

SPOTLIGHT ON READING ABBEY QUARTER



PROJECT UPDATE

AUGUST 2017

WE NEED YOUR HELP

A key part of this project is putting in place a number of new interpretation panels across the Reading Abbey Quarter and the town centre, to highlight the Abbey's history and link this to significant historic buildings in the area.

Currently a prototype display panel about St. Mary's Church can be seen in the *Reading Abbey Quarter: Then & Now* exhibition, at Reading Museum. The exhibition closes on 23 September. Since May, museum staff and volunteers have been regularly asking visitors for their views on the panel's style, colour and how clearly the historical information is explained.

During early September, a new temporary display panel (taking on board the evaluation received so far) will be installed to its proposed location outside St. Mary's Church. Volunteers and museum staff will be out in the town asking passers-by for their views. The results from these surveys will help us assess the appeal and interest in these boards and help us tailor the other panels planned for the Reading Abbey Quarter.

We'd love to hear your views on this prototype interpretation panel during this period, so either drop by and visit the exhibition at Reading Museum or catch us by St. Mary's Church next month!



Visitors give feedback on the prototype panel in our current exhibition.

CHANGES COMING TO READING MUSEUM

Museum visitors will notice some major changes on the ground floor shortly, as works begin in late August, in the *Reading: People & Place Gallery*, to re-organise the space and create a new gallery with a Reading Abbey Quarter focus and refresh the displays. A number of display cases will be emptied from the middle of August and much of the area will be boarded off from October. The new gallery is due to open in February 2018.

EVENTS

Every Saturday

Gallery Tours: Reading Abbey Quarter

Join one of our trained volunteers for an introductory tour to the galleries. Our volunteers will begin the tour with an update on the Abbey Quarter project, so you can find out about the exciting plans to transform Reading's Abbey precinct into a unique historical and cultural destination. This will be followed by a fascinating insight into some of the objects the Museum has on display.

All ages, 12pm – 12.45pm

Donations welcome, drop in

Every Wednesday and Saturday until 23 September

Exhibition Tours

Enjoy a 20 minute tour of the *Reading Abbey Quarter: Then & Now* exhibition. Learn about Reading's rich heritage through the photographs and paintings of the Reading Abbey Quarter.

All ages, 11.15am.

Donations welcome, drop in

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ABBNEY ON WHEELS ROLLS OUT



Child handling objects from Reading Abbey at the 'Forbury Fiesta'.

Have you enjoyed a 'virtual reality' view of the Abbey Ruins or held a 900 year-old tile from Reading Abbey? There's still time to take part in these experiences and more as the project's 'Abbey on Wheels' outreach programme rolls on.

Since April, museum staff and our new events volunteers have been attending various fairs and festivals across the area, spreading the word about our project and getting people excited about the Reading Abbey re-opening next year. We've enjoyed days out at Dee Park, Forbury Fiesta, Waterfest, the East Reading Festival and the Oxford Road and South Reading Churches fun days. We have had lots of support from the charity RG spaces who ran tile-painting activities for children (and adults!).

If you haven't spotted us yet, come along and 'say hello' at the next 'Abbey on Wheels' on Saturday 16 September at Caversham Court Gardens, as part of the Reading-on-Thames festival. We will be there 10am till 3pm.

CONSERVATION UPDATE

It is full steam ahead for the conservation of Reading Abbey. Soft capping has been added to the south-transept and treasury to help prevent water damage to the walls. The scaffold is almost complete around the chapter house to start the conservation work in this section. The gateway is drying out well and our contractors are getting to grips with the damage caused by buddleia roots spreading behind the plaster. The team have even found some interesting artefacts across the site, including parts of medieval floor tiles. There have been challenges, such as discovering some of the worst ant damage our contractors have ever seen, but they are taking it in their stride and we are still on schedule to open in summer 2018!

It has been great sharing our progress with the public on our sell-out conservation tours. We were also delighted to welcome the Heritage Lottery Fund onto the site in July too.

EVENTS

Reading Abbey Lecture Series

7 October: Dr Ron Baxter – Blood and Bones: The Veneration of Relics at Reading Abbey

4 November: Professor Anne Lawrence – Science and Magic within the Monastery

25 November: Professor Peter Stoneley – Garden Party and Prison Cell: Oscar Wilde in Reading

8 & 9 September

Abbey Quarter Tours

For Heritage Open Days 2017, join us on a free walking tour of the Quarter.

For our full events list, please visit our website or pick up the latest copy of 'Reading Arts - What's On'.



LOTTERY FUNDED

