**Reading Abbey Timeline**

* 870-871 Viking army encampment – first record of Reading as a Royal town
* 1086 Royal borough recorded around the Saxon minster church of St Mary
* 1121 Reading Abbey founded by King Henry I, endowed with land across Britain and religious relics, chiefly the hand of St James the Apostle
* 1125 Secular functions of the Abbey include the embryo Reading School
* 1136 Henry I buried in front of the High Altar
* 1164 Abbey church consecrated by Archbishop Thomas Becket in the presence of Henry II
* 1185 Henry II receives Heraclius, patriarch of Jerusalem at the Abbey
* About 1240, ‘Sumer is icumen in’, the earliest known English round written down
* 1254 Royal charter given to the town
* 1359 marriage of John Gaunt and Blanche of Lancaster at the Abbey. Their son was Henry IV, first Lancastrian King of England
* 1453 Parliament summoned to meet at Reading by Henry VI
* 1464 Edward IV publicly announces Elizabeth Woodville as his Queen after they secretly marry
* 1485 Grammar School established by Henry VII in the Refectory of the Hospitium
* 1486 Grammar School is reconstituted in the name of King Henry VII
* 1539 Dissolution of Abbey by Henry VIII – Abbot Hugh Cook Faringdon executed for treason
* 1557 St Laurence churchyard created
* 1560 Charter from Elizabeth I, a frequent visitor to Reading staying in her royal residence within the former Abbot’s Lodgings
* 1578 Town Hall moves into the Hospitium’s refectory, probably in a chamber above the school
* 1643 Siege of Reading – earthwork defences built around Reading
* 1688 ‘The Reading Fight’ – troops of James II and William III clash in the town’s streets, the only bloodshed of the Glorious Revolution
* 1720 A mob led by Mayor Robert Blake (Blake’s Cottages commemorates his wharf) destroys canal works on the Kennet Navigation, fearing loss of trade
* 1776 first antiquarian survey of Abbey Ruins
* 1785 Jane Austen and her sister Cassandra attend school in Abbey Gateway
* 1786 Reading Corporation moves from the Hospitium Refectory to the newly opened Georgian Town Hall built next to it. Reading School moves from the Hospitium Refectory to new school building in The Forbury. House of Correction built in the Forbury.
* 1791 St Laurence’s churchyard enlarged
* 1793 enlarged County Gaol opens in the Forbury
* 1804 Simeon Monument designed by John Soane, a native of Reading
* 1810 Kennet & Avon Canal opens
* 1833 Abbey South Transept and Chapter House purchased by public subscription
* 1837 Suttons’s Seeds opens their premises in Market Place
* 1837-1840 St James Roman Catholic church designed by A.W.N. Pugin
* 1840 Brunel’s Great Western Railway arrives in Reading
* 1841 Huntley & Palmers, world’s biggest biscuit factory opens
* 1842-1844 County Gaol rebuilt by Scott and Moffat
* 1856 Public Pleasure Gardens laid out in the east part of the Forbury
* 1861-1862 Sir George Gilbert Scott restores the Abbey’s Inner Gateway after its collapse
* 1871 After seven centuries in the Abbey precinct a new site for Reading School is opened in Erleigh Road
* 1875 Town Hall designed by local resident Alfred Waterhouse
* 1883 Reading Museum opens to the public
* 1886 Maiwand Lion memorial unveiled
* 1897 Oscar Wilde leaves Reading Gaol
* 1911 Berkshire’s Shire Hall opens
* 1915 Abbey becomes a Scheduled Ancient Monument
* 1932 World War Memorial unveiled
* 1943 Air raid damages Town Hall and St Laurence’s church, killing 41 people
* 1962 Sutton’s Seeds vacates town centre site and Prudential develop offices on the site
* 2006 Forbury Gardens restored with Heritage Lottery Fund support
* 2007 Simeon Monument and Market Place restored
* 2013 Reading Prison closes

*Compiled by Reading Museum*