



Friends
of
Reading
Abbey

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2014

Patrons:

The Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire

The Right Worshipful the Mayor of Reading

The Right Reverend the Bishop of Reading

The Abbot of Douai

The MP for Reading East

The MP for Reading West

The Vice Chancellor, Reading University

President: *Brian Kemp* **Vice Presidents:** *Janet Bond* *Leslie Cram*

You are invited to the
Annual General Meeting
of the Friends of Reading Abbey

Saturday 25th October 2014
at 2.30pm
(doors open at 2pm)

The Soane Room, Reading Town Hall, Blagrove Street
(Please see the agenda within)

We are privileged to have as our Guest Speaker

Professor George Bernard
who will be speaking on

The Dissolution of the Monasteries
with local reference to Reading

*George Bernard is Professor of early modern history at the
University of Southampton.*

*It was Frank Terry's teaching at Reading School which inspired him to become an
historian. His books include *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking
of the English Church* (2005), and *Anne Boleyn: Fatal Attractions* (2010).*

*All members are welcome to come along to the AGM, free of charge - as are
interested friends and colleagues.*

Refreshments available

**Annual General Meeting
Saturday 25 October 2014 at 2.30pm**

AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of the AGM held on 26 October 2013
4. Matters arising
5. Chairman's report
6. Treasurer's report
7. Election of officers and committee members:
President and Vice-presidents
Chairman
Secretary
Treasurer
Ordinary members of the committee
8. Appointment of Independent Examiner
9. Membership Subscriptions 2014—2015
10. Any Other Business

GOOD NEWS ON THE ABBEY QUARTER HERITAGE BID

READING Borough Council's bid to conserve the town's historic Abbey Quarter and re-open the Abbey Ruins to the public was successful in securing initial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in June 2014.

This means the Council – supported by Friends of Reading Abbey - can now move on to developing more detailed plans for the project which includes widespread conservation work of the Abbey Ruins and Gate, the site-wide interpretation of the Abbey Quarter area and a programme of events and activities. There is now a two year window for Council to work up its application seeking the full grant amount of £1.7M from the HLF. The total cost of the project is £3.1M, and the Council will put in the remaining funding.

FORA is an active partner of the Council in the Abbey Quarter project, and has a seat on the project team. We are actively supporting the bid through proactive voluntary work, including supporting the Council in opening up parts of the Abbey Ruins for public tours under safety-controlled conditions (“hard-hat tours”).

The Council's bid has public backing with more than 1,150 responses received to a public consultation earlier this year and 97% supporting the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The tours of the Ruins were also hugely oversubscribed during this June's Water Fest event, which shows the level of public interest in the site. The most recent opportunity to take in the history of the Abbey Quarter was as part of the Heritage Open Days tours on Friday 12 and Saturday 13 September 2014 and these too were heavily subscribed in advance.

Many of the Quarter's historic features are recognised as having national and local importance, being designated as part of a Scheduled Ancient Monument and Listed Buildings. Reading Museum's significant collections relating to the Abbey are of international importance and both reflect Reading's long history of global links.

The main conservation priorities are the Abbey Ruins and the Abbey Gateway, both part of the Scheduled Ancient Monuments and on the English Heritage 'Heritage at Risk Register'. The Council has already used separate funding to improve Town Hall Square in 2013 and has secured more funding to restore St Laurence's churchyard wall during 2014-15.

The project to conserve the Abbey was initiated after public access to the ruins was closed in summer 2009 after a condition survey highlighted the 'poor and rapidly deteriorating condition of the walls'. Working with English Heritage, Reading Borough Council has already completed comprehensive

condition surveys and investigations of the Abbey Ruins and Abbey Gate. The condition surveys have established a detailed schedule of repairs and a cost plan which is included in the Council's Heritage Lottery funding bid.

You can find out more information about the Abbey Quarter Project by following this link to the Reading Museum Website: <http://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/get-involved/projects-consultation/abbey-quarter>

READING WATER FEST

The hard-hat tours of the Abbey Ruins, as part of Water Fest in June, were very successful and fully booked, with over 200 people having the opportunity of getting into the Abbey Ruins under safety-controlled conditions. Due to the popularity of the tours an extra session was added at the end of the day. Along with Reading Museum, Friends of Reading Abbey assisted with the tours.

On a related point, for 2015 we are looking to persuade Reading Council to open the Abbey Ruins on even more occasions, for safety-controlled visits. A number of FORA members have already volunteered to help run these tours, but more are needed. So if you are interested in volunteering to help next year, please contact John Painter j.g.painter@hotmail.co.uk.



A Tour In Progress

*Further photographs can be found on our website
www.readingabbey.org.uk*



Everyone loves the Abbey!



Friends of Reading Abbey Annual Outing to Winchester on 24 September 2014

The day will include tours of the cathedral, Winchester College and St Cross Hospital. All come at a cost, but with group discount we can keep the cost down to £20 a head, which will include afternoon tea at St Cross.

Leave Reading at 9am—travel by private car, some sharing (travel costs not included). Please contact John Painter for further details - secretary@readingabbey.org.uk.

SUBSCRIPTIONS - a reminder that annual subscriptions are due on 1 September 2014.

Please note new email addresses: Iris Hunt - treasurer@readingabbey.org.uk
John Painter—secretary@readingabbey.org.uk



SUMMER PARTY—CAVERSHAM COURT GARDENS

The good weather held for the third Summer Party on 22 June, organised by Friends of Caversham Court; Friends of Reading Museum and Friends of Reading Abbey. The gardens and flower borders looked magnificent and provided a perfect setting for people to enjoy an afternoon of family entertainment. It was estimated that the event attracted around 1,000 visitors.

The Friends of Reading Abbey gazebo was well attended and the display of information about the Abbey with illustrations proved of great interest. We are happy to report that we signed up new members on the day and further membership applications have been received since. This increasing membership enables the committee to continue to promote the importance of Reading Abbey. Once again, the Abbey History Trail was popular with children (and adults) and proved to be a great way to learn about some of the abbey's past.



Intent on the Abbey Trail Questions



Redding Moreys Entertain



Progress Theatre Players



Friends of Reading Abbey Gazebo

More photographs of the Summer Party can be found on our website: www.readingabbey.org.uk