

Hands On Learning *with Reading Museum Service*

FOOTBALL IN READING

H471



Scarf

Reading were formed in 1871. They were originally nicknamed The Biscuitmen after one of the main trades in the town, Huntley & Palmers biscuits, but changed to The Royals in 1976. Reading's colours have always been blue, although the shade of blue has varied between navy blue, royal blue and sky blue. Until 1971 the club had no official badge. The badge on this scarf is the second design. The badge and the colours help date the scarf to some time between 1983 and 1986.



Supporters Badge

The badge shows a baker carrying a football on a plate and obviously alludes to the club's nickname - The Biscuitmen. It probably dates from the 1950s. The rather bland new nickname, The Royals, refers to the fact that Reading is located in the 'royal' county of Berkshire. The official mascot of the team is a cartoon-style lion called Kingsley Royal, in reference to the Maiwand lion in Forbury Gardens.



Football Rattle

Rattles were a popular way of making noise at matches after the war until about 1970. This rattle is in the old club colours of navy blue and white and is marked with the logo of Edelston and Brice, a sports shop in the town, presumably owned by two ex-Reading players, Maurice Edelston and Gordon Brice, who played for the team in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

An advert for Edelston Sports Ltd appears in programmes of the 1960s, with the address 37 Oxford Road. Maurice Edelston's father, Joe, was manager of Reading from 1939 to 1947. The rattle has a slightly home-made air, but this was not unusual in this period of austerity. Around that impoverished time Reading FC bought some jerseys from the submarine service and dyed them green for use by the goalkeepers!



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Season Ticket 1996-97

At Reading's old ground Elm Park, season ticket holders were given a book of paper tickets like this one. When they went through the turnstile the appropriate match ticket was torn out of the book. At the Madejski Stadium (opened on 22 August 1998) season ticket holders have smart cards which electronically contain the same information that used to be on the paper tickets.



Ticket, Reading v Macclesfield, 1999

A match ticket from the first season at the Madejski Stadium. It was Macclesfield's only visit here and they lost 1-0.

Programme, Reading v Hereford, 1983

During the 1982/83 season millionaire Robert Maxwell made a concerted effort to buy the club, with the intention of merging it with Oxford United. This was vigorously contested by Reading fans and the fight continued into the 1983/84 season. This was the last time that Reading played in the bottom division and thus marks the beginning of the club's rise to the Premiership twenty-three seasons later in 2006/07. Reading won this Cup tie against Hereford 2-0, in front of a crowd of 4,453. Unfortunately they went on to lose the next round against, ironically, Oxford United! Illustrative rather than photographic programme covers such as this one used to be common at this date. The light blue stripes on the Reading player were a recent innovation, Maurice Evans (the manager) having replaced the traditional blue hoops at the beginning of the season. Evans had played for Reading in the sixties. He was a popular figure with the fans, but was sacked a few months later in January. A further twist of fate meant that he went on to manage Oxford United, leading them to victory at Wembley in the 1986 Milk Cup.



Fixtures List 2002-2003

At the start of every season the club gave away free fixture cards to let fans know what games were happening when. Before the widespread use of the internet these cards were important sources of information and the design hardly changed down the decades.

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Programme, Photos, Rosette and Tickets for Simod Cup Final 1988

The Simod Cup (or the Zenith Data Systems Cup, as it was known from 1989-92!) was a competition created after the Heysel Stadium disaster in 1985, when English clubs were banned from European competition for five years. The sponsors for the first two years - Simod - made sports shoes, but they never caught on in the UK. The competition was open to clubs in the top two divisions of the football league and ran for seven seasons.



Although the Simod Cup was never taken very seriously by the football league's top clubs, the visit to Wembley for the 1988 final was one of the biggest days out in Reading FC's history. More than 40,000 fans travelled up the M4 to the old Wembley Stadium. Reading were about to be relegated to Division Three but surprised the football world by beating First Division opposition in almost every round of this cup competition. In the final Reading beat Luton 4-1. The photographs show the Reading team celebrating. They were taken through the metal fence designed to stop fans running on to the pitch. All these barriers were removed after the Hillsborough disaster in 1989 when over 90 Liverpool fans were crushed to death against such a barrier.

Ticket, Second Division Play-Off Final, 2001.

At this date the top two teams in a division at the end of each season were automatically promoted to the league above. The next four teams qualified for the 'play-offs' - that is, they competed against each other, but only one of them eventually gained promotion. In the 2000/01 season Reading found themselves in the Second Division play-offs. Their first match was against Wigan Athletic. Reading found themselves 1-0 down with two minutes to go, but scored twice to win. The stadium literally moved and shook with excitement as the capacity crowd leapt up and down. Unfortunately, they then lost 3-2 in extra time against Walsall in the Millennium Stadium Final. They did, however, gain automatic promotion to Division One in the following season. This ticket is a memento from the match when they came so close to promotion.



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Programme, Reading v Fulham, 1957

At this date Reading were in the Third Division. It was a dark period in the club's history. Their performance on pitch was mediocre and they started and finished the season in dire financial straits.

This match may have been a friendly, as Fulham were not in the Third Division and Reading did not meet them in the FA cup. The adverts in the centre make interesting reading, recalling a long-gone era. The largest add is for Huntley & Palmers - 'The First Name You Think of in Biscuits' - which was still an active business in the town and the basis of the club's nickname, The Biscuitmen.



Programme, Reading v Aston Villa, 1986

Reading drew the first leg of this League Cup tie 1-1 but lost the second leg 4-1. The programme shows Reading, newly promoted to the second tier, in a confident mood, with a colour cover showing the cup they won as Third Division champions earlier in the year. Although they survived 1986/87 in the Second Division, they were relegated back to the Third Division in 1988.

Programme, Reading v QPR, 1966

Reading won this end-of-season Third Division game 2-1 and finished a typical eighth in the table. Three months later England won the World Cup - but none of these players featured!