The
Berkshire Echo
The Newsletter of Berkshire Record Office

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BBC Journey into History

The BBC's *Journey into history* is a pilot project to provide supervised online history learning sessions. The pilot ran from January to March and covered local and family history. One of the pilot sites was the Southcote IT Experience (SITE) in Southcote Community Centre. The Record Office helped SITE promote the project, and staff also attended a session to talk through one of the local history trails on the pilot's website. The BBC will evaluate the project with a view to making it available nationally. If you want to have a look at the *Journey into history* trails go to www.bbc.co.uk/learning/pilot. The pages were due to be there at least until the end of March.

Senior Archivist Mark Stevens at SITE with participant Patricia Sloan

Mark Stevens

Indian connections

The Wantage parish magazine for August 1883 (D/P 143/28A/1) records the visit of some Indian ladies to St Mary's Home. Ramabai Pandita, described as "a lady of considerable birth in her own country … and highly educated … [who] has taken a prominent position with regard to the movement in favour of native female education". A young widow, she had come to England in order to study medicine, with the hope of working with Indian women who were said to be too reserved to speak to male doctors, but Ramabai's own health proved insufficient. She was accompanied by her young daughter, and by a friend named Anundabai.

The September 1887 issue of the magazine (D/P 143/28A/2) records that Ramabai and her daughter had been baptised on Michaelmas Day, 1883. It also quotes from a *Times* article about "Ramabai, who has been busily employed in America this last year in lecturing and studying the kindergarten system"" and writing a book about "The High-caste Hindu Woman". She planned to start homes in India for child widows, who might be educated there to become teachers, nurses, doctors, or housekeepers, without breaking caste. This article noted that "She will give them encouragement to become Christians, but will bind herself not to compel them to do so".

Lisa Spurrier

Looking for that long lost marriage?

The long awaited John Brooks Marriage Index, 1538-1837, has arrived! Unfortunately it came in the form of 35 unlabelled boxes of 16 mm film, which meant that every one had to be viewed so that the contents could be identified and the sequence established. This has now been done, and the films will soon be available in the searchroom. Three films are devoted to records of marriage licences from 1616-1848. The remaining 32 run in reverse chronological order (from 1837 to 1538) in periods of roughly 50 years. The records are indexed under the groom's surname only in alphabetical order within these periods. Users will need to ask the searchroom staff for a blank 16 mm reel on to which to wind the films whilst viewing, as the machines are currently fitted with 35 mm reels. Printouts can be made on the existing reader-printer if required; searchroom staff will be able to advise on the minor adjustments required.

Nella Warner

Labourers lifestyles unlocked

A recently catalogued pamphlet on poor relief (D/EX 1632/1) shows the harsh reality of life for working class families in Berkshire in the late 18th century. At Easter 1787 the Revd David Davies of Barkham asked six families with young children in his parish what they earned and what they spent on food and other necessaries, "guarding as well he could against error and deception". He sent an abstract of the details to other parishes, asking for similar details in other parts of the country, and used the returns to compile his well-known publication *The Case of Labourers in Husbandry* (London 1795).

One of the most interesting things is the light ("faithful, but melancholy", as Davies puts it) cast on labourers' lifestyle. Listed as necessities were bread or flour, yeast and salt, "bacon or other meat", tea, sugar, butter, soap, starch and "blue" (for washing), candles, thread, thrum and worsted (the last three all needed for mending the family's scanty supply of clothes). Soap was eked out by mixing it with ashes (from burning green ferns). Fuel for a year would have cost a typical family 12 shillings, but Davies calculated that in Barkham, which was not enclosed, "a Man can in a Week cut Turf enough on the Common to Serve the Year," so that its real cost to the family was one week's lost wages. Other essentials were the rent of a cottage and garden, where vegetable were grown. Cheese and beer were included on the list, but only one of the families in the sample could ever afford either "and then but seldom". This slightly better-off family saved money by buying a whole hog, which was half the price of buying meat retail through the year. As a result of having more meat, they needed to spend less money on bread to fill them up.

A man's annual purchase of clothing consisted of one suit, a working jacket and breeches, "1 pair of stout shoes nailed", two pairs of stockings, a hat and a handkerchief. A woman would need for the year one gown, petticoats (number not stated), a shift, a pair of strong shoes, one pair of stockings, two aprons, and a supply of handkerchiefs and caps. The children's clothes were "partly made up of the Parents old Cloathes, partly bought at Second Hand."

The men, all labourers hired and paid by the day, mostly earned 8 shillings a week. The wives all worked too, but brought in a very small income (6d or 1s a week). One family had two children old enough, at 13 and 16, to work, which added another 3 shillings to that household's weekly income. Davies noted potential income from wages lost due to lying-in (childbirth) and sickness, family burials, and unemployment during bad weather. All the families in the Barkham sample earned between £22 and £23 a year, with total expenses of between £24 and £30. No wonder even the most industrious might need poor relief!

Lisa Spurrier

New book launched at the Record Office

The authors and publishers of a new book on the important but relatively unknown Victorian church architect Henry Woodyer gathered with a large crowd of invited guests at the Record Office in February to launch the first ever full-length study of the man and his buildings. *Henry Woodyer, Gentleman Architect*, published by the Department of Continuing Education at Reading University, contains an account of his life and a detailed and lavishly-illustrated catalogue of his works. Based in Surrey, Woodyer designed many buildings in Berkshire including Christ Church Reading, St Paul's Church Wokingham, Newbury National Schools, and the Convent of St John Baptist Clewer. The Record Office mounted a small display of documents relating to Woodyer and his works for the evening. We were delighted to provide the venue for this important event, not only because much of the research for the book was carried out in the Record Office, but because through this research the evidence of the archives reaches a much wider audience.

Peter Durrant

Staff news

We were extremely sorry to say goodbye to archivist Bob Hale in January this year. Bob, who has left us to take up a post in his native Yorkshire, had been at Berkshire Record Office for over ten years, and was responsible for many aspects of the current searchroom layout as well as managing our library of secondary material. He will be much missed both by colleagues and by visitors to the office. In March we also lost Ian Wintersgill. Much of Ian's work was behind the scenes, but he was also a regular presence at reception. Receptionist Lesley Skinner leaves in April, and will also be very much missed, after seven years. As we are still not fully staffed, temporary searchroom assistants Neila Warner and Kim Shahabudin are staying on for a while, on a full-time basis.

Congratulations to searchroom assistant Julie Grisman, who has embarked on the process of qualifying as a professional archivist, while continuing in her current rôle. She has been accepted on a part-time course by distance learning, run by the University of Wales at Aberystwyth and accredited by the Society of Archivists.

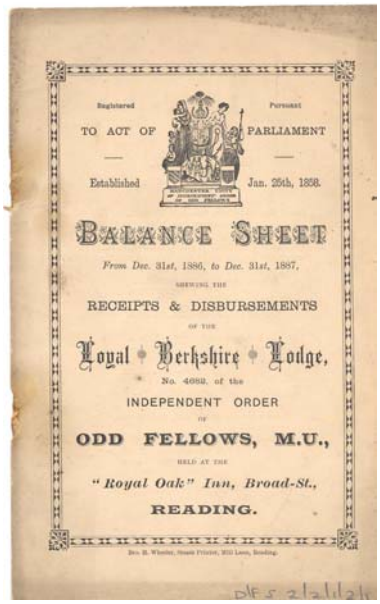
Rachel Hassall and Bruce Whealleans have joined us to work on a New Opportunities Fund project, on which we have embarked jointly with the Rural History Centre at Reading University; more on this in the next issue.

Just Catalogued

Recent deposits from local churches include Church of England parish records from Charlton, 1922-2001 (D/P 143B); Cholsey, 1909-1998, including several registers (D/P 38); Earley St Bartholomew, 1895-1998 (D/P 192); Radley, 1925-1997 (D/P 95); Sunningwell, 1925-1998 (D/P 127); Tilehurst St Michael, 1999-2002 (D/P 132); and, most interesting, Wantage, 1843-2001 (D/P 143). The latter include vestry minutes dating from 1843, when the influential Thomas Butler was vicar of Wantage, a plan of the church interior following Street's 1857 restoration, and papers on the management of the Church of England School. Newbury United Reformed Church has deposited additional records, 1985-1996 (D/N 32), and we have received records of the United Reformed Church's Reading and Oxford District Lay Preachers' Association, 1974-1995 (D/N 46). Accounts of Reading and District Free Church Council, 1942-1992 (D/N 16) have also been added to our holdings. We were also pleased to acquire a bound volume of the Arborfield parish magazine for 1889 (D/EX 1735).

Staff have listed a collection of deeds of property in a number of parishes, 1628-1881 (D/EX 1694) including Didcot manor, Balsdon Park and Wallingtons in Kintbury, and Katesgrove mansion and the Watlington Brewery in Reading. One especially interesting item was the 1764 lease to the Hon Augustus Hervey of a house in Sunninghill with the use of its furniture, described in deprecating detail as "very old, has been very much and very ill used". The parlour curtains, for instance, were "very old, much worn and torn – taken down and put up". A lease of furniture in better condition related to Holme Park, Sonning, in 1903, acquired with a common recovery (deed) of Sindlesham manor, Hurst, 1723 (D/EZ 137). We have also catalogued a collection of deeds relating to breweries in Hungerford, Maidenhead and Newbury, and to their tied houses in several counties, 1714-1931 (D/EX 1710). Other deeds relate to property in Bray, Warfield and Winkfield, 1789 (D/EX 1684); Cookham (Pinkneys capital messuage and farm), 1658 (D/EX 1717); and Reading, 1873-1963 (D/EX 1711).

Berkshire's railway heritage is represented by some 19th and 20th century photographs and papers relating to Reading and Twyford stations (D/EX 1680), and by papers on east Berkshire railways, 1845-1884 (D/EX 1705). The latter include material on the opposition in 1846 to a proposed line (never built) to be called the Windsor Slough and Staines Atmospheric Railway. An incomplete but interesting series of accounts of long-standing local store Heelas & Co of Wokingham, 1798-1919 (D/EHS) adds to our holdings of records of local businesses. A copy of the will of Thomas Hussey of Moulsford (proved 1661) is of interest for its bequest to Jethro Tull (D/EX 1681). We were very pleased to receive the records of the Berkshire branch of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, 1886-1983 (D/FS 2) and records of the Bucklebury Players, an amateur dramatic society, 1958-1999 (D/EX 1685). Another, more controversial pastime, is reflected in two recently catalogued letters. One, from Sir Henry Neville in the 1570s, permitted two visitors to the area to hunt bucks (deer) in Windsor Forest (D/EZ 138), and the other concerns shooting at Warfield Park in 1878 (D/EX 1715). Finally, we have catalogued the poor relief pamphlet about which I write elsewhere in this issue (D/EX 1632).


Registered Pursuant
TO ACT OF PARLIAMENT
Established Jan. 25th, 1838.
BALANCE SHEET
From Dec. 31st, 1886, to Dec. 31st, 1887,
RECEIPTS & DISBURSEMENTS
Loyal Berkshire Lodge,
No. 4082, of the
INDEPENDENT ORDER
ODD FELLOWS, M.U.,
"Royal Oak" Inn, Broad-St.,
READING.

Lisa Spurrier

Berkshire Record Office, 9 Coley Avenue, Reading RG1 6AF.
Tel. 0118-901-5132 Fax 0118-901-5131 E-mail ARCH@Reading.gov.uk
Website www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk

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