

# 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

Chairman	Hon Secretary	Treasurer & Membership	Programme Organiser	Editor
David Cliffe 1 Priest Hill Caversham READING RG4 7RZ 0118 948 3354	Eddy Hooper	John Starr	Vicki Chesterman 7 Norman Road Caversham READING RG4 5JN Tel: 0118 947 3443	John Dearing 27 Sherman Road READING RG1 2PJ Tel: 0118 958 0377

Winter 2014

No 35

## Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Society's AGM will take place on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

### AGENDA

1. Welcome and Apologies.
2. Approval of Minutes of 2013 AGM.
3. Matters Arising.
4. Chairman's Report and Review.
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Election of Officers and Committee for 2013/14.

#### Present Committee.

##### Officers

Chairman	David Cliffe*
Vice Chairman	Sidney Gold*
Secretary	Eddy Hooper
Treasurer	John Starr*

##### Committee Members

Vicki Chesterman*	Programme Organiser
John Dearing*	Newsletter Editor
Sean Duggan*	Archivist
John Whitehead*	Publicity
Joy Pibworth*	Co-opted

Those marked with an asterisk are prepared to stand again. *Any other nominations with names of proposers and seconders should be submitted to the Secretary, prior to the meeting.*

7. Any Other Business

### **Thoughts from the Chair**

For much of January this year, I found myself back in my home town, Macclesfield, in Cheshire, and took the opportunity of attending a meeting of the local history society there. The numbers present were about the same as at Reading. Visitors paid £3, as opposed to £2 at Reading, but this did include a cup of coffee and a biscuit afterwards.

My thoughts went back to the 1960s, when this society was in its early days, and I was there, sitting at the front, notebook and pencil in hand, soaking up the information that was being imparted by people who seemed rather old and distinguished. Admission for students was free – I wonder if we have many student visitors in Reading these days?

At the time, my knowledge of Reading was limited to the few sentences in the school geography textbook. We were told to remember the name of the River Kennet, which was quite different from the River Kent. Little did I think that I would turn out to be one of those “old” people who stands on platforms and gives local history talks in this part of the country!

Returning to Reading, or rather, to Caversham, I am now in temporary possession of a large cardboard box filled with photographs and letters which were offered to our society. Unfortunately, it had been kept in a damp place, and I had to spend some time with a vacuum cleaner and a duster, removing the worst of the mould.

What I found wasn't terribly interesting. The documents date between 1917 and 1962, and had belonged to Miss Marjory Hasluck, of Warren House, 83 St. Peter's Avenue, Caversham. She was the daughter of the Rev. Ernest Edward Hasluck, Vicar of Sixpenny Handley, in Dorset, and the family moved to Caversham when he retired in 1925. Quite why is not apparent from the letters. After the death of her parents, she seems to have lived on in the family home, with her brother, Reggie. He was a councillor and magistrate, and they were both members of St. Peter's Church, in Caversham.

The family was obviously well-to-do, and travelled in Europe on their holidays. They had friends in many different parts of the world, and the photographs are of family, friends, pets, and holidays – almost all of them unidentified. In fact, I haven't been able to find a picture which definitely shows Miss Hasluck. If anyone knew the family, and would be interested in looking through the box, please get in touch. My telephone number is 948 3354, and my e-mail address [davidcliffe438@btinternet.com](mailto:davidcliffe438@btinternet.com).

I'll be writing a piece for “Caversham Bridge,” the monthly Caversham Christian newspaper, to see if any of their readers is interested, and after that I'll have to edit the material down, and the Berkshire Record Office has agreed to look after the more interesting bits. Thanks are due to the donor of the material, from Eastern Avenue, Reading, who rescued it from destruction. - *David Cliffe*

### **The World War One Documents at the Library**

We are advised that the following publications, between 1910 and 1925, have been temporarily removed from the shelves for digitisation but are due to be back in the library in February]:

- 1 Smith's Directories
- 2 Kelly's Directories
- 3 Berkshire and The War
- 4 1918 and 1921 Electoral Rolls
- 5 Microfilm for Reading Standard, Reading Observer and Berkshire Chronicle.
- 6 Ordnance Survey maps 1:25 1909-1912

If you have an urgent need to refer to items before they return to the Library please consult the Local Studies Librarian, who may be able to assist you. Alternatively, the Berkshire

Record Office has some of these publications; so it would be worth contacting them.

### **A bit of Old Reading out in the West**

One of the other societies I belong to as a fairly active member is the Chapels Society. The Society's most recent "chapel crawl" of South Somerset was of considerable interest to me, apart from its intrinsic attractions for those who love the history and architecture of our nonconformist heritage. In particular, a Reading connection was found in the third chapel visited, Long Sutton Friends' Meeting House. Quaker activity in the area began with George Fox's visit to Somerset in 1656 and in 1670 they purchased a cottage opposite the present Long Sutton meeting house to serve both as a dwelling house and a meeting house.



Long Sutton Meeting House – exterior view

“In 1704 a London Quaker named William Steele left land and £200 to build a new meeting house. The bequest for the meeting house was conditional on the Friends paying the whole cost of carrying the necessary materials. The new meeting house was completed in 1717 and William Steele's corpse was interred in the burial ground....



Long Sutton Meeting House – interior view

The interior of the building is plain and simple and typical of eighteenth century Quaker meeting houses. It is a single large room sub-divided with a partition at one end which encloses a gallery and staircase/entrance hall. The old benches are all elm and face inwards and are supplemented by some more modern seating.

In the later eighteenth century numbers of Friends locally declined and in 1793 the building was closed. It was re-opened in 1795 by William Palmer, whose grandson became the Palmer in Huntley and Palmer. This was, of course, George Palmer (1818-97), who transformed the small-scale business of his relative, Joseph Huntley, into a world-beating enterprise that put Reading on the map.



: Long Sutton Meeting House – One of the Palmer tombstones

The burial ground at Long Sutton contains many tombstones of the Palmer family including the one depicted here. Quaker graveyards have a charm that is all their own and, as those who went on Joy Pibworth's summer walk will know, the one in Reading is well worth a visit – truly one of the town's hidden gems! - *John Dearing, incorporating notes by Peter Daniel, David Dawson and Roger Thorne.*

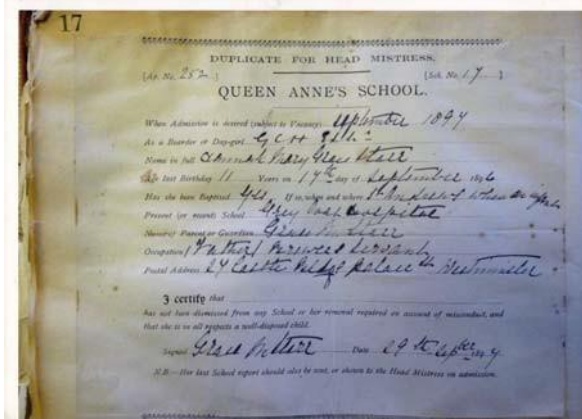
### Reading Faces on Show

The current exhibition at the Art Gallery is entitled Making Faces and includes many oil paintings from the Art Gallery's own collection, yet seldom seen, many of these works are by local artists of Reading worthies. There are fine examples from the Tudor to 20th century, particularly important is the wonderful portrait of Queen Elizabeth 1st which has recently been on loan to Kenilworth Castle. Other noteworthy portraits are Christopher Griffith by Gainsborough, John Berkeley Monck by Richard Jones and Mary Mitford by Benjamin Haydon along with examples by Gilbert and Stanley Spencer. The exhibition is further enhanced by rarely seen marble busts by George Simonds, William May and John Tweed. The show runs till March 16th 2014 - don't miss this opportunity to see this superb exhibition. - *Sidney Gold*

### Hannah Starr at School

Readers will long memories will perhaps recall that in 2011 we published a piece by our Treasurer, John Starr, concerning his relative, Hannah Mary Grace Starr (1885-1966), the daughter of a Westminster drayman who was educated at Queen Anne's School in Caversham and subsequently became a Post Office clerk. John took the opportunity of our January meeting at which the school's historian, Daniel Talbot, addressed us to find out more about her education. He writes as follows:

In 1897 the illustration below shows that Hannah, aged 11 on 17 September 1896, a pupil at Grey Coat Hospital, was awarded an Exhibition to Queen Anne's School. The family were then living in Castle Lane, Westminster.



The 1900 Summer Report on Foundation Scholar Hannah (aged 14yr. 9 mths) stated that she

was in Form IVa and that both Conduct and Progress were 'Good'. She was recorded as being at QAS in the 1901 census; her last term Report, Autumn 1901, stated that the 16 yr. 1mth old Hannah was again 'Good' in Conduct and Progress. (A number of other girls were 'Good', one was V. Good, a few were 'much improved', others were 'Improving' and one or two were 'Good on the whole!'). – *John Starr*

**Book Sale.** We hope to have another book sale in April 2014. Please pass any suitable items to David Cliffe for storage until then.

**Subscriptions.** You are reminded that these became due on 1<sup>st</sup> January. Please pay the Treasurer in person or via the address on page 1. The sum remains at the previous rate of £9 per annum.

**Reading Book of Days.** Sales are going well both through the Society and at Waterstones and other retail outlets. Penny Starr has taken over responsibility for sales to Society members – so please see Penny if you have not yet obtained a copy.