

## WATERHOUSE & VICTORIAN READING

The period from 1837 to 1910 has left Reading with a wonderfully rich architectural legacy, from the exuberant ornament of town centre banks and shops, to the inventive patterned brickwork of its residential neighbourhoods, to an impressive array of civic and cultural infrastructure. These were designed by talented local architects such as Charles Smith, Joseph Morris, and William Ravenscroft, and joined by illustrious national figures, including Pugin, Scott, Woodyer and Bodley.

Foremost among these was Alfred Waterhouse (1830-1905), a prolific architect who helped to shape architecture into the profession as we know it today. Relocating his practice from Manchester to London, Waterhouse moved with his family to Reading in 1867. They settled at **Whiteknights**, a former country estate redeveloped into smaller plots. Waterhouse designed his own residence **Foxhill** for one of these, along with several others (since demolished). He also renovated his parents' home, **Whiteknights House**, designed by Smith, who would go on to make important additions to Waterhouse's own buildings, including the grammar school and the Palmer mansion, **East Thorpe**.

Waterhouse's many contributions to Reading include numerous residences, churches, the new **Town Hall** (1871-76) and the re-founded **Reading School** (1868-74). In these works Waterhouse adapted the popular Gothic Revival style to suit modern needs, including masterful planning, an eye for the picturesque, and inventive use of brick and terracotta. It's astonishing to think that he was simultaneously designing Manchester Town Hall, the Natural History Museum in London, new buildings for Oxford and Cambridge, and much else. Though he had a small team of dedicated draftsmen, Waterhouse designed each project himself, a testament to his unceasing energy and talent.

These achievements were realised thanks to the civic zeal of Reading's leading citizens, most especially the Palmer family (of biscuit fame). **Palmer Park**, **Forbury Gardens**, the **University of Reading**, and many other foundations resulted from their philanthropy. They also demonstrated industrial responsibility in the development of **New Town** and **The Mount** as high-quality housing for their workers, though their geographic segregation is a reminder of the social hierarchies inherent to Victorian society. Further contrasts are seen in one aspect central to Victorian Reading that has vanished entirely: its factories and industrial buildings. **Huntley & Palmers**, **Simonds Brewery** and other sites along the Kennet have now disappeared, the former H&P social club a small reminder of this once pervading presence on the town.

The walks in this guide can easily be combined in different ways. Their geographical spread is testament to Reading's Victorian growth, and there are equally notable sites 'off the map' in west Reading and Caversham. Walking Victorian Reading shows how Waterhouse and his contemporaries believed in the power of design, with architecture that delights and nurtures the spirit, creating 'everyday' environments that are still valued and enjoyed today.

## HIGHLIGHTS



TOWN HALL (A)



ASSIZE COURTS (B)



QUEEN VICTORIA ST (F)



HUNTLEY & PALMERS (H)



ST JOHN EVANGELIST (J)



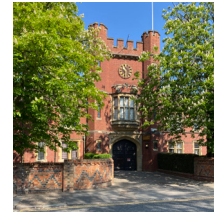
READING SCHOOL (K)



ST BARTHOLOMEW'S (M)



NEW TOWN PRIMARY (N)



WANTAGE HALL (Q)



FOXHILL HOUSE (R)



WHITEKNIGHTS HOUSE (S)



THE MOUNT (T)



HILLSIDE (U)

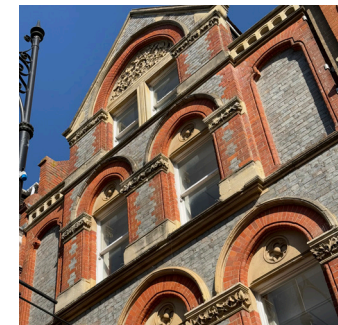


CHRIST CHURCH (W)



RISING SUN (Y)

## VICTORIAN READING SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR



Dr Stephen Gage

In partnership with REDA



## Key Sites

**A.** Town Hall, 1876 (Alfred Waterhouse), (concert hall by Lainson, 1882; library, art gallery, museum by Cooper & Howell, 1897)

**B.** Assize Courts, 1861 (JB Clacy)

**C.** Church of St James, 1840 (AWN Pugin)

**D.** Reading Station, 1840/67 (Brunel, Lane)

**E.** Great Western House, 1844 (Brunel) (now Malmaison Hotel)

**F.** Queen Victoria Street, 1894 (SS Stallwood)

**G.** Reading Gaol, 1844 (George Gilbert Scott)

**H.** Huntley & Palmers Social Club, c. 1900

**I.** Wesley Methodist Church, 1873 (Joseph Morris)

**J.** St John the Evangelist, 1876 (WA Dixon)

**K.** Reading School, 1868-74 (Waterhouse) (extensions by Charles Smith, William Ravenscroft, 1873-1911)

**L.** Church of St Luke, 1882 (JP St Aubyn)

**M.** St Bartholomew's Church, Hall & Vicarage, 1880 (Waterhouse), (Chancel by GF Bodley, 1905)

**N.** New Town Primary School, 1874 (Morris)

**O.** University of Reading Great Hall, 1906 (Ravenscroft & Smith)

**P.** East Thorpe, 1882 for Alfred Palmer (Waterhouse) (St Andrew's Hall extension by Smith & Son, 1911) (now Museum of English Rural Life)

**Q.** Wantage Hall, 1908 (Smith & Son)

**R.** Foxhill House, 1867 for Alfred Waterhouse (Waterhouse)

**S.** Whiteknights House, 1858 (Smith), home of Waterhouse Senior (extensions by Waterhouse, 1862, 1873)

**T.** The Mount, 1876 (housing for Huntley & Palmers managers)

**U.** Hillside, 1880 for William Isaac Palmer (Morris & Stallwood)

**V.** Somerleaze House, 1877 for William Silver Darter (Waterhouse)

**W.** Christ Church, 1862, 1874 (Henry Woodyer)

**X.** Christ Church Vicarage, 1872 (Waterhouse)

**Y.** Rising Sun Temperance Tavern, 1877 (Waterhouse)

