The
Berkshire Echo

Berkshire Record Office Newsletter Issue 34 Winter 2005/2006

Dates for your diary

A new series of the BBC's 'Who Do You Think You Are?' programme has been planned for the beginning of 2006. To coincide with this, the Record Office is providing an extra Introductory Visit for newcomers to the office on the **27th February 2006**. If you would like to attend, or know someone who would like to attend, please ask to put your name down on the list at Reception at the Office or call 0118 901 5132.

We will also be having an Open Day with the Berkshire Family History Society on **Saturday 4th March 2006**. Further details will be available in due course.

A day school on the court of the Quarter Sessions and its records will be taking place at the Record Office as part of the Oxford University Continuing Education (OUDCE) programme, on **Saturday 18th March 2006**. For more information and to book a place, contact the OUDCE on 01865 270368 or e-mail: ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk.

Ivone Turnbull

Interested in World War 2?

Berkshire Record Office (BRO) has just produced its 'Guide to World War 2 Records'. It includes documents at the BRO which are relevant to research into the war of 1939-1945.

It is divided into sections by topic: Air Raid Precautions, Bombing Raids, Home Guard, Civil Defence, Evacuation Scheme, Remembrance, and Home Front. Records are listed by place within these sections.

[Image taken from a scrapbook of news cuttings about Bell's Asbestos and Engineering Limited, Slough, 1935-1950; ref. D/EX1800/2]

Highlights from the guide include a scrapbook from Oakfield Hostel in Wokingham for children evacuated from London, 1940-1951 (D/EX1362/1), a service register for Remenham parish annotated with commentary on the war, 1939-1945 (D/P99/1B/4), and local government efforts for the home front, such as Maidenhead Borough's Holidays at Home and Entertainments Sub-Committees, 1943, 1945 (M/AC2/3/2).

This guide will be useful for anyone who is interested in how the war was run locally or how it affected organisations and individuals in the county. It will also be helpful starting point for those new to studying the war. The guide is free and available from Reception at the Office.

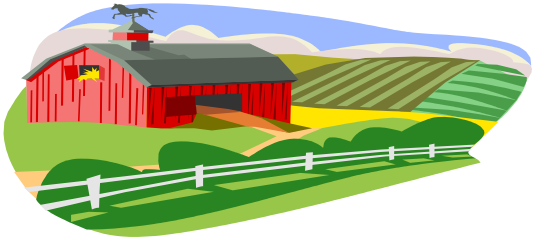
Lindsay McCormack

Nearly born in a barn

A searcher discovered a fascinating account of an attempt by the overseers of Newbury parish to avoid financial responsibility for a vagrant woman's child at the end of the first Enborne parish register (D/P 51/1/1) as follows:

"October ye 27 1724 Jane Jones a Traveller wit[h] … lodged in the barn of Thomas Smith of Enborne and s[he] happened to be in labour that night.

Thomas Smith hearing of it, came to her and told her, that she should not lie in there, and directed her to the next Ale-House the Bishops-head in the parish of Newbury and gave her a shilling.



John Cooper who lived at the Bishops-head would not entertain her, but forc'd her out of his house and [the] child was born in the court, but after that she and [the] child were taken into his house.

At the end of a fortnight and four days the offic[ers of New]bury sent the said Jane Jones and her two childr[en to the] parish of Enborne by a vagrant-pass, it being the [la]st place where the said Jane Jones was relieved.

The officers of Newbury would not suffer the child to be baptized in their parish, and therefore the minister of En[borne] was under a necessity of baptizing the child.

This I have written to testifie, that though the child was baptized at Enborne, it was born in the parish of Newbury October ye 27th 1724 the night before the feast of St Simon and Jude. William Dashwood Rector of Enborne November the 24. 1724.

Anne the daughter of Jane Jones a Traveller was baptized November the 24 1724, but born in the parish of Newbury October ye 27th 1724."

Lisa Spurrier

Public buildings in 20th century Berkshire

The architectural drawings from the Berkshire County Council Architect's Department, which was in existence between 1947-1976, have recently been catalogued (C/AR/P1 - P13). The drawings include site plans, plans, sections and elevations of various buildings in the ownership of the council, including schools and colleges, police stations, and fire and ambulance stations.

The collection includes drawings made before the creation of the County Architect's Department, inherited by the council. Some of the drawings were made by a well-known Reading architect, Joseph Morris, who became the first County Surveyor. The earliest dated drawings in the collection, of 1863, are for Hungerford Police Station (C/AR/P12/14) and the latest are of 1972 for youth facilities at Grove School, Wantage (C/AR/P4/131).

The drawings are a marvellous source of information for social issues of their day, particularly those for the schools. There are many drawings relating to extensions to secondary schools following the raising of the school leaving age following the Education Act 1944. There are plans for a grammar school in Woodley that was never built (C/AR/P3/56).

The primary school drawings are particularly charming. A site plan of 1909 shows the location of the water supply for Harwell primary school - at some distance from the school itself. Welford and Wickham primary school did not acquire indoor toilets until 1966. Boys and girls were taught in separate classrooms once past infant age. Often, detail of the teachers' accommodation is included. The school buildings are often surprisingly small, and can have accommodated relatively small numbers of children.

There are suggestions of a gentler way of life in the 'Police Cottages' designed for many villages. Many were later converted into police stations. Drawings relating to the Shire Hall, Assize Courts and Police Headquarters and surrounding buildings give an insight to the changing town centre of Reading.

Jane Chedzey

Helping them on their way

The overseers and ratepayers of the north Berkshire parish of Ashbury were so desperate to get rid of one poverty-stricken family that when in 1845 John Powell, his wife, and their seven children, wanted to emigrate to the Cape of Good Hope, they were prepared to sell two cottages the parish owned in order to help fund the journey (D/P 9/8/1). When this proved impossible, money was borrowed instead. The Government provided free transport for the parents and three of the children.

Lisa Spurrier

Just catalogued

An interesting collection has arrived from a Wallingford solicitor's firm, 1573-1988 (D/EX 1871). It includes deeds for many north Berkshire parishes, papers of the Cozens family of Cholsey, and papers relating to other clients, mainly for the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some of the more unusual of these include an agreement releasing a Streatley hotelier from liability for accidentally shooting in the head the boy who was "boots" at his hotel and agreements between estranged married couples for separation, maintenance or good behaviour.

The papers of the Alderman family of Kintbury, 1712-1939 (D/EX 1891) include deeds of property in Kintbury, Speen, and Lancashire. A catalogue has been

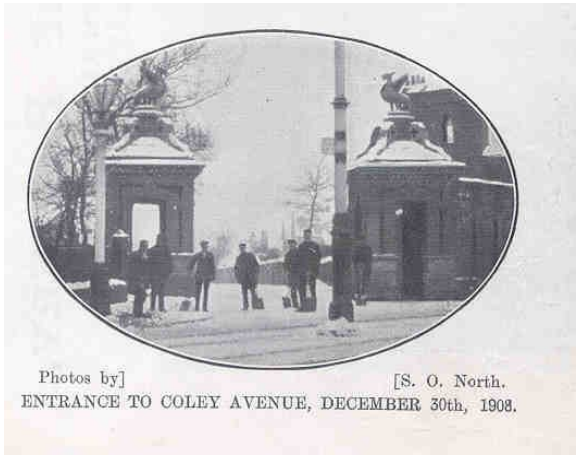
compiled for the records of an estate mainly in Frilsham, Yattendon, and Hampstead Norreys, which was built up by London-based stockbroker H G F Weber (D/EX 1927). We have also received additional estate and family papers of the Hippisley family of Sparsholt, 1808-1965 (D/EX 1332).

A small collection of deeds of property in Caversham, Newbury, Reading and Sonning, 1677-1921, has been listed (D/EX 1919). Also now available are deeds for property in Ashbury (D/EX 1892); Binfield (with prints of Bisham Abbey) (D/EX 1730); Childrey and Lambourn (D/EX 1920); Maidenhead (D/EX 1917); Newbury (D/EX 1878 and 1888); Pangbourne (D/EX 1945); Reading (D/EX 1898 and 1945); Wallingford (D/EX 1935); and Winkfield (D/EX 1895).

A fascinating plan showing the course of the two streams of the River Cole in Bourton in 1771 has been transferred from Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office (D/EX 1939). This is especially interesting as the east stream appears to have subsequently disappeared, probably due to the construction of the Wilsthire and Berkshire Canal. The plan also shows "ponds" dug out of the river to allow watering places for cattle. A detailed map of Longworth drawn in 1838 has been purchased (D/EZ 146).

The burial register for Compton, 1901-2005 (D/P 41) and East Ilsley registers of burials and banns, 1868-2005 (D/P 74) are now available. We have also received parish records from Easthampstead, including registers of baptisms, 1962-2003, and marriages, 1966-1999 (D/P 49); Sunninghill, some dating back to 1677 (D/P 126); and Winnersh (D/P 73C).

The records of Beech Hill Baptist Church, c.1885-2005, have been catalogued (D/N 49). A large collection of photographs and pictorial supplements produced by local newspapers, mainly in the early 20th century, with printed miscellanea relating to local Methodism, provides a useful resource for the history of Reading and the surrounding area (D/EX 1638; an example is shown here).


Photos by] [S. O. North.
ENTRANCE TO COLEY AVENUE, DECEMBER 30th, 1908.

Lisa Spurrier

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