NO: YES  
12. BUSINESS NAME OF EMPLOYER, IF UNEMPLOYED, WRITE "UNEMPLOYED": DEVORKIN & CHASON  
13. EMPLOYER'S ADDRESS (NO. AND STREET) (CITY) (COUNTY) (STATE): 24136 00195 ST CHICAGO ILL  
14. WRITE YOUR NAME AS USUALLY WRITTEN (DO NOT PRINT): Sam Devorkin  
15. TODAY'S DATE: 12/27/1952

RETURN COMPLETED APPLICATION TO NEAREST SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION FIELD OFFICE.

Figure 2: SS-5 form for Sam Devorkin, showing Brestovich and Dora Abramovich

Firstly, Sam Devorkin's mother's name was Dora Abramovich – we already knew that Sam's father was Joseph from his tombstone, Harris Dvorkin's tombstone and quite a few other records.

Secondly, he was from Brestovich. Previously, it was thought that he was from Brest-Litovsk as stated on other documents such as Sam's marriage record, which stated "Berestow", or brother Harris's UK Alien Registration card which stated Brest-Litovsk.

After discussing this with experts in the Belarusian archives, it was concluded that I should be looking in Vialikaja Bierastavica (Greater Bierastavica) – a mere two and a half hour drive away – and not Brest-Litovsk, thus invalidating the titles of my articles in Shemet (journal of JGSGB) on “The Dvorkins of Brest-Litovsk”, parts 1 and 2.

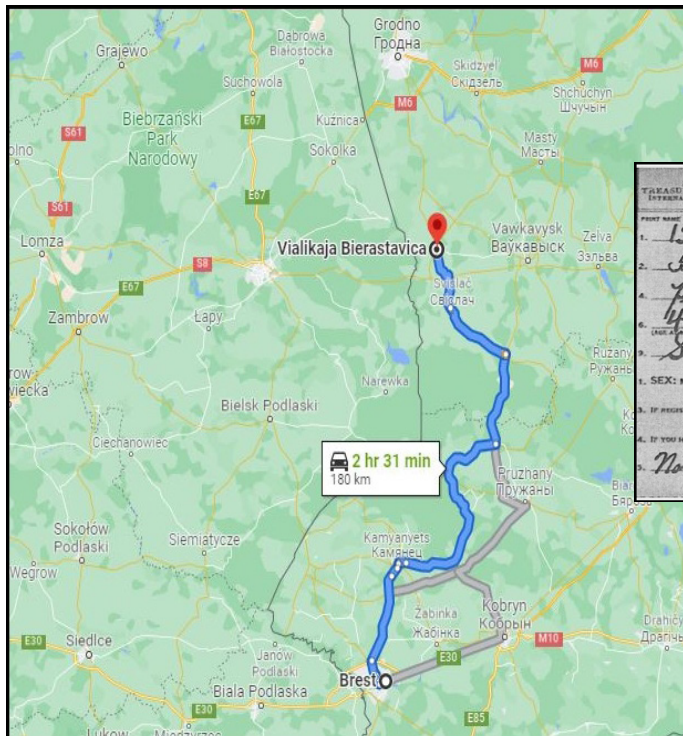


Figure 3: Brest (aka Brest-Litovsk) and Vialikaja Bierastavica, a mere 2.5 hours drive away

Further evidence was obtained from the 1921 UK Census, which stated Harris’s birthplace as Barstervitz.

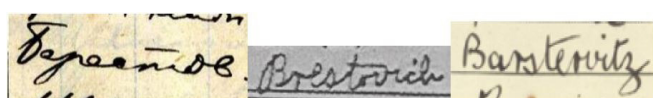


Figure 4: Berestow, Brestovich and Barstervitz from three different records

Despite spending hundreds of pounds/dollars with Belarusian archives on the search for records in Brest-Litovsk without obtaining a single record, searches in the Grodno archives for Dvorkins in Vialikaja Bierastavica are now bearing fruit.

### Isidor Berkowitz, the brother of my great grandfather Harris Bercovitch or Berkowicz

The information for this SS-5 order came from the US Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007 available on Ancestry US, Ancestry Worldwide or Ancestry Library edition.



Figure 5: Isidor Berkowitz index for ordering the SS-5

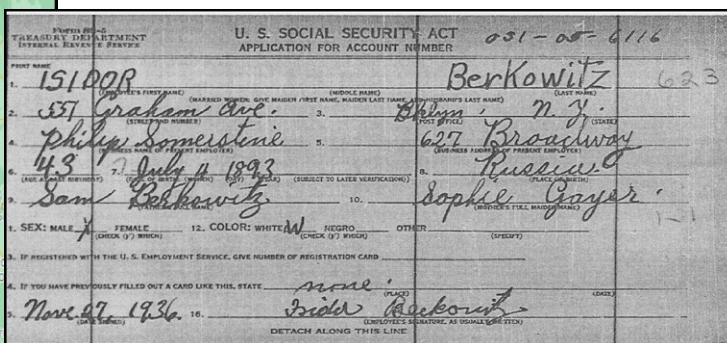


Figure 6: SS-5 form for Isidor Berkowitz, showing parents Sam Berkowitz and Sophie Gayer with birthplace “Russia”

While the information on this SS-5 matches most of what was already known for Isidor, that is, that his parents were Sam Berkowitz and Shosha (or Sura) Gayer/Gaier, this was the first time she had been documented as being Sophie. Sophia or Sylvia yes, Sophie never before. While it may seem an obvious variant, when entering “Sophie Berkowitz” into Ancestry and FamilySearch, the following two indexes were found:

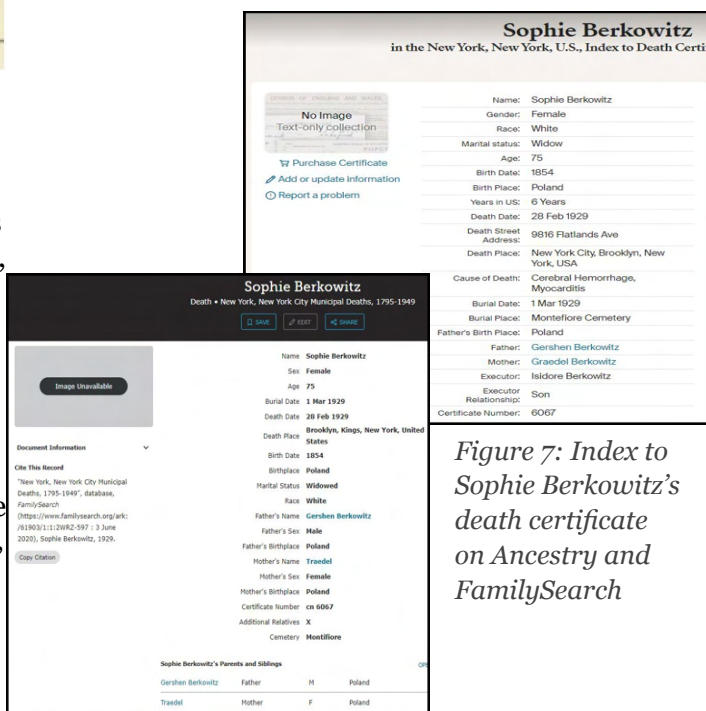


Figure 7: Index to Sophie Berkowitz’s death certificate on Ancestry and FamilySearch



This yielded Sophie's death certificate which had eluded me for a number of years.

Figure 8: Sophie Berkowitz's death certificate

And also the location of Sophie's burial at Montefiore Cemetery in Queens, New York.

I jumped on a plane immediately and visited this cemetery, finally to meet my great great grandmother Shosha/Sophie.

After an extensive search she was eventually located in an unmarked grave between Sylvia Arons and John Pizer. While some may have been disappointed with this result, it does say something about the financial situation of her four children living in America at the time of her death in 1929 at the time of the great depression. Also, it gives me a new project to complete to erect a tombstone for the only great great grandparent whose picture I have.



Figure 9: Shosha/Sophie Berkowitz's final resting place in Montefiore Cemetery, Queens, NY and her only known photograph

## Louis H Berkwitz, the brother of my great grandfather Harris Bercovitch or Berkowicz

The information for this SS-5 order came from the US Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007 available on Ancestry US, Ancestry Worldwide or Ancestry Library edition.

Figure 10: Louis H Berkwitz index for ordering the SS-5

Figure 11: SS-5 form for Louis Harry Berkwitz, showing Samuel Berkowitz as father, an unknown mother (!), with birthplace Warsaw

What was most interesting about this record was that Louis had forgotten his own mother's name! At least he remembered his birth place of Warsaw, Poland. In the above record for Isidor he stated "Russia" whereas other evidence proves that he was also born in Warsaw, like his brother Louis.

## Max Berkowitz, the brother of my great grandfather Harris Bercovitch or Berkowicz

The information for this SS-5 order came from the US Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007 available on Ancestry US, Ancestry Worldwide or Ancestry Library edition.

What is quite interesting is the completeness of the data in the index, which includes most of the key genealogical information written on the SS-5.

That being said, I still wanted to check that the record had been transcribed accurately (it was), so ordered the SS-5 anyway.

Samuel Stein	
in the California, U.S., Death Index, 1940-1997	
Detail	Source
Name:	Samuel Stein
Social Security #:	551108079
Gender:	Male
Birth Date:	20 Feb 1882
Birth Place:	Other Country
Death Date:	5 May 1982
Death Place:	Los Angeles
Mother's Maiden Name:	Berkowitz

Figure 14: Sam Stein index for ordering the SS-5

Max Berkowitz	
in the U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007	
Detail	Source
Name:	Max Berkowitz
Gender:	Male
Race:	White
Birth Date:	15 Mar 1886
Birth Place:	Europe, Poland
Father:	Sam Berkowitz
Mother:	Sylvia
SSN:	103267733
Notes:	Jan 1951: Name listed as MAX BERKOWITZ

Figure 12: Max Berkowitz index for ordering the SS-5

As most of the information was in the index, the real value of ordering this record was in seeing the original signature for Max and also the address information for Max's home on 142 Blake Ave and Max's store at 139 Blake Ave, in Brooklyn, New York.

Figure 13: SS-5 form for Max Berkowitz showing Sam Berkowitz as father, Sylvia with unknown maiden name, with birthplace Poland, Europe

### Samuel Stein, husband of Goldie Berkowitz, the sister of my great grandfather Harris Bercovitch or Berkowicz

The information for this SS-5 order came from the California, US Death Index 1940-1997 as it was not found in the US Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007, both available on Ancestry US, Ancestry Worldwide or Ancestry Library edition.

Figure 15: SS-5 form for Samuel Stein, showing Nathan Stein as father, Sarah Levine as mother, with birthplace Warsaw

The "Levine" maiden name was completely new to me and will now be researched further, both in US records but more importantly in Polish records on jri-poland and JewishGen, possibly on FamilySearch and the Polish State Archives website too.

In conclusion, there is unique genealogical data on these SS-5 records which makes them essential to order.

Leigh Dworkin is the current Chairman of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain (JGSGB). He has been researching his mainly Polish family for the last thirty years, but also tries to research into Lithuania and Belarus, from where his surname originates. He is also Chairman of the Windsor, Slough and Maidenhead Branch of Berkshire Family History Society.

### References

1. Jewish Genealogical Society of Long Island (JGSLI)
2. The JGSLI video on SS-5 applications is found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mt-4pZL8GJE>
3. Nolan Altman was the recipient of the IAJGS Lifetime Achievement award in 2021, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTQXxfGEac>
4. <https://www.legalgenealogist.com/2024/01/30/ordering-the-ss-5-2024-style/>

# What's New on the Website?

*An update from the webmaster*

## Five years on

I can't quite believe it has been five years, but in May 2019, the trustees signed off the new designs for the websites and work began on the implementation phase. Our previous sites had served us well for many years but web technology had leapt forward and the underlying platforms needed to change.

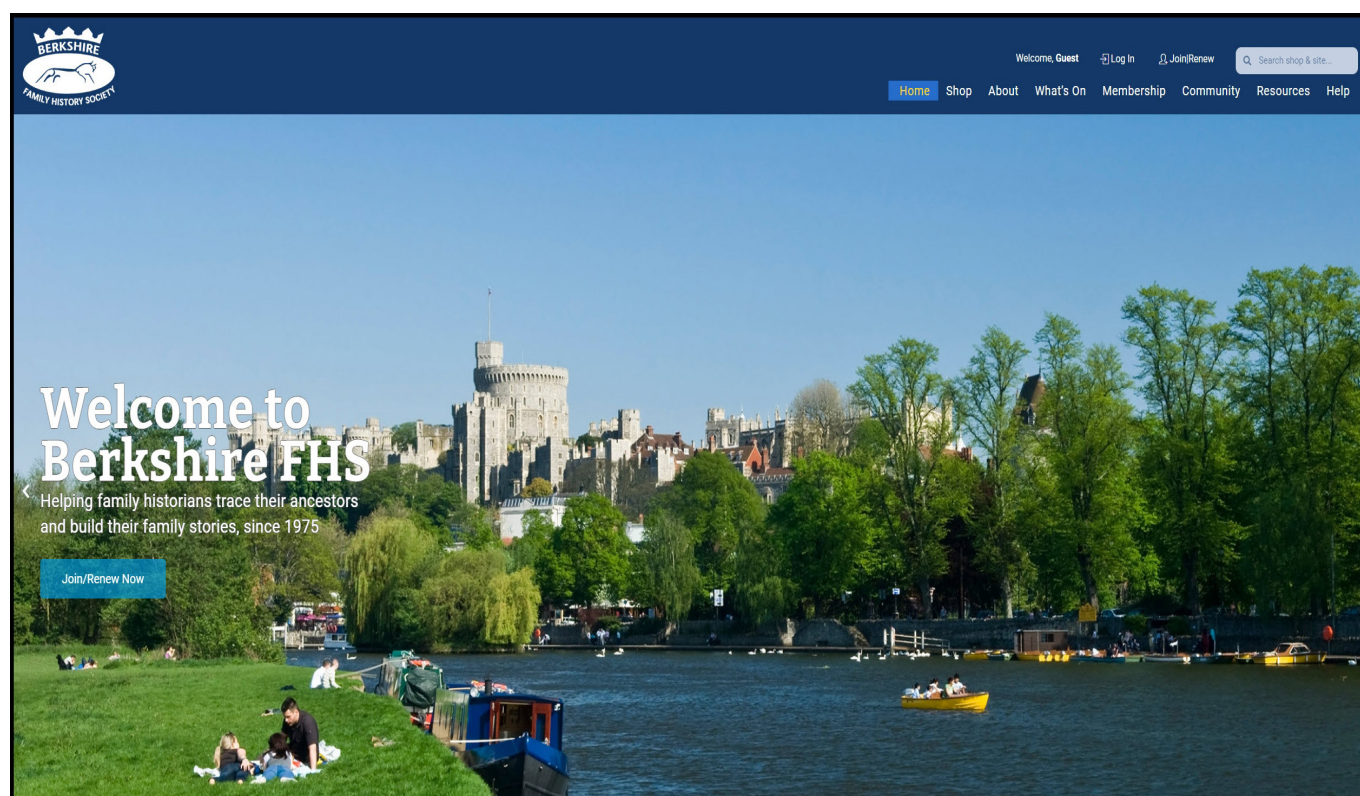
But web technology doesn't stand still. Five years ago, we were at the front of the vanguard but it didn't take long for other FHS's to realise the need to update from the sometimes ancient technologies they were using, and they started to play catchup. We need to keep one step ahead!

Notably, many of them have outsourced their web designs to specialist companies and this seems to be a growing trend. We are fortunate in having a couple of inhouse experts to do ours. But don't worry, we use standard tools and standard software to produce our site so even if the two of us don't see the Number 94 bus approaching at speed, the site is safe.

## Website 2024

Design standards change and our new platform allows us design flexibility. Those of you who receive the InTouch newsletter will be familiar with the series of heritage photos and the 'then and now' presentation - it is consistently one of the most popular sections of the newsletter. So when we thought about updating the homepage it seemed obvious that Berkshire imagery was a good place to start.

We decided to go big and use some full screen images from around the Royal County. Of course, there is only one Royal County in England, and only one that boasts a Norman Castle that is the seat of the monarchy. So we claim exclusive bragging rights over every other county and every other FHS, and feature Windsor Castle as our first image on the homepage carousel; but if you dwell on the page and you'll see some other iconic landmarks from around historic Berkshire. Here's the image section of the new home page - see the full screen full colour version at [berksfhs.org](http://berksfhs.org):



## Finding your way around

There's a lot of content on our website - a quick inventory reveals just short of 2,300 items with more being added every week, so the new homepage design makes it easier to find your way to public and member only resources. These can be found by scrolling down the home page. There is more on this section of the website on pages 14-15:

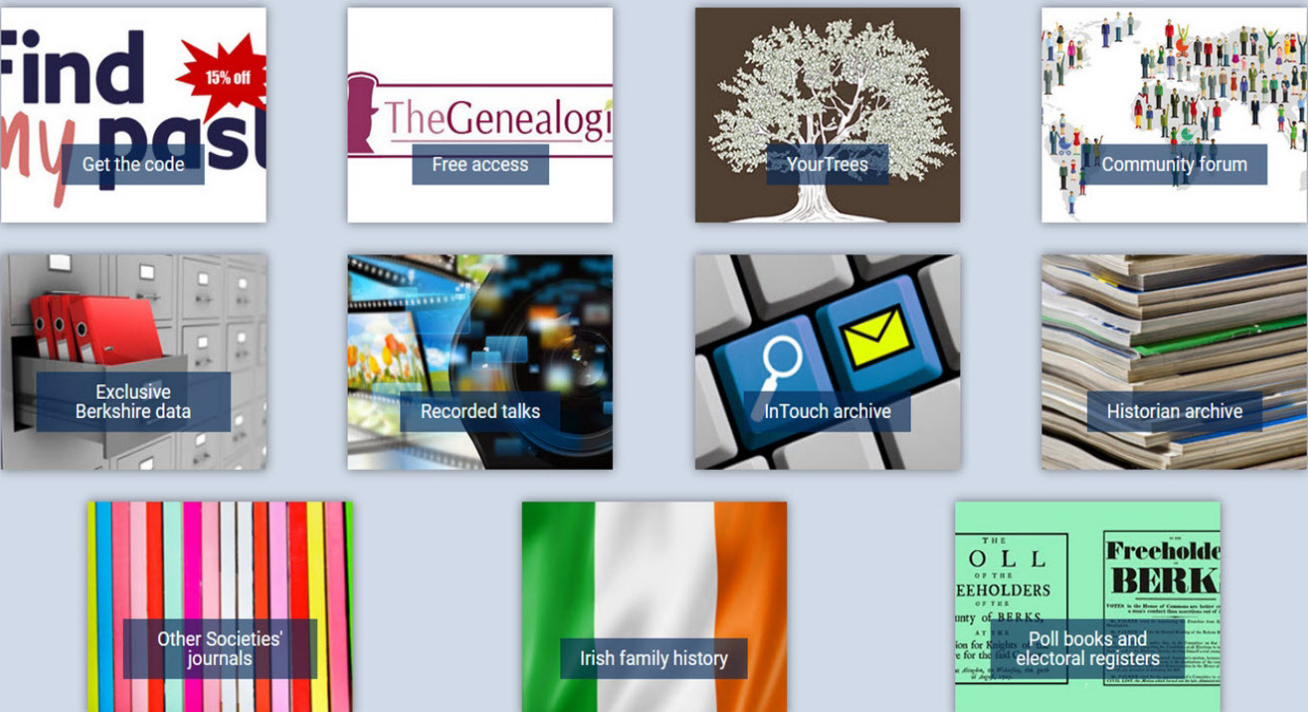
### Resources for everyone

[f](#) [x](#)



- Membership
- Shop
- Plan your visit
- Research wizard
- Berkshire names index
- Pay-to-view videos
- Berkshire places
- Berkshire Poor Law Unions
- Churches, cemeteries & more
- Articles

### Resources for members - join for instant access



- Find my past 15% off Get the code
- TheGenealogist Free access
- Your trees
- Community forum
- Exclusive Berkshire data
- Recorded talks
- InTouch archive
- Historian archive
- Other Societies' journals
- Irish family history
- Poll books and electoral registers

## The shop has moved to the main site

One of the benefits of our new charitable status - Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) - is that we have been able to absorb the shop company into the main charity. For members, the difference is negligible but from the volunteers' perspective this makes administration much simpler. Only one set of accounts is needed now and only one website - yes that's right, we've recently merged the shop site into the main website. The new homepage therefore includes a section dedicated to the shop:

The screenshot shows the 'Shop' section of the website. At the top, it says 'Shop' and 'Around 1,200 genealogy related products to help you with your research - we've provided a few recommendations for you below'. Below this is a search bar and a 'Member discount' banner stating 'Members are entitled to a 10% discount on products published by the Society, which number over 900! - Login to reveal the current coupon code'. The main section is titled 'Recommended Products' and features six product cards:

- A Secretary Hand, An ABC Book**: £5.00, ADD TO BASKET
- Berkshire Baptisms 3rd Edition**: £5.00 - £20.00, SELECT OPTIONS
- Berkshire Burials 13th Edition**: £5.00 - £25.00, SELECT OPTIONS
- Berkshire Marriages, 5th Edition**: £5.00 - £20.00, SELECT OPTIONS
- Berkshire Overseers' Papers (CD)**: £20.00, ADD TO BASKET
- Berkshire Probate Index, 1480-1857 (CD) BFHS**: £25.00, ADD TO BASKET

## Contact us easily

We love hearing from members and non-members alike, so we've added yet another new feature to make this as easy as possible. You may have seen this feature on many sites. In the bottom right corner of most pages there's a comment symbol. Click it and a panel will open where you can quiz our knowledge base, or leave us a message and we'll get back to you.

## Conclusion

All of these changes are designed to make our website attractive, appealing and useful to the widest possible audience. We're always on the lookout for younger members and we believe that delivering a modern, feature rich website is one way to do so. We hope you agree!

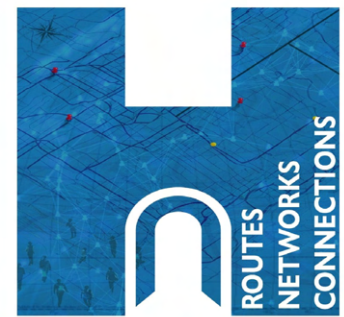
The screenshot shows a contact form interface. On the left is a blue speech bubble icon with a white arrow pointing right. To the right, a blue panel contains the text 'Hi there' with a hand icon. Below this is a message: 'Need help? Search our help centre for answers or fill out the form and we will get back to you as soon as possible.' The form includes a search bar for 'Search for answers', and three input fields: '\* Name', '\* Email', and '\* Message'.

# Heritage Open Days 2024

## About Your House - discover the families who lived in your house

Heritage Open Days are running again this year and Berkshire Family History Society is once again taking part. The events run throughout the country from Friday 6th to Sunday 15th September, and this year's theme has been announced as 'Routes, Networks and Connections'.

The Society will be focusing on "connections", and will be offering guidance to those wishing to discover the history of their house and its past occupants.



Throughout this period we will be running a display in the Holybrook Gallery at Reading Central Library, in conjunction with Reading Local Studies Library. The highlight will be a panoramic view of Broad Street, Reading based on the 1881 census.

On Saturday 7th September, we will be running a video display of the areas of Reading affected by the creation of the Inner Distribution Road. One of the video's creators - Graham Turner - will be joining us to chat to visitors about the area of Coley which was particularly altered by our ring road, sharing memories and tales of families displaced and houses lost.

The opening hours of the Centre for Heritage and Family History will be (hours additional to our normal opening are marked \*):

Friday 6th	*10.30am-4pm
Saturday 7th	10.30am-2.230pm
Monday 9th	10.30am-3pm
Tuesday 10th	10.30am-4pm
Saturday 14th	*10.30am-2.30pm

On Monday 9th and Tuesday 10th, during our normal opening hours of 10.30am-3pm and 10.30am-4pm respectively, we will be offering free tours of the Centre for Heritage and Family History and the facilities we offer.

Refreshments will be available for a modest donation.



# From The Forum



**For your brick walls, queries and a chance to connect with others ... and to give back and help others.**

Find the Forum under “Community” on the Society’s website. Don’t forget to subscribe to the various sections, so that new posts are sent directly to your email.

Here are some recent postings.

Karen is hoping to get some help with a brick wall in her Berkshire line for Joseph Savage (born 1790 to George and Winifred Savage, Swallowfield) and Lucy Brant (born about 1793, Swallowfield per later census documents, parents unclear). She has found Joseph and Lucy’s marriage on 2 Jan 1814 at St Giles and identified some possible sisters. There’s more information within her message and some helpful replies already – can you provide more help?

Member Tom Mann Hine has an extensive knowledge and archive of mills and milling families in Berkshire. He would be pleased to help members if they have a miller/mill query and of course any mill information that they may have would be much appreciated. The contact details for Tom are in the Forum post.

Do you have ancestors from Stanford in the Vale or the surrounding area? You might be interested in the latest fascinating publication from the Berkshire Record Society which gives a rare insight into the impact of the extreme religious changes of the Tudor period upon this small community. Find out more in the Forum post and purchase the book in the Society’s online bookshop.

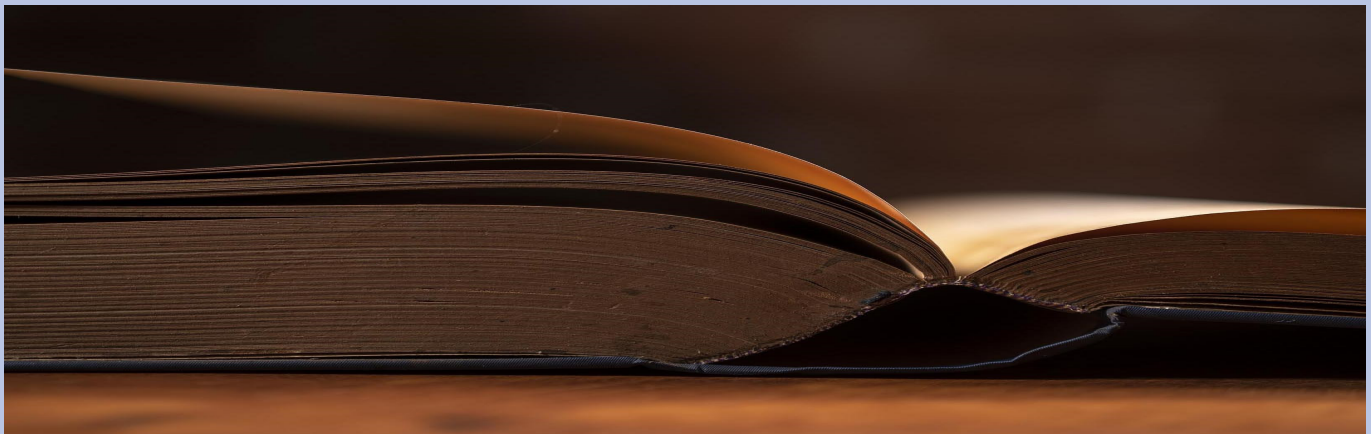
Liz asked has anyone come across Hospital Farm in Milton? “I’m interested in an ancestor who was there in the early 1930s. Many thanks.” Can you help Liz?

# Second-hand and New Book Fair

**The Centre for Heritage & Family History  
2nd Floor, Reading Central Library, Abbey Square, Reading,  
Berkshire, RG1 3BQ**

**Saturday 1st June 2024**

**11am – 2pm**



Love books and reading?

Over recent years, Berkshire Family History Society has been given many pre-loved books to sell. These are predominantly local history, family history and social history books – although we also have a fair number of military and transport history books, plus others.

If “history” is your thing – then come along and grab a bargain. We need to clear the decks a little so everything will be out on display. Plus, we will also have some of our extensive bookshop of new books, maps and publications available to purchase, including our data CDs.

The book fair lasts for three hours, and you’ll be able to buy refreshments whilst you ponder your purchases. The Research Zone is also open today – so why not combine it with a little historical research.

Just turn up – free entry and no pre-booking required.