FRIENDS OF ROMSEY ABBEY
Charity No: 1134191
SUMMER 2025 NEWSLETTER





From the Chair …

Welcome to our Summer Newsletter 2025. As we bask in the warmth of summer, it is the perfect time to look back over the varied programme of events that we have enjoyed this year and look forward to more delights on the horizon. All the details of past and future events are on our website – www.romseyabbeyfriends.org

We are lucky have such a dedicated team of Trustees who organise the events, spend time pursuing our projects, keeping our website and notice board up to date and making sure we are compliant with data protection and safeguarding requirements. Our Vicar, Thomas Wharton, has been attending our Trustee and Projects meetings. In addition, Chris Harpham our Head Verger and our Churchwarden Jan Bartlett, also attend. This has enabled us to liaise with the PCC and other committees more effectively, although we wish that progress with our Projects could move at a faster pace.

The coffee mornings continue to be a big draw for our members. Now, Lis needs a bigger pool of helpers to sustain her work. We'd love to hear from you if you are willing to volunteer. Ken Gibson's time as our Publicity Officer has resulted in an abundance of articles in Open Door and The Romsey Advertiser, which has helped to get our message across far and wide. We are looking for more committee members too, if you are interested let us know.

The best way to become a Friend is by word of mouth, by sharing the good news of the Friends - it makes a huge difference. The Friends of the Abbey is a force for good, our shared commitment, our love of the Abbey and our desire for more people to share this wonderful, living place with the wider community. It is easy to become a Friend, visit our website or pick up a leaflet in the Abbey. Your membership helps support our ongoing projects and events.

I look forward to seeing many of you at future events and do contact us if you have any queries or questions – office@romseyabbeyfriends.org

Jill Hall

Another delve into the Archives
Alice Taylor – the Taylor family – Dr Francis Taylor

In the last newsletter we told the story behind the much-loved memorial to Alice Taylor and promised this time to reveal more about her father, who created it.



Memorial to Alice Taylor in Romsey Abbey sculpted by her father Francis

Dr Francis Taylor lived in Lansdown House, Church Street, Romsey, with his wife Jemima and their children. By our own standards they were a tragic family for only five of Francis and Jemima Taylor's family survived into adulthood. By the standards of the day, however, their plight was not uncommon; for large families and high mortality were features of Victorian life.

Francis Taylor was born in Hull and came to Romsey as assistant to Dr John Beddome and later married Dr Beddome's daughter. He went on to become one of the town's most eminent citizens – surgeon, churchman, alderman, JP and Mayor of Romsey in 1854 and 1855.

Sculpting was a hobby, but his skill was such that he was able to exhibit a pieta at the 1851 Great Exhibition in the Crystal Palace, London.

He was an accomplished surgeon, an innovator and inventor. He received a royal accolade for his invention of a "simple and successful instrument for feeding infant children". The instrument was used to feed Queen Victoria's children and Dr Taylor received a "satisfactory testimonial" from Buckingham Palace. The Queen also granted permission for the device to be known as "Taylor's Royal India Rubber Tubes for Feeding Infants".

Taylor was also one of the first to use chloroform following its introduction in 1847. In 1851 he used it during dentistry on a cook who needed three teeth extracted and, a few days later, on a woman in childbirth. He also inserted gold fillings in teeth, a difficult procedure then as the cavity had to be kept dry.

Another of Dr Taylor's inventions was an automatic earth closet featuring a ratchet arrangement which released a quantity of earth whenever the lavatory seat was depressed and released!

Francis Taylor, Esq, JP and surgeon died suddenly on 18th November 1870 of heart disease. He was 59. His funeral took place on 25th November. The event was recorded in the Hampshire Advertiser as follows.

"The remains of our late, highly esteemed townsman were interred yesterday with every demonstration of respect. All the shops in the line of procession were closed, many respectable tradesmen headed it and these were followed by the Corporation and private friends. Mr Frank Ashworth Taylor, son and partner of the deceased, was chief mourner, supported by two of Mr Taylor's brothers, his old friend, Dr Reynolds of London University and others. At the Botley Road Cemetery a large concourse had assembled and we never remember an occasion on which all present appeared to be so deeply concerned. The Burial Service was most impressively read by the Vicar of Romsey, the Rev E L Berthon, who was accompanied by the Rev Jas Davies of Braishfield and the Rev N H Barr, Curate of Romsey."

He was succeeded in the practice by his son Frank, who employed two of his three surviving sisters to keep the books. Another son, William, was also a doctor, practising at Cheltenham.

Acknowledging sources – Southampton Daily Echo and the Hampshire Chronicle

THE SOCIAL SCENE

The Events programme for 2025 has a very varied and interesting selection of opportunities for Friends to have a taste of a range of activities and venues.

A FAST Trip!

The title of this trip is a tad misleading but it made a great start to the first trip out in the year. In this context, FAST isn't actually the pace of the trip but is the acronym for the Farnborough Air Science Trust Museum and Wind Tunnels which our group visited in April.



The morning was spent touring their museum, followed in the afternoon by a visit to their historic Wind Tunnels. Farnborough was the location for the first powered flight in the UK in 1908, William Cody successfully flying more than ¼ mile, a feat which took 27 seconds, before crash-landing at the far end of the field. Prior to that, the site had seen the development of balloons for military use, having been acquired by the military in 1905. As such, it remains the oldest airfield in continuous service in the UK.

The site subsequently became the Royal Aircraft Factory, renamed in 1918 as the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE) upon the formation of the Royal Air Force (RAF). The site played an important part in the development of many aspects of aviation, including Britain's rockets in the 1950s/60s, as well as many elements concerning air safety. Farnborough remains the location of the Air Accidents Investigation Branch.

The Wind Tunnels were used until the 1990s to test a range of aspects of planes as well as other objects such as racing cars. The enormous size of the largest wind tunnel, which could hold an entire fighter or small commercial plane, was mind-boggling. The team at FAST were superb in giving a very clear explanation about the history of Farnborough's role in aviation history and the science behind the wind tunnels in particular.

Buckler's Hard – not a hard day out!

On a Tuesday morning in early June, two minibuses of members of the Friends of Romsey Abbey set off for Buckler's Hard. The weather certainly wasn't with us but it didn't dim the enthusiasm for the day in any way.

On arrival, most opted for coffee (and cake for some) before setting off around the village during which time the rain pretty much stopped making the walk to the Museum and Gift Shop that much easier. The Museum is quite extraordinary with well presented displays, artefacts and tableaux as well as a film. All this illustrating the history of the area from the time of the Cistercian monks in the 13th century to its time as a shipyard from the construction of Admiral Nelson's favourite ship – HMS Agamemnon – which was built and launched at Buckler's Hard in 1781.

It was then time for lunch, some opting to eat at the Captain's Table café, some at Henry's and others at the Master Builder's House. Lunch over, there was time for a walk in the rain (no surprise there) for some down to the Shipwright's Gallery where a film was shown on the building of the Agamemnon which filled the time until the boat trip. Whilst pleasant with a great deal more information given about the area along the estuary, due to the rain it wasn't easy to see everything clearly, but this was nonetheless enjoyable.



Back on terra firma, it was time to wend our way up the path to the car park where our carriages awaited for the return journey to Romsey. Thanks to Jill Hall for arranging the visit as well as Dick Hewett and Rob Gower for driving.

Picnic at Island House – a chance to see the lovely gardens

In early June a group of The Friends was delighted to visit The Island, Greatbridge by kind invitation of Sarah Saunders-Davies. There had been doubts as to whether we would go ahead as the day started off with drizzle, but it soon turned to bright sunshine, and it was agreed that we could continue. With the River Test running through the middle of the gardens, we were able to wander round on arrival and admire the wonderful display of roses before we enjoyed our picnics and a chance to catch up with our friends.

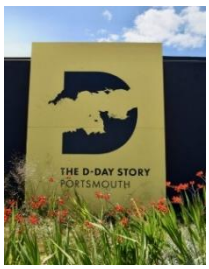


In the afternoon we were shown round the extensive gardens by the knowledgeable Head Gardener Derek who had thirty-five years of experience working at The Island. We learnt that the borders were designed to be a crescendo of colour with different heights and textures, hear about the historical significance of the variety of trees, discovered lily ponds reminiscent of Monet's Garden and picked up tips to care for our own gardens.

We had an extremely enjoyable and fulfilling day.

D-Day Experience and Southsea Castle

Yet another sunny summer day in July saw two minibuses depart from Romsey to travel to Southsea with the D-Day Story and Southsea Castle as their destination.



The D-Day story is a very well laid out experience and contains many exhibits which are quite emotive. There are so many items that illustrate how people lived, how the forces - not just from the British Isles but also worldwide - were united and it is quite overwhelming when one experiences the immense organisation and efforts it took to fight for so many years. There are recorded reminiscences from some of the veterans which are worthwhile particularly as there are so few veterans remaining.



Operation Overlord was just one part of the war but an incredible achievement. The Overlord Embroidery is totally stunning. The work that has gone into this 'Bayeux Tapestry' type display is amazing and the detail so much to be admired and a fitting tribute to all who were involved in that particular exercise.



It was entertaining to look at the Landing Craft Tank 7074 on view outside the Museum which was raised from the mud of Birkenhead Docks and fully restored after falling into disrepair (and the mud) following its life as a nightclub post war. This is the last LCT to survive after the war and is certainly worthy of a look around. The additional positive from looking round this craft is the views of the Solent from the upper decks.

A visit to Southsea Castle, yet another of Henry VIII's military fortifications, was interesting and it was feasible to walk the ramparts and take another view of the Solent. It is intriguing that buildings such as this have survived for hundreds of years and certainly fulfilled their purpose to protect the coast from invasion.

We returned to Romsey close to the scheduled time (but not in the jeep!).

The rest of the year .....

At the time of going to press, there are spaces available on the Petworth House trip (23 September) and the Ethelflaeda talk with Puddings (24 October). The Desert Island Discs Evening, Thames Boat Trip and Churches Trip are all full with waiting lists and the Sonning Theatre trip is also full. If you have any queries on these trips or would like to ensure you can have a place, please contact Dick Hewett on events@romseyabbeyfriends.org.

Money Matters - What are we spending the funds on?

Currently we are funding the purchase of a new supply of 20,000 visitor leaflets for the Abbey as well as a share of the cost of the sound system for Abbey Vine.

STOP PRESS – At the July meeting, the Committee discussed the flower arrangements in the Abbey which certainly enhance the visitor experience, and decided to pay for new stainless steel inserts in the pedestals to hold the flowers in place as well as making an annual grant towards the cost of the flowers.

Could you please let us know if your financial status has changed such that you are no longer a UK tax payer and therefore Gift Aid can no longer be applied to your subscriptions and donations. Contact Dick Hewett, Treasurer, on events@romseyabbeyfriends.org to let him know.

Most of our photographs are taken by Ken Gibson, for which we thank him.