The
Berkshire Echo
The Newsletter of Berkshire Record Office

NO. 18: Winter 2001/2002

What's New

Our fortnight's closure in November allowed us to complete a number of housekeeping tasks. Regular visitors to the searchroom will notice that work to sign and label the library is now complete and that the first edition and 1930s Ordnance Survey maps have been sleeved in plastic. Less obviously all the microfiche have been checked and should each be in their correct place. We have also undertaken one or two presentational tasks, and completed an audit of 'closed' documents to bring us up to date after the move.

Behind the scenes we were joined by various building subcontractors to carry out essential maintenance, and also to complete some of the unfinished jobs. Some of you will have spotted that the good news (e.g. the payphone is installed) was balanced by the bad news (e.g. the vending machine had been incorrectly installed). Needless to say we will be living with subcontractors for a while yet.

The other new development in the searchroom is the arrival of two PCs. Both of these are set up for internet use, and one additionally provides the 1881 national census index on CD-ROM. Now we have the PCs we will start to purchase other CD-ROM sources. The machines are free to use, and we do not intend to operate a booking system for them unless we have to.

Which leads on to the 1901 census. With our PCs we can now offer access to the online service for anyone who wishes to use it. We have not ordered any pre-paid vouchers as our PC access is so limited, but I understand that the BFHS Research Centre will be selling them. However we are also purchasing returns for Berkshire (including Slough) on microfiche, and will be able to provide copies from these for our usual fee. The census is available from 2 January 2002.

Mark Stevens

P is for Pauper

For many members of the rural community, to be poor and in receipt of parish relief must have been degrading enough. A document from Kintbury parish records (D/P 78/18/1) shows the lengths to which officials would go in an attempt to shame the poor into providing for themselves (or to avoid having to pay them).

In 1697 an Act of Parliament was passed which, amongst other provisions, ordered that all those receiving poor relief from their parish should wear a badge to indicate this. The document above records an agreement made by the overseers and churchwardens of Kintbury requiring that, whilst in receipt of poor relief, all members of that family "shall weare the letter 'P' fairly cutt out of Red Cloth, and fast fixed on the Right shoulder of their upper garment". They were to wear this "badge" wherever they went (for example, to church or to market). If they refused, the churchwardens and overseers would "not for the future pay or give to him her them or any of them so refuseing, any Collecion or Relief".

I have not discovered whether these measures were implemented in Kintbury, or whether anyone was denied poor relief for failing to comply, but the fact that those administering poor relief were liable to a fine of twenty shillings for every violation of this order might have had something to do with the fact that, in Kintbury's case, they recorded an agreement to carry it out!

Julie Grisman

Rolling In Riches

A bitter family feud, and family's black sheep, appear in a recently purchased letter from Charles Ellison to his brother John Montague Ellison, dated 8 March 1822 (D/EZ 134/4/1). John, an Army officer living expensively in Twyford, had got into business difficulties out of which eldest brother William had refused to bail him and complained to Charles. Charles writes:

> You complain of my Brother William as you state "Rolling in Riches" compelling you on "the point of starvation" to send the only £200 you have altho' he is upon the spot & will not give himself the least trouble to enquire anything about the Glasshouse … Neither do I know tha[t he] is Rolling [in] Riches … I do not think you ought to accuse him of oppressing you. He is certainly not liable to contribute a single Shilling towards the Glass House losses.

Charles himself then offered to help,

> upon condition … that you will not sell your Commission, & will leave Twyford and go to the North <u>alone</u>, & take a small Lodging. If you persist in selling your commission I will most certainly not enter into such engagement, or have anything more to do with you … I would advise you to write to William, & state to him in the strongest terms you can the wretchedness of your present condition, & that you are holly (sic) sensable (sic) of the folly of your conduct, & are determined with that view to change your course of life, & that for the purpose of extricating yourself from your misfortunes you think of endeavouring to procure a cheap Lodging somewhere in the North …
>
> I know you cannot shake off the present trammels which encumber you, without great exertion on your part, but your safety depends upon it, & if you value your own happiness either here or hereafter you will not hesitate a moment. If there is any sincerity in your repentance you must prove it by your future conduct … I must have Acts & not Words. They amount to nothing.

Sadly, Charles' efforts were all in vain, for John died later that year.

Lisa Spurrier

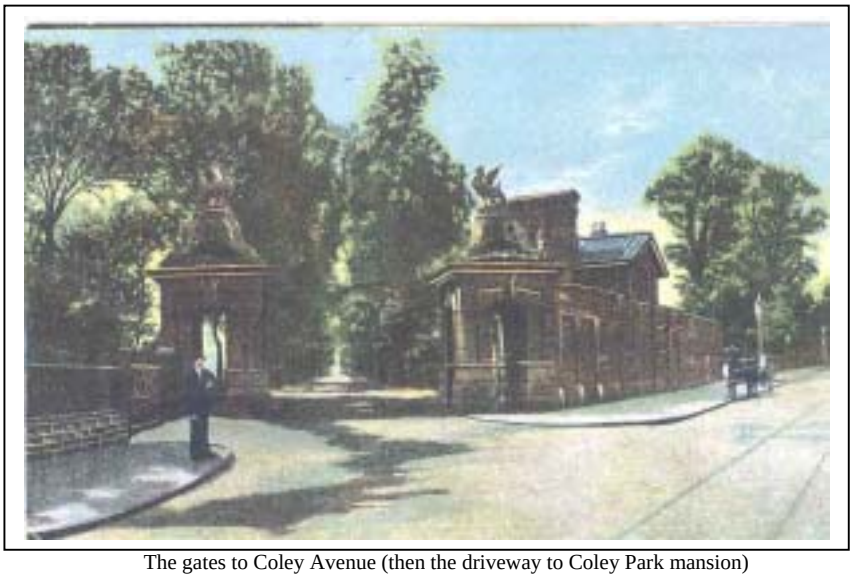
Just Catalogued

Health and education are in the spotlight this issue. Records of a number of Reading schools have arrived recently: the British Infants School (later a Board School) in Southampton Street, 1870-1907, and George Palmer Infants School, 1907-1996 (2001/SCH/3); Battle Mixed/Senior/Secondary Modern School, 1891-1968, Wilson Mixed, Central and Senior Schools, 1905-1972, and Meadway Comprehensive, 1972-2001 (2001/SCH/4); and Christchurch C of E Primary School (now New Christ Church CE (VA) School), 1983-2000 (2001/SCH/5). Records of Stubbings Church of England School, 1882-1932, and St Michael's School, Easthampstead, 1923-1977, are included in the recent deposits from those parishes mentioned below. The minutes of the Berks, Oxon and Reading Joint Board for the Mentally Defective, 1940-1948 (J/MH) reveal past attitudes towards helping people we now think of as having learning difficulties. The Board ran Borocourt Institution for Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire County Councils, Oxford City Council and Reading County Borough. We have also catalogued records from three Maidenhead hospitals: Maidenhead General Hospital, for which we have registers of operations, 1966-1970 (D/H 1), St Mark's Hospital, 1946-1978 and Maidenhead Isolation Hospital, 1940-1978 (both D/H 3). Health records are subject to closure periods of up to 100 years for obvious reasons of confidentiality. Finally, we have listed the prescription books of pharmacist R Comyns of Sandhurst, 1924-1974 (D/EX 821). The forerunner of today's social services is to be found in the Boards of Guardians who ran workhouses, and an unexpected recent discovery in a local hospital has resulted in the transfer here of accounts of Easthampstead Board of Guardians, 1899-1926 (G/E). Other official records have come from Winnersh Parish Council, with the transfer of its minutes, 1987-1997 (CPC 73C).

We are always happy to report the arrival here of 19th century parish registers, and some have recently come in from Aston Upthorpe (marriages, 1862-1971), East Ilsley (marriages, 1837-1978), Moulsford (marriages 1839-1993) and Speen (baptisms 1834-2000, as well as marriages 1987-1992). Warfield has deposited its tithe map (D/P 144, an official copy made at the Tithe Office in 1881 because the parish had lost its own original copy). Other parish records deposited recently including some later registers have come from Aston Tirrold, 1937-1992 (D/P 10); Caversham St Andrew, 1911-1990 (D/P 162C); Didcot All Saints, 1917-1960 (D/P 47); Dry Sandford (minutes of the trustees of Mary Mutrie's Charity), 1883-1995 (D/P 187); Easthampstead, 1822-2000 (D/P 49); North Moreton, 1949-1976 (D/P 86); Purley, 1948-1993 (D/P 93); Reading Christ Church, 1864-1950, including minutes of a meeting to discuss conditions on the Whitley Housing Estate, 1943, and a fine, if incomplete, set of parish magazines dating from 1890 (D/P 170); and Stubbings, 1856-2001, which includes that rare thing: a graveyard plan (D/P 195). The Stubbings records also include minutes of the Commons Protection Association, 1929-1932; this body was formed to secure Maidenhead Thicket and Cookham Dean Common for public use. We were also pleased to receive the records of Spencers Wood Congregational (later United Reformed) Church, 1901-1995 (D/N 44). Also of interest are the records of Wokingham Free Church Burial Board, 1919-2000 (D/QX 34), though please note that the burial registers have not been deposited.

We have purchased an exciting early 17th century map showing the River Thames and its channels and islands at Cookham (D/EZ 132). Another purchase was a survey of Brimpton and Shalford manors, 1622 (D/EZ 134), which was accompanied by some miscellanous material, 1633-1848, the most interesting of which are a bill for the education of a pupil at Oxford House School, 91 Castle Hill, Reading, and the letter mentioned in the *Rolling in Riches* article elsewhere in the *Echo*. Another rather miscellaneous collection has been listed (D/EX 266), consisting of deeds of property in Cold Ash, 1866-1898, and the Barton Lodge estate, Winkfield, 1753-1920, maps of Knight Ellington manor, Cookham, 1742 and 1830, papers of the Knapp family of north Berkshire and London, 1651-1773, and executors' accounts of madhouse keeper Dr William Battie of London, owner of Knight Ellington, 1776-

1803. The "Lunaticks" at Dr Battie's asylum included Lord Cavendish and Sir John Murray. A quitrent roll for Letcombe Regis manor, 1745, has been sent to us by the Society of Genealogists (D/EX 1691). We have made available deeds relating to property in Beenham, 1588-1928 (D/EX 137); Binfield, 1779 (D/EX 1682); Bourton, 1653-1888 (D/EX 816); Letcombe Regis and area, 1454-1812 (D/EX 1679); Reading, 1823-1928, including the mansion house called Redlands, 1856-1906 (D/EX 1688) and 1914 (D/EX 1692); Streatley, 1832-1940 (D/EX 1672); the Waltham Place estate, 1691-1965 (D/EX 652); Woolstone, 1843-1848 (D/EX 122). We have also acquired plans of the Old Wharf House, Wallingford, 1889, and postcards of several central Berkshire scenes, 1880s-1912, including one of the gateway of Coley Avenue (just outside the Record Office premises!) (D/EX 1674). Lastly, although perhaps not strictly speaking new – a handwritten draft had been available for some time – we have completed and improved the catalogue of the important archive of the Palmer family of Holme Park, Sonning, and the Ewens of Essex, 1275-1965 (D/EE). Items of particular interest include soldier Arthur Ewen's letters home from the Crimea and elsewhere, 1851-1871, and a fine set of medieval deeds for Hurst, Sonning and Wokingham.



The gates to Coley Avenue (then the driveway to Coley Park mansion)

Business records to have been catalogued lately include the day books of Hedges Iron Foundry in Bucklebury, 1882-1890 (D/EX 1643), and the fascinating records of Reading brewers Dymore Brown & Sons, 1772-1962 (D/EX 1660), many of which relate to their tied houses. We have acquired plans of the Reading premises (Church Street and London Street) of Huntley, Boorne & Stevens, manufacturers of tin boxes for Huntley & Palmers, 1872-1921 (D/EX 1673). Last but not least, the county's musical heritage is represented by the recently deposited records of the Berkshire Organists' Association, 1921-2000 (D/EX 1641).

Lisa Spurrier

Erratum notice

In the last issue we published an article on the celebrations relating to the Scouring of the White Horse at Uffington. The description quoted is to be found in the parish register of Shrivenham, not Uffington, although the reference given was correct. The misattribution was entirely the fault of the editor. I hope no-one was led astray by this mistake!

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