

# BRO

The Berkshire Record Office  
The Archives of the Royal County

## The Berkshire Echo Issue 52

- ❖ [The Grand Tour: “gap” travel in the 18th century](#)
- ❖ [Wartime harvest holidays](#)
- ❖ [‘A strange enchanted land’: flying to Paris, 1935](#)
- ❖ [New to the Archives](#)

### From the Editor

It is at this time of year that my sole focus turns to my summer holidays. I invest in a somewhat groundless belief that time spent in a different location will somehow set me up for the year ahead. I am confident that this feeling will continue to return every summer, and I intend to do nothing to prevent it doing so.

July and August are culturally embedded these days as the time when everyone who can take a break, does so. But in celebrating holidays inside this Echo, it is quickly apparent that the ‘everyone who can take a break’ was, until very recently, confined to those rich enough not to worry about the instant loss of work, or food, that taking a break entailed. Holidays were status symbols, enjoyed by those of either independent or substantial means.

Holidays remain a status symbol in terms of destination and accommodation. The modern Grand Tour involves long haul instead of carriages, the lodging houses and pensions replaced by five-star exclusivity. Yet our holidays also remain a fascinating insight into how we choose or chose to spend our precious leisure time. Whether you lie flat out on the beach or make straight for cultural centres says a lot about you.

So it is true for our ancestors. As the people of Berkshire took their holidays, they will have brought back experiences which may well have shaped their own lives and decisions. The characters in this Echo must all have been affected by what they saw, as we will be too on our own holidays this year.



Mark Stevens  
*Senior Archivist*

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

#### HERITAGE OPEN DAY

This year’s Heritage Open Day is Saturday 11 September, and as in previous years, the Record Office will be running behind the scenes tours between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Please ring 0118 9375132 or e-mail [arch@reading.gov.uk](mailto:arch@reading.gov.uk) to book a place.

#### BROADMOOR REVEALED

Senior Archivist Mark Stevens will be giving a session on Victorian Broadmoor at Wellington College as part of the Wokingham branch of the U3A’s Study Day on 25 August. Attendance is restricted to U3A members. Book at [www.wokinghamu3a.org.uk](http://www.wokinghamu3a.org.uk); cost £25.

#### EXHIBITIONS

The small exhibition of documents relating to Reading during the Civil War, 1642-1649, continues in the Wroughton Room to the end of August. It will be followed from mid September by an exhibition of records of the Dodeka Club.



## The Grand Tour: “gap” travel in the 18th century

Many students choose today to take a “gap year” travelling. They are in good company: in the 18th century it was common for wealthy young gentlemen to spend a year or two travelling in Europe. Most of them followed the ‘Grand Tour’ route through France, Italy and the German-speaking parts of Europe.

Young Berkshire gentlemen joined the exodus, and some of them have left us their impressions. 19 year old Grey Neville from Billingbear House kept a diary of the Grand Tour he undertook with his younger brother Henry in 1700, which is now available for consultation at the Record Office (ref. D/EN/F18/1). They visited churches, attended the opera, and admired works of art. They were particularly assiduous sightseers in Rome. They also enjoyed attractive gardens and appreciated natural beauty such as the “mighty fine” Falls of Rhine at Schaffhausen in Switzerland.

The diary includes Grey’s candid comments on the towns he travelled through: in one Dutch town “everything seemed dirty to me and nasty indeed”; another was “too neat but by the cleanliness of the people is kept from the plague”. He did not like Cologne, which he called “a great Nasty ill paved town full of Religious”, although he did admire the cathedral. Geneva on the other hand had “the finest, noblest prospect in Europe”. He found Venice smelly and dirty, and thought Paris “very unhealthful”, adding tartly, “nobody at Paris lives to be 60 without a miracle”.

Food and drink were important to Grand Tourists too. Grey Neville’s accounts record many purchases of wine and champagne, and he particularly relished the “most exquisite wines” sold at Nuremberg. The brothers enjoyed a bargain meal at Frankfurt, where they “were treated like princes for 30 pence a meal”. They also splashed out on clothing, and Grey purchased a sword as a gift for his brother.

After returning home, Grey Neville served as MP for Abingdon and Wallingford.



## Wartime harvest holidays

Volcanic ash and strikes are bad enough, but what if you could not travel abroad at all? This was the fate of Britain’s population during World War II. A recent acquisition to BRO tells us how some people ended up devoting their precious holiday time to help with the war effort. Volunteers could spend a week or two at a War Agricultural Camp helping labour-pressed farmers to get the harvest in, and combat food shortages.

Mimi Hatton, a 28 year old teacher living in London, devoted part of her holiday in August 1943 to a War Agricultural Camp in rural north Berkshire, working on farms in West Lockinge and Southmoor. Her diary records that she slept in a well appointed, with access to a large marquee furnished with a radio and a grand piano. The camp was run by an Italian internee, previously the floor manager at the Park Lane Hotel. Transport to farms was provided by two Czech lorry drivers.

They were well fed by wartime standards; Mimi’s first meal in camp consisted of cold sausage, corned beef, lettuce, boiled potatoes, two puddings and fresh fruit, bread and margarine, and tea. Sunday lunch was roast lamb. They were given packed lunches on working days, with sandwiches, cake and cordial.

It wasn’t all work and no play. Mimi enjoyed the natural beauty of the Berkshire Downs and observed wildlife as she worked, and made friends with fellow workers. In the evenings they could play cards and games and listen to music in camp. On the first evening, Mimi returned from a walk to find “one of the Cockney group banging out jazz on the grand while the rest do a bit of hip-wagging, the conga and bumpsadaisy”, and Antonio led a group singalong of the camp song. They also went out to local pubs to drink, play darts and flirt with RAF officers and locals.



# 'A strange enchanted land': flying to Paris, 1935

The October 1935 issue of Wokingham St Paul parish magazine (D/P154B/28A/20/9) has a fascinating early account of a commercial air flight from Croydon (then the main airport for London) to Paris. It was written "by a correspondent", presumably a parishioner. This is what it says:

"At nine o' clock in the morning we arrived at the Imperial Airways office opposite Victoria Station. A smart blue motor coach stood outside, waiting to convey the passengers to Croydon. Inside clerks were buzzing about, weighing the luggage and the passengers. To our great relief our suitcases came within the 33lbs that each person is allowed to take free of charge, but we discovered to our disgust that other people had brought handbags as well to carry with them, while we had not known that they were permitted...

The airport at Croydon is a palatial building with hundreds of offices and waiting rooms, and a large hotel alongside for people who want to stay the night at the beginning or end of the journey. Outside in the huge concrete square like a vast parade ground two or three winged monsters waited with throbbing engines, while others wheeled majestically down from the skies or skimmed along the ground.

Ours was one of the smaller planes... It had five engines, two on each wing and a larger one in the centre. We entered at the back by means of a sort of step-ladder, and had to climb up a steep slope to our seats, owing to the angle of the body of the machine when standing on the ground.

## Holiday snaps

Amongst its collections, BRO has a number of pioneering albums of photographs from the 1880s and 1890s. Pictures from the albums of the Cave family of Bracknell (ref D/EX1690) have been used to illustrate this issue.

*The Silent Sisters working in their garden near Biarritz, France, n.d. [c.1884-1900] (D/EX1690/1, p. 13)*

*The sea front, Isle of Wight, n.d. [c. 1890s] (D/EX1690/1, p. 46)*

*A group of travellers, believed to be in Norway, c. 1895-1896 (D/EX1690/4, p. 54)*



It was very smart and comfortable inside, with seats for five passengers along each side and a gangway down the middle. Each seat had a bracket table in front of it, and an adjustable ventilator overhead... The whole interior was decorated in an attractive shade of blue, with chromium fittings. Each table was provided with literature describing to timid passengers the safety, comfort and convenience of air travel. The one sinister note was to be found at the foot of each seat, in the form of a papier-mache bowl labelled 'in case of sickness'...

The noise of the engines was too loud for any attempt at conversation: we were separate beings driven through a strange enchanted land between earth and sky, but it did not feel like Heaven - in fact most of the passengers were looking so green and miserable that we must draw a discreet veil over the next half hour of the journey.

At last with glad relief we saw the roofs and spires of Paris shining in the sun, and we began very gradually to descend: down, down, down... The aeroplane banked over on one side and made a huge downward curve; there was the flat square of the aerodrome waiting to receive us, but looking so small that we must surely miss it and crash into the buildings beyond. No, we should make it after all, as she took another sweeping curve, and then straightened out and skimmed above the ground at a hundred miles an hour. Gradually she slackened speed: we felt the slightest bump, and there was the ground all round us, and we had come to earth again. Gently she came to a standstill, and we got out, feeling deaf and rather unsteady but treading the firm ground with relief. Two hours and a quarter: in London for breakfast, and in Paris before mid-day!"



## New to the Archives

### Parish registers

Boxford: burials, 1876-2009 (D/P21)

Wargrave: Marriages, 2006-2008, and burials, 1978-2006 (D/P145)

### Other church records

There is a carefully drawn map of the district assigned to the new church of Maidenhead St Luke in 1867 (D/P181), and a beautiful watercolour design for stained glass windows at Easthampstead Church, from the studio of Burne-Jones, c. 1876 (D/P49).

The arrival of additional material for Caversham St Peter, 1948-2007, prompted the complete revision of the existing catalogue (D/P162). Other church records have come in from Calcot St Birinus, 1950-2009 (D/P188), Caversham St Barnabas, 1998-2009 (D/P162D), Childrey, 1916-2008 (D/P35), Hatford, 1938-1985 (D/P65), Hinton Waldrist, 1891-2001 (D/P70), Hurst, 1966-2008 (D/P73), and Winkfield, 2005 (D/P151). We have also acquired vouchers for goods supplied to the vicar of Stockcross, 1931-1936 (D/EX2141).

The extensive archive of Park United Reformed (formerly Congregational) Church, Reading, 1907-2008, is of considerable interest (D/N53). Interesting additional Methodist records have been deposited for Slough Central Hall, 1932-1986 (D/MS69); and the Slough Circuit, 1944-1994 (D/MC18)

### Pubs uncovered

Newly catalogued records of the county quarter sessions offer an exciting new resource for those studying 20th century pubs (Q/AC). Licensing was normally a function of the petty sessions, but problematic cases were referred to the Licensing Committee of the full Quarter Sessions. For these cases (c. 1931-1961) there are detailed files, often with plans of the premises and occasionally photographs, together with papers presented as evidence for or against the renewal or granting of a licence. Other files relate to compensation granted where a licence was refused, 1936-1956.

### Rating records

Our rate books project continues to help those researching house history with the completion of cataloguing and conservation of the rate books and valuation lists for Wantage Rural District Council, 1866-1973 (RD/WT), and Wantage Urban District Council, 1921-1974 (UD/WT).



### World War II

Mimi Hatton's diary of her time at a War Agricultural Camp in north Berkshire in 1943 sheds new light on life during World War II (D/EX2139). The war is also reflected in an autograph book given to the matron of Bucklebury Place War Hospital, which occupied one of the county's big country houses, with verses and drawings by patients (mostly wounded members of the Armed Forces, with some Norwegian merchant seamen), dated 1941-1942.

### Personal papers

Newly deposited personal papers include a series of diaries kept by Reading solicitor, Scoutmaster and Congregational Church secretary Gerald Hampton, 1922-1943 (D/EX2104), the most interesting aspects of which are his accounts of travel to Switzerland in the 1920s, in keeping with our holiday theme. We have also acquired papers and photographs of the Day and Hanson families of the Duke of Edinburgh Hotel, Reading (D/EX2121).



### Need somewhere to hold a meeting?

Why not ask about our Wroughton Room for hire? Reasonable rates, great accommodation. Call on **0118 901 5137** for more information.

### 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.

#### Contact Information:

Tel: 0118 937 5132 Fax: 0118 937 5131  
Web: [berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk](http://berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk)  
Email: [arch@reading.gov.uk](mailto:arch@reading.gov.uk)

The Berkshire Record Office,  
9 Coley Avenue, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 6AF

### Funding Partners

- Bracknell Forest Council
- Reading Borough Council
- Slough Borough Council
- West Berkshire Council
- The Royal Borough Windsor and Maidenhead
- Wokingham Borough Council

