



FRIENDS OF READING ABBEY

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2021

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

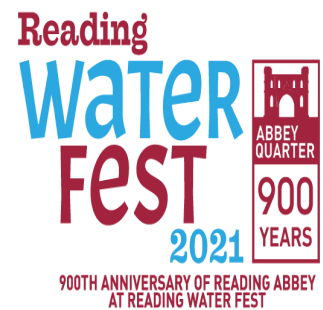
Vice President: Vacant



WATER FEST RETURNS ON SATURDAY 19 JUNE

11am to 5pm in the Abbey Ruins

It will be the flagship celebration event to mark the **900th anniversary of Reading Abbey**. Originally one of Europe's largest royal monasteries, Reading Abbey was founded by King Henry I of England in 1121.



Despite working under very difficult conditions due to the outbreak of Covid - and subsequent lockdowns - Reading Borough Council have pulled together an impressive programme for Water Fest.

It will feature the Forbury Civil War Camp and Medieval Village, a floating stage, painted narrowboats on the river, children's entertainment and more.

In light of restrictions still in place, a ticketed system will be in operation to monitor numbers and the Forbury Gardens and abbey ruins won't be accessible during this event without pre-booking. Demand is expected to be high.

Book your ticket to this free festival, via <https://whatsonreading.com/waterfest900>.

The Friends of Reading Abbey will be at Water Fest too, as well as the Friends of Reading Museum, forming part of a heritage themed area within the Abbey Ruins. We will be promoting FORA and the abbey, have books on sale on local history topics and, enjoying meeting people face to face once again!

NEW CARVED HEAD CHOSEN FOR THE ABBEY GATEWAY

In **Reading Council's** recent quest to decide which historical figure would be carved on one of the incomplete head-stops that decorate the outside of Reading's Abbey Gateway, the last **Abbot of Reading** received just over 40% of the vote. Abbot Hugh Cook Faringdon received 361 votes out of a total 867 – a clear winner, taking the lion's share of the vote. The second most voted for option was the modern stone mason with 236 votes and in 3rd place was Jane Austen with 151 votes. Queen Elizabeth 1 was in fourth place followed by Dr Jamieson Hurry and Sir George Gilbert Scott. The winning figure will now be carved by Cliveden Conservation and the carving will be unveiled on **19 June 2021** during Water Fest, to mark the Abbey's 900th anniversary.



Image of the last Abbot

FRIENDS OF READING ABBEY TALKS VIA ZOOM

The programme of talks beginning in December 2020 and ending on 20 May 2021, has been a great success. Our inaugural 'Professor Brian Kemp Memorial Lecture' on 27 March 2021 attracted an on screen audience of approximately 90 people. Due to the popularity of these Zoom talks, the Committee are considering another series beginning in autumn 2021.

READING ABBEY 900 BADGE

The Friends of Reading Abbey have commissioned a badge to commemorate Abbey 900. A local design student, Katie Holt, produced the artwork which is based on the pilgrim's badge in the Reading Museum collection.



We're very pleased to say that the badges will be on sale on our stand at Waterfest, and also at Reading Museum at a cost of £2.50 each.

ABBAY 900 WALKING ROUTES

To further commemorate this auspicious year, a web-based local walk has been produced by committee member, Doug Beaumont. The route begins in the Forbury and circles through the town, covering all points of interest along the way. It will be published on our website, with maps, by June 2021.

READING GAOL UPDATE

Reading Borough Council submitted their bid for the site on 15 March. On 18 May the Ministry of Justice rejected the Council's bid of £2.6million as not of high enough monetary value, and are likely to re-market the site for commercial sale. The Council have said they will keep their bid on the table.

An artwork which appeared on the morning of 1 March on the gaol wall, was confirmed as a genuine 'Banksy' on 4 March, 2021. It was subsequently defaced, but has been restored and is protected by scaffolding.



Rabble Theatre are delighted to be performing live again, and to present their latest production - **THE LAST ABBOT OF READING**. It will be staged in the Chapter House of the Abbey Ruins from **11th June to 3rd July**.

Written by Beth Flintoff the dramatic new play tells the incredible tale of Reading's unlikely last abbot, Hugh Faringdon, and his devastating relationship with Henry VIII. This promises to be well worth seeing and tickets are on sale now. All booking information, including covid safety measures, can be found on the Rabble Theatre website <https://rabbletheatre.com>. Or try the South Street Arts Centre Box Office on 0118 960 6060.

DIARY DATES FOR 2021 (assuming restrictions have been lifted)

Sunday 1 August	Caversham Court Fun Day 2pm to 5pm. FORA will have a stand at this popular event.
11 - 12 September	Heritage Open Days - date to be confirmed.
16 October	WEA Day-School - Henry I's Reading Abbey 10am - 4pm. Details to be confirmed.
Saturday 30 October	The Friends AGM. The talk will be given by Dr Joanna Laynesmith, University of Reading GCMS, on Elizabeth Woodville and her links to Reading (<i>deferred from 2020</i>).