



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.

<u>Hon. Secretary</u>	<u>Chairman</u>	<u>Hon. Treasurer</u>
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WINTER 1992

1992 PROGRAMME

- 30 January Fred Padley Memorial Lecture: Adult Education and the
Amenity Movement
Britain's Countryside and Buildings Heritage
Mr. Ken Major
Lecture Room 4, University, London Road, Reading
7 for 7:30 p.m. - tickets £1.50 (concessions £1)
- 20 February The Industries of a Riverside Village: Wargrave
Mrs. Ann Middleton
- 19 March Annual General Meeting followed by Village Life in War-time
Mrs. Nancy Saunders
- 30 April Some East Berkshire Villages and the Domesday Survey:
Windsor, Waltham St. Lawrence, Winkfield
Mr. Luke Over
- 21 May Thatcham Road Names
Mr. Roy Tubb
- 11 June A Walk around part of Central Reading
led by Mr. Ken. Major
- 9 July A Walk around Nineteenth Century Earley
led by Mrs. Joan Dils

All the indoor meetings other than the Fred Padley Memorial Lecture start at 7:30 p.m. in the Abbey Gateway Room, The Forbury.

DOCTOR ROBERT SOUTH (1633-1716)

Although, apparently, not a native of Caversham, this eminent divine lived for over 50 years at The Priory, a house which survived until 1967 on land at the corner of Church Street and Hemdean Road. He was noted for his eloquence and wit although in his day the introduction of humour into sermons was not approved of by everyone. Educated at Westminster and Oxford, he was later made Prebendary of Westminster Abbey and Canon of Christ Church. In 1676 when Laurence Hyde, the Earl of Clarendon's second son was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary to Poland, South accompanied him as chaplain. Based on South's own diaries, an account of the adventures they experienced on the journey across Europe was published posthumously by Edmund Curl. (It was said of this writer that he 'added a new terror to death.')

On his return South was appointed Rector of Islip near Kidlington and as evidence of his generosity we are told that he spent the entire income of this benefice in building and endowing schools, building parsonages and in private benefactions. But his usually genial outlook did not extend to Puritans. In a sermon delivered in Westminster Abbey in the presence of Charles II he described Oliver Cromwell as a "bankrupt beggarly fellow entering the Parliament-house with a threadbare torn cloak and a greasy hat, perhaps neither of them paid for. Who could have suspected that he should, in so few years, by the murder of the one king and the banishing of another, ascend the throne and want nothing of the state of a king but the changing of his hat for a crown?" It is recorded that Charles laughed heartily at this jest and asked Rochester to remind him of the occasion when next a bishopric fell vacant. In fact each of the reigning monarchs from Charles to Queen Anne offered South preferment but he declined them all.

Normally his sermons which have been preserved in eleven published volumes were finely reasoned and of simple eloquence. He remained a bachelor until his death at 83 and his estate, including land in the Warren and Hemdean, was bequeathed to his housekeeper Mrs. Hammond and, after her death to Christ Church, Oxford who sold it piecemeal. Dr. South was buried in Westminster Abbey.

James Gafford

(Adapted from "Some Worthies of Reading" - J.J. Cooper, 1923)

CADFAEL COUNTRY

Each Spring the Berkshire Archaeological Society organises a trip to an area of archaeological and historical interest. This year's trip is to Shropshire and the Welsh Borders ("Cadfael Country" to those familiar with the novels of Ellis Peters). Tours are planned of Shrewsbury, Wroxeter (the Roman city of Viroconium), Haughmond and Buildwas Abbeys.

Accommodation will be in the historic town of Shrewsbury at the Abbot's Mead Hotel, a Georgian house in the town centre. The cost covering two nights accommodation, evening meals and transport will be £99 (single room supplement £5 per night). For further details contact either their Treasurer, James Gafford, on Reading 474308 or Edna Goodburn on Bracknell 425774.

ANY PUBLICITY IS GOOD PUBLICITY?

At the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Reading Abbey in October, our Secretary was asked for advice and on how to get reports of meetings into the local press. Having outlined some ideas he found he could not refuse the job!

MEMORIES OF DAYS GONE BY

As I was walking through Minster Street a few days ago (early September), I noticed that N.E. Blake & Co., sports outfitters at No. 54 were holding a closing down sale at the expiry of their lease. The shop opened here 72 years ago in 1919 and this sale represents the demise of another of Reading's long-established concerns. It appears that all the south side of Minster Street will be subject to compulsory purchase followed by demolition, to be replaced by the new Oracle development. This of course is the continuing process of re-development of Reading but it is sad to see yet another establishment coming to an end.

I used to buy golf balls here in pre-war days, second-hand balls could be had for 2 old pence each and balls in a slightly better condition with less cuts in them cost me 3d. I bought my clubs here too, also second-hand, a hickory shafted driver, ditto a brassie, steel shafted mashie, niblick, and No. 1 iron, and a wooden shafted putter. Names which are mostly no longer used. The most expensive one cost me 6 shillings, (30 pence today). I used to play on the golf course at Sonning Common, riding to there on my Rudge Ulster motor cycle. Membership cost half a guinea a year. It was a 9 hole course, the only one whose name I can remember after all this time was the 8th known as the 'Bully pit'. The green was in the bottom of a deep pit, hence the name. Occasionally, (was it an annual event?) a match was played against the Artisans' section of Harpsden golf club which was always very enjoyable.

The course was neglected throughout the war years and did not re-open afterwards, it wasn't really viable as it was on a public common and great care had to be taken to make sure that the fairways were clear before driving off. But those were some pleasant summers when one was young without a care in the world and I had almost forgotten them until the closing down sale of N.E. Blake brought memories flooding back.

Golf costs much more money today than the sums I quoted above but inflation is a fact of life and always was. Consider for instance the year 1632. In that year Capital burgess William Maulthus received a halfpenny a cartload for gravel taken from his land in the Ortes to surface the roads of Whitley, perhaps, 4 cubic yards a load. Thirty years ago I paid £3.12.0 for four yards of path gravel. Enquiring of a supplier in the town today I was quoted £72 plus V.A.T. for an equivalent sized load.

Incidentally, a year later, 1633, the gravel from William Maulthus' was condemned by the council as being unfit for use and alternative supplies were called for.

Norman Wicks

ROSE THEATRE

The discovery of the site of the Rose Theatre in 1989 attracted a lot of interest. It is the subject of the lecture to be given by Julian Bowsher to Berkshire Archaeological Society on at 2:45 p.m. on Saturday 15 February at the Friends Meeting House, Church Street, Reading.

COMMITTEE 1992

We are pleased to be able to announce that Peter Russell has been co-opted to the Committee. Like the Secretary and the Treasurer he used to live in Pinner. Maybe it is something to do with the air over there! Bent Weber and Francis Goodridge have also expressed their willingness to join the Committee.

ARCHAEOLOGY IN BERKSHIRE 1991

(i) Day School

Every year Berkshire Archaeological Society organise a day school at the University to review the past year's activities drawing on speakers from the ranks of both the professionals and the local societies.

This year's Day School (or is it last year's?) will be held on Saturday 14 March at Reading University, London Road, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The cost will be £4.50 with a reduction for members of the Society. Drinks are available but those attending have to bring packed lunches or visit a local hostelry.

(ii) Annual Review

To confuse matters the Heritage Group of the Highways and Planning Department at Berkshire County Council publish an annual report under the same title!

It covers not only surveys but also the preservation and management of a number of sites within the county. Berkshire has been at the forefront in many of these activities. In particular, with new developments where developers have to fund archaeological work as part of the planning process.

Copies may be obtained from the Highways and Planning Department at Shire Hall (tel. Reading 234914) price £1.50 plus 50p postage or ask the Secretary.

POSTAL SERVICES

We all enjoyed the evening in November when John Chapman came to tell us about public services in Furley. He is speaking to Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday 17 March at the Museum of English Rural Life, Whiteknights on the history of the local postal services. (Non-members £1.25)

READING IN 1892

This year is the centenary of the founding of the University College which in 1926 became the University of Reading. In order to commemorate this the next series of Town Hall Lectures sponsored by the University and Reading Museum and Art Gallery will look at Reading in 1892. On alternate Wednesdays:

- 5 February Architecture in Reading in 1892 - Mr. J.K. Major
- 19 February Industry and Commerce in Reading in 1892 - Mr. T.A.B. Corley
- 4 March Reading and the Railways - Professor A.G. Atkins
- 18 March Agriculture around Reading in 1892 - Dr. E.J.T. Collins
- 1 April Education and Culture in Reading in 1892 - Mrs. J. Dils

The cost is either £12 for the entire series or £2.50 per lecture (concessions for "Leisure Pass" holders).

ROMANS IN BERKSHIRE

Thank you to Elspet Naish and her band of helpers for an enjoyable evening at our New Year Party on Thursday 9 January.