FG: Hello again and welcome back to the Counties of England podcast with your host Finn Gray. In this weeks episode we will be covering none other than the county which is home to the national trusts oldest tree. The county which supposedly houses the world’s largest Lion and the county which contains Windsor Castle. That final clue should’ve been the giveaway but nonetheless we will be covering Berkshire today.

FG: Berkshire is found in the South East of England and is bordered by six counties: Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire to the north, Greater London to the east, Hampshire and Surrey to the south and Wiltshire to the west. It is shaped like a workman’s boot: hard worn and toe curled upwards. The county town is Reading and the largest town is Reading too. It is one of the home counties which means that it is near or borders London. It has a population of 911,403 placing it 24th out of 48. It is the 9th smallest in terms of area. It is the 10th largest in terms of population though, so it is similar to Bedfordshire in the sense that both are relatively small, but fairly densely populated.

FG: In Berkshire, to the east of the county (towards London) it is more urban. But further to the west it is more rural, so again Berkshire is a mix of rural and urban areas. Some people describe Berkshire as “half home county, half West Country”. Berkshire is split up into 6 different regions: West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, Windsor and Maidenhead, Slough.

FG: The median salary in Berkshire is £36,650. The unemployment rate is 3% and the average house price is £422,306. This means it is one of the more wealthy counties compared to the UK average. This is shown from the quote from ‘Engel’s England’ by Matthew Engel “Not every girl in Berkshire actually marries a prince, but a lot of them would be plausible contenders.”

FG: Berkshire has played host to many historical battles and events in the past, a few of them are: The Siege of Windsor castle, the end of the civil war between King Stephen and Empress Matilda at the treaty in Wallingford and William of Orange succeeding in the Battle of Reading for the Glorious Revolution. In Parliament, Berkshire is represented by 8 MP’s, 6 of which Conservative and two are represented by Labour. The most famous MP is Alok Sharma for Reading West who previously served as Business secretary.

FG: Many famous films have also been filmed in Berkshire such as: Star Wars the Force Awakens, The Jigsaw Man, Bridget Jones’s baby and the 1967 version of Casino Royale. Some famous people born in Berkshire include: Kate Middleton, Ricky Gervais, Kate Winslet and Oscar Wilde wasn’t born there but he was a prisoner at Reading Gaol. Some places of interest include: Windsor Castle, Legoland Windsor and Ascot Racecourse.

FG: Geographically Berkshire contains the River Thames and Virginia water lake, however this is in fact artificial.

FG: Berkshire is stereotypically a posh county and I can see where people are coming from with that stereotype. It houses two royal estates: Windsor Castle and Frogmore. It has the most expensive school in Britain: Eton College and its major football team have the nickname “The Royals”.

The flag features a traditional symbol of the county, the stag and oak. This design's connection with the county dates from at least Michael Drayton's 1627 poem Battle of Agincourt, where he describes the men of Berkshire marching under the symbol of "a Stag, under an Oake that stood".

It was actually instated officially in 2017, so it is fairly recent, but most county flags were actually instated in the last 8 years or so, so it isn’t too uncommon. Some counties don’t even have flags yet. I can do an extra episode on this if you really want, so if you would like that then do communicate that to me.

Reading has the most expensive property empire pro rata (£50 billion) outside of London. Reading also has an American tinge to it, as house numbers are numbered the American way and the heart of Reading is actually further out of town.

So I think that is just about it for this episode again, I hope you enjoyed it and are looking forward to the next episode on the 23rd of January where we will be covering the county of Buckinghamshire so keep an eye out for that.