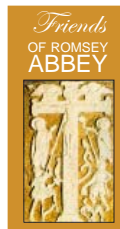


NEWSLETTER



Summer 2009

Issue One



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

'All living things grow'

Welcome to the first newsletter of the new yet rapidly growing and developing Friends group. I want to start by saying how delighted I am by the way that the Friends has started its life and is gradually developing a life of its own. We are a new organisation and getting things off the ground takes some time, but as you will see in this publication, we have already had a number of wonderful events and some more coming up.

You are now part of something new and living, and all living things grow. Its direction and shape is up to you. Friends are not people for whom everything comes to them on a plate, but who share and support. What we can assure you of is that the Friends are now a significant part of the support network of the Abbey.

Our target is to attract 500 friends by the end of 2010. We now have just over 200. So we encourage you to invite a friend to join or to come to one of the events over the next year or so.

Finally, my profound thanks to you all for your support of the life and work of the Abbey.

With all good wishes,

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The Trustees - Who's Who?



*President:
Revd. Tim
Sledge*



*Chairman:
Michael
Perfect*



*Vice-Chairman:
Revd. John
Clarke*



*Secretary:
Jane
Hargreaves*



*Treasurer:
Tim
Rogerson*



*Ken
Gibson*



*Liz
Hallett*



*Chris
Harpham*



*Nadine
O'Connor*



*Lis
Speck*

Our honorary Vice-Presidents are: The Rt. Revd. Paul Butler, Bishop of Southampton and the current Mayors of Test Valley and Romsey.



Photo: Matthew Birch

Preparing for the Launch. This photo appeared in the Romsey Advertiser on March 27th 2009, together with an article about the aims and objectives of the new Friends group.

Launch Night, Friday 3rd April

There was a buzz of excitement and anticipation when many people came along to the Abbey on Friday 3rd April to find out more about the new Friends organisation, and in many cases to sign up as members. The evening was introduced by the Chairman, Mr Michael Perfect, who explained how “the Vicar’s suggestion of a Friends group had been picked up and set in motion in a remarkably short time, thanks to the enthusiasm and hard work of a number of people”. A group of cheer-leaders from Romsey Abbey School then gave a splendid display, setting the tone for what was to follow.



There were perhaps 200 people at our Launch. The Abbey seemed crowded

The Revd. Tim Sledge, President of the Friends, said “We all need ‘friends and family’, the church here is not a building but a family of people. The church family wants to do more to develop links in a wider way across the town, especially with children and younger families and with older isolated people.” It is the vision of The Friends of Romsey Abbey, that we should do more to develop this friendship and partnership with everyone in the town and even beyond. To achieve this, we need the support of everyone.



Cheer-leaders from The Abbey School gave a stunning performance

Mayor of Test Valley, Councillor Brian Page, the Town Mayor, Councillor Karen Dunleavy, and - by video film in his unavoidable absence - the Bishop of Southampton, the Rt. Revd. Paul Butler. After an organ fanfare by the Friends’

The Vicar’s words were echoed by all three of the Friends’ Vice-Presidents, the

Treasurer, Tim Rogerson, everyone present drank a toast to the new organisation.

Around eighty people signed up and became Friends during the evening, with many more showing interest.



Speeches from the Chairman (above) and President (right) during the Launch



Left to right: the Mayor of Test Valley, Councillor Brian Page; Chairman of the Friends, Mike Perfect; Mayor of Romsey, Councillor Karen Dunleavy and President of the Friends, The Revd. Tim Sledge

Early Events

A number of events were organised for the first 3 months. First was a very successful coffee morning held in the Town Hall on 8th May. Many people attended and a further 22 joined the Friends on that morning. A tour of the Abbey building led by Bob Smith followed on 14th May and a tour of the tower led by the Verger and Trustee, Chris Harpham, on 18th June.



Learning more about the Abbey and exploring parts of the building not often on show



Forthcoming events planned for the rest of 2009

Until we could be sure that the new organisation would be popular, we did not feel able to commit ourselves to potentially-expensive events. Now however, the good news is that we have OVER 200 MEMBERS, with more still joining on an almost daily basis. So we have planned further events to which you are warmly welcomed.

1. Coffee Mornings

The first coffee morning in the Town Hall proved an excellent way for members to meet together and get to know each other. So we plan to hold **coffee mornings on the second Friday of each alternate month**. The next one will be on **Friday 10th July**, then **Friday 11th September** and **Friday 13th November**. All will be from 10am until 12 noon in the Court Room. Do come along and bring a friend - or two. Freshly-made cafetière coffee, home-made biscuits, a raffle and a warm welcome. Admission £2 including coffee and biscuits.

2. Further Abbey Tours have been arranged for **Saturday July 18th at 3pm** and **Wednesday October 14th at 3.30pm**. No restriction to numbers, but please book.

3. A further **Tower Tour** has been arranged for Monday 17th August at 3.30pm. Numbers are restricted for this tour. (See also number 7)

4. Vicarage Tea Party

Tim and Caroline Sledge invite members of the Friends to a **Strawberries and Cream Tea in the Vicarage garden** on Sunday 9th August from 4.30pm. Cost £7.50. Straight after this you are invited to join Evensong in the Abbey where there will be a special welcome for all Friends, whether or not you came to the Vicarage tea-party. Do please come along if you can.

5. Chichester Outing

On Saturday September 19th we have arranged **a trip to meet the Friends of Chichester Cathedral**. We will be given a tour of the Cathedral at 2pm, tea afterwards at 3pm, time to explore the building further or perhaps the town, and then join Evensong in the Cathedral at 5.30. We hope to travel together by coach and the cost will be £15. Leave from Church Place at 12.45pm, return by around 7.30pm.

7. Ethelflaeda Lecture

All Friends are invited to attend **the inaugural Ethelflaeda Lecture on Friday 23rd October in the Abbey at 7.30pm**. This is the start of a Festival which we hope will become a regular event at the Abbey. The lecture will be given by Canon Lucy Winkett, Canon at St Paul's Cathedral. Look out for other activities during that weekend. Light refreshments will be served afterwards.

7. An Evening Tower Tour for a special view of any firework displays across the town on Saturday 7th November at 6.30pm. Led by the Verger and with hot chocolate served afterwards. Cost £4. Numbers are restricted for this tour, so book early.

8. Carol Service

All members of the Friends are particularly invited to come along to the **Service of Nine Lessons and Carols** on Sunday December 20th at 6.30pm in the Abbey.

Booking for these events

There is no need to book for the coffee mornings, the Ethelflaeda Lecture or the carol service, **but please may we ask you to book for the Vicarage Strawberry Tea, the trip to Chichester and the Abbey and Tower Tours by filling in the enclosed form or by contacting the secretary via the website.** For each of these we will need to know the numbers attending and in some cases numbers are restricted.

Special mention of The Friends of Chichester Cathedral

We owe a great debt of thanks to the Friends of Chichester Cathedral for their help and encouragement when we formed the Romsey Abbey Friends. The Executive Chairman, Mr Alfred Moon, and Friends' Secretary, Mr Brian David, visited us in Romsey and shared ideas and experiences of their flourishing group which celebrated its 70th anniversary earlier in June. We have been warmly invited to visit Chichester on September 19th and we do invite as many of you as possible to take up this offer - see page 6, and please remember to book a place.

Suggestions for next year

We have a number of proposed trips and activities for the first half of next year. It would help us very much if you could give us some idea of which of the following would interest you (obviously with no commitment yet):

- In January a coffee morning on Friday 8th
- In February a visit to the Museum of Army Chaplaincy at Amport
- In March a coffee morning on Friday 12th and, if it can be arranged, a trip to see Big Ben and Westminster Abbey or the Houses of Parliament
- In April a Families' and Children's event during the Easter period
- In May the AGM on Thursday 13th and a coffee morning on Friday 14th
- In June a visit to Jane Austen's home at Chawton and Chawton House Library (Chawton Manor, the home of Jane's brother)

There will also be further tours of the Abbey and the Tower. Please also let us have your suggestions for activities which you would like us to consider. At this stage of our fledgling organisation, we would very grateful for your ideas and enthusiasm.

One date for your Diary: The Annual General Meeting of the Friends 2010 will be held on Thursday 13th May in the Abbey after the Ascension Day service. The service begins at 7.30pm after which drinks will be served in the transept. The AGM will then follow. There will be a special Guest Speaker.

And Also

We are delighted that you have joined the Friends. We hope very much that you will enjoy the social side of our organisation and get to know many more people in the Abbey community. One way of getting to feel you belong might be to offer to help in some way with the running of the various activities: perhaps giving a hand at the coffee mornings, sharing the organisation of a particular event, helping with computer or office skills, publicity, etc. Our Trustees are all unpaid volunteers and would much appreciate the enthusiasm of some more helpers.

Of course, we are also hoping to raise additional funds which will be used to help develop closer links across the town, and to enable more to be done with children and young families, and also with older isolated people.

And Finally

We are very pleased to pass on news of our members: very special news on this occasion. One of our Trustees, Nadine Taylor, was married in the Abbey on 2nd May to Matthew O'Connor, and our Vice-Chairman, the Revd. John Clarke, will be married in September, also in the Abbey, to Hazel Withers. We wish both couples every happiness - and if you are looking for a husband or wife, perhaps you should consider becoming a Trustee of the Friends of Romsey Abbey!

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of The Friends of Romsey Abbey, as distinct from the PCC.



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