

THE FRIENDS OF READING ABBEY

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2024



Patrons:

The Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire

The Right Worshipful the Mayor of Reading

The Right Reverend the Bishop of Reading

The Abbot of Douai

The MP for Reading East

The MP for Reading West

The Vice Chancellor, Reading University

President: Janet Bond

Vice President: John Mullaney

READING
WATER FEST
2024

SATURDAY 8 JUNE
11am to 5pm



Back again for its 35th year, Water Fest celebrates the Kennet and Avon Canal, as well as the many historic spots that can be found along the towpath in Reading.

Reading Abbey was founded by monks from Cluny Abbey in France, and Lewes Priory, Cluny's daughter house in England. The Friends subscribe to the Federation of European Cluniac Sites (FESC), which was set up in 1994 to promote awareness of Cluniac foundations across Europe.

This year, to celebrate the Federation's 30th anniversary, we will focus our display on the Abbey's connections with Cluny; and there will be our *Cluny Kids* History Trail for children to follow.



You will find the FRIENDS OF READING ABBEY stand within the south transept along with other heritage groups - do pop by and see us there.

As always, this accessible one-day event is free to enter and there are many activities and exhibitions to enjoy throughout the Forbury Gardens, Abbey Ruins and Chestnut Walk.



THE PROFESSOR BRIAN KEMP MEMORIAL LECTURE - 2 MARCH 2024



Held in the beautiful church of St James, the **Spring Lecture on Monks, Miracles and Memory and the dissolution of Reading Abbey**, drew an attendance of approximately 130, our largest to date! Given by Professor Helen Parish (*pictured with John Painter and Dr Peter Durrant*), the audience enjoyed this very interesting and informative talk and were keen to learn more via the question session which followed. Thank you to all who came along, we greatly appreciate your support.

THE FRIENDS SUMMER OUTING 2024

This year's summer outing will be on **Wednesday 17 July**, travelling by coach to Gloucester. We will visit the cathedral and have a guided tour of the Blackfriars Dominican friary in the city centre. The cathedral is the C12th church of the Benedictine Abbey which survived the dissolution to become the seat of the new see of Gloucester. It is the burial place of a king - Edward II - and retains much of its monastic cloister, including fan vaulting and a Reservoir.

The trip has proved very popular and the coach is almost fully booked. However, there are sometimes cancellations so if you're interested in the trip, it's worth phoning John Painter on 0118 9267893 to check availability.



Gloucester Cathedral - WIKIPEDIA

READING GAOL UPDATE

Our Summer 2023 edition featured the Save Reading Gaol Campaign, when 700 people marched through Reading on 25 March 23 in a bid to save the building as a cultural centre and to prevent luxury flats being built on this historical site.

One year further on, the site has been sold to the Ziran Foundation and during an interview with Radio Berkshire in March 2024, Eric Sun, Media Relations Manager for Ziran stated that the foundation had "no intention" of turning the building into flats. Mr Sun further announced that the two main focuses were a boutique hotel and a substantial art gallery and that the Ziran Foundation were 100% on board with making the site a landmark/cultural destination.

DIARY DATES 2024

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| 8 June | WATER FEST (11am to 5pm) |
| 17 July | FRIENDS SUMMER OUTING |
| 6 - 15 September | HERITAGE OPEN DAYS |
| 28 September | CLUNY LECTURE A public lecture on the theme of Reading Abbey in its European Context , organised by the Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies (GCMS) and History Department at the University of Reading, along with FORA. Details to be announced but keep the date free . |
| 26 October | AGM AND LECTURE Medieval Tilery in Silver Street, Reading , a talk by David Sanchez , from the Thames Valley Archaeological Service. |