The
Berkshire Echo
The Newsletter of Berkshire Record Office

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What's New: Website

Our new website is now available for evaluation. You can find it at www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk. Amongst other things it includes online guides to our holdings of parish and non-parochial registers for baptisms/births, marriages, and burials/deaths. It also includes a searchable summary guide for part of our holdings. Please have a look and tell us what you think. We hope to launch the site (and make it 'visible' to search engines) in August.

Mark Stevens

The Golden Jubilee

We will have a display of jubilee and coronation related documents in our exhibition room from late July to September to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee. We discovered that for George III's Golden Jubilee, the owner of what is now Yeomanry House provided a feast of meats, plum puddings, strong beer and punch for his tenants. This seems like an excellent idea and we are vigorously lobbying our landlords to uphold the tradition.

JUBILEE.

G. R.

Oct. 25, 1809.

Patriotic verses for George III's golden jubilee

Mark Stevens

Charles Dickens: man of letters, lover from Slough

It seems Charles Dickens spent parts of 1866 and 1867 trying to live a quiet life in Slough. But you need to know that he was trying to hide if you want to find him. He was living secretly with his mistress, actress Ellen Ternan, in a house in the High Street. In the Slough Local Board rate books for the period there is a Charles Tringham listed as the occupier of the property. This was Dickens, renting the house under an alias he often used. Documentary proof of Dickens's secret life is rare, and we were delighted when the BBC came recently to the Record Office with Peter Ackroyd to film the relevant books. They made their television debut in his series *Dickens*, which was broadcast on BBC2 in May.

Mark Stevens

Heritage Open Day news

We are pleased to announce that, following the success of last year's Heritage Open Days, the Record Office will be participating again this year. There will be a chance for you to see behind the scenes on **Saturday 14 September** from 11.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m.

Rough Music

Quaint rustic tunes played by villagers at harvest suppers? Not exactly – the term 'rough music' has a specific and rather less jolly meaning. There is an interesting local case relating to one William Goble of Newland, Bearwood, who was indicted in 1839 for wife-beating. The case papers (D/EWL/L3) describe local residents' reaction to his crime:

> ….a custom almost universally prevails in villages and rural districts whenever a quarrel takes place between a man and his wife and the husband resorts to violence against his wife for the labourers and other idle inhabitants of the parish & neighbourhood to assemble together equipped with flags, horns, bells, pieces of iron & all kinds of sonorous instruments with which they resort towards the evening to the house where the unfortunate couple reside and create all the noise and disturbance in their power much to the chagrin of the unhappy husband and greatly to the annoyance of the quiet & orderly inhabitants of the village & neighbourhood where these scenes take place. This recreation among the country people is called 'rough music' and is resorted to for the ostensible purpose of avenging the wife upon her husband for his lack of gallantry but with the real object of affording to some of the chivalrous persons who take part in it what they conceive to be a little innocent amusement and to others a means by which they are enabled to satiate their own personal malice & revenge.

William Goble and his wife were subjected to this for 7 evenings, but not everyone sided with the 'musicians'. One participant received an anonymous letter from 'a friend' whose message was as follows: *"If I was your wife you should not have a bit of sugar in your tea."* She suggests something far less pleasant that she would add!

'Rough music' was not a specifically Berkshire pursuit. Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, 1898, notes that it was known as 'toberac' in the Basque country and 'skimmity-riding' in Somerset, and it is a 'skimmity-ride' that is used to humiliate the victims of an unfortunate liaison in Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

Neila Warner

Staff news

We are delighted to report the arrival of a number of new members of staff. The public service team has been enlarged by the recent appointment of three new part time searchroom assistants. Neila Warner (whose face should already be familiar to regular visitors) and Janet Wardell will be on duty in the mornings, and Katharine Molyneux will work in the afternoons. Archivist Ivone Turnbull joined us in May from the Royal Institution of Great Britain.

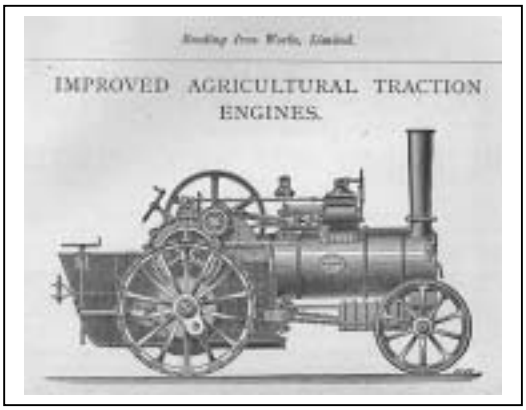
There are also a couple of goodbyes to report. Strongroom assistant Ted Ridgwell retired in May after having worked at the Record Office since the move to this building two years ago. He won't be leaving entirely, however, as he has agreed to continue on a part-time basis, particularly to help us out on Thursday evenings. Temporary searchroom assistant Kim Shahabudin will be leaving us in July in order to pursue her PhD research

Lisa Spurrier

Farming: new landscapes and new technologies

Berkshire Record Office has embarked, in conjunction with the Rural History Centre at the University of Reading, on a two year digitisation project entitled 'Farming: New Landscapes and New Technologies'. The aim of the project is to digitise material from the county's enclosure records held at Berkshire Record Office and from the agricultural engineering archive of the Rural History Centre. This material will be used to create an online resource of learning material for the landscape of the post-Agricultural Revolution era. The project is funded by a grant under the New Opportunities Fund which distributes National Lottery money to education, health, and environment projects across the UK. Bruce Wealleans and Rachel Hassall have been appointed, as Technical Officer and Documentation Officer respectively, for the term of the project, and their efforts will be divided between Berkshire Record Office and the Rural History Centre.

The project aims to bring together for the first time digital copies of all 182 large-scale Parliamentary enclosure maps and 160 awards for the historic county of Berkshire which are dispersed amongst the collections of Berkshire Record Office, Buckinghamshire Record Office and the Public Record Office. These maps and awards will be scanned and catalogued onto a database to create an invaluable online resource of visual and descriptive material for the study of the history of enclosure in Berkshire. At the Rural History Centre a unique national collection of Victorian sales catalogues produced by agricultural engineers will be scanned and catalogued onto a database. This collection includes those of local manufacturers Thomas Baker of Newbury, John Wilder of Reading, and the Reading Iron Works Ltd. Contemporary images taken from engineering drawings, photographs and posters created for the manufacturers will also be used on the website.



From an 1878 catalogue from Reading Iron Works (Rural History Centre TR SCM P2/B564)

Part of the Earley enclosure map, 1820 (D/P 113/26C)

By the end of this year a website will be 'live' with some material ready to be viewed and user feedback gathered. Once completed the site will be accessible from the websites of both the Record Office and the Rural History Centre and will provide an important resource for those interested in studying the history of enclosure and the agricultural revolution at a local or national level.

Examples of the type of images that will be available on the website are shown above.

Rachel Hassall

Just catalogued

This issue's highlight collection must be the records of Neates, the Hungerford and Newbury estate agents (D/EX 898). They include the customer accounts of Kintbury builder John Bronsdon, 1874-1905; farmers' annual accounts, 1943-1980; an extremely large collection of sale catalogues and particulars, 1890-1984, relating mostly to west Berkshire; and records of the Hungerford Fat Stock Association (which mounted exhibitions of farm animals), 1910-1960. By coincidence a similar collection of builders' records arrived from the other end of the county, in the form of the records of Blay and Son of White Waltham, 1864-1976 (D/EX 1726). We have catalogued the papers of the Hippisley family of Sparsholt, 1610-1964 (D/EX 1332). These relate mainly to the family's property in north Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Yorkshire and Ireland, and include an amazing album of photographs of Sparsholt House, showing its lavish furnishing in 1907. We have also listed deeds and papers relating to Combe manor, 1567-1965 (D/EX 1725). Other deeds relate to property in Drayton, 1796-1957, and Sutton Courtenay, 1780 (D/EX 1743), and in Newbury, 1849-1920 (D/EX 1720).

Family historians should be excited by the deposit of the Eaton Hastings parish registers of baptisms, 1813-2001, and burials, 1813-1998 (D/P 50), and may also be pleased to learn of the first deposit of records, including some registers, from the modern parish of Reading St Barnabas, 1922-2001 (D/P 169). Other parishes to have deposited material in recent months, also including parish registers, are Reading St John and Stephen, 1941-1998 (D/P 172), California, 1972-1990 (D/P 189), and Stubbings, 1949-1993 (D/P 195). Sport, generally under-reflected in our holdings, is represented by the recent arrival of records of the Berkshire Women's Hockey Association, 1908-2000 (D/EX 1712), Ranelagh Ladies Hockey Club, 1934-1998 (D/EX 1699), and the Three Counties Women's Hockey League (Berks, Bucks and Oxon), 1987-2001 (D/EX 1713). Other kinds of entertainment are reported in the magazines produced by Newbury Boys' Club in 1943 (D/EX 1741).

A recent purchase was the records of the Maidenhead Model Lodging House Company Ltd, 1891-1922 (D/EZ 139). The company was founded in order to provide a "Model Temperance Lodging House" in Maidenhead for workmen and "travellers in search of work" who would otherwise be forced to stay "in a public house where they are exposed to the temptations of strong drink, and whence a large proportion of the crime in the town arises". Other items listed recently include the reports of the Medical Officer of Health of Abingdon and Faringdon Districts Joint Public Health Committee, 1949-1972 (J/PH1); additional records of Reading Trades Union Club, 1914-1942 (D/EX 1216); minutes of the Reading Lodge of the United Operative Plumbers' Association, 1894-1943 (D/EX 1727); records of the Berkshire County Officers' branch of the trade union NALGO (D/EX 1677); the papers of Gordon Spring, a civil engineer employed by Reading Borough Council, 1922-1978, including photographs of one of his regular inspections of the underground portions of the Holy Brook (D/EX 1722); and a miscellaneous collection including papers of the Lovejoy and Wheeler families of Windsor and material relating to Challow Hill House, 1723-1963 (D/EX 1686).

Lisa Spurrier

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for all local authorities in the Royal County of Berkshire