

# 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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## **THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR**

My chair today is in the bay window of my house. I have seen the buses go by, and the corporation dustcart, if I can still call it that. Both are measures of civilisation in my book. The view through the Nottingham lace curtains is much the same as it was when I first moved here, thirty-odd years ago, apart from new lamp standards. On the other hand, the pace of change in central Reading seems to be gathering momentum.

The Friars Walk Shopping Centre didn't last long, and is being torn down ready for redevelopment, through to Station Hill. The Homebase DIY warehouse didn't last much longer, and its site has hoarding round it. Plans have recently been unveiled for the site of the former power station in Vastern Road – which according to today's *Reading Chronicle* is to be called The Old Power Station – and more homes are planned for the site of the old postal sorting office in Caversham Road. By night, the red lights on the tower cranes over the two very tall apartment blocks on the site of the old BMW car showrooms by the Vastern Road railway bridge can be seen from many different parts of town. This represents maybe another 5,000 Reading residents, and another assortment of buildings which look as though they could be anywhere in the country. Maybe the History of Reading Society will gain a few more members as a result of the increased population?

Perhaps of more immediate concern is the fate of Reading Gaol. Will any of the interior be accessible to the public, or will it become apartments and an expensive hotel? I would hope that by now most people are aware of the campaign for it to be transformed into an arts hub, with a museum area and the possibility of seeing inside Cell C33 where Oscar Wilde once languished. I'd be interested to know if the ground-penetrating radar used on the land round the gaol and around St. James's Church and School revealed anything unexpected. Who knows how long we shall have to wait and speculate?

We do now know, however, the publication date of the new one-volume history of Reading, written by our President, Joan Dils. It's to be "launched" on October 28<sup>th</sup>, produced by Carnegie Publishing and costing £25. We shall be having some copies to sell at our meetings, so if you can resist the temptation to buy a copy until the date of our November meeting, we should be able to sell you a copy at a discounted price on November 20<sup>th</sup>.

At that meeting we will also be selling calendars for next year, and Christmas cards, and we still have copies of the book about Reading cinemas available.

Whether or not we have a second-hand book sale next year depends on whether we have some different material to sell. As well as books, in the past we've sold postcards, ephemera, and framed prints and pictures, all relating to the Reading area. If you have any items you no longer want which may interest other members, please bring them along to a meeting, where I or any other committee member will take them off your hands and store them until we hold the sale.

Also during the next year, the Society hopes to publish the book *Abbot Cook to Zerodegrees: an A-Z of Reading's Pubs and Breweries*. The text is now virtually complete and awaits final checking. It deals with more than 500 establishments which have been recorded over the last 600 years or so.

And the programme of talks and visits for next year is also virtually complete, and details will be released soon. We are promised, as usual, talks on a wide variety of subjects – from sail-making to suffragettes, the gasworks to the Inner Distribution Road, and from Redlands to Southcote Road to Whitley. I hope you'll renew your membership when the time comes!

David Cliffe

### **IN CASE YOU MISSED THEM**

*Reports of the first four talks given to the Society in 2019 follow, as recorded by our committee member for Publicity and Archives, Sean Duggan.*

The subject of the May talk was the **Return of (Roman) Catholicism in Reading**. The speakers were John and Lindsay Mullaney. Both John and his wife, Lindsay, were teachers at the Catholic Blessed Hugh Faringdon School in Reading, later, they opened a bookshop in Caversham and co-founded the Scallop Shell Press and the Caversham Literary Festival.

In 1532, during the reign of King Henry VIII, the King ordered Parliament to pass legislation to curb the authority of the papacy in England and Wales. This grudging break with the Roman Catholic Church by the King was caused by his failure to obtain from Pope Clement VII a divorce from his Spanish wife, Catherine of Aragon.

In Reading the most tangible concomitant of this policy was the dissolution of the Abbey whose gaunt ruins are a reminder of the church's once significant power in the kingdom. In 1539, its last abbot, Hugh Cook Faringdon, being found guilty of treason, was ignominiously executed before it.

Protestant reformers demanded that all the accoutrements of Catholic religious ritual, including the images of the saints and the high altar, were to be banished from the town's churches; thenceforth, the focus of church services would be readings from the Bible and the preaching of sermons.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, in Rome, an Englishman, Cardinal William Allen, was appointed to set up colleges to train priests, or Jesuits as they became known, who would return to England, undetected, in order to celebrate the mass to the recusant Catholic population. The Blount family at Mapledurham House was a notable recusant household who also provided a safe house for Jesuit priests.

In 1829, Parliament passed the Catholic Emancipation Act: it permitted Catholics to sit in parliament, a necessity after the unification of the British and Irish Parliaments in 1801, it also restored religious and property rights removed under the Tudor monarchs.

An important document, the *Cowslade Manuscript*, believed to be the work of Ellenor Cowslade, would chronicle the return of Catholicism to Reading. In 1792 a small group of French priests arrived in the town; they had fled the persecution there in the wake of the Revolution.

The priests came to Reading at the invitation of the Smart and Cowslade families; they were respected local Catholic families and the proprietors of the *Berkshire Mercury*

newspaper; at this time, they had established a Catholic place of worship at Finch's Buildings in Hosier Street.

The priests settled in a house at Castle Hill, known then as the King's Arms; it was they who planted the Cedar of Lebanon tree in the garden. Among their number was a young student from the seminary in Caen, Francois Longuet. When it was safe for the priests to return home, Longuet chose to stay on.

During his time in Reading, Longuet founded his own chapel which he named the Chapel of the Resurrection: the congregation grew quickly, and he was assisted by two nuns. It is believed to have stood near Valpy Street; today there is no trace of it. Tragically, whilst travelling at night along Pangbourne Lane (modern Oxford Road), Longuet was brutally murdered during a robbery for the £200 he was carrying.

Today, the culmination of the return of Catholicism to Reading was the building of St. James's Church opposite the Abbey ruins in 1837. This was made possible by the generous benefaction of James Wheble of Woodley; he was then High Sheriff of Berkshire and the owner of the former abbey site.

Following their talk to the Society in May on the subject of the Return of Catholicism in Reading, the speakers, John and Lindsay Mullaney, invited the members on a guided group visit to St. James's Church, Reading in June.

The tour began at the church's west porch: between it and the presbytery there lurk the gaunt fragments of the north transept of the former abbey upon whose footprint the church stands. The fragments came to rest there in the siege of Reading during the English Civil Wars of the 1640s: the occupying Royalist army had employed gunpowder to reduce the height of the abbey ruins in order to provide a clear line of sight for their cannon that were mounted on Forbury Hill.

In 1829, parliament passed into law the Catholic Emancipation Act: for the first time since the Reformation Roman Catholics were permitted to worship openly and to participate fully in the civic life of the nation. However, there was a problem for the newly revived English Roman Catholics, the Church of England had occupied their old places of worship and stripped them of their shrines and images. This new generation of Catholics had to build new churches.

In Reading the building of the Catholic Church of St. James was made possible by the generous benefaction of the devout catholic James Wheble of Woodley Lodge, Berkshire. In 1834, he purchased the abbey site from Nicholas Vansittart, Lord Bexley, for the purpose of excavating it for historical research; later, he provided funds for the erection of a church there and engaged the eminent ecclesiastical architect Augustus Welby Northmoor Pugin to design it. Pugin, unusually for him, produced a design in the then unfashionable Romanesque style; perhaps in polite submission to the late-Norman architecture of the former Reading Abbey.

The building work commenced in 1837, the year Wheble became High Sheriff of Berkshire, and the church opened on 5th August 1840 with a service of consecration led by Bishop Thomas Griffiths; sadly, James Wheble had died of a heart attack two weeks earlier. The first permanent priest was John Ringrose.

In 1840, the church comprised a nave and an apsidal sanctuary and it could seat nearly 300 worshippers. Wheble chose to dedicate his new church to St. James-the-Great, his choice recalling the ancient abbey's dedication to that saint. Buried in the sanctuary are the remains of Francois Longuet founder of the Chapel of the Resurrection the progenitor of St. James's.

Among the church's furnishings the most interesting piece is the receptacle of the baptismal font. It was discovered in 1835 during Wheble's excavation of the abbey site where it was buried in the area where the chancel stood. Among the theories put forward as to its original function the most plausible one, due to its ornate decoration of interlacing

foliage scrolls, was that it was a pillar capital that supported an arcade. In 1840, it was given a new base and lid and converted for use as the font.

In the twentieth century, due to the growth of the congregation, schools were built in 1912 and the church itself was extended in 1926: an aisle to the south of the nave, larger west porch and an ambulatory behind the sanctuary were added. The architect employed was Wilfrid Mangan; at this time he also designed the English Martyrs' Catholic Church opposite Prospect Park.

Today, the church attracts a congregation of over 400 worshippers for Sunday Mass and 40 languages are represented.

The subject of the September talk was **George Lovejoy-Bookseller of Reading**. The speaker was Martin Andrews. Martin worked for many years at Reading Museum, later, he became a lecturer in the Department of Typography and Graphic Communication at Reading University.

The Victorian bookseller George Lovejoy was born in a house at Earley Yard off Minster Street, Reading on February 8th, 1808. His father, Charles, worked at the Abbey Mill.

After completing his education at the National School, Reading, located in the great hall within the abbey ruins, George was apprenticed to Messrs Smart & Cowslades, owners and publishers of the *Reading Mercury* newspaper, at the Market Place. During his time with the company he became a skilled compositor and printer; by the age of 24 he was the manager of the stationery and bookselling department.

In 1832, the eminent local artist, Edmund Havell, the proprietor of a stationery and circulating library at 31, London Street, Reading, had become bankrupt; with a loan from his friend William Silver Darter, Lovejoy took over the shop and established himself there as a bookseller, stationer and librarian. In his diary he recorded that on his first day of trading 'he rose at 6.30am and closed his shop at 9.30pm'.

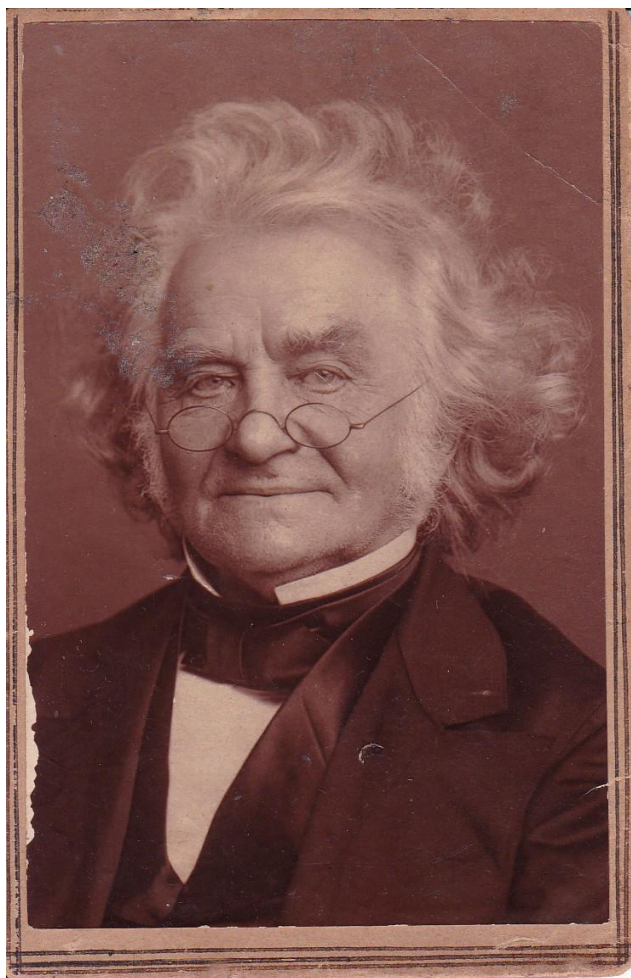
In 1834, Lovejoy married Martha Wilkinson of Russell Street, Reading; sadly, in 1837, she died of consumption. He later married Elizabeth Beckwith Craik and they had two daughters, Alice and Katherine.

In 1840, his shop was demolished to make way for the imposing Mechanics' Institute Building; he moved his business further along London Street where he would remain until his death. By the 1880s, his circulating library, the Southern Counties Library, had a stock of 80,000 books.

Many eminent authors of the time were among his friends: the famous local author Mary Russell Mitford was an important customer. Another friend, Charles Dickens, who would often give lectures at the Mechanics' Institute, was encouraged, unsuccessfully, by Lovejoy to be the Liberal Party's candidate as MP for Reading.

Such was his renown in the local business community that he was appointed the secretary for the Reading branch of the 1851 Great

Exhibition at Hyde Park, London: he was responsible for selecting exhibits for display from local manufacturers; he also submitted exhibits of his own invention.



**George Lovejoy in old age**



## William Smith's Bookshop

George Lovejoy died on July 18th, 1883 and was buried at the Cemetery on Wokingham Road, Reading. Among the many mourners was the Reading MP George Palmer. Lovejoy's assistant, Eliza Langley, who had been working for him for 21 years, managed the business until her death in 1897.

For most of the twentieth century the shop continued as a bookseller trading under the name of William Smith & Son. Today, the shop at London Street is home to the Reading International Solidarity Centre and still sells books. (ED: My diary tells me that I first visited William Smith's bookshop on October 10<sup>th</sup> 1970, nearly 49 years ago, as I write. On this occasion my purchases were *Far Away and Long Ago* by W. H. Hudson, a volume of *Hugh Latimer's Sermons and the Letters of Horace Walpole* – quite a mixed bag. It was to be the first of many visits until sadly the business was acquired by Blackwell's, who subsequently moved it to Kings Road, closing the second-hand side in the process, and then decided to quit Reading altogether. I believe I sat in the Forbury and started reading the Hudson book but for some reason I did not continue after returning to my home in Taplow and to this day it has sat on my bookshelves unread!)



## PROFESSOR BRIAN KEMP, 1940-2019

Though not, as far as I know, ever a member of the History of Reading Society, Brian Kemp was one of Reading's most eminent historians. He died on August 12<sup>th</sup>. His speciality was the history of Reading Abbey, and some of us will remember the talk he gave on *Reading Abbey's Royal Connections* in 2015. He was also an authority on English Church Monuments.

The family moved to Reading in 1950, when his father came to run Sutton's Seed Trial Grounds. Brian graduated at Reading University, became an Assistant Lecturer there in 1964, and was made a Professor in 1990.

His publications include *English Church Monuments* (1980), *Reading Abbey: an Introduction to the History of the Abbey* (1986), *Reading Abbey Cartularies*, which he edited for the Royal Historical Society (2 vols., 1986-87); and *Reading Abbey Records: a New Miscellany*, which he edited for the Berkshire Record Society (2018).

Another of Brian's interests was natural history, and I knew him through the Reading & District Natural History Society some years before I joined the HoRS. As I got to know him, I found that he had a rather naughty sense of humour. At meetings we would greet one another with "Good evening, Mr. President" – he being President of the Friends of Reading Abbey, and I of the Natural History Society. He will be missed by Reading's historians and naturalists alike.

David Cliffe

## HENRY GEORGE HASTINGS

The Hastings family's earliest known direct connection with the Thames was via Henry George (Senior) born 20th December 1866 at Wytham to Henry, an agricultural labourer–thatcher and Maria Collett. In the 1871 census, Henry George is listed as 'Scholar' living at 35 Wytham with his parents (then aged 40 and 30), two brothers and an older uncle. In the 1881 census, he is listed as 'Harry', a 13–year old farmer's boy resident as a servant of Anne Hedges, a farmer/butcher at 41 Wytham. His mother, Maria, a laundress and widow was by now living in 14 Duke Street, Oxford with his brothers and further siblings.

Family legend suggests that as a youth seeking his fortune, Henry walked downriver from Wytham, intending to make his way in London some time after 1882. As he does not appear on any 1891 census, this could be due to working on the river, i.e. on the move. On arriving in Reading Henry George most probably worked exclusively for Gaetano (Antonio) Bona, born Italy c1861, a naturalised British citizen and publican resident on the 1891 census at 4 Algol Terrace (off Caversham Road), or his wife Esther, born c1861 in Peterborough, herself shown listed resident at The White Hart Hotel, which would become the first Caversham Bridge Hotel.

The period 1880–1900 saw an incredible expansion of pleasure trade on The Thames, with many new steamers commissioned for operators as the Conservators of the River Thames completed full navigation with a modernised lock and weir system. The publication and popularity of Jerome K. Jerome's classic, *Three Men in a Boat* (1889) served to further heighten recreational use of the river following improved sanitation, and publican–hotelier Antonio Bona was among the first to capitalise on this new market.

Bona would have had several steamers built for the increasing business, the hulls almost certainly by Maynard's of Strand–on–The–Green, Chiswick, at that time run by Francis Goodwin Maynard's widow Emma and her 3 sons Henry, Thomas and Frederick at the Devonshire Boat House. Steam engines would have been installed by John I. Thornycroft and Co Ltd run by naval engineer John Isaac Thornycroft and partner John Donaldson in Chiswick.

Bona operated *Chic* (probably later *Bonaseria*), a 43-passenger steamer sometime after 1884, *La Mode* (later *Bonavista*), a 77'6" 48 passenger steamer built sometime after 1887, *Fashion*, an 87 passenger steamer built 1888.

Alternatively, but less likely, Henry George could also have been working for East's Boat Building Co., Reading, aboard their 55'9" 104 passenger steamer *Caversham*, built 1884, when she was owned by Bona (1884–92), or their 34'7" 25 passenger steamer *Tremolo*, built 1897, both vessels, like many he worked aboard that he would later come to own.

In the March–April 1891 census for Chertsey, Surrey, Henry George's first wife, Elizabeth Anne (Alice) Rooke, born c.1866 in Whitby, Yorkshire is listed as a barmaid (25) resident at The Bridge House Hotel. Traditional upper–lower or lower–middle class, especially when in service during the late Victorian period would have courted and saved in order to marry, commonly until they were over 25 years of age, and possibly for as long as 7 years. Working, probably as mate or hand, Henry George could have come into contact with Elizabeth any time after 1885 when they would both have been around 19 years of age, suggesting he was crew on vessels between at least Caversham and Chertsey. Henry George Hastings married Elizabeth Anne Rooke on 24th August 1891 in Reading.

Aged 26, Henry George's first command as skipper was the steamer *Caversham*. He also skippered Bona's (1895–1905) and Charles Maynard's of Windsor (1906–1910) *Britannia* (*Bonafide*), a 77'6" 215 passenger steamer, Maynard's (1903–1915) *Queen of England*, a 70'10" 25grt 260 passenger steamer, all vessels he would later come to own.

By 1899 Henry George was publican (beer retailer) at The Crane, 1 Crane Wharf on the Kennet, Reading. In the following year he became the master of *England*, a 100' 300–passenger steamer, and the first tunnel stern version built for the Thames for Bona (listed built in Reading, but more likely by C. Maynard of Windsor).

In the 1901 census Henry George was still at The Crane, 34 years of age, head of the household, a waterman and licensed victualler, and living together with his wife, Elizabeth Anne Hastings, also 34, a daughter, Maria (after his mother's name) Amelia Hastings, aged 9, his younger sister Louisa Maria Hastings, aged 19, a dressmaker, and Selie Gee, aged 13, a general domestic servant. Of interest is the presence of Louisa Maria, Henry George's youngest sister, born c1883, and suggesting continued contact with his 68-year old widowed mother, now living as a laundress-owner at 113 Marlborough Road, Islington with his sister, Emma (28), a washerwoman.

Elizabeth Anne Hastings died and was buried in Reading during the last quarter of 1903 when Maria Amelia would have been 11 or 12. What became of her is still a mystery.

Emily Charlotte Richardson was born in 1880 to Joseph, a leatherdresser (preparing the final stages of converting a hide to be made into specific goods), and Sarah Ann of 7 Commercial Road, Hereford. She had 2 older sisters, Eleanor Anne and Elizabeth Mary (?). By the 1891 census, the 11-year-old Emily Charlotte had moved with the family to 47 Gaol Street, Hereford, with the family extended to include Albert George, Ernest Harry, Arthur Joseph(?), and Olive Maude.

In the 1901 census, (Emily) Charlotte Richardson, aged 21 is listed as a housemaid at 36 Bewell Street, Hereford. How she and the recently widowed Henry George Hastings were to meet remains a mystery, but it has been suggested she was resident, probably in service at Bona's Caversham Bridge Hotel. At 37 years of age, Henry George Hastings (Snr) married Emily Charlotte Richardson (24) on 12th November 1904, probably in Reading.

A daughter, Doris Gladys was born 9th April 1907 in Hereford, when Emily Charlotte returned to her family for the birth while Henry worked. Henry George Junior (Harry) was born on 28th December 1908, possibly in Portland Avenue (now Road), Kingston-upon-Thames. In the 1911 census, the family is listed as resident at 15 South Lane, Kingston-upon-Thames, and the 43-year old Henry George Senior listed as 'Lighterman'. With the move downriver to Kingston upon Thames, Henry George Hastings's affiliation with Reading ended, probably during 1908.

Henry George Hastings later went on to own East's Caversham and Tremolo, Bona's/Maynard's Queen of England and Britannia (II), Cawston's of Reading's Eclipse (III) and Starlight (II).

Stephen Hastings

*Mr Hastings is searching for historical data relating to Gaetano (Antonio) Bona's pleasure steamer operation and original Caversham Bridge Hotel, Cawston's and East's of Reading, The Crane public house, and any photographs that may exist. Material on the pubs resulting from our A to Z Pubs project has been sent to him and we will be happy to forward any other information provided by readers.*



## ST JOHN'S WOODLEY



### Interior of St John's Woodley

in 1988. St John's the Evangelist parish church next to the school was completed in 1873. The foundation stone was laid in 1871. It was built by the Guildford architect Henry Woodyer who had previously worked on the restoration of St Andrew's church and the vicarage in Sonning. A south aisle was added in 1987. Both school and church were built with money and land donated by Robert and Caroline Palmer of Holme Park in Sonning. They are listed buildings. The two buildings are in the tree lined Church Road and are part of Woodley Green Conservation Area, along with the vicarage and The Bull and Chequers pub.

St John's church and the old school opened for Heritage Open Days in September 2019. About 200 people came to visit them. Some were former pupils who remembered Miss Thomas, known as the Welsh dragon, who was a fierce headmistress from 1936-1965. The school has a good collection of old class photos and ex pupils were able to spot themselves from years ago.

Members of Reading, Wokingham and Woodley U3As are researching the history of Woodley as part of a shared learning project. If anyone is interested in the project, please contact Ann Smith: phone 0118 9783430 or email [wokinghamsmith@gmail.com](mailto:wokinghamsmith@gmail.com).

Ann Smith

John Betjeman referred to Woodley in *Murray's Berkshire Architectural Guide* of 1949 as:

"An aerodrome, new bungalows, unfinished shopping arcades deface most of this flat district east of Reading". He was not impressed with Woodley's architectural heritage! But he went on to say: "The church is a flint and stone building of great originality by H. Woodyer (1871). It has a triple bellcote, unexpectedly elongated and high. Its interior is lofty and graceful with a triple arched screen with stone vaulting. The brick and flint school beside the church is also the work of Woodyer".

Before 1881, people in Woodley were part of the huge parish of Sonning. It included Sonning, Eye and Dunsden in Oxfordshire, Earley, Woodley and Sandford.

St John's Church Centre consists of the former Church of England primary school and the head teacher's cottage. They opened in 1855. The school moved to new

premises on the site of Woodley Airfield



## SWINGING READING

Amid all the current speculation on the outcome of 'Brexit' and a possible General Election one paper described Reading West as a 'swing seat' – leading me to wonder how far this was true of Reading in former days. Certainly, it has swung with the political wind in recent years but was this always the case with Reading West and the various other Reading seats past and present?

Back in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the modern political party system scarcely existed. Although MPs were usually labelled Whigs or Tories they also tended to form groups within these broad categories and there were no constituency associations for choosing candidates. Patronage, often laced with bribery and corruption, played a large part in things, especially if you were representing a rotten borough where 'the electorate' was likely to contain a larger number of sheep or even fish than human beings, as was the case with the notorious seats of Old Sarum and Dunwich. From 1640 to 1885, Reading was a two-member constituency and quite often elected both a Whig and a Tory, as in 1806 when Sir John Simeon, brother of the more famous Charles and Edward, was the Tory and Charles Shaw-Lefebvre the Whig.

Following the limited but still very important parliamentary reforms of 1832, things began to change and we see elections following the political trend, so that in 1841 when Sir Robert Peel was elected for the new Conservative Party (still nicknamed Tories to this day) both Reading MPs were of that persuasion, Charles Russell and Henry Cadogan obtaining 58% of the votes between them, as against 42% for the Whigs. When Peel was voted out of office in 1846 after the repeal of the Corn Laws, the Whigs and Radicals gained the ascendant, with Francis Pigott and Thomas Talfourd topping the poll – again 58% and the two previous MPs with the residue, losing their seats.

By-elections were very common in those days as MPs appointed to posts in the government had to stand for election again, as well as those caused by MPs having to leave the chamber, as happened in 1849 when Talfourd became a Judge. On that occasion the Tories regained the seat. There was a further by-election in 1857 when the new Solicitor-General under Palmerston, the Whig Henry Keating, was required to defend the seat had obtained only a few months earlier, although he was perhaps fortunate to be returned unopposed, as had also been the case in the General Election.

The period 1846 to 1874 was one of Whig (renamed Liberal) ascendancy, following the split in the opposition party and during this time with the exception of the 1849 by-election Reading returned MPs from the governing party. However, in 1874 when the country as a whole deserted Gladstone for Disraeli Reading continued to elect Liberals, Francis Goldsmid, one of the earliest Jewish MPs, and George Shaw-Lefebvre (nephew of Charles). This may reflect the enlargement of the franchise in 1867 when Disraeli's minority government famously 'caught the Whigs bathing and stolen their clothes' and introduced the reform bill which would otherwise have been left to Gladstone, who duly succeeded in 1868.

In 1885, however, Reading became a single-member constituency and celebrated with the return of a Tory MP, Charles Murdoch, who unseated Shaw-Lefebvre by 129 votes – the share of the votes was 49.1 to 50.9, which sounds very similar to that of a certain referendum of latter years! For the rest of the century Reading's choice of MP reflected the mood of the country but in 1898 in a by-election following Murdoch's death George Palmer junior was elected Liberal MP and retained the seat two years later when the country again returned the Conservatives under Lord Salisbury.

We may perhaps continue this saga into the 20<sup>th</sup> century in a later issue unless the Editor hears cries of 'Enough! Enough!' from the populace.

John Dearing

## RECOGNITION FOR TWO HISTORY OF READING SOCIETY STALWARTS

At our September meeting, writes *David Cliffe*, we had the pleasure of welcoming two former committee members to the front of the church to receive tokens of recognition for their service to, and promotion of, the History of Reading Society. Firstly, Sidney Gold was presented with an honorary membership and a copy of Malcolm Summers' latest book *Signs of the Times: Readings' Memorials* (Two Rivers Press 2019). Then John Whitehead was invited up to receive a certificate of thanks and gardening vouchers for him and his wife, Rosemary. I think it's safe to say, they were not expecting it!



Presentations to Sidney and John – photos by Chris Widdows

*[The Editor was very sorry to miss these presentations but he found rather to his surprise that he was to receive his own award that night from the Campaign for Real Ale Reading for achievement as 'Outstanding Local Pubs Historian'!]*

**MEMBERS ARE REMINDED THAT ARTICLES INCLUDING REPORTS OF ANY HISTORICAL RESEARCH THEY ARE UNDERTAKING RELEVANT TO READING AND ITS ENVIRONS WILL BE WELCOMED BY THE EDITOR. IT IS YOUR SOCIETY AND YOUR NEWSLETTER!**