

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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EDITORIAL

Following our AGM in March, committee member, Vicki Chesterman, has kindly volunteered to become our new programme organiser. Those who attended will be aware that Eddy Hooper has taken over from Peter Russell as our Honorary Secretary.

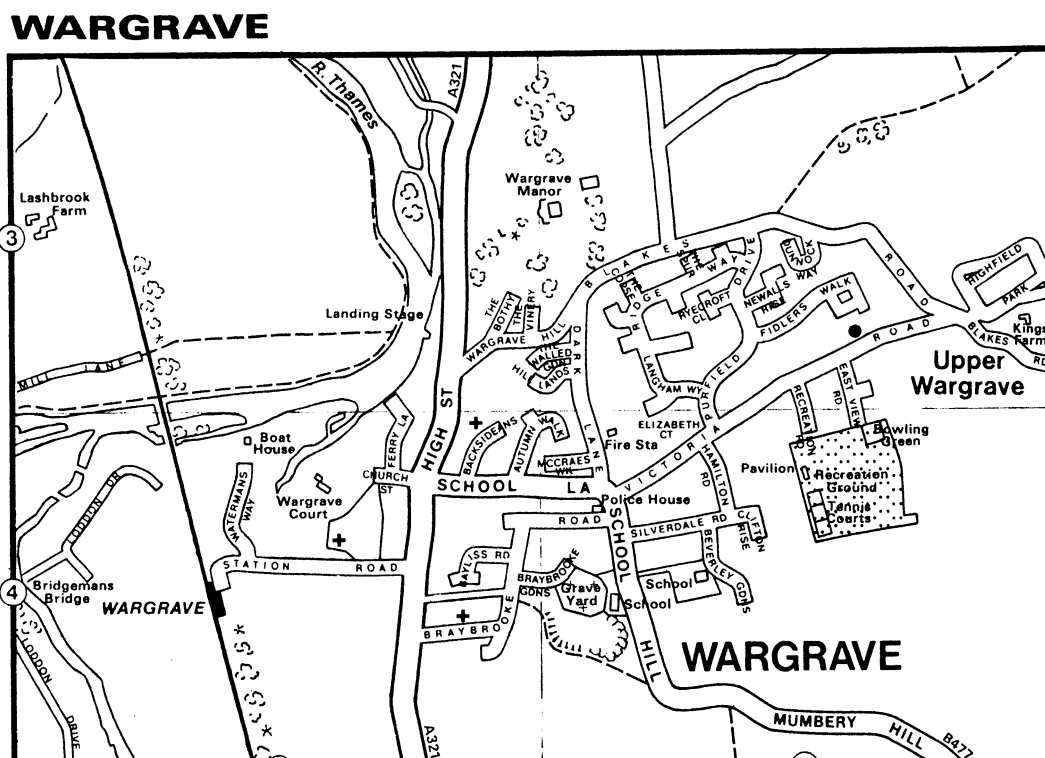
We reported last year on the passing of long-standing member, James Gafford, but what I had not realised then was that he and his wife, Pam, were also long-time members of our current venue, Abbey Baptist Church. Pam was also a gifted artist and one of her paintings hangs in the kitchen area in the lobby. As the editor is now equipped with a scanner we are able to include one of James' sketches of bygone Reading in this issue. I am indebted to Miss Sylvia Newberry and Mrs Jean Sheppard for this information.

A longstanding but unsubstantiated belief on my part was partly shattered by the talk on brick making by James Ford in April. I have long held to the theory, advanced by the Revd Robin Leaver in the 1970s, that Sherman Road where I live was named after the Reverend James Sherman who ministered in Reading from 1820-36

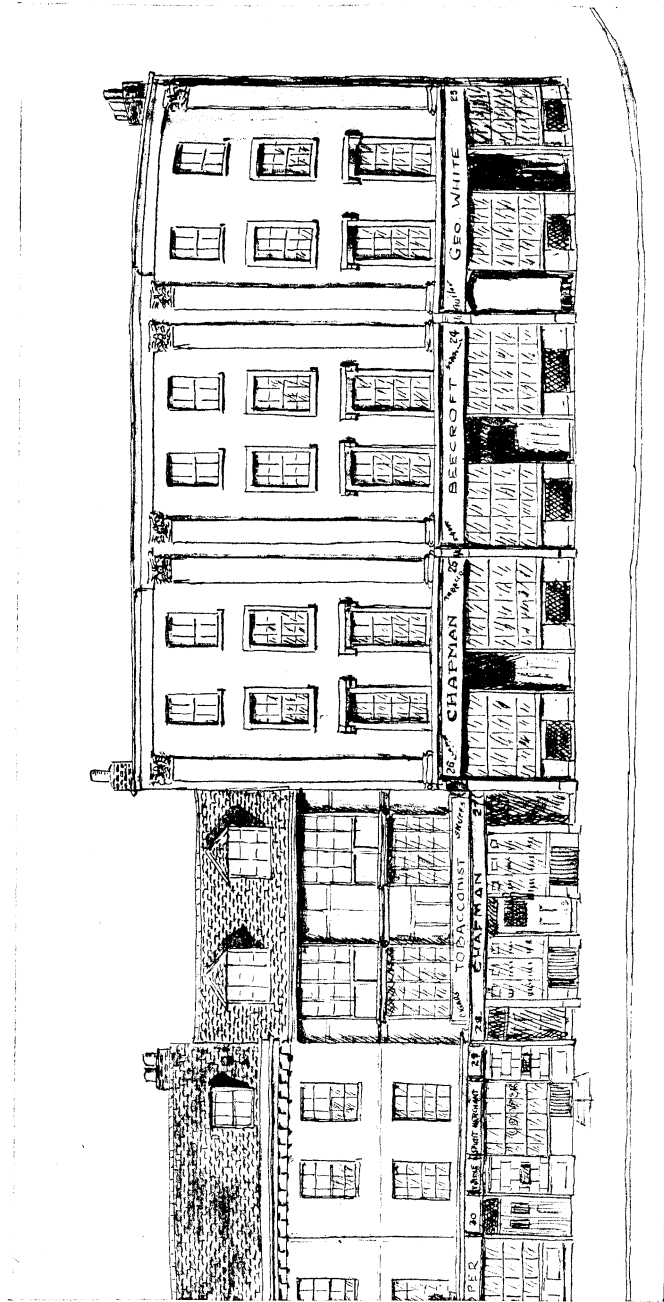
and was well known for his powerful sermon at the Great Reading Cheese Fair in the first year of his pastorate at Castle Street Chapel. This theory, probably following me, is also repeated in the second edition of Adam Sowan's A to Z of Reading road names. However, James Ford's talk revealed that one of the brick-kilns in Katesgrove was operated by a gentleman called Shearman alias Sharman and the site appeared to be round about where Sherman Road now sits. So could it have been actually named after this semi-literate brickmaker in yet another variant of his name?

In the two months following the publication of this newsletter we go on tour. On 20 June we meet at the Queen Victoria statue outside the Old Town Hall at 6.30 whence Mr Sidney Gold was lead us on a guided walk around some of the statues and monuments in Reading.

Four weeks later on 18 July we shall have a Historical Walk round Wargrave, guided by Peter Delaney of our sister society in Wargrave. We are asked to assembled by 7.00 pm at the lych gate, Mill Green, Station Road, Wargrave - which is just in front of St Mary's Church. Rail travellers can get the 18.19 to Twyford, changing there onto the 18.29, arriving 18.33.



Wargrave at large – Station Road is the bottom left corner of the map.



MARKET PLACE

A sketch by James Gafford of part of the west side of the Market Place.

EPHEMERA

Recently the History of Reading Society, along with other local groups, was invited to the centre for Ephemera Studies at the department of Typography of Reading University. Ephemera is a word used to describe the collection of pieces of printed paper, which today we might call "junk" and the type of paper that one would normally throw away, such as bills and bill heads, receipts, envelopes, paper bag labels, bus and rail tickets, posters, leaflets, and theatre programmes, sweet papers, cigarette packets, beer mats, packaging and labels. When they become 50, 100 or 150 years old, such items are of much more interest and though still not valuable in terms of money, they are of great value to the social historian and printing enthusiast.

Reading Department of Typography is now the headquarters of the Ephemera Society. We were also given a talk on the various methods of printing and saw a display of a working printer, who although he did not come from Reading was representative of the type of work that would have been carried out by numerous provincial printers, including those carrying out their business in the town.

Though the centre has a vast collection, it is rather short on items pertaining to Reading. An appeal was made that if you have any of this material, preferably pre-1950, please donate it to the Centre for Ephemera Studies, University of Reading, instead of putting it into the recycling bin!

Sidney Gold

The 2007-8 programme commences on Wednesday, 19 Sept 2007. Those of a musical persuasion may also like to note that the Reading Phoenix Choir is giving a concert at the Abbey Baptist Church on Saturday 22 September at 7.30. All welcome. Ticket price is not yet known but will probably be about £7 (including car parking).