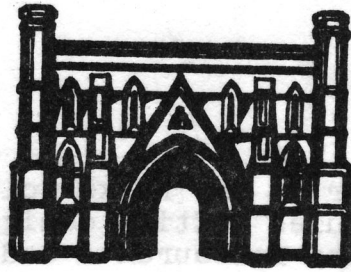


14 Jan 1982 -
Mr Michael THOMAS,
"architecture in Reading"



The History of Reading Society

Meetings Secretary:
Miss Sue READ,
15 South Street,
Caversham.
Tel: 55911 (day)
(Museum)
476018(evg)

Newsletter:
Mrs Jean DEBNEY,
8 Huckleberry Close,
Purley, Reading
Tel: 413223

Treasurer:
Mr David QUARTERMAINE,
4 Stone Street,
W Reading
Tel: 587566

October 1981

Dear Member,

It has fallen to my lot as the member of the Committee responsible for the production of this newsletter, which, it is planned to produce four times each year. We want to expand the contents to include short articles, comments and information about Reading - that is, if you, the members, will write something for us. This is the first of the new-style newsletters and we hope that you will enjoy reading it.

MEET THE COMMITTEE:

Janet CLARK moved to Reading with her architect husband Andrew in 1978, and they joined the History of Reading Society (H.O.R.S.) soon after. Before the arrival of their daughter Susannah, now aged 4, Janet worked in the Local History Library in Oxford. Since she has been in Reading, she has voluntarily indexed the 1851 Census for Reading for the Berkshire Record Office, and this project is now nearing completion. (The index is available for consultation in the BRO Search Room, Shire Hall, Shinfield, Reading). She is also organising the Society's project of indexing the Berkshire Chronicle. A new addition to the family is expected next Spring which will curtail Janet's activities for a while - but we hope not for too long!

Jean DEBNEY is a nurse, and she and her engineer husband Cliff moved to Purley from Middlesex in 1979; they have two teenage sons and an elderly budgie. Jean's interests are in both family and local history, and since joining the HORS 18 months ago she has become very interested in Reading. She has recently started a small local history group in Purley which involves transcribing and studying the documents and finding out about the families who lived there. On the family history side, she has collected as many references as possible to the surname "DEBNEY", as well as researching other branches of the family. Jean is also a member of the Berks Family History Society and runs a bookstall (mostly of Berks local histories and aids to genealogy) for them; Cliff is the chairman.

Clinton & Jo ELLIS were both founder members of the HORS and have served on the Committee for some time. They moved into Berkshire from London 17 years ago, and now live in Caversham with their teenage daughter, Christine, several dogs, cats, horses and "god knows what else" (said Clinton when I asked him.) Both are designers: Clinton works for the Metal Box Co. and also writes history articles for a Caversham community

magazine; Jo is a lecturer at the Berks College of Art and works in different media which includes textile design for Marks & Spencer, & Ladybird, murals for various restaurants and some book illustration. Between them they produce the magnificent posters to advertise our meetings each month.

More profiles of the Committee will be in the next Newsletter.

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We have an Apology to make - We are sorry:

When the last Newsletter was sent out at the beginning of July, a large percentage of Society members had not at that time renewed their subscription for 1981-82, and it was not clear from the list of addresses supplied for mailing who had actually paid up. SO, to simplify matters, EVERYONE received a renewal notice which has led to some confusion and bad feeling - we have refunded those who paid again and apologise to those of you who felt their integrity was threatened; We will endeavour to organise things better next time. We hope that those of you who took the trouble to write, will accept this in acknowledgement and regret.

* * * * *

NEWSPAPER INDEXING - BERKSHIRE CHRONICLE from 1825

Janet CLARK who is organising this project reports that two ladies have now begun to index the Births and Marriages; she would like another volunteer - or two - to do the Obituaries: any offers?

Mr Bert RIVERS has been doing a marvellous job and has now completed 25 years of "music" and Transport: roads, railways and waterways". He writes:

"The indexing of back numbers of the Berkshire Chronicle has proved a fascinating assignment, the chief danger being that of temptation to spend an inordinate amount of time on "side-lines" which keep catching ones eye.

However, one fascinating item appeared under one of my legitimate subjects:- Music. On 1st March 1851, an advertisement appeared for an orchestral concert in the Town Hall to include a steel band, Swiss bells and a rock band. Until then, I had been under the impression that Steel Bands were introduced from the Caribbean during the late 1950s. As, however, a write-up in another column mentioned that the instruments for the steel band had been made specially for them by a firm in Germany, the composition of the band was probably something different from those of our West Indian immigrants."
A.E. RIVERS.

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RECENT MEETINGS

READING's HISTORY through the TREES of the LONDON ROAD AREA:

Fortunately the weather was fine when over 40 members and their friends assembled OUTSIDE the Turks Head in London Road on Thurs 9th July 1981. ... The Landlord kept hoping we were going inside, and passers-by had to step off the pavement to get past us all ... but soon after 7.30 we all set off on a most interesting walk led by Catherine OLVER through London Road to Kendrick Road, the Acacias Car Park and then to Redlands

Road. None of us had any idea at the start of the walk how many and how varied were the trees that could be found in such a small area of the town. Catherine OLVER had lots of interesting facts to tell us and she kept our interest all the time (despite some terrible competition from the London Road traffic!) She showed us a sample of the fossil Ginkgo tree, a strawberry tree and a purple plum, a Manitoba maple and an Italian alder: to name but a few trees from the explanatory list that she gave us. So many of Reading's trees have come from all corners of the world and all had something interesting about them. I now know where to get my bay leaves (without paying if nobody sees me picking them) in Reading! I now keep looking at trees with a greatly increased interest - but nowhere near the knowledge that Catherine OLVER has.

COLEY - Nearly 30 members and visitors assembled in the Abbey Gateway on Thurs 24 Sept 1981 to hear Mr Bill DENTON talk to us about COLEY, which is a suburb of Reading. Mr DENTON, a former schoolmaster, has now retired to live in Reading once more. He was born and spent his early years in the slums of Coley, and is therefore well qualified to talk to us about the terrible conditions which he experienced in his childhood. He kept us all enthralled with the tales of deprivation, the overcrowded and insanitary conditions of the many courts and alleys, which have now mostly disappeared under the Inner Distribution Road: a few houses remain standing starkly against the skyline on the south of Castle Hill.

During the questions after Mr Denton's talk, a very interesting three-sided conversation took place - **reminiscing** about old Reading - between Mr Denton, Mr Padley and Mr Rivers ... with some useful additions from the evening's chairman, David Quartermaine.

Mr Denton also brought with him a collection of photos of Coley and newspaper cuttings, etc. which we all enjoyed looking at.

COFFEE was served at this meeting, which pleased many people; some months ago it was decided not to serve coffee at meetings because it was felt people did not want it (or was it because no one was very keen to go and make it?) However, the Committee did feel that we were missing out on an opportunity for a social chat, and anyway we were usually thirsty by the end of the evening. So it has been decided to reintroduce it, but we would like help in preparing it please:- could we have one or two volunteers at each meeting; this will help the Committee, who don't always want to be the ones who have to miss part of the meeting. Coffee and a biscuit are 10p.

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BERKSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION - Autumn Meeting, 3 Oct 1981

Over 60 men and women from various local history societies in Berkshire attended this meeting which took place, by kind permission of the County Archivist, at the new premises of the Berkshire Record Office, Shire Hall, Shinfield Park, Reading, from 10am to 4.15pm.

In the morning session, we were divided into four groups (according to the colour of our name label) for a guided tour of the Record Office, an introduction to the various types of documents and of the Search Room facilities, plus a peep into some aspects of document preservation.

In the afternoon we all had an opportunity to do some practical research using manuscript sources. The topics offered us ranged from

being reassuringly easy to fiendishly difficult. (They were right about the latter!) We were given a choice of five subjects: from reading old manuscripts, Berkshire in 1881, nonconformity, source analysis for beginners to using old wills and inventories. I chose Nonconformity in Berkshire and found out about several new sources which I didn't know existed and Cliff had fun reading some old wills.

Although the car parking facilities at Shire Hall are excellent, their catering facilities at weekends are abysmal! There is only one coffee machine to serve everyone - and we had to eat our lunch sitting on the (fortunately carpeted) corridor floor! Still, it all added to the friendly informality of the occasion, and no one was heard to complain.

Altogether, it was a most interesting day, and we greatly enjoyed meeting old faces from the local history scene. We hope that next time there will be most representatives from this Society.

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MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS in BERKSHIRE

The BLHA is co-ordinating all recording of monumental inscriptions in the old county of Berks (pre-1974). If you know of anyone who is transcribing a churchyard, or has already done so - please let me know: Jean DERNEY, Reading 413223.

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FUTURE MEETINGS

- October 20th - Mrs Mary TREMBATH on 'Dangborne, a Rural Parish Meeting to be held in READING MUSEUM.
- November 19th - Mr W J WRIGHT, Chairman of the British Victorian Military Society - title to be announced.
- December 17th - "Visitors to Reading" - Members' Evening and Seasonal Entertainment - see attached notice.

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CHAIRMAN: Unfortunately, no-one has come forward to fill this position, so we are continuing in a rather rudderless state - Joan Dils is sort-of holding the reins, but as she is an extremely busy person we cannot expect her to continue in this way. Any offers?

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FOOTNOTE - see page 2 - NEWSPAPER INDEXING is carried out on the FIRST SATURDAY every month, 10am to 1pm in the READING REFERENCE LIBRARY, Blagrove Street (or telephone Janet CLARK, Reading 68316) The index, so far, is available for consultation in the Reference Library.

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Bye for now.

THE COMMITTEE