

NOT JUST A STUDENT GUIDE RED RAG'S ALTERNATIVE READING

Isolated letters (A,B,C etc) that appear in this guide refer to the divisions of the map overleaf....

Student Union Handbooks: There are handbooks for students at the University which aren't a lot of good - a lot of the welfare handbook seems to be about London (lifted from NUS info?) and it is horribly out of date on Reading, as is the "Town" section of the Students' Union Handbook. E.g. the Agra Restaurant was demolished some time back. Before that it was done for public health. So was the Star of India and the White Hart at Sonning (all recommended). Apparently the compiler of the Welfare handbook had to do it in a hurry after the previous compiler resigned over the banning of the Univ Women's Group. So blame the people who did that. This Red Rag guide may not be perfect (who knows?) - mind you we're not being paid to do it...

Welcome to Concrete City! Now for the first time the truth about Reading revealed by members of the totally unrepresentative Red Rag Collective. This guide is produced at short notice in particular for the influx of students new to the town in Sept '82. Please let us know criticisms, corrections or improvements for future editions....

Reading is a town population 140,000 not quite yet swallowed into the conurbation of South East England but working on it. There's some really nice countryside around (get a map!); inside the town the best walks are along the rivers (the Kennet and the Thames). The neglected ruins of Reading Abbey can be found in the shadow of the wall round the prison. People all over the world know about the prison: Oscar Wilde was there and "celebrated" it in his 'Ballad of Reading Gaol'. Reading used to be famous for its biscuit factory: they've just demolished it. You'll still see the legend "Head offices: King's Road, Reading" on most biscuits you buy. If you're keen on head offices you've come to just the right place. The Councils' (Reading and Berks) idea of what Reading ought to look like can be seen at Shire Hall (down Shinfield Rd), or the Civic Offices/Hexagon bit behind the Butts Shopping Centre (there's another abomination). Don't miss the Inner Distribution Road (IDR) while you're there. Fortunately they ran out of money before they could knock any more of the town down to finish that.

The lion in the Forbury Gardens gets used a lot to symbolise Reading. It's a memorial for soldiers killed in the British invasion of Afghanistan in 1880. The sculptor killed himself when it was pointed out that a lion would fall over if it tried to stand like that.

Reading is quite famous for its ornamental patterned brickwork: look for this in the older residential bits, e.g. The Mount off Christchurch Rd, Pell St and Alpine St, New Town between Cholmely Rd and the railway.

Reading's a fairly well-off place. A bit of light industry. It's a shopping centre for the region (the big shops are mostly in Broad St and Friar St but see our list for the good ones). The suburbs (Caversham to the North, Tilehurst to the West, Woodley to the East, Whitley Wood to the South) are all pretty dire. There's lots of commuters and lots of "high technology" industry - that means computers and weapons. (with all the military establishments Reading's also in the middle of a ring of Peace Camps.) Unemployment in Reading has never been higher, but it's about the lowest in the country (9%). The Centre for the Unemployed in East St was set up largely on the initiative of a Tory MP... The Council hasn't built any houses for years; but there's a great luxury hotel going up next to the Hexagon...

The Reading bus service is (compared with other places) good. Fares are (comparatively) low; the town was a pioneer in contraflow bus lanes. Cyclists are not so well provided for: join the Friends of the Earth Bikes Group! The one-way system and the traffic lights keep cars driving slowly round in circles.

Oh yes, if you're walking home late at night expect to be stopped by the Reading police ("as seen on TV"), and get asked who you are, where you're going etc etc.

Red Rag is Reading's Only Newspaper. It comes out every fortnight and is free, politically non-aligned, and financed by donations. It's worth getting for its Famous Going Out Guide and Events Diary alone. Apart from the Rag there's the Evening Post (the Dross) and weekly Reading Chronicle which is fairly awful but useful for finding jumble sales. The Trotskyist papersellers by the entrance to Smelly Alley in Broad St are one of the sights of Reading. There is occasional talk of a pirate radio station but until that happens you'll have to make do with Radio 210.

Accommodation - how to find it: (other than through official channels):-

- Notice boards. In Acorn, Students Unions, newsagents
- Estate agents (some). Try Wrights in Harris Arcade, Chaney's near Acorn.
- Evening Post daily at 1pm or earlier from Tessa Rd offs.
- Reading Chronicle. Thursday 6.00pm.
- Berkshire Mercury
- asking everybody.
- Squatting (lots of potential!)

E.S. If you're in a University hall and intend to move out give notice soon, or you'll end up paying rent till Easter.

Women's Centre: Reading's women's centre is in the basement of Old Shire Hall, in Abbey St by the archway. (C) It's open Tues 10.30 - 3.30 and Sat 10.30 - 2pm. Has Women's Information Service, list of sympathetic doctors, pregnancy testing Tues 7-9pm; meeting every 1st of the month to discuss running of the centre and activities.

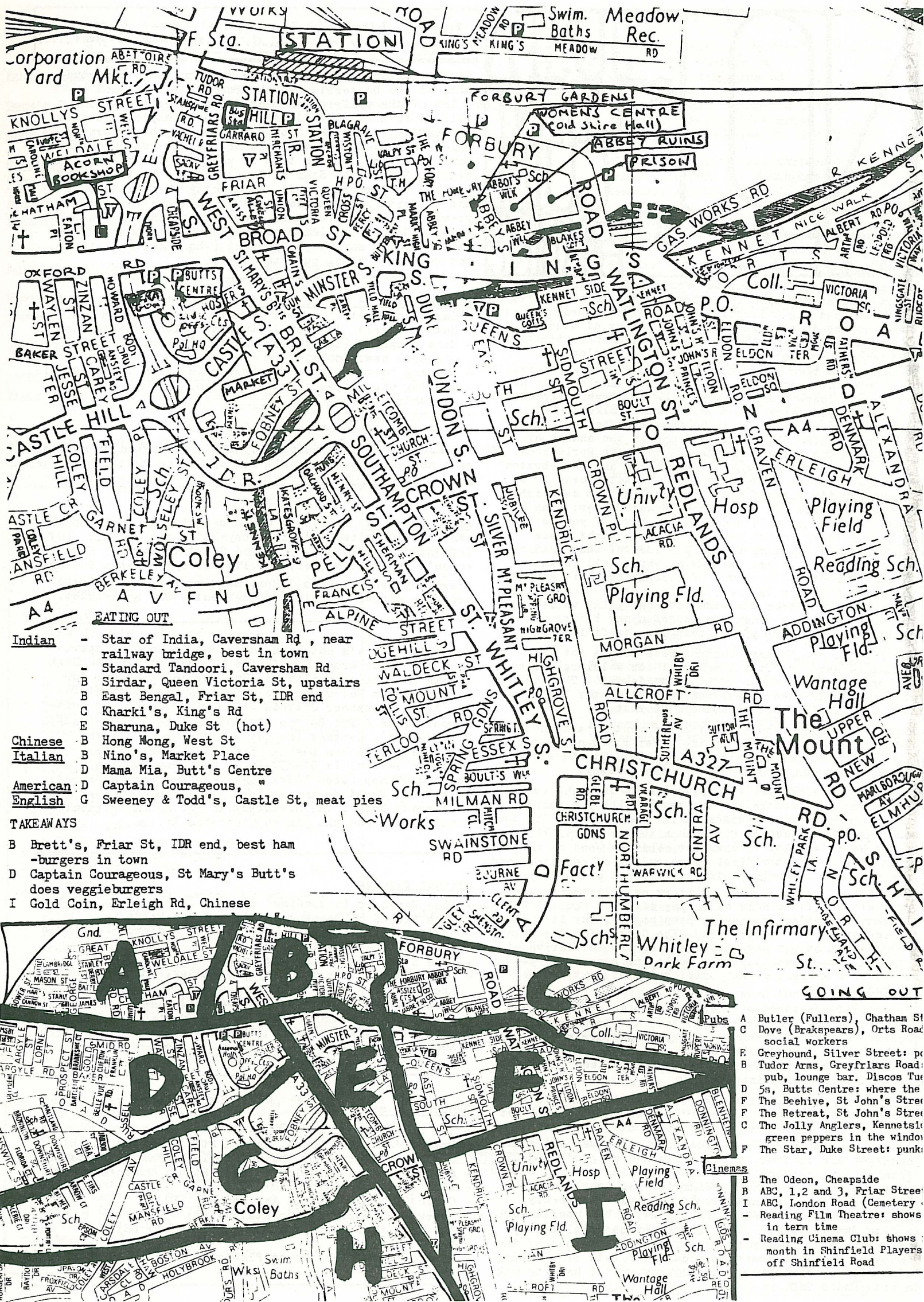
Gay Life: There's not much gay scene in Reading apart from the Tudor Arms, Greyfriars Rd (B); Slough and High Wycombe are the places to go. The Gay Youth Group, for anybody under 26, organises social events: contact Box 11, Acorn Bookshop, Chatham St or via Reading Gay Switchboard (Tue & Fri 8-10pm 597269) or London G.S. (24-hr 01-837-7324). Contact the Gay Women's Group via the switchboard. London Lesbian Line (Mon & Fri 2-10pm, Tue to Thurs 7-10pm) is 01-837-8602. Gay News available at Acorn Bookshop (also books pamphlets and notice-board); Knights in Broad St and Station Hill; Ken's Shop at the University Union; the newsagent in Wokingham Rd (near Hamilton Rd) and the one on Caversham Bridge.

Further reading:

- 'The Stranger in Reading' is good but a bit out of date
- 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' by Oscar Wilde.
- 'Belford Regis' etc by Mary Russell Mitford, Reading's only famous-ish writer.
- 'The Story of Reading' by Daphne Philips.
- 'A Village in the Town' by F.C. Padley, on the St Johns area.
- Local O.S. map (Reading and Windsor)
- Local walk books (be adventurous!)
- The Squatter's Handbook, 7th ed (40p)
- Red Rag every fortnight.

Venues for meetings:

- The Crown, Crown St. (E)
- Friends' Meeting House, Church St off London St (E)
- St Mary's Centre, by the Church in St Mary's Butts (E)
- Centre for the Unemployed, East St off Queen's Rd (F)
- AUEW Hall, 121 Oxford Rd (D)
- Civic Offices, next to the Hexagon (D)
- Museum, Blagrove St (up stairs) (B)
- The Red Lion, Southampton St (bottom of) (E)
- Apl
- Apollo Youth Club, Mount Pleasant, near the Greyhound (E)



- EATING OUT**
- Indian**
- Star of India, Caversham Rd, near railway bridge, best in town
 - Standard Tandoori, Caversham Rd
 - B Sirdar, Queen Victoria St, upstairs
 - B East Bengal, Friar St, IDR end
 - C Kharki's, King's Rd
 - E Sharuna, Duke St (hot)
- Chinese**
- B Hong Mong, West St
 - B Nino's, Market Place
- Italian**
- D Mama Mia, Butt's Centre
- American**
- D Captain Courageous,
- English**
- G Sweeney & Todd's, Castle St, meat pies

TAKEAWAYS

- B Brett's, Friar St, IDR end, best ham-burgers in town
- D Captain Courageous, St Mary's Butt's does veggieburgers
- I Gold Coin, Erleigh Rd, Chinese

- GOING OUT**
- A Butler (Fullers), Chatham St
 - C Dove (Brakspears), Orts Road social workers
 - F Greyhound, Silver Street: pub, lounge bar. Discos Tue
 - B Tudor Arms, Greyfriars Road: pub, lounge bar. Discos Tue
 - D 5s, Butts Centre: where the
 - F The Beehive, St John's Street
 - F The Retreat, St John's Street
 - C The Jolly Anglers, Kennet side green peppers in the window
 - F The Star, Duke Street: punk

- Cinemas**
- B The Odeon, Cheapside
 - B ABC, 1, 2 and 3, Friar Street
 - I ABC, London Road (Cemetery)
 - Reading Film Theatre: shows in term time
 - Reading Cinema Club: shows month in Shinfield Players off Shinfield Road

GET INVOLVED...

Friends of the Earth: 27 Instow Road 868260. Rain forests, anti-nuclear power, cycles. Winter programme available.

Campaign against Militarism: Box 10, Acorn Bookshop, 17 Chatham St Responds to militaristic events locally.

Civic Society: 68972. Preservation of buildings and character of Reading.

El Salvador Solidarity: Clive on 64545.

NCCL: 661035. Re-starting this autumn.

Anarchists: Box 19, Acorn. Weekly meetings. Paul on 56204.

Berks Organic Gardeners: 476317. Meeting, outings, advice on organic growing methods; plants and seeds available.

Amnesty: 662874. Monthly meetings, prisoner support groups.

Burghfield Peace Camp: Box 17 Acorn. tel 478279 (Anne + Robin). Peace Camp in abeyance but campaign still alive.

Berks Humanists: 936-4871. Revitalised.

Vegans: 581805. Monthly meetings, support + info on not eating any animal products.

Thames Valley Natural Health Centre: 477531 (Anna). Meetings (not free), lots of info on alternative health + therapies.

Berks Anti-Nuclear Campaign/Reading GND: P.O.Box 158.

Rainbow Peace Settlement and Women's Peace Camp at Greenham Common being evicted as we go to press.....

----- Of course there isn't room to mention most of the groups and organisations active in Reading. For that you'll have to wait for the Red Rag directory due out at the end of October. To find out what's going on, read the Events diary in Red Rag, look at the leaflets and notices in Acorn (or in Brett's or Reading Wholefoods)

HASSLE - SMASHING

- B Citizen's Advice Bureau, 38 Caversham Rd, open 10-4 weekdays, (10-2 Weds), 10-12 Sat or phone 598059 from 2-3.30 weekdays, (12-1.30 Weds)
- B Reading Gingerbread, contact John Thorne, 81896 (single parent families)
- B Reading Council for Racial Equality, 46 Caversham Rd, open Mon-Fri, 9-5, 583773
- B Number 5, 2-4 Sackville St, open Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30, 7.15-10pm; Sat 10-? 585853, 24 hrs
- C Women's Information Centre, at the Women's Centre, basement of Old Shire Hall, Abbey St
- C Pregnancy testing and advice: free, confidential, on the spot. Women's Centre, Tues 7-9. Bring early morning urine sample.
- C East Reading Rights. Stall Sat mornings by Baptist Ch at Cemetery Junction.
- F Unemployment Centre: 2-4 East St, open 9.30-4.30 Mon to Fri, welfare rights, classes
- E W. Berks Community Health Council, 19 Gun St 595678 (complaints about NHS)
- E Legal Aid 10 Crown St, 589696
- D Consumer Advice Centre, Civic Offices, next to Hexagon, 55911
- H Samaritans, 154 Southampton St, open 9am-10pm, 54845 (24hrs)
- I Family Planning Clinic, 24 Craven Rd, 864621
- I VD Clinic, London Rd (Royal Berks), open weekday mornings, 863355
- I Nightline (student line), David's Hall, London Rd, help all night, 6pm-8am, 872268
- I Casualty, Royal Berks, London Rd,
 - Alcoholics Anonymous, 597494
 - Reading Rape Crisis Line, open 7.30-10.30pm 55577, confidential support line, answer-phone during the week
 - Reading Gay Switchboard, Tues & Fri, 8-10pm 597269
- B Central Post Office, 7-10 Friar St, 55868
- C DHSS, Market Place, 581261
- B Alder Valley bus station, Station Hill, 581358
- B Unemployment Benefit Office, surnames D-M, Station Rd, 594433
- F Unemployment Benefit Office, surnames A-C, N-Z, 21 South St, 594433
- E Reading Transport, 583747
 - Electricity, 581133
 - Water, 55822
 - Gas, 581451, 24hrs

SHOPS

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Food | Delikatessens: | D County Delicacies, St Mary's Butts |
| | | A Giuseppe's, Chatham St |
| | | - " , Wokingham Rd |
| Fruit & Veg: | | D Reading Market, by Butt's Centre |
| | | Wednesday, Friday & Saturday |
| | | B "Smelly Alley"- Union St, btw Friar St and Broad St |
| | | ALSO- for unusual veg, various Asian shops in Oxford Rd, Wokingham Rd, and Cemetery Junction |
| Wholefoods: | | - University Union lunchtimes (cheapest) |
| | | I Reading Wholefoods, London Rd |
| | | D " " , "Traders", Station Rd |
| | | - Reading Market (stall), by Butt's Centre |
| Cheese: | | B Cheese shop in "Smelly Alley", see above |
| | | D Traders (stall), see above |
| Butchers: | | B West St, best in town |
| Fish: | | B "Smelly Alley", two fishmongers |
| Health foods: | | D Vitality House, Butt's Centre |
| | | C The High, High St, off Market Place W/ basement snack bar |
| Off licences: | | I Grog Shop, London Rd |
| | | I Hop Inn, Erleigh Rd |
| | | - Bottoms Up, Bath Rd |
| | | - Unwins, Wokingham Rd |
| | | - Henley Brewery, Prospect St, Caversham |

Bicycles:

- D Trents, Butt's Centre
- A " , Oxford Rd
- I Wilkins', Whitley St (for secondhand)

Books

- A Acorn, 17 Chatham St, underneath the Chatham St car park at beginning of the Oxford Rd- a fun place to be; "not just a bookshop"
- B Bargain Bookshop, Market Way (arcade), 2nd hand and (new) remainders
- E Book Bargains of Oxford, King St, (ext of Broad St) remainders
- F London St Bookshop, HMSO and 2nd hand
- B Keegans, Harris Arcade, Friar St,

Records New:

- D Our Price, Butt's Centre
- B " , Chelsea Girl, Broad St
- D Quicksilver, Butt's Centre, upstairs
- B P/M Records, "Smelly Alley", nice and laid back upstairs
- B Arcadia, "Smelly Alley", or Friar St
- B Hickies, Friar St (classical)
- F Pop Records, King's Rd
- A Sirrell's, Oxford Rd

Secondhand:

Secondhand:

- C Breakers, motorcycle parts, King's Rd
- A Sirrell's, electrical goods & records, see above
- B Emporium, Merchant's Place, off Friar Street, for clothes, antiques, junk
- B Traders, for same, see above
- ALSO Oxford Rd, good for 2nd hand furniture, beds, electrical goods

Charity:

- B Dr Barnado's, Friar St
- " , Wokingham Rd
- B Sue Ryder, Blagrove St
- B Oxfam, Station Rd
- H " , Whitley St
- C MIND, King's Rd
- I Help the Aged, Whitley St

REDRAG OUTLETS

- A Acorn, 17 Chatham St
- B Emporium, Merchants place
- D Our Price, Butt's Centre
- D Quicksilver, " , upstairs
- F Pop Records, King's Rd
- F Centre for Unemployed, East St
- Ken's SHOP, University Union

To get a copy delivered FREE ring Chris, 61257 or Nick 666681