

# READING CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Registered Charity no. 263959

Website: [Readingcivicsociety.org.uk](http://Readingcivicsociety.org.uk)

## AGM 2024



We were delighted to welcome 38 members and 2 guests to the AGM in the Garden Hall of Watlington House on 16 March.

The official business included a review of our activities across the year, our financial results and updates to the Constitution. The minutes were circulated to all members the following week. The committee for 2024 is listed at the rear of this newsletter. We are delighted to welcome Jo Alexander-Jones as our new Minutes Secretary and Newsletter Editor.

After the official AGM business there was a very well received presentation by Alastair Dick-Cleland, Project Development Manager of the Landmark Trust, on the work of the trust.

The Trust is a building preservation charity which restores castles, forts, towers and cottages for self-catering breaks. Through donations on the day we raised £179 on which Gift aid will be claimed. In total our donations to the Trust from this event will be £250.



### Donnington Hospital Almshouse

We still have some spaces on 10 June for the visit to Donnington Hospital Almshouse, near Newbury. It is part of a group of Almshouses which have been under the patronage of the Hartley Russell family since 1632.

Our host and guide on the day will be Willie Hartley Russell MVO DL.

If the weather is favourable, Willie will start us off at Donnington Castle and then lead us through the village down to Donnington Hospital. A light lunch will be provided in the Boardroom of the Hospital.

Numbers are limited to 30. Donations of £20 per person are sought, to which gift aid will be added and passed to the Newbury Soup Kitchen, which is supported by Mr Hartley Russell. To book please contact the Chair on [bennettbaker@msn.com](mailto:bennettbaker@msn.com)

### Watch This Space

Planning is underway for a number of visits and talks in the RCS 2024 Programme:

**Walks festival** (11-19 May) - We are running 2 walks.

**Waterfest** (8 June) - We will be there with the Look Draw Build@Reading Station Project.

**Heritage Open Days** (6-15 September) - We are exploring potential new venues. We will run the Walks festival walks through Katesgrove and Victoria Park. On 14 September Lloyd Turner will open his new garden at Hillside House so we can see progress from last year's planting.

**Waltham Place, White Waltham** - 22 August. A morning guided visit to series of Ornamental Walled Gardens, which date from 17C to today. Tea after the visit. 20 per head. Booking details to follow.

**Shinfield Studios** - A visit to this new creative media hub in Shinfield is being explored. Details to follow.

**Bracknell Talk and Visit** - A talk by Andrew Radgick, History Officer, Bracknell Forest Society entitled Bracknell before the New Town. This will be followed at a later date by a guided walk of Bracknell

To keep up with news on Reading's civic activities and specifically those of our Society see:

**RCS Website** - [www.readingcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.readingcivicsociety.org.uk)

**RCS on Facebook**

**RCS on X (formerly Twitter)**

**RCS on Instagram**

# Planning Update

## Local Plan Partial Update



The Reading Borough Local Plan was adopted in 2019 and by law local authorities must review the plan every five years. The March 2023 review identified enough updates for a partial update of the Local Plan to be progressed. 17 sites for development were nominated for inclusion.

The consultation on the scope and content of the updated plan was open until 31 January 2024. It can be read on the RBC website or downloaded from [here](#).

As of early April, the next stage of the New Local Plan Partial update has been postponed, more [here](#).

## John Lewis Site, Mill Lane



A consultation was held in January, and another in March, on the plans from the John Lewis Partnership (JLP) to turn the site of their old collection building into a rental community of around 200 flats. Their aim is to provide high quality, professionally-managed private rented and affordable homes. The plan is to commence construction in autumn 2025 with new residents arriving in autumn 2027. Above is the architects' impressions of the developed site.

Following engagement with RBC officers and members of the public, the original plans have been scaled back to keep height to that of the Oracle site opposite and stepped back so that the highest point is away from the London Street conservation area. The two garden areas have also been extended.

Following the public consultations, the planning application is expected in spring 2024 for the Planning Committee to review later in the year. This does seem ambitious. The plans and an opportunity for comment can be found on the [JLP website](#).

## Norman Place, Vastern Road

In January, the developer Packaged Living launched a consultation into its plans to build 260 flats to replace the vacant six-storey office block now in place. The proposal is for six interconnected blocks of managed build-to-rent apartments. A summary is [here](#).



Above is the architects' initial designs for the site as viewed from Thames-side, next to Clearwater Court.

Several Committee members attended the consultation. Whilst we felt positively about some aspects of the “warehouse” look of the buildings from the Thames (this was an industrial area after all) we felt the public space which may be seen in the image was not large enough to be useful. The building line as it fronts Vastern Road will be close to the pavement where the view will be very dominant. We felt there was too little focus on the detail of the design of the building as it fronts Vastern Road.

A new design consultant has recently been recruited so we hope for further engagement and improvements.

## Sapphire Plaza, Watlington Street

In March, RCS Committee members took part in a discussion with representatives of the owner of the former HMRC office, Sapphire Plaza and the 1980s housing next door. Development ideas for the sites are at an early stage. They include some interesting



ideas for energy, overall design and access to the nearby Huntley and Palmer Gardens. The owner proposes to prioritise the residential units to be available to the staff at the RBH. We focused part of the discussion on the potential to include a medical facility as we know from surgeries nearby the space and facility pressure Primary Care is under. They have followed up contacts we provided in Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (which covers Reading).

### **Hosier Street**

RBC have now chosen a partner, McLaren Living, to build more than 600 flats in this central location and regenerate the area into the 'Minster Quarter'. It is envisaged that 30% of the flats will be designated as affordable housing. Councillor Jason Brock, RBC Leader, said: 'The regeneration of the Minster Quarter represents an unprecedented opportunity to deliver one of the best located mixed-use development opportunities in the UK, right in the heart of Reading town centre.' McLaren Living are working on the future of Broad Street Mall, with 640 build-to-rent homes. The proposal with 3 tower blocks is around 5 floors higher than the scheme previously approved. It will be very dominant above the nearby Conservation Area.

### **Advertising Boards in Town Centre**

RCS has been in discussions with RBC about the proposal by MaxxMedia to erect a large electronic noticeboard outside M&S which will be viewable from the length of Broad Street. There were strong objections from Thames Valley Police, Reading's Economic & Destination Agency and the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee. Richard Bennett attended a meeting held by the lead planner with the applicant. The Head of Planning stated there are no heritage grounds for an objection. The Planning Officer's focus was to address TVP concerns about predicted interference with town centre CCTV tracking of miscreants. As for the impact on the townscape he was very dismissive, "It's new business for the town generating £500k income over 10 years for the council." RCS/CAAC and REDA continue to believe this is the wrong site.

### **RCS joins CADRA**

We have joined the Caversham and District Residents' Association to give us a clearer understanding of planning-related issues which concern them. Already we have picked up on two relating to the plans to extend the car park at the Thames Lido and the proposed addition of solar panels to the roof of the same building.

### **Another Site for the AEW Empire**

AEW has acquired another building in Reading; 12-14 Friar Street which was until recently Wild Lime. AEW already owns the Harris Arcade site, the Revolution bar,

the Pitcher & Piano bar and a number of buildings around Smelly Alley (Union Street), on Forbury Road and around Valpy Street. They also own Broad Street Mall.

## **Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal**

The Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) has over the last 2 years undertaken a thorough review of the appraisal of the Christchurch Conservation Area. The updated appraisal was submitted to RBC officers in August 2023. RBC has published the document for public consultation which runs from 5 April until 31 May 2024. More details [here](#). Views are welcomed.



### **Christchurch Green Heritage Board**

A new heritage board has joined the others in our town. This newest board is on Christchurch Green, close to the University of Reading's Whiteknights Campus and where five roads meet. Unveiled on 21 February by Vice Chancellor of the University, Professor Robert Van de Noort CBE, the board was the inspiration of Jenny Halstead and the Friends of Christchurch Green.

The board gives a short history of the area and the University, highlighting 3 prominent individuals, Alfred Waterhouse, Edith Morley and Harold Hopkins along with a photograph of the location from around 1906 (shown below as then and now). On the reverse is a map of the area from 1840 showing a more rural landscape than we have now.





## Lord Reading's Statue

**When did you last go to the gardens at Eldon Square? The gardens are at the heart of the Eldon Square Conservation area and within them is Jagger's statue of Rufus Isaacs which was originally erected in New Delhi.**

**Our thanks to RCS member David Stevens, former Mayor of Reading, for this article that he submitted at the end of his Mayoralty in 2021. It seems more fitted to a formal newsletter rather than an email update, so our apologies to David for the long delay. David recalls how he brought the 4<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Reading to see the statue for the first time since it was unveiled in 1971.**

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King George V Gardens are not well known. They are concealed behind trees and shrubbery on the London Road just opposite The Royal Berkshire Hospital. They are surrounded by Eldon Square – a collection of mid-Victorian Bath stone houses. In the middle of the square stands the statue of Rufus Isaacs (1860-1935).

Isaacs was the MP for Reading from 1904 to 1913. He became the Attorney General and for his wartime public service was made Earl of Reading in 1917.

Between 1921 and 1926 he served as the Viceroy of India, during which time he imprisoned Mahatma Gandhi. On his return to England he was made Marquess of Reading, the first person to rise from commoner to a marquess since the Duke of Wellington. He is still the only Jewish person to be raised to a marquessate. He died in 1935 aged 75.

His statue was carved by Charles Sargeant Jagger (1885 – 1934). He was a well regarded sculptor who created a number of imposing memorials after the First World War including the Royal Artillery memorial at Hyde Park Corner, the Great Western Railways memorial at Paddington Station, various statues in N. France and the Ernest Shackleton memorial at the Royal Geographical Society. In the 1920s, the famous architect Sir Edwin Lutyens commissioned Jagger to create sculptures of elephants and imperial lions to guard the new Viceroy's House and Government buildings in New Delhi which were opened in 1931. They were designed in the Edwardian Baroque style. You may have visited the monumental buildings or seen them in the films "Gandhi" (1982) and "Viceroy's House" (2017). The house is now called the 'Rashtrapati Bhavan' and is the official residence of the President of India.



### 50 years apart

Left: Statue being unveiled by 3<sup>rd</sup> Marquess of Reading on 8 July 1971

Right: Statue with (l-r) Simon Rufus-Isaacs, 4<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Reading, David Stevens and Julian Rufus-Isaacs, Viscount Erleigh on 28 October 2021

Jagger also created two statues of former Viceroy for Lutyens. One was of Lord Hardinge, who was Viceroy 1910 – 1916. The second was of the Marquess of Reading. It was carved from seven tons of white marble in England and shipped to India. Sadly Jagger died from pneumonia in 1934 at only 49. He was in the process of creating a large statue of George V which was completed by another sculptor.

During the turbulence of Indian independence Isaacs's widow, Stella, was fearful that the statue of her husband would be damaged or even destroyed and asked the Indian authorities if they would give it to her. They assented and gifted the statue to Great Britain. At her own expense the Dowager Marchioness arranged for the statue to be shipped back to England. She decided that it should be returned to Reading and some 19 sites around the town were considered. Very sadly just before she was due to unveil it, the Marchioness died on 22 May 1971 having approved the site in Eldon Square.

On 8 July 1971 the statue was instead unveiled by the 1st Marquess' grandson, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marquess. Three grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren attended.

Fifty year later, on 27 October 2021 the Mayor of Reading, Cllr David Stevens, invited the current Marquess, Simon Rufus-Isaacs, to come and inspect the statue again. He was accompanied by his son Julian, Viscount Erleigh, who saw it for the first time.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Marquess now lives in Gloucestershire and in 2021 it had been some time since he had visited Reading, connections having been lost over the years. His son Julian works in Finance, mainly in New York. It is hoped that this visit will lead a re-establishment of connections with the family that will endure. However, given their geographical distance from our town it is a matter of thinking of the right event in which to engage them.

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## We're Inspiring the Next Generation to build their model Railway Station



Look Draw Build@Reading Station is a creative learning programme which uses the Reading train station to inspire around 600 primary school students every year to connect with architecture and the public space. To find out more go [here](#). Do run the video at the top.

Starting in 2022 the project has been delivered by ARCHI-adventure, of Barcelona, in partnership with RCS. In 2022, morning workshops were delivered to 9 Reading Primary schools. In 2023 to 10. In 2024 the programme will be delivered to 11 schools, 15 classes. This includes 3 Special Educational Needs schools, overall 5 new schools this year.

Great Western Railways Community Fund provided funding in 2022 of £4.5K and in 2023 £6.0K. However, our application for a grant in 2024 was not successful, their priorities had moved on as they had so many other applications. This year the project, is sponsored by the National Heritage Lottery Fund giving £3.6K, the Royal Academy of Engineering Ingenious Awards £3.6K. Haslams Estate Agents as Gold Sponsors £1.5K

During April participating classes will be taken to Reading Station to be guided on how to navigate a large modern station, how to use ticket machines and they will be briefed on the importance of safety on the railway. Materials are assembled by the trainees at the Ways and Means Trust at Rotherfield Peppard.

The morning workshops will be delivered in schools during May. The children are guided and supported to build their own model railway station. We do so with the support of young STEM team members from STANTEC, Ridge & Partners, Weston & Co Architects, Architect and RCS member Matt Andrews, and Richard Bennet's neighbours; Project Manager Caroline Bishop and Maria Darby, formerly a Deputy Head at a SEN school.

On 6 June a panel of experts will review the 15 models selected by the classes to represent them in the inter-school competition. The top 3 model stations will be displayed at Waterfest on Saturday 8 June.



Royal Academy  
of Engineering

Ingenious Awards funded by the Dept of  
Science & Technology



## Cartwheeling Boys - Now you see it, now you don't

In November 2021, as part of the review of Monument and Heritage Assets we were asked to undertake by RBC, Richard Bennett took some images of the Cartwheeling Boys sculpture in Clonmel Way, at the back of the Magistrates Courts and near the site of the former Civic Centre.

Then came Storm Eunice in February 2022, during which the boy “cartwheeled” over the wall. Some before and after images are below.



Images: Before (left) by R Bennett, and After (right) by Thames Valley Police

### What has been going on since?

A RCS member, David Stevens, is also Chair of the Reading Düsseldorf Association (RDA) and he offered to help facilitate restoring “the Boys”. Two of the sculptures are completely intact. Unfortunately the third boy had a major fall and lost his head, part of his arm and his thigh. The broken parts which were recovered are in safe storage at the council site in Bennett Road.

The sculpture is owned by RBC and they accept they have a responsibility and desire to restore it. The challenge is to recreate the missing parts and cast them in the same material as was used for the original. Aluminium was an unusual choice, selected in part because Brunel University was experimenting with the metal and provided it for the sculpture. The issue now is that very few foundries cast in aluminium.

David spoke to the original sculptor, Brian Slack, now 89, who is in good health and happy to advise on any reconstruction. David has found a foundry in Middlesex which can work in cast aluminium. The foundry owner came to inspect the remaining elements and judged it would be possible to repair them, at a cost that seems acceptable to RBC. To cast the missing parts in aluminium, it is necessary first to create moulds. David has found a designer

who works using a 3D printer and is willing to engage in the project. He is now liaising with RBC and the hope is that the missing parts will be recreated this summer and the Boys will then be ready for their restoration.

There was much discussion as to whether the Boys should be put back in their original location, next to Düsseldorf Way in the Minster Quarter. The difficulty with this site is that the redevelopment of the whole area is still some way off and there is no certainty the statue could be sensibly accommodated in whatever is planned.

It was decided that as the Boys are a significant piece of civic artwork, it would be appropriate to incorporate them into the design for the new library that is to be built adjacent to the RBC offices on Bridge Street. The plan is that they will be mounted on the south side of the library and will be highly visible from the street. The RDA is also hoping there will be an information board at ground level explaining their cultural significance, along with the story of their collapse and resurrection.

**David Stevens** (April 2024)

## South Street Swimming Baths

### Reading's lost Baths

It all started with a casual conversation outside Watlington House. Richard Bennett mentioned that there had once been a swimming pool in South Street which had been used by the schoolgirls when Kendrick Girls School had been housed in Watlington House, from 1877-1929.

He had found, in the archive of Kendrick School, an article by Mrs Agnes Bridge who attended 1887-1893. In it she mentions the fun the girls had working off their spirits on the parallel bars and the swings. She followed this with "in the summer we went swimming in South Street Baths".

Intrigued, wondering exactly where the Baths were sited, mystery, eh? Let's find out some more, especially with the heritage powerhouses of Evelyn Williams and Ann Green Jessel joining us in the hunt. Here are our findings.

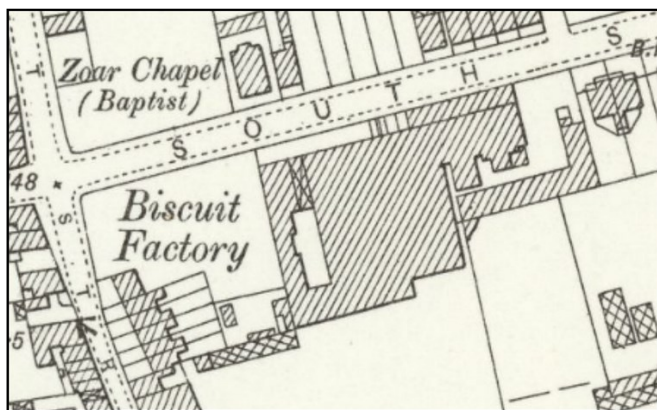
We know from the memories of Mrs Agnes Bridge that the girls went to South Street Baths in the summer between 1887 and 1893. Also, that the Kendrick School was located in South Street from 1877 to 1927, so we had a date range for the hunt. Unfortunately, the relevant Ordinance Survey maps showed no obvious building likely to be or contain a pool.

The local newspapers of the time revealed more. The Berkshire Chronicle of 26 May 1883 holds a notice for the opening of South Street Ladies' and Gentlemen's Swimming Baths' at 10 o'clock on Thursday 31 May placed by the proprietor W H Simonds (William Henry). Further articles from this time give us a feeling for the size of the establishment. The site opens with three swimming baths; a large one of 100 feet by 29 feet with a depth range of 3'6" to 7'6", beside two smaller baths each 46 feet by 27 feet. One of the smaller baths was for the exclusive use of ladies and the other was a first-class bath for gentlemen. Apparently the two smaller baths could be joined by taking out the partition wall, a process described as simple but not explained. The baths were fitted with over eighty dressing boxes, which, while not described, are assumed to be similar to those in the old Arthur Hill pool. At the front of the building were forty-eight small baths, some of which had Turkish bath appliances, with the others being described as private baths. The establishment was built over two years by W H Simonds, who was a builder by trade, rather than repurposed and at the front of the site he built a private house, comprising twelve rooms,

for himself. The baths used 'town water' heated by gas-powered steam piping. The largest bath alone held 100,000 gallons. The gentlemen's baths were maintained at 70 degrees while the ladies' bath was at 75 degrees. The Reading Mercury noted that there were private hot and cold baths available for ladies and gentlemen at the opening, but that twenty similar baths for the working classes had yet to be built in the basement. Above the baths were a number of rooms suitable for club rooms and on the second floor a suite of rooms for the bath's manager. The baths were to open between 6am and 9pm on weekdays and from 6am to 8am on Sundays. The pricing varied, but entrance to the large gentlemen's bath would cost five shillings for fifteen tickets and for the ladies' bath fifteen tickets would cost seven shillings (maybe to reflect the extra five degrees of heat). Swimming lessons cost one shilling for men and two shillings for women. The baths proved not to be just for individuals in Reading, the Reading Swimming Club can be seen holding races there for several years.

In the 1891 census we see the baths sited after no 5 East Street, putting it at the corner of East and South Streets. Also at the bath's address are William Henry's sons, Alfred Simonds (28, builder) and William H J Simonds (34, contractor) and their families, with William Henry himself (58, builder) living at 50 South Street.

In August 1892 Reading's Parks and Pleasure Grounds Committee discuss bathing options in the town and the adoption of the 'Baths and Washhouses Acts'. As part of the discussion the Committee discussed the Corporation purchasing South Street baths, as Mr Simonds had notified his willingness for this sale, along with the purchase of adjoining land, for £2,400. Some on the Committee objected to the purchase because of the large amount of corporate debt at the time and preferred the reconstruction of the bathing place in King's Meadow at a cost of £2,000, assuming that it could be opened for two afternoons for ladies only. The outcome was that the King's Meadow work was approved, the South Street baths purchase would not take place and the adoption of the Acts was deferred. The Corporation's discussion follows on from a notice to sell by auction issued earlier in 1892 where auctioneer John Miller, on behalf of W H Simonds, was offering the now-called Imperial Baths as a freehold property comprising a rectangular plot of 62-foot frontage and 160-foot depth. So, we know that the site was substantial, but again the exact location is not specified.



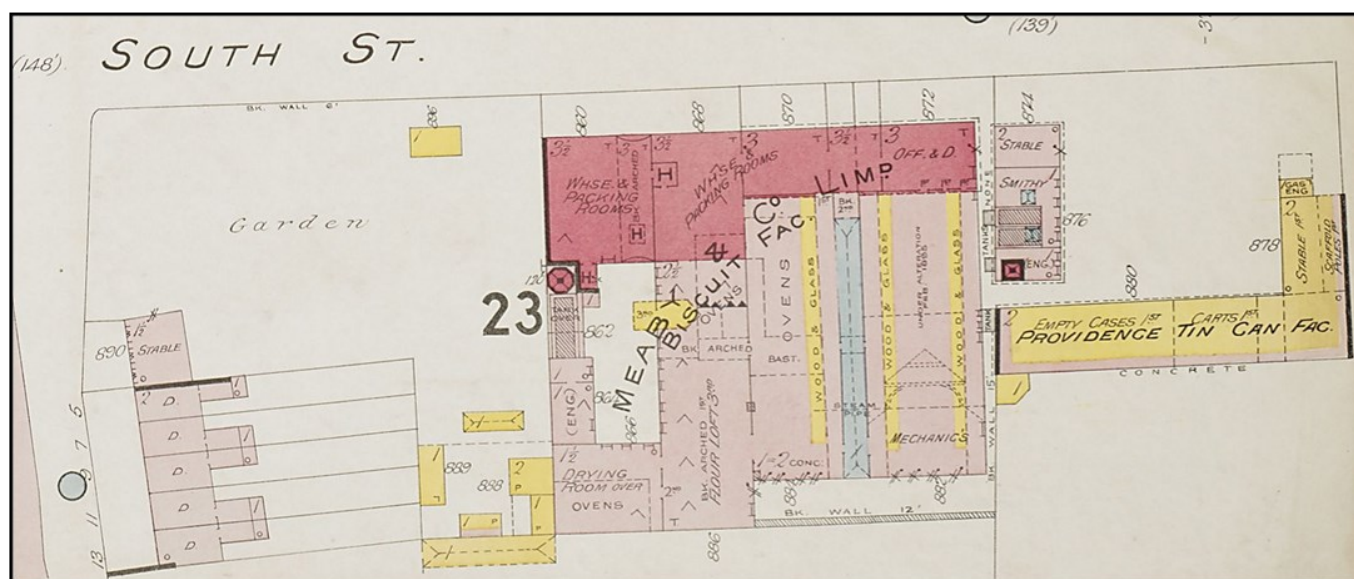
In early 1893 the baths and the surrounding site was bought by the Reading Biscuit Company, previously Meaby & Co. Ltd and later known as H O Serpell and Co Ltd. The Reading Mercury gives the price for the whole site as £3,800 and puts the site on the south-east corner of South and East Streets.

The history of Serpells is a fascinating story for a later newsletter, but what I didn't know until now was the bathing pool aspect. It appears that the baths were incorporated into the biscuit factory that was built on the site. We know this from a report on bathing accommodation in Reading in the Reading

Observer of 5 August 1893. This report notes that the reconstruction of the King's Meadow Bathing Place had been delayed and that the old reservoir at Spring Gardens in Whitley had been adapted for bathing purposes. Also, that The Reading Biscuit Company Limited had generously placed two of their smaller baths in South Street at the discretion of the Corporation for the use of women and girls and would extend the use to men and boys on Tuesdays and Thursdays. There was also some accommodation in place for private swimming at the back of Fry's Island.

To date no later information on the fate of the baths has been found. In Goad's fire insurance map of 1895 (below), the biscuit factory layout is detailed, but there is no mention of any baths nor any areas where they would have sat.

Equally in reports of the fire at the South Street biscuit factory in July 1904 no mention is made of any baths in the list of damaged areas. Maybe at this point the removal of the baths was regretted as a large onsite reservoir of water might have been of use in dowsing the flames.



It would be lovely to hear from anyone who knows more about the baths, or about Serpells which, as mentioned above, is a work in progress for me. **Jo Alexander-Jones**

### New RCS Members

We are delighted to welcome the following new members who have joined over the last year:

Mrs Val Graves, Mr Michael Brice, Mr Terry Giles, Mrs Julia Alexander Gordon, Ms Janet Novak, Mr Andrew Edger, Mr Darren Jones and Mrs Jo Alexander-Jones, Mr and Mrs Kevin Hogarth, Mr and Mrs Bill Gornall-King, Ms Mary Ellaby and Ms Caroline Piller.



## Walking for Good

Our Committee member and the winner of the Pride of Reading's 2023 Cultural Contribution Award, Terry Dixon provides the town with wonderful walks at the same time as collecting for charity. In the 2023/24 financial year he will donate the following monies:

- Home-Start Reading £2,600
- Reading Ukraine Community Centre £2,600
- Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity £480
- Tilehurst for Ukraine £175

Since starting in 2016 he has raised £19,000 for local charities.



Terry wishes to send a big thank you to all who have come on his Walkabouts and/or helped in other ways, especially Jackie Dixon.

## Welcoming Reading's New Citizens

Richard Bennett, our Chair, in his role as Deputy Lieutenant has, since his appointment in 2018, represented the Lord-Lieutenant of Berkshire at many Citizenship Ceremonies across Berkshire.



The ceremonies in Reading are held in the Ceremony Room within Reading's Old Town Hall. Richard has welcomed the new citizens and give a potted history of the town and county, followed by encouragement to explore the town and consider volunteering opportunities as a way to become engaged in Reading's life.

During two ceremonies in February he welcomed new citizens in Reading, hailing originally from thirty-three different countries. They join the many others who have been welcomed into our town and nation and have added to our great multi-cultural society.

## Contributions to the Newsletter

**We welcome articles and news on topics of interest to Reading - current and heritage. Please send contributions to the Newsletter Editor - contact details below.**

## OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE 2024 - 2025

<b>Chairman:</b>	Richard Bennett, 69 Baker Street, Reading, RG1 7XY Tel: 0118 959 8350 email: Bennettbaker@msn.com
<b>Minutes Secretary</b>	Jo Alexander-Jones, email: joalexanderjones@gmail.com
<b>Hon Secretary:</b>	Vacant position
<b>Hon Treasurer:</b>	Penny Kemp, 66 Northcourt Avenue, Reading, RG2 7HQ
<b>Membership:</b>	Alison Bennett, 69 Baker Street, Reading, RG1 7XY Tel: 0118 959 8350 email: Bennettbaker2@msn.com
<b>Planning:</b>	Richard Bennett (but help sought urgently)
<b>Newsletter:</b>	Jo Alexander-Jones, email: joalexanderjones@gmail.com
<b>Committee:</b>	Amanda Martin, Clare Platts, Lynette Edwell, Richard Stainthorp, Stephen Snook, Terry Dixon

## Memorials Supplement

**It has been a busy time for the memorials of Reading with many being refurbished and cleaned. Below are some of the major works that have been undertaken.**

When the Reading High Street Action Zone (HSHAZ) Board was asked for suggestions for restoration projects in the town we highlighted that several of our treasured monuments needed urgent refurbishment. We're pleased to report that the work has now been completed to eight memorials, undertaken by Cliveden Conservation.

### The Zinzan Tomb

The tomb, which sits in Reading Minster churchyard, marks the burial of Dr Peter Zinzan who died in 1781 and his wife Sarah, who died in 1811. Zinzan practiced medicine in Reading in the mid-1700s when the town had three physicians; Zinzan, Dr Merrick and Dr Addington. He was part of the Zinzan family who had possessed the Manor of Tilehurst and who give their name to a road in west Reading.



The chest tomb had suffered from weather damage, erosion and vandalism. Cliveden Restoration removed the lid and broken side panels, cleaned all the stone and put it all back together. Some of the original inscriptions have been sharpened.

### The Maiwand Lion

In 2021 we were briefed by Dr Carolyn Jenkins (RBC) that two of the bronze plaques were loose and extensive repairs, bronze panel re-patination and cleaning the stone were required. It was hoped to contain the works to the base. However once the Lion was checked over it was clear more work and

repainting was required. Overall cost around £90,000 funded from the CIL budget. Previous restoration work was undertaken in 2004-05.

Like most cats, this lion wouldn't go quietly into the bath. Instead it was jet washed (picture by Cliveden Conservation).



The lion stands in Forbury Gardens. It commemorates the 329 soldiers of the Royal Berkshire Regiment who lost their lives at the Battle of Maiwand in 1880. The sculptor was George Blackall Simonds. It was unveiled in December 1886.

### The Harrinson Testimonial Cross



The Cross in Reading Minster churchyard is a memorial to Mr Harrinson, a 19<sup>th</sup> century surgeon who did much to improve the area around the church then populated with insanitary dwellings.

He donated thousands of pounds which helped to clear old buildings in the Butts area and improve the church. The monument was designed by Reading architect Spencer Slingsby Stallwood and carved by Messrs Wheeler Brothers. It was completed in 1887, the year of Queen Victoria's jubilee, which led to the confusion of its sometimes being known as the Jubilee Cross.



The brickwork was repaired and repointed as needed, a step was corrected and the dedication lettering renewed in lead. The Cross was re-dedicated on 11 October by the Reverend Sonya Wratten, Vicar of Reading Minster. Richard Bennett took part in the service. RCS and the CAAC asked that the memorial should be renamed the Harrinson Testimonial Cross on the Historic England record of the listing, which has now been done - see [here](#)

#### Queen Victoria's Statue

This statue, again by George Blackall Simonds, was erected to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 1887. It sits by Reading Town Hall facing away from Marks and Spencer (not that this should start a rumour that the Queen was not amused to shop here!).



Her Majesty has been given a nice clean (as seen in these photos by Chris Forsey), cracks on her plinth filled and her spiked chains reinstated.

#### Edward VII Statue

Not to be beaten by his mother, this King who stands looking at Reading Station, has had a clean up by Cliveden Conservation.



Unveiled in 1902 to commemorate the Coronation, the monarch is dressed in the uniform of a Field Marshall and is wearing the parliamentary robe and holding the orb and sceptre. The bronze statue is mounted on a polished granite plinth on which are sited two bronze panels with detailed inscriptions. However, as the statue is now located on a traffic island reading the inscriptions is a little hazardous.

To ensure everyone's safety we have included the wording here:

His Majesty Edward VII

King of Great Britain  
and Ireland and of  
the British Dominions  
beyond the Seas  
Emperor of India

—  
This Statue was presented  
to the Town of Reading by  
Martin John Sutton  
eldest son of the late  
Martin Hope Sutton  
who for 86 years was  
a resident in this Borough

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Coronation  
of  
His Majesty King Edward VII  
1902

—  
Record of the  
Commemorative Celebrations  
and Public Rejoicings held  
in the County Borough of Reading

—  
Dinner to 2000 Aged Poor Persons.  
Tea to 14,500 School Children.

Special Services at  
Churches and Chapels.

Procession of the Town Council,  
and of Oddfellows, Foresters, and  
other Benefit and Friendly Societies;  
Trade, Florally Decorated, Emblematic,  
and Historical Cars, and  
Decorated Carriages, including  
Automobiles and Cycles.

Aquatic Sports, Amateur & Non Amateur  
and Old English Sports.

Water Carnival with procession of  
illuminated and decorated boats  
and steam launches.

Royal Salute.

Planting commemoration tree in the  
Forbury Pleasure Grounds  
by the Mayoress.

Illuminated Promenade Concerts.  
Torchlight Procession attended by the  
Mayor and by the Chairmen and  
Secretaries of the Coronation Committees  
Distribution of Medals and Coronation  
Pictures by the Mayor & the Mayoress.

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Alfred Holland Bull J.P. Mayor.  
Henry Day, Town Clerk.

### The Simeon Monument

Edward Simeon was the director of the Bank of England and he lived in The Forbury. In 1804 he commissioned this monument to improve the lighting conditions in Reading's Market Place.



The monument, which often goes unnoticed, has now been repaired, the bronze plaques have been re-patinated and the metal railing painted in invisible green, rather than the putty colour it was. It was last restored in 2007 by A F Jones, Stonemasons.

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### **Other memorials that celebrate Reading's heritage have been spruced up.**

#### Forbury Gardens

The very rusty sign, with its tired paint, on Forbury Hill has been restored by Cliveden Restoration.

The sign reads: "Forbury Hill. The beautifying of this hill and other improvements in The Forbury were made AD 1831 under the direction of Joshua Vines Esq<sup>R</sup>. who raised a subscription for that purpose and superintended the work."



The Spanish Civil War Memorial in the Gardens has also been refurbished. The memorial was created by the late Eric Stanford, at the time a Reading-based sculptor, to commemorate those who were involved in this war. It is believed that sixteen people from the Reading area went to Spain to volunteer for the Republican cause. The memorial is a representation of the mothers of those killed in the war. Originally sited outside the old Civic Centre, it was moved to

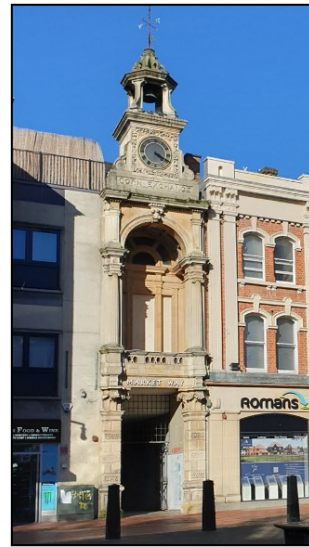
Forbury Gardens in 2015. Do walk round around the back to see more of the carving and the names.



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RCS has been working with Reading Borough Council HSHAZ team to get the iconic clock on the old Corn Exchange in Market Place working again.

RBC have worked through a chain of owners to establish the current owner. They have sought their consent for access and to have the work undertaken.



The mechanism is, disappointingly, a small modern electronic gizmo. David Card, a clock repairer in Caversham, estimates it would cost around £2,000 to get it started again, if the hands are not stuck.



We wait to hear if the HSHAZ team have been successful in enabling the repair to be undertaken.

**Reading has many great monuments, if you love one why not write about it for our coming newsletter editions.**