

DAY CONFERENCE. WEDNESDAY JULY 3rd

The **MIDLAND CATHOLIC HISTORY SOCIETY** has organised a day at St James' Church Reading. There will be two illustrated talks, with a short guided tour of the Abbey ruins.

Programme:

10.15 to 10.30 Arrival and coffee at St James' church

10.45 MORNING TALK (Prompt start)

Reading Abbey: From Foundation Charter to recent research.

The Foundation Charter of Reading Abbey compared to those of other Cluniac and Benedictine monasteries. Lindsay Mullaney

Recent architectural and archaeological evidence, including newly published documents concerning the annual commemorative liturgies for Henry I. John Mullaney

12.00 MASS IN ST JAMES' CHURCH

12.30 – 1.00 LUNCH.

Because of the limited time available please bring a sandwich lunch. Hot/cold drinks will be available

1.00 GUIDED TOUR OF THE ABBEY RUINS

2.30 AFTERNOON TALK

The Turbulent Lifetime of Thomas Vachell. Tony Hadland.
(Thomas Vachell was MP for Reading in 1555)

3.30 TEA AND DEPARTURE

For non-members the cost for the day will be £10.00 or £5.00 if you wish only to come to either the morning or afternoon session. Payment may be made on the day itself but to help with seating and refreshments, please let us know if you intend to come, jgmullaney@aol.com or phone 0118 9470478. If paying by cheque, please make it out to *The Midland Catholic History Society*.

Parking is very limited, but if you need a special accessible place, please let us know. The nearest parking is Queen's Road Car Park (<http://www.reading.gov.uk/article/11734/Queens-Road-car-park>). Reading Borough Council, who now run this car park say that it is open, despite an NCP website message stating that it is closed. However, it is quite expensive. We are exploring alternative sites.

For those not wishing to go to Mass, this will offer the opportunity for a longer lunch break and maybe a visit to the Abbey Ruins or to the new display at Reading Museum.

FURTHER INFORMATION.

The speakers and their topics.

MORNING TALK. The talk will last about an hour and will comprise two parts. It is an outline of the last year's work by Lindsay and John Mullaney.

Lindsay Mullaney's research has involved looking at the foundation charters of various Benedictine monasteries from the 10th to the 12th centuries. One other source is a largely unknown book published in 1626,

the “Benedictine Apostolate in England”, (*Apostolatus Benedictinorum in Anglia*). This is a detailed, but partisan, history of the Benedictines in England from Saxon times. It was written in Flanders by Augustine Baker, a Benedictine scholar.

Lindsay has used these sources to make a comparative study of the foundation charter of Reading Abbey with those of other Benedictine monasteries. Her talk places the Reading charter in its wider context and helps us further understand the early days of Reading’s abbey and the intention of both its founder, Henry I, and of the monks who came to Reading in the 12th century.

John Mullaney has been examining aspects of the liturgical life of the Abbey, including material from the archives at Douai Abbey, west of Reading. He combines this with architectural and archaeological evidence demonstrating what life in Reading Abbey was like, especially in the first 200 years after its foundation.

John looks at how Professor Brian Kemp’s newly published research, concerning the liturgy for the annual, and indeed monthly, commemoration of Henry’s death, helps to give us a deeper and more accurate insight into the daily life of Reading Abbey. (*Reading Abbey Records a new miscellany*, B Kemp. £12.50. Berkshire Record Office).

GUIDED TOUR OF THE ABBEY RUINS

Unlike other tours of the Ruins, this will focus on those parts which tell us something about the liturgical life of the Abbey and the spirituality of monastic life. We will look at those sections of the standing remains that tell us how they would have been used and what it would have been like to be a monk, pilgrim or visitor to the Abbey in the 12 and 13th centuries.

AFTERNOON TALK

The Turbulent Lifetime of Thomas Vachell

Thomas Vachell was the heir of an old Reading gentry family; his wife was a Reade from Abingdon. Thomas’s father suppressed the hugely wealthy Reading Abbey, yet Thomas doggedly stuck to ‘the old faith’. His story spans five monarchs and four changes of religion. He became the most fined recusant in Oxfordshire, his wealth was seized in a government raid and, as a result of ‘swimming against the tide’, he fell out with his wife. Thomas Vachell’s story illustrates some of the huge changes England went through in the Tudor and early Stuart era.

About Tony Hadland

Born 1949 in Reading, Tony is a retired chartered building surveyor, information scientist, operational risk manager, museum administrator and freelance broadcaster. He has been an author for nearly forty years and today specialises in Thames Valley recusancy, genealogy and bicycle history. He was chairman of the Oxfordshire Local History Association for seven years, and has been the Oxfordshire Family History Society’s vice chairman and journal editor. In 1992 he published *Thames Valley Papists*,* a history of recusancy in the Thames Valley, and in 2004 the Mapledurham Estate published a second edition. He frequently presents illustrated talks on recusancy and is currently editing a volume for the Oxfordshire Record Society on the registers of the Oxford Catholic Mission. (*Available from St James’ Church and from the author. Price £9.95)