The
Berkshire Echo

Berkshire Record Office Newsletter Issue 29 Autumn 2004

Heritage Open Day

The Office enabled visitors to see behind the scenes on Saturday 11th September as part of the Heritage Open Days events. Visitors could look at documents relating to the Access to Archives (a2a) website, see how documents are stored in the strongrooms and take a look at some of the work that the Conservation staff do.

This year, the Berkshire Family History Society (BFHS) were involved holding short talks on Starting Your Family History (Carolyn Boulton), Using the Internet for Family History (Chad Hanna) and Family History and Local History (Barry Boulton). The BFHS also had a book stall and an area where visitors could discuss research or family history issues.

The day went well and we had quite a number of visitors of all ages. If you came along, we hope that you enjoyed it and that next year will be just as successful.

Ivone Turnbull

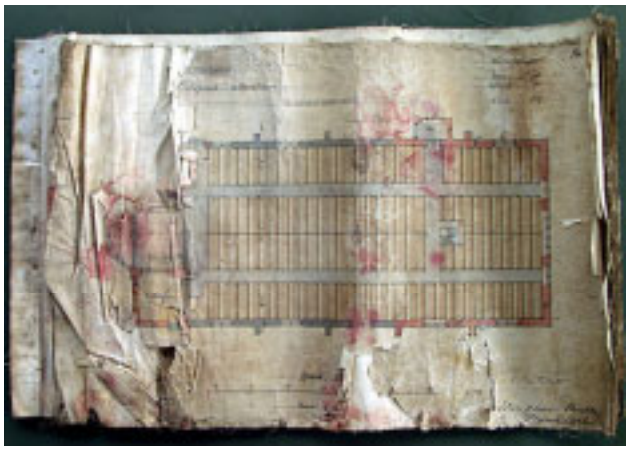
Introductory Visit to the Record Office

On Monday 11th October, the Record Office will be undertaking a visit of the searchroom for newcomers to the office. It will be an opportunity to get to know how to use the searchroom and its facilities, with advice and guidance from staff. The pilot visit is limited to 10 people and will begin at 2pm, lasting about one hour. If you would like to take part, please ask at reception and put your name on the list. If it proves successful, we hope to put on similar visits in the future.

Ivone Turnbull

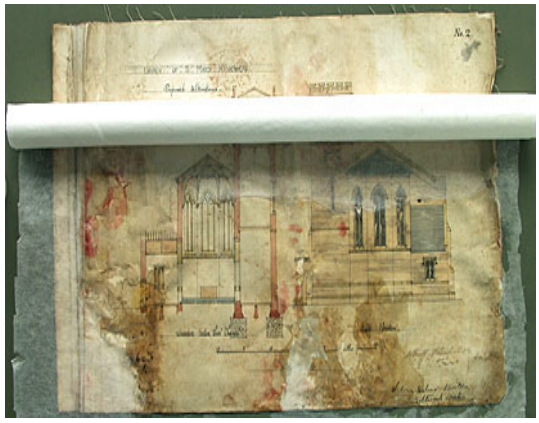
Repair treatment to plans and elevations of proposed alterations to St Mary's Church Maidenhead 1877, architect Arthur W Blomfield and E M Forster (Ref. D/P 180/6/1).

These drawings arrived at the Record Office badly damaged from water and subsequently mould growth. As a further result of the damage, only nine plans remain (number eight was found to be missing once treatment had begun). The paper plans were lined with linen, which had withstood the test of time and still supported the very vulnerable paper.



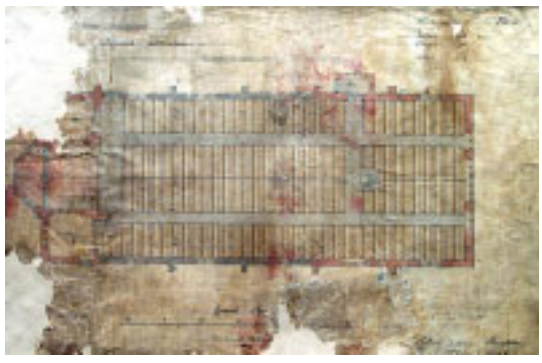
This photograph shows the first plan with damage that was found to be common throughout. The paper was curling away from the linen and in some pieces had completely disintegrated. The staining is a result of germinating mould spores. Before the repair treatment began the surface was gently brushed to remove the loose dirt.

An ultra fine tissue paper was pasted to the front of the plan before the linen support was removed. The moisture from the adhesive softened the old paste enough to remove the linen without difficulty.



Once the linen was removed from the back of the plan it was apparent how much of the plan was missing. The missing areas were replaced with an English paper chosen to blend with the colour of the plan. This photograph shows the new paper after it has been shaped to replace the missing pieces.

A second piece of tissue was adhered to the back of the plan to give a final layer of support once all the missing pieces had been replaced with new paper. All the plans were repaired by the same method and were placed in polyester sleeves for protection during handling.



Sue Hourigan

Staff News

We would like to congratulate Julie Grisman who has taken on the post of Archives Assistant since the 1st of September 2004. Julie was previously a Searchroom Assistant, so many visitors will know her quite well already, though they will now be seeing her at various times of the day instead of just the mornings. As a result of this, Katharine Molyneux (Searchroom Assistant), will now be working in the mornings instead of the afternoons.

Ivone Turnbull

Annual Stock Take

The annual stock take will take place from 1st to 12th November 2004 inclusive. We will be closed to the public during this period and apologise for any inconvenience this may cause to our users.

Ivone Turnbull

Trouble Among The Tombstones

Family historians interested in monumental inscriptions may be interested in the following story from the notes of local historian Henrietta Batson (D/EX 1846/3):

When Welford parish church was rebuilt in 1852, part of the churchyard to the south of the church was dug up. Many skeletons were reburied north of the church, and many of the tombstones were broken up and used to build a wall. Others had the names effaced and were reused for new burials – with notable spelling errors! Fifty-odd years later, George Jarrett, who had assisted in building the new church, told Henrietta:

"The demolition of the gravestones caused serious unpleasantness among some of the former parishioners. In one instance Mr Saxty of Halfway causing the then Rector to restore a very large flat stone to its original position till Mr Saxty's death when it was again taken up, cut up, and used."

Lisa Spurrier

Just catalogued

Family historians will be excited by the arrival of parish records from Buckland (D/P 27) including baptisms 1884-1973 and marriages 1837-2002; Cumnor, 1805-2000 (D/P 45), including a register of banns, 1851-1919; and Beech Hill including the registers of marriages, 1995-2003, and banns, 1868-1995, as well as a beautiful illuminated manuscript office book given to the church for use at Holy Communion, 1867, (D/P 121). Every page is different, many with gold leaf.

Additions to Reading St Laurence records (D/P 97) include churchwardens' accounts, 1850-1892, and charity accounts, 1850-1941. Material from Hurley (D/P 72) includes nineteenth century plans, a watercolour of the parsonage, and a 1747 settlement certificate for the Compton family. Other parish records have arrived from Cholsey (D/P 38); Clewer (D/P 39); Cookham Dean (D/P 43B); West Hendred, including banns, 1864-1990 (D/P 67); Littleworth, including banns, 1952-1997 (D/P 27B); Maidenhead St Peter (D/P 84); Reading Greyfriars (D/P 163); and Wokingham St Sebastian (D/P 154C).

Just Catalogued continued:

The first phase of the Methodist records cataloguing project has come to an end with the completion of lists of the records of Woosehill Community Church, a Local Ecumenical Project with the Church of England (D/MS 85); and Methodist Churches at Colnbrook (D/MS 109); Eton Wick (D/MS 110); Ashford Hill (D/MS 102), Plastow Green (D/MS 96), Tadley Common (D/MS 98), and Tadley Main Road (D/MS 99), all in Hampshire; Henley-on-Thames (D/MS 104) and Woodcote (D/MS 105) in Oxfordshire; and Aldbourne West Street (D/MS 106), Baydon (D/MS 107) and Ramsbury and Witcha (D/MS 108) in Wiltshire. The only registers are marriages at Henley-on-Thames Wesleyan Methodist Church, 1876-2001. New material continues to accrue, and includes the baptism register of Sunninghill Wesleyan Methodist Church, 1908-1998 (D/MS 16). Additional records from Twyford United Reformed Church has led to the re-cataloguing of all the church's records (D/N 13).

Additional medical and staff records have been transferred from Newbury District Hospital, 1940-2001, all subject to extended closure periods (D/H 4). The registers of legal documents sealed by Berkshire County Council, 1890-1998, have now been catalogued (C/CL/L1 and C/CS/L1). The sealed documents include contracts above a certain value, conveyances, leases, orders and bye-laws. We have also received additional records from Twyford Parish Council (CPC 73B).

Newly deposited school records include those of St Nicolas' Primary School, East Challow (2003/SCH/1), and the managers' minutes of Beech Hill Church of England School, 1951-1967 (D/EX 1864). Leisure activity is reflected in the records of Beech Hill Memorial Hall, 1920-1997, built as a World War I memorial (D/EX 1863); and by the records of Battle Football Club, 1935-1977. The club was founded for local boys and was an official "nursery" club for Reading Football Club until 1957 (D/EX 1853). The records include a fascinating set of scrapbooks compiled in the late 1940s recording the history of the club.

Arborfield Local History Society has deposited records consisting mainly of publications based on members' research, as well as some sale catalogues for properties in the area (D/EX 1716). Finally, we have acquired leases of East Court House in Finchampstead, 1881 and 1895 (D/EZ 145), and a collection of sale catalogues, mostly for properties in Reading, 1930-1966 (D/EX 1852/2/1-22).

Lisa Spurrier

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