

Sculptures  
in Reading  
town centre

## The Trooper Potts VC Memorial Site



# Drinking Fountain

*Wheeler Bros*



WS0022

A drinking fountain against the south wall of St Laurence Church and facing the Market Place. Made of Mansfield Stone and marble it once provided a drinking fountain with two containers for watering dogs near ground level.

It was one of the products of the Drinking Fountain Movement. The architects were Poulton and Woodman and the carver worked for Wheeler Bros.

The Drinking Fountain Society was inaugurated in 1859 with the requirement "That no fountain be erected or promoted by the Association which shall not be so constructed as to ensure by filters, or other suitable means, the perfect purity and coldness of the water." The first fountain was built on Holborn Hill on the railings of Saint Sepulchre's church on Snow Hill, paid for by Samuel Gurney, and opened on 21 April 1859.

The fountain became immediately popular, used by 7000 people a day. In the next six years 85 fountains were built, but much of the funding came directly from the association and much of that money was provided directly by Samuel Gurney, as donations were not sufficient.

Gradually the association became more widely accepted, benefiting from its association with Evangelical Christianity and the Temperance movement. Beer was the main alternative to water, and generally safer. The temperance societies had no real alternative as tea and coffee were too expensive, so drinking fountains were very attractive. Many were sited opposite public houses. The evangelical movement was encouraged to build fountains in churchyards to encourage the poor to see churches as supporting them. Many fountains have inscriptions such as "Jesus said whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again but whosoever drinketh of the water I shall give him shall never thirst".