



**The Friends of
Colchester Museums**

Registered Charity No. 310669

**73rd Annual Report 2022-23
and Autumn Newsletter 2023**

OFFICERS

<i>President</i>	His Worship the Mayor, Councillor John Jowers	
<i>Vice Presidents</i>	Peter Berridge Peter Constable Patrick Denney Dr Chris Hall Jenny Jones	Peter Jones Andrew Phillips Sir Bob Russell Paul Spendlove
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<i>Programme Secretary</i>	Joy Hopkinson (<i>joyhopkinson1010@gmail.com</i>)	
<i>Committee</i>	Bill Abbott Liz Anderson Harry Carlo Michael Connell	Chris Farnell Geoff Fenn Chris Hall
<i>Ex Officio</i>	Frank Hargrave (<i>Colchester & Ipswich Museums 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 www.cimuseums.org.uk	

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

tfocm.org.uk

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Since the last newsletter, the Spring programme and first outing have taken place. We had a varied selection of topics for the talks and the first of the two annual outings, to Stow Maries, was very enjoyable. Thanks go to Mary Dale and Joy Hopkinson for helping the Museum to run their exhibition at the recent Roman Day in Castle Park.

At the AGM, Cllr John Jowers was elected President. The existing Vice Presidents were reappointed, and new Vice Presidents voted in: Sir Bob Russell, to recognise his promotion of Colchester's history; and Jenny and Peter Jones, for their long service to the Friends of Colchester Museums.

The Mayor presented a drawing by Constable of the west front of St Botolph's Priory to Philip Wise, Heritage Manager at the Castle Museum, on behalf of the Friends of Colchester Museums, who had made the purchase, together with a 1913 photograph of the High Street.



At the talk by Patrick Denney following the AGM, the attendance was well over 100.

We were sad to hear of the death of Mark Davies who served for many years on the committee. The last talk of the Autumn season, at which he was to have spoken, will be "The Mark Davies Memorial Lecture" and Andrew Phillips, one of our most popular speakers, has offered to speak on "When Paxmans went bust and what happened next."

The committee is now below the size required by the constitution. While there is no need to panic, we do need to get some new volunteers for the committee, both because of this and because there are things which are not being done which should be. There is more on this later in this newsletter.

The survey last autumn of members' preferences for time and venue of meeting was not much use as there was little response and no clear preferences were shown. A much-simplified survey is enclosed with this newsletter, basically just asking

members if they would prefer to start at 7 instead of 7.30. (However, there is a risk that an earlier start could prevent some possible speakers from attending.)

There will be a private viewing of the Gladiators exhibition for TFOCM members. This is on Thursday 7th September, 6.30-7.30 p.m.

Some lectures next year will, if possible, be by members of Colchester Medical Society, who asked if they could share their lectures and ours.

We will soon be beginning our Autumn programme, with a visit to the Food Museum (fully booked) and a promising series of talks. We look forward to seeing you.

Ray Cantrell

Chairman

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TREASURER'S TOPICS

The annual accounts are included in this edition. If anyone has any questions, please let me know.

Thank you to everybody who has completed and returned a Gift Aid form. About 50% of members have done so and if you do pay tax, it will be really helpful if you can complete and return the form, which is enclosed. I still have some catching to do with Gift Aid claims, but anticipate recovering £2500 from HM Customs and Revenue by September, with more to come.

Thanks also to members who pay by a bank standing order and who have paid the amended instalment rate. If you have underpaid your subscription, details of the amount payable are enclosed.

Subscriptions went up from 1st January and most members have paid the correct rate. Some members do need to amend their payment instructions, but if this is the case, a note will be enclosed, giving you details of how this can be done.

If you want a season ticket for the Autumn Talks, they are available at £8.00 from me.

Peter Evans

Hon. Treasurer

WANTED

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The full committee only meets about three times a year and this is where the more important matters for TFOCM are decided. Apart from attending meetings, each committee member has responsibility for some aspect of the Society which involves some time working at home during the year. Without the work of the committee, the Society would not function.

The Constitution (which is the legal basis) reads “The affairs of the Society shall be managed by a Committee elected from the Society’s membership, comprising the Chairman, Treasurer and two Secretaries and not less than 8 other members.” At present there is a total of 11 committee members including officers.

This is not in itself a great worry, but there are a number of areas where the work is not being done effectively.

Areas where we could do with volunteers joining the committee and taking responsibility include:

Website

Social Media

Publicity (at present covered by the Chairman)

Youth Officer (an area which is not covered at all at present)

Recording or videoing of talks

If you are willing to help with any of these please make yourself known

An alternative might be for anyone who has the necessary skills and is willing to help with these (or other) areas but does not want to be on the committee to perform the work without joining the committee.

THE FRIENDS OF COLCHESTER MUSEUMS
Income and Expenditure account
for year ended 31st March 2023

INCOME	2022-2023	2021-22
Subscriptions	£8106.50	£7082.50
Lectures	£980.20	£505.60
Donations (*4)	£1055.83	£649.00
Interest	£1033.56	£383.28
NatWest compensation (*1)	£100.00	
Gift Aid	£16.55	
	<u>£11292.64</u>	<u>£8620.38</u>

EXPENDITURE	2022-2023	2021-22
Operating Expenses	£2899.19	£2600.94
Subscriptions and Insurance (British Assoc. of Friends of Museums, and British Association of Local History)	£175.00	£220.00
Events - Christmas Open Evening	£112.00	£99.00
Contribution to Museum (*3)	£1423.80	£1,093.79
Purchases (*2)	£3383.00	£4250.00
Surplus of income over expenditure	£3299.65	£365.65
	<u>£11292.64</u>	<u>£8620.38</u>

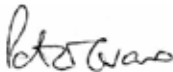
Notes to the Accounts


- Note 1 Compensation awarded due to delay in creating online bank account at NatWest
Note 2 Gold watch (Hedge) £1183, gold/glass setting £700, contribution to Wicked Spirits exhibition £1500
Note 3 Payment to Castle Museum in lieu of free admission for members
Note 4 Includes payments received in memory of Jean Baker
Note 5 Funds received from The Friends of the Roman Wall, less repairs to display panel

The Friends of Colchester Museums
Balance Sheet
as at 31st March 2023

ACCUMULATED FUND	2022-23	2021-22
Balance b/fwd	£38400.18	£38,043.53
Surplus/loss the year	£3299.65	£365.65
TOTAL	<u>£41699.83</u>	<u>£38,400.18</u>
Reserves		
B Colbron	£805.60	£805.60
Fulford bequest	£4724.11	£4724.11
Roman Wall (*6)	£4901.02	£5538.02
CREDITORS		
Payments for 2023 trips	£1140.50	£1125.00
Room hire		£5.00
Season tickets 2023	£160.00	£560.00
Colchester Recalled	£100.00	
Colchester City Council	£1535.80	
	<u>£55066.86</u>	<u>£51157.91</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS	2022-23	2021-22
BANK		
Current Account	£8812.42	£6437.03
Building Society	£46254.44	£44,720.88
TOTAL	<u>£55066.86</u>	<u>£51157.91</u>

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

COLCHESTER MUSEUMS REPORT TO THE AGM JUNE 2023

In 2022-23

Visitor numbers returned to pre-pandemic levels and income at the Castle exceeded targets, buoyed by the exhibition '*Wicked Spirits, Witchcraft and Magic*' at Colchester Castle, which gave voices to those who were persecuted and imprisoned. This time last year FOCM helped us achieve a challenging crowd-funding target for the exhibition of £15,000 by donating the final £1,500; many thanks! The exhibition encouraged a 4% increase of visitors on pre-pandemic figures, and also went on to support a very successful programme of events, including sold out talks throughout the run.

We're now installing *Gladiators, a Day at the Roman Games* and are hopeful that this will encourage many visitors, especially families, to the Castle before the exhibition closes in January. It features a number of exciting loans, notably from the British Museum, including the famous Gladiator helmet.

NPO – Arts Council

In November we received the good news that our NPO funding from Arts Council is secure for the next three years, 2023-26, and we were awarded an uplift in funding to double our current funding from £200,000 per annum to £400,000. This will mean a very ambitious delivery programme for us, as well as the ability to recruit some new staff. As always with Arts Council, the expectation is that we plan our programme around the community and inclusivity. The additional investment will boost our access, educational and digital resources.

MEND – Arts Council/Dept Culture, Media and Sport funding for backlog maintenance

Colchester Museums were awarded a grant of £229,000 from the Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND) towards much needed renovations at Hollytrees Museum - start up work has commenced at last!

We are meeting with Historic England shortly to talk about the next round of funding which, if successful, will concentrate on the damp issues and the NW tower of the Castle.

Natural History Museum

Work also continues with planning a refreshment and redevelopment of the Natural History Museum following a lengthy period of public and stakeholder consultation. We hope to be able to progress with these plans following the outcome of a funding application to the National Heritage and Culture Fund

Community

Improvements to access have been made across the board, both physically in the museums and online. At Colchester Castle this was acknowledged with its shortlisting in the 'Best Accessible Museum' category of the national 'Kids in Museums' Family Friendly Museum Awards

We have very recently received a grant from the lottery to develop a project dedicated to combatting loneliness using our collections to stimulate conversation and engagement. This funding has been generously supported by Colchester Catalyst and Colchester Museums Development Foundation.

Additionally, Colchester Visitor Services worked in collaboration with Dementia Action Alliance and Essex Cares Ltd to engage with dementia groups and to develop life learning sessions. These create a safe welcoming space for dementia sufferers and their carers. These sessions involve a combination of sensory stimulation activities and conversations, with training in place for staff to enable them to feel comfortable and confident in hosting these events.

We continue to work closely with Market Field College, for students with moderate learning difficulties, including those with autistic spectrum needs, aged 16-19.

Approximately 15 students come to the museums weekly to carry out work experience with us, helping them to prepare for life beyond education. They have been helping us with various tasks carefully and enthusiastically, including meeting with King Charles III and Camilla, The Queen Consort, who visited Colchester Castle on March 7th 2023; he was the first reigning monarch to visit since Edward VII.

We displayed '*Un/Masked*', a small temporary display opened on 29 March 2023. It was produced by Karl Anthony Mercer, a former Curator 4 Change trainee at Colchester Museums. The display explores some of the challenges facing neurodivergent and disabled people and the limited collections that many museums have which are able to tell their stories.

Although achieving income targets has been critical, the team has been mindful of the families most impacted by the cost of living crisis and the service's mission to engage all of our communities. As a result, free event tickets and memberships were distributed to families in need, via partnerships with organisations such as Barnardo's and Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service and Refugee Action. We also increased the number of free and drop-in activities at all three museum sites, such as free craft activities, storytelling and object handling sessions. The traditional free entry days were also facilitated -with 1,854 visitors attending the Castle's Heritage Open Day, despite it taking place at the time of the late Queen's death, and

the ever - popular Christmas Open Evening was once again generously supported by the Friends with the provision of refreshments.

38 venues participated in Heritage Open Days (compared to 29 in 2021). The total number of visitors was 5,094, a significant increase on the figure of 3,692 recorded in 2021. In 2023, Heritage Open Days will form a major event in the year of celebration of City Status. As a result, a special effort has been made to involve as many venues as possible, especially those which are completely new or have not participated for some years.

Many thanks as ever to The Friends of Colchester Museums for all your support, both financial for acquisitions and reimbursement for refreshments and museum entry, and in kind with advice and collaboration.

Pippa Pickles

Colchester Museums Manager



EVENING LECTURES SPRING AND SUMMER 2023

The Siege of Colchester, June 12th - August 28th, 1648 (11th April)

Councillor Professor Pam Cox and David Molloy outlined events of the Civil War Siege, in which Colchester had declared for Parliament but was besieged by Parliamentary forces. The talk began our Spring series in some style, with over 100 attending, and it was interesting that teachers from a number of local schools attended, with the Siege being integral to their Curriculum. The 375th Anniversary is to be marked by events in August and the Curator of an exhibition case in the Museum, Ben Patey, has contributed an article for this newsletter.

Colchester Royal Grammar School Pool (25th April)

Colchester's biggest war memorial

In this wide ranging and enlightening talk, Dr Paul Byrne explained that the Pool is unique: the only one to be registered with the Imperial War Museum as a war memorial. Headmaster, Dr Shaw Jeffery and his successor Mr Cape, initiated and developed their vision for a swimming pool. The School suffered a great loss: 75 pupils gave their lives in the War. The intention was to teach pupils to swim and therefore save lives in future. Parents and pupils were energetic in their support, but the major fund raising event was an Old English Fair that lasted for three days.

The local firm JW Trudgett put in a tender for £975, then excavated the site entirely by spadework, at great speed. Works were completed ready for an opening ceremony in July! Over the years, swimming classes and house championships have ensured that the educational ambition for the pool was realised. The pool is still in regular use, both for the school and for members of the public

Peter Evans

The Low Countries to New Hall and Beyond (9th May)

Sr Moira O'Sullivan and Sr Margaret Mary Horton told us of the Sisters' origins at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in 1099 up to their work with deprived communities today. The Order began as an Order of male Canons who were succeeded by female Canonesses, thought to be more 'hard working and less expensive!' They founded a progressive school for Catholic girls in Liege, Belgium, but because of the French Revolution they had to relocate the whole establishment to England. After overcoming the suspicion of locals, a family purchase enabled them to move

into New Hall, Chelmsford, which had been Henry VIII's Palace of Beaulieu. The school thrived and is now one of the largest independent Catholic schools in the UK. However, the Community was declining in numbers, so in 2003 they moved out to work in East London, Chelmsford and Colchester. The sisters brought with them wonderful artefacts, including a 17th Century chalice and prayer book. The University of Durham now houses most of the Order's archives.

Peter Evans

The Great Essex Earthquake (23rd May)

Peter Jones began his thorough and enjoyable talk by explaining how earthquakes are caused by the movement of tectonic plates, a process which is seldom felt in England. But the shock of this event in 1884, the largest earthquake ever recorded in England, was felt as far afield as Exeter and Altrincham - and its epicentre was beneath Abberton. There were few serious injuries, but many close escapes and about a dozen deaths - however, not all as a direct result of the earthquake. Thousands of houses were damaged, often losing their roofs, and many church towers were damaged or collapsed, including that of Lion Walk Church where the talk took place.

The earthquake happened before the days of newspaper photographs, but we were shown contemporary graphic illustrations and images from local photographers which recorded extensive damage.

A national relief fund raised only little, but about £10,000 came from a local effort. The total cost of repairs was an estimated £100,000 at the time, or about £15,000,000 now.

Ray Cantrell

The Essex Industrial School (6th June)

This fascinating talk by Emma Palmer, a broadcaster who has closely researched the social history of Essex, documented the lives of Victorian children who had been mistreated and abandoned. Convicted of petty crimes, boys could be sent to Thames training ships and exposed to danger from fire and accidents. In contrast, Industrial Schools presented an opportunity for the neglected to learn trades and progress in life. Joseph Pash was a successful engineer who, in 1872, opened a school for 120 boys in Baddow Road, Chelmsford. This provided a basic education and developed skills in practical trades and farming, enabling many young men to go on to lead successful lives, often in Canada or Australia. As confirmation, letters of heartfelt appreciation were sent to Mr Pash and his staff. Many of the boys fought

in World War One and the future George VI visited the school as a testimony to its achievements. However, from 1924, when the school system changed, the impact of Industrial Schools gradually began to diminish.

Michael Connell

Old Heath: Ancient port and modern suburb of Colchester (20th June)

Patrick Denney gave a fascinating and authoritative account of the history of Old Heath: as Old Hythe, it was the first harbour of Colchester in Saxon times and it remains a distinctive part of Colchester today. He detailed the history of local agriculture, the various dairy farms or 'wicks' which served local needs as well as St John's Abbey. Later, industries around Distillery Pond and Bourne Brook included a large gin distillery; there were also corn and oil mills, a steam laundry and a brick works. Home life was hard in Old Heath: a regular water supply was not established until the early 20th Century. More positively, a Board School was opened in 1898, having formerly been in The Bell public house and St Barnabas church. The Second World War had a considerable impact, with two direct hits and loss of life; evidence of anti-tank defences can still be seen in Old Heath gardens today. Old photographs and oral accounts gave a special sense of authenticity to this history.

Joy Hopkinson

The Journey to a New Museum for Brightlingsea (4th July)

This is the first of two talks this year about Museums near to Colchester, that have, or are, developing new museums.

Margaret Stone, Curator, took us from the foundation of the Museum as a reading room 130 years ago, to a modern premises with state of the art displays and facilities. Often referred to as the Library and based in Duke Street, the buildings were outdated by the 21st century, and Brightlingsea was in danger of losing its museum accreditation. It was too small and access was poor. During an open evening about the local shipyards, not only was the Museum full but ex-shipyard workers were spilling out onto the pavement as well. Better premises were required. Many gifts of artefacts - and money - had been received but in 2013 a legacy of £500,000 from Claud Dove meant that a move would be possible. The former Police station was bought, gutted and extended and a lottery grant meant that specialist designers could be employed. Now situated in Station Road - and named Dove House - the museum is open at weekends all year round, with longer hours in summer.

Peter Evans

COLCHESTER POSTERS FOR THE MUSEUM

The Friends have already given the Museum some posters about local events and some more are being handed over next week, including a charity dance at the Corn Exchange in 1950s. This was mentioned to the Mayor at the AGM and he remembered going to several such charity events.



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MARK DAVIES



Mark was the son of a vicar, born in Bolton and brought up on the outskirts of Liverpool and in Cheshire. He was awarded a degree in Classics from Dublin University, then studied at the Institute of Archaeology at University College, London. His first job was as Archaeological Assistant at the Grosvenor Museum, Chester. Being much involved with archaeological digs in Chester, he met his wife, Caroline, on one of these digs, where she was a volunteer. They had 4 children, and 11 grandchildren, living in Roman Road for 35 years.

In 1970, Mark was appointed Assistant Curator at the Colchester Museums Service and remained there until he retired in 1998, running the Museum for two periods.

Apart from the redisplay of the Museums, Mark was closely involved with the management of Colchester's Archaeological sites, St Botolph's Priory, a programme of repair for the Roman Wall and, notably, creating the Gosbecks Archaeological

Park. After his retirement, Mark led tours of Archaeological sites around the world and continued to be closely involved with the operation of Colchester historical groups, including the Colchester Archaeological Trust and the Essex Society for Archaeology and History, which he chaired 2011-14.

The Friends knew Mark well from his days at the Museum. He was asked to become Chairman when Andrew Phillips retired in 2009, because of his experience with other local groups. He continued until 2016. After that he remained on the Committee, contributing knowledgeably to our decisions

As a younger man, Mark played many sports, but was also interested in music, singing bass in the St Botolph's Church Choir Music Society. Mark was very knowledgeable in all aspects of history but was easy to approach, as he had a good sense of humour. He always had a close relationship with his ex-colleagues at the Museum, who had much respect for him. His wise counsel will be much missed by us all.

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FOCM TRIPS 2023

It was welcome news that, after postponements caused by the Pandemic, the planned trips to Stow Maries Aerodrome and the Museum of Food at Stowmarket would be able to go ahead. As the Chairman announced, the visit to Stowmarket Museum of Food in September is now fully booked.



VISIT TO STOW MARIES GREAT WAR AERODROME

Many thanks to Joy Hopkinson for getting the show on the road once more. The article in the Spring newsletter documented many details about the history of this site, but our visit opened up whole new vistas.

This is a unique site with many planes, vehicles and intact original buildings on show; our cream tea was served in a mess room that had changed little in over a hundred years. The knowledgeable guides made the experience of World War One very immediate.

The youth of the pilots who undertook hazardous operations was striking, many as young as seventeen or eighteen - and some of these may have given false dates of birth.



With only a few hours of instruction (at a cost of £75 per head, returnable on qualification) they were launched into combat, wearing adapted motorcycling gear as their only protection against high altitudes and freezing weather. Neither were there any parachutes available...

And they were only a part of the operation, with a whole community of technicians and support workers a necessity. Part of the exhibition highlighted the vital role



played by local women, most of whom would travel to and from the site for their work shifts.



There was a moving memorial to the war dead, and the museum is in the process of researching biographies for all ground and air casualties among serving officers and air crew.

Hangars contained near exact replicas of the planes which fought on either side and we were able to hear directly from a craftsman pilot who was in the final stages of constructing a Fokker Wolf triplane, due for its trial flight in 2024. A metal fuselage and wooden wings had been skilfully and meticulously assembled.

The weekend after our visit a Festival of the Air was due to take place. Almost 30 planes would be taking to the air and performing tricks such as stunt flying and mock bomb runs using bags of flour - far more light hearted than the true events of 1916-18 on this site.

The Museum is open between 10am and 4pm on Fridays, Saturday and Sundays. www.stowmaries.org.uk gives details for all future activities, including a Model Air Show in September and the Remembrance Parade in November.

Footnote:

Ray Cantrell asked Suzanne, the Assistant Curator, who was one of the guides for us on the visit, if there were any records of pilots serving at Stow Maries as he thought his great uncle had been there. Suzanne very helpfully involved 'Ask Research' who, after some digging, found his great uncle's service record. This showed that he was attached to 37 Squadron - the unit based at the three airfields in the group. So at the least he must have landed at Stow Maries quite frequently, even if he was based at one of the other two airfields.

Michael Connell

RECENT COLCHESTER MUSEUMS ACQUISITIONS

A sketch of St Botolph's by John Constable. Anna Evans, an auctioneer at Rosebury's, the London Auction House, noticed that a Constable drawing of St Botolph's Priory had failed to sell and mentioned it to her mother, Angela Hammond, one of our members. She told our Treasurer at a Civic Society tour of the Priory. The Museum was informed and asked us to cover the purchase and conservation costs. We were able to purchase this for £4420 and present it to the Museum at the AGM. It is a beautifully observed piece, now being conserved at a specialist workshop near Cambridge. It is one of a number of related drawings, which confirm Constable's close family links with Colchester.

The High Street photograph from 1913, which shows work being carried out on the building that is now occupied by Robert Dyas (see Winter newsletter) will cost £470 to restore because it is mounted on unstable wood board. The picture has to be taken off, cleaned and stabilised with acid free board.

The Committee unanimously agreed to meet the full costs of purchase and the conservation of these acquisitions. Philip Wise gave his thanks for the continuing support that we provide to the Museum.

The Braintree Hoard

As pictured in a recent newsletter, this important purchase has been made. A dedicated case will be set up in the castle for a display of this new acquisition in the near future.

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GLADIATORS – A DAY AT THE ROMAN GAMES

FoCM Committee members were invited to a recent preview of the exhibition.

From Pippa's introduction it was evident that teamwork and support from many other organisations - notably the British Museum - had enabled this outstanding exhibition to be created. A local and national network undertook the responsibility for making the Games come to life.

We were struck by the quality and variety of the exhibits, including the Pompeii helmet, in superb condition and rarely loaned out to smaller venues. And of course, the Colchester Vase has confirmed that Roman Games did in fact take place just outside our City walls. A wide range of helmets and armour was on display too and interpretation boards made the details of gladiatorial combat between Secutor

and Retiarius, Murmillo and Thraex, come to life; these were drawn in vivid colour by Gary Erskine, a comic book artist who has most notably illustrated the “Star Wars” series.

The exhibition was well set out, informative and accessible: there really is something for everyone here. It is organised so that the day of violent activities is followed, from the procession to the arena and purchase of souvenirs to the slaying of prisoners by wild beasts and finally the combat between fighters who may have been the celebrities of their day, noted for their particular skills.



And the whole room is overlooked by a reproduction of a massive early 19th Century painting, a panorama that records the moment of submission and verdict after a gladiator has been defeated in combat.

All in all, a great production. There really is something for everyone here!



THE FOCM COMMITTEE

Roman Festival, Saturday and Sunday, July 29th and 30th, Castle Park.

On Saturday July 29th, Joy and I volunteered in the Castle Museum marquee at the Roman Festival. I assisted at last year's event and had enjoyed the experience, so was very pleased to be asked to help again. Our task was to supervise an activity involving searching for Roman items, such as oyster shells, coins, tesserae, that were buried in trays of ground up cork. It proved to be popular and there was a steady flow of children, who tried to guess what the objects were, before moving onto other activities provided by the staff at the Castle Museum.

There was a great deal to see and do elsewhere: gladiators fought, Roman soldiers milled with the public, a talk was given by the author Lindsey Davis and there was an opportunity to dress as a Roman - these were just a few of the many activities available. In all, a very enjoyable day and once again, we were very pleased to be able to support the work of Colchester Museums.

Mary Dale.

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MERSEA MUSEUM

Mersea Museum was built in 1976 by a local builder, Mr Stanley Hills, who not only constructed the building but donated the land on which it is situated. It is run by a board of trustees and a working committee. In 1992 the original building had a small wing added with a grant from Hervey Benham Trust and in 2010, following a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, a Resource Centre was added. It is situated in the High Street, next to the Church of St Peter and St Paul.

We open as a museum from the beginning of May until the end of September. During the winter months it is used for meetings, talks, art shows and occasional mini-exhibitions. The Resource Centre is used throughout the winter on Saturday mornings alternately for the Mersea Archive Research Group meetings and for general get-togethers where, mainly local, people pop in for a coffee, to use the computers for research or just to have a chat. The museum can be hired for meetings, talks etc. This coming autumn we will be running two ten-week courses from John Pullen-Appleby. One is a *History of Mersea – from the Stone Age to the Space Age* and the second is a *History of the River Blackwater*. Booking for our autumn courses is via the website (info@merseamuseum.org). We limit spaces to 60.

The museum has three main areas. On entering you find yourself in the main, original building which houses around its walls a semi-permanent exhibition; and, in the centre there is an exhibition that changes every year. For each of these we try

to highlight an aspect of Mersea, how it has changed and is continuing to change. This year, we have focused on *'Living on the Land'*. Having passed through the main area you come into the Benham Wing which houses permanent exhibitions of Mersea wildlife, oystering, children's toys, farming tools and, under the stairs, two local businesses, Clifford White's and Digby's. The Resource Centre contains our computers which hold some 60,000 images and documents, oral histories and film/video. There is also a shop selling a good selection of books on local topics, toys and souvenirs.



Among our more important displays is a replica of a fisherman's cottage as it would have been 100 years ago with a doorbell that sets the occupants talking to each other in wonderful Mersea accents. We also have the contents of the Mersea Barrow on long term loan from Colchester Museum. It consists of a beautiful Roman, green glass bowl and its lead container. The bowl has the cremated remains of a man, dating from the first or second century AD. Analysis has shown that he was a very rich and probably important individual whose cremated remains were covered with frankincense after they were put into the jar. The museum also

holds the keys to the Barrow and arranges visits from interested individuals and groups and is open to the public on Heritage Open Days.

Thirdly, after collaboration with a team from CITiZAN (Coastal and Intertidal Zone Archaeological Network), we have boards from a Bronze Age trackway that were found in the mud near Coopers Beach at the lowest of low tides and shards of Bronze Age burial urns that were found in a field at East Mersea.

This year's exhibition is *'Living on the Land'*, looking at farms and farming, Ray Island, caravan sites and a display from our collaboration with ENORI (Essex Native Oyster Restoration Initiative).

During the summer season the museum is open from 2pm to 5pm on Wednesdays through to Sundays and Bank Holidays. Admission is £2 for adults and free for under eighteens and members. Membership is £5 per person per year. Even if you cannot visit in person, our website is well worth a visit www.merseamuseum.org.uk

Our address is 12 High St., West Mersea. CO5 8QD.

We are a short walk from the bus stop at the MICA (which is the end of the route). There is limited parking at the museum but there is a car park behind the library.



“Among our more important displays is a replica of a fisherman’s cottage as it would have been 100 years ago with a doorbell that sets the occupants talking to each other in wonderful Mersea accents.”

"COLCHESTER RECALLED"
COLCHESTER'S ORAL HISTORY GROUP

The Autumn Season talks will be held on Mondays at Roman Circus House and begin at 10.30am

11th September Colchester Theatre from the Old Rep to present Day –

Dorian Kelly

16th October Clacton at the start of WW2 - *Roger Kennell*

13th November Colchester's First Bypass and its Memorials - Liz White

11th December - Christmas Picture Quiz

New members and guests welcome: Admission £4 (£3 Members)

AN ANNIVERSARY – THE SIEGE OF COLCHESTER

2023 marks the 375th anniversary of the Siege of Colchester, a dark and devastating event in the city's history. For 11 weeks, from June 1648, Royalist soldiers were trapped inside the town walls with the parliamentary supporting citizens. There were significant military events as a consequence: the mouth of the Colne was blockaded by three Parliamentary ships and a battle took place at Boxted Heath. Despite many attempts by the royalist troops to escape or gather supplies, the siege ended in their surrender and the execution of two of their prominent leaders, Charles Lucas and George Lisle on 29th August.

The impact this event had on the town and its inhabitants is unimaginable. Starvation swiftly arrived as people ran out of food, resorting to eating rats and domestic animals such as cats or dogs. Eventually people were forced to eat the tallow (animal fat) used to make candles as a form of nutrition. Cannon fire from the parliamentary troops stationed outside the town walls led to the destruction of several key buildings, including the tower of St Mary-at-the-Walls church to the west of the town. Thatch from the rooves of many buildings was also repurposed to

feed the horses of the royalist cavalry taking shelter, leaving those buildings more open to the unseasonably bad weather that was experienced at the time.

The town took many years to recover, though did so spectacularly. Within a few generations Daniel Defoe described Colchester as ‘large, very populous, the streets fair and beautiful’. However, he referenced the siege and the destruction it had left on the town, suggesting the legacy was still felt.

To mark this pivotal moment, not just in local history but also on the national stage, Colchester City Council have provided several forms of commemoration. A display at Colchester Castle, with loans from the Essex Society for Archaeology and History via the University of Essex Special Collections, showcases some of the objects relating to the siege not usually on display, including siege coins which were used as a temporary currency. A series of films entitled ‘*The Siege Diaries*’ was commissioned in partnership with the Colchester Institute, giving viewers a sense of life during the siege. Finally, the *Siege Spectacular* will be held over the weekend of 20th August, involving re-enactments and living history allowing for visitors to get a sense of the scale of what took place 375 years ago.

Ben Paites

Colchester and Ipswich Museums

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STOP PRESS - FREE PRIVATE VIEWING

A Friends’ Private Viewing of Gladiators Exhibition has now been arranged for **Thursday 7th Sept, between 6.30-7.30**; refreshments will be provided.

The exhibition is attracting large numbers, so this is a really good opportunity to have a close look.

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Answers
1C, 2B, 3B, 4A, 5B, 6B, 7C, 8C, 9A, 10B.

COLCHESTER MUSEUMS – LATEST UPDATE

- The *Twinkle Twinkle* display is being refreshed next week, and photography of the associated objects has taken place for a curated ‘on-line’ group which contains photographs and descriptions of the items shown. Many thanks go to FOCM who are covering the cost of photography
- Ivy growing on the Natural History Museum will be ‘pruned’ after birds have finished nesting. There are always conversations about supporting biodiversity of course, but the building is being surveyed as part of the redevelopment plans which will be a deciding factor on how much vegetation remains in future. Discussion with Parks advisors is now taking place. Similarly at Hollytrees, growth is being assessed as part of the roof repairs which begin imminently.
- Heras safety fencing around the Castle is precautionary. Following a recent drone survey we are aware that some areas require further investigation which is ongoing. We’ll update FOCM as we get more information.

Pippa Pickles

Colchester Museums Manager

PREVIEWS OF AUTUMN LECTURES 2023

Frinton and Walton Heritage Trust

This talk will focus on Frinton’s seafront; John Barter has just produced a book on the topic. He will then expand on news of the Trust’s activities and its plans for the future, including a Heritage Centre. Established in 1984, the Trust exists to consolidate historical knowledge of the local area and to provide public access to archives, artefact and exhibits that tell the story of the community’s past. This will expand on the article in our Spring 2022 newsletter.

The Town Watch

The Watch, Colchester, is the civic bodyguard to the Mayor of Colchester. They can be seen at all civic events and were particularly prominent as a guard of honour when the King and Queen visited Colchester recently.

They turn out for major city or social occasions as well as other events that promote Colchester. They are almost unique in the United Kingdom, with the Lord Mayor of London being the only other with a civic bodyguard.

The Art in the Town Hall

Philip Wise is well known to us as he is the Heritage Manager at Colchester and Ipswich Museums. The art in the Town Hall is a wonderful collection of paintings old and new, some of local and some of national importance. This includes the portrait of the late queen by Richard Stone which was used by the BBC at the time of the late Queen's death last year. It was used in all their obituary broadcasts to the country and indeed the world.

Colchester between the Wars

Paul Rusiescki gave a wonderful insight into Colchester in the twenties and thirties in our lecture series of 2022. However, such is the rich history of our city we didn't reach 1939 and so we have asked him to return to complete the story. Now, he will be taking a particular interest in the experiences of veterans between the Wars

The Mark Davies Memorial Lecture:

Why Paxman's closed and what happened next...

Andrew Phillips has agreed to give our first Mark Davies memorial lecture on the day when Mark was due to give a probably controversial talk entitled 'Colchester, City or Town?'

The history of the Paxman family and factory is important in the social history of Colchester. Many hundreds, possibly thousands, of people were employed by Mr Paxman in his factory at the Hythe. Andrew has researched Paxman's extensively, so this will be fascinating to hear.

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HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

Between Friday 8th and Sunday 17th September, over 40 locations are open to visit without charge - though please note that the only free day at the Castle will be Saturday 9th.

Most locations are in Colchester, but locations outside the City include the Mersea Barrow, the Munnings Art Museum in Dedham and the Nottage Maritime Institute on Wivenhoe Quay.

This is a truly superb opportunity to explore the riches that our District has to offer, from Roman sites to Saxon and mediaeval churches, watermills and a water tower, then the contrast between Edwardian and Victoriana municipal design and the contemporary lines of the Mercury Theatre and Firstsite. This annual celebration of Colchester's heritage is not to be missed!

THE COLCHESTER QUIZ

By Gill Bird

1. According to the 2021 Census which Essex city has the largest population.
A. Southend B. Chelmsford C. Colchester
2. Who described Holly Trees as the finest Georgian house in Colchester?
A. Mortimer Wheeler B. Nikolaus Pevsner C. Lord Cowdray
3. From Essex dialect what does Sobbled mean?
A. Scrubbed B. Soaked C. Singed
4. When did Cants start selling roses?
A. 1765 B. 1794 C. 1825
5. When did BR Eastern Region stop using steam trains?
A. 1958 B. 1962 C. 1968
6. When was the first air raid on Colchester?
A. 1914 B. 1915 C. 1916
7. Where is William Gilbert buried?
A. St Peter's B. All Saints C. Holy Trinity
8. When did the Essex & Colchester (County) Hospital open?
A. 1810 B. 1815 C. 1820
9. When did the first public school open in Colchester?
A. 1206 B. 1534 C. 1742
10. When did the first traffic warden appear in Essex?
A. 1962 B. 1964 C. 1968

Answers on page 23

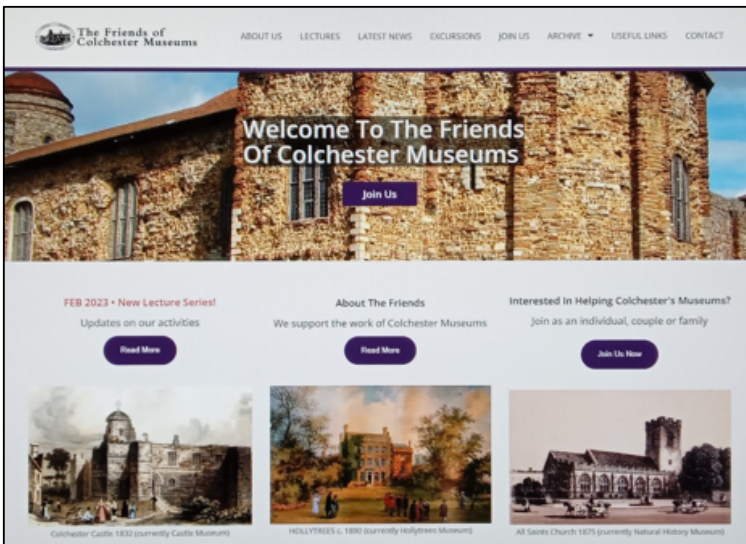
THE FRIENDS' DIGITAL PRESENCE

Using social media we can reach prospective new members. Our Facebook page (below) is getting attention and already has 680 followers



www.facebook.com/ColchesterMuseumFriends

Our website www.tfocm.org.uk (below) is now building up nicely and has passed 5,500 hits, nearly half of which have arrived directly, the rest coming from web searches and social media referrals.



So please help spread the word by sharing our links with family and friends.

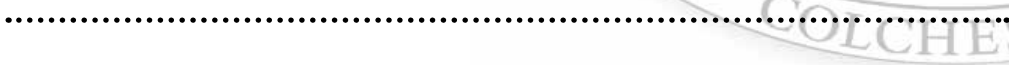


FRIENDS OF COLCHESTER MUSEUMS
Autumn 2023 Lecture Series

£2 per talk (£4 for non-members)

EVENING LECTURES – Tuesday at 7.30 pm

5 Sept	Frinton & 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	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	When Paxman went bust <i>The Mark Davies Memorial Lecture</i>	<i>Andrew Philips</i>



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