The
Berkshire Echo
The Newsletter of Berkshire Record Office

NO. 25: Autumn 2003

Likely disruption to visitors: 20 October -27 February

We are sorry to have to report that the replacement of the floors in both our downstairs strongrooms is likely to go ahead over the autumn and winter.

As we will have to vacate these rooms while the floors are replaced, visitors wishing to use original documents will find access restricted. We are hopeful that most of our collections will remain accessible, but please note that if you need to consult original documents we will not be able to guarantee you access to them.

Despite the work we will continue to be open as usual, and offer access to all the resources currently available in the searchroom. Please note also that we will not close for stocktaking in the first fortnight in November (though we may close for a while later on in the building work).

We are very sorry for the inconvenience that we know this will cause you. If anyone wishes to ask about the availability of a particular document(s), please get in touch with me.

Mark Stevens

Update: Black and Asian people in Berkshire

In September 2002, I started collating parish register references to contribute to the project run by the Black and Asian Studies Association to map the history of Black and Asian people in Britain. Since then, I have received details of 9 entries, baptisms and burials, in parishes as diverse as Thatcham, in West Berkshire, Windsor in the east of the county, Shinfield in the south and Remenham in the north.

The earliest reference so far discovered is to the burial in Midgham parish of "John Beau an Infant (Black) from the Foundling Hospitall in Lambs Conduit Fields London", on 5 January 1756 (D/P130C/1/2). The latest, dated 17 April 1818, is the burial in Remenham parish of "George Freeman alias Foray An African Negro Boy, Servant to the Revd. Dr. Scobell at the Rectory" (D/P99/1/13).

Thank you to all those who have found and recorded this information for me. I will be forwarding details to BASA shortly and will then commence collating the next batch of entries. If, in the course of your research here, you find parish register entries for Black or Asian people, and would like to contribute to this project, please ask staff at the Search Room enquiry desk for a form to complete.

Julie Grisman

Staff news

Congratulations are in order to Searchroom Assistant Neila Warner, who has been awarded a prize by Berkshire Family History Society for an article on rough music published in that society's journal, the *Berkshire Family Historian*, adapted from one published in the summer 2002 issue of the *Echo* (no. 20).

Just catalogued

The highlight collection this issue must be the extensive and fascinating archive of the Community of St John Baptist, Clewer, 1849-1993 (D/EX 1675), which is of national significance. The Anglican Sisterhood was founded in 1852, initially to run the House of Mercy established in Clewer in 1852 to rescue "fallen women". Works undertaken by the Sisters included other work of the same kind in other parts of the country, orphanages and childrens' homes, hospitals and convalescent homes, and mission work in new urban parishes (often deprived areas).

Records of many of these enterprises are included in the records deposited here, including locally St Andrew's Convalescent Hospital, St Augustine's Boys' Home (*right*), the House of Mercy and St Stephen's High School, all in Clewer, and work in Devon, Essex, Kent, Gloucester, London, Oxfordshire and Surrey. Some material, particularly admission registers to Homes, is of necessity closed to public access for a certain period due to the confidential and personal nature of the contents.

The Church of England is also represented by the recent arrival of churchwardens' accounts from Wallingford St Peter, 1837-1940 (D/P 139); an interesting selection of records of Cholsey, 1846-1993 (D/P 36), including vestry minutes, 1856-1894, and highway rates, 1846-1854; records of Grove, 1924-2000 (D/P 143C), including registers of marriages, 1985-1995, and burials, 1924-1993, and the managers' minutes of Grove School, 1936-1952; the marriage registers of Reading Greyfriars, 1958-2002 (D/P 163); and a scrapbook of pictorial and printed material dating back to c.1880 kept by the churchwarden of Newbury St Nicolas, 1975-1988 (D/P 89).

Some stray parish records from Brightwalton, 1752-1933, have been discovered and placed in the Record Office's care (D/EX 1805). These include a land tax assessment from 1752, a church rate, 1812, and the fascinating parish memoranda book kept by the incumbent, 1895-1933, whose contents include a description of beating the bounds in 1904, notes on local dialect and a memorandum of a local smallpox outbreak in 1878. A similar memorandum book from Brightwell has also appeared, c.1879, with touching letters of condolence to the family of its author, a former vicar of the parish, on the death of his late daughter in 1886 (D/EX 1821).

Our project to catalogue the Methodist records of Berkshire continues, with the completion of work on the following churches: Hungerford Bridge Street, 1616-1978 (D/MS 44), Inkpen, 1960-1968 (D/MS 45; the church baptism register only), Leckhampstead Thicket, 1938-1973 (D/MS 46), Littlewick Green (formerly Littklewick Congregational Church), 1864-1955 (D/MS 47), Maidenhead Burberry Hall/St Mark's, 1934-1990 (D/MS 48), Mortimer, 1868-1983 (D/MS 49), Newbury City Mission, 1928-1964 (D/MS 50), Newbury Northbrook Street, 1682-1990 (D/MS 51), Pangbourne, 1933-1973 (D/MS 52), and Quicks Green, Ashampstead, 1932-1972 (D/MS 53).

Arab Horse through Palestine.
PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHAPEL
REV. F. J. T. REGNALL,
Illustrated Lecture

In addition we have catalogued the records of several Methodist churches in Reading, namely Bourne Memorial, Whitley, Reading, 1948-1980, including registers of baptisms, 1949-1979, and marriages, 1952-1979 (D/MS 54), Reading Cumberland Road, c.1893-1975, including registers of baptisms, c.1940-1972, and marriages, 1945-1972 (D/MS 55), Reading Emmanuel, 1997-2003 (D/MS 57), Reading Friar Street, 1875-1959 (D/MS 58), and Reading London Street, 1891-1950 (D/MS 59). We have also received additional deposits of material from Reading Oxford Road, 1978-1996 (D/MS 1), Maidenhead High Street, 1903-1993 (D/MS 10), and Caversham Gosbrook Road, 1888-1994, including baptisms, 1972-1988 (D/MS 29).

We have also received deeds of the former Primitive Methodist chapel building (later used as a Berkshire County Council library) in Wallingford, 1889-1992 (D/EX 1818).

Unofficial voluntary organisations can sometimes provide the best evidence of leisure activities in the past, and staff have now catalogued the records of a number of local clubs and societies with a considerable range of interests. They are the Berkshire and Buckinghamshire Farmers' Staghounds Hunt, 1920-1942 (D/EX 625); Eton & Slough Conservative Association, 1953-1983, much of the material relating to the 1974 General Election (D/EX 939); Tilehurst St Mary Magdalen Mothers' Union, 1963-1999 (D/EX 1480/5); the Slough Group of Toc H (D/EX 1802); Reading & District Natural History Society, 1881-1936 (D/EX 1807); and Reading Horticultural Federation, 1944-1986, and Coley Gardeners' Association, 1948-1956 (D/EX 1820).

Official records to have been listed in the last few months include an 18th century copy of Newbury Borough's book of ordinances, 1599, and its charters, 1596-1685 (N/IC 2/1). Civil parish records have arrived from Bradfield, 1912-2000 (CPC 22), Longcot, 1894-1993 (CPC 112B), and Welford, 1894-1975 (CPC 147). Frilford Parish Council, meanwhile, celebrated the Millennium by recording all the wild flowers in the parish, and a copy of the fully illustrated booklet produced has been placed here (CPC 57). The Record Office has also acquired copies of two films held on our behalf at the specialist Wessex Film and Sound Archive: a Berkshire College of Education film on mathematical structures, 1973 (D/EX 1707) and a Berkshire Education Committee on Cookham Nursery School, 1952 (D/EX 1708).

The records of Sargeant's Funeral Parlour in Colnbrook, Slough, 1910-1950 (D/EX 1801), have some family history interest, as they include the deceased's name, age, date of death and place of burial, as well as funeral requisites supplied. Other records of local businesses to have arrived here recently include records of John Hooper of Reading, pill manufacturer (see elsewhere in this issue), 1787-1849 (D/EX 1830); the (mainly advertising) records of Bestobell, also known as Bell's Asbestos and Engineering Ltd of Slough, 1898-1974 (D/EX 1800); and a brochure of J Wooberry of Reading, cleaner and dryer's agent, c.1900-1910 (D/EX 1796).

The papers of clients of former Reading solicitors Francis & Parkes, 1742-1985 (D/EX 877) consist mainly of title deeds of property in Reading and elsewhere in the county. Another miscellaneous collection of deeds etc, 1722-1911 (D/EX 1080) most interestingly includes Farley Hill capital messuage in Swallowfield, 1751-1792. Also now available are deeds and other records relating to property in Beenham and Ufton Nervet, 1924-1968 (D/EX 1782), Binfield, 1933 (D/EX 1783), Lambourn, 1873-1920 (D/EX 1774, 1789), Milton, Speenhamland and Stanford-in-the-Vale, 1828—1830 (D/EX 1819), Reading, 1874-2001 (D/EX 1778, 1781, 1799, 1815, 1826), Shaw-cum-Donnington, 1697 (D/EX 1784), Shellingford, 1828 (D/EX 1779), Winkfield, 1825-1925 (D/EX 1776), and Wokingham, 1701-1827 (D/EX 1817). We have also acquired a map of the Buscot Park estate, c1849-1855 (D/EX 1813).

Various other documents have now been catalogued. Among those which have already been consulted by researchers are the astronomical sketches made by local man Gideon Davis between 1877 and 1897 as a guide for novices, "to show what a small telescope can show in Reading" (D/EX 1808). The annual reports of Reading Dispensary Trust, a medical charity, for the years 1870-1962, have joined other records already held here (D/QRD).

We have received an album of photographs of the members of Reading Board of Guardians, 1899-1900 (D/EX 1794) and one recording a Children's Carnival given by the mayor and mayoress of Reading in 1892, showing local middle-class children in all kinds of fancy dress (D/EX 1792). Finally, staff have listed addresses and testimonials to two prominent Caversham churchmen: Baptist Ebenezer West, former headmaster of Amersham Hall private school, 1877 and 1892 (D/EX 1791) and the Revd William Sully Unwin, the Church of England parish curate and a worker with temperance and Friendly Societies, 1893 (D/EX 1793).

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