
in touch

Berkshire Family History Society



27th Sep saw the second anniversary of the launch of the new websites. I'm not quite sure where the intervening two years went but we thought we'd mark it with a bit of fun by having a Treasure Hunt - details below. Enjoy!

Elsewhere, we have expanded the opening days for the Centre, we've news on

the progress of YourTrees (*have you submitted YOUR tree yet?*) as well as from The Vale & Downland Museum and tens of millions of new records on Findmypast.



New series of Who Do You Think You Are

Yippee it's back!

You know autumn is on its way when the lineups are announced for the new series of Strictly Come Dancing and Who Do You Think You Are?

The latter begins on 12th October with an episode starring comedian Josh Widdicombe. The series has an impressive line-up of celebrities waiting to explore their past, together with Josh Widdicombe, there's: Ed Balls, Dame Judi Dench, Pixie Lott, Joe Lycett, Alex Scott and Joe Sugg. The seven-part series takes us to the Tudor Court, the English Civil War, Denmark, Jamaica, Jewish East London, the Marines and the Great Fire of London.



Ancestors from the Vale of the White Horse area?

If you are interested in the history of Wantage or your family comes from the Vale area, the Vale and Downland Museum in Wantage may have resources to help you.

This delightful museum has recently opened a new research library which is sure to be of interest to those with ancestors from the town and surrounding area. Visitors can access reference books, articles, photographs and maps. They also have an extensive collection of wills and transcripts. Volunteers are on hand to help guide visitors through the available resources and assist with queries.

To visit, you will need to book an appointment as there is only limited room and the email to do so is: researchlibrary@valeanddownlandmuseum.org.uk. There is also at present a mini exhibition on the Almshouses in Wantage.

For those further afield, there are also free downloadable resource guides on the website. These cover a wide range of subjects such as Wantage Baptists in the 17th Century, Rural Foundries in the Vale and Downland, the 1832 Cholera Outbreak in Wantage and Chilton Church School.

Check it out at:

<https://valeanddownlandmuseum.org.uk/library/>



Centre for Heritage & Family History - open longer from mid-October

It has been so lovely to see everyone who has come to see us since we reopened the doors of the society's heritage centre on the second floor of Reading Central Library. We have been busy most days and are welcoming a mix of customers who are able to pre-book and those who drop in on chance there will be space. You are all very welcome.

To find out more about the Centre and our covid-precautions and to pre-book your visit - see:

<https://berksfhs.org/planning-a-visit/>

In addition, we are delighted to let you know that **from Monday 18th October** we will be increasing our opening hours further. From the 18th onwards, you will no longer need to pre-book your visit and may just turn up.

Opening hours from 18th October

Mondays 11am - 3pm

Tuesdays 11am - 3pm

Thursdays (last Thursday of the month) 11am - 3pm

Saturdays (1st Saturday of the month) 11am - 2.30pm

Our opening hours will be reviewed again in early 2022. We look forward to seeing more of you over the coming months.

Findmypast adds their biggest record release for 2021

Findmypast have recently added a massive 32 million names and 14 million addresses to their record set England & Wales, Electoral Registers 1910-1932. The newly added records span the years 1910-1919 and will be useful to both family and house historians.

Electoral Registers are lists created annually of people who are eligible to vote and include their reason for eligibility, such as their residence or ownership of a property. Included now, are those who first gained entitlement to vote after 1918.

Given the lack of a 1931 England & Wales census, electoral registers become even more important for this period.

The detail in each register varies but will include some or all the following information:

Transcripts

- Name
- Year
- Polling district or place – This will include polling districts or wards. Civil parishes are not indexed and will need to be searched by keyword.
- Constituency
- County

Images

- Address or abode
- Nature of qualification or a description of the property
- Name, description and residence of a landlord or another person to whom rent is paid
- Occasionally occupation or age

Find out more at:



New service continues to grow

We've broken through the 100 trees mark and the database is steadily growing. We now have more than double the number of names than Members Interest has collected since the society was founded in 1975 - four weeks compared to forty six years! And it's all indexed and available for lightning-fast searches.

Why not add *your* tree to YourTrees? It's absolutely free - a new benefit of membership. Your membership fee is worth every penny, just for THIS service let alone all the other member benefits.

We've already heard from some members who've lost their hard-won work due to a computer crash. Don't let that happen to you. Send us your tree and you'll have an emergency backup!

Find out more

And now for the Treasure Hunt!



We've hidden some treasure chests on the website. Find one, click on it and you can enter our free prize draw for a ticket to one of three talks of your choice. But you need to get digging - because the treasure disappears on 10th Oct!

You need to login to start the hunt

Clues:

All the clues point to a group of pages on the website and the first clue tells you which group of pages. On arrival shall I tarry and see what happens or shall I rush off elsewhere to look? Family Historians are nothing but patient though. Remember the tale of the Hare and the Tortoise.

1. This menu looks intriguing and has some Info I might find useful - there must be something in one of those boxes beneath
2. There's an article by a member that I want to read again. Now, where can I find it ..?
3. Somewhere you'll find some data about our historic county
4. What connects a cocktail consisting of Irish whiskey, chartreuse and vermouth; a collection of short stories by James Joyce; and a five lined poem?
5. We took a poll on how many members could solve these clues and 1,832 said yes.
6. Where can a white swan, a repetition of sound, a cedar log and a grinning cat all potentially further your family research?

Start hunting



Events

Our events programme is mostly online

Join us - wherever you are



October Natter Group

**Discussion Group facilitated by:
Chad Hanna and Gillian Stevens
05 Oct 18:45 for 19:00**

Venue: Online

Join in this online discussion from your own home, wherever where you live.
Open only to members of Berkshire Family History Society.

Informal discussion group, facilitated by Chad Hanna and Gillian Stevens. Topics are chosen by the group on a monthly basis. End time varies

Free to members

Pre-booking required

Book now



A Potpourri of Social History Talks – Autumn Series

7 Oct, 21 Oct, 4 Nov, 18 Nov, 4th Dec

Venue: Online

This all series ticket covers all five talks in the autumn “Potpourri of Social History” talks series, for the discounted price of four. You may also book each talk individually – see each separate event page. Four of the talks are on Thursday afternoons at 2pm, one on a Saturday at 12 noon. All last about an

hour with time for questions and discussion afterwards.

Smelly Alley, Reading

[Thursday 7th October 2 - 3.15pm: Smelly Alley, Reading with Kevin Little](#)

Fairmile Hospital, Berkshire's county asylum

[Thursday 21st October 2-3.15pm: Fairmile Hospital, Berkshire's county asylum with Mark Stevens](#)

Wilts and Berks Canal

[Thursday 4th November 2-3.15pm: Wilts and Berks Canal with Martin Buckland](#)

The Duke of Wellington: A life of service

[Thursday 18th November 2-3.15pm: The Duke of Wellington: A life of service with Brigadier Michael Aris DL & Richard Bennett DL](#)

The History of Greyfriars Church, Reading

[Saturday 4th December 12 noon – 1.15pm: The history of Greyfriars Church, Reading with Malcolm Summers](#)

The all series ticket cost £20 (members £16)

Pre-booking required

Book now



Smelly Alley, Reading

Talk by Kevin Little

07 Oct 13:45 for 14:00

Venue: Online

Fishmongering & other stories

"Smelly Alley", more properly Union Street, is a narrow pedestrian street linking Friar Street and Broad Street. It's famous in Reading as one the few locations where you could until recently experience a more 'characterful' shopping

experience. From the 1930s until relatively recently, Kevin and his father before him, ran Frosts the fishmongers there. This talk is packed with anecdotes about life in the Alley, including how it got its name, and the story of the oldest shop in Reading.

Tickets cost £5 (members £4)

Pre-booking required

Book now



Introducing Manorial Records

**All Branches Meeting
with talk by Ian Waller
13 Oct 19:15 for 19:45**

Venue: Online

For centuries, the lives of our ancestors were controlled by the lord of the manor which continued until their final demise in 1922. For many family historians any mention of the manor makes them tremble because they think it leads back into the strange world of medieval history where only faint ghosts of our anonymous ancestors exist. Manorial records are an important source of information providing a fascinating insight of the day-to-day life of most of our ancestors.

Manors had countless officials, rules and regulations and held courts to deal with transgressions and uphold the local laws. The records generated mean you would be able to find family name in the wealth of manorial documents. Every person associated with the manor – urban or rural – will likely be named. This talk examines how the manorial system operated and what records it generated in which your ancestor may well have appeared.

Free to members. Non-members £3.

Pre-booking required

[Book now](#)



1-1 Family History Advice Session

18 Oct

Slots start at 14:00, 14:30, 15:05 and 15:35

Venue: Online

Are you just getting started in family history and wanting guidance as to how to proceed? Or are you stuck at a particular “brick wall” and need some help?

Our popular family history advice sessions have returned, and these ones are online using Zoom technology. These sessions are 1-1, free of cost and are available to members and non-members alike.

Book a 25 minute slot with our advisers and you’ll receive help from our experienced research assistants. We will provide whatever help and suggestions that we can within the time frame and will book a follow-on session with you if needed. Four 1-1 slots are available in this session:

Slot 1: 14.00 – 14.25

Slot 2: 14.30 – 14.55

Slot 3: 15.05 – 15.30

Slot 4: 15.35 – 16.00

Pre-booking is required because full joining instructions will be emailed to attendees in advance. You will also be asked to confirm the advice you are seeking, so that we can make the session as useful as possible for you. Bookings close one week before the event.

[Book now](#)



Getting the most out of UK Census Records Workshop led by Tony Roberts

20 Oct 19:00 - 21:00

Venue: Online

Find out how to get the most from census records for your family history research. This workshop considers the background to the census and looks at it in some of its early forms in England and Wales. Attendees will explore the development in the modern census from 1841 to date, including also the 1939 Register, and have the opportunity to examine examples of different census.

Members: £9 Non-members: £10

Book now

That was just a selection from our extensive
events programme ...

... [click here for the full programme](#)

Events routinely sell out so book early to secure
your place



Berkshire Family History Society

for family history research - in Berkshire and beyond

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