

The Friends of Raymond

Chairman's Report to AGM 8th February 2026

As Shakespear put it, the course of true love never did run smooth, and it's fair to say that, as with affairs of the heart, the affairs of the Friends of Raymond have seldom run smoothly either.

It would be very unusual for me say the past year had gone like clockwork. So it will come as no surprise if I tell you that 2025 certainly wasn't without its ups and downs. Just some of the setbacks we encountered were locks too tight for the boats to go into them, unforeseen leaks and mechanical failures and, of course, the water shortages that prevented *Nutfield & Raymond* from going anywhere between August and November.

All the same, in spite of everything the fates threw at us, we managed to achieve a great deal last year. The details of our achievements will be in the reports from the officers, as well as some them having been reported in the recent newsletter. So, by way of the chairman's overview, all I need say is that we managed to attend every event in our programme, even if we did have to go to some of them by road rather than by water, and we did a great deal of improvement work on the boats, especially *Raymond*.

But, as with the course of true love, it's not the bumps along the way that matter, it's the end result that counts. And in that respect I'm very pleased to say that 2025 did indeed have a happy ending.

We finished the year with more money in the bank than we started with – due in no small part to the tireless work of our sales team, and to some very generous and unexpected donations – with more members than we started with, and with the boats in much better shape than they were in a year ago.

So, it only remains for me to pay tribute to my colleagues, the officers of the charity who have worked all year behind the scenes to make the Friends of Raymond function as a going concern, to everyone who has helped with the boats and with the fundraising, and to each and every one of our Friends without whose generosity and support there would be no Friends of Raymond. Thank you all.

Nick Lake
Chairman
3rd February 2026