

FRIENDS OF HISTORIC ESSEX

Supporting the Essex Record Office

Registered Charity No. 235270

Minutes of the 70th Annual General Meeting held at Broomfield Parish Church at 11.30 a.m. on Saturday 8th July 2023

Dr Trudy Stevens, a member of Broomfield PCC, welcomed the Friends to Broomfield Church and spoke briefly about the tower restoration project and the Rosemary Rutherford fresco.

Dr Christopher Thornton welcomed everyone to the AGM, and the President, Lord Petre, took the chair.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from 10 members, with 2 additional apologies being recorded at the meeting. The names are shown at the end of these minutes.

2. Minutes of the 69th AGM held at Boxted Airfield Museum on 2nd July 2022

The minutes were accepted as correct.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

No matters arising.

4. Annual Report and Address by the Chairman for the year ended 31 March 2023

The following report had been circulated to members and posted on the FHE website.

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. I would like to thank all the officers and committee members for their continuing commitment and hard work for the charity. FHE continues to be in a good financial situation, and we thank our Hon. Treasurer, Ruth Earnshaw, for so ably managing our accounts. During the year FHE received a donation of £1,000 from the Friends of Southend Museums when that organisation was wound up. Our current paid-up membership now stands at 129 individual members and 37 institutions and councils, a slight overall increase. Our active Twitter account has 635 followers. Thanks to our Hon. Membership Secretary, Janice Gooch, and also to Neil Wiffen, for following up on potential new members. Please pass on to Janice any ideas you have about people who may be interested in supporting the ERO by joining the Friends.

Events and Publications

Our Autumn 2022 newsletter was again slightly delayed, but finally distributed early in 2023. That for Spring 2023 is imminent. Thanks to Neil Wiffen for the excellent content and arranging new printers. More short articles or reviews of books by members would be most welcome, especially on topics or projects that involve ERO sources or facilities. The ERO events programme is now back in full swing, and FHE volunteers helped support the *Walkers of Hanningfield: Mapmakers of Tudor and Stuart Essex* event on 21 October. We are now entering the 70th year of the existence of the Friends and proposals have been approved by the FHE Committee for a celebration event in 2024 and the publication of a booklet with the working title 'Essex Record Office in 70 Documents'. More information will follow in future newsletters.

University of Essex placements 2023

There has not been a University of Essex placement in 2023 due to a lack of applicants. A review is taking place between representatives of FHE and the University to discuss ways forward.

Supporting the acquisition of documents

FHE has continued to purchase manuscripts for the ERO at auction or through e-bay, though unfortunately our bids were not always successful thus lowering expenditure. Acquisitions during the year included four court rolls of the manor of Curles in Clavering 1564, 1570, 1601, 1607 costing £338 (Clavering Landscape History Group kindly contributed £50) (ERO A15900); a large set of Castle Hedingham deeds 1728-1896 for £400 (ERO A15862); a power of attorney relating to Bicknacre Priory in 1287 (ERO D/DU 3466) purchased at auction for £500; a deed relating to Brentwood in 1841 (ERO, D/DU 3233 add) was purchased for £62.50; Maldon deed of 1599 bought on e-bay for \$350 US Dollars (ERO, D/DU 3449). In most cases postage costs were extra. The Friends have also purchased items for the ERO library.

Finally, it was with much sadness that FHE members learnt that ERO Archivist Katharine Schofield had passed away on 15 November. Katharine was a very popular member of ERO staff as well as being a fine historian. The ERO held an event on 10 February 2023 to remember Katharine and donations to FHE were received in her memory, including a very generous one from her family."

At the AGM the Chairman highlighted the slight increase in membership and the large donations received. He also announced that the Spring *Newsletter* was available there to take away, and suggested that copies could be given to prospective members.

5. Proposed amendment to the Constitution

A resolution to amend section 12 of the Constitution had been circulated with the agenda. The Chairman explained that it has become increasingly difficult to achieve the figure of 25 people present (about one sixth of the membership) that is sufficient for the AGM to be quorate. According to section 14 of the Constitution a provision of

the Constitution may be amended by a majority of two –thirds of those present and voting at a General Meeting.

Proposal by the Executive Committee: To amend section 12 of the Constitution to read as follows “A quorum of fifteen members in total will be necessary to conclude any business”.

This was carried unanimously.

6. Appointment of Examiner for year ended 31 March 2024

Proposed by the Committee: Geraldine Willden.

This was agreed unanimously.

7. Financial statement for the year ended 31 March 2023

The report of the Treasurer, Ruth Earnshaw, had been emailed to members and posted on the FHE website.

“For the financial year ended 31st March 2023, FHE reported a surplus of £1,903. Our reserves at year end were £67,029.

Income and Expenditure

Income for the year was £6,187 vs £3,705 last year. It was boosted by one-off donations from the Friends of Southend Museum on their winding-up (£1,000) and in memory of Katharine Schofield (£1,115). Subscription income was slightly increased at £1,923, reversing the decline seen in recent years. We received an impressive £511 from the sales of Peter Walker’s map book and other items at the ERO and other events. Other donations were £454 and interest income £544.

Expenditure for the year was £4,284 vs £3,001 last year. This included £2,135 on the purchase of documents and other items for the Record Office. Other significant items were the annual Student Placement grant of £750 for the University of Essex, and £661 for printing and distribution of the newsletters.

Balance sheet

At 31st March 2023, FHE reserves were £67,029. A number of different investments are held, which ensures we have funds available for acquisitions while also benefitting from the relatively high interest rates which are now being offered.

We hold £22,000 in National Savings income bonds earning 2.85% and two 1 year deposits with Charity Bank: £20,000 maturing in August at 2.06% and £10,000 maturing next March at 3.36%. We also had £15,045 in cash and current account balances”.

The Treasurer pointed out that our income had increased due to the rise in interest rates, and an increase in sales due to ERO being fully open again. FHE had purchased 9 items for ERO, so it had been a successful year.

Acceptance of the financial statement was proposed by Ruth Earnshaw. Seconded by Lynn Marston. Agreed unanimously.

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

The present officers are willing to continue, although Chris Thornton said he would like to stand down as Chairman in a year's time, as he has been on the Executive Committee for 20 years, and Chairman since 2014.

Honorary Officers standing for re-election: Chairman, Dr Christopher Thornton; Vice-Chairman, Ken Crowe; Hon. Secretary, Jenny Butler; Hon. Treasurer, Ruth Earnshaw; Hon. Membership Secretary, Janice Gooch.

Proposed by Simon Coxall, seconded by Stewart Seymour. Agreed unanimously.

The Committee proposed that Neil Wiffen be elected Hon. Publications Secretary. Agreed unanimously.

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

Standing for re-election as Committee members: Jane Bedford, Alison Rowlands, Simon Coxall, Julie Miller, Sean O'Dell.

Proposed by Chris Lambert, seconded by Maureen Scollan. Agreed unanimously.

The Executive Committee proposed the election of Rachael Bailey-Gibson as a new committee member. Agreed unanimously.

10. Statement by an Essex Record Office representative

Martin Astell, Essex Record Office Manager, attended the AGM and reported on various aspects of the service. Martin began by talking about the sad death of archivist Katharine Schofield who had worked at ERO for many years. Victoria West had now joined the staff as archivist.

Talks and events included:

- displays for Black History Month
- the launch of a VCH publication
- an event to celebrate the Walker maps, supported by FHE volunteers
- an exhibition and events for the 70th anniversary of the 1953 floods, with education packs on the floods compiled and sent to schools in Canvey and elsewhere
- a day conference on railways.

Publications: *The Great Tide* had been reprinted

Projects:

- digitising of the enclosure awards is ongoing

- an HLF application for an archive engagement project will be submitted in the coming year, focussing on the Tendring area
- Infected Blood Inquiry: about 60 ERO documents, including Community Health Council minutes, were consulted by the research team
- ERO is taking part in a national survey of record offices to locate adoption records

Decarbonisation: heat pumps and LED lights are being installed in ERO. The building will be closed for one week from 17th July.

Sound Archive: a number of ERO sound recordings were broadcast on BBC radio, both local and national, on a variety of topics including the 1953 floods.

Martin thanked the Friends for their support throughout the year.

11. Resolutions proposed by members of the Friends

None were received.

Apologies for absence

Rachael Bailey-Gibson, Adrian Corder-Birch, Karen Dennis, Steve Dennis, Sarah Ensor, Anne Kemp-Luck, Patricia March, Julie Miller, Joanna Moncrieff, Hilary Taylor, Nicola Thomas, Neil Wiffen

Attendance at AGM

Martin Astell, Jane Bedford, Tony Bedford, Pat Bodin, Zoe Bridges, Anne Brimlow, Jenny Butler, Ken Crowe, Ruth Earnshaw, Herbert Eiden, Janice Gooch, Jacky Hathaway, Roger Kennell, Chris Lambert, Lynn Marston, Lord Petre, Graham Richards, Alison Rowlands, Lesley Ruse, Derrick Ruse, Maureen Scollan, Stewart Seymour, Julie Sherman, Martin Stallion, Chris Thornton, Richard Wade, Brenda Watkin, Elphin Watkin, Victoria West (29)

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29th July 2023