

Family History at Reading Central Library

We have a large number of resources for family history research. Although we specialize in the county of Berkshire we do have other resources and expert staff ready to answer your questions. We have reference books for consulting in the library as well as books for home loan. All titles are listed in the Library Catalogue, available online at the Library website - www.readinglibraries.org.uk

General Guide

Most of the material is on the top floor of the Library in the **Family History Centre** - including microfilm, microfiche, and CD-ROM. There is no charge for using most facilities - though photocopying and printing incur a charge. Printing from microfiche and microfilm is available on a self-service basis. Microfilm readers and the CD-ROM terminal may be booked in advance, free of charge, though it is usually possible to walk in and use one without an appointment. There is no need to book fiche readers. There are Internet terminals throughout the Library, and access is free to members. Sessions are limited by time, and must be booked on the first floor. Please feel free to browse around, and to ask the staff to find things for you and to ask for help if you have any questions.

If you cannot come to the library we do offer a research service, but there is a charge for more complicated enquiries. Please ask for details. Phone us on (0118) 9015965, write to Local Studies, Reading Central Library, Abbey Square, RG1 3BQ or email via the website.

Books on compiling a family history

The collection includes guides to producing a history, and to the various sources of information, and their location - for example, where to look at parish registers for Northamptonshire, or where to look for information about someone who was in the army, or who worked on the railway. There are directories of archives, record offices, and public libraries across the country. There are also guides to Welsh, Scottish and Irish family history. Other books are held in reserve so please check the catalogue for full listings.

Next to the books are the magazines on the subject - *Family Tree*, and BBC Who Do You Think You Are?, and in the Local Studies collection next door is *The Berkshire Family Historian*. Extensive backruns of these are held.

Resources in the Library

PARISH REGISTERS - BERKSHIRE PARISHES . - Some registers have been transcribed and are available here in book form, with name indexes, but the main collection is

at the Berkshire Record Office (see “Resources outside the Library”). Please ask at the enquiry desk for full listings.

PARISH REGISTERS OUTSIDE BERKSHIRE. - There is a collection of transcribed and printed registers for various parts of the country. The titles can be found on the catalogue by doing a keyword search under the name of the county and the word “registers.”

THE IGI (International Genealogical Index), produced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) is in effect an index to registers of baptisms and marriages in England, Wales and Scotland, from the start of parish registers until civil registration began in 1837. The Library has a microfiche copy of the IGI, from which pages can be printed, and it is also available free of charge online - www.familysearch.org

THE CIVIL REGISTER OF BIRTHS, MARRIAGES AND DEATHS - The index to the Civil Register (also known as the St. Catherine’s House Index, or the G.R.O. Index), is gradually being made available online - www.freebmd.org.uk (and others). The full index for England and Wales is available on microfiche at the Berkshire Record Office, together with forms for ordering certificates (for details see below).

CENSUS RETURNS - BERKSHIRE There is a complete set on microfilm for Berkshire and the adjacent part of Oxfordshire to include Caversham, 1841-1901. The personal details are confidential for 100 years, so we cannot expect full access to the 1911 census until 2012. (Access online is available on the website Findmypast). The 1851 and 1881 censuses are available on CD-ROM, and searchable by name.

CENSUS RETURNS OUTSIDE BERKSHIRE. The 1881 census for the whole country is available online free of charge, and so is searchable by name - www.familysearch.org . Otherwise there are a few websites that also provide access, the two biggest and best known are Ancestry and Findmypast, but you will have to pay to view the pages. Please ask staff for more details.

DIRECTORIES - There are directories for Berkshire, and for some other Berkshire towns, and a small number for other counties. The collection of Reading directories is particularly comprehensive. Please check the online catalogue for holdings. You need to ask at the enquiry desk if you wish to browse through the collection. Some of the more fragile directories are available on microfiche only.

The Library has a few early editions of the local telephone directory, and a complete set from the 1950s onwards.

POLL BOOKS AND ELECTORAL ROLLS - There are some Berkshire lists from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Some neighbouring parts of Berkshire and South Oxfordshire are covered from the 1950s to the 1990s. The lists for Reading are virtually complete from the 1880s until 2003, after which the Library has only the “edited” version of the list.

PEERS AND LANDED GENTRY - Current editions of the lists are on the top floor. The Library has some older lists in the reserve stock, so please check the catalogue.

HERALDIC VISITATIONS - The Library has printed editions for most English counties.

WILLS AND PROBATE RECORDS - There are printed indexes for various parts of the country. We also have some others on CD.

MEMORIAL INSCRIPTIONS - The inscriptions on gravestones and monuments in many Berkshire churches and churchyards have been transcribed and indexed, and the work is being continued by local family history societies. The older surveys are available on paper, and work done more recently is on microfiche.

THE NATIONAL BURIAL INDEX - produced by the Federation of Family History Societies, is on CD-ROM and has records for the whole of England. The second edition contains 356,000 Berkshire records. Please ask to use this.

NEWSPAPERS. - Most of the newspapers published in Reading from 1723 onwards are available on microfilm. There are no systematic indexes, though there is a card index of names in the Local Studies Library that has references to the local papers among other resources. Library members also can access the *Times Digital Archive 1785-1985* (ask for fact sheet 34).

We can provide photocopies of microfilm pages.

PRESS CUTTINGS. - They date back some 50 years, and come from the Reading local papers. The “biography” files are sometimes useful for family history.

LOCAL AND COUNTY HISTORY

We hold one of the largest collections of printed material on Berkshire in the UK so if you have local ancestry there is a lot you can learn here about the history of the local area as well as seeing maps and photos. We also possess a large set of the volumes of the Victoria County History that are detailed examinations of the local history of English counties. Check the Catalogue for holdings.

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES ON THE FIRST FLOOR OF THE LIBRARY.

(Available on request: please check the catalogue for complete lists of holdings.)

The Army List from 1758 to the present day

The Clergy List and *Crockford's Clerical Directory* from 1850 onwards.

Alumni Oxonienses (graduates of Oxford University) up to 1884

Alumni Cantabrigienses (graduates of Cambridge University) up to 1900

The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (2004)

Who Was Who from 1897.

We have many other items in our reserve collections including long runs of the *Illustrated London News* and *Country Life*. We also have in our Reserve store - Calendars of State Papers, Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports, Rolls Series and Camden Society publications. Ask staff for details.

Resources outside the Library

THE BERKSHIRE RECORD OFFICE, 9 Coley Avenue, Reading, RG1 6AF, tel. 0118 901 5132, e-mail ARCH@Reading.gov.uk (Holds the archives, including parish registers,

for the county and Indexes to Birth, Marriages and Deaths see their website for full details.)

Open from 9-5 on Tuesday to Friday with late opening until 9 pm on Thursday. You must book in advance and will need to get a readers ticket so will need ID.

<http://www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk/>

THE FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH CENTRE (Berkshire Family History Society), Yeomanry House, 131 Castle Hill, Reading, RG1 7TJ, tel. 0118 950 9553. (Holds census returns for counties other than Berkshire and many other resources check the online catalogue. Charge for non members.)

<http://www.berksfhs.org.uk>

Please note that the Record Office and Family History Research Centre are next to one another, and to the Registry Office.

THE FAMILY HISTORY CENTRE, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 280 The Meadway, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 4PE, tel. 0118 9427524.

<http://www.familysearch.org/>

Our website has the library *Catalogue*, a series of useful Family History websites on the *Links* section of the Library website and under *Services* we have more general information on our Family History services, and holdings:

www.readinglibraries.org.uk