

READING CIVIC SOCIETY

AGM - 16 April 2024

Chairman's Report – to 31 December 2023

People

Sidney Gold

Sidney Gold's funeral was well attended. We managed to get a tribute in the Henley Advertiser

Minutes Secretary Last year we were delighted to welcome Linda Fothergill who undertook this role for a while. Unfortunately, she experienced ill health during the summer and had to withdraw.

Newsletter Editor. Our last Newsletter was published in 2019, we simply did not have the resource to publish. I am pleased to report that Jo Alexander Jones, who also works to produce the newsletter for Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group & the Berkshire Local History Association, has agreed to assist us with producing a newsletter again. 1st version is in development.

A. Events during the year:

Our Events and engagements

- **REDA's new Reading Walks Festival 10-14 May** We ran a joint walk with Terry's Reading Walkabouts of
 - St-Peters/Caversham CA Walk 10 & 13 May.
 - Terry's 7 Bridges Walk 11 & 14 May.

Both walks attracted numbers in the 20's & generated donations for Terry's Charities.

- **18 May Bucklebury Visit** At the last AGM Clare Platts persuaded the then High Sheriff, Willie Hartley Russell MVO DL, to invite us to his gardens at Bucklebury House. We were restricted to 30 people, it attracted some 28 members and friends. We were surprised have a tour of some parts of the house and to be offered a light lunch in the kitchen of the now lost house. We made a donation of £555 to Willie's supported Charity, The Newbury Soup Kitchen.



- **Thames Valley First 5th June**

RB was invited by now member, Bill Gornall-King, to give a talk to 20 of Reading's Business leaders titled "**What is going on in Reading**".

• **Water Fest 10 June 2022**

We exhibited for the 2nd year. Our stand displayed information about our Look Draw Build project for Primary Schools, including the 3 "top" models produced by schools and one by the trainees at the Ways and Means Trust (who assist the project). We displayed info about RCS and Planning Proposals. My thanks to Terry, Steve and Amanda for assisting with the stand. Also to Gemma Solanellas was also over from Barcelona, it was so hot she was the only one able to stand the heat. The project was a finalist in the Thornton Educational Trust Awards 2023 but did not win!

We have been awarded grants for LDB@Reading Station 2024; £3.6K National Lottery, £3.6K Royal Academy of Engineering. Haslams are Gold Sponsors for the 3rd year £1.5K



◦ **Newbury Civic Society 50th Anniversary 10 June.**

RB attended, on behalf of the Lord-Lieutenant the event in Shaw House to celebrate their anniversary. I was able to ask about their Blue Plaque Scheme.



- **White Waltham Airfield 22nd June.** 19 members attended a talk by the Deputy Manager of the Airfield about the history of the airfield, followed by a tour and lunch. A few then followed Michael Penfold to Shottesbrook Parish Church.

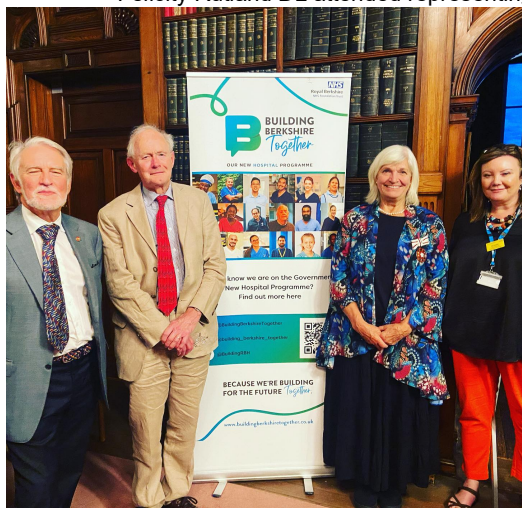


- **Georgian Reading 14 July.** Member John Missenden gave his talk about Georgian Reading to the Woodley 55+ group.
- **14 July Visit to CAMPUS Offices.** Lynette Edwell organised what could only be a small group (9 members) to visit the Campus offices by the Basingstoke Rd/ M4 Junction. Really interesting. Great idea Lynette.



- **Heritage Open Days** We organised some new events:
 - **9 September The Hospitium.** Terry Dixon persuaded the Co-Op Nursery, which uses the Hospitium building, to allow a "one off visit" by 12 members. This was held at the end of a morning viewing by parents, with some of their kids. Matthew Williams from Reading Museum joined us for his first ever visit there. It was difficult to take images in the circumstances. BRAVO Terry for arranging the event.
 - **10 & 13 September St Peters/Caversham CA walk** was re-run. Mid 20s for each.
 - **14 September Royal Berkshire Hospital** 47 People attended a talk about the RBH its History & Today. Member Ian Kemp suggested we approach the RBH to see if it would be possible to hold event in the in the **Old Pathology Library**. **What a great idea.** Talks were given by; Richard Havelock (History) and Lynn Bushell (Potential Future). This was followed by a visit to the Edward VII Ward. The event drew in people who were new to us, including some former nurses who had started in the 1970s.

Felicity Rutland DL attended representing the Lord-Lieutenant of Berkshire.



- **15 September Glorious Revolution 1688.** 65 people attended Mike Cooper's presentation in the garden hall of Watlington House.



- **The new gardens of Hillside House**, Allcroft Road were opened for the first time by Lloyd Turner. Over 4 tours 86 people attended (capacity 88). Lloyd and his garden designer, Gaila Adair, gave an explanation about the story of the design of the garden and the plants included. The garden commemorates the 4 Sutton Boys who gave their lives in WWI. Much demand for a repeat in 2024.



- **8 October Churches Tour. The first since 2019.**

Lynette Edwell organised a visit to, St Mary the Virgin Laverstock, St Mary's Overton and St Nicholas, Freefolk. 21 people took part. A Camp Hobson afternoon tea was squeezed in. One of the joys, as noted by Chris Widdows' photo was the River Test on a warm day

Thank you Lynette





11 October Minster Churchyard – Jubilee / Harrinson Cross restoration

RB was invited to attend the rededication of the Harrinson Cross in the and to give a reading. The name used by Historic England on their Listing Website "The Jubilee Cross" will be changed.



14 October Gentlemen Danes Walk.

This was hosted by member John Nixon, with an invited party of 20. It started in the Mayor's Parlour, Cllr Page joined the walk. John's tour started with the Braag memorial on Reading Minster and included the gravestone he had recently discovered in St Laurence's Churchyard to one of the Gentlemen Danes, Marcus Brant. John will run the walk on 18 May as part of the 2024 WalksFest. [Reading Walks Festival | What's On Reading \(whatsonreading.com\)](https://www.whatsonreading.com/)



20 October "What's going in in Reading?" RB gave a talk to 50 members of the Woodley +55 Club . The fee of £80 was put to the RCS Blue Plaque fund.

November Reading Civic Society Committee member Terry Dixon received the Cultural Contribution Award at the [Pride of Reading Awards](#) for his Terry's Reading Walkabouts.



4 November Smith's Coaches of Reading

Some 26 people attended the illustrated talk by Historian Paul Lacey in the garden Hall of Watlington House



18 November Annual Luncheon at the Narrowboat

Some 37 people attended this year. Many thanks to Clare Platts, Penny Kemp and Terry Dixon for the restaurant research and for organising the event, to Chris Widdows for his quiz, and photos below..



I wonder what this “knuckles on the table” was about!



They are still at it!



B. Other

Richard Stainthorp takes part in the **Station Hill Advisory Group** which has been examining the proposed Art Work for Station Hill

Blue Plaque Scheme.

Further work has been undertaken by Terry Dixon, Katrina Parker and Dr Margaret Simonds to develop a scheme to consult with RBC.

RBC has offered to fund, upto £3K, developing the RBC website to hold information about existing and future plaques. The work will be mainly complete by end March 2024, enabling us to charge £1.7K- £2K. There may be £3-500 to be borne by RCS in 2024.

To date £940 has been raised for the project via talks etc.

C. Social Media

Reading Civic Society Website www.ReadingCivicSociety.org.uk

Last year we reduced the number of domains we pay for. This year we have moved to a new website host Headwall Hosting, which costs us £132 per year, saving £84 pa. Domain costs additional £14.

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/ReadingCivicSocietyd> &

Twitter [www.ReadingCivicSociety@readingCivicSoc](https://twitter.com/ReadingCivicSoc)

Instagram www.instagram.com/readingcivicsociety

Posts to the Instagram page gain wider interest. Very few RCS members seem to view.

D. Newsletter.

In place of newsletters we have issued email updates. During 2024 we issued 11 email updates (copied to those not on email) (15 in 2022+2023, 17 in 2021). Newsletters when produced are sent to 3 Ward Councillors, MPs, Civic Voice and others.

E. Civic Voice Membership The National Charity for the Civic Movement

Following Civic Voice's financial problem in 2021 we made an advance payment on subscriptions of £300. We did not therefore pay in 2022 or 2023. The subs for 2024 are £195.

F. Membership of Reading Groups

We joined Connect Reading (£25 per year) during 2022, & the First Friday Club. We will renew Connect again for 2024 to see if we can use it more fully. We will review at the end of the year. First Friday does not charge.

G. Planning

RBC lost its Conservation and Urban Design Officer, Bruce Edgar, earlier in the year. By the Autumn a new Conservation Officer, Biju (Burcu) Can-Cetin had taken up her post. She has experience of working in role in a London Borough. So far our experience of working with her is positive.

We continued to review Reading Borough Council's planning applications. Lack of a dedicated Planning Officer means we have to target Civic Society comments on areas of specific engagement. We have increasingly worked with the Conservation Area Advisory Committee to comment on applications.

Where possible we engage early with developers as this assists our understanding of the constraints of a site and developer's plans. It is an opportunity to influence.

H. Future events

- Visit to Station Hill 11 April am. Booking form on the way Cost will be £7 per head.
- Waterfest 8 June – Look Draw Build (with event in Halams 5/6 June)
- Donnington Castle and Donnington Castle Monday 10 June am. Booking form circulated. Cost £20 per head.
- Walks; Katesgrove Walkabout 10 May Victoria Park 14 May
- Under development; Shinfield Studios, Waltham Place Gardens
- HODs events; Gardens at Hillside House & others.

Membership Report *Note previous year in brackets*

Subscriptions for 2023 total £1,190 (2022 £1,110, 2021£1,350 £1,305 2020, £1,620 2019, £1,483 2018).

As at March 2024 there are 176 members (2023 185, 2022 175) (3 honorary life members – last year 6). We have a number of Pink Elephant membership chasers to issue. Sub for this year total £920.

Since the 2023 AGM we have had 10 new members, making 34 since 2020. However we have had several “departures”.

10 members do not have online access and receive notification of the AGM and the relevant documents by post. They receive hard copies of email updates which are now used in place of printed newsletters.

Richard Bennett

Chairman 10 March 2024

Terry Dixon's Report

Committee member Terry Dixon report on the guided walks & talks undertaken as Terry's Reading Walkabouts during 2023-24.

He runs it as a not-for-profit enterprise with proceeds donated to local charities: He says 2023/24 FY has been an amazingly good year, well beyond expectations,

Total raised (as of 1/3/24) (less £154 expenses) = £5855, allocating as to for - Home-Start Reading = £2600 & RUCC = £2600 & RMRNC = £480 & Tilehurst for Ukraine = £175.

His Book sales have raised a further £55 for Berkshire Women's Aid

Terry states he is very grateful for the continued support of Reading Civic Society and its members, particularly the collaboration with Richard Bennett over Reading Walking Festival & Heritage Open Days walks.

We are looking forward to two New Walkabouts 'Victoria Park' & 'Katesgrove' for the new Reading Walking Festival (10 & 14/5/24) and in HoDs in September 2024.

9 of Reading's 15 Conservation areas are now covered by Walkabouts. Most because of, excellent collaborations with Richard & RCS.

Finally, my new 2024-2025 charities are 'MND Association Reading & West Berkshire' and 'ABC to read' from April 6th 2024 for that FY.