



**FRIENDS  
OF  
READING  
ABBEY**

**NEWSLETTER**

**Autumn 2022**

**Patrons:**

*The Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire*

*The MP for Reading East*

*The Right Worshipful the Mayor of Reading*

*The MP for Reading West*

*The Right Reverend the Bishop of Reading*

*The Vice Chancellor, Reading University*

*The Abbot of Douai*

**President:** Janet Bond

**Vice President:** Vacant

You are warmly invited to our

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Saturday 29 October 2022 at 2.30pm**

**Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square, Reading RG1 3BE**

**The AGM will be followed by our Autumn Lecture, given this year by  
CHRIS DARBYSHIRE**

**on**

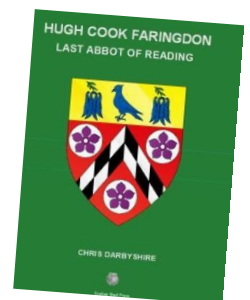
**THE TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF HUGH COOK FARINGDON**

The talk will consider the background to the conflict between Henry VIII and the Church, the course of the dissolution of the monasteries and the fall of Reading Abbey. The arrest of Faringdon, and the charges laid against him and his two co-accused will be discussed, and the conduct of the trial reconstructed.



**CHRIS DARBYSHIRE** attended Presentation College in Reading and after a period at university, returned to live and work here in 1979. He practised as a solicitor in Reading, and subsequently sat as a Judge in the town.

Chris has published his biography of Hugh Faringdon, and a detailed study of the medieval church in Stratfield Mortimer. In his study of the charges against Faringdon and his two co-accused, he has sought to bring a forensic approach to what happened in Reading nearly 500 years ago.



*Abbey Baptist Church is behind Reading Central Library, in the Abbey Precinct.  
It will be open from 2.00pm. Free entry, with a voluntary retiring collection.*

## WATERFEST 4 JUNE 2022

After a grey start, the weather improved and the crowds were treated to warm sunshine in which to enjoy the many activities on offer. Based alongside local heritage groups including the Friends of Reading Museum, the Reading Civic Society and the Con-Fraternity of St James, our stand drew a lot of interest and sales of books on the Abbey and the history of Reading were brisk. It was great to engage with visitors face to face again, and continue to inform people of the abbey's history and importance.

The Mayor, Councillor Rachel Eden stopped by for a chat, as did Matt Rodda, MP for Reading East.

The History Trail for children was very popular and over thirty children took part, giving them the chance to learn about the abbey as they followed the clues.

Along Chestnut Walk there were many workshops and decorated boats along the riverside. Food and drink were available in the Forbury and live music on all 3 stages, including the Prolisok Ukrainian Dance Group who performed folk dances and were very warmly received.

Reading Borough Council and the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust are to be congratulated on a most successful Water Fest 2022 and a big thank you to all the volunteers.



*Above and below - some budding historians*



*Above: Some of the Prolisok Ukrainian Dance Troupe*



*Left: Mayor, Councillor Rachel Eden and her Mayoral Escort, with Matt Rodda MP, visiting the Friends of Reading Abbey stand.*



## A BUSY YEAR FOR THE FRIENDS OF READING ABBEY

### SUMMER LECTURE

On Saturday 18 June, the 901<sup>st</sup> anniversary date, an additional public lecture was organised. The lecturer was Professor James Clark, from the University of Exeter, on *The Dissolution of the Monasteries*. The illustrated talk, specifically tailored to Reading Abbey and the local experience of the dissolution, was greatly enjoyed by some 35 members and friends in St James RC Church.

### ST JAMES WAY WALK

Our partners in the Con-Fraternity of St James have continued to promote a number of local initiatives, including a joint walk with FORA along the first 10 miles of the St James Way, from Reading Abbey to Burghfield Common, held on Wednesday 20 July, in part to check the newly-erected waymarking.

### ANNUAL OUTING TO ABINGDON

On Wednesday 3 August, a large group of members and friends gathered in Abingdon for the Friends' annual outing, our first since 2019. We headed over the bridge to the Abingdon Abbey Buildings where we had coffee in the Lower Hall. Here we were given a brief summary of the history of Abingdon Abbey by members of the Abingdon Abbey Buildings Trust. Nothing now remains of the abbey church, but some associated monastic buildings do still exist. We enjoyed a guided tour of these splendid survivors, which included the Granary (Unicorn Theatre), Checker Hall, Long Gallery, Guildhall and St Nicolas Church. After lunch we moved on to St Helen's Church and the Long Alley Almshouses. Lastly, the Abingdon Town Museum, which is housed in the County Hall. Abingdon is a town of rich history and wonderful medieval buildings, and a visit is HIGHLY recommended. The Friends of Reading Abbey are extremely grateful to members of the Abingdon Abbey Buildings Trust for giving so generously of their time and knowledge. Thanks also go to John Painter, FORA secretary, for making all the arrangements.



Unicorn Theatre



The Long Gallery



Interior of St Nicolas Church



The Lady Chapel Ceiling, St Helen's Church



Here are just a few photographs from a most enjoyable day. If you weren't able to join the outing, you can follow the Abbey's history by typing 'Abingdon Abbey Timeline' into Google.

## Caversham Court Gardens Fun Dog Show, Sunday 24 July

The next summer event for the Friends took place in the lovely Caversham Court Gardens. FORA shared a stand with the Friends of Reading Museum and Reading Civic Society, displaying information about our organisations to the many people attending the dog show. The brisk breeze from the river however, defeated attempts to safely erect the joint gazebo, therefore our stands were out in the open, giving a more relaxed feel! Photos below. More can be seen on our Facebook page.



## Berkshire Online Heritage Fair

Saturday 6th Aug 2022 saw the first ever online Berkshire Heritage Fair, organised by Berkshire Family History Society and Berkshire Local History Association.



Being online, there was no barrier to being able to attend and 30 local organisations were on hand to answer questions or give guidance on family heritage and research.

It was also aimed at those with an interest in historic Berkshire and FORA took part in both 2 hour, morning and afternoon sessions. We felt that this Heritage Fair was a great idea, but that live events are more suitable for FORA, and the lack of engagement with our breakout room proved this to be the case. An interesting day nevertheless and we learnt about organising online fairs!

## The Campaign to Save Reading Gaol Continues ....

Matt Rodda MP has recently circulated leaflets asking for people to show their support for the campaign, and to add their signature to his petition. He states that he's working with Banksy, local arts and community groups, and with Reading Borough Council to develop an arts and community based alternative use for the gaol. At the beginning of September 2022 the petition had gained over 9,000 signatures. When 10,000 signatures are reached, petitions get a response from the Government. The online petition can be found at <https://mattroddamp/stopreadinggaolselfoff>

## SUBSCRIPTIONS - MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

**A reminder that our 2022-23 subscriptions will be due from the end of October.**

The Committee is recommending once again that they remain unchanged, for the seventh year running, at £7 for single membership, £10 for family membership, £15 for corporate membership, and £105 for life membership.

If you have still to pay your 2021-22 subscriptions, it is not too late to do so! Cheques, made out to The Friends of Reading Abbey, can be sent to the Treasurer at 25 The Crescent, Earley, Reading RG6 7NW. Or you can pay directly by electronic banking into the FORA bank account, Sort Code 77-49-04 Account 60275168: if you do this, please register your name when doing so.

*Your support is very important and enables us to continue to promote awareness of Reading Abbey through our lectures, literature and events.*

## Queen Elizabeth II 1926–2022



The Friends of Reading Abbey shared the national sadness at the death of Queen Elizabeth II and appreciation of her 70 years of service to the Country and Commonwealth. The Platinum Jubilee Celebrations in June, had revealed the depth of affection held for the Queen.

The accession of King Charles III to the throne was proclaimed twice in Reading on Sunday 11 September. The declaration for the Royal County of Berkshire was made at 1pm by the High Sheriff of Berkshire, Alka Kharbanda, outside Reading Town Hall. The Reading Borough declaration was made by the Mayor of Reading, Councillor Rachel Eden, at 2pm, outside Reading Minster.

Large crowds attended both events, which concluded with the singing of God Save the King, and three cheers for our new monarch.