

Friends of Cookham Abbey

Report and Financial Statement for the period ending 31st December 2024
Charity Number 1204300

1 Administrative information

Trustees:

Professor Gabor Thomas – Chair (appointed 10 August 2023)

Paul Seddon – Treasurer (appointed 10 August 2023)

David Mudd – Secretary (appointed 10 August 2023)

Mike Bryan (appointed 10 August 2023)

Mandy Brar (appointed 10 August 2023)

Mike Copland (appointed 10 August 2023)

Shez Courtenay-Smith (appointed 10 August 2023)

David Gilbert (appointed 2 July 2024)

Mark Howard (appointed 10 August 2023)

Jill Oseman (appointed 13 November 2024)

Registered office: 17 Chantry Rd, Maidenhead, Berks SL6 1TR

Independent Examiner: Peter Carver

Bank: Caf Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ

2 Report of the Trustees for the period ended 31st December 2024

The trustees present their report and financial statements of the charity for the period from its registration as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) 10 August 2023 and ending on 31st December 2024, a period of 16 months. Future reports will be for a 12-month period.

This report is intended to show the Charity Commission, FCA members and partner organisations how the charity is meeting its objectives, and that it is effectively and properly managed.

3 Objectives and Activities - Public Benefit

The purposes of FCA are set out in its Governing Document, approved by the Charity Commission on 10 August 2023. FCA is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered in England and Wales, charity number 1204300.

The objects of FCA are, for the benefit of the public, to advance research, education and public interest in the archaeology and history of Cookham and neighbouring areas in the Thames Valley, including but not limited to, the investigation and preservation of historic land, buildings and artefacts.

The charity's main activities are

- to provide financial and practical support for the excavation of an Early Medieval (Anglo-Saxon) abbey in the Paddock, adjacent to Holy Trinity Church Cookham. The annual excavation and a Field School for undergraduates are undertaken by the University of Reading (UoR). FCA provides financial support for post-excavation recording, analysis and conservation of finds and remains from the excavation;

FRIENDS OF COOKHAM ABBEY

- to develop and undertake a programme of public engagement, to get people involved in the archaeological investigations through education and outreach. The results of the excavation project will be of interest to many people: residents of, and visitors to, Cookham and neighbouring towns and villages, historians, archaeologists, and students of all ages. There is a larger audience of people who cannot or do not visit Cookham, and FCA aims to reach them online.

FCA achieves its objectives by the important contribution of work and time by volunteers, and by purchasing services from companies and individuals. FCA does not at present employ staff. FCA does not own property: the Paddock, the abbey remains and finds belong to the Parochial Church Council of Holy Trinity Church.

4 Achievements and Performance

During the reporting period, **FCA supported the excavation** in several ways:

- supporting the cost of site clearance in the Paddock for the 2023 dig, to enable a larger area to be excavated;
- over 100 volunteers worked on the dig in each season, and many of them are FCA members;
- contributing to the lab analysis of skeletons from the cemetery. Some 40 interments which were excavated in 2023 were taken to UoR for investigation by osteoarchaeologist Dr Ceri Falys. This included assessment of biological sex and age at death, evidence of skeletal trauma and pathology, and radiocarbon dating. Preliminary results, now confirmed in a final report, showed a high level of serious pathologies and skeletal deformities. This suggests that the monastery may have had a role as a place of healing or hospice. Further scientific investigation will be done, which may throw light on their diet, migration and potential kinship connections;
- conservation and analysis of mid-Saxon metalwork and woodwork. These artefacts have to be cleaned and treated by specialist conservators to prevent deterioration. The metal artefacts recovered include tools and dress accessories which throw light on daily life in the abbey community. Wooden artefacts include the lining of a well, and wooden and leather objects found in it. A report from York Archaeology specialists in 2024 has identified the function and age of most of the wooden artefacts;
- Identification of pre- and post-Saxon coinage and metalwork, which are evidence of activity on the field before and after the 8th-9th century abbey;
- contribution to completion of post-excavation paperwork and data entry – financial support and volunteer time. The excavation process removes the archaeological evidence. It is therefore essential that thorough recording is done, so that the site can be interpreted by specialist archaeologists and explained to specialist audiences and the wider public;
- Trustees agreed to give financial support to Phyllida Shelley-Smith as Artist in Residence during 2024 and 2025. The Artist in Residence project is an excellent way to extend engagement with the excavation and its results. The project has been largely funded by a grant of £29,535 from Arts Council England. Cookham Festival also generously donated £500 to support the AiR project. Financial support included payment for Phyllida's time before and during the dig seasons, the cost of materials and equipment, and showing her work in the Maidenhead and Cookham Arts Trail (CAMAT) in September 2024 and 2025. Phyllida's art and displays were engaging for many visitors, and over 50 people came to her scheduled art sessions. The grant will also pay for 'Digging the Bigger Picture', a 2-day Art and Archaeology Symposium and accompanying exhibition in summer 2025.

The **second main objective of FCA is to share knowledge of the excavation and its results, and to embed its findings and significance in local communities**, during and after the dig season. During the 2024 dig, over 1,700 visitors were given tours of the site. Donations came to about £5,200, from which FCA paid £1,051 towards student welfare. After the cost of room hire in the Parish Centre, net income for FCA was approximately £1,700.

FRIENDS OF COOKHAM ABBEY

Many of the site visitors were local residents, about half of whom were already familiar with the excavation project. FCA wants to extend its engagement to include groups and communities who may not be familiar with this period of English history, who may find it difficult to visit the dig, or who feel that archaeology is 'not for them'.

This aspect of FCA's aims has been developed and furthered by Sarah Parfitt, who was appointed as FCA's Community Engagement Manager in July 2023. Sarah's media experience and contacts proved hugely helpful during the dig seasons. In 2024, two media days were run, with involvement from national and local TV, radio and press. UoR Press Office noted 108 pieces of media coverage in August and September. Social media accounts (official and unofficial) had over 39,000 views.

Sarah has subsequently developed a framework for workshop visits to local schools. These have focussed on primary schools, linking with the national curriculum Key Stage 2 topics of the Anglo-Saxons and Local History. The workshops include an explanation of the Anglo-Saxon period, the opportunity to handle artefacts from the dig, a virtual reality tour of the dig, 'Ask an Archaeologist', and in 2025 will include readings from the 'Cookham Chronicle', a series of fictional narratives being developed by Trustee David Gilbert. Sarah developed links with ten local primary schools, and in autumn 2024 undertook workshops in three schools. The 2025 dig will be earlier in the summer, coinciding with term-time, so school groups will be able to tour the dig.

The school workshop programme will expand in 2025, with strong support from a team of volunteers, mostly archaeology undergraduates at the University of Reading. FCA is very grateful for their time, interest and help, and hopes that this experience will help them in their future careers.

The dig takes place for four weeks each summer. FCA wants to engage with audiences for the other 48 weeks of the year. We are using social media channels including a Facebook group. In 2023 we launched our own website www.cookhamabbey.org.uk, which explains our purpose and who we are, and gives updates on the exciting archaeology results and the community engagement programme. As our work develops, we will refresh and update the web content more frequently, led by Trustee Jill Oseman. The design and graphics for the website, and of our printed publicity material, has been done by Richard Pow of Pow! Design & Web, a Cookham-based web designer.

Links with schools and community groups are an important part of this programme. Sarah and other Trustees are collaborating with Salt Hill VR, a virtual reality and digital skills company in Slough. Salt Hill has created a virtual reality tour of the dig. We believe this mode of experiencing the dig and its finds, and learning about the area's past is an exciting way of engaging with new audiences particularly younger people, those who are not local, and those who may not be able to visit the excavation in the summer. Using VR is an important way of engaging with children and young people, who are used to this technology. It has also been enjoyed by older people at a visit to Elizabeth House Day Centre in Cookham.

The importance of early medieval Cookham Abbey as a political and economic centre is being revealed by the archaeological investigations. The archaeology is also illustrating its role as a locus of religious importance in the early Christian period of the Thames Valley. Several other religions recognise the importance of religious sites in river landscapes. To explore this theme and to increase awareness of Cookham's role in a sacred landscape, FCA held two 'multi-faith' events in 2024, which were well attended by members of local faith groups. We hope to build on these contacts in the future, as a way of using archaeological heritage to strengthen communities.

With a grant from the UoR's Impact Project Fund, FCA commissioned an opinion survey from visitors to the site in 2024. The results were encouraging, giving an indication of people's understanding about the period and archaeology, before and after their visit. The survey will guide the development of, and fundraising for, our public engagement programme, and gives a valuable baseline against which Trustees will be able to measure our impact and demonstrate the public benefit given by the charity.

FCA is grateful for financial support from a number of individuals and organisations, including:

- Mrs C Boyd Roffey - £3,000 towards the cost of lab analysis of skeletons in 2024;
- University of Reading Impact Fund - £5,000 for the community engagement programme
- Louis Baylis (Maidenhead Advertiser) Trust - £1,000 in 2023 and £1,500 in 2024;
- Prince Philip Trust - £1,000 in 2023;
- Cookham Festival - £1,000 in 2023.

We are keen to develop and maintain links with individuals and organisations who may be able to support our work. We believe that the dig and its visitors can bring benefits to local businesses, and in 2025 we will pursue these potential partnerships.

In concluding this section of our report, we would like to thank several partners for their interest and practical support for our work:

- the Churchwardens, Parish Church Council and staff of Holy Trinity Church;
- the students and staff of the University of Reading Archaeology Department;
- the University's Press Team;
- Maria Evans, of Our Community Enterprise (OCE);
- Sarah Parfitt whose enthusiasm, media experience and networking skills have made a huge contribution to FCA's work, far in excess of our expectations when we set up the post in 2022. Sarah will be stepping back from her work with FCA after the 2025 dig season. We wish her well, and look forward to her continuing interest and support.

5 Structure, governance and management

FCA's constitution provides for a maximum of 12 Trustees, with 3 Trustees due for re-appointment in any one year. FCA's first AGM as a registered CIO was held on 6 June 2024. None of the existing Trustees' term of appointment expires until the 2026 AGM.

New trustees are appointed by the existing trustees and serve for two full years after which they may put themselves forward for reappointment. Existing trustees review the skills and experience needed for the management and business strategy of the charity. Applications are invited from FCA's membership and other people who have expressed an interest in the charity's work. Future appointments will be advertised. On appointment, new trustees are briefed on the purpose, constitution and policies of the charity.

The Trustees meet quarterly to agree FCA's strategy and areas of activity, including financial plans and risk management, and performance. The day-to-day management of FCA business, application for small grants, and the approval of items expenditure not exceeding £2,500, is carried out by its Officers (Chair, Treasurer and Secretary). Trustees promote FCA's role, work and financial needs to other individuals and organisations. All trustees give their time freely and no trustee remuneration is paid. Trustees may reclaim small out-of-pocket expenses made on behalf of FCA. No Trustee or connected person took paid employment with FCA during the reporting period.

FCA has no trading subsidiaries, does not hold land or property, and has no loans. It is not a subsidiary of a wider group structure. FCA members are accepted as individuals, not as corporate bodies. At the end of the reporting period, FCA had 106 members. At the time of compiling this report, membership has risen to 164.

FCA Trustees have agreed policies on:

- internal financial controls and risk management
- data protection and privacy

FRIENDS OF COOKHAM ABBEY

- safeguarding and serious incident reporting
- 'Know your donor' and due diligence
- risk analysis and management for FCA activities. FCA holds public liability insurance.

Trustees are grateful to Jill Oseman for acting as Membership Secretary. FCA has contracted with Our Community Enterprise, a non-profit company, to prepare bids for grants.

A number of FCA members work as volunteers on the Community Engagement programme, particularly to provide workshops and activities with schools and other local groups. Where appropriate, the required level of Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks are obtained.

Trustees are not aware of any serious incident to be reported to the Charity Commission during the reporting period or subsequently. No external risks or impacts have affected FCA positively or negatively during the reporting period.

6 **Declarations**

The Trustees declare that:

In managing the charity, the Trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit;

there have been no serious incidents/problems which have caused/could cause significant harm or loss to the charity or the people it helps.

The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' Report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustees



Gabor Thomas Chair 15/10/2025

7 **Financial Statement**

The financial statement of Friends of Cookham Abbey has been prepared in accordance with Charity Commission requirements and guidance (Statement of Recommended Practice 2005) using the Receipts and Payments basis.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which show with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011 Accounts and Reports Regulations, and the charity's own constitution. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Approved by the FCA Trustees on 10th October 2025 and signed on their behalf



Gabor Thomas Chair 15/10/2025

FRIENDS OF COOKHAM ABBEY


**CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**
**Independent examiner's
report on the accounts**

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

 Charity Name
Friends of Cookham Abbey

**On accounts for the
period ended**
31st December 2024
**Charity no
(if any)** 1204300

Set out on pages

 ABOVE AND BELOW
 (to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the period ended 31/12/2024.

**Responsibilities and basis
of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

**Independent
examiner's statement**

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (other than that disclosed below *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:

Date:

15/10/2025

Name:

PETER JOHN CARVER.

Relevant professional

N/A.

Registered charity no. 1204300

6

FRIENDS OF COOKHAM ABBEY

qualification(s) or body (if
any):

Address:

YORK PLACE	
COX GREEN LANE	
MAIDENHEAD	SL6 3EU

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

FRIENDS OF COOKHAM ABBEY

Friends of Cookham Abbey

Accounts for period ended 31 December 2024

	2024	2024
	£	£
Income and Expenditure Account		
Income		
Membership Subscriptions/Donations	30,217.21	
Talks/site tours	7,012.55	
Other events	16,998.14	
Interest received	101.09	
Grants received	31,582.00	
Sundry income	75.00	
Total income		85,985.99
Expenditure		
Communications	903.00	
Event costs	6,844.80	
Set-up costs	2,520.00	
Artist in Residence	12,277.73	
Community Engagement	21,267.70	
On-site costs	9,262.00	
Post excavation costs	9,210.58	
Fundraising costs	6,238.19	
Insurance	96.00	
Sundry expenses	20.00	
Bank charges	60.00	
		68,700.00
Net of income and expenditure		<u>17,285.99</u>
Balance Sheet		
Bank	21,210.44	
Current Assets		21,210.44
Maidenhead Archaeological & Historical Society	2,041.82	
Sundry Payables	1,882.63	
Current Liabilities		<u>3,924.45</u>
Net assets		<u>17,285.99</u>
General Fund		
as at 10th August 2023	0.00	
Net of income and expenditure	17,285.99	
as at 31st December 2024		<u>17,285.99</u>