

Reading Abbey to be revealed at Water Fest this weekend!

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Reading Abbey walls being conserved using the traditional hot lime mortar technique, which dates back to the medieval period. Chris Forsey

Reading's Grade I listed abbey, thought to be the final resting place of King Henry I, will be revealed to the public for the first time in 10 years this Saturday June 16.

The 'Abbey Ruins Revealed' celebration follows a three year £3.15million conservation project led by Reading Museum to breath new life into Reading's historic Abbey Quarter, thanks to National Lottery players.

Founded in 1121 by King Henry I, Reading Abbey was once the fourth largest abbey in Europe, longer in length than Westminster Abbey, bigger than Durham Cathedral and boasting a spire as tall as nearby modern landmark 'The Blade'. The historic ruins were also once a Royal Palace to Queen Elizabeth I and the Abbey Gate, a school to a young Jane Austen.

Reading Abbey's re-opening ceremony headlines a packed programme of festivities at this year's much loved family festival [Water Fest](#) - Reading's annual free celebration of the town's waterways and now in its 29th year.

Revealing the Reading Abbey Ruins and Abbey Gate

The much anticipated reveal of Reading Abbey Ruins and Abbey Gate will see Reading's Mayor, Cllr Debs Edwards and HM Lord-Lieutenant of the Royal County of Berkshire, Mr James Puxley officially open the ruins to the public for the first time since 2009, when stone work became dangerously unstable.

#AbbeyRevealed will see the whole Abbey Quarter transformed to bring its exciting 900 year history to life. Visitors can expect to see historic themed activities and re-enactments, including a visit from King Henry I himself, Civil War themed performances from the 'Earl Rivers Regiment of the Foote' bringing the explosive 17th century to life, and a 12th-century medieval village complete with sword fights and weapon displays.

Parades of beautifully decorated canal boats, live music, refreshments, children's entertainment and craft and community stalls, as well as the much-loved annual duck race, will also be on offer at Water Fest between 11am and 5pm, which is organised by Reading Borough Council in partnership with the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust.

Fantastic heritage on your doorstep

Michelle Roffe, Head of HLF South East, said: "The 900-year-old Reading Abbey ruins and gate provide a visual connection to the important, but little known, role that the city has played in European history since medieval times. Thanks to National Lottery players, we are pleased to have invested in this ambitious project to stabilise the ruins and open them to the public for the first time in almost 10 years. We are delighted to see this investment come to fruition and help the people of Reading rediscover the fantastic heritage on their doorstep."

For more information about the history of Reading Abbey and the National Lottery project to carry out urgent repair, stabilisation and preservation works visit [Reading Borough Council's](#) website or [you can view this video for more information](#).

Event details

Reading Water Fest and Abbey Ruins Revealed can be found in Forbury Gardens between 11am-5pm

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