

BRO

The Berkshire Record Office
The Archives of the Royal County

The Berkshire Echo

July 2018

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WHAT'S ON

From the Editor

Welcome to the summer edition of the Berkshire Echo. This time we look north-west of Berkshire to Coleshill as we near the completion of a conservation and cataloguing project. Generously funded by a grant from the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust, the records of the Coleshill Estate will soon be available for research and an exhibition will help tell the story of the estate and show off some its records.

The first deposit of the Pleydell Bouverie family and Coleshill Estate papers was made in 1951 and there were subsequent transfers in the 1960s. However it was not until the 1990s that the National Trust informed the BRO that a large collection of records had been discovered in the stables on the estate. Some 200 boxfuls were transferred to the BRO, but sadly time had taken its toll and many of the records were in a poor condition and in need of significant conservation work. Thus they remained for several years, safe, but inaccessible.

Now following months of cataloguing and conservation work, combined with teams

of local volunteers from the Women's Institute and Wokingham Theatre who helped to clean and rehouse documents, the collection will finally be accessible to the public. The articles that follow provide detail on the Coleshill estate as well as the conservation work that was carried out. An exhibition of featured documents entitled "A Perfect Specimen": the Coleshill Estate and the Radical Lord Radnor' will be on display from 17th October 2018 to celebrate the completion of this project. We hope you enjoy reading and discovering more about it.

Don't forget that you can always keep up to date with what's going on, the latest news, and search the online catalogue by visiting our website:

www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk
or social media pages on:

 @berksarchives

 berkshirerecordoffice

Ivone Turnbull
Senior Archivist

'A Perfect Specimen'

17th October 2018 to 18th January 2019,
during normal opening hours

"A Perfect Specimen": the Coleshill Estate and the Radical Lord Radnor' is an exhibition which looks at the way a dynamic landlord set about improving a great Berkshire estate in the mid-nineteenth century, some of which can still be seen today. Available during our opening hours (Tuesday and Wednesday 9am to 5pm, Thursday 9am to 9pm and Friday 9am to 4.30pm). FREE admission. Why not come along and take a look?

How to Read Old Handwriting

12th November 2018, time 10.15-14.45
Always wanted to know how to read old handwriting? Come along to our introduction to reading handwriting found in documents at the BRO from c.1500 to 1700. Cost is £20 per person. There are 10 places available and booking is essential. Please email arch@reading.gov.uk or call 0118 937 5132.

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Top: The Albert Institute, Windsor (D/EX2386/1)



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Top: Coleshill House in 1822 (D/EX130/3/10/2)

Coleshill House and Estate

Until its tragic destruction by fire in 1952, Coleshill House was one of the most elegant and beautiful houses in Berkshire. Situated on rising ground just outside the village of Coleshill in the extreme north-west of Berkshire, it had glorious views south towards the Berkshire Downs and west over the valley of the River Cole into Wiltshire. Designed by Roger Pratt for his cousin Sir George in the 1650s, it was the home successively first of the Pratt family, then of their descendants the Pleydells, and finally of the Pleydell Bouverie family, Earls of Radnor, before being acquired by the National Trust after the second world war.

As well as being a family home, it was also the centre of a large estate, covering nearly 4,500 acres in north-west Berkshire and extending over the county boundary into north Wiltshire. All the owners of the estate took an active interest in its management. William Pleydell Bouverie (1779-1869), the third Earl of Radnor, however, was particularly notable. He was an improving landlord and advocate of modern methods of agriculture. The model farm he established with the aid of his agent Edward Moore in Coleshill in the 1850s

was widely admired and held up in the national agricultural press as an example to be emulated.

And what a treasure-trove has been found in the records discovered in the stables. There is a fine series of rentals, detailed accounts of the farms in hand, thousands of bills and vouchers, stock and pedigree books, nearly 100 maps and plans, and a splendid set of wages books and papers detailing the work done on the estate day by day and naming the men who did it. And there are records of more leisurely activities too: five cricket score books record the result of matches between the estate teams and their local rivals.

The culmination of this cataloguing project means that access to this fine collection will finally be possible. Although neither the estate nor the farm are open to the public, it is possible to visit the watermill and the second world war defences. For details on when this is possible, see the National Trust website: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/the-buscot-and-coleshill-estates

Behind the Scenes at the BRO

19th November 2018, time 10.30 to 11.30

Ever wanted to know what goes on behind the scenes at the BRO? Come along and find out. You will be shown how we store our documents and given an insight into the job of our conservator. It's FREE and there are 12 spaces available. Booking is essential. Please email arch@reading.gov.uk or call 0118 937 5132.

World War I blog

The blog continues to grow on a daily basis. Each post relates to that day or month 100 years earlier, as the 1914-1918 war unfolds before Berkshire eyes. Why not take a look: <http://berkshirevoiceswwi.wordpress.com/>.



Conserving Coleshill

The majority of the documents are 'working' records. For instance, there are multiple copies of maps in a variety of formats and media, from initial draft to final plan. Similarly, the manuscripts contain many original additions of sections, inserts and secondary binding elements which reflect the changing relationship between author and user. Additionally, contemporaneous repairs with unsuitable materials regularly occur throughout the body of work. Balancing the conflict between restoring functionality and the desire to correctly represent these historical elements has been an ongoing facet of this project.

One of the greatest challenges was treating documents which had been subject to poor storage conditions which affected their appearance. As a result, many of the documents were badly fragmented and torn. During the preliminary survey for the project, many of these were able to be matched to other fragments which had been stored across other locations. Visually many of the maps and plans had severe staining and darkening where different levels of cumulative light exposure had altered their appearance over time, which is apparent even post reunification. However, for the maps affected in this way, the evidence of this damage bears witness to the history of the document, and its connection to the past.

Over the course of the project, the aim was to stabilise the documents, and restore their functionality for public use. This was achieved in a variety of ways dependent on the needs of the material and the media used. With bound volumes and flat documents, some of the largest problems for a conservator are negotiating risks to material which is sensitive to moisture, as many common treatment approaches involve the use of water.

As the use of watercolours and inks was common throughout the collection, a variety of approaches were developed to tackle the issues presented. Some could be carefully treated

utilising a machine known as a 'vacuum suction table', which allows for greater control by increasing rates of evaporation to remove stains, whilst others with localised stains or adhesive marks could be treated by using a Gellan or Agar gel to gently introduce moisture over a longer period of time.

Possibly the greatest challenge was posed by the Great Coxwell tithe map, which was easily the largest document requiring treatment. Measuring 1500 by 1060 mm, and comprised of over 20 fragments of varying size, the map required great amounts of technical ability to handle and clean the document with care. As it was heavily damaged and dimensionally large with a variety of different media sensitive to moisture, the best approach was carefully researched, in order to best plan how to negotiate the treatment complexities.

In order to minimise risk to the sensitive media, a material known as a 'fixative' was applied to sensitive areas across the map. The fixative was selected as it was 'volatile', a term which means it would evaporate in a well-ventilated atmosphere and leave no residue. However, this restricted treatment time, which meant there was a limited window in order to complete aqueous treatment. This meant that during the lining procedure, it was imperative to act quickly and efficiently, ensuring each fragment was placed correctly and each area of text and imagery aligned as originally intended.

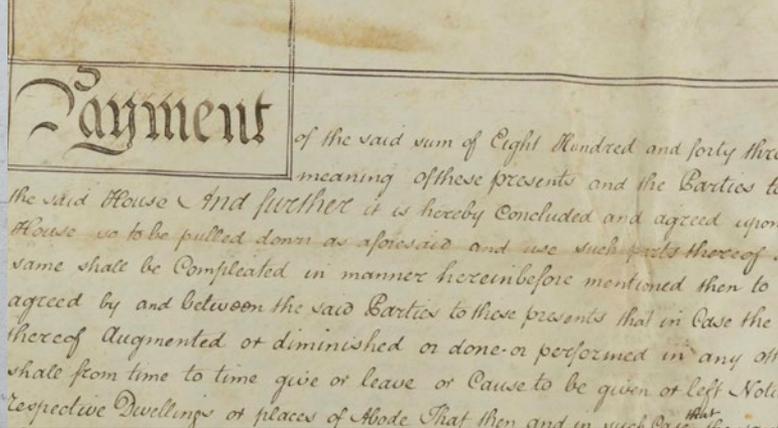
As there were large areas of the map missing, the decision was made to undertake a process called 'infilling' whereby an archival neutral toned handmade paper was shaped and used to stabilise the adjacent material and fit into the missing area. After this, the document was housed on an acrylic tube in a bespoke made Tyvek map bag. It, along with other items in the collection, will now be accessible to view thanks to the completion of the project.

Top: Repairing the Great Coxwell tithe map (D/EPB) - The map after repair





New to the Archives



Top left: The Albert Institute, Windsor (D/EX2386/1)
Top right: Contract for building Bear Place (D/EX2544/1)

From mansions to bungalows: sources for house history

An interesting recent arrival is the contract for building Bear Place, Wargrave, for David Ximenes (D/EX2544). Edward Edgerley of Hurley, carpenter and builder, undertook to demolish the existing house called 'Bare Place', and to build a new 'substantial' brick house on a site marked out on Bare Place Farm. The contract includes a detailed specification, including reuse of materials from the old house, at a maximum cost of £843. We have catalogued a lovely architect's elevation of the Albert Institute, Windsor, 1878 (D/EX2386). We have also acquired plans for bungalows in Bracknell, 1920-1922 (D/EX2485); and slides showing the redevelopment of Orts Road, Reading, in 1977 (D/EX2494).

New light can be shed on the development of east Reading through the records of the Redlands Estate Company, 1836-1928 (R/D69). A small collection of manorial records for Ascot and Winkfield manors, 1758-1921, is now available (D/EX2650). We have also listed a series of rate books for Charlton, 1875-1922 (G/WT).

Charities

The records of Windsor Municipal Charities (WI/Q) have now been listed. These charities provided marriage portions, apprenticeships, and education for the poor, as well as helping widows and the elderly.

Psalm singing strollers

One of the most interesting of the Reading Borough deposited collections includes records of the Archdeacon's Visitations of Berkshire, 1729 and 1786, and 18th century copies of various documents in the Archdeacon's possession (R/D80). Most intriguing is the order by the Bishop in 1737 to stop groups of 'psalm singing strollers' from wandering from church to church. We have also listed records of the Newbury Rural Deanery, 1970-1984 (D/RDN); and Vale of White Horse Rural Deanery magazines, 1948-1969 (D/RDV).

The best of wives

The will of Samuel Torrent, vicar of Reading St Giles, 1729 (R/D151) includes a request to be buried frugally by his wife, 'my Brethren of the Clergy who have been received by me in my lifetime with a generosity perhaps exceeding my circumstances will not expect or desire that she who

might have had a more ample provision made for her and her child, had I endeavoured to have saved anything out of the Revenues of my Living or even of my own private fortune for her, should put herself to any great charge for my Interment, nor can she who has been known by all persons at all acquainted with her to have made the best of Wives'. If she remarried, trustees were requested to take care of the education of his young son, 'regarding much more his improvement in Religion than Learning, that they would take care not to send him to any school, how great credit soever it may be, where the Master or Masters of it are in the least suspected of being tainted with Arrian [sic] or Republican Principles'.

Berkshire families

We have catalogued papers of the Fuller, Coleman, Pope and related families of Abingdon and elsewhere, 1681-1886 (D/ECM). We have also received records relating to a trust fund established by Thomas Holdsworth, 1887-1896 (D/EX2618), and the probate of John Dickenson of Bill Hill, 1842 (D/EX2643).

Opening Hours

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

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Funding Partners

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