

The Friends of Historic Essex

Annual Report for the year ending 31 March 2024

AGM papers

Members registered to receive e-mails will have received the Agenda and Booking Form by e-mail; otherwise, they have been sent by post. For all other reports and papers, with the 2023 AGM minutes, please refer to: <https://friendsofhistoricessex.org/news/>

The year's activities

The committee has met three times at the Essex Record Office, with some members attending in person and others via Microsoft Teams. The charity continues to be in a good financial situation, and has benefited from one-off donations worth more than £6k from 5 individuals and 2 groups this year, for which support we are very appreciative. Spring and Autumn 2023 newsletters, bumper issues full of interesting articles, were distributed during the year. Preparation of articles for our projected booklet 'The Essex Record Office in 70 Documents' continues. FHE committee members have supported the ERO events programme. At a talk by Peter Walker on 'Chapman and André's map of Essex' on 27 May, sales of books and reproduction maps raised £355 – our thanks to Peter for his continuing help. We also funded a 'Thank You' lunch and project display for the ERO volunteers on 3 August to express our appreciation for all that they do for the archive service.

University of Essex placements 2024

Following a request from the University and the ERO, FHE has agreed to support two University of Essex student placements in 2024 (there were none in 2023), at a total cost of £1,500 (matched by the University). The students and topics this year are: Rielly Kitchener (Frating Hall Farm Community) and David Perkins (Rayleigh and Hadleigh settlement papers).

Open the Box: connecting communities through archives

FHE committee has approved a future grant this important project, which is focused on outreach and engagement in the Tendring area, of £2,000 for conservation work and £5,800 for an internship. The majority of the funding will come from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Cyber security

The committee has designed a cyber security policy to safeguard personal/financial data held by the society, based on Guidance for small charities from the National Cyber Security Centre.

Supporting the acquisition of documents

FHE has recently enjoyed some success in acquiring documents for the ERO, including a court book of the manor of Orsett 1647-50 (£600), two boxes of 19th-century farm accounts and other records of the Smith family of Great Clacton (Jaywick) (£120), deeds from Stow Maries (£55), and 24 Essex postcards (£250). Most important were four lots from the sale of the library of the late Christopher Foyle, including a survey of the Rich estates, completed under Robert Rich, the 3rd Baron and first Earl of Warwick (c.1610), and three collections of Essex deeds. The total cost was £13,284, but significant grants from The Friends of the National Libraries, ESAH, and private individuals reduced the cost to FHE to £1,653. Afterwards, some further documents (deeds) from the Foyle collection were acquired by ERO by private treaty sale at no further cost to FHE.

Committee thanks and changes

I would like to thank all the officers and committee members for their continuing commitment and hard work for the charity. I am stepping down this year after 10 years as Chairman and I wish the charity every success for the future. Sean O'Dell and Julie Miller are also stepping down from the committee this year, and I would like to thank them for all their contributions. There is further space on the committee, and we would be most happy to receive nominations.