



BRO

The Berkshire Record Office
The Archives of the Royal County

The Berkshire Echo

July 2019

- Home sweet pigsty
- Living in constant dread
- New to the Archives

WHAT'S ON

From the Editor

Welcome to the summer edition of the Berkshire Echo which has its links with the 100th anniversary of the 1919 Housing Act which enabled local councils to build housing for those in need. There has always been a need for housing and the Victorians tried to improve conditions in the late 1870s by clearing slums and to provide new housing. However many still lived in squalor and later, demand for working class housing increased significantly following the end of the First World War. This brought on the development of the aforesaid Act.


In this edition we discover stories amongst the archives relating to homes, homelessness and the tenant/ landlord relationship. The ever increasing need for housing people has been a difficult one throughout history and resulted in many illegal tenancies for landlords. In "Home sweet pigsty" we read about the issues surrounding one landlord's dealings with evicting a family living on their land. What transpired was quite dramatic!

In "Living in constant dread" we discover how a landlord had to deal with all manner of issues and excuses for non-payment of rent. However, it also reveals the hardships that tenants


went through which could often cause the non-payments in the first place. If you couldn't work because of illness, no one was going to pay your rent for you. Similarly chasing the landowner to fix problems could also be a problem – living in constant dread of children falling into a well certainly does not sound like idyllic living. It seems that being a landlord or a tenant in the past was never going to be an easy task.

Do take a look at the 'New to the Archives' section to see what is now available – you never know what you might discover. Also, our 'What's On' section details what events are going on. 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/

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Ivone Turnbull
Senior Archivist

'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?

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 or call 0118 937 5132.

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Top: Sitting room in a 'show' prefabricated post-war house at Windsor, 1946 (D/EX832/8/1/3)

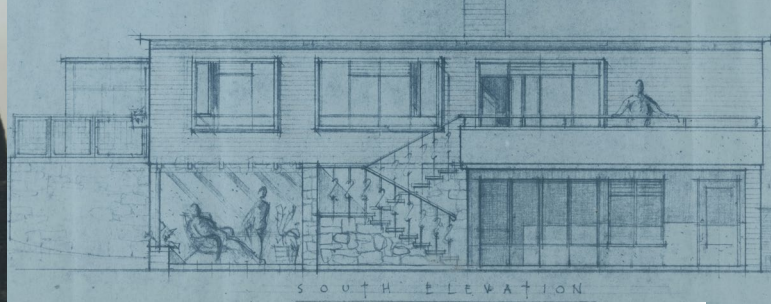


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The Berkshire Echo July 2019
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Home sweet pigsty

Legal papers can often reveal tales of hardship such as homelessness, and here we discover the story of the Parrs. In 1795 Bucklebury carpenter Thomas Parr had bought a brick thatched cottage at the southern end of Frilsham Common, and soon after, he let it to his brother James. Unfortunately Thomas got into financial difficulties, and eventually had to sell the cottage to Robert Hayward, lord of the manor of Frilsham, for £100.

Hayward was keen to get rid of the sitting tenant James Parr, who he said had been 'very intrusive upon the Common', and had stolen land to build a pigsty. However, the parish overseers of James' home parish of Bucklebury ('who seem to have had a dislike to his coming home to them') were happy to supply him with money for rent, and, allegedly, 'encouraged him in his conduct towards Mr Hayward which in some instances was personally offensive'. The lawyer wrote 'Hayward is a close [mean] man but timid and particularly fearful of doing an actual injury to any one'.

James Parr had been given notice to quit in September 1811 by Richard Bew, one of Thomas's creditors who had forced the sale. At an unknown date, Bew went to collect the unpaid rent, 'but did not do it, being terrified by James Parr and his Mother'. James claimed that the house actually belonged to his mother, from whom Thomas had allegedly obtained the deeds 'clandestinely'.

Hayward's lawyer stated, 'Thomas Parr is a bad man and since his Bankruptcy is gone from Thatcham and no reliance can be had upon him. In short they are altogether a bad set

and the whole story of her making the purchase appears to be trumped up to justify the conduct of James Parr who ... seems to presume upon the timidity of Mr Hayward and his great reluctance to go to law.' However, on 19 June 1813 John Thomas Stevens, the sheriff's officer, in the presence of Mr Bew and Mr Hayward and wielding a court order, physically removed James Parr and his effects from the cottage, locked it, and took the key to Hayward.

Now homeless, James Parr, his wife Elizabeth (Betty), and their children, moved into the pigsty that James had built illegally on the common. It was not weatherproof, so James thatched it with rushes and made a door. As winter approached the wife and children were occasionally given shelter by neighbouring cottagers, but in general they remained in the pigsty. James was working several miles away at Newbury, but returned to spend Sundays with his family.

On Monday 8 November 1812, James Smith, a labourer who Hayward had sent to sleep in the cottage, took the keys over to Thomas and Ann Allin, an elderly couple Hayward had engaged to occupy it during the day. When Ann got there at 7 a.m., she found that the Parrs had forced entry through a broken window, and nailed up the doors from the inside. Hayward and the Frilsham parish constable headed to the cottage on Friday 12 November with a warrant. Things then took a dramatic turn. The door was forced open by Hayward's carpenter Trumplet, wielding a broadaxe, pickaxe and hammer. Mr Hayward sat watching from his horse as his men removed the Parrs' pathetic collection of personal property.

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Top left: Old cottage in East Hanney, earmarked for demolition as part of a slum clearance programme in the 1930s (D/EWK/B217/6/16). The Parrs, a century earlier, might have originally lived in a house like this before taking refuge in the pigsty.

Top right: Proposed redevelopment of an air raid shelter in Upper Warren Avenue, Mappedurham, into a permanent home for a hard-up family whose father had been unable to find work since being demobilised, 1948 (D/EX94214/1/9)

WHAT'S ON

Armistice: How the Great War ended

22nd July 2019, time 14:00

Peace? Defeat? Surrender? The ending of the Great War in 1918 – with formal peace only in 1919 – is as controversial as its beginning. This talk by author Mike Cooper, looks at how the War was won and lost and its immediate consequences and ties in with our WWI exhibition. It's FREE and there are 30 places available. Booking is essential. Please email arch@reading.gov.uk or call 0118 937 5132.

Don't forget

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/>





Mrs Parr (who was inside with her children) grabbed hold of the bar on the kitchen window and refused to leave unless she was carried out, ‘made use of bad language to the Men and said she would butcher Mr Hayward if he came in and that she would do something to him yet, and was in a violent passion’. She then collapsed in the first of three fits ‘(real or pretended) and she and her children made a great noise’. James Parr’s mother turned up while her daughter-in-law was in her fits, which lasted an hour and a half, and ‘was very outrageous [and] said the House was hers and she paid the Money for it’.

Mr Hayward was alarmed by the situation, and as it was raining hard told his men not to eject the family after all. James Parr arrived at 1 p.m., and was immediately arrested. Hayward had successfully gained possession of the rooms upstairs, but the Parrs continued living in the kitchen and other rooms on the ground floor pending resolution of the court case. We don’t know what happened in the end, but it seems likely that the family had to move out.

Source: D/EX1927/14

Living in constant dread

The Marquess of Downshire was another landowner to have difficulty with his tenants. A draft rental of his Berkshire estates dated 1831 (D/EX2073/2) is annotated with comments revealing a range of life crises resulting in unpaid rent.

Lord Downshire himself had, it seemed, been making rash promises to prospective tenants. Thomas Slarke had rented land under the condition that he would build a house, but ‘he had proposed to lay out £300 on [a] new Cottage but said his Lordship had told him £100 would build a good one, & he now refuses to lay out more.’ Another tenant, Benjamin Deane, insisted that ‘his Lordship told him about a pound an acre would be a fair rent, & that he thought himself unjustly used and imposed on by ... requiring him to pay more.’

Henry Lunn’s crops had failed and he complained that his dairy building was ‘nearly falling [down] for want of repair’, this being the landlord’s responsibility. Moses Lawrence had ‘been ill and out of work’. Robert Gough, his sons, and his brother in law Isaac Spratley, shared a house, but were unable to pay the rent because their employer Lord Limerick was late paying their wages.

The list goes on. John Westbury, tenant of Park Farm, West Shefford, was ‘ungrateful’ for repairs, and planned to quit the farm. Lydia Thatcher was ‘very poor but promises to pay’. William Brown senior, ‘a very old man, promises to pay this if possible’. He had held his cottage for 55 years. William Brown junior and George Portlock were both very poor with large families. It was arranged that if they could not pay their rent the parish overseers would find them cottages. James Deacon was in prison for rioting ‘tho’ less blameable than many others’ (presumably during the Swing Riots), and his wife was struggling, but promised to pay next time.

Finally, William Ward, whose family had rented Roughdown Farm in Peasmore for over 100 years, requested that an old well in his house be repaired, as it frequently dried up in the summer, leaving the family without water. They were living ‘in constant dread of some of their younger children falling into the well’, which was very deep, especially as a neighbour’s child had drowned in a similar well. The steward thought a new well outside was a reasonable request for this good tenant.

It would seem that the life of a landowner was not necessarily easy; neither was it for their tenants!

Top: Kitchen in the show post-war prefab at Windsor (D/EX832/8/1/4)





New to the Archives



Top left: Prosperous farmer Richard Wernham of Chieveley, 1860s (D/EWN/F63)
Top right: Fred Wernham with other men in Newbury inspecting a new car, c.1900s (D/EWN/F101)

House history

We were delighted to be able to purchase some records of Shinfield manor and estate, 1424-1811 (D/EZ194). A stray poor rate book for Shrivenham, 1895 (D/EZ195), will also be of interest to house historians; as well as deeds for property in Silver Street, Reading, 1895-1954 (D/EX2691); and 36 St Marks Place, Windsor, 1909-1910 (D/EX2697).

Berkshire people and families

The diaries of the Revd James Randall (rector of Binfield 1831-1859 and later Archdeacon of Berkshire), 1814-1840, contain much of interest on his personal life, call to the Church, and his early days in Binfield (D/EX2418). A small collection of papers of George Brewer of Binfield and Warfield, schoolmaster, 1860-1872 (D/EX2617), has also been received.

We have added to the records of the Wernham family of Chieveley and elsewhere (D/EWN). Of special interest here are papers of Dorothy Kaminski (nee Wernham), who was a governess in Warsaw and escaped with the Polish family who employed her when the Germans invaded Poland in 1939.

Records of the Bradfield family of Milton Mill, 1648-1943 (D/EZ193) consist mainly of leases of the mill and other property. A small collection relating to the Willes family of Hungerford, 1797-1876, includes deeds of farms in Hungerford, Inkpen and Kintbury, and an unusual French probate document for a relative who resided in Paris, 1876 (D/EX2718). We have acquired the marriage settlement of Ashe Windham and Cora Middleton, and related documents, 1903-1931 (D/EX2614). After their marriage the couple settled in Wargrave. Letters of administration of the Revd James Hitchings of Wargrave, 1850 (D/EX2613) have also been deposited.

Methodism

We are constantly adding to the Methodist archives here, but it was particularly exciting to discover a number of early baptism registers. These cover Reading Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, 1836-1900 (D/MC1) and Reading Primitive Methodist Circuit, 1831-1955 (D/MC2), and relate to many chapels in the two circuits. We have also acquired property records for Eastbury Wesleyan Chapel, Lambourn, 1775-1996 (D/MC12).

Clubs and societies

The popularity of vegetable growing in the 20th century is revealed by the records of Reading Co-operative Allotment Association (later Reading Allotment Society), 1910-1968 (R/D147); Sunningdale and District Gardening Association, 1936-2016 (D/EX2661); and Woodley Horticultural Society, 1965-2012 (D/EX2715). Music is represented by Reading Barbershop Harmony Club, 1974-2012 (D/EX2678), and additional records of Reading Festival Chorus, 1970s-2012 (D/EX1225).

The records of Datchet Working Men's Club, 1881-1986 (D/EX2481) have also been catalogued. Records of several more Women's Institutes are now available, including Hampstead Norris, 1975-2010 (D/EX2646); Maiden Erlegh, 1962-2010 (D/EX2487); Shinfield, 1965, and Winkfield, 1923-2011 (D/EX1925); and Windsor Great Park, 1932-2013 (D/EX2589). The Newbury branch of Toc H, an organisation formed among religious soldiers during the First World War, did charitable work in the area, and its newly deposited records cover the period 1931-1949 (D/EX2224).

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.

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