



Charity Number 1134191

**MINUTES OF 2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2023 in The Church Rooms at 4.30pm**

**1. Opening Prayer**

Thomas offered the opening prayer.

**2. Welcome by the President**

Thomas commented on the fact that this was St Barnabas Day, the apostle for encouragement. He gave thanks to the Friends and particularly the Committee and is hoping to take encouragement from Barnabas and work together in the months to come.

**3. Apologies**

Apologies were given by Committee members Dick Hewett as well as Colin and Rosemary Davis.

In addition, apologies were received from:

Patricia Brown	Shirley McKenzie
Jane Burnage	Catherine Sheppard
Sheila and Ray Caine	Veronica Taylor
Howard and Jan Green	Jacqui Tilt
Jane and Ian Hammond	John Twigg
Jennifer Hilton	Jackie Weston
Andrew Keeling	Stephen and Anita Woods
Margaret Lillywhite	

- 4. Minutes of the last meeting** were agreed and passed. Proposed by Bill Slegg and seconded by Steve Rawlins

**5. Chairman's Report**

At last year's AGM we tried a different format, which proved to be highly successful, the meeting followed by a delicious Strawberry Tea and an Evensong dedicated to the Friends, so we are continuing that this year.

When the Friends charity was established in 2009, they had the enhancement of the visitor attraction at its heart and it set four objectives:

- To Publicise the Abbey
- Bring more people into the Abbey
- Enhance the Abbey experience
- Educate and enliven those of all ages

These objectives were aimed at increasing the utilisation of the Abbey by making it a more interesting, exciting and pleasant place to visit and, thereby, increasing its engagement and income. Since 2009 the Friends have spent about £80,000 on some 50 varied projects covering those four categories. Our income from membership, events and donations funds our Projects for the Abbey.

We have a hardworking committee who are a talented team and have the Abbey at the heart of everything we do. I would like to give special thanks to Dick Hewett for taking on the role of Acting Chair in 2020 until last year, as well as all his other roles for the Friends. Dick is the Vice-Chair, Treasurer and organises the Events Programme. We were delighted to welcome Rosemary Barker in 2022 to take over the position of secretary and she is doing a fantastic job. Roger Rowe has a strong hand on our membership numbers. Mike Prince has been working tirelessly as Chair of Projects; our next important projects being the new Signage around the abbey and the Refurbishment of the shop in conjunction with the new development plan. Mike has also produced a record of all our projects in a new database. We are working hard to further develop the relationship between the Friends and the PCC. Thomas Wharton and Julie Carlton are members of the committee which is vital for liaison with the Abbey.

Thanks also to Colin and Rosemary Davis, who organise our Boat Trip and visit to the Mill Theatre in Sonning. They also run a brilliant bottle stall at the Abbey Christmas Fair and thank you to all our members who provide a very eclectic mix of bottles. We are incredibly grateful to Lis Speck for organising the Coffee Mornings with her efficient team and their wonderful homemade biscuits, which contributed to a successful year. One of the highlights of the year is our Annual Dinner at the White Horse, usually attended by about 80 Friends who enthusiastically join in with the musical entertainment provided by Dick Hewett and Tim Rogerson.

If anyone is interested in becoming a Trustee, please let us know.

Thank you to all our members who have supported us this year and to Thomas and his team in the Abbey and the help we receive from the Parish Office.

**Jill Hall**  
**Chair**

## **6. Honorary Treasurer's Report**

In the absence of Dick Hewett, Jill read the Treasurer's Report:

I must first apologise to members for my absence from this year's AGM (away visiting family in Spain). I hope this report will be a sufficient explanation behind the summary of accounts.

Members should be aware that our financial year runs from 1 April to 31 March, however our events calendar effectively runs from 1 January to 31 December. This causes the end of year accounts to give a misleading picture of our real financial situation.

The key items to note are:

- The figures for income are as always slightly misleading due to timing, as we receive nearly all receipts for events before 31 March, but generally don't then incur the

costs for these events until the next financial year. Nevertheless I can report that the events of calendar year 2022 generated a net surplus of £1,161, the figure to use for a truer picture. This figure would have been higher were it not for event cancellations (as reported elsewhere).

- The more comprehensive programme of events for 2023 has generated an increase in apparent revenues, but these will be countered during the next financial year as the expenditure is incurred for these events.
- Income from subscriptions and associated donations was £4,882. Together with Gift Aid (£1,869), this means we generated £6,751 in total from membership. We are very grateful for the contributions over and above the subscription rates which many members make.
- Sales of badges and greetings cards generated £193, and we had a small bequest of £80. We also earned £1,343 in interest, a huge change from the previous year, thanks to the dramatic increase in interest rates.
- We received several payments into the FRA account (£70) for Abbey Social Events. These were immediately transferred out to the correct account.
- The net effect was that we generated a total of £9,528 income (including the surplus from 2022 events, and ignoring receipts for 2023).
- We gave the Abbey £6,425 for projects (reported elsewhere), and spent £371 on the purchase of sales items and £314 on admin (principally a new leaflet). Thus exclusive of the costs of events, we spent £7,110.
- The stock of goods for resale includes Greetings cards (sold through the Abbey Gift Stall, Visitor Information Centre and several other outlets) and FRA badges, which are all available for sale to members.
- The overall result is that effectively we added a net £2,418 to the balance from the previous year. Taking into account the likely expenses on events in 2023, the true balance of the charity is therefore in the order of £91k. (The liabilities assume all events could be cancelled and all receipts refunded to members.)

The accounts are presented to you for your approval.

**Dick Hewett**  
**Chairman, FRA Treasurer**

## **FRIENDS OF ROMSEY ABBEY**

### **Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31st March 2023**

	2023	2022
<b>Receipts</b>		
Income from Subscriptions	3,240	3,720
Donations and legacies	1,742	1,897
Fundraising activities	193	80

Income from activities	13,214	6,851
Bequests	80	0
Interest	1,343	32
Paid in for social events	70	0
Gift Aid	1,869	0
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>21,752</b>	<b>12,580</b>
<b>Payments</b>		
Grant	6,425	4,058
Expenditure on Activities	9,507	5,127
Merchandise	371	0
Printing, website and displays	314	111
Donation	0	0
Transfer out for social events	70	0
Bank charges	60	15
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>16,748</b>	<b>9,311</b>
<b>Net (payments)/receipts for the year</b>	<b>5,004</b>	<b>3,269</b>
Cash funds as at 1st April 2022	88,900	85,632
<b>Cash funds as at 31st March 2023</b>	<b>93,904</b>	<b>88,900</b>

All amounts relate to unrestricted funds

### Statement of Assets and Liabilities at 31st March 2023

	2023	2022
	£	£
<b>Cash Funds</b>		
Bank current and deposit accounts	16,801	13,141
CCLA COIF Deposit Fund balance	77,103	75,760
	<b>93,904</b>	<b>88,900</b>
<b>Assets</b>		
Payments made for future events	9,917	6,985
Stock of goods for resale	300	0
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Amounts received in respect of future events	19,584	13,371
Accrued expenses	0	0

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 18 May 2023

**R Hewett**  
**Treasurer**

**J Hall**  
**Chair**

The question was raised over why the Friends are using only 6% to support the Abbey which is not a good situation given the level of funds held. Jill explained that some projects have not gone through and we are currently planning to support the new Abbey signage.

Thomas informed that the Abbey does want and is grateful for support from the Friends and the signage is a project which will progress in the near future. Process for proposals for projects is currently being reviewed. It is the PCC which decides whether a project goes ahead. In addition to the signage the ref-fit of the shop and development to enhance the Abbey are being considered. The intention is that projects should progress.

Jill commented that the Friends are working hard to improve the communication with the PCC.

Mike Prince informed that the process is that all projects are paid for initially by the Abbey which then asks the Friends for their support so the expenditure can be as much as a year out of date by the time a project has gone through the process.

A question was raised over whether there are any restricted funds but there are none.

Proposed by Geoff Gibbs  
Seconded by Ken Gibson

## **7. Honorary Project Chairman's Report**

Hello Friends. It's my job to tell you how we are spending, or trying to spend, your money on projects for the benefit of the Abbey.

Our most significant achievement this year was the production of a self-guided tour of the Abbey in Ukrainian. In the past we have only provided the funding for printing of such material. In this instance, we organised every step in the process. As it happens, everyone involved in making it happen gave their time and talents free of charge, so the whole project cost us nothing.

Another success relates to the memorial to Alice Taylor, near the book and gift shop. The white patches on the plaster effigy, where the surface layer has flaked off, have been over-painted to blend-in. More significantly, the whole effigy has been raised up on blocks to allow air to flow underneath and evaporate moisture which had become trapped in the plaster. The memorial is intended to remain like this for the next year. This conservation project, managed by the Fabric Committee, was initiated 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years ago. In 2019 the Friends offered funding to enable it to proceed after the PCC's grant aid application had failed. We budgeted £2,500 of which £1,465 has been spent to date. We are currently working on an information sheet for display near the memorial to tell its story.

Last year we told you we were looking for a "flagship project" to fund in order to spend a significant amount of our accumulated funds on something highly visible. Our chosen project is to undertake a total, professional re-fit of the shop; because of its importance to visitors, contribution to Abbey funds and current poor display and storage facilities. Unfortunately, our proposal clashed with the PCC's invitation to the Inspecting Architect to present ideas for re-modelling the west end of the Abbey, so it was put on hold. Now that the PCC has had the opportunity to digest those ideas, we are hopeful that our proposal to re-fit the shop can progress.

Another project which, like Alice, is taking a long time to come to fruition, is improving the way the 15<sup>th</sup> century embroidered cloth in the North Chancel Aisle is displayed. This was originally suggested to us in 2019 by Janet Wallace, the then senior Churchwarden. The estimated cost was £13,000; The Friends agreed to budget £6,500 for this project on the understanding that the PCC would apply for grants to cover the remainder.

The textile is currently hidden behind very ugly curtains and in a dark-wood Victorian cabinet, which dominates it. Most visitors miss it entirely and those who don't are disappointed with the poor visibility of the embroidery because of low light levels and reflections in the glass. The cabinet is in a sensitive location: immediately below the recently installed "Calling Window" – a current visitor attraction. There is also concern that the glass in the cabinet is not shatter-proof and therefore poses a safety hazard. The aim of the project is to make the artefact properly visible to visitors, whilst protecting its and their safety in a minimalist cabinet that will blend into its surroundings.

We established communication with a recommended local textile conservator regarding supervision of the transfer, inspection of the textile and undertaking any conservation found to be necessary. With her help, we identified the ideal material for the window of the cabinet: a museum/art gallery-quality acrylic sheet, which can be sourced locally. We also identified options for constructing the cabinet in aluminium or stainless steel and methods of supporting and securing it to the wall. Two years ago, indications were that the necessary work could be achieved for a cost close to the original estimate. Sadly, recent cost inflation makes it unlikely that a similar conclusion could be reached today.

Last year the Fabric Committee was given a presentation of our work to date so that they could check that the DAC (the Bishop's Diocesan Advisory Committee) was content for the Abbey to proceed with the proposed changes and to seek grants to cover the remaining costs. We await a response from the Fabric Committee/PCC before proceeding to firm-up proposals.

The final ongoing project I would like to bring to your attention is replacement of all external signage and notice boards for the Abbey. This has been proceeding as a co-operative project with the Vicar and Assistant Curate. Ideas for types of sign, branding, wording and placement of signs have been evolved in discussion with a design consultancy. I am hopeful that it will be possible to bring this work to fruition this year, subject to DAC and PCC approvals. The Friends will be meeting the full cost of the project – estimated to be in the region of £10,000.

In addition to these one-off projects, our annual commitments to encourage tourism, draw in young families and keep the Ethelflaeda Festival going, continue at an annual cost of about £4,000.

**Mike Prince**  
*June 2023*

## **8. Honorary Events Chairman's Report read by Jill**

What a relief it was to be able to mount a full programme of events during 2022 after all the limitations and constraints of Covid. A packed programme was reasonably well-supported by members and a surplus generated for funds as a consequence, although two trips had to be cancelled and one reduced for varying reasons. Our policy is not to run any event at a loss, with a break-even figure of attendance carefully monitored.

Our coffee mornings resumed, albeit with lower numbers attending than pre-Covid. It will take time for numbers to recover fully and we need to keep promoting these enjoyable social occasions which are held on the third Friday of the month in alternate months. We also returned to the White Horse in October for our Annual Dinner, again with a good attendance and the regular entertainment from Tim and Dick.

Our boat trips resumed in April 2022 with a cruise from Caversham on the Thames, organised by Colin and Rosemary. This is always a popular trip, repeated in April 2023 with a trip from Walton-on-Thames. Booking early for this trip is always essential. In contrast, we decided not to attend the Mill Theatre at Sonning in December as they were repeating their 2021 production of Top Hat and insufficient members were interested in attending. We are however booked to attend in December 2023.

A new initiative was a tour of four churches in the Fordingbridge area, led by Brian Woodruffe (ex-head Bellringer at the Abbey). Brian's selection was very contrasting – from the Saxon edifice at Breamore to the Georgian church at Hale. We shall be returning to visit four other churches this August. Meanwhile our Dorchester Abbey trip was yet again postponed due to it clashing with the funeral of a prominent member of the Abbey congregation. We fully intend to get there eventually, this July!

A trip to the Watts Gallery and Hatchlands (both near Guildford) was relatively poorly supported, and one minibus was replaced by car transport. Rob Gower drove the minibus, and he will be the second driver with Dick for the trips this year. A trip to the Hawk Conservancy was cancelled due to a lack of a driver and a concern about the weather.

Finally our AGM in the Church Rooms was followed by a Strawberry Tea and Evensong, which ensured a good attendance at the meeting! It is hoped that the same will apply on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2023!

We are already into the full programme of trips and events during 2023, and hope members will continue to support these as they are arranged both for members' enjoyment and to add to the funds available for projects.

**Dick Hewett**  
**Chairman, Events Committee**

## **9. Honorary Membership Secretary's Report**

In the middle of May we had 313 Paying Members now 314 and 10 Honorary members, now 11. This could increase a little if we get positive responses to requests we are sending to people who have not renewed in time for the AGM.

The Covid years have not been kind to us – the lack of activities and the increasing age of our membership has led to a steady decline in our numbers. But in the last two months we have had 6 new members, our activities are now in full swing, and we are trying to improve our Marketing: so hopefully we are past our low point!

**Roger Rowe**  
**Membership Secretary**

## **10. Election of Officers and Committee Members**

Jill informed that all members of the Committee are prepared to stand again  
Thomas asked for nominations for Chair and Jill was duly proposed by Mike Prince and seconded by Steve Rawlins

The following were proposed:

Dick Hewett	Vice-Chair, as well as Chair of Events and Treasurer
Mike Prince	Chair of Projects
Roger Rowe	Chair of Membership
Rosemary Barker	Secretary

All were proposed by Celia Rowe and seconded by Steve Rawlins

## **11. Any Other Business**

Roger informed that he would like a volunteer to take on Membership. He can convert databases back to spreadsheets that would assist the person taking on this role.

Jill expressed thanks to Liz Wagner and her team for the tea – the room and refreshments were looking lovely and proved to be so.

The meeting closed at 5.10 pm with a special Friends Evensong at 6.30 pm in the Abbey.