

# The History of Reading Society



May 2000

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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## Overdue Subscriptions

Bob Hutchinson is still waiting for a few subscriptions. If there is a red cross in this box your subscription is due. Can you please renew your membership by paying as soon as possible.

Single Member £9 or £6 concession. Couple £12 or £9 Concession



## Summer Visits

There are three summer visits coming up. Two of them are in the programme and one extra has been arranged. Reminder: these visits are for members only.

### 1 History of Emmer Green

The Emmer Green local history group have arranged an exhibition at the Ocean Suite, Grove House, Highdown School. They will give us a special viewing at 7.00pm, Thursday 25 May.

### 2 University of Reading - Whiteknights Campus

A conducted walk by the Superintendent of Grounds, Mr Marcus Nock at 7.00pm, 15 June. See the enclosed map for details of the assembly point.

### 3 Guided Walk around Sonning.

The walk will be led by Armine Edwards at 7.00pm, 20 July. See the enclosed map for details of the assembly point.

Inside the church of St. Mary at Henley over the south doorway there is a memorial to the French General Charles Francois Dumouriez with an interesting story behind it. Dumouriez was born on the 29th January 1739 at Cambrai and made his career in the French army. He it was who was mainly responsible for the declaration of war against Austria on 20th May 1792 and he it was who planned the invasion of the Low Countries.

A subordinate of his, Kellerman, won the battle of Valmy against the Prussians on the 20th September 1792 and Dumouriez himself severely defeated the Austrians at Jemappes on the 6th of November 1792 but he himself was defeated at Neerwinden in March of the following year. The Commissioners of the Convention sent to enquire into his conduct, presumably because he lost the battle, he forthwith arrested and handed over to the enemy. Then he tried to persuade his troops to march on Paris and overthrow the revolutionary government. They refused however and this is when General Dumouriez together with the like-minded Duc de Montpensier fled into the Austrian camp.

For the next ten years he was living in poverty in Austria. He met Horatio Nelson at Hamburg in 1800 and they became friendly. As a result of this he was invited to England in 1803 to advise the government on anti-invasion measures. He was well qualified for this as he had some 20 years earlier prepared a comprehensive scheme for the invasion of the Isle of Wight in which he was ahead of his time by advocating the use of landing craft instead of troop transports. His defensive plan was most thorough and with its beach defences, strong points, and mobile columns was prophetically familiar. Dumouriez continued in an advisory capacity receiving a government pension of £1200 p.a. and spent the rest of his life here on intimate terms with the royal circle and as a friend of Wellington.

An attempted invasion had already been made on the south coast of Wales in 1797 by 1400 soldiers led by an Irish-American General but they had been speedily surrounded and captured.

At that time of invasion scare there were no adequate maps of England so in 1804 Captain Mudge of the R.A.O.C. was given the job to prepare some. His maps were to a scale of 1 inch to a mile and he began with the south-east coast of Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire where invasion was most expected. These surveyors were educated men familiar with Caesar's itineraries, but at that time little was known about archaeology, so when they came across a hill-fort or anything similar without a local name they entered it on their maps as "Caesar's Camp". This is still printed on those maps today. As the maps had been prepared by the R.A.O.C. they became known as Ordnance maps and were put on sale to the public for the first time in 1828.

Around about the time that General Dumouriez winning was his first battles in 1792 a warship was built for the French government and named "le General Dumouriez" after him. This ship was captured by the British in the West Indies, off Port au Prince in Haiti, and renamed "Port au Prince". Her last voyage was in 1805-6 when she came to grief in the Tonga islands in the south Pacific and four fifths of her crew were massacred by the natives who burnt the ship to the waterline to get at the ironwork.

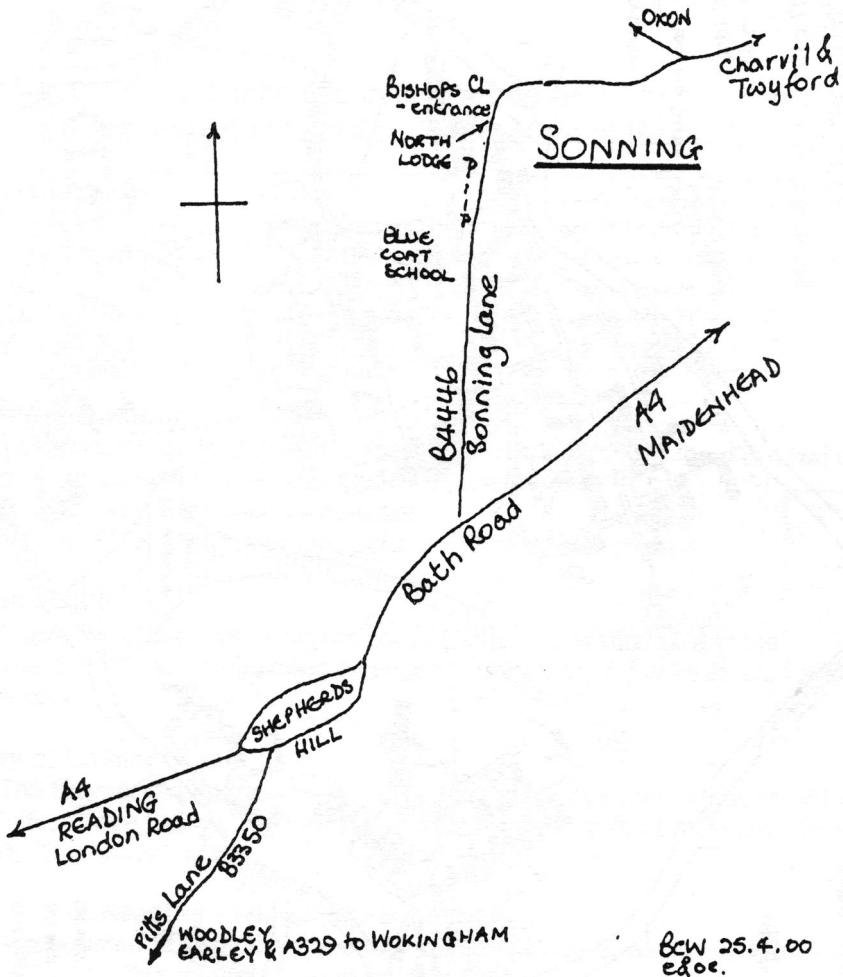
The ship's boy was one of the crew who survived and lived there for four years becoming a Tongan chief. His great grandson Dennis McCulloch was living at Wallingford the last time I heard of him 14 years ago.

General Dumouriez died at Turville Park six miles from Henley on the 14th March 1823 aged 84 and was buried in the local church in spite of being a Roman Catholic. There are about 200 graves in the floor of the church but they were all covered up in 1854 when a

new floor was laid over them and they can no longer be seen. His funeral was described in the Reading Mercury of 24th March 1823.

The Tonga islands were discovered in 1616 by Jacob Lemaire and William Cornelio Schouten and they became involved in hostilities with the natives. Abel Tasman who reached there in 1643 avoided any such clash, and Captain Cook visited twice, in 1773 and 1777. Today the islands are part of the Commonwealth.

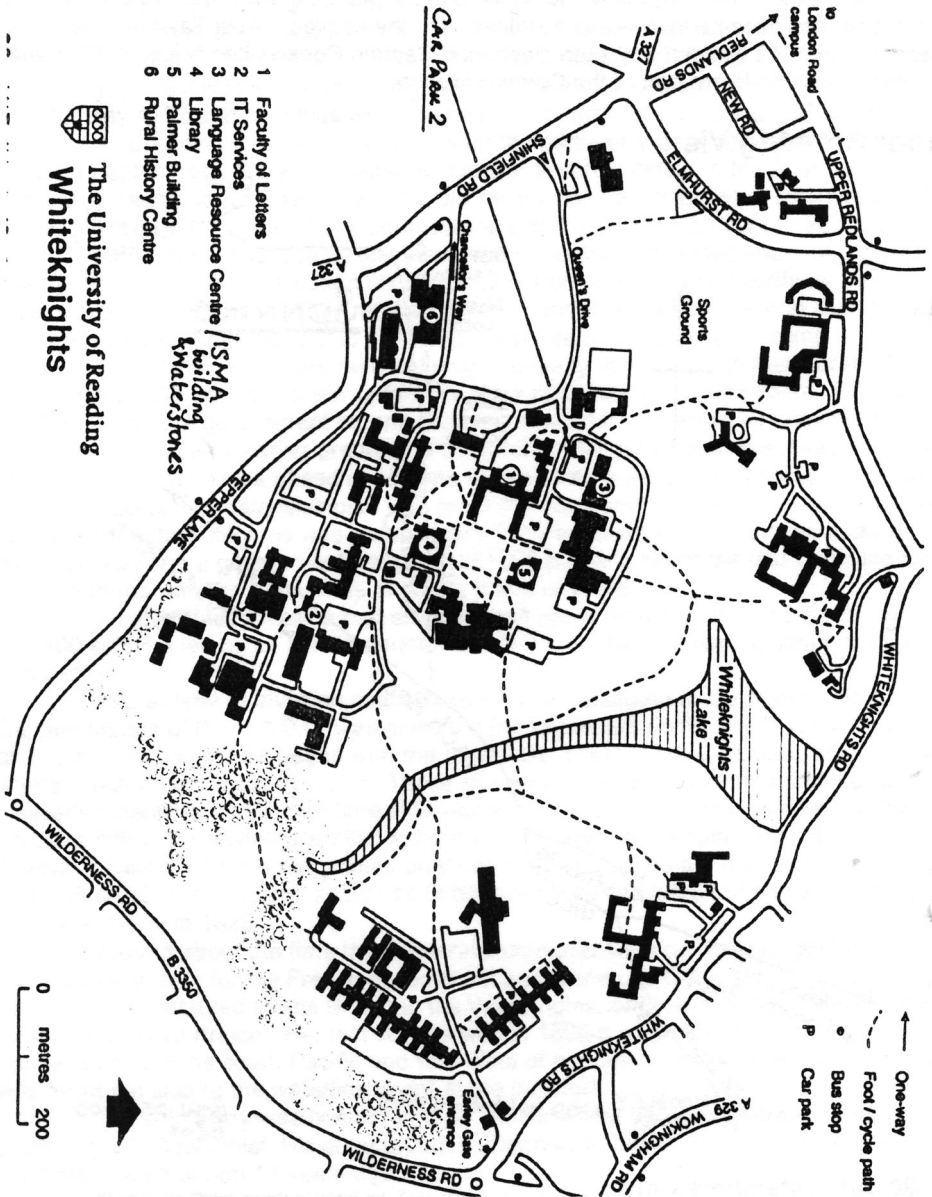
## Map for Sonning Visit



7 pm, 20 July. Members only.

Please park between Reading Blue Coat School and North Lodge (entrance to Bishops Close). Meet at North Lodge.

# Map for Whiteknights (Reading University) Visit



 The University of Reading  
**Whiteknights**

7 pm, 15 June. Members only.

Meet in car park 2, adjacent to ISMA building and Waterstones