

BRO

The Berkshire Record Office
The Archives of the Royal County

The Berkshire Echo Issue 38

- ...✦ Honouring Fair Mile
- ...✦ BRO Completes the Grid
- ...✦ New to the Archives
- ...✦ Critical Eye on Jane Eyre
- ...✦ New Family History Tool

From the Editor

Welcome to the first online issue of The Berkshire Echo and many thanks for signing up to receive your copy. We hope that having absorbed its content, you will be inspired to visit our offices or website and begin your own journey into the past.

The Berkshire Record Office (BRO) is the place to visit if you want to find out anything about the history of Berkshire. We hold more than 7 linear miles of historic documents, dating from the 12th century, covering a whole host of subjects, broadly belonging to either local or family history.

With the e-movement well under way we decided to embrace it as a mean to keep you, our readers abreast of latest developments at BRO. Within these pages you can expect to find details of family and local history events in the area, fascinating features from the archive, details of latest material available at the BRO, project and partnership news, usage tips and hopefully feedback, queries and stories that will come in response, from you.

In this first issue: Read about Fair Mile hospital and the recent celebration of work done on the records there; discover a major new mapping resource; enjoy a fascinating tale of a Jane Eyre critic; fill in some of those gaps in your family history; see the latest material added to the collections, and ensure that you have noted the dates of the Bracknell family history fair.

If you would like to feedback on any of the articles or indeed if you would like to share your own family or local history story, please contact us (all contact details on the back page). If you have other friends or family who may like to receive their own copy of the newsletter please let them know our email enquiry line arch@reading.gov.uk

Please read on, and enjoy!
Mark Stevens (Senior Archivist)



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

GET INTRODUCED TO HISTORY

Want to learn more about your history or the history of where you live? Why not put your name down for one of the free BRO introductory visits. Dates for 2007 are: 5th February, 16th April, 9th July and 8th October. Call us on 0118 901 5132 or ask at Reception for details.

TAKE THE FAMILY TO THE FAIR

Sunday 28th January 2007 is the date for this year's Family History fair at Bracknell Sports and Leisure Centre, Bracknell. The BRO will have a stall where you can gain information about our services. Our colleagues at the Berkshire Family History Society (BFHS) will also have a stall so why not come along and find out more. Ask questions about how to start your family history or how to solve any mysteries you may have discovered in your research. The fair is open from 10am to 5pm, admission £3.00; see the Family History Fairs website for more details: <http://members.aol.com/aquarterma/familyhistoryfairs.html>



Councillor Angus Ross, Chairman of Wokingham District Council; Councillor Brian Bedwell, Chairman of West Berkshire Council and Councillor David Maclsaac, Mayor of Slough Borough Council.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

PAINTING PARADISE

The Museum of Reading is currently exhibiting the Stanley Spencer paintings from the Stanley Spencer Gallery in Cookham, while it undergoes refurbishment. Pop along to the museum and take a look at this wonderful exhibition, which runs until 22nd April 2007. See the museum website for more details: <http://www.readingmuseum.org.uk>

Honouring Fair Mile

The completion of a project to catalogue and conserve the records of Berkshire's former county lunatic asylum, Fair Mile Hospital, was recently celebrated with a high profile reception at The Berkshire Record Office.

Various honoured guests attended the celebration event including the Lord-Lieutenant of Berkshire, Philip Wroughton, the Chair of Berkshire NHS Trust, Lorna Roberts, and guests from the councils of Berkshire, NHS Trusts and mental health service providers.

Guests were treated to a display of various records including case notes and registers.

The project, funded by a grant from The Wellcome Trust, has delivered a complete catalogue of records relating to the patients, staff, land and buildings, and administration of the hospital and conserved them for posterity.

The catalogue (reference D/H10) is available in the searchroom and details the collection, the highlight of which is an almost complete set of the statutory patient records from 1870 to 1944, including admission registers, records of medical treatment, case books, and registers of discharges and deaths.

An online gallery has been created on the BRO website, providing a brief history of the hospital and showing collection highlights. To take a look please go to: www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk/collections/fairmile.htm



Philip Wroughton; Councillor Bet Tickner, Mayor of Reading Borough Council and Lorna Roberts.

BRO COMPLETES THE GRID

A project to catalogue the Ordnance Survey National Grid maps for Berkshire is now complete allowing visitors to access more than 1200 maps previously unavailable at the BRO.

This is a wonderful resource if you are researching local history, house history, or even family history, as it covers a fairly modern period in a geographic and visual way.

Included in the collection are 1870s-1880s town plans for Abingdon, Newbury and Reading at scale 1:500 (c.120inch/1 mile) as well as the following Berkshire maps:

1:1250 (c.50 inch/1 mile) 1950s-1980s
1:2500 (c.25 inch/1 mile) 1950s-1970s
1:10,000 (c.6 inch/1 mile) 1960s-1970s
1:25,000 (c.2.5 inch/1 mile) 1980s

If you wish to make use of this new collection please ask during your visit.

To advertise please
contact us on
0118 901 5132



in the County of Berkshire and of Wiltshire in the counties of Wilt and Berks or any of them has been duly qualified under the provisions of "The Act for the better teaching and improvement of Land?"

And whereas I the said George Foster have been appointed the Valuer in the Matter of the said Indenture and having made the Appraisement required by the said Act have duly held all necessary meetings and drawn up and sent to the said Bishop of Salisbury a Report in writing in the usual manner for England and Wales my Report in writing in the usual manner and in all other respects complied with the provisions of the said Act



Mary Russell Mitford

And whereas I the said George Foster have been appointed the Valuer in the Matter of the said Indenture and having made the Appraisement required by the said Act have duly held all necessary meetings and drawn up and sent to the said Bishop of Salisbury a Report in writing in the usual manner for England and Wales my Report in writing in the usual manner and in all other respects complied with the provisions of the said Act

Critical Eye on Jane Eyre

For those of you who watched the recent BBC adaptation of Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre it may fascinate you to know that there were harsh critics lurking even in Victorian times.

Letters authored by a local, then esteemed writer, Mary Russell Mitford reveal her view of the latest in contemporary fiction of the day.

In 1849, Mitford writes "[I find the book]..powerful but terribly coarse and unpleasant – too coarse to be written by a man or a lady" and goes on to say "the authoress makes the reader share Jane's preference of the sinner to the saint – indeed I think the odious selfish missionary the best done thing in the book."

In another letter, dated 1853, Mary said of Brontë's later books "although not ladies and gentlemen her personages are men & women", but shocked by the "bad tone", wondered, "Where can she have lived?" Presumably life for Mary in Berkshire was not akin to the world of Brontë's novels!

Mary lived in Three Mile Cross, near Reading, and based her most famous book Our Village on her life there.

Document references: 1849 letter D/EZ131/2; 1853 letter D/EZ131/6

NEW FAMILY HISTORY TOOL AT THE BRO

Are you researching your family history and having problems filling gaps? If so, then our new collection of Bishop's Transcripts may be of interest to you.

Bishop's Transcripts were the result of parish clerks transcribing parish registers containing details of baptisms, marriages and burials and sending the transcripts to the Bishop in the Diocese of Salisbury. These documents can be invaluable when filling in gaps where a parish register no longer exists.

Until recently it was only possible to use these documents at Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office, but now BRO have created microfilm copies of the transcripts, which date from the early 17th century up to 1836. Post 1836 transcripts are held at the Oxfordshire Record Office.

Please ask us for more details during your next visit.



Are you interested in tracing your Ancestors from near or afar?

Contact the
Berkshire Family History Society
 Yeomanry House
 131 Castle Hill
 Reading Berks RG1 7TJ
Telephone 0118 950 9553
 For more details about our Society and dates of Branch meetings in Bracknell, Newbury, Reading, Vale of the White Horse, Windsor and the Computer Branch in Woodley see the website www.berksfhs.org.uk
 Our **Research Centre** is open at the address above
 Tuesday 10.00-16.00, 19.30-21.30
 Wednesday & Thursday 10.00-16.00
 2nd & 4th Sunday each month 11.00-16.00

Member of the FFHS
 Registered Charity No 28010



New to the Archives

Family historians will be excited by the discovery of a hitherto unknown parish register for Peasemore (D/P92). The register covers baptisms, 1804-1812, burials, 1805-1812, and one marriage in 1804. The volume had subsequently been used to keep accounts. The parish has also deposited the marriage register for 1837-1986. Other parishes to have added to their records are Charlton (marriage registers, 1957-1999) (D/P143B), and Maidenhead St Peter (D/P184). The records of Shinfield and St Sebastian's (in Wokingham Without) Cemeteries (DC/WO) are also now catalogued.

We have acquired a set of photographs of Fair Mile Hospital taken in 2001 (D/EX1678), which supplement the hospital records mentioned in the last issue of the Echo. Healthcare is also represented by the records of two homes for people with learning disabilities: Binfield Park Hospital (D/H9), and Church Hill House, Bracknell, based in the former Easthampstead Workhouse (D/H8). The records include the workhouse admission register, 1929-1933.

We now hold the printed calendars of prisoners tried at Newbury Borough Quarter Sessions, 1946—1959, with one for 1939 (D/EX1938). One small collection consists of papers relating to the compulsory purchase of slum areas in Coley in the 1930s (D/EX1965). Official records also include records of Chaddleworth Parish Council (CPC32).

Property history records recently added to our holdings include deeds from Hurst (D/EX1978); Newbury and Thatcham (D/EX1907); and Wantage, Charlton and Grove (D/EX1963). Additional Combe manor estate records, 1920-1972, have

been listed (D/EX1725). Sale catalogues have arrived for the Hillfields estate in Burghfield, 1892 (D/EX1940), 9 Peascod Street, Windsor, 1912 (D/EX1968), and the Buckhold estate in Bradfield and adjoining parishes, 1932 (D/EX1956).

A rather unusual deposit was a case of replica medieval seals associated with Hurley Priory, made in the 1890s for Hurley vicar and local historian, the Revd Florence T Wethered (D/P72). The programme for films to be shown at the Playhouse in Windsor in May 1944 (D/EX1984) includes an advertisement for a local teashop offering home cooked meals "compatible with wartime restrictions".

And finally, some very early 20th century publicity leaflets shed light on Reading biscuit makers Huntley and Palmer's (D/EX1970). Local cycling fans appear in records of Reading Road Club, 1937-1947 (D/EX1971). We have also acquired records of the Wokingham branch of the Operative Bricklayers' Society, 1919-1924 (D/EX1961). A small collection of postcards of views of various places in the county has arrived (D/EX1943). We have acquired copies of the 1890/1 plans of Cholsey railway station (D/EX1953).

Opening Hours

Tuesday 9-5, Weds 9-5, Thurs 9-9pm, Fri 9-4.30
Closed Mondays, Weekends and Bank Holidays.
Please call us for further details.

Contact Information:

Tel: 0118 901 5132
Fax: 0118 901 5131
Web: berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk
Email: arch@reading.gov.uk

The Berkshire Record Office,
9 Coley Avenue, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 6AF

Funding Partners

- Bracknell Forest Borough Council
- Reading Borough Council
- Slough Borough Council
- West Berkshire Council
- The Royal Borough Windsor and Maidenhead
- Wokingham District Council



The River Pang, Bradfield (D/EX1956)

