

# BRO

The Berkshire Record Office  
The Archives of the Royal County

## The Berkshire Echo

April 2018

- A new Britain: transforming health and welfare
- Making friends with the enemy
- A sporting sensation
- New to the Archives

### WHAT'S ON

#### Colours More than Sentences

14th March to 8th June 2018, during normal opening hours

Colours More than Sentences - an exhibition of artists' interpretations of Oscar Wilde's classic poem, the Ballad of Reading Gaol, drawn from around the world. Available during our opening hours (Tuesday and Wednesday 9am to 5pm, Thursday 9am to 9pm and Friday 9am to 4.30pm). FREE admission. Why not come along and take a look?

#### Whitechapel Girl

19th April 2017, time 18.00

A talk by Sarah Macdougall on Clare Winsten. There are 30 places available, and booking is essential. Please email [arch@reading.gov.uk](mailto:arch@reading.gov.uk) or call 0118 937 5132.

#### How to Read Old Handwriting

18th June 2018, time 10.15-14.45

Always wanted to know how to read old handwriting? Come along to our introduction to reading handwriting found in documents at the BRO from c.1500 to 1700. Cost is £20 per person. There are 10 places available and booking is essential. Please email [arch@reading.gov.uk](mailto:arch@reading.gov.uk) or call 0118 937 5132.

Continued on page 2

Top: The children's ward at Maidenhead Hospital in 1948 (D/H/126/15)

### From the Editor


Welcome to the Spring edition of the Echo which is about all things '70' because the BRO is 70 this year! The Berkshire Record Office first opened its doors on 10th August 1948 in the basement of Shire Hall (now the Forbury Hotel) in Reading with Felix Hull as County Archivist and sole member of staff. The first holdings were those of the County Council itself, the court of Quarter Sessions and the Boards of Guardians. Parish records, privately owned deeds and manorial records were also deposited.

Access was a lot more restricted back then - visitors had to have a reference from a Justice of the Peace or public body. Most of the early users were experienced academics or local antiquarians and there were just 21 visitors in the first year of opening. In 1951 the office moved to the basement of the Assize Courts and by 1981 it was at the new Shire Hall at Shinfield Park. In 1998 the Berkshire County Council was abolished and the

BRO began its new life as a joint service of the 6 Berkshire authorities. It moved to its present home in Coley Avenue in October 2000. Today our visitors and enquiries number in the thousands.

We hope you enjoy the articles in this edition which looks at the creation of the NHS, the Reading-Dusseldorf Association and one local opinion about the Olympic Games in London. Remember you can always keep up to date with what's going on, the latest news and search the online catalogue by visiting our website: [www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk](http://www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk) or social media pages on:

 @berksarchives

 berkshirerecordoffice

Ivone Turnbull  
Senior Archivist



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The Berkshire Echo April 2018  
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Top: The children's ward at Maidenhead Hospital in 1948 (D/H/1/26/16)

## A new Britain: transforming health and welfare

5 July 1948 saw the creation of the National Health Service, when the existing network of voluntary and public hospitals was taken over by the Government in order to provide a standardised, free system of healthcare. In Berkshire, these ranged from large prestigious hospitals like the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading and King Edward VII in Windsor, to small cottage hospitals like Wantage and small specialist units like Park Isolation Hospital in Reading, which had been built to house people with serious infectious diseases. The Berkshire Mental Hospital at Cholsey was also taken over and given a new name: Fair Mile, intended to remove the stigma of mental illness.

In tandem with these changes, the National Insurance Act introduced other aspects of the welfare state, abolishing the last vestiges of the old poor laws. Many Public Assistance Institutions (the former workhouses), which already had infirmaries for the sick poor, were turned into hospitals - Battle Hospital in Reading, St Mark's Hospital in Maidenhead, Sandford, Old Windsor and Upton Hospitals, all started life as workhouses. Many had already been used as general

Emergency Hospitals during the Second World War. The Hungerford workhouse premises were used as an overflow for Fair Mile, and Easthampstead became a home for adults with learning difficulties.

Although local authorities had been involved with various aspects of maintaining public health before 1948, the new system allowed for more strategic thinking and organisation. Hospitals were grouped together for administrative purposes. Voluntary District Nursing Associations were also taken over by the NHS, and ambulance services were set up, initially with volunteers driving them.

70 years on, although it has undergone various changes, the NHS is, like Berkshire Record Office, still fulfilling the vision of its creators.

*Source: BCC minutes (C/CL); records of Berkshire hospitals (D/H)*

### Behind the Scenes at the BRO

*Monday 25th June 2018, time 10.30 to 11.30*

Ever wanted to know what goes on behind the scenes at the BRO? Come along and find out. You will be shown how we store our documents and given an insight into the job of our conservator. It's FREE and there are 12 spaces available. Booking is essential. Please email [arch@reading.gov.uk](mailto:arch@reading.gov.uk) or call 0118 937 5132.

### Cutting and Decorating Picture Mounts

*Friday 29th June, time 12.00-16.00*

Ever wanted to know how to cut and decorate picture mounts for your pictures and photographs? Learn this, as well as how to clean and attach pictures to your mounts. Cost is £25 per person. There are 8 places available and booking is essential. Please email [arch@reading.gov.uk](mailto:arch@reading.gov.uk) or call 0118 937 5132.



# Making friends with the enemy

Following the trauma of the Second World War, Reading led the way in normalising links with Germany. Phoebe Cusden, the town's mayor, visited Germany in the summer of 1947, and was shocked by the devastation she saw, particularly the impact on women and children. She arranged for several children from the city of Dusseldorf to stay with volunteer host families in Reading for several months in 1948. Post-war Britain was still heavily affected by rationing of food and other goods, but life was infinitely better than it was in occupied Germany.

More visits were to follow in later years, with Reading children making return visits. Twin town organisations existed elsewhere, but the Reading-Dusseldorf Association was the first with a former enemy country. One of Phoebe's Dusseldorf contacts, Herr Henkel, was the chairman of Henkel & Co, the company which manufactured Persil washing powder, and Phoebe was one of the voices which argued against this and other firms being closed down as part of the collective punishment of Germany. Her efforts predate the start of the Marshall Plan, which saw American investment in rebuilding Europe after the war.

The Reading Dusseldorf Association recently celebrated its 70th anniversary, and many years of exchange trips between children and adults.

*Source: papers of Phoebe Cusden (D/EX1485)*



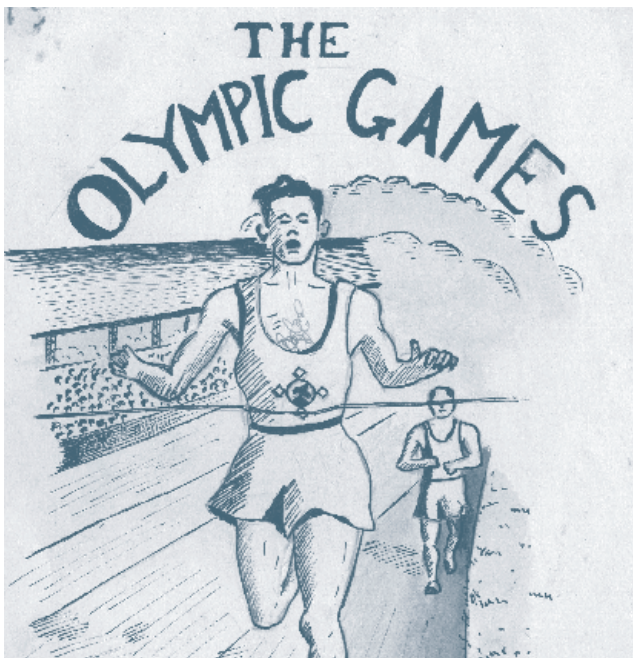
Top: Reconstruction in Dusseldorf as observed by Phoebe Cusden (D/EX1485/15/13)

## A sporting sensation

One of the biggest news stories of 1948 was the staging of the Olympic Games in London. Reading schoolboy W I Worsley looked forward enthusiastically to the Games, in a paper he read to friends at Reading School. He thought there was plenty of sporting talent in the country, but that we should 'spend much more time & money on our Olympic representatives or we can give up any hopes of being anything out of the ordinary in the future'.

He urged extra rations for sportsmen. Not however, sportswomen: the youngster thought it would improve the Games to abolish women's events altogether, saying, 'Having women in shorts slinging around 16 lb weights does not seem right, and to me appears to come too near to the bearded woman circus sensation'. Hopefully not too many others agreed with him! Happily, attitudes have changed with the Olympic movement now keen to ensure men and women have equal representation across all events, although enthusiasm for sports is as strong as ever.

*(SCH3/18/61/7)*



Left: Imagining the Olympics of 1948 (SCH3/18/61/7)



# New to the Archives

## Focus on Newbury

We have now completed work on the Newbury Borough Deposited Collections – a vast miscellany of records relating to Newbury and the surrounding area from 1311 to 1986 (N/D). The collection includes a wide range of deeds, maps, records of charities and local organisations, printed ephemera, etc. Highlights include registers of baptisms and deaths for an unidentified chapel, possibly Wash Water Independent Methodist Chapel, Enborne, 1825-1837 (N/D111); records of the Newbury Association for the Apprehension and Prosecution of Thieves and Felons (N/D22); records of Newbury Literary and Scientific Institution (N/D155); and records of several local turnpike trusts (N/D159).

## Berkshire families

The small but fascinating collection of papers of the Longland family of Abingdon and Radley, 1839-1917 (D/EX2564) include letters on the difficulties of gardening in colonial Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), 1889, the remarriage of divorced persons (and laxity of American divorce laws), 1891, the Siege of Mafeking, WWI experiences, and the tragic saga of Mrs Longland's beloved pet canary, which was eaten by the 'horrid lodging house cat' when taken on holiday. Another small collection relates to the property of the Dewe and Floyd families in Grove and East Hanney, 1632-1920 (D/EFL).

The account book of John Sherman of Hungerford, 1765-1787 (D/EX2528) includes references to servants' duties, payments for gardening, and even the maintenance of Sherman's 'gard dog' [sic]. We have acquired the marriage settlement of Elizabeth Guy of Littlewick and Edwin Cales of Maidenhead, 1843 (D/EX2609).

## Manorial records

We have unexpectedly received medieval records for some Berkshire manors, including accounts and a rental for the manors of Didcot and Sotwell Stonor, 1456-1457 (D/EZ191). An addition to the papers of the Andrews family of Shaw House includes accounts for Shaw manor and mill, for three years between 1462 and 1553 (D/ENM1).

## Need somewhere to hold a meeting?

Why not ask about our Wroughton Room for hire? Reasonable rates, great accommodation. Call on **0118 937 5132** for more information.



## Wartime life

The diary and reminiscences of air raid warden and munition worker Ada Mears of Reading, 1939-1943, shed light on wartime experiences (D/EX2495). We have also received some photographs of members of the 4th Berkshire ATS platoon, 1939-1940 (D/EX2505).

## Health and welfare

A precursor to the welfare provisions of 1948, the Berkshire Insurance Committee was established to administer the provisions of the National Insurance Act of 1911. All workers aged between 16 and 70 and their employers paid into a fund to receive unemployment benefit and free medical treatment in the event of sickness. Newly catalogued records of the committee, 1913-1950, shed some light on the local operation of the medical aspects of the scheme (D/EX272). An earlier version of welfare is reflected by the Poor Law Commission Orders sent to Windsor Board of Guardians, 1834-1836 (D/XGW1).

## Charities

Some material has been added to the records of Thatcham Parochial Charities, covering the dates 1654-2003 (D/QX14), and also to the Hurst Consolidated Charity, 1905-1905 (D/QX30), the latter relating mostly to the Arborfield and Newland Fuel Allotment Charity.

## Opening Hours

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

### Contact Information:

Tel: 0118 937 5132 Fax: 0118 937 5131  
Web: [www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk](http://www.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
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- ✦ West Berkshire Council
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