



FRIENDS OF READING ABBEY

NEWSLETTER SPRING 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

THE PROFESSOR BRIAN KEMP MEMORIAL LECTURE Saturday 26 March 2022 at 2.30pm The Abbey Baptist Church

THE READING ABBEY FORMULARY

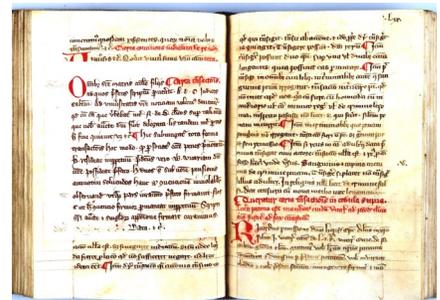
Dr Fredrica Teale

Dr Teale combined her background in archaeology and music to do an interdisciplinary MA in Medieval Studies at the University of Southampton, with a focus on Benedictine Abbeys. This led to a PhD looking at Benedictine jurisdiction in the fourteenth century, with the Reading Formulary as case study. She will give a background to the Formulary, and what the Formulary tells us about the relationships between people at all levels of society in the late C13th and early C14th.



The Reading Formulary is a collection of legal and other documents written as a guide for use at Reading Abbey. It was located in private ownership by Professor Brian Kemp, and in 2013 the Friends of Reading Abbey helped the Berkshire Record Office to purchase it for public access.

**Abbey Baptist Church is behind Reading Library.
It will be open from 2.00pm. Entry will be free, with a voluntary retiring collection to help cover the costs of hire.**



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 30 OCTOBER 2021

Our meeting this year was the Friends' first live event for 2 years! Held in a new venue, namely, The Abbey Baptist Church in Reading, we were provided with a modern and airy meeting room, conveniently located in the town centre – and close to the Abbey Ruins. It was a pleasure to welcome people face to face once again and over 50 people attended the meeting and lecture.

Our Chairman, Dr Peter Durrant MBE, reported on the positive response to Reading Abbey 900 and thanked all those who had made it such a success. Despite the continuing COVID restrictions, FORA had produced a full and varied programme of events, including Zoom lectures, talks and walks, pilgrimage routes and self-guided tours. The Friends were delighted to have been able to take part in Reading Water Fest on 20 June, where we introduced the new Pilgrim Badge, sales of which were brisk.

The Mayor, Councillor David Stevens had nominated FORA as one of his five chosen charities and Peter Durrant was delighted to receive a cheque for £1,600, part of the proceeds of the Mayor's online auction earlier in the year. Sincere thanks were extended to the Mayor for his ongoing and active support.



Peter Durrant receives the cheque from the Mayor

The Secretary's Report, presented by John Painter, also reflected what an active and positive year 2021 had been, in spite of the pandemic. The report is published on our website and can be seen by following this link:

<http://readingabbey.org.uk/pdf-files/sectyrpt-2021.pdf>

Once the official AGM business had been concluded, Dr Joanna Laynesmith gave a fascinating talk on Elizabeth Woodville whose secret marriage to Edward IV in 1464 was revealed at Reading Abbey.

Thanks to Joanna's extensive research, we were given a glimpse into Elizabeth's character and her life as queen during this particularly turbulent period in England's history.

Two of Joanna's books were on sale at the AGM and are available online - at a discounted price. Details are below:

Cecily Duchess of York is at <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/cecily-duchess-of-york-9781350098787/> and the discount code GLR TW7UK takes 30% off the RRP.

The Last Medieval Queens is at <https://global.oup.com/the-last-medieval-queens-9780199247370> and the 30% discount code for this book is AAFLYG6.

As at February 2022 these codes still applied and represent an excellent discount.



John and Lyndsay Mullaney ably cope with book sales



John Painter, Joanna Laynesmith, Dr Peter Durrant

PETITION TO REOPEN BIDDING FOR THE SALE OF READING GAOL



Petitions
UK Government
and Parliament

There was a media frenzy in December 2021 when world-famous street artist, Banksy, pledged to donate £10 million to help fund a bid to purchase Reading Gaol and prevent the Grade II listed building being bought by property developers. The artist has offered to match the best commercial offer by selling the stencil he used to paint on the Grade II-listed building in March 2021 (pictured).

The Ministry of Justice responded by stating that the intervention fell outside of the bidding timetable. Subsequently, Reading East MP, Matt Rodda, has backed a petition to reopen bidding for the sale of Reading Gaol.

At 10,000 signatures, the government will respond to this petition and all petitions run for 6 months. The deadline to sign is 30 June 2022. Follow the link <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/603658>. FORA will continue to monitor the situation.



The Banksy mural is now behind a protective Perspex screen following an attempt to damage it.

ZOOM TALK: CON-FRATERNITY OF ST JAMES AND THE ST JAMES WAY

Following the success of our 2021 winter/spring programme of zoom talks, more are being organised this year for members who prefer to join from home during the darker and colder months. The first was held on 27 January 2022, given by *Robin Dorkings*, Group Leader of the Thames Valley group. Founded in 1983, the CSJ has around 1,000 members and their mission is to provide information and support to those wishing to undertake any of the Camino routes to Santiago de Compostela. The Camino is a network of ancient pilgrimage routes, originally religiously motivated. Robin explained that nowadays, motivations can be religious, or a 'new start', a time for reflection, adventure or physical challenge. It is also a very social time, with places to eat and stay. There are many routes in the UK - our local one being THE ST JAMES WAY: Reading to Southampton. This is an 86 mile walk over 6 days, beginning at the Abbey Gateway, and taking in historic settlements such as Bramley, Upper Wield and Winchester. The route is accredited by Santiago de Compostela. Pilgrims can collect stamps in an accredited passport on any of the miles walked in England. And don't forget 'Reading for Modern Pilgrims' as featured in our Autumn 2021 newsletter (here's the link <http://readingabbey.org.uk/pdf-files/nlautumn2021.pdf> plus this direct link to the Reading Pilgrim Trail leaflet <https://livingreading.co.uk/public/downloads/FFQ3G/Reading%20for%20Modern%20Pilgrims%20map%20guide%20-%20A4%20landscape.pdf>) Start your Camino Inglés from your own doorstep!



ABBOT'S HOUSE GARDEN RE-OPENS

To the east of Abbot's House, in Abbot's Walk off The Forbury, is an enclosed garden overlooking the Dormitory in the Abbey Ruins. Since 2015 the garden has been fenced and gated to control access and prevent anti-social behaviour. It is maintained by Abbot's House who open the gates for public access during their office hours. However, since the start of the COVID pandemic in March 2020 they have been permanently locked. We have been in contact with the agents for Abbot's House, who have now started to re-open the gates again, from 1st February 2022, initially between the hours of 10.30am and 2.30pm.



Our Secretary, John Painter, did go to the gardens on 1st February and confirmed that the gates were open. However, there is still concern over possible anti-social behaviour and John is asking if: **'those of us in the Reading area could visit and sit in the gardens from time to time, to re-claim the gardens for the public and to discourage daytime anti-social activity'**.

Please do visit this quiet spot, maybe take some lunch, stay a while ...

DATES TO NOTE IN YOUR 2022 DIARIES

Saturday 26 March - 2.30pm SPRING LECTURE

Thursday 26 May -7.30pm Zoom Talk by Toby Davies from RABBLE on their forthcoming open-air production of Henry I and Reading Abbey, to be staged in the Abbey Ruins in June. The link will be sent nearer the time.

Saturday 18 June - 2.30pm SUMMER LECTURE

To celebrate the 901st anniversary of the Abbey's foundation, and on the foundation day, we are holding an additional public lecture, by *Prof. James Clark*, University of Exeter, on the ***Dissolution of the Monasteries***. Details to follow.

Wednesday 3 August SUMMER OUTING TO ABINGDON. Itinerary currently being finalised.

Saturday 29 October - 2.30pm AGM AND AUTUMN LECTURE Details to follow.