

THE FRIENDS OF READING ABBEY

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2023



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: John Mullaney

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

Saturday 28 October 2023 at 2.30pm

Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square, Reading RG1 3BE

A warm welcome awaits at the AGM, which will be followed by our Autumn Lecture.

Our speaker this year is PROFESSOR LINDY GRANT, and her subject is:

Burying the Royal Dead: Reading Abbey and royal pantheons in the high middle ages



Henry I founded Reading Abbey as his burial house in the tradition of the Anglo-Norman kings of England: his father, William the Conqueror, had founded St Etienne at Caen; King Stephen founded Faversham. But at the end of the twelfth century, Henry I's grandson Henry II and great-grandson Richard I were buried with other members of the family in a dynastic pantheon at Fontevraud. Why did their family burial policy change so dramatically? How far did they have a policy?

This talk explores their options and choices between cathedral or abbey burial, one's own mausoleum or family pantheon, and how their burial traditions compared with those of their royal contemporaries in continental Europe.

Lindy Grant is Professor Emeritus of Medieval History at the University of Reading, and an Honorary Research Fellow at the Courtauld Institute of Art.

*The 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.*

IT HAS BEEN A BUSY FEW MONTHS SINCE THE SUMMER EDITION OF OUR NEWSLETTER!

THE READING WALKS FESTIVAL 12 - 14 MAY 23

This inaugural event, organised by REDA (Reading's Economy and Destination Agency), proved to be a great success. A total of 42 guided walks were on offer, led by local volunteers and experts and the majority were fully booked.

The Friends of Reading Abbey were pleased to be involved and provided two walks – *Reading and Caversham Pilgrimage Sites* and a *Tour of the Abbey Quarter*, both led by committee members. All places were taken on both. Having received positive feedback, REDA plan to run the festival again in May 2024, over a longer period, dates to be confirmed. By following the link [Readingwalksfestival.org](https://readingwalksfestival.org) you will find a short report on the 2023 festival, plus many more photographs.



*Reading and Caversham Pilgrimage Sites
St Anne's Well, Caversham, 12 May.*

HOLYBROOK WALK, 31 MAY 23

Having recovered from the Walks Festival, we held our own walk for FORA members which followed the Holy Brook from source to confluence. Nine of us gathered at Sheffield Bottom Picnic Area (near Theale) for the 6-mile walk, led by Steve Vale of Loddon Valley Ramblers. The route took us through meadows and narrow paths, passing Coley Park Farm where the beautiful 16th century dovecote is said to include stones from Reading Abbey. Other places of interest included the Walled Garden and Cottage and the sites of the Coley Branch Line and Coley Men's Bathing Place. We had various sightings of the Holy Brook along the walk but at Reading, it flows under the town centre only to be seen at intervals, emerging by The Oracle and Central Library before joining the north channel of the river Kennet.

A big thank you to Steve who ably guided our group back to central Reading.



THE SUN BLAZED DOWN ON 10 JUNE TO CELEBRATE 34 YEARS OF WATERFEST



The Friends of Reading Abbey's stand was situated within the beautiful South Transept along with other heritage groups, and throughout the day we were visited by many members of the public, who stopped by for a chat and gain information about Reading Abbey. We had many books on the abbey for sale, and these proved very popular. As temperatures soared, people were keen to find shade, but a number of children braved the heat to follow our Abbey Trail, and some adults too!

The Mayor of Reading, Councillor Tony Page also visited us, along with some royal visitors from the past. A varied programme of activities was in full swing throughout the day, including music on three stages, workshops, crafts and many places to enjoy refreshments. The event is always well supported by the public and the Friends welcome the chance to engage with people and promote awareness of the abbey and its history.

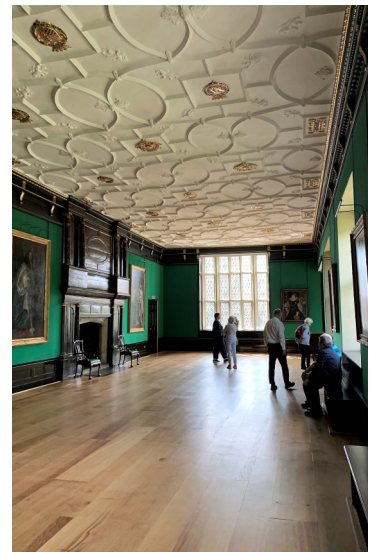


THE FRIEND'S SUMMER OUTING, 26 JULY 23

This year's summer outing was to London, to visit **St Bartholomew the Great church and The Charterhouse**, both within short walking distance of each other. We gathered in Reading Station for our journey via the Elizabeth Line to Farringdon and 28 members and friends formed our party for the day in London.

At the Farmers and Fletchers Hall, we had morning coffee and an introductory talk on St Bartholomew the Great before walking to the church. Established by Rahere in 1123, just two years after Reading Abbey, it is the only remaining Norman church within the City. Built in the Romanesque style, the Norman Chancel and Transepts gave us an idea of how splendid Reading Abbey would have once looked. Rahere was a courtier and favourite of King Henry I and his tomb can be seen in the church. After lunch, it was a short walk to The Charterhouse where our group were given a guided tour of this Carthusian priory founded in 1371, just outside the walls of London. Like Reading, the abbot stood out against Henry VIII, refused to sign the Act of Supremacy, and was executed at Tyburn.

Charterhouse is such an interesting place to visit, with much to see and admire. There are more photos of this enjoyable day on our Facebook page.



SUBSCRIPTIONS - MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

A reminder that our 2023-24 subscriptions will be due from the end of October. The Committee is recommending once again that they remain unchanged, for the eighth 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 2022-23 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.