

FRIENDS OF HISTORIC ESSEX

Supporting the Essex Record Office

Registered Charity No. 235270

Minutes of the 68th Annual General Meeting held by email on 24th July 2021 due to the COVID-19 health emergency

The Chairman, Dr Christopher Thornton, sent the AGM papers by email or post to members on 25th June 2021. Agenda items 1, 2, 4, 7 were posted on the FHE website. Nominations for election to the Executive Committee and Resolutions for discussion at the AGM had to be sent to the Chairman by 16th July. The AGM acceptance form enabled members to vote for or against each agenda item and make comments.

1. Minutes of the 67th AGM held by email on 4th July 2020 and matters arising

There were no corrections to the minutes. 29 members voted to accept the minutes. No abstentions.

Under item 4, Treasurer's report, it had been pointed out by one member that the total income should have been £11,485 (not £11,484) and the balance £61,785 (not £61,784). The Treasurer explained that this was not an error but is due to the need to round up figures in the accounts.

2. Annual report by the Chairman for the year ended 31st March 2021

The following report by Dr Thornton was emailed to members and posted on the FHE website:

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”.

3. Appointment of Examiner for year ended 31st March 2022

Proposed by the committee: Geraldine Willden

This appointment was agreed unanimously.

4. Financial report and statement for the year ended 31st March 2021

The Treasurer's financial report and the examined accounts were emailed to members and posted on the website.

“For the financial year ended 31st March 2021, FHE reported a surplus of £2,638, compared to £1,725 for the previous year.

Income and Expenditure report

Income has reduced from £6,236 to £5,935.

We received a generous donation of £2,000 from the *Essex Journal*, when the publication of the journal was transferred to ESAH. This is being ringfenced for future document purchases.

Subscription income was £2,254 and other donations £699. Due to the pandemic, there were no events or other fundraising opportunities during the year. Last year these contributed £909. Income from publications and other sales at events and the Essex Record Office was also nil (last year £615). The limited receipts while ERO

was open will be reported in the next financial year. Finally we received gift aid of £439 on subscriptions and donations made in the year to March 2020.

Expenditure has reduced from £4,511 to £3,297.

The main expenditure items were £1,718 on document purchases, £750 to support a University of Essex placement at the ERO, and £489 newsletter costs. The cost of the paper AGM was £134, compared to £773 last year for the AGM and other events. In prior years we have supported the *Essex Journal* through advertising at a cost of £300, but this is no longer necessary following the transfer to ESAH management.

Balance sheet

At 31st March 2021, FHE held £22,000 in National Savings income bonds earning 0.01%, £25,679 in a one-year fixed rate deposit with Shawbrook Bank (through CAF) earning 1.4% until July, and £17,254 in current accounts and cash. Total reserves were £64,422”.

The financial report and accounts were accepted by 28 members.

5. Election of Honorary Officers under Rule 4 of the Constitution

Proposed for re-election: C. Thornton (Chairman); K. Crowe (Vice-Chairman); R. Earnshaw (Hon. Treasurer); J. Butler (Hon. Secretary); J. Gooch (Hon. Memb. Sec.)

All were re-elected unanimously.

6. Appointment of Executive Committee under Rule 5 of the Constitution

Proposed for re-election: A. Rowlands; S. O'Dell; J. Bedford; N. Wiffen

All were re-elected unanimously.

Proposed for election: Julie Miller; Simon Coxall

Both were elected unanimously.

7. Statement by the Essex Record Office Manager

The following report by Martin Astell was posted on the FHE website:

“Temporary closure of ERO building due to COVID-19: Since last year's AGM, when the ERO was in full lockdown, we have reopened, closed again and then reopened once more. During the second lockdown, the certificates service continued to operate although we had to suspend the Reprographics Service and Search Service. Email enquiries have been answered throughout the period. Indeed, in some months we saw unprecedented numbers of enquiries and very high numbers of certificates ordered. Essex Archives Online has remained available throughout. The ERO is fully open to the public, including the Conference Centre and wedding venue, but still with limits on capacity to maintain social distancing. We have been advised that quarantining of documents is no longer considered necessary.

Talks and events: Unfortunately, we have been unable to offer any talks and events for over a year. However, we are cautiously approaching the possibility of running some 'ERO Presents' talks in the autumn.

University of Essex History M.A. Placements: For this year only, the Friends are generously supporting two placements rather than one. The two students – Aaron Archer and Adam Campbell-Drew – started in the week beginning 10 May. 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.

Marriage Registers: New legislation came into force in May 2021 modernising the system of marriage registration from a hard-copy marriage register to an electronic system of registering marriages. This means that all existing marriage registers – both civil registration copies and church copies – are required to be closed. As a result, huge numbers of registers have been taken in over the past few weeks. This process started in the last week of May. By the end of June, over 400 of the 670 wedding venues in Essex (churches and approved premises) had brought in registers to be closed and stored at ERO. More than 640 Registration Service copies of the registers had been deposited and 226 'archive' copies of registers had been accessioned and catalogued: 130 from nonconformist churches and congregations and 96 from Church of England parishes. This is an enormous task for the Archivists and the Archive Assistants and is a great example of our successful partnership working with the Essex Registration Service.

Decarbonisation: With the roof surfaces having been replaced in most parts of the building, work has been undertaken to install an impressive array of photo-voltaic cells (solar panels). At the time of writing the system is not yet operational but, when complete, it should have a total capacity of around 118kWh. This is one of a number of decarbonisation projects which will be implemented at the ERO building over the next few months to include air source heat pumps for heating and LED lighting throughout the building.

Library cataloguing: The mammoth task of adding the ERO's reference library collections to Seax/Essex Archives Online has continued this year. Having completed the cataloguing of the volumes previously (with support from our team of volunteers), the pamphlets are now being tackled. All of the pamphlets relating to particular places – of which there are around 6,000 – have now been added (ref: LIB/E/) and the work to add the numbered boxes is under way. In addition, most of the periodicals in the Searchroom now appear on Seax, as do the parish magazines. These have been catalogued as LIB/PER 1-3.

Communicating Connections: sharing the heritage of the Marconi Company's wireless world: 30 oral history interviews have been recorded with former employees and others connected to the Marconi Company and, so far, over 13,000 photographs from the Marconi Photographic Archive have been digitised. The project team are now using this material to develop exhibitions to be displayed in Chelmsford. This project is funded by a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Harlow Development Corporation archives: Work is progressing well on the cataloguing of the records of the Harlow Development Corporation. Hector Mir, who had worked as an archivist at ERO a couple of years ago on a short-term project, started work in December to catalogue this collection. A steering group including representatives from Harlow Museum and Harlow Arts Trust has been established to provide advice and volunteers from the museum are assisting with cataloguing some of the records. This project is funded by an Archives Revealed cataloguing grant from The National Archives.

Wellcome funding for ANTAM: The ANTAM network (Association of New Town Archives and Museums) has been successful in securing £415,000 from the Wellcome Trust to catalogue and conserve important new town collections. The network is supported by an Archives Revealed grant from The National Archives. The ERO is the lead institution for ANTAM (although West Sussex was the lead for the bid to the Wellcome Trust). ERO will receive £20,000 from the Wellcome Trust grant for conservation of Basildon Development Corporation records.

Kate Luard First World War Letters: Conservation repackaging has now been completed. Letters were removed from their envelope and unfolded, letters and envelopes were cleaned using a smoke sponge and then enclosed in polyester sleeves. Sleeves were then stored in archival quality box ring binders. 569 polyester sleeves and 7 box ring binders used. This work was made possible through donations from the Essex Society for Archaeology and History and the Western Front Association (Essex Branch).

Essex Ensembles Assembled: Digitisation of recordings by the Essex Youth Orchestra and the Colchester Youth Chamber Orchestra has been completed with the help of a grant from the Association of Recorded Sound Collections.

Artist-in-Residence: Chelmsford-based artist Elaine Tibley has created an Activity Pack aimed at Key Stage 1 & 2 school pupils. The activities are inspired by some of the thousands of photographs taken by the Marconi Photographic Unit and preserved at the ERO. These show the Company's factories and the products they produced, including examples of equipment installations from around the world. The photographs, dating from the 1890s to the 1980s, also include staff photographs and promotional material. The pack is being released to coincide with the British Science Festival being hosted in September 2021 by Anglia Ruskin University in Chelmsford. The pack contains ideas and activities covering the subjects of History, Geography, English, Art and Science. It will be available from the ERO website and will be promoted to schools in Chelmsford and across Essex. This project is supported by funding from Chelmsford City Council.

Resonance Collective ambient album: A Chelmsford-based collective of musicians and artists have created an album of digital music using recordings from the Essex Sound and Video Archive. The artists were given copies of selected recordings from the Sound Archive and each created individual tracks in response. As well as demonstrating that ERO holds collections which can be used in creative ways, the project will also raise awareness of ERO to new audiences. The album is due for release (on Bandcamp) on the 15th of July and ERO will be working with Resonance

to publicise and promote the album. It will be a charity benefit album, all proceeds of sales going to the Friends of Historic Essex. So, download a copy, tell your friends and raise some funds for FHE!!

8. Resolutions proposed by members of the Friends

No resolutions were received.

Acceptance forms received

Martin Astell, Jane Bedford, Tony Bedford, Pat Bodin, Jenny Butler, Adrian Corder-Birch, Ken Crowe, Johanna Dale, Shirley Durgan, Ruth Earnshaw, Sarah Ensor, Ron Howlett, Sue Howlett, Elizabeth Kemp-Luck, Roger Kennell, Martyn Lockwood, Patricia March, Lynn Marston, David Mears, Julie Miller, Simon Mynott, Sean O'Dell, Lord Petre, Alison Rowlands, Lesley Ruse, Maureen Scollan, Chris Thornton, Jennifer Ward, Neil Wiffen (29)

JIB

4th August 2021