



**The Friends of
Colchester Museums**

Registered Charity No. 310669

Spring 2022

Officers

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www.tfocm.org.uk

From the Chair

I am looking forward to April 12th when our 'live' talks start again in Lion Walk Church, it will be good to get back to some sort of normality. Zoom meetings are better than nothing but can never have the atmosphere of a proper meeting. We do not know what 'Friends' will look like when we do get back to normal. Will our members still want to come out into town in the evening? Will some have found other things to do? In the circumstances the committee have decided not to run any trips this summer until we can be sure we can fill a coach.

During the winter break the committee has tried to be positive. We have started to collect images for an FOCM photographic archive. We have a new Newsletter editor and want to make the Newsletter a more interesting read. It had become a bit dull during the lockdown and we would like to include more contributions from members.

So if you feel like writing something we would love to hear from you.

**Please contact the editor Michael Connell: 01206 575948
or email mconnellbureshouse@hotmail.co.uk**

The Annual General Meeting this year will be on June 20th and will start at 7.00pm, half an hour earlier than normal. At the last AGM I agreed to be chairman for one year, so I will be standing down from the committee in June. Fortunately the Vice Chairman Ray Cantrell is offering himself for election.

We are looking for somebody with IT skills to manage the 'Friends' website. This does not necessarily have to be a committee member but they must be a good communicator. So if you know somebody suitable for this post, or you would like to join the committee yourself, please let me or the secretary know.

I look forward to seeing you on April 12th.

Stay Safe until then,

Peter Jones
Chairman

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Treasurer's Topics

I, too, am sure that we are all looking forward to the return of live talks in April – all being well of course.

We did look at ways of taking payment for admission electronically, but this seemed too complicated in view of the small amount involved. It would be a big help if everybody attending could please bring the right money - £2 each or £4 for non-members – to save on handling change.

If you are intending to attend most talks in 2022, you could buy a season ticket for £20 per person. If you want to do this, please send me a cheque payable to The Friends of Colchester Museums at 5, Grimston Road, Colchester CO2 7RN.

Peter Evans

Hon. Treasurer

Proposed changes to FOCM constitution

It is seven years since the constitution was last updated and after a review the following propositions were discussed at the committee meeting on January 24th.

1) Members undertaking work and projects on behalf of the society can only be paid for reasonable out of pocket expenses. Any other payments to members will only be made with the approval of the committee.

This appears to be an unwritten rule in many similar groups to our own. The accepted view was that if you join a group to support a good cause you should not be able to make money out of it.

2) The FOCM can, if the committee approves, support any other organisation or project that has an interest in and promotes the history or heritage of Colchester.

The Friends have been asked in the past to support other worthy historic causes in Colchester, for example we donated a sum of money to help purchase a section of the Roman wall. Strictly speaking the constitution, as it stands, does not permit this sort of expenditure. This proposal addresses that; all donations will need the committee's approval.

3) If the committee decides that it is necessary or advisable to dissolve the Friends of Colchester Museums it shall call a General Meeting giving no less than 21 days notice, stating the terms of the proposed resolution.

If the proposed resolution is confirmed by a two-thirds majority of FOCM members present and voting, the committee shall realise any assets held by or on behalf of the FOCM. Any assets remaining after payment of any proper debts and liabilities shall be disposed of at the discretion of the committee and without any unnecessary delay.

Should the unthinkable happen, at least this proposal would make it easier.

The committee voted overwhelmingly in favour of all the proposals. However, the constitution can only be changed if the proposals receive a majority vote at the AGM or at an Extraordinary General Meeting.

The reason we are publishing these now is to enable the members to be forewarned.

If anyone does not agree they can offer counter proposals and amendments etc. at the AGM.

Peter Jones

Talks and Trips

We are hoping that as many of you as possible will attend our spring series of lectures which start on Tuesday 12 April at 7.30 pm with *Essex Rock – geology beneath the landscape*. We have an interesting list of talks organised and it will be so good to be back in Lion Walk Church again and to see the images on the big screen with other members around us. There will not be any trips in 2022 but hopefully we will be back visiting places of interest in June/July 2023.

I will be standing down as Programme Secretary at the 2022 AGM and a new member of the committee, Joy Hopkinson, has agreed to take over the role. Please vote for her at the AGM as I am sure she will do a good job. It has been an interesting journey for me holding this post for the last ten years and I have enjoyed meeting lots of you at meetings and on the summer trips.

Jenny Jones

Answer to the puzzle on page 14 - No cheating!

<i>The names in order are: Morant, Cowdray, Paxman, Benham, Boudica, St Helena, Harsnett, Eudo Dapifer, Gilbert</i>

Zoom Talks

The Essex Branch of the Historical Society has kindly invited FOCM members to two talks on Zoom this spring. The details are as follows:

Saturday 2 April

Professor Adam Smith, Edward Orsborn, Professor of US Politics and US Political History at Oxford University, will talk about The Trump Legacy. Professor Smith is an expert on the American Civil War and its consequences.

Saturday 7 May

Dr Michael Row, Reader in European History at King's College, London will talk about The Napoleonic Empire. Dr Rowe is an expert on the history of France and Germany and on the theme of the growth of the state and nationalism in Europe.

All talks start at 2.30 pm with Zoom access from 2.15 pm at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89012164046>

Meeting ID 890 1216 4046

(There is no Password, as the Historical Association work on a waiting room system and you will be let in automatically)

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Students

Following the Covid pandemic, we have not been able to hold live lectures and we now wish to attract younger people as well as established members.

As an experiment, it has been decided to offer full time students entry at the members' rate (half the normal rate for non-members). The University and the Sixth Form College have been approached and asked to let students know about the lectures.

The lectures may foster an interest in history in some students, and may even help with their studies. As a side benefit, the venue is generally not full and any additional attendees, even at a reduced rate, will be financially beneficial.

The scheme will be reviewed later in the year.

Ray Cantrell

NEWS FROM THE MUSEUMS

The Platinum Jubilee

Colchester Borough Council and Colchester Museums will be asking local residents to share their favourite images and photographs relating to past Jubilees and significant Royal occasions. If you have any that you think might be suitable please send them to: chris.farndell@ntlworld.com He will pass them on to the museum and keep a copy for the FoCM archive; members can also bring copies to any of the FoCM talks. These could be from the Coronation of Elizabeth II (or even earlier!) and include landmark events from her reign, up to the present day. These images will be available to see on the CBC website and on a swipe screen in Hollytrees Museum, alongside a display of memorabilia from Museum collections. A celebration day will be hosted by Colchester Borough Council in the park on Friday June 2nd: this will include a gun salute, music and beacon lighting.

We're hoping that the images of royal events will be included in a projection of images onto the Castle, which will follow the lighting of the beacon. These images will be kept as a permanent archive celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

We'd welcome any images from the Friends that you would like to be included.

Further details on the celebrations and collection of images will be available soon.

Hollytrees and the Castle

Having submitted a strong, clear application, we were very disappointed not to receive an award from MEND, Museum Estate and Development Fund, which would have supported the much anticipated and necessary repairs and decoration of Hollytrees and the Castle. We are now looking at other ways to finance this essential work, which of course will be supported by Colchester Borough Council and Colchester Borough Homes. A repairs programme will be defined soon, and we'll update you on progress when we can. We're very sorry, as we know the maintenance of these buildings concern many of you. So please be assured that the planned repairs and decorative work will still take place - and we won't stop trying to secure external funding where we can, despite this recent outcome.

Natural History Museum

In October 2021 Pringle Richards Sharratt were appointed to deliver a feasibility plan on the development the Natural History Museum in All Saints Church. Surveys and family consultation have also taken place, and reports delivered to the Museums' Service - thank you to all who took part in the survey process.

A large farming wagon, identified for disposal in 2015, has now been rehomed - transferred to Hall Farm where it can now be enjoyed by visitors.

The team continued to tackle the infestation issues at the Natural History Museum, notably through the decanting and freezing of taxidermy to kill the moths and beetles that are threatening this collection.

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Witchcraft Exhibition 2022

Colchester Museums are working with the Museum of Witchcraft and Magic, Cornwall, to produce an interventive display/exhibition this summer. This next Hidden Histories project, "Witchcraft and Superstition," aims to highlight and explore changing attitudes to witchcraft throughout history. Our interventive display will include one of the most significant texts on witches in history, the mediaeval 'Malleus Maleficarum,' on loan from the University of Essex. Besides this, there will be artefacts related to magic, taken from the combined collections of Colchester Museums and the Museum of Witchcraft. As one of the core themes of this exhibition, we will explore the shift in attitudes to witchcraft and why those suspected of the practice of magic were largely women. Their persecution began in the witch trials that were held in the 15th Century, and the talks and resources that complement this exhibition will allow adult visitors to delve into darker themes, including the persecution of women during Colchester's own witch trials.

Pippa Pickles
Colchester Museums Manager

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Memories of a Guide

A new cohort of guides is in training to support the excellent delivery of town and castle tours. This is a new programme, delivered by local expert guides. Roy Waters, a blue badge guide who qualified in 1994, remembers the process of research, training and shadowing that he experienced, and has enjoyed engaging with an enormous range of visitors from all over the world when they visit our town.

However, he explained that, despite the thorough preparation, not everything went to plan on the day...

“ I was on a town tour with twelve people. We were in the Culver Centre - so next stop High Street, and I used to go through Debenham’s for a short cut. Twelve of the group went in and only eight came out. Apparently the other four had been distracted and, without telling me, decided to go shopping instead. Oh dear... Or, more extraordinarily: A gentleman became stuck in a narrow tunnel between two of the vaults when he had somehow turned sideways. One leg, straight out, was jammed against the opposite wall. When we pulled him out he thanked us, and showed us his false leg!”

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The Roman Circus Visitor Centre

Currently, the Centre is open from 11am to 3pm, Tuesday - Friday. These hours will be extended from 19th April to 10am to 4pm, Tuesday - Saturday. You can go to romancircus.co.uk for further details, and of course remember that admission is free to Friends of Colchester Museums. There are guided tours at 12noon and 2pm and the current exhibition is “Colchester’s Street of Tombs.”

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River Memories

Ray Cantrell has recalled an account from around a hundred and thirty years ago, outlining a crossing of the River Colne en route from the railway station, at a site close to Castle Park. He notes that it had appeared on an old Ordnance Survey map, but only a few traces of it remain. Do any members have any knowledge or memory of this? Ray is continuing to research the topic and hopes to be able to write more in a future newsletter.

In 1724, Daniel Defoe published “A Tour Through the British Isles,” and of course rather earlier than that he lived for some while in Colchester and set part of the infamous novel “Moll Flanders” in the town. His account of Colchester gives precise details of river crossings:

“They have three bridges over the River Coln, one called North-Bridge, at the North Gate, by which the road leads into Suffolk; one call’d East-Bridge, at the foot of the High Street, over which lies the road to Harwich, and one at the Hithe where toward the river it is very populous; it may be called the Wapping of Colchester. The river is navigable within three miles of the town for ships of large burthen; a little lower it may receive even a royal navy. And up to that part of the Hithe, close to the houses, it is navigable for hoys and small barks.”

Fascinating stuff indeed... but no mention of the river ford. Certainly worth exploring!

And Defoe also had further viewpoints on the town:

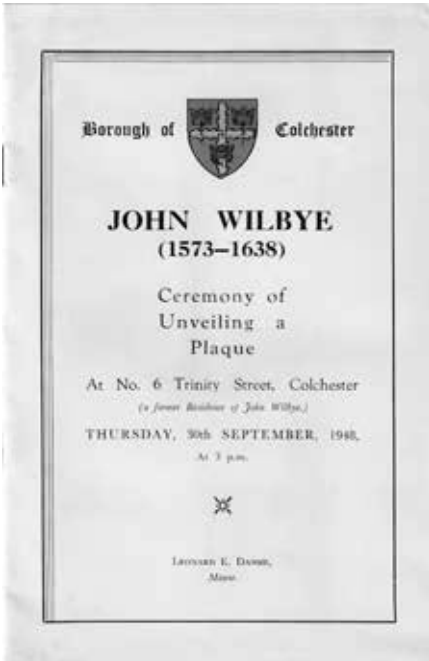
“The Castle of Colchester is now become the only monument showing the antiquity of the place, it being built as the walls of the town also are, with Roman bricks; and the Roman coins dug up here and in the fields adjoining, confirm it. This castle has stood an hundred and twenty years from the time Mr Camden wrote, ‘In the middle of this city stands a castle ready to fall with age.’ Nor will another hundred and twenty years make it look one jot the older: It was observable, that in the late siege of this town, a cannon shot, which the besiegers made at this old Castle, were so far from making it fall, that they made little or no impression upon it...”

And, a good many years further forward from that, the Castle goes from strength to strength, as “News from the Museums” has testified.

Michael Connell

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John Wilbye



The illustration is the front page of a Colchester Borough Council pamphlet issued in 1949 when the blue plaque was unveiled at 6 Trinity Street, Colchester by the Mayor, Leonard E Dansie.

John Wilbye was a composer of madrigals, born on 7th March 1574 in Thetford, the leading composer in his field at that time. His works included “Sweet Honey Sucking Bees” and “Lady, when I Behold.” He retired to Colchester in about 1628, staying with Countess Rivers, who lived at Tymperleys. The house and her property covered a larger area in Trinity Street at that time. The present 6 Trinity Street is a 17th century timber framed house with an 18th century brick front.

Wilbye lived on the site at “The Great Brick House” until he died in September 1638. He was probably buried in Holy

Trinity Church. The Countess, Mary Darcy, was the daughter of Sir Thomas Kitson of Hengrave in Suffolk, who had been Wilbye’s previous patron.

And in 1949, Leonard Dansie was a founder member of the Friends of Colchester Museums.

Peter Evans

OTHER LOCAL HERITAGE GROUPS

We are intending to start a series of articles about other local heritage groups and museums in our area of North Essex and South Suffolk. The first is about the Frinton and Walton Heritage Trust, based at at Frinton, and would like to thank John Barter, chair of the Trust for the article and the excellent photographs.

Frinton and Walton Heritage Trust

Founded in 1984, to research and conserve the heritage of Walton, Frinton, Great Holland, Kirby Cross and Kirby-le-Soken, the Frinton & Walton Heritage Trust is a volunteer organisation with about 300 paid up members, a fifth of whom live outside the immediate area. Membership currently costs £10 for single and £18 for two people at the same address. Members receive three newsletters a year and other benefits include a discount on the purchase of our own published history books and special entry to our monthly winter lecture series in the McGrigor Hall, Frinton-on-Sea.

In 1985, we took on the old Gatekeeper's Cottage, just inside the 'Frinton Gates'. This two up, two down cottage was refurbished and became our headquarters building. Renamed Crossing Cottage, the house has been the repository of our extensive paper archives, maps, house plans, copies of house deeds of the area and local artefacts. Our Archival Team under Archivist, Liz Bruce, follow up research projects about people and buildings of the area and answer questions that come in by letter, email, the website and personal application. We are currently working to restore the Cottage building and to make the facilities easier for visitors and members to meet with the archival team on the ground floor and to exhibit a selection of our Frinton artefacts.

When the Frinton Gates were removed by Network Rail and replaced by automatic railway crossing barriers, the Trust was given the old gates along with the Gatekeeper's Signal Lever Hut. The gates were installed in the Frinton Station's garden alongside some of our London Liverpool Street Station memorabilia. We created the Trevor Bright Railway Museum in the lever hut to house our collection of railway artefacts, covering the history of the railway line and stations from Thorpe-Le-Soken to Walton-On-The-Naze. The Gates at present are undergoing further restoration and hopefully will return to the station garden soon. We also have items of Liverpool Street Station memorabilia installed and displayed in the cottage garden.



Our Railway Museum Curator, Tony Barrett, is very willing to open the Museum by appointment until we are able to open both buildings regularly, hopefully after the May Bank Holiday.



Weekly coffee mornings are held throughout the summer on Tuesday mornings from 10.00am to 12.00 noon in the Cottage Gardens until early October. Open to the public, attendees enjoy their beverage and biscuit whilst watching our volunteer gardeners working in the award-winning garden. There are formal cottage-style beds and a woodland area with a small pond.

During the summer months we are able to lead and host organised individually tailored architectural walks of Frinton and Walton, varying from a half day to a full day experience, with a ploughman's lunch. We have hosted a number of national and Essex based societies and groups who wish to be guided around the

Arts and Crafts Avenues and the Modernist Frinton Park Estate, with selected house visits.

The Trust runs a number of fund raising Sales Events throughout the spring, summer and autumn months on Saturday mornings. Please see our website www.fwheritage.co.uk for further information about these and other Trust activities.

We welcome visitors and new members to the Trust and would love to meet members of the Friends of Colchester Museums. When you come to visit us, do please make yourselves known.

John Barter

Chair, Frinton and Walton Heritage Trust



The Path of History Puzzle

H	K	M	S	R	G	U	A	W	Q
V	X	O	N	A	Y	P	L	X	M
R	E	F	R	Z	T	E	L	E	A
G	I	D	V	A	H	H	Y	N	E
I	P	W	F	J	N	T	B	A	A
L	A	O	D	T	S	E	O	R	H
B	D	O	C	A	N	Q	Y	S	K
E	D	I	D	C	R	H	A	B	N
R	U	N	P	U	A	J	L	E	W
D	C	O	B	M	E	T	T	P	J

The idea of this puzzle is to find a pathway through the maze of letters. The grid includes the names of nine people associated with Colchester. To get you started the first name has been highlighted and you have to find your way to the D in the bottom left-hand corner. Some letters are used twice. Solution on page 5.



**Natural History
Museum**

Invitation

Conservation architects Pringle Richards Sharratt have recently engaged by Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service to investigate options for a new vision of Colchester's Natural History Museum. PRS will be presenting this exciting project at Colchester Castle on Tuesday 22nd March at 3 pm and again at 6 pm. All FOCM members are invited to this event to hear and see ideas for the redevelopment at this 'feasibility' stage **There is no need to book, just turn up at the Castle at either 3 pm or 6 pm on Tuesday 22nd March.**

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**Have you checked out our website?
tfocm.org.uk**

FRIENDS OF COLCHESTER MUSEUMS 2022

All lectures take place at Lion Walk Church, Lion Walk, Colchester
Admission £2 (members), £4 (non-members) or by season ticket

EVENING LECTURES – Tuesday at 7.30 pm

12 April	Essex Rock <i>Geology beneath the Landscape</i>	<i>Ian and Ros Mercer</i>
26 April	The Rise of Modern Colchester <i>1940 – 1990</i>	<i>Andrew Phillips</i>
10 May	Scenes Past <i>A History of Photography in North Essex</i>	<i>Chris Farn dell</i>
24 May	The Friends to the Rescue <i>25 years of acquisitions by Colchester Museums</i>	<i>Philip Wise</i>
7 June	The Calm before the Storm <i>Colchester 1938 - 1939</i>	<i>Paul Rusiecki</i>
21 June AGM	A Brief History of 45 Colchester Schools	<i>Sir Bob Russell</i>
6 Sept	Colchester in the 20th Century <i>As recorded in old films</i>	<i>Colchester Film Makers</i>
20 Sept	Colchester Cemetery	<i>Sharon Mooney</i>
4 Oct	Essex Lighthouses <i>Maritime Safety off the East Coast of England</i>	<i>Peter Jones</i>
18 Oct	The History of St Leonards-at-the-Hythe <i>The rise and fall of one of Colchester's finest medieval churches</i>	<i>Joy Hopkinson</i>
1 Nov	The Changing Face of Ordnance Survey <i>One Inch Maps of Essex</i>	<i>Peter Walker</i>
15 Nov	Money Talks <i>British history and daily life seen through coins</i>	<i>Tom Hodgson</i>

Further information from Jenny Jones, Programme Secretary

jonesjp@outlook.com