

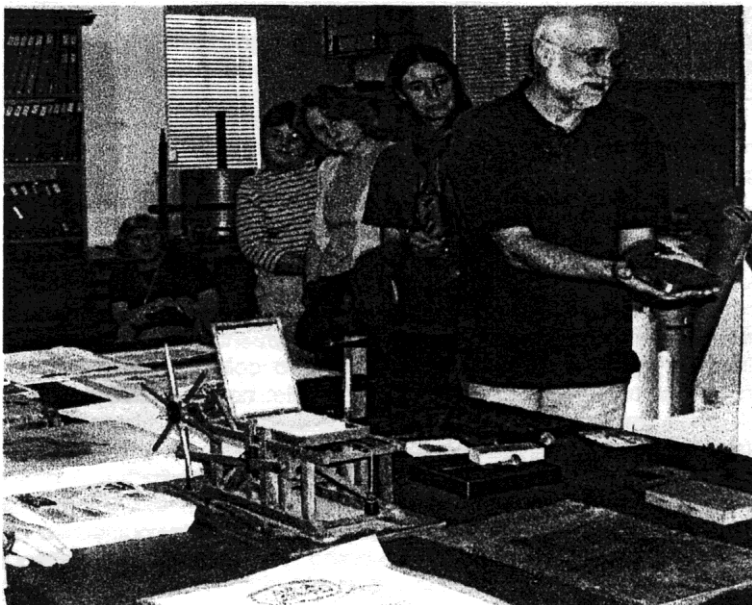
The History of Reading Society



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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During the Society's summer visit to the Department of Typography and Graphic Communication at Reading University, **Martin Andrews** showed members some of the many fascinating exhibits the department uses to illustrate the history of graphic design.

EDITORIAL

Together with this issue of the Newsletter you will find our new programme for 2003/4. As ever, our hard-working Programme Secretary, Eddy Hooper has produced what I hope you will agree is an exciting schedule of meetings. The first meeting of the new "term" also marks an important departure for the Society, as we move to a new night of the week - Wednesday. I know that some members will find this night difficult but then some found Thursdays difficult too! We hope you will continue to support the Society and that we will see you from time to time.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

A further episode from The History of the Sun Inn, Reading

Licensed houses have been associated in one way or another with crime and punishment from the earliest times. At one extreme some have been the favourite haunts of off-duty policemen (from Chief Inspector Morse downwards) and have even been kept by retired officers of the law. At the other they have been dens of iniquity where the plans of greater or lesser crimes have been hatched and nurtured. It was said of one landlord of the Nags Head in London's Belgravia that the entire criminal fraternity was represented at his funeral. The Sun no doubt falls somewhere in between these extremes and certainly has had its share of "incidents" over the years. At least it can be said that to the best of our knowledge no licensee of the Sun suffered the indignity that befell the landlady of the Turk's Head who, in 1915, was arrested on her own licensed premises for drunkenness, incurring a fine of ten shillings with 10s6d costs.

In 1626 Robert Woodd, a sayler, an apprentice to Captayne Tokeleye of London, was examined on 22nd and 28th April in connection with a spending spree in the town's hostelries with money that did not belong to him. His master had sent him to a tailor to collect some money owed to him and instead of returning it to him he had travelled to Reading via Brentford, Hounslow and Maidenhead and put up at the Bell for four nights at a cost of 40 shillings, to which he generously added a further four shillings in tips to the "servantes". Further sums were spent at the Olivant [i.e. Elephant] taverne (30s), the George (10s), the Sun (3s) and the Three Tuns (12d). Whilst the Sun's contribution looks small by comparison it should be borne in mind that the present worth of the currency is about one-sixtieth of what it was in the early 17th century. 3s = 180s = £7.50- the current costs of around three and a half pints of beer! In the words of the record of his first examination:

He...came to this towne Sondaye last. and there lodged at the signe of the Bell. He brought from St. Katherine's with him xxiiij*l* in

money, gold and silver, whereof he spent x, xj or xij*l*. in 3 or 4 dayes, and the rest, viz. xiiij*l*., the Constables had of him. And saith he had this money by this meanes, viz. Captayne Tokely sent this Examine to a taylour's house beyond London stone, with a quittance to recover of that taylour xxiiij*l*. Which he did receive and had of the taylour, and the money being due to this Examine he tooke it and came away with the money intending to goe to Bristoll. Sent to Warde.

From Work in Progress by Ian Hamblin and John Dearing

READING'S FIRST ROYAL CHARTER

This year marks the 750th anniversary of Reading's first royal charter, granted by King Henry III in 1253. This followed a period of tension between the townsmen and the officers of the Abbot, which even spilled over, into violence with men from the abbey being set upon and beaten up. The Abbot brought a case to the king's court where the leaders of the town were summoned to explain "why armed, they repelled the abbot's bailiffs in Reading...and why day and night in the said town they have lain in wait for the abbot's bailiffs and servants." The burgesses countered these charges by claiming that they had rights of self-government going back long before the foundation of the abbey some 130 years earlier. However, they were unable to furnish documentary evidence of these rights, allegedly granted by King Edward the Confessor and the upshot was that the King ordered the Sheriff of Berkshire to see that the abbot's rights were upheld.

That appeared to be the end of the story but - money talks. The King was perennially short of ready money and was apparently swayed by a gift of £100 from the well-heeled leaders of the town with the result that on 5 July a Royal Charter was granted, giving the "burgesses of Reading in the gild merchant there" the right to buy and sell throughout the land without paying any tolls or dues.

The story is told in its context by many Reading historians and most recently in some detail by our late President, Dr Cecil Slade, in "The Town of Reading and its Abbey." In order to commemorate the event, the Berkshire Record Office has mounted a Charter 750 Exhibition at its premises at 9 Coley Avenue in which documents of importance to the town will be on display till 13 September. Unfortunately the 1253 charter no longer survives but that of 1344 will be on display, along with the magnificently illustrated charters of Henry VIII, James I and Charles I, early deeds and account rolls and the 17th Century register of freemen. Also on display will be objects from Reading Museum and civic silver and other items normally kept in the Mayor's Parlour.

Some Future Events

Straying from Reading - in Newbury - the West Berkshire Museum has an exhibition of Tudor Times until the 9 September. Admission is free and the exhibition is open from 10 till 5 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and also on Saturdays closing at 4. The exhibition will illustrate characteristics of Tudor buildings with photographs of fine local examples and children's activities will be featured during the holiday period.

Also next month the heritage season is upon us. In Reading, St Mary's, Castle Street will be featuring an exhibition of copies of the Book of Common Prayer, the traditional Anglican liturgy which has its roots in Thomas Cranmer's 1st prayer Book of 1549. The 250th anniversary of John Wesley's birth is also likely to be commemorated. Doubtless many other local sites of interest will also be on show.

For those who feel they have exhausted Reading and wish to venture west Upton Court has a heritage open day on Saturday 14 September from 10 till 4. This is billed as an "Opportunity to see a fine Elizabethan house which is now an education Centre for schoolchildren and is not normally open to the public." The house dates from 1570-80 according to Pevsner. while other authorities state that it was completed in 1576. Shortly after its completion it came into the hands of Francis Perkins. a noted Recusant and the house is said to include a priest's hole.

We also wish to remind all readers that the Committee would appreciate any help members can give with the catering at our meetings. Even one meeting a year would be welcome - and It will take up at most half-an-hour of your time!

How about a contribution from you to fill this space?

Your Society needs YOU!

(with apologies to the W W 1 recruiting poster)