

The

Berkshire Echo



The Berkshire Record Office Newsletter

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News

- Bracknell Family History Fair 29th January 2006. The BRO attended this annual family history fair and dealt with many enquiries. It was well attended and we had 211 visitors to our stall alone.
- We have seen a huge increase in the number of new starters at the office since the BBC's Who Do You Think You Are? programme began in January of this year. To coincide with this, BBC Radio Berkshire were on site on Saturday 11th February to promote the programme and see what the BRO and Berkshire Family History Society were offering the public.

Perhaps you would like to visit, but would like some advice on how to use us? Why not try one of our Introductory Visits, which are designed to give an overview of the office as well as guidance and advice in the use of sources in the searchroom. Please call on 0118 901 5132 to put your name on the list for the 10th April, 10th July and 9th October, or ask at Reception.

- Unfortunately, we have had to increase our research fees to £9.00 per half hour and £18.00 per hour. We have also raised our charges for certified copies of baptisms and burials to £12.00 in line with those of the Church of England.

Ivone Turnbull

Water, water everywhere (but only to drink)

An amusing incident arises in the recently deposited records of Maidenhead Waterworks Company (D/EX 1913). One of the shareholders charged the company directors "with a policy and methods characterised as ... 'muddling', 'deaf-adder-like' and 'senseless'." The other shareholders disagreed and passed a vote of confidence in the board.

Hosepipe bans are also nothing new - we find that in the very early 20th century the company prosecuted individuals for using water supplied for domestic purposes on their gardens.

Lisa Spurrier

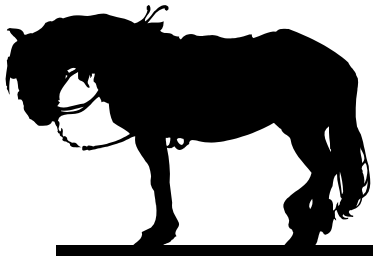
An Unwelcome Visitor

The Sept. 1875 Old Windsor parish magazine (document reference D/P150/28A/8A) revealed an intriguing incident:

"A curious, but somewhat alarming event disturbed the congregation assembled for the afternoon service in our parish church on Sunday, August 29th. The Vicar was

just finishing his sermon, when the sound of a horse was heard. In a few seconds he had dashed through the south door and then fell on the pavement in the middle of the nave.

The extreme suddenness and noise of the whole proceeding and the appearance of the great black horse "where nae sic horse should be" caused great consternation among the female members of the congregation.



The horse was backed out of the church by Colonel Howard Vyse, and the Vicar reminded those present that it was a cause of thankfulness that no one was injured. It transpires that the horse had been frightened whilst pulling a small steamer on the river. It was providential that no one was leaving the church at the time, or some serious accident might have occurred.

Sabina Sutherland

Centenarians in Hurley and Winkfield

We tend to think of people as living longer today than in the past, but some did reach a great age by any standards. One such is recorded in the Hurley register (document reference D/P 72/1/3), which on 5 December 1802 records the burial of "Sarah Williams, a poor old Widow (of a Soldier slain in Germany) - She was Supposed to be 100 years of Age - having been maintain'd by the Parish, and known only as an Old Woman, during the Life of Persons now more than 59 years Old"

Another lady, Esther Strike reached the age of 102 before being buried in Cranbourne on 22 February 1862. She was baptised Esther Jackman in Winkfield on 3 June 1759, and married William Strike in 1782. The vicar of Cranbourne noted in the burial register (document reference D/P 190/1/19): "She died in a cottage nearly opposite Cranbourn [sic] Church, Febr 14 AD1862: preserving her mental faculties to the last."

Lisa Spurrier

Traffic management in the 17th century

Heavy traffic is not just a 20th or 21st century problem as the Reading Corporation (Borough) minutes of 23 May 1649 (document reference R/AC 1/1/5; p41) reveals:



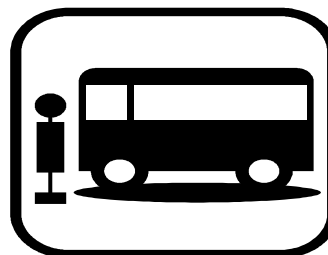
"Forasmuch as great damages and inconveniences have happened in this Towne by the often cominge and passage of divers Wagons, Timber carts and other carts by and over the waie from Castle Streete through the paved Streete called Minster Streete to Mr Thackhams and Mr Dewells doores and thenceforwards to the Markett

place and Wherffe, By reason of the narrownes of the waie from Minster Streete to ye said Markett place, Itt is therefore ordered and agreed, That for the future remidieing of ye said inconvenience, the said waie leading out of the said Castle Streete viz from John Frain's house to John Winches house shall bee chained uppe, there being a sufficient waie left for horses and men to passe to and fro, (The said Chaine from time to time onely to be opened upon necessary occasions)."

Lisa Spurrier

An Unusual Journey

The following story in a press cutting from the Reading Standard of 12 May 1906 shows what some councillors got up to in 1906 (document reference D/EX 1540/1):



"Roars of laughter ... were caused at Maidenhead Town Council meeting, on Monday evening, by Councillor P. Thompson reciting his experiences in London on Friday night as a 'bus driver, with the borough surveyor, Mr Percy Johns, as conductor. The couple, representing the council, went to Caledonian Market, and purchased two horses for the new steam fire engine; and Mr Thompson bought a superannuated London 'bus for his own private use. Between ten o'clock and midnight Mr Thompson (an experienced driver and horseman) harnessed the horses in the 'bus, intending to drive by road to Maidenhead. Desirous of improving the occasion, however, he followed the 'bus route, and solicited and took up fares. Passing bus-drivers looked on suspiciously. Fares were taken by the courteous conductor and put down at various points. Some were taken in wrong directions, and appeased by the return of their money. Tottenham Court-road, Charing Cross-road, Strand, etc., were negotiated, without police or other interference, and the joke was completed when the 'bus was pulled up outside a well-known hostelry, and the occupants informed that there would be a wait here while the driver and conductor partook of a chop! Of course, the fares alighted! Maidenhead was reached well before the breakfast hour. Mr Thompson announced to the council that the balance of fares for disposal was 11d., of which 2d. was for the conductor and the remaining 9d. he had handed to the borough accountant in relief of local rates."

Lisa Spurrier

Just catalogued

We were delighted by the gift to the Record Office of a volume containing Goad plans (exceptionally detailed maps produced for the benefit of fire insurance companies) for Reading and three non-Berkshire towns; those for Reading were initially drawn up in 1895 and revised at intervals, up to 1930 (D/EX 1900). A beautiful map of the Earl of Fingal's estate in Shinfield, drawn by prominent local surveyor Josiah Ballard in 1756, has been transferred from the Museum of English Rural Life (D/EX 1930).

