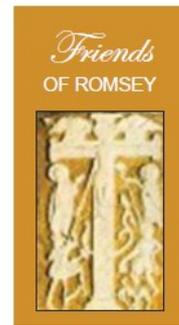


NEWSLETTER



Summer 2016

Issue 15

A message from Revd Canon Tim Sledge, Vicar of Romsey

Dear Friends

There was some research done recently into the importance of significant churches (often called Greater Churches, but I have never really liked the name!) and what made them more attractive and helped them to grow. Of the nine key areas, there were three which I felt were germane to the Friends:

- Engaging culture and the arts
- Improving welcome and hospitality
- Developing educational programmes

These are all part of improving the visitor experience, and have already greatly benefitted from the support of the Friends. So let us look back on what you have contributed towards:

- Culture and the arts – your support of the Ethelflaeda Festival has enabled music and exhibitions to be staged which otherwise couldn't have happened.
- Improving welcome and hospitality – your support of quality guide leaflets in so many different languages, and the access to the internet throughout the Abbey which enables us to stream services has produced grateful thanks from across the world – opening up the abbey to wider more international and also local and more housebound audiences.
- Developing educational programmes – we now have more schools visiting the Abbey with much more cohesive and curriculum-focussed activities, and a growing partnership with a local archaeological company who dig deep (excuse the pun) to resource schools in their exploration of the Abbey.

All these things are supported, encouraged and funded by the Friends. It helps us to achieve one of the great gifts of the abbey which is to be, in the words of Archbishop Rowan Williams *'...in a world that is getting smaller, the task of the church is to be a big place, where those bits of humanity that cannot find a home anywhere else can flourish; a place where people feel they can spread their arms wide, and be human in a way they have never reached before.'*

Friends are about humanity. Thank you for enabling those who come to the abbey to be human, in a way they may never have reached before.

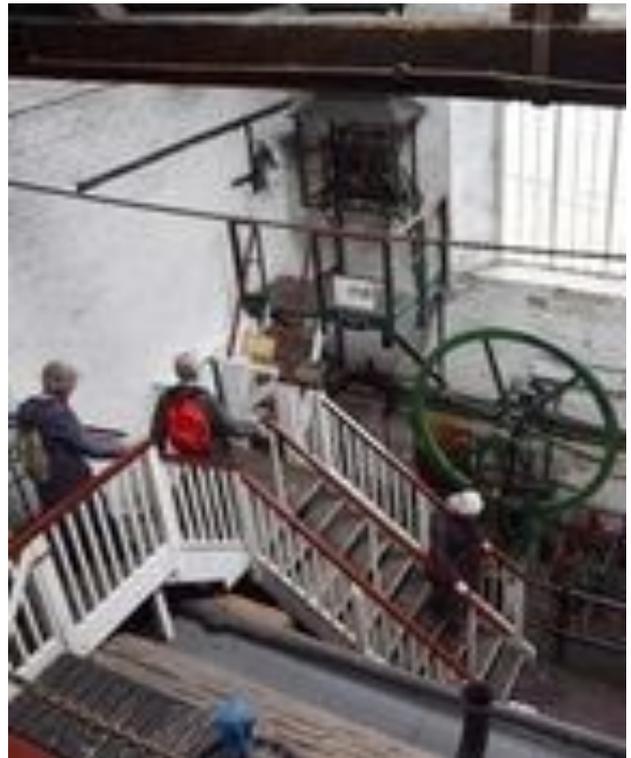
With all good wishes



Kennet and Avon canal

In April a group of 31 Friends went on our first outing of the year, to the Kennet and Avon Canal. Two very contrasting visits made up the day, which was led by Colin and Rosemary Davis.

In the morning we were given a guided tour of a museum at Crofton housing two coal-fired beam engines dating back to 1812 that were used to pump water from a reservoir up into the summit pound of the canal. The engines can still be used. The museum volunteers had been chartered the previous week to fire up the engines because the navigation authority's electric pump had broken down.



In the afternoon, in the village of Kintbury, our Friends boarded a horse-drawn boat for a 2-hour cruise along the canal and through one of its 104 locks. This was a most relaxing experience, cruising silently behind Monty and his 1 horsepower.

As is traditional on Friends' outings, matters gastronomic were not ignored, with coffee and delicious homemade cakes at Crofton in the morning, followed by a superb pub lunch at Wilton and then tea and snacks on the boat. It was a very enjoyable day.

Letter from the Chairman

Dear Friends,

Those of you able to be at our AGM will know of the very significant improvements we have introduced during the past year. In the Winter Newsletter I was able to give an idea of the work in progress which involved improvements in our financial management, events administration, and data security. It is now very encouraging to report that this work is complete. This has involved a complete revision of our data management processes by Roger Rowe, our Vice Chairman who, working with Dick Hewett, chairman of our Events Sub Committee, has created a system of administration and financial control which will enable your committee to meet the challenges facing us in the future with confidence and transparency.

A good number of members have already enjoyed several well supported and, judging by many comments, much appreciated events...and bookings are well advanced for the remaining years programme.

I would like to focus now on our Annual Dinner which is to be held this year on Tuesday 4th October. This year we will be using the new facilities at The White Horse Hotel, which is able to cater for larger gatherings than we are normally able to handle, **it is therefore an opportunity for a major social get together for The Friends.**

Bishop Jonathan Frost has agreed to be our speaker and your committee is keen for this to be seen as an opportunity for all members to come together, share an evening of good company and food, and exchange ideas that may be useful in enabling the Friends to increase their support for more projects in the future. **So make sure the date is in the diaries of you and your friends, let Dick Hewett know in good time if you will be joining us and let's make this a really successful evening.**

Every Blessing,

John Twigg

RNLI Headquarters, Poole

In May, 30 Friends visited the RNLI College overlooking Poole Bay Harbour. It is a working college with a world class Sea Survival Centre for all volunteer lifeboat crew members and beach lifeguards. Groups from all over the British Isles travel to Poole to be trained on courses that can last a few days or several weeks.



The facilities include classrooms, twin lifeboat simulators with a mock-up rescue off Dover harbour, and a four metre deep training pool with a wave generator that prepares crews for anything they might encounter at sea.



The RNLI training pool

Visitor Briefing for The Friends



In the simulator the Friends embarked on an exciting rescue mission which involved two burning tankers, helicopters and other shipping getting imminently close to the danger area that contained a cruise liner and other smaller boats.



The RNLI simulator

A video demonstrated the intensive training undertaken by the brave 40,000 volunteers who take part in this wonderful service. The RNLI is totally funded by charitable contributions and needs £400,000 a day to run the organisation.



Everyone had a thoroughly enjoyable day out with excellent sunshine and a two course carvery lunch. The trip was led by John Thompson-Hall.

Romsey Signal Box

It was a beautiful warm summer evening when a group of Friends was welcomed to Romsey Signal Box. For those of us on our first visit we truly felt we had discovered a hidden gem, set as it is in a beautifully tended garden so reminiscent of the glory days of rail travel.

Dating from around 1870 and re-sited and restored in 1987, this is a wonderful example of true English engineering heritage and a testimony to the dedicated group of volunteers who undertook the project and now keep it available for visitors.



A group of Friends about to be briefed by 'head signalman' Dick Hewett, far right (thanks to Ken Gibson for the photos)

We were welcomed with tea and homemade cake by David Trewern in the Buffer Stop Café, and then taken through some of the historical and technical aspects of railway signalling in the Visitor Centre by Adrian Birtles. Dick Hewett then split us into two groups for an interactive visit to the Signal Box, where we learned more fascinating history of the canals and railway in and around Romsey.



Colin Wedderburn, pleased to be at the controls in Romsey Signal Box



*The Flying Scotsman
passing Romsey
Signal Box*

Didcot Railway Centre— Great Western Railway museum

On a warm Saturday morning in July, a group of 22 Friends set off for the Didcot Railway Museum, to enjoy a day dedicated to steam and all things railway related. We visited the 1930's engine sheds, where gleaming GWR Express locomotives were undergoing restoration.



We looked at Brunel's Broad Gauge Rail track, a common feature of the Great Western railway until 1894.

The Broad Gauge was pioneered in 1838 with a gauge of 7ft ¼" and retained until 1892 on the GWR. Today's Dual Gauge at 4ft 8 ½" was introduced during 1864.

A GWR Diesel Railcar, built in 1940, took us to the other end of the site for a well-deserved lunch. After lunch we visited the Museum followed by a visit to a World War II Air Raid Shelter, complete with authentic radio, announcing the start of the War and an air raid in progress.

This was followed by a Steam Train ride, a Steam Railmotor No. 93 built in 1908, which was converted into an Auto Trailer in 1935. Many members just kept on the steam train riding back and forth, relaxing to the sound of 'steam' and enjoying the wonderful views and glorious sunshine. Our visit ended by thanking our two Didcot Railway Centre Guides, Tony and Frank, for looking after us so well.

Report by Ken Gibson



Exploring the engine shed



*Our guide (helped by his dog!)
filling the water tanks*

Friends of Romsey Abbey – Events 2016

August

Sunday 21st Aug: Strawberry Tea in the Vicarage garden (or indoors if raining).

4.30pm. £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

Monday 10th Oct: Bombay Sapphire Gin Distillery at Laverstoke Mill, in beautiful surroundings alongside the River Test . A water-powered mill and its associated buildings has stood on this site for over 1,000 years, a place steeped in history, tradition and exceptional craftsmanship that is now maintained to a high architectural standard. Lunch is arranged at the local Red Lion Pub, Overton at 13.00. Menus for a one or two course lunch with optional tea/coffee will be forwarded to members booking the trip, to pre-order their food, which you will pay for on the day at the pub. We are travelling to the Bombay Sapphire Distillery by TVCS Minibus. Depart Romsey, Church Place 09.15. Arrival back at Romsey approx. 15.30-15.45. Inclusive cost of travel and guided tour is £30.

Only 32 tickets available, last booking date Wednesday 31 August for the tour and food order. Leader: John Thompson-Hall

Late October: Ethelflaeda Festival including:

Friday 21st Oct: Jackie Dankworth concert

Saturday 22nd October: Annual Lecture (details to be announced)

December

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

COFFEE MORNINGS

Friday 15th July, 16th September, 18th November

Town Hall, 10.00am. Last serving 11.45. Members and non-members all welcome

How to Book

Bookings can be made on booking forms, or 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 (enclose 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 details or availability of places, please ring Dick on 01794 500523

Bringing the Abbey into people's homes

The Friends have been encouraging and supporting the Abbey's Technical team as they bring some of the Abbey's life to the internet using video-streaming.

A number of our services have been "streamed" out of the Abbey onto the internet - for people to view on their computers, tablets, and smart phones in their own homes or while traveling. We are now exploring the best way to make this facility available in nursing homes and the like where these devices may not be so readily and easily available. The Abbey's website tells you how to access video-streaming.

In addition to streaming major Abbey services we have also streamed a wedding, a christening and a funeral – allowing people unable to come to these services to experience them in a very direct manner.

Report by Roger Rowe

The 2016 AGM

The 2016 Annual General Meeting of the Friends was held on 7th June, and 41 members were present. All the information about the AGM is now on the website as well as all the officers' reports. Guest speaker was John Campbell, Deputy Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police, pictured below with our Chairman John Twigg. He gave an interesting and humorous talk about the behind the scenes policing for royal events. He gave details about the security and planning for the Queen's 90th birthday and how all the other services became involved.

John Twigg thanked the Friends for supporting events and was very grateful to Roger Rowe for taking over as Vice-Chairman and to Dick Hewett who has taken over the Events Committee. He thanked all the committee members for their work and support. He emphasised the need for new younger members and encouraged everyone to recruit family members. John said that it had been a privilege and pleasure but this would be his last year as Chairman, so we will be looking for a replacement. *Report by Jill Hall*



*John Twigg with guest speaker,
John Campbell*

The Christmas Fair

The Bottle Tombola at last year's Christmas Fair raised almost £500 for Abbey funds. Plans are already being made for a bigger and better effort this winter. The fair is being held on Saturday 3rd December 2016.

We hope our usual band of helpers will be available, however if any other members would like to offer an hour of their time on the day, do please call John Twigg on 01794 521966.



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.

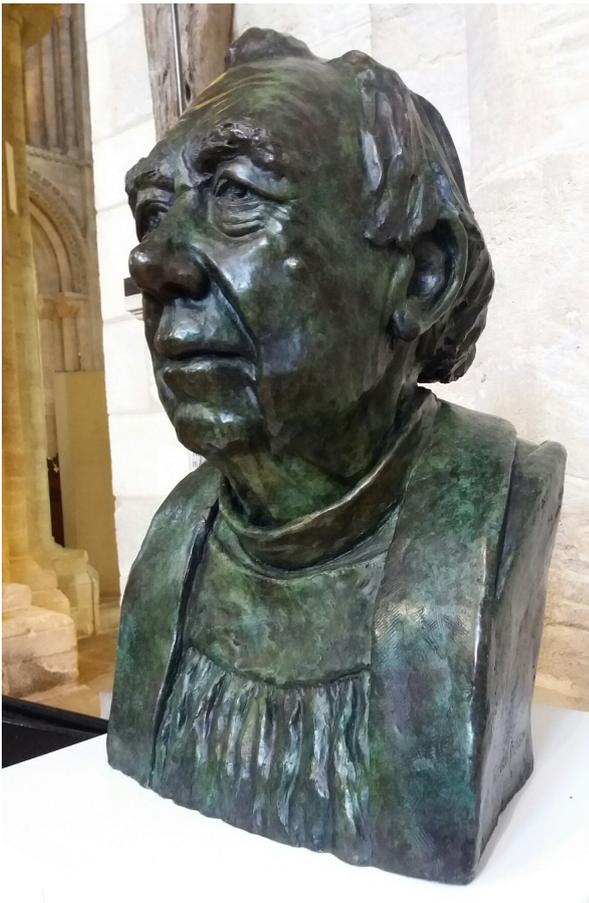
Guide and strengthen the Friends that they might be a generous and supportive group for the benefit of the Abbey and that the beauty of your love may be made more widely known.

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** Dick Hewett (temporary); **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**

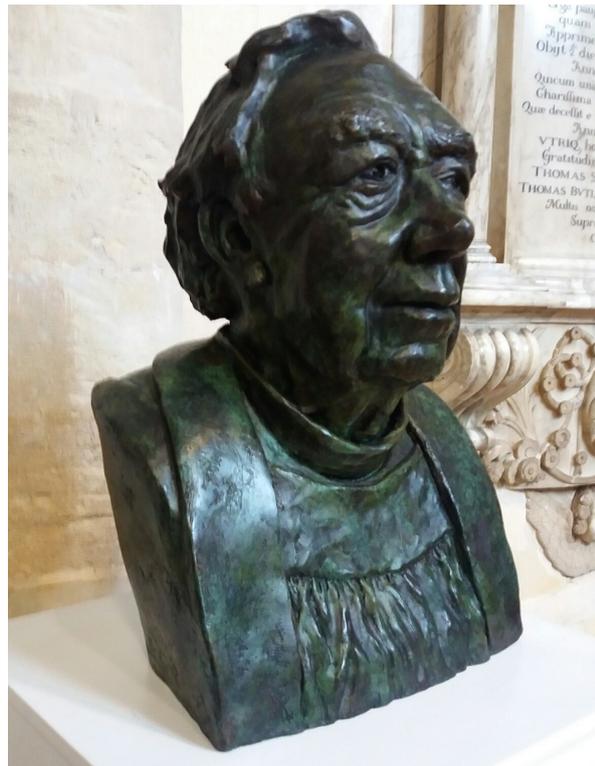
Our Vision

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'.

A bronze bust of Dean Trevor Beeson was on display in the Abbey for two weeks in the summer



Before being displayed in Romsey, the bust had been displayed in an international sculpture exhibition in London



The bust was created by Farley Chamberlayne sculptor, Melanie Legg, to mark Trevor's 90th birthday

