

The Friends of Romsey Abbey
Charity Number 1134191
2021 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Thursday November 18th at 2.30 pm
In the Church Rooms

AGENDA

1. Opening Prayer
2. Welcome by the President
3. Apologies
4. Minutes of the last meeting
5. Chairman's Report
6. Honorary Treasurer's Report
7. Honorary Project Chairman's Report
8. Honorary Events Chairman's Report
9. Honorary Membership Secretary's Report
10. Election of Officers and Committee Members
11. Any Other Business

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE
FRIENDS OF ROMSEY ABBEY**

THURSDAY 26th November 2020 Via Zoom

Present: were 35 members.

Introduction by the Chairman. Roger Rowe welcomed the members and said that this was our first virtual AGM but hoped that we would have a face to face one next time. He said he was very grateful for all the help the Friends had received.

Opening prayer.

Welcome: The President, Rev. Thomas Wharton, welcomed the members and said that this year had been like no other, with all the restrictions in place because of Covid 19. He thanked Roger and the committee for the work they do. The Friends help in practical ways and are providing a new software package called Church Desk which will take over the Abbey electronic communication and interaction, including the website, rotas, bookings and bulletins.

We have welcomed Rev. Sally Wormersley and Rev. Lee Thompson to the Abbey this year. The Calling Widow speaks powerfully about how we are all called and it has increased the visitor footfall considerably. We are looking forward to working with the Friends on social and environmental concerns in the community.

Apologies: Margaret Lillywhite, Jim Wilkes, Christine Edginton, Jackie Weston, Liz Holloway, Hilary and Jim Philbin, Gordon and Margaret Massie, Mike Perfect.

Minutes of the AGM on 6th June 2019 were agreed as a true record. Proposed by John Thompson-Hall and seconded by William Slegg.

Chairman's Report 2019/20

The 10th Anniversary of the Friends occurred in 2019, and our membership exceeded 400. But when we reviewed our membership records this year it revealed that the number who actually met our membership criteria at the end of the year was 395. At our last AGM we elected 4 more Trustees: Patricia Kerridge, Mike Prince, Bill Slegg, and Andrea Woolridge. As you will see from the Dick Hewett's Events report, we had a busy and much enjoyed Events programme supported by well attended meetings of his Events Committee. When we had settled into a rhythm with our new Trustees we found it best to merge the Trustees meeting agenda with the Projects meeting agenda: I chaired the Trustee items and John Thompson-Hall chaired the Projects items. This pattern also suited our Vicar Thomas Wharton and Church Warden Janet Wallace, with one or other attending all our meetings. Communication with "The Abbey" has been very good as a result. As you will see in John Thompson Hall's report, we were able to provide substantial help during the year to Abbey funds. The pipeline of projects we are considering grew well during the year, too. I am very grateful to Dick Hewett as Treasurer, Events Chair and Vice Chairman, to our secretary Jill Hall, and to John Thompson hall as Projects Chair for their hard work during the year; and to all Trustees for the contribution they have made. The current Office holders are all happy to stay on as Trustees. But I will not be putting my name forward as Chairman and John Thompson Hall will not stay on as Chair of the Projects group. In the last month of our Year, Covid struck so our activities in 2020/21 have had to be curtailed, to our great disappointment.

Roger Rowe
Chairman

Treasurer's Report. Copies of the report had been distributed. Dick Hewett reported that Mike Phillips will independently audit the accounts before they go to the Charity Commission. The income from subscriptions looks as if it has gone down but we had a major blitz to identify where the money is coming from. Money from those who donated more than their subscription, was changed to a donation. Subscription money has therefore gone down from £6000 to £3000.

We spent £11,770 on grants and events and we had £90,717 in the bank at the end of the year. Money spent on projects is down, but we have a lot of new projects in the pipeline.

Approved by Mike Philips
Seconded by Geoff Gibbs

The Projects Committee Report 2019/20

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. 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 in October. We continue to meet the costs of visitor leaflets in several languages which are an essential part of marketing the Abbey's history and artefacts. We have provided funds to refurbish the effigy of the three-year old child, Alice Taylor who died in 1843, which has just been completed. Funds were provided 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. We have funded the purchase and installation of new curtains for the Church Rooms. Smaller funds are allocated for sports equipment for our Youth Worker and for the Education Officer on a needs only basis. More recently quotations have been received for proposals to place on show our 15th Century Cope, these are now being reviewed by the committee. The Friends have recently made a contribution of £2030 towards the substantial costs to re-open the Abbey for the public, following the COVID 19 shutdown in March 2020

John Thompson-Hall, Projects Chairman

Events Report 2019-20

FRA Events Report 2019-20 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 the 2019 AGM, focusing on the continuing 2019 programme and the impact of Covid19 on plans for 2020. Our Events Diary for 2019 included a wide variety of visits, which were generally well supported by the Friends. In early June Jill and John Thompson-Hall led a group to Uppark, the National Trust property on the South Downs which had been restored after a devastating fire some years earlier. A 10th Anniversary tea and evensong was enjoyed by many in July. This was followed in August by a trip led by Dick Hewett (with Tim Rogerson driving a second minibus) to Tyneham deserted village and Lulworth Cove and Castle, on the Jurassic Coast in Dorset: fortune smiled as the weather was glorious. Dick led another group to Eling Tide Mill and Eling Church in September, this time using just one minibus and running a shuttle service from Romsey, which worked well. Finally, Colin and Rosemary Davis once again led a large party by coach to the Mill Theatre at Sonning for lunch and a matinee performance of "Singing In The Rain", which included the front rows getting a dowsing during the performance! Unfortunately, our booking for the Annual Dinner at the White Horse Hotel in early October was cancelled at only a few days' notice when the hotel was closed due to financial irregularities. In addition to all these programmed events, the Friends continued to organise regular bimonthly Coffee mornings in the Town Hall. These were 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 2020 was issued in the New Year. However as a result of the Covid19 lockdown from March, and the subsequent restrictions on transport and venues opening, all events planned for 2020 had to be cancelled, including the bimonthly coffee mornings at the Town Hall (though one informal "bring your own refreshments" gathering was held in the South Garth earlier in the year). Many of those who had booked have retained their places for the same events which we hope to mount in 2021. Certainly the Thames boat trip and Sonning theatre visits have already been booked for April and December 2021 respectively, and others to the Newt Gardens in Somerset, the Hawk Conservancy, Dorchester Abbey in Oxfordshire, and the Watts Gallery and Hatchlands (National Trust) in Surrey will be rearranged. An Annual Dinner has been provisionally booked for October 2021 at the White Horse. We sincerely hope that the situation will have improved sufficiently for all our events to go ahead without the constraints of social distancing which severely limits the capacity of transport and venues and renders most of the events uneconomical. I would like to thank all members for their patience over the past year, which has been extremely frustrating and worrying for everyone. Some members requested refunds, which we were very happy to arrange; some requested that their payments be passed direct to the Abbey's

funds, which has been done; whilst many left their payments in our accounts, thus reducing the necessary financial transactions and giving us a core of supporters looking forward to returning to our popular events next year. The cancellation of events has also curtailed the addition of any surpluses to the funds.

Dick Hewett Chairman, Events Committee

FRA Membership Report 2019-20

Our Membership Year runs from April 1st to March 31st. It was looking earlier in the year that our Membership was over 400 on March 31st. But for several reasons a recount has shown that 394 was the true membership on March 31st. Your Membership Secretary was rather busy setting up and operating the Emailing system for Abbey Communications, which has been vital in distributing the abbey Bulletins, and failed to detect that a number of members had not renewed. Further he had not taken into account some members who had died and were still being counted as members. I am grateful to the Treasurer, who did a very detailed analysis of the membership records against our Bank receipts, to identify the members who had not renewed for 2019. The closing of the Abbey has meant that we do not have visitors to the Abbey picking up Membership forms, so we cannot really expect any real growth in our membership yet. That said, thanks to the publicity gained for The Friends in the Service on October 11th, we have received two new members.

Roger Rowe, Membership Secretary

Election of Trustees:

Chairman - Vacancy

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

Jill Hall - Secretary

Mike Prince - Chairman of the Projects Committee

Roger Rowe - Membership Secretary

Trustees - John Thompson Hall, William Slegg, Andrea Wooldridge, Patricia Kerridge

Events Committee - Colin and Rosemary Davis

These were elected en bloc, proposed by Liz Wagner and seconded by Mike Philips

AOB

Roger Rowe thanked everyone for their continued support. He especially thanked Thomas for all his support and said that the Friends have a very good relationship with the Abbey.

FRA Chairman's Report 20-21

We were delighted to elect four new Trustees at the 2019 AGM, which gave a renewed enthusiasm and energy to the committee's activities. It was therefore very frustrating that at the very end of the 2019-20 year Covid19 struck, and we were plunged into lockdown. Progress was suddenly curtailed on much of the Friends' activities, with events cancelled and less frequent meetings of the committee being held on Zoom.

At the 2020 AGM (held by Zoom), John Thompson-Hall decided to step down from the role of Projects Chairman, whereupon Mike Prince volunteered to step into the breach, for which we are very grateful.

Mike has already enthusiastically taken up the challenge with a new monitoring and reporting system for Projects.

During lockdown an opportunity was taken to rationalise the membership list yet again, with the result that a more reliable contacts list has been established, and a number of lapsed members renewing subscriptions.

Communication with members has been understandably difficult, and we have probably not been producing the number of newsletters or email updates which we should – though for many periods of the year, there was inevitably little to report.

With Roger Rowe having stepped down from the role of Chairman at the last AGM, I reluctantly agreed to step in as Acting Chairman. It is not a role I have ever sought, and I am very reluctant to continue in the role longer than is necessary, especially as I am already Treasurer, Events Chairman, and Vice-Chairman. This is contrary to good governance. The Committee agreed that a more formal method of selecting a Chairman should be developed, and Andrea Wooldridge helped prepare an application pack. However despite numerous appeals for a new Chairman, no one suitable has come forward. We appeal to every member yet again to consider whether you could be the person to take the organisation forward.

Dick Hewett
Acting Chairman

FRIENDS OF ROMSEY ABBEY

Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31st March 2021

	2021	2020
Receipts		
Income from Subscriptions	3,525	3,400
Donations and legacies	2,440	2,149
Fundraising activities	0	0
Income from activities	-1,360	9,023
Interest	90	461
Gift Aid	850	900
Total receipts	5,544	15,933
Payments		
Grant	10,112	11,770
Expenditure on Activities	0	7,930

Printing, website and displays	38	232
Donation	480	0
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Total payments	10,630	19,932
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Net (payments)/receipts for the year	-5,086	-3,999
Cash funds as at 1st April 2020	90,717	94,716
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Cash funds as at 31st March 2021	85,632	90,717

All amounts relate to unrestricted funds

FRIENDS OF ROMSEY ABBEY

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at 31st March 2021

	2021	2020
Cash Funds		
Bank current and deposit accounts	9,904	15,080
CCLA COIF Deposit Fund balance	75,728	75,638
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Assets		
Payments made for future events	1,908	9,703
Stock of goods for resale	0	0
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Liabilities		
Amounts received in respect of future events	6,711	18,006

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on

R Hewett, Acting Chairman

I have reviewed these accounts and confirm that it appears to me that: 1) proper accounting records have been kept, and 2) the accounts are in accordance with the records.

Signed: T Rogerson Date

Projects Report

The *Friends* make grants to cover or partially cover the costs of projects which aim to bring benefits to users of the Abbey, its environs and the Church Rooms. Projects may be proposed by the Vicar, Churchwardens, Standing Committee, PCC, Subcommittees and Working Groups of the PCC or individuals. Decisions on which projects to support and grants to be made are taken by the committee of trustees. Funds for these grants arise from membership subscriptions, gift aid, profits from events, generous donations and legacies. Supported projects tend to fall into three categories: outreach, enhancing the visitor experience and parish facilities.

Outreach

This year we complete a 5-year commitment to contribute to the cost of employing the Children and Families Worker, Rhiannon Wilmott. Her ministry has been so well-received that we have committed to continuing our support at the same level.

Each year we provide grants for the Ethelflaeda Festival to cover the costs of children's activities, concerts and speaker's fees and accommodation.

Similarly, each year we budget to support costs associated with other children's activities e.g. for the Light Party.

Enhancing the Visitor Experience

The Vicar and Churchwardens have set up a new working group to oversee improvements to "communication, visibility and welcome as a major church venue within the parish and wider community". In view of the similarity of its aims with our own, the Committee has offered to support relevant projects initiated by this group to the tune of up to £75,000.

As a consequence of the establishment of this working group, responsibility for a number of projects which the friends were pursuing have been subsumed by that group:

- Provision of an audio headset system for guided tour parties
- Retention of the 900-year Timeline for future use, possibly in other media
- Improving the display of the mediaeval embroidered cloth under the Calling Window
- Provision of external seating near the North Door

Projects arising from the new initiative are likely to include re-instatement of the above list plus:

- A smartphone self-guided tour app
- Completion of the conservation of the Alice Taylor memorial
- Conservation of the external Saxon Rood
- Improved and extended display of the footings of the Saxon abbey
- New signage outside and labelling inside
- New notice boards and information boards outside
- New visitor leaflets and guide

Parish Facilities

The *Friends* made a grant of about £3500 to cover the costs of acquiring, installing and setting up the Church Desk IT system for the parish. As use of the system is expanded to embrace more and more activities its benefits will become ever more apparent.

Various grants have been made to cover the costs of procuring the Good Boxes and ancillary equipment to enable visitors to make contactless credit card donations to the Abbey.

A grant was made towards the cost of the new curtains for the Church Rooms.

The Committee has agreed a budget sum towards the cost of buying a new (second hand) piano for the Abbey.

Mike Prince, Projects Chairman

October 2021

FRA Events Report 20-21

The FRA Events Calendar runs by calendar year. As a result, this report focuses on the impact of Covid19 on plans for 2020.

The programme for 2020 was issued in the New Year. However as a result of the Covid19 lockdown from March 2020, and the subsequent restrictions on transport and venues opening, all events planned for 2020 had to be cancelled, including the bi-monthly coffee mornings at the Town Hall (though one informal “bring your own refreshments” gathering was held in the South Garth earlier in the year).

Plans for 2021 were also put on hold, however the easing of restrictions has enabled plans to be made for re-activating the events which were planned for 2020 and then 2021. The report for the 2022 AGM will highlight the events which will subsequently have been held.

The cancellation of events has curtailed the addition of any significant surpluses to the funds.

Dick Hewett

Chairman, Events Committee

FRA Membership Secretary Report 2021

Today our membership stands at 367 having slowly fallen during Covid. With the Abbey so often closed for visitors, so many people isolating, and hence so few able to see our membership leaflets in the Abbey, there have been very few new members joining. While with our age profile, we have lost members in greater numbers, some having died, some moved away from the area to be near family, and others feeling no longer able to contribute to the Friends. But we thank them all for their contributions over the years.

Here’s hoping that with the increase in the Abbey’s opening times and a new programme of activities programmed for next year, we will see our numbers rise in the new year.

Roger Rowe

Membership Secretary