



## **The Friends of Colchester Museums**

*Registered Charity No. 310669*

Winter Newsletter  
January 2021

# Officers

As Elected at The Annual General Meeting on 18th June 2019

<i>President</i>	His Worship the Mayor, Councillor Robert Davidson	
<i>Vice Presidents</i>	Jean Baker Peter Constable Patrick Denney Andrew Phillips	Peter Berridge Mark Davies Barbara Napper Paul Spendlove
<i>Chairman</i>	<i>Position Vacant</i>	
<i>Acting Chairman</i>	Peter Jones ( <a href="mailto:jonesjp@outlook.com">jonesjp@outlook.com</a> )	
<i>Honorary Treasurer</i>	Peter Evans ( <a href="mailto:peter.evans7978@btinternet.com">peter.evans7978@btinternet.com</a> ) 5 Grimston Road, Colchester, CO2 7RN Telephone: 01206 540990	
<i>Honorary Secretary</i>	Mary Dale ( <a href="mailto:m.dale1955@live.co.uk">m.dale1955@live.co.uk</a> )	
<i>Membership Secretary</i>	Roy Anderson ( <a href="mailto:royandliz@outlook.com">royandliz@outlook.com</a> )	
<i>Programme Secretary</i>	Jenny Jones ( <a href="mailto:jonesjp@outlook.com">jonesjp@outlook.com</a> )	
<i>Newsletter Editor</i>	Ian Ahmet ( <a href="mailto:ianahmet@gmail.com">ianahmet@gmail.com</a> )	
<i>Website Editor</i>	Alan Skinner	
<i>Other Committee Members</i>	Harry Carlo Chris Hall Andrew Phillips	Mark Davies Avril Lankester
<i>Ex Officio</i>	Frank Hargrave ( <i>Colchester and Ipswich Museums and Arts Manager</i> ) Pippa Pickles ( <i>Colchester Museums Manager</i> ) Philip Wise ( <i>Heritage Manager</i> )	
<i>Honorary Auditor</i>	Roy Anderson	
<i>Museum Office</i>	Museum Resource Centre 40 Heckworth Close, Colchester, CO4 9TB Tel: 01206 282931 <a href="http://www.cimuseums.org.uk">www.cimuseums.org.uk</a>	



# Winter Newsletter, January 2021

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

Patrick Denney, The Friends of Colchester Museums chairman has stepped down. As Vice Chairman, I have taken on the role as Acting Chairman.

However it was always my intention to stand down from the committee at the next AGM. Jenny Jones, the programme secretary, and Ian Ahmet, the newsletter editor are also intending to stand down from the committee. Alan Skinner will be standing down from the committee but will continue as Website Editor.

**A crisis is looming because according to our constitution the committee requires 4 officers and not less than 8 members. We desperately need a chairman and new committee members. If these posts are not filled there is a possibility that The Friends of Colchester Museums may not survive.**

I have heard lately of several groups that have disbanded due to people not willing to get involved in the running of their group. Also nobody knows for sure how we will emerge from the pandemic, it will be a long time before we are completely back to the life that we remember. There are going to be new challenges and different ways of doing things and we need a committee able to take this on.

We have over 1000 people on our books and within that number there has to be the abilities and expertise we need to keep the group going.

Please give this careful consideration because if nobody comes forward The Friends of Colchester Museums may itself become history.

Peter Jones, *Acting Chairman*

If you would like any further information please email me at:  
[jonesjp@outlook.com](mailto:jonesjp@outlook.com)

## **FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

Firstly can I wish you all a Happy New Year, whatever happens, surely this year has got to be better than last year. Patrick Denney has now stepped down as Chairman after three years in the post and more than thirty years as a committee member in various positions to take a well earned break. On behalf of everybody I would like to say thank you to Patrick for the enormous amount of work he has put in to Friends over the years.

As Vice Chairman I have taken over as Acting Chairman until the next AGM, although it is also my intention to stand down from the post then. Several other committee members are also standing down and we do need some fresh faces and young(er) blood on the committee.

Several groups that I am aware of have disbanded because they could not find enough volunteers to form a committee. Please do not let this happen to Friends. Its origins were in Victorian times in the Colchester Castle Society whose logo we still use. FOCM has been in existence since 1949 supporting the Museum and it would be tragic if we could not continue that for the sake of a committee.

Nobody knows what shape Friends will be in when we come out of the pandemic or how many members we will retain. I appreciate we have had a year's membership with very little to show for it so until we can get back to normal we have decided to put our talks out over the Internet in the Zoom format. It is essential that you register your name and email address if you want to join us for these talks. (See the form that accompanies the newsletter). There will not be a charge for these five talks but Zoom only allows 100 (computers) to take part. So to make sure of your place book early.

Looking forward to seeing you on Zoom. In the meantime, follow the rules, stay safe and I wish you a happy and healthy 2021.

Peter Jones  
*Acting Chairman*



## MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Sadly, as can be seen from the table below, our membership numbers are down on the same period last year.

	Dec 2020	Dec 2019	Dec 2018	Dec 2017
<b>Single</b>	275	305	305	307
<b>Couple</b>	204	216	227	226
<b>Family</b>	93	102	106	106
<b>Other</b>	10	11	11	11
<b>Total</b>	582	634	649	650

We have had to delete members who have not completed Privacy Consent forms. Taking into account all categories this represents a total of around 1,050 members currently associated with the group.

## ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

During Lockdown, the Friends of Colchester Museums has continued to help Colchester Museums.

We have contributed towards the purchase of a section of the Roman Wall and also to the cost of the exhibition of the Turner painting "Walton Bridges". We have had administrative expenses, such as insurance for all our operations, not just the talks and events. We posted newsletters to members who could not receive them electronically so there have been postage,

administrative and printing expenses. In any case, our basic purpose is fund raising for the Museum to buy exhibits and help with their expenses.

As you will see, we are arranging for lectures to be given by Zoom and will not be charging for them. If you are able to give a donation instead of the admission fee, usually £2, please add a nominal sum to your subscription or make a separate payment by cheque or through the bank.

I am sure that members will realise the need for subscriptions and the usual Subscription Form is enclosed. About a third of all subscriptions are paid through the bank, either by a standing order or individual transfers. For those of you who wish to pay that way, please see the bank account details on the subscription form, so that you can either set up a standing order or make a one off payment for your subscription. Please make sure that your name is shown as a reference.

Your membership card for 2021 is enclosed for use when visiting the Castle. If you decide that you do not wish to renew please return the card to our membership secretary. We are still holding payments for the trips that we originally arranged for 2020 and will not take place in 2021. If you now require a refund please let me know.

Peter Evans, *Hon. Treasurer*

## LECTURES AND OUTINGS 2021

After having had to curtail all our events in 2020 we are now beginning to plan for 2021. We are obviously still very restricted by the COVID situation but it is important that we try to keep things going as well as we can. We are planning to run our spring series of lectures in April, May and June but because we are far from certain when we will be able to hire the Lion Walk Church again these lectures will be hosted on Zoom. We realise that some of you will not be able to access Zoom but feel that we should try and get back to some semblance of normality as quickly as possible. These lectures will be free to attend to offset the disappointment of not being able to meet in 2020. Please note that the first five lectures will take place on a **MONDAY at 7:30pm.**

Patrick Denney will run these Zoom meetings and there will only be capacity for 100 participants. (Obviously those sharing a computer count as one participant). **It is essential that you register your intention to join these meetings and give your email address on the enclosed form.** Nearer the time you will be sent an e-mail with the joining instructions for each meeting.

The 2021 AGM will be held on Tuesday 22 June at 7pm and will be followed by a talk on the history of the River Thames which once ran to the sea through north Essex. If possible this meeting will be held in Lion Walk Church on a Tuesday as normal.

We are unable to run the Thursday afternoon lectures for the time being. We apologise for any disappointment this may cause.

Details of the talks are given on the back page of this newsletter.

It seems unlikely that the visits to the Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket and the Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome will still take place but a decision about this must be withheld until a later date as we do not know what the situation will be in June/July. If you require a refund of money paid for these trips please contact the Financial Secretary Peter Evans.

I hope we are all able to meet again before too long and that 2021 will be kind to you. Stay safe and well.

Jenny Jones, *Programme Secretary*

## ANOTHER ASSET LOST?

You may have seen in the papers recently that an exhibition of 200 years of Colchester Engineering currently located in the Museum of Rural Life in Stowmarket has been served notice.



The Colchester Engineering Society initiated the display as a Millennium project with our own Andrew Phillips having a considerable input. The exhibition occupies over 1,200 square feet and includes many products from local firms. Some are quite large such as a full size cross section of an 18 cylinder Deltic diesel engine.

What to do with it? That is the question. With Paxman having a large presence in the display, coupled with the impending factory closure, it would seem only right that it should return to Colchester. But where to put it? The Castle Museum does not have the space nor the money to do anything. There was speculation that a building in the Paxman factory

might be set aside. That will depend on what the company want to do with the site but with the site over a mile from the town centre it is a bit off the tourist trail.

The future of the exhibition does not look promising. Will this be another lost chance to capitalise on Colchester's heritage? Another asset lost like the clock museum and the local history museum?

A couple of years ago there were moves to try to acquire an army building from the barracks to establish a military museum that came to nothing and Jumbo and the old Odeon cinema stand derelict. I seem to remember that the unique Roman Circus had a lot of problems establishing itself as an attraction and why do the signs from the High Street disappear when you emerge from the Westway underpass?

I just wish that Colchester could make the most of its past in the way that Chester and York do. Meanwhile, we do have the unloved and underused Firstsite that would, even in the short term, make an ideal place for a Colchester engineering exhibition.

Peter Jones, *Acting Chairman*

# HERITAGE MANAGER'S REPORT

## BUTT ROAD ROMAN CHURCH

Over the last few months, significant progress has been made in the presentation of this important archaeological site located next to Colchester's Police Station on Southway, and thought by some to be the remains of the earliest Christian church in Britain constructed around AD 320. Repairs to the masonry and renewal of the timber posts and gravelled surface, largely funded by Colchester Borough Council, were undertaken in July by specialist building contractors. A new interpretation panel is currently in preparation and is planned to be installed early in 2021.



The site was excavated by the Colchester Archaeological Trust in the 1980s and is usually interpreted as a Christian church on the basis of its plan, the presence of possible graves inside the building and a nearby late Roman Christian cemetery. Recently an alternative theory that the building was a mithraeum, or temple to the eastern

god Mithras, has been proposed on the grounds that its size, lack of windows and the evidence of feasting fit better with its use by followers of this religion.

The announcement by Historic England that the site had been recognised as being of national importance and designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, following an application by Colchester Borough Council, attracted considerable press interest, including a report in 'The Times' on 14th October.

## ST BOTOLPH'S CHURCHYARD

A project to interpret the historic churchyard at St Botolph's Priory will see the installation early in 2021 of a new interpretation panel commemorating three remarkable individuals buried here: Captain Jesse Jones, Dr Roger Nunn and William Hawkins MP.

Jones fought in the Peninsular War of 1807-14, in which an allied army under the command of Sir Arthur Wellesley (later the Duke of Wellington) drove the French out of Spain. He was wounded at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 but lived to tell the tale and retired to Colchester. Dr Nunn was the first doctor to work at what became the Essex County Hospital when it opened in Lexden



Road in 1820. He was also Mayor of Colchester in 1834 and again in 1842/3. William Hawkins was a leading figure in the attempt to develop Colchester as a major port on the East Coast in the mid-19th century. He built two railways to improve the links to the port at the Hythe, one to Sudbury and the other to Clacton.

Conservation work will also be undertaken on the grave of Captain Jones as part of this project which is being undertaken by the Museum Service in collaboration with the Colchester Civic Society.

### **LEXDEN MOUNT**

This impressive Roman burial mound is located in a private garden in Lexden, but is visible from an area of public open space. As part of an agreement with Historic England an interpretation panel was erected by the Museum Service at the site a few years ago and funding was made available for regular grounds maintenance. This work, involving the clearance of invasive vegetation and the removal of some dead trees, has recently been undertaken by specialist contractors commissioned by Colchester Borough Council. As a result of this work Lexden Mount should not require any further maintenance for several years.

### **INTERPRETATION AUDIT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND HISTORIC BUILDINGS**

Over the last six months Lois Garrod Smith, the Arts and Heritage Project Officer within the Museum's Heritage team, worked on an interpretation audit of the archaeological sites and historic buildings within Colchester. The purpose was to review the current state of interpretation at these locations and prioritise work so that as and when funding becomes available work can be undertaken as rapidly as possible. The sites considered included the Roman Circus, Hilly Fields, Lexden Park, Berechurch Hall Dyke, Holy Trinity Church, St Giles's Church and St Michael and All Angels, Mile End. We now have a very detailed understanding of these sites, all of which were visited by the Heritage Manager during the course of the project.

Philip Wise, *Heritage Manager*

**Answers to Puzzle Pages**  
**Only Connect:**  
*Colchester Streets:*  
 High, Head, Brook, Queen  
*Colchester Stations*  
 North, Town, Hythe, Bus  
*Preceded by Castle*  
 Arms, Park, Gates, Museum  
*Colchester Mayors*  
 Oxford, Cope, Chuah, Young  
**Ward Hunt:**  
 The missing ward is Old Heath

# Puzzle Pages

## Ward Hunt

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

**Berechurch**  
**Highwoods**  
**Mile End**  
**Prettygate**  
**Castle**  
**Hythe**

**New Town**  
**Shrub End**  
**Greenstead**  
**Lexden**  
**Old Heath**  
**St. Anne's**

### How to Play

Find the names of the wards in the Colchester Borough Council area. Only eleven of them are hidden in the word search. Can you find which one is missing?

## Only Connect

<b>Oxford</b>	<b>Arms</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>Queen</b>
<b>Town</b>	<b>Cope</b>	<b>Bus</b>	<b>Head</b>
<b>Gates</b>	<b>Young</b>	<b>Park</b>	<b>Museum</b>
<b>Brook</b>	<b>Hythe</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Chuah</b>

### How to Play

Sort out the sixteen seemingly random names/words into four groups of four connected words that all relate to Colchester. You may find that some clues fall into more than one category but there is only one complete solution.

*(Answers can be found on Page 9)*

### STOP PRESS

The FOCM committee recently donated £5000 towards the cost of exhibiting the JMW Turner painting “Walton Bridges” at the Castle Museum from the 26th September to the 28th March. As the opportunity to view has been limited by the pandemic the Museum has made a special video about it for the Friends.

Here’s a link to the video: [tinyurl.com/focmw Walton Bridges](https://tinyurl.com/focmw Walton Bridges)

For all other news and latest updates see our website: [tfocm.org.uk](https://tfocm.org.uk)

# FRIENDS OF COLCHESTER MUSEUMS

## *Virtual* LECTURE SERIES 2021

**These lectures will take place on Zoom and you will need to register your email address with us to ensure we can send you the joining instructions.**

**All lectures take place on MONDAY at 7.30 pm**

12th April	<b>Roman Public Baths and Town Houses</b> <i>Recent archaeological excavations in Colchester town centre</i>	<i>Adam Wightman</i>
26th April	<b>Museums from your Armchair</b> <i>The Museum's Online Collections</i>	<i>Glynn Davis &amp; Rory McDaid</i>
10th May	<b>The History of Boxted Airfield</b> <i>An important US fighter base on our doorstep</i>	<i>Richard Turner</i>
24th May	<b>Keeping Busy</b> <i>Colchester's industrial past</i>	<i>Peter Jones</i>
2nd June	<b>Clacton Theatres and Memories</b> <i>An account of local seaside entertainment</i>	<i>Roger Kennell</i>

**The 2021 AGM will take place on Tuesday 22 June at 7pm. We are hoping to be able to hold the AGM in Lion Walk Church as usual as long as the COVID-19 situation allows. This will be confirmed nearer the time. After the AGM there will be a lecture as follows:**

22nd June	<b>The Thames through Time</b> <i>River Thames in North Essex</i>	<i>Ian and Ros Mercer</i>
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Further information from Jenny Jones, [jonesjp@outlook.com](mailto:jonesjp@outlook.com) or  
c/o Friends of Colchester Museums,  
19 Heathfields, Eight Ash Green, Colchester, CO6 3QP

