



**The Friends of
Colchester Museums**

Registered Charity No. 310669

Winter Newsletter 2024

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For up to date news and information, please visit the website for

The Friends of Colchester Museums

tfocm.org.uk

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The lecture programme in Lion Walk Church ran well, apart from the unfortunate event of Andrew Philips being taken ill while giving the Mark Davies Memorial Lecture. I am glad to report that he is recovering well, and the Friends' thanks go to members and church staff for their speedy intervention and the support given to Andrew.

The second outing of 2023, to Stowmarket Museum of Food, took place with some delay to the return; this is reported on later in the newsletter.

The original survey of members' preferences for time and venue of meetings was of little use because there was no clear preference and a low return. A much-simplified survey was enclosed in the Autumn newsletter, basically just asking if members would prefer to start at 7 instead of 7.30. The results of this were discussed at the last Committee meeting. A summary follows this Report. There were many good suggestions for talks, though not generally with suggested speakers, and these will be discussed by the Committee.

A private viewing of the Gladiators Exhibition was arranged and went well, though with a lower attendance than was hoped for. This was possibly due to short notice or because many members had already seen it.

It was agreed that King Charles might be interested to read our Spring Newsletter, which included a report on his visit to Colchester Castle with the Queen Consort, and a copy was duly sent to Buckingham Palace. Our newsletter editor received a reply, in which the Head of Royal Correspondence informed us that the King was delighted to be reminded of this wonderful visit. The letter concluded that "His Majesty would have me convey his warmest good wishes to all of The Friends of Colchester Museums."

I am very pleased to report that Yvonne Abrams has joined the Committee and will be responsible for the website. This is excellent news, and will be a relief to Alan Skinner who resigned from running the website about three years ago but has very kindly been continuing to do so until a replacement could be found.

There is a very promising programme in preparation for the next year - more information follows - and I look forward to seeing you at the talks.

Ray Cantrell

Chairman

A Correction

Our Chairman heard from a member, Martin C. Woods, who wrote:

If I may correct an error in the Autumn Newsletter, Mark Davies did not live in Roman Road, but here at Castle Road from 1972. I purchased the property from him in September, 2004.

TFoCM are pleased to set the record straight!

Michael Connell
Newsletter Editor

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REPORT ON MEMBERSHIP SURVEY AUTUMN 2023

1. Members were asked, via a short questionnaire included in the Autumn 2023 Newsletter, three questions:

Would you prefer talks to start at 7.30 p.m. (as now) or at 7p.m?

Do you come to the talks by walking, by bus, or by car?

Have you any suggestions for talks?

2. 48 replies were returned. Of these, 6 were representing the views of 2 members.

3. Of the replies received, 17 expressed a preference for 7p.m, 26 for 7.30p.m, and 3 had no preference. 2 returned forms did not have an answer to this question.

Counting people rather than replies (where replies were in the names of 2 members) 18 expressed a preference for 7p.m, 28 for 7.30p.m, and 3 had no preference.

4. The results suggest that the preferred time of the two options given is 7.30p.m.

5. 27 of the 48 returns indicated that people travel by bus or walking, 21 by car. For people travelling by bus, cycle or walking, the City centre is probably easier than another venue. For car users, a venue away from the centre with easier parking might be preferable. However, the returns suggest that a venue in the City centre would probably suit more people than one further out.

6. About 40 suggestions were made for possible subjects for talks, with some overlapping and many being excellent. All will be considered, but speakers knowledgeable on the subjects will not always be easy to find.

7. The results were discussed at the last Committee meeting, and a decision was made not to change the meeting time or place.

Ray Cantrell

MONEY TALKS - Subscriptions due 1st January 2024

The rates are: £13 Single members - £20 for Couples and £28 for Family membership.

A remittance advice is enclosed for you to enclose with your payment. Many members pay by a bank standing order; but if you have not arranged to do so, the remittance advice shows our bank account details so that you can pay online, either as a standing order or a one-off payment.

Our subscription rates increased last year and most members have amended their payment rate. A few members have not done so as yet, and a reminder is enclosed if that is the case.

Please note that your membership card is enclosed with this mailing. If you no longer want to be a member, please return your membership card to the Hon. Treasurer (details on page 2).

Season Tickets

Admission for our talks remains at £2 per session for members (£4 for non-members). However, you can buy season tickets for all talks for £20, a saving of £4. Please use the remittance form for your payment, or payments can be made directly into our bank account. Please quote "Season Ticket".

Gift Aid

Thanks to the members who have already completed a gift aid form to enable us to claim gift aid back from His Majesty's Customs and Revenue. If you are not sure whether you have completed a form already, please check with me. Providing that you pay enough income tax to cover your subscription, it is very helpful if you can do this, enabling us to raise more money.

Peter Evans
Hon. Treasurer

ANDREW MILLAR

Early this year, we heard that the Friends were going to receive a bequest from the estate of Andrew Millar, a long-standing member and indeed Committee member who had died in February 2020, aged 92. Peter Evans and a number of fellow members remember Andrew, who was blind and had worked as a Senior Physiotherapist in Orthopaedics at Black Notley Hospital. He was also a Town Guide and went on active and even dangerous holidays. Peter said that at his funeral it was said that Andrew knew that he was blind, but he didn't have to believe it if he didn't want to.

Apparently, he was involved with the launch of the Talking Newspaper for the blind and his particular contribution, as a Scotsman from Paisley, was to arrange that the newspapers would be sent post free. It was no surprise that the Talking Newspaper and other charities for the blind featured in his will, along with local heritage groups including the Friends of Colchester Museums and the Colchester Oral History group “Colchester Recalled.” Andrew chaired this from its foundation until his death, for almost 30 years.

As time went on, we found out that the amount of the bequest given to us was £40,000. We were astounded; it was so generous of Andrew to think of The Friends, and indeed the other groups. Currently, this sum is held on deposit, earning us more money.

So, what can we do with this? We will support the Museum by purchasing more exhibits and we are looking for at least one large item to commemorate his generous gift.

Ray Cantrell and Peter Evans

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EVENING LECTURES AUTUMN 2023

Frinton and Walton Heritage Trust (5th September)

John Barter, Chairman of the Trust, gave a talk concentrating on the beaches of Frinton over the years. He told us how until the town of Frinton was founded in 1882 there was nothing on the beaches (although barrels of contraband found their way ashore through the marshes where the golf course is now). Frinton was intended to be an upmarket resort, with all houses in the area of the Avenues having to be large and of good quality. Celebrities and even Royalty spent holidays in the town - and some came there to live. There were cheaper houses for tradesmen and labourers elsewhere.

The beach was developed by constructing the sea walls and access paths upon the cliffs and installing wooden groynes. There were strict regulations for dress and behaviour on the beach and sea walls. Originally, tents were provided by the Council for the use of bathers, but these were soon replaced by bathing machines and beach huts, the best of which now sell for £80,000!

Ray Cantrell

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The Town Watch (19th September)

In uniforms and carrying their weapons, three members of The Colchester Watch (called the Town Watch before Colchester’s city status) gave an interesting presentation on the history of the Watch and its role in the present day.

The earliest record of a town watch comes from the year 802 when tithings - groups

of ten able-bodied men - were called upon to become law enforcers. In the following centuries, watchmen acted as the police force across the country. However, as in other towns our force was disbanded, being replaced in 1840 by the Essex Constabulary. Then in 2001, the Colchester Town Watch was reinstated to provide a purely ceremonial and civic role; every year they appear at the Town Hall during the Mayor Making and at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday. Notably, Colchester Watch stood guard during the King's visit earlier this year.

After the talk, those present were invited to talk to the speakers and to handle the weapons. It was a most enjoyable and informative evening.

Mary Dale

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Art of the Town Hall: Philip Wise (3rd October)

The Town Hall holds many treasures and Philip revealed this, by telling the stories behind the artwork.

Some paintings reveal insights into Colchester's history: 16C Dutch refugees seeking permission to stay in the town, and William Gilberd showing his experiments with electricity to Elizabeth I. Then there are portraits of former mayors and aldermen, including familiar names such as Wilson Marriage and James Paxman.

The portrait of Cllr Catherine Buchanan Alderton (1869-1951) is significant as she was the first woman Mayor of Colchester, but the most notable is that of the late Queen by Richard Stone. Painted in 1991, it was reproduced extensively at the time of her death. There are also landscape paintings in the collection, including one of St Peter's church from 1763.

Several interesting artefacts were also shown, including table decorations: an ornamental Epergne centre piece and a silver model of a ship, the 'Colchester Neff'.

It was certainly a stimulating presentation, and we are all now hoping to see these treasures for ourselves.

Joy Hopkinson

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Colchester Between the Wars – continued (17th October)

Paul Rusiecki explained that his topic, the impact of World War One on local soldiers, would be focused on their stories in the years 1919-1939. However, the statistic of 196 Colchester men from the Essex Regiment dying in France and Flanders, and the anguish of their families attempting to trace them, in no way overlooked the horror of the War itself.

Very many problems were encountered as soldiers returned to everyday life: "We were

better off in France” sums up the feelings of those who subsequently experienced unemployment, tramping and the workhouse. Extensive research into local press reports revealed the shocking number of ex-servicemen and civilians, some with distinguished records, whose despair led to long term illness. Detailed biographical details confirmed that the authorities were often unsympathetic about what we would now understand as PTSD. And over 100 local suicides were recorded in these inter war years, a frightening statistic.

Paul showed us in no uncertain terms that “the icy fingers of the Great War have a very long reach indeed.”

Michael Connell

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THE MARK DAVIES MEMORIAL LECTURE

When Paxman's went bust - Andrew Philips (31st October)

At the start of the talk, a presentation was made to Caroline Davies, Mark's widow, who attended along with their son, Rhuddlian.

Andrew started by explaining that whilst Paxman's existed for 150 years, the first third was dominated by James Paxman himself and Steam. The remaining was the time of Diesel, led by Paxman's youngest son Edward (Teddy). For most of that time Paxmans, in whatever form, was the major local employer.

It all nearly ended in 1932, when the group of which Paxman's was a part went bankrupt. Teddy did manage to rescue the situation, but it was a difficult time. It was my late father's bad luck to proudly finish his apprenticeship at this time, as there was no money to take him on at the rate that he was now entitled to expect. My grandfather and four uncles worked there at the time, but Dad would never return.

However, as the war came in 1939, Paxmans did rise once more and Teddy was in demand from the Admiralty. Sadly, it was never a locally owned family firm again.

Peter Evans

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ROSE ALLEN (OR ALLIN) – A COLCHESTER MARTYR

When Queen Mary I came to the throne she wanted to reimpose Roman Catholicism and chose to do this by generally copying the Spanish methods (though not actually setting up a formal inquisition). Heretics - those who refused to deny their protestant faith - were generally burnt at the stake.

Of the 280 people burned at the stake in her reign, 25 - nearly 10% of the total for the whole country - were connected with Colchester. This is a remarkable number for a single town of this size.

There is a monument to the Colchester martyrs on the stairs in Town Hall. This has, among others, the names of the 25 Colchester martyrs who chose death rather than denying their faith during Mary's rule, 1553-1558.



This is the story of one of these, Rose Allen (or Allin), burned in 1557. It is abbreviated from Foxe's Book of Martyrs:

Master Tyrrel with certain of his company went into the chamber where Father Mount and his wife lay, telling them to "rise for they must go with him to Colchester Castle." Mother Mount was very sick and asked that her daughter might first fetch her some drink.

So her daughter, Rose Allin, took a stone pot in one hand and a candle in the other and went to draw drink for her mother. As she came back again toward the house Tyrell met her and told her to advise her father and mother to be good Catholic people.



The burning of Rose Allin, hand, by Edmund Tyrrell, as she was going to fetch drink for her Mother, flying in her hands.



She said she would not do this.

Then Tyrell, taking the candle from her, held the burning candle under her hand till the sinews cracked. He said repeatedly to her, "Why, wilt thou not cry?" but she answered that she had no cause, she thanked God, but rather to rejoice. She said he had more cause to weep than she if he considered the matter well. In the end he thrust her from him violently.

When all six to be burned were nailed at their stakes, and the fire round about them, they clapped their hands for joy in the fire. Bystanders, estimated at thousands, cried encouragement to them.

In 2008, Colchester Council named new streets in Berechurch after the Colchester Martyrs. Although Rose Allin was not included, William Harris, Agnes Silverside, Richard Nichols and others are commemorated by street names.

Ray Cantrell

HELP NEEDED WITH THE JUMBO PROJECT

It has been a busy few months for The Jumbo Project following the award of an initial grant of £250,000 to North Essex Heritage from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The charity and building preservation trust aims to restore the unique Victorian water tower and transform it into a financially sustainable heritage and community space. The Jumbo Project has already been supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund as well as Historic England, the Government's Town Deal Fund and The Architectural Heritage Fund.

Made possible by National Lottery players, the development funding is helping North Essex Heritage progress its plans to apply for a full National Lottery grant later. Purcell architects, consultants and a Project Director have been appointed to help the Trustees steer the project forward. Imagemakers, award-winning experts in interpretation design and strategy, have identified key themes which will be reflected in the displays inside Jumbo's huge water tank.

Simon Hall MBE DL, Chair of North Essex Heritage, said: "We were delighted to have received the amazing support thanks to National Lottery players.

"Colchester has always loved Jumbo, which is an icon of our City. Now we need everyone to support us as we work towards the full development scheme which will deliver a project we can all be proud of for generations to come.

"We will now start vital restoration work, continue making grant applications to other organisations, and develop our proposals and partnerships. We will also seek planning permission and listed building consent."

Volunteer guides, project partners, charitable donors and fundraisers are all needed as activity increases. All financial contributions are valuable to the Trust, no matter how small. If you are interested in donating to The Jumbo Project, volunteering, or raising money, please contact simon.hall@northessexheritage.org

Recent milestones for Trustees and volunteers supporting The Jumbo Project have included the launch of the first public tours. It took just minutes for the annual Heritage Open Day tours to be booked out and there was a similar enthusiastic response when the paid-for guided trips went on sale. The first volunteer guide, Ian Stimson, was in place for tour number one. More tours will be held in early 2024.

You can keep up to date with The Jumbo Project on Instagram @JumboHeritageColchester or X (formerly Twitter) @ColchesterBPT

North Essex Heritage and The Jumbo Project have new websites coming soon. And there will be more Project news to come in TFoCM Spring Newsletter.

Irene Kettle
North Essex Heritage

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PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 2023.

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Available in due course in bookshops in Colchester and Chelmsford



Paxman Girl assembling one of the 3,565 engines built to drive large tank and vehicle landing craft at D-Day

STOWMARKET TRIP

On September 14th a group of TFOCM members visited the Museum of Food on the site of the former East Anglian Museum of Rural Life in Stowmarket. It was nice to be on a “Friends” trip again, my first ride on a Kings Coach since before lockdown.



The Museum site is quite large, over 70 acres, and consists of a farm, park and woodland and a variety of buildings that formed part of the original museum. There are restored buildings, new buildings and old buildings transported from various parts of the Eastern Counties and re-erected on site. The majority of them have links to farming and country life such as barns, stables, a smithy and a working water mill.

It was last year that the Museum reopened as the Food Museum and it is still being developed. One of the disadvantages of a site like this is that being so large it makes it difficult to see everything in a limited time. We were there for just over three hours and there were electric buggies if you did not feel like walking. To find our way around we were given a map, which actually was an artist’s impression of a bird’s eye view and the captions were printed in a light grey, making it difficult to read. There were some suggestions on the back of the map about what to see and I did manage to visit most of these. The main point the museum seemed to be making was about the environmental cost of producing food, especially meat. Apparently, cattle produce vast quantities of methane and require large acreages of land that could be used more efficiently to grow food. Some vegetarian alternatives to meat were available to taste as well as some spiced crickets. Although it was not quite like the Bush Tucker Trail it was difficult not to make the comparison.

While a concern for the environment is perfectly understandable and it is something that we have to tackle, I was hoping for a bit more about the history and development of food. For example, the story of when man first turned to agriculture or a history of how diets have changed over the years and the health risks of consuming too much processed food, fat, sugar, salt, alcohol, fizzy drinks etc would have been interesting. Hopefully, as the Museum develops it will cover topics such as these.

One of the highlights of the day was the cream tea in the café - who would want to eat spiced crickets when there were scones, strawberry jam and cream on the menu?

All the staff we met at the Museum were lovely, very friendly and very helpful, particularly in assisting with the little problem that delayed our departure.

So, thanks to Joy for arranging the trip and the excellent weather as well. It was good to get out on a TFOCM trip again and I shall be watching for developments at the Food Museum for a possible future visit.

Peter Jones

MUG TO COMMEMORATE KING CHARLES' VISIT

A limited production of 100 mugs - to commemorate the visit to Colchester by King Charles III earlier this year - is now on sale.

They have been commissioned by Sir Bob Russell, who is raising money for the installation of a statue for “Twinkle Star” sisters Jane and Ann Taylor, prolific writers of poems for “infant minds.” One by Jane, written in Colchester in 1806, is known throughout the world as “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star”.



The mugs are being sold for £10 each.

Payment is either by cash or cheque, payable to “Twinkle Star Fund,” by contacting sir.bob.russell@hotmail or in writing to:

35 Catchpool Road,
Colchester CO1 1XN.

Sir Bob said, “I felt that the visit by King Charles and The Queen Consort, in March, should be commemorated and that the production of a limited edition of mugs would be a good idea, with the sales raising money for the Twinkle Star statue project. While we have enough for the statue, which has now been cast, we still need to raise money for the engraved paving and installation.”

The statue will be located diagonally opposite Colchester Town Hall, on the wide pavement to the east of Pelham’s Lane in front of Tesco’s. It is hoped that installation will take place in April.



GLADIATOR EXHIBITION VIEWING

On September 7th, on what was possibly the hottest evening of the year, Colchester Castle Museum very kindly arranged a private viewing of the Gladiators Exhibition for members of TFoCM.

Besides giving an opportunity to have a close look at this remarkable display there was a most informative talk from Glynn Davis, the curator who was responsible for producing the display and a chance to chat to senior museum staff, including Frank Hargrave, the Head of Colchester and Ipswich Museums.

Some of the questions asked were difficult even for the experts - such as the role of women gladiators and just who released the beasts from the tethering block (one of these being in the display), but the talk was most informative and very interesting.

Probably the pride of the exhibition was the gladiator's helmet on loan from Pompeii, complete apart from the plume at the top which presumably was burnt away. Other items included the miniature figure of a gladiator, weapons, pieces of armour, and many other small items.

Maybe one day the amphitheatre will be found where gladiators fought in Colchester. But there is also the possibility that part of the chariot circus may have been used.

We are grateful to the staff of Castle Museum for giving up their time to run this visit.

Ray Cantrell

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NEWS FROM THE MUSEUMS

Colchester Castle has seen a steady flow of visitors, kept buoyant by the Gladiators exhibition. We have been delighted by the feedback received on this carefully thought out, but playful, interpretation of our understanding of Gladiators in Roman Colchester. The exhibition closes in January, so there is only a short time left if you haven't yet visited.

Planning is in place for next year's exhibition, which will be a departure from the Roman theme, but nostalgia will be prevalent - details to follow in the new year.

Work continues on Hollytrees Museum to address the roofing issues, mainly water ingress, for which we received funding from Arts Council. We hope to complete the works before the end of 2024.

“At Risk” assessment of the Castle

Historic England released the ‘Heritage at Risk’ list recently and the Castle was placed on it this year in recognition of the extent of works needed. Colchester Museums have

been actively seeking funds to address issues around water ingress, which is causing damp in the walls, particularly in the Northwest areas of the building. Historic England advisors visited the Castle earlier this year as part of this process and agreed that work was necessary to reverse the declining condition of the areas in question, in order to protect the use of the building and the important collections within. They described the condition as “generally satisfactory, but with significant local issues.” Following their inspection, the Castle was placed on the Heritage at Risk register as Priority A – indicating an immediate risk of deterioration or loss of fabric.

With the support of Colchester City Council, a number of investigations have since taken place to ascertain the nature of the issues, including an extensive drone survey, consultation and a survey with conservation specialists. A Conservation Accredited architect has been engaged to develop plans which will address immediate concerns and longer-term conservation maintenance of the building. Heras fencing has been erected, both to protect the external walls and as a health and safety precaution until essential work takes place to stabilise the vulnerable sections of the walls.

We have again met with a Historic England advisor who approved our plans to remodel the current inadequate drainage system, which has been overwhelmed by persistent rainfall and torrential downpours in recent months.

The Castle’s Grade 1 Status

Colchester Castle is a building of the highest significance in England. Comprising the Norman keep and the Roman Temple of Claudius, the multi-period site is registered as a Scheduled Ancient Monument and is also Grade I listed. The exterior of the building gives the impression of an ancient monument in places, whilst inside is a fully functioning museum housing significant collections and welcoming many thousands of visitors each year. These include school children learning about its Roman past, Boudica’s revenge on Colchester and daily life in a Castle. Maintaining a building such as this is challenging, but we are committed to ensuring that future generations will be able to enjoy the Castle for years to come, and, with plans now in place, will commence work to address the issues highlighted by Historic England.

Pippa Pickles
Colchester Museums Manager



COLCHESTER'S HERITAGE

Open Days

This year, Heritage Open Days took place between Friday 8th and Sunday 17th September, with Colchester's contribution concentrated on the two weekends. In total there were 46 participating venues or guided walks (compared to 29 in 2021 and 38 in 2022). Heritage Open Days was a major event in Colchester's year of celebration following the award of City status in September 2022.

The total number of visitors recorded was 7,550 which is a significant increase on the figures of 5,094 in 2022 and 3,692 in 2021. Visitor figures have now returned to pre-pandemic levels across the City and are broadly comparable to the level of participation recorded in the period 2015-19. Visitor numbers might well have been higher this year, but for the extremely hot weather over the weekend of 9th-10th September which impacted the numbers at the Castle in particular. It is also worth noting that, despite strenuous efforts by the organisers, several venues did not report their figures with the result that the actual number of visitors is likely to have been around 8,000.

The Heritage Open Days festival in Colchester would be impossible to run in its present form without the support of local organisations and volunteers, particularly members of the Colchester Civic Society. Special thanks are due to Ann Turner, who for many years has arranged stewards for various venues in Colchester.

Recent Work

Work on interpreting the City's heritage has continued in recent months with new interpretation panels being installed at St Michael's Church in Myland, the Roman Circus and the University of Essex. This is part of the ongoing project to improve the public's access to the rich and diverse heritage of Colchester by installing interpretation panels at key locations. To date over 40 have been installed, including around the complete circuit of the Roman Wall, and at Gosbecks Archaeological Park, St Botolph's Priory and the Jumbo water tower.

The panel at St Michael's is at the ruined medieval church in Rectory Close, rather than the Victorian church on the hill, and is particularly noteworthy as this is one of the least known archaeological sites in Colchester. St Michael's has an interesting history which includes being badly damaged during the Siege of Colchester in 1648. The site has been adopted by the Myland Community Council, who funded the interpretation panel.

The interpretation panel at the Roman Circus is the second in the planned series and follows the installation of the first panel at Flagstaff Road in October 2022. This new panel is outside Nero Court, the former Royal Artillery Officer's Quarters of the military garrison and describes the eastern end of the Roman Circus which saw frequent crashes of chariots known as 'shipwrecks'. The panel at the Roman Circus was funded by Mrs

Rosemary Jewers in memory of her husband Tony, a TV cameraman who worked for several major broadcasters during his professional career, including the BBC and ITV Anglia.

The final panel is located at what is arguably Colchester's newest archaeological monument, the Bronze Age barrow cemetery at the University of Essex. Three low earthen mounds are visible at the site with two only known from aerial photographs. Together these five barrows form the most important Bronze Age barrow cemetery in the local area, dating back to the period 2500 – 700 BC. The interpretation panel has been placed close to the footbridge over the railway line at the new student accommodation building known as The Meadows. The panel was paid for by the University of Essex through the planning process.

In the next few months, it is planned to install a bronze plaque on the grave of Capt. Thomas Pinto in Holy Trinity churchyard and make progress on the final interpretation panel at the Roman Circus.

Philip J. Wise
Heritage Manager



Unveiling of the interpretation panel at St Michael's Myland by the vicar, Rev. Ray Gibbs.

COGGESHALL MUSEUM

Coggeshall Museum opened in 1990 in an annexe to St. Peter's Hall in Stoneham Street, the rooms having formerly housed the kitchens which provided meals for the nearby primary school. Subsequently an enthusiastic group of volunteers managed to acquire an astonishing array of artefacts from the local community, plus the furniture necessary for displaying them. These have been consolidated over the years so that today Coggeshall has one of the best small museums in the county.

One of the most important of the Museum's displays relates to Coggeshall Abbey, which dominated the town in the Middle Ages. Although few of the buildings remain, there is a wonderful scale model of how the Abbey complex would have looked prior to the Dissolution. There are also displayed many examples of the local tiles and bricks, thought to be amongst the earliest such post-Roman examples. Opinions are divided as to the identity of a human skull found during excavations in the 1950s, but it may be that of Abbot Ralph (1207-1218).



Coggeshall's wealth was very much based upon the trade in textiles, and this is reflected in a number of displays. There is a full working example of a hand loom, whilst elsewhere there are examples of the delicate tambour lace which employed many women in the later Nineteenth Century.

In the more recent past, Coggeshall experienced a diverse range of occupations, and these are reflected in the displays on four local companies:

JK King and EW King (seed growing), Swinborne's (isinglass) and Hollingtons (clothing manufacture).

Like all communities, Coggeshall has had its fair share of characters, foremost amongst whom was local blacksmith Dick Nunn. One of our displays pays testimony to this 'people's champion' who fought to protect public rights of way and who demolished - without authority - buildings he deemed unfit for human habitation. He was regarded locally with great affection, and when he died in 1896 shops were closed and hundreds of residents turned out to pay their respects.

A recent acquisition has been a Sound Box, financed largely by a generous grant from the Essex Heritage Trust. This enables visitors to hear interviews with local residents which were recorded some years ago. The past is very much brought alive as stories are told of life in the First World War, farming with horses, and the arrival of American servicemen at nearby air bases as from 1942. Also interesting is the strong local accent,



which is heard perhaps rather less these days.

Our younger visitors are invariably drawn to the display on education in former times. The items include a child's chalk slate, ink wells and a school punishment book from the 1920s. The latter describes in detail the misdemeanours which had led to the cane, one of the more unusual offences being 'stealing walnuts from a neighbour's garden!' Two recent

innovations have been the introduction of a Children's Trail within the Museum and the opportunity for volunteers to provide local history presentations at the primary school.

There is also a Research Room which provides computer facilities for investigating family history in addition to an extensive library related to topics of local interest. The exhaustively researched Roll of Honour commemorates the many Coggeshall men who lost their lives in the two World Wars.

Working with the Parish Council, a new and attractive Coggeshall Guide pamphlet was published last year. It is available at a number of locations around the town, it is free, and visitors are provided with notes on over thirty buildings of interest. In addition, the Museum is also able to provide guided town walks for visiting groups.

The Museum's website has recently been upgraded the better to reflect the town's heritage. Photographs provide a tantalising glimpse into the past, whilst visitors are able to learn more about the many buildings, characters and occupations that comprise our history. For more information, please refer to coggeshallmuseum.org

The Museum is open from 2.00 pm to 4.30pm on Sunday afternoons and Bank Holidays from Easter through to the end of October. In addition, during July and August it is open on Thursday mornings from 10.00am to 12.00 pm to coincide with the town's market. There is no admission charge, but donations are always welcome to help offset running costs.

Dudley Maughan



Answers 1B, 2A, 3A, 4C, 5B, 6A, 7B, 8C, 9A, 10C

PREVIEWS OF LECTURES IN 2024

April 9th Colchester Non- Conformists: Seven Hundred Years of Awkward Colcestrians....

Ray Cantrell will explore events, both horrifying and humorous, associated with people and places in Colchester. Since the mid 14th century when John Ball was preaching to the peasants in revolt, some in Colchester thought that the established church was not fulfilling the purpose for which it was formed. These people met together to worship in what they believed to be the way God wanted. Until the Act of Tolerance in 1688 they were breaking the law if they met together or failed to attend weekly a service of the Established Church. Now they have, of course, gradually become accepted.

April 23rd 'Theatre in Colchester - lost but not forgotten'

Colchester has always been a centre of excellence in the theatre and entertainment worlds. It is the only place with two Roman Theatres and a Chariot Racing Track, nine or more Music Halls (an important stop on the 18th and 19th century tour schedule) the Moot Hall Theatre, the Theatre Royal, the Grand Palace of Varieties, and more! On this birthday (and death day) of William Shakespeare, Dorian Kelly, the well-known local theatre historian and raconteur, has some stories that will amaze you.

May 7th 'The history of bell ringing and the bells of Colchester churches'

We are lucky in Colchester to have some churches with wonderful bells that are still rung frequently.

Matthew Brown is a member of the Northeast Essex Association of Change Ringers and has rung in many Colchester churches and further afield. He will talk about the history of bellringing, widespread in England by 750AD, although most bells then were hung in a very simple fashion and simply tolled. Great changes occurred after the Reformation when the bells were rehung using new technology, giving greater control. The art - or possibly science - of Change Ringing was then developed.

May 21st 'Boudica: Myth and Legend'

Richard Bale has a lifelong interest in the Romans, studying them at university and then working in the 'field' for many years. He has presented the Roman Life series for the Colchester Archaeological trust and has organised many walks and talks on the Romans.

In his talk on Boudica he will explore the evolving story of her life and look at how much is based on solid information and how much is myth, taking a fresh look at the evidence.

June 4th ‘Colchester Voices: Wartime Memories of D-Day and Beyond’

Patrick Denney is well known to us as a past Chair of the Friends and a local historian and author.

The date of his talk is just two days before the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings on 6th June 1944. Some of these voices were recorded by Patrick at the 60th anniversary, to record the D-day experiences of a number of local people. Since then all of them have passed away, making their memories of the occasion of even more value and interest. He will also include one or two other amazing experiences beyond that of D-Day.

June 18th and September 3rd: Colchester Medical Society 250th Anniversary

Colchester Medical Society was established in 1774, so this year celebrates their 250th anniversary. We will celebrate with them by having two talks on the history of medicine in Colchester.

These will be introduced by Dr Fabrizio Casale, who is their archivist, and he will give the first lecture: ‘The Doctors and Matrons at the Essex County Hospital Colchester’

July 2nd ‘The Taylor Maids’

Peter Jones has given many fascinating talks to the Friends on a wide range of subjects. This is the story of Ann and Jane Taylor and the nursery rhyme “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” of course written in Colchester. The sisters lived in an attic, in Stockwell Street, which is still there today. Due to the fundraising efforts of Sir Bob Russell a statue of the sisters is to be erected in the High Street, hopefully in 2024.

September 3rd: Colchester Medical Society 250th Anniversary (ii)

September 17th ‘The life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Preacher and Teacher’

Peter Tervet has conducted extensive research into the life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a most influential Baptist preacher during the 1800s. Although much of his work and influence was in London, he was born in Kelvedon; his family later moved to Hythe Hill, Colchester, when he was only a few months old.

His Christian conversion came at the age of 15 on a chance visit to the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Artillery Street. Subsequently, his influence as a Baptist preacher and teacher has spread worldwide.

Back Lane in The Hythe was renamed Spurgeon Street in the 1920s.

October 1st ‘The Braintree hoard and late Saxon Essex’

A rare and historically important hoard of Anglo-Saxon coins was recently discovered at a site in North-East Essex, near to Braintree. It includes silver pennies dating from the time of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066) and Harold (1066). 1066 is well known for the Battle of Hastings, the end of Saxon England. The coins were minted in several towns including Colchester and were buried in the early autumn of that year.

Philip Wise is the Heritage Manager for Colchester and Ipswich museums and has given several excellent talks for the Friends in recent years.

‘October 15th The Cinque Port of Brightlingsea: Blessing of the Waters’

Roger Tabor is a well-known biologist and naturalist who has presented many natural history programmes on television.

However, he is also the Chairman of the Blessing and Reclaiming of the Waters Committee of Brightlingsea. This is part of the Cinque Port Liberty of Brightlingsea, which is a ‘limb’ of the Cinque Port of Sandwich in Kent. As a fishing port, it holds this ceremony every year to claim the rights to the waters. The tradition has been kept for centuries and the boats go out to sea, decorated with bunting after the ‘Blessing of the Waters’ at The Hard.

October 29th: The Mark Davies Memorial lecture

Details to be confirmed



Gill Bird's New Year Quiz

- How long after Auckland (N.Z.) does the New Year reach Colchester?
A 10 hours B 11 hours C 12 hours
- The half a crown (2/6d) ceased to become legal tender on January 1st of which year?
A 1970 B 1971 C 1972
- Which of these famous architects died on January 1st 1944?
A Edwin Landseer Lutyens B George Gilbert Scott C Joseph Paxton
- Which famous diarist began their diary on January 1st 1660?
A John Evelyn B Mrs Dale C Samuel Pepys
- On January 1st of what year was the BBC established by Royal Charter
A 1923 B 1927 C 1929
- The Archers was first broadcast on January 1st of what year?
A 1951 B 1953 C 1955
- When did England, Wales and Ireland first recognise the 1st January as New Years day?
A 1725 B 1752 C 1784
- When did News Years Day become a public holiday in the UK?
A 1971 B 1973 C 1974
- The oldest recorded New Year festival took place in Mesopotamia in what year?
A 2000 BC B 1012 BC C 98 AD
- Which creature will the next Chinese New Year be named after?
A Rabbit B Snake C Dragon

Answers on page 19



FRIENDS OF COLCHESTER MUSEUMS

Spring & Autumn 2024 Lecture Series

£2 per talk (£4 for non-members)

EVENING LECTURES – Tuesday at 7.30 pm

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|----------|--|---------------------------|
| 9 April | Colchester Non- Conformists:
<i>Seven Hundred Years of Awkward Colcestrians....</i> | <i>Ray Cantrell</i> |
| 23 April | Theatre in Colchester
<i>Lost but not forgotten</i> | <i>Dorian Kelly</i> |
| 7 May | A history of bell ringing and the bells of Colchester churches | <i>Matthew Brown</i> |
| 21 May | Boudica: Myth and Legend | <i>Richard Bale</i> |
| 4 June | Colchester Voices ★
<i>War time memories from the archive 1939-1945</i> | <i>Patrick Denney</i> |
| 18 June | Colchester Medical Society 250th Anniversary (i) | <i>Dr Fabrizio Casale</i> |
| 2 July | AGM at 7pm followed by The Taylor Maids
<i>The story of Ann & Jane Taylor and Twinkle twinkle</i> | <i>Peter Jones</i> |
| 3 Sept | Colchester Medical Society 250th Anniversary (ii) | |
| 17 Sept | The life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon:
<i>Preacher and Teacher</i> | <i>Peter Tervet</i> |
| 1 Oct | The Braintree Hoard and late Saxon Essex | <i>Philip Wise</i> |
| 15 Oct | The Cinque Port of Brightlingsea:
<i>Blessing of the Waters</i> | <i>Roger Tabor</i> |
| 29 Oct | The Mark Davies Memorial lecture | |

Further information from Joy Hopkinson, Programme Secretary
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