

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

**The Annual Vestry Meeting for the Election of Churchwardens and the
Annual Parochial Church Meeting will be held in Romsey Abbey on
Sunday 18th May 2025 at 11.45 a.m.**

AGENDA

- 1) Opening prayers
- 2) Apologies for Absence

VESTRY MEETING

- 3) Minutes of the Vestry Meeting held on 26 May 2024 (*draft minutes are below*)
- 4) Election of Churchwardens

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

- 5) Minutes of the APCM held on 26 May 2024 (*draft minutes are below*)
- 6) Election to Deanery Synod – 3 members for election for 2 years
- 7) Election of 5 members to the Parochial Church Council for three years
- 8) Report from the Electoral Roll Officer **2025 page 8**
- 9) Election of the Electoral Roll Officer
- 10) Parish Reports – PCC Committees **2024 Pages 9-14**
 - a) Deanery Synod
 - b) Discipleship
 - c) Fabric Committee
 - d) Financial Resources Committee
 - e) Health and Safety Committee
 - f) Magazine Committee
 - g) Mission & Giving Committee
 - h) Safeguarding
 - j) St. Swithun's Committee
- 11) Annual Report and Accounts of the Parochial Church Council for the year ended 31st December 2024
- 12) Election of Auditor
- 13) Group Reports **2023 Pages 15 - 23**

Abbey groups

 - a. Bellringers
 - b. Catering Team
 - c. Children and Families Worker Report
 - d. Choir
 - e. FORAC
 - f. Head Verger
 - g. Home Groups
 - h. Journeying Together
 - j. Listening Cafe
 - k. Mothers' Union

- m. Net Carbon Zero
- n. Parish Lunch
- p. Pastoral Team
- q. Romsey Abbey C of E (Aided) School
- r. St Swithun's and Abbey Women's Group
- s. Tour Guides
- t. Youth Worker

Associated organisations **2023 Pages 23 - 25**

- 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 26 May 2024

Chairman: The Revd. Thomas Wharton

The Vicar opened the meeting with prayer.

Copies of the Vestry Meeting minutes of 21 May 2023 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.

The Vicar introduced the election of churchwardens.

It is the custom in our parish for churchwardens to serve for four years. Ms Julie Carlton had served four years. Her term as Churchwarden will be at an end at the Archdeacon's Visitation on 13th June.

Mr David Auger had served for two years and was willing to serve for a further year. He was **proposed by Mrs Jane O'Brien** and **seconded by Mrs Jan Bartlett**.

Mrs Janice Bartlett was **proposed by Mr Ian Clark** and **seconded by Mrs Eija Matthewson**.

There being no other nominations, the Vicar declared Mr Auger and Mrs Bartlett 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 18 May 2025

AGENDA ITEM 5

MINUTES OF THE APCM HELD ON 26 MAY 2024

1. OPENING PRAYERS

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

2. APOLOGIES

There were 89 present and 16 apologies.

Apologies received – Pam and Roger Leech, Howard and Jan Green, Patricia Brown, Andrew and Rosemary Doughty, Carol Lamb, Liz and David Sharman, Chris and Susan Pritchard, Dorothy Stokes, Sarah Hargreaves and Karen Clewer.

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

5. MINUTES FROM 2024 APCM

The Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on Wednesday 26 May 2024 (pages 3-8) were taken as read and agreed unanimously. The Chairman signed the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

6. DEANERY SYNOD ELECTIONS

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.

In 2023, Elizabeth Wagner, Adrienne Mordan and Diane Kingston were elected for three years. Julie Carlton as Churchwarden also attends Deanery Synod ex officio. Diane Kingston has stood down.

Anthony Cross was also attending ex officio, as an elected member of the Diocesan Synod; however he is now training for ordination and therefore no longer a lay member.

This leaves four vacancies for lay representatives of this parish on Deanery Synod for the remaining two years of the triennium.

One nomination had been received: Julie Carlton was proposed by Mr David Auger and seconded by Mrs Jan Bartlett. Elected.

7. ELECTIONS TO THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

The PCC may include up to 15 elected members who serve for 3 years. There were 6 vacancies, 5 for three years, and 1 for one year.

The following nominations were received.

David Johnson – proposed by Louise Newman and seconded by Pamela Leech - standing for re-election

Diane Hargreaves – proposed by David Johnson and seconded by Pamela Leech – standing for re-election

Martin Seymour – proposed by David Auger and seconded by Tim Edmonds - standing for re-election

In addition, the following nominations were received for new members-

Rick Beton (co-opted in 2023) - proposed by Tim Edmonds and seconded by David Auger, For one year.

Christopher Harpham - proposed by Patricia Brown and seconded by Pamela Leech.

Sarah Riley - proposed by Pamela Leech and seconded by Glynne Beasley

The Vicar proposed, and it was agreed, that these nominees be elected *en bloc*. All voted in favour of the six candidates. Rick Beton volunteered to serve a one-year term. The remaining candidates were elected for three years.

The Vicar thanked all candidates for their time and dedication to the work of the parish.

8. REPORT OF THE ELECTORAL ROLL OFFICER

Jane Russell reported that the review of the electoral roll (ER) 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.

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 Rhys Lewis and Mrs Adrienne Mordan. All voted in favour. The Vicar gave a vote of thanks to Jane Russell for her work as Electoral Roll officer.

10. PARISH REPORTS

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

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

Jane Arden commented on the reduced number of reports but acknowledged the huge amount of work done by the PCC Committees. She proposed that all committee reports should in future include the names of members of committees (with their agreement), not just the chairperson. Nigel Herriott confirmed that there is no data protection issue in relation to this.

The motion was proposed by Jane Arden and seconded by Nigel Herriott.

The Revd. Sally Womersley reported that the pastoral team has not been constituted as a committee since COVID. There are 13-14 members. Information will be on the Pastoral Notice Board soon.

Committee reports were adopted.

11. ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023

Tim Rogerson, PCC Treasurer, presented the audited accounts for 2023 which had been available in the Abbey and St Swithun's for two weeks and also on the Romsey Abbey Website under "About us".

Mr Rogerson reported that, in contrast to a predicted deficit budget for 2023, the accounts show a surplus for the year of £20k on the general fund. This was because of a generous donation from the Quilters' Exhibition and generally higher visitor figures and donations as part of the Romsey Arts Festival in July 2023, and because there had been staff vacancies for part of the year.

A question had been received about whether any of the parish's investments of £5.4m could be used. Mr Rogerson explained that most of the investments can't be used but were left specifically to be invested in a named fund for use of general purposes of PCC. This produces £80k per year income.

Prebendary Peter Speck pointed out that the statutory wording for the Church's mission (quoted in the 1st paragraph of the report) should be "*pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical*".

There were no other questions from the floor.

12. ELECTION OF AUDITOR

Knight Goodhead were **proposed by Liz Wagner and seconded by Ian Clark. All voted in favour.**

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

Abbey Groups

The following reports had been circulated and were taken as read:

- a. Bellringers
- b. Catering Team
- c. Children and Families Worker
- d. Choir
- e. FORAM
- f. Head Verger
- g. Home Groups
- h. Journeying Together
- i. Mothers' Union
- j. Net Zero Carbon Group
- k. Parish Lunch
- l. Romsey Abbey School
- m. St Swithun's and Abbey Women's Group
- n. Tour Guides
- o. Youth Worker

Associated group reports

- Christian Aid
- George's Trust
- Friends of Romsey Abbey
- Triangulate

All reports were taken as read and accepted by the meeting

14. VICAR'S REPORT

The Vicar said that it was a sign of a healthy organisation, including churches, that there were many people coming and then moving on as they developed and moved to new roles. Over the last year, there had been a number of changes in the Ministry Team; Christopher Harpham had arrived as Head Verger, following the departure of Robyn Cleveland; Rhiannon Wilmott, formerly our Children and Families Worker, had been ordained and moved to St Paul's Winchester, and had been replaced by Syrone Dore and Rosy Payne. Our Associate Curate, the Revd. Lee Thompson, had taken up post as Vicar of Lymington, and in the Parish Office, Stef Wilmott had left and Jane O'Brien had joined the team. Among our volunteers, Sarah Riley had been appointed as Safeguarding Officer. And we were looking forward to welcoming Yin Yin as our new Curate, with her husband Colin, at the beginning of July. The Vicar had attended a training day with Yin Yin at St Mellitus College.

Trinity Sunday reminds us that God's relationship with us is overflowing and giving – not just for ourselves but to share God's love with others. Our welcome to visitors and the community is part of our benedictine heritage, including the welcome of our stewards and led by Chris Harpham and Verger team. And our life flows into the civic life of the town – through civic services, our bellringers and our cultural contribution to the town through concerts and exhibitions.

The Vicar said he was proud of the role our Mission and Giving Group plays in ensuring that we continue to give to the wider world, giving up to 10 % of PCC income and building our relationships with those we support, including his own visit to Burundi in summer 2023. The Vicar encouraged anyone with a heart for mission to join the Mission and Giving Group.

We need to respond to our changing society; since the COVID pandemic, attention is drawn in different directions and we have to find imaginative ways of engaging, laying foundations to produce fruit in the long run. Our new Children and Families and Youth Workers are making a good start with new groups and activities.

As custodians of the Abbey we are also exploring the future of the building. Our Statement of Needs spelled out the priorities of protecting our heritage and enhancing facilities. The June PCC meeting will be dedicated to looking at options for taking this forward, with our architect. The aim is to get to the point to share with the wider church and town and permission bodies. We will need a lot of prayer.

Finally, the Vicar thanked Julie Carlton at the end of her four-year term as Churchwarden.

15. QUESTION TIME

Dorothy Stokes (not present) had submitted a question about whether the Christmas collection shouldn't be given away. The Vicar explained that the parish is committed to sharing and we plan our giving through the Mission and Giving Group as described above – educating ourselves as well as giving money.

We also support a number of families, usually nominated by the Abbey Primary School, through our Hardship fund, and hold occasional bucket collections in aid of emergency appeals. The proceeds of our Christingle and Crib service are split between the Children's Society and the Abbey

Mrs Elizabeth Wagner proposed that the Mission and Giving Group should discuss the proposal and report back next year or via Open Door. This was agreed.

Beth Auger thanked the Verger Team for all their hard work and particularly for their support of her son Thomas as was training to support the Verger.

Lucy Lewis thanked Julie Carlton for organising the Chaperone Rota and the Romsey Abbey Technical Support team for all their hard work during services and concerts. Eve Wheen thanked the flower arrangers for their beautiful arrangements.

The Head Verger proposed that Brian Normington be nominated for a Royal Maundy Money award, in recognition of his 32 years supporting the Abbey. It was agreed to explore how this could be done.

Neill Beasley said that he was pleased to hear progress was being made and was looking forward to discussing with the architect at the forthcoming PCC meeting. He asked who had drawn up the brief for the current designs. The Vicar explained that a group of Abbey representatives had discussed with the architect what areas should be considered, PCC had commented on the concept drawings and Standing Committee has since met the architect to discuss. This was an evolving process.

Nigel Herriott asked what surveys had been undertaken with the town. This would be needed when we apply for grant funding. The Vicar responded that his role was to lead the church to

discern and articulate what we really need to serve the community. Once we have formulated our vision, we will need to involve professionals but it's for us to say what we need first and to be able to justify that.

John Gould reminded the meeting that we will need a dedicated body to take the work forward and a long term view for on which to base bids for funding.

Glynne Beasley asked how we could recruit more younger people to help existing ageing volunteers. The Vicar said we all have a role to play. We will draw people in by forming friendships and connections.

David Auger, Churchwarden, gave a vote of thanks to the Vicar for his spiritual leadership and hard work which was warmly endorsed.

The meeting closed at 12.45

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 Grace.

AGENDA ITEM 8

REPORT OF THE ELECTORAL ROLL OFFICER 2025

This year, as happens every six years, we were required by the Church of England to compile a new Electoral Roll. The time period allocated for people to apply was 18th February to 18th April. Applications could be made either online (links were posted in the weekly bulletin as well as a specific email sent out to all those who subscribe to the bulletin) or by paper copy. The new Electoral Roll (names only) was made available for view in both the Abbey and at St Swithun's between 1st May and 15th May.

Notice of the requirement to compile a new Electoral Roll was made in the February edition of Open Door and weekly on the parish weekly bulletin and on the screens in the Abbey prior to the 9.30 Eucharist. The Electoral Roll Officer also addressed the Romsey Abbey Congregation at both the 9.30 Eucharist and at Abbey Vine on two occasions during the allocated period.

As of 18th April 2025, the number on the new Electoral Roll stands at 418 of which 258 (62%) are female and 160 (38%) are male. Of the 418, 66 (16%) are applications from people not previously on the Electoral Roll. Of the 418, 46 (11%) are applications from people outside of the Parish but who worship regularly at either the Abbey or at St Swithun's. Of the 418 applications, 86 (21%) were made by paper and of these 31(7%) did not provide an email. 79% of all applications were made online. Moving forward, we need to increase the number of online applications.

At the time of the APCM in May 2024, the number on the Electoral Roll was 469. Of these, 117 (25%) did not reapply. Some are now sadly deceased, some have not reapplied for medical reasons, some have moved out of the Parish, and for some well... Everyone who had not reapplied by 10th April received either an email, a phone call or a visit.

The full ER will be shared with Church Desk so that the database can be updated accordingly to reflect the changes including those who chose not to share an email.

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.

Jane Russell (Electoral Roll Officer)

AGENDA ITEM 10

PARISH REPORTS – PCC COMMITTEES 2024

a. Deanery Synod

Romsey Deanery Synod members: Julie Carlton, Adrienne Mordan, Liz Wagner

The June meeting was held at Mottisfont and the presentation was made by the Christians Against Poverty Debt Centre Manager Debs Niblett. This was a very informative talk explaining how their work has grown from a starting in a bedroom in 1966 to over 266 Debt Centres, with over 800 Churches linked, with Jesus being at the heart of everything they do and always offer prayer if wanted.

Moments of celebration was also on the agenda with the synod hearing about the Youth, Schools and Children's work for the deanery. The Revd. Tom Benson asked the synod to think what is positive about the church as there is always hope from a Christian point of view. After discussion it was felt that the church can be a social hub, not only in church but elsewhere in the community.

The main discussion for the October meeting was a presentation from the Diocesan Stewardship Advisor with the title "More than Money: The Holistic Approach to giving as Christians." The subjects included: A Short Theology of Generosity, About the Common Mission Fund (this included a video from Bishop Philip Mountstephen), Survey of Parish Officers, Current Resources and Resources in Development. It was hoped that this would give a much clearer insight to the working of the Common Mission Fund.

Pastoral Update:

Revd. Yin Yin Bull has been appointed as Curate at Romsey Abbey

Revd. Joe Sweetnam has been appointed Rector at the Mid Test Benefice

Kings Somborne is now in vacancy with recruitment now in hand.

Christine Brazier

Deanery Synod Secretary

b. Discipleship

Members: Revd. Sally Womersley (chair), Rosy Payne, Barbara and Ian Keys, Barbie Evans, Katie Clark, Revd. Thomas Wharton, Lucy Rocque, Eve Wheen, Lucy Lewis, Jan Bartlett

The Discipleship Group met on five occasions in 2024.

This year, our first meeting was held on the 25th March. At this meeting we clarified our terms of reference as follows:

Discipleship Group Terms of Reference

Thomas introduced discussion around Terms of Reference for the Discipleship Group. It is important to clarify the remit of the Discipleship group to be clear how this group can support the wider ministry and mission of the Abbey and St. Swithun's.

Terms of Reference

The main purpose of the Discipleship group is to support the ministry of Romsey Abbey and St. Swithun's by enabling individuals and our whole church community to encounter the love of God in Jesus Christ and to encourage discipleship, fellowship and the development of gifts.

Areas in which the Discipleship group can offer support:

- to support the provision of Homegroups, shared learning and fellowship
- to encourage and deepen prayer in our shared life and mission
- to support faith and fellowship opportunities led by our Children & Families worker, Youth worker and Director of Music
- to support the running of Baptism, Confirmation, and faith exploration courses
- to support the Ministry team with the running of seasonal and themed courses
- to support the Abbey's ministry to the wider town and visitors, enabling opportunities of encountering Jesus Christ
- to support mission opportunities to the wider town with Churches Together

We also changed the frequency of meetings – Discipleship Group will now meet once a quarter, every 3 months.

Revd Sally Womersley
Associate Priest (chair)

c. Fabric Committee

Members: David Auger, Jan Bartlett, Glynne Beasley, Patricia Brown, Diane Hargreaves, Chris Harpham, David Johnson, Pam Leech (chair), Richard Pratt, Revd. Thomas Wharton

The Fabric Committee continues to meet monthly, with the exception of August and December. The Abbey Quinquennial architect, Louise Salman has moved architectural practice and is now working with her husband's Practice Loop Architects in Salisbury. As the position of inspecting architect is awarded to a person and not a practice, the PCC was content to approve this move.

We continue to ensure that all safety equipment has annual inspections.

A Faculty from the DAC has been applied for to erect a statue of the Late Queen Elizabeth II on the North Churchyard. The DAC returned various queries which TVBC and the sculptor have been able to answer and we are now awaiting a decision on the Faculty application. This has now also gone out to consultation with statutory bodies.

Salisbury Cathedral Glass have been able to complete the refurbishment of two of the Tower windows and we are awaiting a quote from them for the remaining windows to ensure that water ingress is controlled.

The architect is currently drawing up a specification for works to the Tower roof, replacement of the flagpole which is rotting, replacement of various areas of old bitumen in the high gutters and the replacement of the louvres on the Octagon on the weather-side are all included in this project.

The effigy of Alice Taylor at the north-west side of the Abbey remains elevated. Peter Martindale, conservator, would like to see Alice remain elevated for a further 6 – 12 months. The base of the effigy is drying out and he feels facilitating further drying would be of benefit.

The glass on the existing cope display case has been coated with a Opalux solar control film Specialist UV Control . This will control the amount of UV reaching the cope and will provide security from the plate glass of the display. This has enabled us to remove the ageing curtain that has protected the cope for many years enhancing the presentation of the Nightingale Window above.

Although there has been no progress with the larger scheme of the Abbey Enhancement Project we have successfully procured the services of environmental conservationist Tobit Curteis. He has undertaken a survey of the environmental influences on the Romsey Rood that hopefully will enable us to move forward with a solution to the increasing deterioration of this almost unique monument

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.

The sinking ledger stone in St. Nicholas chapel has continued to move and push up surrounding flooring. The architect has prepared a specification for re-laying the floor in this area and replacing the ledger stone – which will almost certainly shatter upon lifting – with two smaller slabs of Purbeck stone.

We have still been working on replacing the external signage around the Abbey to modernise this and bring the content up to date, hopefully we will see the conclusion of this project in the near future.

We have taken advice from a conservator about the condition and refurbishment of the Henrican Bill of Sale. This is showing some signs of damp. However, following the fire at King John's House we wish to re-open negotiations with the Hampshire Record Office to see if they will make us a facsimile for display if we were to then deposit the original with them.

The PCC voted at its January meeting to accept an 'in principle' quotation for the refurbishment of the Abbey Clock. This is deteriorating with a considerable amount of metal fatigue. The refurb price, excluding scaffolding and crane hire, is £48K and we would hope that the Appeal Trustees will look positively on this project. We have already been awarded a donation of £5K and intend to set up a community fundraising initiative.

The Fabric Committee worked with TVBC Environmental Dept. to allow the wildflower seeding of the North Churchyard. This led to an amazing display of summer wildflowers which was exceedingly well visited. We are looking forward to the 2025 display!

General maintenance to ensure that the Abbey is safe is ongoing and ably supported by our Head Verger Chris Harpham. We use a variety of workmen to carry out low level maintenance tasks but finding people willing to do the work is always a challenge.

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

Pam Leech

Chair

d. Financial Resource Committee

Members: Liz Wagner (chair), Tim Rogerson (Treasurer) , Jan Bartlett, Revd. Thomas Wharton, Julie Carlton, Ian Clark, Stephen Alger, Patricia Brown

FRC met five times in 2024 and reviewed Business Continuity Plans, Financial Procedures & Policies, Risk Register and Succession Plan along with the Abbey insurance policies. In addition, members of the team reviewed and updated the PCC's existing data protection policies and procedures and wrote several additional ones. These policies were agreed by PCC in November and with these in place has enabled the PCC to take out cyber security insurance as further protection. Gift Aid and VAT, via the LPW Scheme, were reclaimed.

Regular givers (mainly PGS), Visitors, MIRA concerts, Christmas Fair and Catering events were major income streams. In 2024 income from contactless donation points totalled £21,078.93 (£17,856 in 2023). An income of £11,210.69 was gained from the contactless payment point which in the Gift Shop for use when the shop is unstaffed. The small contactless donation device by the candle stand has raised £1877.93 this year, mainly with £1 donations.

Energy costs are not as high as in previous years but efforts continue to reduce usage and costs 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

e. Health & Safety Committee

Members: Julie Carlton, Liz Wagner, Paul Quinnet, Sarah Riley, Christopher Harpham, Jan Bartlett

The Health and Safety Committee keeps under review H&S policies and procedures for the Abbey and St Swithun's and carries out regular inspections of the Abbey and grounds.

The Committee met three times in 2024. Twelve staff and volunteers attended Emergency First Aid at Work and Paediatric Emergency First Aid at Work training held in the Church Rooms in May. Sidesmen were given refresher evacuation training at their meeting in February. Online training, on a range of topics including display screen safety, food hygiene, working from height and manual handling, is completed by staff and volunteers according to the needs of their role within the Abbey and St Swithun's.

The Committee has welcomed the Head Verger and Safeguarding Officer as members. This has improved our links with the Fabric Committee and ensures a joined-up approach between

safeguarding and health and safety requirements. We reviewed our H&S policy and risk assessments to ensure that they reflect the requirement for hirers' compliance with H&S and safeguarding requirements.

The Committee would welcome new members who have an interest in health and safety and staff wellbeing. Please contact Julie Carlton (H&S Chairman) if interested.

Julie Carlton

f. Magazine Committee

Members: Rowland Davies (Chair), Tim Edmonds Content Editor, Biddy Massey Distribution Manager, Jane Russell Deputy Distribution Manager

In contrast to previous years no major problems were encountered in the production and distribution of *Open Door* during 2024. Not only that – we were able to hold the cover price of £2.00 per copy for 2025 together with a discounted subscriber rate of £20 for 12 issues.

There was a small loss of subscribers (6 deaths, 3 gone away, 3 lost sight and 8 cancellations for various reasons) but these were partially offset by gaining 7 new subscribers. It goes without saying that the Magazine Committee would wish to recruit more new subscribers and is considering how best to increase awareness of the magazine among the congregation and, perhaps, the people of Romsey who do not attend the Abbey.

As ever we very grateful to contributors to the magazine, both those reporting on regular events and those who write series of articles on a particular topic. We would also like to thank Philip Clewer for the high quality photos he regularly sends us.

The Committee is pleased to announce that a contribution of £1, 500 was made to Abbey funds from the proceeds of 2024 magazine sales, an increase of £500 on the preceding year.

Rowland Davies
Committee Chair

g. Mission Giving Group

Members: Ian Clark, Revd. Thomas Wharton, Revd. Yin Yin Bull (from Sep 24, Jane Horne, Jane Arden (until Dec 24, Richard Peace, Beth Auger (from Oct 24, Julie Carlton (from Oct 24)

In 2024 we organised the distribution of £20,000 allocated by the PCC for local charities and mission partners. Following the guidance of General Synod, this represents nearly 10% of the parish's voluntary income. We supported 21 agencies through the year, splitting our support equally between home and overseas charities, and also 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 gifts were to Romsey Foodbank and the USPG mission agency.

Parish members also support their favourite charities, including local groups for The Mothers' Union, The Children's Society, Christian Aid and Triangulate.

If you would be interested in helping us oversee the PCC's generosity, please contact Ian Clark southwick@eml.cc 07999 494372

Ian Clark

h. Safeguarding Report

Safeguarding within the Church of England has definitely come to the fore in the past year. As we have all heard, reports from historic safeguarding cases have made national news and social media, resulting in the resignation of Justin Welby, and a long list of others that were involved. This has resulted with my role as Parish Safeguarding Officer having a lot more guidelines to follow and questions that were put to our PCC to consider and answer.

We held a group face to face training on safeguarding in November, which was attended by 25 of our volunteers. The training was run by the Diocese Safeguarding team and everybody said what a worthwhile training it was. I will try to organise another one either later this year or early next. All the trainings are valid for a three-year period, so please enquire if you think yours is coming to an end.

I continue to work alongside Rosy and Syrone, our Youth and Families workers, as well as our other groups, to ensure all our groups and activities are fully safeguarded. I would like to thank them for all their support and keeping me in the loop! Pam Leech and myself are now both DBS verifiers and work to keep those eligible for a DBS in their role, up to date. My thanks also to Pam for all her support.

Safeguarding in Romsey Abbey is everyone's responsibility. Our awareness and raising concerns fall to each and every one of us, clergy, staff and volunteers. If anyone has any concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

My thanks to Thomas, Jan, and David for all their support.

Sarah Riley

Parish Safeguarding Officer

Safeguarding@romseyabbey.org.uk

Mobile 07986662503

j. St. Swithun's Committee

Members: Richard Pratt (Chairman), Elizabeth Pratt (Secretary), David Bartam, Catherine Bartram, David Bibby, Irene Bray, Sandra Drake, Val Lines, Jenny Scovell.

The average Sunday attendance at St Swithun's church over the year was 27 (24 in 2023. 40 attended on Easter Sunday (30 in 2023), and 32 on Christmas Day (35 in 2023). 56 people attended the Carol service on the 22nd December. There were 2 funerals.

St Swithun's hosted Singing Story Time, Little Angels and Oasis, all led by Syrone Dore.

As reported in the 2023 report, the heating system broke down. It was repaired and a new heating timer installed in February 2024. Of the members of St Swithun's Committee Richard and Catherine are also communion assistants helped as needed by David Bibby. Sandra organizes flowers. Jenny organizes readers and David Bartam organizes sides-people. Irene organizes coffee for the Morning Worship service on the first Sunday of each month.

Elizabeth organizes organists, which has become a very difficult task. Several people have helped occasionally but we need one or two more organists who can play regularly or even occasionally.

Richard Pratt

AGENDA ITEM 13

GROUP REPORTS - ABBEY GROUPS

a. Bellringers 2024

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.

In 2024 we rang for all Sunday morning services, most Sunday Evensong services, thirteen weddings, two funerals and a thanksgiving service for Sir Peter Gregson, a former Churchwarden of Romsey Abbey (1991–95) and instrumental in the early stages of the project to rehang the Abbey bells. A quarter peal was rung in memory of Alan Price, former Tower Captain, Secretary and Treasurer of Romsey Abbey Bellringers.

In 2023 the ringing team at Romsey Abbey lost one of its most loyal members, Joy Scanlan. Brian Woodruffe organised a fundraising ringing event on 20th July in her memory to draw attention to the need to support Cancer Research. A total of £1,573.18 was collected was donated to Cancer Research.

We entered two teams into the Winchester District 6-bell striking competition at Houghton and were awarded 1st place in the method competition and 2nd place in the call change competition.

In September our annual tower outing took us to the Wiltshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire borders.

We rang carols on handbells at the Abbey Christmas Fair and we also rang in the New Year and were joined by the Vicar Thomas Wharton (and family) and also the Mayor of Romsey, John Parker.

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

In 2024, 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. Homemade cakes/biscuits have also been provided for several joint Sunday morning services, including Easter and Harvest. Catering has also been provided for many other Parish functions including: meetings for Abbey Stewards/ flower arrangers/ Gift Shop volunteers and for Sidesmen, pancakes on Shrove Tuesday for the boys and girls choirs, Christian Aid Lent Lunch, Pentecost Pizza for the choirs, Archdeacon's Visitation, Beggars Fair, Light in the Abbey, Heritage Craft Day, All Souls, tea for the choirs before Evensong and wine bars at MIRA concerts.

Outside catering functions have included drinks for weddings, FRA afternoon tea, Baptism Lunch, Parish Picnic, coffee for tours, afternoon Tea for Crossways Travel party attending Nine Lessons & Carols.

Demand for catering was certainly high and £5,760 was added to Abbey funds from these catering events. These events just could not happen without the loyal support of the wonderful band of volunteer bakers and helpers. Our sincere thanks goes to these volunteers for maintaining the Abbey's strong Benedictine tradition of hospitality and welcome. We look forward to welcoming new members to the team in 2025 to increase the capacity to do more events.

Liz Wagner

c. Children and Families' Worker

Toddler Group

A weekly session held in the Church Rooms. Each session runs for 1.5 hours and offers free play, crafts and activities, and circle time where we have storytelling and songs. Refreshments and snacks are available to families throughout the session. We currently have approximately 20 families attending each week. Child ages range from newborn to 5 years.

Singing Story Time

A weekly session held at St Swithun's Church. Each session runs for 1 hour. The session starts with circle time where children are individually welcomed with a song. A new book is selected each term, to which we sing and sign (Makaton). The session ends with a parachute song and a goodbye song, followed by refreshments for adults and a snack for the children. We currently have approximately 6 families attending each week. Child ages range from newborn to 3 years.

Little Angels Group

A monthly Bible-focussed group, held at St Swithun's Church, for children aged 3 to 10 years. Each session explores a different Bible story or theme using Godly play, which is a Montessori style of telling Bible stories and parables using simple, natural materials. After the story, children can participate in the themed craft activities or use the story telling materials to re-tell the story themselves. Each session ends with a short time of prayer. We currently have approximately 3 families attending each month.

Seekers

Seekers is Romsey Abbey's Sunday school, which takes place during the 9.30 service each Sunday morning. Children follow the Sunday School Banner during the processional hymn and are then taken over to the Church Rooms. Each session starts with a short, interactive children's 'sermon', followed by a prayer and then activities or games to help consolidate learning. Children are taken back into the abbey just before communion and have the opportunity, at the end of the service, to show the congregation the craft activity they have completed, if they wish to do so.

Abbey Vine children's activity

Children are provided with a craft activity to complete during the 11.15 Abbey Vine Service. The activity is designed to consolidate learning from the morning's theme or reading. Children then have the opportunity to feed back to the congregation, if they wish to do so. Colouring sheets and toys are provided for very young children.

Messy Church Goes Wild

A quarterly all age event that encourages exploration of the natural world and connecting with God outside the traditional church setting, with a focus on good stewardship of God's creation. Sessions aim to inspire awe and wonder in the natural world encouraging participants to connect with God through nature. Each session has a different theme but follows the same pattern. Each

session starts with a welcome and introduction to the days theme. This is followed by themed activities, after which, the participants are then gathered for the 'celebration' which involves interactive storytelling, discussion and prayers. The event culminates in a 'Feast', which offers participants an opportunity to connect, build relationship and discuss what they have learned during the session.

Pop-up events

Children's pop-up events occur throughout the year. We currently organise events for children attending Quavers, families attending Children and Families groups, and also children's events for the public. Examples of current pop-up events Quavers Easter egg hunt, Quavers Abbey tour, Summer Family Funday, Light in the Abbey and Toddler's Christmas Party.

Syrone Dore

d. Choir

The Choirs have continued to help lead the worship of the regular and extra services throughout the year. The regular services include the two Sunday services and the fortnightly Thursday Choral Evensong at 6pm.

Outside commitments in the community have included singing at the founding of Mottisfont Augustinian Priory celebrations and also later in the year, Christmas Carols as a fundraiser for us, as well as the Romsey Lantern Parade, George's Trust Concert and Romsey Hospital on Christmas Eve. Choristers also travelled to sing Choral Evensong with Chichester Cathedral Choir in their church and a return visit is hoped for at some point.

The choristers also performed a Sunday afternoon concert in July where their individual talents on instruments and voice were applauded. There was also a 'try the organ afternoon' as part of the Royal College of Organists initiative and a number of choristers took part.

Our training choir Quavers has continued to flourish and is feeding the main choirs although there is still much work to do in engaging non-church families. Judith Beton and Anna Ho have continued to voluntary work with choristers in the RSCM Voice for Life workbook series and continued thanks goes to them for this as well as to the parents and by no means least our excellent accompanist and deputy Director of Music, Richard McVeigh.

Martin Seymour

Director of Music

e. FORAC

Friends of Romsey Abbey Choirs have met on a regular basis throughout the year. The name has been changed back to reflect the true nature of its existence and a fresh set of terms of reference were drawn up and sent to the PCC. The overall aims are to help and encourage choristers' music development and experience (Education), fellowship and teamwork (Social), and encouraging young people to look outwards, establish local links and raising awareness (Community). Rosy Payne has been part of the team along with the parents so that there is joined up thinking and actions across these areas. Music workshops have been organised (notably with the scholars of King's College Cambridge and also Alice Wratten), social events including laser tag, the pantomime and taking part in the lantern parade along with singing at Romsey Hospital at Christmas. Further events are planned for the next twelve months for choristers and parents too.

Martin Seymour

Director of Music

f. Head Verger's Report

The number of Vergers now up to 5, and we attend ALL services and events in the Abbey.

The team open and close the Abbey 7 days a week.

The team went to Chichester Cathedral to see how the dept works and stayed for Evensong

We enjoyed a curry night and the Servers / vergers BBQ a massive thankyou to Chris and Sarah Riley for hosting it.

We hosted the 1st drinks party at Folly House Garden (thankyou to Pete and Trish McVean).

We are most busy training on Saturday afternoons while we set up for Sundays

Again thankyou to the team for all your hard work over the year .

Chris Harpham

Head Verger

g. Clark's Home Group

We usually meet on the first and third Tuesday afternoon of most months in either Love Lane or The Harrage. In 2024 we studied some of the Psalms, looked at the "Extraordinary" video series from LICC focussed on stories of different Bible characters, and followed a series on the Nicene Creed. We welcomed several new members through the year. More details from Katy at katyc@eml.cc or 01794 501819.

Katy and Ian Clark

h. Journeying Together

'Journeying Together' has continued to meet throughout the year, initially at the Wisdom Centre and latterly in the Church Rooms when the Wisdom Centre was no longer available. The Revd. Dr Mich Lajeunesse stepped down from leading the group, so we now self-facilitate. The group's aims are to share experience of the Christian journey in an inclusive way; discuss the Bible and other inspiring books; pray and grow in faith. Currently there are about 15 of us in the group. During the year we have used '*Being With*', '*The Things He Carried*' by Stephen Cotterell and a study guide on Nehemiah to promote discussion. In addition, the group also explored a couple of hot topics, Same sex Marriage and Assisted Dying ably led by Bryn Bridges and Howard Green. All the discussions have been positive, interesting, and at times challenging.

We also include a time of prayer in each meeting and often share a short service of Compline.

Jan Bartlett

j. Listening Café

This Easter saw the third anniversary of the Listening café.

My thanks to our volunteers and also to Abbey members who join with us and help us clear away each week. Also, our thanks to Sarah Riley as PSO, who has offered her time in guiding us through the necessary safeguarding and risk assessments.

The purpose of this group is to offer a café style listening ear for people to chat, to welcome and offer refreshments, to be available to engage in conversation, but not to counsel people.

We have people joining us from the Abbey community, Romsey and wider areas including Southampton. Some of whom now regularly join us at Abbey Vine. Numbers of visitors to the café

vary week to week with 25 being the maximum so far. We have 11 regular volunteers who offer their time on a rota basis. Volunteers meet regularly once a quarter at the Wisdom centre, partly as a social get together, and partly to discuss any particular needs and evaluate the café

If you would like to join us, either as a volunteer, or to join us for a cuppa anytime. You would be most welcome.

Revd. Sally Womersley
Associate Priest

k. 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

m. Abbey Net Zero Carbon Group

We have continued to monitor the temperature of the Abbey in various locations within the building, and we have continued to log the electricity and gas consumption – which determines our CO₂ emissions. We monitored mainstream, Church, and specialist media for developments in heating and lighting – and to see what progress other large old churches are making with the technologies we need, such as solar panels for electricity and heat pumps for heating.

We have documented the assessments we have made, producing the following documents:

- Energy Audit: Analysis of current energy consumption and efficiency.
- Carbon Footprint Assessment: Evaluation of current emissions.
- Benchmarking: Review of decarbonisation solutions implemented by other historic churches.
- Temperature Survey: Measurements taken at multiple levels within the Abbey ever since January 2022.
- Usage Patterns: Frequency of use and number of people involved
- Feasibility Study: Initial investigation into the potential for a ground-source heat pump based system
- Lighting Upgrade: some progress in replacement of halogen lighting with LED technology. This is on-going and will be run as a separate project.

These have enabled us to produce two Request for Proposal documents, one for a heating project and one for a lighting project. These will be put to professionals with the relevant knowledge so

that we have professional-based documents which we can then send out to get quotes for the actual work. The proposals will come back with options so we will have to decide in the light of what they say what we actually want to do. Producing these Proposals is a piece of expert work for which we will have to pay. At the time of writing the PCC have approved the spending of the necessary money subject to agreement by the Fabric committee.

The next steps after getting these proposals will be to agree what options to pursue and then move to obtaining planning permission and Diocesan support, and doing fund-raising.

Progress is also being made on getting double glazing installed in the Church Rooms.

Roger Rowe has led the Zero Carbon group for several years but is now standing down. Thanks are due to him for his inspiration and leadership.

Zero Carbon Group

n. Parish Lunch

During 2024 we had a total of 510 diners, which means we had an average of more than 40 at every lunch. Our total profit for these meals was £1,083 and we have purchased 10 aprons for the cooks to wear when serving. We also spent £40.19 on paper serviettes and £261.00 on new pans and lids, which suit the new stove better.

Almost all of our 'eaters' are women who live alone, so the social side of parish lunch is most important. We also charge a very reasonable fee for our two course lunch, followed by tea or coffee, which means it is not too expensive for them, regardless of their income.

All those who work in the kitchen contribute their time, the cost of their fuel when dishes have to be cooked at home the previous day and also many of the incidental ingredients which they already have in their cupboards. We are all very appreciative of the meals they prepare. We have two new cooks joining the team, which is very encouraging, as several of the original team are now into their 80s, and no-one can go on for ever!

At the last hygiene inspection, we scored the maximum of 5, proving that everything we do meets all the regulations.

Liz Holloway

p. Pastoral Team

Firstly, our thanks to everyone who volunteers their time, gifts and goodwill in this important ministry. Also our thanks to Sarah Riley as PSO, for her support, and also to Jan Bartlett (CW), who has guided us through the 'Lone workers' procedure.

My name is Sallyann Coole and I am the Pastoral Team Co-ordinator and the first point of contact, working alongside Revd. Sally Womersley and Revd. Jill Aussant. The role of the co-ordinator involves organising the pastoral care for the Abbey and St Swithun's communities, liaising with the Ministry and Pastoral teams to ensure that members of the congregation who are unable to come to church are continue to feel part of the churches community. We provide home visits with or without Holy Communion, take Holy Communion into the local care homes and Romsey Hospital. Since Covid, the Pastoral team has grown and now has 19 volunteers. The team are great and are always willing to help. We have made some changes to our procedures, for example; upgrading

and writing policy and procedures to support the service, arranging Pastoral Team meetings every quarter, two of these meetings will be solely for supervision. The last policy and procedure we have completed is the Lone Worker, and have provided workshops for the team to be informed of any changes to policy and procedure.

We are always looking to welcome new volunteers. If you feel you would like to be a part of this valuable ministry, please contact me, or Revd. Sally or Revd. Jill.

Sallyann Coole.

Pastoral Co-ordinator Sallyann.coole@romseyabbey.org.uk

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

2024 and the start of 2025 has been a season of fruitful flourishing for Romsey Abbey CE Primary School. The school followed up a strong and very positive SIAMS inspection in November 2023 with a really encouraging and successful Ofsted inspection in January 2025. The school's reputation within the local community is in a very healthy place with numbers on roll high along with a full Reception Class intake for the last two years. Children are achieving strong outcomes above the national end of KS2 averages for the past two years as well. In their recent inspection, Ofsted said of our school, *"Pupils are incredibly proud of their school. They feel happy and safe as they develop strong relationships with the kind and caring staff. Pupils live up to the high expectations set for their learning and behaviour and achieve well across the curriculum"*.

The school continues to benefit from consistency in leadership, ensuring we continue to grow and develop towards our vision of giving every child the best possible education so they can all flourish within a deeply Christian ethos. We continue to support Early Careers Teachers (ECTs) in making a strong start within their teaching careers: one teacher has recently successfully completed their two years as an ECT and another ECT is making great progress in their first year of teaching.

In Collective Worship and throughout our curriculum we are seeking to support the positive wellbeing and attitudes of pupils with a focus on how we can learn from our mistakes and make healthy life-giving choices, looking closely at the teachings of Jesus and the experiences of those who have sought to walk in the footsteps of Jesus with love, trust and forgiveness. The school is greatly blessed by the ongoing support of the Abbey with the Year 5 Abbey Sleepover and the half termly services at the Abbey a real highlight for our pupils.

Mark Harris

Headteacher

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

We have a healthy membership, with both regular and occasional attendees. Meetings are on the first Wednesday of each month, with none in August and, this year, not one in March, the first Wednesday being Ash Wednesday.

During the past year we have had several speakers, including Peter Speck with his magician's hat on, Neil Gwynne telling us about the history, and future, of The Plaza, our Town Crier, Terry Hamer, speaking about his work, and Jane Lightbody, who enthralled us with an account of her "Life in three Continents".

We have also enjoyed evenings out, one with Chris Harpham, who showed us, and explained the significance of, some of the many vestments in the Abbey, and one to King John's House where

Sarah Hargreaves enlightened and entertained us. This year began with a very pleasant dinner in the Palmerston Rooms. Other meetings were regular events, the Ploughman's supper in July, the AGM and the Christmas party. Guessing the number of sweets in a jar was our contribution to the Christmas Fair.

Liz Sharman

s. Romsey Abbey Tour Guides

2024 was another busy year with 47 booked tours and a number of *ad hoc* tours given by the tour guides. In total, 1198 visitors were given booked tours. The tours included a number of U3A groups, foreign and local students, care homes, organised coach trips as well as groups of families and friends. There was a panel of 9 regular volunteer guides who generously gave up their time to share their knowledge and enthusiasm for the Abbey.

During the spring and summer, we have been very grateful to Andrew Keeling who has offered 'drop-in' tours on Wednesday lunchtimes. These tours are not booked and visitors can just turn up on the day. Sometimes he had no takers and sometimes he had taken quite large groups around.

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.

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

t. 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

Even though the local Committee no longer meets, the Christian Aid representatives from the Romsey churches (Baptist, Methodist, URC and the Abbey) continued to liaise and co-ordinate a limited number of fund-raising activities.

Local activities continue to include Lent lunches, bucket collections and some sponsored events. In March 2024 the Abbey's Lent Lunch raised £305 and the bucket/envelope collection during Christian Aid week in May raised (with Gift Aid) £11658.20. 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 marked the 15th Anniversary of its launch in June 2024, an amazing milestone for a small local charity, but as with any anniversary that we may hit, it is always tinged with the sadness of the memory of George and his loss. Throughout the last fifteen years we are very fortunate to have had such amazing support from the Romsey Abbey Parishioners and, of course, the people of Romsey itself. Over the years George's Trust has raised more than a quarter of a million pounds to support young people in many ways. The largest block of funding was £114,000 which was awarded to the Teenage and Young Adult Cancer Unit in 2010 to help set up the much-needed unit in the Southampton University Hospital. This was followed closely by £50,000 being awarded to the Immunotherapy Cancer Research team in Southampton to fund a specialised piece of equipment to help with cancer diagnosis.

Over the years thousands of pounds have been awarded to support teenagers with all manner of projects, from sport, to music, equipment, team building, camps and of course the support for the Choral Scholars in our wonderful Abbey Choir, through our small grant scheme. One of the main groups helped this year was the Romsey Youth Choir when we provided funds to help two young people to take part in the annual singing trip abroad to Germany and Belgium.

This year George's Trust is now on the funding team for The Southampton University Hospital imminent refit of the Teenage and Young Adult Cancer Unit within the hospital. It is a great privilege to be able to help this amazing unit once again. The plans are going through, and it is hoped that the refit will go ahead by the end of the year. As the Unit is unfortunately always full, this will be phased refit.

George's Trust has now established itself as a reliable and popular Charity within Romsey and it seems to have a life of its own with amazing support. Romsey Abbey is an important part of that support and we are very grateful to everyone within the Romsey Abbey family of parishioners and staff.

Jane O'Brien

3. Friends of Romsey Abbey

2024 was a successful year for the Friends. The Friends raise money through subscriptions, donations and social events, to pay for projects that enhance the visitor attraction. Items included lanyards for the stewards, the survey of the Romsey Rood using non-invasive techniques, to discover more about its structure and strength to determine how best to conserve it, Children's Light party, Tourism South East Advertisement, Toys and Play Equipment, Payment for the consultancy work on new exterior signage and a Contribution towards the operating costs of the Children and Families team, and the cost of the new website. In support of Abbey Vine, FRA contributed to a third of the cost of their music sound system.

Coffee mornings held every other month in Romsey Town Hall 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 2024, we had a four Churches Tour in the Wilton area, a visit to The Isle of Wight Steam Railway, Larmer Tree Gardens and Groveley Jigsaw Factory, Downton Abbey 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.

Once again, we welcomed a wide variety of performers and audiences to the Abbey throughout the year. Concert attendance, which had lifted in 2023, rose by another 20% in 2024 with over 6000 tickets sold across 21 events. Over 1000 tickets were sold through the Romsey Visitor Information Centre. We are sad that our long and productive association with the VIC has come to an end following their recent closure, but we are delighted that tickets are now being sold through Oasis Christian Bookshop.

Overall, the concerts in 2024 raised approximately £21k for the Abbey and Church Rooms. Cushion hire separately raised nearly £2k and this amount is combined with concert administration fees of approximately £3k, which go towards the production of the concert brochure as well as investment in equipment such as concert lighting.

Most popular amongst the concerts were the Band of His Majesty's Royal Marines Collingwood, now a regular fixture, the Southampton Philharmonic Choir's "Heavenly Voices" (their first concert in the Abbey in many years) and Romsey Youth Choir's Christmas concert, with over 400 in the audience for each of these. But of course, we were also delighted to host smaller events such as Vox Humana's delightful presentation of the Play of Daniel, including roaring lion sound effects.

We are extremely grateful to our many volunteers for enabling these concerts to take place, in particular the front of house, box office, chair movers and stage building teams.

If you are interested in being involved 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 and the number of booklets being taken remains as high as ever. It is, however, becoming more difficult to source the full range of printed materials as many resources are now available only online. We will continue to ensure that all materials available reflect up-to-date guidance. The 'sources of support' sheet is regularly updated to give local and national contacts.

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

Romsey Abbey continues to be a charter signatory of Mindful Employer and has renewed its subscription, paid for by Triangulate, of the Mindful Employer Plus, the 24/7 helpline for staff and volunteers.

Bridget Brook