

In Touch

Berkshire FHS <noreply@berksfhs.org.uk>

27 August 2023 at 08:00

in touch



Hi

This week's is a rather different **in touch**

We have the usual list of Society events but our major feature is Berkshire Heritage Open Days, which makes this a bumper edition.

Every September thousands of volunteers across England organise events to celebrate our fantastic history and culture. It's a chance to see hidden places and try out new experiences – all of which are FREE to explore. This year's theme is astounding inventions. Here's our pick of some of the events taking place across the county. For full details of all events see:

<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/>



Berkshire Family History Society

To celebrate our rich heritage in Berkshire and to give individuals the opportunity to discover the incredible inventors and pioneers in their own families the Society will be extending the opening in The Centre for Heritage and Family History during the Heritage Open Days period. The Centre is open to members and non-members alike and is free to visit, although donations are welcomed. Refreshments are available for a small charge.

Our opening hours will be as follows:

Monday 11 September: 10.30am - 3pm

Tuesday 12 September: 10.30am - 7pm

Saturday 16 September: 10.30am - 2.30pm

In addition, on Saturday 16th September - Catherine Sampson will be giving a talk ["Who Do I Think I Am?"](#) exploring some of the characters and pioneers in her open family and how she went about finding them. It is aimed at beginners and those new to family history, or to those who just enjoy a good family story. It is free to attend. Pre-booking is preferred but you can just turn up on the day.



St Helen's Church, Abingdon: Talk and Visit

"The Wondrous Machine" - an illustrated talk on organs and their music over three centuries. As well as the talk, St Helens Church will be open throughout the weekend and is well worth a visit. There has been a church on this site since the 10th century or earlier. The present church dates from the 13th century but over the subsequent centuries several aisles were added by bequests from local guilds and families so that, unusually, it is now considerably wider than it is long. The panorama of stained glass windows is lovely but the church's most special feature is the very rare ceiling paintings in the 14th century Lady Chapel. See website for opening times and access details.

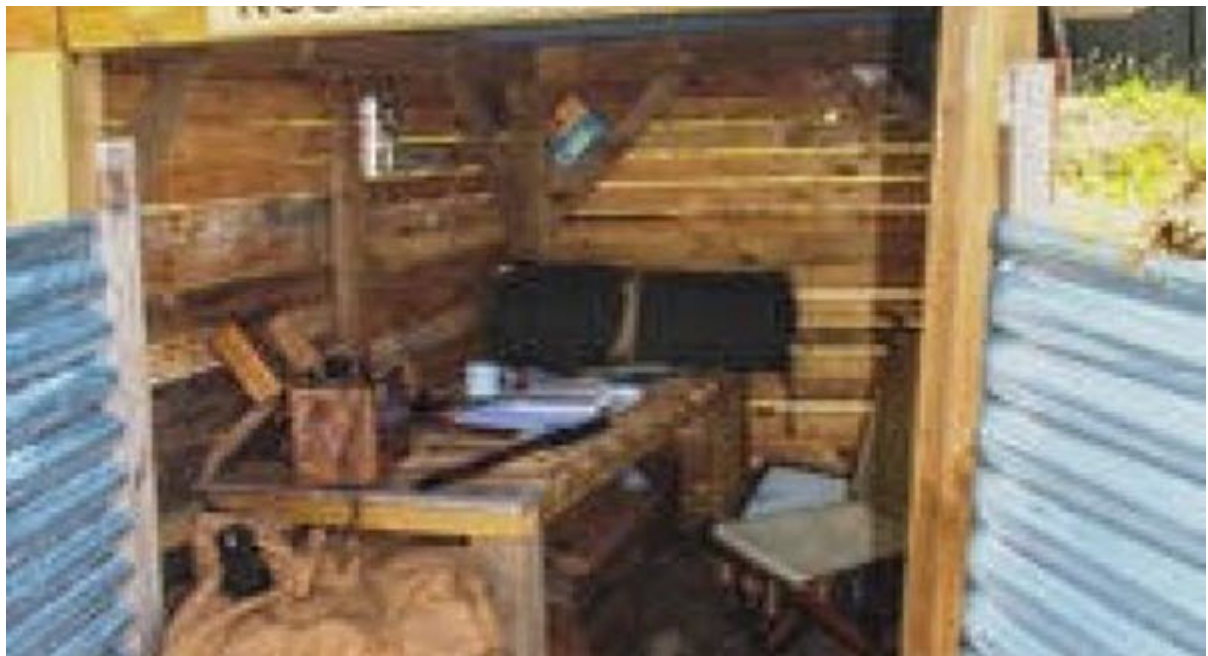
<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/st-helens-church12>



All Saints Church, Bisham: Tour

All Saints Bisham Church is nestled between the river and the old turnpike, the route of the Marlow flyer to London until it closed in 1888. Take a moment off your route to go down and sit by the river in the tranquil churchyard. Dating from the C12 with a Norman tower of chalk, the church was the place of worship for the Abbey family. The Bisham estate saw the Knights Templar and the Earls of Salisbury and was part of Ann of Cleves divorce settlement from Henry VIII. The heyday was in the 1500s with the Hoby family, here for 200 years, then the Vansittarts for another 200. Discover a treasure trove of court and political influence in the spectacular monuments which tell their tales. Contrast with the modern industrial copper of the Williams Chapel, another story. See website for opening times and access details.

<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/all-saints-bisham>



World War One Trench Experience at Garth Hill College, Bracknell: Visit

This is a wonderful opportunity to make a strong connection with the past and engage in remembrance of the First World War. Visitors will have a guided walk through a realistic trench to gain an understanding of a soldier's life at the front. See website for opening times and access details.

<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/the-world-war-one-trench-experience-at-garth-hill-college>



St Peter's Caversham Conservation Area and Beyond: Walk

Join this 2 hour wander around the less travelled heights and streets of Caversham led by Richard Bennett of Reading Civic Society & Terry's Reading Walkabouts. Along the way, take in some of Caversham's listed buildings and the site of the old Police Station, Caversham Court and its gazebo and crinkle crankle wall, St Peter's Church, The Mount and Queen Anne's Well. Pre-booking required. See website for timings and details of how to book a place.

<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/https-www.eventbrite.co.uk-e-st-peters-caversham-conservation-area-and-be>



Decontamination Suite, Greenham Air Base: Tour

Building 274, Buckner-Croke Way, Greenham Business Park, Newbury, Berkshire, RG19 6HX

Greenham Common was active as a US Army Air Force and US Air Force airfield for various periods from WWII onwards, most famously during the Cold War. Between 1982 - 1991, it was home to the US Air Force 501st Tactical Missile Wing and operated 96 cruise missiles. It was the site for the famous Greenham women's peace protests.

Few buildings remain from this period. Greenham Control Tower is the only building now open to the public as a visitor centre. The charity that runs Greenham Control Tower has arranged special permission to open the decontamination suite within building 274 to the public as part of Heritage Open Days. See website for opening

times and access details.

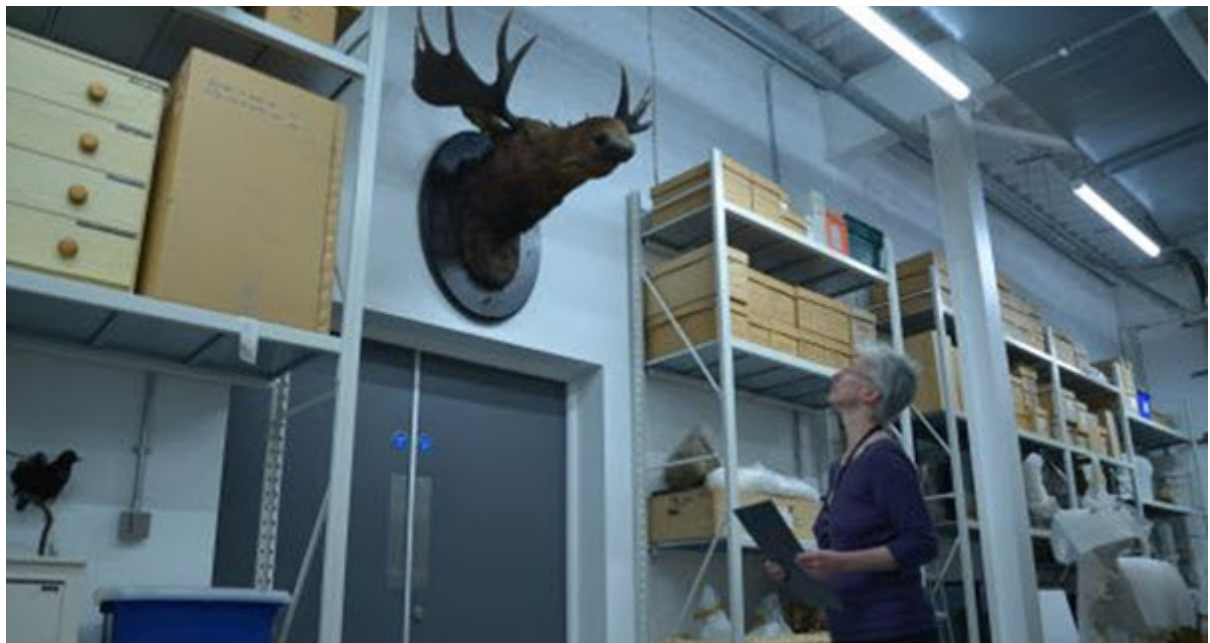
<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/decontamination-suite-greenham-air-base>



Berkshire Record Office, Reading: Tour

Come along on our free behind the scenes tour of the Berkshire Record Office, the Archives of the Royal County. We will explain what you can see and do on a visit and you'll be able to look at some original documents on display. You'll find out more about the services we offer and be taken where visitors are not normally allowed to go - into the archive storage and staff areas. Our conservator will also be on hand to reveal more about their work in repairing documents. Pre-booking required. See website for timings and details of how to book a place.

<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/berkshire-record-office-tour>



Reading Museum Store: Tour

Join the staff of Reading Museum for a behind the scenes tour of their new South Reading store. This year's theme is Our Green Stories, focussing on objects linked to the local environment and our relationship with nature. Tours are in small groups (up to 6) led by Museum staff and last about 45 minutes. Pre-booking required. See website for timings and details of how to book a place.

<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/https-www.readingmuseum.org.uk-whats-on-reading-museum1>



St Giles Church, Reading: Visit

The original St. Giles was built in the twelfth century, to serve a large Parish with a small population in well-wooded country through which the River Kennet flowed. It stood on the main road south, on the outskirts of the town, hence perhaps the dedication. In 1191 Pope Clement III gave the church to Reading Abbey: and throughout the middle ages, it enjoyed the right of sanctuary. The building grew gradually. During the Civil Wars of the seventeenth century, when the parliamentarians besieged Reading, St. Giles tower was garrisoned for the King and the upper part was destroyed in 1643. The fabric was restored at the end of hostilities, and again under a series of popular incumbents in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Catholic Revival began to influence the life and work of what was by now a very populous parish. See website for opening times and access details.

<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/https-www.sgiles.org.uk>



St Laurence Church, Slough: Tour & Exhibition

Upton Court Road, Slough, Berkshire, SL3 7LS

The church is Grade I listed and Slough's oldest building. Church and churchyard tours available including the grave of William Herschel. There will also be a heritage display & exhibition of famous telescopes including Herschel model of 40 ft telescope, and Brian May's (Queen guitarist & astrophysicist) telescope made for spotting satellites. See website for more information and timings.



All Saints Church, Wokingham: Tour & Exhibition

London Road, Wiltshire Road, Wokingham

Wokingham's oldest church opens its doors with an exhibition of the creative changes to the building since 1190, as it adapted to meet the needs of the community through the centuries. See how the building meets the needs of the 21st century in Wokingham along with some fabric creations. Open daily - see website for timings.

<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/800-years-of-creative-development>

Events

Our programme is a mixture of online and face-to-face events

Online Family History Advice Clinic

Mon 04 Sep 14:00 - 16:00



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?

These popular family history advice sessions are online, using Zoom technology – so you can book a session, wherever you live in the world. 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 (booked)

Slot 2: 14.30 – 14.55

Slot 3: 15.05 – 15.30 (booked)

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.

For members and non-members of Berkshire Family History Society.
Free.

[Book now](#)

September Natter Group

Tue 05 Sep 18:45 for 19:00

Led by: Gillian Stevens and Chad Hanna

Online



Join in this online discussion from your own home, wherever 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](#)



Writing Up Your Family History Workshop

Sat 09 Sep 11:00 - 13:00

Tutor: Dr Barry Jerome

**The Centre for Heritage & Family History,
Reading**

Have you been researching your family tree and would like to write it up as a story but don't know how to start?

In the popular workshop, Dr Barry Jerome will help you get started. He will also show you how you can structure it, so that you can write up your family history while still continuing your research.

Tickets cost £10 (members £9).

Pre-booking is required because places are limited.

[Book now](#)

The Origins of Camp Hopson



Wed 13 Sep 14:00 - 16:00
Newbury Branch Meeting with talk by Jonathan Hopson

West Berkshire Museum

Camp Hopson is the department store based in the heart of Newbury, located at [6-12 Northbrook Street](#).

Join Jonathan Hopson as he takes us through a brief history of the Camp & Hopson families and shows how the two families relate to Joseph Hopson & Sons, Alfred Camp's Drapery Bazaar and Camp Hopson & Company Limited from 1851 to the present day.

This talk is free to members of Berkshire Family History Society but we request a donation of £5 from non-members.

Booking not required

[Find out more](#)



Family History – why it matters

Wed 13 Sep 19:30 - 21:30
Talk by Chris Broom

Online

'Family History, why it matters', promotes the numerous benefits of family history research, while also encouraging attendees to reflect on the unique sequence of events leading to their own birth, the many challenges faced by their ancestors and the importance of documenting their own lives.'

This is the talk postponed from our society Annual General Meeting in June.

Tickets cost £5 (free to members).

Pre-booking required.

[Book now](#)



Drop In Advice Session

Thu 14 Sep 14:00 - 17:00

Bracknell Central Library

Bring your questions, problems and 'brickwalls' ... and get some new ideas and advice from members of the Berkshire Family History Society.

For ALL family historians wherever your ancestors came from.

Free for everyone

[Find out more](#)



The History of Purley's River Estate

Thu 14 Sep 14:00 - 15:30

Talk with speaker: Catherine Sampson

The Centre for Heritage & Family History

One of only two large inter-war plotland sites in Berkshire, Purley's River Estate has a significant history. It began life in 1935 as a holiday destination suitable for camping and caravanning in usually idyllic former parkland by the Thames. However, very soon many of the plots gained more permanent accommodation, particularly after war broke out in 1939. Entrepreneurship thrived, resulting in a multitude of private businesses and shops over the years, as did a strong community spirit.

This talk is accompanied by lots of images of the estate and its people, including its famous range of adapted dwellings such as railway carriages and buses.

This is the final of three talks in the Houses & Estates Talks Series.

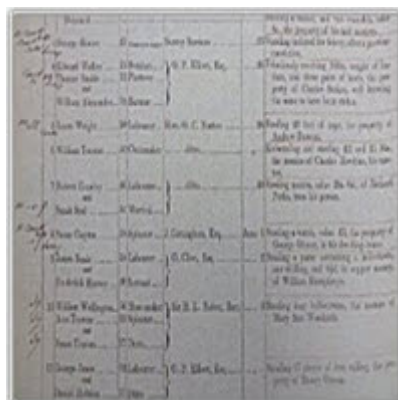
After the talk, tea/coffee and cake will be available (included in the price).

Pre-booking is recommended, but you can pay on the door if there are spaces available.

Members £4

Non-members £5

[Book now](#)



Family History – the dark side

Fri 15 Sep 14:45 - 16:30

**Bracknell Branch Meeting with speaker:
Katie Amos**

The New Priestwood Community Centre

Using examples from her own family tree Katie explores the more roguish members of her family and discusses the sources that can be used to find out more about them.

This talk is free to members of Berkshire Family History Society and we request a donation of £5 from non-members.

Branch library available to members to borrow books. Refreshments available. Car park outside the hall.

Booking is not required

[Find out more](#)

Who Do I Think I Am?

Sat 16 Sep 12:00 - 13:00



Talk with with speaker: Catherine Sampson

The Centre for Heritage & Family History

Discovering our back story

This talk is part of Berkshire Family History Society's programme of activities to celebrate the annual

Heritage Open Days across Britain.

Are you interested in tracing your family tree? Discover how to research, what types of records are available and how to interpret them. The talk is interspersed with humorous and poignant stories of ancestors encountered along the way and their stories. Speaker, Catherine Sampson, will share some of her own back story. This includes war heroes, pioneers, an early Union activist and aspiring politician, smugglers, criminals and a murderer. And it takes us to the coal mines of the North-East, London's dockyards, the fields of Cambridgeshire, the Suffolk coast, the prairie lands of Canada and the battlefields of the First World World.

It is free to attend, and pre-booking is recommended as numbers are limited. You may just turn up on the day though – subject to availability.

If you are inspired to get going, the Research Centre will be open that day from 10.30am to 2.30pm.

[**Book now**](#)

That was just a small selection from our extensive events programme

[**Click here for the full programme**](#)

**Our events routinely sell out -
book early to secure your place**



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