



Friends of Braintree Museum Newsletter

No.39 February 2026

Welcome to our second digital Newsletter

In this way we want to keep you up to date with the Friend's activities and events.

We are encouraged by the number of Friends who come to our monthly Talks. Peggy always manages to give us a varied programme of speakers so do check the back of your membership card for the programme for the year.

Unfortunately through health problems I have not been able to come on recent outings but Karen has very ably guided everyone on the day. We will be looking towards further outings this year and will send out details as we plan them.

Please do support the Museum by going to see the Exhibitions. The new one, "Art Deco and Beyond, Innovation and design in Braintree" has only just started, and is very relevant to the Museum and Archive and also links with the 100th Anniversary of Silver End. The Collections Manager and Archivist, ably supported by volunteers, have put together a striking and detailed insight into Art Deco in Braintree. Remember entrance is free and you will get 10% discount on any shop purchases.

Finally we are so grateful for your support. Our reserve finances are diminishing and if we want to continue offering financial support to the Museum, we need to look for ways to raise money! Any ideas are always welcome as are any comments on the Friends.

Thank you.

Jean Harrison – Chairman

New Members

Welcome to these new members who have joined The Friends of Braintree Museum since our last Newsletter in June 2025.

Ms C Freeman	Mr P Farr	Mr M Hardy	Mr R Hinton
Mrs J MacKay	Mrs L Martin	Mrs J Miller	Mrs C Watts

We would like to thank the many people who have renewed their membership for another year. If you have not already done so, we will be pleased to receive your subscription of £15 per person.

Owen Harrison Membership Secretary.

AGM

On Friday, March 6th we are holding our AGM.

This is always a very short meeting as all the papers are distributed in advance. Please come, and then enjoy Jane Redman's Talk on Anne Frank before celebrating another year with tea or coffee and cake!



Our next Talks are:

Date	Subject	Speaker
6 Mar	AGM and Anne Frank: Her Diary and her Legacy.	Jane Redman
10 Apr	Goodbye to the High Street?	David Williams
1 May	Innovation and Design in Braintree During the 1920s and 30s.	Polly Redman
5 Jun	We'll Meet Again: An Evacuee's Story.	Bryan Thurlow
3 Jul	An Audience with Charles Dickens.	Simon Waterfield
4 Sep	Behind the scenes of the Museum.	Lizzie Jarlett
2 Oct	Toys of the 1950s.	Andrew Beschizza
6 Nov	Essex Curiosities.	Maggie Piper

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

2026 Talks

This is a foretaste of a couple of the Talks coming up.

On 10th April 2026 our Talk is called "Goodbye to the High Street?" and will be given by David Williams. David is a registered City of London guide-lecturer, historian and Freeman of the City. He speaks on a wide range of topics. Is it possible that the busy High Street which attracted shoppers to many towns and cities is about to disappear? That will mean the end of many well-known names that originated as small shops in the 18th and 19th century. We now have out of town retail parks and with modern technology we are just a click away from ordering all we need whilst still in our dressing gowns! Do you think the High Street will survive or could it soon be consigned to history.

Our 3rd July Talk, "An Audience with Charles Dickens" will be given by Simon Waterfield. Simon researches and writes monologues about events and people in history and performs his stories as a monologue in character. This makes the event come alive for the audience.

Meet Mr Dickens and listen to the story of his childhood. Hear about his family, growing up in Kent, experiences at school and of working in a factory at the age of 12. Learn about his family's stay in Marshalsea Prison and what inspired him to write his stories and his characters.



Previous Talks

In July 2025 our Talk "The Humorous side of the Police in the East End in 1970s" was given by Roy Tyzack. Roy is a retired police detective who joined the Metropolitan Police in the early 1970s and was based in Whitechapel, East London. He became known for sharing fascinating and humorous stories from his police career through radio segments, talks, and tours.

In September 2025, we welcomed Mike Abel for his talk, "A Talk About Beekeeping." Mike, a member of the Chelmsford Beekeeping Association (part of the Essex Beekeepers' Association – EBKA), brought a wealth of knowledge and hands-on experience to the session. He shared insights into the world of beekeeping, weaving together technical expertise, practical hive management, and an appreciation for the vital ecological role of pollinators. His presentation ranged widely across the subject, touching on topics such as bumblebees and indoor pollination, swarm management, essential beekeeping skills, and effective hive inspections.

Our October 2025 Talk "The Land of the Maharajas" was given by Cherry Mullins. Cherry Mullins is an engaging speaker who gives talks on a wide variety of topics. She loves bringing her talks to life with beautiful slides and often includes some of her poems. This Talk was about one woman's journey through India, a fascinating look at one of the most beautiful Continents in the world. Told through slides and laced with personal stories including a wonderful encounter with a Maharaja.

Outings 2025

Scotney Castle – 9 June 2025

On what started as an overcast but dry morning, 40+ of us set off on a visit to Scotney Castle, which is near Royal Tunbridge Wells in Kent. The coach driver did a fantastic job of negotiating the very long and narrow driveway up to the carpark.

On arrival we were all handed an entrance sticker, pamphlet and clear instructions on what was available to see during our five hours stay.



Scotney Castle is a scheduled ancient monument and has a long and rich history. The earliest parts of the old castle were built in 1378 by Roger de Ashburnham and were altered over the years by both the Darell and Hussey families.

House: Built between 1837 and 1843, the house contains a large collection added by three generations of the Hussey family. The collection includes many artworks, books and furniture. Scotney Castle has been in the ownership of the National Trust since Christopher Hussey's death in 1970. The house remained the private residence of his widow Betty Hussey, until 2006 and first opened to visitors in 2007



Walled Garden: The one-acre walled garden was built in around 1840 to provide the family with fresh produce, including fruit, vegetables, herbs and an assortment of flowers.

Accessibility: Two of our party made good use of the on-loan mobility scooters, giving them accessibility to large parts of the 780 acre estate.



Wildlife: Nature at its best. Mother duck keeping her brood of ducklings safe, perched on a rock in the castle moat.

There was very good value for money catering facilities on site, although we did overwhelm them slightly when we first arrived, with the majority of us requiring refreshment after the journey. But we are a patient lot on the whole!

Scotney Castle is well worth visiting. We were blessed with improving weather throughout our stay, ending up sunny and warm, with some of us enjoying an ice cream as a final treat.

Copped Hall – 6 August 2025

Copped Hall in Epping, is a fine Georgian mansion under restoration, with 20 acres of landscaped parkland and four acres of walled garden.

The mansion and gardens are situated on a site of ancient human habitation. Many important buildings, from the Medieval, Tudor and Elizabethan eras were demolished prior to the present mansion being built and enlarged by the Victorians.



House: We were met by some of the volunteers who gave us a comprehensive tour of the house. It was fascinating to see rooms without ceilings and bare unplastered walls and realise how much work has been done and the tremendous target and challenges the Trust faces in continuing with the restoration.



Restoration: Photographs of the before and after showed the extensive work which has been done re-building the walls and re-establishing the roof. The Portland stone staircase has been rebuilt up to the first floor and a new landing recreated. The State Hall on the first floor has been restored to 1758 condition, giving us a taste of what is to come in the rest of the house.



Gardens: We were served delicious home-made cakes and tea and given guided tours of the extensive gardens. There were so many areas to admire including a lily pond, a rockery dotted with quotations from Shakespeare as well as the trees and flora. We were also shown excavations that had revealed a house that Mary Tudor had once lived in before becoming Queen and our guide had some very interesting anecdotes about this.

Stowmarket Food Museum – 7 October 2025

In early October 46 of us had a lovely day at Stowmarket Food Museum. Set in 84 acres and with 17 historic buildings it kept us busy all day. Their current exhibition is School dinners; it was very interesting to see how they have changed over the decades. Lots of agricultural items on display showing from the field to our plate.

Nestled in the heart of Stowmarket, the Food Museum stands as the only museum in the UK dedicated to exploring the rich history of food production, farming, and the people behind the industry. With over 40,000 objects, including fascinating exhibits, this museum is a culinary journey through time that offers something for everyone.



Food Museum - Main Entrance.

Abbot's Hall: is a Queen Anne house located within the 84-acre grounds of the Food Museum. The hall's history is closely tied to the museum, which explores the heritage of farming and food production in East Anglia. The site of Abbot's Hall has a long history, with an estate or manor recorded here as early as the 12th century. The hall was the centre of a large food-growing estate that produced grain, hops, livestock, and produce for the owners, workers, and for sale.





Walled garden: located next to the historic Abbot's Hall, the garden grows a variety of seasonal vegetables, salads, and herbs that are used by the museum's cafe.

The garden is open for visitors to enjoy, and some of its produce is occasionally sold at a cart on-site.



Garden Bench: The Food Museum engages in projects that promote sustainable practices, including garden benches made from recycled materials. In the background is the Victorian Conservatory, which overlooks the walled garden.

Forthcoming Outings

There are other outings for 2026 at the planning stage! More details to follow!

News about committee members

Philip Deal

Philip was born at St John's Hospital in Chelmsford in 1957. He spent his early years in Witham before moving to Somerset in 1961, where his father was completing his National Service. In 1963 the family settled in Braintree after his father took a position at Eastern Tractors in Bradford Street. Philip attended Bocking Primary School followed by Margaret Tabor Secondary School.

At the age of seven, Philip joined the St John Ambulance Boys' Brigade as a Cadet. He served for seventeen years, supporting countless local events on first-aid duty and eventually becoming a Cadet Officer.

Philip began his working life in 1973 with a five-year craft apprenticeship in the manufacture of surgical instruments on the Springwood Industrial Estate. The company, Carlsberg & Froud Ltd, later became Downs Surgical and then B Braun Ltd. Philip spent 28 years at the Bradbury Drive factory, becoming Foreman at just 21 and serving as Production Supervisor until the site closed in 2001.

He then moved into the lighting industry, spending 14 years with Lighting & Ceiling Louvres Ltd in South Woodham Ferrers. Starting as assistant to the Manufacturing Manager, he later became Operations Manager. When the family-run company eventually closed, Philip faced six challenging weeks of unemployment. A fortunate encounter with a former colleague from his surgical instrument days led him to Phoenix Surgical Ltd in Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire. He joined their Quality Department and remained there for seven years, retiring in February 2023.

Throughout his career, Philip continued to develop his skills, completing a Surgical Technicians course at Padding College and earning a Management Diploma and NEBOSH Health & Safety Certificate from Braintree College.



Philip and Christine married in 1978 and have one daughter, Katrina, and two grandsons, Mason and Dawson.

Since retiring, Philip has become an active member of the local community. He manages the Friends of Braintree Museum website and newsletter and serves as Membership Secretary for Braintree Area u3a.

Among his many hobbies, Philip enjoys lawn bowls, photography, pétanque, dancing, and walking.

Chronicles



In October, you received the latest edition of our magazine *Chronicles*. It was an excellent edition in which our Editor, Russell Thompson, had included articles from a variety of contributors. Russell included news from our Collections Manager, Lizzie Jarlett, about new acquisitions at the Museum. It is so good to know that the Museum collection continues to grow as more objects of local interest are added. Russell is always looking for articles, particularly of local interest, so do get writing!

News from the Museum

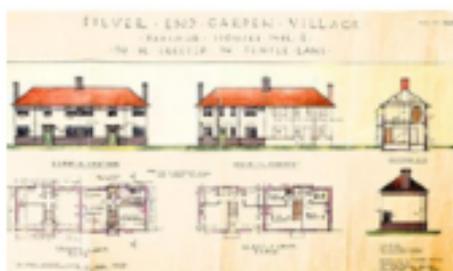
Art Deco and Beyond: Innovation and Design in Braintree 1925-1935

Dear Friends,

The latest exhibition at Braintree Museum opened on Saturday 17th January 2026 and will run until 27th June 2026. It illustrates how Braintree paved the way in manufacturing innovations and textile design during the 1920s and 1930s.

Highlights include a wide array of original Warner & Sons designs; original building plans of Silver End, celebrating their 100th anniversary in 2026 and the influence of Courtauld's new artificial silk.

Please do visit the exhibition with your free admission. We also have a new range of exhibition cards, tote bags and a catalogue in the Museum Shop. Full details of our following talks programme can be found online:



House Plan for Silver End 1928.



Talks at the Museum

7pm Thursday 26 February - Art Deco and Beyond at the Warner Textile Archive by Sophie Jemma (online)

7pm Thursday 26 March - Art Deco and Beyond in Braintree 1925 – 1935 by Polly Redman (online)

10.30am Saturday 25 April Town Tour: Braintree 1925 – 1935 with Polly Redman (in person)

Our next exhibition will be Football! A local history of the beautiful game. Any contributions please contact Polly.



Braintree District Museum Trust recognised as an Inclusive Dementia Organisation

The Museum and Archive are now officially recognised by the Alzheimer's Society, for the Trust's commitment to creating welcoming, supportive spaces for people living with dementia and their carers, following a presentation on the 22nd October 2025.

A training programme for staff and volunteers was followed by several Christmas events for those living with dementia.

New four-year funding agreement with Braintree District Council, 2026-2030

The Museum Trust has successfully secured the next four years of funding from Braintree District Council at the current budget plus inflation. In the context of challenging local authority finance, this is a significant achievement that reflects the strong delivery of aligned Council priorities. David Wisbey, Chair of Braintree District Museum Trust wishes to pass his thanks on to all the Friends for their support.



Cost of Living Award

Braintree Museum has been recognised by Braintree District Council for our contribution to their Cost of Living Partnership, with an award for the dedication and efforts that have positively impacted the lives of residents within Braintree District. Specifically, this relates to our Children's Book Exchange, Braintree Museum Holiday Club, free Saturday opening, reminiscence talks to care homes and Braintree Museum Toddler Time.

Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation

The government announced on the 4th December that the implementation of Devolution in Essex, with the creation of the Greater Essex mayoral authority, is to be postponed to May 2028. Elections to Essex County Council will proceed on 7th May 2026 with Braintree Museum being used as a polling station. More information can be found on the newly-launched website A stronger Greater Essex.

Polly Redman, Chair of Museums Essex, the county-wide museum consultative body, has led the publication of the Museums Essex Advocacy Report, illustrating a strong case for the contribution of museums to culture and heritage in the county, featuring the Archive and Museum with case studies including staff and volunteers.



Table Top Sale

Finally, if you have any books, puzzles, toys or bric-a-brac for our Table Top Sale at 10am on 28th March 2026 please bring them to the Museum after the 2nd March 2026.

Robert Rose

Museums Director - Braintree District Museum Trust

Braintree Museum Interactive Touch Screens

With kind funding from the Friends, the Museum has been able to install two interactive screens in the Warner & Sons Gallery and the Victorian Classroom.

These engaging educational experiences feature durable cabinets housing full HD 1080p 24" capacitive touch screens and integrated sound bars, providing versatile exhibits that showcase compelling content for years to come through continued support and maintenance by two local tech businesses.

Using eco-friendly refurbished equipment aligned with the Museum ethos, the robust systems will both inform and inspire museum visitors on local topics.

The content for the Victorian Classroom includes a range of lessons recorded with a Victorian teacher. The content for the Warner Gallery includes videos of the history and making of textiles.

Polly Redman

Museum Manager



Acknowledgements

This newsletter has been compiled by Philip Deal with contributions from other Committee Members and Museum Staff. I am very grateful to him for this and all his digital support.

Jean Harrison - Chairman