



FRIENDS OF READING ABBEY

NEWSLETTER SPRING 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

THE PROFESSOR BRIAN KEMP MEMORIAL LECTURE Saturday 18 March 2023 at 2.30pm St James' RC Church, Forbury Road, Reading RG1 3FD

The Medieval Pilgrimage Experience: Arrival, Destination and Engagement

Dr Jamie Ingram

The talk will explore some of the historic and archaeological evidence for the pilgrimage experience. With focus on the arrival of the medieval pilgrim at a pilgrimage centre and potential methods of personal engagement with the divine there, using the presence and distribution of graffiti and what this can say about the pilgrims' movement and engagement with space and the divine at the site.

Jamie Ingram is a doctor of medieval archaeology, affiliated to the University of Southampton and Hampshire Historic Graffiti Survey and is an expert in the study of historic graffiti, its interpretation, and what it can tell us about the experience of lay worshipers within pilgrim destinations.



St James's RC Church is next to Reading Gaol, in the Abbey Precinct.
It will be open from 2.00pm. Free entry, with a voluntary retiring collection.
Non-members welcome.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 29 OCTOBER 2022

We were delighted to welcome an audience of 78 people to the Abbey Baptist Church for our AGM and Lecture. This represented a number back to pre-Covid levels, which was extremely encouraging. In his report, our Chairman, Dr Peter Durrant MBE, said that during 2022 FORA had been active in promoting awareness of the Abbey, and its history and continuing significance today, and added that the Secretary's report had demonstrated the range of activities promoted or shared in. He publicly thanked the committee for its work over the past year; welcomed the developing relationship with the Con-fraternity of St James; and noted the continuing links with partner groups, such as the Friends of Reading Museum and the Friends of Caversham Court Gardens. There had been a slight decline in membership over the past year and the challenge in 2022/23 was to arrest and reverse that decline, and to attract new, and in particular younger members.

The Chairman noted that for the past year there had been a vacancy for the position of Vice President and under Agenda Item 6, he formally proposed John Mullaney to fill this vacancy which was seconded by John Painter.



The busy Book Stall



Peter Durrant and Chris Darbyshire

Following the AGM business, Chris Darbyshire, gave an illustrated talk on the Trial and Execution of Hugh Cook Faringdon. As promised, Chris engaged the audience with his forensic approach and vividly recreated the conviction of the abbot and his co-accused, John Enyon and John Ruge in November 1539. All three were convicted of High Treason in a trial lasting just one day. If you would like to read a detailed study of this subject, Chris' book can be purchased via www.scalloppshellpress.co.uk/our-books. It's number 15 on the list – Hugh Cook Faringdon, Last Abbot of Reading.

IN OTHER NEWS

READING ABBEY GATEWAY'S Hugh Faringdon carved head received a prestigious national award at The Stone Federation of Great Britain's Natural Stone Awards 2022.

The carved head, which was added to the gateway in 2021 to mark the Abbey's 900th anniversary, was Commended in the Carving, Lettering and Sculpture category. The awards were announced at an official ceremony held in London on 2 December 2022.

The new book by Dr Joe Chick, *Society and Monastic Lordship in Reading, 1350-1600* was published before Christmas, by Boydells, who have created a special offer for members of the Friends of Reading Abbey. To purchase it through their website <https://boydellandbrewer.com/9781783277568/urban-society-and-monastic-lordship-in-reading-1350-1600/>, enter promo code **BB127** at the checkout to receive 50% off, valid until 30 May, 2023. This cuts the hardback price of the book from £70 to £35.

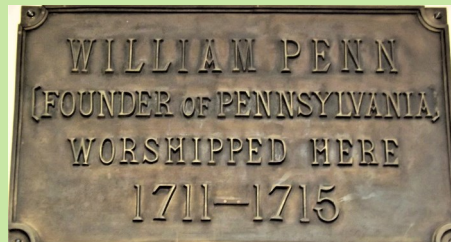
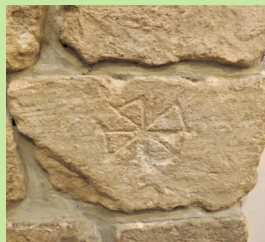
Reading Gaol - there is no further news on the future of the gaol site, but we understand that Councillor Tony Page has written to Dominic Raab MP, on behalf of Reading Council, pressing for an update from the Secretary of State for Justice.

VISIT TO READING INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY CENTRE (RISC) 24 JANUARY 2023

RISC occupies three adjacent buildings: 35, 37 and 39 in historic London Street. Knowing that the building contains stones from Reading Abbey, the committee were delighted to be given permission to visit and look around.

During an excellent and informative tour given by Martin, we learnt of the extensive use of cut stone from Reading Abbey in building the basement foundations of nos. 35 and 37. During renovations to the buildings in 1997, more stones and fragments of sculpture from Reading Abbey were discovered in the wall between nos. 35 and 37 and more uncovered when creating a new doorway. About half were carved with a variety of mouldings or mason's marks. Some of these have been re-used to form the base to the bar in no.35, and in the RISC roof garden, which is a lovely green space amongst the surrounding buildings. Stones also form a beautiful wall arcade in the 'Stones Room' (Committee Room 3). It is believed that these were taken as building materials from the Abbey sometime after dissolution, and most probably after the Civil War. They were examined by Dr Ron Baxter (author of *The Royal Abbey of Reading*, and a previous speaker for the Friends) and all have been fully documented in the *Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland* [3]. A visitor to this site was William Penn, founder of the state of Pennsylvania and Quaker leader. He had retired in 1710 to a house in Ruscombe, Twyford and would often worship here at the Quaker meetings.

The buildings were a fascinating place to visit, and their history is fully documented in a book called '*RISC. Of books, stones, friends and visions*' and copies can be purchased from the shop at £5 each.





10 - 14 MAY 2023

THE FESTIVAL is an exciting new initiative and your Editor can do no better than add the following from the Press Release, issued on 3rd February:

“ Welcome to the inaugural **READING WALKS FESTIVAL**. We are delighted to share over 40 walks with you over the five days of the festival, bringing alive the stories, heritage and landscapes of Reading and the surrounding countryside through a series of guided walks.

Our emphasis for the Reading Walks Festival is as much about telling the stories of Reading as walking for its own pleasure, so you'll find that our volunteer guides have lots to share with you along the way.

Our walks range from one-hour short walks to a 2-day pilgrimage. The majority of the programme of walks are free.”

THE FRIENDS OF READING ABBEY are very pleased to be involved and will host two walks:

Friday 12 May at 10.30 am - Reading and Caversham Pilgrimage Sites

Sunday 14 May at 2pm - Reading Abbey Quarter Circular Walk

You can find full details of each walk and how to book via this link
[What's On events | What's On Reading \(whatsonreading.com\)](https://www.whatsonreading.com)

Do please visit the site. There are a *huge* variety of guided walks on offer, giving opportunities to learn about the heritage and history of this area, while keeping fit!

IMPORTANT DATES FOR YOUR 2023 DIARIES

<u>Saturday 18 March - 2.30pm</u>	SPRING LECTURE
<u>10—14 May</u>	READING WALKS FESTIVAL (<i>FORA walks listed above</i>)
<u>10 June</u>	WATERFEST
<u>13 June to 1 July</u>	HENRY 1 - RABBLE THEATRE'S production to be staged in the Abbey Ruins. (<i>check their website for ticket release dates</i>).
<u>8—17 September</u>	HERITAGE OPEN DAYS
<u>Saturday 28 October - 2.30pm</u>	AGM AND AUTUMN LECTURE (<i>Speaker, Lindy Grant on Royal Burials in C12/13th Monasteries</i>).

DIARY DATES