

Annual Luncheon Party - 2nd March at Pepe Sale



*Photos by
 Chris Widdows*



We held our annual party for the second year at Pepe Sale, Queens Walk. Some 48 members took part, including some new members who joined us for the first time. The feedback from the lunch was good and we plan to go there again next year. Our thanks to Brenda Tait and Clare Platts who organised the event so successfully and also to Brenda's daughter Jill, and Phillipa, who ran the raffle. Also to the *patron*, Tony, and his team who looked after us so well.

Joan Sheppard (1921-2013)



We were very sorry to hear that Joan Sheppard, a member of Reading Civic Society since 1982, and a former committee member, has died after a long illness. Her funeral, a Requiem Mass, was held at Westminster Cathedral followed by a reception at the home of her eldest son Peter, a former Chairman of Reading Civic Society, at The Friary in Westminster. Joan and her husband Ralph moved to Reading from London in 1966 and to Baker Street in 1973. Long-standing members will remember with fondness Joan's energies to involve people in events and her ability to organise parties and food at a moment's notice. Joan's family held a last "Joan Sheppard Baker Street Party" with great élan. If members wish to make a donation in Joan's memory this can be made to the charity "The Passage", which helps homeless people; <http://www.passage.org.uk>

Roger King (1942- 2013)



We regret to announce that Roger King, a member of Reading Civic Society since 2003 and a member of the Committee since 2011, died in May after a short illness. His life was celebrated at his funeral on Wednesday, 15 May. Society members who attended the Luncheon party will recall Roger attending

despite being extremely ill. Roger and Sonia moved to Reading in 1966. He worked in banking in London until he was 60 underaking a number of community activities at the same time. In the last few years he also joined the Watlington House Trustees. He brought a good sense of humour and lots of common sense to our meetings. The Society has made a donation in his memory to the Duchess of Kent House; www.memorygiving.com/rogerking.

Annual Churches Tour - Sunday, 30 September 2012

The inspiration for this tour originated from Lynette Edwell, who is a member of the Society and who lives in Newbury, whilst taking part in last year's tour of Wallingford. With her contacts in Newbury, she carried out a lot of the preparatory work and this made my reconnoitre much easier. We settled on four visits which would give us more time at each location.

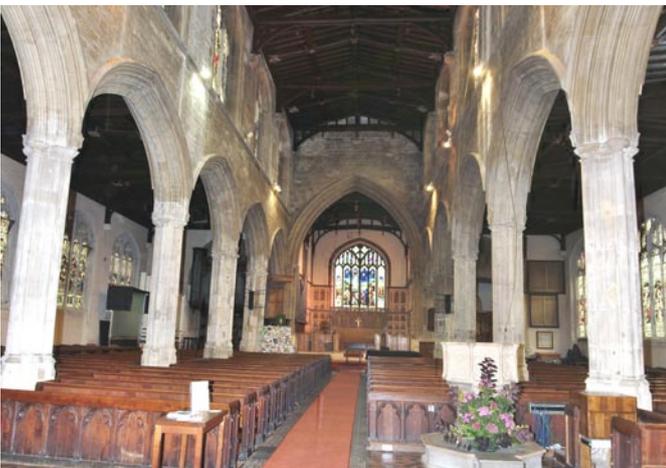
Arriving at Newbury, we left the coach at the Wharf Museum and walked through the market place past the Victorian town hall to come under the two 1770 gateways, the earliest examples of the Gothic revival style in Berkshire.

Our first visit was to **St Nicolas Church**. We were welcomed by Michael Perkins and his friend and they conducted us around the church.



St Nicolas Church

The structure of the church, almost unaltered since it was built in the 16th century, is entirely in the perpendicular style and is ashlar-faced inside and out. It was built between 1509 and 1532.



St Nicolas - Interior

The carved bosses in the nave have the initials of both John Winchcombe (d 1519) and his son John (d 1567) who became known as Jack of Newbury, a wealthy clothier and chief benefactor of the church.

The church was restored and re-battlemented by the architect Henry Woodyer between 1858 and 1866 and he redesigned the chancel. The reredos was carved by Sir Ninian Comper in Caen stone and was dedicated in 1907.

Another point of interest is a cut-out of the Bluecoat schoolboy marking the founding in 1706 of the local Bluecoat School. The tower is perhaps the finest architectural feature containing a ring of ten bells and of continuous history from 1532.

A short coach ride took us to the **Quaker Meeting House** (on Market Street) where we were met by Colin Milsom who is also a member of our Society.

Colin had arranged a mini exhibition for us with some original documents denoting the history of the Quakers in Newbury from 1702 (see image below).



The first meeting house with its burial ground was located on the site of what is now the bus station. The Quakers acquired the present meeting house in 1955 and it was formerly owned by the Brain family who were local coal merchants. It was constructed in the 1920s. There are two meeting rooms with a library. The building is simply furnished with a very pleasant garden. It is also used by other organisations such as those involved with mental health care.

We then visited the parish church of **St George the Martyr at Wash Common**. We were welcomed by the vicar, the Reverend Paul Cowan.

During the First World War, a group of Wash Common people decided to build a church as a memorial to the war dead and also to the six thousand men who died during the first battle of Newbury in 1643. It would replace the small St Luke's Mission Church built in 1876.

The church was designed by F C Eden, a pupil of Bodley's, in the renaissance Italian style and with a white pantile roof. There are round and square windows in brick frames. Construction began in 1933 and it was built from east to west. Funds subsequently ran out but in 1963 building resumed westward when a cloister range together with a campanile (without bells) were added. The interior is very light and the principal focus at the east end is a baldacchino. There are plenty of Latin inscriptions and verses from the Bible. The atmosphere was one of a church that you might find in Tuscany.



St George the Martyr - Interior

The area where the first stage of building stopped could be seen by severe cracking of the plasterwork with damp and Revd Cowan explained that the inefficient, and increasingly unreliable, heating system had let this wonderful venue down for many other activities, hence a project was launched to refurbish the system in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way and to encourage local groups to use the building more. In 2010, 129 solar panels were installed on the south side and the work was completed just in time to qualify for a Government grant. They installed more efficient underfloor heating and insulated the roof, the benefits being to heat the whole complex including the hall using only 40% of the electricity generated and they are able to sell the remaining 60%. It is the first carbon-neutral church in the UK and includes ground-source heating for which they received a grant of £40,000.00 at the end of February 2012.

The last church on the tour was **St John's Church in Newtown Road**. We were conducted round by Geoff Lobb.

The original church was built in the Gothic style by Butterfield in 1860. It was completely destroyed by German bombing on 10th February 1943, the only church in the Oxford Diocese to be destroyed during the Second World War. A Nissan hut-style church replaced it on the same site and a wholly new church, designed by Stephen Dykes Bower, was built subsequently. £54,000.00 was received as war damage compensation.

The church has a long high nave with nine bays and narrow passage aisles. There are three storeys but no gallery. The elevations evoke Ravenna in Italy, Trier in Germany or Anglo-Saxon Brixworth, Northants, rather than anything Gothic. The inside is quasi-Romanesque with lofty wall-shafts and ceiling of strongly-patterned boards.

Photographs by Chris Widdows



The builders were Musselwhite & Weston of Basingstoke and the foreman was an expert "brickie". The bricks are not normal standard but of a smaller height and width. As time went by, many design faults became apparent. The bricks were porous and water seeped into the inside. The roof tiles were inferior and the rainwater-heads and guttering were too small. The parishioners had to raise £38,000.00 to correct these faults and the brickwork is a students' paradise with many a class visiting the church.



The style of worship is high church with a whiff of incense together with a lasting memory of interior loftiness.

We were entertained to a magnificent tea by the ladies of the church and our coach driver Paul joined us.

I made a donation to St John's parish and the rest of the money not expended I donated to the Royal Berkshire Churches Trust.

There was enough interest for me to organise another tour for 2013 which is planned for 29 September to visit Maidenhead.

Again, I would like to thank Lynette Edwell for all of the hard work that she put in to lay the foundations for the tour and also Colin Milsom for generously giving us his time at the Quaker Meeting House.

Rodney J Oliver

Our thanks to Rodney and Lynette for organising such an interesting Church tour. We look forward to 2013.

Forthcoming events

AGM -16th March The Garden Hall, Watlington House

This was the first meeting we had held at Watlington House. Roger King arranged this event for us even though he was not well enough to join us. We plan to use Watlington House again next year as the facilities and parking are good.

The formal business of the meeting included the Chairman's report and election of the committee, which is shown below. We agreed to seek a replacement for our auditor Zoe Hancock, who has undertaken the role for 9 years and who wished to "retire".

The Chairman explained to members that we do need more volunteers to join the committee to help with the website, other communications and activities. A flyer is enclosed asking for volunteers. The committee work is not onerous but does give you a wider understanding of planning and other issues around town.

After the formal business Brigadiers Michael Aris and Neville White gave their presentation about Stratfield Saye. They showed a large number of images at a cracking pace with clear and interesting explanations. This was a "sampler" for the RCS tour of Stratfield Saye which they will lead on 3rd September.

Presentation of the "Good Place" Award at Reading University June 2013

Details are enclosed. If you would like to join us at the university to meet the successful student, listen to their presentation and meet them, and their lecturers, informally afterwards please complete the booking form enclosed.

Visit to The Royal Hospital Chelsea Thursday, 25 July 2013

This will be a visit to London by coach, with a guided tour of The Royal Hospital by one of the Chelsea Pensioners themselves. Further details and a booking form are enclosed.

Visit to Stratfield Saye House Tuesday, 3 September 2013

Brigadiers Aris and White will guide our tours of Stratfield Saye. Further details and a booking form are enclosed.

Annual Churches Tour

Sunday, 29 September 2013

Rodney will lead us on a tour of churches around Maidenhead. Further details and a booking form for his ever popular tour are enclosed.

NEW MEMBERS

Dr A Price, Ms S McArdle, Mr & Mrs G Price

Contributions to the Newsletter

Please send contributions to the newsletter and Letters to the Editor to Adam Sowan, contact details below.

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