

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

Chair & Newsletter Editor John Dearing 27 Sherman Road READING RG1 2PJ Tel: 0118 958 0377	Hon Secretary Eddy Hooper	Treasurer & Membership John Starr	Programme Organiser Vicki Chesterman 7 Norman Road Caversham READING RG4 5JN Tel: 0118 947 3443
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Winter 2009

No 21

EDITORIAL

Although we hope that you will find other matters of interest in it, the main purpose of this issue is to advertise our Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 18 March. At this you will not only have the opportunity to vote for a new Committee – even if it is more or less the same as the old one! – but you will also be asked to accept our new Constitution. This became necessary because in one or two areas we were not acting strictly within the letter of the old one – in particular the offices of Chairman, Secretary etc, had become accepted as more or less jobs for life. It was necessary to incorporate this change into our rules and at the same time we have made such other amendments as seemed sensible. You will find a copy of the Constitution circulated with this Newsletter and we hope that you will find it meets our needs.

Perhaps I may add, however, that I took office as Chairman on 19 March 1998, beginning an 11-year reign, and there only one office that I have held for a longer period. I think it would be beneficial for the Society if a new Chairman took over after 12 years, although if there are any volunteers to take over this time round I shall not be unduly sorry.

The formal notice for the AGM follows.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

To be held at the Abbey Baptist Church, Reading at 7.30 pm on Wednesday, 18 March 2006.

AGENDA

1. Welcome and apologies.
2. Approval of Minutes of 2008 AGM
3. Matters Arising.
4. Chairman's Report and Review
5. Treasurer's report
6. Motion to accept the new Constitution. Proposed from the Chair.
Any amendments must be sent to the Secretary or another Officer before the meeting.
7. Election of Officers and Committee for 2009/10.

Present Officers		Willing to stand again
Chairman	John Dearing ^①	✓
Secretary	Eddie Hooper	✓
Treasurer	John Starr	✓
Executive Committee Members		
Programme Organiser ^②	Vicki Chesterman	✓
	Noreen Hooper	✓
Publicity ^②	John Whitehead	✓
Technical Support ^②	Bent Weber	✓
Vice-Chairman ^②	Sidney Gold	✓

^① Also Newsletter Editor. ^② These are appointments to specific tasks made by the Executive Committee. If the new Constitution is passed, the post of Vice-Chairman will become an elected one.

8. To elect an independent examiner of accounts
9. Any Other Business – Data Protection Act.

The AGM, will be followed by **60 Years of the Dusseldorf Association**, a talk by **Robert Dimmick**, a former Mayor of Reading, who is Chairman of the Association.

NEW BOOKS

A much needed new booklet has been published for the Friends of Reading Museum by the Two Rivers Press entitled "The World in Reading, introducing the Reading Museum Collection", this lays out in 32 pages and over 100 illustrations items from the collections, with a short introduction written by the Museum staff to each departments, archaeology, ancient Greek and Egyptian collections, Reading Abbey, entomology, painting, sculpture and pottery, Huntley & Palmers Collection, Bayeux Tapestry, and the Reading Chronicle Photographic Collection along with other important areas, such as the environment, the Reading Foundation for Art, and the Schools Loan and Education Service. All this information has been packed into this splendid booklet which is both colourful and well produced.

Excellent reading for yourself or as a little extra gift at any time of the year. It is obtainable at the Museum of Reading shop at £5.

Sidney Gold

BITS AND PIECES

Having reported on one initiative by the Reading Civic Society (RCS) in the last issue, is good to be able to mention another, to which attention is drawn in the latest Newsletter of the Berkshire Local History Association (BLHA). This is to restore the memorial on the southern exterior wall of St Mary the Virgin, Reading, of the memorial to Laurentes Braag. Braag was one of a number of Danish prisoners of war on Parole in Reading during the Napoleonic Wars, when Denmark was for a while an enemy in alliance with Boney. Sadly he died here in 1808 at the young age of 26. The memorial is now in a poor state and the wording hardly legible. RCS hopes to raise £1300 to pay for its renovation, some of which has already arrived in the form of grants.

An exhibition that looks well worth seeing and entitled "Reading Then and Now" opens at the Museum on 14 February. Exhibitions and drawings from the town's past are contrasted with photographic of the same views at the present day. It is on for four months, so no excuses!

It is good to see Reading, or Rather Berkshire, history honoured – congratulations to Dr Peter Durrant, County Archivist, for being awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours.

We have received the following notice. about an Oral History Project that the Reading University of the Third Age (U3A) are about to undertake:

"You may already have heard a rumour about our intentions, as it is more than a year since a small group of members began knocking ideas around.

Our objective is to record voices of people who, during the 1960's and early 70's, lived or worked in the centre of the town in the area bounded by the Oxford Road and Castle Street, where everything was demolished to make way for the construction of the I.D.R. and the building of the Borough Offices and other Public buildings.

It is proving difficult to find our 'Study population' as you can well imagine. We are embarking on leaflet publicity via Clubs for older people, and are hoping for media interest. If any of your Members know of potential "interviewees" we would much appreciate receiving contact details."

If you can help, please contact: Margaret Marshall,

SONNET

To those who visit Reading Abbey

If ye would prove the magic of these stones
 Be blind awhile to marvels of to-day -
 The flame-fed giants panting o'er the way -
The winged miracle 'cross the sky which drones -
And hark the wind that, with weird pathos, moans
 Thro' this great reverend Ruin, lorn and grey.
 Muse, and tread softly : no rash haste display :
Oft well-spent quiet to the soul atones
For loud years of neglect; and thou may'st hear
 Of golden tutoring an underflow,
 Showing how all earth's glories one way go,
And, eloquent with the ivy's gesturings,
 Telling how Faith sings, spite of change, sans fear:
Bidding the deathless spirit seek the deathless things.

The above is the work of Henry Egby, styled the “Berkshire lyrist” and a one-time resident of Old Coley. When not writing verse he was a shopkeeper and coal merchant.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

May we remind you again, if a reminder is needed, that membership subscriptions at £9 per person became due on 1st January. If you intend to come and vote at the AGM and we hope approve our new Constitution, you will need to have renewed your membership. Please ask Dr. John Starr, our Treasurer, if you are in any doubt on this matter.

We are well aware that a number of our older members rely on others for lifts to the Society meetings. Indeed it is often members of the Committee who provide the lifts. This sometimes means that when the person giving lift is otherwise engaged other members are unable to attend. If we could widen our circle of folk willing to provide lifts this problem would not arise. If you are willing to give a lift either regularly or on an occasional basis, and if you would also benefit from one, please let the Secretary know.