

FRIENDS OF READING ABBEY

AUTUMN LECTURE

Saturday 28 October 2023 2.30 pm

Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square, Reading RG1 3BE

Burying the Royal Dead:

Reading Abbey and royal pantheons in the high middle ages

Professor Lindy Grant



Henry I founded Reading Abbey as his burial house in the tradition of the Anglo-Norman kings of England: his father, William the Conqueror, had founded St Etienne at Caen; King Stephen founded Faversham. But at the end of the twelfth century, Henry I's grandson Henry II and great-grandson Richard I were buried with other members of the family in a dynastic pantheon at Fontevraud. Why did their family burial policy change so dramatically? How far did they have a policy?

When the Empress Matilda nearly died in 1132, she wanted to be buried at the abbey of Le Bec in Normandy, but Henry I insisted that she should be buried among her ancestors at the cathedral of Rouen. This talk explores their options and choices between cathedral or abbey burial, one's own mausoleum or family pantheon, and how their burial traditions compared with those of their royal contemporaries in continental Europe.

Lindy Grant is Professor Emeritus of Medieval History at the University of Reading, and an Honorary Research Fellow at the Courtauld Institute of Art. She is the author of *Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis. Church and State in Early Twelfth-Century France*, Longmans 1998; *Architecture and Society in Normandy, c. 1120-c.1270*, Yale 2005; and *Blanche of Castile, Queen of France*, Yale 2016; and of numerous articles. She was President of the British Archaeological Association, 2010-13; is a Trustee of the British Academy Angevin Acta project; and was Chair of the Battle Conference for Anglo-Norman Studies between 2016 and 2021.

Abbey Baptist Church is behind Reading Central Library, in the Abbey Precinct. It will be open from 2.00pm. Free entry, with a voluntary retiring collection.