

The Friends of Romsey Abbey Newsletter. Late Summer 2019

I am grateful to our four members who “volunteered” at our AGM to become Trustees of The Friends. Our new Trustees and committee members are Patricia Kerridge, Michael Prince, William Slegg and Andrea Wooldridge: welcome aboard! The AGM was well attended and there was a good “buzz”, helped by a glass of wine after the business part and the many friendships within the group. Our President, Revd Thomas Wharton, introduced himself to the membership, spoke of the significance of The Friends to his vision for the Abbey and chatted with members afterwards.

To recognise our 10th Anniversary we organised a Strawberry Tea and Choral Evensong on July 21st. They were well attended by about 70 members and our thanks go to the Abbey Catering team and to the Abbey Choirs. The weather had been rather unpredictable, so we met in the Church Rooms rather than in the South Garth.

At the AGM we decided to change the subscription for couples so that a couple will now pay £10 a head – the same per person as single members. Couples currently paying £15 do not need to change their subscription. But if you would like to move to £20 per year, we would be delighted to accommodate you! And our Officers this year are Jill Hall (Secretary), John Hall (Chair of Projects), Dick Hewett (Treasurer, Chair of Events, Vice-Chairman) and Roger Rowe (Chairman, Membership Secretary).

Our Events programme for the year is well under way and we have made progress on some of the projects for the Abbey, as you will see below.

Roger Rowe
Chair and Membersip

Events Report

The usual programme of events has proceeded with some very successful and enjoyable outings so far. At the end of April Colin and Rosemary Davis organised a boat trip with buffet lunch on the River Thames at Henley which was much enjoyed as always by the coachload of members who made the trip. Plans are already being developed for next year’s watery outing.

This was followed in June by a trip to Uppark (National Trust) in Sussex led by John and Jill Thompson-Hall with transport by minibuses driven by Tim Rogerson and yours truly. The slightly damp day did not detract from the fascinating visit to this historic house which was gutted by fire in 1989 and since completely restored.

Just recently I led a trip to the Jurassic Coast in Dorset, again driving a minibus with Tim Rogerson in a second. Thankfully a beautiful day with an almost cloudless sky and a turquoise sea ensured a most enjoyable tour which included the deserted village of Tyneham, Worbarrow Bay (for those who could walk there), Lulworth Cove for lunch, and the partially restored Lulworth Castle.

Forthcoming trips include Eling Tide Mill and Church on the afternoon of 12th September (spaces still available), our Annual Dinner with guest speaker and entertainment on Tuesday 8th October (spaces still available), and the annual visit to the theatre at Sonning on 7th December (fully booked but with a waiting list).

Meanwhile our bi-monthly coffee mornings continue to draw in the crowds and raise a healthy surplus for the funds, as do all our events, funds which of course are raised to enable us to support the many projects which my colleague John Thompson-Hall reports on next!

Dick Hewett
Chairman, Events

Projects Report

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.

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
Chairman, Projects Group

Stop Press:

The new display case for the Saxon Hair is now ordered,

We have agreed to fund the model of the Abbey being made by Men’s shed for the 900th Anniversary of the Abbey,

Check our new website – you can now view it on Mobile Phone and Tablet. Thanks to John Compton.

<https://www.romseyabbeyfriends.org/>