

READING CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Registered Charity no. 263959

Website: Readingcivicsociety.org.uk

Heritage Open Days - September 2018



Above, participants on the conservation area walk on Thursday, 6 September, led by Terry Dixon with backup from Richard Bennett and Katrina Parker, and, *right*, the group for the Saturday, 15 September tour, led by Richard Bennett with backup from Katrina Parker. They gathered at The Oasis in Baker Street, a once redundant pub now repurposed as a community hub owned by Carey Baptist Church.



The Civic Society's 90-minute walks around the Russell St/Castle Hill Conservation Area covered a large part of it, but kept to the north side of Castle Hill. It was thought to be useful to point out the areas which are causing problems, and which subsequently caused Historic England to designate the CA as 'At Risk', while also seeing the parts which remain unspoilt. The CA illustrates the Georgian and Victorian development of the town to the west.

HODS seems to have been very well supported in 2018, with the inclusion of the second weekend.

At Watlington House they saw a footfall of over 300 on the day that they were open. The exhibition by the Mills Archive, 'Women in Milling', was very appropriate to the year's theme of Extraordinary Women.

2019 sees ten consecutive days of openings and events from 13 to 22 September. This will allow those who can participate mid-week to do so and avoid busy weekends. I should think that regular 'openers' will mainly stick to their usual times but it might encourage others.

ABB

PLANNING UPDATE

Our map opposite identifies developments in the heart of Reading which will, if completed as planned, add over 5,500 new homes.

1 Thames Quarter, the BMW site by the station, 12 and 23 storeys, 315 apartments. Planning permission gained by Lochailort and then sold on. Started Autumn 2018.

2 Foundry Quarter, Weldale Street, 429 apartments in four blocks. Planning permission gained by Ropemaker and then sold on.

3 Verto, King's Road, on the old King's Point site, up to 17 storeys, 103 residential units. Work is just being completed.

4 Bristol and West Arcade, Friar Street and Coopers Arms, Market Place, 43 apartments + offices and retail. Planning permission has recently been gained.

5 Reading Gaol. Ripe for redevelopment and re-use in one form or another but still in the ownership of the Ministry of Justice and GII listed.

6 Homebase/Toys R Us site, Kenavon Drive. L&Q gained planning permission and are now working with Berkeley Homes to provide 750 homes in three blocks and a 19-storey tower beside the Kennet. Demolition has started.

7 Reading Metropolitan, the old GPO site, Caversham Road, 658 new homes + offices, health centre and retail. First public consultation was held in 2018, with a submission due in 2019.

8 SSE Site, Vastern Road, 260 apartments and 10 mews houses. Following consultations this is still changing. There will be a way through the site from Christchurch Bridge for pedestrians and cyclists.

9 No. 1 Reading, 29-25 Station Road, the fourth scheme recently proposed for this site, a 23-storey block containing bar, restaurant, hotel and offices.

10 Station Hill. Since the sale to an American company there have been no detailed submissions for this site but – watch this space.

11 Royal Heights/Clarendon House, Queens Road, a mix of converted former offices (permitted development), 49 mini apartments, work underway, and an additional 9-storey new build, 40 apartments, planning permission gained.

12 Broad Street Mall, expansion of their site including 3 tower blocks (5 to 22 storeys) to rise above the existing car park facing Dusseldorf Way, providing 493 units. After consultations the full planning application has just been submitted.

13 Hosier Street Area, including the site of the old Civic Offices and possibly the police station if vacated, will provide new residential accommodation (no definite numbers yet) including a tower block. Consultation meetings have revealed a lack of public support for the current proposals.

14 Forbury Retail Park, Forbury Road, has been zoned for residential development.

15 TGI Friday and other retail site, Vastern Road, has been zoned for residential development.

16 Jackson's Corner, Kings Road, conversion and new build, 33 units. Permitted and work underway.

17 Former Telecom House, Friar Street. Approval given for demolition of Telecom House and Friars Walk, prior to the construction of residential units. Numbers not known.

18 Gas Holder Site, Kenavon Drive, 129 new homes (1, 2 and 3 bed). A consultation has been held.

19 1 & 2 New Century Place, East Street, change of use from offices to housing (permitted development), providing 135 studio apartments. Approved.

Just outside the area illustrated there are also recently approved applications for the old **Cox and Wyman Printworks** site, Cardiff Road for 96 dwellings and the remaining part of the **Battle Hospital** site, Portman Road which will provide 215 dwellings.

RB

2020 FEB
HONG KONG

CONSULTING

Approved

WORK STARTED



PLANNING UPDATE

Premier Inn, Hosier Street (182054)

After the very troubled Eva's Nightclub was finally closed down, as part of the updating of Broad Street Mall, Premier Inn have submitted an application to demolish the existing structures to make way for a part 7-, part 8-storey 101-bed hotel. Given that this is a Premier Inn, not known for their architectural flair, they appear to be trying to make an effort with the brickwork, but this can't disguise the block-like design of the building.

MRT – Thames Valley Business Park–Napier Road (181843)

Following many objections, and rejection by Wokingham BC, this scheme has now been withdrawn. An alternative way to tackle congestion is being sought.

Former Reading Family Centre, North Street (181652)

The approval of the application for housing on the large Weldale Street site has attracted interest to this area. Lochailort have submitted this outline application for a 2.5-, 3.5- and 4.5-storey building comprising 47 apartments, a mix of 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom units. This proposal will include 30% affordable housing.

An identical application (181653) has also been made which is for 100% affordable housing.

Grovelands Baptist Church (181555)

The latest application to demolish this attractive and unusual building, and to replace it with flats and reduced community use, was refused at the last Planning Applications meeting on 6 March. The building was added to the Local List at the initiative of the Civic Society, and the CAAC, and we wrote to the planning officer and members of the PAC immediately before the meeting to re-iterate our strong objections to demolition. Many other objections to these proposals came from members of the local community. What next??

Eaton Court, 106-112 Oxford Road (182098)

This application concerned the modern office block which is partly occupied by the Department for Work and Pensions. The proposal was to change the use of the offices to housing (permitted development) to provide 59 dwellings: 31 studios and 28 1-bed units, while the DWP retained their offices and the multi-storey car park would remain. The application was withdrawn, possibly because there is potential for contaminated land (site of an historic warehouse) and an asbestos management plan was required for the existing building – it is of that era. **ABB**

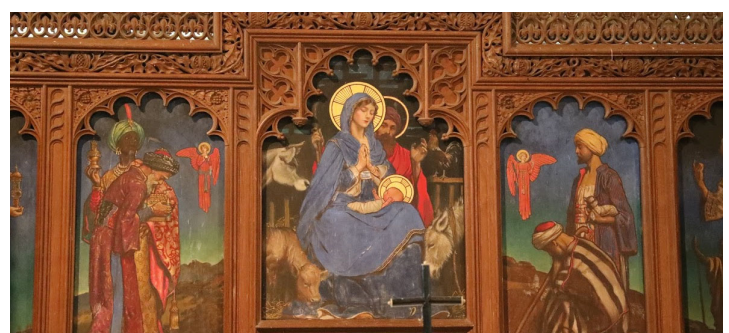
Churches



The Churches Tour was devised and organised by Lynette Edwell and Dr David Peacock, the historian and Chair of Newbury Civic Society. We began at **St Mary's Church, Great Shefford**, in the Lambourn Valley. An aisleless church in flint with stone quoins, with a round west tower and a south porch. The round tower is one of two in Berkshire, this one with a later octagonal third stage. Stonework for Norman windows is still visible in the east end of the church.



The stone font is Norman, with a plain lip and four bands of carved decoration. The east window of 1887 is by Lavers, Barraud & Westlake with paintings of the Annunciation to either side by Nathaniel Westlake, 1883. A striking lancet window in the chancel to Lois Victoria Randall Davidson, 1945, is by Rachael de Montmorency. The painted wooden reredos of 1912 is by Byam Shaw (*below*).



Tour – 30 September 2018

The church was restored in 1870, with John West Hugall as the architect, and work carried out by Thomas Wooldridge of Hungerford. In the churchyard is the base and shaft of a C15 cross found in 1870, with a C19 cross on top.

Next came **St Mary's, Aldworth**, a mainly C14 church with an earlier tower, a broad south aisle and a C19 porch.



The east window is a memorial to the 11 men from Aldworth who died in WWI. It is by John Bewsey, in a C15 style. The pulpit is dated 1639, i.e. pre-Civil War, and was brought from St Laurence's Church, Reading in 1741.

The Aldworth Giants are monuments to members of the De la Beche family, "one of the richest collections of C14 effigies in the country" (Pevsner). The ruins of their castle were still visible in the C17. In 1644 the monuments were described by visiting Royalists as already damaged. Below is the effigy said to be of Sir Nicholas de la Beche, the most prominent of the family: influential in the reign of Edward III; steward of Gascony; guardian of Edward III's son, the Black Prince; and summoned to Parliament in the 1340s.



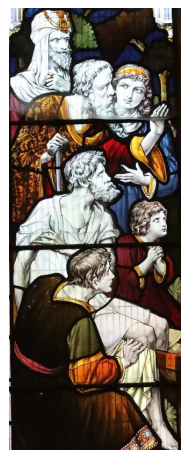
The effigy against the north wall could be Sir Philip de la Beche, who died between 1335 and 1338. His legs are crossed and he is portrayed in very elaborately embossed armour, and wearing a helmet with the face guard thrown back, *above right*.



Our last stop was at **St Mary's, Bucklebury**, originally Norman with thick flint and rubble walls and a Perpendicular tower with a carving of a man and a wheel. Bucklebury was the property of Reading Abbey before it was acquired by the Winchcombe family in 1540.



The interior retains its box pews and gallery. The east window features an unusual crucifixion by Frank Brangwyn, 1912, and there are further Brangwyn windows in the sanctuary. There are many monuments to the Winchcombe family, and to the Packers and Hartleys, and an Eric Gill carving (1928) in the north aisle.



Many thanks to **Lynette Edwell** and **David Peacock** for arranging this tour (and the cream tea at Camp's) and to **Chris Widdows** for the photographs.

ABB

Another award for Thames Lido

Following the “Highly Commended” award to Thames Lido from Civic Voice, we proposed the Lido for the Historic England Angel Awards in association with the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation, in the category “Best rescue of an historic building or place (under £5m)” for its restoration and re-use. While the Lido did not make the cut for the final shortlist, the judges were sufficiently impressed by what has been achieved to award a Certificate of Commendation. Arne Ringner has told us that he is having the certificate framed and that it will be on show at the time of our AGM.

These awards recognise volunteers and professionals, individuals and groups who have rescued an historic building. This category includes locally and nationally listed buildings, but the age or type of building does not matter. The winner was the Florence Institute, Liverpool, a Victorian Grade II venue and the oldest surviving purpose-built boys’ club in Britain. For a century from 1889 it provided safe recreation to boys from poor communities in south Liverpool and it was the same communities that led the long struggle to not only restore the building to splendour but bring it back to life for local people. **ABB**

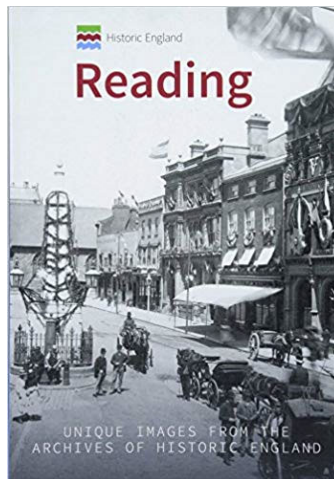
Ghost signs in Reading



A ghost sign is an old hand-painted advertising sign that has been preserved on a building even though the company or product is long gone. Chris Widdows photographed the one above just off West Street. There are a number of these signs along Oxford Road and in that area.

One of our members, Terry Dixon, is looking for examples which can be recorded before they disappear. If you know of any ghost signs please let us know where they are by contacting Richard Bennett (contact details on back page) so that we can collate them. **ABB**

NEW PUBLICATION



**Historic England:
Reading**

by Marion Field

**Amberley Publishing,
2018**

p/b, 96pp, rrp £14.99

This selection from HE’s archive includes many familiar scenes, some less so, some duplicated, some undated. The captions, text and copy editing, alas, are very disappointing, with many errors: Belgrave for Blagrove; Woodger for Woodyer; the Abbey was not founded in 1129, nor was Reading School on its present site in 1486; Simonds’ first brewery was not on Bridge Street. And so on. **AS**

Bar reborn

The Three Bs Rathskeller under the Town Hall is to reopen soon. For a while signs in the windows suggested that it was to become the Lains café, which was possibly a very obscure nod to Thomas Lainson, the Brighton architect who designed the middle bit of the complex. The name has now emerged as the Pantry, a commendable reference to the ill-fated People’s Pantry across the square. The big tin advertises for the town’s most famous products that used to adorn the walls have no doubt been lost.

Bar in a coma

Down the hill, the Lower Ship (or sometimes the Horse and Barge) used to have a bar in the form of a boat and a strip map of the canal, but we understand that the interior has been stripped out. The pub has stood empty for 30 or more years, despite being a smashing building in a plum spot. The culprit is Sam Smiths, the Tadcaster brewer. Our local CAMRA branch has given them a special award for needlessly keeping their excellent ales from us for so long. Apparently ‘they would like to reopen it, but it’s not a priority’. **AS**

Heard on “Grand Designs”:

Q How many Conservation Officers does it take to change a lightbulb?

A What do you mean, “change”?

Oops – where did *they* go? *We have recently informed Historic England that their record of listed buildings in Reading is rather out of date and have told them about three buildings which have been demolished and need to be taken off the list – ‘not extant’, as they put it.*

If you know of others which still appear on the list, please let us know.



Left, The Reading Dispensary was added to the list at Grade II in 1957. It is dated as 1847-48, probably by John Billing. Right, It was replaced by the Heelas/John Lewis extension of 1979-85 by the R D Cook Partnership.



Left, 2 and 2b Kings Road, dated as 1880s, were entered on the list at Grade II, “a painted brick corner block in asymmetrical design”. Right, They were replaced by Abbey Corner.



114-118 Castle Hill were entered on the list at Grade II, and dated early-mid 19C; 114, Richmond House, with a central (possibly later) portico. The image above left is dated c.1890 and that above right is c.1965. Both images show the side of the Horse and Jockey pub (no. 120), now the Castle Tap, as does the 2019 image, left, of the modern block of flats, Castle Gate (c.2000).

ABB

Black and white photographs by kind permission of Reading Central Library, Local Studies Library.

AGM

SATURDAY, 13 APRIL 2019

at 2.00 p.m.

The Changing Room, Thames Lido

King's Meadow, Napier Road, RG1 8DF

A G E N D A

Minutes of 2018 AGM and matters arising

Chairman's Report

Sub Committee and Officers' Reports

Hon. Treasurer's Statement of Accounts

Election of Officers

Election of Auditor

Any other business

Tea, coffee and cake will be served.

This will be followed by a talk given by

Anne Green Jessel, of the King's Meadow Campaign, who will speak about **Lost Lidos**.

Forthcoming Events

We are looking at a day out by coach in **early August**, possibly to **visit another Civic Society**, as we have done in the past, with some free time to explore independently.

Heritage Open Days will be on ten consecutive days this year, **13-22 September**. This is usually an opportunity for us to offer walks covering various themes. Again, booking will be through Eventbrite and will be promoted on our website and by email.

There will be a **Churches Tour** in **September**, which may be in a different format depending on which area we cover.

William Marshal Information Panel

RCS and Caversham & District Residents Association are working together to develop a richly illustrated panel telling the story of William Marshal. For further details see the enclosed leaflet & RCS website.

NEW MEMBERS

Mr T Dixon, Mr D White, Ms E Thomas,
Mr L van Hoogenhuijze

Contributions to the Newsletter

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

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE 2018/19

Chairman:	Richard Bennett, 69 Baker Street, Reading, RG1 7XY Tel 0118 959 8350 Email: Bennettbaker@msn.com
Secretary:	Fiona Rycraft, 0787 942 7038 (mobile)
Hon Treasurer:	Penny Kemp, 66 Northcourt Avenue, Reading, RG2 7HQ.
Membership:	Alison Bennett, 69 Baker Street, Reading, RG1 7XY Tel 0118 959 8350 Email: Bennettbaker2@msn.com
Committee:	Amanda Martin, Clare Platts, Sean Duggan, Lynette Edwell
Newsletter Editor:	Adam Sowen, 24 New Road, Reading, RG1 5JD Tel 0118 987 1452 Email: Sowmor@waitrose.com