



The Friends of Colchester Museums

Registered Charity No. 310669

Spring Newsletter 2023

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

tfocm.org.uk

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

It has been a quiet period since the last newsletter, with not a great deal to report. However, plenty has gone on behind the scenes with setting up a promising series of lectures and interesting outings for the coming year. This is thanks to a lot of work by Joy Hopkinson in particular, with fuller details appearing in this newsletter: I look forward to seeing you at these.

Publicity for the Spring series of lectures is prepared and will be sent out for display soon; an outline of the varied and stimulating programme is included on page 4.

In the last edition there was an article by Sir Bob Russell about a statue of the Taylor sisters, who wrote "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" which it is intended to locate in the High Street. There is a feature about the sisters in Holly Trees Museum. This will be updated, and part of the improvement will be to have original documents professionally photographed to be on show. As some of the documents are over 200 years old they are very prone to light damage, so cannot be permanently displayed. The Committee has agreed to donate £250 to the Museum for the copying work.

We are intending to get a pull-up banner for use at activities where we have a presence. We could do with photographs of a talk in progress and of members on an outing. If anyone has a suitable photograph we could use please let us know.

FOCM is still in need of someone to run our website and possibly a social media presence. There is also room for a member to be involved in publicity. If anyone is willing to help with this, please make yourself known.

There are also other areas where members could be of help:

- o It would be good if we could keep a photographic record of activities
- o Members may be willing and able to submit contributions to the newsletter
- o Occasionally we help the Museum with staffing events and activities
- o Maybe there is someone who could video talks to go onto You Tube
- o And each issue of the newsletter needs to be enveloped for sending out

As with all committees there is a need for new blood at times!

Thank you to those who responded to the notice in the last edition of the newsletter seeking views on the timing of talks.

The replies were varied, with nearly half preferring the existing arrangement and the remainder being spread over a range of other suggestions.

This result was noted at a recent committee meeting and options will now be discussed, and then put to members at the AGM in order to agree the best way forward. There will not be an alteration to the talks planned for the remainder of this year.

And finally, would all members please note the arrangements for this important event:

Friends of Colchester Museums Annual General Meeting:

Tuesday 20th June at 7pm in Lion Walk Church

To be followed by a talk:

Old Heath: Ancient port and modern suburb of Colchester, by Patrick Denney

Ray Cantrell

Chairman



TREASURER’S REPORT

Payment of Subscriptions

Subscriptions became due on 1st January 2023 and if we have not received your payment, a reminder is enclosed with this newsletter. Payment can be made to me by cheque or direct into our bank account. If membership is no longer required, please let me or our membership secretary, Roy Anderson, know as soon as possible.

The new rates payable are: Single members £13 - Couples £20 - Families £28

Payments made by standing order

The subscription rates were increased in January, but a number of standing order payments were received at the old rate. We cannot amend the standing order on your behalf - you will need to contact your bank yourself, as mentioned in the previous newsletter. If you have online banking, you can of course amend the amount yourself. You will also need to correct the underpayment for 2023 (£3 for single membership, £5 for couples and £7 for families).

Should you need to take action, a note is enclosed.

Gift Aid

We are eligible to claim gift on subscriptions and donations paid by members, equal to 25% of the sums paid. We are making claims again after some problems were resolved. The first claims have now been made but a number of members need to complete new certificates as regulations changed a few years ago. If we do not have a current certificate from you, a new form is enclosed and it will be very much appreciated if you will complete the form and return it to me as soon as possible. It will give us more money to support the Museums.

Peter Evans

Hon. Treasurer

FOCM EVENING LECTURES SPRING AND SUMMER 2023

11 April Under Siege : Colchester and the Civil War *Cllr Professor Pam Cox*

2023 is a year of celebration for Colchester. There is a whole programme of events celebrating our new City Status, but it is also the 625th anniversary of the Siege of Colchester during the English Civil War. In the summer of that year, 1648, Colchester found itself in the thick of the conflict when a Royalist army, on their way to East Anglia to gather support, entered the town. It was very quickly surrounded by a Parliamentary force who besieged the town for 11 weeks, before the King's army surrendered.

Professor Pam Cox is Head of the Sociology Department at Essex University and has written many books and papers on social history but also has presented the BBC History Series 'Shop girls- the true story of life behind the counter.' She is also a Colchester City councillor and holds the Portfolio for Heritage and Culture .

25 April Colchester Royal Grammar School Pool *Dr Paul Byrne*

The swimming pool at Colchester Royal Grammar school was opened in 1923 as a war memorial to those alumni who had died in the First World War. Dr Paul Byrne is a member of the Friends of Colchester Museums and is a consultant rheumatologist based in Colchester. He is involved in the Friends of the CRGS Pool.

CRGS is one of the oldest schools in the country, founded in 1128 and it has two Royal Charters; one granted by Henry VIII in 1539 and the second by Elizabeth I in 1584.

9 May The Low Countries to New Hall and Beyond

Sr Moira O'Sullivan and Sr Margaret Mary Horton

The Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre ran the school at New Hall in Chelmsford for many years. Their school was founded in 1642 in Liege in Belgium by a young English girl of 19 who wanted English Catholic girls to have an education. However they had to escape, with the students, during the French revolution and in 1799 they secretly returned to England. This is the story of this escape, their eventual arrival at New Hall and the subsequent development of the school in Henry VIII's Palace of Beaulieu. Today, the order is based in both Colchester and Chelmsford.

23 May The Great Essex Earthquake, 1884

Peter Jones

The Colchester Earthquake took place during the morning of April 22nd, 1884. Sometimes known as the Great English Earthquake, it is said to have been the most destructive in the UK for 400 years. It affected not merely Colchester but many of the surrounding villages. In Wivenhoe and Abberton, almost every building was affected. Several churches were also damaged.

Peter Jones is a former Chair of the Friends and has lectured on a number of topics over the years.

6 June The Essex Industrial School for destitute boys, 1872 *Emma Palmer*

The Essex Industrial School and Home for Destitute Boys was established in Chelmsford in 1872. It took boys in who were considered neglected, destitute or at risk of falling into crime. It aimed to give them a basic education and practical training. It was founded by a local businessman and funded entirely by donations. The stories of so many young boys from the school are sometimes tragic but also, at times, inspiring. Emma Palmer is a journalist who has conducted extensive research into this Victorian institution and its pupils.

20 June Old Heath: Ancient port and modern suburb of Colchester. *Patrick Denney*

Old Heath has been in existence as a settlement since Saxon times. It was originally known as Old Hythe, as it was the first port of Colchester. It was then superseded by the port at the Hythe or ‘New Hythe’ which was nearer to the centre of Colchester. We will hear how the development of the settlement has changed from those early Saxon and Medieval times to the present day. Patrick Denney is well known to the Friends as a former Chairman, eminent local historian, and an author of many books about Colchester and its locality.

4 July The Journey to a new Museum for Brightlingsea *Margaret Stone*

Brightlingsea is said to be a ‘small town with a big history’. The museum was founded in 1989 but in 2020 moved into a purpose-built building. It has displays and trails covering much of the fascinating history of this town, from oysters to shipbuilding. Brightlingsea is a ‘limb’ of the cinque port of Sandwich and is the only one outside Sussex and Kent. The museum is entirely run by volunteers and Margaret Stone, the curator, will tell us how a superb new facility for the town was established.



COLCHESTER CIVIC SOCIETY EVENTS

In the past, the Society has invited the Friends of Museums to some of their events, and have arranged the following for this summer:

22nd April 2023	2pm	Irvine Road Community Orchard
7th June 2023	7pm	Illustrated talk at Roman Circus House on excavations at the Essex County Hospital
15th July 2023	11am	Guided tour of St Leonards-at-the-Hythe Church
31st August 2023	2pm	- Tour of Energy from Waste Facility, Great Blakenham

For full details and prices, please see their website: www.colchestercivicsociety.co.uk or contact Jo Edwards on 0771 626561

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FOCM TRIPS SUMMER 2023

We are so pleased that, after postponements caused by the Pandemic, the planned trips to Stow Maries Aerodrome and the Museum of Food at Stowmarket can now go ahead. Please find booking forms enclosed with this newsletter; as you will see they are very special sites with a great deal to offer.

STOW MARIES AERODROME

The first date for your diary is our visit to the aerodrome on 20th July.

Following its re-discovery by a private concern, the site was designated a conservation area in 2009 and in 2012 all 24 surviving buildings were listed Grade II*. Because of the site's condition and importance, it was included on the English Heritage "Buildings at Risk Register" in the same year.

Stow Maries is the only remaining 'operational' WW1 airfield in existence and was established as a front line of defence against the German Zeppelins and Gotha aircraft that terrorised Londoners and the population of Essex between 1916-18. Whilst the first Zeppelin raid was as far back as January 1915 over Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn, it was the raids of 1916-17 that really provided the catalyst for setting up Home Defence (HD) Squadrons of the Royal Flying Corps.

Prior to this and perhaps in anticipation of being attacked from the air, the RFC set up some 16 landing grounds for aircraft across the country. One of these was at Stow Maries, begun in September 1916 but not fully operational until 1917. Further night landing grounds were also opened in 1917 at Braintree, Thaxted and Runwell. Rapidly, several Home Defence squadrons were assigned to these airfields which really were little more than grass landing strips.

Originally the squadrons were equipped with a mixture of BE2E and BE12 aircraft, but there was not much to recommend either. Built originally for reconnaissance and sturdy enough, they were however slow and certainly unable to intercept the enemy Gothas that could fly above 15,000 feet. The BE2 had a top speed of only 77mph and took 35 minutes to reach an altitude of 10,000 ft. As one Australian pilot Bill Taylor put it, the BE2 was... “underpowered, underarmed and unmanoeuvrable.”

By June 1918, all the flights of 37 Squadron were based at Stow Maries and permanent facilities were built, some of which remain to this day. By Armistice Day in November 1918, they were flying the much more effective Sopwith Camel, a genuine single seater fighter with a top speed of 117mph and capable of operating at 19,000 feet.

Stow Maries is well worth a visit as the volunteers have a wealth of understanding about the early days of flying and the history of this important location. They are more than willing to share their exceptional knowledge of the site and its displays, particularly relating to the aircraft which flew in and out of the aerodrome. It's fascinating to hear how, as well as flying these machines, pilots also had to man a machine gun to combat Zeppelins and Gotha bombers.



Some of the aircraft on display are still flown in events; every year there is an organised “fly in” of old aircraft with displays from the 10th Essex Regiment living history group.

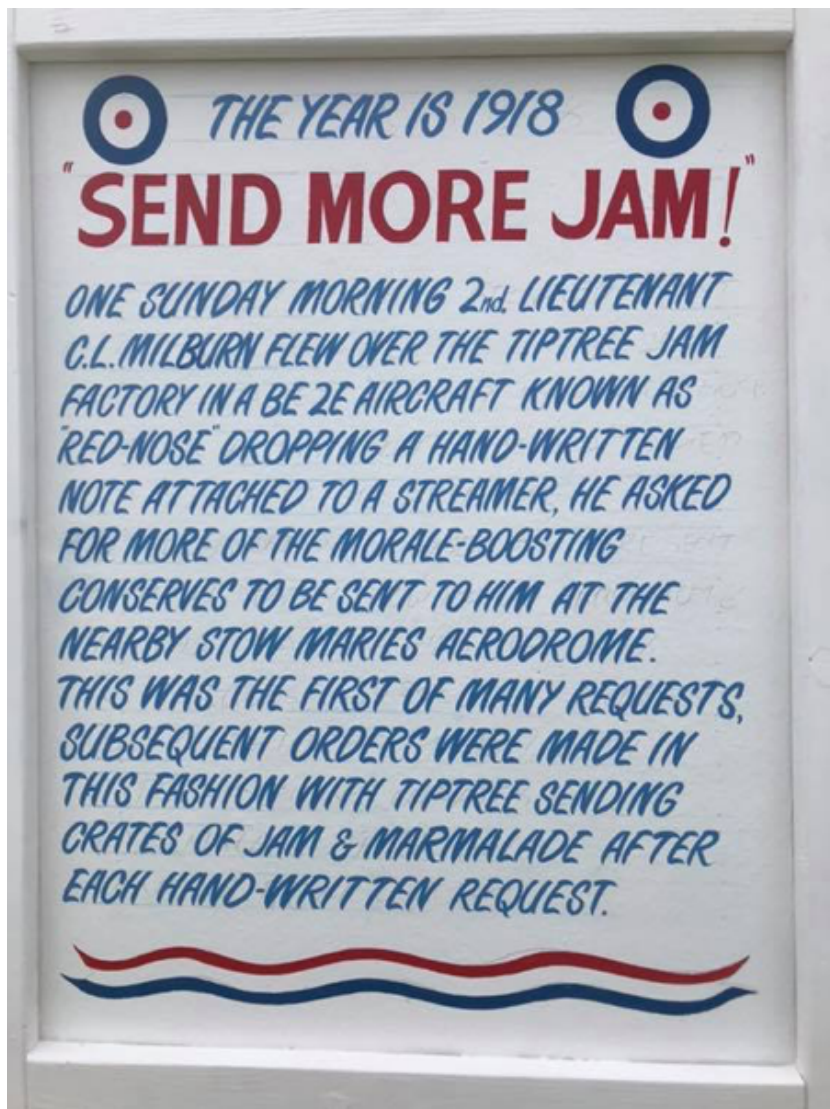
As well as aircraft, there are vehicles, weapons and uniforms from the period and artefacts with links to the local area, including a section of the famous Zeppelin that was downed near Little

Wigborough. Many of the original buildings have survived: there are several hangars and workshops/repair rooms for the engineering minded to wander around. The Officers’ Mess is still part of the site and also, poignantly, the original mortuary that sadly did have to be put to use.

In April 1918, flying an outmoded BE 2E aircraft, 2nd Lt Gerald Mucklow died after engine failure on a night takeoff; he is buried nearby in the church of Saints Mary and Margaret. His loss is marked by a memorial near the site, commemorating the ten officers, men and women of 37 (Home Defence) squadron who died in defence of their country from Stow Maries, Goldhanger and Rochford aerodromes between 1916 and 1919.

A complex character (with an alias and uncertain origins) he is also remembered more happily as the young pilot who flew his “red nosed” plane over the Wilkins Tiptree factory to drop a shopping list for jams and preserves in a pouch decorated with red and yellow streamers. And yes, there is a café at Stow Maries which has continued this supply link to the present day, although orders are now placed in a more conventional fashion.

Barrie Sears



THE FOOD MUSEUM

Another date to note is the second of our outings this year: to The Food Museum, booked for Thursday 14th September. This is later in the year, because our programme of lectures ran into July and so to avoid the school holidays we have arranged the trip for early September. Coach companies are also very busy and so difficult to book in July!

This was formerly the Museum of East Anglian Life but was transformed into this new venue in 2022. It is situated in Stowmarket, Suffolk and is said to be ‘multi-sensory, fun, relevant and engaging.’ From cheese making to brewing, historical breads to seasonal eating, it aims to engage the visitor and you will explore how Britain’s diet has changed through the centuries. There will be a welcome talk when we arrive; they have a café where we will have afternoon tea.

The entire Museum is large, extending to 75 acres, but there is no need to try and see everything on a single visit, and much of interest can be easily accessed. One highlight is Abbott’s Hall, a Queen Anne house which is original to the site, and this is close to our entry point. The Hall houses the community exhibition galleries and leads on to the picturesque Walled Garden. This grows a range of fresh produce which is used in the adjoining café.

The museum shop has a daily ‘menu’ that lists all the talks, tours and demonstrations that will be happening during your visit. Every day, you can meet our horses, get engaged with hands-on farming or foraging activities and watch the animals feeding. On our visiting day, Thursday, there is a chance to tour the watermill which is a level walk from Abbott’s Hall. There are in all 17 buildings, and an amazing 40,000 objects in the Museum collection, from authentic wartime ration recipes to a full-size museum power engine.

Alton Watermill



Further through our site you'll find the Bobby Building, housing crafts and tools used in the production of food, a blacksmith's forge, and our Farm Barn which explores who grows our food. The Bone building is currently being refurbished and soon will house a programme of changing annual exhibitions.

Just beyond these buildings you'll find our farm area, with rare breeds, growing crops and an orchard. Further along is Alton Watermill, Great Moulton Chapel and Eastbridge Windpump and a mile of beautiful river trails. The museum looks after a 1.8km stretch of the River Rattlesden, also known as the River Rat. In Spring 2022, a series of sculptures was unveiled, inspired by the natural world, along a 1km pathway which meanders along the river. These include deer made from willow, carved wooden animals and a spectacular wire sculpture entitled "The Web of Life."

Their website <https://foodmuseum.org.uk/>, has a lot of information including details about accessibility and a map of the site.

Joy Hopkinson and Ray Cantrell

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THE ROYAL VISIT TO COLCHESTER CASTLE

After much organisation and preparation, much of it done in secret, King Charles III and Camilla, The Queen Consort, visited Colchester Castle on March 7th 2023. The last reigning monarch to visit us was Edward VII.

After meeting dignitaries in the Castle, they met with Museum staff and were taken through the galleries. The King showed a great interest in the building, its age and its history. He was particularly intrigued by the Castle connection with the White Tower of London, both sharing Gundolph, Bishop of Rochester as their architect. The tombstones of Facillis and Longinus also caught his attention.

The Queen Consort spent some time with the students from Market Field College who showed the couple objects from the handling trolley. These included a replica torc, a roof tile with animal footprints and a wax tabula and stylus. Albert, one of the 16 students present, persuaded the Queen Consort to write her name on the wax; and needless to say the object will not stay in the handling trolley any longer! Market Field College is a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities facility; the students are all 16-19 years old and they come to Colchester Museum on a work placement basis to learn skills for life after leaving full-time education. Mia, another student, presented the Queen Consort with a bouquet on arrival.



Their Majesties then moved onto the Fenwick Treasure and Colchester Vase which had been removed from their respective cases for the visit. The Vase has been much in the news after an article appeared recently in the national press and is going to be a key object in the Gladiators exhibition opening in July.

They finished the Castle visit in the Chapel, meeting various Colchester groups and looking at the Letters Patent which were displayed on an easel. Signing the visitor book before they left, they unveiled the name of the baby rhino at Colchester Zoo, Dara, which means “Beautiful” in Swahili, before heading up the High Street for a quick walk about and then to the library.

Pippa Pickles





*King Charles and Queen Consort Camilla
visit Colchester*

Photos: Colchester City Council



THE COLCHESTER VASE

The Colchester Vase was initially discovered in 1853 in Colchester's western Roman cemetery. It is famous for the incredible artwork depicting gladiators and other scenes from a day at the games in Roman Britain. It is particularly special as it includes the names of the gladiators: Memnon and Valentinus.

Glynn Davis, Senior Castle Curator, together with experts from the universities of Kings College London and Durham as well as local specialist, Nina Crummy, have re-evaluated the vase and its contents.

The fact that it was the vessel for a cremation is often overlooked and, as part of the 'Decoding the Roman Dead' project in 2021, the team commissioned isotopic tests, which determine the area in which a person was brought up, and analyses of bones in the human remains. They discovered, for the first time, that the person buried with the pot was a man, aged over 40, who did not originally come from Essex.

The re-evaluation of the vase itself also crucially showed how the names had been inscribed prior to firing, rather than afterwards as had originally been assumed. This, together with the fact that it had been produced in a workshop in Colchester indicated that the vase was commissioned to celebrate a specific event that was presumably held in the City at some point between AD 170 and 200. It seems likely that this was a piece of sporting memorabilia commissioned by someone very wealthy and who had a particular reason to commemorate the games the vase depicts. Who he was - a sponsor, trainer or even one of the gladiators himself we will never know. Nor do we know the fate of Valentinus, the gladiator depicting holding a finger up in submission.

The vase is on permanent display but will also be an important feature in an upcoming major exhibition at the Castle from the 15th July, ***'Gladiators: A day at the Roman Games'***.

Frank Hargreaves



CAMPAIGNING FOR JUMBO WATER TOWER

Early in January, some members were fortunate to be offered the opportunity to join Civic Society members on a tour of the Jumbo water tower. David Balcombe, Director of the Building Preservation Trust that is now working so hard to preserve the building, was the leader for the visit. Having conquered almost a hundred steep stairs to reach the engineers room, we were given a first hand view of the work in hand and a superb insight into the proposed redevelopment of this unique site.

Our Water Tower is the largest Victorian municipal water tower in England and a much-loved Colchester icon. At the time it was built, Jumbo represented a huge public investment in the supply of clean water to the whole community. Incidents of cholera and other water-borne diseases soon became a thing of the past.

Neglected for many years, and on the Historic England At Risk Register, the tower is now in urgent need of restoration, so that it can be saved for current and future generations. Its heritage value is well understood and it is Grade II* listed.



A view eastwards from Jumbo

After nearly four decades out of use, Jumbo is in poor condition: whilst the massive brickwork structure has survived well, the roof and cast ironwork are under threat of collapse.

Specialist surveys have revealed the manner and causes of this deterioration, which has accelerated over the past five years. The restoration of Jumbo now cannot wait.

North Essex Heritage have championed the repair and re-use of Jumbo since it published an Options Appraisal in 2015. With ongoing community consultation and support from expert consultants, the trust has developed a proposition that aims to secure the future

of this important, national monument.

This will bring the derelict and unique Balkerne Water Tower back into use, creatively converting it to provide a new and fully accessible heritage visitor attraction for the city. Combined with this, complementary commercial uses will supplement visitor revenue and help to achieve financial sustainability.

The illustrations give an idea of what might be in store for visitors to a restored Jumbo - from Colchester, the United Kingdom and further afield



Inside the Tank Room of Jumbo

As a heritage interpretation space, the tank will be the first step on the journey through Jumbo. As much of the surviving original pipework and valves will be retained in this space as possible. It will tell the story of Jumbo, why Colchester needed it and how it related to the townspeople. A flexible and connected audio visual system will create a fully immersive experience for visitors, while newly created openings in the tank will allow views out over the city. The patina of the interior of the tank panels, the timber roof structure and the huge scale of the roof space are all retained and combine to make the experience one to remember and to revisit.

Jumbo's heritage significance and conservation status means that this will be a costly project, requiring high quality interventions where these are necessary. Dealing with the repair of innovative, Victorian engineering whilst allowing the structure to be re-purposed is a huge challenge. No single grant giving source is able to provide the necessary funds.

Trustees are therefore seeking to gather together a cocktail of funding from a variety of sources. Whilst we hope that some contributions will be substantial, other grants may be quite small, but all will be significant.

JUMBO

THE WATER TANK

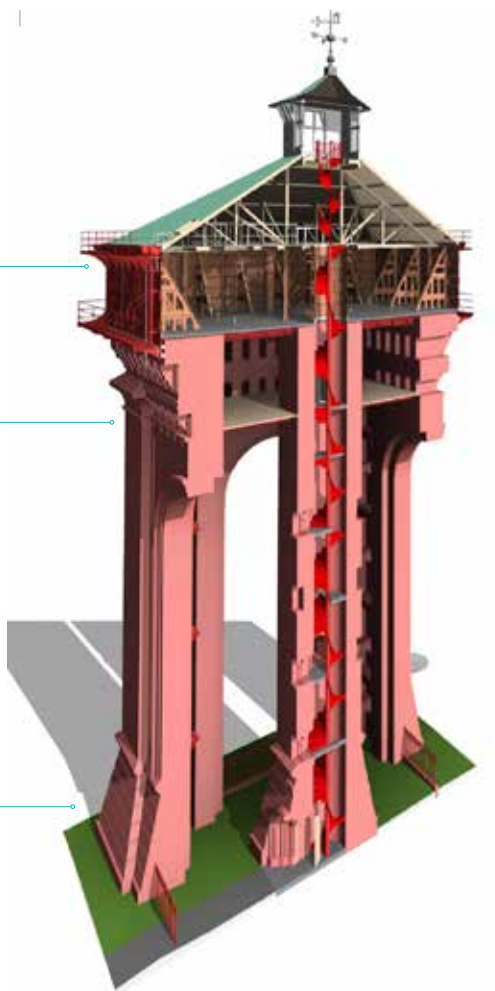
To be used for heritage interpretation, community events and private hire

THE ENGINEERS' ROOM

To be used as a bar

GROUND LEVEL

To be used as a restaurant



The water tower has been adopted as a Towns Fund project and this has provided financial support to appoint a full Design Team and Project Managers to work with North Essex Heritage and Colchester City Council. This funding will also be used to help match other grants awarded to the project as and when these are received.

We currently estimate that the total cost of the project will be more than £6.5m. This sum is based upon preliminary design work that will continue if the National Lottery Heritage Fund approve the grant application that has recently been submitted.

The Trust is now seeking further financial support to help make this project a reality. We cannot do this alone and whilst we are confident that a substantial proportion of costs will be met from organisations already identified, the Trust still need to raise around £2m from other sources.

Every financial contribution is valuable to us, no matter how small. Even if you are unable to provide funding there are many ways you can still be involved. Perhaps you might like to be a project partner or get involved with our future activity programme? Or provide expertise to help the trust achieve success?

Chris Betts RIBA, Trustee at North Essex Heritage.

For further information about fundraising for Jumbo please contact:

David Balcombe, Director, North Essex Heritage

07722 780923 davidbalcombe1@gmail.com



THE COLCHESTER QUIZ

By Gill Bird

1. What is Eryngo?

- A. An Icenian dialect B. A Roman board game C. An oyster D. An edible plant

2. In "Old Essex" what was a Pollywag?

- A. A Sheepdog B. A Grasshopper C. A Tadpole D. A Caterpillar

3. When was the first Colchester police force founded?

- A. 1834 B. 1836 C. 1838 D. 1840

4. Who left his clock collection to Colchester?

- A. Bernard Mason B. Lord Cowdray C. Wilson Marriage D. Ronald Rolex

5. Where is Merville that the Colchester Barracks is named after?

- A. India B. Spain C. Holland D. France

6. In the late 18th century what was located on the site where Fenwick now stands?

- A. An iron foundry B. A beer house C. Stables D. A candle makers

7. When did Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show visit Colchester?

- A. 1899 B. 1900 C. 1903 D. 1905.

8. Colchester Zoo was the first zoo in the UK to successfully breed what?

- A. Meerkats B. Aardvarks C. Sloths D. Iguanas

9. Mary Whitehouse died in Colchester in what year?

- A. 1995 B. 1998 C. 2001 D. 2005

10. When is St Oysth's Day?

- A. 4th July B. 10th August C. 3rd September D. 7th October

Answers at bottom of page 6



FRIENDS OF COLCHESTER MUSEUMS 2023

Lecture Series

Admission for members £2 per session (£4 non- members)

Season ticket for all talks is £20

EVENING LECTURES – Tuesday at 7.30 pm

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|-----------------|---|--|
| 11 April | Under Siege
<i>Colchester and the Civil War</i> | <i>Cllr Professor Pam Cox</i> |
| 25 April | Colchester Royal Grammar School Pool
<i>Colchester's biggest war memorial!</i> | <i>Dr Paul Byrne</i> |
| 9 May | The Low Countries to New Hall and beyond
<i>A history of the Canonesses who now live in Chelmsford & Colchester</i> | <i>Sr Moira O'Sullivan
Sr Margaret Mary Horton</i> |
| 23 May | The great Essex earthquake, 1884
<i>When panic and destruction swept across north Essex</i> | <i>Peter Jones</i> |
| 6 June | The Essex Industrial School
<i>The Chelmsford institution for destitute boys, founded in 1872</i> | <i>Emma Palmer</i> |
| 20 June | AGM at 7pm followed by Old Heath
<i>Ancient port and modern suburb of Colchester.</i> | <i>Patrick Denney</i> |
| 4 July | The journey to a new museum for Brightlingsea
<i>A curator's view</i> | <i>Margaret Stone</i> |
| 5 Sept | Frinton and Walton Heritage Trust
<i>Its future plans and the new Heritage Centre</i> | <i>John Barter</i> |
| 19 Sept | The Town Watch | <i>Town Watch</i> |
| 3 Oct | The art in the Town Hall
<i>An insight into this rich collection</i> | <i>Philip Wise</i> |
| 17 Oct | Colchester between the Wars
<i>The story continued from the lecture in 2022</i> | <i>Paul Rusiecki</i> |
| 31 Oct | Colchester: City or Town? | <i>Mark Davies</i> |

Further information from Joy Hopkinson, Programme Secretary
joyhopkinson1010@gmail.com