

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE
FRIENDS OF ROMSEY ABBEY
THURSDAY 18th November 2021
In the Church Rooms

Present: were 28 members.

Opening prayer.

Welcome: The President, Rev. Thomas Wharton, welcomed the members and thanked everyone for coming and for their continued support for the Abbey. He thanked Dick Hewett, the Acting Chair and the Trustees for keeping the Friends going and keeping everyone involved. We have not been able to conclude many of the projects because of Covid but this should improve this year. We have a vacancy for Chair. We had a very successful Dinner in October at the White Horse. He thanked the Friends and hoped that we can continue to improve how we interact with the Abbey.

Apologies: William Slegg, Andrea Wooldridge, Celia and Roger Rowe and Anne Hewett.

Minutes of the AGM on 26th November 2020 were agreed as a true record. Proposed by John Thompson-Hall and seconded by Geoff Gibbs.

Acting Chairman's Report 2020/21

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**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
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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

Proposed Mike Phillips

Seconded Geoff Gibbbs

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. The first phase 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

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

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Dick Hewett 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.