

# BRO

The Berkshire Record Office  
The Archives of the Royal County

## The Berkshire Echo Issue 45

- ❖ [Uncovering Broadmoor's Secret History](#)
- ❖ [Case Notes: Broadmoor](#)
- ❖ [Conservation of Broadmoor's Records](#)
- ❖ [New to the Archives](#)

### From the Editor

It's not everyday that you get the offer of looking after an archive of international importance, but it happened to BRO nearly 5 years ago. Broadmoor Hospital wished to transfer its historic archive to us, and we were very pleased to say yes. Of course, that was just the start of the story. Various lorries and vans have made their way from Crowthorne to Reading since, and each time we have decanted the contents into our strongrooms. We have made three separate approaches to The Wellcome Trust for funding, and they have granted us over £200,000 towards listing and repairing the collection. The repair work will continue for some time to come, but after eighteen months of that work, and over two years of cataloguing, we are delighted to declare Broadmoor Hospital's historic archive open for research. This is a significant achievement for BRO and particular thanks must be made to our dedicated project staff, Kate Tyte and Rhonda Niven, who write about their experiences in this Echo.

Broadmoor is one of those collections where every page tells a story, and often a very vivid story. There are many terribly sad tales of lives destroyed by mental illness, of families broken up and never

mended, of fear and paranoia. It is not history for the fainthearted. Yet at its heart is a community - a community of patients and staff, living, working and learning together, amongst the pine trees of Bracknell Forest. And it is the history of this community that is now available to all.

While The Secret World of Victorian Broadmoor exhibition is on at the Museum of Reading, BRO will be hosting its own exhibition to continue our 60th anniversary year. This gives us the chance to get out some old favourites from our collections and to acquaint you with some new ones, too. The exhibition follows on from the great response we had to the 60th anniversary edition of the Echo, and we are looking forward to planning further 60th activities over the next year. For now though, read on to find out more about Broadmoor, and to see what we've done with the records of England's first criminal lunatic asylum.

*The Broadmoor archive will be available for research from Tuesday, 18 November 2008.*



Mark Stevens  
Senior Archivist

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

#### THE SECRET WORLD OF VICTORIAN BROADMOOR

The Museum of Reading is hosting an exhibition to mark the completion of BRO's project to catalogue and conserve Broadmoor's records. Held at the Town Hall, Blagrove Street, Reading from 8 November 2008 to 22 February 2009, come along to view documents and artefacts never before seen by the public. The exhibition also includes paintings by Richard Dadd, celebrated artist and Broadmoor patient, on loan from Bethlem Royal Hospital.

#### QUARTER SESSIONS

A day school on Quarter Sessions records will be held at BRO on Saturday 14 February 2009 by Dr Peter Durrant. Learn more about these valuable but underused sources for local historians, and participate in workshop sessions to examine the records themselves. This school is run through the University of Oxford's Department for Continuing Education. To enrol, telephone: (01865) 270368 or email: [enrol@conted.ox.ac.uk](mailto:enrol@conted.ox.ac.uk).





# The Secret World of Victorian Broadmoor Uncovering Broadmoor's Secret History

Since Broadmoor Hospital opened in 1863, it has gained a reputation as a fascinating and frightening institution. Now that Berkshire Record Office has completed a project to catalogue and conserve the records, its secrets can be revealed to the public for the first time.

During the 1990s the staff and friends of Broadmoor created a historical society and began to gather records and artefacts relating the hospital's history. The society aimed to open a museum at Broadmoor, but there proved to be many obstacles, so in 2004 the historic records were deposited at BRO. The collection amounted to over 600 boxes of papers, plus over 500 volumes and other items.

This huge collection required too much work to be done as part of routine office work, so the Berkshire Record Office applied to The Wellcome Trust's Research Resources in Medical History funding scheme. It provided an initial grant of £110,000 for a 2-year cataloguing and conservation project. Patient files have subsequently been transferred to BRO, and The Wellcome Trust provided an additional £22,000 for their cataloguing, and £91,000 for their conservation.

I began the daunting task of sorting and cataloguing the collection in 2006. I started by listing the location and contents of each box, and then grouping the records together into series of

similar items. It was difficult both because of the volume of records, and because the records cover a long time period (1863-2004). During that time Broadmoor underwent many changes in its management structure. It was difficult to keep track of the various management bodies, and find out what they were responsible for, and what records they kept. The problems were intensified because there has been hardly any secondary material written about special hospitals.

To overcome these problems, I had to phone members of hospital staff, visit the Parliamentary Archives to view their records, and spend hours sifting through the records themselves to try to make sense of them. When I began this project I could have written what I knew about Broadmoor on the back of a postage stamp, and now I am probably the world expert!

Eventually I was able to identify all the records, place them in their context, and create a catalogue that I hope is user-friendly.

I know many people will want to use this fascinating collection, and I'm sure I won't remain the world expert for very long!

**Kate Tyte**  
*Archivist, Mental Health Project*



*Kate Tyte*

See original records relating to these famous patients and others at The Secret World of Victorian Broadmoor exhibition, 8 November 2008 to 22 February 2009 at the Museum of Reading. The Broadmoor archive is available for research at BRO from Tuesday, 18 November 2008.

### **PRISONERS, GHOSTS AND GLASS**

Come and see an exhibition celebrating Berkshire Record Office's 60th anniversary. Various treasures from our collections have been brought out especially for display. Open now Tuesdays to Fridays until 23 January 2008 in the Wroughton Room at BRO. Free; drop in during office hours.

### **BROADMOOR REVISITED**

BRO's Mark Stevens will be giving an introduction to Victorian Broadmoor at the Museum of Reading, Town Hall, Blagrove Street, Reading. Find out more about one of England's most famous institutions at this free drop-in event held on 12 November from 1:00 – 1:30 pm.

*Broadmoor's main gate (D/H14/L6/1)*

*Staff at Broadmoor, 19th c. (D/H14/B6/1)*



# From the Broadmoor Archives

## Case notes: Richard Dadd

Richard Dadd (1817-1886) was a well-known artist, and is one of Broadmoor's most famous patients. He studied at the Royal Academy in London before going on a Grand Tour of Europe, Egypt and the Holy Lands as the personal artist of Sir Thomas Phillips. During the trip Dadd became mentally ill. He became paranoid and believed that the Egyptian God Osiris spoke to him and guided his actions.

In August 1843 Dadd stabbed and killed his father during a walk in the countryside at Cobham. He believed he had killed the devil, and maintained this delusion all his life. Afterwards he fled to France but was caught by the police after attempting to cut the throat of another traveller. In his pocket was a list of names of 'people who must die'. Dadd was tried and found insane, and sent to Bethlem. He remained there for 20 years, and spent his time creating many celebrated paintings. In 1864 he was moved to Broadmoor where he continued with his paintings until he died in 1886.

## Case notes: Revd Henry John Dodwell

Revd Henry John Dodwell (1825 – 1900) was fired from the Brighton Industrial School where he was a chaplain in 1878. He thought this was unfair, so took legal action against his employers. In order to draw attention to his case he fired a pistol, loaded with blanks, at a judge. He was tried and found insane, and sent to Broadmoor in 1878.

There was great controversy about his case, because doctors were unable to agree whether he was insane. His case was widely discussed in the newspapers and in the House of Commons. The Royal Psychological Society even published a pamphlet about Dodwell, asking for him to be released. In 1882 Broadmoor's doctors, who thought it would be dangerous to release him, were proved right. He attacked Dr Orange, Broadmoor's Medical Superintendent, by hitting him over the head with a stone in a handkerchief. He thought this would draw attention to the 'injustices' against him. Dr Orange was badly injured and resigned because of ill health four years later. Dodwell remained in Broadmoor where he died from heart disease in 1900.

## Conservation of Broadmoor's records

Rhonda Niven



In April 2007 a conservation project to re-package, repair and stabilise the archives of Broadmoor Hospital, formerly Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum, was begun at the Berkshire Record Office. The archive includes a wide range of material covering the administration and personnel

records of the hospital. Patient medical records have also now been transferred to BRO.

The archive consists of both loose-leaf and bound material as well as photographs of patients and the hospital site. The records cover the period from the hospital's opening in 1863 until 2004. Prior to removal to the Berkshire Record Office the material had been stored in a variety of locations at Broadmoor Hospital from the Superintendent's office to the former bakery, and even, at one point, the mortuary. Hence, much of the material was in a poor condition. Many items were partially covered in bird droppings, and a number of items were mouldy throughout.

Preliminary preservation work, such as re-packaging and removal of staples, was undertaken by the Project Archivist during cataloguing. She established a database to identify items that were considered in need of further conservation treatment. This database was then used to survey the collection, identifying specific treatment to be undertaken. Having established the conservation requirements of the

collection, the Project Archivist was asked to indicate the priority and expected use of each item, so that conservation work could be concentrated on the most important documents. A total of 29 volumes was identified to be 're-bound as original' and 46 volumes to be 'case bound'. The case-binding is a simpler, more cost-effective style which enables the material to be accessed by searchers.

Dry cleaning, paper repairs and re-sewing were carried out on all volumes which required treatment. Some of the volumes were then out-sourced for re-binding in the original style. Others were case bound within the Conservation department at BRO.

A further grant has now been awarded by The Wellcome Trust to enable 20 boxes of patient records to be washed and repaired. On arrival at Berkshire Record Office, these records were found to be in such a fragile condition that researchers could not handle them safely. It is estimated that this part of the project will take a further 3 years to complete.

Rhonda Niven  
*Conservator, Mental Health Project*



Bird droppings damage (D/H14/B2/2/1)



## New to the Archives

### Estate & manorial

The highlight of recent cataloguing activity is a small but important collection of estate records relating to the estates of the Trumbull family of Easthampstead and related families, which appears to have strayed at some point from the Downshire archive (D/EZ91). Of particular interest are the Easthampstead estate accounts, 1719-1751, and (named) labourers' daybook, 1748-1757; Beenham estate accounts, 1746-1757; the diary of Robert Lee of Binfield, 1738-1739; and a rental of Lee's estates, 1749-1761. By coincidence, another small group of strays from this archive has also found its way here (D/EX2073). The most interesting of these is a rental dated 1831 (we hope to tell you more about this in a future issue).

We are also pleased to announce the completion of catalogues for the final swathe of newly discovered manorial records. These relate to manors in the parishes of Faringdon and Shrivensham (D/EEL), Letcombe Regis manor (D/EZ160), Welford and Peasemore manors (D/EAH), and Coxwell and other manors belonging to the Earl of Radnor (D/EPB), and range in date from the 16th to the 20th centuries.

Other estate records include a delightful sale catalogue for Forest Hill Park in Clewer, 1885 (D/EX2044). We have purchased an early deed for land in Englefield common field, dated 1455 (D/EZ158). Other deeds added to our holdings relate to Norden Road, Maidenhead, 1879-1980 (D/EX2069); Fawley Lodge, Coley Avenue, Reading, 1890-1974 (D/EX2067); and a tenement in Wantage, 1616 (D/EX2074).

### Local government

The records of local government form an important part of our holdings, and we have been working steadily to make them more accessible. The minutes of Wokingham Borough, previously only held to 1885, are now available for consultation up to 1974 (with the exception of the mayoral year 1971/2) (WO/AC). To help house historians we have catalogued the rate books for Windsor, 1914-1951, and Clewer Without, 1914-1926 (WI/FR). The Windsor Borough rentals (for property belonging to the borough), 1528, 1561 and 1800-1815 (formerly given the provisional reference WI/FR) are now listed as WI/FA3.

### Board of guardians

It is an unusual pleasure to announce the discovery of some additional records from Wokingham Board of Guardians (G/WO). These include the letter book recording the Guardians' correspondence, 1835-1842; and most excitingly for family historians, there are registers of births in the workhouse (later a war emergency hospital) from 1914 to 1943, and deaths, 1866-1925. A hitherto missing volume of accounts for Easthampstead Poor Law Union has also come to light, 1900-1902 (G/E).

### Parish registers

Family historians will be interested in the following newly arrived parish registers:

Blewbury: baptisms, 1864-1911; burials, 1855-1928 (D/P20).  
Stubbings: banns, 1964-1980, plus a map of the district assigned to the church in 1856 and correspondence of the managers of the Church of England school, 1909-1931 (D/P195).

### Opening Hours

Tues 9-5, Weds 9-5, Thurs 9-9pm, Fri 9-4.30.  
Closed Mondays, Weekends and Bank Holidays.  
Please call us for further details.  
*Closed for stocktaking 3 to 14 November 2008 (inclusive)*

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### Funding Partners

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