



# BRO

The Berkshire Record Office  
The Archives of the Royal County

## ***The Berkshire Record Office***

### **Annual Report**

***For 2017-2018***

Berkshire Record Office, a countywide archive service for all  
local authorities in the Royal County of Berkshire

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



## Introduction

After the benchmarking, analysis and eventual success that was archive service accreditation, this year we moved away from process and back to a focus on helping people and the collections.

The year began in splendid fashion with the results of the survey of visitors to UK archives. We outperformed even our previous excellent results - a great tribute to staff and evidence of our efforts to provide a 'gold standard' of customer service.

This was followed by the culmination of many years' work in a substantial output of collections newly-available for research. For an archivist, there is nothing quite like presenting something new to researchers (however fond you might be of the old favourites) and it is really pleasing to have so many thousands of items added to the public catalogue.

As well as using our skills on our own material, we also continued the mantra of sharing our expertise. We offered opportunities for anyone to learn not just about sources but also collections care, picture framing and reading old handwriting. We are really pleased that these sessions are now established - not only do they pass on useful, and increasingly vanishing knowledge, but they also bring people closer to the historic collections.

Speaking of which, the two collections highlighted this year were our externally-funded projects: the Royal Merchant Navy School at Bearwood and the Coleshill Estate. The Bearwood project, generously funded by the depositor, resulted in a fascinating exhibition, wide media interest and Jonathan Dimbleby - for perhaps the only time - reciting the words 'Berkshire Record Office'. With Coleshill, this first year was one of hard graft and the details of conservation and cataloguing, as we look forward to publicly celebrating that project this autumn.

In all these things, we have continued our aim to provide a high-achieving and inclusive research resource. We are so fortunate to look after so many treasures from across the county. We also remain very aware of our duty to Berkshire's communities now and in the future. Last year I wrote about the 'applause' we were offered by the accreditation assessors - and that applause continues to spur us on.

Mark Stevens  
County Archivist  
June 2018

## Celebrating our award of Archive Service Accreditation



*Members of Standing Conference receive the accreditation plaque from The National Archives, June 2017*

*(from left to right, Councillor Marion Mills (RBWM), Derek Trinder (Berkshire FHS), Richard Alexander (Wokingham), Councillor Marian Livingston (Reading), Philip Wright (Slough), Councillor Hilary Cole (West Berkshire), Mark Stevens, Neil Curtis (TNA), Ivone Turnbull, Dr Rebecca Rist (University of Reading), Hannah Jones (TNA))*

## Welcoming Visitors and Enquirers

As mentioned in the introduction, this year we were very pleased when we received the results from the latest survey of visitors to UK archives.

They followed last year's excellent performance in the survey of distance users and were better still. We recorded 9.8 out of 10 for all the metrics relating to staff - availability, attitude and quality of advice, and a 9.5 rating for the service overall. These results meant that we had the highest proportion of satisfied customers of any county service in the south east, which is another fantastic achievement by the staff and shows our commitment to giving visitors the best experience that we can.

We are determined to maintain this performance. In the coming year, the team is going to spend time at their monthly meetings reflecting on all our processes, looking for improvements where possible. One outcome of that already has been our renewal of book cushions, for which we have now made removable covers that can be washed regularly - a small detail but one that adds a little extra.

### The visitor experience

*Very helpful staff - the service could not be bettered*

*Splendid service*

*I have enjoyed two days in this lovely quiet space and so helpful staff too*

*I've been really impressed by the service provided*

*You were all very efficient, helpful and friendly*

*You're a gem*

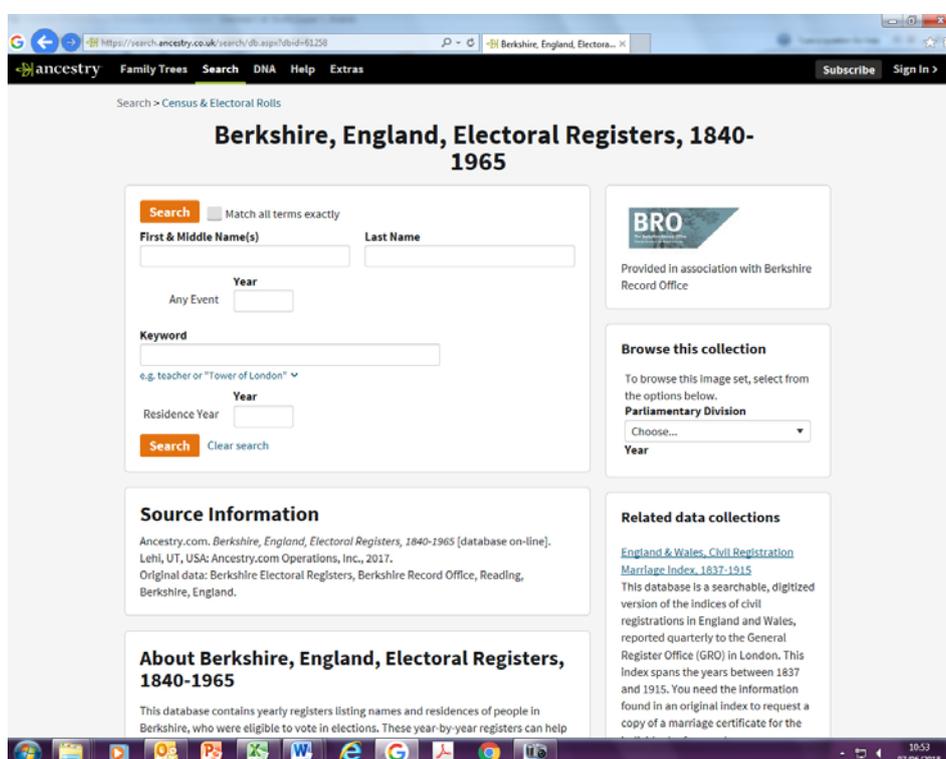
Our customer guarantees stood as follows:

- 99% of visitors got their first choice of visit time
- 99% of written enquiries were answered within 5 working days
- 96% of all copies were supplied within 10 working days
- 100% of original documents were produced for visitors within 15 minutes of order

## For the Online Customer

The most significant development for remote users took place separately from our own online offerings: the launch of the Berkshire electoral register collection on Ancestry.

The collection, spanning 1840-1965, was digitised entirely from material held at the Record Office and went live in November. The initial licensing agreement with Ancestry runs for ten years. For customers, this provides the first online dataset of our records available since the New Landscapes site of enclosure maps was created in 2004. For us, it is an opportunity to gauge likely use of pay-per-view material as well as any impact on direct enquiries.



*The Ancestry collections page for the electoral registers*

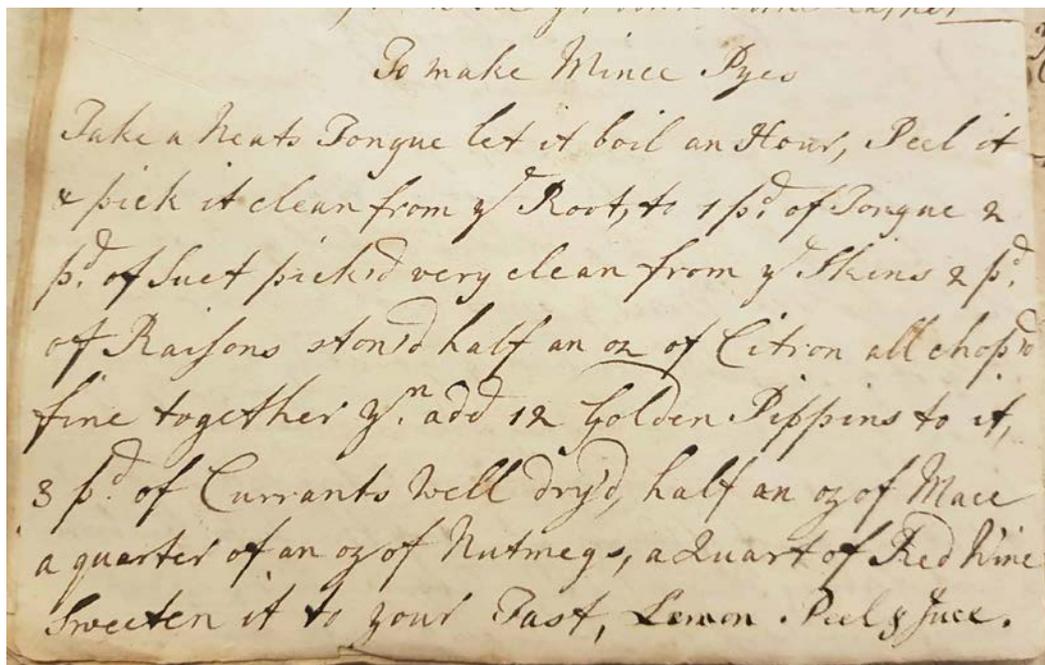
We have not added much new content this year to our own website but that is because work began last summer to redesign the site entirely. The existing site is now ten years old, and Reading's desire to retire its content management system provided the incentive for an update. After a tender process, we appointed Farrow Creative of Petersfield to build a new site using the 'October' platform and this work will complete shortly.

The content from the current site is being moved across in its entirety, meaning visitors will still be able to access anything they found before. Apart from a refreshed design, the main benefit they will immediately notice is that the site will

resize itself to fit whatever device they are using - PC, laptop or phone. There will also be a marketing sign-up option on the home page.

In the meantime, we have continued to add our monthly highlights to the current site. These have included a letter from Jane Austen's family circle - showing that domestic life for her friends was much as Austen described; a Georgian passport belonging to Charles Blandy of Reading; and some local New Year's honours in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Windsor. Lisa Spurrier also continued the daily First World War blog of comments from the Home Front.

The greater part of new online content now tends to be posted onto our social media accounts. Our Twitter followers currently stand at 530 and our Facebook friends at 680. Popular posts during the year included the receipt of our accreditation reward, the snowy winter of 1908, a suffragettes' meeting, and anything to do with cookery: historic recipes for mince pies, the Berkshire Pie (chops, apples and onions) and even love were all shared enthusiastically.



How to make 'mince pyes' the 1775 way (a 'neat' is a young bull, if you were wondering)

## Engaging the Curious

We held another three of our half-day sessions on reading old handwriting, two collections care workshops at Shaw House, and workshops on picture mounting both at Shaw House and in the Record Office. As a one-off event, we also jointly presented a day's training on Protestation returns - lists from 1642 of those swearing an oath to the Protestant religion - with the Parliamentary Archives. We also held a day's training on salvage and emergency response for the Mills Archive.



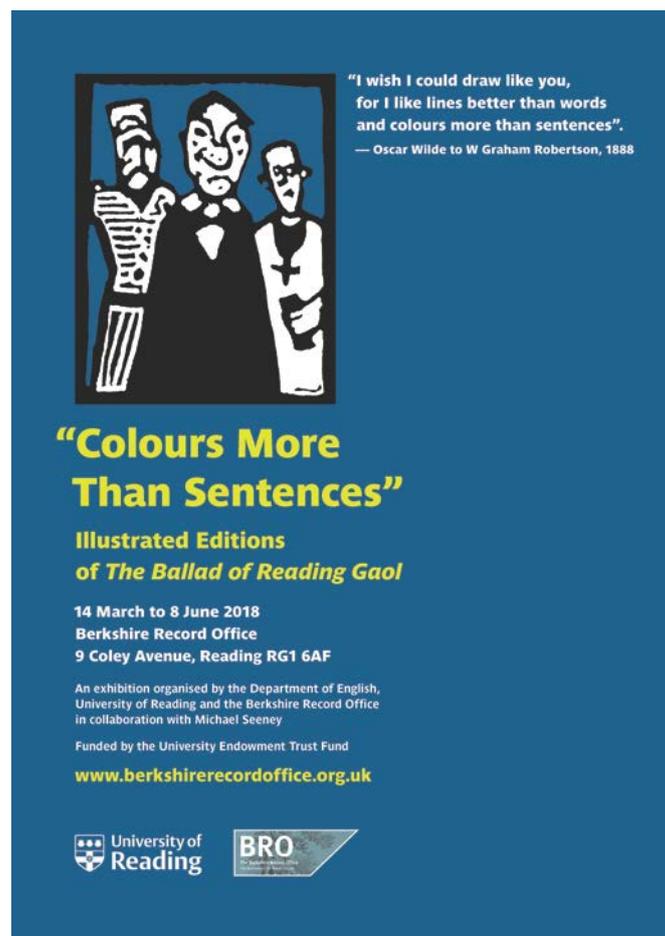
*Workshop on Protestation returns*

The usual family history talks programme took us to Emmbrook Social Club and West Forest Townswomen's Guild, both in Wokingham, the Woodley Women's Club and The Curve in Slough. The latter also hosted our talk about the history of Reading Prison, as did the Wokingham U3A. The Victorian Broadmoor talk had airings at the Goring Gap Local History Society, the Yateley Offshore Sailing Club (who meet in Sandhurst) and a public talk in Yateley Library, while there was a conservation talk for Stockcross WI and a Victorian asylums talk for a community event at the Great Hall, Cholsey (the old Fair Mile Hospital). Retired staff from the civil service also visited for a tour of the building.

We hosted two of our behind-the-scenes tours as well as further opportunities to view the building for the Heritage Open Days. We had a stand at the West Berkshire Heritage Roadshow and also spoke about sources for LGBT history at a Heritage Lottery Fund event in Reading Museum.

We staged three exhibitions onsite during the year. 'Orphans of the Sea', part of our Royal Merchant Navy School project, is detailed elsewhere. The others were both products of partnerships. Firstly came 'Capability Brown in Berkshire', which was curated with the Berkshire Gardens Trust. This celebrated the tercentenary of the birth of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, and did so with panels relating to Brown's life and archives relating to gardens in Berkshire where he worked. The exhibition was launched with a public talk given by Ben Viljoen, chair of the Trust, about Brown's impact on the county.

Then, towards the end of the year we opened 'Colours More than Sentences: Illustrated *Ballads of Reading Gaol*'. This was curated as part of our long-standing partnership with the University of Reading's Department of English Literature and made use of a significant collection of material amassed by Wilde scholar Michael Seeney. The exhibition title is taken from a quote by Wilde that he preferred 'lines more than words and colours more than sentences', while the collection of *Ballads* is drawn from around the world. It is, we believe, the first time such an exhibition has been attempted. At the private view we were also able to display some of our prison archives relating to Wilde and Charles Wooldridge, the trooper whose story inspired the *Ballad*.



"I wish I could draw like you,  
for I like lines better than words  
and colours more than sentences".  
— Oscar Wilde to W Graham Robertson, 1888

**“Colours More  
Than Sentences”**

**Illustrated Editions  
of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol***

14 March to 8 June 2018  
Berkshire Record Office  
9 Coley Avenue, Reading RG1 6AF

An exhibition organised by the Department of English,  
University of Reading and the Berkshire Record Office  
in collaboration with Michael Seeney

Funded by the University Endowment Trust Fund

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

University of Reading 

Poster for 'Colours More Than Sentences'

The widest reach for our displays was achieved by an exhibition hosted elsewhere. A selection of Lynette Edwell's collection relating to the Greenham Common Peace Camps was loaned to the Birmingham MAC for its exhibition 'The Fence and the Shadow'. This was based on original artwork by Sally Payen, created to reflect the interest around Greenham air base in the 1980s and 1990s. Our material was used to provide context for the artwork. The MAC is one of the most visited regional arts spaces in England and the exhibition was a major profile-raising activity for us, with some 8,000 visitors having viewed our loans.



*A case of Greenham material at the Birmingham MAC*

We delivered our usual learning events for University of Reading students: an early modern literature MA session; a talk to history undergraduates about dissertation sources; and supporting two undergraduates in the 'discovering archives' module. We also hosted a session for conservation undergraduates from the Camberwell College of Arts.

Our newsletter, the *Berkshire Echo*, this year featured marriage and illegitimacy, welfare before and after the Second World War, Anglo-Saxon Berkshire and the work of the Clewer House of Mercy with 'fallen' women. We also contributed our usual columns to society newsletters, while press coverage included an article in *The Door* on our 10,000<sup>th</sup> accession, a piece in the *Slough Citizen*, and a wide-ranging feature in December's *Who Do You Think You Are?* Magazine.

## Developing Collections

This year has seen three local collections deposited which have an interest beyond the county boundary.

Two of them are business archives. The photographic collection from H & G Simonds Ltd, the Reading brewers, was generously transferred from the archives of Heineken PLC. We were greatly helped with this by the current head of the Simonds family. The photographs are mostly post-war in date, and include company staff, social events and tied houses and off-licences around Britain.

Those images are relatively small in number compared to the vast print and film archive that we received for Metal Box PLC. Metal Box had its roots in Nottinghamshire and London, but its headquarters were in Reading from 1975-2005, and we believe that our collection forms its promotional archive. It includes pictures from factories around the world and design details for hundreds of products from a firm that was, at one time, the biggest packaging company in the Commonwealth.



*Anyone for a Pot Noodle? A single image from Metal Box's extensive archive*

The other collection relates to what is now known as The Avenue School in Reading. This special needs school traces its history back to 1901, when a separate class for 'mentally defective' children was opened at the Oxford Road Primary

School. As such, it was one of the earliest special schools opened by a local authority and, quite possibly, an even rarer example of one that has maintained a continuous archive.

Although the collection is relatively small we believe it is significant and might well attract funding as part of a larger project. We have decided to survey the other special schools in Berkshire to see if there is similar material elsewhere.



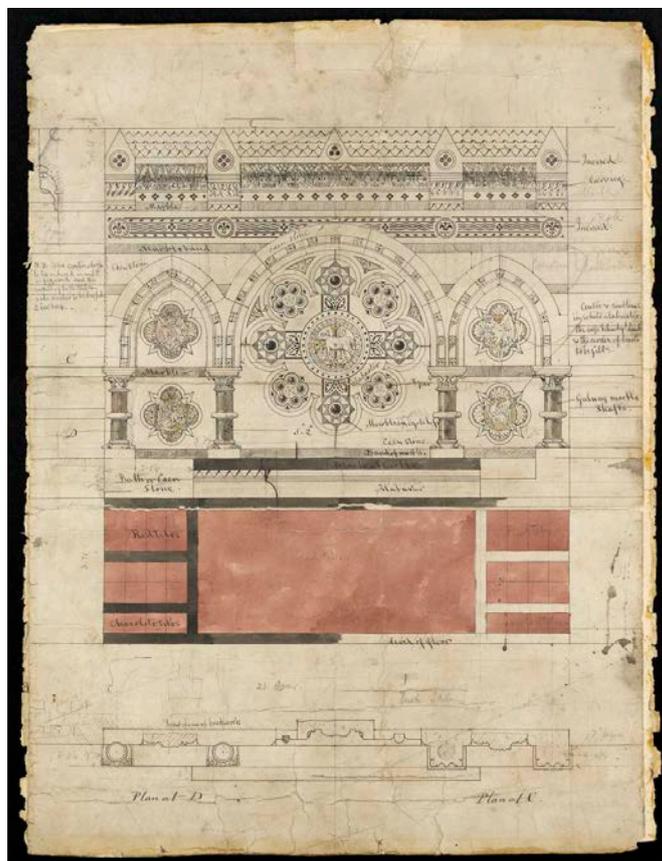
*A class of what were described as 'cripples' at the Whitley Special School - which would later become The Avenue, 1909*

Other new public authority material included the parish council archives for Bray, Brimpton and Didcot, all dating from their inception in 1894; a sizable quantity of older magistrates records for the courts that sat at Abingdon, Faringdon and Wantage; while the Reading cemeteries team deposited their burial and cremation registers for grounds in London Road, Hemdean Road and Henley Road.

Clubs and societies were represented by the Berkshire organists, Townswomen's Guilds and Women's Institutes. There were more cultural activities through Wokingham Theatre and the Reading Barbershop Harmony Club, with sports via the Newbury and Thatcham Hockey Club and the Warfield Badminton Club. The Sunningdale and District Gardening Association gave us their archive, as did residents' associations for South Earley, Romans Hill (Bracknell) and Katesgrove (Reading).

Nineteenth-century parish registers were received from the churches of St Peter's, Caversham; West Challow; Letcombe Bassett; Little Coxwell; Old Windsor and Buscot. However, the nicest parish item to come our way was from All Saints in Windsor: a drawing of the reredos, or altar screen, made in 1863 by the junior

member of staff in a London architect's studio: Thomas Hardy. Although there is conjecture whether Hardy's sketch is his own design or not, it is still a rare and wonderful item. The reredos itself was rediscovered behind panelling two years ago and has now been restored.



*Thomas Hardy's drawing for a reredos at All Saints, Windsor*

Perhaps the most pleasing community deposit of all came from the Old Royals Association - those ex-pupils from the Royal Merchant Navy School in Bearwood. Several Old Royals made the trip to see the 'Orphans of the Sea' exhibition and this resulted in them deciding to place their records here alongside the school's.

Finally, it was business and family papers that brought in the oldest items. One was a single item - a compotus (literally, a calculation, but more colloquially an account) roll for the manor of Didcot, dated 1457; while the other, a deed from 1336, was part of a very large collection of additional material relating to Buscot Park, in the extreme north west of the ancient county.

Our Buscot material relates to the Loveden family, who owned the estate from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It has changed hands several times since and is now a popular National Trust house and garden. We have been speaking to the Trust as part of our Coleshill project and have made them aware of this new trove for

Buscot. We will continue discussions to see if there are opportunities for joint working that might benefit us both.

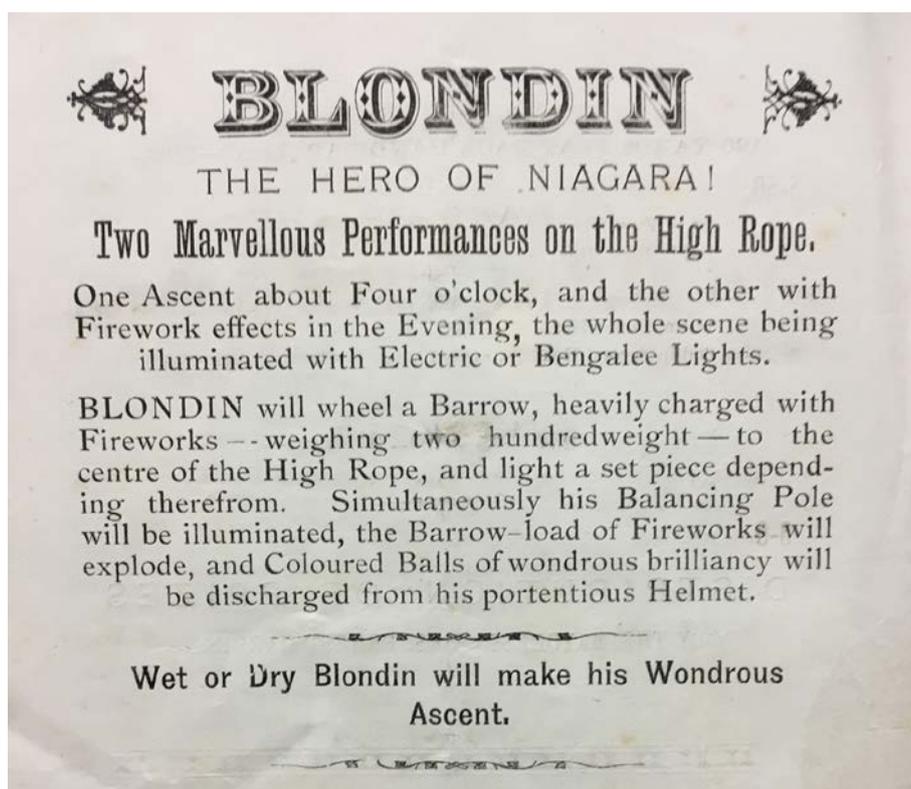
Other family papers included some 18<sup>th</sup> century material for the manors of Ascot and Winkfield, the deeds for Newbury's Camp Hopson department store, and a wonderful collection of Victorian and 20<sup>th</sup> century hunting diaries from the Bannard family of White Waltham. Another department store, the now-closed Jacksons of Reading, also added more material to its archive.

## **Making the Collections Available**

The year's output of new catalogues was high - over 7,000 items - which is the highest figure for a decade and the result of our determination to finish various jobs, either new, dormant or that have been running over several years.

To a certain extent this was grant-related, because it included the Royal Merchant Navy School collection that our project archivist, Louise Woof, finished cataloguing in June. It was also a piece of teamwork, as all staff had contributed to listing over a thousand coroner's files for the period between the wars, while a group of three staff had reviewed and catalogued more than 500 Berkshire County Council 'miscellaneous' files. The latter was an intact series created by the County Clerk, and it included appointments of chief officers, welfare claims under the Workmen's Compensation Act, military manoeuvres, bovine tuberculosis, swine fever, midwives and maternity clinics, local utilities, probation of offenders and agricultural instruction - showing not just the growth in local government functions during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century but also the historically rural nature of the county.

Two other collections that had been worked on for many years were those accumulations deposited by local people with the old boroughs of Newbury and Reading. In the years before the Record Office existed, both boroughs offered storage for items of historic interest. The resulting deposits were large. In Newbury, there were around 160 separate gifts including the archives of the town's Literary and Scientific Institution, Volunteer Fire Brigade and Society for the Apprehension of Felons. There was also Pope Nicholas V's mandate in 1453 for a chapel at Chamberhouse in Thatcham and various wonderful pieces of ephemera.



*The day that Charles Blondin, world famous tightrope walker, came to town: the main event in Newbury, 25 May 1896*

The Reading deposits include Victorian druggist's recipe books; the 1615 inventory of goods belonging to Mawditte Glasse, bargeman; the Archdeacon of Berkshire's parish visit books for 1729 and 1786; and a letter book for a Jamaican estate owned by a local family. More sizeable presentations to the borough include the antiquarian papers of the Reverend Peter Ditchfield of Barkham; archives from Dunlop and Company, transport and coal merchants; and the records of the Redlands Estate Company, which oversaw the building of much of the area around the University.

In addition, there were a number of notable collections this year catalogued from scratch. They include the quantity of papers from Home Farm, Charlton, which featured in the annual report two years ago. There were also the archives of the Reading and District Scouts, Datchet Parish Council, Windsor Labour Party and the Windsor Municipal Charities. A large collection of client papers from Pitman Bazett, the Newbury solicitors, was also completed. This includes many items relating to landholdings across west Berkshire as well as papers from Donnington Hospital and the Bucklebury estate.



Part of the Reading Borough collection: the title deeds from 1633-1684 for Caversham Park, which is currently being sold by the BBC

A full list of new collections for research is published in *The Berkshire Echo*.

## Spreading the Impact of the Collections

Many people learn about us through our customers and, as usual, a number of local books were published based, in part, on research in the Record Office. They included histories of the following places: Aldermaston, Bagnor, Chieveley, Englefield, Padworth, Shinfield, Sunningdale and Wokingham; while family history resources were published for the Wokingham Union.

Images from the collections were used in various exhibitions and publications. West Berkshire Museum made use of Joseph Toomer's 1815 census of Newbury, while a community exhibition in Cholsey featured several images from the Fair Mile Hospital archive, and a selection of documents for the town and manor of Hungerford were displayed there in the Town Hall. Documents were also loaned for display as part of the Heritage Open Days in Reading, Shaw and Wokingham.

Two academic works were based on material here: Sir Henry Unton's diaries formed part of a feature on the Elizabethan court on the Folger Shakespeare Library website, and a thesis on convalescent homes, including St Andrew's, Clewer, was completed at John Hopkins University in Baltimore. Images from the collections were also reproduced as follows: a plan of Sandford Priory for the Capability Brown 300, a Shrivenham map in a University of Vienna thesis on English

landowners, and the *Yellow Pages* within a Panorama documentary about Northern Ireland. Our Agatha Christie 'missing' poster also appeared on the front cover of the *Journal of Neurology* and in a dramatisation for Sky Arts.

The impact of the Royal Merchant Navy School archive is dealt with below.

## Caring for Collections

As in the previous year, the biggest collections care output came from a project - this time, Coleshill, of which more later.

More routinely, the scourge that is sellotape resulted in hundreds of inserts being removed then safely glued into minute books for Beedon Parochial Church Council, the Twyford Townswomen's Guild and the Berkshire branch of the National Farmers' Union. We also repaired a number of small, personal seals as part of our preservation assistant, Jane Mac Tarling's, work as she studies for the Archives and Records Association's certificate in archive conservation.

A seal also formed one of our bigger repairs of the year. This time it was a great seal for George I, affixed to a deed from 1720 for a farm in Whitley.

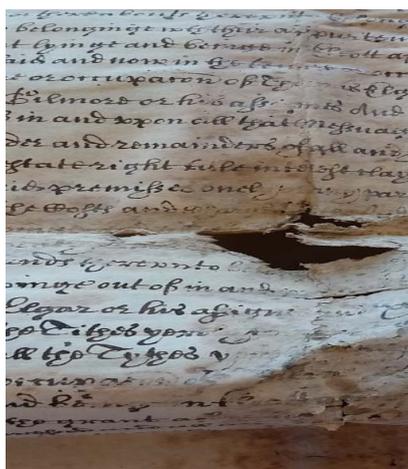
The seal itself was completely shattered, but as it was still in its metal storage skippet the pieces were still held loosely together. They were safely removed by placing a piece of blu-tack across the top of the skippet so the pieces could be lifted out. The blu-tack then acted as a mould as melted wax was dribbled into the missing areas on the back. Once the wax had cooled, the seal was turned over, the blu-tack removed and wax applied to the cracks on the front.



*The repaired Great Seal*

The other time-consuming repair was to a bundle of 17<sup>th</sup> century deeds for Kintbury, relating to the rectory. These had all been badly damaged by damp with the result that the parchment skins were too weak to handle and the text - ink which rests on the parchment surface - was beginning to fall off.

For each of the sixteen items, a 2% solution of gelatine in distilled warm water was applied to consolidate the weak areas and the loose text. The result is that the deeds can now be handled safely for the first time in at least 60 years.



*Before and after photographs of the Kintbury deeds*

## Special Projects

### *The Royal Merchant Navy School, Bearwood*

Last year we mentioned that this project had begun; the cataloguing is now complete. Louise listed over 400 items from the school dating back to the record of its first meeting, as the Merchant Seamen's Orphan Asylum, at the London docks in 1827.

This nationally-important archive was therefore made available during the 190<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of what is now called the Royal Merchant Navy Education Foundation. The Foundation, which had generously supported the cataloguing, also provided funds for Louise to curate a celebratory exhibition, 'Orphans of the Sea', which opened in November.




## ORPHANS OF THE SEA



An exhibition to celebrate the 190th Birthday of the Royal Merchant Navy Education Foundation

Berkshire Record Office  
9 Coley Avenue  
Reading  
RG1 6AF

8 November 2017 – 16 February 2018

*'Orphans of the Sea' poster*

The exhibition made use of some of the wonderful things within the collection. It detailed a handful of the many children supported by the Foundation; the various institutions that the charity has run; and the daily lives of students at Bearwood from 1921-1980, which is the period that the school existed. The exhibition attracted much interest: it featured in the local press, on BBC South Today, and was the topic of a series of live broadcasts on the Radio Berkshire breakfast show.

The Foundation and its supporters also remain significantly engaged with its history. The Old Royals visited the exhibition, as well as depositing their own archives, while as part of the 190<sup>th</sup> events, the Foundation commissioned a short video featuring the archives alongside stories of Foundationers today, all narrated by Jonathan Dimpleby. We hope to use our relationship with the Foundation to pursue opportunities to repair the more damaged items in the collection.



*At the launch of 'Orphans of the Sea'*

### ***Coleshill Estate***

In July, we began this nine month project to repair and repackage hundreds of items for one of North Berkshire's great estates. Funded by the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust, the repair work is mostly to business records for managing the land, improving agricultural and domestic buildings, and running the Model Farm, which was a notable innovation in animal husbandry.

Last year's annual report featured an image of one item, a map of Great Coxwell from 1829, in fragments on a bench. This year, we have a much more happy image of it being repaired by Aimée Crickmore, our project conservator, on our giant glass studio wall.



*Preparing the map wall for lining tissue, and then infilling the Great Coxwell map*

A piece of lining tissue was pasted onto the wall and then the various fragments arranged accurately on top. After that had dried, new tissue was matched and cut to fill the missing sections. That makes the process sound simple, but as those who saw the map on the wall will know, it was a painstaking jigsaw puzzle that required significant patience to fit together.



*Aimée at work on a smaller map*

Although most of the repairs were not quite as spectacular they were still numerous. Aimée treated around 50 maps and plans in total as well as around 30 books. Some of the latter required complete rebinding, such as a payment book for labourers from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, shown below. This book was unusual in that the paper sections had been sewn onto recessed cords which were themselves sewn into the book's spine. This technique is rarely used today, but is a highly-decorative style that shows the volume was made to be a prestigious item. As the sewing had collapsed and the cover was missing, this gave Aimée the opportunity to reconstruct it and present an approximation of how the book would have looked 200 years ago.



*Labourers' payments before and after*

The Coleshill project will be celebrated with an exhibition later this year, supported by the National Trust, who are the present owners of the estate.

## *Berkshire Schools Research*

Editorial work on the gazetteer of 18<sup>th</sup> century schools is nearing completion. The volume should be published towards the end of this year. Many thanks are due to our editor, Sue Clifford, for her work creating the gazetteer, and to Peter Durrant for his proofreading oversight.

Meanwhile, our volunteers have changed tack on their next project. On closer investigation, the amount of information on the county gaols was found to be so vast that piecing it together was likely to take many years. Rather than commit to this, the volunteers have chosen instead to continue their work on education. For their next project, they will research the period of school building between 1870-1914, when first school boards and later local education authorities began to commit large sums to providing universal schooling. It is intended that the result will be a book of essays about individual schools, augmented with original plans and photographs of the buildings. Planning work has begun and the first research assignments will be offered shortly.

## **With Thanks to Our Staff**

None of these achievements would have been possible without the contributions of our staff. Thanks, as always, are due to them for supporting what the Record Office wants to achieve. It was particularly appropriate that they shared in our accreditation presentation and the excellent results in the visitor survey.

We have experienced a small number of staff changes during the year. We were very pleased that our Royal Merchant Navy School archivist, Louise Woof, transferred to the permanent staff in May. She was joined by other new archivist Elly Southwell, who had previously worked at Norwood, a UK Jewish charity that supports children and families.

Aimée Crickmore joined as Coleshill conservator in July shortly after Jas Dhillon finished as Reading prison conservator. Also in July, Nicki Richards became our new administrative officer and Natalie Burton resigned as archives assistant to study for an MA. Natalie was replaced in October by Rosannagh Maddock.

Staff also continued to represent the Record Office in other places. I served as a visiting research fellow in the University of Reading's History Department and as Vice-President of the Berkshire Family History Society; Ellie Thorne as a member of the council of the Berkshire Record Society; and Lisa Spurrier on the editorial committee of the journal *Berkshire Old and New*. Sue Hourigan was an assessor for the Archives and Records Association conservation certificate, giving a lecture to the students as part of her work. Sue also spoke about mounting herbarium specimens at the Archives and Records Association UK conference.

## And with Thanks to Our Volunteers

We were also very pleased during the year to have our usual wide range of support from volunteers. Our 'Discovering Archives' undergraduates were Emily Cookson and Lydia Smith, who spent a term working on the Oliver Roskill papers. Other documentation projects were undertaken by Judith Attar, who is providing an index to recipients of grants from Archbishop Laud's charity; John Cox, who is similarly indexing the Reading Poor Law Union minutes; Maddie Goring, listed deeds for the Sunninghill Park estate; and Chris Viney, who has identified photographs in the Maitland Underhill collection. We have also benefited from the technical expertise of Jeremy Sims, who provided detailed advice about the content of our unlisted Thames Conservancy plans.



*'Discovering archives' students in conservation*

Peter Durrant has spent another year of Mondays covering a range of book conservation projects: this year he repaired the earliest two Chieveley parish registers and made a new cover for the vestry minutes of St Mary's, Reading. He was helped by our Wednesday morning conservation volunteers, who did the resewing for all those books, as well as for many of our Simmons and Lawrence sales catalogues. The volunteers also provided a huge amount of assistance as part of our Coleshill project. Thanks are due to both the Berkshire WIs and Wokingham Theatre teams: Wendy Backhouse, Sue Baughan, Eva Collinge, Greta Dixon, Francesca Heffernan, Ann Knee-Robinson, Christina McCann, Sue Main-Morris, Jean Parsons, Marion Searle and Heather Young.

## Key Numbers

### Visitors and enquiries

	2017/18	2016/17
Visitors to the search room	2231	2380
Written and telephone enquiries	5793	4793
Documents produced	6323	5911
Microforms consulted	4645	6536
Copies supplied	7167	6357
Visits to online resources	77114	70126
Talks and visits: number	31	35
Talks and visits: attendance	714	716

### Accessioning and cataloguing

Accessions received: number	204	231
Accessions received: volume	6.045m <sup>3</sup>	9.733 m <sup>3</sup>
	1.56GB	
Catalogues completed: volume	10.503m <sup>3</sup>	2.658m <sup>3</sup>
Accessions catalogued: number	243	177
Items catalogued	8511	1987

### Conservation and preservation

First aid	81	283
Tipping-in	860	159
Sewing	20	457
Packaging	137	168
Encapsulation	56	167

### Staff resources

Headcount of permanent staff	19	18
Number of full-time equivalent posts	13.40	13.95
Headcount of project staff	1	2