

Rare archaeological finds show monastery was a social and religious hub

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Credit: University of Reading

A large communal building, timber-lined well and cemetery include some of the discoveries made by archaeologists at an 8th–9th-century monastery in Cookham, Berkshire.

Staff and [students](#) from the University of Reading have spent the past

month digging up the Anglo-Saxon site, next to Holy Trinity Church in Cookham, Berkshire.

Key finds include:

- A large timber structure with an internal floor and hearth that would have been one of the main buildings within the monastery.
- A well, with a preserved wooden barrel-lined shaft containing other wooden artifacts
- A substantial walled monastic enclosure fronting the River Thames
- A [cemetery](#) containing more than 50 deceased individuals—adults of both sexes and children—spanning three generations

Professor Gabor Thomas, of the University of Reading who is leading the project said, "The discoveries we have made at Cookham in 2023 will help us to paint a much clearer picture of daily life at the monastery. We will need to carry out more detailed analyses of what we have found, but the artifacts unearthed at this year's dig again show the exceptional quality of preservation at Cookham."



Credit: University of Reading

The remains of the monastery were first discovered in 2021 in a test excavation by staff from the University of Reading's Archaeology Department and volunteers from local archaeological societies.

A full-scale dig followed in the summer of 2022 when excavators uncovered an industrial and craft zone that would have supplied nuns with food and helped to transport imported items along the River Thames.

The excavations are by kind permission of Holy Trinity Church Cookham. The University of Reading Department of Archaeology is set to return to excavate more of the Cookham site in 2024.

Provided by University of Reading

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