



Friends
of
Reading
Abbey

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2016

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

You are invited to the
Spring Meeting
of the Friends of Reading Abbey
Friday 15 April 2016
7.30pm

St Laurence Church, Friar Street, Reading RG1 1DA

Dr Martin Heale

will talk on

The Abbot in Late Medieval and Reformation England



Dr Heale (PhD (Cantab) FRHS) is Senior Lecturer in Late Medieval History at the University of Liverpool and a native of Reading. His publications include *Monasticism in Late Medieval England, c.1300 – 1535* and *The Prelate in England and Europe, 1300-1560*. He is currently completing a book on *The Abbots and Priors of Late Medieval and Reformation England*, which will be published by Oxford University Press in 2016/17.

We are taking the lecture to St Laurence's this year to provide an opportunity for Friends, and other people attending, to visit and look around this late medieval church, which is part of the Abbey precinct and was founded by the Abbey as a place of worship for the townspeople.

Entry will be free, but there will be a voluntary retiring collection to help cover the costs of hiring this important venue

The church will be open from 7.00pm.

National Citizen Service Challenge October 2015

In the half term of October 2015, Friends of Reading Abbey joined with Reading Museum and the Friends of Reading Museum to support a group of 12 seventeen year olds taking part in an NCS Challenge to improve their photographic skills by photographing the Abbey Ruins and the surrounding Abbey Quarter.

The NCS Challenge is a Government supported initiative which is aimed at young people aged 15-17 from a variety of backgrounds and helps them build skills for work and life whilst taking on new challenges

and meeting new friends. This really enthusiastic group of young people had been given a presentation the day before about the history of the site, plus a talk about the Reading Abbey Revealed project. This was followed by a tour, so that they could plan what they wanted to photograph the following day.

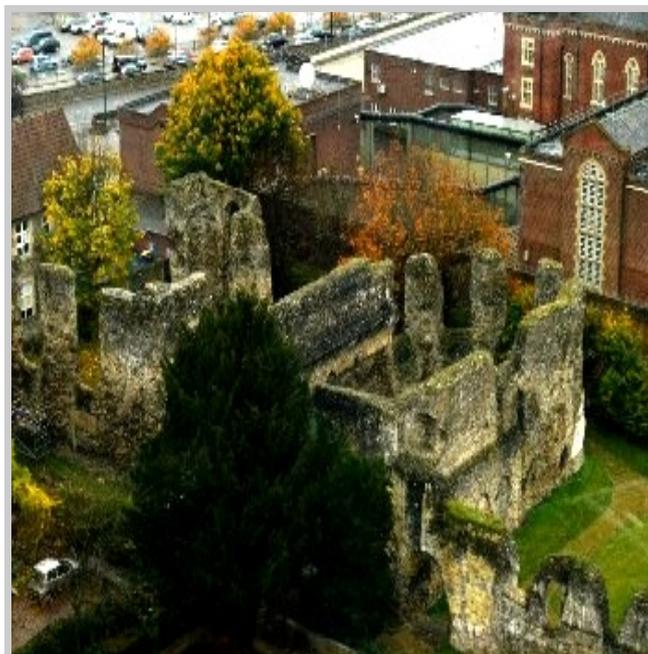
Their brief was to look at 3 aspects:

- Social history – how people use the Forbury area in the present day
- Artistic side – looking at the sculptures etc,
- From a marketing perspective – to imagine that they were taking publicity photos



Sadly, the day of the project (Thursday) was very damp and dismal, but it didn't curb the group's enthusiasm. Haslams Estate Agents very kindly gave permission for the group to take photographs from the top of the Blade building which gave a superb view over the Forbury, the Abbey Ruins and the prison.

On Friday afternoon it was the End of Challenge presentation and our very enthusiastic group of photographers presented some of their work to families and friends. The photos were impressive and they had managed to capture some really interesting shots of the site, of which these are just a few. The group came a long way in their understanding of the site in the three days - on the Wednesday hardly any of its members had even heard of Reading Abbey, but by the Friday all them had enthusiasm for the Abbey Ruins.



BOYDELL & BREWER, THE ACADEMIC PUBLISHER
IS OFFERING A 25% DISCOUNT TO THE FRIENDS OF READING ABBEY ON THEIR RECENT TITLE

**THE ROYAL ABBEY OF READING
BY RON BAXTER**

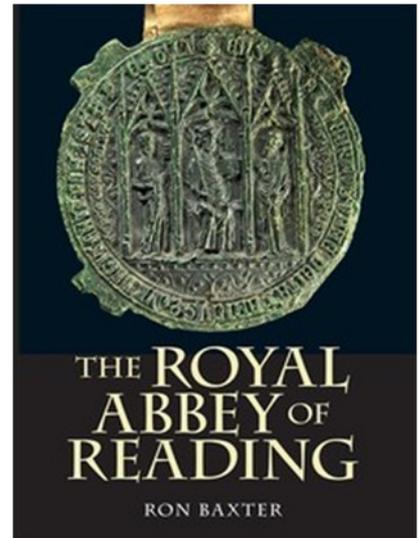
This richly illustrated volume is the first full-length survey of Reading Abbey, one of the most important ecclesiastical buildings of the Middle Ages. It offers a new virtual reconstruction of church and shows how the abbey formed the backdrop to many key historical events. The discount will make the price **£45.00** for members (instead of £60.00 RRP). Interested members should order directly from the publishers and an order form is attached.

The Royal Abbey of Reading

Reading Abbey was built by King Henry I to be a great architectural statement and his own mausoleum, as well as a place of resort and a staging point for royal itineraries for progresses in the west and south-west of England. From the start it was envisaged as a monastic site with a high degree of independence from the church hierarchy; it was granted enormous holdings of land and major religious relics to attract visitors and pilgrims, and no expense was spared in providing a church comparable in size and splendour with anything else in England.

However, in architectural terms, the abbey has, until recently, remained enigmatic, mainly because of the efficiency with which it was destroyed at the Reformation. Only recently has it become possible to bring together the scattered evidence - antiquarian drawings and historic records along with a new survey of the standing remains - into a coherent picture. This richly illustrated volume provides the first full account of the abbey, from foundation to dissolution, and offers a new virtual reconstruction of the church and its cloister; it also shows how the abbey formed the backdrop to many key historical events.

Ron Baxter is the Research Director of the Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland.



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Summer isn't far away and we have the following events planned

New Venue for the Friends' Summer Party - Sunday 19 June 2016

The three Friends' groups have held a Summer Party in Caversham Court Gardens for the last 4 years but in view of the successful *Reading Abbey Revealed* bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund it was felt appropriate to celebrate this success by holding the Party in the **Forbury Gardens, Reading from 2pm to 5pm.**

There will be live entertainment, activities for children, refreshments and much more - all taking place at the east end of the Forbury Gardens. A full programme will be circulated nearer the date, so please make a note to come along and support this event, hosted by the Friends of Reading Abbey, Reading Museum and Caversham Court Gardens!



(Photo: WIKIPEDIA)

FORBURY GARDENS

Winner of the Green Flag Award

Friends of Reading Abbey's Annual Outing - Wednesday 6 July 2016

This summer's annual outing will be by coach to Lewes Priory - the first Cluniac foundation in Britain, founded between 1078 and 1082. The day will include a guided tour of the Priory ruins and opportunities to visit the local church attached to the Priory (St John the Baptist), and the Anne of Cleves House, both in Southover, Lewes.

Our programme will end with a visit to Clayton, near Brighton, to visit the Saxon church, later part of the Priory's lands and with C12th wall paintings by the monks. More details on the trip to Lewes will follow, including the cost, but please keep this date free in your diary.



WALKS AND TALKS

WE ARE HAPPY TO OFFER TALKS ON READING ABBEY TO LOCAL GROUPS, CLUBS AND SOCIETIES. WE CAN ALSO OFFER GUIDED TOURS AROUND THE ABBEY QUARTER.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS PLEASE E-MAIL: secretary@readingabbey.org.uk OR WRITE TO Iris Hunt (Treasurer), 3 Mitchell Lodge, 269 Bath Road, Reading RG30 2BN.

Changes to the Friends of Reading Abbey Website

www.readingabbey.org.uk

We have been working to upgrade our website, giving priority to creating a fresh and up to date look to the home page with easier navigation across the site. Links to other pages are now in colour; the News and Events section has been expanded and a larger selection of photos of the Abbey Ruins have been added. Included on the Home Page is a photo of the Dormitory Area with the Blade towering behind it, taken during the photo-call at the announcement of the successful outcome of Heritage Lottery Fund bid. The new website became live on Friday 15 January 2016 .

If you don't have access to a computer in your own home, were you aware that it's possible to access the internet (and hence the FORA website) via computer terminals in public libraries? You will need to have access to the system, which will normally be available if you have a reader's card. Once you have logged into your account, you open a browser, such as Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, Safari, type the website address (www.readingabbey.org.uk) in the address line, and press the Return Key. The website will be displayed and you will be able to navigate around it using the links.

We hope that you will find the website changes helpful. Any comments on them would be very welcome, via email to secretary@readingabbey.org.uk.