



READING BASINGSTOKE COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP



READING

This major station, managed by Network Rail, was the ninth busiest outside of London prior to Covid-19.

The very first station on this site was opened by the original Great Western Railway on 30 March 1840 - with only one platform! Reading has seen many changes since then. In 1989 the station was upgraded with the addition of a new concourse and small shopping arcade. The current station was officially opened on 17 July 2014 after a major rebuilding programme that included alterations to the layout of the lines.



Reading West

This suburban station was built to allow long distance trains to serve the town of Reading without having to use the main line station. Trains would have had to reverse direction to continue their journey and this would take up platform space and time at an already busy station. Instead, trains used two lines which avoided the main station and then formed a junction with the main line to the west of Reading station. Reading West station allowed Reading passengers to board or alight from long distance trains. The platforms were made big enough to accommodate long distance trains, compared to the shorter platforms only used by local branch line trains at Bramley and Mortimer.

For many years, Reading FC's Elm Park football ground was very close to Reading West station. Its stadium was built in 1896 and the last match played there was in 1998 prior to the club moving to its current home on the outskirts of the town (see Green Park station).

A £3.1 million facelift and upgrade including a new entrance and ticket office has been approved for Reading West and works are due to start soon.



Artist's impressions of the upgraded station.



Artist's impressions of the new station.



Mortimer

This Grade 2 listed building is a wonderful example of an early Great Western Railway Italianate-style country station. The design features a roof which overhangs the building on all four sides providing a canopy around it, including the platform. This was the only intermediate station when the line opened in 1848. It featured a small single-track goods shed and goods yard which closed in 1963. Most country stations had a goods shed or sidings which served their local communities. The railway was for many years the main method of moving freight, such as food, general goods and agricultural produce to and from rural areas. Most local businesses would have had access to the goods facilities and the railway was a 'common carrier' meaning it was obliged to convey any items a customer wished; all manner of items could be brought to a railhead for delivery or collection.

Mortimer station featured a very pleasant formal garden when it first opened. The impressive style of the garden and the station were designed to please the nearby landowner, the Duke of Wellington ('The Iron Duke'), who lived at Stratfield Saye House.

A new passenger footbridge was erected at the station in 1992 which replaced an older metal structure. The footbridge had been provided as the station did not have its own bridge over the lines, and passengers wishing to cross between the platforms, or gain access to the Basingstoke platform had to use a nearby road overbridge instead.

The station is actually located at Stratfield Mortimer, with the main village of Mortimer being a little way further west.



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Bramley

The station at Bramley was built quite a long time after the track had been laid through the village, opening to passengers on 1 May 1895. For many years, this Hampshire station was called 'Bramley for Silchester', to avoid any confusion with 'Bramley & Womersley' in Surrey. It also had a goods yard until 1963.



'Bramley for Silchester' station

Bramley has strong military links. In 1916, during World War One, a Command Ammunition Depot was built on land just south of the station creating an extensive military railway network on either side of the Reading Basingstoke line. The Ministry of Munitions took over the site to the east in 1917 and to the west in 1918. At its peak, this private internal railway system amounted to over 200 miles of track linking a vast amount of stores buildings and including a marshalling yard on the west side of the main railway line. The system used its own steam engines for many years, although battery electric locos were also used from 1922 for safer operation given the explosive nature of the supplies stored at the site! The Depot was so extensive and gave work to so many that it required workmen's trains to operate to get the staff to the widely dispersed buildings. Bramley Depot was also extremely busy during the Second World War.

By the 1960s, three diesel shunting engines had replaced all the steam engines. These Ministry of Defence-owned locomotives - numbered 421, 422 and 425 - were kept in excellent mechanical and external condition at a large maintenance depot building visible from the main railway line. The site was closed in March 1987 and to mark the occasion three special trains ran 'The Bramley Bunker' railtours, starting at Basingstoke then operating around some of the Bramley Depot internal rail network. There had been plans to make the diesel depot and some of the track at Bramley a base for railway enthusiasts to keep and restore locomotives, but nothing came of the scheme and the site is now used for military training exercises.

BASINGSTOKE

Great Western Railway's Basingstoke station opened on 1 November 1848, next to the London & South Western Railway station that was already there.

The Great Western Railway station had a timber roof which spanned two of Basingstoke's three platforms, a two-track engine shed and goods shed plus several sidings forming the goods yard. In the early days, the goods 'transhipment' shed had one set of broad gauge rails, and one set of standard gauge rails. All freight and goods had to be unloaded and reloaded between wagons on either track before it could reach its final destination. This took much time and effort so in 1856 the company laid a third rail at the standard gauge width on its tracks from Oxford to Reading and Basingstoke making these lines 'mixed gauge'. This allowed trains of either gauge width to use the lines.

Basingstoke's Great Western Railway engine shed closed in 1950, leaving just the former L&SWR loco shed to service steam engines until its closure in July 1967 when BR steam ceased.

The separate Great Western Railway station closed in 1932. However, the current Platform 5 is one of its original features still in use today as the 'bay platform' for local stopping services.



©.Railway Station Photographs



READING BASINGSTOKE COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP

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- Reading West
- Reading Green Park
- Mortimer
- Bramley
- BASINGSTOKE



www.readingbasingstokecrp.co.uk

How you can help

- Join the Reading Basingstoke Community Rail Partnership stakeholder or voluntary groups.
- Help with, or sponsor, improvements to a station.
- Provide a service, business or promotion at a station.
- Provide or help to look after flowers and planters at stations.
- Assist with passenger surveys, events, art projects and promotions.
- Improve access to or from stations via bus, cycle, walking or car sharing initiatives.
- Keep stations free of litter and rubbish.
- Organise or lead guided walks or cycle rides from stations.
- Help 'keep an eye' on stations in the evening or at weekends.
- Report any damage or anti-social behaviour.

and much more...

Please contact us for further information about how to help.

For further information:

Visit www.readingbasingstokecrp.co.uk
 Find out more on our Facebook page
www.facebook.com/ReadingBasingstokeCRP
 Email info@readingbasingstokecrp.co.uk
 Phone 07900 103296
 Look out for publicity in the local media.

Information correct at time of going to press.
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THE READING BASINGSTOKE LINE

A community rail partnership line supported by Great Western Railway.

This important rail link runs for 15 and a half miles between the South Western Railway (SWR) main line at Basingstoke and the Great Western Railway (GWR) main line at Reading. The line runs through north Hampshire and south Berkshire, crossing the county boundary south of Mortimer station.

The line was engineered and built by the Chief Engineer of the original Great Western Railway - Isambard Kingdom Brunel - and opened on 1 November 1848. The route branched off the Reading to Hungerford 'Berks & Hants Railway' line at Southcote junction (named after a nearby manor house) two miles south of Reading and terminated at the GWR's Basingstoke station which adjoined the London & South Western Railway's station.

Great Western Railway built this line to its own specifications. Not only did it use its unique broad-gauge track width but it laid the rails on longitudinal, rather than the usual transverse sleepers. Brunel thought that wider trains were more stable - so safer - when fast running. Consequently, his broad-gauge rails were spaced 7 feet and a quarter of an inch apart; much wider than the British standard gauge track of 4 feet 8 inches and a half inches used by all other main railways. As a result of this difference, only GWR broad-gauge trains could use the Reading to Basingstoke line until 22 December 1856, when the company decided to add a third, inner rail at the standard gauge width to its broad-gauge track as far as Oxford. After this, standard gauge trains from Basingstoke and beyond could also access the Reading route, making Basingstoke a proper railway junction rather than a meeting point of two separate railways. Due to rivalry between the rail operating companies, it was another 13 years before the last sections of track on this line were standardised.

The Reading Basingstoke Line has always been an important link between the two main lines. In addition to the current 30-minute frequency of stopping services operated by today's 'new' Great Western Railway, it is used by long-distance CrossCountry passenger services. Freight trains make good use of the line, such as car trains which take vehicles for export, and Freightliner container trains use the route as part of their journey to and from Southampton Docks and destinations in the Midlands or further north. All this activity makes it a busy line both day and night. The line is not electrified beyond Southcote Junction so all trains using the line are diesel powered at present.

The stations covered by Reading Basingstoke Community Rail Partnership are served by regular train services in both directions, seven days a week.

TRAIN SERVICES

For train times along the route you require:



Great Western Railway timetable
T14 Reading to Basingstoke.
Visit gwr.com



CrossCountry trains timetable Scotland, North East & Manchester to the South West and South Coast.
Visit crosscountrytrains.co.uk

For further information:

National Rail Enquiries: 03457 48 49 50
nationalrail.co.uk

For next train departure information from your local station text the name (for example; MORTIMER) to 84950

British Transport Police: 0800 405 040

The travel information in this leaflet is for guidance only; before travelling please check current timetables and routes with the relevant operator.

BASINGSTOKE

Festival Place

There are over 200 stores under cover in this vibrant shopping mall opposite the main exit from Basingstoke station. festivalplace.co.uk



Willis Museum and Sainsbury Gallery Market Place

Named after local clockmaker George Willis, this Hampshire Cultural Trust museum used to be the Town Hall. Touring exhibitions supplement the permanent displays, and outside stands a life-size bronze statue of Jane Austen. Museum entry is free. Walk through the Festival Place shopping centre opposite the main exit from Basingstoke station to Market Place. hampshireculture.org.uk/willis-museum-and-sainsbury-gallery



Eastrop Park Churchill Way East/Eastrop Way

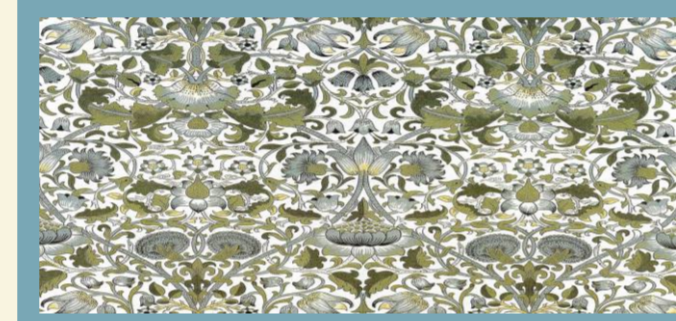
This popular park has a boating lake, a café, 'dry plaza' fountain, play areas and Tree and Walking trails. The River Loddon flows through the park into a balancing pond that is a haven for wildlife including kingfishers. The park is a 10 minute walk from the station. basingstoke.gov.uk/parks



Join the Basingstoke Canal Heritage Footpath in Eastrop Park or back at Festival Place to follow the original route of the canal. (Download a pdf of the walk leaflet from basingstoke.gov.uk).

'Loddon' design by William Morris

The River Loddon rises in Basingstoke and flows northwards for 28 miles to join the Thames at Wargrave in Berkshire. In the early 1880s the Arts & Crafts movement wallpaper and fabric pattern designer William Morris took a boat trip with friends down the River Thames. This inspired him to create a series of printed cotton fabrics named after its tributaries; 'Loddon' or 'Lodden' (there was some confusion over the spelling) was one of them.



Ruins of the Chapel of the Holy Trinity

Holy Ghost Cemetery, off Chapel Hill, South View. Just north of Basingstoke station is a peaceful cemetery where there are many War Graves and where twelve WW2 tank blocks can still be seen that were part of a barrier used to protect the railway. Adjacent to them are the ruins of the beautiful Holy Trinity chapel that was built by 1st Baron Sandys of The Wyne - intended for himself and his wife Margery.

Find out more about Basingstoke's history on the Heritage Society website. bas-hert-soc.org/town-trail.html



Basing House Old Basing Basing House was a major Tudor palace and castle in the village of Old Basing. Today only parts of the lower ground floor, plus the foundations and earthworks remain. The ruins are Grade II listed and Basing House is a scheduled monument managed by the Hampshire Cultural Trust hampshireculture.org.uk/basing-house



Join the Basing Trail to walk from the station to Basing House following the waymarks. (Download a pdf of the trail leaflet from hants.gov.uk/walking/basing-trail).

© Joe Low, Provided by Hampshire Cultural Trust

READING

Museum of Berkshire Aviation Woodley

Berkshire's dynamic contribution to aviation history is graphically recaptured at the historic site of Woodley Airfield, near Reading. Miles and Handley Page aircraft built at Woodley are being re-constructed and exhibited at the museum along with fascinating pictorial records and priceless archives.



Nearest station: **READING**

Reading Buses '13 orange' bus service runs from stop EM outside the station to Herald Way (1 min walk to the museum). For information please visit reading-buses.co.uk

Forbury gardens

2 minutes walk from the station, this popular public park is an oasis of peace and tranquillity. The huge and imposing lion statue in the grounds is the 'Maiwand Lion' commemorating local soldiers lost in 1880 in the Battle of Maiwand during the second Anglo-Afghan war. Sculpted over two years by Reading man George Simonds, and weighing 16 tons, it is one of the largest cast iron sculptures in the world.



Reading Museum & Art Gallery Blagrove Street

This museum near the station houses wonderful historic and artistic objects both local and global. Highlights include important archaeological finds from Roman Silchester and medieval Reading Abbey, a unique Victorian copy of the Bayeux Tapestry, contemporary Aldermaston Pottery and the famous Huntley & Palmers biscuit tins. There is a changing programme of exhibitions in The Sir John Madejski Art Gallery and the museum shop is well worth a visit. readingmuseum.org.uk



Cole Museum of Zoology

Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading Part of the University's School of Biological Sciences, this educational museum re-located in 2021 to the new Health and Life Sciences building. There are examples here of creatures from all over the planet. collections.reading.ac.uk/cole-museum

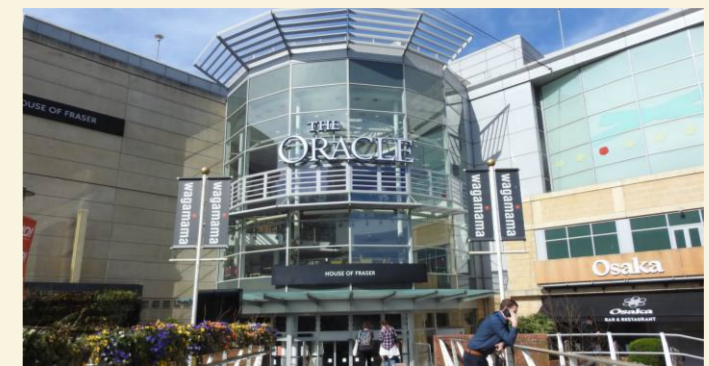
Ure Museum

The Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology, established in 1922 by Percy Ure, is part of the University's Department of Classics. Located in the Edith Morley Building, its fabulous array of statues, carvings, mosaics, pottery and artifacts make up one of the most important collections of Greek antiquities in the UK. collections.reading.ac.uk/ure-museum

Reading Buses '21 claret' bus service runs from stop EK outside the station to Queens Drive for Whiteknights Campus (2 min walk Ure Museum/4 min walk to Cole Museum). For information please visit reading-buses.co.uk

The Oracle shopping centre

This large indoor shopping and leisure mall on the banks of the River Kennet was developed and is owned by Hammerson and the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority. 9 min walk through town from the station. theoracle.com



Kennet & Avon canal

The 87-mile long canal and navigation starts at Reading at the junction with the River Thames near Blakes Lock and runs through the centre of the town, past the Oracle, before heading westwards and running parallel to the railway line for a section. The end of the canal is in Bristol. Look out for ducks, swans, geese and grey wagtails as you follow the canal towpath. canalrivertrust.org.uk/kennet-and-avon/canal



Join the Kennet & Avon Canal towpath at the Oracle shopping centre, following the National Cycle Network Route 4 waymarks. (The towpath is shared by walkers, joggers, cyclists and anglers).

Riverside Museum Kenavon Drive

This small museum gives an insight into the history of the Kennet and Avon canal and River Thames in the town. It is housed in two listed former waterworks buildings - the Screen House and the Turbine House - and spans the river at Blakes Lock. 20 min walk through town from the station. There are paths on both sides of the river, so you can cross the footbridge by the gas holder and come back on the other side. readingmuseum.org.uk



Reading Buses '42 buzz' bus service runs from stop EO outside the station to Kenavon Drive (1 min walk to the museum), or buses from EM to the Huntley and Palmers stop (3 min walk to the museum). For information please visit reading-buses.co.uk

'Kennet' design by William Morris

William Morris's printed cotton fabrics named after tributaries of the Thames, known as the 'River chintzes', included 'Evenlode', 'Wey', 'Windrush', 'Wandle and Cray', 'Cherwell', 'Loddon' and 'Kennet'.



Thames Path

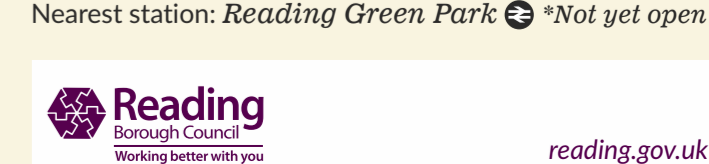
Approximately 7 minutes from Reading station is Reading Bridge and the footpath alongside the River Thames can be accessed from the town side. Christchurch Bridge is a striking new suspended footbridge on the path leading over to Christchurch Meadow on the opposite riverbank. Nearby, 'The Coal' woodland in Kings Meadow was once the site of GWR coal yards. While taking in the fresh air, enjoy pleasant views of the wide river with its graceful Weeping Willows, colourful moored house boats, and passing pleasure boats, canoes, swans, ducks and geese. The water up and down-river from Caversham Bridge is a designated swan sanctuary.



Join the Thames Path at Reading Bridge on George Street. Information is available on the Saturday Walkers Club website walkingclub.org.uk/daywalks

The Select Car Leasing Stadium

Home to Reading Football Club since 22 August 1998, the stadium originally named after former Chairman Sir John Madejski has a capacity of just over 24,000, and cost around £50 million to build. It is just over 1 mile from the new Reading Green Park station. Nearest station: **Reading Green Park** *Not yet open



reading.gov.uk