

Friends of Warden Abbey Vineyard
Trustees' Annual Report
and Financial statements
for the year ended 31 March 2025

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**Friends of Warden Abbey Vineyard
Trustees' annual report
for the year ended 31 March 2025**

Full name Friends of Warden Abbey Vineyard

Registered Charity Number 1176602

Principal address 39, Broadacres, Luton, LU2 7YF

Trustees:

David Charles Corfan	Chair
John Leslie Handscombe	Treasurer
Louise Ann Wilson	Secretary
Colin McCartney	Membership Secretary
Deborah Ann Garwood	Tours & Talks Administrator
Amanda Mary Gibson	Marketing Manager

Other Committee Members (Non Trustees) include:

Kathrynn Harris	Events Manager
Keith Smith	

Monica Cummins and Carole Cox retired as committee members and trustees.
Louise Wilson and Debbie Garwood were appointed trustees at the December AGM on 3rd December 2024.

Independent examiner

Bob Hughes, (Voluntary), 7 Cartwright Close, Bromham, Bedford, MK43 8QF

Governance and management

The charity is operated under the rules of its constitution adopted 19 August 2016, as amended on 12 December 2017, as amended on 06 December 2022 and as most recently amended on 03 December 2024.

Aims and objectives

- To promote the advancement of education in agriculture, horticulture, viticulture, medieval crafts and history, in the context of Warden Abbey Community Vineyard (forming part of the Scheduled Monument of Warden Abbey), for the benefit of the community.
- To promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the natural environment at Warden Abbey Community Vineyard, to maintain a facility for physical and leisure-time activities, aimed at improving the health and well-being of the local community

Friends of Warden Abbey Vineyard Trustees' annual report (continued) for the year ended 31 March 2025

Summary of the main achievements during the period

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to update members and volunteers on the activities of the Friends during the past year in relation to the Objectives of the Charity and to highlight the goals for the next year.

Progress in the Vineyard

Vineyard Manager Nick Williams, who started in January 2024 on a short-term contract, soon established himself as a very personable and capable vineyard manager. Nick's capabilities were quickly recognised by BedsRCC and Nick's initial six month contract was quickly extended to a year and has since been further extended on a rolling basis.

2024 saw a major effort to raise funds to support planting a further 400 Bacchus vines to fill in gaps among the existing rows of Bacchus.

Following the disease problems in 2023, the vines were looking good for a reasonable yield in 2024. However, as we were preparing for harvest towards the end of September the vineyard was suddenly decimated by massive bird damage. This damage was unprecedented and unfortunately about 90% of the crop was lost, mainly to pigeons. It's hard to know what caused this, but a combination of poor local crop yields and a very wet late summer seemed to drive a huge number of birds towards our grapes.

Yet again the poor harvest was scant reward for the all the volunteer effort expended throughout the year both tending the vines and running events to maintain the vineyard and enable FWAV to continue to provide financial support to the vineyard project.

Charitable Objectives

The Charity achieves its Objectives by training volunteers in all aspects of operating the vineyard and by encouraging new volunteers to join. It also markets the vineyard to a wider audience, to maximise the use of its facilities. The historical aspects of the vineyard and its surroundings have been further developed, so that the wider community can better understand how the history of the area has impacted on the current operations there.

The vineyard's facilities are increasingly being used as part of horticultural therapy, wellbeing, and art programmes by a variety of local organisations.

To ensure the continuation of the vineyard project, the Charity has utilised multiple ways both to raise funds and to spread the word about the vineyard project.

FWAV's major fundraising events (i.e. vineyard tours, talks, picnics and paella events) were all popular, contributing over £9000 to FWAV profits. We believe that by increasing the number of such events, we can substantially increase our profits and we are exploring this possibility as well as introducing new events.

There has been a continued influx of new volunteers, bringing more energy, experience and ideas to the vineyard. Our amazing volunteers again contributed over 5000 hours to vineyard activities in 2024/25, another magnificent contribution to the Community Vineyard Project. We again participated in 'The Big Help Out' in June which generated further volunteer interest.

As a result of the funds generated, we were again able to contribute £10,000 to BRCC to help towards the running costs of the vineyard.

Grant Funding

We did not receive any grant funding in 2024/25 but we did receive a donation of £500 plus a potential £500 in donations for 'tools' from our corporate volunteer days – these donations are currently outstanding. We hosted Santander (twice), Wincanton Distribution and National Highways, who undertook several tasks including painting the shed and earthing up new vines, for which they funded the topsoil.

Local Participation

The number volunteers attending sessions at the vineyard has continued to grow with between 15 and 20 volunteers attending twice per week whenever sessions are running. The vineyard volunteers donated over 3700 hours and a further 1200 hours were expended on other events and background work to keep the Friends thriving.

There has been increased interest in the vineyard from local schools and local social services who offer wellbeing activities. An increasing number of companies have also expressed interest in supporting the vineyard through corporate volunteering activities.

Marketing

The Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts have been essential marketing tools and very ably managed by Hannah Penwright and latterly James Kelliher at BRCC in conjunction with Amanda Gibson who co-ordinates all our marketing activities.

There are now over 1700 names on our database of supporters who received 10 vineyard news updates in 2024

Tour Activity

In 2024 we ran 10 Tour and Tasting events and a further 10 tours on Open Day, 171 visitors attending the public tours and tastings. Tours and Talks again generated over £5000 profit for the Friends.

Carole Cox retired from the Committee and her tour responsibilities at the 2024 AGM. Carole contributed huge amounts of time and effort into running tours for many years and she'll be greatly missed. As a founder member of FWAV Carole was granted lifetime membership of FWAV at the AGM. Lifetime membership was also awarded to Gerry Nolan following his retirement from the committee and chairmanship in 2023. Carole's role will be undertaken by Debbie Garwood in 2025.

Vineyard Output

Following the disease that blighted the vineyard in 2023, the vines recovered well under Nick's careful management and spraying regime and a reasonable harvest was eagerly anticipated. Unfortunately, it all went wrong in the 10 days leading up to Harvest which was planned for 19th October. Sadly, the crop was devastated by birds over the weekend of 12th/13th and although harvest was brought forward to 15th there was massive loss from birds and only 380Kg was picked from an estimated 3 tonnes. A very disappointing outcome after 9 months hard and seemingly positive vineyard work.

Several initiatives are planned for Harvest 2025 to mitigate the bird damage including the use of bird scarers and opening the vineyard for volunteers to walk around to keep the birds at bay.

Winemaking

The grapes were sent to Halfpenny Green Vineyard this year and as the volume was so low some additional Reichensteiner grapes were purchased to make up the volume to a commercially viable quantity. This will become the 2024 Nonconformist.

Development at the Vineyard

In 2024, 400 additional Bacchus vines were planted to fill in gaps in the existing Bacchus rows. A very successful planting day was held on 19th May. Thanks to Monica Cummins who has very successfully taken on the task of running the Plant a Vine Scheme.

Membership Development.

At the 2024 AGM, the constitution was amended to grant Friends membership to all volunteers who have contributed 10 hours over the preceding two years. This recognises the contribution of as many volunteers as possible, some of whom make valuable sporadic contributions.

Following the success of the social evening in February 2024 another evening was held on April 1st 2025. This was another opportunity to taste wines from our back catalogue and we were also treated to a talk by our historian, Margaret Roberts, on 'The Medieval Vineyard'. It was a great evening and an opportunity to taste some older vintages and make purchases at very reasonable prices.

Subscription Membership of FWAV enables anyone to contribute to the development of the vineyard who may not be able to volunteer at the vineyard or events. We encourage either purely monetary donations, or donations of time, both of which help to take the project forward.

BedsRCC

BedsRCC is the operator and manager of the vineyard, with whom The Friends work closely to keep the vineyard running. The financial backing of BedsRCC and the volunteer hours provided by FWAV are essential to the viability of the project.

In round numbers, FWAV sold 1930 bottles of Warden Abbey Wine between April and December, of which 1000 were bottle sales managed by FWAV volunteers on behalf of BedsRCC (ie Tours plus Open Day and Christmas bottle sales), plus 930 at FWAV events, including Paella nights, Picnics) and sales to Volunteers and Friends. The latter FWAV sales contributed around £1900 of the year's £13,866 profit.

BedsRCC also agreed to change the wine discount structure. Volunteer-Friends may purchase wine at trade price plus 10% and paid-up Friends at retail minus 10%.

FWAV has generated around £135,000 net income (profit) since its formation in 2013. Major contributors have been Open Days (£41,000), Tours and Talks (£43,000) and Grants (£23,000). These funds have enabled FWAV to donate over £128,000 to BedsRCC, made up of 'annual' (non-specific) donations of £85,800, £33,300 for specific items and improvements to the facilities, topped up with grants of £9,300 that we applied for on their behalf.

The production of sparkling wine, whilst more profitable than still, requires a significant need for cash, to pay for the more complex production costs and for it to be held in stock for the extra couple of years required for it to fully mature.

The website is a joint venture between FWAV and BedsRCC and continues to work as our main marketing and sales channel for the Vineyard and FWAV events.

The Future

The Friends has become an effective organisation over the past few years and has been able to make considerable donations to and work in partnership with BedsRCC to help with all aspects of the vineyard.

In the coming year, FWAV intends to build on these developments and to expand its efforts still further. The main targets are:

- To develop better ways to market the vineyard, its activities and wines;
- To increase the returns from fund-raising events during the year;
- To increase the number of tours, lectures and other events,
- To seek further grant funding sources to help develop the vineyard;
- To seek funding for work with schools and other establishments; and
- To expand the membership of FWAV.

The organising committee of FWAV is in a good position to help take forward these ideas and, as ever, is always looking for enthusiastic volunteers to help.

The Charity's Policy on Reserves

In terms of expenditure, the Friends employs no staff and only spends funds when they have already been generated through fund-raising activities. This means that there is no risk of the Friends running into cash deficit, as the Friends only spend cash they have already generated.

Nevertheless, it is prudent for the Friends to build up reserves of cash for the following reasons:

- Fund-raising events often may require the expenditure of funds in advance of such events, on the basis that this expenditure will be recovered via the fund-raising activity to which it relates
- When grant applications are made, the funders will often require matched funding to be provided by the Friends, to support the funding application
- When a grant has been agreed in principle, it may be necessary to expend an element of the funding in advance of receiving the formal grant
- The vineyard uses several important pieces of equipment, and the cost of repair or replacement of such equipment cannot be easily planned, so reserves are needed to enable such unplanned costs to be more easily met
- There are occasions when expert consulting services may be needed, to ensure that the vineyard can benefit from external expertise at the right time. These occasions, by definition, are not easily planned, so funds need to be retained to manage such circumstances.

For these reasons, the Trustees have decided that an appropriate reserve should be retained annually, normally not exceeding £5,000. This policy will be reviewed regularly for appropriateness.

The closing balance of cash in March 2025 was £16401, which is higher than the amount that has been agreed as a prudent retention, but it is planned to invest in some new equipment to improve the activities that are needed to keep the vineyard running effectively.

Signed on behalf of the Charity's Trustees

Signed 

David Corfan
Chair of the Charity's Trustees

Date 7/11/2025

**Independent examiner's report to the Trustees of
Friends of Warden Abbey Vineyard
for the year ended 31 March 2025**

I report on the accounts of the charity which are set out on pages 9 to 11.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the general directions given by the Charity Commissioners under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

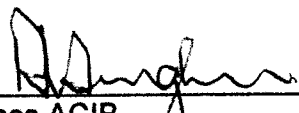
Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act

have not been met;

2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed  Date 7/11/25
Bob Hughes ACIB
Independent Examiner (Voluntary)

Friends of Warden Abbey Vineyard
Receipts & payments account
for the year ended 31 March 2025

2024				2025	
Total		Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	
Funds		Funds	Funds	Funds	
£	Note	£	£	£	
Receipts					
6413	Grants & donations	2	848.56	0	848.56
0	Corporate Events		0.00	0	0.00
4397	Tours		3046.14	0	3046.14
1671	Talks		2342.46	0	2342.46
6432	Open Day		6551.09	0	6551.09
1151	Membership		624.59	0	624.59
5767	Picnics, Paella and Events		8686.23	0	8686.23
109	interest Received		145.70	0	145.70
854	Volunteers Evening		0.00	0	0.00
956	Southill House Visit		117.40	0	117.40
170	Warden Pear/Monastic Book Sales		487.86	0	487.86
406	Christmas Sale		241.13	0	241.13
525	Donate-a-Vine		689.20	0	689.20
0	Wne sales-members, volunteers,retail		2255.23	0	2255.23
328	Merchandise		752.48	0	752.48
0	Gift Aid Tax refund		164.45	0	164.45
117	Miscellaneous		73.92	0	73.92
29296	Total receipts		27026.44	0.00	27026.44
Payments					
10000	Donation to BRCC		14445.76	0	14445.76
788	Tours		0.00	0	0.00
350	Talks		266.46	0	266.46
1379	Open Day		1753.13	0	1753.13
3157	Picnics, Paella and Events		4509.76	0	4509.76
1107	Volunteers Evening		0.00	0	0.00
21	Warden Pear/MonasticBook Sales		12.10	0	12.10
82	Wine sales-members, volunteers,retail		1695.06	0	1695.06
108	Christmas Sale		21.00	0	21.00
6900	Equipment		0.00	0	0.00
597	Repairs and Renewals		0.00	0	0.00
0	Merchandise		792.52	0	792.52
479	Miscellaneous		498.21	0	498.21
24968	Total payments		23994.00	-	23994.00
4327	Net receipts/(payments)		3032.44	0.00	3032.44
9041	Cash funds at start of this period		13368.88	0.00	13368.88
0.00	Transfers between funds		0	0.00	0
13368	Cash funds at end of this period		16401.32	-	16401.32

Friends of Warden Abbey Vineyard
Statement of assets and liabilities
at 31 March 2025

2024			2025
£	Cash assets	Note	£
3236	Bank Current Account		6122.86
10132	Bank Reserve Account		10278.46
0	Petty Cash		0.00
<u>13368</u>			<u>16401.32</u>
	Other monetary assets		
0	Debtors		0.00
0	Investments		0.00
<u>0</u>			<u>0.00</u>
	Liabilities		
0	Creditors		0.00
0	Advance receipts		0.00
<u>0</u>			<u>0.00</u>

These financial statements are accepted on behalf of the organisation by:

Signed  Dated 7/11/25
 John Handscombe, Trustee (Treasurer)

Friends of Warden Abbey Vineyard

Notes to the accounts

for the year ended 31 March 2025

1. Receipts & payments accounts

Receipts and payments accounts contain a summary of money received and money spent during the period and a list of assets and liabilities at the end of the period. Usually, cash received and cash spent will include transactions through bank accounts and cash in hand.

2. Grants & Donations

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £
Sundry Donations	848.56	0	848.56
	<u>848.56</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>848.56</u>

3. Trustees' Remuneration

The Trustees received no expenses, remuneration or benefits in this period

4. Independent Examiner

The Independent Examiner conducted the examination on a voluntary basis and received no fee or expenses.

5. Glossary of terms

Restricted funds: These are funds given to the organisation, subject to specific restrictions set by the donor, but still within the general objects of the organisation.