

The Friends of Historic Essex

Annual Report for the year ending 31 March 2021

AGM arrangements and the COVID-19 crisis

As members will recall, we cancelled last year's physical AGM and substituted one conducted by e-mail. As the health situation remains uncertain, and the proceedings last year were successfully conducted, the committee decided to repeat the arrangement for the 2021 AGM. However, we sincerely hope to be able to return to a 'live' AGM from 2022.

The arrangements over paperwork are the same as last year:

Papers by e-mail: members registered to receive e-mails will have received the Agenda and all reports by e-mail.

Papers by post: members who have asked for postal mail will have received the Agenda and Chairman's report. All other reports and papers can be accessed via the FHE website: <https://friendsofhistoricessex.org/news/>

All members will also have received an 'Acceptance Form' so you can express your approval (or not) on each agenda item. Please return these **by 24 July**, by e-mail or post, as indicated on the form. We need at least 25 responses so that the AGM is quorate.

The Year's Activities

The committee has met three times via Microsoft Teams, kindly and ably hosted by ERO Manager Martin Astell. FHE membership and subscriptions have remained stable at about 170 individual members and 40 institutions and councils. As a result, FHE has a stable financial situation, also aided by slightly reduced expenditure arising from the changed AGM arrangements and lack of events at the ERO. We have continued to make grants for the acquisition of documents whenever asked, but no external grants were requested or made during the year. As soon as it proves practical to plan for an event at the ERO the committee will consider doing so.

Our newsletter was sent to members in the Autumn of 2020, and that for Spring 2021 has been issued to accompany this year's AGM papers. We are still experimenting with the newsletter format and the printing arrangements, and I would like to thank Neil Wiffen for taking on the newsletter layout and production. Short articles or reviews of books by members would be most welcome, especially on topics or projects that involve ERO sources or facilities.

Essex Journal

FHE was one of the supporting partners behind *Essex Journal*, publication of which has now been transferred to the Essex Society for Archaeology and History. At the winding-up of the EJ committee in December 2020, the remaining balance was shared between supporting institutions, with FHE receiving £2,000 for which the committee is most grateful. It has been placed in a ring-fenced fund for important document acquisitions.

University of Essex placements 2020 and 2021

The FHE-supported internship for an Essex University student at the ERO for 2020 was held by Grace Benham who worked on a collection (deposited at the ERO in 2018) of oral history interviews about the establishment of women's refuges in London and the East of England. We congratulate her on her successful research, described in the Spring 2021 newsletter and at www.essexrecordofficeblog.co.uk (posted 28 August 2020).

For 2021 the FHE Committee agreed, exceptionally for this year only, to support two student placements, and Aaron Archer and Adam Campbell-Drew were appointed. One is exploring letters sent to the early 19th-century MP James Brogden, and the other is working on 18th-century Poor Law records from Colchester parishes. We look forward to reading about their findings in due course on the ERO blog and in the FHE newsletter.

Supporting the acquisition of documents

The FHE Committee has continued to work with Richard Anderson, now ERO Archives and Collections Lead, Chris Lambert and other ERO archivists on the identification and acquisition of documents for the ERO archive. Although we have made rather fewer purchases than 'normal' this year, there is again a wide variety. Several items were bought at London auctions, notably the ledger of an ecclesiastical builder, William Parmenter, a joint purchase with the Essex Society for Archaeology and History. The ledger enhances the ERO's existing collection of Parmenter business records. Items that we successfully acquired are listed below. More detailed catalogue entries are available on SEAX, as shown below in parentheses. An article concerning item (e) appears in the Spring 2021 FHE newsletter.

(a) Deed of release of the Green Dragon, Saffron Walden 1786 (ERO A15374).

(b) WW1 nurse's autograph album belonging to Nurse Phyllis Keeling, Earls VAD Red Cross Earls Colne Hospital, 1917-1918 (ERO A15391).

(c) Dedham War Work Rooms Minute Book, 1939-1946 (ERO reference A15340).

(d) Manor of Dunmow late the Priory Court Book, 1847 (ERO reference A15356).

(e) Ledger of William Parmenter, ecclesiastical builder of Braintree and Bocking, 1852-1873 (ERO catalogue reference D/F 88/4).

(f) Edwardian diary of Miss Deeks of Sparrows Farm, Halstead Road, Sible Hedingham, detailing day to day life, travel to London, and family matters, 1902-1904 (ERO reference A15333).

(g) Bound volume of newspapers, *The Buckhurst Hill Independent* and *Essex County Record*, 1933 (ERO reference A15339).

Committee membership

We are pleased to propose at the AGM two regular users of the ERO Searchroom, Julie Miller and Simon Coxall, for membership of the FHE Committee. Julie is a historian and a PhD student at the University of Essex. She was an FHE-sponsored intern at the ERO in 2019 and spoke about her research on the journal of the Quaker John Farmer at the 2019 AGM. Simon is an archaeologist and landscape historian who recently published an article on the fascinating Clavering place-name Quamstowe in the Spring 2021 edition of *Essex Journal*. We look forward to working with both Julie and Simon in the future. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the committee for their continuing commitment and hard work for the charity.

Dr Christopher C. Thornton, FSA, FRHistS
Chairman, The Friends of Historic Essex (Reg. Charity No. 235270)
20 June 2021