

*Inspired by past,  
present & future*

*New*

# Relics

*Imagined & enshrined  
for Reading*

*by local artists*

*Personal,  
enigmatic &  
bizarre mementos  
of Reading*

# ROCKIN' RELICS



Personal, enigmatic & bizarre mementos  
of Reading, imagined & enshrined by local artists.  
Inspired by the past, present & future.

## New Relics for Reading

**Relics once drew thousands of pilgrims to Reading Abbey. When Henry VIII closed Reading Abbey in the Dissolution the many relics associated with the Abbey were scattered.**

**Artists were invited to reinterpret the idea of the relic.**

**All these relics are associated with Reading and reflect life in Reading from before the time of the Abbey to now and into the future. These new relics may be real or imagined.**



Martin Andrews and Elaine Blake installing the New Relics at Reading Museum

New Relics for Reading is a collaboration between Elaine Blake, Carole Stephens, Jenny Halstead, Martina Hildebrandt, Jo Thomas, Maeve Prendergast, Martin Andrews, Sally Mortimore, Suzanne Stallard and Therese Lawlor.

Reading Museum, Reading Guild of Artists, Two Rivers Press, Jelly, OHOS, Whiteknights Studio Trail, Independent Artists Network and RGSpaces

Tim Wilson: poster design.

1	Sue London	Creatures of Reading
2	Vas Zavialov	(Future) - Tools of Famous Artist
3	Sadie Brockbank	Seed Ball Shrine
4	Martina Hildebrandt	Feminist Gloves
5	Jane Bonney	Absolute Unit
6	Jane Glennie	A-block 19 / A-block 47. Or: The loss of bonds initiated in communal living.
7	Michael Zavialov	Writer's Block, C22 Oscar Wilde
8	Jenny Halstead	The Biscuit Box
9	Michael Garaway	D A 2 K
10	Robert Fitzmaurice	Reading Man
11	Jo Dennis	Wo mad Nights!
12	Martin Andrews	Writers in Reading
13	Martin Andrews	Reliquary of relics
14	Carole Stephens	The Huntley and Palmer Wedding Cake 1945
15	Trish Roberts	It Takes The Biscuit
16	Liz Real	Blessing the Reading Festival
17	Sam Stead	Remnant
18	Helen Westhrop	By the Thames
19	Kate Corder	Band another B: Festival 1992-1998
20	Trish Grimes	The Inkilinkin
21	Jo Dennis	Reading Text on Reading Road
22	Joan McQuillan	Textile Tulip Fabric Relic
23	Jo Thomas	Smelly Alley Pearl
24	Richard Backhouse	Harrold's Arrow
25	Tim Wilson	Remains of an Unknown Reveller
26	Susan Eley	Reading, Our Town (City?)
27	Clare Buchta	Horseshoe Bridge
28	Martina Hildebrandt	Section of Reading Civic Centre
29	Chris Mercier	The Affordable Home
30	Linda Saul	The Southern Gas Social Club pigeon coop
31	Sally Castle	Remember Jackson's
32	Emotional State	Stories from Seed Guardians
33	Natasha Zavialov	(Future) - Tools of Famous Artists from Reading
34	Mohan Banerji	Jackson's, The Family Store
35	Susan Eley	Broad Street Air, Reading Bus
36	Ornella Trevisan	Whiteknights Studio Trail
37	Kit Yan Chong	The Good Old Days: Ginger Nuts



When I think of Reading, I always think of its buses. My relic is an old Reading bus and the creatures in the windows link to the town. Courage brewery cockerel, Ye Boars Head, the Purple Turtle and Kingsley the Reading FC Mascot are all taking a trip.



This relic is from the future and depicts the tools of famous Reading artists that arose to worldwide fame in 2020. These are the actual brush and pallet knife used in the creative process. They were taken from the artist mid way through work. The Resin in which they are suspended harks back to the fossilised forms of life that are found by archeologist and give them an insight into the past. Here we get an insight into the future.



At the core of my sculptural work is a concern for nature and our relationship to the other beings sharing this space and it's resources with us. My response to this project has been informed by this concern. I have made a reliquary for a Plane tree seed which I collected from the ground outside Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin, in the heart of the city. Plane trees are known to be able to cope well with pollution, so as an inner city tree this seemed like a good choice to me, as well as the fact that it has a beautiful ball form.

My shrine-like Reliquary is inspired by the Greek/Roman terracotta shrine models I saw in the museum in Reggio Calabria over the summer. The miniature buildings seemed to be waiting to house something important. The birds around the top of the opening are intended to act as guardians - to protect the spirit of nature embedded in and symbolised by the extraordinary potential of the seed.





These are the much “hated and resented” gloves of Edith Morley (1875–1964), the first female professor in the United Kingdom, based at the University of Reading 1908–1940. However, there is now speculation that they may have belonged to her friend and fellow feminist, the politician Phoebe Cusden (1887–1981) who in her roll as Mayor of Reading in 1946 possibly saw the more practical reason for wearing gloves, rather than an affliction of being a woman.

My current work is influenced by the women of Reading and the anniversary of 100 years since the first British women won the vote. Having grown up in London, I am interested in the hidden history of my adopted home of Reading. I try to create thought-provoking images that have a story behind them but leave room for the viewer to create their own thoughts.

Trained as a Theatre Designer at the Wimbledon School of Art, I worked for the London Fringe and touring companies for 7 years. With creative parents, making things has always been a part of life. Moving on in a different direction I now also deal with another kind of paint! Over the last few years I have become an active member of the Reading Guild of Artists, where I have been able to use and develop various skills. I am currently on the RGA council and volunteer as their Webmaster and Archivist.





The MERL is a Reading museum, well known locally and nationally. On April 9th 2018 the @theMERL twitter feed posted a photograph of a ram along with the caption "look at this absolute unit" Within 72 hours the tweet gained over 98,000 likes and 27,600 retweets and propelled the museum into global popularity. I chose the tweet as a virtual modern relic, housed in a reliquary based on the English countryside. I see the MERLS followers as a growing band of pilgrims, eager to feed from the museums 'fount of knowledge'.

Jane Glennie  
**A-block 19 / A-block 47.**  
**Or: The loss of bonds initiated in communal living.**



Yes, the lasagne was terrible! But living communally in halls and carrying a tray from the kitchen servery to a long table, you could sit next to anyone and have a conversation. You could roam the corridors when you felt like being sociable and find someone, anyone. (In real true life). You met people outside your sphere. You could do random things with random people. But it was ok, you were familiar – you lived together. You liked people, you didn't like people, you made friendships you've had ever since. You made friends with people you didn't expect would be your friend. It's no longer (for the most part) the same. There is little sense of wider community in small self-catered accommodation. A social media organised life keeps you in your sphere. It makes me sad for my children. They won't get the best of the experience of being a student. Small compensation to not eat the lasagne.

Jane Glennie is a typographer, artist and filmmaker. (BA Typography & Graphic Communication, University of Reading, 1994)





HM Prison Reading, Block C3.3.

*...For each man kills the thing he loves,*

*Yet each man does not die.*



My relic is about the memory of my very first visit to Reading.

Arriving at the station around midnight in the late 1960s with the man who would later become my husband, after attending a Conference dinner in London, we got off the train but no taxis (they were rare in those days!) and proceeded to walk. The air was filled with the sweet, almost sickly smell of baking from the Huntley and Palmer's factory (situated roughly where Homebase was)...this was the night-bake of a million custard cream!





Multimedia cumen in, a College posts a call;  
I answer for a job therein, to teach the Digital.  
So Reading my address becomes, my work - Academy;  
That's gone, but here - my ID card - presents the memory.





This is a man of the Readingas tribe, running after boar  
This is a man of Reada's People, leaping a ford  
This is a man running along the towpath, timeless



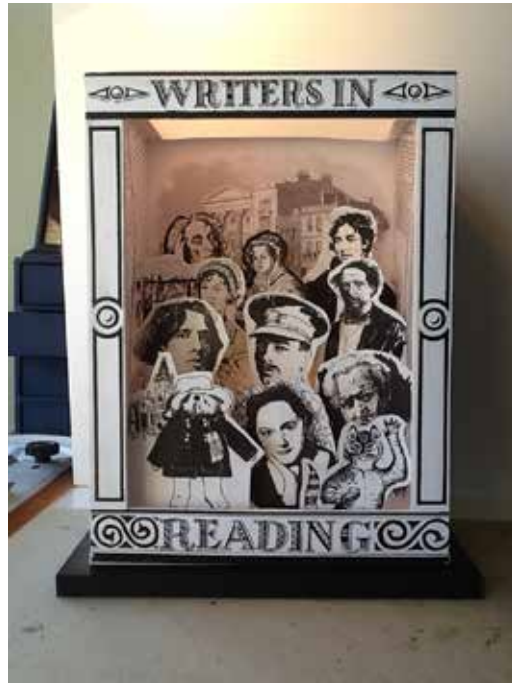


Inspired by the reliquary arms with jewels and patterning I thought I could use some articulated hands that I had for a few years. I wanted to make a little shrine to remember the happy diversity that Womad seemed to bring to Reading every year. I encased a small globe in the little window in the arm to signify how the world was brought to Reading in music food and people. I painted henna-type patterns on the hand because that was often seen at Womad.

Round the wrist is a Womad entry wristband of mine from 1994, - this is the real relic.

The silk festival flags flutter in the wind against the distinctive blue of the Womad marquee.





My relic celebrates famous authors who have an association with Reading in order remind people of just one aspect of the towns rich cultural heritage. The selection is in no way complete – where is TE Lawrence who lost the first manuscript of the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* on Reading Station? I drew the portraits to illustrate a book on the subject written by Dennis Butts and published by Reading's Two Rivers Press. The cat is called 'Orlando' from books written by Kathleen Hale – a student of Fine Art at Reading from 1915–17.





This is a modern take on a medieval reliquary dating from the fifteenth century which contained the 'tooth of Mary Magdalene'. It is made from coloured foil from sweet and Easter egg wrappers lovingly collected at the appropriate seasonal festivities. The reliquary contains a roll of paper on which I have written a list of the relics known to have been owned by Reading Abbey – including the hand of St James and hairs from the head of the Virgin Mary.

Carole Stephens  
**The Huntley and Palmer Wedding Cake 1945**



My parents got married on August 10th 1945 in Holy Trinity Church, Hermitage, near Newbury, very soon after the end of World War II. They were exceedingly lucky to have a wedding cake, which was kindly supplied by the Palmer family. My grandfather was the Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, the Palmers were friends who lived in the village.





'It Takes The Biscuit' - a nice cuppa and a couple of biscuits  
 When the call came to create reliquaries for Reading, my mind went straight to biscuits - as it so often does! More precisely, Huntley & Palmer's biscuits were the obvious thought for my reliquary. Huntley & Palmer's was founded in Reading in 1822 and its iconic red brick biscuit factory was a local landmark, known to all who lived in and around the town. It certainly was a childhood memory for me - as were their very special biscuits!

When creating my reliquary, a decorated cup and saucer, the choice of biscuit wrappers for the decoupage was enormous, since at their height H & P made 400 different varieties while employing 5,000 workers. I don't recommend trying the relics themselves - rock hard, salt dough biscuits for decoration only!

Sadly the factory was closed in 1976. 'It Takes The Biscuit' is a small tribute to a great company.



The most famous relic in Reading Abbey was the (alleged) hand of the apostle, St James which is thought to have been given to the Abbey in 1133 by the Empress Matilda. With this in mind I wanted to represent a hand with the blessing gesture. As relics were venerated by pilgrims it seemed appropriate to link the hand with the modern pilgrimage to the Reading Festival, hence the wristband.





Tucked into the crook of a wall, strewn across the pavement, shards glimmer in the gutter. The small piles of broken glass lie green and brown and clear, the mute sharp tongues speak of anonymous drama. Unknown acts, careless and forgotten. The remains left to be swept up, to injure, to distress, to threaten, to anger, to be forgotten, to remind.

Broken.

Beyond repair.



My relic is a tapestry. I have been walking the Thames Path which stretches from London to Cricklade in Gloucestershire for 180 miles passing through Reading. I have reached Pangbourne walking 15 or so miles at a time; so about 90 miles in. It has been a mixed experience; the path is flat, easy going and well-marked marked; even when it takes me away from the river to avoid the luxurious housing estates, sports complexes, water works and sewage farms or even over the river so a mere commoner doesn't venture on the Royal Estate. I passed lots of lovely sites and some less attractive like touristy Henley with overflowing gin palaces, yachts and waste bins and dirty public conveniences.

When I reached the countryside and the wide-open spaces, I was a little disappointed, the trees and green river banks are very lovely and lonely as we see in my relic. It was the city I enjoyed the most; the bank was just a strip of mud and shingle that disappears the tide come ins. The wild-life; herons, sea gulls and cormorants and ducks were those I recognised among the reeds and sedge where there had been extensive conservation work. On the river; houseboats and sail and rowing boats and even larger boats coming and going. That, against the urban/shore life it was lively and a nice place to walk.

Tapestry isn't an easy way to illustrate such a complex image so I have experimental with other media but not succeeded to portray what is in my mind eye. Helen Westthrop AKA nelebligh



A particular NY band made their Reading Festival debut in 1992. I was their only guest and watched the band from backstage. This stage relic also acts as a habitat for Bees and continuum for residues of Sutton Seeds pollination in the town.



“The Inkilinkin ” (renamed as a result of my unique texting skills! aka The Hobgoblin ” )

An ale house has reportedly been on this site for around 300years and is therefore of great historical importance. It also has personal significance and importance in my life.

It has been my place of celebration, commiserations, sadness, joy and contemplation; a place to do when nowhere else would do.

Rites of passage in the Inkilinkin

Birthdays together with my lover and my best friend

Birthdays totally alone

Birthday celebration with my son- his first official pint

Always a space for me





This reliquary celebrates the old confusion in the spelling of Reading. I thought of a gory story involving a hand to make a play on the word 'Reading' using one of a few articulated model hands that I already had. Then I covered it with gold leaf to mimic the old hand reliquaries.(my first experiment with using this delicate stuff - I ended up covered in it myself!)

I fixed red 'jewels' to the severed wrist symbolising blood and finished off the innards of the wrist window with a broken hologram rose pendant I've had for about 30 years. The hand grasps the phone on which the victim was texting whilst crossing the road. Reading in reading.



My love of tulips inspired me to do the Last Tulip from Sutton Seeds, who were a major employer in Reading from 1806 until 1976, with Royal Patronage including Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth II - who granted a Royal Warrant.

Quality is the keynote of the Sutton Seeds reputation. This 3-dimensional representation reflects that quality in the materials and carefully applied skills.

Using my own Tulip stencil I printed a design onto silk and used this fabric to construct the regular container with stitch, free embroidery, beads and sequins. The Tulip Bulb was made from polyester wadding, tissue paper and a layer of fine silk fabric all enhanced with paint and wax.

The resulting creation reflects the richness of the tulips produced by Sutton's.



This contemporary reliquary is a small plastic sample container for gemstones and rocks with the label partially worn. It contains a small pearl.

The Smelly Alley Pearl was found Summer 2018. It was found unexpectedly one evening and kept safe ever since. The container offers protection and the opportunity to see the pearl. Whilst it was tempting to remake the reliquary for this event the opposition of the plastic container with the natural pearl challenges me. Can the plastic of the container become precious enough that it itself is treasured as a reliquary or will it be recycled, burnt or become landfill?

The odds of finding a pearl in an oyster are roughly 12,000 to one. Oysters have been on sale in Smelly Alley for decades. It is the second pearl found that the Smelly Alley Fish Company is aware of.



I came to Reading in 1999 and knew the museum was one of the places I'd find out about my new home. I was not wrong! What struck me at that time was the enormous interesting stories revolving around Reading, and the vast amount of rich artistic talent that had passed through its doors. I then joined the Reading Guild of Artists and I have being lucky to contribute to the museum's activities by exhibiting my own art and helping as a volunteer on open days and Pop up programmes. I feel that my reliquary of 'Harold's Arrow' reflects my continuing interest in Reading and its wonderful Museum. Thanks to the Museum for allowing me to use images from their copy of The Bayeux Tapestry in my own free and relaxed style. Thanks to the organisers of this event for stirring up my creative juices and making me work long into the night.



This reliquary houses the nucleus accumbens (the so-called 'pleasure centre' of the brain) belonging to an unidentified Reading Festival goer. It was found on site at Little Johns Farm, on Sunday 20th August 1998 – the morning after Beastie Boys headlined.



In 1999/2000 I was closely involved in the Reading entry for the McDonalds Our Town Story at The Millennium Dome. At the same time, people I knew were involved in the City Status bid for Reading.

The Our Town Story we produced involved a number of pupils and teachers from several schools working together to represent aspects of Reading's history through dance and costume.

There was a vast amount of enthusiasm and cooperation from the council rep, pupils and teachers to produce something that we would be proud of. Sadly, it became very 'clever' to trash the Millennium Dome in the press and elsewhere, thus also trashing the efforts of the people working with pride to represent their areas. My piece represents the enthusiasm (and glitz) we and (and many other towns) put into our work. The relic my dome contains is fragments of a photo I took of Reading's performers relaxing at the Dome. The work is a bit tongue in cheek. A bit two fingers to the 'intelligentsia' who trashed us!

The Millennium Dome is now the successful O2. Reading did not get city status, but I wish I had a fiver for every time I've heard someone say it should be one, or that they believe it is one. Brighton and Hove got the honours - so it took 2 towns to beat us!



I have based the relic on an actual horseshoe in memory of the working horses that used the horseshoe bridge whilst towing barges up and down the river.

It is constructed from paintings done in the local area of the waterways and trees.

This bridge is an important structure, listed, but unknown to many. The confluence of the two rivers emphasises how lucky Reading is to have lovely waterways to enjoy.

These waterways of Reading are often hidden but are beautiful assets that should be valued, respected and honoured as historic relics were.

This bridge was intended to take foot traffic and barge towing horses across the Kennet to continue along the Thames.

Its shape made it become known locally as the Horseshoe Bridge, now used by walkers and cyclists to access the river side.





A piece of the Reading Civic Centre after it was demolished having come to the end of its design life after 40 years. Its shape is an echo of a sister building nearby. It has been safely wrapped in case of contamination by other building materials used at the time of construction.

(Disclaimer, it's not really!)





The word "relic" suggests to me a chimera, (the impossible creature), borne out of the malady that is nostalgia. Yet it is also an impossible reality existing in our world like the Mobius loop.  
Is the Affordable Home now a relic for the Reading of 2018?

**The Southern Gas Social Club pigeon coop**

The former Southern Gas Social Club is a beautiful building on the River Kennet that has been derelict and inhabited by pigeons for several years. It is now scheduled for development and the pigeons appear to have been evicted. I have re-imagined the building as a pigeon coop.





My reliquary is a miniature knitted replica of my grandmother's sewing basket. I was born at 30 Hatherley Road and she lived opposite at 27. I use her basket for sewing bits and pieces, in her time it would have been full of her bits and pieces from Jackson's. My knitted basket contains paper leaves and has a label to explain:  
'JACKSON'S...Their wonderfully unsophisticated window displays are a delight: you can tell it's autumn when they bring out the sprays of artificial brown leaves.'

Adam Sowan—Abattoirs to Zinzan Street pub.Two Rivers Press



Emotional State is a collaboration between two designer artists who work together exploring themes of the great female 'holy wild'.

Each one of us has an ancient cellular memory of being a seed keeper. The communities from which we descend are resilient survivors, just like our seeds, we triumph over adversity.

Whether a seed is carried by land, air, water, animal or stolen by two seed guardians, the purpose to return them to the great female 'Holy Wild' - Mother Nature.





On a dark winter evening, waiting at a bus stop I dream of getting home.  
I greet the number 17 like a best friend filled with warmth and light.

From 1905 to 1939, the people of Reading probably felt the same for  
the trams. Now in 2019, buses fulfil our transportation needs. Surely  
something in the future is going to replace them, I wonder what it will be.



Jacksons - Reading's family department store – an integral part of Reading's retail heritage.

My reliquary pays homage to Jacksons Department Store. Through the use of decoupage, and the use of fabric (a nod to Jacksons famous and well loved haberdashery department), I have tried to capture images of the store, and what it stood for. The model of the capsule was engineered by John Godo of Earley.

Jacksons flagship branch traded in Reading from for over 138 years, opening its doors first on 17 September, 1875 , and sadly closing them for the last time on 24 December, 2013.

The store operated a network of pneumatic tubes made by Lamson Engineering which transported cash and documents around the building. Installed in the 1940s, it was the last such system still functioning anywhere. A customer's cash and a ticket stating the items purchased would be placed in a capsule by the sales assistant; the capsule would be delivered via the pneumatic network to the cash office; the receipt and change would be returned to the customer in another capsule. By centralising the cash collection, the system helped avoid thefts from the various small areas of the store, which would otherwise each have needed a cash register. At the closing auction, the system was purchased for £900 (+ VAT and commission) by the man who had been maintaining it for the past 20 years.



When I first lived in Reading in the 1980s, you could almost chew the air on Broad Street some days. In damp and humid weather, the traffic fumes would be held close to the ground in a layer of evil and noxious gas. I had to go there, for instance to get school uniform from Jackson's - a rite of passage for all my children as they went up to secondary school, always accompanied by a Heelas pancake lunch. But the air quality did not encourage hanging around... my piece celebrates the difference in the air quality on Broad Street between the 80s and now. It also, in its varied colours, nods to Reading Buses contribution to the fight for air quality\*. I could pretend the idea of a bird cage was a clever reference to canaries and coal mines, but in fact that idea came later. I just thought a bird cage would make a good reliquary to contain 'air' (actually felting fibres) The little bells are a reference to canaries, though. (\* For information, if you are not local, the livery of Reading buses is varied and colourful and much admired by friends from out of town in my experience)



I only make works out of waste, leftovers or discarded materials.

My relic is the Art Studio Trail.

It must have been 2014 when, on the last day of the Reading Whiteknights Trail, I noticed a pile of leaflets; clearly they were out of date by then. Rapidly I reflected that there must be a better way for them to be used, rather than be pulped into a material of inferior quality – as recycling paper normally is.

So I carried them home and they remained for a length of time in the cabinet where I store a variety of materials, all waiting to be employed in something – hopefully – meaningful. Once the theme for the new collective installation was revealed, an idea was born.

The reliquary structure is obtained using the leaflets to make rods; these are then folded and bound together with wire from stripped electrical cables, thus giving origin to the required shape. Spectacle lenses symbolically represent the glass for the case – delicately hanging, held by copper wire, at the mercy of how the wind happens to blow.

A pair of spectacles, complete in their frame, is a reminder of art acting as something for us to look through, and see with. Do you see in focus or is it blurred? Do you see dark or clear?

My thanks go to Dr Kirk optician, who collected and donated the lenses. I would also like to pay a tribute to Christine Brewster, my teacher, who regularly attends the Trail and to whom I am much indebted.





Nostalgia is associated with a longing for long gone moments, especially the good old days. Could it be a positive or negative emotion?