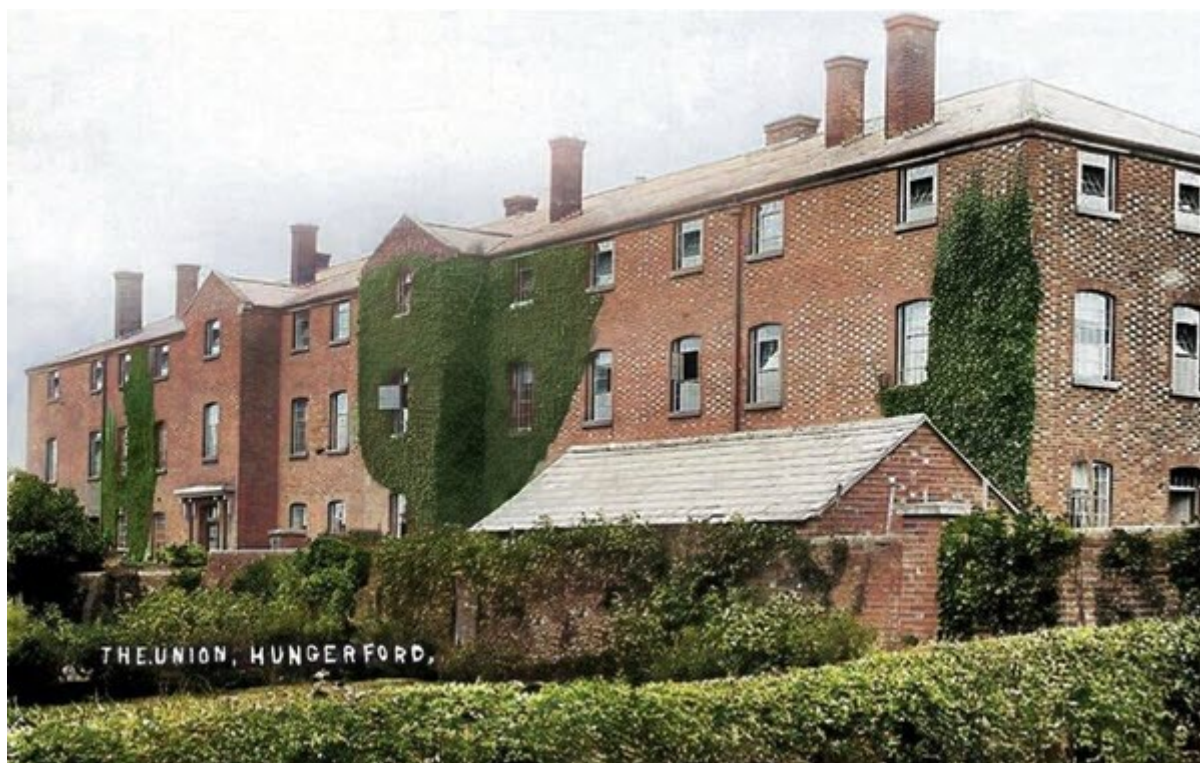


[View this email in your browser](#)

in touch



Hungerford Workhouse - image colourised by Jim Bradshaw

Hi friend

Welcome to the first edition of In Touch in 2024

We start by continuing our series of heritage photos from Berkshire. The well has a long way to go before it runs dry. This time we're looking at Hungerford Workhouse. Once again the National Library of Scotland provides an easy way to pinpoint the location on the modern map. You can see the footprint of the now demolished buildings in the modern replacements. Use the slider to flip between the [old and modern maps](#)

Elsewhere, we have another tranche of journals from other family history societies, but our big news item is the upcoming Berkshire Heritage Fair co-hosted by us and the Berkshire Local History Association. You can join us wherever you are on Zoom and we hope to see you there. 24th Feb - make a note on your calendar and book your place below.



Exchange Journals

We start the new year as we ended last year, with more reading material for you

- Airedale & Wharfedale FHS
- Barnsley FHS
- Berkshire Local History Association
- Calderdale FHS
- Family History ACT (Australia)
- Family History Society of New Zealand (*new*)
- Herefordshire FHS
- Hertfordshire FHS
- Newfoundland & Labrador FHS (Canada)
- Society of Australian Genealogists

Enjoy!

[View online \(login required\)](#)



Extension of General Register Office access to death records

The General Register Office (GRO) has improved its access to civil death records via its online view service.

The GRO holds the civil birth, marriage and death records for England and Wales. You can use its website to access the indexes for birth records 1837-1934 and 1984-2021 and death records from 1837-1957 and 1974-2021.

Until changes introduced last year, the cheapest way to access the full certificates was by PDF, which took up to four days to be delivered. From July 2023, the GRO made birth records from 1837-1922 and death records from 1837-1887 available as digital images which cost £2.50 and could be downloaded immediately.

Access to the death record images has now been expanded to include records dating from 1888-1957 - a significant improvement in access and a welcome reduction in costs.

Access to the indexes themselves is free of charge.

Search them here:

<https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>



The poster is for the 'Online Berkshire Heritage Fair 2024'. It features a dark green background with white text. On the left, there are three small images: 'Newbury Broadway' showing a street scene, 'The Street Aldermaston' showing a narrow street, and 'Village Forge Compton' showing a stone building. The main title 'Online Berkshire Heritage Fair 2024' is in large, bold, white letters. Below the title, it says 'ORGANISED BY BERKSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY & BERKSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION'. The date and time are 'Saturday 24th February 10.00 - 12.00 and 14.00 - 16.00'. The entry is 'By Zoom - Free entry'. At the bottom, there is a Zoom icon and the text 'Berkshire Family History Society CIO, Reading Central Library, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 3BQ. Charity No: 1204390'. Logos for the Berkshire Family History Society and a Berkshire Local History Association logo are in the top right corner.

Newbury Broadway

The Street Aldermaston

Village Forge Compton

Online Berkshire Heritage Fair 2024

ORGANISED BY
BERKSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY &
BERKSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY
ASSOCIATION

Saturday 24th February
10.00 - 12.00 and 14.00 - 16.00

By Zoom - Free entry

Berkshire Family History Society CIO, Reading Central Library, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 3BQ. Charity No: 1204390

Berkshire Heritage Fair 2024 - Saturday 24 Feb

Organisers - Berkshire Family History Society & Berkshire Local History Association

- Online, so location is no barrier to being able to attend.
- Session timings are pitched to allow as many people as possible from across the world to join in. Last time, participants joined us from the US, Canada and Australia - can we add even more countries this time?
- The event uses Zoom breakout rooms, and each participating heritage organisation will mostly have their own room, although some will share.
- It's free and you can attend one or both sessions.

Why Attend?

If you have an interest in historic Berkshire or some particular location within it, you will almost certainly find this beneficial. You will be able to:

- Connect with local experts about locations, businesses, industries or families of interest.
 - Some of these organisations have their own archives available and are able to give advice about their archive and how you can access it.
 - They will share general or specific information and images pointing people to new sources they were previously unaware of.
- Attendees can share information on their own family or heritage research with the participating organisations.
- Attendees can gain advice and guidance on Berkshire-specific resources and sources.
- Get help with your own family history research - from getting started to breaking down brick walls.
- Build lasting connections with new contacts beyond this event.

Of course, volunteers from Berkshire Family History Society will be there. We'll also be joined by representatives from many of our contiguous counties - Buckinghamshire Family History Society, Hampshire Genealogical Society, Oxfordshire Family History Society, West Middlesex Family History Society and Wiltshire Family History Society.

Amongst those new this year: The Wardrobe Museum - for all your Berkshire Yeomanry Regiment queries, Reading Local Studies Library - for the best historic collection of images, books and memorabilia from Berkshire, The Thames Valley and Great Western Omnibus Trust and the Western Front Association (for everything WW1). Also new this year - experts on the Great Western Railway and some of Berkshire's other large employers - including Huntley and Palmers.

To see the list of organisation signed up to participate so far:

<https://berksfhs.org/berkshire-heritage-online-fair-2024/>

Book your place or places [here](#)



Bring Your Backstory to Life™

Ancestry - new collections in January

There's good news from a number of websites about new or additional collections due to go online during 2024.

Due to launch at Ancestry during January:

- Pension records of Post Office workers held by the Postal Museum,
- Electoral registers held by the North Yorkshire County Record Office,
- Non-conformist registers from Hampshire, and
- Electoral registers from Westminster.

Find out more at:

<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/>

RuralHistoria



Medieval Burgage Plots

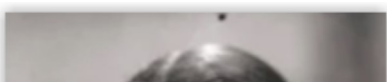
Those with ancestors who lived in towns, particularly before the 19th century, have probably come across burgage plots, possibly without knowing it. A burgage plot refers to a specific type of land tenure that was prevalent in medieval towns and cities across England and parts of Europe. Their footprint is still recognisable in urban landscapes in the 21st century.

The website RuralHistoria.com has an excellent introduction to burgage plots. If you haven't yet seen it - it's worth looking at - if only to better spot their imprint in townscapes today.

<https://ruralhistoria.com/2023/12/04/what-is-a-medieval-burgage-plot/>

Events

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



The Life and Work of Rosalind



Franklin

Mon 15 Jan 19:30 - 21:30

**Abingdon Branch Meeting with talk by
Laura Holland**

Long Furlong Community Centre, Abingdon

Rosalind Franklin is a key figure in the greatest discovery in life science in the 20th Century – the discovery of the structure of DNA.

This discovery shaped modern biology in a profound way, creating whole new fields of research and understanding.

This talk will discuss the life and work of this great experimental scientist, the lesser known projects she worked on, and her place in scientific history.

Franklin's name is now lent to multiple awards, organisations and institutes, one of which sits on the Harwell Campus in South Oxfordshire.

Large Free Car Park adjacent to hall.

Photograph: Rosalind Franklin ©National Portrait Gallery London

Free to members.

We request a donation of £5 from non-members.

Pre-booking is preferred, but non members can pay on the door.

Book now



Killing off your ancestors

Wed 17 Jan 19:30 - 21:30

**Computer Branch Meeting with talk
by Gillian Stevens**

Online

It is always embarrassing when your apparent ancestor dies before adulthood. What

are the warning flags that a parent isn't who you think they are? Gillian Stevens will help us avoid this mistake by drawing our attention to death records and substitutes for death records.

Free to members.

We request a donation of £5 from non-members.

Pre-booking is required.

Book now



Brick Walls, Stories and Quizzes

Fri 19 Jan 14:15 - 16:30

Bracknell Branch Meeting

**The New Priestwood Community Centre
Bracknell**

If you need help with a 'brick wall' please bring your problem along to the meeting when other members will try and help with suggestions to hopefully solve the problem. Members of the audience are welcome to bring along short stories regarding their journeys on finding out about their ancestors. Also during the afternoon we will be having some table quizzes where members of the winning table will each receive a prize.

Branch library available to members to borrow books.

Refreshments available.

Car park outside the hall.

Free to members.

We request a donation of £5 from non-members.

Find out more



The Old Poor Law Workshop



Sat 20 Jan 11:00 - 13:00
Tutor: Joan Dils

Online

Many family historians have ancestors whose lives were touched at some point by poverty.

The old Poor Law (1597-1834) was a system of poor relief devised by Tudor politicians. It was still in use until the eve of Queen Victoria's reign. Administered by unpaid parish officials and financed by parish ratepayers, it was tough but not without some compassion. Dealing with tens of thousands of young, aged, poor and sick people, as well as incorrigible rogues, it generated innumerable records of individual lives and misfortunes, leaving an invaluable legacy for social and family historians to explore.

This workshop will explain how the system worked and evolved over the centuries, discuss the records it created and their usefulness for researchers.

Tickets cost £10 (members £9).

Pre-booking is required because places are limited.

Book now



Shinfield St Mary Tour

Tue 23 Jan 14:00 - 15:30
Tour Leader: Chris Young

Meeting Point will be notified within booking process

Come and visit St Mary's Shinfield where churchwarden, Chris Young, will tell us about its history. He will also talk about some of the notable people linked to it.

Originating in 1069, there is a long and fascinating history. It was founded by Guillaume de Breteuille, one of William the Conqueror's great Marshalls. The church

has changed and adapted with the times but retains many Norman features along with a new stained glass window that was installed to commemorate the Millennium.

Tickets cost £5 (members £4).

Pre-booking is required because places are limited.

Book now



A Potpourri of Social History Talks - Winter Series

Thu 25 Jan/Thu 22 Feb/Thu 21 Mar

Online

This all series ticket covers all three talks in the Winter "Potpourri of Social History" talks series, for the discounted price of £12.50 (members £10.00). You may also book each talk individually using the links on against each event below, at £5 (£4 members) each. All three talks are on Thursdays at 2pm and last about an hour. Afterwards there will be time for questions and discussion. This is an online talks series using Zoom.

Thursday 25 January "Women in World War Two" 2 - 3.15pm with Bill King

Often overlooked, discover how the talents of women were integrated into the British war effort on the Home Front, in industry and in the Armed Forces at every level during World War Two. Bill is a popular speaker and his talks are meticulously researched.

[Book separately](#)

Thursday 22 February "Maiwand and The Great Game" 2 - 3.15pm with Mike Cooper

The impressive cast iron statue of a lion in Forbury Gardens, Reading has become

one of the most iconic images of Reading. The Lion is posed snarling defiance to the north – towards Russia. Built by George Blackall Simonds and unveiled in 1886, it commemorates those who died in the Battle of Maiwand. Yet few of us probably know much about the battle and its tragic association with Berkshire. In this talk, Mike Cooper looks at the Battle of Maiwand against the background of Anglo-Russian rivalry in Asia – The Great Game - something he's been following for 40 years - and the history of the lion itself.

[Book separately](#)

Thursday 21 March "The Battle of Britain" 2 - 3.15pm with Richard Marks

In 1940, Britain stood alone following the fall of France. With the German army poised across the channel, only the RAF could prevent the Luftwaffe from gaining the air supremacy needed to successfully mount the expected invasion. Historian Richard Marks will look at how the RAF's systems and equipment allowed them to prevent the invasion.

[Book separately](#)

Pre-booking is required because places are limited. Full joining instructions will be emailed to attendees in advance. Bookings close one day before the first event.

Book series ticket



Women in World War Two

Thu 25 Jan 14:00 - 15:15

Talk with speaker: Bill King

Online

Often overlooked, discover how the talents of women were integrated into the British war effort on the Home Front, in industry and in the Armed Forces at every level during World War Two. Bill is a popular speaker and his talks are meticulously researched.

This talk is the first of three in the Winter Potpourri online talks series. Book all three

talks in the series for £12.50 (members £10). The other talks take place on 22nd February and 21st March.

Pre-booking is required, because the event link will be sent in advance.

Tickets: £5 (members £4)

Book now



Henry Smith: A Most Notorious, Naughty, False, Lying Fellow

Thu 25 Jan 19:45 - 21:00

Reading Branch meeting with talk by: Sue Paul

Online

Henry, son of Ralph Smith and brother of Samuel, flourished 1668-1710. He worked for the East India Company towards the end of the seventeenth century and was sacked by the Company on a number of occasions being described as a most notorious, naughty, false, lying fellow. Subsequently, he was incarcerated in Newgate gaol and tried on two counts of piracy; before biting that hand that rescued him and acting undercover in Scotland. Was Henry a global black sheep or maligned character?

This talk by Sue Paul demonstrates how you can enhance your ancestral history by reconstructing the life story of someone who cannot be found in any traditional genealogical records.

This talk is free to members of Berkshire Family History Society, and we request a donation of £5 from non- Booking ends one day before event.

Image: Coat of arms of East India Company 1600-1709 by Bharata-indstar via Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0)

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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