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The Berkshire Record Office
The Archives of the Royal County

The Berkshire Echo Issue 59

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From the Editor

People have always loved their gardens, whether this was for pleasure or for sustenance, so gardening seems a natural theme to apply to an Echo.

Historical gardening was not the multi-million pound industry that it is today, of course, and many gardeners would have relied on their friends and neighbours rather than the garden centre for plants and seeds. We've found a Berkshire sage (who as it happens was very fond of herbs) to give you a flavour of the sort of advice your neighbours may have offered. You might find it helps if you speak his lines in a traditional Berkshire burr, rather than with our modern voice.

Gardening is also an important part of home and family life, and an obvious backdrop to relationships. Surely it is only a matter of time before one of the dating websites produces an advert featuring couples looking longingly at each other over a grab pack of mixed heathers. If you can't wait that long, our Georgian tale of illicit amour in the arbour will give you a sense of what such an ad might look like.

Finding this true love tale makes me think about the period dramas that have become such a staple of Sunday evenings. These ratings toppers remind us just how popular history can be. You'll find our own Call the Midwife also in this Echo but whether it is that, Upstairs Downstairs or Downton Abbey, the period drama has its basis in an interpretation of history. You can always test the truth of this interpretation yourself by hunting down some real stories in the archives.



Mark Stevens
Senior Archivist

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Introductory visits

Just getting started in family or local history? Come along to one of our free introductory visits to see what's available here to help your research. The next dates are: 16 April; 9 July; both at 2 p.m.

To book your place, telephone: 0118 9375132 or email: arch@reading.gov.uk.

A New Probate Index for Berkshire

The County Archivist is leading a day school on enclosure records on Saturday 24 November (cost £52 per person). Places are limited to 20, so early booking is advised. Enrol online at www.conted.ox.ac.uk/V200-57.

The New Berkshire Probate Index

The revised Archdeaconry index, spanning the whole collection from 1480-1857, should be available in April on CD for £25. Please ask at reception if you would like to buy a copy, or e-mail us for postal charges.





Love in the garden

For the 18th century gentleman, a landscaped park and beautiful garden was an essential part of their country home. One such example is Buscot House in north west Berkshire, built by landowner Edward Loveden Loveden in the early 1780s. The Buscot estate records (D/ELV) include fascinating details of the creation of the garden, as well as a glimpse into a forbidden love affair conducted by Mr Loveden's young wife.

Edward Loveden Loveden was interested in plants, and was a member of the Royal Horticultural Society. He kept a memorandum book with details of all the trees that he ordered, commenting on the taste of their fruits (ranging from exquisite to sugary) and the month that each blossomed. There were at least four garden labourers employed at Buscot at any one time to do the hard work, with external contractors brought in for specialist jobs like putting up new buildings or pest control. For instance 20 wasps' nests were destroyed in November 1788, and a dozen moles were killed to stop the lawns being spoiled.

When it was finished, the garden at Buscot must have been a delightful place in spring and summer. Edward no doubt enjoyed spending time there with his first wife Mary, who died in 1784, and second wife Elizabeth, who died in 1788 after less than three years' marriage. But it was his third wife, Anne who made most use of it. The garden provided a romantic location for Anne, but not with her husband, over twenty years her senior and suffering from gout which made

walking painful. Instead, she wandered there with Thomas Raymond Barker, the son of a friend of Edward's, who was rather closer to Anne in age. Shockingly, he was a clergyman.

It is clear from a letter to Anne's secret lover in November 1808 (D/ELV/L24) that the pair had been accustomed to meet that summer in the gardens. Fearful of discovery, Anne told Thomas that their former rendezvous was now too visible (presumably due to the lack of leaf cover), while the workmen were busy planting on the hill overlooking it. She bemoaned other work in the woods and shrubbery, meaning neither of those would do for a tryst. There was no garden building suitable either – she had found the only barn which was fit to enter had been locked.

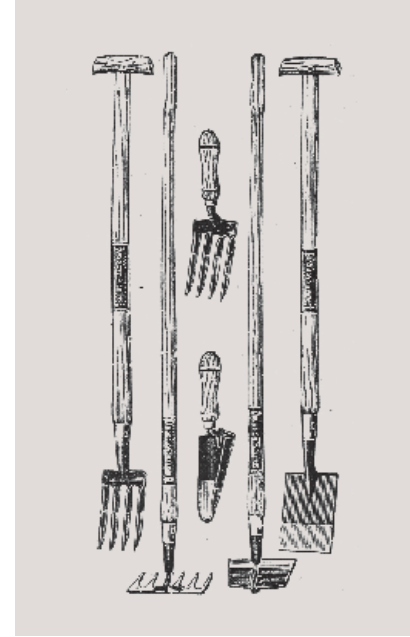
The affair was exposed a few months after this letter was written. Loyal to their master, the household servants at Buscot had grown suspicious of Anne, and the couple had been spotted kissing in the rose garden. In March 1809, Buscot's butler discovered that Thomas had been secretly entering the house at night while Edward was away, and after a tearful showdown, Anne's husband learned all.

Shamed, Anne left Buscot and set up house with her lover. They stayed together for the rest of her life, though they could never marry because Loveden refused to divorce her. The garden where Anne betrayed the man who had created it is now in the care of the National Trust.





Garden Supplies



A gardener's world after World War II

Advice on gardening on a rather smaller scale is given by Charles Hazell (b. 1881), in a memoir composed in semi-retirement in 1946, when he was the postmaster at Littlewick Green (D/EX1505/1).

A former farm labourer from north Berkshire with very little formal education, he was a pioneer of what he called 'natural' methods, and what we would now call organic gardening. His love of gardening and farming led him to describe his half-century's work in farms and gardens as 'one long holiday with pay'. He was keen to share his expertise with others, and to encourage cottage dwellers to make the best use of their gardens and allotments.

He thought one acre managed efficiently was sufficient to provide a decent living. The plot should be divided into 16 mini-allotments of ten poles of land, each planted with a different type of vegetable, with several crops a year on each. One of the ten sections was to be kept as an 'exhibition allotment' for competitions, with a few plants of all types to be entered in horticultural shows after the allotment itself had been judged. Hazell's own showcase allotment boasted 30 varieties of produce grown on just ten poles of land and was a real triumph. It won a nationwide prize, with one expert calling it the best he had ever seen. Winning this kind of competition meant not only prize money, but that a higher price could be charged for the produce.

In order to have a ready supply of manure, he suggested keeping a small area for livestock – one or two pigs, 20 hens and a beehive were ideal. Fodder consisted of wastage from

the plots. Hazell's top tip for manure was to always have the heap sloping like a hayrick, to keep the rain out.

A small greenhouse was useful for tomatoes and to propagate early plants. Another secret was to treat the crops daily with his special 'garden dust'. This was a mixture of soil, sand or grit, lime, sweepings from the chicken house, and powdered mortar from old buildings, all finely sifted with seeds removed. This acted as a simple and free fertiliser, and adding soot and bonfire ash helped to kill pests.

Mr Hazell's perfect one-acre plot had a variety of fruit and flowers as well as the more mundane vegetables. Cut flowers sold well, and roots, seeds and plants could also be profitable. Recommended flowers included wallflowers, carnations ('almost the king of all flowers'), galardia ('I do like to have a good patch of galardia'), and chrysanthemums, which sold well late in the year. 'You must have a herb bed', he insisted, as 'a herb bed do look nice'.

But it was not all about making money. Charles Hazell loved the flowers he grew, and was particularly fond of old fashioned cottage garden flowers like those his grandmother had grown in the 19th century. His garden was full of wallflowers, forget-me-nots and dahlias, with borders of carnations, pansies and stocks, just to name a few of his favourites. He had a few roses, but disliked the thorns. In retirement, he was able to devote more attention to his flower garden: 'Now it is first beauty at home. What a pleasure keeping borders neat and smart and crammed brim full of bloom'.

(right) Garden tools sold by the House of Toomer, Newbury, 1934 (D/EX1718/2/125)
(middle) Wheelbarrow sold by the House of Toomer, Newbury, 1934 (D/EX1718/2/125)
(left) Prizewinning vegetable display, 1933 (D/EX1718/2/124)



New to the Archives

Charities

Additional material has been added to the already extensive archive of Reading Municipal Charities (D/QR), including detailed bills and receipts for many of the individual charities from the 17th to the 20th centuries.

The Reading branch of the Guild of Brave Poor Things was a charity which provided practical assistance and social support for blind and physically disabled adults and children in the early 20th century. It ran drill and handicraft classes, provided training and apprenticeships for children, outings and holidays, and contributed to the cost of medical treatment and aids to mobility. We now hold the minutes, 1909-1929 (D/EX2247). The records of Harwell Parochial Charities, 1882-2005, have also been deposited here (D/QX41), and we have catalogued the records of Lady Pocock's Ecclesiastical and Non-Ecclesiastical Charities, Maidenhead, 1818-1974 (D/QX12).

Hospitals and public health

An interesting arrival in the light of the success of the BBC series *Call The Midwife* was the papers of midwife Margaret Ross, who was based at Wantage Cottage Hospital between 1935 and 1941 (D/H15).

We have also acquired a memento booklet issued to patients at St Andrew's Convalescent Hospital, Clewer, which was built in the 1860s. It includes photographs of several wards (D/EX2183). Also now available are annual reports from the Medical Officers of Health for the West Berkshire District (which confusingly included north Berkshire), 1948, and for South Berkshire (which was really just south west Berkshire), 1949-1972. These provide statistics relating to public health matters. A small collection of bye-laws relating to north and west Berkshire 1885-1984 (D/EX2176) include public health provisions. Plans for Newbury District and Sandford Hospitals, 1953-2001, have also been transferred here (D/EX2232).

A light is cast on the leisure activities of 19th century Broadmoor staff in the addition of the scrapbook of the staff Dancing Class, 1873-1911, to the hospital's archive (D/H14).



A gap in the official archive of Fair Mile Hospital, Cholsey (the county's mental hospital), has been filled by the purchase of annual reports, 1923-1937 (D/EZ165). Copy plans of the final layout of the same hospital before its closure in 2001 (D/EX2120) and the minutes of Prospect Park Hospital Residents' Steering Committee, 2003-2006 (D/EX2005), reflect the impact of recent changes in mental health provision.

Local history

A small collection of local history notes compiled in the late 19th and early 20th centuries mainly relating to Wokingham has been transferred here (D/EX2026). A set of drawings, photographs and notes on Anglo-Saxon and Norman churches compiled in the 1940s has been donated (D/EX2192). We have acquired a typescript history of Bracknell, compiled in c.1950 (D/EX1950), and a history and memoir of Pinkneys Green (D/EX1974). More unusually, Steve Glason put his memories of growing up in Reading in the 1950s in poetic form (D/EX2138). We have also listed a collection of photographs and printed miscellanea which illustrate the history of Sandhurst (D/EX2109).

Opening Hours

Tues 9-5, Weds 9-5, Thurs 9-9pm, Fri 9-4.30.
Closed Mondays, Weekends and Bank Holidays.
Please call us for further details.

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