



BRO

The Berkshire Record Office
The Archives of the Royal County

The Berkshire Record Office

Annual Report

For 2019-2020

Berkshire Record Office, a countywide archive service for all
local authorities in the Royal County of Berkshire

T 0118 937 5132 arch@reading.gov.uk
F 0118 937 5131 www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk

Berkshire Record Office, 9 Coley Avenue, Reading RG1 6AF





The bleak end-of-year welcome to the Record Office

Introduction

Sometimes normal service is disrupted. For all of us, the end of year was such a time.

On 24 March we joined the national lockdown to slow the spread of the coronavirus. It was time to keep ourselves, our visitors and our friends safe.

As archivists, we are familiar with safety. We apply it constantly to our collections as we seek to protect them. It takes a lot of equipment and thousands of hours every year to keep the collections safe.

We are fortunate to have had over 70 years of daily safety practice. This meant that, though it was daunting to put the collections into hibernation, it was also reassuring to know that we had structure and protocols to keep them safe while we were seldom present.

With the Record Office sleeping we then carried on remotely. This would have been impossible even a few years ago. Now, we were at least able to engage in some ongoing communication with the wider world. But the possibilities of new technology tend also to be a lesson in its limitations; and, in archives, you can only get so far before inevitably needing the collections as real things. That meant a somewhat limited form of Berkshire Record Office as we moved into 2020/21.

Before March's great interruption we had already built on various things reported last year. Our historical LGBT research had been taken up by others, our project to repair the Newbury churchwardens' accounts was complete, and we had been awarded funds to catalogue the Thames Conservancy archive. Work on the latter had begun and we were looking forward to 2021, which is the 250th anniversary of the Conservancy's roots.

As predicted, we have also shared more and more. That is not only stories but also our skills, particularly those in palaeography and collections care. It is a delight to do so. We very much look forward to the time when we can safely share these skills again, and by using the real things that we love so much.

Mark Stevens
County Archivist
June 2020

Welcoming Visitors and Enquirers

This year's principal verdict on customer care came via the national survey of visitors to UK archives. We scored 9.3 out of 10 for our overall service and 9.7 out of 10 for the staff's help and advice. These were excellent results and staff are thanked warmly for their achievement.

We also got some helpful advice back about how we could improve. Some of that is dealt with in the next section, but we have also been spurred to look again at the food and drink we provide for visitors. While finances are always likely to limit our range, Reading's Hexagon Theatre kindly allowed us access to their suppliers and so we have raised the quality of food and drink.

The visitor experience

My thanks to your team, all of whom were efficient and courteous - truly exemplary in fact

I work at several archives and this experience was one of the best

Your kindness and efficiency made my research trip both productive and fun

A really helpful service

I experienced nothing but friendliness, efficiency and helpfulness - congratulations on running an outstanding and exemplary service

The Archives and Records Association's new national readers card, the Archives card, launched just as lockdown began. The card has been long-awaited and will be available to all visitors once we reopen.

Our customer guarantees stood as follows:

- 99% of visitors got their first choice of visit time
- 99% of written enquiries were answered within 5 working days
- 99% of all copies were supplied within 10 working days
- 100% of original documents were produced for visitors within 15 minutes of order

For the Online Customer

Although the visitor survey relates to the service onsite, from it came two benefits to those planning a visit. These will also benefit online customers.

The first is providing a facility for online payments. We have known for many years how inconvenient it is to offer only a phone number for card users. This is particularly so for overseas customers. It has proved a challenge to address this but by the end of the year we were nearly there. Customers will use a local government payment system which, though not designed for online retail, will provide a base on which to build.

Secondly, we have continued to put material online. Most notably, we added our index to the Archdeaconry wills and probate, 1480-1857, as a free and searchable resource. This index was created in partnership with the Berkshire Family History Society, Berkshire Local History Association, Berkshire Record Society and Oxfordshire Local History Association, funded by the Marc Fitch Fund and originally published on CD ten years ago. Now anyone can browse the 38,000 names, places and occupations in the index.



WITHERS, Catherine	Hatford		1610	D/A1/134/053 D/A1/15/010	MF551 MF10065
WITHERS, David	Hinton Waldrist	Yeoman	1632	D/A1/135/122	MF552
WITHERS, Elisha	Reading St Mary		1770	D/A1/224/180	MF96120
WITHERS, Francis	Reading	Pewterer	1687	D/A1/223/58	MF96117
WITHERS, Henry	Pusey	Husbandman	1664	D/A1/222/77	MF96115
WITHERS, Henry	Buckland	Yeoman	1681	D/A1/138/70	MF553
WITHERS, Jane	Burgage, Hinton Waldrist		1690	D/A1/138/134	MF554
WITHERS, John	Stanford In The Vale		1615	D/A1/221/055	MF96112
WITHERS, John	Stanford In The Vale		1615	D/A1/168/119	MF96001
WITHERS, John	Great Coxwell	Yeoman	1721	D/A1/140/30	MF555
WITHERS, John	Boxford	Yeoman	1780	D/A1/141/171	MF556
WITHERS, John	Thatcham		1848	D/A1/166/27	MF585
WITHERS, Mary	Great Coxwell		1721	D/A1/140/33	MF555
WITHERS, Moses	Bucklebury		1748	D/A1/141/18	MF555
WITHERS, Phillip	Speen	Yeoman	1775	D/A1/141/157	MF556
WITHERS, Richard	Longworth	Husbandman	1626	D/A1/135/053	MF552
WITHERS, Richard	Hinton Waldrist		1636	D/A1/136/049	MF552
WITHERS, Robert	Eastbury, Lambourn	Yeoman	1772	D/A1/141/140	MF556
WITHERS, Thomas	Bucklebury		1780	D/A1/224/196	MF96120
WITHERS, Thomas	Bucklebury		1780	D/A1/224/196	MF96120
WITHERS, Thomas	Kintbury	Clock Maker	1829	D/A1/232/92	MF96131

A page of wills search results

The regular monthly highlights featured, among others, a poster for an 1861 bazaar to raise money for the Windsor Royal Free School; a Thatcham governess's account of escaping the Nazi invasion of Poland; and Progress Theatre's 1968 world record for non-stop Shakespeare recital. These highlights joined many other items posted on our social media feeds, where this year we joined the new Archive30 campaign - one archival theme a day throughout April - and autumn's well-established Explore Your Archive. By year end we had over 1100 followers on each of our Facebook and Twitter feeds.

Engaging the Curious

Much of our content publication is now online, though we continue to offer columns in the county historical magazines and to make *The Berkshire Echo* available in hard copy for those who do not have computer access. A further four issues of the *Echo* were published this year; these highlighted another two centenaries - for women's suffrage and social housing - as well as the developments of public cemeteries and retail therapy.

We offered a range of opportunities to enjoy the collections. There were three sessions on reading old handwriting and all were full. Sue, our conservator, also provided two practical days for groups from the Catholic Archives Society and the Mills Archive on managing water damage.

Our subject talks remain in demand: I spoke about Broadmoor to the Newbury Probus group and at the Basingstoke Discovery Centre; about Victorian asylums to the Pangbourne Heritage Group; and about the history of Reading Prison to the Berkshire Family History Society at Reading Library. Sue offered advice on caring for personal collections to the Reading and District Probus and at Phyllis Court in Henley, while Ellie reprised her Victorian Plenty's talk to the family history society's Newbury branch.

We received visits from Broadmoor staff, the Goring 41 Club and the Wokingham U3A. There were another three behind-the-scenes tours as well as the traditional one for the national Heritage Open Days. This year's Open Days theme was protest and we presented a display of Newbury bypass material.

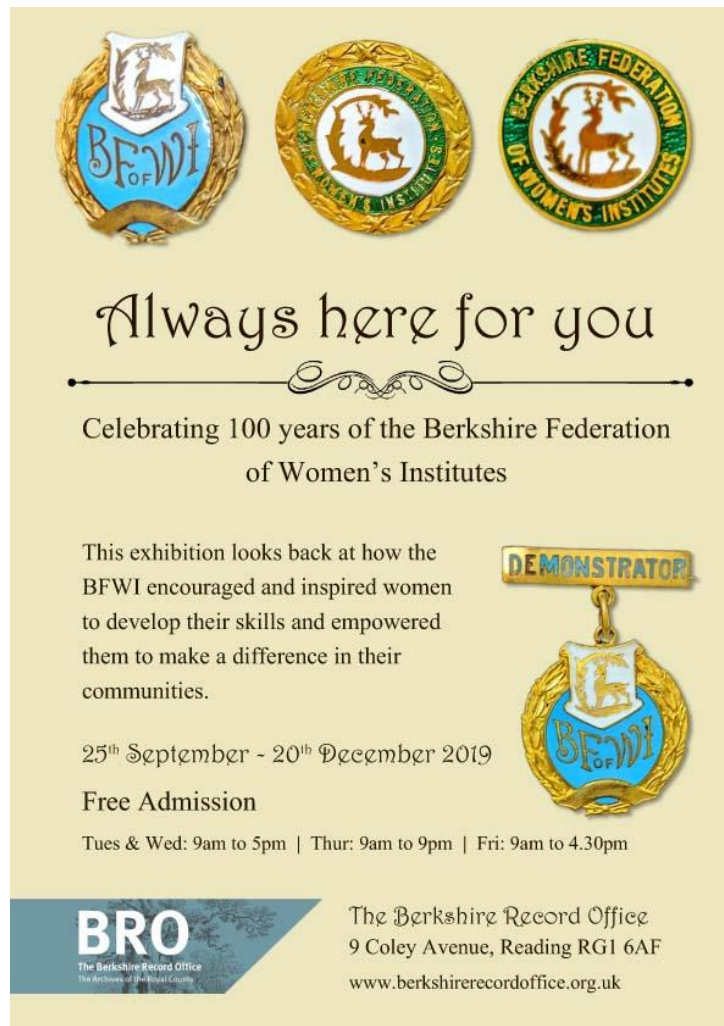
We were also delighted to welcome a group of archivists from the Jiangsu Provincial Archives. This is the fourth group we have hosted from China. Chinese archives are regional but alongside smaller city services and each tier is represented in the provincial delegations. There is a high familiarity with our strongroom design, as the British Standard for collections storage has been enthusiastically embraced in China.



Presenting a copy of Joan Dils' new 'Reading: a History' to visitors from Jiangsu

There were two in-house exhibitions. The first, 'A Great Deliverance', marked the centenary of the Treaty of Versailles and the formal end of the First World War. The display recounted how Berkshire people dealt with peace and the impact of returning soldiers, the unemployed and the dead. These issues affected the whole country and this is reflected in the county's history.

Yet out of that challenge came many positives, including another 2019 centenary, that of the Berkshire Federation of Women's Institutes. During the war, WIs had grown to help support the rural economy and by 1919 nearly twenty Berkshire villages benefitted from one. This led to the formation of a county association. We were delighted to be able to celebrate the Federation's hundred years of work, including campaigns around food poverty, quality and sustainability. The exhibition, 'Always Here for You', provided the year's civic reception and both the Lord-Lieutenant and Marlene Vokes, the current Federation Chairman, welcomed guests to a range of cakes - supplied, of course, through the skills and generosity of WI members.



Poster for the BFWI centenary exhibition

There was plenty of local interest in both exhibitions. ‘A Great Deliverance’ featured on That’s TV and Radio Berkshire, while the latter broadcast an interview about ‘Always Here for You’. Other media content was provided for That’s TV on Reading Library’s crime day, Radio Berkshire about Oscar Wilde in Reading Gaol, and for BBC South in response to the discovery of an abandoned family archive by a roadside in Exeter. We also contributed a podcast for the launch of Reading’s What’s On website, which is where our events are now additionally listed.

We ran the regular learning activities to support University of Reading history and English students. The Berkshire prize for best undergraduate history dissertation was awarded to Robert Harrington for an interpretation of the Wolfenden report on same-sex offences. Then, following the success of the history undergraduate module ‘Discovering archives’, we collaborated with the department on a new module, ‘Going Public’. This looks at how to interpret historical collections for a wide audience; its first fruits have informed our forthcoming Second World War exhibition for the 75th VE Day anniversary.

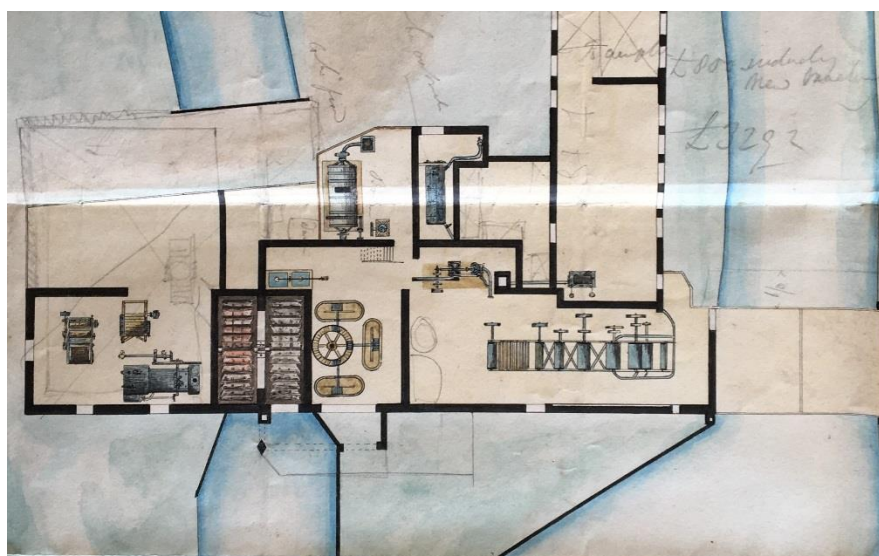
Developing Collections

The year's biggest quantity of new material came from Broadmoor Hospital, and comprised all the paperwork still on site and submitted to the Savile Inquiry. Roughly half the material for the period was here already and the new deposit completes the collection of management papers covering the 1960s-1990s. Although some of it includes patient data, and will be closed for decades, other parts were published by the inquiry and provide much operational detail on modern psychiatric care in a secure setting.

Runner up in terms of size was another transfer of public records. This came via the East Berkshire Magistrates Court and contained licensing files for hundreds of pubs in Bracknell, Maidenhead, Slough and Windsor. The files date from the early 20th century and many include plans of building alterations that the magistrates were asked to agree.

Other sizable new collections proved once more how estate archives still appear unexpectedly. Firstly, we acquired the papers of the Best family of Donnington Grove. These had been purchased by a bookseller at a clearance sale in the 1990s and then taken to Suffolk. The bookseller had sold the Winterbourne map and rate book that we bought last year with help from the Friends of the National Libraries. Negotiations following that sale allowed us to obtain the whole collection and prevent it being split.

The Bests owned Donnington for only a couple of generations and the collection spans roughly that time. However, it includes earlier papers for Bagnor Manor and Honeybottom Farm as well as a handful of family items from the 17th century.



Plan of improvements to the paper mills, Bagnor, possibly for the London Paper Making Company, from the Best papers, c1860s

We then received a similar collection via Sir Richard Sutton's Settled Estates Ltd. The company is one of England's major landowners. It transferred deeds relating to the Benham Park estate in Speen and the Barton Court estate in Kintbury.

Benham Park is a fine 18th century house, nowadays in commercial ownership, while Barton Court dates from the 17th century and is presently home to Sir Terence Conran. The collection of deeds is large and pre-dates both houses, providing unique evidence for how the landholdings grew over time.

Records relating to land ownership and management are a staple source for researchers. Similar items were received for properties in Abingdon, Cholsey, Greenham, Maidenhead, Shurlock Row and Thatcham, while larger developments were reflected in collections for Westland Road in Faringdon and Reading properties owned by the Ellis Campbell Group.

Like the Best papers, the oldest property records were purchased - single deeds for Binfield, 1465, Wokingham, 1566 and the manorial grant of Smewyns, White Waltham, to John Norreys in 1558. An 18th century map of John Glover's farm in Sulhamstead was similarly acquired.

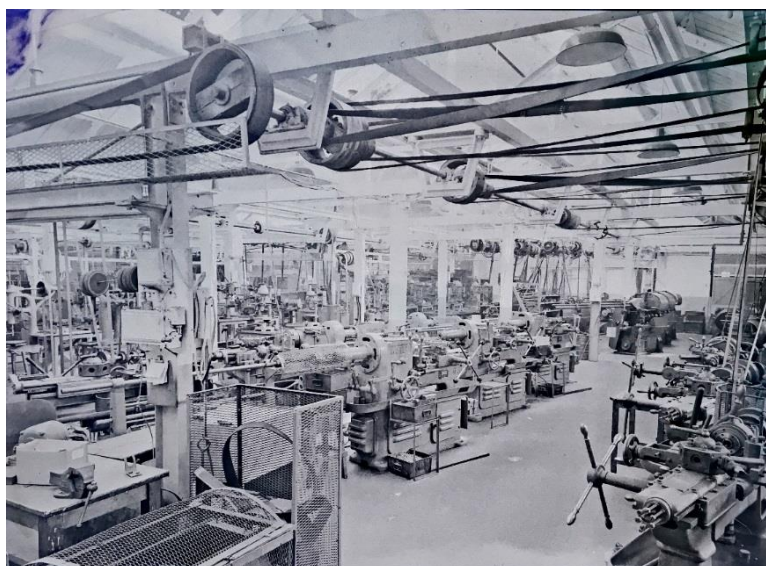


The remains of the Great Seal of Philip and Mary, from the grant of Smewyns manor, White Waltham, 1558

Community archives continue to comprise the numerical bulk of collections offered. Notable receipts this year included the archives of the Berkshire Automobile Club, which traced its roots back to 1903. The club was open to anyone who owned a car - a rather select band of 140 people during its first year - and lobbied for safer motoring and better roads.

The Windsor Constitutional Club, a gentleman's political establishment, began even earlier, in 1886, and its archive is a very full record of the club's history. Clubs were also represented by collections from the Berkshire Ladies Golf Association, the South Berkshire District Scouts, Slough Town FC, Reading's St Mary and St Lawrence Society of Change Ringers and the Wokingham Evening Townswomen's Guild, while our close relationship with the Berkshire Women's Institutes resulted in new items for current and closed branches.

Local landmarks featured in collections from the Bearwood Institute, Borocourt Institution, Hungerford Town and Manor, Padworth Village Hall and Watlington House in Reading. We received some papers from the more temporary Pangbourne Bridging Camp, set up to accommodate Army engineers based in the village during the Second World War, while local historians passed us material from the Binfield village history project. Two personal collections were deposited: one with items from across Ascot and neighbourhood; the other a photographic survey of the pre-demolition route of Reading's inner distribution road.



The machine shop floor at McMichael's television and radio factory, Slough, 1960s

Additional business records were accepted for the Berkshire Printing Company by the deposit of some Brooke Bond tea cards. The earliest record book from Reading Waterworks was discovered, dating from 1826, while some Victorian items from Simonds brewery were found in a house in Shinfield. We also received some wonderful photographs of McMichael's radio factory in Slough, and the archive of

Drews, the Reading ironmongers. Employees were represented through the Reading Trades Union Council and a collection of papers relating to Windsor Safari Park in 1977, when the keepers went on strike alleging animal cruelty.

Parish registers arrived for Bradfield and Bucklebury, St John's in Caversham and St Peter's in Earley, Harwell, Ruscombe and Shaw-cum-Donnington. Some nineteenth century registers were received for Brightwell and Sotwell, while larger deposits of other, older material arrived from Ashampstead, Childrey, Faringdon, Purley and Twyford. Registers were also received from Newbury Primitive Methodists and the Society of Friends' Reading Meeting.

Local council records came from Slough and West Berkshire, the old Easthampstead and Wokingham rural districts, and the parishes of Charvil and Thatcham. Bracknell Forest and Newbury Town Councils continued to transfer their meeting papers electronically. School records were received for Caversham Nursery, Winnersh Primary and the Royal Merchant Navy School at Bearwood.

Making the Collections Available

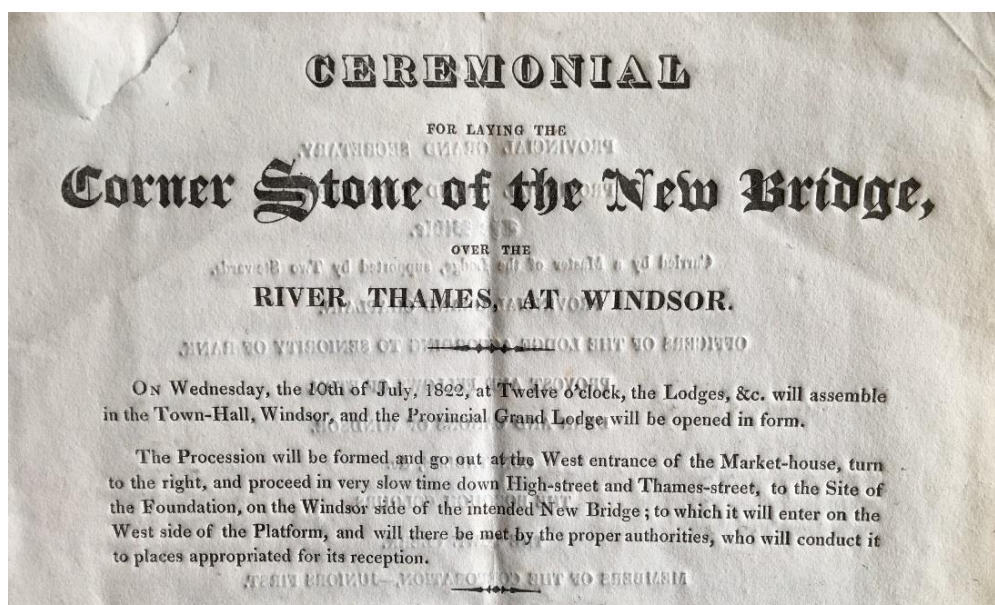
Having reported last year on the Newbury bypass protestors' archive, balance is now provided via the Bypass Supporters Association. This was a more formal grouping than the protestors and represented many of the tradespeople in the town. It was founded in 1985, shortly after the Department of Transport published the preferred bypass route, and it lobbied for the road from then to the commencement of work eleven years later. Its archive contains evidence on traffic use and accidents around Newbury as well as submissions made to the public inquiries that reviewed the scheme.



Before the bypass: traffic on the A34 through Newbury, 1994

A much earlier transport project featured in a group of some 250 miscellaneous items for the old Windsor borough. This was the 'new' bridge over the Thames at Eton, built in 1822 to replace its thirteenth century predecessor. We have minutes of the bridge-building committee, complete with letter of advice from Thomas Telford, as well as accounts of the tolls collected to pay for the crossing and papers from the legal dispute that abolished them.

Other items from the borough span a huge range of local government activity between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries. There is a survey of the manor of Windsor Underoure, previously owned by Reading Abbey and purchased by the town in 1540; Sir Christopher Wren's 1689 deed of election as Windsor MP; the specification for the sewerage system built in 1850; and photographs of the 1947 floods. There is also a copy of the complaint sent to Queen Victoria in 1861 when she failed to pay the poor rates on Frogmore House.



Flyer for the ceremony to lay the corner stone at Windsor bridge, 1822

Last year we also reported on Basildon Park papers that came via the Iliffe family; this year we have catalogued papers for Iliffe properties in Bradfield. The papers mostly relate to the period when Bradfield House and the surrounding area was owned by the Stevens family, founders of Bradfield College. Following the bankruptcy of the Reverend Thomas Stevens his estate was sold in lots and parts purchased by the Iliffes in the 1920s. The papers include poor rates from the 1720s, an account of bread, cheese and beer given to the parish poor at the Georgian Jubilee of 1809 and various items relating to the Bradfield Water Works.

Elsewhere, rural life featured in the archive of the National Farmers' Union Berkshire branch, whose recorded history began in 1920, and the hunting diaries of

the Bannard family of White Waltham. Further items for White Waltham formed part of client papers from Maidenhead solicitors, Thomas and Sons. Domestic pursuits could be found with the Berkshire Embroiderers' Guild, which was founded in 1948.

Bread Cheese & Beer given to the Poor
of Bradfield Oct 25th 1809

180 Gall^s Loaves
356 lbs Cheese
600 Quarts Beer

Subscription £ 56 - 0 - 0

Bells-Paid

Mr Clark	£ 4 ⁰ - 0	} 55 5 ⁰ - 10
Mr Witherton	11 ⁸ - 0	
Mr Ludlow	11 ² - 8	
Mr Smith	9 ¹⁸ - 10	
Mr Dodd	4 ¹³ - 4	
Pingers	3 ³ - 0	
Drums -	11 ¹ - 0	
Cash in Hand	£ 0 - 14 - 2	

Bread, cheese and beer for the Georgian Jubilee in Bradfield, 1809

The catalogue of burial and cremation registers for the three Reading Cemeteries at Hemdean Road, Henley Road and London Road safeguarded important resources for family historians. Long-term work to list twentieth century coroners' inquests also produced hundreds of case files now available to view. These cover Abingdon, Maidenhead and Wantage districts as well as Reading borough and district (the parishes and places surrounding the borough boundary). They have been listed up to 1946, which is the latest date at which the files are legally open.

Spreading the Impact of the Collections

Alongside the various planning applications, historical landscape and environment reports were a range of wider re-uses of material. There was Joan Dils' excellent new *History of Reading*, as well as shorter publications by groups in Appleton and Radley, and images for local campaigns about Reading's prison and London Road cemetery. A probate inventory and poor law settlement certificate featured in a new edition of *English Local History: an introduction*. And a teacher at Little Heath School in Tilehurst used our collection of historical BAME parish register entries in the classroom; these were subsequently passed to the Historical Association which is interested in adding them to its schools' resources.

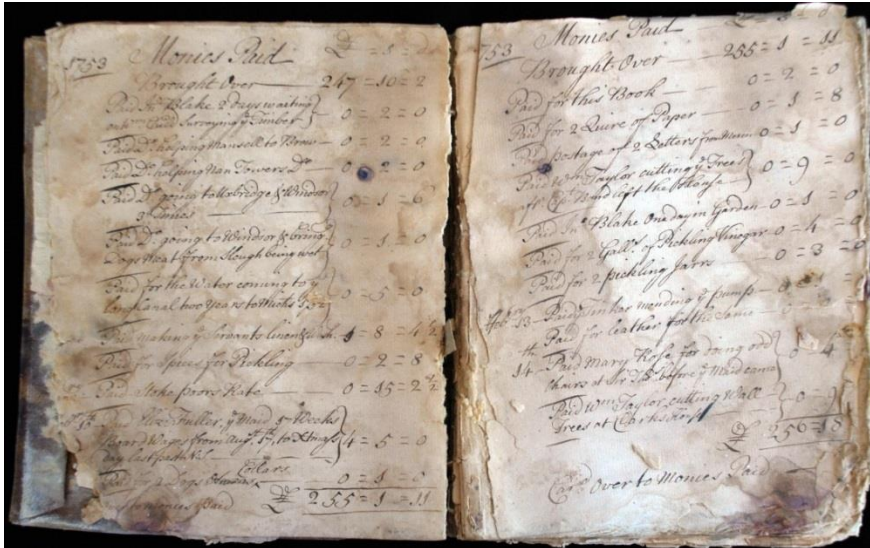
A letter from John Walter, owner of *The Times*, was included in a new biography, while Henry Neville items in the Billingbear archive continue to interest those who argue that he was William Shakespeare. Broadmoor featured in two academic books: *Union and Disunion in the Nineteenth Century*, which included a chapter on discharges from the hospital; and *Unsound Empire: Guilt and Responsibility in British Imperial Law*. A doctoral thesis was written on the Clewer House of Mercy archive while medieval seals from our 2014 exhibition, 'Small objects of power', featured on a sigillography website.

We loaned documents for Heritage Open Days displays in Reading and Shaw-cum-Donnington, while various items relating to travel featured in an exhibition at West Berkshire Museum. Material from Hemdean House School in Caversham was also displayed there in an onsite exhibition.

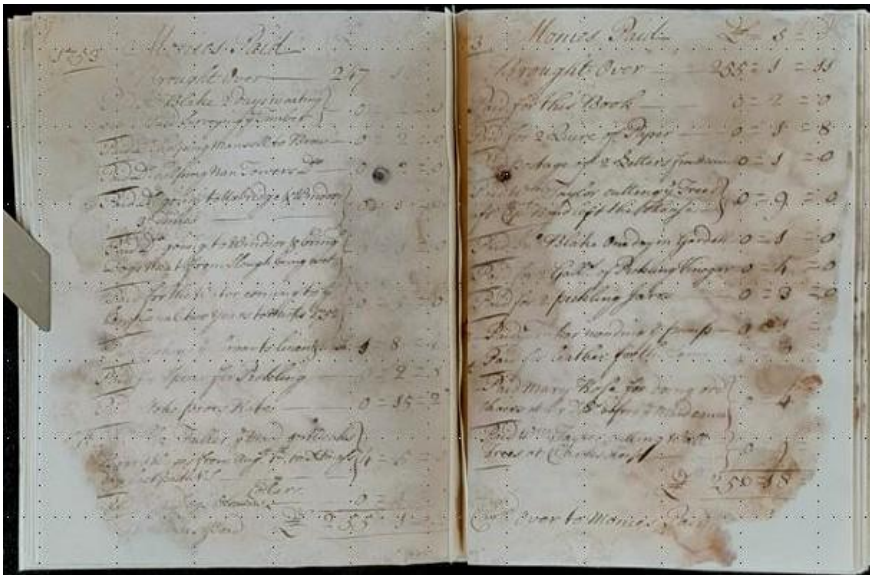
Caring for Collections

Major intervention this year was offered to the Georgian bank book of Sir Francis Stapleton. The Stapletons lived at Greys Court in Oxfordshire, but by marriage had also acquired property in Braywick and the bank book covers that estate. It is typical of its type, a small volume written onto handmade paper and bound into a parchment cover. It had suffered significantly from water damage, which had caused the cover to shrink and the paper to become stained and weak.

Because the iron gall ink was not fugitive - it did not run in water - it was possible to wash each folio, stabilising the papers and reducing the staining. Each paper was then treated to fill missing areas before the book was sewn back into its original vellum laces, but with a new parchment cover.



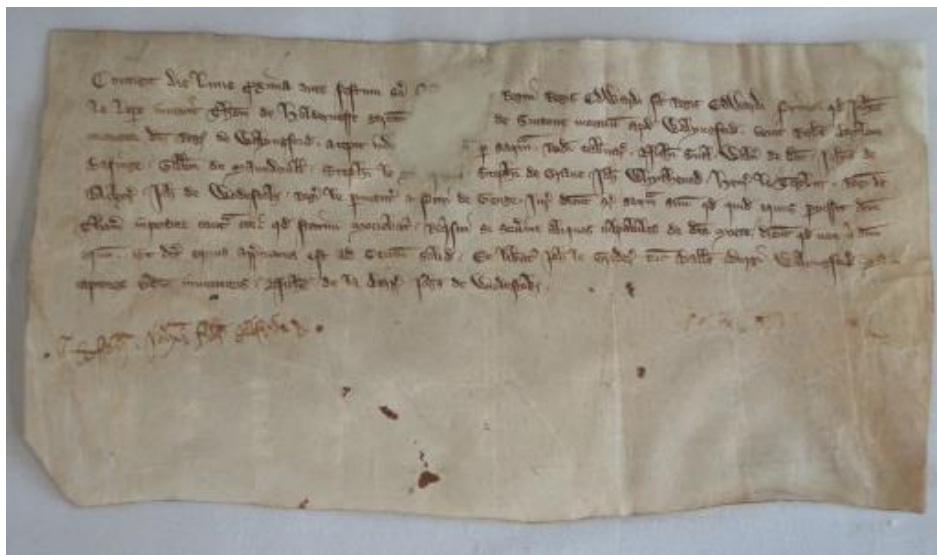
Francis Stapleton's bank book before and after treatment



A plan of Burghfield from 1870 was also treated to stop it breaking into pieces. The plan was on a brittle tracing paper and required a supportive tissue adding to its reverse. This was affixed by coating the tissue with wheat starch paste and methocellulose but then, because tracing paper reacts badly to water, first allowing the paste to dry. The tissue was then placed onto the tracing paper and humidified to re-activate the adhesive.

Following her parchment training last year Jane Mac Tarling has also completed a relevant piece of repair. Jane worked on a Wallingford coroners' inquest from 1307, which was held on the body of Thomas de Holdernesse. He was a groom found dead on the road and the inquest decided that he had been kicked by a horse.

The inquest itself was in good condition but had a small piece missing, which made it an excellent item for training purposes. Jane cleaned the parchment before humidifying it and drying it under tension, so that it was perfectly flat for its repair. A new parchment patch was pared and adhered to the front of the document with gelatin mousse; a layer of goldbeater's skin (intestine) was then placed on the rear for additional support.



The Wallingford inquest after repair

Special Projects

Accreditation

Three years have now passed since we became an accredited archive service. We are still one of only 6% of UK archives to gain this status. This year it was time for review, and we were asked to submit an update to The National Archives. The review is not only based on changes and developments within the service but also checks that we have addressed the improvement actions identified in the original assessment.

We were pleased to say that we had done the latter. We have developed our collections information plan, we have explored and delivered storage for digital preservation, and we have continued using partnerships to engage people with our collections. The review was a useful exercise in seeing how much we had achieved over the last three years.

We should receive the review outcome during early 2020/21.

Broken Futures

Last year's LGBT history project with the University of Reading developed further as we hoped it would. We were delighted at Christmas to hear that Support U, a local LGBT charity, had gained Lottery funding to develop our research into historical same-sex offences.

Support U's project will build on the work we completed with the university, widening the date range of research and allowing more time to create biographies of the people found. Support U have recruited a team of volunteer researchers and weekly sessions were well-established before they had to be put on hold at lockdown. We still hope that it will be possible to share some results later this year.

Victorian schools

Our volunteers have continued to explore school construction in Berkshire between 1870-1914. The project remained without an editor and Peter Durrant is thanked for providing editorial support during the year. Research work for this project was also paused in March.

Newbury churchwardens

Between April and August we completed our project to repair the earliest two volumes of churchwardens' accounts, 1602-1795, from the church of St Nicolas, Newbury. This work was kindly funded by a grant from Sabina Sutherland's charitable trust. Aimée Crickmore, previously our Coleshill estate conservator, returned to work on the project.

Aimée had 16 weeks to complete paper repairs and rebacking of both volumes, each of which comprises around 320 pages. The earliest volume needed paper infill to its first 20 pages, which were loose at the front of the volume. These were then reattached to the rest of the text block. The process was very fitting because Aimée discovered that the accounts had first been written as individual folios and then bound together later. Aimée also discovered that most of the paper came from France, apart from three coarser sections that were probably later in date and produced in the Netherlands.

The later volume required considerably more work. The entire book was disbound, and all 40 sections sized with gelatine to stabilise the iron gall ink. The sewing was in poor condition and around a fifth of it was missing; new sewing onto handmade cords was required, while several misbound pages from an old repair were restored to their original order.

Both volumes were given new covers. With the earlier book, it was possible to retain the original leather and infill the missing pieces with new skin, stained to match the contemporary finish. Only a few fragments of leather survived on the later book, so these were removed and stored separately while a whole new skin provided a replacement.

The project was completed on time and within budget.



The later churchwardens' volume being resewn

Liquid Assets - the Thames Conservancy archive

In June we were delighted to hear that we had been awarded £38,000 to catalogue our Thames Conservancy archive. The award was made by the national cataloguing grants scheme, Archives Revealed, and it allowed us to employ an archivist for 14 months and list over one thousand items from the Conservancy. The story was picked up by BBC South, That's TV and Radio Berkshire. Listing work began in December and, lockdown permitting, is due to complete in February next year.

The archive dates to 1771, when the Thames Navigation Commission was created to improve the river as a trade route. The Commission began work on the pound locks and towpath that still help to define the non-tidal upper Thames. The Commission was replaced by the Thames Conservancy in 1866 and our archive continues until the Conservancy itself was replaced by the Thames Water Authority in 1974. It contains much about the built structures on the river as well as management of water purity and land drainage.

Also in June, we held a research day with heritage and science academics from the University of Reading to explore how the Conservancy archive might be used in research. The result was a bid to the university's undergraduate research projects fund to find historical episodes of agricultural pollution in the river. That bid was successful but, like so much else pending at year-end, may have to be postponed.

We have also begun looking towards the 250th anniversary of the Commission in 2021. We have begun discussions with ex-Conservancy employees and local art groups about how they might wish to mark the anniversary. And we were delighted to be generously offered £12,000 from Thames Water to help develop the archive further. £10,000 will go towards conservation work and £2,000 will support the anniversary.



One item from the vast Thames Conservancy archive: a survey of the lock and weirs at Caversham, 1869

With Thanks to Our Staff

As I write our staff, like much of the nation, are working from home. Being unable to access or tend the collections has made life hard. I would like to express my huge thanks to them for looking after each other and staying positive during the disruption to their working lives.

Apart from Aimée's slight return as project conservator we had a small turnover. Gill Gough retired after more than 20 years' service and takes our best wishes with

her. Samantha Baxter left to work at Douai Abbey, Rosannagh Maddock moved to London and Krystyna Franek ended her stay as strongroom cleaner. The four of them were succeeded respectively by Laura Luca, Hannah Pomeroy, James Mould and Sarah Lobley. Michaela Garland also joined as our Thames archivist.

There was no change to the outside positions held in other organisations. I carried on as visiting research fellow in the University of Reading's History Department and as Vice-President of the Berkshire Family History Society, while also continuing to sit on the Wellcome Trust's Research Resources Committee. Ellie Thorne sat on the council of the Berkshire Record Society and Lisa Spurrier on the editorial committee of the journal *Berkshire Old and New*. Sue Hourigan remained an assessor for the Archives and Records Association's conservation certificate.

And with Thanks to Our Volunteers

As usual, our volunteers have done us proud. The Berkshire WI and Wokingham Theatre conservation teams cleaned and repaired nearly 500 bills from the Coleshill archive and cleaned roughly 10,000 letters. Ray and Tony, together with occasional additional help, continued to plough through the Thames Conservancy plans, cleaning 400 and listing another 75 in preparation for our Conservancy project. Peter Durrant used his bookbinding expertise on the marriage register for Wantage St Peter and St Paul, 1705-1750.

Peter now has company as a chief archivist turned volunteer. Deborah Jenkins, previously head of London Metropolitan Archives, has joined us to put her cataloguing skills to excellent use. Deborah has been working on the archives of the Berkshire and Hampshire division of the National Deposit Friendly Society and papers from the Simeon family.

Our Reading Poor Law Guardians indexing team has been expanded, while we hosted three work experience pupils from Reading School. Volunteers also continued listing projects on Reading town clerk's material, Simonds and Lawrence sale catalogues and the inventory notebooks of Horleys, land agents.

Our thanks go to all our volunteers for their time and support on work that we would not otherwise be able to do.

Key Numbers

Visitors and enquiries

	2019/20	2018/19
Visitors to the search room	2242	2106
Written and telephone enquiries	5186	5620
Documents produced	6238	6341
Microforms consulted	4615	3960
Copies supplied	9904	9808
Visits to online resources	66182	82891
Talks and visits: number	19	23
Talks and visits: attendance	362	470

Accessioning and cataloguing

Accessions received: number	167	228
Accessions received: volume	3.851m ³	6.727m ³
	5.29GB	6.15GB
Catalogues completed: volume	8.105m ³	4.722m ³
Accessions catalogued: number	189	222
Items catalogued	3946	4405

Conservation and preservation

First aid	414	130
Tipping-in	765	122
Sewing	119	118
Packaging	89	167
Encapsulation	318	7

Staff resources

Headcount of permanent staff	19	19
Number of full-time equivalent posts	13.40	13.40
Headcount of project staff	1	1