

The Friends of the Ipswich Museums

2022 Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 25th May 2022 at 7:00pm in Christchurch Mansion

Attendees - Lady Deben as President of FoIM; Richard Wilson as Chairman of FoIM; Members of the Committee and ten further Members of the Friends; Dr Frank Hargrave on behalf of Colchester + Ipswich Museums Service; Councillor Carole Jones, IBC Portfolio Holder.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Robert Burlinson, Nicki Porter.
2. **Approval of the AGM minutes** of 16th June 2021 - proposed Sheila Brooks, seconded Denise Fiennes.
3. **Matters arising** from the minutes of the AGM of 16th June 2021. There were no substantive issues raised from the previous minutes.
4. **Chair's report**

4.1 Richard Wilson welcomed the attendees, saying that it was great to see people in person again and to share the work of the Committee over the past twelve months.

4.2 Events: Despite the challenge of holding in-person events, a number have been held, and we should commend the Committee for the successful outcomes, and applaud the Members for attending. The key event of the summer was the important *Power of Stories* launched in June, which still has a life around Suffolk; then we had Emma Roodhouse's introduction to the *Creating Constable* exhibition in November; the unveiling of the Doris Zinkeisen portrait and the launch of the Zinkeisen book by one of our angels, Philip Kelleway (co-written by Emma Roodhouse and Caleb Howgego); and then the hard-hat tour of the Gainsborough House in Sudbury, a really excellent and enlightening trip. Our Christmas celebrations were scuppered by Covid, but we were able to launch Emma's *Creating Constable* book. Thanks to Lady Deben for writing the forward to that excellent publication on behalf of the Friends.

In February we had an excellent online event with conservator Nicola Evans on the Jan Porcellis seascape. This online event allowed us to get up closer to the artwork than usual, another good reason for us to run such online events each winter when we otherwise wouldn't meet. Like the previous Angels campaign (the restoration of the 18th-century gentleman's frockcoat), the restoration of the Porcellis painting was funded through the generosity of our Angels and Friends. We are very pleased that despite the Covid lockdowns we have been able to keep a strong fundraising support from these Angels campaigns. Richard thanked Denise who has been running these so successfully over the past three years, raising many thousands of pounds for the Museums. Denise was also thanked for running our website so well. It was fitting that in August last year we were able to hold a thank-you event for our generous Angels.

Aside from the website, our newsletter remains the best way of communicating with our members: Kevin Young has moved on but we are very pleased to have gained as editor Nicki Porter, who has made an excellent job of making the newsletter more up-to-date and visually engaging.

In March we were delighted to host a second event celebrating Emma Roodhouse's book *Creating Constable* and we are pleased that the current super exhibition runs until October. Last year we reported on our role in supporting CIMS's successful acquisition of the Mason family's early-Constable scrap book, the paintings by Leonard Squirrel and Doris Zinkeisen, and of course more recently we were able to support their acquisition of the Julia Heseltine pictures. We are now working on helping to purchase *80 Ipswich Portraits* by Samuel Read. We hope also to be able to help to fund a set of important maritime paintings, and more details will be available in due course.

4.3 Cashless donations: After lengthy research we have begun renting a Cashless Donations terminal, located in the Mansion Hall, and we are pleased with the donations that have already come in. We decided to rent rather than purchase the terminal as we felt the latter might not be appropriate as technology will develop in the future. If it proves profitable, we may investigate whether there is a case to bring in more further terminals for example in the WAG or in the Museum. We are going to investigate sponsorship for these terminals as this would reduce the cost to the Friends.

4.4 NLHF bid: As Frank Hargrave will share with us in due course, much focus for the year has been on the NLHF bid. As Friends our main task has been fund raising and we are gratified that our bid for £150,000 from Garfield Weston was successful. We are now working on a bid for funding from the Foyle Foundation. The Friends will hold these funds in our bank account before being released for the Museum project at the appropriate time.

4.5 Display boards and guide book: We have new display boards outside the Mansion and we are now working on a reprint of the Mansion booklet as these are in short supply, which is proving to be a little challenging in terms of negotiating the rights to certain aspects of the content. Erica Burrows has been leading on this brilliantly and we commend her patience and hard work so far.

4.6 Autumn events: We hope to have events relating to the *Landscape Rebels* exhibition that is coming soon; we are aiming for our Summer party on the 6th July (rescheduled from the 21st June due to the scaffolding currently up in the Mansion courtyard).

4.7 Committee thanks: Richard highlighted that the charity's running costs remain very low – a testament to the Committee and the Members' good will – thanks to everyone for their support for the Museums. Richard gave his thanks specifically to the Committee for their time and support, which has been the backbone of another successful year. He hopes that we can continue to increase the range of events after Covid to fulfill our mission of supporting CIMS but also to attract new Members.

4.8 CIMS support: Richard gave the Committee's thanks to the CIMS staff across the Mansion, Museum and Art Gallery for all their support through the year. Special thanks went to James Steward (who has now left for Bradford) and we look forward to welcoming a new Museums Manager.

4.9 Concluding remarks: Despite the challenges in the past two years, the charity remains vibrant and active, and with the redevelopment of the Museum in hand, there is a lot to look forward to.

5. Trustees' Report and Annual Accounts.

5.1 Andrew Steward presented the Accounts which have been prepared in accordance with Charities Commission requirements and independently verified by Rowell Bell. We are fortunate that our receipts this year have been £17,000, up £1,000 from last year: £5,600 from subscriptions; the Angels contributed a significant £4,500; the guides tours £1,800; and Members and visitors generously gave

£4,600 in donations. So, thank you to everyone who contributed this year. Our payments comprised £2,600, mainly newsletter and website costs, which as Richard has said is very efficient; there are no staff wages with everything being contributed on a voluntary basis. Our net surplus was approximately £14,000. We contributed £10,000 to the Museum redevelopment project, £3,000 for the Julia Heseltine painting, and £5,000 for the Mason family album. We contributed £1,700 towards research costs for the *Creating Constable* exhibition and a further £2,800 for the Zinkeisen. Net appropriations were £8,600, so our cash reserves came down to approximately £118,000. Much of this is already pledged, including the £40,000 for the Museum redevelopment, and the support for acquisitions mentioned before is also committed (though not yet invoiced) by IBC. In real terms our free reserves are in the order of £60,000-£70,000, which is an appropriate level in terms of supporting CIMS exhibitions and acquisitions in the medium term.

5.2 Rowell Bell made an observation that corporate membership subscription numbers had risen considerably and the Committee and particularly the President should be thanked for the work to get more corporate subscribers. Jean Attenborow commented that we now have 17 corporate members, up from 11 a year earlier, while Denise mentioned that the Chamber of Commerce was a great find.

6. Appointment of the Independent Examiner of the Accounts.

Rowell Bell provides an independent examination of the Accounts. The meeting unanimously approved his re-appointment for the coming year. He was thanked for his outstanding support.

7. Report from the Membership Secretary.

Jean Attenborow commented that current individual memberships total 291, similar to last year, though we have been slower to sign up new members due to the lower number of events we were able to hold. With things opening up again, we need to focus on events that will attract more members. We want to get more members, but we also shouldn't lose sight of the strong core support we have been able to maintain through these difficult years. Denise Fiennes reminded the meeting about the option to share gift membership as a present.

8. Report from Colchester & Ipswich Museums Services.

Frank Hargrave opened by stating that the support CIMS gets from FoIM is extraordinary – it is a level of generosity, both in terms of financial support but also in staging interesting activities, that is not seen in most other museums. Equally, CIMS does value the input and thoughts from the Committee. So, thanks very much to all the members of FoIM. Frank continued by thanking James Steward's influential period of working in CIMS, saying that many of the ideas he implemented will have a lasting positive impact on the Museums.

An incredible amount of work is ongoing in the Museum redevelopment project (though it may not seem so from outside!), particularly in relation to the conservation, temporary relocation and documentation of the Museum Collections. We are in a very good position, not least due to the fundraising support that has come via the Friends; the initial £10,000 that was committed by the Friends early at the NLHF Round One stage: that level of commitment is taken very seriously by potential funders and the £40,000 is a massive kick-start for a wider campaign of fundraising. The seeking out and fulfilling the requirements of funding applications like the Garfield Weston is superb: not everyone gets £150,000 for a capital project from these funders, so it is a massive tribute to the work of Richard, Denise and the Committee to have achieved this level of success.

We can be hopeful for the future in many other ways too; we have seen visitor numbers rise on a trajectory that anticipates a return to pre-Covid levels within a few years; the wonderful staff we have here in Visitor Services, across the organization, not least those putting together exhibitions. The quality of those exhibitions really is quite extraordinary, and they have a long shadow: *Creating Constable* and the latest successor iteration is being so well received even without the major loans from the V&A and elsewhere. It shows the ability of the exhibition curators to source major loans but also showcases the wonderful quality and breadth of the collections here in Ipswich: the Mason family album being the latest extension of this. Again, it is the depth of the support of the Friends: many of these acquisitions are very important to expand the story of the community, and so many other museums do not have that ability to acquire such artefacts which help tell their story. The Friends here is the voice from the community, which in itself is part of the story, and at times you also tell CIMS of items that should be considered that might otherwise be overlooked. The support helps the conservation: the excellent repair of the gentleman's coat, and the story behind that – people love the conservation, the transformation of an important item, and it helps bring people in to the Museums. CIMS really understands the strength of support from the Friends and is grateful for that.

Power of Stories has just won the Museums and Heritage Award for a Temporary Exhibition over £80,000, a prestigious national award. To win against the V&A and the Imperial War Museum was tremendous. It brought in 24,000 people overall and this came just at the right time when we needed to welcome people back in after lockdowns. And it has a legacy, as the costumes are travelling around Suffolk for other communities to see.

Creating Constable is a wonderful exhibition which has brought in 17,000 so far and which is still going strong. Also the in-depth research undertaken to back it up - many museums, even some universities, do not have the ability to undertake the quality of Emma Roodhouse's research: we are hoping to do more of this particularly alongside the redevelopment. For example, we have commissioned experts to research into the Ice Age animals and the application for Designation for the geology collection. It is a marker nationally if our collections get designation and will help the profile of the Museums.

The *Crossings* exhibition with the British Museum spotlight loan of the poignant display of the Lampedusa Cross made from the sunk vessel carrying refugees; this helps our work to reach out to local groups including local refugee groups to underpin the Museum's increasing accessibility programme. The events programme has been a real challenge but we are starting to see this come back following Covid inhibiting the big events for such a long while. We had a *Meet the Expert* day, which attracted over 700 people. And we are reintroducing the mini mammoth sessions for the under-5s, which are proving incredibly popular.

In terms of statistics: the Museum had 41,050 visits; the Art Gallery – helped by the intriguing *Moon* exhibition - 6,044; and the Mansion 40,449. There were 3,800 pupil visits - schools have been the slowest to return but are now coming back in good numbers, so the future is bright.

Our thanks go to the Committee, particularly to the Chairman, President, Denise and Nicki.

9. President's Address

Lady Deben addressed the meeting, saying how nice it was to see everyone, and how much better in person! Thanks go out to CIMS and particularly to Frank for his gracious recognition of the Friends' hard effort: the importance of our contribution really does make a difference; every subscription and

donation mounts up and it underpins all of our support. Thanks also to James Steward for his contribution: we are sorry he has gone but we are sure his successor will be welcomed and will help to expand the reputation of the Museums.

The *Creating Constable* opening essentially coincided with reopening of our lives after lockdowns, and it was very special and exciting and reassuring that Ipswich was able to undertake such a wondrous exhibition where many of the paintings came from our own collection. *Recreating Constable* reveals the difference that Constable made to the way that we look at the world all around us. Many thanks to Emma Roodhouse for her remarkable scholarship: it is a superb achievement for the wide range of information that she brought together, and for discovering local material not normally seen such as the depiction on a piece of wood when he was only sixteen of the interior of his father's windmill. It was a revelation. Her book certainly deserves to be sold in the wider world and we need to work hard to ensure that we are doing everything we can to make sure this happens.

Once again Ipswich has shown great sensitivity of timing in respect to displaying the *Landscape Rebels* exhibition. Having just come back from COP26, it is heartening to see the greater priority that corporations and governments are giving to the subject of climate change, so this exhibition comes at precisely the right time. We hope that it will be possible to get many children from all over Suffolk into the exhibition, after all they are the real ambassadors for their parents - perhaps we could think of offering a leaflet for them to take back to their parents to help change opinions and invite them to come in?

Well done to Ipswich for all achieving all this. We are looking forward to all the upcoming exhibitions, which will be a continuation of such a special year. My thanks to Richard, Denise and all of the Committee for their hard work which makes such a contribution to the Museums.

10. Election of Officers and Committee Members.

10.1 The President requested the meeting to approve the reelection of all the current committee members. The proposer was Cllr Carole Jones and the seconder was Bunty Ball. This was carried by the meeting unanimously.

10.2 There was also a proposal for a new member of the Committee - Robert Burlinson. The proposer was Erica Burrows and the seconder Rowell Bell. This was also carried by the meeting unanimously.

11. Any other business.

Alan Swerdlow mentioned that while he is no longer area coordinator for the British Association of the Friends of Museums, he keeps a keen eye on other Friends groups and believes that it would be hard to find another group across the country that could give a better Chair's report that was given this evening and for this you should be congratulated.

Cllr. Jones gave her heartfelt thanks from the Council to the Committee and the Friends; she could not imagine a better Friends group anywhere!

Richard concluded by accepting the thanks but saying that the Committee really only ride the crest of the wave that is the membership, so he gave overall thanks to the attendees and the wider membership.

Following the close of business of the evening, Mark Bills, Director of Gainsborough's House in Sudbury, spoke eloquently about their NLHF project experience which has underpinned the successful redevelopment of the gallery.