

THE HISTORY OF READING SOCIETY

NEWS AND INFORMATION

NOVEMBER 1978

Editorial Notes

We fully expect that by the time you receive this newsletter to have enrolled our hundredth member. The expanding membership of the Society and the good attendance at our monthly meetings show very clearly how many people are interested in our town and its long and fascinating history.

A town is a living thing which changes texture and shape according to the prevailing conditions, economic and social, and the needs of its inhabitants. A member of the editorial staff who is looking over my shoulder as I type these notes comments that the latter part of the preceding sentence should read "the needs of those of its inhabitants currently in a position of power." Be that as it may, the process of change is not one that can be arrested. It is however to be hoped that those who have responsibility for the conduct of the town's affairs will be sensitive to all who take an interest in what goes on around them. Unlike some local bodies, the History of Reading Society does not set itself up as a pressure group committed to effecting change or improvement within the Borough. We are however hopeful that by drawing attention to the surviving evidence of earlier times, we can help in preserving those features which are of historical importance from neglect and destruction.

The views of individual members are of the greatest importance. If there are matters upon which you have strong views, why not send them along for publication in this newsletter. Two subjects which spring immediately to mind are the plan, recently approved by the Borough Council, to clear St. Mary's churchyard of its tombstones and memorials with a view to converting the area into a public garden. Will this be an improvement or a mistake? We hear that church chalices dated 1599 and 1618, the property of St. Giles Church, are shortly to be offered for sale by auction. Is this to be applauded or deplored? What are your views?

Future meetings:

CHANGE OF DATE! Please note that the Members Evening will now take place on Wednesday, 10th January, 1979, and not on the 11th as stated in your programme. The venue, the Art Gallery, Blagrove Street, remains unchanged.

Next meeting. Thursday, 14th December at the Museum & Art Gallery. We welcome Dr B. Kemp who will speak to us on Reading Abbey.

One day courses in Local History. Our parent organisation, the Berkshire Local History Association is in course of arranging two one day conferences which will be held at Easthampstead Park Educational Centre. The first of these, on Saturday, 11th February, 1979, embraces 'The nature and use by the local historian of parochial records.' This will be followed on Saturday, 7th April, by 'The tithe map and commutation in the study of local history.'

Details from the Director, Easthampstead Park Educational Centre, Bracknell, Berks or from Trevor Rowley, Local Studies Dept., University of Oxford, Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford.

Your own Committee is also in process of arranging a one day course to take place at Ufton Court on the 23rd June next. Full details will be circulated shortly. We are however able to say that the subject matter will be of interest to students of the history of Reading and the surrounding area. Those of you who are already familiar with Ufton Court will agree that this a place of real historical interest as well as being a most delightful setting for any course.

Visit to Courage's Brewery. Twenty five members visited the brewery on Monday, 6th November. This guided tour of another of Reading's industrial landmarks soon to become redundant was followed by a buffet supper with samples of the beverages seen in course of production. Thank you Messrs Courage for a very special evening.

The tour inspired the following work by Sheila Parish. Who said that historians have no artistic ability?

A BREWERY BALLAD

An alcoholic spirit haunts the steaming drums of malt:
He is restless parched and puzzled as he drifts and then must halt.
As he merges with the vapour, as he searches night by night,
He is moist and yet he mourns his thirsty plight.

As he drifts past creaking coolers and the foaming tanks of yeast,
He wonders where the bottles are (just one would do, at least).
But all he sees is incomplete, a process never ending,
a mass of sugar, malt and hops, its steamy scent ascending.

So he hovers with his ghostly tongue and ghostly nose both quivering.
He's watched the sweating shovellers while he hung in limbo shivering,
And like the Ancient Mariner, he sees a drinkless sea -
A sea of beer unready - and goes home to have his tea.

THANKS: The Committee wishes to thank those members who answered the call for assistance in dispensing coffee and washing up.

HELP! The Berkshire Local History Association is looking for an Hon. Treasurer. The book-keeping is simple and the cash turnover slight. If you would care to assist, please contact Peter Southerton for further details.

HELP! Our Secretary, Joan Dils, who during the Winter months has a full programme of teaching commitments would appreciate the services of an assistant to relieve her of some of the routine secretarial duties of the Society. If any member would care to help her out, she would be profoundly grateful.

HELP!! Can anyone assist with information relating to Elizabeth Taylor (nee Coles), novelist? One of her works, 'The Angel' was set in Reading. Her first literary efforts were published in 'Here Today' in 1944/45. Has anyone a copy of this magazine or knows where one can be obtained?
