

THE FRIENDS OF READING ABBEY SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2025



Patrons:

*The Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire
The Right Worshipful the Mayor of Reading
The Right Reverend the Bishop of Reading
The Vice-Chancellor, Reading University*

*The Abbot of Douai
The MP for Reading Central
The MP for Reading West and Mid-Berks*

President: Janet Bond

Vice President: John Mullaney



SATURDAY 28 JUNE 2025 brings WATERFEST back again for its 36th year.

Taking place within the Forbury Gardens, Abbey Ruins and Chestnut Walk, this popular event runs from 11am to 5pm.

The Friends of Reading Abbey will be there alongside other heritage groups, and we'd be delighted to see you.

Our **SCHOOLS' ART COMPETITION** has now been judged, so do come along to our stand, where the entries will be on display.

The **Schools' Art Competition - Reading Abbey, Past Present and Future** was designed to encourage interest and awareness of the Abbey amongst local children - and the abbey ruins will be the perfect place to see the artwork. We will also be running the **History Trail**, a fun way for children to discover facts about Reading's Abbey.

This free event will have activities throughout the Forbury Gardens, the Abbey Ruins and Chestnut Walk, where the beautifully painted boats will be moored along the canal. There will also be a programme of music plus food stalls. Waterfest this year will directly respond to the Council's pledge to be carbon neutral by 2030, using environmental and climate change themes through creative programming and workshops on the day.

BRIAN KEMP MEMORIAL LECTURE, 29 MARCH 2025

We had an excellent attendance for this year's Professor Brian Kemp Memorial Lecture, with an audience of almost 80 filing into St James' church. We were treated to a fascinating talk by Dr Ruth Salter on ***Medicine for the Monks: Medieval Monastic Infirmaries, Healthcare and Reading Abbey***, a topic that generated many questions in the session that followed.

FORA AT 40 1985 - 2025

To mark the 40th anniversary of The Friends of Reading Abbey we have been finalising two projects, the first being our **Schools' Art Competition - Reading Abbey, Past Present and Future**. Fifteen submissions were received and judged by Martin Andrews, a local designer and typographer and former President of the Reading Guild of Artists. All participants have been invited by school to take part in printing workshops at Martin's studio in Caversham where certificates will be awarded, along with Hobbycraft vouchers and Pilgrim badges (which Martin has kindly made). The winners' schools will also get a financial award.

The entries will be on display at:

The FORA Coffee Morning, Abbot's House, Friday 13 June

At the Blade foyer, office hours Monday - Friday 10 - 5, from 16th to 27th June

And on the FORA display stand at Waterfest, Saturday 28 June



PLAQUE INSTALLATION - 35 & 37 LONDON STREET - THE RISC BUILDING

Our second project was to design a plaque for the exterior of RISC, to record the presence of large quantities of Reading Abbey stones within the building. Following its dissolution in 1539, materials from the abbey were reused at numerous sites around Reading and in the 1990's stones were discovered built into the basement and wall between nos. 35 and 37. The basement stones are still in place, while others were used to build an arcade in 'The Stones Room' and the counter at the front of no. 35, with free-standing stones laid in the roof garden. The design of the plaque has now been finalised and once installed, a formal unveiling will be organised and this event will be covered in our next Newsletter.



SIGNAGE SPRING CLEANING, WEDNESDAY 8 MAY

Five FORA Members and three from the Museum volunteered to clean the Interpretation Panels in the Abbey Quarter and Town Centre, on 8 May. Any graffiti was either removed by white spirit or reported to the street cleaning department. Quite a few fell into this category within the town but fewer within the ruins themselves. It was a fun morning, and good to see the panels looking fresh and cared for. Pictured at work are Sue and Al, two heritage custodians from the Museum - and Francoise Le Saux, our treasurer.



DIARY DATES

28 JUNE	WATERFEST
"	WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR, RABBLE THEATRE - ST LAURENCE CHURCH (https://rabbletheatre.com)
23 JULY	SUMMER OUTING - HARMONDSWORTH/SYON
12 - 21 SEPTEMBER	HERITAGE OPEN DAYS
25 OCTOBER	AGM and AUTUMN LECTURE. Our speaker will be Dr Euan Roger from the National Archives.

PHOTOS FROM THE SPRING LECTURE, 29 MARCH 25



Our Chairman Dr Peter Durrant with Speaker, Dr Ruth Salter



Reading Abbey

Past, Present and Future

Schools' Art Competition



Friends
of
Reading
Abbey



For year groups

Year
1-2

Year
3-6

Year
7-9

Year
10-11

There is also a **creative writing competition** for **Y7-9** and a **poetry competition** for **Y12-13**, both on the theme '**a day in the life of Reading Abbey**'.

There is a certificate and a prize for the winner of each category. The winning students' school will get an award and a children's workshop run by a local artist.



For details and entry form, please see
www.readingabbey.org.uk

COMPETITION POSTER

SIGNAGE SPRING CLEANING, 8 May 25



A group of students from Stuttgart, taking in the abbey's history and happy to be in the photo!



WE HOPE TO SEE YOU AT WATERFEST