

Keeping in touch

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in touch

Berkshire Family History Society



East Ilsley Sheep Fair - Image courtesy of Jim Bradshaw

Hello

We lead with another evocative image from Jim Bradshaw. The East Ilsley Sheep Fair was an important part of local history for 400 years, ending only in 1934 when road transport put paid to it. We know, then, that this image predates 1934, and Jim has done another fabulous colourisation job - you can almost hear and smell the sheep in their pens. For more info about the sheep fairs [click here](#).

We have details of MyHeritage's latest offering on the image 'enhancement' front - give them a photo and a script and see and hear your 'ancestor' speaking. Let's see what you think, but to me it lacks the authenticity of Jim's work, which will continue to feature in [in touch](#).



More Online Maps on the Berkshire Record Office Website

After the recent addition of the Public Health Maps for Reading - this week we have another announcement from the Berkshire Record Office (BRO) of more new online maps.

This time it's the Tithe Maps for Berkshire which have been added to the BRO's online catalogue. Simply add the name of the parish you are interested in and "tithe" to the catalogue search field and the catalogue details for all related documents will appear including a digital copy of the map. You can click to enlarge to see more details.

The level of detail included in the tithe maps is usually very good - with individual fields often included and named. As these maps usually pre-date the first OS maps - they are a great way of seeing what your ancestral villages looked like in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Thank you to the team at the BRO.

[Click here to search the catalogue:](#)

<https://www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk/search-catalogue>

And if you haven't used tithe records before, The National Archives have a very useful guide:

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/tithes/>

And don't forget Berkshire's Enclosure Maps are already online at:

<http://www.berkshireenclosure.org.uk/>



Berkshire Family History Society's AGM

Berkshire Family History Society's Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday 22nd June at 7.30pm, via Zoom. There will be no speaker booked for the event, as we will only be conducting society business.

Places must be booked in advance. If there are two members within your household, please book two places. Booking will close 2 days before the AGM.

This is a great opportunity for those of you who haven't previously been able to attend an AGM, to join this important part of the governance of the society. Meet other members of the society, hear about the society during 2021/2022 and find out the plans ahead. Questions and debate is encouraged. We welcome all members, wherever you may live.

The society also needs more people to step forward to act as Trustees. This isn't an onerous task but we need as broad a spectrum of experience and views as we can manage, to help manage the day-to-day running of the society and set the direction. If you are willing to stand, please submit the online form by Sunday 22 May 2022

Find out more about the AGM and nominate yourself at:

<https://berksfhs.org/2022-annual-general-meeting/>

Book your place at the AGM at:

<https://berksfhs.org/events/annual-general-meeting/>

DNA Family Secrets returns to BBC2 from 19th April



Keep an eye on the TV schedule for Tuesday - DNA Family Secrets is back with six episodes in the second series - once again hosted by Stacey Dooley.

DNA Testing has become increasingly popular in recent years, particularly amongst family historians, but we are still beginning to understand the way that it can change people's views of themselves and of their family histories. DNA Family Secrets made this abundantly clear back in 2021 when it debuted and it

will be interesting to see the journeys which are revealed this time round.

There was little available in the way of announcements as we prepared this newsletter - but the first episode apparently starts in Liverpool with a gentleman who has long wanted to know the identity of his father and is flabbergasted by what he learns.



New MyHeritage Tool makes photographs “move” and “talk”

Over the last two years, family history website MyHeritage has steadily unveiled new photograph manipulation tools using artificial intelligence.

The latest allows people in old photographs to “move” and “speak”.

To use LiveStory, you need to be a MyHeritage subscriber or register for a free account. You will be able to upload a photograph of your deceased relative and type in a biographical account for them to say. The website then creates a video in which your ancestor talks and moves.

This latest offering from MyHeritage shows just how far AI has advanced in recent years.

Check it out at:

<https://www.myheritage.com/livestory>

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

First tranche of military service records added to The National Archives' catalogue

In February 2021, the MOD began the process of transferring all 9.7 million historic service personnel records to The National Archives (TNA). It will take six years.

The records include around 500,000 individuals with First World War service and the vast majority of those who served in the Second World War, as well as those who did National Service.

The first tranche of these records are now available to order from TNA. The records are those in series WO 420 and relate to the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) regiment, where the date of birth is before 1917. You can now search the records by searching for 'WO 420' in Discovery, TNA's online catalogue, and browsing the listings, which include each man's name, date of birth and service number.

The actual service records are not available online.

To access a record, you must click 'Details' by the man's name and follow the instructions to order a record to view at TNA's buildings in London. It is also possible to order a paper copy of a record using TNA's record ordering service.

Find out more at:

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/news/first-mod-service-personnel-records-now-available/>





Events

Our events programme is mostly online

Join us - wherever you are



Victorian Crime, Police and Criminals

**All Branches Meeting with talk by
Antony Marr**

20 Apr 19:15 for 19:45

Venue: Online

Every family has someone who got involved with the criminal justice system – as a criminal, a victim, a witness, a police or prison officer. In my own family a court conviction in Liverpool in 1868 led to a chain of events that had a lasting effect on my family for a century or more.

This talk will look at finding the records of crime and criminals in the Victorian period. It will look at the types of court your ancestor may have appeared in, what records might remain and where to find them. It will look at some of the punishments handed down, including hanging, transportation and penal servitude with hard labour. The Victorians loved keeping records and the criminal justice system is a particularly rich source – court documents, newspaper reports, appeals for clemency and letters from prisoners (and sometimes photographs) often survive and can add wonderful detail to your family history research.

The Victorian period also saw the introduction of formal police forces, and a major building programme of prisons in England and Wales and your ancestor may have served as a constable or prison officer – we will look at what records you might find of their service.

Free to members. Non-members £3

Pre-booking required

[Book now](#)



Royal Flying Corps Records Workshop

Tutor: Richard Marks
23 Apr 14.00 - 16.00

Venue: Online

The Great War of 1914-18 saw the first use of aircraft in warfare. The British Royal Flying Corps played an important role throughout.

In this workshop, we will look at what the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) was and how it related to the Royal Naval Air Service, prior to the amalgamation of the two into the Royal Air Force in 1918. We will investigate how the family historian can discover what their relative did in the RFC. We will consider their experiences, their aircraft, what records may be available and where to find them.

Tickets cost £10 (members £9)

Pre-booking required

[Book now](#)



1-1 Family History Advice Session – April

The Centre - Berkshire FHS
25 Apr 14:00 to 16:00

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 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 - already booked

Slot 3: 15.05 – 15.30

Slot 4: 15.35 – 16.00

Free members and non-members of Berkshire Family History Society
Pre-booking required

[Book now](#)



A Potpourri of Social History Talks – Spring Series

28 Apr 14:00 - 15:15

26 May as above

23 Jun as above

Venue: Online

This all series ticket covers all three in the spring “Potpourri of Social History” talks series, for the discounted price of £12.50 (members £10.00). You may also

book each talk individually – see each separate event page. All three talks are on Thursdays at 2pm and last about an hour. Afterwards there will be time for questions and discussion.

Plentys of Newbury

The Plenty name will be familiar to many people living in Berkshire. It has been associated with engineering in the town of Newbury for over 200 years, with products ranging from ploughs to steam engines. This talk will chart the development of the family company, looking at the characters involved and how they shaped the direction of the business. It will also give a glimpse of the workers during the Victorian period and find out what it was like to work in the Plenty factory.

[Thursday 28 April “Plentys of Newbury” 2 – 3.15pm with Ellie Thorne](#)

More than Biscuits, Beer and Bulbs – Reading’s Other Industries

While Reading is rightly renowned for its baking, brewing and seed businesses, the town had many lesser-known industries that brought with them prosperity and just as importantly jobs for the wider population. In a time when most companies were privately owned, we will explore a number of these companies and the people who owned them covering industries such as printing, ironworking and brickmaking; names like Cox and Wyman, Katesgrove Foundry and Poulton’s Waterloo Kiln Brickworks.

[Thursday 26 May “More than Biscuits, Beer and Bulbs – Reading’s Other Industries” 2 – 3.15pm with Jo Alexander Jones](#)

The Simonds Family & Simonds Brewery

The Simonds brewery was founded in Broad Street, Reading, by William Blackall Simonds in 1785. After a move to Bridge Street, it remained there until 1978. It is one of the reasons Reading was known for the 3 Bs – biscuits, beer and bulbs. Raymond Simonds, son of the last Simonds family managing director of the brewery, will begin by telling us about his Reading roots. These can be traced back to the 13th century and its wider origins in Europe and the USA. He will talk about the origins of the family brewery, its extent and eventual demise.

[Thursday 23 June “The Simonds Family & Simonds Brewery” 2 – 3.15pm with Raymond Simonds](#)

The all series ticket cost £12.50 (members £10)
Pre-booking required

Book now



Plentys of Newbury

Speaker: Ellie Thorne

28 Apr 14:00 - 15: 25

Venue: Online

The Plenty name will be familiar to many people living in Berkshire. It has been associated with engineering in the town of Newbury for over 200 years, with products ranging from ploughs to steam engines.

This talk will chart the development of the family company, looking at the characters involved and how they shaped the direction of the business. It will also give a glimpse of the workers during the Victorian period and find out what it was like to work in the Plenty factory.

This talk is the first of three in the Spring Potpourri online talks series. [Book all three talks in the series](#) for £12.50 (members £10).

Prebooking is required

Non-members £5, Members £4

Book now



May Natter Group

Facilitators: Chad Hanna and Gillian Stevens

03 May 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 attend, but pre-booking is required so that the meeting link can be emailed to you.

[Book now](#)



House Histories Course

Tutor: Dr Margaret Simons
Saturday May 7th and 14th.
Each session 11.00 - 13.00

Venue: Online

Researching the history of a house can be both exciting and rewarding, revealing fascinating stories of those that lived there before you. Do you have a house that you are interested in knowing more about, have you come up against a dead end or do you just want to know how to approach the subject?

If so, then this online course will help you reveal people, dates, events and much more using familiar resources like the census, but also introduce you to the less familiar such as the national Farm Survey, 'Modern Domesday', the 1910 Inland Revenue valuation survey, rate books, tithe records, local authority records, sales particulars and auction catalogues. You are welcome to bring your housing project to these sessions.

Two sessions: May 7th and 14th, both sessions 11am – 1pm

Week 1. Establishing what you know already and a starting point for your research. Identifying those records that will get you started.

Week 2. Where next? Using the facts and figures of our data collection as our base we will consider those sources that can help us to give context to our

research and flesh out our house history.

Tickets cost £20 (members £18)

Pre-booking required

[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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