

5TH ANNUAL UK CLUNIAC FORUM CONFERENCE
Held on 5 October 2018 in Reading Town Hall

Brief notes of meeting

1.0 Programme

The conference agenda is attached to these notes.

2.0 Attendance

Delegates and guests recorded on the attached list together with a note of apologies.

3.0 Introduction

The conference was chaired by Christelle Beaupoux, Community Engagement Officer for Reading Borough Council, who opened proceedings at 10.15 am and followed with a description of the Reading Abbey Revealed Project.

4.0 Guided tours

Delegates divided into two parties for a tour of the Abbey Quarter starting at Reading Museum.

5.0 Lunch

Lunch was organised by the Friends of Reading Abbey in the boardroom of Gateley Plc on the 13th floor of the Blade office building with panoramic views of Reading and the Abbey quarter.

6.0 Presentations

The first part of the afternoon was given to four presentations:

- 6.1 Fédération Européenne des Sites Clunisiens: Christophe Voros, Director of the Federation, reported on latest developments with FESC and their website. The interactive map had the locations of 1200 Cluniac sites including the 50 foundations in Britain. He emphasised the advantages of membership of the federation.
- 6.2 Monk Bretton Priory: Fred Thompson, Friend of Monk Bretton Priory, gave an update on activities in the past year include a project to research the pre-conquest founders of the priory.
- 6.3 A Short History of Cluny in Britain: Dr Anthony Freeman, Lewes Priory Trustee, gave an introduction to the project which he hoped would contain a narrative history, a gazetteer of the UK monastic sites and possibly a photographic survey. He emphasised that this would take a number of years and he was hopeful that there would be contributions from members of the forum with detailed knowledge of their site. He circulated a synopsis of what would be required.
- 6.4 Funding the UK Cluniac Forum: Kate Hickmott, Education and Access Officer for Lewes Priory Trust, explained that though the previous bid was unsuccessful, HLF encouraged us to try again. The questionnaire sent out to each site had produced some helpful information on preferred development priorities. It was important to show that the group could involve local communities. Members were asked to try to obtain letters of endorsement from two organisations in their area which would demonstrate local support.

7.0 Group discussion

The second part of the afternoon was given to members to raise matters of particular concern.

7.1 FESC membership

Christophe Voros confirmed that there were only three sites which were members of the Federation (Lewes, Paisley, Pontefract). Payment should be simple now that there was a UK bank account.

Sy Morse-Brown said that it was appreciated that it was difficult for local authorities to decide to join as they were all under great pressure with reduced government spending. He noted that Barnsley had not renewed the subscription for Monk Bretton and Fred Thompson undertook to look into this. Likewise Dudley MBC had said last year that they would join but this had not happened. Deborah Merrick agreed to look into this. FESC would need to persuade English Heritage and Historic Scotland to take a head office decision to approve their sites could join.

Sy Morse-Brown hoped that the case could be made to local authorities that FESC membership would lead to a raising of the national awareness of sites attracting visitors and therefore income. It was suggested that it might be easier to get local authorities to pay an annual conference attendance fee which could then be passed on as an FESC subscription.

7.2 Crossraguel

Adrian Cox indicated his strong support for the forum despite having to pay his own attendance expenses. Crossraguel was currently undergoing significant maintenance work but members were still very welcome to make a visit.

7.3 Dudley

Deborah Merrick reported that Dudley Priory had undergone some deterioration since the conference there last year which reflected the difficulties that the Metropolitan Borough Council was having with restricted funding.

7.4 Pontefract

Dr Janet McNaught reported that problems with contractors working on the Pontefract Castle project had caused great difficulty and Wakefield Metropolitan Borough Council was not appreciative of the contribution of the volunteer group. It was hoped that this could be resolved but the offer to host a Forum conference would have to be put on hold.

7.5 Prittlewell

Claire Reed echoed the problems with local authority finances but hoped that there would be development of an educational programme.

7.6 St James Church, Reading

Lindsay Mullaney described the role of Scallop Shell Press in publishing an account of the return of Catholicism to Reading post Reformation and in particular the interest in documenting pilgrim routes.

7.7 Friends of Reading Abbey

Peter Durrant and John Painter described the role of FORA in the Abbey Quarter Project including the publication of a new guidebook. The project had seen a significant increase in the membership of the volunteer group.

8.0 **Abbey Gateway Tour**

Delegates were given a fascinating visit to the refurbished monastery gateway with its re-creation of a Victorian schoolroom.

9.0 **Hidden Abbey Project**

Delegates were welcomed to the Pugin-designed Church of St James by Canon John O'Shea and given tea. John Mullaney gave a brief history of the church and the discovery of the medieval carved stone which is now used as a font. Further sections of abbey masonry were able to be examined in the courtyard at the rear of the priest's accommodation.

10.0 **Next meeting**

Christophe Voros reported that following the death of Louis de Wet, the owner of the private section of Wenlock Priory, his widow had suggested that the next conference might be able to be held there. This is yet to be formally confirmed and a date agreed.

11.0 **Conclusion**

Reading Borough Council and the Friends of Reading Abbey were congratulated on providing an outstanding programme and delegates were thanked for taking part in a most interesting and informative day. The conference closed at 5 pm.



5th ANNUAL UK CLUNIAC FORUM CONFERENCE

5 October - Victoria Hall, Reading Museum and Town Hall

Programme

9.45am - Registration and tea and coffee

10.15am - Introduction to the day

10.30am - Reading Abbey Revealed

11.00am - Tour of new gallery and Abbey Quarter site

- 11.00: 1st group to start AQ tour
- 11:30: 2nd group to start AQ tour

1pm 2.15pm - Lunch, at the Gateley boardroom, in the Blade

2.15-2.30pm: Travel back to the Town Hall

2.30pm - Member presentations

- Fédération Européenne des Sites Clunisiens : Presentation from Christophe Voros
- Monk Bretton Priory: Fred Thompson, Friend of Monk Bretton Priory, project update.
- Lewes Priory Trust: Tony Freeman, "A Short History of Cluny in Britain". Kate Hickmott will speak about application for funds to support the UK Cluniac Forum Group.

3.30pm - Group discussion (led by Sy Morse-Brown)

4pm - Abbey Gateway tour

4.30pm- Hidden Abbey Project, St James Church (tea and coffee)

5pm - End

2018 UK Cluniac Forum Conference

Site	Contact	Description	Organisation
Present			
Cluny	Christophe Voros	Director	Fédération Européenne des Sites Clunisiens
Crossraguel	Adrian Cox	Cultural Resources Advisor	Historic Scotland
Delapré	Margaret Hawkins	Trustee	Delapré Abbey Preservation Trust
Dudley	Deborah Merrick	Senior Park Ranger	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
	John Hemingway	Archaeologist	
Lewes	Sy Morse-Brown	Chairman	Lewes Priory Trust
	Andrew Norris	Trustee	Lewes Priory Trust
	Arthur Franklin	Trustee	Lewes Priory Trust
	Kate Hickmott	Education & Access Manager	Lewes Priory Trust
	Paul Benjamin	Trustee	Lewes Priory Trust
	Dr Anthony Freeman	Trustee	Lewes Priory Trust
Monk Bretton	Fred Thompson	Member	Friends of Monk Bretton Priory
Pontefract	Dr Janet McNaught	Secretary	Friends of Pontefract Castle
	Robert McNaught	Member	Friends of Pontefract Castle
Prittlewell	Claire Reed	Curator	Southend Museum Service
Reading	Christelle Beaupoux	Community Engagement Officer	Reading Borough Council
	Peter Durrant	Chairman	Friends of Reading Abbey
	John Painter	Secretary	Friends of Reading Abbey
	Doug Beaumont	Committee member	Friends of Reading Abbey
	Dianne Sykes	Committee member	
Apologies			
Castle Acre	Julie Enefer	Site Manager, Castle Acre	English Heritage
English Heritage	Mark Douglas	Senior Properties Curator (North)	English Heritage
Paisley	Alistair Campbell		Paisley Abbey
Prittlewell	Ciara Phipps	Social History Curator	Southend Museum Service
Thetford	David Osborne	Member	Thetford Society
Wenlock	Michael Carter	Senior Properties Historian	English Heritage
	Naomi Speakman	Curator of Late Medieval Europe Dept	British Museum