

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE  
FRIENDS OF ROMSEY ABBEY  
THURSDAY 6th JUNE 2019

**Present:** were 34 members.

The meeting began with The Friends prayer.

**Welcome:** The President, Rev. Thomas Wharton, welcomed the members and thanked Roger and the committee for the work they do. The Abbey is a gift to the people of Romsey and we need to reach outwards to support the fabric, the projects and promote a sense of peace and calm to the building. The Friends help in practical ways. Next year, 2020, is our 900 year anniversary. He is hoping that he will have a new colleague , an associate priest in addition to our new music director, Martin Seymour.

**Apologies:** Caroline Nokes MP, Margaret Lillywhite, Colin and Rosemary Davis, Jane Arden, Jim Wilkes, Geoff Howard, Janet Wallace, Christine Edginton, John and Angela Twigg, Carol and Brian Lamb and Anne Hewett

**Minutes of the AGM on 7th June 2018** were agreed as a true record. Proposed by Celia Rowe and seconded by Geoff Gibbbs

**Chairman's Report 2018/19**

Looking back to last year's AGM, we had no President and we were trying to streamline the way our organisation works to reduce the load on the Trustees. I am delighted to say we have our President now - and it's nice to see you at your first AGM with the Friends. Our simplified processes have worked well and we can look back with a sense of satisfaction for the year we have had. Having a Warden and the Vicar at our projects meetings has been a big help.

I featured the dwindling number of Trustees last year. I am sorry to say we are now losing Tim Rogerson, the longest serving Trustee, and I would like to thank him for his contributions to the first 10 years of The Friends - everything from our accounts, our constitution, our relations with the Charity Commission, to driving minibuses for us. So now we are down to the Vicar and 4 Trustees - a worryingly small number to supervise our activities and to represent the range of views in our community. Dick and I each hold two posts! We think there were supposed to be 8 when the Charity was set up.

I closed last year by saying that with a new incumbent and our £60k legacy the stage was set for a new Chairman to lead the Friends in 2019. This year I am registering that I will stand as your Chairman for 2019/20 but I am not prepared to stand in 2020 when I shall be 80. I will, however, carry on as Membership Secretary doing admin stuff, if elected.

We are a voluntary organisation and can only do what our members are prepared to do for us. We are blessed having four hard working groups who shoulder the work - Lis Speck's coffee morning and biscuits volunteers, Dick's Events organisers, John Thompson-Hall's Projects committee and my hard-working committee of Trustees and key workers. All groups feel they are under considerable strain, and note they are a year older than they were last year. Lis needs a bigger pool of helpers to sustain her work. Our events need to be organised by volunteers, and the number of organisers has limited the number of events we can arrange. The three committees are hard to distinguish as there is nearly

identical membership. I am particularly grateful for Colin and Rosemary Davis, Geoff Gibbs and Ken Gibson for the work they take on for the Committees.

Last year I thanked by name all the Friends who take on duties to make the Friends a success. I thank the **same people** again this year but hope there are more names to thank next year.

Our membership has now risen to 410. Our membership grows, and the impact we can have on the Abbey grows, as a result of Friends asking their Friends to join us. Our Coffee mornings continue to be a great draw to our members, their friends, and people we corral from outside the Town Hall (but not when they close the Town Hall front door). Thank you Lis and all your team.

You will be hearing reports from the Events Group and the Project Group Chairmen on how they got on this year.

This is our Tenth Anniversary year and we will celebrate it by holding a celebratory Strawberry Tea and Choral Evensong on July 21<sup>st</sup>. The Tea is for members only, it will be free, and you will be offered a glass of Prosecco or fruit juice. Tickets will be issued to find out how many people are coming so we can tell the Abbey catering team.

Roger Rowe  
Chairman

**Treasurer's Report.** Copies of the report had been distributed. Dick Hewett reported that Mike Phillips will independently audit the accounts. We had received a bequest of £66,746. We have tried to find out from the estate if there was an indication of how this money should be spent but this was not possible. We have a deposit fund balance of £75 plus £177 interest. Any surplus at the end of the year will be spent on projects.

Dick emphasised that we now have only four trustees remaining which is too small to continue so we would very much value some volunteers.

**The Projects** The Friends make an annual financial contribution to the Abbey for various projects to enhance the visitor experience and to enable us all to develop the work and outreach of the Abbey overall. Our funds arise from members subscriptions including gift aid donations, small profits from our various events and generous individual donations: I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone here for their very welcome support since our last AGM.

In summary: we have again made a partial contribution to the annual costs for the work of our Children and Families Worker, Rhiannon Wilmott and a contribution to the annual Ethelflaeda Festival held last October.

We continue to fund a 'state of the art' device in various local care homes to enable people regular access to the live streaming of Abbey services, including weddings to anywhere in the world. We have improved the audio visual communication between the Choir and organist during services and rehearsals. We continue to meet the costs of over 30,000 visitor leaflets in several languages which are an essential part of marketing the Abbey's history and artefacts. Also, we have funded an innovative computer simulator for training young recruits with the help of our existing Bell-ringers. Plans are in place soon to have audio guide headsets to assist during our popular guided tours. More recently we have funded a pop-up banner for the Abbey's welcome table.

We have reserved funds to refurbish the effigy of the three-year old child, Alice Taylor who died in 1843, whose statue was wrought in plaster by her Father. Also, funds are set aside for re-housing our Saxon plaited hair display item, believed to be from a coffin buried during the period AD 895 -1123. In the long term we have pledged our support for the Abbey Development Project including the St Lawrence Chapel Saxon foundations and

protection of the exposed 11th century Saxon Rood carved in stone on the Abbey south elevation.

Returning to the modern day, smaller funds are allocated for sports equipment for our Youth Worker and for the Education Officer on a needs only basis.

John Thompson-Hall  
27/05/2019

**Events Report.** The FRA Events Calendar runs by calendar year, with a schedule compiled in the autumn which is advertised around the New Year for events between January and December. As a result, this report leads on from my Report from last year's AGM, focusing on the continuing 2018 programme and the first event of 2019.

Our Events Diary for 2018 included a wide variety of visits, which were generally well supported by the Friends.

In early June Tim Rogerson drove a select group to Hampton Court for the day, a trip much enjoyed by all. This was followed in August by a visit to the Weald and Downland Museum at Singleton, led by Jill and John Thompson-Hall. September saw two minibuses driven by Dick Hewett and Tim Rogerson transporting a party to The Vyne and the Sandham Memorial Chapel, two National Trust properties in north Hampshire. Finally, Colin and Rosemary Davis led a large party by coach to the Mill Theatre at Sonning for lunch and a matinee performance of "Guys And Dolls", our second trip to this venue which is likely to become the focus of an annual pre-Christmas jaunt.

In October a very good gathering of Friends enjoyed the Annual Dinner at the White Horse Hotel, coordinated by Jill Hall and Ken Gibson. This was a chance for the Friends to welcome our new vicar, Thomas Wharton, after which Dick Hewett and Tim Rogerson again provided a musical finale with minimal finesse.

In addition to all these programmed events, the Friends continue to organise regular bimonthly Coffee mornings in the Town Hall. These continue to be well supported, offering an opportunity for fellowship, as well as a chance to recruit new members and encourage members to sign up for the events.

The programme for 2019 was issued in the New Year, with the first trip again proving extremely popular, led by Colin and Rosemary Davis. This was a coach trip to Henley in April, to visit the maritime museum there and enjoy a boat trip on the Thames, with lunch on board. Once again this was very much enjoyed by the full party who attended.

Plans for the rest of 2019 include trips to Uppark (NT), Tyneham and Lulworth, Eling Tide Mill, and a repeat trip to Sonning, this time for "Singing in The Rain". A few spaces are still available for a couple of the events, otherwise waiting lists are now the order of the day. And we have booked our annual Dinner for Tuesday 8th October.

I would like to thank all those who have directly or indirectly led or supported the many events which have been organised, both past and future. All our events are budgeted to make a surplus which feed directly into the funds we can use for the projects we wish to support. The full events programme contributed over £2,500 from 2018, thanks to the healthy numbers attending. May this continue in 2019.

Happy to take suggestions of places to visit next year.

Dick Hewett Chairman, Events Committee

**Membership Secretary's Report.** Last year we asked all members who pay by Standing Order to pay them to our TSB account. Many of you have made the change but I understand this is complicated to do and a nuisance: we have decided to leave things as they are for existing members but have all new subscriptions use the TSB. The Treasurer and I sincerely hope the TSB branch stays in Romsey.

Our membership count for 2018/19 is 410 compared to 399 last year. By coincidence 410 is also the number of people in the Abbey's Electoral Roll for 2019 as I go to press.

It has been pointed out to the Trustees that our membership subscriptions, which are a minimum of £10.00 for singles and £15.00 for couples discriminates against single members. To remedy this, we will raise the rate for NEW memberships to £20.00 making it twice the rate for singles. We will change our publications to reflect this as soon as possible.

Roger Rowe

Membership Secretary.

**Election of Trustees:**

Roger Rowe Membership Secretary and Chairman

Dick Hewett Vice-Chairman, Chairman of the Events Committee and Treasurer

Jill Hall Secretary

John Thompson-Hall Chairman of the Projects Committee

Committee Member Geoff Gibbs

Events Committee Colin and Rosemary Davis

John Compton Website

These were elected en bloc, proposed by Liz Wagner and seconded by Mary Greggains

**AOB**

Three people volunteered to be Trustees: Andrea Wooldridge, William Slegg and Patricia Kerridge.

Mike Prince volunteered to become part of the Projects Committee.