

The Friends of Colchester Museums

Newsletter – January 2008



The Friends of Colchester Museums

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Ex Officio PETER BERRIDGE (Museum and Heritage Manager)
TOM HODGSON (Community History Manager)
PHILIP WISE (Heritage Manager)

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14 Ryegate Road Colchester CO1 1TW

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for 2008 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 to which your payment should 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 and return.

Please send all payments, and any arrears, to MR PETER EVANS at 5 Grimston Road, Colchester CO2 7RN. (Tel: 01206 540990). PLEASE NOTE that your Membership Card for 2008, which allows free entry to the Castle Museum, is included with this newsletter, but remember that payment for 2008 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.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

This has been our best year ever with membership continuing to rise to an all time high. We are now supported by nearly 650 members, many of whom have taken out Couple and Family memberships thereby raising the total number associated to nearly double that number. In addition to the many benefits associated with being a member of the Friends (including Free admission to the Castle), it remains one of the most productive ways to support your local museum service and we trust that all will continue to promote the Society and encourage others to join.

2007 LECTURE PROGRAMME

JIM ROBINSON concluded the 2007 programme with a well researched and well presented lecture *From Black Holes to Colchester's Glasshouse* on 20th November, which was readily appreciated by yet another 100 people attending. Birthday celebrations precluded my attending the 6th November offering by JOHN RIX entitled *50 Years of Farming in the Stour Valley*. By all accounts another appreciative audience of over 100 was suitably entertained.

The programme was commenced way back on 11th September when JOHN JOWERS gave a delightful lecture entitled *Fishing: A Very Essex Industry* and his knowledge of the subject shone through. For me personally, the next lecture on 23rd September by WILLIAM TYLER *Bound and Free: The End of Slavery and The Slave Trade* was both alarming yet overly political. Yes, slavery in all its respects was absolutely dreadful and exceedingly callous and cruel, but so were many other things in those days, and can we be really certain that somewhere in the world slavery in some form or another does not take place today?

PETER MURPHY's topic on 9th October *The Archaeology Beneath the North Sea* was of a much lighter nature and was followed a fortnight later by LEIGH ALSTON's *Medieval Discoveries at Charlie Brown's* - an absolutely fascinating account of what happened to buildings that we all know and love, situated just outside the town centre.

It was a great programme of lectures on a wide variety of subjects, well delivered and well attended by appreciative audiences. The organisers deserve our thanks!

PETER CONSTABLE

LECTURE SERIES 2008

Our summer programme of lectures for 2008 will commence on 15 April with a

presentation entitled *Remembering Colchester on Film*, which will be delivered by BERNARD POLLEY and his colleagues from the Colchester Film Makers Club. This looks like being an excellent start to our season with the prospect of being able to view some old archive film of the town. Other talks in the series will concentrate on themes such as Tiptree jam, Essex brass bands and the Siege of Colchester. A full listing of lectures are included on the back cover of this newsletter. All lectures will take place in Lion Walk Church on Tuesday evenings.

OUTINGS 2008

Gainsborough's House, Sudbury

Tuesday, 20 May 2008 - 6.15-9.30pm

We have arranged for an evening visit to Gainsborough's House, Sudbury on Tuesday, 20 May 2008. The museum is the birthplace museum of Thomas Gainsborough, one of the greatest painters in the history of British art. More of his paintings, drawings and prints are

on display here than anywhere else in the world, and we have arranged for the Friends to enjoy a private viewing of the exhibits.

In addition to being able to view the collection, and perhaps spend some time browsing in the Gift Shop, those attending will also be treated to an introductory lecture and light refreshments. All in all, this promises to be yet another most interesting evening.

The trip will cost £14.50 per person inclusive of all travel, entrance and guiding fees etc. 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 arranging for a pick up point somewhere near to North Station.

Another outing is currently being arranged and further details will be available in due course.

Know Your Town?

Where do you think the building illustrated below can be found in Colchester?

What is its present use?

What were its previous uses?

There are two statues shown in niches in this building.



They are shown above in their present situation.

Where is this?

PATRICK DENNEY



Answers can be found on the inside back cover.

Museum News

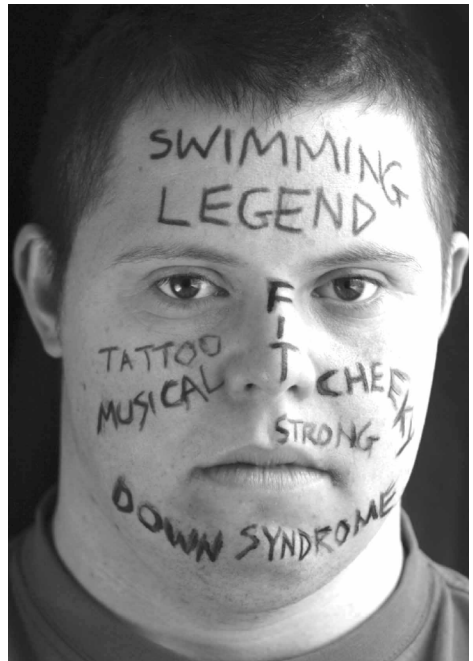
'Life Beyond the Label' opened to the public at Colchester Castle Museum on 16th October with a guest appearance by gold medal winning Paralympian swimmer, DANNY CRATES.

This ground-breaking exhibition focuses on the lives of disabled people in Colchester. The objects, stories, film and artwork reveal individual experiences alongside current and historical attitudes towards disability. The exhibition is part of a larger project on disability representation co-ordinated by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries at Leicester University. Colchester is one of nine museums involved.

Other partners include Birmingham and Glasgow museum services and the Imperial War Museum. The exhibition will be on display until 19 May 2008.

TOM HODGSON

Community History Manager



COLCHESTER'S ROMAN CIRCUS

Colchester's Roman Circus has just received Scheduled Ancient Monument status from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. This means the remains of the Circus are not only recognised as being of national importance but are also given legal protection from damage and development.

Design entries to create a new heritage attraction based around the Roman Circus have also just been received by Colchester Borough Council. Three firms have submitted entries which will now be the subject of a range of consultation before a decision is made early in the New Year. The selected firm will then be commissioned to work up a more detailed proposal to form part of a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund which will be submitted later in 2008.

Discovered in late 2004, during archaeological excavations within the



Colchester Garrison, the Roman Circus, or chariot-racing track, is a unique archaeological monument in Britain. At the time of the discovery it hit the headlines across the country and was heralded as one of the most exciting Roman finds in decades. Colchester is one of only six locations in northwest Europe where a Roman circus has been securely identified.

The Council has asked design firms to come up with a concept for a cover building to enable a section of the foundations of the Circus grandstand to be exposed to public view. In addition entrants to the competition were asked to present their ideas for a wider scheme to present information about the Circus to visitors to the site. The three firms who entered the competition are: Inkpen Downie, a Colchester practice who have worked at the Visitor Information Centre, Chris Hudson Design of London, who designed the exhibitions in the Sutton Hoo Visitor Centre and Headland Design Associates, who are based in Chester and have worked for English Heritage and the National Trust.

The Museum Service has been working very hard for some time to bring forward the Council's plans for the Circus. Colchester Borough Council is fully committed to realising the potential offered by this remarkable archaeological discovery; very soon after the site was first recognised the Council committed £100,000 in order to develop a £1 million interpretation scheme. The scheduling of the Circus is great news and something that the Museum has been working towards for sometime.

The Council's Management Plan for the Roman Circus, prepared in 2006, was approved by English Heritage and adopted as a key document in the preparation of the Scheduling proposals. The Museum has worked with English Heritage in making sure that we achieve the best possible outcome for the Circus remains in the future development of the surrounding area.

PHILIP J. WISE
Heritage Manager

What are the benefits of membership of the Friends of Colchester Museums?

- Your subscription, and profits from members' activities, is used to support the Museum. We are often asked to help the Museum to buy new exhibits, but we have also assisted with the cost of exhibitions.
- You get free admission to the Castle Museum.
- You pay a reduced rate for admission to our series of talks each Summer and Autumn.
- You receive invitations to special events and outings.
- You are sent regular newsletters with news about the Museum.

In what other ways can you help us help the Museum?

- You can Gift Aid your contributions so we

- can increase the value of your payments.
- You can also make extra donations (which are also subject to Gift Aid).
- You could also consider mentioning us in your will (not that we want to loose you!)
- Help us at Friends' stands at the Annual Opening Evening at the Castle in December or at the July History Fair at St Botolph's Priory.

We have members who regularly visit the Museums but do not attend our series of talks.

Others attend several talks each season, but seldom get to the Museum. All can be assured that they are assisting the Museum Service.

PETER EVANS

University of Essex Local History Centre

Courses in Early 2008

A new 10-week course 'The History of Colchester' is starting in April 2008.

The course which will be delivered by PATRICK DENNEY, will explore the town's history from the coming of the Romans to the present day. The course will take place of Monday evenings commencing on 21st April.

Enquires and applications to:
Graduate Secretary, Department of History,
University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester,
or telephone Lisa West on 01206 872190.

Other new 10-week courses at the University are as follows:

'Introduction to the Archaeology of Essex and East Anglia' by HOWARD BROOKS, from Tuesday 15th January.

'Family & Community in 19th Century Essex' by DR PAUL GLENISTER from Thursday 17th January.

Enquiries/Enrolment via
DR ALISON ROLAND, Dept. of History,
University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester.

Family History Using the Internet

A 10 week course aimed at providing the learner with the skills necessary to research their family history online. Although primarily aimed at the beginner, the course would also be of interest to more experienced family historians who would like to gain experience using computer-based sources.

Tutor - PATRICK DENNEY
Tuesday afternoons at the Wilson Marriage Centre, Colchester starting 15 April 2008.
Course Code: NWM2B71
Enrolment - Grey Friars 01206 542242 or
Wilson Marriage 01206 798488

COLCHESTER RECALLED

Colchester's Oral History Group, continues its monthly meetings on Thursday 17th January 2008 in the Board Room at the Colchester Institute at 7pm, when GEOFF PETTIT is going to talk about A Year in Our Town. The subject on 14th February is Wivenhoe's Last Shipyard and on 15th March A Visit to Auschwitz.

STOP PRESS

Good news from HM Revenue and Customs. They have just paid us £1506.36 for Gift Aid for the year 31st March 2007. This represents the tax paid by members in the scheme on their subscriptions. This is the biggest single payment that we have received from them for any Gift Aid claim.

ANSWERS TO KNOW YOUR TOWN?

The illustration on page 2 is of the Co-op Bank situated in High Street. It was originally built as a Corn Exchange that opened in 1845. Since then, it has been used in several ways including an art school/gallery and theatre.

The statues pictured on page 2 are in their present situation outside St Mary's car park in Balcerne Lane.

A big thank you to everybody who has already completed a gift aid certificate - about 75% of the membership. If you have not yet done so, information about how you can is enclosed with this newsletter.

PETER EVANS
Hon. Treasurer

Friends' Lecture Series 2008

Tuesday, 15 April 2008

BERNARD POLLEY and Colleagues
Remembering Colchester on Film

Tuesday, 29 April 2008

TIM CAME
Tiptree Jam: Past, Present and Future

Tuesday, 13 May 2008

PAUL GLENNISTER
Dirt and Disease in Victorian Colchester

Tuesday, 27 May 2008

PHILIP CRUMMY
Who Was Boudica?

Tuesday, 10 June 2008

DR ANDREW HOPPER
General Fairfax and the Siege of Colchester

Tuesday, 24 June 2008

7pm **Annual General Meeting**
7.30pm DAVID CAWDELL
Grandad Played the Cornet

All at Lion Walk Church 7.30pm
Admission price per lecture:
Members £1 - Non Members £2.
For details contact PATRICK DENNEY
on 01206 796822.

THE FRIENDS OF IPSWICH MUSEUMS

Winter Talks, January – March 2008

The Talks are organised by HOWARD KING who can be contacted at 43 Jupiter Road, Ipswich IP4 4NT.

Note: Due to clashes with other events in the town on Tuesday evenings – the following talks will be staged on Wednesdays, starting at 7.30pm. Doors open at 7.00pm. Tea/coffee and biscuits will be served before each lecture.

Parking for Mansion Events – Crown Street Car Park is recommended. Pedestrian access will be possible from Soane Street and Bolton Lane. The availability of parking inside the Park is uncertain; please enquire nearer the time if you are unable to walk from Crown Street. (Christchurch Mansion 01473 433554).

Wednesday 23rd January 2008:

When Did You Last Get Plastered?

A talk by BILL SARGENT on the history and techniques of Pargeting and Conservation Plastering, including a live demonstration. The talk will be at Christchurch Mansion. Cost: £3 members, £5 others. Pay at the door.

Wednesday 20th February 2008:

Not Many People Know This.....!

A talk by MERVYN LEMON, who looks at various so-called facts, about the law, animals, famous people, food, drink – even nursery rhymes. The talk will be at Christchurch Mansion. Cost: £3 members, £5 others. Pay at the door.

Wednesday 19th March 2008:

Touchdown on Titan

A lecture presented by PROFESSOR JOHN ZARNECKI of the Space Sciences Institute of The Open University. He will talk to us about his career in astronomy including sending the Cassini spacecraft and Huygens probe to Titan (Saturn's largest moon).

This will be held at the Museum Street Methodist Church. Tickets £5 for members, £8 for others obtainable from 20th February from the Ipswich Tourist Information Office or direct from HOWARD KING – please send an SAE and a cheque made out to Friends of Ipswich Museums.

N.B. *Members of the Friends of Colchester Museums will be entitled to 'members' rates.*