

Berkshire Family Historian

*The quarterly journal of the
Berkshire Family History Society*



September 2024

Volume 48



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Berkshire Family History Society

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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

St Lawrence Church, April 2014, by Hugh Pihlens, courtesy of Hungerford Virtual Museum

Berkshire Family Historian

The quarterly journal of the Berkshire Family History Society

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Editor's Notes

We're here already with your September 2024 Berkshire Family Historian. Time seems to fly past faster with each issue and no sooner are we posting out one issue, than we are starting work on the next.

As you will see in this issue we have a bumper packed Events programme with quite a few visits to new parts of the county. Our ever popular advice sessions, both online and at The Centre for Heritage and Family History, give you a chance to get a fresh pair of eyes looking at that problem you've been wracking your brain over for some time, and, who knows, you may get that nugget of information to provide an answer to it. Don't forget to book early for events via our website to avoid disappointment as some events sell out quickly.



The branches continue to provide a selection of meetings covering a wide range of topics on local and family history, that are free of charge to our members.

The forthcoming year promises to be a year of big events for the Society, so keep your eye on future issues of this journal, your regular Society and branch newsletters and the website for more information as it becomes available.

We hope that you find this edition is packed with interesting articles to keep you entertained when you need a break from your research.

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

Vicki Chesterman

editor@berksfhs.org.uk

Chairman's Corner

It was lovely to see so many of you at June's AGM. It was one of our best ever attended AGMs, with a lively discussion. If you were unable to attend, you can read all about it in this edition of the Historian and also view the recording in the Members' Area of the website.

The last twelve months have been very busy for the Society. You will see that there is also plenty on the agenda for the year ahead. You can read more about our likely move in 2025 in this Historian and also some of what is planned to mark the Society's 50th birthday.

Thank you to all of our amazing volunteers who continue to keep the Society moving forward and who put so much energy and passion into helping their fellow family historians. You are worth your weight in gold and we truly appreciate everything you do.



Catherine Sampson

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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



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.



49th Annual General Meeting Report

The 49th Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday 19th June 2024. The meeting was held over zoom and 67 members attended. We were delighted that the meeting was our most interactive to date allowing members to share their thoughts and ideas for the society going forward. We thank you for your comments.

The accounts were unanimously approved for submitting to the independent examiner.

At the meeting all the Officers, the President and Vice-Presidents and Trustees shown on the Agenda were voted in. The appointment of an independent examiner of accounts was also endorsed.

Paul Barrett stood down as a Trustee this year and he was thanked for the work he had done whilst in the role, he is continuing as a webmaster and will therefore still be very active as a society volunteer.

James Puxley was re-elected as Society President and Mark Stevens and Irene Littleby returned as our Vice-Presidents. Catherine Sampson was returned as Chairman, Nick Prince as Vice-Chairman, Vanessa Chappell as Secretary and Martin Pilkington as Treasurer.

We welcome Alison Pedley as a new Trustee. All other Trustees were re-elected for a further term.

This meeting was recorded and is available on the society's website.

Dates for Your Diaries

6-15 September - Heritage Open Days*

Events will be going on around England and Wales to support this year's Heritage Open Days. See the separate article in this Historian to find out more about the Society's plans.

21 September 2024 - Liddiard Family Reunion*

Aldbourne, Wiltshire

Details to be confirmed nearer to the event.

26 October 2024 - Oxfordshire FHS Family History Fair*

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

Free



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

9 November – West Surrey Family History Society Fair

Woking Leisure Centre, Kingfield Road, Woking, GU22 9BA

10am - 4.30pm

For more information see: <https://www.wsfhs.co.uk/pages/index.php>

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

Events organised from The Centre for Heritage and Family History

September 2024 - December 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.	
Sep Mon 16th Oct Mon 21st Nov Mon 18th Dec Mon 16th 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.
Sep Mon 2nd Oct Mon 14th Nov Mon 4th Dec Mon 2nd 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.
Oct Mon 14th 2 - 4pm ONLINE	Merchant Navy Advice Session: with Tony Wright Do you have Merchant Navy ancestors and need some advice as to how to trace or interpret their records? Our specialist family history advice sessions are 1-1, free of cost and available to members and non-members alike. Three 1-1 slots are available in this session.

DNA & Family History – Online TICKETS £5 (members £4)	
Places are limited, pre-booking is required	
Oct Sat 12th 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.

Workshops	
See website for full details. Places are limited, pre-booking is required.	
<p>Sep Thu 19th 7 - 9.30pm</p> <p>TICKETS £10 (members £9)</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p>Munition Workers in WW1 Tutor: Dr Richard Marks</p> <p>The First World War was the first global conflict fought by industrialised nations. Each side was dependent upon a ready supply of munitions. Who were the people who worked in these factories and what did they do to support the men at the front? In this workshop, we will look at where the munitions factories were and what people who worked in them did. We will consider working conditions and experiences, and what records may be available and where to find them.</p>
<p>Oct Sat 12th 11am - 1pm</p> <p>TICKETS £10 (members £9)</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p>Victorian Workhouses Tutor: Joan Dils</p> <p>Discover what life was like in a Victorian workhouse. What was expected of inmates? What was their diet? What were the rules governing the workhouse? What records were kept? Where can you now find those records? And, what can they tell researchers? Delve into the life of those unfortunate enough to fall on hard times, fall ill or injured, or simply just getting old.</p>
<p>Oct Sat 19th 11am - 1pm</p> <p>TICKETS £10 (members £9)</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p>Parish Registers Tutor: Catherine Sampson</p> <p>Increase your chances of success with a family historian's core resource. Better understand what parish registers can provide for you. Including where to find them, how Church of England and non-conformist registers differ, and how to interpret them. Discover some of the hidden codes which can appear in registers and what they tell us. We will also look at the benefits and potential pitfalls of Bishops Transcripts, transcriptions and indexes.</p>
<p>Oct Mon 30th 7 - 9.30pm</p> <p>FREE Members Only</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p>Creating an enduring family tree in YourTrees Tutor: Paul Barrett</p> <p>Do you wish that your grandparents had kept a family history? You can ensure your grandchildren have easy access to their backstory. How durable and easily interpreted is your current family archive? Will it stand the test of time, or ultimately end up in a cardboard box in the attic? Create an enduring family tree in YourTrees and avoid these common problems. In this workshop, you will learn how to create an enduring family tree, ensuring your hard work is never lost. Don't just build a family tree – share it for the future. Discover the possibilities and ask your questions!</p>
<p>Nov Thu 14th 7 - 9pm</p> <p>FREE Members Only</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p>Getting the Most out of your Membership Tutors: Vanessa Chappell & Catherine Sampson</p> <p>Are you a relatively new member of the Society? Want to get the most out of your membership? This informal workshop will introduce you to the range of benefits that you have available to you. It will include accessing the Society's transcriptions, the mechanisms to enable you to collaborate and share your research with others, ways to obtain help in breaking down brick walls, and the various discounts and savings available for members. Q&A welcomed.</p>
<p>Nov Sat 16th 11am - 1pm</p> <p>TICKETS £10 (members £9)</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p>World War One Royal Flying Corps Records Tutor: Dr Richard Marks</p> <p>This workshop is designed for family historians researching their ancestors who were in the Royal Flying Corps in World War One. This talk will unravel the mysteries of the RFC for family historians, looking at where and how it operated, as well as looking at the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) and how it operated in conjunction with both the army and the navy. It will cover the jobs undertaken by the personnel of the corps, both flying and ground based. as well as their planes, how they were trained and lived and how to locate their records.</p>

Guided Walks and Tours	
Please see the website for full details. Places are limited, pre-booking is required.	
Sep Sat 21st 11.30am - 1.15pm TICKETS £10 (members £9)	Tour of St Mary's Church, Purley on Thames followed by cream tea Guide: Catherine Sampson St Mary's Church dates to the Norman period although it is believed to be built on the site of its Saxon forerunner. Its architecture and features reflect not just the Norman period, but also its subsequent remodelling and extensions. For over a hundred years, this was an emparked church, accessible only via a private track. Its monuments have connections not just to some of Purley's leading families, but those in Berkshire, and to local and international events. We will finish with a cream tea.
Sep Fri 27th 11am - 1pm TICKETS £5 (members £4)	The Conqueror, Cromwell and Agatha Christie: Historical Wallingford Walk Guide: Malcolm Gray Wallingford is a town with a rich history that includes the Saxons, the Normans, the English Civil War and Agatha Christie. Join us on a walking tour of the centre of Wallingford taking in some of the significant people, places and events.
Oct Fri 4th 10.30am - 12 noon TICKETS £5 (members £4)	Castle Hill, Reading Guide: Terry Dixon Join Terry Dixon for this walk exploring the Castle Hill area. Do you know what a pop-up pub was? Where the Coley steps were? See the changes from Courts to a Mansion, lost industries, changing communities and learn some fascinating facts. Plus, visit the Holy Brook Nook.
Oct Fri 18th 10.30am - 12.15pm TICKETS £5 (members £4)	The High Street of Hungerford and Beyond: a guided walk Guide: Dr Hugh Pihlens Hungerford is full of interesting history. The town was laid out as a new town in the 13th century, and the heart of the town retains its mediaeval roots. Many of the High Street buildings are timber framed, but a number were modernised during the hey-day of the coaching era, which brought so much prosperity to the town. This guided walk will cover the history of the town, key buildings in the High Street, Church Street and The Croft, before ending in Bridge Street.
Nov Tue 19th 2 - 3pm TICKETS £5 (members £4)	Tour of St Nicholas Hurst Guide: Steve Curnow Join our guide for this rare chance to look around St Nicholas' in Hurst. There has been a church on the same site in Hurst for over 900 years. Come and learn about its colourful and exciting history, from its connection to the Civil war, the battle of Trafalgar, its association with Merton College in Oxford as well as the villages own bread charity.
Natter Group - Online - Free	
Sep 10th Oct 1st Nov 5th Dec 3rd	Informal discussion group facilitated by Chad Hanna and Gillian Stevens. Topics are chosen by the group on a monthly basis. Free to attend, members only. Pre-booking is required. Tuesdays 6.45 for 7pm – end time varies.

Transport 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 Transport series for £12.50 (members £10).

<p>Sep Thu 12th 2 - 3.30pm</p> <p>Final talk in the Industry & Archaeology Series</p>	<p>More than Biscuits, Beer and Bulbs – Reading’s Other Industries: with Jo Alexander Jones</p> <p>While Reading is rightly renowned for its baking, brewing and seed businesses, the town had many lesser-known industries that brought with them prosperity and just as importantly jobs, for the wider population. In a time when most companies were privately owned, we will explore a number of these companies and the people who owned them covering industries such as printing, ironworking and brickmaking; names like Cox and Wyman, Katesgrove Foundry and Poulton’s Waterloo Kiln Brickworks.</p>
<p>Oct Thu 10th 2 - 3.30pm</p> <p>First talk in the Transport Talks Series</p>	<p>Berkshire’s Forgotten Railways: with Richard Marks</p> <p>Historically, Berkshire had a more expansive railway network than it does today. Before the 1970s, the county had a strong railway service, with most places having easy access to a railway station. However, the situation changed significantly in the late 1960s and 1970s when extensive railway cutbacks resulted in the closure of many stations and lines.</p> <p>This talk will delve deeper into the effects of these closures on the county and its inhabitants, as well as the underlying reasons for the discontinuation of lines and stations.</p>
<p>Nov Thu 14th 2 - 3.30pm</p> <p>Second talk in the Transport Talks Series</p>	<p>London Underground by Design: with Paul Joyce</p> <p>Many of us will have travelled on the London Underground and admired the beauty of some of our underground stations. This talk celebrates their design and architecture. Hear about such diverse subjects as architecture, posters, signage, decorative tiling, Art Deco lighting, general fixtures and fitting and much more in this fascinating talk by a life-long railway enthusiast. Early booking is recommended as this is likely to be a very popular talk.</p>
<p>Dec Thu 5th 2 - 3.30pm</p> <p>Final talk in the Transport Talks Series</p>	<p>Berkshire’s Canals: with Richard Marks</p> <p>Before the advent of railways, Berkshire was known for its extensive canal network. These waterways played a crucial role in Britain’s transportation infrastructure, establishing Berkshire as a significant junction and contributing to the county’s economic growth. This talk will explore the reasons behind the extent of the county’s canals and their impact on the local population. Additionally, it will reveal how the railways eventually overtook the canals, possibly at a slower pace than commonly perceived.</p>

Research Zone Tour

Places are limited, pre-booking is required.

<p>Nov Thu 11th 11.15am - 1pm</p> <p>FREE</p> <p>The Centre for Heritage & Family History</p>	<p>Yet to visit The Centre for Heritage and Family History and would like to know what’s available there and how it can help your family history research? This tour will introduce you to the facilities of the Centre and also those within the adjoining Local Studies Library.</p> <p>The Research Zone is open to 3pm, so why not stay on and do some research as well, if you have time.</p>
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Potpourri Social History Talks

Online

TICKETS £5 (members £4)

Our autumn Potpourri talks series comprises three online social history talks. All series tickets can be purchased for the discounted price of £12.50 (members £10). Alternatively you can book individual talks for the price of £5 (members £4). Pre-booking is required.

<p>Sep Thu 26th 2 - 3.15pm</p> <p>Final talk in the summer Potpourri Series</p>	<p>The History of Purley's River Estate: with Catherine Sampson</p> <p>The largest inter-war plotland site in Berkshire, Purley's River Estate has a significant history. It began life in 1935 as a holiday destination for camping and caravanning in usually idyllic former parkland by the Thames. However, very soon many of the plots gained more permanent accommodation, particularly after war broke out in 1939. Entrepreneurship thrived, resulting in a multitude of private businesses and shops over the years, as did a strong community spirit. This talk is accompanied by lots of images of the estate and its people, including its famous adapted dwellings such as railway carriages</p>
<p>Oct Thu 24th 2 - 3.15pm</p> <p>First talk in the autumn Potpourri Series</p>	<p>Tea Before Victoria: with Joy Pibworth</p> <p>We are all very familiar with the concept of Afternoon Tea as a very agreeable social event. Before this mini-meal was conceived in the 1840s, the role of tea was very different and this talk explains the social and legal changes which had to take place during the 17th and 18th centuries before tea took its place as Britain's national drink.</p>
<p>Nov Thu 28th 2 - 3.15pm</p> <p>Second talk in the autumn Potpourri Series</p>	<p>Curtain's Up: The History of Reading's Art Venues: with Katie Amos</p> <p>Katie Amos is known as the Local Studies Lead for Reading Library, but she has also been a member of the Reading Arts Front Of House team for over 30 years too. With these dual roles, she is ideally placed to discuss the histories of the three Arts venues - The Hexagon, Concert Hall and South Street. From old to new, each venue has a different feel, but they have hosted many national and international stars over the years, some of whom may get a mention in</p>
<p>Dec Thu 12th 2 - 3.15pm</p> <p>Final talk in the autumn Potpourri Series</p>	<p>An Historical Tour of the Streets of Old Coley: with Joe Doak & Graham Turner</p> <p>This virtual tour of Old Coley will take participants through the streets of Coley before slum clearance and the Inner Distribution Road destroyed large sections of working class housing in this inner city area of Reading. Using a mixture of historic maps, old photographs, personal knowledge and desk-top research, Joe and Graham will present a history of the area and tales of life in this tough but vibrant community. They will stop off along the way to explore the Coley Steps, Coley Primary School, Simonds Brewery, St Saviour's Church and the local brick making industry. It should be of interest to Old Coleyites, local historians, current residents and anyone intrigued about what existed before the IDR.</p>

We're on the move in 2025

Catherine Sampson, Society Chairman

The Society has enjoyed being based on the second floor of Reading Central Library for six and a half years now. How time flies.

Last year, Reading Borough Council (RBC) announced that it was the recipient of £19.1million levelling up monies from Central Government to enable it to revitalise the Hexagon Theatre and build a new modern Central Library. The new Central Library will be housed in a new extension to the Council's Civic Offices on Bridge Street, and the current building, where we are based, will be sold to developers for conversion or development into residential flats.

The likely move date for the library has changed a number of times, as the project timeline is readjusted, and is currently likely to be late 2025/early 2026.

Sadly, the current charities based in the library building, including the Society, have been advised that there is insufficient room to accommodate us at the new site and so we will not therefore be relocating with the library in our current format.

Whilst this is disappointing news, it does allow us to step back and fully consider how we can best support our members and visitors moving forward.

We are currently identifying alternative potential sites and will be working with both RBC and the private sector to do so. All options are being considered. At the moment, our likely move date is Autumn 2025.

We will keep you informed as to our progress through future editions of the Historian.



Bill Nicholls Reading Central Library CC BY-SA 2.0

Common website questions

Tips from our web team

We get a lot of emails about managing your account and finding your way around. Most things related to your membership can be updated directly online faster than you can send us an email, and with instant results. Here are some common issues.

1. What's my username?

Usernames are assigned by the user during signup. Some were carried over from the old website (pre 2019). It doesn't matter if you can't remember your username, you can use your email address instead.

2. I forgot my password

Go to the login page and click the Forgot Password link. Enter your email address. If the site finds a matching email it will send you a password reset email. If the email doesn't arrive, check your spam folder. Have you changed your email recently? If you have and haven't updated it in your user profile, the password reset email will be sent to your old address. Do you still have access?

If the email hasn't arrived after 10 minutes, go to the Help > Contact menu option to send us a message.

3. My preferred password isn't accepted

Strong passwords are essential these days and our system will not accept weak ones. The site will tell you how strong your proposed password is when you join or when you do a password reset. Use a password manager such as Bitwarden or allow your browser to store your details.

4. My email address has changed

Login to the website. Select Profile in the top menu and update your email there. If you use a password manager or your browser to store your details, don't forget to update those.

5. What's my membership number?

Login to the website. Select Profile in the top menu. Your membership number will be shown at the top of the page. Your membership number will rarely be needed in practice.

6. I'm not sure if I've renewed/I think I've renewed twice

Login to the website. Select Profile in the top menu and click the Subscriptions tab to see your subscription record.

If you subscribe twice your membership will be extended by a further year. You can either leave it (you won't get any renewal notices next year) or you can ask for a refund - go to the Help > Contact menu option to send us a message.

7. My bank wants to send me an authorisation text so I can renew or complete a purchase - where do I update my mobile number?

We do store your phone number in your profile

and you can update it. Login to the website. Select Profile in the top menu and scroll down to the phone number field. **BUT your bank will only send a text to the mobile number stored in your bank profile.** You need to login to your online bank account or call them.

8. How do I search for products and general content?

There's a search bar at the top of every page. Click on it and start typing to get filtered results. On the results page there is an option to toggle between products and content.

9. I still haven't found what I'm looking for

Be more specific in what you search for. Search terms like 'Berkshire' or 'Baptisms' will return hundreds of results. 'Abingdon St Nicholas' will produce very few. Don't use wildcard characters - modern search functions don't need them and you may actually hide some results. Search will also handle simple misspelt words.

10. I haven't received the InTouch email newsletter lately

Has your membership expired? See item 6. If you're still a member it's possible you unsubscribed from the newsletter by mistake, or didn't allow us to send you newsletters when you renewed. To fix this, login to the website. Select Profile in the top menu and click the Newsletter resubscribe tab to rejoin the mailing list.

If that doesn't fix it go to the Help > Contact menu option to send us a message.

Your **profile page** is the place to start for all things related to membership and your account. It provides 24/7 self service and features prominently on the homepage.

If you can't find what you want there, use Help > Contact to send us a message or click the big blue button at the bottom right of every page of the website

49th Annual General Meeting of Berkshire Family History Society

Chairman's Report to Society Members: year ending 30 June 2024

Overview

During the past year we have tightened and improved the Society's legal standing by becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The Society's separate limited company, Berkshire Family History Society Enterprises, which traded as our bookshop, has ceased trading as a separate entity and now trades as a direct part of the Society itself.

We have continued to expand the Society's services, events and activities, thanks to the efforts of our amazing volunteers. The Trustees have comprehensively reviewed the feedback received following last year's survey and a number of actions have been implemented as a direct result. The feedback also informed the strategic planning the Trustees completed earlier this year which will allow us to better direct our activities and focus as we move forward.

A project team is in place to manage the relocation of the Society's base which we anticipate occurring sometime in 2025.

The Society's digital transformation continues with a refresh of the Society's website and the transfer of the bookshop pages onto the main website. There have been substantial additions to the number of videos of talks and tours available to our members and the range and number of journals available to view online from other Family History Societies.

Whilst membership has fallen slightly, in line with the majority of other Family History Societies, in contrast member and non-member interaction is increasing.

The Centre for Heritage and Family History

The Society has now completed six and a half years in Reading Central Library. We enjoy a close working relationship with Simon Smith and his team and thank them for their ongoing support.

The relocation of Reading Central Library to a new extension to the Civic Offices on Bridge Street remains ongoing, although the project is currently running a year behind its original planned move date. The Society has been advised that there is insufficient room to accommodate us at the new site and so we will not therefore be relocating with the library in our current format. Whilst this is disappointing news, it does allow us to step back and fully consider how we can best support our members and visitors moving forward.

We are working with Reading Borough Council to identify alternative potential sites and will also be working with private sector partners. One possible premises has already been identified – a room in Battle Library – although discussions are at a very early stage and all potential venues are still being explored. It is possible that we may base from one premises and also offer some facility for family history research support from another. At the moment all options are being considered. We will, of course, be consulting with our volunteers who work from the Centre, and our members, as we move forward.

At some stage in the future, we will therefore be relocating to new premises. There is currently no firm timescale yet as to when that will be, but we have been advised that we are likely to be able to stay at our current site until December 2025 [since revised by RBC to autumn 2025], if we should so wish.

The opening hours of the Research Zone reduced slightly earlier this year although we continue to welcome a steady stream of visitors, including many regulars. Thanks go to all of our Research Assistants, who do an amazing job, and also Sandra Barkwith who chairs the Research Zone Committee, John Elkin our Centre technology coordinator, our librarian Angela Gunn, and John Dunne our Centre amenities coordinator.

The Genealogist remains available online via the website to all members, on days when the Centre is closed.

Membership

Welcome to the new members who have joined the Society during the past year. Our membership numbers have decreased slightly, as previously stated, but generally remain very healthy.

At the beginning of the year we rationalised our membership programmes to make it simpler to join and to reduce the workload of administering our membership. We now have one membership, regardless of where a member may live, and a second member can be added to a membership at no extra cost. Younger members aged 18-25 will continue to receive a discount voucher against the cost of their membership, to encourage the next generation.

Members have continued to receive discounts on Society products, and also continue to be able to attend many events for free, or for a discounted ticket price. Other popular membership benefits include member-only events, exclusive Berkshire data, Find my Past membership discount, YourTrees, the Forum, InTouch and the Historian, video catch-up and video tours.

Thanks go to our Membership Secretary, Bob Plumridge, who does a great job in welcoming members and managing our membership processes. Thank you to everyone for renewing your membership, to the UK taxpayers who renew their Gift Aid declarations, and all who are able to make a donation.

Branch Meetings and Outreach Activities

Over the course of the year, two of our branches have operated exclusively online, one exclusively face-to-face, and three have met both face-to-face and online. Each committee continues to give much thought to what might best suit the needs of their membership. Branch attendances fell slightly from the previous year, reflecting the increase in face-to-face meetings.

Two further online Combined Branches Meetings took place, both very well attended and received. In October 2023, Lady Mary Teviot gave a talk on "Underused Sources for Genealogical Research", and in March 2024, Sue Gibbons spoke about "Scottish Sources at the Society of Genealogy".

Other meeting topics have ranged from the always popular member evenings to talks on accessing and interpreting sources, research stories and local history topics. Reports of these meetings are available on the website and in some cases, a video recording is also available. The number of recorded talks, available to view at any time, has grown over the last year with new additions including "Getting to Know Your Army Ancestors Through Photographs and Memorabilia" and "The Empress of Ireland - Canada's Titanic".

Branch - run advice sessions, an important part of our charitable activities, have taken place in Bracknell, Faringdon and Wokingham libraries and in the Society's Research Zone. These sessions are advertised on the website and at the libraries.

Thank you to our branch chairpersons who have served over the last twelve months: Sandra Barkwith, Vanessa Chappell, Vicki Chesterman, Leigh Dworkin, Nick Prince, David Purling, Gillian Stevens and James Thornber, and all of their branch committees for the sterling work they do.

Communicating with our Members

In Touch continues to land in the inboxes of our members every other Sunday, with an events update in the alternative weeks. Uptake of the newsletter still exceeds sector averages and we receive much positive feedback. This is managed by Catherine Sampson, Paul Barrett and Reg Ward and they would be delighted to have further help.

During the last membership year, the Historian editorial panel led by Vicki Chesterman, as editor and designer, continued to produce a rich and varied content in each issue, reflecting the breadth of research interests of the society's membership. September 2023's edition was the first to be offered in a digital only form to those who chose to go green, one of the actions we have taken as a result of the January Feedback Survey. Thank you to everyone who has provided articles and contributions. New articles are warmly welcomed.

Website, and Social Media

The Society's webmasters, Paul Barrett and Dave Osborne, continue to maintain, develop and

continually refresh the Society's website so that it performs well and remains user-friendly, dynamic and relevant. This year has seen a major change to the websites run by the Society, with the closure of Enterprises website and the transferral of all the content to the main Society site, not a small task. These are critically important roles as many of the Society's processes are managed online.

The Forum continues to be a useful place where members can go to obtain advice or guidance from others. We recommend that all members register their interest to receive content from the various sections so that they don't miss out on the very varied postings.

We continue to strengthen our links with other Societies through the journal exchange, which has grown by 30% over the year. Sixty one Family History Societies now share their journals. Vicki Chesterman coordinates this important member benefit.

The mechanisms by which members and non-members can contact the Society for advice have been simplified and improved in recent months, with the addition of chatbot onto the website which allows for many regularly received queries to be answered automatically. These enquiries can be either general or specific in nature, and are received and answered face-to-face, and via email, webforms and telephone.

Social media remains an important outlet to the wider world for the Society. Twitter is actively led by Dave Osborne while the Berkshire Genealogy Facebook site is led by Debbie Kennett and Brian Denton. The latter now has over 1.3k members, an increase of 11% on last year.

Projects and Publications

A significant number of new Berkshire banns and marriages were published during the year in digital download format, expanding the options available to access this important material from the Society's shop. A further quarter of a million baptism entries transcribed and checked by Society volunteers were also published by Findmypast.

In addition, a further edition of Berkshire baptism is due to be published imminently in CD format.

It brings the total number of published baptisms to close to 600,000.

The new name indexes for Berkshire baptisms, banns, marriages and burials, launched last year have continued to be very popular.

Thank you to all of our volunteers who have made this possible, your efforts are much appreciated. A special mention to Jocie McBride who has handed over the baton of Publications Manager after many years to Robert Turner, and also to Tony Wright who does so much to bring our transcriptions to publication.

Thank you also to Mark Stevens and his team at the Royal Berkshire Archives (formally known as the Berkshire Record Office), for their support during the year. To help the team there continue their important work the Society has donated £3,000 worth of new computer equipment for their Research Room.

Events, Education and Promotion

Almost 1,600 individuals attended events between July 2023 and June 2024 - some face-to-face, some online, some free and some with a modest fee. This is an increase of 14% on the previous year.

This last year's programme included social history talks, family history workshops, walks, tours and courses, advice sessions, informal natter evenings, and the DNA special interest group. A trip down the Caversham chalk mines proved very popular and was featured in an article on Family History Societies in the Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine. Events take place at different times of the day and on different days of the week to improve accessibility.

These events are led by a committee comprising Sandra Barkwith, Vicki Chesterman, Malcolm Gray, Catherine Sampson and Gillian Stevens who are supported by a wider team of volunteers. Thank you to all of our extremely knowledgeable speakers, tutors and walk leaders who have supported the programme over the last year.

The Society together with the Berkshire Local History Association organised the online

Berkshire Heritage Fair in February 2024, a follow-on from the first fair eighteen months previously. This was well attended and supported by heritage organisations from across the county as well as our neighbouring family history societies. We also attended East Surrey Family History Society's virtual Fair in January and Wiltshire Family History Society's Fair in June.

Two short video tours are now available for members to view on the website - one of Reading's Old Cemetery, on the London Road, and the other of St Mary's Church in Shinfield. One of these videos was crafted by a student from Henley College, reflecting our commitment to fostering young talent and providing them with opportunities to grow.

Bookshop

Berkshire Family History Society Enterprises, the Society's wholly owned subsidiary, ceased trading as a separate entity at the end of March and its operations have now transferred directly into the Society. Their former website has also closed and the bookshop catalogue and ordering system is now part of the Society's website. Business continues as normal. The Bookshop stocks over 1,000 items, many of which are Berkshire specific and difficult to obtain elsewhere. Thanks go to Tony Roberts, Geraldine Marsden and Tony Henty who have managed this important activity over the last year.

Services for Members and the Public

Your Trees has grown significantly since launch and now contains 431 trees (up 115% from last year). These trees feature over 345,000 individuals, 114,000 families and 477,000 places. This free service, exclusive to Society members, allows you to upload a copy of your family tree(s) (including media) to the Society's website, and collaborate with others with similar surname interests. The Society stores everything on a secure server and so it provides a storage back-up and a safe-guarding of your valuable research for future generations. More new tools to help you identify errors and gaps in your trees have been added during the year and a helpful report highlighting any issues you may wish to resolve is produced each time you submit a new version of your tree. Don't miss out on this great facility and the training resources available to submit and manage your trees. Thanks go to Alan Brooker and Paul Barrett who manage this and also

provide support and training to new users.

Delivering Public Benefit

The Charities Act, 2011, requires that all registered charities report their main activities and achievements in relation to the objects of the charity. The Society's charitable objects include:

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

Benefits are:

- readily available and accessible to members and the public;
- taken actively into local communities in a wide range of regular meetings, outreach events, and other activities; and
- available free of charge at the point of delivery, in many cases.

Many of the benefits that the Society offers have been laid out in this report.

Society Governance

Following the agreement of the membership at last year's Annual General Meeting, the Trustees completed the steps needed to convert the Society's charitable status to that of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. We now have a new charity number and have carried out the majority of the tasks required of us following the change. Thanks go to everyone involved in the work needed to achieve this, particularly Martin Pilkington, who led the project, Paul Barrett and Vanessa Chappell.

The Society is managed by an Executive Committee (the Trustees), elected annually by members. They met eleven times this year. Consideration and implementation of the Society's activities is managed in detail by sub-committees and working groups, which increased in number from eight to nine this year, and the six local branches. During the year, the majority of committee meetings have been held online.

If you are interested in helping with an aspect of the Society's activities or becoming a Trustee, please contact the Society's Secretary.

What of the Future?

The final activities required to complete the CIO conversion and amalgamation of the bookshop into the Society are in the process of being completed and should be finished by the autumn. We will continue to improve and extend the Society's programme of activities, events and services and to improve access to them, regardless of physical location. More new product launches are anticipated in the year ahead.

The Trustees have agreed its priorities ahead as follows:

- (1) Membership
- (2) Successfully relocate and establish a new Society base
- (3) Seamlessly merge Enterprises into the Society
- (4) Review and reorganise the branch structure to best meet the needs of our audiences
- (5) Review our engagement with our members and the public

2025 marks the 50th birthday of Berkshire Family History Society. We already have exciting plans to celebrate the occasion which will include a face-to-face conference on 10 May 2025. Put the date in your diary now and we'll be sharing more information with you in due course.

The future of your Society lies with you, our members, and those who are willing to volunteer

SAVE THE DATE

In 2025 Berkshire Family History Society will be celebrating its 50th anniversary. To mark this special occasion, we are planning to run a conference on **Saturday 7th June 2025**, and a range of special visits throughout the year.

Keep your eye on the website for more information. All events will also be published in the Berkshire Family Historian and Society newsletters.

to help it. It is through your skills, talents and generosity that the Society is able to continue to thrive. If you can help, please let us know.

Thank You to every Volunteer

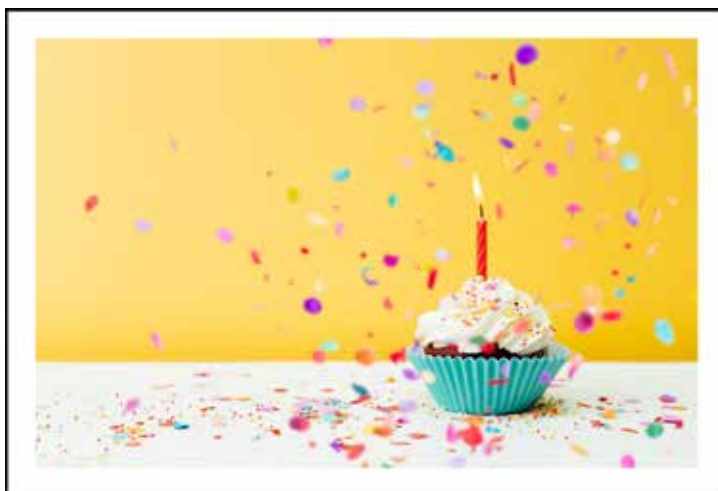
Finally, a sincere thank you to the many volunteers who not only keep us thriving as a Society but help us to expand and develop new services and new ways of doing things. The last few years have been challenging, however I believe the Society has fared incredibly well because of the dedication of its volunteers.

Thank you to my fellow Trustees for their dedicated work in managing the many facets of our activity in what has been another busy year. I have named and thanked a number of individuals in this report, but I would like to mention two whose work keeps us functioning as we need to as a charity. Vanessa Chappell, Society Secretary, has kept us compliant and contributes to a wide range of Society activities. Martin Pilkington, our Treasurer, has built on the work of previous Treasurers and continues to ensure we are in a very strong position for the future.

One Trustee is stepping down at this AGM, Paul Barrett. Paul will continue to be the Society's webmaster and my thanks go to him for his energy and drive to innovate and lead change, and his considered input to trustee discussions, decisions and implementations.

Catherine Sampson

Chairman, Berkshire Family History Society



Highlight on

Hungerford is a small, historic, market town on the Berkshire/Wiltshire border, in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Until 1895 the town was divided between the two counties.

Two rivers – the Dun and the Kennet – meet below the town, the centre of which stands back from the A4 Bath Road, which has brought Hungerford prosperity, beggars and choking traffic over the centuries. The Kennet and Avon Canal passes through, as does the railway line from Reading to Devon and Cornwall.

The parish was formerly divided into four tithings: Hungerford Town, Sanden Fee, Eddington with Hidden, and Newtown with Charnham Street.

In 1894 the tithing of Leverton and Calcot, then in the Wiltshire parish of Chilton Foliat (although in the Berkshire hundred of Kintbury Eagle), was transferred to the civil parish of Hungerford, and the following year North and South Standen and Charnham Street, formerly parts of Wiltshire, transferred to Berkshire.

Place names within the parish in 1851 also included Bagshot, Shalbourne, Eddington, Hungerford Newtown and Prosperous.

To the east of the town is Port Down, 200 acres of common land where fairs, horse-racing and prize-fighting were held in the past. It is still managed as common land, with grazing. To the west is Freeman's Marsh, owned by the Town and Manor of Hungerford, and maintained as a conservation area.

The map on the right shows the Hungerford area in 1792.

Hungerford lies in the hundred of Kintbury Eagle, and was in the Poor Law union of Hungerford and Ramsbury until the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1836 when it became the Hungerford Registration District. It is currently under the West Berkshire local authority. In 1851



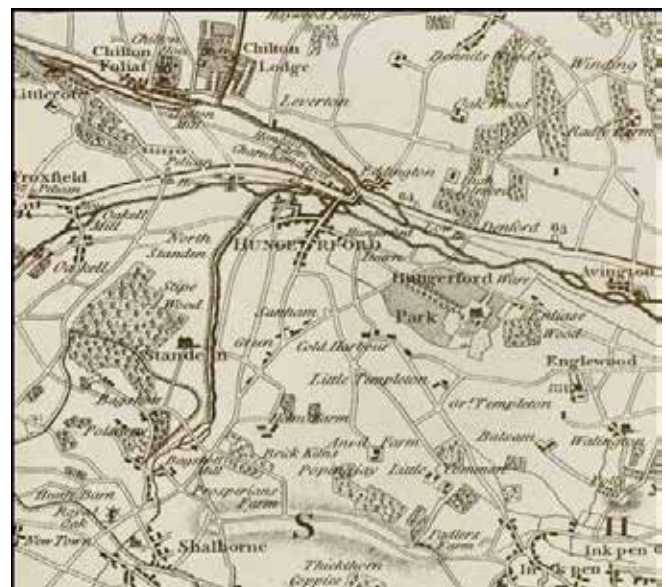
it had a population of 3,070 which had not quite doubled to 5,767 by 2011.

Adjoining parishes in 1851 were Lambourn, East Garston, Great Shefford, Kintbury, Inkpen; and in Wilts: Shalbourne, Froxfield, Ramsbury and Chilton Foliat.

Anglican church and parochial organisation

Hungerford lies within the deanery of Newbury and the archdeaconry of Berkshire, which transferred from Salisbury diocese to that of Oxford in 1836.

The main parish church of St Lawrence (pictured left in the early nineteenth century) stands in the Croft, west of the main street. This Georgian-Gothic style building of 1816 replaced the earlier,



700-year-old church, which had collapsed, but many monuments were transferred from the old to the new building. Another rebuild took place in 1880. The churchyard was closed and levelled by 1892.

St Saviour's, Eddington, was built in Victorian Gothic Revival style on high ground overlooking the valley and the town in 1868. Manned by the clergy from St Lawrence, it served the northern part of the parish, seating 250 people, and was in regular use until it closed circa 1956. The churchyard is still used today, but the church itself is now a private house.

St Mary's, Newtown (below), was opened in 1870, and in its early years served as a schoolroom for Newtown school on weekdays. It was licensed for Divine Service, but not for banns or marriages. Attendances declined in the second half of the twentieth century, and the church closed in 2006. It is now a private house.



Other churches

A Wesleyan Methodist chapel was erected in Church Street in 1807. It was believed to be on a previous Wesleyan site, but no records of any predecessor exist. This chapel was replaced in 1869 by a building in Charnham Street (Bath Road). The Church Street premises were then used for both a day and Sunday school. The Bath Road chapel closed in 1971.

The Primitive Methodist chapel was founded in 1830, when it formed part of the Shefford mission; a later chapel was built in Bridge St in 1864, and it became the centre of a circuit in 1869. A Sunday school was added in 1907.

Both Wesleyan and Primitives continued to meet separately until 1971.

A Congregational chapel was built in 1806, replaced by a bigger building in 1840; the original building was then used as a Sunday school.

Schools

Hungerford Grammar School was founded in 1635, and operated until 1900 on the site where Croft Hall now stands.

A National School (below) was built at 42 High Street in 1814. The Royal Berkshire Archives (RBA) has the admissions register for 1816-1856 and managers' minutes for 1837-1910.



A British and Foreign Society School was set up in the High Street.

A National School for infants was in Newtown in the mid-nineteenth century, which for many years used Newtown's St Saviour's church. A new schoolroom opened in 1900, and served until 1965, when the school was closed due to a falling roll. The RBA has admission registers from 1896.

There was a Wesleyan Methodist School in Church Street. The RBA has managers' minute books and other records from 1891.

Also there was a National School at 6 Oxford St, Eddington, and many private schools have come and gone over the years.

In 1910 the voluntary schools were replaced by a single council school for all ages; not until 1963 did the John of Gaunt Secondary Modern School open, 19 years after the Education Act. It is now John of Gaunt Community Academy.

Local history

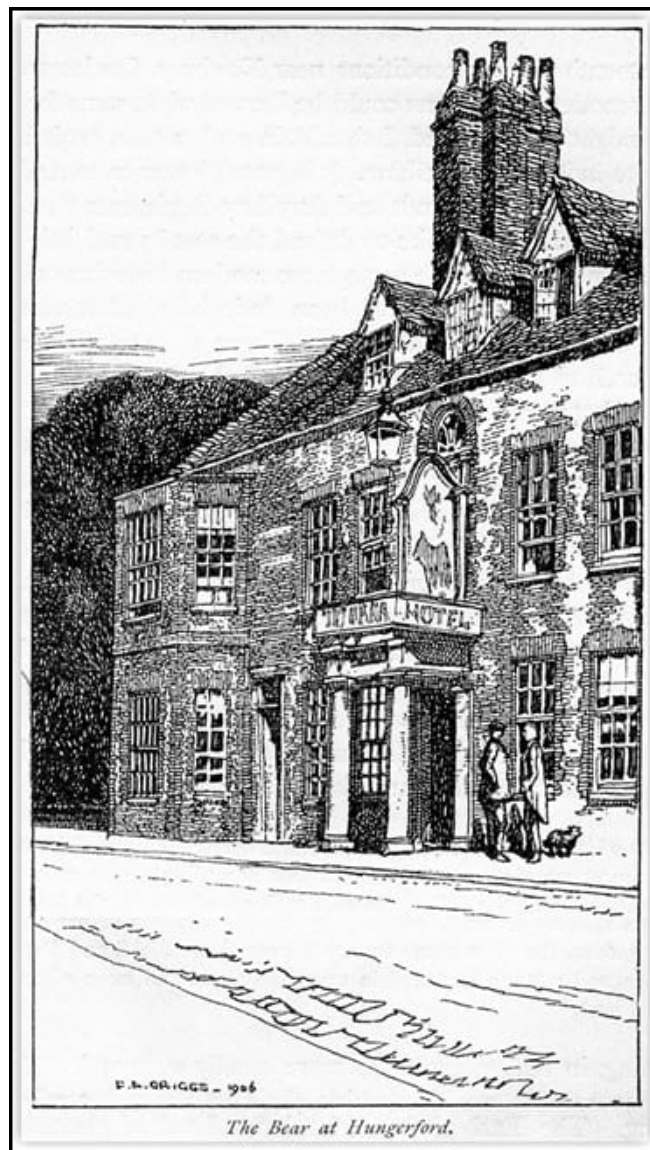
Between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries the manor of Hungerford passed between the Crown and various Duchies of Leicester and Lancaster, and in 1362 it passed to John of Gaunt, a name that is strongly associated with the town today.

The organisation of the Town and Manor of Hungerford has remained little changed for nearly 400 years. Office-holders include the Constable, the Port-Reeve, Bailiff, four Tutti-men, Water-Bailiffs, Overseers of the Common (Port Down), Keepers of the Keys of the Common Coffers, Ale-Tasters and the Bellman. The Bellman or Town Crier also holds the several offices of Assistant Bailiff, Beadle, and Crier for the Hocktide Courts.

The Hocktide Court is held in accordance with medieval custom each year on the second Tuesday after Easter, Tutti-Day. The Bellman summons the commoners to court, and events of the day include not only some formalities in the town hall but the nationally famous ritual of Tutti-Men with their floral staves touring the area, exchanging oranges for kisses from the lady of each house. After lunch at the Three Swans the “colts” (newly arrived residents) are shod. Rumour has it that in the past the shoeing used to be a little more robust, with nails sometimes being driven into feet.

In 1688 an unprecedented historical event took place in Hungerford. Prince William of Orange, having landed at Brixham in Devon, travelled with his army towards London to relieve his father-in-law of the Crown. King James II sent three commissioners to meet the usurper at the Bear Inn at Hungerford on 6 December. Plans were made here for the throne of England to pass to William, and for James to “escape” to France. The Bear is still an inn today.

In the eighteenth century Hungerford prospered as a service station to the coaching trade between London and Bath. Horses were changed and



refreshment taken in a dozen or so inns which flourished in the town, including the Bear (above).

In the late nineteenth century two policemen were shot by poachers in Eddington. The murderers were hanged at Reading Gaol, and memorial crosses to the victims erected where they fell.

On 19 August 1987 a 27-year-old unemployed local labourer, Michael Ryan, shot and killed 16 people including his mother, and wounded 15 others in the middle of the town before fatally shooting himself. The tragedy remains, along with the Dunblane and West Cumbria killings, one of the worst criminal atrocities involving firearms in British history. The Hungerford Massacre, as it became known, led to the Firearms (Amendment) Act of 1988, which banned the ownership of semi-automatic rifles and restricted the use of shotguns with a magazine capacity of more than two rounds.

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
Hungerford	Ebenezer (Wesleyan)		no registers	1886-1897	no burial ground			Yes					Hungerford Wes. Meth. Circuit Vol 1 Bapts 1810-1880; Hungerford Wes. Meth. Circuit Vol 2 Bapts 1881-1937 & Marriages 1886-1897; Hungerford, Marlborough & Wansage Wes. Meth. Cir. Historic Roll 1899-1904	Marriage registers begin in 1886 and are deposited at the Berkshire Record Office. The chapel opened in Church Street in 1807 and closed in 1809. See also Hungerford Independent Church, Hungerford Primitive Methodist Chapel and Hungerford Wesleyan Methodist Chapel.
Hungerford	Independent			not licensed	1819-1830			Yes			Yes	Yes		Birth and baptism registers begin in 1803 and burial registers in 1819 and these are deposited at The National Archives. See also Hungerford Ebenezer (Wesleyan) Chapel, Hungerford Primitive Methodist Chapel and Hungerford Wesleyan Methodist Chapel.
Hungerford	Methodist Circuit (formerly Primitive and Wesleyan circuits)			not licensed	no burial ground			Yes						Baptism registers begin in 1937 and are deposited at the Berkshire Record Office.
Hungerford	Primitive Methodist (Bridge Street)		no registers	no registers	no registers			Yes						
Hungerford	Primitive Methodist Circuit			not licensed	no burial ground			Yes					Hungerford Primitive Methodist Circuit Baptisms 1869-1937	Baptism registers begin in 1868 and are deposited at the Berkshire Record Office. See also Hungerford Ebenezer (Wesleyan) Chapel, Hungerford Independent Church and Hungerford Wesleyan Methodist Chapel.
Hungerford	St Lawrence			1600-1817	1559-1969		Burials 1559-1799 & 1800-1969 Monumental Inscriptions 1693-1965	Yes	MI's vol 3		Yes	Yes		Registers begin in 1559 (marriages 1562) and are deposited at the Berkshire Record Office. The churchyard closed in 1891 and after this date all burials entered in the burial registers took place at Hungerford (Eddington) St Saviour. See also Hungerford Ebenezer (Wesleyan) Chapel, Hungerford Independent Church, Hungerford Primitive Methodist Chapel and Hungerford Wesleyan Methodist Chapel.
Hungerford	Union Workhouse			not licensed				Yes					Hungerford Union Workhouse Births & Deaths 1866-1914, Paupers' Service Book 1877-1917	Birth and death registers begin in 1866 and are deposited at the Berkshire Record Office.
Hungerford	Wesleyan Methodist Circuit			not licensed	no burial ground			Yes			Yes	Yes	Hungerford Wes. Meth. Circuit Vol 1 Bapts 1810-1880; Hungerford Wes. Meth. Circuit Vol 2 Bapts 1881-1937 & Marriages 1886-1897; Hungerford, Marlborough & Wansage Wes. Meth. Cir. Historic Roll 1899-1904	Baptism registers begin in 1810 and the earliest is deposited at The National Archives. Later registers are deposited at the Berkshire Record Office. See also Hungerford Ebenezer (Wesleyan) Chapel, Hungerford Independent Church and Hungerford Primitive Methodist Chapel.
Hungerford (Eddington)	St Saviour		no registers		no registers		Monumental Inscriptions 1815-1953	Yes	MI Colltn, Vol 2		Yes	Yes		St Saviour's Church was built in 1868 and closed by 1969. No baptism or burial registers exist. It is believed that all baptisms and burials are entered in the registers for Hungerford St Lawrence, although they are not specifically identified. One marriages register covering 1877-1969 has been deposited at the Berkshire Record Office.

Hungerford information that is on our CDs

Our shop stocks the following items relating to Hungerford

- Berkshire Marriages 5 CD (contains over 4,000 entries for Hungerford St Lawrence, Wesleyan Chapel and St Saviour (Eddington))
- Berkshire Burials 13 CD (contains Hungerford Independent 1819-1830, Hungerford St Lawrence 1559-1969 and Hungerford Union Workhouse 1866-1914)
- Berkshire Probate Index, 1480-1857

- Berkshire monumental Inscriptions Collection Volume 3
- Hungerford St Saviour marriages 1843-1969 data download
- Hungerford Independent burials 1819-1830 data download
- Hungerford Union Workhouse burials 1866-1914 data download
- Hungerford Wesleyan Chapel marriages 1886-1897 data download
- Hungerford St Lawrence marriages 1562-1599

- data download
- Hungerford St Lawrence marriages 1600-1837 data download
- Hungerford St Lawrence marriages 1838-1910 data download
- Hungerford St Lawrence burials 1559-1799 data download
- Hungerford St Lawrence burials 1800-1969 data download
- Hungerford St Lawrence Memorial Inscriptions 1693-1954 data download
- Hungerford Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Volume 1, Baptisms 1810-1880 (Eureka Publications)
- Hungerford Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Volume 2, Baptisms 1881-1937 (Eureka Publications)
- Swindon Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Volume 1, Baptisms 1817-1874 (Eureka Publications)
- Hungerford Primitive Methodist Circuit Baptisms 1869-1937 (Eureka Publications)
- Hungerford, Marlborough and Wantage Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Roll 1899-1904 (Eureka Publications)

- Hungerford Poor Law Union Workhouse Births and Deaths 1866-1914 and Paupers Service Book 1877-1917 (Eureka Publications)
- South West Berkshire 1" Old Ordnance Survey Map 1889 (Godfrey Edition)
- Reminiscences of 20th Century Hungerford Pam Haseltine (Hungerford Historical Association)
- Hungerford, A History (Hungerford Historical Association)
- Aspects of the Early History of Hungerford by Norman Hidden
- Hungerford Overseers Papers 1654-1834 (Berkshire Record Society)

You may have seen in the events section in this issue, that we have our first opportunity to learn from Hungerford Historical Association's archivist - Dr Hugh Pihlens - about Hungerford's history during a guided walk entitled 'The High Street of Hungerford and Beyond'. The walk will take place on Friday 18th October 2024 at 10.30am. Places are strictly ticket only as we anticipate it being a popular event. Please see the website to book your place.

An Update from Projects & Publications

Catherine Sampson

Since my last update, we have welcomed Lisa and Louise to our team of volunteer transcribers and checkers and Richard has joined us to help with databases. We would welcome more help, particularly from those able to transcribe or check at the Royal Berkshire Archives in Reading.

We are making good progress transcribing and checking more of the outstanding baptism registers for Berkshire. In recent months, we have been tackling more of the eastern parishes which saw increased growth in the nineteenth century, particularly after the coming of the railways.

One recent interesting entry has just been uncovered at one of the Windsor Churches, where triplets were baptised in the late eighteenth century, a highly unusual entry in this period

of high infant mortality. And the godparents of these rare survivors? None other than King George III, Queen Charlotte and seven other members of the Royal family. That must have been some christening service!

If you have a little time, you could spare to help, please get in contact with Catherine at projects@berksfhs.org.uk





News from the Royal Berkshire Archives

Ivone Turnbull, Senior Archivist at the Royal Berkshire Archives

We are pleased to announce that we have signed a contract with Ancestry to digitise the parish registers that we hold. These are Church of England registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials for parishes currently within the Archdeaconry of Berkshire, as well as those now within the Archdeaconry of Dorchester. However, they will only be digitising registers where the parish has given permission, and only of deceased people.

As you might imagine, the project will take some time to complete as there are a few thousand registers to digitise. This means that our exhibition and conference room will be unavailable until the end of 2024/beginning of 2025. Ancestry will then work on preparing the images for publication which will take time to complete. It is difficult to say exactly when images will be available online, but we will certainly make people aware nearer the time. Once available, images will be accessible via an Ancestry subscription, though will be free to view onsite at the RBA via our Ancestry subscription.

Since the last article, we launched our online digital repository. It stores records which we have received in digital format and copies of some of our paper-based records. However, it does not contain digital copies of all our collections, and some of our digital records are only available to view onsite at the RBA. You can view what digital records we have by searching our digital repository: <https://berksrecords.access>.

[preservica.com/](https://www.preservica.com/) To view material that can only be viewed onsite, please contact us via our website: <https://www.royalberkshirearchives.org.uk/contact-us>

Did you know 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 read our social media feeds on X, Facebook and Instagram for all the latest information, as well as watch videos on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@royalberkshirearchives>

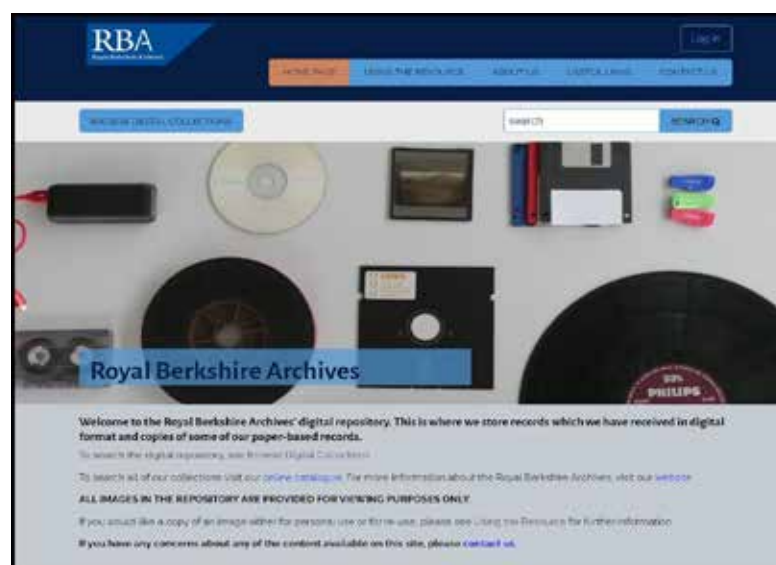


Image courtesy of Royal Berkshire Archives

What's New to View at the RBA?

Readers may be interested to know of recently catalogued collections such as the Windsor Council of Christian Congregations and Churches Together in Windsor (formerly Windsor Christian Council) [D/EX2842]; Bracknell Pentecostal Assembly (D/N62); and additional records of the Society of Friends, also known as Quakers, 1722-2010, relating to Reading (D/F).

Also available are the papers of Bertrand Fletcher of Upton (D/EX2960); the Seymour family of Arborfield Cross, 1916-1928 (D/EX1841); papers of E C Dawson, of Reading, 19th century to 1949 (D/EX587); the Booth family of Reading, 1911-1947 (D/EX2836); additional material of the Frankum family of Woolhampton, 1837-2022 (D/EX1007); papers of Maurice Grimmett, 1954-2021 (D/EX2880); papers of Rob Bradford, Wokingham, 1971-1978 (D/EX2924); and an invoice to Gerald Vere Borlase Burgoyne of Crowthorne Farm for gyro tilling 13 acres of land (D/EX2878).

Business material can be found in papers relating to Hickies Music Shop, Reading (D/EX2944); additional records for Jackson's department store, Reading, 1905-1986 (D/EZ216); and additional material for Samuel Elliott and Sons (Reading) Ltd, 1930s to 1988 (D/EX1263).

Official material includes minutes of Abingdon and Culham Rural Joint Food Control Committee, 1917-1920 (J/FC); building control plans for Newbury Borough, 1883-1940 (N/SB); records of the Bracknell Development Corporation, 1946-1982 (NT/B); as well as the papers of the Reading Borough Deposited Collections which provides an indication of British involvement in slavery in Jamaica (R/D150).

Other records now available include Translines, the magazine of Newbury and District Transport Group, 1995-2023 (D/EX2951); papers of the Glebelands Association, a campaign group opposed to new housing development in Wokingham (D/EX2875); deeds of property in Bray and Cookham, 1807-1948 (D/EX2843); a collection of papers relating to land in Wootton and The Arcade in Friar Street Reading, 1829-1904 (D/EX1064); and a copy of the 1728 Reading-Puntfield turnpike act (D/EX2890).

We have also catalogued an item relating to the Reading Historical Pageant, 1920 (D/EX2986); additional material for Wokingham Theatre, 1968-2023 (D/EX2083); photographs and programmes of the Central Drama Club, Reading (D/EX2926) and other programmes of other artistic groups such as the All Saints Operatic Society, Reading, 1947-1948 (D/EX2937), and the Sainsbury Singers (D/EX2940).

Finally, some recently catalogued digital material can be found in scans and transcripts of sections of the diary of Mary Snelling, a pupil at Queen Anne's School, Caversham, relating to the 1943 bombing of Reading (D/EX2910).

To keep up to date on what collections we have, please see our online catalogue. To view any digital material, please see our online digital repository.



**ACCREDITED
ARCHIVE SERVICE**

The Royal Berkshire Archives
9 Coley Avenue
Reading
RG1 6AF

arch@reading.gov.uk

0118 937 5132

Abingdon Branch

abingdon@berksfhs.org.uk

In April, the Abingdon Branch held a Family History Clinic and local publicity invited members of the public to bring along their problems for a 1-to-1 session with experienced Branch members able to offer help and advice. In the event there was a relatively low turn-out but some interesting enquiries cropped up involving topics such as DNA, and the implications of test results, and adoption.

Following the Branch Annual Meeting in May, Diane Coates told the story of John Phillips, a young man associated with her family, who, at the age of 19, joined the RAF in 1941 and lost his life in 1943 when the Lancaster bomber, in which he was flying, crashed in France. Diane presented a very informative and occasionally emotional talk, pieced together from information found in RAF archives and historical societies and through talking with contemporaries.

In June, Branch members and several visitors heard Bill King tell the story of the British Resistance Movement in WW2. He explained the development, constitution and activities of an organisation which never formally existed and described how the volunteers were trained in guerilla warfare at Coleshill House in the Vale of White Horse.

Meetings ahead:

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

16th September

Anne March Caldwell a Victorian Novelist
by JJ Heath-Caldwell

21st October

Discussion Group

18th November

A Stroll through Berkshire's Graveyards by
Catherine Sampson

Brian Denton



*Diane Coates
talks about
John Phillips*

*June's speaker
Bill King*



Bracknell & Wokingham Branch

bracknell@berksfhs.org.uk

Report of April Meeting - Reading WW1 Hospitals talk given by **Lionel Williams**
reported by **Bryan Pledger**

World War One started on 4th August 1914 with only 7,000 hospital beds throughout the UK. Something had to be done to support the wounded actually on the battlefield, thus a Stretcher Bearer Corps was created to recover the dead and wounded. An evacuation route was set up close to the front line and those needing further treatment were then moved to advanced dressing stations. The seriously injured were transported to casualty clearing stations and from there were sent to base hospitals, usually near to the Channel ports. On 29th October 1914, the first batch of 50 wounded soldiers arrived at the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

On 3rd February 1915, the War Office started converting workhouses into hospitals and by the last week in March, the Reading's workhouse on Oxford Road was converted into the Reading

Around the Branches

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

No 1 War Hospital. The first convoy arrived at Reading station on 22nd April 1915. In February, five Reading schools were converted. A Care and Comforts Committee was set up so as to distribute cigarettes etc.

In 1917, the officer in charge of the surgical division of the town's war hospitals was Leonard Joyce. His techniques saved lives. The most important breakthrough was when he discovered the Reading Bacillus. He noticed wounds that were healing had a 'characteristic smell', which those that failed to heal did not have. He worked to identify a bacteria and then used it to infect patients with non-healing wounds which broke down dead tissue to allow the wounds to heal naturally. Problems due to the use of poison gas, trench foot and shell shock were overcome as were advances made in plastic surgery.

The Armistice was signed on 11th November 1918 and Battle Hospital No 1 closed without any fanfare after Christmas 1918 when the last 98 patients left.

Report of June meeting - Local Family History

Finchampstead and its Lords of the Manor by Christine Cox

Finchampstead is an ancient settlement lying close to the Roman road constructed between Staines and Silchester. From the 14th century, there were two manor houses, later known as East Court and West Court. West Court was extensively restored for Rev Ellis St John, after he inherited it. It was let to various tenants after 1842 and eventually became the Officer's Mess for REME.

In 1849, John Walter III purchased East Court and his son Arthur Fraser Walter demolished the house and built a Victorian house naming it "The Manor". His son John Walter IV inherited it in 1910 and sold The Manor together with the Bearwood Estate at auction in 1911. The Manor's new owner donated it and the grounds to the Church.

Michael Rea's talk entitled **An odd Fyshe**, was an account of Charles Fyshe Palmer, 1769-1843. Charles, (the grandson of Henry Fish of Biggleswade, who had inherited in 1712 the estate of Luckley and East Court Manor, Finchampstead, after the required assumption of the name Palmer), was elected in 1818 as the Whig MP for

Reading. This was a period of great depression in Britain following the Napoleonic wars. He advocated Parliamentary Reform, abolition of slavery, attacked government extravagances and supported low paid agricultural workers. After he died in 1843 without issue, the estates passed to his wife's son Sir John Gordon Sinclair, who then sold it to John Walter of Bearwood.

Meetings Ahead:

Friday, 20th September

Take him to the Tower by Peter Must

Wednesday, 16th October - Combined Branches Meeting -

The Earl and the Pharaoh by Lady Carnarvon

Friday, 15th November

Migration throughout the UK by Debbie Bradley

Drop-In Advice Sessions

Bracknell Library on the second Thursday of the month from 2pm - 5pm

Wokingham Library on the last Tuesday of the month from 2pm - 4.30pm

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.

18th September

Tracing Living Relatives

16th October - Combined Branches Meeting

The Earl and the Pharaoh by Lady Carnarvon

20th November

Family History Software

December - No meeting

Gillian Stevens

Around the Branches

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

Newbury Branch

newbury@berksfhs.org.uk

Past Talks

In June, Sarah Roberts spoke about her trilogy of books "That Summer", "Lost Summers" and "Summer Rainbows". The first was her mother's record of evacuation from Portsmouth to Kintbury in 1941 and afterwards. The second covers Sarah's life from 1965 and why she took so long to read her mother's story, while the last one looks at the origins of the family in Kent and back to the Huguenots. Interest from Queen Camilla was just the icing on her cake.

Newbury hasn't been meeting in July and August due to holidays and 2024 is no exception.

Meetings ahead:

The branch continues have a mix of face-to-face at West Berkshire Museum on 2nd Wednesday afternoons and zoom meetings mostly in colder months on 2nd Wednesday Evenings.

11th September (F2F)

A Nice Quiet Life by Rob Chicken

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

16th October (Zoom) Combined Branches Meeting

The Earl and the Pharaoh by Lady Carnarvon

13th November (F2F)

The Cope Hall Colony by Carol Brindley

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

At the time of writing (June 2024) our Zoom speakers for January and February 2025 haven't confirmed availability, so check out the Society Newsletters which will have that information. In March, there will be another combined branches meeting.

On 9th April 2024, I will be speaking about "Baptists in Berkshire", a brief overview of the Baptist movement from the 16th century and a

look at some Berkshire Baptists. I will be doing a shameless plug for the Angus Archive at Regents College, Oxford. Anyone seeking Baptist ancestors anywhere in the UK needs to know of this wonderful place.

Nick Prince

*Museum,
Cloth Hall,
Wharf Street,
Newbury by
Jo and Steve
Turner, where
Newbury
Branch meets,
CC BY-SA 2.0
Wikimedia
commons*



Reading Branch

reading@berksfhs.org.uk

Reading branch has enjoyed a variety of face-to-face meetings at our venue of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. In April, we had an informal open evening where those attending could chat together about their family history problems and triumphs. In May, we had a last minute change of speaker, and welcomed Ann Smith to tell us about '100 years of shopping in Reading'. This was a welcome reminder of the vast range of businesses that have traded in the town centre over the years, and prompted much reminiscing amongst the audience.

June saw us having a presentation by Laurie Page on 'My Eminent Ancestors'. This was a tale of the numerous MP s and dignitaries he found when exploring his maternal ancestral lines. Laurie was fortunate enough to have found portraits of many of these ancestors due to their jobs or social standing - if only we were all so lucky! It provided a reminder to us all to explore maternal lines as well as the paternal ones - they can sometimes be more fruitful.

Around the Branches

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

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.

26th September (Zoom)

Help, My Ancestor Has Vanished by Simon Fowler

16th October - Combined Branches Meeting

The Earl and the Pharaoh by Lady Carnarvon

28th November (Zoom)

Research at Home Using Your Libraries' Online Resources by Paul Gaskell

12th December (f2f)

Quiz and short talks by members

Vicki Chesterman

Windsor, Slough & Maidenhead Branch

windsor@berksfhs.org.uk

In April, "Breach of Promise to Marry - The Real Miss Havishams" by Denise Bates taught us about the law that gave nineteenth century women better rights than men, and the women who enforced their rights to sometimes devastating effect. The talk investigated the social and cultural history of broken engagements between 1780 - 1970 and why the law allowed the person who had been jilted to claim damages from the person who had broken the engagement.

May welcomed Dr Judith Hill, with "Agricultural unrest and the Swing Riots in Southern England 1830-32". The Swing Riots reflect the resentment felt by agricultural labourers and their desire for vengeance against local landed interests, notably their employers and those who controlled the vestries and made Parish Poor Law decisions. The attacks struck at the very roots of social

cohesion. This talk was followed by our exciting Branch Annual Meeting (BAM).

June saw our annual outing with an afternoon visit to the St. George's Chapel Archives at Windsor Castle. There we saw deeds, letters,



Swing Riots

rolls and manuscripts dating from the early twelfth century, tracing the history of the Chapel and College of St George and of the properties the College once managed in 30 counties across England and Wales. We were dazzled by some of the treasures from the collections on display in the search room and exhibition gallery, as well as viewing a selection of rare books in the Chapter Library, including Elias Ashmole's "Antiquities of Berkshire". First published in 1719 - the Chapter Library edition was printed in 1736.

Coming soon is Dr Nicholas Dixon on "Ancestors on the Map; Finding Locations of Family Photographs" in July. In August we will be having a summer break.

Meetings ahead:

Windsor branch holds its meetings on Zoom, starting at 7.30pm.

Around the Branches

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



24th September (Zoom)

Using a Research Methodology for Family History by Phil Isherwood (left)

16th October (Zoom) Combined Branches Meeting

The Earl and the Pharaoh by Lady Carnarvon

26th November (Zoom)

Victorian Hiring Fairs by Clare O'Grady

Leigh Dworkin

John Lewis Partnership Archive

What we hold

We manage the corporate archives of the John Lewis Partnership, which includes Waitrose. We also have some archives of many of the businesses or stores which became part of the Partnership over the years.

Where we are

The John Lewis Partnership archive is located in Cookham, more information can be found here <https://www.johnlewispartnership.co.uk/about/who-we-are/heritage-centre.html>.

The Heritage Centre is open to the public every Saturday, 10am to 4pm.

The best sources for family history are our staff magazines; The Gazette, which dates back to 1918 and local Chronicles from 1947. Please get in touch to book an appointment if you intend to visit for research, to make sure that we have space and staff available to help you. Appointments can be requested by contacting heritage.centre@johnlewis.co.uk.

In addition to staff magazines, other archives have been kept primarily for business purposes, rather than family history, staff records are incomplete. It can sometimes be difficult to find individuals in the archives however staff are happy to try to help, please contact us at heritage.centre@johnlewis.co.uk.

Our online resource for the history of the Partnership are our Memory Store websites:

<https://jlpmemorystore.org.uk/>

<https://johnlewismemorystore.org.uk/>

<https://waitrosememorystore.org.uk/>

Social Security Number Application Forms (SS-5) – Part 2

Leigh Dworkin shows us how to order these underused US documents

In the first part of this article in Historian (Volume 47, June 2024) I showed six examples of SS-5 documents and the unique information included which greatly enhanced my genealogical research.

In this second part, I give a step-by-step account of how to order the records from the American government website pertaining to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to the Social Security Administration (SSA).

How to Order an SS-5 Document

This is quite straightforward, given that documentation is available from The Legal Genealogist Blog by Judy Russell. This may be found by Googling “The Legal Genealogist” “SS-5 2024 style” or visiting <https://www.legalgenealogist.com/2024/01/30/ordering-the-ss-5-2024-style/>

In order to make this even easier, this article offers a guide including screenshots as I order two documents. The first is the SS-5 for Max Berkowitz, the brother of my great-grandfather Gershon or Harris Bercovitch, and the second is the SS-5 for Samuel Stein, the brother-in-law of the same Gershon or Harris Bercovitch.

Case study- Samuel Stein

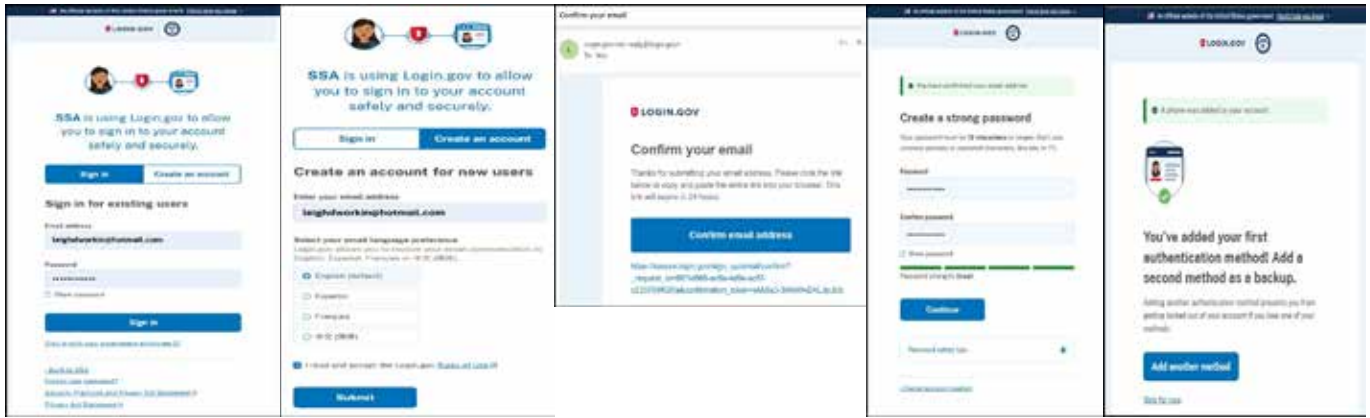
1. Go to the SSA’s FOIA Public Access Link (PAL) at <https://foia.ssa.gov/app/Home.aspx> and click on “Sign In” (top right).



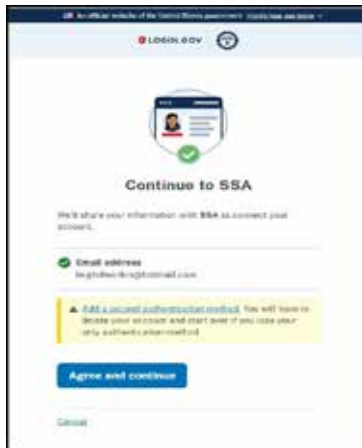
2. If you do not have one already click the first “Create an account with Login.gov”, otherwise select the dark blue top button and “Sign in with LOGIN.GOV”



Creating an account will ask you to enter an email address, which will be confirmed by sending you an email (check your Junk Mail for something from Login.gov if you don't see it). After confirming, you will need to enter a strong password (twice) and will need to set up a second method of authentication, such as having to enter a 6 digit code sent to you by text message.



While two factor authentication is mandatory, setting up another authentication method is optional so can be skipped.



Agree and continue to share your data with the SA and then Agree to the Terms of Service.

The final step to create an account involves entering your mailing address details as this will be needed to receive the SS-5 document through the post.



3. Once logged in, select "Submit Request" near the top and right of the screen, or you can go straight to <https://foia.ssa.gov/App/CreateRequest.aspx> :



This is a very long page, so scroll down past your Requester Details, which you should check as being correct.

4. In General Information, enter **DEBS** as the Action Office; **Decedent SS-5** as the Request type; **Other** as the Requester Category; **Mail** as the Delivery Mode; **Credit Card** as the Payment Mode, by selecting from the popup menus:

5. In Decedent Numident/SS-5 Request, enter as much data as known such as the name, Social Security Number if known (without dashes), birth & death dates (in mm/dd/yyyy or dd mmm yyyy format) and parents names if known:

(I obtained these details from Ancestry in the US Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014 confirmed by the California, US, Death Index 1940-1997, although his mother's maiden name was unknown to me but probably not Berkowitz as that was his wife's. Other research suggested his birth place as Warsaw rather than "Other Country".):

Detail	Source
Name	Samuel Stein
Social Security Number	551100070
Birth Date	20 Feb 1882
Birth Place	Other Country
Last Residence	30036, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California, USA
Death Date	May 1982

Samuel Stein	
in the California, U.S., Death Index, 1940-1997	
Detail	Source
Name	Samuel Stein
Social Security #	551100070
Gender	Male
Birth Date	20 Feb 1882
Birth Place	Other Country
Death Date	5 May 1982
Death Place	Los Angeles
Mother's Maiden Name	Berkowitz



6. Remember that SSA "will not disclose information about any person in our records unless: 1) the number holder has provided written consent or we have acceptable proof of his or her death; or 2) the number holder is at least 100 years old and we have acceptable proof of his or her death; or 3) the number holder is more than 120 years old."

So, finally, enter supporting files to prove that the individual is deceased. Here I attach the tombstone picture for Sam Stein (as shown above):

7. The fee for an SS-5 has recently risen from \$21 to \$30. Do not try to save \$2 by going for the Numident record, which will only supply the data from the SS-5 record and not an image of it. It is best not to trust others to transcribe.

Select Willing to Pay All Fees – you will only be charged \$30.

Do not select Fee Waiver Requested, as this is unlikely to be applicable.

8. In Expedite Information, do not select Expedite Requested, as this is unlikely to be applicable.

9. In Mailing Address, check that the details are correct, then Click the blue **Submit** button.

10. If all is correct with the Request Submission, you will be able to Select a Debit or credit card, and pressing Continue will redirect you to an external payment website. Your supporting files will be uploaded at this point:

11. Fill in your payment details including credit card information, and click Continue:

12. You will receive a confirmation of your details; Check the authorisation box and click Continue

13. You will be sent an email confirming that the request has been submitted:

14. If you want to see the details of your request, choose Request Status on the SSA FOIA online website:

15. After all that, this appeared in the post, some 40 days later:

Conclusion

From this SS-5 we learn that Samuel Stein's parents were Nathan Stein and Sarah Levine. The Levine name was new to me and has not been found on any other record nor index. I did know that Sam was born in Warsaw from other research, as he had naturalized, but if you have not managed to find naturalization documents for your ancestor, this could be one way to find the exact town or city of birth. The birth date is also more precise here than on the petition of naturalization which simply states February 1882.

Home and work addresses are also supplied, along with the name of the business, which could be a new line of research.

Leigh Dworkin is the current Chair of the JGSGB and the Chair of the Windsor branch of the BerksFHS.

This screenshot shows the 'Expedite Information' section of the SSA FOIA Request form. It includes a warning about expediting requests, a 'Request Reason' text area, and a 'Mailing Address' section with fields for street, city, state, zip, country, and phone number. A blue 'Submit' button is visible at the bottom right.

This screenshot shows the 'SSA FOIA Requests' payment information section. It displays a payment amount of \$30.00 and two radio button options: 'Bank account (ACH)' and 'Debit or credit card'. The 'Debit or credit card' option is selected. 'Continue' and 'Cancel' buttons are at the bottom.

This screenshot shows the payment details form for SSA FOIA Requests. It contains fields for cardholder name, card number, expiration date, and security code. There are also fields for billing address, phone number, and email address. A 'Continue' button is at the bottom.



INTRODUCING FOR 2024-2025

YOUR TRUSTEES



Your Society Chairman - Catherine Sampson

Catherine began her own family research when she was a teenager and has been hooked ever since. Her own research interests are mainly centred on East Anglia and the North East. She joined the society in 2009 and has served as a trustee for every year bar two ever since. She was elected as Society Chairman in June 2021, having previously served as Chairman 2017-2020. Catherine is also the society's Projects Co-ordinator, she chairs the Projects & Publications Committee, and is an active member of the Education & Events, IT and Marketing & Communications Committees and the Editorial Panel. She has written and published several books on local and family history and is a regular speaker across Berkshire on social history subjects. When time and circumstances permits, Catherine is a keen photographer and traveller, her last trip being to Northern Norway and Iceland.

Your Society Vice-chairman and Newbury branch representative - Nick Prince

Nick recently retired from the civil service after 39 years. He has been researching his family since 2007 and is hoping to do more, including overseas. He is actively involved in Thatcham Baptist Church, Theatre groups and at the Watermill Theatre. He is working on a number of projects both Family History and Theatre based.



Your Society Secretary - Vanessa Chappell

A society member since 2006. Vanessa has been Chair of the Abingdon (Vale of White Horse) Branch for many years and is now their Programme Secretary. Vanessa has lived in Abingdon and been married to Duncan for 30 years and has two grown up children Robert and Nicole. When not researching her own ancestry in Wales, Birmingham, Gloucestershire and Bedfordshire, or her husband's Scottish roots, she enjoys creative paper-crafting and working in her garden. Vanessa also helps in her husband's music business 'Big Ginger Tom Music', which promotes live acoustic music and she can be found behind the bar in Harwell Village Hall on gig nights!

Your Society Treasurer - Martin Pilkington

Martin is from Wigan, Lancashire. He has been involved in Family History since 1977 and his family comes from Lancashire, Westmorland and Herefordshire. Martin moved down to London in 1978 and spent 5 years working in various finance roles in the NHS, before joining the Civil Service. He trained to be an accountant with HM Customs and Excise and became an Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants in 1995 and a Fellow in 2003. Martin retired in 2015. Since retiring he has spent about one or two weeks a year working for the council on various activities around elections and a lot more time on his family tree and taking photographs.





Abingdon branch - Dave Purling

Dave retired as a Substation Engineer after 46 years in engineering. Dave has been married to Ann for 38 years and has twin adult children, James and Emma. Dave was born in Abingdon, Berkshire and has lived in Didcot all of his life. He and his wife enjoy family history and love going to shows and archives to continue their research. Dave and Ann have been members of Berkshire Family History Society for around 5 years.

Bracknell and Wokingham branch- Sandra Barkwith

Sandra joined the Executive Committee in 2012 as the Representative for Bracknell branch. She became chairman of the branch in 2015. She has been a member of the Society since 1998. Currently, Sandra is Convenor of the Research Zone Committee and the Branches Consultation Group and a member of the Education and Events Group.



Computer branch - Gillian Stevens

Gillian joined the society in 1998 and has worked closely with the Federation of Family History Societies (now the Family History Federation), Findmypast and The National Archives. She has served on the Executive since 2007, bar two one-year compulsory gaps, and represents the Computer branch of which she is Chairman. She also sits on the Education & Events group and facilitates the monthly Natter group. Gillian has in recent years found her first and probably only Berkshire ancestor whilst researching her own family history and by making a worldwide study of the Blofeld surname.

Windsor, Slough and Maidenhead branch - Leigh Dworkin

Leigh Dworkin is a passionate amateur genealogist and has been working on his own family tree for about 40 years. Genealogically speaking, he considers himself to be $\frac{5}{8}$ Polish, $\frac{1}{4}$ Lithuanian and $\frac{1}{8}$ Belarusian, judging by his great-grandparents' nationalities, which is far more interesting and exotic than being just an Essex lad.

He has been chairman of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain (JGSGB) since 2016, is a frequent speaker on topics of Jewish genealogy and family history, and has been chairman of the Windsor branch of the Berkshire FHS since 2019.





Reading branch - Vicki Chesterman

Vicki has been involved with Berkshire FHS for over 20 years and is the current Reading branch Chairman and programme secretary. Vicki is chairman of the Education & Events committee and is the editor for the Berkshire Family Historian. She also has a keen interest in local history.

John Dunne

John joined Berks FHS about 20+ years ago and has been a committee member of the Computer branch for almost 20 years. Since taking early retirement from the NHS in 2008 he has had more time to catch up with Irish, American and British relatives as his father was one of 15 children and his mother one of 4 children, he has many aunts and uncles, all now deceased and of course very many cousins to keep track of. John moved to the Reading area in the early 1980s from his home in Bracknell. He had been in Bracknell since 1958 when his family left West London to start a new life in Bracknell New Town, which was a big new adventure for him aged 10, and his parents. In March 2022 he finally made contact with his half sister, who was adopted as an infant. It has been a roller coaster of a ride getting to know her and her large family ever since. This has all been achieved by the use of DNA research, the value of which is not to be underestimated.



Alison Pedley

Alison Pedley lives in Wokingham, but her roots are firmly in North-West England, where she was brought up. Alison is well-experienced in the field of family history, having researched her own heritage in depth, after her father asked for her help. He had started his research in the days before online databases but as they grew in availability, Alison helped him out. This led to a second career at the age of 50. She studied Modern History in the 1970s but after a career in finance, returned to university achieving an MA (Historical Research) and a PhD. Her PhD thesis was about 'criminal lunatic' infanticidal mothers who were committed to Broadmoor and other English specialist facilities between 1835 and 1895. While she was researching, she joined the Berkshire Family Society and used the databases available to help build personal backgrounds to the case studies' subjects.

Last year she volunteered to be an RA at the Centre. Alison hopes that her experience, built up over many years, will help other folk with their genealogical research.

Andrew Rice

Andrew qualified as a chartered accountant in 1975 and about the same time started to develop an interest in my family history. He had little spare time then, and with no internet, his knowledge expanded very slowly. Workwise he moved into the charity sector in 1982 and has remained working in finance in that sector ever since. He currently still works as a charity Finance Director three days a week. He was happy to support the Society as Treasurer for the maximum five years in the past and is glad to be back and able to continue to help in a small way. Hopefully he will be able to carry on my own research at the same time!



YOUR VICE-PRESIDENTS



Mark Stevens

Mark is Berkshire's current county archivist. He grew up in Maidenhead and has a lifelong love of history in the Royal County. He is particularly interested in historic mental health care and the people who received it and is the author of two related books: *Broadmoor Revealed* and *Life in the Victorian Asylum*. He was elected as vice-president of the society for the first time in 2016.

Irene Littleby

Centenarian, Irene Littleby, became a Vice-president of Berkshire Family History Society in 2023. She has been an active volunteer since the 1980s when she began transcribing parish registers for the Society and also for the Berkshire Record Office. Many of our publications from the 1990s through to present, owe their existence in some way to Irene. Irene thrives on a challenge and particularly enjoys tackling the older and more illegible registers, even taking up Latin to extend her knowledge.



YOUR SOCIETY PRESIDENT –

Mr James Puxley CVO, former Lord-Lieutenant of the Royal County of Berkshire

We are pleased to announce that Mr James Puxley is again, returning for a seventh year as President of Berkshire Family History Society. He became our society President after expressing an interest in genealogy at the official opening of the Centre for Heritage and Family History in 2018. He has looked into his own family history and is in the fortunate position of having a wealth of archives to refer to enhance the stories of his predecessors.

Born in 1948, Mr Puxley was educated in Berkshire before attending the University of Bristol where he obtained a BA degree in history. He attended the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester where he obtained a diploma in rural estate management and worked as a rural chartered surveyor for several years following qualification as a chartered surveyor. In the 1980s he started to manage the Welford Estate, near Newbury on behalf of his mother and then on his own behalf when she transferred ownership to him. He continues in this role today living at Welford Park with his wife, Deborah, who assists her husband in the management of the Welford Estate and organises the annual opening of the grounds for 5 weeks every February for the public to come and view one of the country's finest snowdrop displays.



Mr Puxley was High Sheriff of the Royal County of Berkshire from 2000 to 2001. He was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant in 2005 and became Vice Lord-Lieutenant in 2010. In 2015 he was appointed Lord-Lieutenant of the Royal County, thereby becoming the Queen's representative within Berkshire. This role involved taking considerable interest in and supporting very many aspects of county life, civic, voluntary, military, religious, business and others. Mr Puxley retired as Lord-Lieutenant in October 2023.

How a Berks FHS Event Can Reach Further Than Family History

Sarah Swatridge explains how a Berks FHS course impacted on her day job

Last autumn I signed up for a 10-week course run by BFHS and titled Victorian Sources for Historians". The tutor was Dr Margaret Simons.

We were a small group, the majority of whom wanted to learn more about their own ancestors as they were researching their family trees and wanted a broader background knowledge to help them understand what it was like to live in Victorian times.

However, my reason for doing this course was mainly because I'm a writer and love writing historical novels. I studied history at university, although not the Victorians.

So far, I've had about 100 short stories published worldwide in women's magazines, 14 pocket novels (novellas), and 10 large print novels available from libraries. About two thirds of my books are historical, mainly set in Victorian times. There are fewer markets for historical short stories so most of them are contemporary.

For some time, I have been working on a series loosely based around Victorian Reading. The prequel, Biscuit Wars, was published as a D C Thomson pocket novel in February and is now being considered by Ulverscroft as a large print novel. These novels are all linked by their setting but are stand-alone stories. I've currently got another one being considered and am working on the next, whilst the others have been planned out.

Each story focuses on one character and a different aspect of Victorian and later Edwardian life. I've got an idea for each which I keep adding to.

Some writers just sit down and write; I'm a planner. I like to map out my plot and begin to develop my characters before I even start to write.

I was pleased to receive information beforehand from Dr Margaret Simons on what topics we'd

be learning about each week. These covered many areas of Victorian life such as society and class, health and hygiene, travel and education. Knowing what was coming up made me think, often subconsciously, what I'd be listening out for, or specific facts I needed to know more about. Often, the brief mention of something would spark another idea, for example, in week 2 I noticed a reference to the first female factory inspector and decided she'd make a splendid secondary character.

Over the course, we learnt about how the country was changing from being mainly rural to the growth of large communities such as Reading. It made me wonder how easy it would be for a young person to adapt to such a different way of life.

My characters are not the rich and famous; they are the ordinary, everyday people who make up a community. Normal they might be, but they are achievers, prepared to take risks and fight for what's right.

Margaret's course helped give me a good insight into housing arrangements that would have been available, health issues that were relevant at the time as well as the impact of the railway on our area. Hopefully, all these little extra details will make my stories more believable and enjoyable for my readers.

We are so fortunate, not only to have access to the wealth of material that the Berkshire Family History Society has for us, in person and online, but there is so much information available via the Internet. Thanks to Margaret, I now note down the source and date of my research, should I need to refer back.

I admit, I could happily spend hours on my research, and enjoy every minute, but that doesn't get a first draft written! I've had to train myself to write the story and ONLY look up specific things as and when they crop up.

Not surprisingly, I picked up another couple of ideas for future stories from doing Margaret's course. I also discovered other areas that I know I need to learn more about, such as the development of photography in the late Victorian period and into the twentieth century.

Undertaking courses such as this and listening to many of the excellent talks hosted by the Berkshire Family History Society, are not the only ways in which I develop my stories.

I'm lucky enough to have spent time in the enormous costume department of a local theatre group – Twyford Drama. I was amazed how different I felt, and moved, when I was dressed for the part. For a start, I had to slow down when wearing a long dress and my posture improved, even though I wasn't wearing a whale bone corset!

Other research I've done, for different novels, has been equally interesting. I once went to the Maidenhead Heritage Centre and, with the help of a fully qualified pilot, flew a Spitfire! Ok, so it was a simulation but it just made me admire those ATS girls all the more. In fact, the more I learnt about their real-life stories, the more I realised I had to write about something different, because the truth was better than fiction!

I have also lived on war-time rations which was quite an eye-opener. Much to my surprise, I was allowed more butter and milk than I usually eat but there was much less variety. Fortunately, I love vegetables and this was winter, so there were plenty of root vegetables around. One day, I'll try rations again in the summer for a different experience.

Over the years, my husband and I have had allotments and at one time my ambition was to become self-sufficient but the reality is that we would probably starve!

I've also sewn my own clothes and used a variety of natural dyes to dye different fabrics. My mum was a skilled dressmaker, but I didn't inherit her skills. I was always better at cooking than sewing.

I once did a workshop with Adrienne Henry, a milliner in the Harris Arcade in Reading and

learnt how to make my very own, bespoke 1920s style cloche. I'm very proud of the hat I made and admire the skill of the milliners.

You won't be surprised to find I'm an avid reader, and love many of the historical dramas we have on television. I do like them to be accurate and to reflect the actual culture of the period, rather than be modernised to bring them in line with what's currently more acceptable.

I would like to extend a huge thank you to Dr Margaret Simons and also to Vicki Chesterman for putting on this excellent course and many similar ones. I, for one, have been entertained and have learnt a lot which has been put to good use.

If you are interested in reading any of my novels, you can read the blurbs on my website www.sarahswatridge.co.uk. You can also sign up, via my website, for my one-page, monthly newsletter.

And, if you'd like to buy my collection of 20 Feel-Good Stories, several of which are historical, then go to Amazon or order direct <https://www.thebridgetowncafebookshop.co.uk/>

The Lord-Lieutenants of Berkshire

42 Lord-Lieutenants have served the county of Berkshire since Henry VIII appointed Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, his Lieutenant for the Southern Counties in 1545. Brandon's job was to coordinate local defence in the face of threats of French invasion, and defence remained the principal concern of Lord-Lieutenants until the last years of the reign of Queen Victoria. In the twentieth century the nature of the Lieutenancy changed, and today's Lord-Lieutenants, whilst continuing to support the work of the territorial and volunteer forces, are primarily concerned with promoting social cohesion and encouraging and celebrating public and voluntary service in the community.

In this short illustrated history, the author traces the story of the Lieutenancy in Berkshire, from the tumultuous days of the Tudors, through the turmoil of the Civil War, the constitutional crisis of 1688/89, and the (relative) calm of the eighteenth century, until the French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon brought new fears of invasion and a revival of activity. After a discussion of the nineteenth-century changes and the pivotal role of Lord Wantage, the book reviews the development of the role of the Lieutenancy in the twentieth century, concluding with a description of the work of the Lieutenancy today, and brief biographies of the 41 men and one woman who have held the post.

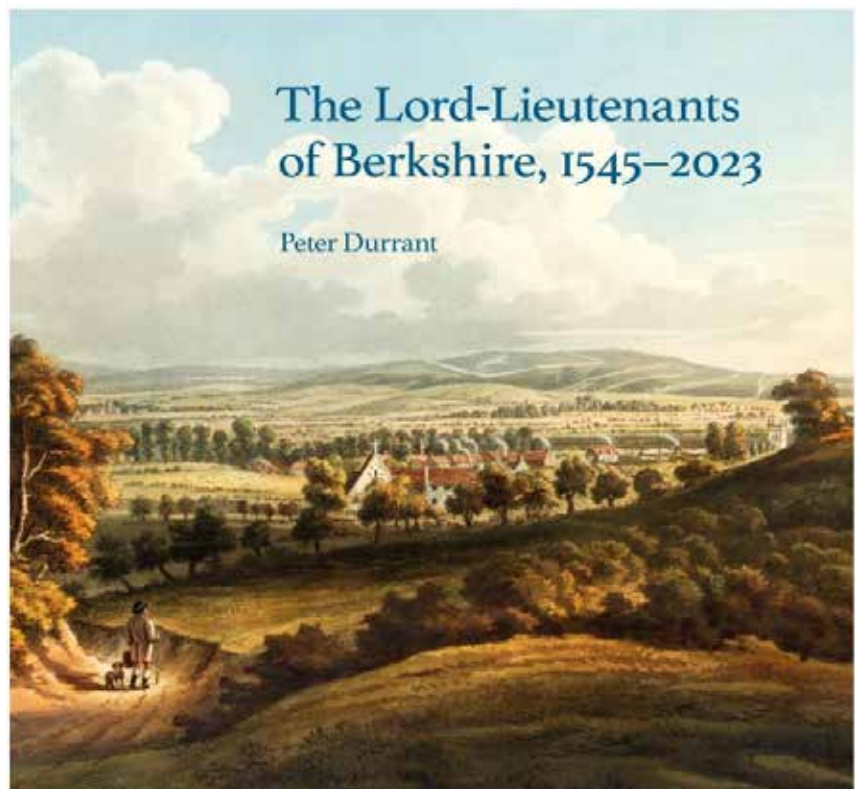
Berkshire's Lord-Lieutenants have included courtiers and members of the Royal Family as well as leading local individuals. The common thread uniting them all is their position as the personal representative of the Crown in this Royal County.

About the author

Dr Peter Durrant MBE was County Archivist of Berkshire for 25 years until his retirement in 2014. He is Chairman of the Berkshire Historic Churches Trust and of the Friends of Reading Abbey, and is a Past President of the Reading Branch of the Historical Association. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 2002 and was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of Berkshire in 2018.

128 pages, full colour.

Available from the Berkshire Lieutenancy Office <https://berkshirielieutenancy.uk> or the BerksFHS shop at berksfhs.org for £20.



Medicine and Society in Late Eighteenth-Century Berkshire: The Commonplace Book of William Savory Of Brightwalton and Newbury

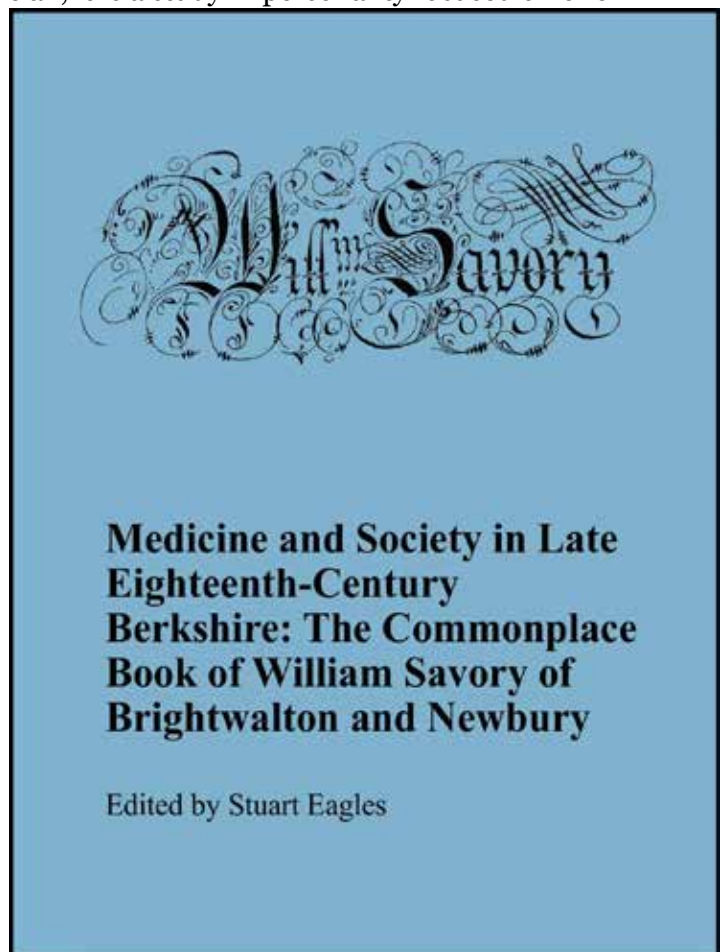
This book is the latest volume published by the Berkshire Record Society and is edited by Stuart Eagles, who is a well established local scholar and writer. The book will be available in Society bookshop soon, priced at £25.

Despite the ponderous and somewhat intimidating title the contents of the book are varied and interesting, and very recognisable to those of us who have notebooks full of jottings, thoughts, anecdotes, family information and other miscellanea, as well as notes on our own professions and works.

William Savory (1768-1824) strove to become a professionally accredited surgeon-apothecary and man-midwife with his own medical practice in Newbury. Following his marriage in 1791 he compiled a manuscript volume from notebooks, correspondence and diaries. This account of his upbringing in Brightwalton is full of observations about the villages, people and events of Downland Berkshire. We read about his schooling and studies, medical apprenticeship and his training in London's teaching hospitals. The light he shines on these experiences, and on the day-to-day care he gave his patients, yields a striking picture of eighteenth century medicine.

This is an informative and entertaining record enlivened by Savory's sense of humour, and is a rich source for local, family and social historians. Above all, it is a study in personality focused on one fascinating young man and his journey into early adulthood in late eighteenth-century Berkshire.

In a comprehensive introduction, historian Stuart Eagles uses Savory's insights to learn more about education, health, medical apprenticeship, astrology and witchcraft, women and sexual politics, leisure, music and dance, religion, royalty and politics, transport, crime, disability, and medical training and practice of the period.



Heritage Open Days 2024

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



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

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

Throughout this period we will be running a display in the Events area of The Centre for Heritage and Family History at Reading Central Library, in conjunction with Reading Local Studies Library. The highlight will be a panoramic view of Broad Street, Reading based on the 1881 census.

On Saturday 7th September, we will be running a video display of the areas of Reading affected by the creation of the Inner Distribution Road at 11am and again at 1pm. One of the video's creators - Graham Turner - will be joining us for the day to chat to visitors about the area of Coley which was particularly altered by our ring road, sharing memories and tales of families displaced and houses lost.

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

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

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

Refreshments will be available for a modest donation.



A Combined Branches' Special Online Meeting

Wednesday 16th October 2024

7.45pm start (session opens 7.15pm)

The Earl and the Pharaoh

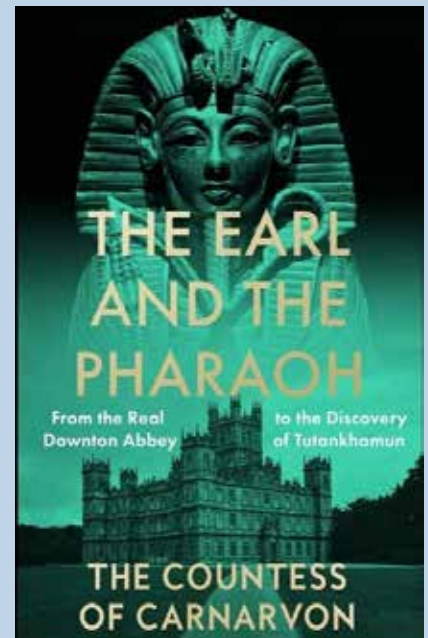
By Lady Carnarvon



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

This talk is about a man whose life and death became front-page news throughout the world between the autumn of

1922 and the spring of 1923 when, with his colleague Howard Carter, he discovered the tomb of Tutankhamun and then, shortly afterwards, died.



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

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

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

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

Book now to secure your place.

SAVE THE DATE! - There will be a Combined Branches' Meeting Christmas Social on Zoom on Wednesday 4th December 2024. Keep an eye on the website for more details.