

OFFICERS

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<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	
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www.tfocm.org.uk

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TALKS AND OUTINGS

Firstly, a big thank you to Patrick Denney for all his Zoom management. We got through the spring series of six lectures without any serious mishap and I think as the season progressed we settled down and enjoyed the talks.

As we begin to relax the Covid rules we are all looking forward to meeting other people again but as things are still a bit uncertain we have taken the decision to continue the evening lectures on Zoom for the autumn. The planned talks for September to November 2021 are listed at the back of the newsletter. They include a talk about murder detection in the period after World War I with Paul Stickler, a retired police officer, and with the renewed interest in the Suffolk site created by the film 'The Dig', Laura Howarth from the National Trust will talk about Sutton Hoo.

There will be a charge of £2 per talk per computer or £10 for all six talks on Zoom. Any additional donations will be gratefully received. It is essential that you book a place for these lectures and a booking form is enclosed that should be sent to Peter Evans with your remittance.

Please note that these Zoom lectures will continue to be held on a Monday evening but when we resume our programme in 2022 the meetings will take place again in Lion Walk Church on a Tuesday evening.

Jenny Jones
Programme Secretary

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

	August 2021	December 2020
Single members	247	275
Couple	178	204
Family	74	93
Others	10	10
Total	509	582

The database has been tidied to take account of memberships that have not been renewed but still represents about 900 people. Membership still includes free entry to the Castle and remains £10 single, £15 Couples and £21 Family. For details on how to join, contact our membership Secretary or see our website.

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FROM THE CHAIR

There is little to report since the AGM but Friends have not been completely dormant during lockdown. We have funded the acquisition of a 14th century gold ring found by a metal detectorist at Boxted. Recently Peter Evans discovered an interesting picture which we purchased. This was of Colchester gasworks by local artist Henry Collins, who with his wife Joyce created the murals in the town's pedestrian underpasses.

I am pleased to report that we had a good response to the appeal for new committee members and we now have 16 on the committee, half of whom are new members. I extend a very warm welcome to them all. It will be good to get some new ideas to help us face the future, because we do not really know what things are going to be like when we eventually come out of the pandemic.

I know that the government has reset the rules but we cannot be sure how the third wave will pan out. Although we would much rather be back in Lion Walk church for our talks we decided that there were too many uncertainties. We could not be sure how many of our members would want to be out of an evening while Covid is still about. Therefore, reluctantly, the autumn programme will be by Zoom presentations; details are listed elsewhere in this issue.

So please bear with us, unfortunately we can only log on 100 computers at a time so it is advisable to book early. Hopefully we will be able to return to Lion Walk in the New Year. Until then stay safe and here is looking forward to better times.

Peter Jones
Chairman

For up to date news and information. please visit
the website for The Friends of Colchester Museums

tfocm.org.uk

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PICTURE PRESENTATION

By Peter Evans

It was by chance that I came across a painting by local artist Henry Collins. It is a view of Colchester Gasworks at the Hythe, painted in 1955, and was being offered for sale through a local gallery, Hayletts of Maldon, on behalf of a local collector. Henry Collins and his wife Joyce Pallott, created the murals in Colchester Subways, by the Sainsburys in Kingsway and similar works across the country. As he is a known local artist and as this is an unusual, rare view, it is doubly attractive. Colchester Borough Council has an art collection but I did not know if it had anything like this. I know from some other paintings that we have presented to the Museum that views like this were welcomed so I sent details to Philip Wise at Colchester



Peter Evans and Peter Jones presenting the picture to Philip Wise. Photo by Chris Farn del

Museums Service who consulted Frank Hargrave, Museum General Manager, and other colleagues. No, the Museum does not have any views like this nor any works by Collins, and indeed would like to have more of this sort of thing. Could the Friends of Museums consider buying the painting on behalf of the museum?

When the seller heard that the painting was to go the Museum, a reduction was made in the price, which was good news. The Friends paid £1750 for the painting and the presentation took place on 6th July 2021. We would be interested to hear memories about the Gasworks.

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THE FRIENDS OF COLCHESTER MUSEUMS
Income and Expenditure account
for year ended 31st March 2021

INCOME	2020-21	2019-20
Subscriptions	£5,867.50	£7,957.50
Lectures - evening	£0.00	£1,024.00
lectures pm (Note 1)	£0.00	£222.10
Trips (Note 1)	£0.00	£559.65
Adorn evening	£0.00	£232.75
Interest	£475.08	£660.76
Donations (Note 5)	£924.00	£620.00
Castle open evening	£0.00	£0.00
Surplus of Expenditure over income	£2,888.91	£3,813.66
	£10,155.49	£15,090.42

EXPENDITURE	2020-21	2019-20
Operating Expenses	£1,708.53	£2,630.12
Subscriptions and Insurance	£346.96	£442.00
(British Assoc. of Friends of Museums, and British Association of Local History)		
Events - Christmas		
Open Evening (Note 1)		£0.00
Purchases (Note 2)	£6,500.00	£10,418.30
Contribution to Museum (Note 3)	£1,600.00	
£1,600.00		
Surplus of income over expenditure		
	£10,155.49	£15,090.42

Notes to the Accounts

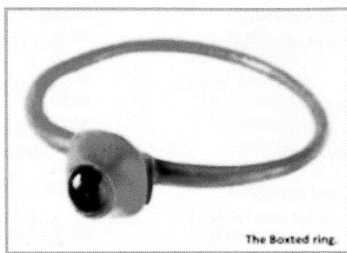
- Note 1 No talks, events or trips were undertaken due to the Pandemic
 Note 2 Purchases 2020/21 Purchase of part of Roman Wall £1500
 Contribution to Turner Painting Project £500
 Note 3 Payment to Castle Museum in lieu of free admission for members
 Note 4 Held for next season of talks
 Note 5 Donations were received for the Zoom talks starting April 2021
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FOCM BUY MEDIEVAL RING

In September 2018 a metal detectorist at work in Boxted heard a signal in his earphones that resulted in the discovery of a gold ring. Following protocol and bringing it to the attention of the appropriate authorities it was identified as being medieval dating to a period between AD 1200 to 1400.

The ring consists of a plain narrow hoop, 22mm in diameter, circular in cross section, with an oval pinkish/red gemstone, probably a garnet, set in a raised bezel.

It was subsequently declared to be Treasure and has been valued at £2,500 by the Treasure Valuation Committee. Similar finds had been recorded in Buckinghamshire, Devon, Suffolk and Somerset and although only one example had been previously found in Essex, in Epping, there was no comparable example in Colchester Museum.



The Boxted ring

The Museum was keen to acquire the ring and asked the Friends to help. This we were pleased to do, and made available from our funds the full purchase price of £2,500.

HIDDEN HISTORIES: WEST AFRICAN GOLD - EXHIBITION AT THE CASTLE MUSEUM

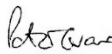
This was launched as an online display in February 2021, ahead of the physical display installed in time for the Castle's reopening on 17th May 2021. This exhibition was inspired by the fact that during the medieval period, around 60% of the gold in Europe originated from West Africa. It features medieval gold coins and jewellery from the museum collection.

The Friends of Colchester Museums
Balance Sheet
as at 31st March 2021

ACCUMULATED FUND	2020-21	2019-20
Balance b/fwd	£40,942.44	£44,746.10
Surplus/loss the year	-£2,888.91	-£3,813.66
TOTAL	£38,053.53	£40,932.44
Reserves		
J Butcher	£55.00	£-
B Colbron	£805.60	£805.60
CREDITORS		
Fees for trips (Note 1)	£1,186.00	£1,857.00
Season tickets (Note 4)	£260.00	£260.00
	£40,360.13	£43,855.04

NET CURRENT ASSETS	2020-21	2019-20
BANK		
Current Account	£6,222.53	£3,892.52
Building Society	£34,037.60	£39,862.52
TOTAL	£40,260.13	£43,755.04
Debtor -Lion Walk	£100.00	£100.00
United Reform Church		
	£40,360.13	£43,855.04

I have examined the accounts of The Friends of Colchester Museums for the year ended 31st March 2021 and confirm that they appear to be in accordance with the Books of Account and Vouchers produced to me for the purpose of this audit.

Signed 
Peter Evans, FMAAT, Hon. Treasurer

Signed 
Roy Anderson, Hon. Auditor

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TALK REPORT

The Thames Through Time

Ian Mercer, formerly of the Geology Museum, gave us a wide-ranging and vividly illustrated history of the River Thames through geological and historic time showing fascinating maps of London at it was in Roman, Medieval and Early Victorian time, before the Thames Embankment narrowed its flow.

Geologically it began 170 million years ago when Britain, covered by a warm sea, produced the thick clay that fills the Thames Basin today to which was added over the next 80 million years chalk and limestone deposits. 30 million years ago, violent volcanic, earth moving spasms pushed Britain above sea level and formed what is now the Thames Valley. 15 million years later, America broke away from Europe, leaving Britain and Ireland a peninsula joined to Western Europe by a vast area of lowland, today under the sea, called by archaeologists Doggerland.

All this was transformed by a series of Ice Ages that began 2 million years ago, when, during cold spells, the Arctic Ice Cap extended over much of Britain. During the warm spells meltwater formed river complexes, flowing to the sea, as ground rock and gravel were dumped in their shifting river beds. Each warm spell was followed by a further ice age, a process that has happened some 15 times, vividly illustrated in Ian's talk. Over this vast era of time the lower Thames valley from London to the sea became full of rocks and smoothened stones from surprising distances from its present course. At one stage for example, the Thames, travelling through North Essex, was a tributary of the Rhine, until rising sea levels flooded Doggerland and Britain became an island.

In the last 30 years industrial gravel extraction from the Thames Valley below London has provided a large slice through its geological river bed, which Ian and his wife Ros have studied, producing from the river's constant wandering, flint, quartz and breccia from Cornwall, volcanic rock from Wales and puddingstone from Hertfordshire, not to mention a dizzying array of fossils.

All this, dramatically shown by Zoom, was a bravura performance.

Andrew Phillips

Editors' note: This lecture was greatly received and we hope to have Ros and Ian back in 2022 for the next talk in the series.

THE NEW COMMITTEE MEET

The new committee held an informal introductory 'live' meeting at Lion Walk Church on July 29th. Among the topics discussed was the future of the FOCM as we emerge from Covid. In a changing world like so many groups we face an uncertain future. Will all our members come back after lockdown? Can we survive without attracting new and younger members? Should the newsletter go digital? Should we continue to solely support the Museum? Does the Constitution need updating?

It was decided to widen the debate and ask the membership for their views and ideas on how Friends can meet future challenges. Any changes would have to be agreed in committee but could only ultimately be ratified by an AGM or an EGM.

New committee member Bill Abbott has already given the matter some thought and it was decided initially that he will gather together all the ideas and suggestions. Then in the autumn we will appoint a sub committee to evaluate everything. This will then be discussed in committee and all valid proposals will be presented to the AGM next June for the members to vote on.

If you think we need to change or there are things we could do better please email your suggestions to Bill Abbott

bill.abbott@btinternet.com

NOT A ROMAN VILLA

by Ray Cantrell

One of the good things about having a dog is that it causes you to go to places you would probably not otherwise. Our collie is now too old and decrepit to walk any distance, but until a couple of years ago she needed quite a lot of walking. Sometimes I would take a bus a few miles out of town, walk across to another bus route, and take a bus back. If it happened to be a double decker she liked to stand with her feet up against the front upstairs window and watch where we were going.

One route I did this on was to take a bus to Mill Road and walk past the rear of the old Severalls Hospital on to Great Horkesley, and then on to West Bergholt. The path from Great Horkesley runs past an orchard and then through some fields. Crossing one of these I found that the ground was crunchy, because I was walking on old broken tiles.

I became quite excited because the field is a likely spot for there to have been a Roman villa, with a southish facing slope, a convenient stream at the bottom, and not far from what was probably a Roman road leading from Boxted to Colchester. There was wheat

growing so I could not wander around off the path. I returned along the same path sometime after harvest, when it was easier to see what there was. There were many tiles of different types, but I could not see anything else. I picked a couple of pieces.

Looking on Bing Maps and Google Maps on the computer there is no trace of any old building there. Nor could I find any sign of any building on old maps. It is unlikely that the tiles would have been transported any great distance – they are not used as a foundation or for making up any obvious dip in the ground.

I took the fragments to the Colchester Museum Finds Officer. She dashed my hopes of having found a Roman villa by identifying them as Early Tudor, probably early sixteenth century. Some were brown glazed, and probably from a kitchen. Still it is old enough to be interesting. Once there must have been at least a rich farmhouse there.

So it is worth keeping an open eye when walking around. There is plenty to be discovered.