



**FRIENDS
OF
READING
ABBEY**

NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN 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



You are warmly invited to our

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 30 October 2021 at 2.30pm

Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square, Reading RG1 3BE

Doors open at 2pm

The AGM will be followed by an illustrated talk on

**ELIZABETH WOODVILLE: A knight's widow "openly honoured as queen" at Reading Abbey
by Dr Joanna Laynesmith, University of Reading**



Elizabeth Woodville is one of England's most controversial and mythologised queens. This talk will consider the circumstances behind her secret wedding to Edward IV and its revelation at Reading Abbey, and explore her role as queen at this particularly turbulent time in England's history.

Dr J L Laynesmith is a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Reading and author of the prize-winning monograph, The Last Medieval Queens.

MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS WELCOME - ENTRY IS FREE

Abbey Baptist Church is a short walk from Reading Station and most central bus stops.

The nearest car park is Queen's Road Car Park.

WATERFEST 19 JUNE 2021

Reading Borough Council produced an impressive programme of events for Waterfest 2021. From the Forbury Gardens to Chestnut Walk and within the abbey ruins, there were workshops, heritage stands, music on three stages, food stalls and even a medieval village. The event was by pre-booking only and was fully subscribed - a testament to the importance attached to marking the 900th anniversary of the founding of Reading Abbey.

The Mayor of Reading, Councillor David Stevens, arrived in style by boat accompanied by the Mayoress. He later unveiled the newly carved head of Abbot Hugh Faringdon, now installed on the Abbey Gateway.

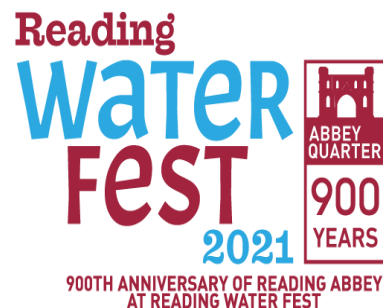


Photo: Reading Borough Council

The Friends of Reading Abbey stand drew a lot of interest, and we had a brisk sale of books relating to the history of the abbey and Henry I. Our pilgrim badges also sold extremely well.



These are now available at Reading Museum, at a cost of £2.50 each.

A big thank you to the organisers and to all who made this such a successful event.



Photo: Reading Borough Council





We're proud to report that The Mayor of Reading, Councillor David Stevens, has chosen the Friends of Reading Abbey as one of his three Mayoral charities for 2020-21.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic he was unable to support FORA in live events until this summer. However we worked together on a series of Video Talks on themes relating to Reading Abbey, which the Council are publishing. The videos can be viewed on YouTube through the FORA website. The Mayor's first talk was in October 2020, with John Mullaney, local historian, author and Friend. Filmed at Reading Museum, the subject was the Coronation of the Virgin capital, which is in the Museum's Abbey collection.

Video link: **The Mayor of Reading and John Mullaney - The Coronation of the Virgin Stone**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZX1iKQp9mQ>

The second talk followed in November with John Painter, our Secretary, and again filmed at Reading Museum:

The Mayor of Reading and John Painter - Reading's Royal Abbey <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNhihukYe2I>

The third talk, in December, was with Lindsay Mullaney, local historian, on the subject of her latest book on Henry I.

The Mayor of Reading and Lindsay Mullaney - King Henry I, founder of Reading Abbey
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wy2Rmf1KPWI>

A fourth talk was released during the 900th anniversary year, in May 2021. The Mayor was joined by Reading Museum Manager, Matthew Williams, who spoke about the impact the Abbey had on the town.

The Mayor of Reading and Matthew Williams - [Reading Abbey and its impact upon a small town](#)

A fifth Mayor's talk was released to coincide with the 900th anniversary weekend of 19th/20th June 2021. The talk can be seen in two parts on YouTube: **The Mayor of Reading and the Bishop of Fulham**

[The Reformation and Dissolution of Reading Abbey - Part I](#) ... [Part II](#)

The sixth and last video talk, *just published*, features the Mayor and our Chairman, Peter Durrant. Here is the link to the talk: **[Reading Abbey: a gateway to the past - YouTube](#)**

READING FOR MODERN PILGRIMS

To celebrate Reading Abbey 900, the Co-Fraternity of St James brought the mummified hand found in the Abbey Ruins in the 1780s and now held at St Peter's RC Church, Marlow, to the Church of St James in Reading, where it was on loan for the feast of St James on 25 July. To coincide with this, a new pilgrim's trail was launched by Living Reading (Reading UK(CIC) in conjunction with FORA and Reading Borough Council. They have produced a map linking those pilgrimage sites in Reading and Caversham that are still visible, and you can print or view online via

[Reading for modern pilgrims \(livingreading.co.uk\)](http://livingreading.co.uk).



On Saturday 24 July, a group keen to follow the Reading Trail left from St James. It included the Mayor, Councillor David Stevens, Councillor Karen Rowland, Lead Councillor for Culture, Heritage and Recreation, members of the Co-Fraternity of St James and members of The Friends of Reading Abbey. Throughout the Middle Ages, Reading and Caversham were recognised centres of pilgrimage. The focus in Reading was Reading Abbey, which possessed over 230 relics including the Hand of St James, and made Reading the centre of the cult of St James in early medieval England. There are thirteen sites on the map and some great history to discover. More photos can be seen on our Facebook page. *From left to right: Assembling at St James' Church; Nearing the original bridging point across the Thames between Reading & Caversham; Oak Statue of Our Lady and Child at St Anne's RC Church Caversham and St Anne's Well, Caversham.*



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 16 October 2021: WEA Day School - Reading Abbey

Keith Hasted, from the Reading WEA Branch is running a Day School Reading Abbey, in recognition of its **900th anniversary** this year. This will be held at RISC, in London Street; the fee is £27. The Day will involve a walk around the Abbey site if weather allows. This is the link to follow for details and enrolment: <https://enrolonline.wea.org.uk/Online/2021/CourseInfo.aspx?r=C3747042>

Saturday 30 October 2021: Annual General Meeting and Autumn lecture. Our first public event for 18 months. (Full details on front page)

Saturday 26 March 2022: The Professor Brian Kemp Memorial Lecture will be given by **Dr Fredrica Teale** of the University of Southampton, on the **Reading Formulary**, the rare Fourteenth Century Abbey manuscript which FORA helped to purchase for the Berkshire Record Office in 2013. Venue to be settled.

SUBSCRIPTIONS - MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

A reminder that our 2021-22 subscriptions will be due from the end of October.

The Committee is recommending that they remain unchanged, for the sixth year running, at £7 for single membership, £10 for family membership, £15 for corporate membership, and £105 for life membership.

If you have still to pay your 2020-21 subscriptions, it is not too late to do so! Cheques, made out to The Friends of Reading Abbey, can be sent to the Treasurer at 25 The Crescent, Earley, Reading RG6 7NW. Or you can pay directly by electronic banking into the FORA bank account, Sort Code 77-49-04 Account 60275168: if you do this, please register your name when doing so.

Your support is very important and enables us to continue to promote awareness of Reading Abbey through our lectures, literature and events .