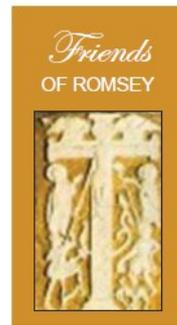


# NEWSLETTER

Summer 2015

Issue 13



## A message from the President; Revd Canon Tim Sledge, Vicar of Romsey

Dear Friends

At our AGM in June, Bishop Geoffrey Rowell (formerly Bishop of Basingstoke and Bishop in Europe) gave us a wonderful 'Cook's tour'; not just of his travels during his ministry, but of the wide and rich diversity of the church across Europe. I was reminded of how easy it is to have an understanding of what the church is – what it looks like, what it does – and then to have that understanding blown apart and expanded by the experience and traditions of other people. It challenges me that one of the great gifts of the Abbey is that it must be a place for all people - of all nationalities, shapes, sizes, backgrounds, denominations, and traditions.

St Benedict (on whom the Abbey's rule and values are founded) said: "Greet all as if they were Christ". I think the Friends are helping us to do just that. When we go on visits, we discover more about what it means to be human; when we run coffee mornings, we welcome all to share and enjoy being together. When you put your generous donations and resources into improving our experience for visitors, you help people to see that there is more to life than the limited horizons of our experience.

When I introduced Bishop Geoffrey, I joked that he could be Bishop of Expedia or Trip Advisor! And those words have come back to bite me. So I want to leave you with two comments about the Abbey from Trip Advisor, which would not have happened if it wasn't for the Friends' human and financial support:

*"One of the most welcoming churches for visitors! The way they are geared up to making the visitor experience a good one. A warm welcome from a steward on entering. Excellent use of lighting, great displays, all in all really good. Our larger places of worship (e.g. Winchester or York Minster) could learn from them." And... "Beautifully cared for: we were given a guide to point us to the items of most interest which was enormously helpful. This abbey is very obviously very cherished by those who give of their time to staff and maintain it."*

I look forward to seeing you over the summer – and especially at the Strawberry Tea in August at the Vicarage.

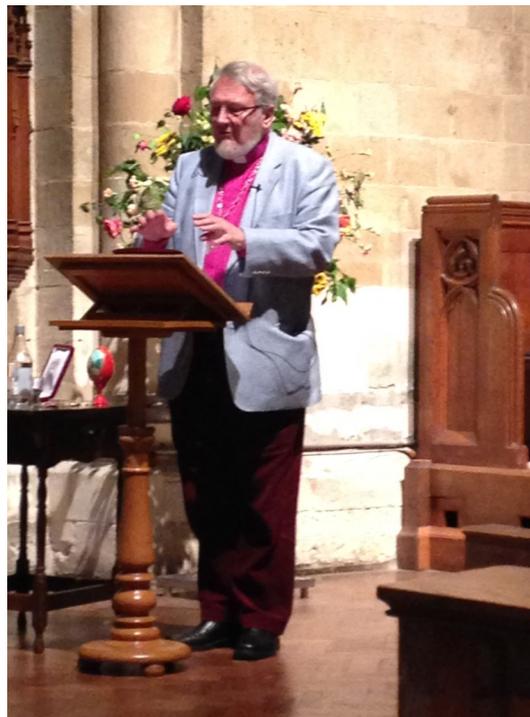
With all good wishes and my prayers for the Friends,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Sledge".



## The Friends of Romsey Abbey AGM

The AGM was well attended by the members and we also welcomed the Town Mayor of Romsey and the Mayor of Test Valley, who are our Honorary Vice Presidents. The Chairman, John Twigg, gave a vote of thanks to the retiring Vice Chairman, Revd John Clarke, and thanked him for all his support and hard work. The new Vice Chairman is Roger Rowe, who is also Membership Secretary. Dick Hewett has taken on the Chair of the Events Committee. All the Trustees were thanked for their support and work during the past year.



*Rt Revd Geoffrey Rowell*

Our Speaker was the Rt Revd Geoffrey Rowell who had been the third Bishop in Europe from 2001 to 2013. He is currently Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Chichester. He gave the Friends an insight into his diocese as Bishop of Gibraltar which is a network of Christian communities from France, Germany, Italy, Malta and Northwest Europe nations.



In 1637 Archbishop Laud gave responsibility to the Bishop of London to oversee the Anglican communities which had developed outside Britain, because of trade with other nations. In the 19th century the Diocese of Europe was set up to look after southern Europe, and in 1980 the two parts of Europe were brought together under the Diocese of Gibraltar.

John Twigg (pictured here next to Rt Revd Rowell) gave a vote of thanks.

*Report by Jill Hall*

## Notes from the Chairman

Dear Friends

It was through my limited contribution as a steward that I first became aware of the Friends of Romsey Abbey and their work. Now, some three years on, I am privileged to be much more involved. There is no doubt that The Friends have made, and are continuing to make, a positive contribution to the work of the Abbey and I am very grateful for the involvement of all on our management team. There is a feeling of genuine potential to make a positive difference to those in our church family and the wider society.

Our President, in his letter, has already mentioned this and we should be encouraged and inspired by his comments. So, may I ask each one of our members to give some thought to the important task of growing our membership. For example: if those of us blessed with children (possibly now mature adults) were successful in recruiting *some* of these, the average age of our membership would be reduced and our potential energy levels increased. I feel sure, with your help, we can look forward to continued growth in numbers and the increasing capability this will bring to the challenges that wait.

Every Blessing,  
John Twigg

## Running The Friends of Romsey Abbey

The Friends charity was established in April 2009. Running the Friends is the responsibility of trustees elected by the members each year at our AGM. The Committee of Trustees meets four times a year. The AGM is held each June, so we now have a new committee - though we were all re-elected!

We do three main things – organise Events for our Members, organise Coffee Mornings for the members and the Romsey public, and allocate funds from your subscriptions to projects that will benefit the Abbey and its visitors.

As Membership Secretary, I maintain a growing database that has all our membership and subscription records. 70% of our members have email and this means we can avoid spending too much of your money on postage. We now have 83% of our subscriptions paid by Standing Order. The subscription data allows me to work out how much Gift Aid Michelle Twigg (Treasurer) can claim for us; so far this year, 80% of our subscription income is eligible for Gift Aid and we have earned £350 cashback from HMRC!

Our website ([www.romseyabbeyfriends.org](http://www.romseyabbeyfriends.org)) is run by John Compton and is a great repository of information about the Friends. My goal is to have all our information, including this Newsletter, published on the website (but some information will be sent out by Royal Mail if it is essential for all members, such as the Annual Events Calendar and the annual Membership Letter). Liz and Mike Hallett handle the printed communications we need. The Membership Letter is your opportunity to see the records I have concerning you, and to correct anything that I or the bank has got wrong. We have just added internet banking to our repertoire. So next year you can pay your Membership this way if you choose, and Dick Hewett can accept bookings this way. But you do have to email us, please, so that we know who has sent us the payment and what it is for.

I hope that gives you a feel for what is going on behind the scenes.

*Report by Roger Rowe*

## Stained glass tour

The first of our Abbey tours for 2015 took place in February. The subject was the stained glass windows and enough people signed up to be able to split into two groups, which were led by Annegret Evans and Brian Lamb.

Most of the Abbey glass is Victorian, dating from the incumbency of the Revd E.L. Berthon, and was given in memory of various prominent local people. One of the most interesting, in St Lawrence's Chapel, was given by the parishioners in memory of Berthon himself. A few windows date from the 20th century and our one example of medieval glass is French, and was gifted to the parish in the late 20th century. We learnt the significance of the imagery in the two great east windows and the reason why the west window now has clear glass. A very interesting afternoon.

*Report by Liz Hallett*



## Exbury Gardens

A last minute decision to postpone the trip to Exbury in May, due to the anticipated poor weather, was met with sighs of relief from those who had booked to join the trip. Exbury Gardens is not a venue to visit on a day of continuous heavy rain! With the reluctant decision having also been taken to cancel the 'Barrow Boys and Bankers' trip to London on 16<sup>th</sup> June due to lack of sufficient numbers, it was decided to insert the Exbury outing in its place. A few of those who had booked for the original date were unable to attend, so it was a small party of just 14 souls (quality if not quantity!) who boarded the single TVCS minibus for a leisurely trip through the New Forest to the splendour of Exbury Gardens.

Most gratifyingly, whilst the azaleas were no longer at their best, there were still sufficient rhododendrons and other species in bloom to make the visit worthwhile – and it did mean the Gardens were significantly less crowded than they would have been in May. The entrance charge was also lower than in May, ensuring that the trip still covered its costs despite the empty seats in the minibus. And the sun shone throughout the day, which was a major relief! A smooth ride on the steam train, and a lovely stroll through the extensive gardens to the riverside, were accompanied by several chances for conversation during stops for refreshments in Eddy's Cafe. A lovely day enjoyed by all, and well worth being retained in the programme of trips for the year, despite the very late change of date.

Thanks go to John and Hazel Clarke for having suggested and investigated the trip, which they were unfortunately unable to enjoy themselves.

*Report by Dick Hewett*



## The Vicars of Romsey

In March, The Friends had a very interesting and intriguing talk by Liz Hallett about the Vicars of Romsey. We heard about fascinating characters, the influence of the nuns and changes to the Abbey over the years. A religious community was established on the site in the 10<sup>th</sup> century but the first vicar, Nicholas de Botelstan, was not appointed until 1334. The Abbey went through periods of prosperity, suppression and neglect. However, it was not demolished at the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries because it contained a church within a church, a section dedicated to St Lawrence and used solely by the town.

The fact that the Abbey survives so well today was due to three Victorian Vicars who set about restoring it to some of its original glory; The Hon. and Revd Gerard Noel (1841-1851), Revd Charles Avery Moore (1855-1860) and Revd Edward Lyon Berthon (1860-1892). The latter oversaw huge improvements including a heating system, the north transept roof and new windows. Liz showed us a gallery of photographs including two of three vicars, unusually all in one photograph. The older photograph (below) shows, from left to right, Revd Andrew Robertson, Canon James Cooke-Yarborough and Canon Corbin.



The modern photograph shows Canon Neil Crawford Jones, Revd Canon Tim Sledge (our present vicar) and Revd David Sherlock.

*Report by Jill Hall*



## **Cruise on the Basingstoke Canal with a visit to Odiham Castle**

On a warm day in April, The Friends went on a cruise down the Basingstoke Canal aboard the 'John Pinkerton' Narrowboat. The 37-mile canal was opened in 1794. It had taken 200 men six years to construct and included 29 locks, 69 bridges and a tunnel. Despite every attempt to operate it on a commercial basis, the railways proved to be too much competition and the canal fell into disrepair. In the mid-1970s it was purchased by Hampshire and Surrey County Councils and restored by a volunteer workforce, eventually reopening in 1991. It is run entirely by volunteers and used by millions of people a year for boating, walking and cycling.



The Friends were met at the canal-side by a guide; a brilliant and knowledgeable historian who described life at the 13th century Odiham Castle. The castle was built by King John and it was from here that he rode out to Runnymede to seal the Magna Carta in May 1215. The end of a fascinating day was rounded off by an excellent meal in one of the canal side pubs.

*Report by Jill Hall*



## **Friends of Romsey Abbey – Events 2015**

### **July**

**Fri 17th. Coffee Morning** in the Town Hall, 10.00am. Last serving at 11.45

### **August**

**Sat 15th Aug. Trip to Imber St Giles, Edington Priory and Steeple Ashton** with a guided tour of Edington. Coffee on arrival at Edington. A pub lunch will be booked; select and pay individually. Leave Romsey 8.30am, from outside the Old Magistrates Court. Led by Shirley Rogers. Cost £15.00 per person, minibus transport included. **THIS TRIP IS NOW FULL BUT YOU ARE WELCOME TO ADD YOUR NAME TO THE WAITING LIST IN CASE A PLACE BECOMES AVAILABLE**

**Sun 23rd Aug, 4.30pm. Strawberry Tea in the Vicarage Garden.** £5.50 per person, cheque with booking please, then Friends' Evensong in The Abbey at 6.30pm

### **September**

**Fri 18th Sept. Coffee Morning** in the Town Hall, 10.00am. Last serving at 11.45

## **October**

**Tues 6th Oct, 7.00pm for 7.30pm. FRA Annual Dinner**, Berties Restaurant.

3-course dinner with pre-dinner drinks. Cost: £33.00 per person, cheque with booking please

**Mon 12th to Thurs 15th Oct. Visit to York** by train, led by Tim Rogerson

**Weds 21st Oct, 3.00 pm. Some stories behind the sculptures of Romsey Abbey.**

A talk in the Abbey with Brian Lamb. Contrary to previous advice, this talk is **Open to Members only**, limited numbers, and must be booked in advance, £3 per person. Please note that this talk will NOT be open to the public and no bookings will be taken on the door

**Sat 24th Oct. Ethelflaeda Festival and Lecture.** The speaker will be Angela Tilby ([www.angelatilby.co.uk](http://www.angelatilby.co.uk)). Angela is the Diocesan Canon at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, and broadcasts regularly on the BBC including Radio 4's 'Thought for the Day'

## **November**

**Tues 10th Nov. An afternoon visit to Wimborne Minster** with guided tour and optional visit to the Chained Library, and free time in the town afterwards. Leave Romsey 1.00pm, coffee on arrival. Return approximately 6.15pm. Led by Liz Hallett. Cost: £14.75 per person, cheque with booking please. Minibus transport included

**Fri 20th Nov. Coffee Morning** in the Town Hall, 10.00am. Last serving at 11.45

## **December**

**Sun 20th Dec, 6.30pm. Service of 9 Lessons and Carols** in the Abbey

### **How to Book**

Please phone Dick Hewett first on 01794 500523 to confirm whether there are still spaces available on these events, before making any payment. Please send bookings with cheques for events to Dick Hewett, 42 Botley Road, Romsey, SO51 5AP (please include your phone number) OR pay direct on-line to the Friends' bank account, Sort Code 40-39-05, Account 21402641, including as a reference the name of the event and sending an email to [rbhewett@gmail.com](mailto:rbhewett@gmail.com) to confirm you are booking and have made the payment. If possible, please separate out payments for different events as this makes it easier to track payments and also easier to handle any subsequent cancellations or refunds.

**Please note an error with Dick's mobile phone number on the Events Diary and booking forms: this should be 07743 942576**

## How have we been able to help the Abbey recently?

The Projects Committee has continued to develop links and help direct our support into areas of need. Funding has been provided for hardware and software to enable internet access throughout the Abbey; this means that services and other events are now available worldwide. Also, information about the link to The Abbey App is now available through the Stewards for visitors with electronic tablets and smartphones. Improvements to the Children's Corner have been completed, with the installation of new notice boards. One of the most cost-effective projects has been the funding of the Stations of Easter prayer trail, which received many expressions of grateful thanks from visiting groups and schools.

## Waitrose tokens

The Friends were chosen by Waitrose as one of the three charities to receive green tokens for the month of April. Many thanks to those who supported us by shopping in Waitrose and picking up a green token to help us raise money for our projects.



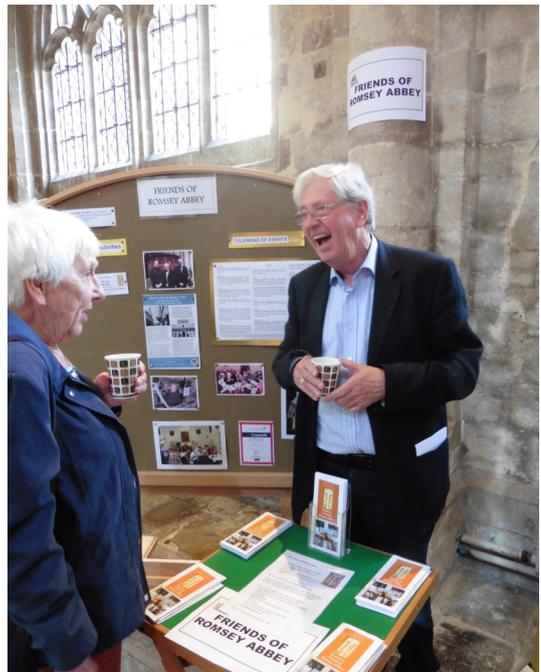
## New and Improved Website

Mike Hallett has made recordings of the latest two talks to the Friends and John Compton has put them up on the website. So you can now listen again, both to Bishop Geoffrey Rowell at the AGM and to Liz Hallett's talk on the Vicars of Romsey. Mike will record future talks when possible, so this is a new aspect of the Friends' website. In addition to information about our own activities, we try to feature other information about the Abbey that we think you would like to see. For example, Liz Hallett has written a history of the Abbey called 'Romsey Abbey - The First 1100 Years'. This is not a Friends' project - the profits are all going to the parish's General fund. Details of this and recent other news are on the website.

## Other News

The Abbey recently held a display on the subject of stewardship. One side of the Abbey focused on where money comes from, and the other side on how it is spent. The Friends had a stand demonstrating how we are able to help financially in various ways.

The photo shows our original Membership Secretary, Jane Hargreaves, chatting with our present Membership Secretary and Vice Chairman, Roger Rowe.



### *The Friends' Prayer*

*Loving Lord, we thank you for blessing us with the beauty of Romsey Abbey.*

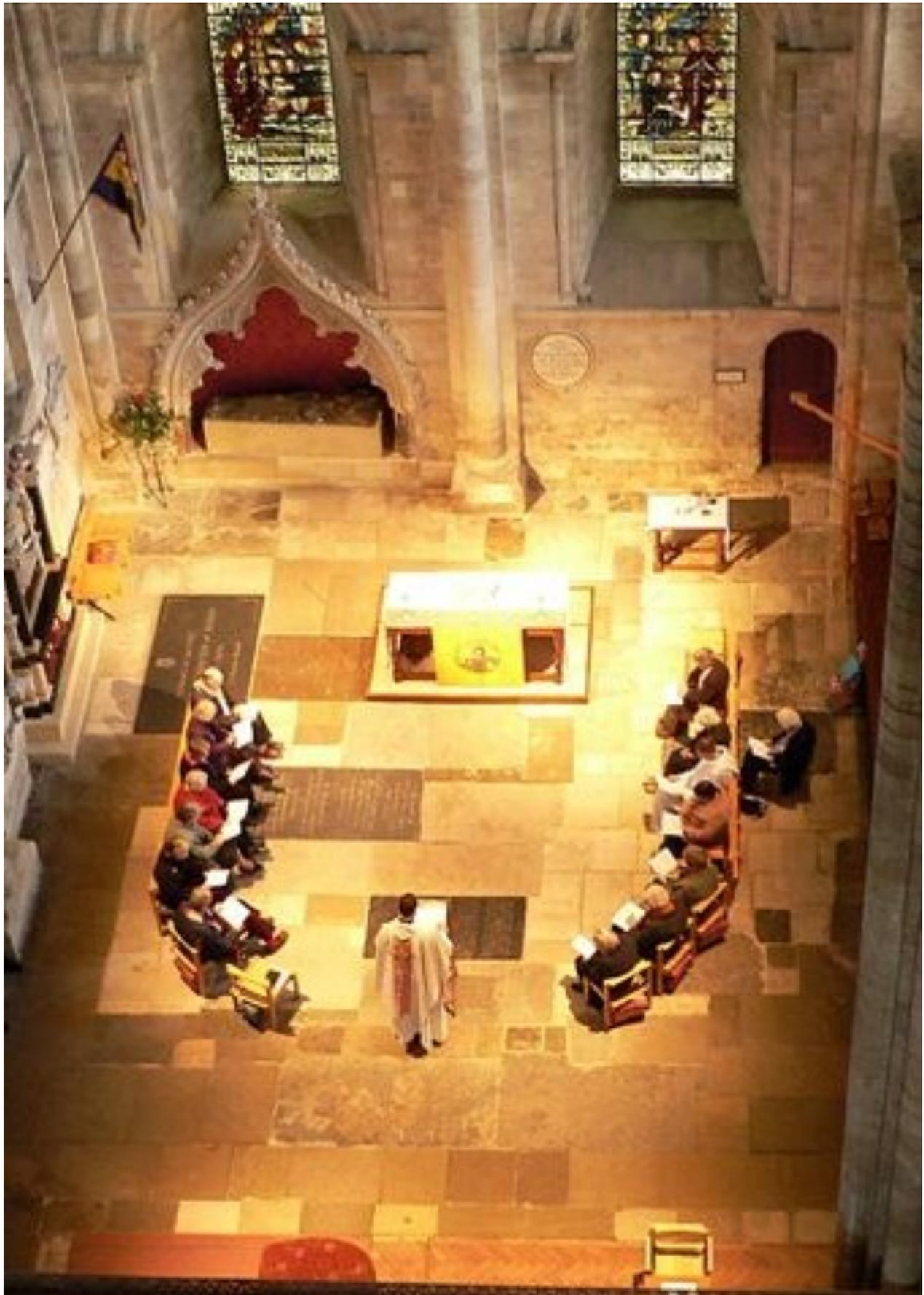
*We pray for the life and work of the Abbey; that you would inspire all who visit with a vision of your beauty.*

*Guide and strengthen the Friends that they might be a generous and supportive group for the benefit of the Abbey and that the beauty of your love may be made more widely known.*

**Your Trustees:** President Revd Canon Tim Sledge, Vicar of Romsey; **Chairman** John Twigg; **Vice-Chairman** Roger Rowe; **Projects Committee Chairman** John Thompson-Hall; **Secretary** Jill Hall; **Treasurer** Michelle Twigg; **Membership Secretary** Roger Rowe; **Events Committee Chairman and Bookings Officer** Dick Hewett. **Committee members:** Tim Rogerson, Ken Gibson. **Member of the Events Committee:** Mike Perfect. **Honorary Vice-Presidents, ex officio** The Mayor of Test Valley; The Town Mayor of Romsey; The Bishop of Southampton. **Newsletter Editor** Ria Skelton. **Website Manager** John Compton. **Registered Charity No. 1134191**

### *Our Vision*

*The vision of the Friends is 'to further projects which enhance the building and its place in the community, bringing together all those who love the Abbey and wish to support its life, work and ministry'.*



**SERVICE IN PROGRESS IN ST NICHOLAS' CHAPEL, FROM THE CLERESTORY**