

The Friends of the Ipswich Museums

2023 Annual General Meeting

held on **Wednesday, 24th May 2023 at 7pm** 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

Apologies were received from Alison Hall, Diane Hollis, Rita Krishna.

2. Approval of the AGM Minutes of 25th May 2022

The previous Minutes were approved by the Meeting. The motion was proposed by Denise Fiennes and seconded by Julie Green: this was carried unanimously.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes of the AGM of 25th May 2022

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 attendance again and to share the work of the Committee over the past twelve months.

4.2. After the challenging Covid years, we were able to return to a relatively normal year, providing a significant set of fundraising events. We should remember how much effort goes on behind the scenes. It goes without saying that the events were overshadowed by Paul Bruce's death in November, which came as a shock; he was such a passionate and knowledgeable Friend. It seemed symbolic and poignant that, four days after his death, a repeat of the BBC *Antiques Roadshow* was aired, an event which he had championed to come to Ipswich. A tree has been planted in his honour in the Mansion garden; the plaque arrived today and will be installed as soon as we can make arrangements.

4.3.1. Events: We have been blessed with a number of lovely exhibitions, particularly *The Power of Stories*. As Friends we are fortunate to have preview days with Emma Roodhouse providing fascinating talks on the background to each exhibition and talking us through each facet of the exhibits. *Landscape Rebels* was a tremendous event, including JMW Turner's *Walton Bridges*, which The Friends had granted £10,000 for the costs of displaying, a testament to The Friends' fundraising. We are all obviously delighted that Emma Roodhouse's contribution

to the published books accompanying the *Creating Constable* exhibition and Doris Zinkeisen unveiling were recognised by EA book awards and we congratulate her and Philip Kelleway, Caleb Howgego and Lady Deben for their contributions to those publications as well. The Friends for providing funds supporting the publications. We should be proud of their work.

4.3.2 After last year's purchases of: the Mason family scrapbook album (containing four previously unknown John Constable paintings); works by Leonard Squirrel; Doris Zinkeisen; and Julia Heseltine, the major acquisition this year was the sketchbook by Samuel Read – Richard was pleased to host an online talk on the *80 Ipswich Portraits* in February – we intend to continue holding events online as part of our winter programme enabling us to connect with Members during the cold winter evenings.

4.3.3. The Friends also provided funds towards the acquisition of a portfolio of important maritime paintings previously owned by Des Pawson, known as the Pierhead Paintings and we held an event here to celebrate those prior to Des's relocation to the South Coast.

4.3.4. We plan to unveil at our Summer Party a series of photographic portraits by John Ferguson, the acquisition of which was supported by The Friends. The acquisition of photography raises questions of the nature of the acquisition and usage rights and that took some negotiation by the CIMS team to sort out and we look forward to unveiling the portraits in the summer.

4.3.4. Last summer we had our Summer Party outside the Mansion, the highlight of which was the highly intellectual (and fun) quiz posed by Cllr Carole Jones. We had a good time.

4.3.5. We had trips to the Munnings Museum in Dedham and then to The Hold in November, and another successful evening was when James Hayward in the guise of the Reverend Samuel Kilderbee welcomed us back some 250 years ago to his Mansion Christmas with his household for our current-day Christmas party.

4.3.6. Events to look out for coming up are our redevelopment consultation on the 14th June, a trip to Benton End on the 20th June and then this year's Summer Party on the 5th July.

4.4. Newsletter. Alongside our website, superbly run by Denise, our Newsletters remain a vital tool for communicating with our Members, and this has been given a new lease of life under our new Newsletter Editor Nikki Porter. She has done a wonderful job transforming the Newsletter and making it more visually appealing and filling it with interesting and informative articles.

4.5. Angels. Richard thanked Denise for masterminding the Angels fundraising campaigns. We are just starting to talk about the next project, and this will be announced in the next Newsletter, but we are excited that the next campaign will be able to augment the Collection we already have here in Ipswich.

4.6. Redevelopment. As no doubt Frank Hargrave will point out in his address, a significant part of CIMS Management's focus has been on the Museum Redevelopment Project. The Committee has continued to work closely with the CIMS team and has participated in grant funding applications. We were delighted to receive a grant of £75,000 from the Foyle

Foundation, on top of £150,000 from the Garfield Weston Foundation. These funds will be held in The Friends' account until needed for the redevelopment. We are delighted to be able to provide our support in making the applications.

4.7. Guidebooks. One item that was mentioned in last year's Minutes was the stock of Mansion guidebooks which we had thought was very low and we were rushing to formulate a reprint, but eventually a reasonable stock of guidebooks was found in the Mansion cupboards so for now the pressure has gone away. It is an item that we will address again as we are looking to revamp the guidebook in any case before the next reprint.

4.8. Guides. We are lucky with our guiding team. Not only are they extremely knowledgeable and approachable, they also being in a not insubstantial revenue stream into the Museum, so The Friends' thanks goes out, as ever, to Erica Burrows and her team.

4.9. Financial position. The accounts show that our running costs remain very low and that is testament to all our volunteers who give their time and energy really very willingly and we are blessed to have a Committee who are not only hands on but also thoughtful and questioning of the requests for support: these requests are not just waived through but discussed and scrutinized in detail. We are also lucky to have the new Museums Manager Alison Hall, and also lucky to have you as Members, a dedicated core membership providing support with energy and enthusiasm and sometimes with money as well.

4.10. Vice President. One of biggest losses this year was Paul Bruce and we had to decide on whether to fill his place as Vice President, particularly as he had skills and knowledge difficult to replace. But there is another member of the Friends group who on her own merits deserves to be Vice President and that person is Erica Burrows. It should be reiterated that Erica has been part of the Ipswich museums for a long time and is a past Chair of the Friends, so while we are sad to have lost Paul, we feel greatly invigorated that she will become our new Vice President.

5. Trustees' Report & Annual Accounts

5.1. These have been posted on the Friends' website. The Accounts have been compiled in line with Charity Commission requirements and independently verified by Rowell Bell.

5.2. It has been a good year financially, with subscriptions of £5k, donations of £21.5k mainly through the cash boxes but also through some online donations. The Guides tours and talks generated £4.2k. We received on account the grant from Garfield Weston as mentioned earlier, which we are holding on fixed term deposit until it is required for the redevelopment, and this is generating a reasonable interest on top which will also be paid over to help the redevelopment. Our expenses of £3.2k were mainly to support the printing of the newsletter, so overall the Friends' Group is very effective in turning the subscriptions and donations into valuable support for the Museums. We do not have any salaried workers; we are extremely fortunate to have people willing to give their time free of charge.

5.3. The Appropriations, aside from the £150,000 earmarked for the Museum Redevelopment, included £1,250 for the *80 Ipswich Portraits*, £8,500 to support the *Creating Constable* exhibition, £5,700 towards the restoration of the Jan Porcellis shipwreck painting, £3,100 to support the acquisition of the Des Pawson Pierhead paintings, and our contribution of £10,000

for the *Landscape Rebels* exhibition. The surplus for the year was near to £4,000. So overall we have done very well.

5.4. This surplus, added to last year's brought forward means that we have approximately £122,000 in cash, of which £40,000 has been promised to the Museum. This leaves us with a healthy balance of £80,000 at the current time. Richard highlighted the item in the accounts saying IBC donation of £7,496, which was to do with when the Ed Sheeran exhibition was being held it was not possible to have donations boxes within the Mansion, so IBC generously set up an arrangement within the online ticket purchasing to allow donations to The Friends. We are grateful to IBC for this not insubstantial amount of money to have come into our accounts for future use in supporting the Museums.

5.5. The accounts were adopted by the Meeting, proposed by Mary Morgan and seconded by Rowell Bell. The motion was carried unanimously.

6. Appointment of Independent Examiner

6.1. The appointment of the Independent Examiner, Rowell Bell, was agreed by the meeting unanimously. Rowell pointed out that he may have to stand down next year so The Friends will start the process of finding a new Independent Examiner. The meeting expressed its thanks to Rowell for all of his contribution to the Friends.

7. Report from the Membership Secretary

7.1. Jean outlined that on 1st January 2022 we had 219 members including 19 corporates. By the end of the year there were 309 members including 15 corporates. So this increase in members were as a result of our being able to offer new events after the pandemic, and a few Gift Memberships as well. This increase is similar to pre-pandemic levels, and looks to be due to the number of events we are now better able to hold, and the expanse of time the wonderful exhibitions are open. As an aside, the accounts show a lower amount this year despite the increase in new members and that is because it is never an exact timing of when the monies come through to us. New members who join in the Autumn gain three months free, and some members pay immediately one year and the following year pay later; it is a question of the timing of the payment of subscriptions. It is disappointing that we lost four corporate members, but these were small businesses who stepped up to help us through the pandemic. Thanks go to Lady Deben and Rowell Bell for helping to co-opt new corporate members. Jean also gave her thanks to all the Members for supporting the Friends through such a difficult time.

7.2. Richard thanked Jean for all her hard work successfully managing the membership and subscriptions, and indeed for all her work supporting the events.

7.3. Rowell Bell also gave his thanks to Jean for keeping good records on the Angels campaigns.

8. Report from Colchester + Ipswich Museums

8.1. Frank opened his report by saying that every April he writes a retrospective of the events of the year for the CIMS staff, which is a good way to relate the significant areas of achievement. While challenging, this year has been slightly less so than the previous year. Looking over the past twelve months some achievements have been extraordinary. Firstly, the return of the pre-pandemic visitor numbers has been delightful to see: here at the Mansion alone we saw approximately 50,000 visitors and that bounce-back was not a given as the picture across other museums in other areas of the country is mixed, and this is down to a lot of hard work from the team here, from Visitor Services, the Collections and Learning team and everyone involved.

8.2. The Welcome. While we talk about the acquisitions and exhibitions, we sometimes forget to mention the warm welcome the visitors receive here and previously at the Museum from Visitor Services but also from Erica's team and the volunteers. This has a huge part to play in the attractiveness of our Museum and Mansion. We saw this particularly during the pandemic, when we were able to open, how this welcome meant to people who were coming out for leisure following lengthy lockdowns. It meant a lot to people to be able to have those conversations.

8.3. Weddings. One thing which also gets overlooked is the weddings that are held here: Frank shared a letter of thanks from a wedding couple thanking everyone for their hard work in making their wedding day so memorable. Behind the scenes there is so much to achieve to deliver a successful wedding day, there is a lot of stress involved and that is a tribute to the professionalism of Visitor Services here. In essence these kinds of activity form the bedrock of the less-seen daily requirements of the staff.

8.4. Museum redevelopment. As mentioned by Richard, the Museum redevelopment is a major focus. The major practical work so far has been successfully achieving the decant. While that may sound unglamorous the project management of that is fascinating. Sometimes it feels like a complicated jigsaw puzzle: as you may be aware poor documentation is the bane of this type of project. If the provenance of an object is lost or an artefact is mis-attributed, it can have a material difference to the value to the local community of that artefact but here great steps are being taken to ensure that the documentation is being accurately completed and improved in detail and it is a testament to the staff of how much they have achieved. The week in October before the Museum closed was heart-warming; so many people came in for a final look, there was a lovely atmosphere and we received some tremendous feedback.

8.5. Exhibitions. In terms of exhibitions, we were fortunate to display, briefly, the Iron Age anchor, which is now being conserved. We are only aware of one similar anchor, from a hill fort in Dorset, and ours will take pride of place in an area in one of the galleries. *Landscape Rebels* was fabulous, and the approach that Emma took was interesting, bringing in different audiences. We worked closely with Norfolk Museums and helped their funding application to be able to keep the only JMW Turner in East Anglia, and one that had had to be export-banned to enable that to come about. In general, our exhibitions footfall continues to be very strong.

8.6. Awards. We achieved significant success when at the Museums and Heritage Awards our *Power of Stories* exhibition championed over the Imperial War Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum in the Temporary or Touring Exhibition of the Year (budget greater than £80,000) category. We also achieved success in the Fantastic for Families category with the "Joy at the Jobcentre" initiative to bring more families into the Museum by running creativity events in Job

Centres across the County, something we aim to expand further afield. At the end of last year all these efforts paid off to achieve a doubling of the Arts Council funding to £400,000 split across both Colchester and Ipswich, some of which will enable us to fund a Learning Manager post, a digital officer post and some additional resources around accessibility. This will enable us to push along our education programmes and enhance our online profile which as you can imagine is an increasingly important facet of our work.

8.7. Arts Council Designation. On a final point about reputation, Richard mentioned the fabulous work that Emma has done on researching, particularly for *Power of Stories* and *Creating Constable*, but other significant projects continue that also enhance our reputation. To note one: Dr Simon Jackson's work on Arts Council Designation of the Cretaceous Geology Collection enabled us to achieve that Designation, and this is an Arts Council marker of national significance. Our Collection becomes one of only approximately 130 collections so designated in the country. A part of that is the work that Simon instigated with the Natural History Museum here in the UK and the corresponding NHM in Sweden and universities in the UK and in Stockholm, particularly in relation to DNA research into our Steppe mammoth teeth. How this research is moved forward will be particularly interesting to see and we will make sure that it becomes a focal point in the new gallery. It has just been announced that we are a partner in a project coordinated by the University of Cambridge to fund 15 PhDs over the next five years exploring collections in EA. The other partners are Norwich and Peterborough Museums. It presents a further fabulous opportunity to explore what we have in our Collections in detail.

8.8. Thanks. This leads to the thanks from CIMS to all of you as Members, volunteers and Committee Members. It remains to be said each year that it would be hard to find a more active and proactive Friends group. The support for the acquisitions is incredibly important and there are very few museums that are able to have such an active programme of events. The support for the exhibitions as well makes them so much more special. Of course, the capital support is paramount, particularly for the redevelopment. Richard remains very modest in his personal contribution to this capital support; he has personally written and championed the applications for £240,000 of grant funding raised towards the redevelopment, aside from the Friends' direct financial provision. CIMS is incredibly thankful to Richard and all the Friends for this help.

8.9. Q&A. Rowell Bell: it has come to my attention that there are many paintings within the Collection that require substantial restoration, the expense of which will be well beyond any financial contribution from the Friends. Is there any partnership funding that the Friends could look to access and is there any curatorial time available to arrange restoration? Frank answered by saying that The Pilgrim Trust for one can help, but we need to be careful as there are only so many grant applications that can be made. Museums do what they are able to ensure the paintings remain stable so they do not deteriorate (this of course being the minimal target), and paintings being loaned to other venues on the basis that the receiving Museum will undertake the conservation work as a way of paying for the loan is a tried and trusted way of resourcing this. Also, generating more interest in a painting through display even in a relatively poor state is a way that museums can generate funding, by increasing the awareness of items in the Collection. Richard commented that The Friends can bear this in mind, so that we could help in some of these projects if there is curatorial time to achieve this.

9. President's Address

9.1. Lady Deben opened her address by adding her voice to the sadness about Paul's death: he was such a crucial member of the Friends and inspired us all with his knowledge and enthusiasm. It was wonderful to see such a packed church for his funeral and we have that small physical reminder of his presence in that tree recently planted outside. Lady Deben was delighted to welcome two new members to the Committee in Nikki Porter who is already doing wonderful things with the Newsletter and then also to Gaynor Stannard: we are very grateful for your agreeing to become involved in the work of this wonderful Friends group.

9.2. We were all very proud when *Power of Stories* won the Museums and Heritage Award against such stiff competition.

9.3. Lord and Lady Deben were so sorry to have missed out on hosting the Susan Owens talk, due to being caught up in the closure of the A12 on the night because of a jack-knifed lorry.

9.4. They also are looking into the potential for a talk to The Friends by a tailor, now living near Debenham, who has worked on the Royal Household liveries, more recently being a key part of the process to replace Elizabeth II's insignia with Charles III's on all the uniforms well in time for the Coronation. He is also an expert on Admiral Nelson and on uniforms generally. His name is Keith Levett and it would be fascinating to have him give a talk here and perhaps provide detail about some of our uniforms in the Collection.

9.5. The wonderful redevelopment is going ahead and the excellent news is all the preparatory work with the re-cataloguing of the Collection with even greater exactitude. This is a fantastic thing and has brought to light one or two unexpected treasures. The Museum galleries, once empty, are being seen in a bare glory not seen in a long time. There's nothing like emptying a space to reimagine how one might fill it again.

9.6. We are so very glad that the Angels campaign is carrying on in new ways and if it could look to focus on both large and small objects it can provide more meaning for donors: targeted donations give people the feeling of greater ownership of an object which in itself can drive donations even more than seeking a contribution for a much larger target.

9.7. We all appreciate that funding for local arts is very important to local communities, but it should not be done at the expense of funding the national centres of excellence on which we all depend. The two areas should never be in competition with each other, so please write or talk to your MPs to make this clear. The UK is actually quite mean with funding its Arts in comparison to other Western countries and we should be up there with the others. We are so fortunate in this country not to be regularly at the risk of bombs or earthquakes, we have the additional bonus of living in a country that has not been invaded for a thousand years, so we have much more of the architectural history and works of art remaining intact, far more than those countries that have been crossed and recrossed by invading armies. So we must make sure that we conserve and preserve what we have, and you all by your presence here show that this is a great priority for you. Thank you for showing your support and for being here this evening, thank you to the Committee in all that they do to prove the benefit the Museum brings

to all of us and in your support you give great heart to the professionals who devote their lives to preserving the decorative arts across the nations.

10. Election of Officers and Committee Members

10.1. The re-election of officers and Committee Members was hosted by Lady Deben. It was agreed that Erica Burrows appointment as Vice President would not be subject to a vote, it was taken as agreed by the Meeting.

10.2. The other Committee Members were proposed for re-election by Sukie and seconded by Rowell.

10.3. Lady Deben praised Nikki Porter as a brilliant editor and who was co-opted to the Committee last year and she has brought it up to date and makes it relevant. She has now agreed to officially join the Committee. She was also delighted to welcome Gaynor Stannard who brings many years of professional experience in the Museums sector. So these two new Committee members need to be appointed. Proposed by Denise and seconded by Rowell.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business raised.

The Meeting ended at 8pm.