

Berkshire Record Society

General Editor's report to the AGM 2011

Properly speaking, this report relates to the calendar year ending on 31 December 2010. However, as usual I shall take the opportunity to bring you up-to-date with progress since the beginning of 2011.

During 2010 we issued one volume - Kate Tiller's edition of the Berkshire Religious Census, 1851. This was a welcome addition to the Berkshire Record Series, and its appearance means that the returns for all three archdeaconries in the Diocese of Oxford have now been published. It also nicely complements one of our earlier publications, Lisa Spurrier's edition of nonconformist meeting-house registrations.

Our index to Berkshire probate records, 1480-1652, was completed during the year, though not published until after the year's end. It was officially launched at a reception at Berkshire Record Office in January, at which the Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire was guest of honour, and it received good coverage in the local press and on BBC South. Originally believed to commence in 1508, work on the index revealed that in fact the earliest documents in the series dated from nearly thirty years before that - hence the revision of the covering dates from earlier announcements. This was a major project, taking in some 15,000 original wills and admsons (with their associated papers) and 9,000 pages of register copies. Because of its size the index was published in three volumes and set against two years' subscriptions. This project received the generous support of the Marc Fitch Fund, the Berkshire and Oxfordshire Family History Societies, the Berkshire Local History Association and Berkshire Record Office, to all of whom we are most grateful.

Work was in progress on a number of texts. The next volume to appear will be Harry Leonard's edition of Robert Lee's diaries, 1735-1744, which was close to completion at the year's end. Lee was a justice of the peace in east Berkshire and his diaries contain notes of his judicial business as well as of his social life and his work in managing his uncle's estates. Joan Dils' edition of the Tudor churchwardens' accounts of St Laurence, Reading, is also well advanced, and we hope this too will appear in 2011. This will bring our publication schedule up-to-date. Other volumes in preparation include Margaret Escott's edition of selected Swing Riots papers, Sabina Sutherland's edition of the church inspection notebooks of Archdeacon James Randall, 1855-1859, my own volume of Hungerford overseers' case papers, 1654-1834, and a further volume by Jeremy Sims on Berkshire turnpike records.

Good progress has been made on the new edition of the Historical Atlas of Berkshire. Most articles have now been completed and maps are being prepared. We hope to publish later this year.

Peter Durrant
April 2011