

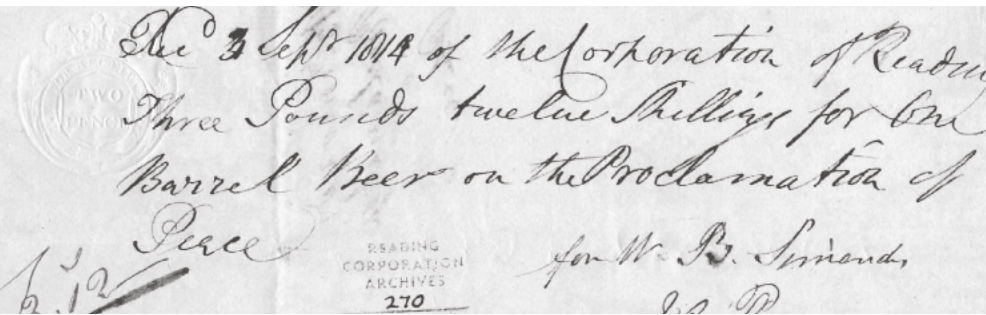
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The Berkshire Record Office
The Archives of the Royal County

The Berkshire Echo July 2015

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From the Editor



2015 seems to be a year of significant anniversaries. Most recently in May we had the 70th anniversary of Victory in Europe (or VE) Day and in June we had the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta - which we touched upon in Echo 70. In October there will be the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Agincourt where the English triumphed over the French in 1415.

Similarly, June sees the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo where the British and their allies were victorious over the French. This edition of the Echo focusses on the Napoleonic Wars surrounding the event.

After being deposed as the Emperor of France and exiled to Elba, Napoleon Bonaparte decided to take Paris back by force. Unfortunately he was up against British and allied forces led by the Duke of Wellington. It was a disaster and Napoleon was once again exiled, this time to St Helena in the Atlantic where he eventually died.

The archives tell us a bit more about the people on the ground and those giving orders. We find out just how important wine really was to the French. We also see how some profited from war, whilst others gave generously to help those in need.

Archives can be used to look back at the past and hopefully learn from it. They can reveal how difficult dealing with war can be and likewise how much of a relief the end of a war is. If we think back to VE Day, it wasn't just about celebration, but about relief and reflection. After the Napoleonic Wars, people tried to focus on helping those in need – the wounded and the poor. Read the stories in this edition and find out more about what happened 200 years ago.

Ivone Turnbull
Senior Archivist

Above: Bill for beer to celebrate peace in 1814 (R/FZ2/40/29)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Heritage Open Day

See behind the scenes at the Record Office on Heritage Open Day, Saturday 12 September. We will be running tours at 11 and 12 o'clock, and Berkshire Family History Society will be giving a talk on Parish Registers for Family History at 11.30. Please contact us to book a place as space is limited: telephone: 0118 9375132 or email: arch@reading.gov.uk. More details will be on our website closer to the time.

World War I blog

The blog continues to grow on a daily basis. Each post relates to that day or month 100 years earlier, as the war unfolds before Berkshire eyes. Check it out at <http://berkshirevoiceswwi.wordpress.com/>.





George Henry Vansittart (D/EX73/3/5/13)

Wine and war in the West Indies

George Henry Vansittart (1765-1824) was one of the Berkshire men involved in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. Heir to the Bisham Abbey estate, he attended Oxford before embarking on a distinguished military career. He studied military science in Germany, and received a lieutenant's commission on 26 December 1787. As Lieutenant-Colonel of the 68th Foot, he fought in the West Indies, 1801-1802, where Britain and France fought over their respective colonies.

Vansittart was placed in control of the conquered French island of Sainte Lucie (now St Lucia) in 1802. There, he received a petition from the French colonists, as supplies of wine on the island were beginning to run out. They begged him to allow an American ship in harbour to unload its cargo of wine, which they piteously explained was 'an article of the first necessity for this conquered island, most part of whose inhabitants being French who from habit can ill bear the deprivation of that necessary article'. Sadly, we do not know if he allowed the request.

Our man in the Waterloo campaign

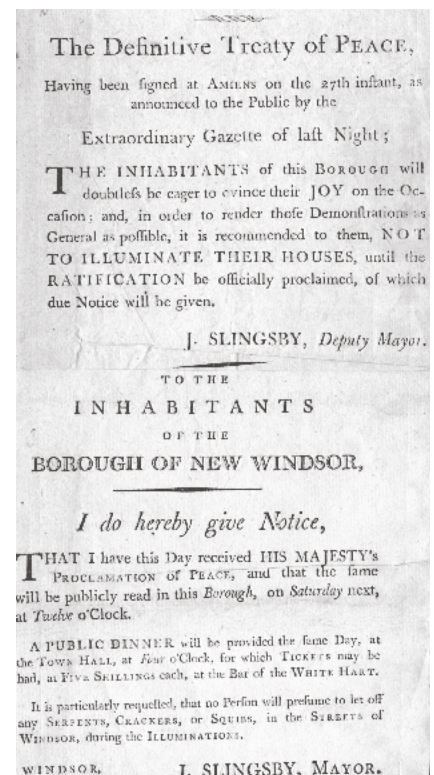
Lieutenant Edward Greene of the Royal Artillery fought in the Napoleonic wars, and his papers have found their way into the archives.

He and his men left Woolwich Arsenal on 6 June 1815, reaching Ostend on the 10th, having endured a 48-hour voyage across the Channel. They marched across what is now Belgium, stopping along the way to do some sightseeing in the old towns of Bruges and Ghent.

Although we remember Waterloo, and the final surrender of Napoleon, as the end of a war which had consumed a generation, the fighting actually went on for some months afterwards. Greene was responsible for moving weaponry

where it was needed. The orders issued when he was moving gunpowder in December 1815 include instructions to exercise 'the utmost vigilance' to prevent the soldiers from smoking near the wagons, and they were careful to keep the wagons well away from homes overnight to prevent a tragic accident.

His heavy artillery was instrumental in forcing the garrisons to surrender at Mariembourg, Philippeville and Rocroi over the summer. He profited personally from these conquests – he was awarded a share of the prize money handed out to soldiers which in his case amounted to £34 13s 9d.



Notice of peace of Amiens (M/1201/4/7)



Celebrating peace

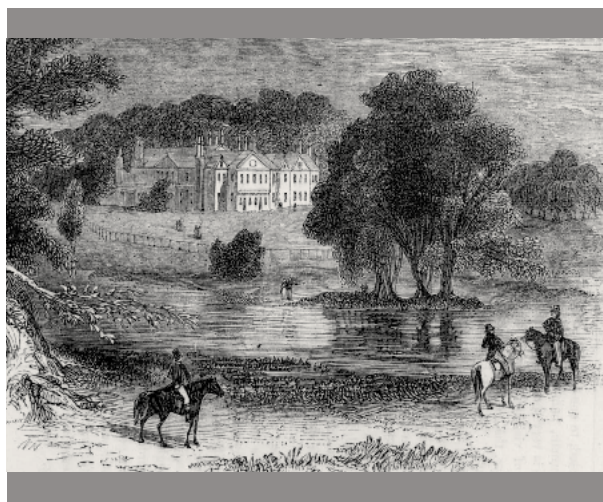
A whole generation was engulfed in the wars between Britain and its allies, and France (see timeline). The fear of invasion was high, although Britain escaped the horrors which faced much of Europe. Peace, when it came, was celebrated rapturously across the country. The Peace of Amiens was greeted with great relief. News reached Newbury at lunchtime on 2 October 1801, courtesy of a traveller on the stagecoach, who had heard it in Reading, whose mayor had received a personal letter from the Prime Minister, Reading-born Henry Addington, Viscount Sidmouth. At first people in Newbury could not believe the tale, as no-one who had come on the coach from London knew anything.

But the good news was confirmed just after midnight, when Joseph Toomer, mayor of Newbury and a local businessman, was woken from his slumbers by 'a number of persons thundering at the door and shouting aloud, with blowing of horns', and brandishing a copy of the London Gazette. They took 'some persuasion' to go away quietly and not rouse the rest of the town. The church bells were rung in celebration from dawn to dusk the following day, and the army fired off three volleys in the market place. Toomer cracked down on the letting off of fireworks by individuals, but in the evening, the council sponsored a 'general illumination', at which the Margravine of Anspach, the former Countess of Craven who lived at Speen, donated cash to be handed out to the poor in further celebration. Everyone in Newbury was smiling, as they celebrated what Toomer recorded as 'the agreeable and unexpected news of PEACE!!' in his memorandum book.

The legacy of war

The wars had a massive impact on the nation and its life. Although the army was a voluntary one, thousands were selected by lottery and had to serve at home in the militia ready to combat a feared invasion. The war also saw the formation of the Berkshire Yeomanry in 1794; and the introduction of the country's first income tax, an unpopular measure which was repealed in 1816.

After Waterloo the borough paid tribute to the cost of victory by donating the large sum of 30 guineas to a fund for 'the families of the slain and of the numerous severely wounded of the British Army at the astonishing and unparalleled victory at Waterloo'. The Duke of Wellington had been awarded the freedom of the borough in August 1814 for his earlier efforts in the wars.



Stratfield Saye, the Hampshire mansion given to Lord Wellington by a grateful nation (D/Ex1159/3/1/1)

Timeline of the French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars

1789	The French Revolution	1804	Napoleon is crowned Emperor of France
1792-1797	The War of the First Coalition (Republican France vs Austria, Prussia, Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and several of the states of Italy)	1805	The Battle of Trafalgar, Britain's most famous naval victory, and the death of Admiral Nelson
1793	King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette of France executed	1808-1814	Britain is involved in the Peninsular War to get the French out of Spain and Portugal, and Arthur Wellesley (from 1813 Duke of Wellington) becomes one of the greatest commanders in British history
1798-1802	The War of the Second Coalition (France vs most of Europe)	1812	Napoleon invades Russia and is defeated there
1799	Napoleon seizes power in France	1814	Napoleon abdicates, and goes into exile; the French monarchy is restored
1802	The Peace of Amiens brings an end to hostilities	1815, March	Napoleon escapes from Elba and regains control of France
1803	War resumes	1815, 18 June	The Battle of Waterloo



New to the Archives

Slough Central Hall (D/MS69/4B/3)



Methodism in Berkshire

We are constantly receiving new material from Berkshire's Methodist churches. As with Anglican parishes, much is of relatively recent date, but there is exciting older material from several churches in Newbury: Bartholomew Street Primitive Methodist Church, 1877-1971 (D/MS2); Northbrook Street Wesleyan Methodist Church, 1832-2004, including extensive material relating to its construction (D/MS51); and Stroud Green Primitive Methodist Church, 1871-1991 (D/MS15). From the Thames Valley Circuit we have new records from Slough Central Hall and its successor, St Andrew's Church, 1928-1978 (D/MS69); William Street Primitive Methodist Church, Slough, 1893-1908 (D/MS70); Cheapside Wesleyan Methodist Church, Sunninghill, 1841-1969 (D/MS17); and Windsor Wesleyan Methodist Church, 1836-2002 (D/MS9).

We have also taken in the trust deed of Baughurst Primitive Methodist Chapel, Hampshire, 1872 (D/MS89), and records from Henley Methodist Church, Oxfordshire, 1886-1983 (D/MS104), which were in Berkshire circuits. There is a printed memoir of Thomas Bush, the founder of Lambourn Wesleyan Methodist Church, 1849 (D/MS8), while papers of schoolmistress Frances Morden, 1857-1906, shed light on the building of Tilehurst Wesleyan Chapel in 1883 (D/EX2220).

Records of Reading Faith Forum and the Reading Faith Community Leaders Group, 2002-2012 (D/EX2131), meanwhile, reflect co-operation between different religions in the area in more recent years.

New for family history: Parish and other registers

Bracknell St Paul: *baptisms, 1986-2013 (D/P 165C)*
Brightwalton: *marriages, 1979-2013 (D/P24)*
Chaddleworth: *marriages, 1986-2000 (D/P32)*
Coleshill: *marriages, 2002-2013 (D/P40)*
Cookham: *marriages, 1960-2004 (D/P43)*

Easthampstead: *baptisms, 2003-2012; burials, 1915-1949, with parish clerk's rough record of burials and internments of ashes, 1919-2008 (D/P49)*

Fawley: *marriages, 1987-2012 (D/P55)*

Leckhampstead: *marriages, 1987-2007 (D/P34B)*

Maidenhead St Peter: *baptisms, 1977-1996, and marriages, 1970-1995 (D/P170)*

Mortimer West End: *baptisms, 1860-2001; marriages, 1981-2004 (D/P120C)*

Padworth: *marriages, 1991-2007 (D/P90)*

Priestwood: *marriages, 1981-2006 (D/P165B)*

West Shefford: *baptisms, 1937-2014; burials, 1897-2014*

Shefford Woodlands: *marriages, 1916-1992 (D/P108B)*

Twyford Cemetery: *notices of interment, 1961-1985 (CPC73B)*

Salvation Army Hall, Wokingham: *marriages, 2002-2010 (D/N59)*

Fire! Fire!

Finally, the log book of Wantage Fire Brigade, 1921-1930, records fires in the town and neighbouring villages (D/EX2415).

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Opening Hours

Tues 9-5, Weds 9-5, Thurs 9-9pm, Fri 9-4.30.
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Funding Partners

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