

Object explore and discover

Learning from Museum Objects

Museum objects are irreplaceable evidence of our history and heritage and can really bring your lessons to life. Each of these downloadable resources explores one of the objects in our collection.

For even more ideas, discover our loan boxes at

<http://schoolloans.readingmuseum.org.uk/> and search our amazing online database at <http://collections.readingmuseum.org.uk/>

Reading Abbey Stone - the Weightlifter



Follow this [link to online database](#) to see the object's full record

DESCRIPTION

Object: Carved stone corbel

Museum object number: REDMG: 1996.195.sf211

Date: 12th century ACE

Material: Limestone

This is a stone **corbel** from Reading Abbey. It was discovered in 1997 during excavations on the site of what is now the Oracle shopping centre. The corbel has a long backplate that was fixed into the wall and the front is decorated with two human heads, one of whom is raising his arm like a weightlifter - very appropriate on a stone whose purpose was to support a superstructure above.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Reading Abbey was founded in 1121 by **King Henry I**, who was buried there. Its Church was consecrated and formally opened in 1164. The Abbey was home to many monks, known as brothers. Reading Abbey was one of the most important religious institutions in Europe through the Medieval Period. It was finally closed down in 1539 during King Henry VIII's 'Dissolution of the Monasteries', along with hundreds of other religious institutions in England.

Flint made up the core of the abbey's walls. Stones like this corbel made up the elegant outer facings that visitors would see. They were carved from the best light yellow limestone. It was quarried from Taynton, Oxfordshire and shipped from Caen in France to the Abbey wharf. After the Dissolution the valuable building materials of Reading Abbey like lead, stained glass and stonework were removed and sold. These were reused to repair buildings and bridges in Reading and further afield. Buildings like the 'Poor Knights lodgings' in Windsor were made with Reading Abbey stones. Only the flint core of the walls still remains at the Reading Abbey Ruins, as the valuable stone was stripped after the Abbey's closure.

Expensive limestone was either cut as blank **ashlar** (large square-cut stones) or carved with ornate images. They depicted myths, monsters and real creatures, religious scenes and characters from everyday life. Some bear the [mason marks](#) of the person who carved them.

LINKS TO OTHER OBJECTS

We have a collection of artefacts from Reading Abbey that you may find useful in your lessons. These are a few examples.

- [Tomb chest fragment](#)
- [Dragon capital](#)
- [Coronation of the Virgin Capital](#)
- [Medieval livery badge](#)

See our [Loan Boxes database](#) for related objects.

IDEAS FOR ACTIVITIES

- **Design your own abbey stone** Inspired by the collection
Will it be a scene or show a serpent, bird, or dragon
What is the story of the stone - where did it come from, where did it go?
- Use our [festival of archaeology](#) resources for medieval craft activities
- Download and use our [Reading Abbey Music Teaching Resources](#)
- Use the [Reading Abbey - interactive map](#)
The children can explore the Abbey's buildings and imagine the life of monks in Medieval Times