

# BRO

The Berkshire Record Office  
The Archives of the Royal County

## The Berkshire Echo

April 2019

- Direct action turns to flames
- Suffragettes support wounded soldiers
- “We have great faith in the newly granted votes for women”

### WHAT'S ON

#### **'A great deliverance': Berkshire and the aftermath of World War One**

*22nd May to 16th August 2019, during normal opening hours*

The Treaty of Versailles in June 1919 was the official end of the First World War - this exhibition will look at how the county responded. Available during our opening hours (Tuesday and Wednesday 9am to 5pm, Thursday 9am to 9pm and Friday 9am to 4.30pm). FREE admission. Why not come along and take a look?

#### **How to Read Old Handwriting Workshop**

*1st July 2019, time 10:15 to 14:45*

Always wanted to know how to read old handwriting, but don't know how? Then come along to our workshop! We will look at samples from 16th to 18th century documents held here at the BRO. Cost is £20 per person. There are 10 places available and booking is essential. Please email [arch@reading.gov.uk](mailto:arch@reading.gov.uk) or call 0118 937 5132.

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### From the Editor

Welcome to the spring edition of the Berkshire Echo where we look back at Women's suffrage. Last year saw the 100th anniversary of the Representation of the People Act which finally gave some women the right to vote. The first general election in which women over the age of 30 with a certain amount of property could vote, took place in December 1918 and as we discover in “We have faith in the newly granted votes for women”, Berkshire clergyman were certainly optimistic about it.


As is well known, the suffrage movement was not a peaceful one and as we read in “Direct action turns to flames” real damage was done to many buildings, in this case Wargrave Church – though it was never proved. We see in “Suffragettes support wounded soldiers” that during the First World War, many postponed their campaigning to focus on the National issue of war and supporting their country.

This is a fascinating subject with so many participants from supporters, peaceful suffragists to anti-suffragists


and the more documented ‘take action’ suffragettes. However, it was not until the 1928 Equal Franchise Act that women and men were finally on equal terms. The voting age was reduced to 21 for all, but it was not until 1969 that this was reduced to 18.

Don't forget to take a look at the ‘New to the Archives’ section to see what is now available. Our ‘What's On’ section details what events are going on, but you can always keep up to date with events, search the online catalogue, learn how to make a visit or use our research services by visiting our website: [berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk/](http://berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk/)

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Ivone Turnbull  
Senior Archivist

Top: Postcard criticising 'silly mad suffragists [sic]' (D/EX 638/66/54)



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Top: A fireman in the ruins of Wargrave Church (D/P14/28/14)

## Direct action turns to flames

The most militant campaigners for equal votes for women turned to violent activism. Wargrave parish church was burned down on 1 June 1914. While no one was ever prosecuted for the crime, postcards charging the authorities with torturing women (probably referring to those imprisoned for protesting) were found near the church, next to a hammer with which it was supposed the perpetrator had smashed a window to gain entry.

The fire was set in several parts of the building, with petrol as an accelerant. The fire was so intense that in just three hours, and despite the efforts of fire brigades called from Wargrave, Wokingham and Henley, the entire interior and roof were lost, leaving the building looking like a medieval ruin. The vestry was not as badly damaged, but modern family historians have reason to be thankful that the then-

current baptism register was snatched from the burning building by the vicar. Flames had already reached the safe, and the binding was scorched, but it is now safely at BRO (doc ref D/P145/1/10). Older registers were out of harm's way in the vicarage. The building itself was rebuilt, opening again in 1916.

Acts of terror rarely inspire conversion to any cause, and the destruction of a beautiful building dating from the 12th century was no exception. The church's architect railed against 'the evil ingenuity of wickedly disposed people'. Preaching out of doors on the next Sunday morning to a congregation gathered on a motley selection of chairs and stools next to the ruins, the Revd Basil Batty, vicar of Wargrave, spoke sadly of *'those whose enthusiasm for a cause had taken them so far beyond the bounds of reason'*.

WHAT'S ON

### Behind the Scenes at the BRO

15th July 2019, time 10:30 to 11:30

Ever wanted to know what goes on behind the scenes at the BRO? Then come along and find out! You will be shown some historical documents, where we store them and given an insight into how our conservator repairs them. It's FREE and there are 12 spaces available. Booking is essential. Please email [arch@reading.gov.uk](mailto:arch@reading.gov.uk) or call 0118 937 5132.

**Don't forget** that we also have a World War One blog. Each post relates to that day or month 100 years ago as the 1914-1918 war unfolded before Berkshire's eyes. Why not take a look and see what you can discover?

<https://berkshirevoiceswwi.wordpress.com/about-berkshire-at-war/>





## Suffragettes support wounded soldiers

Both suffragettes and the less militant suffragists had suspended their battle for equality in the interests of national unity during the First World War. The Ascot Women's Suffrage Society was one local group which actively raised funds to help wounded soldiers, while many individual women served as nurses at home or abroad. They were rewarded by the passage of the Representation of the People Act 1918, which extended the vote to all men over 21, and married women over 30. Ten years later all women over 21 were allowed to vote on equal terms with men.

### “We have great faith in the newly granted votes for women”

Just after the Armistice brought an end to World War I, a General Election was called. It was the first at which married women aged over 30, and all men over 21, could vote.

The vicar of Earley St Peter was one of many who were optimistic that women would use their vote wisely. Writing in the parish magazine in December 1918, he stated:

*“After all great wars there has always been more or less of an upheaval, and many people are looking forward with dread to the next two or three years, but we feel sure that the common sense of our country will prevail, and that the spirit in which we have carried on through the war will carry us on through the early and troublesome times of peace, if we are only true*

*to ourselves and the principles on which we have met the long struggle for right and justice.*

*Not least among the factors which will make for this result is the coming General Election; if everyone will give his or her vote for what he or she thinks really best for the welfare of the nation. We shall have gone far to solve many of the problems that will soon press upon us: and in this connection we have great faith in the newly granted votes for women; it is surely a great historic occasion when the “Mother of Parliaments” for the first time admits women to vote for her formation, and we hope that there will be no slackness in recording the vote, but that every woman will weigh for herself the position of affairs and fully discharge her responsibility.”*

The rector of Remenham felt similarly, writing:

*“The country on December 14 will be faced with the responsibility of a general election, and for the first time women will have the parliamentary vote. Let us pray that they may exercise it wisely, and I believe they will. The present Coalition Government, composed of Unionists and Liberals, will appeal to the nation for a fresh mandate to empower them if returned to office, to negotiate the terms of Peace, and, after Peace, to grapple with the grave problems of reconstruction that await solution. Old party divisions will for this election be put aside, and the Government will ask the country to support the united Coalition. The forces opposed to them, as far as I can judge, will be independent Labour and Socialism, and as their interests are confessedly sectional, they are not likely to safeguard the well-being of the nation, at this critical juncture.”*

On the historic day itself, many schools were used as polling stations. The election was held on a Saturday, but schools were closed the day before to allow booths to be erected to allow for ballots to be cast in secret.

Top: Meeting near Caversham bridge, on Sunday, October 11th, 1908 (D/EX1638/71)





## New to the Archives

### Lovejoy's Library

Lovejoy's Library and bookshop was a longstanding Reading institution. Based in London Street, Reading, it housed a private subscription circulating library, and sold books and stationery. The records (R/D131) include little on the library itself, but there is a lot from the small property letting agency also run by the proprietors. The business was founded by George Lovejoy in 1832, and continued after his death by his assistant Miss Eliza Langley until 1898. It did not finally close until the 1980s.

### Deeds

Records deposited by a Reading solicitor (D/ESE) relate to properties in Reading and the surrounding area, 1675-1970. Ongoing work on the Reading Borough deposited collections includes completion of listing the deeds of the South family's estate in Caversham, 1632-1895 (R/D138). One deed (dated 1670) has a seal wrapped in sycamore leaves, almost certainly dating from the late 17th century but still in excellent condition – a very rare survival. The papers of the Weedon family, 1694-1892, mainly comprise deeds of property in Caversham and Reading (R/D139). Another important collection includes deeds of Caversham Mill and lock, 1791, and pubs belonging to the brewery of James Darby and Zachary Allnut of Cookham, 1786-1823 (D/EX197). Various other pubs in Berkshire and Oxfordshire are included in the deeds of the brewery of Messrs Tanner & Dreweatt, 1690-1875 (R/D78).

We have also received deeds relating to property in Abingdon, 1628-1947 (D/EX115 and D/EX505); Beenham, 1738-1968 (D/EX2603); Binfield, Warfield and White Waltham, 1739-1777 (D/ECRG); Bradfield, Farnborough, Newbury, Shaw and Speenhamland, 1780-1865 (D/EX2608); Chaddleworth and Leckhampstead, 1667-1802 (D/EX2695); Hurst, 1852-1919 (D/EX2679); Newbury, 1748-1893 (D/EX2649); Reading, 1719-1898 (D/EX2663; D/EX2699; R/D159); Sonning, 1908-1961 (D/EX2536); Speen, 1761-1909 (D/EX2616); Tilehurst, 1688-1844 (R/D188, 190); Wargrave, 1876-1891 (D/EX2507); Windsor, 1724-1897 (D/EX2674); Winkfield, 1780 (D/EX2611); and Wokingham, 1785-1967 (D/EX2642). A small collection consists of deeds relating

GEORGE LOVEJOY now publishes, periodically, a Supplement to his Circulating Library Catalogue, which has to this date increased to the large extent of upwards of Two Thousand Pages, and he is induced to hope that the intrinsic and permanent value of the Works comprised therein will secure for him that patronage which he endeavours to deserve. While his GENERAL LIBRARY comprises most of the Popular Fictions of the day, he has sought, in the Works enumerated in his series of Supplements, to minister to the tastes of those who may prefer the graphic delineations of the traveller, the narratives of the historian, the speculations of the philosopher, the biography of the great and good, or the counsels of the Christian moralist or divine.

## LOVEJOY'S Southern Counties' Library,

LONDON STREET, READING.

SEVENTY-SIX THOUSAND VOLUMES IN CIRCULATION.

Book Societies, Literary Institutions, and the Trade supplied on Liberal Terms.

to Ashbury, Eaton Hastings, Hungerford, Sunninghill and Wokingham, 1784-1892 (D/EX2633). A similar group relates to property in Aldermaston, East Hagbourne, Swallowfield and Winkfield, 1652-1909 (D/EX2619).

### Other sources for house history

We were excited to acquire the original parish copy of the tithe award for Bray, 1843-1844, which had been thought lost (D/P23). Also of great interest is a series of over 600 sale catalogues and particulars for a variety of properties across west Berkshire from the estate agents Dreweatt Neate, 1905-1999 (D/EX2338). We have acquired an architectural survey of Cruck Cottages, 69 High Street, Drayton, 1970 (D/EX2607); and sale particulars for Frilsham manor, 1951 (D/EX2680). We have also received trust deeds and appointments of trustees of a number of local charities, 1697-1938 (P/CC2).

### And finally...

We have been given the original apprenticeship indenture of John Jarvis of East Ilsley to William Savory of Newbury, surgeon, 1791 (D/EX2704).

### Opening Hours

Tues 9-5, Weds 9-5, Thurs 9-9, Fri 9-4.30.  
Closed Mondays, Weekends and Bank Holidays.  
Please contact us for further details.

### Contact Information:

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### Funding Partners

- Bracknell Forest Council
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- Wokingham Borough Council

Top left: Eliza Langley of Lovejoy's (R/D131/9/1)  
Top right: Lovejoy's pamphlet (R/D131/3/6)

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