

BRO

The Berkshire Record Office
The Archives of the Royal County

The Berkshire Echo Issue 46

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From the Editor

In recent years it has become traditional to wait for Christmas to finish and then begin the exciting task of planning the annual holiday. Today travel is something that is open to many people, for business or for pleasure, and is usually the result of us wanting to get a rest, see new sights or get ahead. But you do not have to go that far back in time to find a period when travel was either a great luxury, an economic necessity or was forced upon you.

This edition of the Echo looks at some of the great expeditions that are recorded in our archives. There is often debate about how far our ancestors travelled, and while we will not attempt to answer that question, we have found some striking examples of journeys made to and from Berkshire over the centuries. From a Berkshire man at the South Pole to a Senegalese man in Berkshire, these stories provide a brief glimpse of a time when such foreign destinations were beyond our comprehension.

One of the other end of year traditions is the release of the Queen's New Year's Honours, and we were delighted to see that our very own boss, Dr Peter Durrant, had been awarded an MBE for services to local government - or more particularly services to archives and local history through his service in local government. I am sure that you join me in congratulating Peter in this fantastic recognition of his work for Berkshire and its people. It is particularly fitting that he should receive his award during the 60th anniversary year of the Office.



Mark Stevens
Senior Archivist

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

NEW START IN THE NEW YEAR

Start your own exploration into history. Look into your family's past or check out the history of your local area. Why not put your name down for one of our free BRO introductory visits? Dates for 2009 are: 20 April, 6 July, and 5 October. Call us on 0118 901 5132 or ask at Reception to put your name down on the list.

BRO HEADS TO WOKINGHAM

Staff from BRO will be on hand at the Family History Advice Day to be held at the Learning Zone, Wokingham Library on Saturday, 28 March 2009. Come along between 10 am and 3 pm to browse the stalls at the event. Hear a talk on the Record Office and its sources for family history in the afternoon. For more information about this free event, please visit: www.wokingham.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/news-and-events or telephone Wokingham Library on 0118 978 1368.





Kipling in real life: local man's expedition to the Antarctic, and beyond

Winter journey to Cape Crozier, 1911. L-r: Lt Bowers, Dr Wilson, Apsley Cherry-Garrard. Photograph reproduced with permission of National Library of Australia (nla.pic-an13066902).

Apsley Cherry-Garrard was a zoologist who made the now-famous journey with Robert Falcon Scott to the South Pole in 1911-12. You may be interested to know that we hold some of Cherry-Garrard's letters here (D/EHR/Z5-11). Apsley Cherry-Garrard (1886-1956) was the heir to the Cherry family estates at Denford and Little Wittenham in Berkshire, and the Garrard family estates in Hertfordshire. The records we hold include several letters to Cherry-Garrard's solicitor from the Antarctic.

Apsley's dramatic life did not end with the tragedy of the Antarctic expedition. In 1914 he was engaged in a scientific expedition to China, at that time engulfed in civil war. One of the letters in our collection notes, "The Country is in a most disturbed state. White Wolf looks like setting up an independent kingdom in Szechuan, & he is a better soldier than the Imperial troops: trade is more or less at a standstill: one man shot himself 3 days ago owing to financial difficulties... they are expecting

"another" revolution later on & they say that it is going to be worse than the last." (D/EHR/Z8/62) White Wolf (also known by his Chinese name Bai Long) was a famous bandit chief whose successful revolt against the Chinese government (1912-1914) ended when he was shot in 1914.

On the outbreak of World War I in August 1914, Apsley tried to set up an independent unit using dogs to find wounded soldiers at the Front, based on his experience with the dogs on Scott's expedition. When this failed to work out, he joined the army. He served in the ranks as a motorcycle dispatch rider, although someone with his background would normally have been an officer. In his letters, he describes the experience as "Kipling in real life!" and his fellow soldiers as "a lot of rough but very good diamonds."



BRO ref: D/EHR/Z5-11

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Majesty Justice of the Peace in and for the said
Borough

This Examinant on his Oath saith that He is
a Parishoner of the Town of Paisley in the Shire
of Renfrew in Scotland and that He was there Born
and ~~He~~ resided in the same upwards of Twenty
years and about fourteen years ago he was Married in
Paisley as said to Janet his now Wife by whom he has two
Children now living namely Mary aged about thirteen Years and
Campbell D'Loft aged about nine Years
William Stewart

at He was there Born
upwards of Twenty
years ago he was Married in
by whom he has two
about thirteen Years and

The Silk Road south

The records of the overseers of the poor in the parish of Reading St Giles reveal an influx of Scotsmen to the parish between 1774-1775 (R/2297).

In the settlement examinations, 35 out of 87 people examined in that time came from Scotland. Of that, 17 came from Paisley, 9 from Glasgow, 5 from Edinburgh and 4 from elsewhere in Scotland. There are no Scots appearing in the proceedings or subsequent years in the examinations. Why the mysterious flood of new arrivals?

A clue to what suddenly made Reading a desirable destination comes in another overseers record: Cases concerning the settlement of Scottish and Irish paupers with opinions of council (D/P96/16/3/2). One case relating to legal settlement dated 3 August 1774 states, "In the said Parish of St Lawrence [sic] a very considerable Silk Manufactory has been lately established in which about 100 Scotchmen are constantly employed who frequently intermarry with Women of that Parish and unless their Wives and Children follow their settlements it will bring very heavy burdens on the said Parish of St Lawrence [sic]". It seems that the lure of this new industry in Reading enticed the spinners and weavers from their looms in Scotland to make the long journey south.

The records of the overseers of the poor can be a rich source for family and local historians. In addition to the original records, the transcripts and indexes produced as part of the Berkshire Overseers Project are available in the searchroom. Please ask a member of staff for details.

Voyages to Berkshire

Taken from the information collected by BRO researchers for the Black and Asian Studies Association, the following extracts from our records illustrate the long journeys many people had taken to Berkshire hundreds of years ago:

Cookham baptism register, 6 January 1771 (D/P43/1/4)
Thomas Goree an african adult [Goree, an island off the coast of Senegal, was known as a centre for slave trade].

Reading cemetery burial register, 13 March 1852 (R2337)
William Wimmerd [sic], age 11 yrs [William Wimmera was an Australian aborigine thought to be orphaned and taken into the care of the Revd Septimus Lloyd Chase, former curate of St John's church, Reading.].

Shinfield baptism register, 24 August 1799 (D/P110/1/2)
Joseph Phillip Bacchaus a West Indian a black Boy.

A long walk

The log book of the Senior Mixed Department of Joseph Henry Wilson School, Reading (2001/SCH/4/5) reports that on 30 March 1938, "Mr Philip Ross, who is walking round the world, gave a lecture to the whole school at 11.15 this morning". An internet search reveals no further information about Ross's undertaking; one wonders if he completed his mammoth expedition?



New to the Archives

School records

School records are a popular source for family history, and we have completed cataloguing of records from several local schools. The most prominent of these is Ranelagh School, founded as an elementary charity school in Cranbourne by the Earl of Ranelagh in 1709, refounded as a grammar school in new premises in Bracknell in 1908, and since 1981 a comprehensive school (SCH5). Separately we have received records from the related Cranbourne Ranelagh School, Winkfield, 1904-1942 (D/EX1979); this primary school took over the original school's premises and was at one time partly funded by the trust.

Also now here are records relating to Mrs Bland's School, Burghfield Common, 1904-1991 (D/EX2082); Princess Margaret Rose School (formerly St Stephen's Senior Girls' School), Clewer, 1889-1983 (SCH8); Newbury County Girls' Grammar School, 1904-2003 (SCH12 and D/EX2060); St Bartholomew's Grammar School, Newbury, 1945-1975 (SCH11); St Bartholomew's [Comprehensive] School, Newbury, 1975-2001 (SCH13); Winchcombe Infants' School, Newbury, 1964-1981 (SCH10); Wilson Primary School, Reading, 1904-c.1990s (SCH14); and Churchend School, Tilehurst, 1962-2008 (SCH15). There are also some papers kept by a former headmistress of South Grange (formerly Burleigh Wood) Nursery School, Sunninghill (mainly photographs) (D/EX1931).

Petty sessions

If your ancestors came from Aldworth, Catmore, Chilton, Farnborough or East or West Ilsley, they may appear in the recently discovered Ilsley petty sessions court register, 1898-1915 (PS/I). Found with it was a rather interesting handbill advertising a meeting to discuss the establishment of a pitched market for the sale of corn in Wantage in 1845.



BRQ ref: PS/126/1

Parish records

There are no parish registers to report in this issue, but recently deposited parish records include records of the Sonning parish charities, 1895-1980 (D/P113). The parish copy of the Hungerford tithe map of 1849 was deposited (D/P71). The parish diary and memoranda book provides an illuminating insight into church and school activity in Clewer St Stephen, 1901-1932 (D/P39B).

Property sources

A large collection of documents from a Reading solicitor's office is now available for research (D/EX1870). They include deeds for properties in Burghfield, Caversham, Earley,

Faringdon, Finchampstead, Hagbourne, Hurst, East Ilsley, Newbury, Sandhurst, Shinfield, Swallowfield, Thatcham, Theale, Tilehurst, Wallingford, Wargrave and Woodley as well as Reading; architect's plans for houses in Brighton Road, Earley Rise; and probates and other clients' papers. Some deeds go back to the 17th century, but most are late 19th and early 20th century. Deeds have also been deposited for 20 Howard Street, Reading, 1857-1971 (D/EX2087), and property in Binfield and White Waltham, 1773-1777 (D/EX2086). The oldest is the grant of a tenement (small house) and land in Burghfield, which dates from the 1290s (D/EZ161). The entire annual rent was just 2 shillings (10 pence in today's money) - something those feeling the pinch of the recession would appreciate.

House historians can also consult the rate books for the boroughs of Maidenhead, c 1850-1962 (M/FR), and Wallingford, 1838-1967 (WA/FR).

Business records

We are pleased to report that we have acquired the accounts of the Druce family of Winkfield, 1865-1919, blacksmiths who carried out work for many local property owners (D/EZ159). We have also listed the records of two Reading trade unions: the printing union, Reading Typographical Society, 1898-1970 (D/EX1941); and the Reading branch of the GMB union and its predecessors (originally the National Union of Gasworkers and General Labourers), 1911-1988 (D/EX2017).

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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