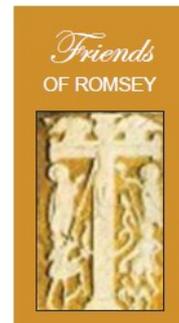


NEWSLETTER



Winter 2015/2016

Issue 14

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

Dear Friends

It was good to see many of you over the Ethelflaeda Festival where the Friends had a greater prominence than ever before. With the lecture, the services and the dedication of the new furniture in St Anne's Chapel – it was a great testimony to your support over recent years. Both regulars and visitors to the chapel have welcomed the new arrangements to enhance the Saxon Rood with almost universal acclaim. The furniture designer, Ron Emmett, has been back taking pictures and will be producing a leaflet all about the design, which we will make available to you by email or post in the not too distant future.

One goal of the Friends is to improve the visitor experience for tourists and pilgrims alike. We have had wonderful reviews about our stewards on TripAdvisor, but I want to encourage more people to visit the Abbey and enjoy it for themselves. So we will be working in partnership with the local authority and community groups to enhance Romsey as a wonderful place to visit, so that more people can enjoy and experience all we do with the Abbey.

I do hope that the Friends will be able to support this, but the best support is to spread the word about the Abbey and what a wonderful place it is to visit and to be part of.

With all good wishes,



We have planned a great range of events for Friends this year

For information on the events and full details of how to book,
please see pages 8 and 9

Friends Coffee Morning held at Romsey Town Hall on Friday 20th November 2015

The Friends Coffee Mornings are getting ever more popular and the one held on 20th November was no exception. We had the pleasure of welcoming 75 members and guests, who worked their way enthusiastically through handmade biscuits and endless cups of coffee.

Our dedicated team of volunteers, co-ordinated by Lis Speck, worked hard producing and serving over 100 cups of coffee and tea. The 'back office' kitchen team produced the coffee and teas and managed to keep up with demand - difficult when it got really busy!



The team on the door, led by Ken Gibson, took the 'very reasonable' entry fee of just £2 each, as well as helping with our security.



The Raffle team

Ken Gibson and John Twigg, pointing to the benefits of membership!

The raffle seems to be getting ever more popular and is led by Roger and Celia Rowe.

Donated raffle prizes are always warmly received!



A very busy Raffle table



Our Chairman, John Twigg, buying his raffle ticket

If you haven't experienced a Friends Coffee morning yet - give it a go! Come along and enjoy the coffee and company

£2.00 for coffee/tea and a homemade biscuit

Friends Coffee mornings are held on the third Friday of every second Month

Report by Ken Gibson

Parish Magazine—Open Door

As a Friend of Romsey Abbey your support, helping to care for the Abbey and its community, is greatly appreciated.

We would like to offer you the opportunity to subscribe to Romsey Abbey's Parish Magazine, 'Open Door'.

This is published monthly, at a price of £1.00. It offers a fascinating insight into the life of the Abbey: news and information on our services, people, history of the building and its wonderful architecture and a full listing of 'What's On' including Music in the Abbey.

An Open Door Subscription offers great value –12 copies for the price of 10 (£10).

If you live in Romsey we include free delivery to your door; outside of Romsey we will post your copy for a small additional charge (UK only).

If you would like to take advantage of our Subscription offer, please contact our Magazine Distributor, Bridget Massey: email bridget_massey@hotmail.com, phone 01794 515263

Members' feedback on our Events Programme

We take great pride in our Events Programme. The Events Committee meet on a regular basis to develop the next year's programme and to monitor the occasional feedback from our members. We try to make the events varied, interesting, exciting, different and above all, friendly and enjoyable. The aim is to provide events which you will enjoy and, of course, rebook with us the next year!

Most of the time everything goes well, and the events are enjoyable with few hiccups or problems. When things do go wrong, and we are notified, we do our very best to put things right quickly. This year we are trying out a new process, to help us monitor the quality of our events. When you come to an event, the Leader will offer you a Feedback form, which we hope is simple to complete. At the end of the event, please hand your completed feedback form to the Event Leader. Your views and comments will be confidential to the Events Committee.

Dick Hewett
Events Committee Chairman

Volunteers needed!

Coffee Morning - Deputy Co-ordinator

We are looking for a volunteer to assist our Coffee Morning Co-ordinator, Lis Speck. You will be a member of a team of volunteers, who have been doing a great job for many years. Duties include preparing for guests to arrive, making and serving coffee and tea, helping with the Raffle, and standing in for Lis when she is away.

For more information, please phone Lis Speck: 01794 516937

Summer Strawberry Tea Party Co-ordinator

We are also looking for a volunteer to take over the co-ordination of the Summer Strawberry Tea Party, held in the Vicar's garden on a Sunday during July or August. This is a lovely summer's afternoon event, organised and fully supported by Friends volunteers.

For more information please contact Jill Hall, the Friends Secretary (email: jillhall1@btinternet.com, Tel 023 8073 1640)

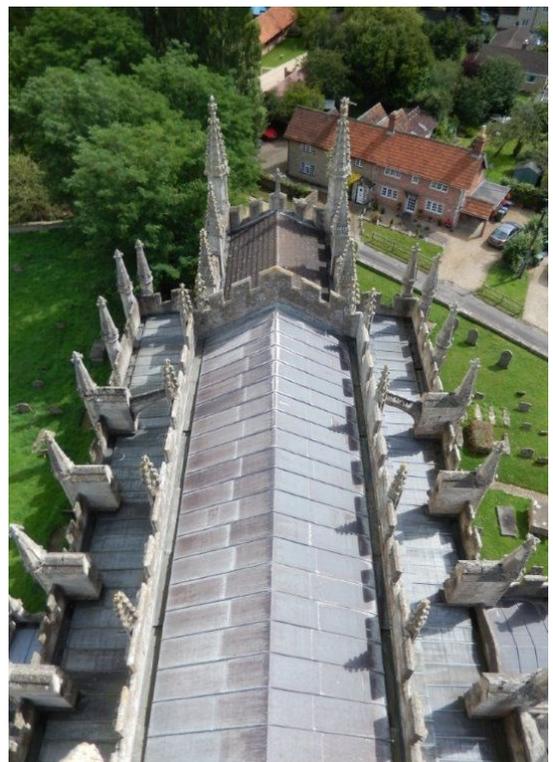
Visit to Imber, Steeple Ashton and Edington

Most of us have heard of the 'lost' village of Imber on Salisbury Plain, but how many realise that it has links with Romsey?

The Wiltshire manors of Imber, Steeple Ashton and Edington were granted to Romsey Abbey by King Edgar following the re-founding of the nunnery in 966.

Salisbury Plain was ideal for sheep-farming, the main source of income for the nuns. In August, a group of Friends set off in two minibuses to renew the links.

View from the tower at Steeple Ashton



First stop: Edington, where in the 13th century the rector of the Norman church acted as chaplain to the Romsey nuns. There was also a chapel dedicated to St Ethelflaeda, patron saint of Romsey Abbey. In 1351 the Norman church was replaced by the existing priory church.

Then, on to Steeple Ashton, where the Abbey bailiff lived and the manorial courts were held and rents received. In 1266, the nuns obtained permission to hold a weekly market and a 3-day fair in early September. Steeple Ashton became a busy market town and prospered through cloth manufacture. Its church was rebuilt with a 90 foot tower and even taller steeple – then, disaster struck! In the early 1500s fire destroyed much of the town, then in 1670 the steeple was twice struck by lightning – it has never been replaced.

After an enjoyable lunch in The Long's Arms the group was en route to remote Imber, high on Salisbury Plain. Our excellent guide outlined the sad story of the villagers' expulsion in 1943 to make way for American troops to train there for D-Day landings, and the subsequent battle with the War Department to gain permission to return. That of course never happened, although in 1961 the House of Lords ruled that the 700-year-old Church of St Giles should be open at least one day a year. That has now been extended to some 50 days a year at Easter, Christmas and during August.

Many thanks to Shirley Rogers, for organising the outing



Edington Priory

Wimborne Minster

In November, a group of 30 Friends spent a very interesting afternoon exploring Wimborne Minster and its famous chained Library. The present Minster building is about the same age as Romsey's Norman church, but a monastery was established at Wimborne in the 7th century and nuns from there went with St Boniface of Nursling to preach the Gospel in Germany.



We were welcomed with refreshments provided by the Wimborne Friends. Our guide was really excellent, bringing the story of the Minster alive with a succession of stories about events and people. The Chained Library too was fascinating, with its collection of extremely rare books and a very knowledgeable librarian.

Report by Liz Hallett

Letter from the Chairman

Dear Friends

How quickly the Christmas and New Year celebrations seem to pass and the memory of the hectic preparations becomes mixed with promises 'to be more relaxed next year'. Looking back over the past year I think all members can be encouraged by the positive contribution we have made. This has been made possible by the dedication and hard work of your trustees and others in our team. In fact, to such good effect, that the role of chairman is now far more relaxed and hassle free. I wish therefore to express my grateful thanks to all those who have picked up several areas of responsibility so effectively. For me, great satisfaction was gained from our significant financial contribution to funds for our planned Youth Worker and our young Intern, Simon. May I repeat my plea for all members to be alive to every opportunity to increase our numbers and, as a consequence, our capability to fund worthwhile projects.

We said farewell to Liz Hallett at the end of 2015 as she stood down from her close involvement with The Friends. Liz was a founding member and has been, together with husband Mike, a tower of strength in so many ways during our formative years. We owe you both a great debt of gratitude. We will most certainly miss you Liz but hope and trust you will be able to use your new found freedom to continue producing that steady flow of fascinating historical insights we have come to associate with you. Also, our congratulations must go to Chris Harpham on his appointment as Chapel Guardian at the Royal Military Chapel in London. Chris was a founding member of The Friends, and has arranged several outings for us, notably a fascinating visit to The Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. Many thanks Chris for all your help in our early days and we wish you the very best in your new post.

Lastly, I wish to thank all members for their generous financial and practical support over the past year and trust and pray that opportunities will continue for The Friends to make positive contributions to the work of The Abbey for 2016.

With every blessing, John Twigg

Friends of Romsey Abbey – Events 2016

March

Monday 7th Mar: The Glories of God's House: Interesting Discoveries. 7pm for 7.30pm. A talk by Liz Hallett in Romsey Abbey, with a glass of wine on arrival. £5 each for members booking in advance, £6 on the door. Non-members welcome

April

Monday 4th Apr: A day on the lovely **Kennet & Avon Canal**. Trip by minibus to Crofton for a guided tour of the Beam Engines museum. Pub lunch (at own cost) followed by a scenic cruise on a horse-drawn canal boat. Leave Romsey 9.30 am, return by 5.30 pm. Led by Colin and Rosemary Davis. £40 per head. Payment with booking please

May

Monday 16th May: Trip by minibus to the **RNLI College in Poole**, with extensive guided tour and 2-course lunch. Leave Romsey 9am, return by 4pm. Led by John Thompson-Hall. £40 per person. Payment with booking please

June

Tuesday 7th Jun: FRA Annual General Meeting in Romsey Abbey. 7pm for 7.30pm. Speaker to be confirmed. Organised by John Twigg

Monday 20th Jun: An evening tour of **Romsey Signal Box**, including refreshments. 7pm for 7.30pm tour. Led by Dick Hewett. £3 per person. Payment with booking please

July

Sat 9th Jul: Day trip to the wonderful **Didcot Railway Centre**. A unique collection of Great Western Railway steam engines with a re-creation of Brunel's broad gauge railway. Believed to be the largest collection of locomotives from any one railway company, in the world. 2 locomotives will be under full steam. Guides will greet us on arrival and give a 1 hour conducted tour, in groups of 10. Leave Romsey 08:45am, return 16:45pm. 1st Class Return Fare £22.50, including minibus transport. Only 32 Tickets available. Station Master - Ken Gibson

August

Sunday 21st Aug: Strawberry Tea in the Vicarage garden (or indoors if raining). 4.30pm. Followed by Friends' Evensong in the Abbey. £5.50 per person, payment with booking please

September

Tuesday 13th Sep: Afternoon visit by minibus to **Christchurch Priory**, with guided tour of the church. Optional visit to the museum or tower (extra charge), free time in the town afterwards. Leave Romsey 1pm, return by 6.15pm. Led by Liz Hallett. £17 each, £20 if visiting the museum or tower. Payment with booking please

October

Tuesday 4th Oct: FRA Annual Dinner at The White Horse, Romsey. 7pm for 7.30pm. 3-course dinner with pre-dinner drinks. Organised by John Twigg. £33 person. Payment with booking please. Menu choice to be supplied after booking

Late October: Ethelflaeda Festival and Lecture. Details still to be arranged

November

Early November: Trip by minibus to the **Bombay Sapphire Gin Distillery** at Overton. Led by John and Jill Thompson-Hall. Date and details of this trip cannot be confirmed until midsummer. If interested, please contact the Bookings Officer to ensure you are provided with the details when they are confirmed

December

Sunday 18th Dec: Service of 9 Lessons and Carols in Romsey Abbey, 6.30pm

COFFEE MORNINGS

Friday 18th March, 20th May, 15th July, 16th September, 18th November
Town Hall, 10.00am. Last serving 11.45. Members and non-members all welcome

How to Book

It is not essential for bookings to be made on formal Booking Forms – members may also book by phone or email :

Either send a cheque made payable to 'The Friends of Romsey Abbey' to: The FRA Bookings Officer, Dick Hewett, 42 Botley Rd, Romsey, SO51 5AP, enclosing the Booking form or a short note

Or pay online direct to the FRA bank account, Sort Code 40-39-05, Account 21402641, Reference '(Brief title of event)'; and email Dick Hewett at events@romseyabbeyfriends.org to confirm you are booking and have paid online

Please separate out payments for different events—this makes it easier to track payments and to handle any subsequent cancellations or refunds

If you wish to check any details, or availability of places, please ring Dick on 01794 500523

How have we been able to help the Abbey recently?



We are delighted to announce that the refurbishment of St. Anne's Chapel, fully funded by The Friends, is now completed (see photos above). The Friends were also able, once again, to fully fund the Ethelflaeda Festival Week. Now that access to the internet is available in the Abbey, you can use your smart phone or tablet to take a 'Panoscope' tour of various parts of the Abbey. With a QR reader installed, just point your device at the QR code in the Abbey and scan the code. And there's one on our Notice board to take you to our website too.

The Friends have also funded much-needed access stairs for the existing temporary staging erected for use during concerts; redesign of the Abbey Logo; and partly funded a 12-month Internship, providing work experience in the life of the Abbey.

Future funding is allocated for a Children and Families Worker starting in summer 2016, and visitor leaflets to advertise the Abbey as an important visitor attraction in this ancient Market Town of Romsey.

Report by John Thompson-Hall

Christmas Fair

The Christmas Fair was a great success. The Fair was opened by Romsey's Mayor, Dorothy Bavistock, and Iris Anderson (Mayor of Test Valley) with help from the Town Crier, Terry Hamer. Rosemary Davis, a Friends member, is shown here helping to staff the Friends' Tombola which raised nearly £500.



*Liz and Sarah with the Town Crier,
at the Christmas Fair*



*Dick and Ken, being
'photobombed' by the vicar*



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'.



St Anne's Chapel