

# 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 & Programme Organiser	Hon Treasurer & Membership	Editor
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Winter 2015

No 38

## Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Society's AGM will take place on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

### AGENDA

1. Welcome and Apologies.
2. Approval of Minutes of 2014 AGM.
3. Matters Arising.
4. Chairman's Report and Review.
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Election of Officers and Committee for 2014/15.

Present Officers	
Chairman	David Cliffe
Vice Chairman	Sidney Gold
Secretary	Vicki Chesterman*
Treasurer	John Starr
Present Committee	
John Dearing [News Editor]	
Sean Duggan [Archives and Publicity]	
Joy Pibworth [Minutes Secretary]	
John Whitehead	

\*Also Programme Organiser.

All current members 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. To elect an Independent Examiner of Accounts.
8. Any Other Business

## Thoughts from the Chair

The New Year promises to bring us some varied and interesting talks, and a couple of members-only visits. I hope you've remembered to renew your subscription! In June, we'll be visiting the Reading Synagogue in Goldsmid Road. I was there on one of the Heritage Open Days a few years back, and must say that it is an extraordinary building, both outside and in, and one that you really shouldn't miss. The architect was W. G. Lewton, who also designed Caversham Library. Spotting the similarities is an interesting exercise. Reading Blue Coat School, founded by Richard Aldworth in 1646, has moved around the town over the years, and is now at Holme Park, Sonning. I've never visited it, and missed the talk we had in May last year, so I very much hope to be there in July. Let us hope for a fine evening, when we can admire the building and its surroundings at their best.



**Reading Synagogue**

I hope that you bought, and are now enjoying, the History of Reading Society calendar. In the end, we had 150 printed and sold 144, bringing in a profit of just over £80 to the Society. The production and distribution of the calendar has been something of a learning exercise, and I'm inclined to think that we should have charged £5 for each one, rather than £4. Had we done that, and sold the same number, we would have more than doubled the profit.

Thinking of profit prompts me to mention the book sale we hope to hold at our April meeting. You can bring in any books likely to interest Reading historians to

our February and March meetings: Sidney Gold or I will be glad to take them off your hands!

The additional money that has come in through book sales, calendar sales, and the royalties from "The Reading Book of Days" will enable the Society to keep subscriptions low. It should also enable us to spread our wings a little, and maybe to get things published, or to hold an event.

During the autumn I was invited to two book launches, both of them for publications from the Scallop Shell Press. John Mullaney's book, "Reading's Abbey Quarter: an Illustrated History," is very much what the title says. Extensive use has been made of the Central Library's collection of local history images, which I catalogued when I was in paid employment. It brought back memories, and it was good to be able to see, for instance, the various prints of the Reading Abbey Gateway, reproduced in the same opening of the book, and spotting the differences, and then comparing them with the 19<sup>th</sup>-century photographs, starting with the one by W. H. Fox Talbot. It certainly made me question how accurate some of the artists and print-makers were!

One artist who seems to have been particularly accurate in depicting Reading was W. H. Timms. The other book launch was for "The Timms Family of Reading and London: Artists, Photographers, Designers and Craftsmen," by Katie Amos. In 1823, Mr. Timms published his twelve "Select Views in the Borough of Reading, and Adjacent Scenery." All twelve are reproduced here, in colour, together with other prints by Timms. They repay careful study. We shall be finding out more when the author, Katie Amos, comes to give us a talk in May.



**King Street, as portrayed by W H Timms**

Coming in February is "Berkshire in the First World War," the book written by a group of around 30 authors, co-ordinated by the Central Library, and funded by



the Heritage Lottery Fund. I have been on the management board, and may be biased, but even as someone not interested in military subjects, I was surprised at the number of different aspects the authors chose as their subjects, and at the effects of the War on different areas of life in the county. It's obviously written by people with varying levels of experience and expertise, but it's all the more impressive for that. All that co-operating had the intended result – a worthwhile book, and the digitisation of some of the primary sources in the Library's collection. I don't think that anyone who reads it will be disappointed.

The cataloguing of the Library's local illustrations collection proceeds, though slowly. At present I'm working on pictures of the Maidenhead area – innumerable images of Boulter's Lock and Maidenhead Bridge. The Newbury area comes next. I'm rather dreading Windsor!

As a diversion, following our December Presidential Address, Mrs. Joan Dils kindly lent me the pictures she had used to illustrate her talk on the history of Berkshire County Council. These have now been scanned, researched and catalogued, and will soon appear on the Library website. Maybe other speakers could be persuaded to do the same?

In the spring, Joan will be running a short course on reading Tudor and Stuart handwriting – please see the details, later in this issue. This is being run for the Berkshire Local History Association, but any local historians are invited to join the course. It looks like an extraordinarily generous offer, and not to be missed if you want to acquire this skill, from about the best teacher you could have!

David Cliffe

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BERKSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION**

Our Society is a corporate member of the BLHA and members are invited to attend the 38th Annual General Meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at St Laurence's Church, The Forbury, Reading. The business meeting at 11 am will be followed by a Symposium in Honour of JOAN DILS, who as well as being President and a founder-member of our own society is also a Founder Member, Vice-President and former Chair of the BLHA. If you receive electronic copies of the Newsletter you can use the following link to book a place:

**[Download the AGM Booking Form 2015](#)**

The **Symposium** will begin at 2:00pm with a brief introduction and a series of three 40 minute talks by prominent local historians – Kate Tiller, Gill Clark and Alan Crosby. Time will be allowed for questions and there will be a short break for refreshments. The day will conclude with a **Reception** beginning approximately **5:00pm onwards**, during which drinks and snacks will be provided.

The closing date for bookings is **Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2015**. These should be sent to Ann McCormack at [secretary@blha.org.uk](mailto:secretary@blha.org.uk). Alternatively, return completed hard copy of form with **SAE** to: **Ann McCormack**,

**A new course, run by the Berkshire Local History Association**  
**LEARN TO READ TUDOR AND STUART HANDWRITING**  
**Thursdays, 5, 12, 19 and 25 March, 7.30 to 9.00 p.m., at**

In a series of practical sessions, you can learn the basic skills of reading and interpreting some of the documents most frequently encountered in local and family history, such as wills, inventories, and parish and borough records.

No fee, but payment for photocopied materials used. Maximum number 8. First come, first served.

Advance booking essential, by 14 February. Contact Joan Dils, either by letter, or preferably by e-mail, at.

### **SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE**

Members are respectfully reminded that subscriptions for 2015 became due on the 1<sup>st</sup> January. Rates remain £9.00 per person. If you have not already done so, please renew now in time to be eligible to vote at the AGM in March! If you want to change your method of payment to standing order it is not too late so here again are the instructions given in the previous Newsletter:

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### **AN EASIER WAY TO RENEW MEMBERSHIP FROM JANUARY 2015**

You may find it easier and more convenient to set up a Standing Order for when your Annual membership is due **in January 2015**. The details your bank will need to process this are as follows:

Current Membership: £9 single, £18 couple

Add: Your Name and 'HORS membership renewal' as reference to identify your payment.

### **BOOK FOR SALE?**

We will be having another second-hand book sale at our April 2015 meeting. To make it a success we rely upon the support of our members. If you have any unwanted non-fiction books which you would care to donate and consider would be of interest to members of a local history society, please bring along to any of the forthcoming meetings and give to either David Cliffe or Sidney Gold who will be storing them.

S.G