

Henry VIII's progresses to Reading – a timeline

Date of Progress	What's going on in England?	What's going on in Reading?
1510. 26–31 July	Henry is a popular king. He is athletic and happily married. He is on good terms with the Pope and awarded the title 'Defender of the Faith'.	Reading Abbey is one of the largest monasteries in Northern Europe and the fourth largest in England. It makes just under £2,000 a year, putting it in the top ten wealthiest monastic establishments in England. It has 30 acres of land, including a deer park covering Whitley, perfect for hunting. The monks of the Abbey were supported by many servants from the town. They would have helped in the kitchens or gardens, in the mill, bakehouse and stables, while carpenters and masons were employed in practical jobs around the site.
1516. 18–19 Sept.		
1518. 16–24 March		
1520. 13–16 Aug. & 21 Sept. to 1 Oct.		
1523. 19–20 Nov.		
1525. 27 Oct. to 22 Nov.		
1529. 21–22 Aug.	During this period, Henry VIII was trying to obtain a divorce from his first wife, Katherine of Aragon, and to marry Anne Boleyn. In 1534, Henry VIII becomes Head of the Church in England. It is now treason to criticise the King or his policies.	The Abbot of Reading petitions the Pope on Henry's behalf in support of the King's divorce from Katherine of Aragon.
1532. 28–30 Aug.		
1534. 18–21 Aug.		
1535. 9–12 July	Thomas Cromwell is made vicar-general of England. He sets up a team to survey the wealth and income of all religious houses and monastic lands in the country. The findings are compiled in a book known as the <i>Valor Ecclesiasticus</i> .	In 1536, the Abbot of Reading starts making lots of payments to Cromwell and his son. In 1537, the Abbot reports to Cromwell that a rumour is circulating that the King is dead. The originator of this rumour is punished.
1540 21–23 Aug.	In 1536, some Protestant religious changes are introduced in England. Additionally, smaller religious houses start being dissolved (shut down). By 1539, although some Catholic practices are allowed again, the Bible is now written in English and larger religious houses are being dissolved too.	Reading Abbey is dissolved. The Abbot of Reading, Hugh Farringdon, refuses to give up the Abbey and is put to death for treason. In 1542, a new charter for the town is issued, incorporating the mayor and burgesses.