Hands On Learning
with Reading Museum Service

READING MUSEUM SERVICE

HISTORY OF READING
EIGHTEENTH to TWENTIETH CENTURY

H17

Plate with Reading Coat of Arms



This kind of pottery is called Goss ware, after the Goss pottery in Stoke on Trent, where it was first made. Adolphus Goss began to manufacture these small souvenirs and sell them all over the country in the 1880s. Nearly every town in the country had a trinket like this manufactured with its coat of arms. Items could be bought only in the town whose crest was illustrated and this created a sense of fun and achievement among collectors. The success of such pottery was thus closely linked to the developing tourist industry of Victorian Britain. It was such a commercial success that other manufacturers jumped on the bandwagon. This example lacks any kind of maker's mark and is a rather cheap imitation of true Goss pottery, which was of a high quality. Heraldic pots were made by having a black outline transfer of the coat of arms printed onto the pot and then the details were hand-coloured by an army of painters. Reading's first coat of arms was granted in 1566. The letters 'R' and 'E' either stand for the first two letters of the town's name or Regina Elizabeth. The Queen's head is in the centre, surrounded by four maidens.

Pins and Pin-maker's Bone

The pin making trade did not require special buildings because it was carried out by hand. The upper floors of buildings were often used, or simply outhouses and ordinary living rooms. For this reason pin making was often carried out by poor people, who could buy a small amount of wire and then sell the finished pins. The wire was straightened and cut into short lengths to form the pin shanks, which were then sharpened at one end. A bone was used to finish-off the sharpening and polish the pin. In the seventeenth century John Kendrick left money to build The Oracle - a large building near St Mary's church which was intended to employ poor people weaving cloth. In fact, cloth-making collapsed in Reading soon after the building was completed. When the run-down building was demolished in 1850 some of its poor inhabitants seem to have made a living from making pins. One of Reading's last pin makers, Richard Hanson, produced the small pins in the case around 1850.



Reading Borough Council

Heritage Lottery Fund

Textile Industry

Wool and Ribbon. Reading's coat of arms is supported not by lions, unicorns or other noble animals, but by two sheep. The animals are there to recall the fact that Reading's growth during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was based on weaving woollen cloth. In this period Reading was famous for its broadcloth - lengths of cloth over 1.5m (five feet) wide and 30m (thirty yards) long, which would have been sold to tailors for making up into clothing. By the early seventeenth century broadcloth weaving was in decline, however, other forms of cloth weaving continued throughout the eighteenth century. Sailcloth was for a time made in Reading and, at the other end of the scale, silk weaving employed a number of people. Elizabeth I is said to have sent a number of mulberry trees to Reading in order to encourage the silk-weaving industry.



Brewing Industry

Hops and Barley. In the second half of the seventeenth century the richest men in Reading were no longer clothiers, but maltsters. Malt is barley that has been allowed to sprout and is used chiefly in brewing. The roads and waterways that converge on Reading brought grain from Berkshire and Oxfordshire. In Reading it was sold in the market place and then turned into malt. By 1760 Berkshire had become the most important area in the country for malting, producing nearly 15,000 tons, over 5% of the national total. The malt was either sent on to London to be brewed into beer or made into beer in Berkshire. Hops - the dried ripe flowers of a vine-like plant - are the other vital ingredient for beer, giving it a characteristic bitter taste. By the late eighteenth century there were five breweries in Reading. In the course of the nineteenth century the biggest of these was Simonds Brewery, which was on the banks of the Kennet, on the site of The Oracle shopping centre.

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Huntley & Palmers Biscuit Tin



This tin is a product of Reading's most famous business - Huntley & Palmers. The Huntley & Palmers biscuit factory dominated the economic life of the town from 1850 to 1950 and their biscuits made Reading famous around the world. Until the 1960s most biscuits sold in shops came in large, glass topped tins - the shop-keeper would weigh out the amount of biscuits you wanted to buy. This small tin was made as a sample tin - that is, a tin to be given away free at publicity events. The painting on the lid of this tin was executed in 1948 by Reginald Mills.It shows the original Huntley & Palmers shop at the top of London Street. The design on the tin, in fact,is slightly different from that in the original painting - some of the shoppers in front of the window have been changed. It must have been made after 1955 as it mentions the Huntley & Palmers factory at Huyton, Liverpool, which was opened in that year.

Huntley & Palmers Booklet

This publicity booklet was produced in 1919 to celebrate the firm's contribution to the war effort. George Palmer, who founded the firm, was a Quaker and a pacifist and would have found it difficult to support the militarism that flourished during World War One. However, by this date his children were in charge and they had abandoned their family's religious tradition - they became Anglicans (and joined the Conservative party). During the war bombs were made in the factory and, as the booklet proudly points out, an expert commented that 'Every Huntley and Palmers' shell is like a piece of jewelry' (p.14). Samuel Beavan Stevens, who was in charge of the tin-box factory of Huntley, Boorne and Stevens, remained committed to Quakerism and refused to make anything in his factory which would cause death or injury, though he did agree to make smoke bombs and steel helmets!



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Clay Pipe & Nails from Waterfront Excavation



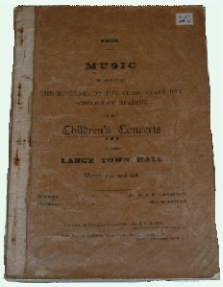
Between 1979 and 1988 a site on the banks of the Kennet, next to the abbey, was excavated. The finds ranged from the Anglo-Saxon period through to the nineteenth century - the full span of Reading's history.
Clay pipes were first made in England in the sixteenth century. This example probably dates from the first half of the eighteenth century, when large bowls like this, with their top cut parallel to the stem, predominated. The nails may also be from the eighteenth century, but they could date from any period except the twentieth century. They are hand made, cut from a square shanked rod of metal. The blacksmith would have given each nail a head and cut and sharpened each into a point. This was the way most nails were made until mechanisation took over in the course of the nineteenth century.

Replica Fire Mark



The Reading Insurance Company was formed in 1822. These signs were not used to indicate which buildings the insurance company's fire engines had an interest in saving. There is, in fact, no evidence that the RIC ever maintained its own fire brigade. Their main purpose, in an age before properties were numbered, was to certify which buildings were part of insurance scheme so that, after a fire, there would be no dispute about liability. Also, originally they were brightly coloured and acted as a form of advertising. The RIC ceased to function as an independent company in 1841. In Reading each of the town's three parishes maintained their own fire engine - a hand cart with a hand-powered pump which could be used to spray burning buildings. These were transferred to the police in 1843 'in such repair as to be useless.'

Music Book



Just as schools in Reading still hold large collective music concerts, so it was in 1908. This book uses sol-fa notation to help the young singers. The publisher, Novello, seems to have specialised in such music texts - a list of their books is printed inside. Several songs have been specially stitched into the book specifically for the Children's Concerts in Reading one of which, at the very end, is in Welsh! The Large Town Hall mentioned on the cover is the splendid Concert Hall which still exists in the old Town Hall building, next to the Museum of Reading.

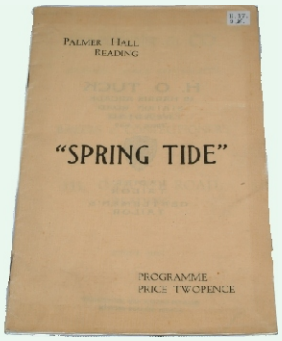
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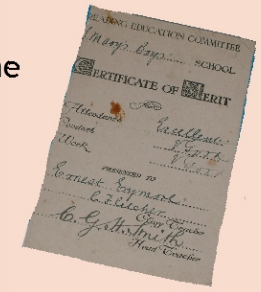
EIGHTEENTH to TWENTIETH CENTURY

Theatre Programme



Reading's first permanent theatre was opened in Friar Street in 1788. Before the age of television people either made their own entertainment at home or went out to plays and concerts. At the end of the nineteenth century there were several large venues available in Reading for both professional and amateur performances, for example the Royal County Theatre in Friar Street, Palmer Temperance Hall in West Street, the Concert Hall in the Town Hall and the Queens Hall in Valpy Street opposite the Museum. In 1907 the Palace Theatre was built in Cheapside. By 1939 this was the only theatre left in Reading. It closed in 1960. This programme is for an amateur production at Palmer Hall in December 1937. There are some interesting Christmas adverts inside, as well as a warning by a local plumber to 'turn off your water supply and drain out pipes etc.' during frosty weather! There is an alcohol advertisement on the back cover, too, which would have appalled Palmer Hall's founder William Isaac Palmer, who was a stalwart of the Temperance movement. He would have thoroughly approved of local people using their free time creatively, but that did not include becoming intoxicated.

Certificate of Merit



Reading's schools were run by a school board until 1903, so the fact this was issued by an education committee suggests it dates from after that date. Ernest Eymore was obviously one of St Mary's Boys School's top pupils! This is neither a school report nor a leaving certificate. The picture of the rhino on the back suggests it was more of an end-of-year attempt at encouragement - hopefully next year Ernest would achieve 'Excellent' in all three categories.

J. Hannam 1901 Calendar



As it says at the top, this calendar would have been given to customers 'Gratis', free. In 1901 buying clothes often involved choosing the cloth and having the items made up, rather than buying off the peg. J. (the J stands for James) Hannam obviously aspired to the expensive end of the market and the calendar emphasises the quality of his work: 'I never Sacrifice Quality to create a false Impression called cheapness.'

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Mineral Water Bottle



This kind of bottle was invented around 1870 by Hiram Codd, a bottle manufacturer of London. His bottle design used the pressure of the fizzy mineral water to force a marble against the upper ring of the neck of the bottle and in doing so seal the bottle. The marble could be pushed down to let the liquid out. The neck of the bottle is cleverly designed to catch the marble and keep it in its place while the bottle was tilted to one side. This innovation came about in 1876. The bottle could be re-sealed by shaking it vigorously and then tilting it upside down to cause the marble to re-seat itself over the mouth of the bottle. Many Codd bottles, as they are known, were broken by children in order to get hold of the marble - even though at one stage Codd patented an oval-shaped marble to make them less attractive to children. This example was made by Redfearn Brothers of Barnsley for Marchant's of Reading. In *Smith's 1902 Directory for Reading,* W and F Marchant are listed as 'Mineral & Aerated Water Manufacturers' at 86-88 Castle Street. They are also listed as 'bakers, confectioners, corn dealers, caterers and as a Post Office'. This bottle was probable made at around that time.

Facsimile of the *Reading Mercury*



The *Reading Mercury* was first published in 1723. It was one of the first provincial newspapers in England. Most of its news, though, was taken from London papers. The only item of local news is found on the back page - news of a hay cart overturning and killing its driver.

Emergency Edition of the *Reading Standard/Berkshire Chronicle*



. Since the days of *the Reading Mercury* newspapers have continued to be produced in Reading. This emergency edition of the *Reading Standard* combined with the *Berkshire Chronicle* is somewhat unusual in that it was printed during a printer's strike. Normally these papers would have been much fuller.

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Studio Portrait



In the days before people owned their own camera you had to make a trip to a photographic studio if you wanted a picture of yourself or your family. There were many photographers in Reading in the Victorian and Edwardian periods. Vandycke, the name on this example, refers to the studio of V.E. Vandycke. In 1901 Everard Cuzner took over this business, although he retained the name Vandycke for the studio. Vandycke probably sounded more artistic than Cuzner! It is probable that this photograph dates from around that period.

Simonds Bank Note

The first bank notes were handwritten promises issued by a bank which could be redeemed for cash when the owner needed it. This example was printed for use by Simonds Bank of Reading. The printed and handwritten text reads: 'Reading Bank Promise to pay the Bearer One Pound on Demand here or at Messrs. Williams's, Moffat & Burgess Bankers, London, 15 day of July 1816.' The note is signed by Henry Simonds. There is a date, 29 July 1816, on the reverse of the note and traces of several signatures. The signatures are there because each time the note was used the person handing it over had to sign it on the back.



Simonds Bank was founded in 1814by the brewer William Blackall Simonds (1761-1834), whose brewery stood on the site of what is now The Oracle shopping centre. His partners were his second son, Henry, his cousins, John and Charles, and his friend, Ralph Nicholson, and they had a working capital of some £25,000. In 1816, the year this note was issued, William Blackall Simonds withdrew from the business. The bank traded as J & C Simonds for about a century until it was absorbed by Barclays in 1912.

Three Tickets

The first ticket is for a fete organised by the Ancient Order of Foresters. This was a Friendly Society. Friendly societies are mutual aid organisations designed to help people protect themselves against hardship. The first Foresters Court (as the individual branches were called) in Reading was established in 1878. There were many other Friendly Societies in Reading at the time, including the Sons of Temperance Friendly Society, Reading Society of Railway Servants and the Oddfellows. The second ticket is for one of the children's concerts which were held in the Town Hall. The third ticket is for the opening of the new public library, Battle Library, on the Oxford Road. Battle was the first library to be built by Reading Borough Council.