

Berkshire Family Historian

*The quarterly journal of the
Berkshire Family History Society*



March 2024

Volume 47



Inside this issue:

**When My GGG-Great Aunt Terrified the Queen
Thomas Willats of Reading
The John Willis Family of Maryland
The Butlers of Inkpen**

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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*

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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

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Berkshire Family Historian

The quarterly journal of the Berkshire Family History Society

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Volume 47

Family names appearing in this issue

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

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Editor's Notes

Welcome to your March 2024 Berkshire Family Historian. Spring has sprung and we hope that you are enjoying the longer days, maybe to visit those familial places or pore over the documents you have recently discovered.

This edition is packed with personal articles that have been sent in by members and non-members alike. Maybe you will discover through reading them, a source of information that is new to you, and possibly even helps solve that brick wall in your research.

You will find another packed Events programme with talks, walks, workshops, and courses, both online and in person, as we progress through 2024. Don't forget to book early for events via our website to avoid disappointment as some events sell out quickly.

If you have a potential article please send it in as without your articles there is no journal. We would be especially interested to receive articles about hints and tips, ways to get the most from a research trip to an archive or general 'How to do research'.

Vicki Chesterman

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Chairman's Corner

It hardly feels possible that by the time you read this it will already be March.

The Society has a busy year ahead. As I write, we have our second online Berkshire Heritage Fair planned for February 24th. As Reading Central Library prepares to move to a new building in the town centre in early 2025, we too will need to relocate and that will involve much planning and organisation during 2024. There's much involved with a move and luckily, given we've done a few over the years, we do have some experience. All of our usual areas of operation will continue through 2024, including a packed events calendar, our regular branch meetings, a continually evolving website and a busy Research Zone welcoming members and non-members alike.

Everything we do as a Society is down to our amazing volunteers who give up time and skills to help our family history community. In the year ahead, we will need even more support, so if you're able to give a little time, wherever you live, we would love to hear from you. You can contact me at the email below.

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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.



Notice of 2024 Annual General Meeting and election of officers and trustees

In accordance with the society's constitution, notice 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.

Officers and trustees form the society's Executive Committee.

If you would like to nominate yourself, or another member to the Executive, please let the Secretary know, in writing, by **Friday 24th May 2024**. Nomination forms may be obtained from the Secretary@berksfhs.org.uk or downloaded from the website at www.berksfhs.org. Please ensure, if you are nominating another, that the person you nominate is prepared to sit on the Executive Committee and be a trustee of the charity - all nominations should be seconded. Information about being a trustee of a charity and what it entails can be found on the Charity Commission website at

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission.

See the essential trustee: what you need to know, what you need to do as a Charity trustee: what's involved (Ref CC3 and CC3a July 10th 2015).

Certain people are not able to be a trustee:

Persons under the age of 18;

Anyone convicted of an offence involving deception or dishonesty unless the conviction is spent;

Anyone who is an undischarged bankrupt;

Anyone who has been removed from the trusteeship of a charity;

Anyone who is disqualified from being a Company Director;

Any other person described in sections 178 to 180 of the Charities Act 2011.

Please contact your local branch if you wish to be considered as a branch representative to the Executive Committee.



Events organised from The Centre for Heritage and Family History

March 2024- June 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.

Family History Advice Sessions – FREE	
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.	
Mar Mon 18th Apr Mon 15th May Mon 20th Jun Mon 17th 2 - 4pm ONLINE	1-1 Family History Advice Session: 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.
Mar Mon 4th May Mon 6th Jun Mon 3rd 11am - 12 noon The Centre for Heritage & Family History	Family History Advice Clinic: 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.

Research Zone Tour	
Places are limited, pre-booking is required.	
Jun Mon 24th 11am - 1pm FREE The Centre for Heritage & Family History	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. The Research Zone is open to 3pm, so why not stay on and do some research as well, if you have time.

Workshops	
See website for full details. Places are limited, pre-booking is required.	
Mar Sat 9th 11am - 1pm TICKETS £10 (members £9) ONLINE	Education c.1860 - c.1914 Tutor: Joan Dils Discover how the provision for education for our English ancestors was transformed between 1860 and the start of the First World War. After 1870, schools run by local elected boards (Board Schools) supplemented those founded by religious bodies; in turn in 1902, schools became council schools administered by local education authorities (LEAs). Throughout the period, teacher training was improved, the school syllabus developed and pupil numbers increased until, in the 1890s, compulsory free schooling was provided for most children.
Apr Mon 22nd 7 - 9pm TICKETS FREE Online	Getting the most out of your Membership Facilitators: Vanessa Chappell and Catherine Sampson 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&A welcomed.

Courses – Places are limited, pre-booking is required.	
Mar starts Mon 11th (2 parts) Mar: 11th & 18th 7 - 9pm TICKETS £20 (members £18) ONLINE	Coal Mining Ancestors Tutor: Richard Marks Coal was an important part of Britain's history and many families have some involvement in the industry but what did they do? What was it like to work in the Victorian collieries and how did it change in the 20th century? Who were the miners and how did they live and where? What role did the Miner's Unions play in the life of the collieries and what was the 'Miner's Welfare'? Where do you look for more information about the miners in your family? Find out more in this short two-week course.
May starts Fri 10th (5 parts) May: 10th, 17th, 24th, 31st June: 7th 2 - 3.45pm TICKETS £50 (members £45) ONLINE	The Industrial Revolution Tutor: Richard Marks Every family historian with British ancestry has ancestors whose lives were changed either directly or indirectly because of the Industrial Revolution. It changed the world forever, but why did it occur in Britain first? In this five week online course for family historians we will look at why the Industrial Revolution happened in Britain, the experiences of those involved, and how the Industrial Revolution can be researched by family historians seeking to trace and better understand how their ancestors lived and worked during this period of great change.

DNA & Family History – Online TICKETS £5 (members £4)	
Places are limited, pre-booking is required	
Apr Sat 13th 2.30 - 4.30pm ONLINE	DNA Special Interest Group 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.

Guided Walks and Tours	
Please see the website for full details. Places are limited, pre-booking is required.	
<p>Mar Fri 1st 10am - 12noon</p> <p>TICKETS £5 (members £4)</p>	<p>Reading Conservation Areas Walk Guide: Terry Dixon</p> <p>Join guide, Terry Dixon, for this walk through three of Reading's conservation areas – The Mount, Redlands & Alexandra Road. The history of much of these areas is inextricably tied up with the growth of Huntley and Palmers, in particular, in its heyday, and the growth overall of Reading in the Victorian period, accelerated by the coming of the railway. From farms to smart 'des-res' & so much more!</p>
<p>Mar Tue 5th 7 - 9pm</p> <p>TICKETS £20 (members £18)</p>	<p>Caversham Chalk Mines Guides: 89th Reading Scout Leaders & Volunteers</p> <p>Chalk mining, dating back to the 1600s, has left a vast cavern system under the 89th Reading Scout grounds. Chalk was a vital ingredient needed to make bricks - one of the industries for which Reading was famed. Explore the mine complex and learn of its uses through time in this visit led by qualified and knowledgeable volunteers of the 89th Reading Scouts. This is a rare opportunity to take part in an exceptional event. Please read the safety guidelines before booking.</p>
<p>Mar Thu 21st 10.30am - 12noon</p> <p>TICKETS £5 (members £4)</p>	<p>Douai Abbey, Woolhampton Guide: Abbot Geoffrey Scott</p> <p>Join Abbot Geoffrey Scott, Librarian and Archivist at Douai Abbey, for a look around their library and archive building. Housed here are records from the monastic communities' earlier libraries in Paris (from 1615) and Douai (from 1818) in France, and Woolhampton (from 1903). Abbot Geoffrey will be pointing out material relating to Berkshire families during this special visit.</p>
<p>April Tues 16th 2 - 3.30pm</p> <p>TICKETS £5 (members £4)</p>	<p>Walk Around Wargrave Guide: Peter Delaney</p> <p>Wargrave local historian, Peter Delaney, is leading this guided walk, in which you can learn about the village's fascinating history around the area of Mill Green, including the churchyard, and the High Street of Wargrave. The walk takes about one and a half to two hours, and is mainly on made-up pathways.</p>
<p>May Tue 14th 2 - 4pm</p> <p>TICKETS £5 (members £4)</p>	<p>Walk Around Woodley Guide: Ann Smith</p> <p>Join historian Ann Smith for a circular walk around Woodley, looking at Woodley's listed buildings, the forge, pub, and what remains of Miles Aircraft and aviation heritage. The walk will last around 2 hours. This is a repeat of a walk first held last year which became fully booked very quickly. Early booking is therefore recommended to avoid disappointment.</p>
<p>Jun Fri 7th 2 - 3pm</p> <p>TICKETS £5 (members £4)</p>	<p>Historic Caversham Walk Guides: Megan Aldrich & Helen Lambert</p> <p>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.</p>

Houses and Estates Talks Series with tea and cake afterwards	
Face-to-Face	TICKETS £5 (members £4)
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 Houses and Estates series for £12.50 (members £10).	
Mar Thu 7th 2 - 3.30pm Final talk in the Around Reading Series	A History of Wargrave: with Peter Delaney The village of Wargrave is on the Berkshire bank of the river Thames between Reading and Henley, with the parish including the hamlets of Crazies Hill and Hare Hatch. Recorded in the Domesday Survey, the talk will look at people, places and events from over 900 years of its history. The story includes kings, queens and bishops, village benefactors, farmers and many others - some well-known, others less so. The impact of forward-thinking villagers, national events, and its growth in the 19th and 20th centuries will be illustrated with photographs from the last 150 years
Apr Thu 11th 2 - 3.30pm First talk in the Houses and Estates Series	Tilehurst's Big Houses: Dellwood, The Laurels & Kentwood: with Katie Amos 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.
May Thu 9th 2 - 3.30pm Second talk in the Houses and Estates Series	Purley Hall and Charles Bridgeman: with Ben Viljoen Ben Viljoen, a founder member of Berkshire Gardens Trust, has always been interested in the history of 18th century English landscape gardening. He was delighted to find that both Charles Bridgeman, father of the English Landscape movement, and Humphry Repton, who succeeded Lancelot Brown, did work in Purley. His talk will be about the rich history of Purley Hall, a secluded Jacobean manor house that is not open to the public, and its connection with Charles Bridgeman.
Jun Thu 13th 2 - 3.30pm Final talk in the Houses and Estates Series	Caversham Park - 930 Years at the Centre of History: with Dr Stephen Goss 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
Natter Group - Online - Free	
Mar 5th Apr 2nd May 7th Jun 4th	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.

Potpourri Social History Talks	
Two Online & One Face-to-Face	TICKETS £5 (members £4)
<p>Pre-booking required. This quarter, our Spring Potpourri Series has a slightly different format. This time, the series is focused on the Second World War and setting the scene for D-Day. It comprises two online talks which can be booked individually or as a package together for the price of £8 (members £7). The third talk is face-to-face and our special D-Day event - a fish and chips lunch after which we will have a D-Day talk with Q&A afterwards. This third talk is priced at £12 (to include lunch) (members £10) and need to be booked separately to the series ticket.</p>	
<p>Mar Thu 21st 2 - 3.15pm</p> <p>Final talk in Winter Potpourri series</p>	<p>The Battle of Britain: with Richard Marks</p> <p>In 1940, Britain stood alone following the fall of France. With the German army poised across the channel, only the RAF could prevent the Luftwaffe from gaining the air supremacy needed to successfully mount the expected invasion. Historian Richard Marks will look at how the RAF's systems and equipment allowed them to prevent the invasion.</p>
<p>Apr Thu 25th 2 - 3.15pm</p> <p>First talk in Spring Potpourri Series</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p>The British Army in WW2: with Richard Marks</p> <p>The personnel of the British Army served across the globe during World War Two, from Iceland to Australia, from the Falklands to East Russia. The army grew from the small peacetime force that went to war in 1939 to the huge modern force that Britain had at its disposal by the latter stages of the war. This talk explores how the army was structured and what it was like to be in the service. The women's forces supported the army - but in what ways and where did they serve? How was the army equipped and how did this change during the war? Why was the British Army actually more mechanised than the vaunted German army of 1940 and what did that mean to every soldier? Find out more in this talk.</p>
<p>May Thu 23rd 2 - 3.15pm</p> <p>Second talk in Spring Potpourri Series</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p>The Technology of D-Day: with Richard Marks</p> <p>The large raid on Dieppe in August 1942 was a complete failure. However, it provided important lessons to the allies which, complimented by experiences of landings in North Africa during Operation Torch, made the D-Day Landings in 1944 a success. One of the key lessons learned was that special equipment and new tactics were needed to successfully mount an invasion. But what did miniature submarines and divers have to do with the D-Day landings? What was a Bobbin or a Crab, and why did the Royal Engineers have their own special tanks? How did the allies control the beaches once troops were landing and how did they deal with the formidable German defences? Find out more in the fascinating talk.</p>
<p>Jun Thu 27th 2 - 3.15pm</p> <p>D-Day special F2F event - talk with fish and chips lunch</p> <p>£12 (members £10) includes lunch</p>	<p>D-Day: with Mike Cooper</p> <p>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.</p>

Thomas Willats: High Sheriff and Prisoner

Laurel Davies *lifts the lid on the ups and downs faced by one man*

At one time, Willats was a fairly common surname in Berkshire. My 4x great grandfather John Yard Willats (1782-1855), was a Mayor of Reading, a maltster, and a partner with William & Charles Blandy in the Mill Lane Brewery. His name has appeared in this publication before in an article by my cousin Les Hooper (Willats, Yard, & Hooper: Three Reading Families, June 2007). This article focuses on John Yard's cousin (once removed), Thomas Willats (1762-1852).

In 1685 John Yard's 2x great grandfather, Moses Willats, mealman of Reading, married Hannah Cartwright, the miller's daughter at Caversham. Hannah's brothers Charles and Edward took over the mill after the death of their father Thomas in 1690, but both Cartwright brothers died young with no male heirs, so when Edward wrote his will in 1729 he passed his property to various nieces and nephews. To his sister Hannah's son Thomas Willats (1698-1741) he bequeathed

"All those my Mills called Caversham Mills and the dwelling house thereunto belonging wherein I now dwell and all that my Lock called Caversham Lock And all outhouses buildings lands Eyotts Waters Weares Floodgates Shuices Fishings Profits Advantages and Appurtenances whatsoever."

Thomas Willats had married Elizabeth Simmonds in 1720 and between 1722 and 1739 they had seven children that survived to adulthood. Thomas died in 1741, and his wife Elizabeth in 1771. They are buried together under a double headstone in the churchyard of St. Peter, Caversham.

Thomas Willats the Elder

Their eldest son was another Thomas, (1722-1786) who followed his father as miller at Caversham. He married Elizabeth Toovey in 1751, which brought a connection to the Powell family of Englefield, one member of which was wealthy bachelor Thomas Powell of Kidmore End.

Thomas Willats and his wife Elizabeth had five daughters in quick succession, and then in 1762, their final child and only son was born - Thomas (1762-1852), our subject. He was baptised at St. Peter Caversham and Thomas

Powell was named his godfather. Thomas Powell died in 1768, aged 50, never having married or produced a legitimate heir. He remembered his godson in his will:

"To my Godson Thomas Willats the younger Son of Thomas Willats the Elder of Caversham aforesaid Mealman the sum of Three hundred pounds when he shall attain his age of twenty one years"

Then, surprisingly, Powell named Thomas Willats the elder, his residuary legatee. And perhaps unsurprisingly, Powell's "heirs at law" were reluctant to accept this will until it was upheld in the Chancery Court (Willats v Tovey C12/1484/19 and Willatts v Carter C12/1518/61).

About the year 1769 Thomas Willats, mealman of Caversham, became the owner of the lovely Georgian house at Kidmore End and set about becoming Thomas Willats, esquire. He added to his already sizeable estate by purchasing the properties which were formerly leased, as he wrote in his 1783 will:

my Locks Mills Fishery Lands and all other the premises which I purchased of William Sheldon Esquire situate and being in the parishes of Caversham aforesaid and of Saint Lawrence in Reading in the County of Berks

my two Eyotts one whereof is situate in Caversham aforesaid and the other in the parish



St. Peter's Church, Caversham, Reading, from the north-east, showing the church, and part of the churchyard with tombstones (courtesy of Reading Local Studies Illustration Collection)

of St. Mary Reading aforesaid and all other the premises which I purchased of the late Mrs Watlington

He served as High Sheriff of Oxfordshire in 1772 and four years later arranged the marriage of his daughter Mary to Richard Jesson, the largest iron maker in the West Bromwich area. Perhaps inspired by his experience in chancery court, he apprenticed his son Thomas to an attorney in Henley for five years, and then sent him to St. Mary Hall, Oxford.

In 1786, at age 69, Thomas Willats the elder died. His fourteen-page will reveals both his wealth and his generosity: he left approximately £6000 to his extended family, friends and neighbours, and the poor of Caversham parish. It also reveals what I interpret as a controlling nature. He had failed to give his son the legacy of £300 (approximately £50,000 in today's money) from Thomas Powell when he came of age and Thomas wasn't to take it after his father's death either:

and in case my said Son shall refuse to give up and release his right and title to the said Legacy or Sum of Three hundred pounds and the interest thereof and to execute such Release and Discharge for the same as aforesaid Then I do hereby declare that the Devise of all and every the said devised Messuages Lands and Premises to him as aforesaid shall be absolutely void and of none effect

Thomas Willats the Younger

So at age 24 Thomas, our subject, came home from Oxford to become head of his family and follow in his father's footsteps. Two years later he married Elizabeth Laura Littlehales, daughter of Baker John Littlehales of Moulsey, Surrey (see Debrett's) and in 1792 at age 30, served as High Sheriff of Oxfordshire, 20 years after his father.

He seems to have been a bookish man, subscribing to books of poetry and travel, and being remembered in his mother-in-law Maria Littlehales' 1794 will:

I desire that my Furniture & all other effects not bequeathed in this Will may be sold without any Auction to Thomas Willats Esquire my son in Law -- I desire may be paid Eight Hundred pounds due to him upon my Bond one year after my decease, likewise Fifty Books to be chosen by him out of my Collection

Thomas was also a religious man. His children were all baptised at St. Peter, Caversham, but he attended St. Giles in Reading where he was a

follower of the evangelical Rev. William Bromley Cadogan, naming his first son Thomas Cadogan in his honour. After Rev. Cadogan's death, Thomas published a pamphlet in 1798 in defence of Rev. Cadogan and criticizing the new minister of St. Giles, *An apology for the Church of Christ and the Church of England; with a vindication of the doctrines of the late Hon. and Rev. W. Bromley Cadogan*. Thomas was also one of the largest subscribers when the breakaway church St. Mary's Chapel on Castle street, Reading was founded (Berkshire Record Office D/P175/5/1).

Thomas and Laura Elizabeth had seven children – four boys and three girls. The eldest, Thomas Cadogan (1789-1826), was sent to Cambridge in 1807, destined for the Church. The second, Peter John (1793-1875) began his career in the army in 1809. But even in 1803 it was clear that Thomas was in serious financial difficulties. His mother Elizabeth wrote in her will that year of "the anxiety I have to deliver my dear Son Thomas Willats from every pecuniary embarrassment he may have at the time of my decease."

It was hard for me to understand the origin of these "embarrassments." No doubt Thomas had spent much on his children's education, and on becoming High Sheriff for a year. Had he also "inherited" debt from his father along with the mansion house and farms?

In 1809 he leased Kidmore House and much of the estate to James Winch Grave and moved his family to Henley. In 1812, he signed an indenture giving his son Thomas Cadogan the "moiety" of the estate he would normally have inherited only after Thomas's death. The following year, his son Thomas Cadogan brought a case to the Court of Chancery (C13/2797/49 Willats v Willats) requesting the estate be divided between himself and his siblings as per his grandfather's 1783 will. It seems likely that these actions were taken in the



Kidmore End House in 2012

hope that the estate might be protected from his father's creditors.

Thomas Willats, prisoner

However, nothing that Thomas did could satisfy the creditors. In 1817 he was committed to the King's Bench debtor's prison where he remained for the next seventeen years, moving 16 times "within the Rules" but finally residing within the walls.

In 1820, while in prison, he put his property up for auction. But he was not released after selling his estate. Instead, the following year he was the defendant in two separate Chancery cases arising from the sale. One of the purchasers charged that Thomas had not turned over the title deeds to a purchased lot (C13/1429/39 Maitland v Willats). And, more seriously, Ely Stott complained (in C13/1429/49) that Thomas and his several adult children had signed indentures starting in 1814 which mortgaged the Kidmore Estate to Stott as security for loans totalling approximately £18000. Since the terms for repayment had not been met, Stott was asking the court to establish his right to the estate.

It was very exciting to find this document, but instead of answering my questions it just created new ones. How could Thomas have received such large loans from Stott and still not be able to pay his creditors? Did the Court of Chancery decide in favour of Stott in 1821? I already knew that problems with ownership persisted up to 25 years later.

CAUTION. - The KIDMORE END ESTATE, of 680 Acres, situate near Caversham about four miles from Reading, the inherited Property of the late Thomas Willats, Esquire. This is to Caution all Persons against PURCHASING, or LENDING MONEY ON MORTGAGE on the said Estate, for special reasons under unprecedented circumstances; the said Estate being under heavy prior Mortgage to, and the legal representative of, the late Mortgagee, on whose Will have been conflicting decisions in different Courts, now advisedly taking measures to re-open the question of right as to the personal Estate of the said Mortgagee. An exposition of the whole case is now in the Press and will shortly be published. Inquiry may be made of Wm. S. King, Esq., Morley, near Leeds.

Reading Mercury, 11 April 1857

While a prisoner of the King's Bench, Thomas was able to live with his family in rented accommodation "within the rules" after paying a

suitable fee to the prison governor. His wife died there in 1825. His eldest son Thomas Cadogan, who had been appointed Rector of Hadley, Cambridgeshire in 1822, was living with his father when he died in 1826. Both mother and son are buried at St. George the Martyr, Southwark. A happier occasion was the marriage of Thomas's youngest daughter Elizabeth Lydia to William Darnton in 1830, also at St. George the Martyr, a church "within the rules" of the King's Bench, so that Thomas was able to attend and sign as witness.

Thomas Willats spent 17 years in debtor's prison, despite owning an estate at Kidmore End, Oxfordshire. One of the most interesting documents I found regarding his legal troubles was the Chancery case brought by Ely Stott in 1821 (C13/1429/49), when Thomas was in the King's Bench prison.

It can be a struggle to understand Chancery court documents and I have occasionally found clearer descriptions in the law journals available online. So I searched archive.org for "Stott +Willatts" and found "A Report of the Judgment in Dew v Clark and Clark" by Sir John Nicholl. This case was very relevant to my research, but I could not easily have found it by searching TNA Discovery, since Thomas Willats was only one of many witnesses who were not name-indexed.

The case was brought by Stott's daughter, Mrs Charlotte Dew, against Thomas and Valentine Clark, the administrators and main beneficiaries of Stott's will. Mrs. Dew claimed the will was written while her father was of unsound mind. Judge Nicholl's report was a summary of the case as it stood in 1826. The mention of Thomas Willats was brief; it included a description of the initial meeting in July of 1813 between Thomas (the deponent) and Stott (the deceased) after a church service in London.

.... the deceased said, 'No, your name is Willatts, is it not?' the deponent acknowledged his name, but said he had not the pleasure of knowing him; the deceased then said, that he must have some conversation with the deponent, and he led the deponent on towards his house in Hart Street, Bloomsbury; where the deponent being urged to it by the deceased, spent the rest of the day with him. On their way as they walked, the deceased told the deponent, that he knew he was a distressed man; but added, that he would clear the deponent of all his difficulties, and in the hope of that relief, the deponent spent the day with the deceased, and, on the following morning, again called on the deceased by appointment, and

made the deceased acquainted with his situation. The deceased immediately advanced him a sum of 4,500l. to the deponent, and thus his knowledge of the deceased arose, and his intimacy with him began.” ...

The behaviour of both men was so odd - I had to know more! So I ordered PROB/37/553 Dew v Clark and Clark (and then DEL 2/21 Clark and Clark v Dew) at the National Archives.

These documents were almost overwhelming – Nicholl’s report described it as “perhaps one of the greatest masses of evidence that was ever presented to this Court.” There were over a hundred pages of depositions and exhibits by Stott’s family and friends relating to his state of mind over a period of years, including twenty-one letters - some 13,000 words - written by Thomas Willats between 1813 and 1823.



Thomas Willats’ letters

I tackled the letters first. In many ways they are typical personal letters; they mention the weather, ask after mutual acquaintances, and relate snippets of Willats family news, such as visits to the Jessons in Staffordshire, and from his brother-in-law Sir Edward Littlehales and family. Quite often Thomas refers to his own ill health.

In the early letters Thomas often wrote paragraphs of a strictly religious nature, referring to sin, Satan, prayer, and divine blessings. He considered his friendship with Stott was “formed upon christian principle.” So perhaps it is only surprising to our modern ears to read Thomas’s comments on his youngest son’s illness. Bendall Toovey Willats (1796-1832) was suffering from a “nervous complaint” in September 1813.

I cannot but hope that many blessings will flow out of this trial, who knows but God may be preparing him to declare to sinners the glad tidings of salvation by preaching the gospel of Christ, or who knows but something which may drop from his lips may be blessed of God to the conversion of others of my family, I think it is our duty to look at afflictions in this point of view.

However, I also noted that at least half of the letters to Stott contain some sort of excuse - for a late reply or a neglected visit, and especially in the summer of 1814, putting off a visit by Stott to Henley. I began to wonder whether Thomas’s friendship with Stott was sincere. And as Thomas’s financial difficulties increased in 1816 and 1817 his letters to Stott became more business-like.

Caught in a lie

In a letter Thomas wrote to Stott’s lawyers in June 1820, he explains why his debts were not cleared after the supposed sale of his estate.

Perhaps as you attended the sale of the estates yesterday, you might suppose they were bona fide sold; but the fact is, that in consequence of the biddings being so much below what we consider to be the worth of the property, all were bought in, except the last lot, which was purchased by Col. Maitland,

The last of Thomas’s letters was written in 1823, after Stott’s death. It is an (unsuccessful) begging letter sent from the King’s Bench prison to Thomas Clark, Stott’s nephew and beneficiary. In it, Thomas Willats first blames his own father for his current situation.

I began my career of difficulties in 1786, which was the year my father died; the fact was, he left me only a legacy of £50, in cash, with the Oxfordshire estates ...; he moreover left my Mother executrix to his Will, so that I was obliged to pay her interest every year for all the stock of the farm he occupied, and which I took upon myself at his death; he also had neglected for many years the necessary repairs of the different farms, the consequence was that the tenants would not take fresh leases unless I would engage to put them in proper repair, I, therefore, was compelled to borrow a sum of money for this purpose, and this was the beginning of all my embarrassments,

Then he blames Ely Stott:

Perhaps you are not aware of it, but Mr. Stott was principally the cause of my coming into this neighbourhood, as he often declared he would

remove all my pecuniary embarrassments, and kept pressing me to have more money

Finally he blames his family, first for extravagant spending,

my family, finding I had met with such an extraordinary friend in Mr. Stott, they launched out, and ran up bills in so many directions,

and then for offending Ely Stott during a visit, so that

... he declared to them, "that they should pinch in another way;" and when he returned to town, he thought of an expedient that would effectually check them, and sent for me to consult me upon it; but it was an unfortunate expedient for me, as prior to this, he had not hinted to me the subject of the mortgage to secure the sums he had advanced, but he now insisted upon it, and of course I could not, as an honest man, object to it,

Thomas was able to carry on for a time, thanks to family support and his ability to acquire almost everything on credit.

After some time, Mrs. Willats wrote to her Brother, [Sir Edward Littlehales] and laid our distressed case before him, and as he had an income of £8000 a year; he agreed to allow her £300 a year, upon condition we would move from Henley, into a small house, in the neighbourhood of London, this was agreed to, and as soon as we could leave Henley, we took a house at Somers' Town, for one year, but in the course of that year there were bills run up unknown to me, (as I spent much of my time with my Mother, who then lived at Reading,)

Much of Thomas's explanation has the ring of truth. But I have caught Thomas in a lie: I know that Thomas's mother Elizabeth Toovey died in 1812, several years before Thomas met Ely Stott and the family moved to Somers Town. Are there any other lies that I cannot detect?

What the depositions reveal

Next I turned to the witness depositions. These were meant to reveal Stott's state of mind and behaviour, but Thomas's answers also reveal much about himself.

Thomas stated that he frequently stayed at Stott's house, for days and sometimes weeks at a time, spending between five and six months with him during the first two years of their friendship. It was Stott's practice every evening to "expound a portion of the scriptures" to his servants, and to pray

"extempore, and in prayer, or that which he substituted for prayer, he was loud, vehement, and extravagant; his prayers were mere rhapsody, but he had a notion that they were excellent and effectual; ... he frequently expressed his astonishment that they did not produce a greater effect upon the Deponent; he wondered that the Deponent was not, as he said, moved to tears"

A few months after their friendship began, Stott introduced the subject of his daughter Charlotte, living elsewhere at the time, whom he described as "the special property of Satan, and the peculiar victim of evil" and "most abandoned in conduct, and depraved in heart and mind." When Thomas finally met Charlotte he found her to be "the reverse of all that her Father had described her to be." He tried to bring about a reconciliation between father and daughter, but eventually gave up, finding that it was useless to reason with Stott, since he became

"very speedily, quite furious upon the subject ... there was a wildness in his eye, and a degree of excitement about him, that in the Deponent's judgment, plainly indicated a disordered mind".

Many witnesses testified to Stott's extreme behaviour. When questioned about Stott's treatment of his servants, Thomas related the following incident.

On one occasion, when the Deponent was staying at the Deceased's house ... the Deceased desired to have his boots, the servant boy brought them ... the Deceased looked at them, and said, now take them away again, the boy did so, and the Deceased then followed him down stairs, and the Deponent heard him flogging the boy unmercifully; the cries of the boy were distressing, but the Deponent did not dare go to his relief. The Deponent is a small man, and the Deceased was very powerful, and his passion ungovernable;

Then Thomas went on to relate an incident that occurred in May 1816, after he and Stott were no longer on friendly terms. Thomas had continued to call occasionally to ask after Stott's second wife Susan Terry, whom he had known before her marriage. She had been ill but was improving when Stott unexpectedly sent for Thomas early one morning. Thomas went to Stott's house

and found him in his parlour; the Deponent said, how shocked he was to hear of Mrs. Stott's death. The Deceased replied, "Yes, I killed her." The Deponent asked him what he could possibly mean, the Deceased said again, that

he had killed her; I gave her too strong a dose, (he said,) it did not occur to me that she was in such a weak state. The Deceased spoke this with extraordinary coolness, and almost immediately afterwards began talking upon other subjects, as though no such event, as the death of his Wife, had occurred at all. The Deponent remembers the Deceased's conduct upon that occasion well; it was most remarkable; when he first knew the Deceased, and for some time, he looked upon the Deceased as a very eccentric man; but afterwards, the Deponent considered that there must be, and he has no doubt that there was, disorder in his mind.

Thomas Willats was clearly shocked by Stott's behaviour, but not necessarily by the cause of Mrs. Stott's death. Ely Stott was a "doctor" whose medical practice was based on the use of electricity. He had become interested in this new field around 1780, not long after its first use in England in 1767, and his practice had flourished. But Thomas deposed that Stott held

extravagant notions as to what he could accomplish by means of electricity; he seriously declared, and seemed to be fully convinced, and was, as the Deponent believes, that "a supernatural power attended him" in the use of electricity.

There was no inquiry into Mrs. Stott's death and in fact, Stott married a third wife in 1818. Would it have been different if the circumstances around the death of the first Mrs. Stott, shortly after Charlotte's birth, had been known? A witness told the court

The Deponent perfectly well recollects the circumstance of the deceased being accused, at the time of his wife's death, of recommending her washing in cold water shortly after her confinement, and that it terminated fatally.

So it is clear from Thomas's own statements that he spent nearly six months living with a

man whom he considered "*a very passionate man, and extremely self-opinionated; much that was repulsive, and something of what was extravagant, might be attributed to that, particularly as he was uneducated and illiterate*". But Thomas has been described as a "small man." He was in financial difficulties and his whole estate had been mortgaged to Stott.

I think that despite all his difficulties, and perhaps some poor decisions, Thomas retained the respect of his family. I have no direct evidence for this, only two references to him in family wills. First, Thomas's brother-in-law Sir Edward Baker Baker (formerly Sir Edward Baker Littlehales) made provisions in his 1822 will for annuities to Thomas's wife and daughters, and for the maintenance of his son Bendall Toovey, who needed care all his life, as well as bequests of money to each of Thomas's children.

The second is the 1822 will of Thomas's son-in-law Edward Sellon, married to his daughter Laura. Edward died aged 30 after only five years of marriage and in his short poignant will he leaves a personal item to each of his close family members - his Bible, a favourite book, a ring, a brooch - and to Thomas Willats, a wish for his freedom.

to my dear father in law Mr. Willats to my dear kind friend Free.

After his release from the King's Bench in 1834, Thomas continued to live in Surrey. He seems to have maintained good relations with his family, witnessing his daughter Juliana's marriage to Daniel Burton in 1835 and subscribing in 1847 to his grandson Edward Sellon's first book "Herbert Brakespeare." He died at age 90 at the home of his widowed daughter Laura (Sellon) Booty. Fifteen years later, Laura and her sister Elizabeth Lydia Darnton finally administered their father's estate. Thomas left no will and less than £20.

How do I log in to YourTrees?

This question has been asked twice this week so it's probably time for a general reminder.

1. Login to the website as normal
2. A second menu will appear - for YourTrees
3. Select a YourTrees menu item
4. When prompted to login, the username is literally the word member
5. The password is shown in the menu

A supplementary question also comes up regularly. How do I edit the details online? The answer is simple. You don't. As a matter of policy, to protect your data from getting out of sync with your local copy, we don't allow online editing. If something changes, update your local copy and send us a new GEDCOM file. We'll overwrite your existing tree with the new version.

There's no limit to the number of GEDCOM submissions you can make.



News from the Royal Berkshire Archives

Ivone Turnbull, Senior Archivist at the Royal Berkshire Archives

Readers may be interested to note that the RBA is now on the Reading Borough Council public wi-fi service. So next time you visit, if you wish to use the wi-fi, you will need to sign up to the new service. It is still free to connect though!

In other news, we are working on making a remote access version of our 'How to Read Old Handwriting' workshop. This will take some time to put together, as we need to consider how to make an all-day in person workshop work just as well as a shorter online affair. Keep an eye out on our website for developments in the coming months, as we will be looking for volunteers to help us test the pilot version.

The results of the 2023 Distance Survey will hopefully be available to us soon and we will share our results on our website. However, we would

like to take this opportunity to thank anyone who kindly took the time to complete the survey and provide feedback on our services. It is much appreciated.

Do not worry if you were not able to visit our recent exhibition "Our Favourites", celebrating 75 years of service which looked at favourite items from the collections. The good news is that you can see an online version on our website in the online galleries section.

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 (formerly Twitter), Facebook and Instagram for all the latest information and watch videos on our YouTube channel.

What's New to View at the RBA?

Readers may be interested in recently catalogued records of Reading Gas Company (D/SG8) and the Berkshire operations of its successor, the Southern Gas Board (D/SG10), 1724-1984. There is also a plan for Wallingford Gas Works, 1930 (D/SG12). There are



the 'quietus' accounts of Edward Russell (1653-1727), Treasurer of HM Navy, covering the period 1689-1699, but created 1693-1717 (D/EZ217); and a rather curious strip of 'ticker tape' received at 10.46am on 6 February 1952 announcing the death of King George VI (D/EX2887).



The quietus rolls - D-EZ217 - reproduced with kind permission of the RBA

There are also the final tranche of records of the Pleydell Bouverie family, Earls of Radnor, 1348-1945 (D/EPB) now available; the records of the Crutchley family of Sunninghill Park, 1801-1940 (D/EX2309); the papers of Doris Long, formerly Whitehorn and Gash, 1925-2022 (D/EX2966); and the records of the Blyth (later Currie) family of Woolhampton, 1614-1926 (D/EX2839).

Book Reviews

Vicki Chesterman

The Parish of East Hendred 1821 and 1831 Censuses

The Eureka Partnership, 2023, 20pp stapled booklet, 210mm x 148mm

Shop: £2.50 / UK: £4.05/ Airmail: £6.70

This booklet gives an overview of the parish at the start of the 19th century through the lists prepared by the census enumerators for the 1821 and 1831 censuses. These list the head of household and how many people were in the household. In addition is the Clergyman's Schedules for 1811 and 1821 which list the number of baptisms, burials and marriages in each year. The included Overseers List for 1821 lists how many houses were inhabited, by how many families and whether their chief employment was agricultural or trade, manufacturing and handicrafts. It also says how many were male and how many were female.

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



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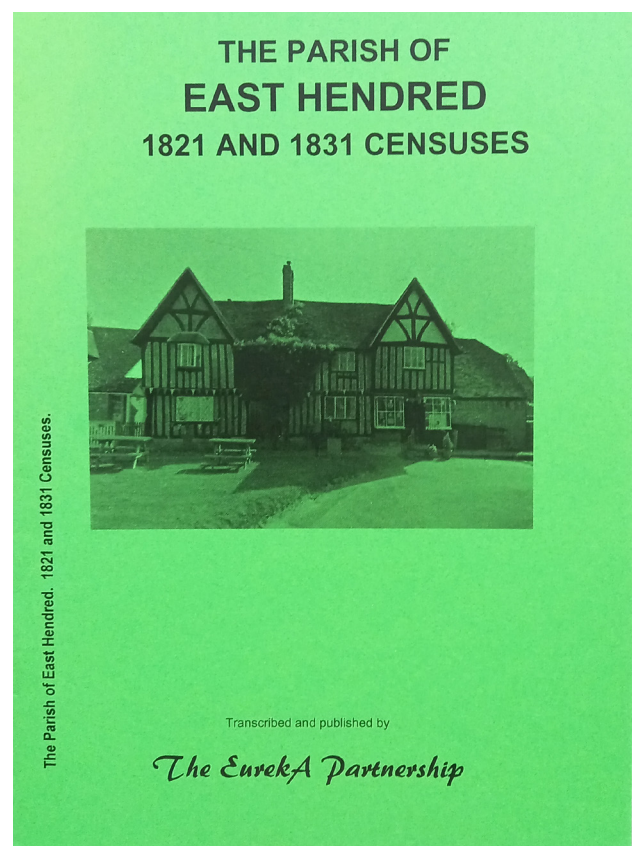
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**Reading Kings Road Baptist Church
Volume 1 Members 1717-1820**

The Eureka Partnership, 2023, 64pp stapled booklet, 210mm x 148mm

Shop: £6.00 / UK: £8.40 / Airmail: £13.50

This booklet lists members of the Kings Road Baptist Church congregation from 1715-1820. For many, it also includes additional notes like when they moved to a different church, when they died, where they lived, and, for women, who they were the wife of. Women may also have their married surnames appended, if they married after joining the church. Members are not solely from the Reading area, but come from as far afield as Hampshire, Faringdon, Maidenhead, Kent, Staines, High Wycombe, and many more.

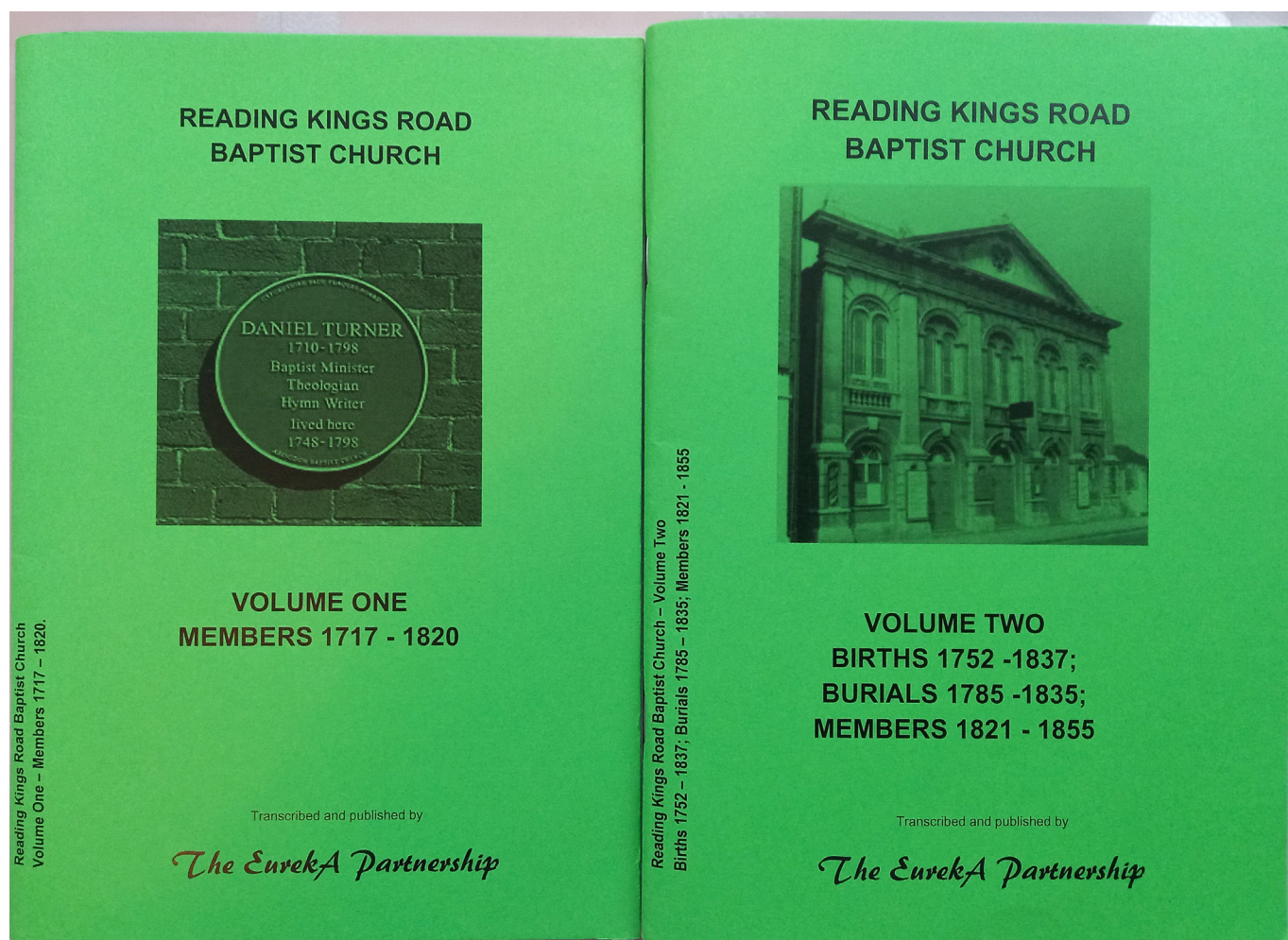
**Reading Kings Road Baptist Church
Volume 2 Births 1752-1817; Burials 1785-1835; Members 1821-1855**

The Eureka Partnership, 2023, 68pp stapled booklet, 210mm x 148mm

Shop: £6.00 / UK: £8.40/ Airmail: £13.50

This booklet details the births, baptisms, burials and members for this Reading Baptist Church. For births, details include date of birth, child's name, parent's names, occasionally, facts such as 'his second wife', and place of abode. Burial information includes date of burial, women's status such as 'wife of' or 'widow', parentage, if a child is being buried, and miscellaneous additional facts that would enhance anyone's family history.

As is usual with The Eureka Partnership publications, these booklets are fully indexed.



An Update from Projects & Publications

Catherine Sampson

We continue to be busy transcribing and checking baptism registers from across the county and by the time you read this, will have just published, or be hopefully about to publish, the next edition of Berkshire Baptisms. The new edition will contain new entries for over 70 parishes, some parishes being new to this edition. It brings the total number of published baptisms to close to 700,00. There are substantial additions for the following parishes: Ashbury, Beedon, Boxford, Bray, Brightwell, Bucklebury, Caversham, Cookham, Denchworth, Didcot, East Hendred, Hungerford, Hurley, Kingston Bagpuise, Letcombe Bassett, Letcombe Regis, Little Coxwell, Maidenhead, Newbury, North Moreton, Reading, Sotwell, Stanford in the Vale, Twyford, Waltham St Lawrence, West Hendred, White Waltham, Windsor, Winkfield, Wokingham and Wytham. Thank you to all of our volunteers who have made this possible.

I am repeating my appeal for some more volunteers with experience of MySQL to help prepare datasets for publication. Is this something you could do?

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 already have one volunteer who is working on uploading data to



FMP, however we are seeking more volunteers 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

Bank Account Changes Coming Soon

As you are aware in the latter part of 2023 we successfully transferred Berkshire Family History into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). This move, as well as giving us a new charity number of 1204390, means that we will be needing a new bank account. This is currently being processed.

Those who pay by Direct Debit do not need to

take any action - your existing DD will carry over. The few who continue to pay by Standing Order - which was withdrawn as a valid method of payment for membership fees - will need to amend the bank account details used for their payments to us.

Please keep an eye on any communication from us regarding this.

Around the Branches

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

Abingdon Branch

abingdon@berksfhs.org.uk

On November 20th, we held a focused session at the Abingdon branch. The main task was to help an individual who had hit a dead-end in their family tree research. Our group worked together, pooling our resources and knowledge to tackle this challenge. Additionally, we took time to answer various questions from our members along with a potential new member, providing guidance and sharing insights on genealogical research.

On December 18th, a small group of our branch members met up at the Kings Head and Bell for some informal Christmas drinks. It was a relaxed evening where we chatted about our personal experiences and discoveries in family tree research. Sharing knowledge in such a casual setting was both enjoyable and informative, creating a nice wrap-up to the year's activities.

Meetings ahead:

Unless otherwise stated, meetings are held at Long Furlong Community Centre, Boulter Drive, Abingdon. Doors open at 7.15pm for the meeting to start at 7.30pm.

20th March

Combined Branches Meeting - **Scottish Sources at the Society of Genealogists** by Sue Gibbons

15th April

Coffee, Cake and Chat

20th May

Branch Annual Meeting and The Story of John Phillips, an RAF Volunteer

17th June

Branch meeting - informal chat session

See website for details of future meetings

James Thornber

Computer Branch

computerbranch@berksfhs.org.uk

Meetings Ahead:

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

20th March

Combined Branches Meeting - **Scottish Sources at the Society of Genealogists** by Sue Gibbons

17th April

Digitising your Memorabilia, 3rd in the series (first was in November 2023, handout already available, second will have been in February 2024, handout also available)

15th May

Aliases or by Another Name

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.

Gillian Stevens

Newbury Branch

newbury@berksfhs.org.uk

Meetings ahead:

Unless otherwise stated, meetings are held at West Berkshire Museum, The Wharf, Newbury RG14 5AS. Meeting starts at 2pm.

13th March

The Craven Family by Clive Williams OBE

20th March (Zoom 7.30pm)

Combined Branches Meeting - **Scottish Sources at the Society of Genealogists** by Sue Gibbons

10th April

Education in Thatcham: A Thirst for Knowledge by Sue Ellis

Please see the website for more details.

Around the Branches

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

Reading Branch

reading@berksfhs.org.uk

Reading branch members attended the Combined Branches Meeting in October where they were given a presentation on 'Underused Genealogical Sources' by Lady Mary Teviot.

In November, we had a presentation by Sue Ellis at our in-person venue of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Tilehurst. Sue reminded us of the many sources that can be used to help tell the story of the ordinary people within our families.

In December, we had our annual quiz and short talks. This year's quiz was shorter than usual, which the audience probably appreciated. Following this were two short talks, one of which prompted much discussion about the places mentioned and potential routes of research.

Our January and February meetings are still ahead of us as this is being written but promise to be full of interest and information.

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.

20th March (Zoom)

Combined Branches Meeting - **Scottish Sources at the Society of Genealogists** by Sue Gibbons

25th April (F2F)

Open evening by members

30th May (F2F)

Branch Annual Meeting followed by **Creating a One Street or One Place Study** by Gill Thomas

27th June (F2F)

My Eminent Ancestors by Laurie Page

26th September (Zoom)

Help, My Ancestor Has Vanished by Simon Fowler

Vicki Chesterman

Windsor, Slough & Maidenhead Branch

windsor@berksfhs.org.uk

October delivered a fascinating Combined Branches Meeting with Lady Mary Teviot on "Underused Sources for Genealogical Research" in which she proved to be quite a trooper. In November, Helen Baggott spoke on "The Empress of Ireland - Canada's Titanic" a story that many of us were unaware of despite how soon after the Titanic the disaster occurred. December saw our traditional in-person Xmas Dinner at the Toby Carvery, Old Windsor for which a small but select group gathered. I need to apologise for non-attendance due to an unexpected and last-minute decision to keep my Covid to myself – very frustrating...

Helen Baggott, our November speaker



Looking forward to 2024, our Branch Secretary Mike Bailey is speaking on "The mystery brooch - how family history research helped solve the puzzle" in January. February will bring Gill Blanchard on "The Poor and the Parish" and we round out the quarter with the Combined Branches Meeting in March when Sue Gibbons will speak on "Scottish Sources at the Society of Genealogists".

Meetings ahead:

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

20th March

Combined Branches Meeting **Scottish Sources at the Society of Genealogists** by Sue Gibbons

30th April

Breach of Promise to Marry by Denise Bates

28th May

Agricultural Unrest and the Swing Riots in

A Combined Branches' Special Online Meeting

Wednesday 20th March 2024

7.45pm start (session opens 7.15pm)

Scottish Sources at the Society of Genealogists By Sue Gibbons

Sue Gibbons is the speaker at the March Combined Branches' Special Online Meeting where she will be talking about Scottish sources at the Society of Genealogists. Her talk will include general sources covering Scotland as a whole such as: armed forces records, Scots working and emigrating abroad, apprenticeship, education and occupations, State papers and Historical Manuscripts Commission reports, land and tax records, and wills including inventories and services of heirs. She will also focus on local sources about particular places: registers of churches, both the established church and nonconformist, civil registration records,

monumental inscriptions, census indexes and returns, directories and poll books or lists of voters, the publications of Scottish record societies, family histories and one-name studies both published and unpublished. She will also include internet sources in this comprehensive coverage.

Sue Gibbons was the librarian of the Society of Genealogists for almost 20 years. She has been a member of the Anglo-German FHS since 1987 and is a life member and Fellow of the Society of Genealogists.

D-Day Commemoration Event - Talk and Lunch

Thursday 27th June - starts 1pm

Tickets £12 (members £11) includes lunch

The Centre for Heritage & Family History, 2nd floor, Reading Central Library

This year the country commemorates the 80th anniversary of the Normandy Landings on 6 June 1944. To remember those who served in the Second World War, this quarter's Spring Potpourri series talks set the scene for D-Day.

Our D-Day event begins with a fish and chips lunch and is followed by a talk by historian 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. The Day began with airborne landings during the night, and saw fighting until the following nightfall. For more details see the event listing on the Society's website.

Pre-booking is required, ticket sales end three days before the talk. If you have any allergies or require a vegetarian option – please advise us of this during the booking process.



D-Day Landing – Chief Photographer's Mate (CPHOM) Robert F. Sargent, U.S. Coast Guard, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons (cropped)

When My GGG-Great Aunt Terrified The Queen

Richard Peaver recounts a royal tale

My great-great-great-great-grandmother, Ann Davenport (or Devenport) (c.1753–1828), served in the royal household of George III, at Windsor, for many years. She was employed initially as “Necessary Woman” to the Princesses and is later described in Queen Charlotte’s account book as “Housekeeper at Lower Lodge”, Windsor. It seems likely that her husband was Thomas Davenport (or Devenport), Assistant to the Queen’s Pages from c.1777–c.1801, when he probably died.

Ann (right, in an oil painting from 1790) and Thomas had four children, William (died after 1818), Martha Caroline (1785–1811) and my great-great-great-grandmother, (Georgiana) Sophia Goertz (née Davenport) (1788–1818). However, a bizarre, and very sad, event concerns the 4th child, a girl whose names and age are not known. It is vividly described in a number of contemporary journals, including *The London Chronicle*, *The Literary Panorama*, *The London Annual Register* and the splendidly named *Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure*, and is also referred to in a letter to the Prince Regent dated 10th August 1813 from the Queen of Württemberg.

The report in the *Edinburgh Annual Register* for 1813 is typical of the way in which the strange incident is related. It reports that, on 2nd May:

The prince regent received an account from Windsor, of the queen’s being indisposed, in consequence of an attack from a female domestic, who was seized with a violent fit of insanity. The prince ordered a special messenger to be sent to



Windsor, to enquire after the health of his royal mother, and the full particulars of the attack. On the return of the messenger the prince sent off Sir

Henry Halford, at seven o’clock in the evening, to attend her majesty. The circumstances of the attack are stated as follow:- The unfortunate female who caused the alarm is named Davenport, and held the situation of assistant mistress of the wardrobe to Miss Rice. Her mother has been employed a number of



Queen Charlotte (1744 - 1818) by Thomas Gainsborough [public domain] via Wikimedia Commons

years about the royal family; she was originally engaged as a rocker to the princesses; and after filling a variety of situations very respectably, until she has attained the high office of being housekeeper at the Lower Lodge, Windsor. Her daughter, the subject of this article, was born in the queen's palace; she is now upwards of 30 years of age, and has lived constantly with her mother, under the royal protection. When she was a girl, she was attacked with a fit of insanity, but was considered perfectly cured; however, she has frequently been seized with fits of melancholy, crying and being very desponding, without any known cause. Her mind had been more affected since the death of the Princess Amelia. She was present at the delivery of the funeral sermon which was preached at Windsor on the melancholy occasion, and which had such an effect on her mind, that she became enamoured of the clergyman who delivered it, and report assigns love to be the cause of the violent mental derangement with which she was seized on Sunday morning. She slept in the tower over the queen's bed-room. About 5 o'clock her majesty was awakened by a violent noise at her bed-room door, accompanied with a voice calling loudly for the queen of England to redress her

wrongs, and with the most distressing shrieks and screams imaginable. The queen's bed-room has two doors; she used such violence as to break open the outer door, but found herself unable to break the inner one. Mrs Beckendorf, the queen's dresser, sleeps in the room with her majesty. They were both extremely alarmed, particularly at first. Her majesty and Mrs Beckendorf hesitated for some time about what had best be done; when having ascertained that it was a female voice, Mrs Beckendorf ventured to open the inner door and go out. She there found Miss Davenport, with only her bodylinen on. She was extremely violent with Mrs. B., insisting upon forcing her way into the queen; and the latter feared that, could she have obtained her object of getting into the queen's bed-room, she would have vented her rage upon her majesty, from the language she used. She had a letter in her hand, which she insisted on delivering to the queen. Mrs Beckendorf was placed in a most perilous situation for about half an hour, being subject to her violence and endeavouring to prevent her from forcing her way in to the queen; and during this time the queen heard all that was passing, and was in great agitation and distress, lest Miss Davenport should gain admittance to her; the unfortunate female declaring the queen could and should redress her wrongs. Mrs Beckendorf in the mean time kept ringing a bell in the passage, but unfortunately did not at first awake any one, though at last the incessant and violent ringing of it awoke Mr Grobecker, the queen's page, and two footmen, who came to Mrs Beckendorf's assistance. Miss Davenport made



Princess Amelia (1783-1810) after William Beechey [public domain] via Wikimedia Commons

use of very profane language to Mr Grobecker. All these persons could not manage her till Mr Meyer, the porter, came, and he being a very powerful man, accomplished it. When she found herself overpowered, she insisted on seeing the king, if she could not see the queen. Mr Meyer carried her by force up to her bed-room, laid her on her bed, and covered her with some clothes, but she kicked them all off. Dr Willis¹ was sent for, who ordered her a strait waistcoat; and she was sent off in a post-chaise, accompanied by two keepers, to a house at Hoxton² for the reception of insane persons.

In her book *Princesses – the Six Daughters of George III* (pub. John Murray, 2004), the historian Flora Fraser describes the reaction of Princess Augusta to this alarming event:

Princess Augusta wrote to Sir Henry Hallford (physician to several members of the Royal family) from Windsor on 2 May 1813: ‘The chambermaid Davenport (who has been very strange for a long time past) went raving mad in the night and at five this morning she flew down to the Queen’s door.’ Davenport knocked and called out to Mrs Beckedorff (sic) who went out to her. Davenport declared she would see the Queen, and Princess Augusta too. Upon Mrs Beckedorff telling her ‘in her mild way’ that she would not wake the Queen but that she should see her in the morning, the chambermaid ‘threw herself on the floor and swore and screamed in the most violent manner.’

The matter passed out of the royal ladies’ hands when Dr Willis’s men, hastily summoned from across the quadrangle, placed the girl under restraint. ‘In that state’, wrote Augusta with horror, she was now – ‘thank God’ – gone to London. And, Dr Millman, for whom her mother had an ‘adoration’, not being available, Dr Baillie came to quiet the Queen.

The reports suggest that the unfortunate Miss Davenport, who had clearly suffered from mental problems since childhood, had been greatly affected by the funeral of Princess Amelia, a “beautiful and slender girl with ruby lips and auburn hair” and “amiable, spirited, unselfish and intelligent”, who had died in 1810, having suffered from ill health for several years. The Princess’s funeral, as was royal custom, took place in the evening of 13th November. A contemporary account described the ceremony. In the “Grand Procession” to the Chapel Royal, the hearse was followed by two royal carriages containing attendants of the late Princess, including Mrs. Davenport. Behind them came the carriages of



Sir Henry Halford (1766 - 1844) from medical portrait gallery [public domain] via Wikimedia Commons

the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Cambridge. (Both Princess Amelia and the Duke of Cambridge were godparents to two of Sophia's children, who were named after their royal sponsors.)

Once inside the Chapel, the funeral procession made its way up the aisle, Ann Davenport taking her place with the "Ladies attendant on Her Majesty and the Princesses", led by Lady Albinia Cumberland and including "Madame" Beckendorff. The latter, who was German, was Mistress of the Wardrobe, a close companion to the Queen and a friend of Sophia's family, as is evident in letters exchanged between Sophia and her husband Heinrich Goertz while the latter was on a mission for the Queen in Hanover. (Eight years later, Mrs. Beckendorff would hold Queen Charlotte in her arms for long hours during the Queen's last illness.) Ann's daughter (her name is not known) took her position in the rearmost group, consisting of the Queen's and Princesses' dressers. The emotion of the occasion, at the late evening hour, in darkest autumn, clearly affected the girl deeply, not to mention her developing a "crush" on the officiant! It is not known what became of the

poor young woman following her fit of insanity. In the early 19th century, "lunatics" were beginning to be treated with more compassion than in previous ages, but there was no treatment and "the house at Hoxton" gained an unfavourable reputation owing to its lack of care for its inmates. We must assume that my unfortunate great-great-great-great-aunt died in the madhouse. Fortunately, this episode did not dampen the Queen's affection for Ann and her son-in-law Heinrich. After a lifetime's service in the household, the old lady, who had sadly outlived Sophia, retired in 1819 in receipt of a royal pension of £215 p.a. and died in 1828 aged 75. Her headstone in Old Windsor churchyard, using the alternative spelling of her surname, bears the inscription: "IN MEMORY OF/ ANN DEVENPORT/ NEARLY FIFTY YEARS A FAITHFUL/ SERVANT IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF/ HIS LATE MAJESTY, AND MOTHER/ TO THE LATE MRS GOERTZ/ DIED JANY 14TH 1828/ AGED 75 YEARS".

Endnotes

1. This would have been one of the two sons of the famous alienist, Dr. Francis Willis, who through his revolutionary treatments had apparently "cured" George III – at least temporarily – of the monarch's earlier bout of insanity. After Willis' death in 1807, his physician sons continued to minister to the King.
2. Hoxton House was a lunatic asylum that achieved notoriety through its scandalously neglectful and sometimes cruel treatment of its inmates.



The John Willis Family of Dorchester and Caroline Counties, Maryland

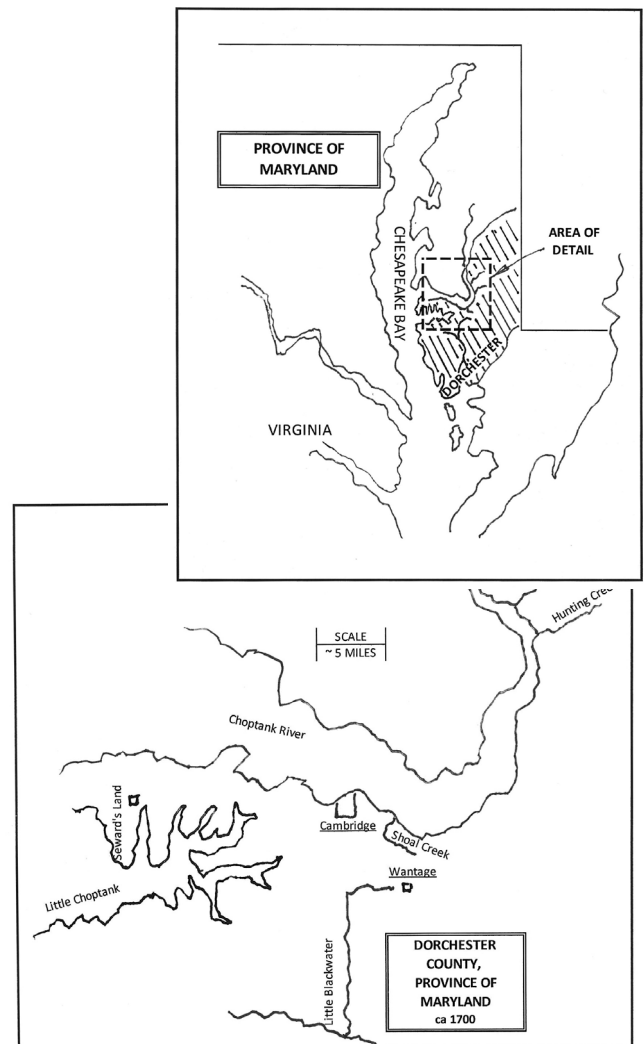
Gary N. Willis tells of a life after Berkshire

John Willis Sr was born before 1668 in Wantage, then Berkshire, England. He grew up with fond memories of this village before emigrating as a young man to the Province of Maryland. There, John gained employment with the Dorchester County Court at Cambridge and married in about 1687. He and his wife initially lived on rented land, raising a family and working off the cost of his passage to the New World. He farmed the rented property as a primary livelihood since the part time nature of the work at court sessions did not provide steady or sufficient income. In 1702, John was able to patent his own property and acquired 50 acres, which he named 'Wantage' after his hometown.

By the time the family moved onto Wantage, John and his wife had six children: John Jr, Andrew, Thomas, William, Grace, and Elizabeth. With two teenage boys to help with the land, the Willises farmed tobacco for cash, tended a truck garden and raised chickens and livestock for their own use. There were plenty of chores for the younger children. The Willises formed a close friendship with the families of neighbour William and Jennet Jones and with John and Dorothy Stevens who resided at 'Littleworth'.

As the years went by, John Jr learned the carpentry trade and married Mary (last name unknown). They moved to rented land close by. Andrew married Jennet Jones, the neighbour's daughter, and rented land near William Jones' new property on Shoal Creek. William, the youngest son, married Judith Seward, and they lived at Wantage with the elder Willises and Grace, Elizabeth, and Thomas. Soon, Thomas went to live with his brother John to help farm his rented land. Thomas then married Grace Bexley. He and John Jr each acquired land in part of Dorchester County that would become Caroline County. William took over running Wantage, while Judith helped care for an ailing Mrs. Willis. Before long, Mrs. Willis passed away leaving William and Judith along with Grace and Elizabeth living at Wantage with John Sr.

As the health of John Sr began to fail in 1712, he made a will rewarding William (and his wife Judith), Grace and Elizabeth for their steadfast support. John Jr contested the will, but it was allowed to stand. John Jr, Andrew, and William



each had children. For the next three hundred years, descendants of these three brothers intermarried with families on the Eastern Shore. The family history is a rich and interesting story of women and men. A handful fought in the revolution. Some were instrumental in establishing the early Methodist church in the region. Most were farmers. Some became doctors and Court justices.

This narrative contains some speculative details about John Willis and his family. However, it is consistent with the provable facts. The following part of the article about the family's humble beginnings in the New World will present that proof.

Birth and Birthplace

The best clue to John Sr's home of origin is the name he gave his land. If he followed the

custom of some of his peers, the name Wantage likely came from his hometown. A town of that name formerly located in Berkshire but now in Oxfordshire, is about 50 miles west of London and 80 miles from the city of Cambridge. Internet research shows the town is currently home to several Willis families. The parish registers for St. Peter and St. Paul Church at Wantage (left) lists marriages and births/christenings from 1538 onwards. Among the marriages are three generations of men named John Willis, the last of whom might be the father of John Willis Sr of Maryland¹. The marriage record shows a John Willis married Elizabeth Chapman on 11 Apr 1664. Among the children baptised by this couple is a John Willis on 3 Jan 1668/9. This is strong circumstantial evidence that John Sr in Maryland is the child of John and Elizabeth of Wantage.

John Willis Sr was not the only person from Wantage, England, in the Province. A common labourer named Henry Willis came to Maryland in August 1684 at age 21 on the John & Elizabeth bound to John Moore of London for four years². The ship's record names Henry's father as Leonard Willis³. Evidence that another person emigrated from Wantage supports the theory that John Sr did as well.

Possible First Appearance - 1694

The possible first appearance in Dorchester County records of John Willis Sr is in 1694 when a man by that name was an appraiser of the estate of William Pritchett⁴. A John Willis served as appraiser again in 1700 and 1703⁵. It is logical



to assume the appraiser in all three cases is the same John Willis. An appraiser had to be sworn to this duty and served only with the approval of the court. John Sr served as the Court Crier at the Dorchester County Court and lived on land a few miles from Cambridge, the county capital⁶. Those connections at Court might have led to his appointment as an appraiser.

Land Acquisition – 1702

John Willis patented land from the provincial land office in 1702, acquiring 50 acres called Wantage on the Blackwater River⁷. As already discussed, John may have named this tract after his hometown. John Willis appeared on the 1704 rent rolls as a planter, indicating he was a landholder⁸. Wantage would remain in the family until 1734.

Death of John Willis Sr. – 1712

John Willis made a will on 18 September 1712 and died soon after. The will was presented for probate on 24 November 1712⁹. John Sr had six children surviving at the time he wrote his will. The will only names four of the six. Eldest son John contested the will in part because two children were not named.

In his will, John Sr. provided that:

1. Son William and his heirs would inherit all land and some personal property,
2. Daughter Grace would inherit certain personal property and all the land if William died without issue,
3. Daughter Elizabeth would inherit certain personal property, and
4. Son John would inherit 12 pence.
5. William Jones and Rice Levena to be executors.

John Willis Jr, eldest son of the deceased, filed a will contest on 3 December 1712, asking that administration not be granted the executors because there were only two witnesses to the will, there were two more children not mentioned in the will and he did not believe his father to

be of sound mind at the time of making the will. William Jones, one of the witnesses to the will and a named executor, appeared in support of John Jr¹⁰.

The Court ordered on 20 February 1712/3 that all parties appear in April to give evidence regarding John Sr's mental condition at the time he made his will¹¹. I have found nothing resolving the dispute in the Dorchester County court records, nor any reference to the contest in the probate records of the Prerogative Court. However, apparently the Court ruled against the contest because probate continued under the named executors. Had the Court sustained the contest, the Court would have nullified the will and appointed an administrator. Instead, Inventories and Administration Accounts filed by the executors for the estate of John Willis in 1714 and 1715 indicate that probate moved forward¹².

A few other comments regarding the terms of the will and its administration are in order. First, the will does not name a spouse of John Willis. We can logically assume that she predeceased John. Were she alive, he likely would have named her in the will with a life estate in the land or otherwise provided for her care by their adult children. Last, the will does not use a married surname for either daughter. We can conclude that they were unmarried in 1712.

Unnamed Children of John Willis

Andrew – Andrew is a proven son.

1. An inventory of the estate of John Willis filed at the April 1714 Court Session names Andrew as a son¹³.
2. Andrew continued to live reasonably close to Wantage and his father-in-law was a former neighbour. William Jones, one of the executors of John's will, owned land adjacent to Wantage and is the father of Jennet Jones who married Andrew Willis. Also, Andrew Willis and William Jones are noted in the 1718 will of Thomas Ennals and in a 1722 land sale as having had land adjoining each other at the head of Shoal Creek¹⁴. The head of Shoal Creek is about three miles from Cambridge (near the current Cambridge-Dorchester Airport) and a mile or so from the headwaters of the Little Blackwater River.
3. In a 1730 deposition, Andrew Willis, then aged about 40, gave a sworn statement about the location of a boundary marker for a tract of land called "Littleworth" or "Stevens".

Littleworth frequently appears in the land records as having been adjacent to Wantage. Andrew's knowledge of the boundary would logically derive from having lived at Wantage as a youth¹⁵.

Thomas - Thomas is a proven son.

1. John Sharp sold a 50-acre tract of land on Marshy Creek Branch above Hunting Creek to John Willis Jr on 10 March 1717¹⁶. Less than five months later, Sharp sold an adjoining 50 acres to Thomas Wallis (Willis)¹⁷. Clerks frequently varied the spelling of the name Willis, sometimes within the same document. Those variants include Wallis, Wallace, Wallice, Willace, Willes and Willous. In fact, John Willis Sr appears in early rent rolls as John "Wallis" in possession of "Wantige"¹⁸.
2. Thomas Willis died intestate in 1722. Grace Wallis (Willis) administered his estate in 1722-1724¹⁹. The 15 Nov 1722 inventory filed by Grace Willis was also signed by Andrew Willis and John Willis as kindred of the deceased. Their relationship to Thomas is not stated, but certainly they were his brothers.
3. Andrew Willis and William Willis each named a son Thomas, presumably after their brother.

In conclusion, the John Willis family of Dorchester and Caroline Counties included sons John, Andrew, Thomas and William, and daughters Grace and Elizabeth. Assigning accurate dates of birth to the children is problematic. Andrew was born in about 1690. John Jr was the eldest son and therefore born at least by 1689. A deposition given sometime between 1746 and 1752 establishes that William was born between 1694 and 1700²¹. Grace was named before Elizabeth in the 1712 will, indicating she was likely the elder of the two. The relative ages of Thomas and William are also uncertain, but I suspect William was the younger. It was not uncommon for the youngest son, the last to leave the household, to serve as a caregiver for ageing or ill parents. Such service would put him in good graces with regard to inheritance. The same could be said of a daughter who remained in the household and unmarried.

Establishing a birth order is not necessary to the analysis, but provides a theoretical picture of the family consistent with the known facts. A feasible order of birth satisfying that criterion is:

1688 - John Jr	1694 - William
1690 - Andrew	1696 - Grace
1692 - Thomas	1698 - Elizabeth

Disposition of Wantage

William Willis and his wife Judith apparently lived at Wantage until 1734, when they sold it for six pounds to Richard Seward, likely Judith's brother. However, two weeks prior to that sale, eldest son John Willis sold the same land to Henry Ennalls for 20 shillings.²² The two sales are a puzzle that is not solved by the deed or probate records.

By 1734, John Jr lived many miles from Wantage in what later became Caroline County and had no apparent claim to his father's former tract. However, John Jr's earlier will contest and the fact he was the eldest son may have created some cloud on the title in the eyes of Richard Seward, the prospective buyer. William or Seward may have asked John to relinquish any claim to the land prior to Seward buying it. John could comply by conveying his interest, if any, in the land to William (or Seward), clearing title so his brother's transaction could proceed. Such a transaction would account for the very low price paid in John's deed. The 20 shillings paid to John likely compensated him for his time and travel between his home and Cambridge to complete the transaction²³.

However, the puzzle is that John Jr deeded his interest to Ennalls and not to William or Seward. Something is missing in the record – a power of attorney under which Ennalls was acting on William's or Seward's behalf, or a subsequent transaction from Ennalls conveying John's interest to either Seward or William. Regardless of this mystery, the record is clear that the Willises had no connection to Wantage after 1734 since Richard Seward still possessed the land twenty years later²⁴. William and Judith Willis and their likely son Thomas Willis appeared in later land records of Dorchester County. Those records show them on land some twenty miles west of the Wantage farm. That land was adjacent to land owned by Richard Seward's parents, adding support to the idea that Richard and Judith were related and very possibly brother and sister.

DNA Project

The Willis DNA Project (at <https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/willis/about/news>) has 542 members, 214 with paternal lines surnamed Willis. Of these, thirteen are in the "Maryland Group" believed to be descended from John Willis Sr who came from Wantage. I invite anyone interested in testing to determine if they

are related to one of these Maryland cousins to contact the administrator at the above link.

I welcome any questions or comments about this and other articles about the family posted at the genealogy blog www.digupdeadrelatives.com. Please contact me at the blog or directly at redmarker181969@yahoo.com.

Endnotes

1. W.P.W. Phillimore, editor, *Berkshire Parish Registers, Marriages, Volume 1*, (London:Phillimore & Co., 1908), I:17, John Willis and Annis Robinson, 31 Mar 1600; I:30, John Willis and Alice Lindsey, 19 Aug 1639; and I:41, John Willis, Junr [?] and Elizabeth Chapman, 11 Apr 1664. Also, John and Elizabeth Willis registered the birth or christening of a son John on 3 Jan 1668/9.
2. Peter Wilson Coldham, *The Complete Book of Emigrants, 1661-1699*, (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1990), II:471.
3. *Id.* at 471, and Phillimore, *Berkshire Registers*, I:34, Leonard Willis and Margaret Powell, 8 Sep 1652; I:39, Leonard Willis and Anne Bell, 10 Sep 1659. Henry, born in 1663, fits as a son of either marriage. There is no proven connection between John Willis Sr. and Leonard and Henry of Wantage. However, the names Leonard and Henry appear several times in the descendants of John Willis Sr.
4. Skinner, *Testamentary Proceedings of the Prerogative Court*, VII:61. Court Session 1694 – In the probate of the estate of William Pritchett, John Haslewood of Dorchester County exhibited the bond of Hannah Charlescroft, administratrix of William Pritchett. Securities Richard Owen, Jarvis Cutler. Also inventory by appraisers John Frank and John Willis. Probate Book 15C:125.
5. Skinner, *Testamentary Proceedings of the Prerogative Court*, VIII:180. Court Session May 1700 – In the probate of the estate of Patrick Donelly, attorneys exhibited the inventory of Patrick Donelly by appraisers David Jenkins and John Willis, Probate Book 18A:62, and XI:4. Court Session Oct 1703 – In the probate of the estate of Daniell Seare of Dorchester County, attorneys exhibited Inventories of the estate of Daniell Seare by appraisers John Willis & William Walker. Probate Book 20:4.
6. McAllister, *Abstracts from the Land Records of Dorchester County, Maryland, Volume 9 (Liber Old No. 13: Liber Old No. 14, folios 1-373)*, (Cambridge, MD, 1963), IX:36. 14 Old 130, 14 Mar 1746 – Deposition of Thomas Pierson, planter of Dorchester County, aged about 60 years, states that John Willis now living in St. Mary's White Chappel Parish

near Hunting Creek was to the best of deponent's knowledge the eldest son of John Willis who lived on Blackwater River about 4-5 miles from Cambridge, and who was formerly Cryer of Dorchester County Court.

7. FHL Film No. 13078, *Maryland Land Office*, 194. On 10 Sep 1702, John Taylor assigned to John Willis all right, title and interest in 50 acres of land, part of a warrant for 2,389 acres granted to Taylor on 15 Oct 1692, Book CD4/194, *and Id.* at 194. On 3 Mar 1702/3, the Maryland Land Office issued a survey certificate to John Willis for a tract of 50 acres called Wantage on the Blackwater River, beginning at lowermost boulder of Littleworth, then N 36 deg E 100 perches, N 36 deg W 80 perches, S 36 deg W 100 perches, then straight line to the beginning. Book CD4/194.

8. Hunt, 1. John Willis is mentioned in the "Quit Rents" of 1704 as being a "planter" on file in the Library of Congress and the The National Archives, London, *and* Keddie, Leslie and Neil, *Dorchester County, Maryland, Rent Rolls 1688-1707 Volume #3*, (The Family Tree Bookshop, 2001), 75. Wantige was surveyed for John Wallis on 3 Mar 1702, lying on the Blackwater River beginning at the lowermost bounded tree of "Littleworth". It encompassed 50 acres and the rental was 8 shillings.

9. Cotton and Henry, *Calendar of Wills*, IV:23. Note that the date given in this source for the submission to probate is 24 Nov 1714. This date conflicts with the date John Willis, Jr., filed a protest to the will and the dates of activity in the Prerogative Court records. I conclude the correct date for submission to probate is 24 Nov 1712. *Dorchester County Will Book 14:12*.

10. *Id.* at 23.

11. <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mdwillis/DCWillsWillis.htm#John1712>, Sandra Willis who abstracted numerous documents from primary records in Dorchester, Caroline and Talbot Counties created this site.

12. V.L. Skinner, Jr., *Testamentary Proceedings of the Prerogative Court, Volume XIII, 1712-1716*, (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2008), 113, 124, 132, 153 and 157, *Probate Book L22:256, 368, 378, 452 and 456*.

13. F. Edward Wright, *Judgment Records of Dorchester, Queen Anne's and Talbot Counties*, (Lewes, DE: Delmarva Roots, 2001), 33. L36A:203, Inventory of John Willis, Dorchester County - £23.14.1 – Appraisers John Kirke, Arthur Smith. Next of Kin: Andrew Willis (son), William Willis (son). FHL 975.2 P28w

14. Jane Baldwin Cotton, *The Maryland Calendar of Wills*, IV:167-9. Will Book 14:631, Will of Thomas Ennalls dated 7 May 1718 - To Thomas Hayward and heirs, 50 acres part of "Ennalls Purchase" (plantation

where Andrew Willis lived), at head of Shoal Creek, and on branch lying between Wm Jones and Andrew Willis', proved 13 Au 1718, *and*, James A. McAllister, Jr., *Abstracts from the Land Records of Dorchester County, Maryland, Volume 1 (Liber Old No. 1 – Old No. 2)*, (Cambridge, MD, 1960), I:71. 2 Old 161, 13 Mar 1722 – Land sale from Thomas Hayward to Henry Ennalls, land devised to grantor by Col. Thomas Ennalls, dec'd, at head of Shoal Creek where Andrew Willis lived adj land where William Jones lived, part of "Ennalls Purchase", 50 acres more or less.

15. James A. McAllister, Jr., *Abstracts from the Land Records of Dorchester County, Maryland, Volume 5 (Liber Old No. 7 – Old No. 8)*, (Cambridge, MD, 1962), V:145. 8 Old 404, 13 Jun-30 Sep 1730 - Commission to John Hodson, Mark Fisher, Thomas Nevett & Henry Ennalls, Jr to perpetuate bounds of Patrick Brawhaun's land at the head of Blackwater called "Hoggs Island." Deposition of Andrew Willis, about age 40, regarding the first boulder of "Littleworth" or "Stevens."

16. *Id.* at 16. 7 Old 51, 10 Mar 1717 - John Sharp of Dorchester Co sold to John Willis, of the same county, carpenter, 50 acres, part of "Sharps Prosperity" on Marshy Creek Branch above Hunting Creek. Wits Thomas Noble, Jane Noble. John Nichols, attorney for John Sharp. (Note that Thomas Noble and John Nicols co-owned "Hampton" located on west side of Hunting Creek, bought from Richard Bennett 15 Jan 1713, 6 Old 230)

17. *Id.* at 23. 7 Old 68, no day or month 1717 - John Sharp of Dorchester Co sold to Thomas Wallis, of the same county, 50 acres, part of "Sharps Prosperity" on the south side of the head of Marshy Creek branch out of Great Choptank River above Hunting Creek. Bounded on one side by land sold to John Willis. Wits Jerem? Thomas, J Lookerman. Acknowledged 19 Aug 1718

18. Keddie, 75.

19. Skinner, *Testamentary Proceedings of the Prerogative Court*, XVI:60, 61 and 151. Filings by John Pitts, gentleman, of Dorchester County, bond of Grace Wallis, administratrix of Thomas Wallis, and inventories of the estate of Thomas Wallis, *and* Skinner, *Administration Accounts of the Prerogative Court, Libers 1-5, 1718-1724*, (Westminster, MD:Family Line Publications, 1995), 138. L5:38, Account of Thomas Wallis of Dorchester dated 13 Mar 1723 - Account total £12.17.7, Payments totaled £18.5.2 made to Patrick Mackalister, Mr. Charles Ungle, John Sharp, John Pitt, Edward Billeter, William Edmondson. Administratrix Grace Willis.

20. The land near Hunting Creek was located within St. Mary's White Chapel Parish. Unfortunately, the church

records for that locale that might prove the marital status of Thomas or Grace do not survive.

21. James A. McAllister, Jr., *Abstracts from the Land Records of Dorchester County, Maryland, Volume 10 (Liber Old No. 14, folios 374-741)*, (Cambridge, MD, 1963), X:74. 14 Old 658, 11 Nov 1746 to 27 May 1752, Commission to perpetuate the bounds of John Harrington's land called "Rosses Range" and "David Ropies", and Return. Nine men and women give depositions regarding this land on Hobson's Creek. Among them are William Willis, age about 52; Judah (Judith) Willis, age about 50; and Mary Seward, age 68.

22. Maryland Land Records, 9 Old 223, 30 Jul 1730 [or 1734], John Willis of Dorchester County, planter, for 20 shillings to Henry Ennalls, of same, gentleman, "Wantage," 50 acres, originally taken up by John Willis, dec'd, on Blackwater Riv., adjoining "Littleworth." Signed by his mark, John Willis. Witnesses: William Murray, Bw. Ennalls. Acknowledged 30 Jul 1734, and 9 Old 214, 15 Aug 1734, William Willis and wife Judith of Dorchester Co., planter, for 6 pounds to Richard Seward, of same, "Wantage," 50 acres near head of Blackwater River adjoining "Littleworth." Signed by marks, William Willis, Judith Willis. Witnesses: Henry Trippe, Cha. Lowndes. Dorchester County Court (Land Records) MSA CE46 10, <http://mdlandrec.com>

23. I believe the date of John's transaction to be 30 July 1734, not 1730. The extant deed book is a copy of the original. The recopied document states the

date of the deed in words rather than numbers, "One thousand seven Hundred and thirty." I believe the scribe who recopied it missed the last two words of the date, which under the style of the day should have been "and four". If John intended his transaction just to clear title for William's sale, the following logically occurred. John showed up at the Dorchester County Court when it was in quarterly session. Henry Ennalls drafted a deed that John signed (by mark, he could not read or write). The court justices, including Henry Ennall's brother Bartholomew, witnessed the signing, and John acknowledged the deed in open court, verifying its validity. All this occurred on a single day, 30 Jul 1734, which limited the inconvenience to the citizen who travelled some distance from Hunting Creek to Cambridge. The payment in the deed was for time and expenses. Sixteen days later Richard Seward bought the land from William and Judith Willis with assurance that John would not be able to successfully protest the sale.

24. James A. McAllister, Jr., *Abstracts from the Land Records of Dorchester County, Maryland, Volume 11 (Liber Old No. 15, folios 1 - 368)*, (Cambridge, MD, 1963), XI:52, 15 Old 247, 11 Aug 1754-15 Mar 1755, Commission to perpetuate the bounds of Richard Soward's land called Wantage. A deposition of Thomas Soward, about 30 years old, mentions the widow Brawhawn; John Stevens grandfather of the present John Stevens; Richard Soward, brother of the deponent; and a bounded tree of Littleworth and Wantage between Roger Woolford's plantation and Brawhawn's, about 15-16 years ago.

Book Fair

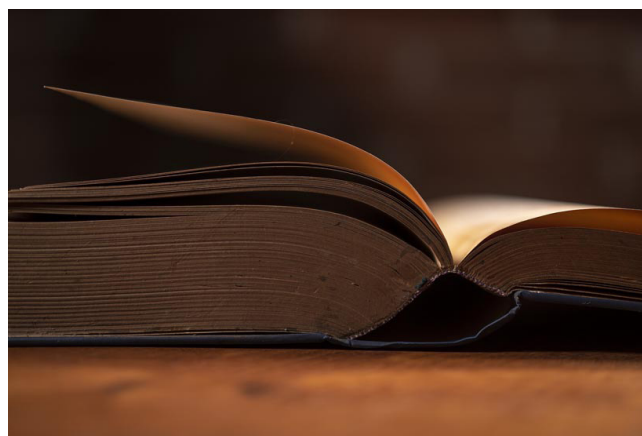
Saturday 1st June

11am - 2pm

Centre for Heritage & Family History, 2nd floor,
Reading Central Library

Love books and reading? Learning new things?

Over recent years. The 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 – no pre-booking required. Free entry.

The Butlers of Inkpen

Patricia Coveney Sears tells us of an ecclesiastical family

Just sixty-five miles west of London in the south-west corner of Berkshire, the thirteenth century church of St Michael's, Inkpen nestles at the foot of the North Wessex Downs. The oldest extant building in the village, it is Grade II* listed, with flint walls and Bath stone dressings, and has a tile hung and lead roofed belfry and tiled main roof. Inside the church are several memorials to members of the Butler family, who for over 150 years made a significant contribution to the life of the parish and the preservation of the fabric of the church.

The story of the Inkpen Butlers begins with Thomas Butler, a retired linen and woollen draper who bought The Priory at Grove, near Wantage, about seventeen miles north of Inkpen. The youngest of his children was Joseph, born in 1692. Thomas was a Presbyterian and Joseph was initially educated at the Dissenting Academy in Gloucester to train for the Presbyterian ministry, but he decided to conform to the Church of England. His father tried to dissuade him but ultimately supported his admission to Oriel College, Oxford. Joseph became an eminent theologian and moral philosopher and was appointed Bishop of Bristol and, in 1750, Bishop of Durham.

Thomas's eldest son, Robert, born c.1676, followed his father into the drapery business and became very wealthy. His eldest son, also named Thomas, became a successful solicitor and his second son, Joseph, was ordained by his uncle, Bishop Butler, who presented him with the living of St Paul's, Shadwell in East London in 1741. Rev. Joseph of Shadwell married Susannah Hoar in 1747 and they had thirteen children, seven of whom survived to maturity. Thomas and Rev.



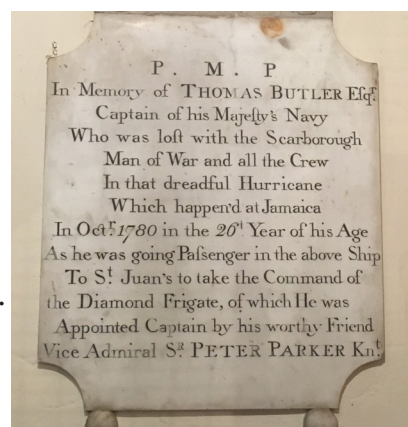
Joseph had three other brothers who became partners in the family drapery business and one of these, John, bequeathed the many estates and properties he had acquired to his nephews Joseph and Robert, the sons of Rev. Joseph of Shadwell. In addition, Thomas the solicitor had become patron of the advowson of Inkpen in 1779 and it remained in the Butler family until 1933. In his will, proved 3 June 1782, he left his estate to his brothers Rev. Joseph and John.

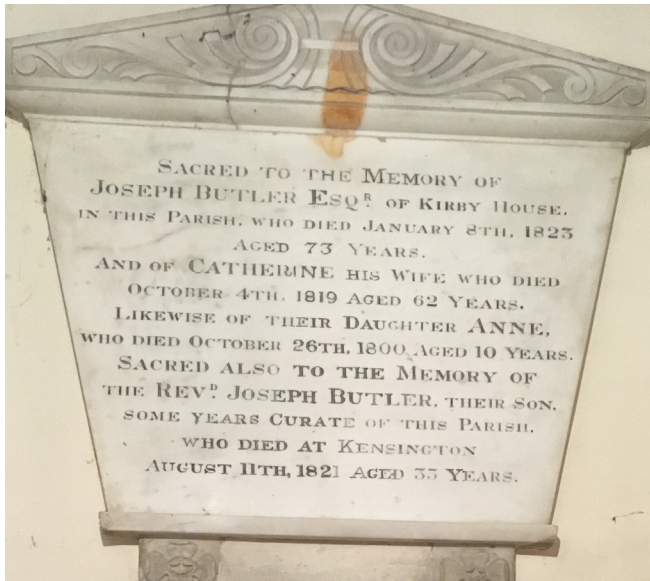
Kirby House, Inkpen (left) was built in 1771 by James Kirby and, after his death, his widow sold the property to Joseph Butler, eldest son of Rev. Joseph of Shadwell. Two of his brothers took holy orders: Robert became the Rector of Inkpen and John became a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. A fourth brother, Thomas, was a Captain in the Royal Navy who perished in the Savanna-la-Mar hurricane in October 1780 off the coast of Jamaica.

Joseph of Kirby House married Catherine Davison and their sons were Joseph, John, George, Robert and Thomas. The eldest of their five sons, John b.1786, was also a Navy Captain. He married Eliza Dobrée, daughter of Captain Daniel Dobrée in 1812 in Guernsey. Their second son, Joseph b.1788, took holy orders and was

for a time curate at Inkpen, dying at the age of 33 years in Kensington. They also had a daughter, Anne, who died at the age of ten in 1800.

Captain John and Eliza Dobrée had thirteen children;





three sons and ten daughters. Their eldest son John b.1814 took holy orders and served, first as curate, then as Rector of Inkpen from 1838 until his death in 1895. Another son was Augustus b.1825 who served as a Captain in the Royal Navy. Rev. John hunted with the Craven Hunt for 72 of his 81 years and it is said that, if a meet occurred on a day when he had to take a service, he wore his riding gear beneath his vestments! However, he took his duties seriously and was described as 'a cleric of the old school, an able preacher who kept to the middle road and refused to take part in the controversies that afflicted the Anglican church in the 19th century'. After a neighbouring cleric, who had been invited to preach on a special occasion, delivered a sermon suggestive of the Oxford Movement, Rev. John declared that he would never again invite a visiting preacher to his pulpit. His nine unmarried sisters ran a Sunday School for the local children. In 1850 he married Maria Ann Cherry, who bore him six children: Harriet b.1851 who became a Sister of Mercy in Wantage, John George who managed the Inkpen farm, Caroline Charlotte became a midwife, Lucy, Ada Louise, and Henry Dobrée Butler b.1860, who succeeded his father as Rector of Inkpen.

Henry had already served as a curate in Swindon, Wiltshire and Shottery near Stratford on Avon when he returned to Inkpen as Rector in 1895 and he soon realised that the church needed complete renovation: the north wall was almost falling down, the bell tower was so unsafe that the bells could not be rung and the gallery blocked light from the west window. A porch was added as a memorial to Rev. John Butler. Much of the funding came from various members of the

Butler family, amounting to over £800, with further donations and pledges bringing the amount to £1,400. The renovated church was formally re-opened and re-consecrated on Sunday 28 February 1897. The final costs were £2,588 and all but £44

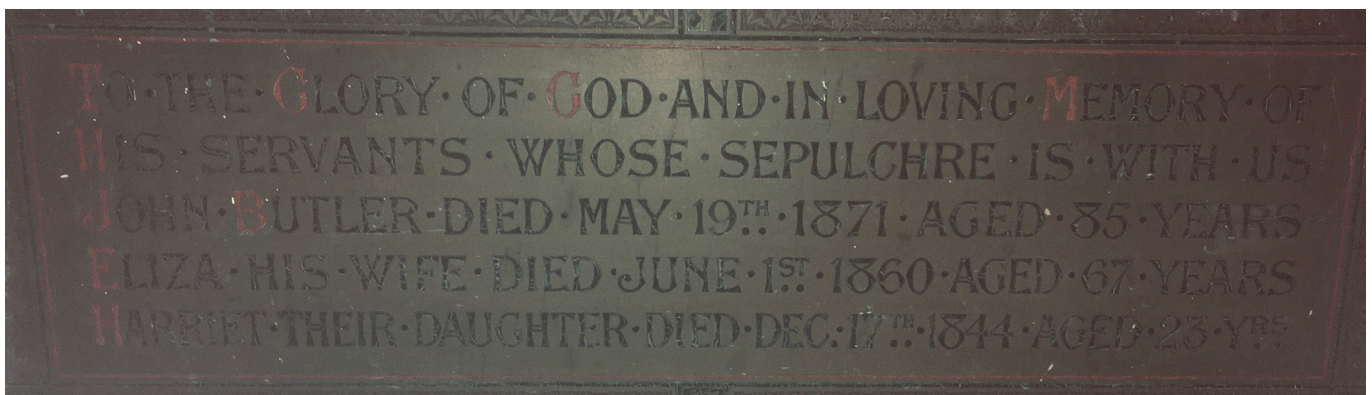


had been given or promised. The murals, some of which commemorate members of the Butler family, were painted some twenty years later by Ethel King Martin.

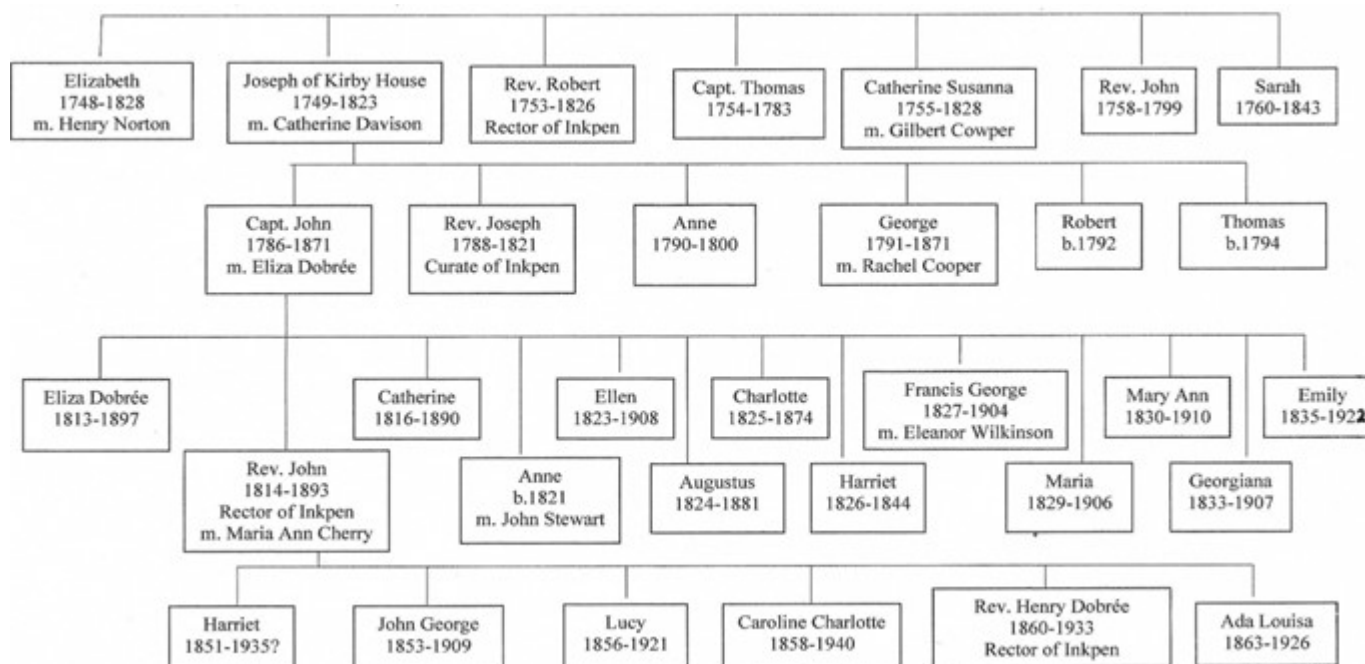
Henry continued to serve the parish until his death in 1933. The lychgate at the entrance to the churchyard was built as a memorial to him, made of English oak and local stone and a hipped roof covered with hand-made tiles. The inscription reads:

Remember O Lord the soul of Thy servant Henry Dobrée Butler who faithfully served Thee in this place 1895-1933.

To the Glory of God. Erected by his parishioners and friends in the Rural Deanery of Newbury.



Descendants of Rev. Joseph Butler, Rector of Shadwell & Susannah Hoar



For more photographs of St Michael's Church Inkpen, both before and after its renovation, see <http://history.inkpenvillage.co.uk/>

Sources:

Memoirs of the Life, Character and Writings of Joseph Butler, late Lord Bishop of Durham, Thomas Bartlett, 1839

The History and Antiquities of Newbury, Edward William Gray, 1839

Inkpen: A Village History, G. Timmins

Inkpen Yesterday, E. A. Martin

Britishlistedbuildings.co.uk

The will of Thomas Butler 1731 Wiltshire, England Wills & Probate, 1530-1858

The will of Thomas Butler 1782 PROB 11/1091/185, National Archives, Kew

The will of Joseph Butler 1823 England and Wales Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858

D/Br/D 1985 Durham Record Office

Navyrecords.org.uk

Births, marriages, deaths, census returns: Ancestry

Photographs by Christopher Sears

Highlight on

Bradfield is recorded in Saxon documents as a settlement called "Bradnafelda" or "Bradenfeld". In the 11th century it was known as "Bradefeldt" and 13th century as "Bradefeud".

There is evidence of earlier settlement in the form of a Roman enameled brooch, found in Bradfield and dated to c. 75 – c. 200.



Roman Enamelled plate brooch (FindID 573057) The Portable Antiquities Scheme - The Trustees of the British Museum, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

It was in the hundred of Theale and mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086.

In 1834 it became the administrative centre of the Poor Law Union of Bradfield which was the largest in Berkshire covering 28 rural parishes and the small town of Theale. That Bradfield became its centre rather than Theale is probably due to the influence and enthusiasm of the Rev. Thomas Stevens.

The Guardians acted very quickly to build a new workhouse in 1835 and in its grounds had a neat little Gothic chapel for staff and inmates built with enthusiastic help from Thomas Stevens. In the 1900s, the Union became Waylands Hospital. In 1990 the Hospital was demolished except

from the front which is incorporated in the new housing development.

Until 1974 Bradfield was the registration district and Rural District Council authority, but it is now Civil Parish in West Berkshire Unitary Authority.

The old Bradfield village is dominated by the College which was founded in 1851 by the Rev. Thomas Stevens, but there is still a beautiful cluster of houses alongside the River Pang below the Church and College. To the west is the later development of the village is known as Bradfield Southend.

Bradfield Southend became its modern development stretched a mile along the ridge road towards Upper Bucklebury. The school was built here. Recent years has seen a debate on the correct naming of this settlement; at one end of the road it was shown as Bradfield Southend and, at the other, Southend Bradfield. Villagers had their say, and the former nomenclature was adopted.

Tutts Clump and Rotten Row are hamlets to the west of Bradfield, a short distance north of Southend. They have a particular relevance to this account as the first Primitive Methodist chapel in the village was at Rotten Row. Sometime later a chapel was built in Tutts Clump; unlike many village chapels it, and its graveyard, are still in use.

In 2011 Bradfield had a population of 2177.

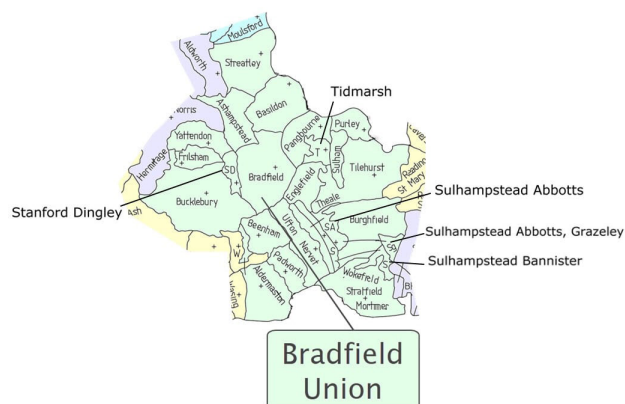
Bradfield's war memorial is the last work of George Blackall Simmonds, which commemorates the deaths of members of the 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers in the First World War, including his son. It is located on the College site.

Today the parish has been virtually cut in half by the M4 motorway along which thousands of motorist's race through the parish usually unaware of its existence, let alone its rich history. It does still retain, however, many of its rural features and landscape amid the bustle of modern life. The river Pang still meanders through its farmland and its footpaths, once vital communication routes, are still available for walking after 1300 years of change.

Adjoining parishes are Ashampstead, Basildon, Beenham, Bucklebury, Englefield, Pangbourne, Ufton Nervet.

Manorial History

Bradfield Manor is first mentioned in the 7th century and appeared in one of three original Abingdon Charters given by King Ini, the lawgiver of Wessex, to Abbot Hean for 15 cassati of land



in Bradfield to build a monastery. However there is no evidence to suggest that the monastery was ever built.

Subsequent owners of the Manor include the families of Despenser, De La Beche, Stafforde, Forster and Mainwaring. In 1754 it was sold to Robert Palmer who then conveyed it to Henry Stevens, grandfather of Rev Thomas Stevens. Rev Stevens was a driving force, rebuilding the church at his own expense and opening a choir school. This became Bradfield College, a public school which is the heart of Bradfield village. He also started a mineral water factory at St Andrew's Well. An authority on the Poor Law and a contributor to its reform, he was involved in the building and development of the Bradfield Union. He died in 1881 a bankrupt.

Rushall Manor or Court is a nominal manor owing suit and service to Bradfield Manor and can be found in records from 1261. The name of this Bradfield farm shows that it was held by copyhold - a common form of manorial tenure.

There are three mills mentioned in the Domesday book, but only one by the 14th century. By 1755 there were two watermills served by the River Pang which flows through the village.

Churches

The first mention of a church at Bradfield occurs in the foundation charter of Dudley Priory which is prior to 1161 and was within the Bradfield Manor whose Lord was Gervase Paynell and confirmed by Pope Lucius III in 1190.

The mediaeval church of St Andrew was rebuilt by George Gilbert Scott in 1847-8, with the exception of the north arcade of the nave which is 14th

*St Andrew
Bradfield by
Michael Ford,
CC BY-SA 2.0,
via Wikimedia
Commons*



century. It was rebuilt of clunch stone, and the external walls faced with split flint. This church has an entry in the religious census of 1851. The church is a Grade II* listed building. The last service was held in the church in 2014, and it was subsequently bought from the Diocese of Oxford by Bradfield College in 2019.

The chapel of St Simon and St Jude was erected in 1835 to serve the Workhouse, while the College had a grand chapel built by the Revd Thomas Stevens. A chapel dedicated to the Holy Trinity was built in 1836 at Buckhold in the north of the parish but was converted into a private residence in 1984. St Peter's is a modern church built to serve the community at Southend.

Primitive Methodism first came to Bradfield in 1830 when the preacher Thomas Russell visited a meeting house in Rotten Row. A Chapel at Rotten Row was bought in 1843 and appears to have been sold in 1851 when a new one was built. It was the centre of the Bradfield Circuit when this was a separate entity. In 1879 the Society moved to Tutts Clump and a new Chapel was built. The Manse was built in 1893 and a burial ground adjoining the Chapel was acquired in 1908.

Our shop stocks the following items related to Bradfield

- Berkshire Baptisms 3 CD (contains nearly 10000 entries for St Andrew and Tutts Clump Methodists)
- Berkshire Marriages 5 CD (contains over 1750 entries for St Andrews and Tutts Clump

Methodists)

- Berkshire Burials 13 CD (contains St Andrew 1540-1932 and Bradfield Workhouse 1835-1932)
- Bradfield St Andrew Parish Registers, including Tutts Clump Methodist Chapel CD

- Bradfield St Andrew Baptisms 1539-1920 data download

- Bradfield St Andrew Marriages 1559-1935 data download

Bradfield St Andrew Burials 1540-1952 data download

- Bradfield Tutts Clump Baptisms 1877-1920 data download

- Bradfield Tutts Clump Marriage 1921-1935 data download

- Bradfield Workhouse Burials 1835-1832 data download

- Bradfield College Register 1888 booklet

- Bradfield Union Baptisms/Burials 1835-1900 booklet

- Bradfield Union Miscellany booklet (includes Informations and Complaints against paupers 1835/1846, Admissions and Discharges for Bradfield Union School between September 1850 and March 1853, a Paupers' Service Book 1851/1911, and abstracts of Boarding Out Committee Minutes 1911/1915

- History of Bradfield book

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
Bradfield	St Andrew		1539-1962	1559-1989	1540-1952	Parish CD	Burials 1540-1952	Yes			Yes	Yes		Registers begin in 1540 (baptisms and marriages 1559) and are deposited at the Berkshire Record Office. The church had its last service in 2014, although the churchyard currently remains open to visitors. See also Bradfield Primitive Methodist Chapel (Tutts Clump) and Bradfield Primitive Methodist Circuit.
Bradfield	Primitive Methodist (Tutts Clump)		1877-2002	1921-2006	Registers not deposited at BRO			Yes						Registers are held at the Chapel. See also Bradfield Primitive Methodist Circuit.
Bradfield	Primitive Methodist Circuit		no registers	no registers	no registers			Yes						See also Bradfield Primitive Methodist Chapel (Tutts Clump).
Bradfield	Union Workhouse			not licensed	1835-1842; 1845-1932		Burials 1835-1932	Yes					Bradfield Union Births/Baptisms & Deaths/Burials 1835-1900; Bradfield Union Miscellany	Baptism registers begin in 1836 and death registers in 1835. These are deposited at the Berkshire Record Office.
Bradfield Southend	St Peter	no registers	no registers	no registers	no burial ground			Yes						Opened in 1960 to serve the community of Bradfield Southend

Dates for Your Diaries

Wiltshire Family History Fair at Swindon

15th June 2024

Berkshire Family History Society will be represented. For more details see: <https://www.wiltshirefhs.co.uk/>

Hampshire Genealogical Society Conference

6th July 2024 Victoria Halls, Hartley Wintney, Hampshire. Berkshire Family History Society will be represented.

From Berkshire Genealogy

Berkshire Genealogy Facebook Group is an informal group for the discussion of family history and genealogy. It is open to anyone living or working in or near Berkshire or anyone with ancestry from the historic county of Berkshire and is run by members of the Berkshire Family History Society.



Here's a few of the recent postings:

Hilary posted an image of classic cars parked in front of a church.

“This is a photo from the 1947 or 1948 2 Litre Register meeting in Newbury. Please can anyone recognise where this was taken and perhaps also tell me more about the event? I am researching people connected with one of the cars.”

Professor Turi King encouraged readers to checked out the popular TV series “DNA Family Secrets” on iPlayer, if they haven’t yet done so:

“For those of you who have been asking if there is going to be a series 4 of DNA Family Secrets, I hear the Beeb are waiting to see what the iPlayer figures are. So, do pop it on if you’ve not seen it yet. All episodes are on BBC iPlayer.

Jim and Jan posed a challenging puzzle:

“Ada New/Greenfield Broadbridge - from Newbury. For some years we have been trying to research the family regarding Ada New b. 1875 daughter of Charles & Phoebe New. She married John Greenfield in 1894 at Newbury, he was the son of John Greenfield, a bricklayer in Newbury. Ada’s father was also a bricklayer at this time.

At the time of Ada & John’s marriage, John Greenfield was at Aldershot in the Army Service Corp, as shown in the marriage certificate. I am wondering if anyone has access to Army records from Aldershot; the reason I ask is that two of their children Mabel b. 1895 and Charles b. 1898 were born at Newbury. Then subsequent children took on the surname of Broadbridge, with the father being named William Broadbridge. These children were born at West Bromwich and Handforth, Staffordshire, all with the surname of Broadbridge or Greenfield Broadbridge.

To this day, we are still not sure whether Ada moved away with her husband, he changed his name, or whether she commenced a new relationship with William Broadbridge. If anyone can assist me, I would really appreciate that.”

Patricia asked:

“I am in my second year of the University of Strathclyde MSc in Genealogy. For one of my assignments, I intend to research The Crown and Garter pub in Inkpen. I am making full use of the resources on

the BFHS and Inkpen History websites and intend to visit BRO [now the Royal Berkshire Archives] and Reading library, but I just wondered whether anyone knows of any previous research that has been done about the C&G. Thank you!”



InTouch Revisited

The Society's newsletter hits members' inboxes bi-weekly, bringing you up-to-date news from the Society and on family history. Back copies can be viewed on the website under "Resources". Here's a condensed selection of a few articles from recent editions, in case you missed them.

Member Only Videos – NEW - The Empress of Ireland - Canada's Titanic

Helen Baggott's talk to Windsor Branch was on a sombre topic - the toll was greater than Titanic's, but it remains relatively unknown. If you couldn't make the live talk, you can catch the recording on our member-only Talks page. (Login required.)

New Berkshire Baptisms on Findmypast

Nearly a ¼ million Berkshire Baptisms added to FMP. Once again, our dedicated and fantastic transcribers have enriched the data available to genealogists around the world with an enormous tranche of baptismal records. Thank you Projects & Publications team!

Mediaeval Murder Maps!

Most of us won't be able to trace our ancestors back into the Medieval period, however we can still enjoy the online excellent maps created by the Institute of Criminology, Cambridge University.

In the first half of the fourteenth century, London was a bustling metropolis. Along the Thames, the wharfs and markets saw merchants from Flanders and the Hanse Cities, and the area around Poultry and Bank was home to a large financial industry. Markets along Cheapside offered fish, meat, milk, bread and other daily goods. London was also famous for its luxury goods. Religious houses were scattered across the city, and St Paul's Cathedral dominated the skyline. And yet London also had its darker side with 142 murder incidents alone investigated in the Coroner Inquests which survive between 1300 and 1340.

Discover Medieval London, York and Oxford in these detailed maps and the incidents which boiled over into murder. You can find them at: medievalmurdermap.co.uk/maps/.



Extension of General Register Office access to death records

The GRO holds the civil birth, marriage and death records for England and Wales. You can use its website to access the indexes for birth records 1837-1934 and 1984-2021 and death records from 1837-1957 and 1974-2021.

Until changes introduced last year, the cheapest way to access the full certificates was by PDF, which took up to four days to be delivered. From July 2023, the GRO made birth records from 1837-1922 and death records from 1837-1887 available as digital images which cost £2.50 and could be downloaded immediately. Access to the death record images has now been expanded to include records dating from 1888-1957 - a significant improvement in access and a welcome reduction in costs. Access to the indexes themselves is free of charge.