

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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CHRISTMAS 1994

KEN MAJOR'S FIND

During restoration work under St Mary's Chapel in Castle Street, architect Ken Major **and** his wife Helen found an exciting collection of clay pots and bottles believed to be hundreds of years old. At the beginning of October, the Major's removed the floor as part of a process to cure dry rot. Beneath the floor was a former cesspit. As Ken Major is also an historian, a thorough examination followed, resulting in the find. There is yet much cleaning and dating to be done on the items which are unusual in that so many are still intact. Most artefacts from that period are damaged or fragmented.

As a society devoted to local history, we will monitor this story and hopefully report on subsequent developments and conclusions.

PRESERVING THE PAST

Reading Council and the Museum would like to restore an old pumping station at Blake's Lock. Financial assistance for the project is being provided by Thames Water but as always in a project of this sort, information is needed.

If anyone has information on the Blake's Lock pumping station or know of people who worked there then Sue Read would be pleased to hear from you. The address is The Museum of Reading, Blagrove Street, Reading RG1 1QH.

PROGRAMME 1995

Buffet Supper Party
With affiliated societies
6.45 for 7.00 p.m. 19 January 1995

Roman Calleva
Sue Read - The Museum of Reading
16 February 1995

Annual General Meeting
Followed by Weather, Climate and History
Dr J. Starr 16 March 1995

To Reading by Coach
Judith Hunter 20 April 1995

Huntley, Boorne & Stevens
David Skilton 18 May 1995

Two Guided Walks
June and July. - Details of guided walks to
be advised

PARTY TIME

Tickets for the Buffet Supper Party on 19th
January are available from the treasurer Mr
R Hutchinson, at a cost of £4 each.

HARRINSONS CROSS

Isaac Harrinson was born in 1809 at
Bardsley in Yorkshire, the son of the curate
there. He became a surgeon being trained
at Guy's and at St. Thomas' hospitals and
came to Reading in 1839 as assistant to Mr
George May, later becoming his partner. He
lived in Castle Street for many years and
was a great benefactor to the town. He was
a co-founder of the Reading Pathological
Society in 1841 becoming its president, and
also acted as medical officer at the Chain
Street Dispensary which had been founded
in 1802 and was pulled down a few years
ago to make way for extensions to Heelas
department store when it was being rebuilt.

Among the various gifts made by him was
£1000 towards the erection of the north aisle of St.
Mary's church in 1872 and

contributing a similar amount for the
installation of the Father Willis organ in the
old town hall, and a further £1000 towards
the new town hall, and again the same sum
to St. Mary's clergy fund.

What perhaps he is best remembered for is
the improvement to the Butts and the
approach to St. Mary's church. Again
donating more than £1000 to the cost, he
was instrumental in the purchasing and
demolishing of the old cottages on the south
and west sides of the churchyard thus
enlarging it and opening up the view of
the church. To many his generosity over
many years a twenty feet stone cross was
erected by public subscription in the
churchyard. This cross was designed by S
Slingsby Stallwood and built by Wheeler
Brothers of Reading, and bears the arms of
Harrinson, the Borough of Reading and of
the dioceses of both Salisbury and Oxford.
It was unveiled by Canon Garry on 24th
December 1887 and Harrinson was
presented at the same time with an
illuminated address.

Six months later Isaac Harrinson died at his
home, now in the Bath Road, aged 79. This
Bath Road house was known as "Bardsley"
obviously named after his Yorkshire
birthplace.

Norman Wicks

SEASONS GREETINGS

The Chairman and Committee would like to
thank members for their support throughout
the year and wish you all a very happy
Christmas and a peaceful but interesting
new year.