

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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<http://www.historyofreadingsociety.org.uk>

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THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR

Quite a lot seems to have happened since our AGM in March.

It was following that meeting that Sam Breakwell expressed an interest in joining the committee, and so was co-opted onto it at a meeting a week later. You can read more later in this newsletter. I hope that she will be happy with us and have much to contribute to our discussions.

Also at that meeting, the committee decided to join the British Association for Local History, or BALH. You can read about the Association, and the benefits of belonging to it, later in this edition.

As you may, or may not, have noticed, the Society's website is now back up and running. Thanks are due to Vicki Chesterman and Dave Osborne for rescuing it.

Then, towards the end of March, several committee members attended the AGM of the Berkshire Local History Association – to which HoRS has been affiliated for many years, and which is not to be confused with the BALH. The Berkshire Association also produces a newsletter, three times a year, the electronic version of which can be seen on their website. Their AGM this year was at the village hall in Eton Wick, and we took along display stand and copies of our publications. Although we didn't sell much from our stall, some very useful "networking" was done, before and after the AGM itself. After lunch, some of us went on a tour of nearby Dorney Court and Church. After two hours of tramping round a rather chilly Tudor manor house, it was pleasant to enjoy a cup of tea at the adjacent tea shop, out of doors and in warm sunshine, before facing a return journey along the A4.

At that meeting, the Berkshire Heritage Online Fair was "launched," as they say, run jointly by the Berkshire Family History Society and the Berkshire Local History Association. It will take place on Saturday, August 6, and the HoRS committee has decided to take part – as a means of raising our profile, if nothing else. It will be like a local and family history fair, using the Zoom platform, with different organisations each having a "stall." People from anywhere in the country, and anywhere in the world, can log in, and visit a "stall" and ask questions, and then maybe visit a different stall. It's an event not really aimed at readers of this newsletter who already know about us and what we do but is a way of reaching out to potential new members and friends. I'm assured that similar events have

been held in other parts of the country, and have worked well, technically and otherwise, for the local societies taking part.



Vol. XX of the Victoria County History of Oxfordshire is now published. I had a hand in writing the section on Caversham, which was in Oxfordshire until 1911, when most of it was annexed by Reading Borough. Like the rest of the series, it's not the most exciting read, but it is packed with detail, with all the facts referenced, a terrific piece of scholarship which is likely to be the last word for a long time. Besides Caversham it includes neighbouring parishes, including Mapledurham and Eye and Dunsden. Reading Central Library has a copy if you're curious.

The Society's Display at the BLHA AGM

Our meeting in May will include a second-hand book sale, which should bring pleasure to purchasers and keep the Society's funds topped up. A sizeable collection of books, about Reading and Berkshire, has come my way, from someone who inherited it from a parent but did not wish to keep it. I listed the items and sent the list round to public libraries in the area, to see if any of the books would fill gaps in their collections. Over a hundred books remain, nothing particularly old or valuable, but all worth having. I suggest that if you're coming on May 18th, you bring with you some 50p, £1 and £2 coins.

The meetings in June and July will be visits – in June a guided tour of the old Reading Cemetery by Cemetery Junction, for which I'm told there are only a few places remaining, and in July we hope to visit Wycliffe Baptist Church, in the same part of Reading.

I hope that you enjoy the summer, and we will return to the Abbey Baptist Church in September. Before then, there are a couple of books that I hope to get published, one about Reading, and the other about the place where I grew up, which has been growing in size for the last 60 years! It will be good to get it out of my system.

David Cliffe,
Chairman, HoRS.

IN CASE YOU MISSED THEM

Reports follow by members of the committee of the in-person and on-line talks given to the Society from October 2021 to January 2022.

October 2021: Suffrage Movement in Reading

Margaret Simons, a well-known local historian, brought us a fascinating story on the Suffrage Movement in Reading, which was unfamiliar to most of our members.

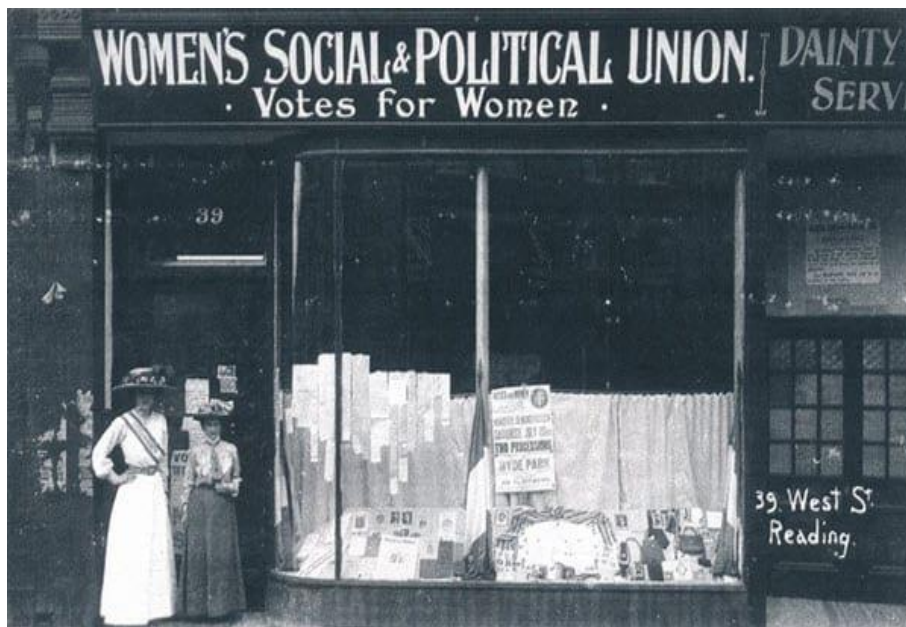
She explained that she preferred to use the term 'Suffrage' rather than Suffragette or Suffragist, as men were also involved in supporting women, by attending meetings and presenting private members' bills in Parliament.

National campaigning began in 1866 and Mrs Eliza Ratcliffe, Principal of the Burlton House Ladies School on Castle Hill, added her vote to the first mass petition. In 1878 George Palmer, MP for Reading made his maiden speech in the Commons, deploring that his mother was disqualified from voting, although she owned substantial property and lands.

In 1887 a meeting was held in the old Town Hall, attended by Millicent Fawcett of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and George Palmer.

It was not until 1907, that a group of women in Reading formed their own group of The NUWSS. A year later in 1908, a Reading group of Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) was formed, when a meeting was held in the town, attended by both men, women and Mrs Pankhurst. There was a quite a lot of heckling!

The WSPU opened shops in Reading, selling suffragette literature. Below are their shops at 39 West Street and on the corner of the Market Place. This group of women focussed on the women workers at Huntley and Palmers factory, where they were supported by a group of male employees.



The women belonging to the NUWSS held committee rooms at 154 King's Road and had a market stall in the market arcade.

On 13 June 1908, 70 members of the Reading Women's Suffrage Society, joined a procession to the Albert Hall. Edith Sutton, Reading Councillor headed the group, which carried the Reading banner. Behind her were about 60 people including women nurses and teachers. Women doctors, members of the Primrose League followed their banner.

A group of women in Tilehurst met in December 1908 but not all in attendance were in favour of women suffrage. A year later David Lloyd George, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, attended a huge rally of 6,000 people, supporting Rufus Isaacs, the Liberal candidate. It was held in the tram sheds on Mill Lane. Two women, Miss Streatfield and Miss Hudson managed to



infiltrate the meeting and protested, along with Kenneth Duke Scott from Twyford, allegedly assaulting Lloyd George. Their protests were against him for not supporting suffrage for all.

In 1910 a meeting was held in the Large Town hall, where Mrs Pankhurst and Prof Edith Morley spoke. Mabel Norton, a suffragette of Priest Hill, Caversham smashed five windows with a small hammer, then walked down to the police station, cheered by a crowd.

The Representation of the People Act was passed in 1918, giving some women over 30 and all men over 21, the vote.

Images courtesy of Reading Local Studies Library

Caroline Piller

November 2021: Reading Cinemas

The members of The History of Reading Society were delighted to listen to their Chair, giving an updated history of cinemas in Reading. David Cliffe has previously published a book on the subject, comprehensively describing the history of the long-admired pastime of "going to the pictures". This talk brought us right up to date and was enriched with many wonderful images.

He began his presentation by recalling the various Victorian light shows, such as the Zoetrope and the Camera Obscura which relied on natural lighting. With the invention of photography (by Fox Talbot in Reading, for example), incandescent light and the improvement of the lens, we learned that by 1860, images could be projected. This was a technique used by travelling fairs when actors and organ music were added to the spectacle to impress the crowds.

In 1897 a Cinematograph first appeared in Reading. This was invented and patented by a French man called Leon Bouly in 1892. The first technicolour film was made in Hollywood in 1935 but Black and White films were the norm up until the 1950s. The first cinema in Reading was the Central Cinema which opened in 1929, showing both Cinerama and Cinemascope. Gradually more opened in small halls and purpose-built buildings. Films were shown in the Kings Hall on Kings Road, where spectators could sit at the front on coconut matting for the price of 1d (one old penny) - this was known as a Penny Plunge! In 1904 The Town Hall showed a short film of workers leaving Huntley and Palmer's factory. Then in 1909 The Liberal Party Hall in Cross Street became the first "Picture Palace" in Reading.



Four independent cinemas were built to serve the outskirts of the town: The Rex on the Oxford Road (on the site of Winslet Place), The Granby at Cemetery Junction (on the corner of London Road / De Beauvoir Road), The Savoy on Basingstoke Road, known as The Cabbage (now the site of the Cotswold Outdoor Camping shop) and The Regal in Caversham (now the site of Waitrose, Church Street). Tilehurst village hall showed films on Mondays and Fridays at 7 p.m. from May until September. Entrance fees were 3d, 9d, 1s and 1/6d.

Some of the last cinemas to close were The Glendale in Caversham (1977), The Granby (1982), The Odeon in Cheapside (1999), The ABC in Friar Street (2003) and The Gaumont on the Oxford Road (1979) formerly The Pavilion Cinema, now the Life Spring Church.

But the cinema business still flourishes in Reading, although now with smaller auditoriums, rather than the majestic ones of earlier days which had 1,000 seats or more. Vue Cinema Complex opened in the Oracle Centre, in 2000. Since 1990, Reading Film Theatre has held screenings of predominantly foreign and specialist films on Whiteknights



Campus. This has recently relocated to a brand-new independent cinema opened in 2021 on the site of Argos on Queens Walk, in the town centre. This exciting new venture, called The Biscuit Factory is a community leisure space with three screens, a live performance space and a coffee shop.

David Cliffe's book *Picture Palace to Penny Plunge: Reading's Cinemas* is available from Two River's

Press, £12. Copies can be bought or ordered at Society meetings.

Caroline Piller

December 2021 - In their own words: family and social life in Reading and other Berkshire towns.

In her annual Presidential Address, Joan Dils gave a fascinating talk based on her extensive research on the Church Court Records of the Tudor period. From outlining the role of the Church Courts, which had jurisdiction over matters such as marriage, wills, breach of promise, defamation and sexual matters, Joan went on to show us some of the cases uncovered in the course of her research.

The Church Courts were needed to regulate behaviour and in Berkshire were administered by a bishop or an archdeacon, both with legal training. Civil cases were initiated by the Church and Instance cases were brought about by lay people and Act Books summarised, in Latin, the formal stages of the pleading.

Each side had to assemble their own witnesses who then had to answer a set of questions from the opposing lawyers. Joan had attempted to follow many cases but as they appeared to last over a long period of time mostly the outcome was unknown. The aggrieved parties were obliged to pay the expenses of the witnesses, which may have had some bearing on whether the cases were pursued or not.

The chosen cases reveal some interesting quirks of language: distance might be measured by a "bowshot," dates and times were recorded as occurring on a "moneshyne night" or "a day or two afore Candelmasse day," on a Saturday night

“about candell trimming,” or very precisely “sonday senight before the last change of the moon before michaelmasse, between dinner and evensong.”

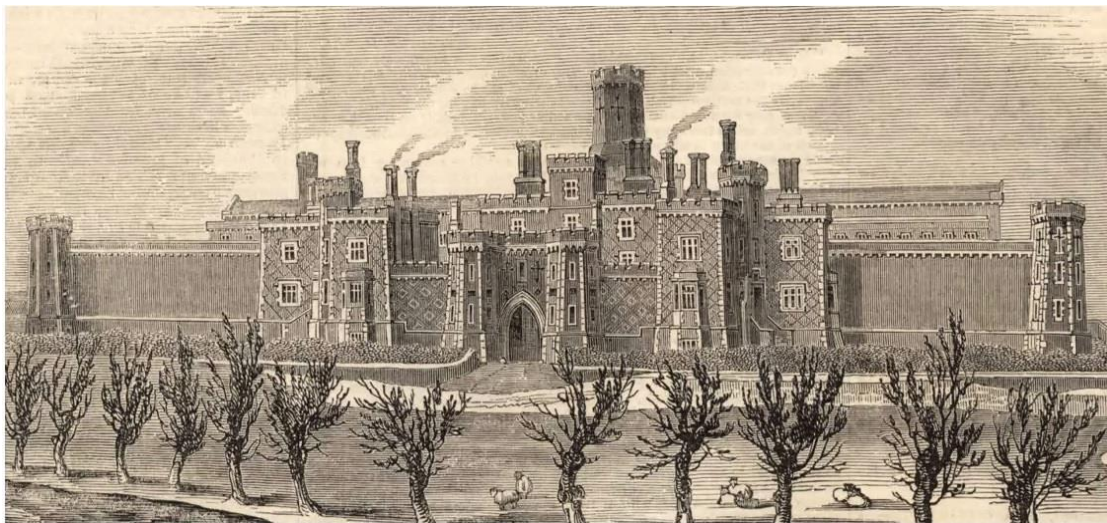
Many of the cases involve anti-social behaviour: name-calling, drunkenness, adultery or street brawls. Occasionally some unexpected snippets of information can be found, for example in a 1601 case in Abingdon it is evident that a carrier, who was departing with pack horses from Abingdon to London around 6 a.m., was expected to return by “the next daye afternoon” and that this was a regular occurrence.

By using the somewhat salacious and slightly amusing accounts Joan was able to reveal both the humorous and serious side of the real-life situations in which ordinary people found themselves. Whether justice was fully served is unclear in the documents but Joan felt it likely that the more serious punishments (fines or public penance) were perhaps more often than not replaced by the swift justice of “carting” in which the so-called guilty party or parties were paraded around the town on a cart and subjected to public humiliation.

Joy Pibworth

January 2022 - A Brief History of Reading Gaol

At the January meeting, Mark Stevens (County Archivist) told the story of prison life on the Forbury site from 1785 to the present day. In the Georgian prison, which housed up to 60 people, inmates were allowed to associate with each other. By the 1840s the Victorian view of prisons was that they should be run so that prisoners would remain separate and silent. A new Reading Gaol was built to accomplish this, to a design by George Gilbert Scott and William B. Moffatt, which could house 185 criminal men, 31 criminal women, and nine bankrupt debtors. It opened in July 1844.



The Victorians believed that such a system would have the twin benefits of destroying criminal culture fostered when inmates fraternised, and of bringing the possibility of salvation to each, as they reflected on their crime and attended daily chapel services. The hour in chapel and the hour exercise allowed was, for most, the only two hours out of the 24 the prisoners were out of their cells.

However, it was discovered that the separate system did not bring the benefits expected and did not affect the reoffending rate. Therefore, a harsher system was introduced – hard labour, hard fare, hard board (literally with hammocks being replaced by a bare plank bed) – in the hope that this would discourage reoffending. The Home Office took over control of prisons in 1877 and set about standardising them.

Mark described Oscar Wilde's experience as Prisoner C.3.3. from 1895 to 1897. He was spared hard labour but worked six hours a day in the prison garden. He was allowed books and writing material – and wrote *De Profundis* while incarcerated. After his release

he of course wrote *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. This led Mark to talk about the 11 men hanged and buried at the Gaol (the last in 1913).

From the outbreak of the First World War, Reading Gaol has followed a more varied path, housing foreign internees in war time and Irish nationalists after the Easter Rising in 1916, and then for a period of 26 years used for other purposes – including as a driving test centre. Reopened as an overflow prison in 1946, it became a corrective borstal for young men in 1951. With a site redevelopment in 1969, it became an adult prison again, and then in 1992 a young offenders' institution. Finally, it closed at the end of November 2013.

This was an enthralling talk with many excellent illustrations, which brought life at the prison in the various epochs to life.

Malcolm Summers

NEWS ITEMS

We are very pleased to welcome **Samantha Breakwell** to the committee. Samantha was co-opted at a committee meeting following the AGM. Otherwise, the make-up of the committee is, as before, except that Jo Alexander-Jones is now Minutes Secretary and Joy Pibworth member without portfolio. Sam has worked in local government administration for over ten years and describes her interest in history as grounded on 'things that look impressive, are hidden or have a nice reason behind them. For example, the talk that happened on the doors and windows, as soon as the speaker [John Missenden] said some of his things, I knew he was going to mention Broad Street Waterstones.' (A report of this talk will appear in the subsequent – late summer? – issue of the Newsletter.)

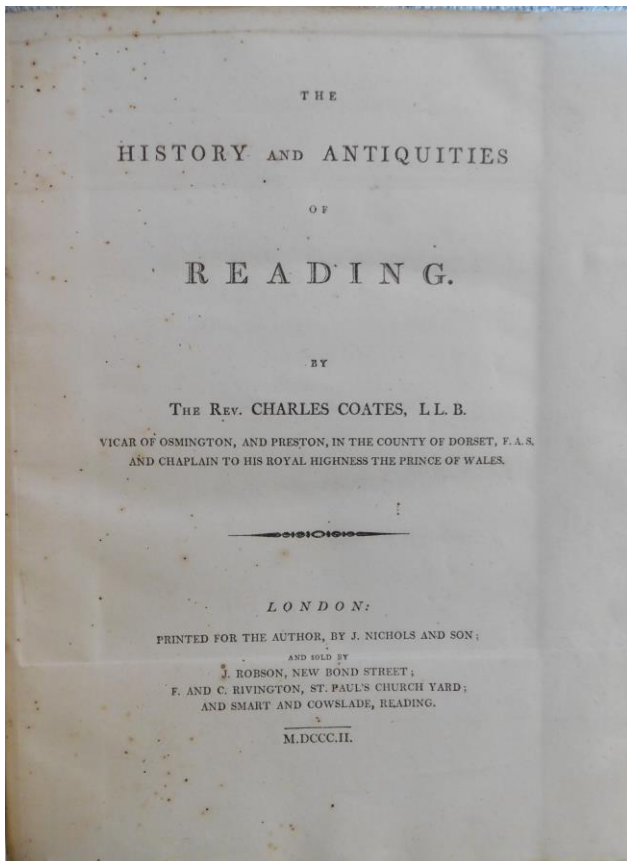
We offer our heartiest congratulations to local historian and long-time HoRS member, **Diana Mackarill**, on reaching her century. Fortunately, the Society received notice of this through 'a little bird' and was able to send her a card.

Diana at 100

On a sad note, our member, **Nick Hopton**, died in March after a long illness, aged 80. Nick had a particular interest in historical mapping and until his illness had been using his skills helping Joe Doak with his various projects. Nick was also a personal friend of the Editor, and we spent many happy evenings in the Retreat pub, discussing our mutual interests which included, as well as history, classic detective fiction - and also of course, beer! We offer our warmest sympathy to Nick's widow, Anne, who is also a member of HoRS.



CHARLES COATES



In *A Sketch of the Literary History of Reading*, published in 1888, the Rev. P. H. Ditchfield called Charles Coates "our great local historian... whose *History and Antiquities of Reading* is so invaluable". The *Oxford University and City Herald* newspaper in May 1810 was similarly in no doubt of the quality of both author and book:

The 'History of Reading', by the Rev. C. Coates, is a work of great merit, and does honour to the laborious research of the learned author – to every person living at or connected with Reading, it may be said to be in some degree necessary, and no Library, whether public or private can be considered as complete without it.

Published in late July 1802, with a Supplement in 1809, Coates's *The History and Antiquities of Reading* is still an authority referred to and quoted, and its reputation and influence show no signs of diminishing. Yet, what can be known of the author? Who was the man responsible for such a great work? And

why did he have such an interest in Reading, when the title page of his book declared him to be the Vicar of Osmington and Preston, in the County of Dorset?

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Charles Coates, son of watchmaker John Coates and his wife Elizabeth, was born in Reading and baptised at St Laurence's Church on 27 March 1746. From aged 7 to 16, Coates attended Reading School under the Rev. John Spicer (Headmaster from 1750–1771), a popular and hardworking teacher, who, among several strengths, was noted for his poetry and the inspiration he gave to the boys to versify too.

In 1762 Coates gained a scholarship to Caius College, Cambridge, to study medicine, funded by Tancred's Charity. In gratitude (and no doubt encouraged by the Rev. John Spicer) Coates wrote a 131-line poem, *An Ode to the Memory of Christopher Tancred*. It was published by Charles Bathurst, Fleet Street, London, and dedicated to the several Trustees of the charity who had granted him such an opportunity. Funded both as an undergraduate and for up to three years of postgraduate study, Coates matriculated as a sizar (the lowest rank of student) at Caius College, aged 16, at Michaelmas 1762. He left the College in 1767, having gained his MB.

Rather than the medical profession, Coates turned to a career in the church. In June 1770, aged 24, he was ordained Deacon by the Bishop of Salisbury, taking up the post of Curate of Tilehurst. In May the following year he was ordained as Priest by the Bishop of London. For some time until early 1778, Coates was a 'Reader and Preacher' at the Chapel of St George, Brentford, in the parish of Ealing.

At the end of September 1780, Coates was instituted to the vicarage of Preston, near Weymouth, in Dorset, by the Dean of Sarum, 'on the presentation of the Rev. John Spicer, Prebendary of this Cathedral', his old Headmaster. Additionally, from 1784 to 1787, Coates was Curate of Ealing, again ministering at the Chapel of St George.

In February 1788, Coates gained a royal appointment as one of the Prince of Wales's 'Chaplains in Ordinary'. The Prince's father, George III, was very fond of nearby



Weymouth. Perhaps Coates had met the Prince in Weymouth society. In the following month, Coates became an LL.B., a Bachelor of Laws, referring to Canon, not Civil, Law. In April 1788, Coates became vicar of Osmington, in Dorsetshire. He was now Vicar of two neighbouring parishes. We can get an idea of the benefits he enjoyed there in an advert, placed much later, when Coates was looking to let his post and property in 1812:

*TO BE LETT, and entered upon at Michaelmas next (old style)--- The TITHES and TENTHS of HAY, Clover, Wool, Lambs, Colts, Calves, Milk, Turnips, Pigs, Poultry, Vegetables, and all other Vicarial Tithes of Preston Sutton and Osmington, in the county of Dorset; together with the Glebe Lands of and belonging to the same Vicarages; also the Vicarage House, stable, coach-house, garden, and orchard, at Osmington. The Renter may also be accommodated with a Cottage in each parish. The Vicarage House, at Osmington, has been considerably enlarged by the present Vicar, at a considerable expense, and is now in excellent repair, very commodious, and most delightfully situated within one mile of the sea. Osmington is four miles from Weymouth and Preston and Sutton three miles, with a turnpike road running through each.*

In 1791 Coates let it be known that he intended to write a History of Reading. In 1793 Coates was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and this may have helped him access the wide range of sources needed for his research. These sources included documents at the British Museum, the 'Records of the Tower, the Rolls, and the Augmentation Office,' and papers at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. The Earl of Fingal gave him access to the 'Chartulary of Reading Abbey' and he made good use of 'Notes made by the late JOHN LOVEDAY'. Francis Annesley, one of Reading's M.P.s, provided him with 'several valuable papers', and Reading Corporation allowed him full access to their Archives and Diaries.

While this momentous project was in full flow, Coates got married. On Thursday 25 July 1793, Charles Coates (aged 47) married Miss Lora Knight (aged 43) at St James, Piccadilly. While the *Reading Mercury* called the bride 'Miss Knight of Clifford-street, London', the *Gentleman's Magazine* called her 'Miss Knight, of the Forbury, Reading'. Lora Knight, daughter of Francis and Lora Knight, had been born in Heckfield, Hampshire, only just over the border from Berkshire, about nine miles south of Reading. Lora may well have lived in Reading for a time, as a Lora Knight signed as a witness to a wedding at St Laurence's in November 1774.

The major event in Coates's life was the publication, in July 1802, of *The History and Antiquities of Reading*, dedicated to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, and price 10s 6d. The names of the subscribers given in the book are a veritable 'who's who' of the great and good in Reading at the time, with a substantial number of non-residents too. Ranging from the Archbishop of Canterbury to Coates's parents-in-law, the list is a long one. Coates would have been pleased that his *alma mater* had subscribed for a copy for its library.

Coates continued his research after the book's publication, resulting in a *Supplement with Corrections and Additions*, illustrated with a view of Reading, published both separately and in a single volume with the original text, in 1809. At his death, he left unfinished work on a revised and enlarged edition of Ashmole's *The Antiquities of Berkshire*, which he had been engaged upon for some years.

His wife, Lora, suffered ill health from about 1809 until her death on 27 November 1812. Coates was much affected by her suffering and greatly afflicted by her death. He became very ill in his turn and died, aged 67, from a severe paralytic attack on 7 April 1813, less than six months after his wife. He was buried at St Osmund's Church, Osmington, on 20 April.

## THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR LOCAL HISTORY (BALH).

The abbreviation for this national body is confusingly similar to that of the Berkshire Local History Association. Together with the HoRS, they both share the same purpose: the support and promotion of local history and historians.

Our Society here in Reading has recently joined the national organisation, as have many other local history societies throughout the country. Why? One important benefit for local associations and societies is BALH's insurance scheme, better than an individual group can negotiate, and cheaper even with the BALH membership fee.

The national body provides other services. It publishes *The Local Historian* four times a year with articles by amateur and occasionally professional local historians, reviews, and details of local publications and journals such as *Berkshire Old and New*. The January 2022 edition of the journal included an article on domestic service in early-twentieth century Berkshire and one on Arnold Bennett and the Potteries, both of great interest for me and probably other exiled Potters as well as Berkshire historians. *The Local Historian* gives members and societies the chance to submit publications for review, member societies to advertise their journals and newsletters, the best articles in a society journal and the best local society newsletter each year receiving awards, unfortunately not financial. A new award is for the Local History Photographer of the Year. There are also Personal Achievement awards for individuals making outstanding contributions to local history, including service with local societies. People from Berkshire have won best article and personal achievement in the last few years. Also published at the same time as *The Local Historian* is *Local History News*, the magazine of BALH. It includes useful information about local history events and activities nationwide, giving local societies the chance to advertise their wares and BALH members to keep abreast of interesting developments.

What else does BALH offer to attract us as individuals? Well, an annual History Day, this year held in London for those attending in person, but also online for those like me who find travelling to and in the capital a challenge. The day includes the AGM (happily short) two lectures, one in the morning on a practical subject (the fourteenth taxation of aliens and the list of slave owners compensated in 1833 with their web sites were two contributions I have found particularly useful in recent years), and one in the afternoon by a guest speaker. This year the morning talk will be on by Mark Forrest, author of a recent BALH guide to post-medieval manorial records, and Dr Janina Ramirez (perhaps best known through BBC television programmes) will give the afternoon talk. The date for your diary is Saturday, June 11th. 10.30-4.00. It is open to non-members, individual members paying a reduced rate both for attending in person or online. Book online via the website. Incidentally, there are some benefits for all members of local history societies, but these do not extend to copies of the journal and newsletter.

The association's website, updated last year, is another valuable resource. Find it at [www.balh.org.uk](http://www.balh.org.uk). It has many good things to offer local historians and browsing is free. So do log on (if that is the correct term) and be surprised. You will certainly learn something useful.

Joan Dils, President, HoRS.

**Ed: *The Local Historian* can be accessed at <https://www.balh.org.uk/thelocalhistorian>. This is a temporary suspension of their paywall access to issues published within the last three years. Older issues are available for free at the same web address.**

**We have been issued with a discount code for our Society members. This code can be used to obtain discounts on the non-member rate, initially for BALH online webinars and workshops. The code is F-34006N.**



## **TWENTY YEARS AGO – From the Chairman’s Annual Report, 2002**

As I began to consider writing this report I felt that fate had dealt me an unkind blow. In this society, it is the convention for the Chairman to give the annual report on its proceedings, whereas in another organisation, of which I am Secretary, the task falls to the latter. That’s life.

At last year’s AGM, we were conscious of the recent death of our President, Dr Cecil Slade. During the year, it was my privilege to be invited to the launch party for Dr Slade’s book on the history of the Reading Abbey site – a major addition to the plethora of works on our town’s history and a model for all in terms of its happy combination of scholarship and readability. In addition, the publication by the Berkshire Record Society of Dr Slade’s edition of the mediaeval court rolls, on which he addressed us so memorably, is believed to be imminent.

It is now my pleasure to inform you that your Committee decided to invite Mrs Joan Dils of Reading University to succeed Dr Slade as the Society’s President and that she has graciously accepted. She had hoped to be with us tonight but found that she had a speaking engagement elsewhere.

[Congratulations to Joan on 20 years as our President!]

## **LAST WORD**

When you receive this Newsletter, the Platinum Jubilee will soon be upon us. Here are some historical reflections in blank verse, penned by their author in 1985, which readers of the ‘Baby Boomer’ generation may find to resonate with their own experience.

### **LINES ON THE APPROACH OF HIS FORTIETH YEAR**

As I approach the year when Middle Age  
Begins, when some say Life begins, I’m moved  
To place myself in the Middle Generation.

We were the first of those to be relieved  
Of National Service by the great Profumo,  
First to enjoy the benefits of Robbins.

Yet I am one who sees a Radio  
And knows it for a Wireless, one who thinks  
And shall do, till his dying day, I trust,  
In terms of shillings, feet and Fahrenheit;

Who just five months after he went to school,  
Having been taught to mouth *God Save the King*,  
Had to relearn that blessed doggerel,  
For George was Dead, and Long must Live the Queen.

**Author’s Note.** John Profumo, best-known for the Scandal that bears his name, as Secretary of State for War (1960-3), announced the phasing out of National Service with the final conscriptions taking place at the end of 1960; so in fact I missed out by four years, whereas the poem implies perhaps that it was a closer thing! Lord Lionel Robbins’ report on Higher Education, published in 1963, influenced the expansion of university education during the 1960s.

**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.**