

# Berkshire Family Historian

*The quarterly journal of the  
Berkshire Family History Society*



**September 2022**

**Volume 46**



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**Your new Executive Committee for 2022/3**

**YourTrees celebrates its first birthday**

**Silk industry connections**

**Tips for reading old handwriting**

# 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.

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

*Rose Street, Wokingham, looking eastwards towards All Saints' Church (courtesy of Reading Local Studies Illustrations collection)*

# Berkshire Family Historian

The quarterly journal of the Berkshire Family History Society

## September 2022

Volume 46

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

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# Editor's Notes

Welcome to your September 2022 Berkshire Family Historian. It seems amazing that we are already in Autumn - where has the year gone? Traditionally, summer is the time when family history research takes a back seat to other activities that are more enjoyable when the weather is warmer and drier. Maybe the extra warmth this year meant that it was more comfortable to visit a relevant archive to do research in air conditioned comfort, or maybe, it meant that all thoughts of research were banished and trying to remain cool was the most pressing concern. Whatever the situation, we hope you are now all enjoying the cooler weather.

In this issue we have the second part of Around Berkshire and hope to introduce you to some of the less well-known parts of Berkshire. Your Society Trustees and Officers for the new year are highlighted as is all the activity of the branches. In case you missed the Society AGM in June, we have a brief round up, and we celebrate the first anniversary of YourTrees.

As ever, our events pages are full of a variety of sessions - walks, tours, workshops, courses and our first ever day school. Please do take a look, you may well find something of interest. Don't forget to book early for events via our website to avoid disappointment as some events sell out quickly.

Please let me know if you have anything you would like to be considered for inclusion in forthcoming issues, or if you have an idea for what you would like to see included in your journal. It is your journal, and your input is very important to us.

**Vicki Chesterman**

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



# Chairman's Corner

As I write this update, I am looking forward to the very first ever online Berkshire Heritage Fair on 6th August. This is a joint initiative by Berkshire Family History Society and Berkshire Local History Association bringing together the often-overlapping worlds of family and local history for the benefit of those attending. I hope that you were able to attend and if so, enjoyed it. Thank you to all of the volunteers from the society and the participating organisations who gave up their time to help others.

We have more interesting events coming up this year - our first ever day school in September - on the topic of Huntley and Palmers and another packed events programme in quarter four. Do take the opportunity to participate if you are able to.

**Catherine Sampson**

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



# 47th Annual General Meeting Report

The 47th Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday 22nd June 2022. As in previous years the Annual General Meeting was held via Zoom and this year there were 53 members present.

All of the officers, the President, Vice-President and Trustees shown on the agenda were voted in. The appointment of an independent examiner of accounts was also endorsed at the meeting.

Graham Vockins, Tony Roberts and Helen Conchar stood down as Trustees and were thanked for their time as Trustees. Derek Trinder stood down as Vice-President, he was thanked for his time as a Vice-President. James Puxley was re-elected as Society President for a fifth year and Mark Stevens returned as Society Vice-President. Catherine Sampson was returned as Chairman, Nick Prince returned as Vice Chairman, Vanessa Chappell was returned as Secretary and Martin Pilkington returned as Treasurer.

We welcomed Andrew Rice and Tony Henty as new Trustees. All other Trustees were re-elected for a further term.

The meeting was formally closed by Mark Stevens, Vice-President.

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

## See the Historian in full colour

There's nothing to compare with handling a printed magazine and we'd love to bring it to you in full colour but that's just not an economic proposition. However, if you head over to the website, you can read a colour version there. The member articles often contain some beautiful colour illustrations.

[berksfhs.org/historian](https://berksfhs.org/historian)

## Abridged Chairmans Report to the 47th Annual General Meeting

### **Abridged Chairman's Report to Society Members: year ending 30 June 2022**

#### **Overview**

The past year has seen a gradual and cautious return to face-to-face meetings and activities, whilst also continuing with a substantial online programme of events. The Research Zone reopened to the public in September 2021 and has continued ever since to expand its opening times. This has been helped as new volunteers step forward to offer their help.

The society's digital transformation continues with the launch of YourTrees and its subsequent expansion of services. The Berkshire Burials project has now come to an end, after over twenty years. Members can now watch a video recording of many online meetings - if they missed them - a particularly valuable service to those in different time zones to the UK.

Membership has continued to remain steady and non-member interaction slowly increases as more face-to-face events are held.

#### **The Centre for Heritage and Family History**

The Research Zone reopened to the public in September, and has welcomed a steady stream of visitors ever since. New volunteers have joined the rota over the last few months and we would welcome more helpers so that we can further expand our opening hours.

The society's reference library is now partially catalogued, with the ever-growing catalogue now available online on the society's website and on the desktop of each PC in the Research Zone. A new bookcase in the Research Zone displays the society's trade directory collection to remind visitors of their importance and to make them more accessible.

The return to face-to-face meant that online access to Findmypast from home, via the society's website, ended in February 2022. However, home access to the society's account with The Genealogist remains available to all online members via the website on days when the Centre is not open to the public.

## **Membership**

Welcome to the new members who have joined the society during the past year. Our membership numbers have remained generally steady.

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. During the last year a few events have been exclusively member-only. YourTrees and video catch-up have been launched as new member benefits.

## **Branch meetings and outreach activities**

Over the course of the year, all six branches have held some online meetings and some have also returned to holding some face-to-face. The reintroduction of in person meetings has been welcomed by many of our local members, and these meetings have also attracted an increased number of non-members. Conversely, the continued use of Zoom has allowed our online community of members to continue to participate, regardless of their physical location. There were 1980 attendances in 2021-22 at branch meetings, up 5% on last year. Moving forward, we will plan to review our branch structure and consider how best we can meet the needs of our members whilst also being mindful of our volunteer capacity.

Branch advice sessions in local libraries across the county resumed in the late summer of 2021, an important part of our charitable activities. Branch project work has likewise recommenced.

## **Communicating with our members**

*In Touch* continues to land in the inboxes of our members every other Sunday, with an events update in the alternate weeks. During the last membership year, the *Historian* editorial panel led by Vicki Chesterman continued to produce a rich and varied content in each issue, reflecting the breadth of research interests of the society's membership. A new series of "About Berkshire" was launched in June. We have welcomed a new designer, Beth Cox, who has brought new ideas.

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 enhance the website so that it performs well and remains fresh, user-friendly and relevant. These are critically important roles as much of the society's processes have now been moved online.

The society continues to make good progress in its use of social media. *The Berkshire Genealogy* Facebook site, led by Eileen Schofield and Debbie Kennett, now has over 1.1k members, an increase of over 20% since the last AGM.

## **Projects and publications**

New products include Newbury St Nicholas Parish Registers CD and the 13th Edition of Berkshire Burials in early 2022. The latter represents the end of a twenty plus year project in transcribing and checking Berkshire burials records which was initiated by David Wright and completed by Jocie McBride, Tony Wright and Catherine Sampson.

During the last year we have completed the publication of the first tranche of baptisms in digital download format, bringing to a close tranche 1 of the publication of society transcripts in baptisms, marriages, burials and monumental inscriptions in digital format. Tranche 2 will commence shortly which will include all remaining burial registers.

## **Online publication of the society's transcriptions**

More society transcriptions were added to Findmypast during the last year. Our latest upload in January 2022, enabled Findmypast to announce that it now offered 2.1 million transcripts of Berkshire data, the vast majority of which had been added by Berkshire Family History Society.

## **Events, education and promotion**

Almost 1,500 individuals attended events between June 2021 and May 2022 - some face-to-face, some online. This is a similar figure to last year, and an increase of 50% on the last year before COVID.

Last year's programme included talks, workshops, courses, advice sessions, informal natter evenings, and the DNA special interest group. The society also attended two online fairs run by the Oxfordshire and East Surrey Family History Societies.

### **Bookshop**

Berkshire Family History Society Enterprises, the society's wholly owned subsidiary, has had a successful year and made another welcome donation from its profits back to the society. The Bookshop website has 25 categories and with the launch of digital data downloads now means we currently have over 1,020 items available across the shop.

### **Services for members and the public**

YourTrees was launched in 2021 replacing Members' Interests. This new free service, exclusive to society members, allows you to upload a copy of your family tree(s) to the society's website, and collaborate with others with similar surname interests. Since launch, the service has been further enhanced and members are now able to add media files.

### **Delivering public benefit**

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

### **Society governance**

The Executive Committee met seven times this year. An extensive review has been completed of many of the society's policies. Following this, new portals were added to the website to enable volunteers to better obtain the information that they need.

### **What of the future?**

We remain committed to giving access to events and services to as many people as possible, regardless of physical location, and continue to explore how we best embrace a mixture of face to face and online as we move forward.

On August 6th, the society, together with Berkshire Local History Association, is holding the first ever Berkshire Heritage Day. This will be online and free to attend. More new online and product launches are anticipated in the year

ahead, as we seek to improve access and meet our charitable objects.

The future of the society lies with **you**, our members, and those who are willing to volunteer to help it. It is through the skills, talents and generosity of our volunteers 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 challenged us in ways we never anticipated and 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 society activity in what has been another busy year. In particular: Vanessa Chappell, society secretary, Martin Pilkington, society secretary, Nick Prince, society vice-chairman, and Paul Barrett and Dave Osborne, society webmasters.

Three of our Trustees are stepping down at this AGM, Tony Roberts, Helen Conchar and Graham Vockins. My thanks go to them for their thoughtful and considered input to trustee discussions and decisions. Derek Trinder also steps down as society vice-president at this AGM and I would like to thank him for the many and varied roles of support he has carried out for the society over more than twenty years. These include chairman of Bracknell Branch, society chairman, and most recently of all society vice-president. A heartfelt thank you from us all.

### **Catherine Sampson**

#### **Chairman, Berkshire Family History Society**

# Around Berkshire

This is the second instalment of a series of articles about places in Berkshire, and is focussed on West Berkshire.

The information used can be found on our website under *Info* -> *Berkipedia*, along with links to related articles. Why not take a look at Berkipedia to see what you might find. If you have anything to add to the Berkipedia, please email the Webmaster at [webmaster@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@berksfhs.org.uk).

## Denchworth

This civil and ecclesiastical parish lies in northern (old) Berkshire, about 2.5 miles north-west of Wantage. Since 1974 it has belonged to Oxfordshire. The Land Brook and the Childrey Brook flow through the parish, which is also crossed by the GWR railway line although there is no station. The parish contains the former manor of Circourt.

It has a declining population - 278 in 1851 and 171 in 2011. It is located in the hundred, Poor Law Union and Registration District of Wantage, and its present-day local authority is the Vale of the White Horse, Oxfordshire.

### Published local history

J S Howse - *Denchworth through the centuries* (1967)



*Denchworth St James* by Motacilla (CC BY-SA 4.0) via Wikimedia Commons

### Anglican church and parochial organisation

The living is a vicarage in the diocese of Oxford. The church of St James is mediaeval in origin, but was subject to Victorian renovation. The church has stained glass by Edward Burne-Jones.

*"Before the restoration of the parish church in 1852 there was a room over the porch containing a parochial library for the use of the vicars of Denchworth. It was begun in 1693 by the vicar and Gregory Geering. The books, which included a 1483 edition of the Golden Legend and other rare volumes, were secured in their places by chains. The library is now at the vicarage, and the Golden Legend is the property of the Bodleian Library."* (VCH, 1924)

This collection, reputed also to include 100 volumes and a mermaid's rib, has since been dispersed.

### Other churches

According to directories of 1868 and 1870 Denchworth had a Wesleyan Methodist chapel.

### Schools

In 1729 Richard Gilgrasse willed £50 for teaching poor children of Denchworth. A Parliamentary enquiry of 1819 found this endowment to be generating income which employed a schoolmistress to teach 12 boys and girls to read, and the girls to knit. The 1881 census enumerated a school and schoolmistress.

### Pubs

The Fox Inn claims seventeenth-century origins. The 1851 census lists a pub called the Carpenter's Arms, which appears to have been home to several households. The 1881 census enumerated the Star Inn and the Fox Inn.

### Other local history

Denchworth is famous for rich



pasturelands, and in the eighteenth century was famous for its cheese.

Denchworth, amongst several of its neighbouring parishes, was a stronghold of the Fettiplace family. The Hydes were Denchworth's second most famous family - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyde\\_Family\\_of\\_Denchworth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyde_Family_of_Denchworth).

Denchworth Manor, a sixteenth-century, 10-bedroom house in 20 acres near the church, was offered for sale at £4.75m (in approx 2011).

### War Memorial

Brian Wilcock notes the elaborate timber-framed WWI Muster Roll memorial in Denchworth is on the external wall of the Fox Public house which lies in Hyde road, that is in the cul-de-sac opposite the parish church. The Roll of Service is on the left side and the Roll of Honour on the right side.

### **East Ilsley**

*Ilsley remote amid the Berkshire Downs,  
Claims three distinctions o'er her sister towns,  
Far famed for sheep and wool, tho' not for  
spinners,  
For sportsmen, doctors, publicans and sinners.*

This traditional rhyme summarises the downland parish of East Ilsley, famous since mediaeval times for its sheep fairs, and in the last three centuries for racehorses. Known also as Market Ilsley or Chipping Ilsley in the past, it lies nine miles due north of Newbury.

The Icknield Way crosses the parish, as do many old wagon tracks, testifying to the village's importance as a commercial hub. Today the parish is bisected by the A34.

The parish is shrinking in population - 750 in 1851 and 538 in 2011. It lies in the hundred of Compton, and was part of the Wantage Poor Law



*East Ilsley by Pam Brophy (CC BY-SA 2.0) via Wikimedia Commons*

Union. It continues in the Wantage Registration District and comes under West Berkshire Council.

### Local place names

Windmill Down is the highest point of the parish. Woolners is the smallest of its manors. Northbury and Ashridge are two other ancient manors. Poor's Furze is where the poor of the parish had the right of gathering furze. Banager Scrubs was the old horse common. Littleworth, Woolvers and Ashridge are all mentioned in the 1851 census.

### Links

Parish council website [eastilsley-pc.gov.uk](http://eastilsley-pc.gov.uk).

East Ilsley Local History Society has undertaken a considerable amount of research and transcription of local records <http://www.eastilsleyhistory.com/>.

### Published local history

- Bob Moulton - *East Ilsley parish council: the first 100 years* (Sigma Books, 1995)
- Jim Wilson - *East Ilsley photographic memories* (1998)
- Nigel Wardell - *Far famed for sheep and wool: a history of East Ilsley's markets and fairs* (EILHS, 2006)
- Nigel Wardell - *Origins of East Ilsley and its name* (Sigma Books, 2004)
- William Hewett - *History and antiquities of the hundred of Compton...(inc East Ilsley)* (John Snare, 1844)
- Sue Burnay - *Time gentlemen please: 300 years of pubs and brewing in East and West Ilsley* (Sigma Books, 2003)

### Anglican church and parochial organisation

The living of East Ilsley is a rectory in the diocese of Oxford. The parish church of St Mary dates from the twelfth or thirteenth century.

### Other churches

A small Baptist chapel was built in 1864, and served the village until Easter 2012, when it closed. There is also a Catholic church.

### Schools

Various private schools have existed in East Ilsley, such as the boarding school run by Mr and

Mrs Burden in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Other establishments of the same era were run by Mr and Mrs Keys, and by Mr Legge.

A National school opened in 1832. Following the Education Act of 1870 it became a board school (ie, shedding its religious governance), and was the predecessor of today's primary school, which in 1966 incorporated West Ilsley school.

### Pubs

The local history society's website has traced 12 inns and beer houses of the nineteenth century, although the 1851 census names only two: the Swan and the White Hart. Most existed to serve the sheep breeders and traders who crowded into the village for its famous fortnightly sheep fairs. In 1850 the landlord of the Swan, George Drewe, combined inn-keeping with racehorse training. Today East Ilsley has only the Swan.

### Other local history

East Ilsley's sheep fairs, granted by charter during the reign of Henry III, were second only to Smithfield in size. The record was 80,000 sheep penned in a single day.

Nearly three centuries ago racehorse training came to the local downland. The Duke of Cumberland, brother to George II, had stables at Kates Gore (long gone, but close to where the filling station is now on the A34), where the unbeatable Eclipse was bred and trained. Race meetings were held here from 1727 – 1858. Training continues to be a major local industry.

### **Frilsham**

Frilsham is a small village and parish near the Berkshire Downs, about six miles north-east of Newbury, and 12 miles from Reading. It has no railway, canal or main road passing through the parish. In contrast to the other two parishes mentioned, it has an increased population - 184 in 1851 and 315 in 2011. It is in the hundred of Faircross, the Poor Law Union of Bradfield and registration District of Bradfield. It is within the West Berkshire Council area.

### Local place names

The only two farms named in the 1851 census were Frilsham Farm and Cocks Farm.

## Links

Village website <http://frilsham.org.uk/>

## Published local history

- G Timmins - *Frilsham a village history* (Lola Print, 2012)
- Felicity A Palmer - *Frilsham and the Floyds 1800-1900* (illus booklet, author, nd)
- J T Parfitt - *St Frideswide and the church of St Frideswide, Frilsham, Berks* (author, 1929)

## Anglican church and parochial organisation

The living is a rectory in the deanery of Newbury, archdeaconry of Berkshire, diocese of Oxford (Salisbury diocese before 1836).

The church is dedicated to St Frideswide, a princess of the late seventh century. According to legend she fled from Oxford to Frilsham to escape the unwanted attentions of a suitor, and hid on the site of a ruined temple used as a pig-sty, which later became the site of the church.

The present-day nave of the church was the complete church of the twelfth century.

## Other churches

A Parliamentary calendar of charitable trusts compiled in 1871 found in Frilsham a trust deed for the benefit of Protestant dissenters.

## Schools

According to Samuel Lewis' *Topographical Dictionary of England* in 1831, Frilsham had a school endowed with the interest on £200. This appears to have been funded by a deed drawn up by Robert Hayward, lord of the manor, in 1824.

Parliamentary papers of 1835 found Hayward's school and another founded at around the same time.

## Pubs

The Pot Kiln is popular today, but no pub or beer house is mentioned in the 1851 census.

## Other local history

Frilsham seems to have had few noteworthy residents, but Miss Elizabeth Gregory was given an obituary in the *Athenaeum* magazine in 1807. It said that she 'had a genius and untaught proficiency in the art of drawing'.



*Frilsham St Frideswide*

# Making payments by card

**Paul Barrett**

To combat card fraud, banks are introducing Strong Card Authentication (SCA). This has been appearing gradually over the last few years but is now gathering pace in the UK, even after our exit from the EU/EEA.

Under SCA, a customer's bank may decide that a payment to a third party requires an extra level of authentication. This could come as code sent by text message to your mobile phone, an email or an automated voice call. You enter the code on the payment site to confirm your identification. If you use a telephone banking app your bank may allow you to authenticate using that. Whether to ask for authentication for a transaction is at your bank's discretion, so sometimes you will be challenged and sometimes not.

We appreciate it can be a bit disconcerting when you come across this challenge for the first time. To help you, we've made some changes to the membership system. On the registration page, there's a popup with some help information and we've redesigned the payment experience so that it's very clear that the whole payment process is handled by our card payments provider Stripe, using their highly secure payment facility.

It's not all bad news though. Apart from the reduced risk of fraud on your card, the banks have included the ability for you to authenticate yourself once per site and then be able to skip entering card details and go straight to the code entry.

You should never give the authentication code to anyone, even if they claim to be from your bank. This means we will no longer be able to assist you with phone renewal. We're actively looking at alternative ways to pay. Cheque remains a possibility, but the charge for clearing a cheque now exceeds all other methods, which reduces the income we have to spend on services for members, so we would like to avoid that if we can, although it is our payment method of last resort.

## GENUKI

A reminder of just how useful the free website GENUKI is for those with UK or Irish ancestry.

GENUKI provides a virtual reference library of genealogical information of particular relevance to the UK and Ireland. It is a non-commercial service, maintained by a charitable trust and a group of volunteers.

The Berkshire pages are maintained by Robert Monk, one of Berkshire Family History Society's volunteers, and are particularly detailed.

Check them out at: <https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/BRK>

# The Centre for Heritage and Family History

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

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

We are starting to become busier in the Centre now and so will be making some layout adjustments to reintroduce a further two PCs. However, we will be retaining as much space between workstations as possible. It is lovely to see so many of you in the Centre and we hope to see more of you over the coming months. In recent months, we have welcomed three new volunteers and hope to soon extend our working hours further as a result. Keep an eye on the website and also InTouch for announcements. We would still welcome more helpers to enable us to extend our opening hours still further, so please get in touch with Sandra at the email address given above, if you can spare a few hours each week. We are a very friendly group.

The society's reference library is now partially catalogued and you can consult the catalogue on our website at [www.librarycat.org/lib/BFHS](http://www.librarycat.org/lib/BFHS) or on any of our terminals in the Centre. A new glass display cabinet in the Research Zone displays our collection of trade directories as a reminder of how useful these resources are. The reference library is available to consult at any time during opening hours.



All of our Research Assistants are happy to provide advice to help you with your research, if you so wish, when you visit. We also provide extra support in breaking down brick walls on the third Thursday of each month and some specialist 1-1 help sessions on specific dates - see the individual event sessions as they are advertised.

## Opening Hours (as at 1st January)

Monday 11am - 3pm

Tuesday 11am - 3pm

Wednesday closed

Third & last Thursdays of month 11am - 3pm

Friday closed

First Saturday of month 11am - 2.30pm



## 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.

# Events organised from The Centre for Heritage and Family History

## September 2022 - December 2022

Our events programme continues to include face-to-face in The Centre for Heritage and Family History and online events using Zoom. Some events are either face-to-face or online, some will be duplicated and available both face-to-face and online during the year. As part of our multi-channelled approach, we are running 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: <https://berksfhs.org>

<b>Potpourri Social History Talks – Online</b>	
<b>TICKETS £5 (members £4)</b>	
Pre-booking required. Book all three talks in the Autumn Potpourri series for £12.50 (members £10)	
<b>Sep</b> Thu 22nd 2 - 3.15pm  Last talk in <b>Summer Potpourri series</b>	<b>A history of Southcote and its Manor:</b> with Mike Cooper Look hard enough and there's no such thing as an "ordinary suburb". Drawing on research for Reading Libraries booklet on Southcote, Mike Cooper looks at the origins of Southcote as a mediaeval manor, its development as a rural community and then, in the second half of the 20th century, its transformation into a planned residential suburb. Along the way, there's a Saxon sheriff, an Elizabethan mathematician, and the Home Guard.
<b>Oct</b> Thu 27th 2 - 3.15pm  First talk in <b>Autumn Potpourri series</b>	<b>A Brief History of Reading Gaol:</b> with Mark Stevens County Archivist Mark Stevens will explore the history of one of Reading's most iconic Victorian buildings - Reading Prison from the Georgian period until its first closure in 1920. Find out about the separate system of 'hard labour, hard board and hard fare' that characterised the Victorian regime; before hearing about Oscar Wilde, some of the prison's executions and Reading's little-known role in the Easter Rising.
<b>Nov</b> Thu 24th 2 - 3.15pm  Second talk in <b>Autumn Potpourri series</b>	<b>Huntley and Palmers:</b> with Richard Marks Huntley and Palmers were not only one of Reading's major employers but an institution within the town and a global brand familiar to many tables across the world. In this talk, find out how the company began, and why it grew to the huge corporation it became. Huntley and Palmer were a prime user of railways and used the great Reading's position as a transport hub to export its products across the globe, find out how in this talk. Richard will also explore what it was like to work for the company across the decades.
<b>Dec</b> Thu 15th 2 - 3.15pm  Final talk in <b>Autumn Potpourri series</b>	<b>The Murder of Alfred Oliver:</b> with David Downs The murder of Reading tobacconist Alfred Oliver, in Cross Street in 1929, remains unsolved to this day. Several witnesses saw a man near the shop at the time of the murder and later identified him as Philip Yale Drew, an American-born actor performing at Reading's County Theatre. The ensuing Coroner's Inquest, at which Drew was subjected to intensive questioning, divided opinion and attracted considerable crowds and controversy. Find out more in this fascinating talk.

<b>Workshops - Online &amp; F2F</b>	
Places are limited, pre-booking is required.	
<p><b>Oct Sat 8th</b> 11am - 1pm</p> <p>TICKETS £10 £9 (members)</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p><b>Writing Up Your Family History</b> Tutor: Dr Barry Jerome</p> <p>Have you been researching your family tree and would like to write it up as a story but don't know how to start? In the popular workshop, Barry will help you get started and show you how you can structure it, so that you can write up your family history while still continuing your research.</p>
<p><b>Oct Sat 15th</b> 11am - 1pm</p> <p>TICKETS £10 £9 (members)</p> <p>The Centre for Heritage &amp; Family History</p>	<p><b>Railway Records for Family Historians</b> Tutor: Richard Marks</p> <p>Did your Ancestors work on the railways? Britain's railway history is complex and can be difficult to decipher. In this workshop, we will unravel the history of the railway companies, from British Railways in the 1980s back to the first railway companies in the Victorian period. We will work through some sample railway documents to decipher what the railway language used within them means, and how they can be used by family historians to build their family histories. We will conclude by looking at where railway archives can be found and how they can be accessed.</p>
<p><b>Nov Sat 5th</b> 2 - 4pm</p> <p>TICKETS Free</p> <p>Members only</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p><b>Creating an enduring family tree in YourTrees</b> Tutor: Paul Barrett</p> <p>Ever wished that your great grandparents had kept a family history? How many of our great grandchildren might feel the same about us in the future. How durable and easily interpreted is your current family archive? Will it stand the test of time, or ultimately end up in a cardboard box in the attic? This workshop has been developed to help you create a comprehensive enduring family tree, which is relevant to the digital generations, so that you can store a copy on YourTrees. It is aimed that those who have already saved versions of their tree(s) on YourTrees and those that are thinking of doing so, or wondering whether they should.</p>
<p><b>Nov Sat 12th</b> 11am - 1pm</p> <p>TICKETS £10 £9 (members)</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p><b>Munition Workers in World War One</b> Tutor: 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><b>Nov Sat 19th</b> 11am - 1pm</p> <p>TICKETS £10 £9 (members)</p> <p>The Centre for Heritage &amp; Family History</p>	<p><b>Scrapbooking for Family Historians</b> Tutor: Angie Catt</p> <p>Creating and preserving family history in bespoke scrapbooks has become increasingly popular over recent years. Find out how you can create scrapbook pages based on images from your own family history in this practical and hands-on workshop. Attendees should bring a copy (not original) of an image they would like to use. Scrapbooking papers will be provided.</p>

<p><b>Nov Mon 21st</b> 7pm - 9.30pm</p> <p>TICKETS £10 £9 (members)</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p><b>Wills Tutors:</b> Chad Hanna and Gillian Stevens</p> <p>This workshop will look at wills, pre and post 1858, plus other probate documents such as inventories, administrations and death duties. Find out their benefits for family historians and where to locate them.</p>
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<b>Guided Walks and Tours</b>	
Please see the website for full details. Places are limited, pre-booking is required.	
<p><b>Sep Tue 13th</b> 2.30 - 4pm</p> <p>TICKETS £5 £4 (members)</p>	<p><b>Caversham Two Bridges Walk</b> Guide: David Cliffe</p> <p>Join David Cliffe who will be leading a walk around the Reading/Caversham border exploring the historic aspects of the River Thames. From leisure to industry, there have been many businesses that have sought the energy, resources and tranquillity of Reading's most famous river.</p>
<p><b>Oct Thu 20th</b> 2.30 - 3.30pm</p> <p>TICKETS £5 £4 (members)</p>	<p><b>Greyfriars' Church, Reading Tour</b> Guide: Malcolm Summers</p> <p>Greyfriars is an Anglican Church and former Franciscan Friary. It is the oldest Franciscan church still in use as a place of worship in the UK and often described as the most complete surviving example of Franciscan architecture in England. After the dissolution of the friary, the site went through many uses including time as a house of correction and a hospital. Historian Malcolm Summers will lead a tour of the church and explain its history and development.</p>

<b>Natter Group - Online and FREE</b>	
<p><b>Sep 6th</b> <b>Oct 4th</b> <b>Nov 1st</b> <b>Dec 6th</b></p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Pre-booking is required. Tuesdays 6.45 for 7pm – end time varies</p>

<b>DNA &amp; Family History – Online      TICKETS £5 (members £4)</b>	
Places are limited, pre-booking is required	
<p><b>Oct Sat 1st</b> 2.30 - 4.30pm</p>	<p><b>DNA Special Interest Group</b> Facilitator: Debbie Kennett</p> <p>This special interest discussion group is aimed at those wanting to get the most out of their 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.</p>



<b>War and Remembrance Talks with tea and cake afterwards</b>		<b>Face-to-Face</b>
<b>TICKETS £5 (members £4)</b>		
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 War and Remembrance series for £12.50 (members £10).		
<b>Sep Thu 8th</b> 2 - 3.15pm  Final talk in <b>Industries series</b>	<b>Suttons Seeds:</b> with Richard Marks Suttons Seeds were an iconic institution in Reading for decades. This talk will look at how it all began and what it was like to work for the company. It will examine how the company built its global reputation for reliable seeds and plants which were guaranteed across the world. The talk will also look at how Suttons developed over the years from humble beginnings in Reading to its move to Devon in the 1970s.	
<b>Oct Thu 13th</b> 2 - 3.15pm  First talk in <b>War and Remembrance series</b>	<b>The Influence of Victorian Mourning on Reading Cemetery:</b> with Anna Ellis The iconic landmark that is Reading Cemetery, on London Road, was established after an act of Parliament in 1842 with the first burial taking place a year later. Its design was based on London's seven "garden cemeteries" and influenced by the writings of the landscape gardener John Claudius Loudon. This talk tells of the growth of the cemetery in the Victorian period, and the development of more flamboyant, ritualised forms of mourning after the death of Prince Albert in 1861.	
<b>Nov Thu 10th</b> 2 - 3.15pm  Second talk in <b>War and Remembrance series</b>	<b>Dad's Underground Army:</b> with Bill King This talk reveals the largely unknown story of the Auxiliary Units (British Resistance Organisation) of World War Two. Bill will talk about the formation, organisation and activities of this secret organisation which, with its headquarters at Coleshill House, would have come into action if Britain had been invaded by the Nazis in World War Two. There is still some intriguing evidence locally of the Reading unit.	
<b>Dec Thu 8th</b> 2 - 3.15pm  Final talk in <b>War and Remembrance series</b>	<b>Reading's First World War Hospitals:</b> with Lionel Williams Reading was one of the largest war hospital complexes during the First World War. It was based on Battle Hospital as War Hospital No. 1 and a number of schools and larger houses were taken over to accommodate the wounded. The main war hospitals were run by the military but many of the auxiliary hospitals were run by the Red Cross. The first war hospital opened in 1914 and the last one closed in 1920. This is their story.	

<b>Courses - Places limited, pre-booking required.</b>	
<b>Saturdays</b> Sep 3rd & 10th  2 sessions both 11am - 1pm  TICKETS £20 (members £18)  ONLINE	<b>Latin for Family Historians</b> Tutor: Joan Dils This course will provide a very basic introduction to the Latin used in some local history documents, especially parish registers and probate records. It is intended to give family historians a start in acquiring enough Latin to translate documents they frequently encounter, and on which they can build advanced skills to translate more complex documents.

## 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.

<p><b>Sep</b> Mon 19th <b>Oct</b> Mon 17th <b>Nov</b> Mon 21st 2 - 4pm</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p><b>1-1 Family History Advice Session:</b> with our Research Assistants Are you just getting started in family history and wanting guidance as to how to proceed? Or are you stuck at a particular “brick wall” and need some help? We will provide whatever help and suggestions we can within your booked slot and will book a follow-on session with you, if needed. Four 25 minute 1-1 slots are available in each session.</p>
<p><b>Sep</b> Thu 15th <b>Oct</b> Thu 20th <b>Nov</b> Thu 17th <b>Dec</b> Thu 15th 11am - 2.30pm</p> <p>The Centre for Heritage &amp; Family History</p>	<p><b>Family History Advice Clinic:</b> with Hilary Waller &amp; 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 this one-to-one session, one of our seasoned advisors will help you make some progress.</p>
<p><b>Oct</b> Wed 5th 1 - 3pm</p> <p>ONLINE</p>	<p><b>Merchant Navy Advice Session:</b> with Tony Wright Do you have Merchant Navy ancestors? Need some advice on how to trace or interpret their records? Three 20 minute 1-1 slots are available in this session. You may share digital copies of any certificates etc you would like help with on the screen during the session.</p>

## Day Schools

Places are limited, pre-booking is required.

<p><b>Saturday</b> Sep 24th 10am - 4pm</p> <p>TICKETS £25 £22.50 (members)</p> <p>The Centre for Heritage &amp; Family History</p>	<p><b>Huntley and Palmers</b> Tutor: Margaret Simons</p> <p>2022 marks the 200th anniversary of the founding of Huntley and Palmers. By the turn of the 20th century, it was the largest employer in Reading and is still fondly remembered. Generations of the same family worked at the factory on the King’s Road, many workers lived close by in Newtown and Redlands and today there are still those who remember the men and women who worked there. Our aim is to explore the origins of the company, the reasons for its subsequent success, and get to know those Victorian entrepreneurs who set the wheels in motion for a business whose products became a household name all over the globe. We will also consider its activities during WW1, the housing question, and the challenges the company faced in the 20th century from foreign competition and a changing industry.</p>
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# Hora-Siccama Coat of Arms

**Susan Hora** tells us about her family's coat of arms

I was interested to read the article about heraldry on page 14 of the June Berkshire Family Historian, as my own family has a coat of arms, although we don't know for certain which of my ancestors acquired it or how.

When my paternal grandfather's second wife died, I inherited a metal trunk of some 250 old letters, some dating back to the 1840s, plus wills, account books, leases, etc. - and a coat of arms. On the side of the trunk the name H. Whinfield Hora was painted in black letters. Henry Whinfield Hora (1829-1904 and always known as Whinfield) was my great-grandfather who spent most of his working life with the Corporation of the City of London, being Chairman of numerous committees and Deputy Warden of the Ward of Portsoken. One of the special committees that he chaired was that which organised the visit of Queen Victoria in 1882 to declare Epping Forest open to the public for ever, and he was one of those presented to the Queen on that occasion, so it was probably Whinfield who acquired the coat of arms. One of my (now late) aunts told me that he used to swan around London with the coat of arms on his carriage, but I don't know if this is true.

The interesting thing about our coat of arms, however, is that it is of the Hora Siccama family, not just Hora. The word 'hora' means 'the hour' in Latin, Spanish and Portuguese, and there are plenty of families called Hora, de Hora and da Hora in Spain, Portugal and Latin America. There are also Hora families in the Punjab area of India, and it can easily be confused with Hara in Ireland and Japan. However, in the Czech language 'hora' means 'mountain', and the story in my family has always been that our ancestors came to England from Czechoslovakia (as was), in perhaps the 15th or 16th century, via Holland. I'm fairly certain this is correct as there are still many Horas listed in the Prague telephone book, and hundreds in North America whose ancestors came from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Russia, Austria, etc. There is a town called Kutna Hora in Bohemia, about an hour's drive from Prague, and there is also Bila Hora (White Mountain).

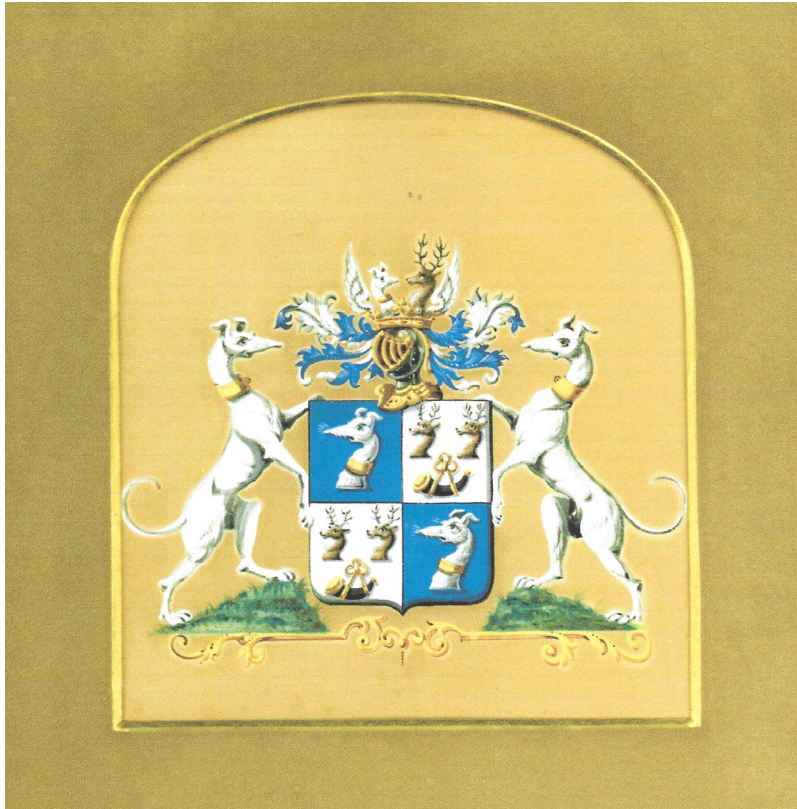
Years ago I wrote to the Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie at The Hague, telling them that I had the Hora Siccama coat of arms and asking for information about the family (Siccama is a Friesian name). They wrote back in delightful English, informing me that we had no right to this coat of arms as we are the 'not noble family Hora'. I take perverse pleasure in being part of the 'not noble' family Hora and shall certainly keep the coat of arms! Some cousins of ours in Canada and Australia have copies of the arms, but no one knows who made them.

The Hora Siccama arms that I have is certainly the original, the wooden frame has seen better days, and the paper on the back with the description in heraldic French has slight tears and is almost coming unstuck. The writing in black ink on brown paper is now faint and difficult to read, but it is possible to make out the main points. There are, in fact, two separate pieces of paper: the top piece says 'Annoblé, Hora-Siccama, Frise, Holl (An., 27 déc. 1817 et 16 déc. 1876', then in English: '1st and 4th quarters are Siccama, 2nd and 3rd quarters are Hora'.

The main piece of paper starts: 'Hora/Jonkheer/Holland', then goes on to describe the design. The 1st and 4th quarters (Siccama), contain 'une tête et col de levrier d'argent colleté d'or (a head and neck of greyhound in silver with gold collar). The 2nd and 3rd quarters (Hora), contain 'deux têtes et cols de cerf au naturel en chef' (two heads and necks of stags and a hunting horn encircled by a hoop or ring - 'viroled'). It then goes on to describe the crest, and the silver and blue mantling or scroll-work, and the supports - two silver greyhounds and buckled with gold.

This coat of arms appears in Rietstaap's Armorial General.

I have been trying for decades to trace my ancestry further back than the mid-1700s, so far without success. My 3x great-grandfather, Alexander Hora, was a silk weaver in Stepney and Spitalfields and I did wonder whether he might have been a Huguenot. Unfortunately, The



Huguenot Society has not got our name on their database of 'Qualified Huguenot Ancestors', and not all silk weavers were Huguenots, of course. He must have been doing very well at first because he paid £8. 15s for his eldest son, James Hora (my 2x great-grandfather) to study for 12 months from December 1816 at St Bartholomew's Hospital under the surgeon, John Abernethy (1764-1831).

His two other sons, William and John, followed their father into silk weaving. However, the silk weaving industry in England declined when some of the restrictions on the importation of silk were removed, and poor Alexander died in Kings Bench debtors' prison in 1830. His age was stated to be 70, giving a year of birth of 1760.

After finding Alexander's date of death, I made the momentous discovery that he had married in Reading! His wife was Charlotte Fletcher, daughter of Thomas Fletcher, and they were married in 1783 at St. Giles'. She was 'of St Giles' and he was 'of St Laurence', but how long he had lived in Reading and where he came from is still a mystery. They had seven children - Mary, James, Ann, William, another James, another Ann, and John, all very common English names. The first four were baptised at St Giles (and the first James died aged 4 and was

buried in St Laurence), then, at the end of the 18th century, the family moved to London. The last three children were born in Bethnal Green, and were all then registered together in 1816 at Dr Williams' Library, suggesting they were non-conformist. Alexander's wife, Charlotte, died in 1819 and she and her husband are buried at St Dunstan's, Stepney.

## Projects and Publications Update

### Catherine Sampson

By the time you read this article, we should have just begun to roll out the publication of the final tranches of the burial digital downloads. Otherwise, they will be coming very soon! This will keep us busy with publications through to the end of this year. However we continue to be busy in the background preparing the next batch of transcriptions.

We have almost finished checking the next batch of marriages to be added to our county-wide marriages CD. These new entries will, of course, also be published in digital download format in due course. The new entries will include some large and much requested parishes and will also complete coverage for a number of parishes already partially published. We hope to tell you more in December's Historian.

We are also busy transcribing and checking baptisms. If there is a particular parish you would like us to transcribe - please email us at: [projects@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:projects@berksfhs.org.uk)

Thank you to the volunteers who have been helping check monument inscriptions and complete the churchyard plan of Tilehurst St Michael. This project began in the 1980s and after considerable delays, we hope to finish it very soon.



# News from the Berkshire Record Office

*Ivone Turnbull, Senior Archivist at the Berkshire Record Office*

We are pleased to say that we are back to normal again! The BRO has removed all restrictions on visitor numbers and bookings, so people can now book for any time they like. We do strongly advise you to book in advance to avoid disappointment, though, particularly when looking at maps, original records or to use the computers.

We are open Tuesday to Thursday 09:00 to 17:00, and Friday 09:00 to 16:30 with one Thursday evening until 21:00 each month for a trial period until the autumn. We will still encourage you to wear a mask if you get within two metres of someone, but this is, of course, a personal choice. And we still advise you to please not visit if you have symptoms of COVID-19 or should be isolating.

Just as the pandemic started, we joined the Archives Card scheme – the replacement of the old County Archive Research Network (CARN). We didn't process any cards during the pandemic, but since reopening fully, we have started to issue them. The new scheme requires visitors to pre-register online and then bring ID on a visit to be checked. You only need a card for original records at the BRO, but other archive services may require one for all material, so it's worth getting a card that you can use at all participating archives. To find out more about the Archives Card and making a visit to the BRO, please see our website for details.

We have shared the results of our Distance Survey online. This is a remote survey carried out in 2021 by the Archives and Records Association (UK and Ireland) in conjunction with The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). We got a 98% overall satisfaction rating of very good/good this time. We thank our staff who worked hard to continue to provide remote services despite all the pandemic restrictions they faced. You can see the results of the survey on our website.

Don't forget to check out our blog pages, and subscribe to receive an e-bulletin with all the latest blogs. We've also been adding content to our YouTube channel, so do take a look and don't forget to subscribe! Keep up to date with all the latest information through our website and social media feeds on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram too.

## **What's New to View at the BRO?**

Readers may be interested in the latest collections that have been catalogued, such as the papers of gardening experts Bill and Joan Baker of Tidmarsh, c.1918-2013 (D/EX2345); the papers of the Simeon family, 1611-1855, (D/ESI); and the papers of William Gilkes of Reading and Caversham, engraver, 1899-1918 (D/EX995).

Our 17th to 20th century collection of prints and engravings of Berkshire (D/EX2807) have been made more accessible through an online catalogue rather than just a card index in the searchroom. We have also listed the coroner's inquisitions for Maidenhead, Reading Borough and Reading District for 1946 (COR/M, COR/RB and COR/R).



*Holme Park Sonning DEX2807-43-1 - courtesy of Berkshire Record Office*

The latest Church of England parish registers now available are:

Brightwell: marriages, 1974-2020 (D/P25)

Childrey: baptisms, 1927-2021; marriages, 1981-2018; burials, 1884-2021 (D/P35)

Crowmarsh Gifford: baptisms, 1919-2011, and marriages, 1985-2021 (D/P161)

Letcombe Bassett: marriages, 2017-2018 (D/P80)

Reading Greyfriars: marriages, 2017-2021 (D/P163)

Sotwell: marriages, 1838-1977 and; 1981-2012 (D/P114)

There is also an unofficial register of burials, mostly in Wantage Churchyard, May 1813-

July 1868 (D/EZ206) and a register of graves, 1900 to 1985 for Earley St Peter

(D/P191/6/2).

Non Church of England registers now available are:

Caversham Gosbrook Road: marriages, 1901-2006 (D/MS29)

Caversham Heights: marriages, 1911-1994 (D/MS30)

All Nations (formerly St Saviour's) Christian Centre (Reading Elim Church):

marriages, 1991-2011 (D/N63/8/1/1-3)

Other Church records include the Childrey vestry minutes, 1849-2012 (D/P35); the

preachers' book (service register) for Wantage, 1865-1884 and vestry minutes, 1897-1998

(D/P143); as well as Theale parish magazines, 1980-2011 (D/P132B).

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

The Berkshire Record Office

9 Coley Avenue

Reading

RG1 6AF

[arch@reading.gov.uk](mailto:arch@reading.gov.uk)

0118 937 5132

[www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk](http://www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk)



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## Book Reviews

### Abbot Cook to Zero Degrees: an A to Z of Reading's Pubs and Breweries

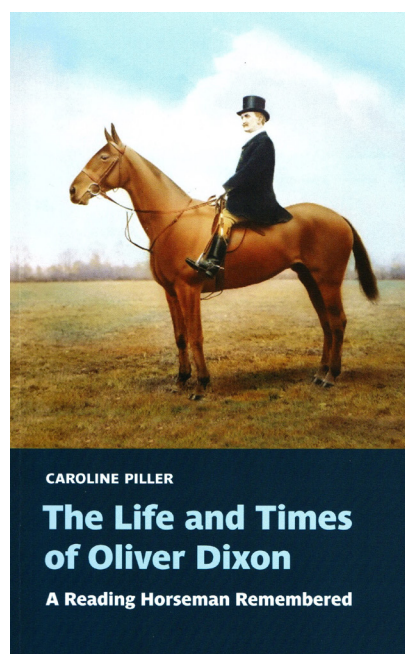
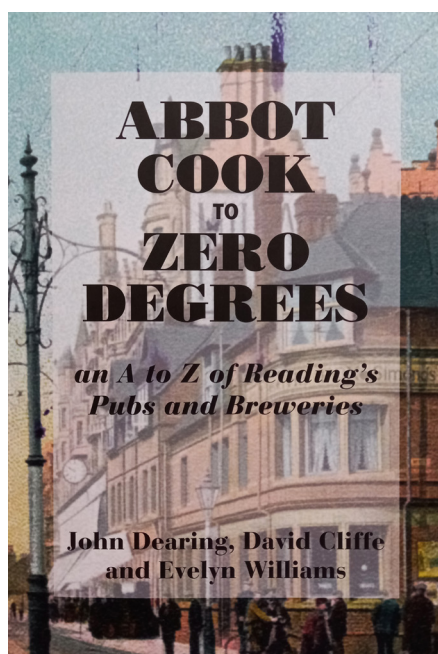
John Dearing, David Cliffe and Evelyn Williams (The History of Reading Society 2021)  
334pp; perfect bound; 225 x 150 mm; 0

Shop £12.00 / UK £15.35 / Airmail £ 29.60

There is an alphabetical section on the pubs, followed by an alphabetical section on the breweries – around 500 institutions in all. Use has been made of old records to make the book as comprehensive as possible, which means that many of the 500 are no longer in existence. Factual information about the premises, landlords and surveys is embellished with anecdotal information and contemporaneous reports from newspapers, periodicals, etc.

The “Abbot Cook” of the title is the first pub in the book, though since it was written, the pub has changed its name to The Hope and Bear. Older Reading residents will remember it as The Jack of Both Sides. The Zerodegrees restaurant and microbrewery, the last pub in the book, is happily still with us.

Included are town centre maps, showing the location of the inns along the streets. There have been at least 33 pubs in Friar Street alone over the years. And there is an index of subjects and the names of all the innkeepers and brewers mentioned in the text. A comprehensive bibliography is also included.



### The Life and Times of Oliver Dixon: A Reading Horseman Remembered

Caroline Piller (Vikenzo Books, 2020) 203pp; perfect bound

£12 from Vikenzo Books

Just as the first Covid-19 lockdown was announced in England, a fascinating book was published by Caroline Piller on former Reading resident, Oliver Dixon. He was an internationally known horse dealer whose establishment was on the open ground bounded by Crescent, Bulmershe, Whiteknights and Wokingham roads, where the University Technical College and Maiden Erlegh school now stand with the sports field behind them. Caroline's book is still available and you can find more information and order a copy via her website: <https://bit.ly/36WJY6s>. Highly recommended.

Reviewed by Nick Baggott and reproduced with his kind permission

# INTRODUCING FOR 2022-2023

## 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 and Centre Committees, and is an active member of the Education & Events and Marketing & Communications Committees and the Editorial Panel. She is a regular speaker across Berkshire on social history subjects and is also a keen photographer and traveller, when time and circumstances permit.

### **Your Society Vice-chairman and continuing Newbury branch representative - Nick Prince**

Nick is still a full-time civil servant now based in Reading. He began researching his family history in early 2007. He is Chair of the Newbury Branch. A change in his status at work allows him to be a trustee and Society Vice-chairman. Nick was recently widowed after 32 years of marriage to Maureen and has 3 stepchildren. His young granddaughter is the only one of his family to share his interest. She attended 2 fairs in 2018 to support the society. Nick is also a member of Thatcham Baptist Church and volunteers at the Watermill theatre.



### **Your Society Secretary and Abingdon (Vale) branch representative - Vanessa Chappell**

A society member since 2006. Vanessa has been Chair of the Abingdon (Vale of White Horse) Branch for many years. 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 husbands 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.







### **Bracknell and Wokingham branch- Sandra Barkwith**

Sandra joined the Executive Committee in 2012 as the Representative for Bracknell & Wokingham 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, 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 and Events group and facilitates the monthly Natter group. Gillian has recently found her first and probably only Berkshire ancestor whilst researching her own family history and by making a worldwide study of the Blofeld surname.



### **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 and Events committee and is the editor for the Berkshire Family Historian. She also has a keen interest in local history.

### **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 37 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.





### **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.

### **Paul Barrett**

Paul is a retired software product manager and spent the final 25 years of his career in the tech industry. He and his wife moved to Northumberland in 2005 to be close to their son and his family but the Barretts have strong connections to Berkshire albeit in the annexed section around Abingdon! Paul joined the society in 2017 and, in 2019, took on the post of Webmaster having redesigned the society's websites. He is passionate about digital transformation and its role in engaging with the digital generations and with members who are remote from Berkshire. He co-edits the online newsletter "in touch" and is a member of the Marketing & Communications committee.



### **David Wooldridge**

David was born in Grimsby, and moved to Bracknell in 1978. He was an Industrial Chemist in sales and technical support working in many different countries for various industries, latterly, for 20 years, supplying speciality chemicals into the aerospace industry, but is now retired.

David started looking at his family history 22 years ago, when bequeathed a small attaché case full of old documents and photographs. He joined the Society in 2009, and is a past Bracknell & Wokingham Branch Chairman and Trustee. David has supported the Bracknell Library Drop in since 2010, and has participated in MI recording and at various events.

### **Malcolm Gray**

Malcolm is a recently retired former insurance broker who like many, who as he grew older, had many questions about his family history that should have been asked to the relevant people many years ago. His roots are in Reading but as he has discovered his family's roots spread around the country.

Malcolm enjoys most sports and has for many years been a season ticket holder at Reading FC and retirement was meant to have involved summers watching more cricket and hopefully he will do later this year. Malcolm also likes music and he has been a regular concert goer, and is a member of the Ramblers and walks all year round. Martin has started regular volunteering for a local charity, The Ways and Means Trust, and also some ad-hoc work for the Reading Museum service.





### **Tony Henty**

A Londoner by birth, Tony was born in Lambeth, and lived in Peckham before moving to Walthamstow. In 1965 he moved to Earley and still lives in the same house from when it was built. A qualified Chartered Accountant, he has worked at various levels in different types of organisations.

Tony dabbled with genealogy in the early 2000's and joined the Berks FHS in 2010 originally becoming a Trustee in 2016. His research has found that he is related to Sir Frederick Henry Royce, of Rolls Royce.

For the last 40 odd years, I have been a volunteer and trustee to various organisations and charities.

### **Andrew Rice**

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



## **YOUR VICE-PRESIDENT**



### **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.

## YOUR SOCIETY PRESIDENT –

### Mr James Puxley DL, Lord-Lieutenant of the Royal County of Berkshire

We are pleased to announce that Mr James Puxley is again, returning for a fifth 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.

Welford Park is a historic house in extensive grounds of 3000 agricultural acres. The property has been owned by James' family on his mother's side for 400 years, originally being purchased in 1618 by Sir Francis Jones Kt, Lord Mayor of London in 1620. It was subsequently inherited via the female line several times by the Eyre and Archer Houlblon families.



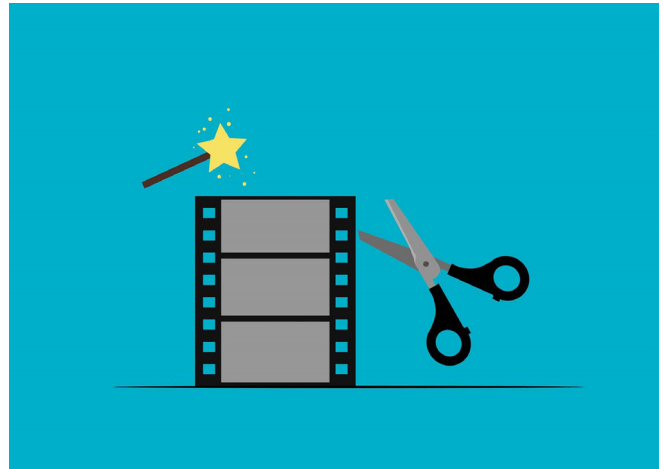
Mr Puxley was High Sheriff of the Royal County of Berkshire from 2000 to 2001. He was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant in 2005 and became Vice Lord Lieutenant in 2010. In 2015 he was appointed Lord-Lieutenant of the Royal County, thereby becoming the Queen's representative within Berkshire. This role involves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

# Can you help? Video Editor Required

For some time now we have been making recordings available of some of our Zoom branch talks for members to enjoy on our catch-up service.

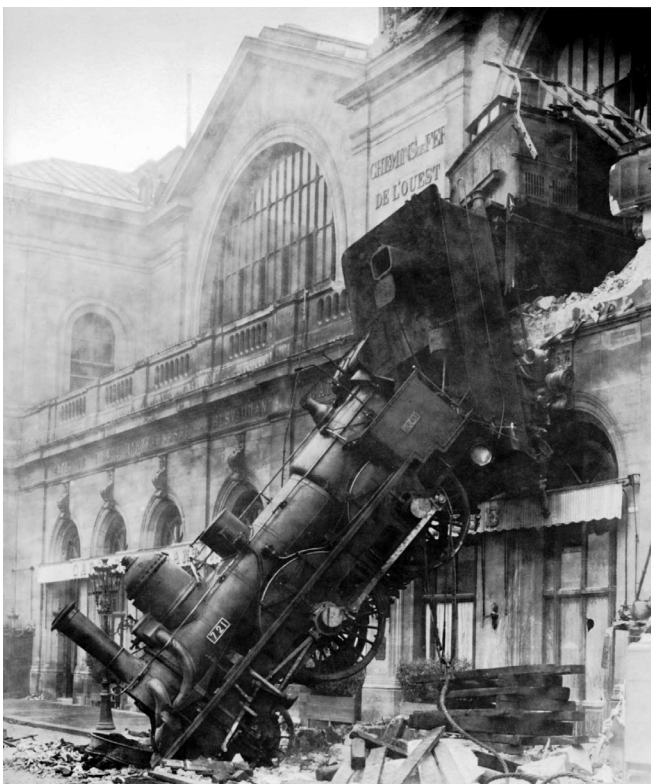
These videos need a little editing before they can be published. The job is not onerous - we're not talking about Hollywood blockbusters - and we do have one editor already but we'd like to beef up our resources. If you have any experience of editing home video we'd love to hear from you please. You can do this from anywhere.

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



## Railwork Work, Life and Death Project

The 'Railway Work, Life & Death' project's database of accidents to British and Irish railway staff has recently expanded to include an additional 16,000 cases, covering 1900-1939.



The project looks at accidents to railway staff before 1939, and contains a summarised transcription of official accident investigations. In total, the database includes approximately 21,000 individuals, all transcribed by volunteers. The records tell us who was involved in an accident, what they were doing, where, when and why.

The project is a joint initiative of the University of Portsmouth, the National Railway Museum and the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick, working with The National Archives. The team is always keen to hear from family members - so do get in touch with them if you have a story to share.

You can search the database and find out more at [www.railwayaccidents.port.ac.uk](http://www.railwayaccidents.port.ac.uk)

# Around the Branches

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

## Abingdon Branch

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

We were lucky to have Dr. Colin Chapman give us a talk at Furlong Community Centre in Abingdon on May 16th, called "Your ancestors don't live in a vacuum". He clearly presented how useful it can be to note the different people that can be found on various genealogy related documents, such as witnesses and the vicar/priests names on marriage certificates for example. By following his approach, you can start to build up a better picture of other people outside of the family that your ancestors would have interacted with during their lives. Another example that he gave was newspaper archives - often found online. Through noting the different people that your ancestors interacted with, it adds more depth to your family history research.

On June 20th, we had a very successful open evening, where anyone could turn up to the meeting and discuss a challenge that they had in their family tree. Other members chipped-in with their thoughts and ideas to help. We had a laptop connected to both the internet and to a projector, so that everyone could see what was going on with the real-time research using [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk). A number of people brought along information regarding their brick-walls, or sought additional information regarding a difficult-to-trace ancestor, and it proved to be interesting, and helpful. We are definitely going to be trying this approach again, at another future event.

See website for details of future meetings.

**James Thornber**

## Bracknell & Wokingham Branch

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

In April, the society held a Combined Branches' Meeting. Antony Marr gave a very interesting and informative talk entitled 'Victorian Crime, Police and Criminals'. Ancestors may appear in records for all sorts of reasons other than being tried for a crime such as a witness, police officer, pub licensee, gamekeeper, juror, applicant for maintenance, and many many more. The National Archives has extensive search guides on criminal

and court records which includes those of the Old Bailey (also available on <https://bit.ly/3oegRR3>). The records of quarter sessions are available in county archives with some online. The best records are in newspapers: The British Newspaper Archive (<https://bit.ly/3aKAPQy>) and The British Library (<https://bit.ly/3cnM1Df>). Many local library services provide online access for library card holders to newspaper collections such as the Gale Collection of 19th century newspapers and sometimes The Times Digital Archive.

At our May meeting, our talk entitled 'Thomas Lawrence and the Warfield Brickworks' was given by Paul Lacey. In 1860, Thomas Lawrence started making bricks at Warfield, and by 1861 had moved to Mount Pleasant in Bracknell. The 'TLB' bricks were of a very high quality and were used in a number of prestigious projects such as Madame Tussaud's, Holloway College, Harrow School, Eton College and William Morris's Red House. By 1871, he had added grocery to his businesses and a foundry and milk farming by 1881, with his Bracknell Stores being opened in the High Street.

Our June meeting was a social afternoon. It started with a Jubilee quiz followed by a chance to enjoy some scones and strawberries and cream whilst catching up with fellow members. Members also had time to explore our extensive library and ask for help with their research.

See website for details of future meetings.

**Sandra Barkwith & Bryan Pledger**

## Newbury Branch

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

Our May meeting, including the branch annual meeting, had to be cancelled due to a combination of personal circumstances whereby half the committee might have been unable to attend. The BAM was carried forward to June, and we hope to rebook our May speaker, Simon Burbidge, in the near future.

At the June meeting, held at West Berkshire Museum, the same committee was re-elected to serve for 2022-23, with the addition of Reg Ward, who has volunteered to help. The BAM was followed by a talk from Ros Clow entitled

# Around the Branches

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

"Debt, Death and Discrimination", in which she highlighted some inequalities of the Victorian justice system. Judges and juries, it seems, tended to look more kindly on middle-class offenders.

In July and August, the branch takes a break, although we aim to support the online Berkshire Heritage Fair on 6th August.

All but one of our branch-organised meetings this year are face-to-face, but we may well return to Zoom in the colder months. However, the outlook beyond November looks uncertain, as the branch still has no programme secretary.

Meetings ahead:

**15th September** (F2F) - please note this is a Thursday and not our usual Wednesday meeting night  
**Swing Rioters** by David Peacock

**19th October** (Zoom)  
Combined Branch Meeting - see back cover

**November** (F2F)  
**Local Policing** by Dave Stubbs

**Penny Stokes**

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

In April, Reading joined the other branches in a Combined Branch Meeting, where Antony Marr gave a presentation on "Victorian Crime, Police and Criminals".

May saw the branch meeting at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and a presentation by Lionel Williams on the "History of Readings Hospitals", which covered not only the two main hospitals but the lesser known ones of Blagrove and Prospect Park.

In June, we had a members night entitled "Help me break down my brick wall". Members came armed with queries and those present were able to offer guidance and tips on how to potentially break through that brick wall. Topics ranged from how to restart family history research after a prolonged hiatus, to finding divorce records,

locating someone missing from the 1881 census and discovering marriage information for a Royal Marine from the early 19th century.

Meetings ahead:

**29th September** (F2F)  
**Where there's a will, there's usually an argument** by Sue Ellis

Learn how to read and interpret wills.

**19th October** (Zoom)  
Combined Branches Meeting - see back cover

**24th November** (F2F)  
**DNA, a practical guide** by James Thornber

Learn about the various tests available and what they can tell you, without the science.

**Vicki Chesterman**

**Windsor, Slough & Maidenhead Branch**  
[windsor@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:windsor@berksfhs.org.uk)

We were still basking in the glory of our January meeting on the 1921 census and so, in March decided to have a members' meeting soliciting feedback from attendees on their experiences with the 1921 census, *Findmypast* and the National Archives. Quite a few breakthroughs were presented by Dick Croker as well as yours truly, along with best practice for getting the most out of the census and its search engine on *Findmypast*.

In April, Anthony Marr speaking on 'Victorian Crime, Police and Criminals' was his usual excellent self in our first combined branches meeting of the year. In May, John Frearson presented "The Green Room Plaque" which commemorates twelve actor members of

the Green Room Club who died in World War One. The talk detailed the stories of these actors, their backgrounds, careers and military service. Julie Goucher delighted us with 'Researching Displaced People' in June, in which four case studies provided examples of the breadth and depth of the topic and covered the 19th Century up to the modern age.

Looking forward, at the time of writing, we eagerly anticipate Kate McQuillian in July who

# Around the Branches

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

will speak on the fascinating "A chest with three locks: the Archives of the College of St George since 1352"

After a summer recess in August, we have "Secrets and Lies: Adventures in other People's Family History" by Frances Hurd in September, Nick Barrett speaking at the October combined branches meeting and "RMS Titanic made in the Midlands" by Andrew Lound in November.

Meetings ahead:

**27th September**  
**Secrets and Lies: Adventures in other People's Family History** by Frances Hurd

**19th October**  
Combined Branches Meeting - see back cover

**29th November**  
**RMS Titanic made in the Midlands** by Andrew Lound

**Leigh Dworkin**

## Woodley (Computer) Branch

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

Meetings ahead: (all talks on Zoom)

**21st September**  
**"A Military Evening"**

What to do when your WW1 ancestor's papers are not to be found as they were damaged by fire, The RAF between 1927-1940, WWI Officer Training & War Diaries.

**19th October**  
Combined Branches meeting - see back cover

**16th November**  
**"Two Graves, a Turnpike and a Murder"**

How a selection of ordinary family history documents can uncover more about the lives of our ancestors. Yes, there is a murder, not something everyone is 'lucky' enough to find.

**21st December**  
**"Online Christmas Genealogy Social"**

Forget about all the things you need to do before the big day. Relax, bring your own seasonal hat, mince pie and your preferred beverage!

**Gillian Stevens**

## The Broad Silk Hand Loom Weavers of Spitalfields

**Alan Winter** *writes of their struggles against the decline of their trade 1828-1860*

Silk weaving had been established in Bethnal Green and Spitalfields since the 15th and 16th centuries and was one of the last industries in London that was localised in a particular area of the city. In the 1680s the French King Louis XIV's persecution of the Protestant Calvinist minority, known as Huguenots, had led to a great exodus of skilled craftsmen. Many of them, including the family of my 3x great grandfather, William Vandome (1814-1887), were silk weavers who settled in Spitalfields and Bethnal Green. William's family arrived in London from Poitiers in 1681.

It was a highly successful and profitable industry,

employing at its height, in the late 18th century, over 40,000 looms, which supported an estimated 400,000 workers and their dependents. By the 1830s, following the introduction of free trade, the number of looms had fallen to just over 9,000.

Throughout the 1840s and 1850s the trade was in terminal decline.

The model of production that developed among the handloom weavers in Spitalfields involved a hierarchy of masters (employers of varying sizes, wealth and capacity) and individual journeyman weavers. Masters subcontracted work to journeymen weavers who worked with



their families at looms in their own homes; using patterns and materials provided by the masters, they produced the finished goods and were paid by the piece.

The economic model of masters and journeymen meant that there were always tensions between the interests of each group. There was a constant struggle for the weavers to maintain their living standards and the weavers often defended their interests with violence, riots and disruption. The weavers' aims were to have the trade regulated so that the price of labour was fixed, and not subject to the whims of the market or the masters.

Those struggles led to the introduction of the Spitalfields Acts from 1773, requiring wages to be set by magistrates rather than the masters. Employers who broke the agreed rate would be fined £50 and weavers could be punished if they demanded higher wages.

The role of the family in silk weaving was always significant. Women and children's labour, though often unpaid, was crucial in delivering orders. Where weavers had more than one loom, they would usually be worked by wives and older children. Women who worked independently were restricted to narrow weaving as broad silk weaving was more lucrative and had a higher status. The Book of Wages and Prices for the Work of Journeymen Weavers from 1774 stated: "No woman or girl to be employed in the making of any kind of work, except such works as are fixed and settled at 5 1/2d per ell or 5 1/2d per yard, or under, for the making; and those not to exceed half an ell in width". [An ell was equivalent to 45 inches or six handbreadths].

This arrangement worked reasonably well for 50 years or so but the masters became increasingly dissatisfied with its operation. They and Free Trade politicians, such as Sir Robert Peel, saw the Acts as discouraging innovation and mechanisation and restricting the free operation of the market. The economic argument then, as now, was that wages had to fall in hard times, regardless of the impact on workers and their families. Pamphlets such as the Observations on the Ruinous Tendency of the Spitalfields Act to the Silk Manufacture of London (1822) were very influential in Parliament. In a House of Commons debate in 1823, David Ricardo, a Whig MP, argued that the Acts were not only "an interference with the freedom of trade but they cramped the freedom of labour itself".

Unsurprisingly, the journeymen weavers saw it in different terms. Over 11,000 people (all men, no women or anyone under the age of 20 were

allowed to sign) in three days signed a petition against repeal of the Acts. On the day the Acts were repealed in 1824 Palace Yard at Westminster "was crowded with agitated silk weavers". They and their families were the ones who bore the brunt of any downturn in trade; the hardship involved in the production of silk goods (long hours and arduous working conditions for the whole family), low wages and the destitution from unemployment was an issue that preoccupied the weavers' union in the 1840s and 1850s. Repeal of the Acts led ultimately to the long-term decline of the trade in Spitalfields and the demise of the hand loom weavers. By the 1860s the trade was all but gone in Spitalfields.

In the 1820s the weavers formed a trade union, the Journeymen Broad Silk Weavers of Spitalfields, to negotiate with the masters. Contemporary newspaper reports from the 1840s and 1850s - when the situation was becoming increasingly desperate - give a vivid account of the silk weavers' struggles against unemployment and the attempts by the masters to drive down wages. In contrast to the violence of earlier times, the weavers wanted a return to wages regulation, through local Boards of Trade; they were reluctant to engage in strikes or other action. Although they were organising at the time of the Chartist movement, the Spitalfields weavers, as a group, did not engage in radical politics.

The period of the Spitalfields Acts (1773-1824) was a prolonged period of settled work and wages for the weavers that allowed them to engage in a range of cultural activities. They formed a number of societies, including Floricultural, Entomological, Recitation, Musical and Mathematical. They were well-known for growing tulips and dahlias and for breeding spaniels, canaries and pigeons, as well as songbirds. By the 1830s those hard-working but relatively comfortable days had passed. Wages had halved between 1824 and 1839 and many were unemployed. Contemporary accounts of the conditions in Spitalfields in 1831 provides a vivid description of the weavers' desperate poverty: "In whole streets...we found nothing worthy of the name of bed, bedding or furniture; a little straw, a few shavings, a few rags in a corner formed their beds - a broken chair, stool or old butter-barrel their seats - and a saucepan cup or two, their only cooking and drinking utensils". Many could not afford clothes or to pay the rent. Newspaper appeals for charitable financial support from the "Gentry and Nobility" by the Union, in conjunction with local churches, went largely unheeded.

The trade union was well supported - membership in 1845 was said to be at least 1000. They held regular weekly meetings, usually on Saturday evenings, often in local public houses such as the Whittington & Cat in Church Row, Bethnal Green. My ancestor, William Vandome, was one of a small group of half a dozen or so men who ran the Union for several years between 1845 and 1859. These men were radical in their views but were clearly aware that the wider membership did not share their political radicalisation. It was said in a report by the Chartist Convention in 1839 that the weavers spent more time on “fancy such things as birds, dogs and skittle playing” than they did on politics. The union leaders saw the importance of political action to support their efforts to maintain the silk trade. They were also exposed to radical ideas for helping working class families in distressed areas and industries; these included taking over common lands, private estates and crown lands “to be appropriated to the establishment of home colonies” for the benefit of unemployed workers. One of the union leaders, John Ferdinando, had a strong sense of history in support of their cause, citing “that great statesman, Pitt” as saying that the first duty of government was “to protect the interests of the productive classes”. Ferdinando was clear about which side they were on; in speaking of “protection” he meant that “Labour should be encouraged and protected as well as capital; when the working classes spoke of protection, they alluded to a thing very different from that which Disraeli and others of that party referred to in advocating protection”.

The continued pressure on wages and increasing poverty had forced the weavers to make public appeals to the “nobility and gentry” for financial support, but these raised limited amounts. There was great anger among the weavers that no help was forthcoming from the government or the upper classes. The weavers were desperate but wanted help “not only to save the people from perishing, but to restore a better state of things, whereby the weavers could support themselves by honest labour”. They compared the lack of help being given to them with the generosity the government showed in giving “£20,000,000 as a compensation to the wealthy West Indian slaveholders” upon abolition of the slave trade in 1834. Their sense of unfairness and unequal treatment was very strong.

By the early 1850s, many of the weavers were on subsistence wages, being barely a quarter of what they had been, even though they worked 14 to 16 hours a day, including on Sundays. The language

being used by speakers at Union meetings was becoming more angry, more desperate and more radical. John Ferdinando spoke of preventing “the sacrifice of the industrial classes to the idle consumer and commercial speculator” and of the “tyranny of the master class of the community”. Guest speakers to their meetings included Henry Mayhew, author of *London Labour and the London Poor*, published in 1848. In a “most energetic speech” Mayhew explained that his investigations had led him to change his view of free trade. The *Morning Post* reported that Mayhew had been “a thorough free trader” but having “witnessed the soul-harrowing scenes of wretchedness and misery ... he now condemned the system of free trade as ruinous to the interests and well-being of the native industry...” Mayhew was “loudly applauded” by the weavers.

For all the radical speeches at their meetings the weavers were not revolutionaries. In August 1854 a group of over 800 weavers held a rally to demand an advance in wages. The weavers were “well-behaved, decently clad and committed no breach of order”, presenting what they felt was a reasonable demand. Arguing that entire families worked 14 or 15 hours each day for low wages, they were concerned for the well-being of their children and families. Even those low rates of pay would only be achieved through “keeping their wives and children constantly at the machine, sacrificing every domestic comfort, and bringing up their children in a state of the grossest ignorance, and depriving them of all sorts of healthful exercise.” None of the masters pledged themselves to comply with the weavers’ demands.

The situation only got worse for the weavers. By 1859 80% of the looms were silent. At a meeting of the union’s General Committee on Saturday 29 January 1859, William Vandome, on behalf of the committee of the unemployed, could only report that funds to support members had almost run out. He sounded despondent, with none of the enthusiasm that his earlier contributions to meetings had displayed. There was very little work for the weavers and most of them had been entirely unemployed for some time. He and his comrades in the Union were coming to the end of what they could do. The Spitalfields weavers seemed to recognise the terminal nature of the decline; by the 1860s they were looking to join with other weavers across the city to form a new union, the Amalgamated Union of the Broad Silk Weavers of London. Subscriptions were 6d per month and members were to “receive benefits in sickness” and union was to “watch over the interests of the trade”. William would soon be

forced to give up the trade completely and take on work as a painter, which he did until he died in 1887.

Although now long gone, there was a silk weaving industry in parts of Berkshire. A remaining remnant of that industry survives just over the county border in Hampshire. The Whitchurch Silk Mill can be found halfway between Newbury and Winchester, on the A34. This Georgian water mill, the oldest silk mill still in its original building, still weaves silk fabrics using Victorian machinery.

In Reading, there was Messrs. Baylis's Silk and Crepe Manufactory. John and James Baylis had arrived in Reading in 1841, and were expanding their small silk manufacturing empire. After the death of Sarah Parsons, a worker in the factory, the Baylis brothers were declared bankrupt and the Reading factory closed in 1843. The site was sold and the buyers were George Palmer and Thomas Huntley of Huntley and Palmer's.<sup>1</sup>

In 1830, Thomas Simmonds was manufacturing silk in Minster Street, Reading as well as in St Paul's Churchyard, London.

Reading's connection with silk weaving predates the above by 200 years, as *'in 1640 the first notice of the manufacture of silk appears when Robert Smart, a silk-weaver, was allowed to use his trade within the borough. At the beginning of the eighteenth century it was fairly flourishing. In... the Oracle plain and figured silk dress materials were manufactured, some of which were from 18 to 60 inches broad.'*<sup>2</sup>

This continued for some time as, in the 1800s, Messrs. Williams and Simpson were making silk ribbons in The Oracle as well as in their London premises in Spitalfields.

Elsewhere in Reading, Brunswick Street is home to a surviving silk mill. The building in this image is that of the former 17th century silk mill built by Huguenot refugees from the German city of Brunswick (Braunschweig), hence the street's name. The building has since served as a pub (the

Brunswick Arms) and has now been converted into houses.

Wokingham boasted three silk manufacturers - one for spinning and two for weaving in the early 1800s. In 1830 one of the weaving factories was in Peach Street and was owned by Mr John Gower.

*'Mr Westcott purchased the premises in the middle of the 1800s and recollected that there were looms in the upper storey for silk weaving. According to the evidence of old inhabitants of the town a number of silk-weavers lived in Rose Street and wove silk handkerchiefs.'*

The factory burnt down soon after Mr Westcott purchased it and he replaced it with sawmills and timber stores. The silk industry in the town ended soon after.<sup>3</sup>

Thattham had a silk mill located in the manor of Greenham in the early 1800s and Kintbury had a small manufactory carried on by Jonathan Tanner, but this ended in the 1840s. Twyford was provided with a village industry of silk manufacture by George Billing who had come from Macclesfield, and the memory of the trade lives on in the Old Silk Mill development.

The decline in the silk weaving industry in Spitalfields and London was mirrored throughout the county with a general decline seen across the counties.



Former Silk Mill in Brunswick Street, Reading by Graham Hon (CC BY-SA 2.0) via Wikimedia Commons

<sup>1</sup> *Death of a Factory Girl* by Emmy Eustace <https://bit.ly/3aSH2dn>

<sup>2</sup> *Victoria County History*

<sup>3</sup> *Victoria County History Berkshire*

# YourTrees 1st Anniversary

Webmaster **Paul Barrett** gives an update on our new service on its first birthday

YourTrees is one this month. It's been a busy year, with new functionality being added and new workshops launched. We've added media into the mix so you can backup your family tree images and documents. We've developed some self-service data quality tools, introduced Boomerang Trees and we've had our first digital bequest.

All of this is for one purpose, so that you can create a digital legacy for your descendants, all of whom will be of the digital generations. For them, paper records are just a first millenium solution.

Here's a roundup of where we are, what we're doing and what we've achieved in the last 12 months to help you preserve your family history research.

## Media

We promised we'd add media as soon as we could, and we have. When you upload a GEDCOM you can now upload a zip file containing your media files. When we import your tree to YourTrees your records will automatically be linked to the media, and those rather dry text-only records will come alive as well as providing a comprehensive backup of your data.

## Data Analysis

Early analysis of YourTrees data revealed a pattern of issues such as dates not in the GEDCOM format DD MON YYYY. Every issue like this reduces the usefulness of your archive to other people so we've come up with three responses:

1. We added some self-service **data validation reports** members can run themselves to see what needs changing
2. We developed a **new workshop** where members can learn how to improve data quality
3. We developed a **GEDCOM file updater** to correct issues automatically as a member's tree is imported. We're continually monitoring incoming data to see if there are more filters we can add. At the time of writing (June 2022) we're about to move to version 6, which is not bad for nine months' operation.

## Data Validation Reports

We've developed thirty self-service reports covering a wide range of common issues such as:

- Invalid places
- Invalid dates, including British quarter dates
- Problematic names
- Unknown gender
- People incorrectly marked as Living
- Implausible life events such as 'Married or died before birth' and 'Married too young' which are clues to records that may be wrong.

Members can run these reports on the YourTrees site at any time, and the results can be downloaded as a To-Do list.

## Workshops

Better records make a better digital legacy. YourTrees can spit out the answer to a question in seconds. And when we accept that as the norm, it becomes easy to assume that if the computer says no, the answer must be no. But computer algorithms generate results based on the way data is stored and if the data is not in the right format and the right place, your rapid answer may be misleading.

As the 'father of the computer' Charles Babbage (1791 - 1871) put it:

*'On two occasions I have been asked, "Pray, Mr. Babbage, if you put into the machine wrong figures, will the right answers come out?" ... I am not able rightly to apprehend the kind of confusion of ideas that could provoke such a question.'*

Modern computer programmers have a much more down-to-earth turn of phrase 'GIGO' - 'Garbage In - Garbage Out.' To avoid that trap we can look back to 1650 and the first written record of the saying "A place for everything; and everything in its place" which should be a data recorder's mantra. It may be centuries old but it's a core principle of our workshops - you would be

surprised at just how much data is in the wrong place in YourTrees. How has that happened? It's mostly a result of historical practices.

You may have started recording your family trees long before the arrival of the personal computer and you will have developed your own method for manually recording data, often using your own shorthand to make it quicker. If you converted to computer based records you may have carried some of those old practices over to the new environment.

Our workshops show you how to adapt your practices to suit the digital era so that your descendants, who are all of the digital age, and for whom digital comes first, can benefit from your research instead of having to start over.

We show you how to format and enter events (facts), names, dates, places and notes in a way that is universally understood by all genealogy programs using the GEDCOM standard<sup>1</sup> so that when the computer is asked a question, the answer is comprehensive and reliable. And while this requirement is not unique to digital trees we also cover the importance of citations and how to record them.

## Workshop 1

Our first workshop, in March, was oversubscribed and we had to increase the number of seats. It was a lively session with tons of questions and it led us to develop some new guides:

### YourTrees Crib Sheets

There's one for each of the major areas, with tips and tricks on how to create good digital records:

- Data Entry Checklist
- Names
- Places
- Dates
- Citations
- Notes
- Data Validation

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<sup>1</sup> GENEalogical Data COMmunications - a standard for the transfer of genealogical data between programs, first published 1984 by the Church of the LDS in the USA

Each crib sheet provides a one page summary of the salient points that you can keep by your side while you're recording your data. But we recognise that each family tree program handles data differently, so each crib sheet continues with examples from the top three programs, *Family Tree Maker*, *Family Historian* and *Reunion*, which seem to be the most popular with our members, although we're happy to add others on request.

The crib sheets are available to all members on the YourTrees area of the society website and directly from the YourTrees website.

## Workshop 2

Our second workshop in May featured an updated presentation based on the learnings from the first workshop and two further months of operation. It was also oversubscribed and we added more seats. Once more we had loads of questions.

Afterwards, an attendee contacted us to say, *"Thank you for an enjoyable, stimulating and daunting workshop. I wish I'd attended a workshop like this years ago!"*

If there were three adjectives that we would have aspired to then *"enjoyable, stimulating and daunting"* would have been right up there - yes, even daunting - because we recognise that years of working practices and recorded data cannot be changed in a heartbeat. And this led us to recommend a six-point action plan, a plan that we also added to the presentation for the third workshop in July (there's a fourth in November). Book now for the November session because it too may be oversubscribed. There'll be more sessions starting in January.

## The six-point action plan

- 1. Remember:** Quality improvement is an iterative process. We don't expect your first submission to YourTrees to be perfect so, **please submit it as it is, because the number one priority is to create the backup copy - one of the core benefits of Your Trees. That need trumps everything.** Once you've done that your research is secure for future generations.
- 2. Act:** If your research is still a work in process, **make sure you apply the crib sheet guides to all new records you create** so that you draw a line between old and new ways of working.

3. **Act:** If you have cause to revisit some existing records, update them while you have the patient open.
4. **Decide** what to do about the rest at your leisure. **If you never get round to fixing them, you have at least secured your data;** but you can chip away at them periodically on those dark winter nights when it's stormy and you have no inclination to set foot outside!
5. **Remember:** You can submit updated GEDCOM files as often as you want - we love getting updates - and the process is quick and easy.
6. **Remember:** Each time you submit your updated GEDCOM, re-run the data validation reports to see how your data quality improvements are progressing and create a new To-Do list.

### Data Corrections

One of the reasons we provide the data validation reports is that it's important that you change your local records - your master copy. However, we recognise that many of the issues could easily be corrected programmatically.

The application we use to provide YourTrees is a commercially available one that has a large community of user-programmers and in partnership with one of them we've developed a utility that can be applied to your GEDCOM file when we import it, to correct some of the more straightforward issues including:

- Chapman codes replaced by the full county and country
- Full month names replaced by their three letter versions
- Fixes FTM's incorrect tag name for AKAs
- Remove all ordinals (st, nd, rd, th) from dates in date fields
- Changes all long form or incorrect GEDCOM modifiers such as 'About,' 'ca,' 'circa' and 'say' to their correct forms

One that we're particularly proud of is the British Quarter date conversion. Q1 1900 is a very convenient way to enter a date but it's generally only Britain that uses quarter dates, and this means they're not supported in the international GEDCOM standard. Instead they need to be expressed as:

British Quarter Date	How it should be entered
Q1 1900	Bet Jan 1900 and Mar 1900
Q2 1900	Bet Apr 1900 and Jun 1900
Q3 1900	Bet Jul 1900 and Sep 1900
Q4 1900	Bet Oct 1900 and Dec 1900

You might think that's an easy conversion for us to do but when we analysed the data in YourTrees date fields we found examples such as Q1 1900, 1Q 1900, 1st Q 1900, 1st Qtr 1900, Jan Qtr 1900, Mar Qtr 1900 and the really obscure "1900 1st qu". We found 52 permutations. Isolating those combinations and converting them was 'fun' but it was worth the effort because on some large trees our utility was able to correct thousands of records. The next logical step was to offer the corrected tree back to the owner to spare them countless hours of effort to manually correct them. *Enter Boomerang Trees.*

### BoomerangTrees

If we correct a tree as we import it to YourTrees, the issues we correct remain in your local copy of the tree. Each time you submit a GEDCOM the same corrections will be applied and unless we break the cycle, your local tree might never be updated with the changes.

So now we offer you the option to receive a corrected copy of your tree. It's really easy:

1. You tick a box when you upload a GEDCOM, to request a Boomerang Tree
2. We make the corrections
3. We email the updated tree back to you
4. You use it to create a NEW local tree<sup>1</sup>
5. You compare the two and decide which you want to use going forward

There's no charge - it's all part of your membership and it's no exaggeration to say that your membership is worth it just to gain access to this facility.

<sup>1</sup> It's imperative you do NOT overwrite your existing tree. We're fallible and you need to check the new tree against the old before you make an irrevocable decision such as deleting or overwriting a tree

## Pocock - a bequest that's welcome

A *welcome bequest*? Does that mean bequests can be *unwelcome*? Surely not? Well, yes, unfortunately that's usually the case. Over the years we've had a number of offers. The problem is that usually they consist of boxes and folders of paper. We simply don't have the storage space and no matter how well it's organised, unless we spend possibly hundreds of volunteer hours cataloguing it, it would be inaccessible to most people. A local history society or the BRO *might* take it if it represented a significant Berkshire family and it contains significant historical documentation, but they are in the same boat when it comes to storage space.

If there are BMD certificates we can try recycling them through the Forum and if there are saleable books we can try to sell them via the website but as for the rest, we usually have to respectfully decline.

However, in May we were contacted by someone whose father had passed away in January. Dad was one of the original members way back from around 1975 (Member number 163) and he had amassed a large body of research.

But this time it was different, because his family offered us a nugget of pure gold - a GEDCOM file containing his research in digital format. Five minutes' work was all it took to upload the file to YourTrees and create a permanent archive of his research containing 16,863 people grouped into 5,686 families, with 618 sources and 5,722 notes. 50 years' research effort is preserved for all of you to benefit from and for his family to come back to, if or when they're ready to take on the challenge.

And then it got even better...

## New Wiltshire Records on Findmypast

Those whose ancestors stray over the border into Wiltshire, will no doubt be pleased to hear of the new record sets now available on Findmypast. Three new collections have just been added.

1. Wiltshire Tithe Award Register 1813 - 1882 - which consists of more than 257,000 records.
2. Lunatic Asylum Registers 1789 - 1921 covering six asylums.
3. First World War Hospital Records - 6,000 records covering admissions to the Old Sarum Isolation Hospital, Salisbury. The Harnham Red Cross Hospital and the Salisbury Infirmary. Many of the patients came from camps on Salisbury Plain.

The records consist of transcriptions created by our colleagues in the Wiltshire Family History Society.

We felt pretty chuffed that we were able to accommodate the Pococks so easily and quickly but what happened next was the icing on the cake.

We published details of the bequest in the bi-weekly *InTouch* email newsletter and in less than 24 hours we had contact from an Australian member who shares a common ancestor and who enquired about adding the ancestors' details to the Pocock tree.

We reached out to the relative who had donated the tree to find out if they were actively maintaining it. They were not, so we were able to give the green light to our member. It's quite a thrill to see how the research of a former member going way back to 1975 has, nearly half a century later, been connected to a member on the other side of the world in the blink of an eye.

That is *exactly* the kind of digital legacy and digital connection we envisaged when we set up YourTrees.

### Conclusion

It's going well. In fact it's going better than we expected and has developed in some novel ways. We're connecting people in ways that are just not possible with paper records and our data validation reports and Boomerang Trees are a great value added service that's free to all members.

Have you sent us your tree yet? If not, check out the website for details on how to do it, and book yourself onto one of the online workshops. The next one's on Sat 5th Nov at 14:00 and they continue in the New Year.

# More army records now available

Back in February 2021, the Ministry of Defence began transferring all 9.7 million historic service records to The National Archives (TNA). The first tranche was released on Discovery in April of this year, covering the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, in series WO 420.

Now, nearly 100,000 more Second World War records are available to order from TNA. These are records from the 'War Office: Selected Smaller Corps Other Ranks: Service Records', which have the reference number WO 421.

The series consists of 94,234 service records of soldiers (excluding officers) who served in the Army Air Corps; the Royal Army Veterinary Corps; the Royal Military Police or Corps of Military Police; the Royal Army Pay Corps; the Royal Army Physical Training Corps; the Military Provost Staff Corps; the Royal Corps of Army Music; the Royal Army Education Corps; the Royal Pioneer Corps; the Intelligence Corps; the Officer Training Corps; and the Non-Combatant Corps. It only includes soldiers who were discharged because they were over age. The types of documents enclosed in service records include attestation forms signed by a new recruit, or created upon transfer between units; statements of service, which outline an individual's postings; and discharge forms issued when a soldier left the regiment.

You can search the catalogue at : <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C17682287>

## Date for your diary

Sat 1st October 10am - 4pm (Free entry) Oxfordshire FHS Family History Fair

The Marlborough Church of England School, Shipton Road, Woodstock, OX20 1LP

Find out more at: <https://bit.ly/3PxxcfA>

## Seeking Berkshire Marriage Photographs

Would you like a photograph of one of your family marriages from Berkshire to be the image used on our next Berkshire Marriages CD? We're beginning to prepare Berkshire Marriages Edition 5 for publication and would like a new image to display. The marriage needs to have taken place in Berkshire and ideally be either Victorian or early to mid 1900s. Ideally the image will be landscape to fit to the CD cover. You need to either own the copyright, or the image needs to be sufficiently old to be outside of copyright.

Edition Four's image was kindly supplied by Jean Harland and featured the marriage of William Watson and Vera Higgs in 1928 at St Nicholas' Church in Sulham. Jean received a complimentary copy of the CD as a thank you and we will do the same again for whoever's image is chosen for Edition Five.

If you have an image you think might be suitable, please contact Catherine on email [projects@berksfhs.org.uk](mailto:projects@berksfhs.org.uk)





# Hints, Tips and Ideas on Reading Old Handwriting

**Hilary Waller** shares some helpful pointers

Anyone who has tried to use the 1921 census, which was released earlier this year, will have probably come across some poor transcriptions and wondered why people find 20th century handwriting hard to read. From 1911 onwards, householders filled in their own census forms, so every entry was written by a different hand. Before that the census enumerators wrote each entry, so once you are used to it, it can become just a question of recognising their individual style of handwriting.

When you have worked through the census records, you will then no doubt also look at Parish records and order copies of birth certificates. Parish records were usually written by the local incumbent and many of them were no better at handwriting than some doctors! Registrars on the other hand were professionals and usually took great pride in their record entries, but which of us has not still struggled to decipher an unusual occupation or an unknown address?

Then you will probably turn to looking at other types of documents, such as wills and land records. Older records tend to be much harder to understand, partly due to the style of language, their use of different abbreviations and phrasing, the old script styles known as 'hands' and fashions in other things such as date formats.

One of the tools that I find most useful is a simple on screen ruler that helps me to keep my place in the document such as this one:

Latour, Rob. A Ruler for Windows. <http://www.arulerforwindows.com/>

Another simple but effective trick is to magnify the image or to highlight it in a different colour.

Then it can be very helpful to create a letter chart. Simply create a list of the letters of the alphabet and against each add an image of how that letter

appears in the document, both as an uppercase and lowercase letter. You should also be aware that they sometimes used special versions of a letter when they came at the beginning or end of a word. There were also other characters such as the 'thorn', typically written as a 'Y'. Once you have your chart filled in, you can use it as a reference guide throughout the rest of the document.

You will also need some practice and one of the best tutorials is on an old part of The National Archives website. There is also a good Scottish site as below.

National Archives (Great Britain). Palaeography - reading old handwriting 1500 – 1800. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/palaeography/>

One of their examples (Tutorial 6) is a document, dated 17 June 1554, relating to the sale particulars of the manor of Bulmershe, near Reading and is the auditor's report on the farm of the manor. It is worth a look, not least as an item of local interest.

National Records of Scotland. Online Tuition in the Palaeography of Scottish Documents. <http://www.scottishhandwriting.com/>

It often helps to think about the context and structure of the type of document that you are reading. Most official documents are written in a formulaic manner and so you may be able to find a transcription of something similar. This can help you to identify common words and phrases. Then the golden rule is to transcribe what you see, not what you think the text says. Then stand back and check to see if it makes sense.

The fashionable style of handwriting used in formal documents has varied over time and by country. It is worth trying to identify the type of 'hand', so that you can find other examples to learn from. 'Secretary hand' was in general

use from the start of the 16th century. This was replaced by 'Round hand' from the 1650s onwards, producing the italic hand that we use today. This website has pictures of the typical alphabetic letter forms, which provide a contrast to the Scottish site mentioned above.

English handwriting 1500-1700: Early Modern Handwriting: Alphabets. <http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/eres/ehoc/alphabets.html>

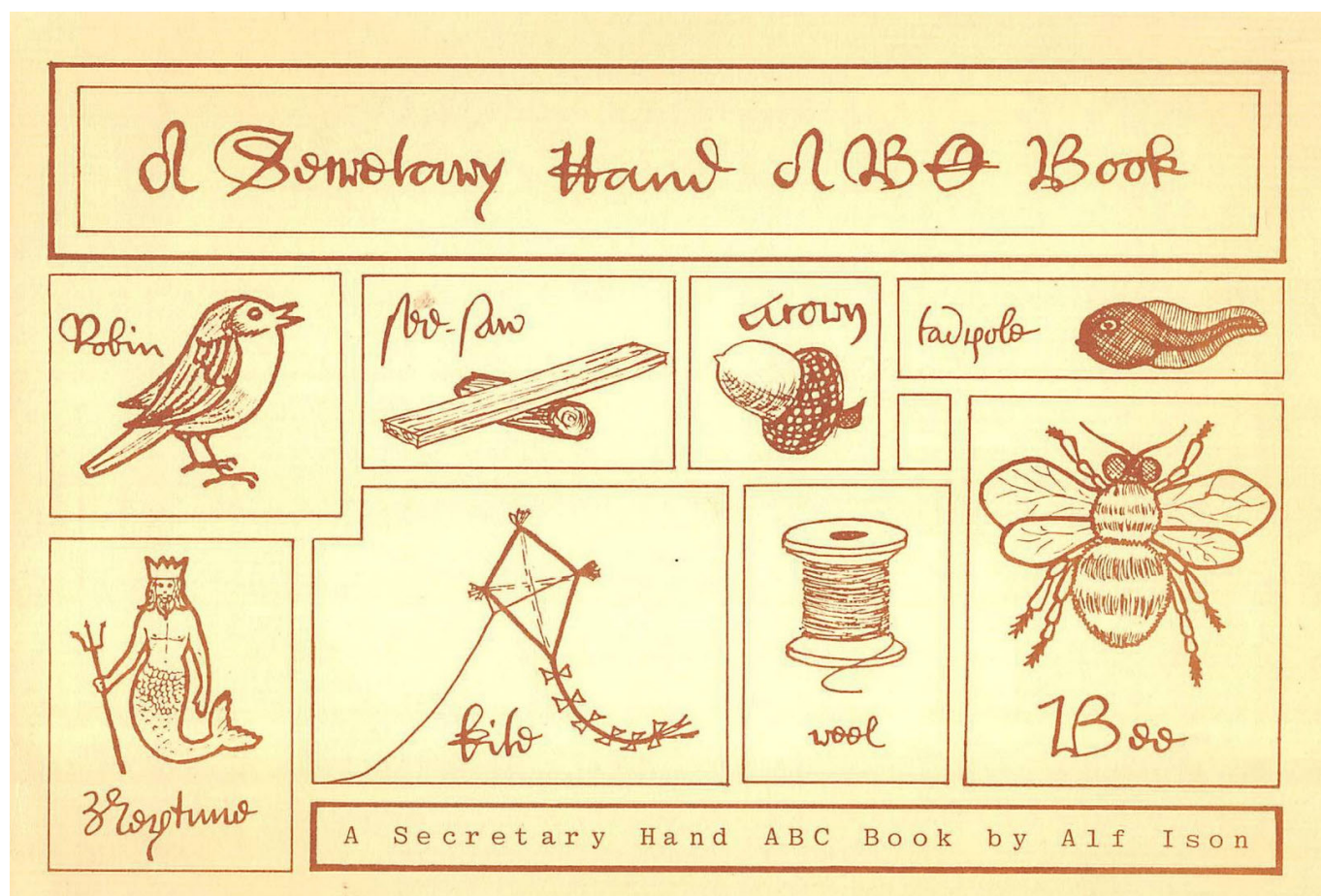
There are also some free software packages such as the one below, which you can download. It splits the screen in two, so that you can see both the image and your transcription.

Transcription editing program. <http://www.jacobboerema.nl/en/Freeware.htm>

It is often said that palaeography, or learning to read old writing, is just like learning to play the piano - 'Unless you keep practising then you soon forget how to do it'. I belong to several genealogy groups and every week an image pops up on WhatsApp or Facebook, where someone is asking for help in reading a document. Typically a fresh pair of eyes can work wonders and it also helps to keep us all in practice.

Ultimately, don't be afraid to have a go.

Ed: Don't forget that the Society sells Alf Ison's book on *A Secretary Hand, an ABC Book* and that there are periodic workshops on reading old handwriting.



# From Berkshire Genealogy

*Berkshire Genealogy Facebook Group*

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



**Jeff shared a photograph of a buckle he had found recently in a field in the Parish of Bradfield.** He was wondering “if anyone could help me get it back to the owner or his family. The monogram reads H.W. J. and the buckle is stamped 14ct on the back (believed introduced into the UK from 1932).”

**Carol asked if anyone has any links to the Golding family of Buscot?** “Specifically, Reuben Golding, son of Abraham. Reuben's daughter, Jane Maria Golding, married Clement Griggs. He was my maternal 2xgreat grandfather.”

**Kaz shared an image of Oxford prisoner Emma Sherwood, who was aged just 13 when she was sentenced to one month's hard labour in 1872.**

“Emma was born in 1858 in Crowmarsh Gifford, to Jonas Sherwood, an agricultural labourer, and Sarah Looker. ... On the 6th of April 1872 she was caught stealing half a sovereign from George Patey. The case having been proved and the prisoner having a previous convicting for felony, she was sentenced to one month's hard labour and after that, three years at a reformatory school. Her father Jonas was ordered to pay 9s a week towards the support of his daughter while she was at the reformatory school, where she was sent on the 4th of July.”

“After release, Emma married John George Francis in 1878. John was from Wallingford, Berkshire and this is where we find the family in 1881, living in Wood Street. They had one daughter in Rose Beatrice in 1883 and the family remained at 42 Wood Street for the rest of their lives. John worked as a plate layer in his younger days but worked as a house painter most of his life. Emma passed away in 1915 and John in 1935.”

**Fran is researching the Jeromes of Tilehurst & wondered if anyone has connections to her family.** She posted two images, one “a photo of my great great grandmother, Fanny Jerome, born 1880, the youngest of 11 to Charles Jerome, an agricultural labourer and his wife Mary Ann Waite. They lived on "Little Heath Road, Tilehurst" according to the 1881/91 Censuses.” The other “a photo of Fanny with her husband, Herbert Marchant of Basildon (m. 1908) with four of their five children, Phyllis, Mary, Eileen & Leslie. She lived to be 96, passing in 1976.”



Please get in contact with the editor if you can help.

# A Combined Branches' Special Meeting

Wednesday 19th October 2022

7.45pm

start (session opens 7.15pm) by Zoom

## Family History and the media: behind the scenes of Who Do You Think You Are?

By **Dr Nick Barratt**

Nick's talk takes us backstage behind the scenes of WDYTIA? He will explain how the show was originally conceived, as well as the research that was undertaken to ensure every celebrity has a surprise in store! Using case studies from the show, Nick reveals how the programme changed its focus from ten stories about British social history in the first series, to an emotional journey of discovery that brought family history to a mainstream audience and explored the myth that it was just about collecting names of dead people. The media exposure, alongside the rise of the internet and platforms such as Ancestry and Findmypast, turned genealogy into something everyone could do, with implications we're still feeling today.



Nick is an author, historian and broadcaster best known for his work on Who Do You Think You Are. He is the Director of Learner and Discovery Services at the Open University, a teaching fellow at the University of Dundee, and a fellow of the Royal Historical Society. Nick served as the President of the Family History Federation until 2021, and remains the President of the Hampshire Genealogical

Society, as well as part of the Historians Collaborate network and a committee member of the Community Archives and Heritage Group. His most recent publication, *The Restless Kings*, tells the story of Henry II and his quarrelsome sons.