

THE FRIENDS OF DORCHESTER ABBEY

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2015



from: Ingrid Lunt
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Registered Charity No. 275819

President: The Bishop of Dorchester

Vice-President: Mr Christopher Gibbs

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Dear Friends,

The autumn newsletter provides the opportunity to report on the AGM which takes place each year in June, the 2015 Dorchester Lecture, the Friends outing to Malmesbury, and to look at the range of projects which have been supported through the generosity of the Friends and of the Members of the Beauforest Society.

Annual General Meeting

The 2015 AGM took place on June 8 with about 40 members present. The Chairman, Richard Dick, expressed his gratitude to the Trustees, and in particular the Rector, Hilary Warburton as Secretary and Honor Juniper as Membership Secretary. He acknowledged the magnificent work of Steph Forman in masterminding the Dorchester Festival which managed to raise £45,000 which will be shared between the Abbey and this year's chosen charity PACT (Parents and Children Together).

Current Trustees (all honorary)

Chairman: Richard Dick
Vice Chairman: John Taylor
Revd Canon Sue Booy (Rector, ex officio)
Hugo Brunner
Tim Cook (Church Warden, ex officio)
Christine Dawson (Treasurer)
Stephanie Forman
Tanya Hawley
Honor Juniper (Membership secretary)
Ingrid Lunt
Judy Macfadyen
David Parker
Mary Saunders
Hilary Warburton (Secretary)

The Rector reflected on the progress in relation to support for the Abbey which has been made since her arrival ten years ago. She described how the three charities which had existed when she arrived had been amalgamated to form the Friends of Dorchester Abbey, with the object of helping the Abbey and contributing to its fundraising for fabric and special projects. In expressing her gratitude to the Friends, and to the Trustees for their substantial fundraising, and for their commitment to and support for various projects, she produced an impressive list of projects to which the Friends had contributed. These included:

- the altar frontal and new vestments, including the Jubilee Cope
- the choir stalls
- the herb garden
- the organ
- the solar panels
- the roof repairs
- tomb restoration
- the lighting

Sue finished by looking forward to the future which includes the Quinquennial and Guest House refurbishment.

At the AGM it was reported that there are now 247 Friends (of whom 137 are life members). The finances continue to be in good order, thus enabling the Friends to support a range of Abbey projects. Next year's AGM will be held on Monday June 6, 2016.

The 2015 Dorchester Lecture

This was given on June 24 by Professor Roger Ainsworth, Master of St Catherine's College Oxford, and Professor of Engineering Science at the University of Oxford, who addressed the title: ***Brunel – Father and Son***. Roger Ainsworth has had an impressive and varied career, which includes an apprenticeship with Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, a First Class degree at Jesus College Oxford in 1973 and a DPhil in 1976, then work first for Rolls-Royce followed by the Atomic Energy Research Establishment. He returned to Oxford and a tutorial fellowship at St Catherine's in 1985, where he has been Master since 2002. Professor Ainsworth is also Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society and an Honorary Fellow of Jesus College. He is Chair of the Trustees of the Oxford Preservation Trust.

His lecture did not disappoint and around 100 of us were drawn to attend the lecture which included an impressive slide show, and elicited lively questions and discussion.

Father Brunel, Sir Marc Isambard, came originally from France, where he learned his basic engineering skills. He achieved success and recognition through various naval and tunnelling initiatives. His son Isambard Kingdom Brunel, who was born in 1806 in Portsmouth, is probably best known for his contribution to the railways including the Great Western Railway (GWR). He was centrally involved in this massive project which included laying tracks, building bridges, creating stations, and building engines and workshops to support this great endeavour. He was also responsible for the two-mile long Box Tunnel, and a number of major bridge projects including the Clifton Suspension Bridge in Bristol. Roger's enthusiasm and passion for engineering, and for these two engineering giants shone through both the lecture and the Q&A session.

Travellers to London will encounter the life-size statue (a bronze by John Doubleday) of Isambard Kingdom

Brunel which has now been relocated to an area between Platforms 8 and 9 on Paddington Station.

Friends Outing to Malmesbury, 11 May 2015

I am very grateful to David Parker who kindly contributed this report on the Friends outing to Malmesbury.

We were blessed with fine weather, enabling us to enjoy a guided tour of the town in the morning and visits to the Abbey Gardens and pub lunches in the middle of the day. The extensive Gardens, which are adjacent to the Abbey, are a privately owned showpiece incorporating a significant collection of roses.

Malmesbury is a small town on a dramatic promontory above a loop of the River Avon. Recently it has become better known as the home of the Dyson factory, but (similar to Dorchester) the town has a long and illustrious history. The Abbey has the tomb of the Saxon King Athelstan (d.939), grandson of Alfred the Great, and said to be the first king of all the Britons, which he achieved by defeating both the Scots and the Norsemen of York. In the 12th century the church became a Benedictine Abbey. It had a very tall spire which collapsed in the 16th century, destroying the chancel and crossing. What survives today is a section of the Norman nave with some ruins outside. In spite of that, there remains much of interest to see, including well preserved stone carvings in the Norman porch.

We were given a warm welcome by the Friends of Malmesbury Abbey, who gave us guided tours of the Abbey followed by splendid tea and cakes, reminding us that we had welcomed them in similar fashion to Dorchester several years ago. It was a good day out, enjoyed by all, thanks to Yvonne Lawden, who once again displayed her customary talent for organising these outings.

Music in Dorchester Abbey

The Abbey provides an excellent place to enjoy music and a good acoustic for both instrumentalists and singers. There is always a rich programme of events, which includes a regular programme by John Lubbock's Orchestra of St John's (OSJ) and the Benson Choral Society. This autumn, OSJ's very successful Music in the Abbey Festival took place from September 7 to 13.

The autumn programme includes:

- The Benson Choral Society autumn concert on Saturday November 28, performing Ola Gjeilo Sunrise Mass and Mozart Requiem, and Anita D'Attelis playing Mozart Piano Concerto no. 24 in C Minor
- December 12, 7.30 p.m. 25th Anniversary of OSJ Voices, including Britten St Nicolas Cantata and Christmas music
- December 19, 6.00 p.m. Handel's Messiah, with OSJ conducted by John Lubbock
- December 31, 7.00 p.m. A New Year's Eve concert A Strauss Gala with the OSJ

The Abbey Herb Garden

The beautiful Herb Garden relies on volunteers for its upkeep. We have found that it benefits from being tidied up in the spring and again in the autumn, and volunteers are always welcome to help with this task. The more volunteers who are able to spare some time, the more impressive the herb garden throughout the year. The date for the spring clear-up will be announced in the next Newsletter.

Beauforest Society

The Beauforest Society was formed to enable Friends to provide additional support to the PCC in important projects. Subscription is £100 a year for four years (paid into the Friends account). This is a great way to support Dorchester Abbey. Additional Beauforest members are always welcome: please contact our Chairman Richard Dick for further details, or see the website www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk/join-the-beauforest-society/

Not much is known about Richard Beauforest, described as a 'great riche man, dwelling in the toun of Dorchestre'. He purchased the Abbey Church of St Peter and St Paul at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries for £140. This sum was said to be the price of the lead on the roof. In his will dated 13 July 1554 he bequeathed the Abbey Church of Dorchester and 'the implements thereof' to the parish, on condition that they should not be sold or alienated without the consent of his heirs. He also bequeathed 'twenty shillings for the reparations', and ordered that his body should be buried in 'our Lady Ile'.

The new Abbey lighting

Following on from the major repairs to the Abbey roof and the stonework, the PCC embarked on a second major project to replace the Abbey lighting system to which the Friends and Beauforest Society were very pleased to contribute £100,000.

Completion of the new Lighting System was celebrated on September 19th at an event organised by the PCC. Members of the Beauforest Society, Friends and major benefactors attended the event, which began with a short Evensong. As the choir processed up the nave, the lighting 'moved' with them, and once they were in the choir stalls the whole Abbey was fully illuminated.

Evensong was followed by a reception, during which there were performances by groups and individuals demonstrating how the lighting can be adapted, and used to illuminate different parts of the building. Our thanks to Caroline Seed, Sharon Warnes and Charlie James, the Abbey choir and Hannah Fraser-Mackenzie for their moving performances.

The generosity of the Beauforest Society members and Friends of Dorchester Abbey have greatly assisted this project, and your continued support is enormously appreciated.

Fundraising and projects

Dorchester Abbey is an ageing building, built for the most part in the 14th century and is therefore continually in need of maintenance and repair. A central role for the Friends is to support the PCC with funds (and on occasion expertise and effort) for restoration and maintenance projects. As reported by the Rector to the AGM, the past ten years has seen an impressive list of projects which have been supported by the Friends.

Current projects include:

- Refurbishing the drains at the East End in order to prevent rainwater causing long term damage. The Friends have agreed up to £30,000 for this slightly less glamorous but nevertheless very important project.
- Refurbishment of the Guest House. There is a need for short-term repairs and decoration, with a view to a longer term major refurbishment to restore the building to its former elegance.

We are all extremely grateful to John Taylor and his fundraising team for running the appeal and to the Friends who made contributions.