



READING CIVIC SOCIETY

Update to Members by email 6 Oct 2020
This edition covers;

1. Planning (Drews, 39 Brunswick Hill)
2. Reading Gaol
3. Slides from family of Jean Rose
4. High Sheriff Service for the start of the Judicial Year

1. Planning -

Former Drew building, Caversham Road

The proposal for the former site of **Drews Ironmongers / DIY store on Caversham Road** will be heard at the PAC this evening. The CAAC and the Bell Tower Association and CADRA have objected to the proposal which, if approved, will result in the demolition of the existing building which was added to the local list in Feb 2020. It will be replaced by a somewhat uninspiring (though of course this depends on your view of good design) new build some 5-7 storeys high.

Some member took the opportunity to sign the online petition which gained 1,140 signatures. One of the issues the council has to balance is the provision of new housing, including affordable, against the negatives, including loss of heritage. A big issue is the precedence which approval would set for the height of future developments along the west side of Caversham Road (the modern run of retail – the gym and the music hop) all the way to the site which was the home of Carters.

39 Brunswick Hill.

39 Brunswick Hill is an Edwardian Villa. In the last 4 years there have been 3 applications for this site. The site has been subject to 8 applications over the last 31 years, all but the latest one have involved total demolition. RCS has consistently objected to the proposals for this building.

Two recent proposals involved total demolition and new build to provide flats. The council rejected these applications, decisions which were backed

up by planning inspectors who turned down the owner/ agent's appeal.



The latest application, in 2019, proposed retention of the building with a small addition to the side and an extension at the back larger than the existing building. The internal elements of the building would have been lost. This application was again refused by RBC, it was announced at the start of October that a planning inspector has again refused an appeal.

Whilst the council's Heritage Consultant took the view that the building did not justify being added to the Local List of Heritage Buildings three Planning Inspectors have now taken the view that it has "more than sufficient architectural significance to warrant its treatment as a non-designated heritage asset."

The PI's conclusion this time was **"... the proposal would be materially harmful to the character and appearance of the host building and the wider area. It would conflict with RBLP Policies CC7 and EN1 insofar as these seek high quality design which protects the historic environment."**

The house itself is not so massive in scale that it cannot be, as it has been for many years, a family house. The owner has maintained it well – which makes the proposals all the more puzzling.

The Reading Chronicle article is

<https://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/18766469.development-plans-readings-fine-edwardian-house-refused-sixth-time-three-years>

2. Reading Gaol future

Whilst we became aware back in March that RBC's bid for Reading Gaol had not been successful we still do not know who has been successful. They are probably recalibrating their interest, and their bid, in the light of the CV 19 nightmare. Bearing in mind the financial impact which has followed CV19 I should think RBC are very relieved their bid did not succeed.

Matt Rodda MP however continues his campaign to secure a component of any future development for cultural and heritage purposes. RBC's Planning Brief which was part of the sale documents made it pretty clear this was expected / required when a planning application is submitted. Matt has recently gaining the support of Julian Knight MP, Chair of the Commons Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee, who has lobbied the MoS for the MOJ, Lucy Frazer MP. The letter may be seen

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/836453313036092/permalink/4251708768177179>

3. Other events - Photo archive

We have recently been given some 150 photo slides by Jenny Thomas, the daughter of the late Jean Rose who joined RCS in February 1960. Jean's husband, Grahame, was a keen photographer. He took images of Central Reading as it was changing in the late 1950s, 60s and early 1970s. We also had some slides donated by John Pindar which show the town in the 1970s and also parts of the university.

We decided to hold a traditional slide show (I am sure you remember your relatives holiday slides/films shows after Morecambe and Wise at Christmas) for members of the committee and some friends (including David Cliffe who formerly managed the Local Studies Library) in the Garden Hall of Watlington House. As there were 14 people in all we ran the 90 minute presentation 4 times.

The aim was to gain an understanding of how unusual some of the images are. David Cliffe, who knows the photo archive of

Reading Library very well, commented that there were images of several buildings which he had not seen previously and also some are only held on the Library service website in Black and White.

We have decided to convert the best images to digital format. These, and ultimately the original slides, will be offered to the library. It may be years before they are loaded onto the RBC website. It was felt that when (if) we are able to host events again members of RCS, and also other groups, will be interested to see the slides shown alongside images of the site as it is today. So here is hoping for AGM in 2021.

Sadly some of the images around the Market Place, and also 22 The Forbury, from the early 1960s were missing as they had been given to Godwin Arnold.

Grahame worked closely with Godwin reviewing buildings for potential listing in the 1960s. I wonder what happened to them? I am sure Godwin would also have had a significant photo archive. Any ideas do please let me know.

To see some of the images please click [HERE](#) The painting of St Mary's Vicarage is dated 1927, our thanks to Sean Duggan for this.

4. High Sheriff of Berkshire's service to mark the start of the Judicial Year

Over the last couple of years I have been able to offer members the opportunity to attend this event held in Reading Minster. Usually some 4-500 people attend the event.

Inevitably this year the plans were changed by CV19 restrictions. At an early stage in planning the event the decision was taken to hold the service in the Chapter House of Reading Abbey ruins. This would be the first time in over 480 years that such a service has taken place in Reading Abbey.

On a very wet Friday, 2nd October, the High Sheriff, Mary Riall, held a socially-distanced event for less than 30 people. The procession of three judges, along with the High Sheriff and the choir of four, wound their way from the Crown Court, through

Forbury Gardens to the Chapter House, with umbrellas raised.

Their arrival in the Chapter House was heralded by a two minute trumpet fanfare. Four members of the Reading Gospel Community Choir provided the songs (no one else was allowed to sing).

The speakers were Ameer Mujahideen and his son Yunis, refugees from Sri Lanka in 2012.

The sermon was given by the Bishop of Reading and the prayers by The Chaplain to the High Sheriff and Dr Ashol Khare, Chair of the Reading Hindu Centre.

The High Sheriff commissioned a video record of the event which may be reached below.

When you watch you will see that Ameer becomes very emotional about his journey.

His son starts and says at 8.38 minutes “... ***I want to be a golfer when I grow up.....***” then his father says at 10:40 minutes that “... ***I was expecting a doctor but I am happy with a golfer....***”.

