



Hi Paul

A very Happy Christmas and New Year to you. By the time you read this, you'll probably have already sampled your first mince pie, and if you're anything like me you'll also have binge watched at least three or four "Christmas movies" including the compulsory "The Great Escape". However you choose to spend the holidays - we hope you enjoy them.

We hope you have also enjoyed reading In Touch over the last year. We have some big announcements in the New Year - so don't miss out. And do send us your contributions if you have something to share with other members.

Catherine Sampson

Chairman
Berkshire Family History Society

What's in this edition?

Well, with deepest apologies to Frederic Austin, the English baritone who popularised it:

*“On the Sunday ‘ere Christmas, Berkshire gave to me
Seven Exchange Journals
Two member videos
Five YouTube videos
Something a little different
JANUARY’S.....NATTER.....GROUP
Si-ix more events
Some to book and
Some you just drop in
And Partridges in Your Trees”*

I’ll get my coat.....



Christmas Closures

The Society’s Centre for Heritage and Family History is now closed for Christmas and the New Year. We reopen on Monday 6th January at 10.30

The newsletter editorial team is also taking a break. We’ll be back on the 5th January. Merry Christmas!



Exchange Journals

Have you managed to read the 25 journals we gave you last time? No? OK, we'll go easy on you this time so you can catch up.

British Columbia Genealogical Society

Cheshire FHS

Heraldry Society

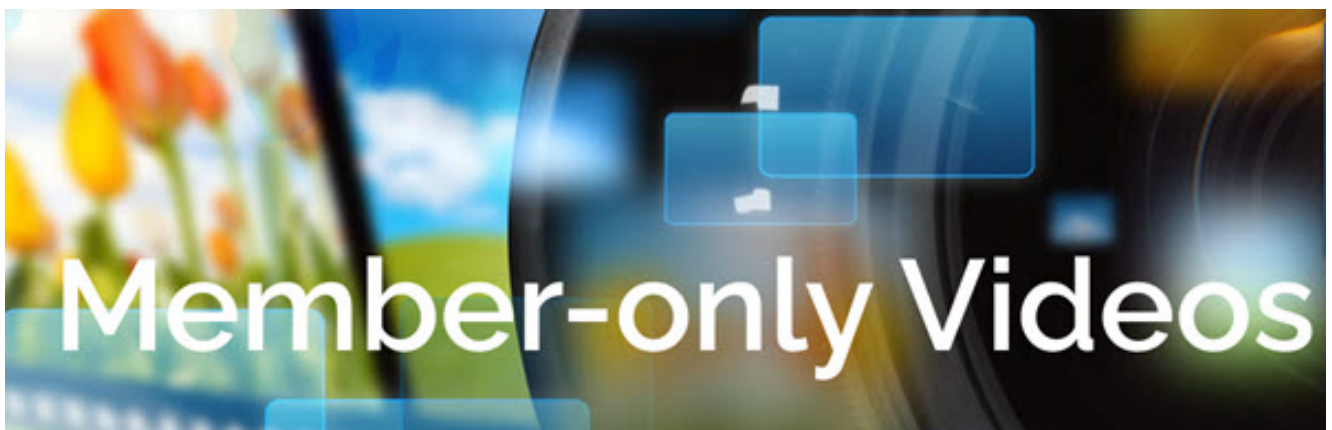
Hertfordshire FHS

Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies

International Society for British Genealogy and Family History

South Australian Genealogy and Heraldry Society

Read them online (login required)



We have two new videos for you to enjoy if you couldn't make the live talks.

We've recently switched to a new editing and display platform so that we can bring you switchable closed captions as requested. These two videos are the first examples - when time permits we'll convert some of the others. Unlike our earlier videos these new ones also play on the page, instead of sending you off to an external service, which we hope makes for a more direct and enjoyable experience.

Victorian Hiring Fairs

By Clare O'Grady

An important time of the year for any rural community, the Hiring, Mop or Statute Fair reached its peak popularity in the 19th Century as a way to seek and to provide

employment. This talk outlines how, when and where the fairs worked; the evidence they leave behind; the campaign against the fairs; registration societies; why the fairs declined as employment tools; and some of the other attractions provided.

Researching at home using your local library online resources

By Paul Gaskell

The video features Paul Gaskell discussing how individuals can conduct research from home using online resources provided by local libraries, with a focus on the offerings of the Oxfordshire Library service and similar services across the UK.

Video homepage



Historic Berkshire on YouTube

In the Christmas edition of In Touch we like to bring you something different, and this year we are once again turning to YouTube and some of the fascinating history videos available to view on this channel. Here are five which caught our eye.

[Reading: Back in Time](#)

[Caversham - 100 Years of History](#)

[Ten Historic Sites of Newbury, Berkshire](#)

[Discover Wallingford: Hidden Gems, Historic Landmarks, and Fascinating History](#)

[Thatcham: What's in a Name? - Nick Young](#)



Something a little different!

Sometimes inspiration can come from the most unusual places - and this story is of the three men who left a note in a Scottish lighthouse 132 years ago. Enjoy!
Thank you to Robert Monk who brought this to our attention.

Read the BBC article (overseas users may need to use a VPN)

EVENTS



January Natter Group

Tue 07 Jan 18:45 for 19:00

Led by Chad Hanna and Gillian Stevens

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.

This meeting's topics are: (1) Gravestones and memorials (2) anything else you wish to discuss.

Members only, free to attend, but pre-booking is required.

Book



Escaping Hitler

A Jewish Boy's Quest for Freedom

Wed 08 Jan 19:30 - 20:30

Newbury Branch Meeting and talk

by Phyllida Scrivens

Online

This is the true story of the remarkable and long life of Kindertransport boy Günter Stern, who in 1939, aged fourteen, fled Nazi Germany. In England he was cared for by two very different British families but later joined the British Army with a new name,

Joe Stirling. After the war Joe opened a travel business in Norwich where he became Sheriff of the city in 1975.

Join Phyllida for this uplifting true story of survival and success against all the odds. Phyllida tells the story of Joe Stirling, with insights into her research journey, including visiting the Rhineland to find Günter's birthplace.

Booking is required.

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

Book



Reading Heritage Talks Series

Thu 09 Jan 14:00 - 15:30

Thu 13 Feb 14:00 - 15:30

Thu 13 Mar 14:00 - 15:30

The Centre

The all series ticket covers all three talks in the "Reading Heritage" talks series, for the discounted price of £12.50 (members £10.00). You may also book each talk individually using the links below.

[Thursday 9 January "Jane Austen's School Days in Reading" with Joy Pibworth](#)

In 2025, we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birthday of Jane Austen. So how better to start the year than with a talk by local historian and dedicated Janeite Joy Pibworth, exploring Austen's connections with Reading. Reading's Abbey Gateway was then home to the Ladies Boarding School which Jane Austen attended from 1785-6. With the help of contemporary sources, we shall look at the buildings, daily routines, the teachers and the local environment Jane would have become familiar with (and possibly even muse on the echoes in her writing).

[Thursday 13 February "Reading's Grey Friars 1233-1538" with Malcolm Summers](#)

From 1233 to 1538 Reading had two religious foundations, Reading Abbey and the Reading Franciscan Friary. This talk tells the story of the medieval friary, its friars, and their relationship with the town. It ends with the dissolution under Henry VIII, leaving us just the Greyfriars Church building as a remnant of the past.

[Thursday 13 March "Reading's Trams" with Dr Richard Marks](#)

Prior to the advent of buses, there was a different mode of transport. A group of innovative local businessmen launched a horse bus service, which, though

rudimentary, marked the town's first foray into public transportation. Then in 1878 the Reading Tramways Company was established. This provided what we would now call an urban mass transit system, better known as the tramway. This talk will explore the origins of the company and the tram routes it established. You will learn about the routes' locations and their role in offering a novel and affordable means of transportation in Reading, transforming the lives of its residents. The talk will also delve into the connection between the Reading Tramways Company and the Wantage Tramway, which was, in fact, a light railway.

Image: Market Place, Reading in the 70's by Antony Ewart Smith, CC BY-SA 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons

Pre-booking is preferred, but you can pay on the door for the series ticket at the first talk, if there are spaces available.

Book



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This is the first of three talks in the Reading Heritage Talks Series. The other talks take place on 13th February and 13th March. You may book tickets for individual events or for all three talks in the series for a reduced price.

After the talk, tea/coffee and cake will be available (included in the price). Pre-booking is preferred, but you can pay on the door, if there are spaces available.

Tickets cost £5 (members £4)

Book



Drop In Advice Session

Thu 09 Jan 14:00 - 17:00

Bracknell Library

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

Free for ALL family historians wherever your ancestors came from.

[Find out more](#)



Visit to the Museum of Eton Life, Eton College Library & Archives

Fri 10 Jan 14:00 - 16:00

Tour Guide: By college staff

Meeting Point will be notified within booking process

The Museum of Eton Life brings to life the experience of learning, playing and living at Eton College across six centuries. The museum sets the history and traditions of Eton alongside stories of daily life of students, staff and visitors. The College Library holds articles dating from the 9th to 21st centuries. These include, in addition to rare books and manuscripts, prints and printed ephemera, personal and literary archives, drawings and artefacts. The College Archives has a rich and varied collection of records and photographs relating to its own history as well as areas of special interest including travel writing, theatrical history and World War One.

Please note there are stairs up to the library.

Tickets cost £5 (members £4). Pre-booking is required as numbers are limited.

Find out more

That was just a small selection from our extensive events programme



Our events often sell out so please book early to avoid disappointment

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