

FRIENDS OF READING ABBEY

## BRIAN KEMP MEMORIAL LECTURE

Saturday 2 March 2024 2.30 pm

St James' RC Church, Forbury Road, RG1 3FD

### Monks, miracles and memory: the dissolution of Reading Abbey and the writing of history in Reformation England

Prof. Helen Parish

The lecture takes as its starting point the dissolution of Reading Abbey, and the accompanying efforts made to suppress the cult of relics and miracle narratives associated with them. As Reformation polemicists turned to the narratives of the past to construct a history and identity in their present, monasticism and the miraculous occupied an increasingly contested space.



At Reading, and elsewhere, the struggle to preserve and to possess the monastic past began almost immediately; monks, miracles and memory became a visual and verbal mnemonic in the reconstruction of religious history.

We will examine in more detail the physical and polemical assault upon 'monuments of feigned miracles, pilgrimages, idolatry, and superstition' and its impact upon memory and the reimagining of the past in post-Reformation England.

Helen Parish is a Visiting Professor in History at the University of Reading, and Senior Tutor at Worcester College, Oxford.

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.