

# BRO

The Berkshire Record Office  
The Archives of the Royal County

# The Berkshire Echo

January 2020

- A garden cemetery for Reading
- A pioneer in cremation
- New to the Archives

## WHAT'S ON

### WWII Exhibition

*April/May 2020*

Keep an eye out for more information on this exhibition in our next edition of the Echo.

### How to Read Old Handwriting Workshop

*10th February 2020, time 10:15 to 14:45*

Always wanted to know how to read old handwriting, but don't know how? Then come along to our workshop! It will be held at the Berkshire Record Office where we will look at samples from 16th to 18th century documents held here. 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.

### Behind the Scenes at the BRO

*24th February 2020, time 10:30 to 11:30*

Ever wanted to know what goes on behind the scenes at the BRO? Then come along and find out! You will be shown some historical documents, where we store them and given an insight into how our conservator repairs them. 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.

Our World War One blog is no longer being added to, but will remain online. Why not see what you can discover? [berkshirevoiceswwi.wordpress.com/about-berkshire-at-war](http://berkshirevoiceswwi.wordpress.com/about-berkshire-at-war)

## From the Editor

Welcome to the first edition of the Echo for 2020 and a Happy New Year to you all! Often we get inundated with family history enquiries in January – quite possibly due to the fact that families have spent time together over the festive period. It's not uncommon to hear stories of the past from older generations and for this to spark an interest in delving into family history.


One very useful source of records for family history research, are the burial records. Whilst this edition looks at the recently catalogued records of the cemeteries in Reading, we do hold records for church graveyards and cemeteries across Berkshire too. In 'A garden cemetery for Reading' we discover how the records provide so much more than just the name of the deceased and the date of burial. They can refer to who paid for the grave, if other family members are in the same plot, and in some cases even the date of death itself is given.

In 'Pioneer in cremation' we discover how Reading built a crematorium which was not necessarily a popular option, but saw over 1000 cremations in the first 10 years alone. Some other interesting pieces of information can be found in the records too, such as the fact that an Aboriginal Australian boy was buried in Reading cemetery in 1852.


Perhaps not the most uplifting of subjects to start the New Year on, but if you look past the fact that it relates to death, such records could be the start of something fascinating. Family history research often leads to local history research too as we use records to find out where someone went to school, where they worked, got married, had children and so on. One record leads to another – burial records could be the beginning of discovering so much more about your ancestors and their connection to you. So read on and see what you can discover.

Whilst you're delving into burials, you might want to see if we have any wills. You can now do this online via our website through our wills index which has over 38,000 entries. You can search it to see what Archdeaconry of Berkshire wills, administrations and inventories we have for someone for the period 1480 to 1857. Why not take a look: [berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk/wills-index](http://berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk/wills-index)

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Ivone Turnbull  
Senior Archivist

Top: The iconic entrance to Reading Cemetery, Cemetery Junction, Reading, 1942 (D)/EX1028/106C/E10



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## The Reading Cemetery Company.



GRANT No. *6357*

By Virtue of an Act passed in the Session of Parliament held in the fifth and sixth years of the Reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, intituled "An Act for establishing a General Cemetery for the Interment of the Dead in the Parish of Sonning, near the Town of Reading, in the County of Berks." We, The Reading Cemetery Company, in consideration of

the sum of *five pounds and five shillings* to us paid by *Jane Liddiard* of *226 Oxford Road, Reading, in the County of Berks, Widow.*  
Do hereby grant and convey unto the said *Jane Liddiard,*

subject as hereafter mentioned, the exclusive right of burial and interment in *all that piece of* Ground being *six* feet and *six* inches long by *two* feet and *six* inches wide, situate and being in the *consecrated* part of the Reading Cemetery, in Division and distinguished by the Number *18012*, in the Plan and book of reference thereto kept by the said Company *To hold the same to the said Jane Liddiard*

## A garden cemetery for Reading

Reading Cemetery opened in 1843 as one of the earliest 'garden cemeteries' in England. After the churchyards in Reading were closed for public health reasons in 1856, it was the main burial place for the town, and it also buried some people from further afield.

It was run until 1959 by the private Reading Cemetery Company. The eastern half of the site was consecrated for Church of England burials, and the western half reserved for all other denominations and faiths. There were two chapels, one Anglican, the other non-denominational, both demolished in the 20th century. The cemetery was extended in the late 19th century to the east, and a Garden of Remembrance was added at the south of the site in the early 20th century. There are a number of war graves from the First World War in the cemetery. The cemetery was taken over by Reading Borough Council in 1959. Burials continued in existing family graves after there was no room for new graves.

The first person buried in the unconsecrated section, on 1 May 1843, was Elizabeth Jacobs, a 21 year old worshipper at Broad Street Congregational Chapel (now Waterstones' bookshop). Local Methodists and Baptists also used the cemetery as soon as it opened. The first Anglican burial was on 2 July 1843, for Thomas Mason, 28, a resident of King Street. Interestingly, in March 1852 William Wimmera, an Aboriginal Australian boy brought to Reading by missionaries after his mother's murder by settlers, was buried, aged 11.

The records of Reading Cemetery are extremely rewarding for family historians. There are two separate series of burial registers going up to 1980 for consecrated ground and 1978 for unconsecrated ground. From 1843 to 1953 there are also very detailed order books recording details of the deceased and the purchaser of grave, the grave number, time of interment, and costs. From 1959 to 1964 a new series of notices of interments replaced the order books, with information including date and place of death and funeral, details of memorials on and persons in existing grave, etc.

Registers of graves record the location of the grave and name all persons interred there with the dates of burial (including interments of ashes), arranged by grave or plot number. This numbering system was based on date of first use, and bears little relation to the area in the graveyard. Because they include all later burials in the same grave (up to 2007 in some cases, although there are very few after 1993), the date coverage is quite extensive and may appear to overlap, so researchers should always start with the order books or burial registers. Some graves were reserved by families for their exclusive use, for a fee, others were used for unrelated individuals. We also have a detailed set of plans showing the individual grave locations. There are some real gems of information amongst the collection.

Top left: Anglican chapel at Reading Cemetery, 1959 (D/EX1028/106C/Er2)  
Top right: Reading Cemetery Company grant of exclusive right of burial for Jane Liddiard, 1929 (D/EX940/1)





1 County Borough of Reading. READING CREMATORIUM.

| No. | Date of Cremation             | Name, Residence and Occupation of deceased                    | Age and Sex         | Whether Married or Unmarried | Date of Death                 | Name and Address of person who applied for Cremation |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|---------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| 1   | 13 <sup>th</sup> August 1932. | Vera May Young.<br>31st Oxford Road<br>Reading.<br>Schoolgirl | 16 years.<br>Female | Unmarried                    | 6 <sup>th</sup> August 1932.  | Annie Young.<br>1 Trinity Road<br>Marlow, Bucks.     |
| 2.  | 30 <sup>th</sup> August 1932. | David John Fryer.<br>Lutbury.<br>Shinfield.<br>Bucks.         | 6 months.<br>Male   | Unmarried                    | 26 <sup>th</sup> August 1932. | John John Fryer.<br>Lutbury.<br>Shinfield.<br>Bucks. |

## A pioneer in cremation

Hemdean Road Cemetery opened as Caversham Cemetery in 1885 following the closure of St Peter's Churchyard to new burials, and was originally run by Caversham Burial Board, and later by Caversham Urban District Council. It was intended to serve the whole of Caversham apart from the area forming the Ecclesiastical District of Kidmore. People from outside that area (mostly from Reading and Henley) were buried there for a higher fee.

There was no formal chapel here, but services of any denomination could be held at the lych gate at the entrance, or in a waiting room on the site. A caretaker known as the 'curator', (later the Superintendent) lived in a cottage adjoining the lych gate.

Reading Borough Council (RBC) had been looking for a new council-run cemetery for the borough for several years. None of the sites identified had been suitable, and when the extension of Reading Borough brought Caversham Cemetery under the control of the council in 1911, it was decided to make Hemdean Road the official borough cemetery for Reading.

Initially, like Reading Cemetery, it had consecrated and unconsecrated sections for Church of England and other burials respectively, but in practice this was ignored and all burials took place in the consecrated section regardless of faith, and the previously unconsecrated area was consecrated in 1917. Few new graves were dug after c.1935.

To cater for increased demand, Henley Road Cemetery opened in 1927, and was run from the start by RBC. Reading Crematorium was built there in 1932, and served Berkshire,

north Hampshire and south Oxfordshire. It included a columbarium for the permanent storage of ashes in pottery urns, and a garden of remembrance for the scattering of ashes. Ashes could also be interred in graves or taken away by the family. The burial records we hold for Henley Road go up to 1992, grave registers to 2007, and cremation records to 1993. The registers of cremations record the date of cremation, the name, address, occupation, age and marital status of the deceased, date of death, details of the person applying for the cremation and the person signing the medical certificate, where the death was registered, how the ashes were disposed of, and if a ceremony was performed and by whom – a huge amount of detail, especially for family historians used to the very basic entries in parish burial registers.

Cremation was controversial at first, mainly for religious reasons, and not a popular option for many, but over 1000 people were cremated at Henley Road in the first ten years. The first cremation in 1932 was of 16 year old schoolgirl Vera Young, whose family were from Marlow, the next a six month old baby from Shinfield. Other early cremations included an Indian undergraduate at Oxford University, the aristocratic Viscount Chelmsford, and landowner Philip Bouverie-Pusey of Pusey. Famous people buried at Henley Road include VC winner Fredrick Potts (who died in 1943). Less famous, but no less poignant, are graves for many of the victims of the bombs which hit Reading town centre in 1943.

Source: Reading Cemeteries records (R/UC; DC/R/UC)

Top left: Reading Crematorium (R/UC/3/7/1/1)  
Top right: Register of cremations (R/UC/3/6/1)





## New to the Archives

### New for family history

As highlighted, records for the three Reading cemeteries have now been fully catalogued and are available for research, covering Reading Cemetery (London Road/Cemetery Junction), 1843-2007 (R/UC1), Hemdean Road Cemetery, 1885-2007 (R/UC2); and Henley Road and Reading Crematorium (R/UC3 and DC/R/UC3). Some of the most recently deposited parish registers also date back to the 19th century:

Buscot: banns, 1813-1830 (D/P30)

Little Coxwell: burials, 1839-2017 (D/P53B)

Didcot St Frideswide: baptisms, 1940-1973; marriages, 1944-1973 (D/P47C)

Didcot St Peter: marriages, 1916-1992; burials, 1916-1992; banns, 1993-2018 (D/P47B)

Fernham: banns, 1861-1944 (D/P112B)

Littleworth: marriages, 1849-2016 (D/P27B)

Longcot: marriages, 1992-2008; banns, 1864-1985 (D/P112B)

Lower Sandhurst: baptisms, 1909-1982 (D/P102)

Old Windsor: baptisms, 1948-1974; marriages, 1884-1970; banns, 1819-2010 (D/P150)

We have also received the baptism register of Twyford Wesleyan Methodist Church, 1893-1915 (D/MS116), and marriage registers for the nondenominational Arborfield Garrison Church, 1986-2014 (D/RG1/1). The coroners' records for Maidenhead and Reading districts have now been listed up to 1943 (COR/M, COR/R and COR/RB).

### Title deeds

The Wokingham Society generously helped us to buy the deeds of a house and land called Edwards Lands near Bearwood in Wokingham, 1652-1743 (D/EZ199). We have also catalogued deeds for property in Caversham, 1899-1978 (D/EX2711).

### Schools

Our records of the Royal Merchant Navy School at Bearwood have been augmented by the annual school photograph for 1960 (D/EX2721). We have received the admission registers for Ranikhet School, Tilehurst, 1970-2004 (SCH47). The papers of the Revd Herbert Wilkinson, vicar of Woodley 1948-1974 (D/EX2733) include material on Woodley CE School. We have acquired the 1946 inspector's report for Malvern House, a small private school for girls in Reading (D/EX2254).

### Photographs

Photographs showing the demolition of Greenham Common Airbase in 1997 have been deposited (D/EX2657). We have added to our collection of photographs of Caversham (D/EX965), and postcards of Broadmoor (D/EX2552). The papers of Anthony Cooper include a photograph of boys from Battle School, Reading, at a potato picking camp in the late 1940s (D/EX2506). A photograph of racegoers at Royal Ascot in 1930 (D/EX2656) has been deposited, as well as one of a Samuel Elliott & Sons' staff outing, 1919 (D/EX2736).

### Miscellaneous

We have handbooks for the Berkshire Royal British Legion, 1962-1972, and sale catalogues of the Sulhamstead Estate, 1943-1948 (D/EX2630). Records relating to the appointment of Sheriffs of Berkshire, 1994-2018, are now available (SH/). We have also acquired the programme for the 1937 Newbury Agricultural Show, held in Kintbury (D/EX2628); and an order for John Groves of Highworth, Wiltshire, a prisoner in Reading Gaol, to appear in court relating to his bankruptcy petition, 1843 (D/EX2683).

### 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.

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