

The logo for The Berkshire Record Office, featuring the letters 'BRO' in a bold, white, sans-serif font inside a white-outlined rectangle.

The Berkshire Record Office  
The Archives of the Royal County

January 2021

- Newbury Bypass Protest
- Ban the bomb! Berkshire and the fear of nuclear warfare
- Bash the rich
- New to the Archives

## WHAT'S ON

### What's On?

You can still take a look at our online exhibition about World War Two in Berkshire and how the local people coped. See the 'Through their Eyes' exhibition for more:

[throughtheireyesww2.com](http://throughtheireyesww2.com)

We're still unable to provide visits or talks in person, but we are hoping to be able to deliver more digital events, so please do keep an eye on our events page for anything we may have on in the coming months:

[berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk/events](http://berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk/events)

A black and white photograph of several people, likely protesters, holding a large banner. The banner has the words 'HOOT FOR THE BYPASS' visible. The image is partially obscured by the 'The Berkshire Echo' title.

# The Berkshire Echo

## From the Editor

Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter for 2021! This time we take a look at protests. Protests to demand or prevent change are nothing new and have been around throughout history – think Magna Carta from 1215, the Boston Tea Party of 1773 and the Suffragettes to name a few. Protest can be made for all sorts of reasons such as human rights, civil rights, political, economical aspects - anything really. But did you know that protests also took place here in Berkshire?

As the name suggests, '**Newbury Bypass Protest**' reveals how the town of Newbury saw environmental protests against the coming of the bypass in the early 1990s. By coincidence the records of both the protestors and supporters groups were deposited with us virtually at the same time. It means that you can get a, hopefully more balanced, view point of the protest from both sides. Plus you can find out more about a very tiny snail!

Going back further in time, in '**Ban the bomb! Berkshire and the fear of nuclear warfare**', we discover more about anti nuclear protests that took place against the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment in Aldermaston.

We also find out how some women protested by camping outside the US Air Force base in Greenham Common, Newbury in the early 1980s. And as we see in '**Bash the rich**', protesting became a way of life for some individuals.

Protests can be a difficult subject to look into as they are often maligned by violence and emotions. They do not necessarily achieve anything at the time, but they can make people aware of an issue. Indeed it can take years for anything to actually happen after a protest takes place. By looking back at historical events, it can help us to understand and learn from them in order to potentially formulate a different future. Such events in Berkshire can help us discover more about its history and the people who lived there too.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the Echo. Don't forget to look at the New to the Archives section for what is available and keep an eye on our website and social media feeds for all the latest news.

Ivone Turnbull  
*Senior Archivist*

Top: Poster supporting the bypass (D/EX2476/8/5)



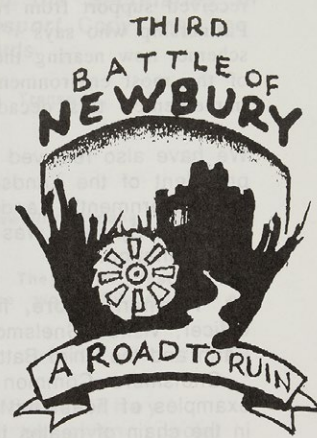
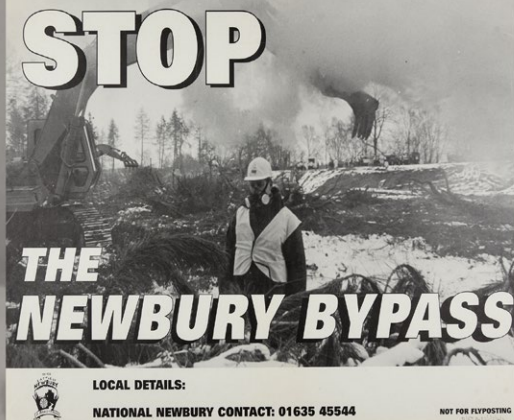
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## Newbury Bypass Protest

The building of the A34 Newbury Bypass provoked one of the best known environmental protest campaigns of the 1990s. Records held at BRO reveal both sides of the story. Those of the Newbury Bypass Protest Campaign and the 'Third Battle of Newbury', 1985-2007, some still stained with the mud of the camps, illustrate the protestors' side (D/EX2473); while the records of the Newbury Bypass Supporters' Association, 1979-2006 (D/EX2476) reveal that many local people were in favour of the road.

A bypass for the town of Newbury was first proposed as far back as 1936. Following increased traffic in the 1970s, the Department of Transport began examining 39 potential routes in 1979, and in 1982 announced that they would be holding exhibitions on a shortlist of four; one to the west, one to the east and two through the centre of Newbury. In 1985 it was announced the preferred route was the western one.

The proposed route ran through sites of significant scientific and historical interest, including Snelmore Common, the vicinity of the Rivers Lambourn and Kennet, Penn Wood, part of the North Wessex Downs (an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty since 1972), the registered Civil War battlefield site of the First Battle of Newbury, and The Chase (a National Trust nature reserve). It was further discovered that areas of the proposed bypass route were home to a rare snail, known as Desmoulin's Whorl Snail.

The initial protests were led by a conventional pressure group, the Society for the Prevention of a Western Bypass (SPEWBY). A lengthy Public Inquiry in 1988 considered ten alternative routes before ruling in favour of the original proposals. In July 1990, the western route was approved by the Secretaries of State for Environment and Transport. Another Public Inquiry (relating to the slip roads and Compulsory Purchase Orders) was held in 1992, with the main opposition coming from the National Trust.

In 1995 the Secretary of State for Transport (Brian Mawhinney) announced that construction would proceed, and this led to a fundamental change in the way opposition was expressed. A new campaign group had formed in February 1994, under the name of the Third Battle of Newbury. They set up protest camps along the bypass route in the summer of 1994 to prevent construction workers from working on the site. One Newbury man, Daniel Hooper, achieved national fame under his nickname 'Swampy', and the modern druid 'King Arthur Pendragon' was also a participant. Some of the protesters were arrested and some sent to prison. Others were forcibly removed by security staff.

They also had a headquarters in Newbury town centre where they produced campaign material and gathered signatures for petitions against the road, stating, 'It is considered to be environmentally the worst proposed road scheme in the country'. Activists also targeted companies involved in the construction and even some individuals.

The Newbury Bypass Supporters' Association, comprised mainly of locals, also carried out an active publicity campaign. They even produced a men's tie with images of the endangered Desmoulin's Whorl Snail wearing a hard hat.

After fierce campaigning on both sides, in 1996 the protesters were evicted from the site and work commenced on the main contract. The controversial road finally opened to traffic in 1998. The population of snails was moved to another location two miles away, but by 2006 it had died out.

Sources: D/EX2473, D/EX2476

Top left: Poster opposing the bypass (D/EX2473/1/3/14/2)  
Top right: Newsletter of the Third Battle of Newbury, 1994 (D/EX2473/1/3/3)





Top: A protester being removed from Greenham Common Airbase, 1982 (Postcards/Greenham/3)

## Ban the bomb! Berkshire and the fear of nuclear warfare

Over 60 years ago, the main focus for protest was the fear of nuclear war, and Berkshire was at the heart of the fight. In April 1958 protesters from across the country marched from London to Aldermaston, where the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment (AWRE) had been established. It was organised by the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War, which also picketed AWRE after the march and tried to persuade workers to resign. The newly formed Campaign Against Nuclear Disarmament supported the march, and subsequently organised an annual programme of marches from Aldermaston to London. Tens of thousands of people attended these marches, protesting against nuclear weapons.

The first march made its way through much of Berkshire, stopping at Maidenhead for a rally on Easter Saturday. Easter Sunday itself saw the marchers reach Reading. Local support for the first and ensuing marches including overnight accommodation and food, came from the newly formed Reading branch of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and its chair, Phoebe Cusden.

Locals were not always thrilled by the marches and other protests, particularly those who worked on the base. Anthony Hurd, MP for Newbury accused what he called a 'motley march' of supporting Communist aggression. When the joint RAF/United States Air Force base at Greenham Common became the site for American nuclear cruise missiles, protest took the form of women's camps outside the base from September 1981 onwards.

The protesters came from across the country. They tried to cut the security fences to gain entry to the site on several occasions, and many women were arrested.

Their protest did not directly affect the decision to remove missiles from Grenham in 1991, following the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty between the USA and Russia. The RAF base closed in 1997, and the site was returned to public use as open land, although the peace camp remained in situ until 2000. The Greenham Common Control Tower has been converted into a visitor centre.

Source: D/EX1485/24/36-37; D/P3/28A/10

## Bash the rich

For some, protest became a way of life. We can get a glimpse into this from the Red Rag, a newsletter produced initially in 1979 by the Reading Anarchist Group and later by a loose collective of likeminded individuals. Throughout the 1980s it opposed government policies and promoted demonstrations both locally and nationally. They protested against apartheid in South Africa and benefit and other public spending cuts at home, promoted squatting in empty homes, and painted slogans on the streets on the anniversary of Hiroshima. Sometimes this included violent actions, and not just against property - in 1985 they wanted to 'Bash the Rich' by means of an organised protest at the Henley Regatta, although participation was low.

Source: D/EX2392/2





## New to the Archives

### The Newbury Bypass

Records of the Newbury Bypass Protest Campaign and the 'Third Battle of Newbury', 1985-2007 (D/EX2473), and the records of the Newbury Bypass Supporters' Association, 1979-2006 (D/EX2476), are now available. Coincidentally, both collections arrived at the Record Office in the same week. See elsewhere in this issue for more!

### Local authorities – pic from contracts?

The useful series of contracts entered into by Berkshire County Council, mainly relating to property and road, has now been listed in detail up to 1967 (C/CL/L2), adding over 800 documents from 1941 to 1967. A recent discovery was the minutes of Reading's New Town Hall Building Committee, 1877-1883 (R/AC2/23/1). The need to house the generous bequest by Horatio Bland to the town of Reading of his museum collection in 1877 led the borough council to extend the town hall to provide facilities for concerts, a Free Library and what was to become Reading Museum. We have also now listed all the minutes and agenda papers for Reading Borough Council up to 2017 (DC/R). The records of Brightwalton Parish Council have been deposited (CPC24), and we have had additions to the records of Thatcham Town Council (CPC130). Finally, we have made available a small set of maps showing changes to the county boundaries, c.1880s-1974 (D/EX2409).

### Water, water everywhere

Private companies were originally responsible for water supply. We were delighted to receive Reading Water Works Company's letter book, 1826-1858 (R/UW), and minutes of Reading Borough Council's Waterworks Committee, 1875-1881 (R/AC), after the council purchased the undertaking. Records of South Oxfordshire Water Company, 1905-1960, reveal that their water was pumped from wells at Goring and stored in reservoirs at Cleeve, Nettlebed and Woodcote, to serve households in Caversham, Streatley and Kidmore End (D/EX2748).

### Schools of all kinds

We have catalogued the records of Baulking School Board and Baulking Board (later Council) School, 1875-1913 (D/EHA/O1); and records of Caversham Nursery School, 1946-2011 (SCH43).

*Click here to recommend a friend*

# MARCH TO ALDERMASTON

## Why?

BECAUSE we must show our opposition to the Testing, Storing and Manufacture of the H-bomb in Britain.

BRITAIN MUST GIVE A

We have purchased a lovely early 20th century album of postcards and photographs of the Catholic public school Beaumont College, Old Windsor (D/EZ197); and have been given photographs of pupils at the Quaker-run Leighton Park School, Reading, 1945-1949 (D/EX2791). Various items, 1910-2004, have been added to the records of Newbury County Girls' School (SCH12). The annual report and statement of accounts of the Committee of the Windsor National Schools, 1854, was a stray item in a family collection (D/EX1690/30). We have also acquired a selection of magazines from Slough High School, 1938-1962 (D/EX2433).

### Coroners

We have now listed all the coroners' returns for Maidenhead District (COR/M), Reading County District (COR/R) and Reading Borough (COR/RB) up to 1946 by name.

You can find out more about all these records by searching our online catalogue: [ww2.berkshirenclosure.org.uk/CalmView](http://ww2.berkshirenclosure.org.uk/CalmView) Enter the collection reference given above in the Catalogue Reference field.

### 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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