

The Friends of Colchester Museums

Newsletter – January 2007



The Friends of Colchester Museums

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<i>Honorary Secretary</i>	Patrick Denney 247 Old Heath Road Colchester CO3 8BN Telephone 01206 796822 Email patrick.denney@ntlworld.com
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<i>Ex Officio</i>	Peter Berridge (General Manager, Colchester Museums) Tom Hodgson (Curator of Social History) Philip Wise (Curator of Archaeology)
<i>Museum Office</i>	Colchester Museums Resource Centre 14 Ryegate Road Colchester CO1 1TW

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MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Another successful year has seen our membership numbers rise to an all time high. Our group is now supported by 610 members, many of whom form part of Couple and Family memberships, thereby raising the total number associated to over 1,200. In addition to the many benefits associated with membership, it remains an excellent way of supporting our local museum service and we trust that all will continue to promote the Society and encourage others to join.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for 2007 are now due for renewal. Current charges are £7.50 for a single member, £12 for a couple and £18 for a family. Please note that a remittance form is enclosed with this newsletter for your payment to be attached. It would greatly assist our Treasurer if members could be prompt in sending their payment as this will lighten his workload considerably in the coming weeks.

For those who pay by standing order, please ensure that you are paying the correct amount. If you would like to begin paying your subscription by standing order (which again would help to reduce administration activities) please complete the enclosed Standing Order Form.

Please send all payments, and any arrears, to Mr Peter Evans at 5 Grimston Road, Colchester CO2 7RN. (Tel: 01206 540990).

Please Note

Your Membership Card for 2007, which allows free entry to the Castle Museum, is included with this newsletter, but remember that payment for 2007 is still owing!

If you no longer wish to remain a Friend of Colchester Museums, please be kind enough to return your membership card to the Treasurer.

GIFT AID

This year, our claim for Gift Aid from HM Customs and Revenue totalled £1,654.59, which brings the total amount received since 2001 to over £6,300.

A big 'Thank You' to all members who have been able to complete a Gift Aid Declaration to help us make these claims. If you have not already completed a Gift Aid Declaration, details are enclosed with this Newsletter.

Please note that if you are able to send a donation in addition to your Annual Subscription, we are able to reclaim tax paid on this as well as your regular annual payment.

Peter Evans *Hon. Treasurer*

LECTURE SERIES 2006

The last six lectures of 2006, judging by attendances and the approbation shown at the conclusion of each item, have been amongst our most successful.

'The Colchester Garrison from Napoleon to the Kaiser' was the title chosen by Andrew Phillips to re-start the programme on September 12th. And what a start! Typical of Andrew - superbly researched and delivered. Whatever the subject, there is no doubt that Andrew entertains!

It was a hard act for Jane Pearson to follow 14 days later, but her subject the Colchester artist John Vine proved to be a worthy subject, especially as the Friends have helped in the purchase of not one, but two of his paintings for the Museum Service. (They were featured in our Annual Report 2005-6 pp.6-7).

Our Hon. Secretary Patrick Denney followed this with a fascinating lecture on Old Heath - home territory for him - and so 'The Road to Suburbia' - the title of his lecture, was not only very authoritative but delivered

with passion and no little style.

Due to an appointment with a surgeon's knife, I regret having to miss Mick Brown's 'Mile End Memories', as I am sure this would have fascinated me, having spent many hours delivering newspapers as a boy in this area and having several friends from this 'village', as it was in those days.

The final two lectures were delivered by two key members of the Museum staff - Tom Hodgson's subject being 'Tales from the Museum's Archives', featuring some of the wonderful artefacts in the Town's collection, and Peter Berridge describing some of the 'Darker Sides of Colchester Castle', a subject for which he is very well versed. Both of these lectures were enjoyed by appreciative audiences and we were fortunate in having two speakers from a very busy department giving freely of their time.

If our next programme in 2007 proves to be as interesting, we are in line for a treat.

Peter Constable

EVENTS FOR 2007

Lectures:

Our programme of lectures for 2007 will commence with a special members only event in the Castle Museum on Tuesday, 20 February 2007. Our speaker will be Katherine Wood (Director of First Site) who will be speaking on the subject 'Future Uses for the New Visual Arts Facility'. As space will be limited for this event all members wishing to attend are advised to reserve a seat by contacting the Secretary Patrick Denney on 01206 796822. The admission charge for this event will be £1.00.

Our regular series of lectures will continue in Lion Walk Church on Tuesday, 10 April when Charles Debenham will enlighten us on his specialist subject - 'From The Other Side of the Street: 50 Years of Painting and Drawing in Colchester'. Members will recall the Friends

purchasing one of his paintings of High Street a little while ago.

The full listing of the lecture programme can be found on the inside back cover.

Visits:

Essex Police Museum, Chelmsford Tuesday, 15 May - 6.15-9.30pm

We have arranged an evening visit to the Essex Police Museum in Chelmsford on Tuesday, 15 May 2007. The museum, which is based at Police Headquarters in Springfield, Chelmsford, holds archival material relating to the history of the force from 1840, including personnel, disciplinary and other records, together with more general documents and a large photographic record. In addition to being able to browse the exhibits, and perhaps trying on an old police uniform etc, our visit will include a special introductory talk in the Force Information Room followed by a guided tour.

If you would like to join this trip you are urged to book your place as soon as possible as there are only 30 places available. Should there be sufficient demand in excess of this number, we will endeavour to run another trip shortly afterwards (further details of this from the secretary).

The trip will cost £12 per person inclusive of all travel, entrance and guiding fees. To book your place please contact Patrick Denney at 247 Old Heath Road, Colchester CO2 8BN. (Tel: 01206 796822).

Cheques should be made payable to the Friends of Colchester Museums. The coach will depart from the Sheepen Road car park at 6.15pm and return between 9.30-10pm. We will also be picking up at Tollgate by prior arrangement (please check for details).

Christchurch Mansion Museum, Ipswich. Tuesday, 24 July - 6.15-10.00pm

This special event is being hosted by the Friends of Ipswich Museums and will be an

excellent opportunity of getting to know our Suffolk counterparts. Christchurch Mansion is the centrepiece of Ipswich Museum Service and is set in the peaceful surroundings of Christchurch Park. The Museum houses period rooms that illustrate changes in style from the 16th to the 19th century. These include the Tudor state chambers, 18th century state rooms and the Victorian wing. The Museum also houses a fine collection of British pottery and porcelain and has displays featuring dolls houses, toys and historic games. In the Wolsey Art Gallery is a splendid collection of paintings and prints by Suffolk artists from the 17th century to the present day. Among the most notable are works by Thomas Gainsborough and John Constable.

The cost for this event is £12 per person inclusive of all travel, entrance fees and light refreshments. To book your place please contact Patrick Denney at 247 Old Heath Road, Colchester CO2 8BN. (Tel: 01206 796822). Cheques should be made payable to the Friends of Colchester Museums. The coach will depart from the Sheepen Road car park at 6.15pm and return between 9.30-10pm. We will also be picking up on the Ipswich Road by prior arrangement (please check for details).

New Exhibition: COLCHESTER HISTORY: THROUGH THE LENS

This exciting new exhibition opens in the Castle Museum on Wednesday, 17 January 2007. It is the result of a collaboration between the National Monuments Records Centre at Swindon and the Essex Museum Worker Group who have got together to create a touring exhibition around the county.

The exhibition will provide a fascinating insight into the daily life of our forebears and will feature scenes depicting transport, entertainment, wartime and local businesses.

The exhibition will be launched at a special preview evening on Tuesday, 16 January between 5-7pm, to which members of the Friends are invited.

If you would like to attend please contact Marie Taylor on 01206 282927.

Below:

Members of the Colchester Motor Club are seen outside Metcalf's Garage in High Street after a competition in the early 1920s. This is one of the many photographs that will be on display at the Exhibition in the Castle Museum.





This photograph (another to be featured in the Exhibition), is of W. Allen and Son's shop, taken in 1940 by the museum's Assistant Curator Harold Poulter. There has been a butcher's shop on this site in St Botolph's Street since 1799 and in 1930 the business was bought by William Allen.



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Museum News

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER!

Back in 1979 a member of the Colchester public discovered a seemingly insignificant length of iron in mud and clay dredged up from the River Colne. Fast forward to 2006 and it was eventually brought to the museum for identification!

The finder thought the object might be a Roman sword but Caroline McDonald the Essex Finds Liaison Officer discovered that it was in fact a 9th century Viking sword. This is an incredibly important find for the town, which despite being part of the Danelaw in the 9th and 10th centuries, has produced little in the way of Viking material.

Though the sword is 9th century, we know that the Vikings passed their weapons from father to son down the generations and called their swords 'ancient heirlooms'. It is possible that this sword could have been in use when Edward the Elder attacked Colchester in AD 917 to rout the Danes and reclaim the town for the English. Perhaps it was lost by a warrior during a skirmish or perhaps it was deliberately thrown into the water as an offering to the gods for a Viking victory that never came.

It has now been acquired by the museum and will form an important part of the permanent displays in 2007.

Two new additions to the Castle Museum will soon be on display. Both are the result of projects the museum has been jointly involved in with young people from local secondary schools. These youngsters are receiving extra support to remain engaged in education and the museum has developed projects to inspire and motivate them.

The lunch room will shortly have a display made up of boards containing faces painted by

groups of youngsters who were involved in workshops exploring themes of tolerance, identity and understanding.

Next to the lift entrance on the first floor there will soon be a mosaic created by the young people of the Behaviour Support unit at Copford. It features images taken from three projects the museum has been involved in with the unit. There is a penny farthing, a Roman shield, and a civil war helmet. There is also an image of the unit itself. The centrepiece is a magnificent representation of the Castle using in part pieces of Roman material.



The Mosaic created by the young people of the behaviour support unit at Copford

The Friends have kindly paid for the costs of mounting eight prints by the Fingringhoe artist, Charles Bartlett. The etchings were created between the 1940s and 1980s and draw very strongly on the Essex and East Anglian coast for inspiration. They have been acquired as part of the museum's print collecting initiative which aims to build up a body of work by recent and current printmakers with Colchester connections. The initiative started in

1998 and the number of works in the collection now stands at 57. They will be on display in Hollytrees from Christmas.

There is another exhibition to catch at Hollytrees, this time in the Running the Home room. It is a display of recently acquired objects and shows the varied nature of the museum's local history collections. The exhibition includes hand-made Punch and Judy puppets, an ermine stole worn by Muriel "Granny" Paxman and the medals awarded to Colchester Station Master, Ernest Wicks.

Colchester Museums are one of nine museums across the country taking part in the Heritage Lottery Funded initiative 'Rethinking Disability Representation in Museums'. We are developing a series of activities with local

disabled people which will culminate in a temporary exhibition at the Castle called 'Life Beyond the Label' in October 2007. The exhibition will consider issues of identity, imagery and language of disabled people in Colchester.

There have been arrivals and a departure in the community history team in the last few months. Ciara Canning started as Assistant Curator of Community History in September. Ciara has worked on museum projects in Bracknell and Hertfordshire and in particular her knowledge of cultural diversity issues and oral history will be very beneficial. She is taking a leading role in the Rethinking Disability Representation project. Amy Griffin, who has worked at Dunstable Museum, joined

us in November as Assistant Community Outreach Officer. Amy arrived not a moment too soon as Joanne Gray, our Community Outreach Officer moved to Plymouth Museums only 10 days later. Joanne built up our community outreach programme from scratch over the last three years and we wish her well in her new post. Amy is now progressing the following projects.

Boudica and the Iceni are returning to Colchester in 2007, but thankfully this visit should be less destructive than their last! Members of the Gateway Drama Group, for adults with learning disabilities, have written and will star in *Boudica the Musical*. This original production will be filmed at local locations during the coming months and will receive its big-screen debut during the summer.

As part of Colchester Borough Council's annual Re-Create



Oyster Baskets: the etching by Charles Bartlett

project, High Woods Country Park is gaining a new community garden which local people can work on together. As a parallel project, Colchester Museums are working with the Visitors Centre on an outreach project which will enable local people to engage with the heritage at High Woods. Look out for more information in future editions.

Next year sees the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery and Colchester and Ipswich Museums are working in partnership to mark this occasion and to celebrate the work of local abolitionist, Thomas Clarkson. As one of the founders of the Committee for Abolition of the African Slave Trade, Clarkson fought hard for the rights of his fellow man. There will be a series of events in Ipswich during the next year, including an exhibition, town walks, lectures and community events, designed in conjunction with the local African and Afro-Caribbean communities.

An area of museum work with which the Friends may not be familiar is that carried out

by Alex Richards on the Colchester Urban Archaeological Database (UAD). This database was created in 1999/2000 to document all archaeological and historical details relating to Colchester before AD1700 and is accessed on two computers in the Museum Resource Centre. This database is not currently publicly available although this is a long term aspiration of the project. It includes details of monuments, events and finds that have been recorded within Colchester town centre and is an incredibly useful resource. The database records are linked to a fully interactive map of the town which perfectly illustrates the complexity of rich archaeological remains within an urban setting. Alex was appointed in April and is making good progress in working through the records to keep the database current.

**Ciara Canning, Amy Griffin,
Tom Hodgson, Janet Lumley,
Caroline McDonald, Alex Richards**

Local History Short Courses

The University of Essex Local History Centre are holding new 10-week courses in Local History that are open to all.

Beginning on Monday 15th January 2007 at 7pm

A History of Colchester by Andrew Phillips

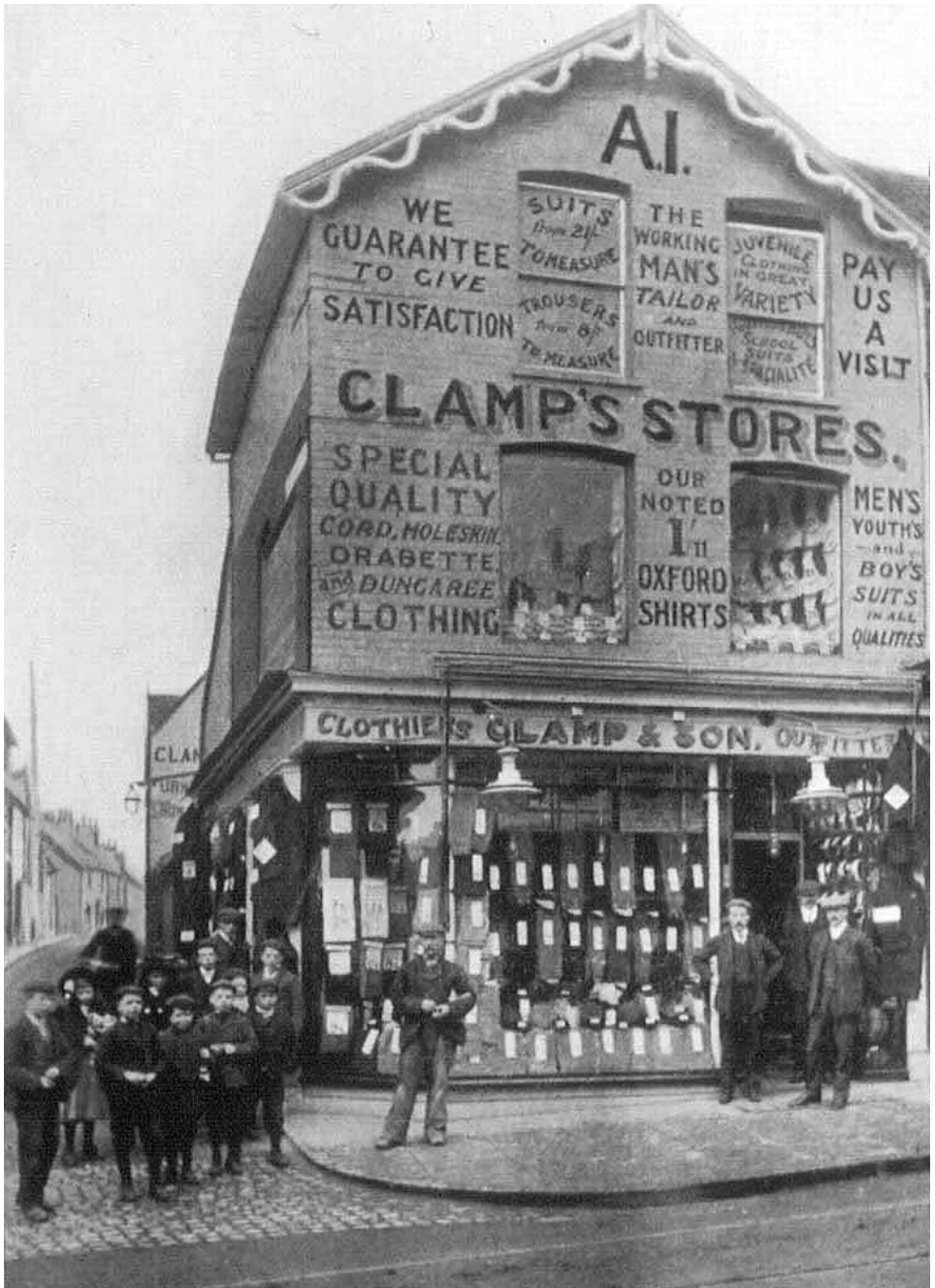
Beginning on Tuesday 16th January 2007 at 7pm.

Introduction to the Archaeology of East Anglia by Howard Brooks

After Easter

Family and Community in 19th Century Colchester and Essex by Paul Glenister

Enquiries and applications to: Graduate Secretary, Department of History,
University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester CO4 3SQ.



An interesting photograph of Clamps store on the corner of St Botolph's Street and Vineyard Street circa 1906, one of the collection owned by Patrick Denney.

Friends' Lecture Series 2007

Special Talk for Members Only

Tuesday, 20 February

7.30pm - Charles Gray Room, Castle Museum

Katherine Wood (Director of First Site)

Future Uses Of The New Visual Arts Facility

All the following lectures at Lion Walk Church
at 7.30pm

Admission per lecture -

Members £1

Non-Members £2.

Tuesday, 10 April

Charles Debenham

From The Other Side Of The Street:

50 Years Of Painting and Drawing

In Colchester

Tuesday, 24 April

Howard Brooks

Changing Rooms:

What Colchester's Roman Houses

Were Really Like

Tuesday, 8 May

John Bradley

The Colchester Martyrs

Tuesday, 22 May

Ann Wise

Warner and Sons:

Braintree's Silk Heritage

Tuesday, 5 June

Dr James Bettley

Revising Pevsner's Essex

Tuesday, 19 June

Annual General Meeting followed by

Frank Grace

Rags and Bones:

Life In The Dockland Slums Of Ipswich

Tuesday, 11 September

John Jowers

Fishing:

A Very Essex Industry

Tuesday, 25 September

William Tyler

Bound and Free:

The End Of Slavery and The Slave Trade

Tuesday, 9 October

Peter Murphy

The Archaeology Beneath The North Sea

Tuesday, 23 October

Leigh Alston

Medieval Discoveries At Charlie Brown's

Tuesday, 6 November

John Rix

50 Years Of Farming In The Stour Valley

Tuesday, 20 November

Jim Robinson

From Black Holes To Colchester's Glasshouse

For further details please contact

Patrick Denney on 01206 796822

COLCHESTER RECALLED

Colchester's oral history group, Colchester Recalled, whose members include many Friends, restarts its monthly meetings in 2007 in the Board Room at the Colchester Institute at 7pm. The first three dates are -

19 January

Ian Baalham The Story of Castle Park

15 February

Dave Austin 30 Years in a Police car

15 March A NADEAS Presentation:

Colchester Butchers: An Oral History

New members welcome.