

**THE ABBEY CHURCH OF ST. MARY AND ST. ETHELFLAEDA, ROMSEY with ST.
SWITHUN'S, CRAMP MOOR**

**The Annual Vestry Meeting for the Election of Churchwardens and the
Annual Parochial Church Meeting will be held in Romsey Abbey on
26th May 2024 at 11.30 a.m.**

AGENDA

- 1) Opening prayers
- 2) Apologies for Absence

VESTRY MEETING

- 3) Minutes of the Vestry Meeting held on 21st May 2023 (*draft minutes are below*)
- 4) Election of Churchwardens

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

- 5) Minutes of the APCM held on 21st May 2023 (*draft minutes are below*)
- 6) Election to Deanery Synod – 3 members for election for 2 years
- 7) Election of 6 members to the Parochial Church Council, 5 for three years, 1 for 1 year
- 8) Report from the Electoral Roll Officer **2024 page 8**
- 9) Election of the Electoral Roll Officer
- 10) Parish Reports – PCC Committees **2023 Pages 8 - 12**
 - a) Deanery Synod
 - b) Fabric Committee
 - c) Financial Resources Committee
 - d) Health and Safety Committee
 - e) Magazine Committee
 - f) Mission & Giving Committee
 - g) Safeguarding
 - h) St. Swithun's Committee
- 11) Annual Report and Accounts of the Parochial Church Council for the year ended 31st December 2023
- 12) Election of Independent Examiner
- 13) Group reports **2023 Pages 13 - 18**

Abbey groups

 - a. Bellringers
 - b. Catering Team
 - c. Children and Families Worker Report
 - d. Choir
 - e. FORAM
 - f. Head Verger
 - g. Home Groups
 - h. Journeying Together
 - j. Mothers' Union
 - k. Net Carbon Zero
 - m. Parish Lunch

- n. Romsey Abbey School
- p. St Swithun's and Abbey Women's Group
- q. Tour Guides
- r. Youth Worker

Associated organisations **2023 Pages 19 - 21**

- 1. Christian Aid
 - 2. George's Trust
 - 3. Friends of Romsey Abbey
 - 4. Music in Romsey Abbey
 - 5. Triangulate
- 14) Vicar's report
- 15) Question time
- 16) Closing prayers

AGENDA ITEM 3

Minutes of the Annual Vestry Meeting for the Abbey Church of St Mary and St Ethelflaeda with St Swithun's, held in Romsey Abbey on 21st May 2023

Minutes of the Annual Vestry Meeting for the Abbey Church of St Mary and St Ethelflaeda with St Swithun's, held in Romsey Abbey on Sunday 21 May 2023

Chairman: The Revd Thomas Wharton

The Vicar opened the meeting with prayer.

Copies of the Vestry Meeting minutes of 22 May 2022 were circulated with the Annual Report before the meeting. The Vicar asked the meeting whether he should sign the minutes as a correct record of the meeting. All agreed.

AGENDA ITEM 4

Election of Churchwardens

The Vicar introduced the election of church wardens.

It is the custom in our parish for churchwardens to serve for four years. Julie Carlton had served 3 years and was willing to serve for a further term. **She was proposed by Mr Christopher Green and seconded by Mr David Auger.**

Mr David Auger had served for one year and was willing to serve for a further term. **He was proposed by Ms Julie Carlton and seconded by Mrs Elizabeth Wagner.**

There being no other nominations, the Vicar declared Ms Carlton and Mr Auger elected.

They were formally accepted by the meeting for presentation at the forthcoming Archdeacon's Visitation.

The Chairman concluded the Vestry Meeting.

Confirmed this day

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

(Agenda items 3 and 4 are recorded in the Annual Vestry Meeting Minutes.)

AGENDA ITEM 5 MINUTES OF THE APCM HELD ON 21st MAY 2023

OPENING PRAYERS

The Vicar, the Revd Canon Thomas Wharton, took the chair and opened the meeting with prayer.

APOLOGIES

There were 65 present and 19 apologies.

[Apologies – Katy and Ian Clark, Pam and Roger Leech, Roger and Celia Rowe, Geoff and Sandy Gibbs, Liz and David Sharman, David Bibby, Jane Arden, Patricia Brown, Paul Quinnell, Brian and Gay Drysdall, Valentine Lines, Sarah Hargreaves, Elizabeth Butcher.]

MINUTES FROM 2023 APCM

The Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on Wednesday 21st May 2023 (pages 3-7) were taken as read and agreed unanimously. The Chairman signed the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

6. DEANERY SYNOD ELECTIONS

ELECTIONS TO DEANERY SYNOD

Parish representatives to Deanery Synod are elected every three years and are ex officio members of the PCC. Based on our electoral role figures, Romsey is entitled to 6 lay representatives.

The following nominations were received:

Adrienne Mordan: Proposed Elizabeth Wagner, seconded Paul Quinnell

Liz Wagner: Proposed David Auger, seconded Paul Quinnell

Diane Kingston: Proposed David Auger, seconded Jane Horne,

All duly elected.

Julie Carlton as Churchwarden also attends Deanery Synod ex officio.

Anthony Cross is ex officio, as an elected member of the Diocesan Synod, a member of the Romsey Deanery Synod.

7. ELECTIONS TO THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

The PCC may include up to 15 elected members who serve for 3 years. There were 9 vacancies.

The following nominations were received.

Richard Pratt: proposed Irene Bray, seconded Elizabeth Pratt – serve for 3 years until 2026

Jill Hall: Proposed Richard Hewett, Seconded Elaine Fagan - serve for 3 years until 2026

Pamela Leech: Proposed David Auger, seconded Glynne Beasley - serve for 3 years until 2026

James Hartley-Binns: Proposed Sandy Walls Quinnell, seconded David Auger - serve for 3 years until 2026

Valentine Lines: Proposed Roger Rowe, seconded Jim Allen - serve for 3 years until 2026

The Vicar proposed that these nominees be elected en bloc. All voted in favour.

Co-opted member to be elected by PCC:

Rick Beton: Proposed by Jan Bartlett, seconded Tim Edmonds.

Janice Bartlett: Proposed Jan Green, seconded Katy Clark - coopted

The Vicar prayed for the PCC.

8. REPORT OF THE ELECTORAL ROLL OFFICER

Jane Russell reported that the review of the electoral roll (ER) was carried out between 21st April and 5th May 2023. During this period, a copy was available for view near the South Door in the Abbey and at St Swithun's.

Following the review, the number on the ER stands at 451 of which 284 are female and 166 are male. This is an increase of 2 since 2022. Since the previous review in 2022, four people have been removed from the ER, all of whom are deceased. Seven people have applied and subsequently been added to the ER.

The full ER has been shared with Church Desk so that the database can be updated to reflect the changes.

To ensure the accuracy of the information on the ER, it is important that any changes are provided to the Electoral Roll Officer for the details to be updated and this should not be undertaken by others.

The Vicar gave a vote of thanks to Jane Russell for her work as Electoral Roll officer.

Jane Russell (Electoral Roll Officer)

9. ELECTION OF ELECTORAL ROLL OFFICER

Mrs Jane Russell was willing to serve for a further year as Electoral Roll Officer. Her election was proposed by Margaret Milner-Williams all voted in favour.

10. PARISH REPORTS

Reports were received from the following committees and associated organisations and taken as read before the meeting.

The vicar thanked all those who had submitted reports and thanked the groups for continuing to meet during another challenging year.

PCC Committees

- a) Church Rooms Committee
- b) Deanery Synod
- c) Fabric Committee
- d) Financial Resources Committee
- e) Health and Safety Committee
- f) Magazine Committee.
- g) Mission and Giving Committee
- h) Safeguarding
- i) St. Swithun's Committee

A correction to **Fabric Committee** report was notified: on page 11, the reference to "cope cupboard" should read "altar frontal cupboard".

Questions were raised in relation to the Fabric Committee report about the proposed Abbey enhancement project.

John Gould, following a visit to an East Sussex church which had undergone a £1m project over 8 years, noted the need to ensure that any development was an Abbey wide project. The Vicar said that the Statement of Needs for the Abbey project, agreed by the PCC following wide consultation, had been agreed this year and the PCC was now consulting with the Abbey Architect. He agrees that the project needs wide consultation and support.

Neil Beasley asked what brief the Architect had given and had consideration been given to the preservation of the Saxon Rood? The Vicar replied that the Architect had been given the Statement of Needs.

D Johnson responded that the Fabric committee took the view that replacement heating should be the priority and that progress should be made via smaller projects.

Rick Beton suggested that whatever we do is going to be expensive and there are benefits for securing funding for a bigger project.

The Vicar proposed that the reports be accepted en bloc; seconded Charles Milner Williams. All voted in favour.

11. ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022

Tim Rogerson, PCC Treasurer, presented the audited accounts for 2022.

We had received an unexpected £55,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. We were also asked for a smaller contribution to the Common Mission Fund (Diocesan "share") and the House for Duty post we support at Kings Somborne as part of the agreement for an Associate Priest was vacant for part of the year.

On the negative side however, the increase in fuel costs in November impacted significantly. (As an indication, the increase could raise our annual fuel bill from £25k to an estimated £60k in 2023).

Setting aside the grant and transfer, the overall result was £565 – which is in line with charities' good practice of breaking even.

Staffing costs increased to £120k, following the reorganisation of and increase in administrative support in the parish office and an increased salary for the Assistant Director of Music.

The Treasurer thanked the Treasury Team for their hard work and support during the year.

Looking ahead to the budget for 2023, there is a £35k deficient forecast. This will be covered by the surplus from the HLF grant this year, but is not sustainable going forward.

There were no questions from the floor.

The PCC had approved the accounts at its meeting on 3 May 2023. **Mrs Elizabeth Wagner proposed that the accounts be adopted. Ian Clark seconded.** All voted in favour.

Thanks were expressed to Tim Rogerson, the Treasurer and the FRC whose work is greatly appreciated in the management of the parish finances.

12. ELECTION OF AUDITOR

Knight Goodhead were again proposed by Liz Wagner and seconded by Adrienne Mordan. All voted in favour.

The Vicar thanked Mr Rogerson for all the detailed work, knowledge and experience he brought to the role of Treasurer.

13. REPORTS SUBMITTED BY GROUPS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PCC AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Abbey Groups

- a. Associate Priest
- b. Assistant Vergers and Servers
- c. Bellringers
- d. Catering Team
- e. Children and Families' Worker
- f. Choir
- g. Communion Assistants
- h. FORAM
- j. Home Groups
- k. Mothers' Union
- m. Abbey Net Zero Carbon
- n. Parish Lunch
- p. Romsey Abbey School
- q. St Swithun's & Romsey Abbey Women's Group
- r. Tour Guides

NB – Correction to report a. as circulated: should be headed Associate priest report.

The question was raised whether the Abbey Net Zero Carbon Group should be part of Fabric Committee to improve lines of communication on this key area of work. It was agreed to consider further.

All other reports were taken as read. Colin Russell proposed that the reports be accepted, seconded by James Hartley-Binns. All voted in favour

Associated Organisations

1. Christian Aid
2. George's Trust
3. Music in Romsey in Romsey Abbey
4. Triangulate

Reports from Associated Organisations were taken as read.

14. VICAR'S REPORT

The Vicar highlighted that the APCM was taking place between Ascension and Pentecost, a "pregnant pause" before the church came into existence, when we pray Come Holy Spirit, Thy Kingdom Come. This is an appropriate time for the APCM.

There are many different layers in the life of a parish here and St Swithun's, as we've seen in the reports. This only makes sense when it is rooted in waiting and prayer.

The Vicar thanked Tim Rogerson, the PCC Treasurer and Liz Wagner, Chair of Finance and Resources Committee for their careful stewardship, Pam Leech as PCC Secretary, the Revd Sally Womersley and the Revd Lee Thompson and all the Ministry Team.

In February, we said farewell to our vergger Robyn Cleveland. Thanks were due to Brian Normington and the Assistant Vergger Team for their hard work during the interregnum.

Rhiannon Wilmott has blossomed in her time in the parish and we wish her and her family well for her ordination and move to St Paul's Winchester. The recruitment process for a successor as Children and Families Worker (initially an interim role) is underway.

The Revd. Lee Thompson is leaving us to be Vicar of Lymington and Anthony Cross after a period of discernment is going forward for training for ordination. We pray for them both.

We are also indebted to the Revd. Fiona Jenvey and the Revd. Mich Lajeunesse for their ministry among us as Self-supporting Ministers.

The Abbey Enhancement Project is a challenge for which we need to work together and be prepared to think big. We need to support it with prayer and discernment.

15. QUESTION TIME

Glynne Beasley pointed out that the current cohort of volunteers is ageing and we need to recruit new volunteers. The Vicar agreed and said we need to encourage new people – as Martin Seymour is doing with the choirs.

Prebendary Peter Speck said it was lovely to see the number of vocations from our congregation but was disappointed that we hadn't been given a new curate for 2023. He felt this was an "opportunity missed", not just for the assistance that a curate would provide to the Ministry Team but because the parish provides such opportunities for training and formation.

A parishioner asked whether there were plans to repeat "say one for me". The Vicar confirmed that this would not take place this year due to lack of resource.

Chris Pritchard thanked the Ministry Team and the many volunteers who sustain and build the life of the parish.

The Revd Sally Womersley, Associate Priest, thanked the Vicar on behalf of the congregation, for his leadership.

16. CLOSING PRAYERS

There being no further questions, the Vicar thanked all who had provided reports and attended in person and the meeting finished with the Messy Grace from the Abbey Vine service.

AGENDA ITEM 8

REPORT OF THE ELECTORAL ROLL OFFICER 2024

Revision of the Electoral Roll was carried out between 23rd April and 7th May 2024. During this period, a copy was available for view near the South Door in the Abbey and at St Swithun's.

Notice of Revision of the Electoral Roll was made in the March edition of Open Door and on the weekly bulletin. An article 'How to join the Electoral Roll' was also submitted for publication in the bulletin.

Following the review, the number on the ER stands at 469 of which 295 (63%) are female and 174 (37%) are male. This is an increase of 18 compared with 2023.

Since the previous review in 2023, 10 people have been removed from the ER, 9 of whom are deceased and 1 who has moved away from the parish and is no longer worshipping in the parish.

26 people (15 female and 11 male) have applied and have subsequently been added to the ER.

Of the 469 members, 59 (13%) are from outside of the parish but worship regularly in the parish

The full ER will be shared with Church Desk so that the database can be updated accordingly to reflect the changes.

To ensure the accuracy of the information held on the ER it is important that any changes are provided to the ERO for the details to be updated and should not be undertaken by others.

It should be noted that in 2025, a new full Electoral Roll must be prepared: this was last undertaken in 2019. This will require **everyone** currently on the Electoral Roll to resubmit an application. As this is a large undertaking, notification will be made as early as February 2025.

Jane Russell

Electoral Roll Officer

AGENDA ITEM 10

PARISH REPORTS – PCC COMMITTEES 2023

a. Deanery Synod

At the June meeting the Venerable Richard Brand (Archdeacon of Winchester) gave a talk on the importance of the wellbeing of Clergy, the topic of which is now for future debate in General Synod.

In our October meeting the Reverend Thomas Wharton gave us a presentation of his visit to Burundi earlier in the year to help re-establish the connection and attend a three-day conference.

In the February meeting Sally Kerson gave a presentation on the Small Pilgrim Places Network, explaining that these are small places, not those already on the map, well known, or that draw crowds.

Pastoral Update:

The Reverend Anne Newport is now the House for Duty Priest in Kings' Somborne.

The new Benefice of Thorngate and Blackwater came into being on the 1st July, with the Rev'd James Pitkin being the first new the incumbent.

The Revd. Phil Bowden has left the deanery and the process of appointing a new Vicar of the Mid Test Benefice has begun.

The Revd. Sara-Jane Stevens was to be welcomed to Thorngate and Blackwater Benefice in February 2024.

Christine Brazier

Deanery Synod Secretary

b. Fabric Committee

The Fabric Committee continues to meet monthly, with the exception of August and December. There has been a considerable amount of low level maintenance work and discussions with the inspecting architect, Louise Salman of St Ann's Gate Architects about works to action some of the items raised in her Quinquennial report of 2022. We continue to ensure that all safety equipment has annual inspections.

There has been some work to restore some of the Abbey silverwork and this has been done to a very high standard by Farish of Mere.

Test Valley Borough Council have approached the Abbey to locate a statue of the Late Queen Elizabeth II on the North Churchyard. The sculptor is Amy Goodman, who designed and modelled The Warhorse in Romsey Memorial Park. The Romsey statue is obviously subject to both Faculty and planning and we are not yet ready to apply for either. The planned erection date is 2025.

We accepted a quotation from Salisbury Glass to refurbish the remaining Tower windows as we do have some water ingress through these. However trying to find a date for them to come has been quite challenging and we are promised spring 2024 despite having accepted the quote in February 2023!

The effigy of Alice Taylor at the north-west side of the Abbey has been subject to conservation work by Peter Martindale, conservationist. The effigy has been deteriorating due to the amount of moisture held by the Plaster of Paris. To try to counteract this Alice has been raised to allow the

underside of the effigy to dry out and hopefully stop the deterioration of the upper surface through damp. We are grateful to the Friends of Romsey Abbey for funding this conservation work.

The discussions to replace the cope display have been overtaken by the suggestion that we replace the plate glass in the case with acrylic. We are currently discussing this with Wessex Windows in Lyminster who supply an appropriate acrylic sheet.

We received a set of sketches from the inspecting architect regarding the Abbey Enhancement Project which focussed on making changes to the west end of the Abbey for storage facilities and a servery. These have not been progressed as the PCC was not sure that making significant alterations inside the building was what they wanted.

The Abbey Net Zero Carbon Group has been very busy monitoring thermal loss with the building and looking at ways of making the Church Rooms more carbon-friendly.

Work continues by volunteers in the South Garth and excitingly we have been joined by a group of volunteers from Speaking Space that offers opportunities for teenagers with learning difficulties.

We have accepted a quotation for Colin Avery to the Abbey to lift the sinking ledger stone in St Nicholas's Chapel. This is now causing a significant health and safety hazard as it is pushing surrounding stones upwards creating trip hazards. We are awaiting a date from Colin to come and do the work.

Louise Salman is preparing plans and specifications to carry out work to the Tower roof. There has been water ingress, the base of the flag pole is rotting and some of the gutters, that have been repaired in the past with bitumen, are now failing. This is a complicated piece of work and we hope the Abbey Appeal will be able to support this work in due course.

We have used wall walkers during the course of the year to remove vegetation growth from the high levels of the Abbey, this is essential to stop the degradation of pointing and subsequent water ingress into the building. The activities of the wall walkers caused a lot of interest from the children of the Abbey School on their way to and from school.

We have been working on replacing the external signage around the Abbey to modernise this and bring the content up to date. However we are still in discussions with the Planners about moving this project forward.

The nave organ has been cleaned by Walkers and the before and after photos show how much this was needed. There seemed to be no obvious cause for the areas of condensation previously identified around the nave organ.

General maintenance to ensure that the Abbey is safe is ongoing and ably supported by our Head Verger Chris Harpham.

I am indebted to the members of the Fabric Committee for their expertise and commitment to our Grade 1 listed building.

Pam Leech
Chair

c. Financial Resource Committee 2023

FRC met six times in 2023 and reviewed Business Continuity Plans, Financial Procedures & Policies, Risk Register and Succession Plan along with the Abbey insurance policies. Gift Aid and VAT, via the LPW Scheme, were reclaimed.

Regular givers (mainly PGS), MIRA concerts, Christmas Fair and Catering Team events were major income streams. In 2023 income from contactless donation points totalled £17,856, an increase on 2022. A contactless payment point was installed in the Gift Shop in late August 2023 for use when the shop was unstaffed. Income from this device was over £3,000 for the last 4 months of the year. In addition, a small contactless donation device was installed by the candle stand and this has raised over £600 from September to December mainly in £1 donations.

Energy costs continued to be high and efforts were made to reduce usage wherever possible. The Abbey's utilities continue to be purchased via the CofE's Parish Buying Energy scheme enabling the energy to be purchased as cheaply as possible. In addition all the electricity is 100% from UK renewable resources.

Our continued thanks to Tim Rogerson, in his role as PCC Treasurer, for maintaining such robust financial accountability.

Liz Wagner
FRC Chair

d. Health & Safety Committee

The Committee met three times during 2023 and continued with its programme of H&S inspections of the Abbey and its surrounds.

The Committee reviews any accidents recorded in the Accident Book and keeps the health and safety training of staff and volunteers under review (including evacuation and first aid training). We organise opportunities for training both in person and on line. In addition, we ensure that risk assessments are in place for Abbey events.

In 2023, we also reviewed our food safety arrangements, in consultation with the Church Rooms Committee and Catering team, following a preliminary visit from the Test Valley Environmental Health Officer who advised that regular provision of cooked meals such as the Parish Lunch falls under Food Safety regulations.

We have also started to consider the impact of the proposed "Martyn's Law" which is still in development but is expected to require buildings open to the public and holding events for over 100 persons (including places of worship) to implement preventive and protective measures for potential terrorist attacks.

The Committee would welcome new members with an interest in keeping safe our staff, community and visitors. Please contact Julie Carlton.

Julie Carlton
Chair

e. Magazine Committee Report for 2023

The major challenge highlighted in the 2022 report was the sudden announcement by Ordnance Survey printers of an increase of over 100% in printing costs. By moving the print operation to a local digital printer the Committee managed to limit the increase in cost to 80%. This did, however, necessitate an increase in the cover price per issue to £2.00 for 2024.

This increase was accepted as understandable in light of our increased cost and some subscribers commented that the quality of the magazine justified the cover price. We lost very few subscribers as a result of the increase.

No July 2023 issue was produced following the sudden fatal crash of the chairman's computer. There followed a double July-August issue after a new computer had been sourced and no complaints were received from subscribers.

Apart from printing (by far the highest cost), software and content subscriptions Open Door is produced and distributed with no cost to Romsey Abbey. All work is done by volunteers but the Committee is pleased to announce that a contribution of £1 000 was made to Abbey funds from the proceeds of 2023 magazine sales.

Rowland Davies
Committee Chair

f. Mission Giving Group

In 2023 we organised the distribution of £20,000 from the PCC to local charities and mission partners, representing nearly 10% of the parish's voluntary income, following the guidance from General Synod. Our policy is to gradually reduce the number of organisations we support, concentrating our prayers and gifts where they can have greatest impact. So we supported 20 agencies through the year, splitting our support equally between home and overseas charities, and equally between Christian mission agencies and those devoted to social action. Our largest gifts went to one of the poorest countries in Africa, Burundi, divided between the Christian University training their priests and other Christian leaders, and the Burundi Anglican church. Our next largest gift was to Romsey Foodbank.

If you would be interested in helping us organise the PCC's generosity, please contact Ian Clark southwick@eml.cc

Ian Clark

g. Safeguarding Report

I took over the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer at the end of October 2023 and have been reviewing and updating our safeguarding policies. We are currently looking at our Safer Recruitment process and trying to update and simplify our forms, which will I hope, speed up the whole process. I have also come on board as a second DBS verifier for the Parish to help Pam Leech, our safeguarding administrator.

Working alongside Syrone, our Children's and Families worker and Rosy, our Youth worker, we have made sure that the Abbey events with our younger members are compliant with our safeguarding policy and I would like to thank them for their help and support.

There is still some work to be done with regard basic safeguarding training for all our volunteers, which will help raise awareness of safeguarding and how we can all play a part in keeping our children, young people and vulnerable adults safe, as well as ourselves whilst volunteering.

I would like to thank Thomas, the Churchwardens and Pam Leech for all their support and advice.

Sarah Riley
Safeguarding Officer

h. St. Swithun's Committee

2023 started as a time of transition away from the COVID precautions of 2022. It was not until early May that we were having communion of two kinds again and we decided it was safe to shake hands again at the peace.

The average attendance over the year was 24, 30 attended on Easter Sunday and 35 on Christmas day. There were 2 funerals.

Singing Story Time met in the church every week during term time. After the summer holidays, Rhiannon Wilmott, the children's worker, left to train as a curate in Winchester and Syrone Dore took over.

2023 was also a year of administrative and technical problems. The committee decided to close their account with Barclays Bank because of non-co-operation. All the funds, except some cash used for small purchases, were transferred to an account administered by the Abbey finance team.

In October the controls of the heating broke down and although a partial repair was made it failed again soon after so that two of the heaters ceased to function for the rest of the year: in addition, the timer ceased to function properly.

The quinquennial inspection was done at the beginning of October.

Richard Pratt
Chair

AGENDA ITEM 13

GROUP REPORTS - ABBEY GROUPS

a. Bellringers 2023

The bell ringers are responsible for ensuring the Abbey's fine ring of eight bells are rung for services, weddings and other occasions, and that the bells are rung and maintained to a high standard.

As well as ringing for regular services, weddings and funerals, ringing to celebrate the King and Queen's coronation at Westminster Abbey included general ringing by the whole band and a peal of 5-spliced Surprise Major, both on Coronation Day. We also rang the following day for the Civic Coronation Commemoration Service.

In July we ran a day of tower tours as part of the Romsey Festival.

In September we were awarded 2nd place in the Guild Inter-tower striking competition at St Michael's Basingstoke, missing first place by a mere 1%.

We rang carols on handbells at the Abbey Christmas Fair and a photograph of the group appeared in the Christmas edition of the Ringing World.

I thank the whole band for their continued support and dedication throughout the year. Because of this, our glorious bells continue to be heard across Romsey every week.

Alistair Brown
Tower Captain

b. Catering team 2023

In 2023, as in previous years, the Abbey Catering Team continued to cater monthly for Baptism preparation sessions and the increasingly popular Parish Tea and weekly, providing pastries for the Abbey Vine congregation. In addition, cakes have been provided for several joint Sunday morning services, including Easter and Harvest. Catering has also been provided for many other Parish functions including:- King's Coronation celebrations, Civic Remembrance service, meetings for Abbey Stewards and for Sidesmen, pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, Christian Aid Lent Lunch, Archdeacon's Visitation, Light in the Abbey, Ethelflaeda Festival, All Souls, Abbey Choir parties and wine bars at MIRA concerts.

Outside catering functions have included drinks for weddings, FRA strawberry tea, buffet for Mothers' Union, Golden Wedding, 60th Wedding Anniversary, funeral wakes and afternoon Tea for Crossways Travel party attending Nine Lessons & Carols.

Demand for catering was certainly high and £5,016 was added to Abbey funds from these catering events. The only restrictions on providing for even more outside catering events is the capacity of team members, so hopefully new team members will be found in 2024.

Sincere thanks to all the wonderful team of bakers and helpers without them these events just could not happen.

Liz Wagner

c. Children and Families' Worker

Interim Children and Families Worker (June 2023 to December 2023)

- Weekly Toddler group
- Twice weekly Singing Story Time sessions
- Abbey Vine children's activity each Sunday.
- Organising pop up events including the Summer Fun day and the Light in the Abbey event.

Permanent Children and Families Worker (December 2023 to Present)

- Weekly Toddler group which incorporates free play, themed craft and sensory play activities, and a themed singing story time section at the end.
- Weekly Singing Story Time which incorporates a welcome song and short story interspersed with action songs and Makaton signing. The session ends with a goodbye song with the parachute.

- Monthly Oasis group is a group for children who prefer a quieter play environment. A story is read and accompanied by a sound bath experience.
- Twice monthly Little Angels group. A Bible story is told through use of Godly Play. Craft activities consolidate learning. The session ends with circle time and a group prayer.
- Weekly bible stories in the Abbey crèche area. A children's Bible story is read. There is time for discussion and questions after the story as well as relevant colouring and activity sheets for children to complete in the crèche area or to take home with them.
- Weekly Abbey Vine children's craft activity to complement the sermon.
- Pop-up events. These have included the Christmas activity morning, the Toddlers Christmas party and the Easter activity morning.
- The Abbey Sunday school is due to start on 5th May. Each session will be based on the Bible reading for that week and will include discussion, crafts and activities.

Syrone Dore

d. Choir report 2023

It's been a busy year for the choirs singing the regular Sunday services and the fortnightly 6pm Thursday Choral Evensong. Extra events included the Coronation celebrations, joint concerts with the Romsey Singers, Michelmersh Silver Band alongside our regular contribution to the George's Trust concert, Carols in the marketplace, carols in Romsey Hospital and more. We also had a very successful tour to Lincoln Cathedral over the October half term, taking 26 choristers plus support staff and adult singers. Our first tour for many years helped to bond the group together. The choristers bought new hoodies with the chorister's logo on the back and some new cassocks were ordered and received as our numbers grow and different sizes were needed. Thank you to Juliette and her team for the help with this.

Several members of our training choir 'Quavers' moved up to the Junior Girls and although numbers have remained stable there is a definite need for more boys and senior girls. Our recruiting afternoon sadly didn't bring many of these to our attention although we did gain some more into the training choir, where we continue to build from the ground up. I have made stronger links with the local schools going in on a regular basis to help with this.

Judith Benton and Anna Ho have been helping as volunteers with the RSCM workbooks at our Monday and Tuesday rehearsals. Thanks to them for the continued support.

Martin Seymour
Director of Music

e. FORAM

With our new youth worker Rosy coming on board, it was a good opportunity to revitalise the Friends of Romsey Abbey Music group. This is a choir parents' body designed to help and support the social side of the choir and the parents too. Rosy and I have been working closely together. A chocolate making workshop, pancake races took place and other events in the pipeline were discussed at our inaugural January FORAM meeting. We intend to meet quarterly.

Martin Seymour
Director of Music

f. Head Verger's Report

Thank you for inviting me back as your Head Verger.

It's been great fun re-learning Romsey Abbey.

We've been able to start turning this ship, but still lots to do, and lots more fun and learning to do.

The team of assistant Vergers are amazing, having Brian Normington as my assistant you cannot ask for better. Thankyou Brian.

If you feel called to be a Verger please ask one of us for more information.

The Servers are a very hardworking team, often overlooked due to them doing their jobs right.

We do have a cross section with ages from 10 to 80.

We could always do we more please speak to Sarah Riley our amazing Head Server.

And yes we go and enjoy ourselves outside the Abbey with BBQs, Curry nights, visits to pubs etc

And yes we include all our servers and families and have fun!

Thankyou Servers for ALL YOU DO behind the scenes in the Abbey.

Chris Harpham
Head Verger

g. Home Groups

We meet on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday afternoons most months, usually in The Harrage or Love Lane.

In 2023 we studied different aspects of being fruitful Christians on our own frontlines from Monday to Saturday, then switched to study Peter and the letters he wrote to the churches in Turkey.

We welcomed several new members during the year.

Ian Clark

h. Journeying Together

The Journeying Together home group, has continued to meet on alternate weeks throughout the year. The group of 12-15 regular attendees meet at the Wisdom Centre, courtesy of The Daughters of Wisdom. The Revd Dr Mich Lejeunese has continued to oversee the group, ably supported by the leadership of Howard and Jan Green. During the year the group has completed several series that have supported positive discussion and developing faith. These have included using Paula Gooder's *'The Joy of the Gospel'* and a series on Creation Matters that has helped us to be more aware of God in Creation and a greater consciousness about our environment. This has continued to be supported by the email tips that Diane Kingston, who facilitated these sessions, has continued to circulate regularly. In addition Bryn Bridges also led us through a hot topic *'what does it mean to be human'*, challenging thought provoking sessions. In addition, the group hosted a Christmas social for all the home groups which not only included singing but also the sharing of puddings.

Jan Bartlett

j. Mothers' Union

The highlight of 2023 was the visit to Winchester Diocese of The Mothers' Union Worldwide President, Sheron Harper in August. Sheron, who lives in Guyana in South America is the first non

British President ever to be elected. She had never been to Winchester and particularly wanted to be at the graveside of our founder, Mary Sumner, on the anniversary of her death. Several of our members were able to be there for the ceremony when Sheron put flowers on the grave stone and to talk to her afterwards over coffee. Later that day, she came to Romsey and met more members over an evening buffet which was served beautifully by the Abbey catering team. She was particularly impressed that our member, Edna Webb, just a few days short of her 100th birthday, was there to greet her.

We continue to meet on the second Tuesday afternoon each month and welcome anyone one who would like to hear one of our speakers, join us for our Lent or Autumn service or come to our annual fund raising cream tea in June in aid of Mothers' Union projects in Africa.

Please contact Jane Horne if you would like to become a member.

Jane Horne

k. Net Carbon Zero

ANZC explores how to achieve the Church's NZC Objective.

In 2023 we continued to measure the temperature of the Abbey every half-hour, every day. We logged the energy consumption – which determines the CO2 emissions for each building. We monitored mainstream, church, and specialist media for developments in heating and lighting, and to see how other large old churches are progressing with technologies the Abbey needs (solar panels for electricity and heat pumps for heating).

We analysed the potential gains for the Church Rooms from replacing the gas heating by an air source heat pump, cavity filling walls, insulating ceiling/roof and installing double glazing.

The diocese and national church are seeking to expedite the transition to net zero with a program of grants for "NZC Demonstrator" projects: these cover professional and technical services (they pay) and specific NZC projects (we pay 50%, they pay 50%). The diocese has accepted our application for professional/technical advice on our more complex needs (e.g. solar panels on the Abbey roof), and funding for less expensive ones (cavity walls).

We continued to stress that the Abbey Enhancement Project and NZC are inseparable technically, managerially, and financially. NZC won't get funded without an Enhancement plan attractive enough to receive the funding for both.

Roger Rowe

m. Parish Lunch

We have had a profitable year in 2023, with 553 'eaters' in total, over the 12 months. Apart from the Christmas lunch, we charged £5.00 per head for the 2 course meal, with the option of tea or coffee afterwards. As the Christmas lunch includes extras (including wine) we charged £7.00 for that and have subsequently put the price for the general meal up to £6.00 per head. We have purchased this year a cutlery trolley, which is kept in the kitchen, and cost £251.98, and it does make laying the tables much easier.

Our total profit was £583.02, after paying for the trolley. Although the cooks claim their expenses, it's never the full amount, as smaller items just come from the larder!

We usually cover the expenses we claim and our reserves are currently just over £2,000. We are holding this so we can contribute specifically when the Church Rooms are improved.

Liz Holloway

n. Romsey Abbey C of E (Aided) Primary School

As a school we have been going from strength to strength over the past 12 months, bearing fruit in lots of areas of school life. We received a very encouraging SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) inspection report in November 2023 which highlighted lots of ways children flourish at our school thanks to our commitment to our Christian vision and values. The children's spiritual development, wellbeing and positive attitudes were among the strengths celebrated. We are now awaiting an Ofsted Inspection which is likely to happen in the Summer term.

The children achieved strong outcomes at the end of Year 6 in July and went up to secondary school confident and well equipped. We have also been encouraged by rising numbers on roll over the past 12 months with the school's Christian ethos and values being an important factor to many parents.

We were delighted to officially open our Psalm 23 Prayer and Reflection Garden in October 2023. Bishop Debbie Sellin came to lead the grand opening of a project that has very much been a community effort. Children, parents, staff and visitors alike now make regular use of this special place of peace on our school grounds.

Mark Harris
Headteacher

p. St. Swithun's & Romsey Abbey Women's Group

Numbers have remained fairly constant, and a few new members have joined us.

Social evenings continue to be popular with the last twelve months having included Skittles at Wellow, visits to two local gardens in June, the playing of an hilarious Quiz/Board game which tested our knowledge of "The Best of British," and the usual Summer Ploughman's Supper with entertainment provided by Emma & Neil Sharman.

Varied talks have also been well attended. In October we learned about the Dragonfly Project, which is committed to helping those affected by domestic abuse and violence. A film and talk about Solent Dolphin followed, this enterprise, manned entirely by volunteers, enabling disabled people to enjoy boat trips around local waters. This year we have enjoyed an evening with Sally Womersley, and a thought-provoking talk about how to have a "sustainable wardrobe", as well as the most recent meeting when Neil Gwynne came to tell us all about the Plaza.

Our contribution to the Christmas Fair was a "Guess the weight of a Christmas Cake".

Liz Sharman

q. Romsey Abbey Tour Guides

2023 was a busy year with 47 booked tours and a number of *ad hoc* tours given by the tour guides. In total, 937 visitors (523 adults, 339 Italian and Spanish students and 75+ local school children) were given booked tours. In addition, the Friends of Romsey Abbey hosted a 'Musical Historical Tour of Romsey Abbey' in August for 50+ people that raised in excess of £500 for Abbey funds. There was a panel of 9 regular volunteer guides who generously gave up their time to share their knowledge and enthusiasm for the Abbey.

Guided tours are not charged for as such, but a donation of £5 per adult to the general Abbey funds is suggested. For student groups (secondary school age) the suggested donation is £3 a head. In many cases it has been noticed that people make additional donations as well as purchasing items from the gift/book stalls.

From early summer 2024 we are planning on holding regular 'drop-in' tours every Wednesday lunchtime.

As well as income for the Abbey, the tours provide important outreach with many visitors saying they must return again and explore further.

Rob Gower

r. Youth Worker

On Sundays, a Youth Activity is offered during Abbey Vine worship each week. By growing relationships with the young people of the Abbey, I'm understanding the ways in which they see/experience God's presence. The young people were involved in intercessions for Easter Sunday and helped with the Easter Craft morning, ensuring a multigenerational approach.

Social events for choristers have included a Chocolate Workshop and Lent talk/Pancakes in February. Feedback has been very positive including: new friendships were made; sense of belonging increased; choristers loved the activities. Events will be offered each half term.

The weekly Christian youth group will start this summer. It will be fun and engaging, whilst offering a safe space to explore and deepen faith. The new logo will represent Being/Talking Christian whilst considering core GenZ values.

I'm nurturing strong relationships with local church-based youth workers and we are collaborating on projects to enable the young people of our churches to spend time together. These include a monthly youth band and a Christian summer youth day.

Plans are underway for the Deanery weekend away in September 2024. School outreach continues and strengthens with 'Faithology' at Mountbatten and the discovery of a Christian Union at the Romsey School.

Rosy Payne

ASSOCIATED ORGANISATIONS

1.Christian Aid 2023

As reported at last year's APCM, in November 2022, the local Christian Aid Committee ceased but during 2023, the Christian Aid representatives from the Romsey churches (Baptist, Methodist, URC and the Abbey) continued to liaise and co-ordinate some fund-raising activities.

Local activities have included Lent lunches, bucket collections and some sponsored events. In March 23 the Abbey's Lent Lunch raised £270 and the bucket/envelope collection during Christian Aid week in May raised (with Gift Aid) £1295. In addition, the Romsey PCC's Mission & Giving fund donated £1000.00 in December.

Sincere thanks go to those who continue to contribute and support to help **Christian Aid's vision of ending poverty & Injustice worldwide.**

Liz Wagner

2. George's Trust

George's Trust is very grateful for the support Romsey Abbey has given us over the past fifteen years and the close association that we have with the community here. Over the last year George's Trust has continued to raise funds to help with the latest refit project for the Teenager and Young Adult Cancer Unit of Southampton University Hospital.

After George died, we pledged over £100,000 to fund the dayroom within this ward, which we achieved, and it is now a pleasure to be back raising funds once again for this amazing ward. The whole project will cost £450,000 so we are hopeful of raising a good chunk of the money needed to help.

As well as these projects we help the young Choir Scholars within Romsey Abbey of which there were four members over the last year. We also have a small grant scheme to help young people in the area with all manner of projects as well as musical instruments, sports equipment, trips abroad, team building to name but a few.

Over the last year George's Trust has been part of many different events throughout the Community as well as in Winchester and the Victoria Country Park where we joined other Charities who help young people suffering from Cancer who are being treated in Southampton Hospital.

Jane O'Brien

3. Friends of Romsey Abbey

2023 was a successful year for the Friends. During the year we spent £17,388 on projects for the Abbey.

'The Friends raise money through subscriptions, donations and social events, to pay for projects that enhance the visitor attraction. Items included 20,000 Visitor Leaflets, Remedial work on the Alice Taylor Memorial, Children's Light party, Tourism South East Advertisement, Top Gown for the Verger, Contribution towards installing Nave Screens safely, Card payment for the shop, Repair of the chiming mechanism for the Abbey clock, Payment for the consultancy work on new exterior signage and a Contribution towards the operating costs of the Children and Families team'.

Our Friends Annual Dinner was held in October at the White Horse. Coffee mornings are held every other month in Romsey Town Hall which are extremely popular and well attended. We run the bottle stall at the Abbey Christmas Fair. A popular event is the annual boat trip on the River Thames. In 2023 we had a Churches Tour in the Avon Valley, a visit to Arundel Castle, Stourhead, Dorchester Abbey, wine tasting in Raimes Vineyard, Hinton Ampner and the Mill Theatre in Sonning.

Jill Hall
Chair

4. Music in Romsey Abbey

Music in Romsey Abbey is the team of volunteers that manages the administration, ticketing, front of house, box office, stage design and backstage activities for the evening concerts held in the Abbey.

We are delighted to welcome a wide variety of performers and audiences to the Abbey throughout the year. 2023 was a busy Romsey Festival year, giving us 23 events to run – four more

than in 2022. Audiences were up by 10% on average, with over five thousand tickets purchased during the year.

Overall, the concerts raised roughly £24k in fees and donations, compared to £16.5k in the previous year, with £1.5k coming from cushion donations alone, which is quite an achievement in itself!

Alongside many regular performers such as Romsey Singers, Southampton Concert Orchestra and Romsey Youth Choirs, it was a pleasure to host the Band of His Majesty's Royal Marines Collingwood for their fantastic concert in February, and we were thrilled that they have returned again this year. We also welcomed the cast of RAODS for the first time, who performed numbers from their Madness musical as part of the Mayor's Charity Concert, and the Abbey choristers thoroughly enjoyed taking part in a concert with Michelmersh Silver Band later in the year.

We have hosted six excellent events already in 2024 and are looking forward to many more thrilling concerts throughout the year.

We are very grateful to our volunteers for enabling these concerts to take place. If you are interested in being involved in concert management in any way, please get in touch with our concert administrator, Chris Green.

Chris Green

5. Triangulate – raising awareness of positive mental health in the workplace and community

Our stand near the South Door is kept stocked with current information which is freely available to anyone. The stand remains in a prominent position so that those coming to the Abbey can see it easily. More leaflets have been taken this year than in any previous year.

The PCC again supported Triangulate, as one of their partner charities, with a financial contribution which is used to buy resources for the stand.

This year's Mental Health Sunday, our 16th, was our last regular annual service, although the topics of wellbeing and mental health will continue to be covered throughout the year. We spoke at both morning services about the background to our work and how everyone can play their part.

Romsey Abbey has signed up again as a charter signatory of Mindful Employer and also continues the provision of Mindful Employer Plus, the 24/7 helpline for staff and volunteers.

Bridget Brook