



# Friends of Braintree Museum Newsletter

No.38 June 2025

## Welcome to this new style of Newsletter

At the AGM I asked if people would be happy to receive the Newsletter in a digital format rather than the printed booklet. This was well received and as there were over 70 members present, the Committee agreed that this should be the way forward. There will be a saving in printing costs as well as postage.

However, I can reassure those of you without email that we will have it printed off and send it to you by post. I hope you find it interesting and enjoy reading it.

Jean Harrison – Chairman

## Talks

We regularly meet to hear a speaker on a variety of topics. We are pleased that these evenings are so well supported and they provide an excellent opportunity for friends to meet up and chat after the Talk.

In October last year our Talk was “Sentinels of the Sea – Lighthouses and Vessels of the Essex coast” and given by Mark Lewis. He is an experienced speaker who is fascinated by lighthouses and has made a detailed study of them, from the Phoenix of Alexandria through the evolving history of their construction, illumination and operation. He had stories of lighthouse keepers and events and related these to those in our area.

The November Talk, “Tis the Season to be Jolly” by Danielle Barnett got us into the Christmas spirit. We started the New Year with Andrew Mowbray taking us on a virtual tour of Colchester. He is a Colchester City Guide and used old maps and compared them with photographs to places today.



In March we heard about the changes in Local Government and the impact they had on Essex. The amazing story of Richard III was our subject in April, and in May, John Miners gave an illustrated talk on Textiles and their use in Wall Coverings. Peggy Wills, who arranges the speakers for our Talks, always produces an interesting and varied programme.

## Our next Talks are:

| Date   | Subject  | Speaker        |
|--------|--|----------------|
| 6 June | Recycling - Plastics and Waste                           | Bill Edwards   |
| 4 July | The Humorous side of the Police in the East End in 1970s | Roy Tyzac      |
| 5 Sept | A talk about beekeeping                                  | Mike Abel      |
| 3 Oct  | The Land of the Maharajas                                | Cherry Mullins |
| 7 Nov  | From Victoria to George V                                | Steve Lester   |

Do please come along on these Friday evenings, listen to the talk, have a coffee or a tea and make new friends.

## Outings

Unfortunately, due to health complications, I have been unable to take part in the last two outings. I am very grateful to Karen for taking over and these are her reports...

### **Visit to Rochester November 2024**



Around forty Friends of the Museum left Braintree one Saturday morning last November, bound for Rochester in Kent, for the Christmas Market.

Paul, our usual coach driver, was able to drop us off within a few minutes of the market.

It was a bustling and colourful atmosphere, with mainly food and drink stalls and a number of handmade gift stalls.

A small children's fairground had a carousel which pleased Pat, so together with Karen they had a ride, it was fun!



Some of us went inside Rochester Cathedral, the grounds of which was home to the market.

Lunch for most was found in the High Street, which was very busy with many Christmas themed shops.

A lovely day enjoyed by us all.



### **Visit to two museums in London March 2025**

Towards the end of March, 40 of us went to The Museum of the Home in London.



The weather was kind which was a bonus as they had a lovely garden to wander in.

Inside the museum were room settings, back to 17th century, and looking forward to 2049. It was a lovely museum housed in Georgian almshouses.



We then went on to Docklands where some of us took time to explore the Dock area and some went to the Museum of London. Here we stepped back in time to see 400 years of Docklands history. Another lovely day out.



## Forthcoming Outings

In June we are going to Scotney Castle in Kent. This is a National Trust House with gardens and walks through the estate.



There are other outings at the planning stage! More details to follow!



## Annual General Meeting Report

The AGM for the year ending 31/12/2024 was held on Friday 7 March and 72 members were present.

The Chairman presented the Annual Report highlighting the increase of the annual donation to the Trustees to £5,000 in respect of the spiralling costs of general management. Support was also given to the Museum in the purchase of two new laptops and signage at the Archive. The excellent proceeds of £1,910.00 from the Raffle went to provide the new interactive screens in the Warner Gallery.

Jean also paid respect and thanks to Sandra and John Adlam, two long-standing members of the Committee who decided to stand down. Their involvement over many years was effective and appreciated.

The Treasurer presented the Financial Report. The balance at 31/12/24 was £11,309.67. This was a decrease from previous years, although it was healthy, but we needed to be aware of ways to build our reserves for future Museum needs.

The Museum Manager, Robert Rose, was unable to be present, so the Chairman presented his report highlighting Museum events of the past year. The Trustees were very grateful for the support received from various Funds, which had been vital as was the support from Braintree District Council. Robert thanked the Friends for their support.

The election of Officers and Committee members took place, and the Committee members are...

|               |                  |                  |                  |
|---------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Jean Harrison | Chairman         | Dan Collis       | Vice-Chairman    |
| Cliff Foster  | Treasurer        | Penny Pilbrow    | Secretary        |
| Peggy Wills   | Talks            | Russell Thompson | Chronicles       |
| Karen Wade    | Raffle           | Pat Barry        | Committee Member |
| Philip Deal   | Committee Member | Chris Thompson   | Committee Member |

## News about committee members

**Dan Collis** - Dan was born in Rugby in 1944 (his mum was evacuated due to bombing in London) but he lived his early life in Dagenham and Arnos Grove, North London.

He started work in 1960 as an apprentice gas fitter and attended Tottenham Technical College. When he finished his apprenticeship, he joined the GPO as a Telephone Engineer.

When Janis and Dan married in 1967, they moved to Braintree, and he joined the Gas Board again looking after the gas holders and pressures for the area. Continuing his life working in the gas industry, he joined ProGas Ltd in 2002 as a gas technician maintaining gas fired power stations from Humberside to Shoreham until he retired.

When John was eight years old, he joined Scouting in North London and gained his Queen's Scout Award when he was 17 years old. When he moved to Braintree his life in scouting continued. He became Group Scout Leader at Cressing and ended up as District Commissioner for Braintree. He was awarded the Silver Acorn for service to Scouting.

Dan and Janis have two daughters, Louise and Angela and two grandchildren.

On retiring, Dan found a new interest as a voluntary maintenance man and decorator in the Museum. He painted many walls and assisted with exhibitions for about 8 years until packing away his tools. This was an enormous help to the Museum. He is now the very helpful and efficient Friends' sound and technology expert ensuring, in particular, that our Talks run smoothly.

At the AGM Dan Collis was elected as Vice-Chairman of the Friends Committee.



## Obituary

**David Stubbs** - Those of you who have been members for some time will remember David who produced the films for our TimeFrame collection.

For many years, TimeFrame was a valuable asset for the Friends. David filmed events and people relating to the town and edited them, producing video cassettes and DVDs.

Each year we had a TimeFrame evening, when David showed the latest films. The Museum holds copies which are a valuable record of our town.

Several years ago, David became unwell, and TimeFrame ceased. I am sad to say David died in February. He will be fondly and gratefully remembered for the huge contribution he made to the Friends.

## Chronicles

It is with a mixture of very sincere thanks and sadness that we accepted that Chris Thompson decided to retire from his position as Editor of our magazine Chronicles.



Chris took up this post 29 years ago and since then has been sourcing articles of historical interest with particular reference to our area. The magazine is a much respected part of the Friends. We presented Chris with a 1909 Air Show printed cup to add to his collection as a token of our thanks.

The good news is that Chris's son Russell, who has been working with Chris in recent years, is taking over and thus Chronicles will continue to be issued each year.

We are always so grateful to our members for their very generous support for our Summer Raffle.



Last year we raised £1,910. This, together with a little extra from our funds, has been used to provide an interactive screen in the Warner Gallery. This has been very well received by visitors to the Museum.

In 2023 the proceeds of the Raffle helped towards the preservation of photographs from the Alf Whybrow collection. A scanner was purchased to preserve negatives and the collection is being digitised. The photographs show Braintree of old, street scenes, shop scenes and pictures of the town's industries.

This year we have been asked if we could support the purchase and installation of a screen and access point which can be made available for these photographs to be viewed in the Museum.

I know we can rely on your usual generous support which will make this historical photographic collection available to everyone.

## New Members

Welcome to these new members who have joined The Friends of Braintree Museum since our last Newsletter in October 2024.

|                  |                 |               |                       |
|------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Mrs K Berry      | Mrs S Flack     | Mrs K Hobman  | Mr & Mrs B Holland    |
| Mr M Humphries   | Mr & Mrs R Kirk | Mrs J Lincoln | Mrs A M Marsden       |
| Mrs M Richardson | Mrs G Rickards  | Mrs L Sharpe  | Mr & Mrs R Winchester |
| Mr P Wood        |                 |               |                       |

Sadly, we have lost some members, but our membership remains fairly constant at 250.



## News from the Museum

Dear Friends,

We have entered our new financial year with an exciting programme of exhibitions, events, talks and projects. Full details can be found on our Archive and Museum websites or by signing up to our quarterly newsletters.

We hope you have visited the Toys and Games exhibition and our summer exhibition “Extinction, from Dinosaurs to Today”, opens on the 26<sup>th</sup> July to 20<sup>th</sup> December 2025.

Do come on one of our new Town Tours, starting and finishing at the Museum Garden, with full details on the Museum’s website.



Our ‘Cost of Living’ programme continues to be very popular, with our Museum Holiday Club fully booked with over 50 applications a day for Easter and a very busy Care Home outreach talks programme.

We are very appreciative of the annual support that the Friends provide towards our Collections care and marketing at both sites. Archive volunteers have been busy cataloguing and conserving the Collection, including making bespoke polyester pockets to preserve the paper designs. Museum volunteers have also been busy cataloguing the Collection, including recent acquisitions that feature in our newsletter. We received a wide variety of enquiries from all over the world, including the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum; Dick van Dyke Show and an Australian researching their family home.

The Museum Trust has decided to leave X (formerly Twitter) as it no longer aligns with our beliefs or customer reach. You can however find the Archive and Museum on Bluesky by searching online or at the following addresses: [@braintreemuseum.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/braintreemuseum.bsky.social) and [@warnertextilearchv.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/warnertextilearchv.bsky.social)

Finally, we were very pleased that the Great British Railway Journey programme with Michael Portillo, filmed on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024 was broadcast on BBC 2 on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025 and can be seen on BBC iPlayer [Great British Railway Journeys - Series 16: 19. Witham to Saffron Walden - BBC iPlayer](#).



Robert Rose  
Museums Director



## Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Katie Gardener of Lambert Chapman for all the help she has given me over recent years with the web site and IT. Philip Deal who joined the committee last year is happy to take on this role. It is great to have worked together in producing this Newsletter.

Jean Harrison