



# NEWSLETTER

**Autumn 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  
**Annual General Meeting**  
of the Friends of Reading Abbey  
**Saturday 29 October 2016 at 2.30pm**  
(doors open at 2.00pm)

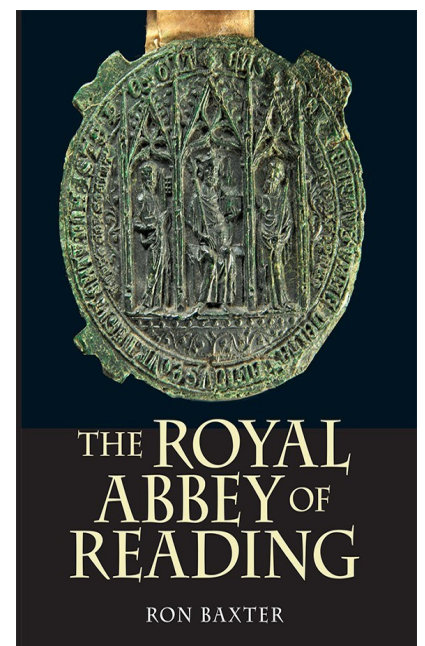
**Soane Space**  
**The Town Hall, Blagrove Street, Reading RG1 1QH**

Following the AGM we welcome  
**RON BAXTER**

to give this year's lecture on  
***READING ABBEY AS A ROYAL PALACE***

Ron Baxter is the author of *The Royal Abbey of Reading*, published this year. This richly illustrated volume provides a 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 Research Director of The Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland.*



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

**Friends of Reading Abbey**

## Friends' Summer Party

The Forbury Gardens, 19 June 2016



Rehearsing inside St James' Church



Progress Theatre Players



Friends of Reading Abbey, Caversham Court Gardens and Reading Museums held this year's Summer Party in the new location of the Forbury Gardens to celebrate Reading Borough Council's successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Reading Abbey Revealed Project.

We were delighted to welcome the Mayor, Councillor Mohammed Ayub who kindly opened proceedings (pictured with Vickie Abel, Chair of FCCG and John Painter, FORA Secretary).

Throughout the afternoon, David Owen Norris (Professor of Musical Performance at the University of Southampton) and colleagues, generously gave their time teaching all comers to sing *Sumer is Icumen In*, the 13th century round famously associated with Reading Abbey. After rehearsals an enthusiastic rendition followed in the gardens.

Throughout the afternoon FoRA provided tours in the area around the abbey ruins, taking in points of interest. These were all fully subscribed. The children's Abbey Trail also provided a fun way to discover the history of the site.

It was an enjoyable afternoon and an ideal opportunity to inform people about the work of the three Friends groups. Our grateful thanks to St James' Church for providing the rehearsal space; to Progress Theatre - and to our sponsors and helpers.

(More photos can be seen on our website)



Group Performance of *Sumer is Icumen In*, conducted by David Owen Norris



Summer Party photos: David Shephard



## Reading Water Fest

11 June 2016

Once again the people of Reading and beyond flocked to Chestnut Walk to see the many boats taking part in Waterfest and to enjoy the various stalls along its route, in this attractive and historic area of the town.



The abbey ruins weren't accessible this year due to the imminent conservation works, however the public were very keen to get updates on the Reading Abbey Revealed project. The Friends of Reading Abbey were on hand with display boards and to provide current information. We hope to have a bigger presence next year. There were also various activities and entertainment in the Forbury Gardens. The rain held off, which was the best we could hope for from the weather during that period of summer 2016!

## Friends of Reading Abbey Outing, 6 July 2016

**On a fine morning in July, a large group of members and friends travelled by coach to Lewes.** Our first stop was Anne of Cleves house where we were served tea and coffee before exploring this 15th century timber framed house and garden.

Next on the itinerary was a guided tour of the Priory ruins and a visit to the local church attached to it (St John the Baptist, Southover), accompanied by trustees of the Lewes Priory Trust. After lunch in the town, the programme continued with a visit to Clayton church, north of Brighton, which is of Saxon foundation but was later granted to the Priory and features C12th wall paintings by the monks. The church is truly a gem and well worth searching out. Our last stop was for tea at the Jack and Jill Inn, Clayton. Many thanks to John Painter and Iris Hunt for organising yet another successful and enjoyable trip and to our President, Professor Brian Kemp, for sharing his knowledge with us throughout the day.



# HENRY I OF ENGLAND

READING BETWEEN THE LINES are presenting a compelling new play on the incredible life of King Henry 1. It will be performed in St James' church, within touching distance of the abbey which King Henry founded in 1121 and where he was buried in January 1136.

**PERFORMANCES RUN FROM 2 NOVEMBER TO 19 NOVEMBER 2016**

**BOOK ONLINE AT [READINGBETWEENTHELINES.CO.UK](http://readingbetweenthelines.co.uk) - OR TELEPHONE 0800 652 4595.**

To coincide with the play, The Forbury Restaurant is offering a pre-theatre dinner menu, featuring some medieval dishes. Visit <http://forburys.co.uk/events/pre-theatre-menu/> or phone 0118 957 4044 for details.

## Abbey Gateway - Victorian Schoolroom

Reading Borough Council is considering a proposal to relocate its Victorian schoolroom from Reading Museum to the room on the first floor of the Abbey Gateway, when it is restored as part of the Reading Abbey Revealed project.

This was included in a report to the Council's Policy Committee on 18 July 2016.

The schoolroom is a popular part of the Museum's education service, and is visited by 4,000 schoolchildren each year, generating £20k annual income. The Abbey Gateway was also the original home of Reading Abbey School, where Jane Austen was a pupil from 1785 to 1786. This additional historical and literary link could add depth and interest to the educational programme for the schoolroom. The schoolroom experience would be modified to reflect Georgian as well as Victorian schooling.



## WHAT'S ON AT THE MUSEUM



Join one of the museum's trained volunteers for an introductory tour to the galleries. Each tour guide offers a different tour and will pick out items that fascinate them. Find out more about the stories behind the objects, like the man beheaded for supporting the king, the links between the Museum and the Palmer family or what was held in the HUGE Roman pot.

**Who:** All ages **When:** 11.30pm - 12.10pm, on Saturdays **How Much:** Suggested donation £2 Drop In

## FRIENDS OF READING ABBEY - ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS REMINDER

There will no change to our annual subscription rates for 2016-17 which remain at £7 for single members and £10 for families. Subs for the new year are payable from 31 August 2016 to our Treasurer: Iris Hunt, 3 Mitchell Lodge, 269 Bath Road, Reading RG30 2BN.

NB - You can now pay by electronic transfer or standing order - more details are given on our website, [www.readingabbey.org.uk](http://www.readingabbey.org.uk) - look under Join the Friends / Renew Membership.

*Please do continue to support the Friends into 2017, especially as the Council's Reading Abbey Revealed Programme will get into full swing this coming year.*