The
Berkshire Echo

The Berkshire Record Office Newsletter Issue 36 Summer 2006

Dates for your diary

Ivone Turnbull, Visitor Services Archivist

- Introductory Visits for 2006-2007 will take place on 10th July and 9th October 2006, and 5th February, 16th April, 9th July and 8th October 2007. The aim of the visit is to provide some guidance and advice in the use of sources in the searchroom. If you would like to book a place, please ask at Reception or call 0118 901 5132 to put your name down on the list.

- Our Heritage Open Day event will take pace on Saturday 9th September 2006. We will be providing tours of the office between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. If you would like to book a tour, please ask at Reception or call 0118 901 5132 to put your name down on the list.

News

Online access to manorial documents

Mark Stevens, Senior Archivist

The Berkshire Record Office, together with the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies and Royal Holloway College, has been awarded £10,000 by the Marc Fitch fund towards a 15 month project to produce an online index to the manorial documents register for both counties.

The register is a list of court rolls, accounts, rentals and surveys of manors, which are held both in public institutions and private hands. Currently it is kept by the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts as a hard copy only. The Berkshire and Buckinghamshire project will see the register remodeled as web pages searchable by manor, parish and date. Sarah Charlton has been recruited as Project Officer and began work in February.

To see how the finished product will look, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/mdr.

Stories from the archives

Murder and mayhem in Marcham (part 1)

Lisa Spurrier, Archivist

A long and bitter dispute marked what appears to have been a complete breakdown in relations between the vicar and the congregation in early 18th century Marcham. David Jones, a Welshman from a poor background who was a

preacher and lecturer at Oxford, became vicar of Marcham in 1699, aged 33. All was well in 1700, but in 1702, the churchwardens reported him for a variety of offences, including "never having Bowed at ye Name of Jesus at ye Solemne repeating of the Creed", for disbursing poor monies without consulting the churchwardens, and for breaking off "allmost in ye Midle" of his sermon, to read out "Scurrilous Letters that had no name to them & then goeing on againe with his Sermon". On another occasion he used "filthy discourse" in criticising a parishioner.

Misfiled in a volume of papers relating to disputes over church rates (document reference D/A2 c.148) is Jones's response. He admitted that "he did preach against women takeing Mastiffe doggs to bed with them which he believes to be true of some of them", in connection with preaching on the 7th commandment and the instance of the complaint as to his language. He also explained that the anonymous letters he had read aloud in church were in response to "a Murder being committed in the parish (as John Prentice father of the murthered person told this Respondent)" and Jones preaching against the "sinn of Murder".

The original letters make entertaining reading:

"Thou Impudent fellow
Was it not enuff for thee to abuse thy innocent naybur by reflecting on him concerning his kinsman; but thou must needs out of thy develish malise over and over fie drunkness and murder upon him; I protest to god almighty If I heare one word more of such abusive stuff come from thy accursed Chopps thou shalt bee severely punished as shurely as the deepist pitt in hell will bee thy portion, take this for the last warning.

Accursed hippocrite
If you don't speedily ask forgiveness for ye abuses you have publickly offer'd to your neighbour in charging him with drunkenness and concealing of murder and other matters thou shalt assuredly bee rewarded according to thy villany."

The story continues in the next issue!

Advice to school leavers

Lisa Spurrier, Archivist

In the 1930s, 14 year old school leavers in Windsor were given a "message of friendly counsel and good cheer" by the Borough. One of these cards is held in the Record Office (document reference D/EX 1918/8) and could be just as relevant today. It includes such advice as:

"Very soon you must choose a Trade or Profession. Let your choice be a wise and intelligent one. Do not allow yourself to drift haphazard into any sort of blind-alley work ... Seriously, conscientiously, take stock of your gifts, your preference, your possibilities. Your life work should be the sphere in which you can do the best, not for yourself only, but for your home, for your country, for mankind …

The greatest of all choices is that between good and evil; whatever else you may be or do, strive to be good. Speak the truth always, whatever it cost you. Be courteous to everybody; to honour another is to honour yourself. Keep your temper. There is no harm in having a temper; the harm lies in losing it …

Your most precious possession is a pure character. Guard it closely. It is easily lost; it is terribly hard to regain.

Never bet or gamble. Gambling is an unhealthy striving to gain something without giving a proper return for it. It robs work of its zest and interest ...

By fresh air, by cleanliness, by recreation, by regular habits, keep your body fit. Be temperate in all things. Beware of strong drink. Athletes in training abstain from alcohol, and surely it is our duty to be always at our fittest …

Keep your mind clean and well-informed. Good books are "Kings' Treasuries." Read only the best."

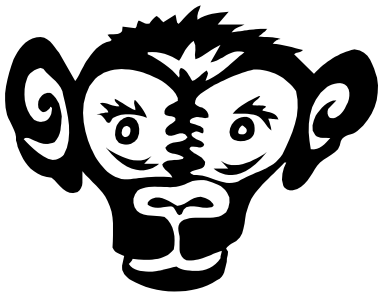
History does not record how many Windsor children went on to become archivists!

Monkey in the mirror

Lisa Spurrier, Archivist

The Brightwalton parish memoranda (document reference D/EX 1805/1) kept by vicar Henry F Howard contain a number of anecdotes of local interest. One such is the following rather sad little story (on page 82):

"There was an old man named David Collins who had been gardener at the Rectory for 40 years when I came in 1872. When the new house was finished in 1874 & some of the furniture was in, David was employed to see to fires in various rooms. In the room on the ground floor facing North there stood temporarily a large looking glass standing some 5 feet high. David who was on his hands & knees at the fire looked round & saw himself for the first time in his life. He was an ugly little creature rather like a monkey.



The sight gave him such a shock that he went home to bed & never got up again. I visited him, & he told me that all was over & that he had seen the devil! Doctoring was of no use & he died."

Just Catalogued

Lisa Spurrier, Archivist

The returns of Berkshire charities to the Charity Commissioners, c.1836-1957, give a fascinating insight into the range of charitable provision in the county (catalogue reference P/CC1; further catalogue references in this article are supplied in brackets). Staff have also completed a special project to list architectural plans of buildings built for Berkshire County Council (C/AR/P), including schools, colleges, police and fire stations, and residential homes. The minutes of Crowthorne (CPC 102B) and Wokingham Without (CPC 154B) Parish Councils have also been deposited.

We have recently acquired a number of useful collections for those undertaking house history as follows: papers relating to 22-24 Market Place, Reading include unusually detailed records of their construction in the late 1830s (D/EX 1944); plans for buildings on the Milton Hill Estate of Sir Mortimer Singer (an heir to the sewing machine fortune), 1912-1913 (D/EX 1740), and for a house in Compton, 1973 (D/EX 1714); papers relating to The Cottage, Old Bracknell, Easthampstead, 1725-1889 (D/EX 1933).

We have received deeds for property in Caversham and Reading (D/EX 1955); Earley, Maidenhead and Windsor, 1949-1953 (D/EX 1948); Streatley, 1894-1975 (D/EX 1954); and Wokingham, 1645 (D/EX 1946); plus papers relating to the compulsory purchase of Wash Water Chapel for the A34 Newbury Bypass, 1982-2005, (D/N 32). Also now available for research is a small collection of sale catalogues relating to various parishes in south and west Berkshire, 1885-1961 (D/EX 1937).

Although the last century saw a great deal of change, there was also a new interest in preserving the local environment and heritage, reflected in the newly deposited records of two local societies (D/EX 1951). The Windsor and Eton Society was formed in 1946 to encourage interest in the history of Windsor and Eton, and preserve and improve local amenities. It had a special interest in planning and development; one of their most celebrated achievements was the 1970s campaign to register Bachelors' Acre as a town green and stop it being used as a car park. The Windsor '72 Committee was formed in 1968 to improve the appearance of the town, initially in connection with the "facelift" campaign of the 1960s. It became Windsor Heritage Committee in 1975, and the two societies joined forces in 1999.

The 1760 will of Margaret Brereton of Fort St George, India, formerly of Windsor, includes the unusual proviso that her head should be cut off or her body cut open to ensure she was not buried alive (D/EX 1924).

Parish records have been deposited for Cholsey (D/P 38); Cranbourne (D/P190), including the burial register, 1850-1997; Wantage (D/P 143); and Winkfield (D/P 151). 21st century material has come in for the Methodist circuits of Newbury and Hungerford (D/MC 13) and Thames Valley (D/MC 19).

We have received copy minutes and accounts of the Green Girls' Charity, Reading, 1803-1813 (D/EX 1962). We also collected papers relating to the celebration in 2005 of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Bishop Samuel Wilberforce (D/EX 1947).

Contact Us: 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	Berkshire Record Office, a countywide archive service supported by all local authorities in the Royal County of Berkshire: Bracknell Forest, Reading, Slough, West Berkshire, Windsor and Maidenhead, and Wokingham.

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