



The History of Reading Society

The object of the Society is to cultivate interest in and to encourage research into the history of the town of Reading.

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***** NEWSLETTER - AUTUMN 1989 *****

We are sorry to learn of the recent illness and admission to hospital of our President, Dr Cecil Slade. The latest news is that he is now back at home and making a good recovery. Our best wishes, Dr Slade, for a speedy return to your former good health and spirits.

The holiday season having drawn to a close your Editor trusts that all our Members had an enjoyable time unaffected by problems of weather and traffic. We now embark upon our Winter session of meetings and activities. Your Secretary, Nigel Denton, has worked extremely hard to prepare a programme which it is hoped will offer something of interest to you all. A copy of the programme on a separate sheet is enclosed with this newsletter. Extra copies for your friends are available from Nigel and myself.

The Summer season ended with walkabout meetings which were well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by all who took part. A word of thanks must therefore be expressed to the leaders, Mr Ken Major and Mrs Joan Dils. The town walk on Thursday, 29th June, was again led by Ken Major, an acknowledged authority on the architectural and industrial history of Reading. Commencing at Christ Church he led the party on a circular walk around the old established residential area which centres upon the former Whitley Pump. Among the buildings noted were the 19th and 20th Century houses in Christchurch Road and Northumberland Avenue, once the homes of local businessmen. Passing along the western side of Basingstoke we took a fresh look at the products of Reading's former brick-makers. In Elgar Road, now no longer a traffic artery, we compared the austerity of the steel and plastic of the factory buildings on the site of what was not so long ago Robert Cort's Iron Foundry with the terra-cotta decoration the artisans' cottages which still line the greater length of the road. Some amusement was had from attempts to decide whether the front doors were original or more recent products of Magnet & Southern.

Other treasures from Reading's brick age were the patterns on the gable ends in river road and the almost ecclesiastical lines of Katesgrove School.

The country walkabout on July 13th, a beautiful Summer evening, took the form of an exploration of the Church and Almshouses at Ewelme, just over the border into Oxfordshire. The organiser of this expedition, Joan Dils, was fortunate in securing the services as guide of Mr George Cannon, the former village schoolmaster. Of very early brick construction, the school house dates from the 15th Century and claims to be the oldest Church School still housed in the original building. It would take too long to describe the treasures of All Saints Church which dates from 1430 and has associations with the Chaucer family. By good fortune the church survived the excesses of the Civil War and remains very much as the 15th Century builders left it. Between Church and School are thirteen almshouses set around a square, cobbled courtyard. Contemporary with the church and school one can here see some of the earliest brick buildings in this part of the country. The Almsmen (or should one say Almspeople?) as there are now some ladies in residence) each have a pleasant home comprising two rooms with all modern conveniences. One lady was very pleased to show us around her quarters.

A visit to Ewelme, particularly on those days in Summer when the school and other buildings are open to the public, is an excursion greatly to be recommended.

FOR YOUR DIARY

To mark the opening of the newly refurbished eighteenth century Small Town Hall, a course of five lectures, "The Story of Reading", has been organised jointly by the University of Reading and Reading Museum and Art Gallery. To be held on alternate Wednesdays from February 7th in the Small Town Hall these lectures, each delivered by a specialist in the particular field, cover 'Saxon and Viking Reading' (Dr C.E. Slade), 'Reading Abbey and the medieval town' (Dr B. Kemp), 'Tudor and Stuart Reading' (Mrs J. Dils), 'Eighteenth Century Reading and Victorian expansion' (Mr T. Corley) and 'Reading and political change in the 20th Century' (Prof. A. Alexander)

There will be a small display accompanying each lecture and a booklet accompanying the series may be available at a later date.

The Town Hall Bar will be open before and after the lectures.

Series rate for 5 lectures, £8.50, booking through the Extramural Office, or £1.90 per lecture at the door.

DAY SCHOOLS AND EVENING CLASSES

Reading University, the W.E.A. and the Reading Adult College again offer a wide range of classes and courses of which the following are but a few:

EVENING COURSES.

Market Towns of Berkshire and South Oxfordshire. The changing fortunes of Reading, Wallingford, Newbury, Henley, Wokingham and Windsor from Domesday Book to World War I. Mondays 7.30-9.30 at Bulmershe Court, Woodlands Ave. 20 meetings. Tutor, Mrs J.Dils.

Industrial Archaeology. An introduction to the methods and skills needed to record and preserve Berkshire's industrial heritage. 20 meetings, Mondays 7.30 to 9.30 at the University, London Road. Tutors, Mr J.K. Major and Mr L. Cameron.

History of Local Woods. An in-depth look at woodlands mainly within 15 miles of Reading. Tuesdays 7.30 to 9.30. 5 meetings at the University, London Road. Tutor Mrs G. Preece.

Victorian Churches and their Builders. A short course exploring some local Victorian churches: the buildings, their builders, their clergy and parishioners. Wednesdays 7.30 - 9.30 at the University, London Road. Tutor, the Rev. Dr. A. Wilson.

DAYTIME COURSES.

Exploring Victorian Caversham. A study of the Victorian expansion of Caversham Village and the hamlets of Emmer Green and Kidmore End. 5 meetings, Fridays 9.45-11.45 from 8th June 1990, at the Caversham Adult Centre, School Lane. Tutors, Mr H. Godwin Arnold and Mrs J. Dils.

Thames Valley Country Houses. A study of the builders and owners of great houses, from Basildon to Cliveden. 5 meetings, Fridays, 9.45-11.45, at The Caversham Adult Centre. Tutor, Mrs J. Dils.

SATURDAY SCHOOLS.

In Search of Ancestors: a family history workshop. For the beginner and amateur, a basic guide to the availability and location of relevant

historical sources. 11th November, 1989, 9 am to 5 pm. The University, London Road. Tutor, Dr S.W. Taylor.

Victorian childhood in East Berkshire. How Victorian children lived - from Royal Palace to squalid slum. 19th May, 1990. 9.30 am - 5 pm. Tutor, Mrs Judith Hunter.

Further particulars of all these courses and many more may be obtained from The Extra-Mural Office, School of Educational Studies, The University of Reading, London Road, Reading, RG1 5AQ. Tel: 318852.

Kyng Charles I
Hys Visits to Reading

In 1635 Kyng Charles determined to govern without Y^e control of Parliament and to raise Y^e necessary supplies by virtue of hys prerogative. In Y^e prosecution of his plan Y^e cuntries was burdened by many arbitrarie measures and Y^e anciente towne of Reading suffered greatly by these actes of opprejon which did subsequently involve Y^e nation in Y^e horrors of civil warre. Y^e towne was commanded to supply Y^e summe of £260 on Y^e pretex^te of building a ship to guard Y^e coast at Portsmouth. This being a heavy amount a petition was presented against it but in vaine.

At Y^e commencement of Y^e warre Y^e Kyng entered Y^e town to meet Y^e Corporation and commande a loan. Further commands were sent by Y^e Kyng for Y^e raising of monies by Y^e people of Reading to pay Y^e Royalist garrison and Y^e salarie of Y^e governor also £2000 for Y^e Kyngs purse so that Y^e people were much distresed by taxation and Y^e petition being not heeded by Y^e Kyng Y^e Corporation had to mortgage Y^e possessions. After Y^e battle of Newbury, Essex defeated by Prince Rupert at Englefield retired to Windsor, withdrawing Y^e garrison of Reading on hys way. Y^e town was then re-occupied by Y^e Royalists, and on this occasion Y^e Kyng spent two dayes here his headquarters being at Caversham House.

The foregoing has been copied as faithfully as a modern word processor will allow from a manuscript document of uncertain provenance. Could it be that we have come across some long-lost text or have we here something a little more modern? Can any of our Readers assist?

Lack of space necessitates "The Chairman's Quiz" being held over to the next issue. Editor's apologies.