



Friends
of
Reading
Abbey

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2014

Patrons:

The Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire

The Right Worshipful the Mayor of Reading

The Right Reverend the Bishop of Reading

The MP for Reading East

The MP for Reading West

The Vice Chancellor, Reading University

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

ABBEY RUINS HARD HAT TOURS



The first of this year's openings of the Abbey Ruins was on Friday 9 May. This was a great success, with 72 visitors over the two-hour lunchtime period. Four FORA volunteers supported Reading Museum staff in guiding the tours. FORA leaflets were handed out to attendees, and we have had two new members so far – one of whom said it was the best lunch hour he'd ever had! It was indeed a pleasure to be inside the Ruins again.

The next opening is on Saturday 14 June, to coincide with **Reading's Water Fest**. This time the visits will run between 11.00am and 3.00pm. FORA volunteers will again be joining Museum staff to act as guides. We will also have a presence at the Museum display stand in Chestnut Walk. The tours are free, and last around 15 minutes. You may have to queue to join a tour, as only a limited number of people can be allowed in at any one time. Assemble at the entrance in Chestnut Walk. Wear sensible shoes.

Do come along and join a tour and say hello to us at the Museum stand.

The Ruins will also be opened to the public (under controlled conditions), during the **Heritage Weekend** in mid-September 2014. These will be longer tours of the Abbey Quarter. Keep an eye on the Reading Museum website for further details, including timings and how you can book your tour slot.

We want to work with Reading Museum to increase the frequency of these controlled openings of the Abbey Ruins in 2015. If you wish to volunteer to be a guide on future Hard Hat tours of the Ruins, please contact John Painter at j.g.painter@hotmail.co.uk or write c/o Berkshire Record Office, 9 Coley Avenue, Reading, Berks RG1 6AF

Reading Evening Post covered the event and their website has a good write-up and some fine photographs:

<http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/local-news/guided-tours-give-peek-inside-7105631>.

For those unfamiliar with **Reading's Water Fest**, the event winds its way through the Forbury Gardens, alongside Chestnut and Riverside Walks, ending up at Bel and the Dragon and the Riverside Museum. There will be entertainment, music and children's activities and you can take in the beautifully painted narrow boats along the towpath.

A full day on offer, in the vicinity of Reading's imposing Abbey Ruins.

Letter from the Chairman

As you will see elsewhere in this Newsletter, a lot has been happening recently. Indeed, so much is going on at the moment that your Committee has decided to issue three Newsletters a year instead of two, while those of you who have email can receive even more frequent updates. (If you haven't told us your email address, please do, and we'll add you to the list).

At our Spring meeting in April a packed audience in Berkshire Record Office's Wroughton Room heard an absorbing lecture by our President, Professor Brian Kemp, on 'The Royal Abbey of Reading' – revealing the many and enduring links between Reading Abbey and the Crown throughout its four-hundred-year history. The Mayor of Reading came along too, reinforcing that the Abbey is important to all sections of the public.

In May, committee members and other volunteers from the Friends helped staff from Reading Museum run some very successful 'hard-hat' tours of the ruins (and more are planned for June). Behind the scenes we have been developing our website, and have devised a walking tour of the Abbey Quarter – although it's not possible to go into the ruins, this tour will highlight the many features that can still be seen. We have been busy preparing for our shared garden party with the Friends of Reading Museum and the Friends of Caversham Court, and we are planning our annual outing. Our new publicity leaflet has attracted so much interest that we have had to reprint it! Which leads me finally to say, that we are delighted to welcome several new members of the Friends. Our membership now stands at over one hundred, which is a great advance on last year and an extremely encouraging development (though we still have some way to go if we are to achieve our goal of doubling the membership by our AGM in October – so do carry on encouraging your friends to become our Friends!)

Peter Durrant



Once again Friends of Reading Abbey are pleased to be joining with Friends of Caversham Court Gardens and Friends of Reading Museum to host a Summer Party in the grounds of Caversham Court.

Entertainments will include a Silver Band, Choirs, Cream Teas, Children's Activities and much more. All in the beautiful riverside setting of the gardens.

Friends of Reading Abbey will have a display in their own marquee and will continue to raise awareness of the history of the Abbey and its importance. There will also be an Abbey History Trail for children (and adults if so inclined!)

ENTRY IS FREE AND ALL ARE WELCOME

**Summer Party - 2pm to 5pm, Church Road, Caversham, Reading RG4 7AD.
(Take the A4074 Woodcote Road & Gardens are past the Griffin on the left)**

**A reminder that FRIENDS OF READING ABBEY AGM will be on
Saturday 25 October 2014**

2.30pm at Reading Town Hall

Finally, Friends may like to know that Reading Bach Choir is performing a newly commissioned work which is a setting of a text which was in Reading Abbey library. It is a Marian text: *Ave gloriosa mater salvatoris* and it has been set by British composer Gabriel Jackson. The concert is on 5th July in St James Church at 7.45pm. The programme also includes Summer Songs by Steve Martland, which begins and ends with a setting of *Sumer is icumen in*. More information on the Choir's website: www.readingbachchoir.org.uk. Tickets £12 (concessions £10) from 0118 947 8097, or tickets@readingbachchoir.org.uk, or www.wegotickets.com.