

ESSEX HERITAGE NEWS



FINCHINGFIELD GUILDHALL

Spring 2014

By 2010 Finchingfield Guildhall was unusable, dangerous and on the At Risk Register. A major programme of repairs, refurbishment and restoration was planned; added impetus was given by the increasing rate of deterioration.

Work began on this fifteenth century, timber frame, Grade I listed building in December 2011. By early 2012 stripping out was well under way, removing cement render, concrete floors, old wiring and obsolete fittings. Historic materials were treated carefully, re-using and conserving wherever possible.

Extensive original daub was discovered on the ground floor. Analysis of this original lime plaster and paint allowed products to be created from the formulae revealed.

Throughout the build, the architect and contractor have striven for authenticity. Window designs are based on historic evidence of mullion holes, heads, cills and shutters.

Continued on p2...



Grants Awarded — for the financial year 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013

St James' Church, Brightlingsea	£3,600	**The Copped Hall Trust	£10,000
<i>Improvements in public access</i>		<i>Construction of a loggia</i>	
**St James' Church, Dengie, Southminster	£1,500	**Essex Record Office	£5,000
<i>Organ restoration</i>		<i>Conservation of plans and drawings by Fred Chancellor</i>	
St Mary Magdalene Church, Gt Burstead	£2,000	Moot Hall, Colchester Town Hall	£5,000
<i>Stained glass conservation</i>		<i>Organ restoration</i>	
Thames Sailing Barge Trust	£5,000	St Michael the Archangel Church, Woodham Walter	£5,000
<i>Restoration and refurbishment of "Pudge"</i>		<i>Improvements in public facilities</i>	
Tilbury & Chadwell Memories Project	£1,236	**Saffron Walden Museum	£3,000
<i>Purchase of equipment</i>		<i>Conservation of Military Colour</i>	
**The Fry Art Gallery	£2,000	St John the Baptist, Pebmarsh	£5,000
<i>Purchase of ceramic plate by Grayson Perry</i>		<i>Improvements in public facilities</i>	

**Featured in this Newsletter

...Continued from front page

A glass walkway is a new addition to an historic building, facilitating its modern, community use. Ground works for the structure revealed archaeological remains. A generous grant from **Essex Heritage Trust** paid for archaeological excavations and recording conducted by Mark Atkinson and his team from Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit.

After 18 months of work, Finchingfield Guildhall is transformed from a dilapidated, dangerous and dank building into a stunning community venue with library, museum and multi-purpose Guild Room. The volunteers of the Guildhall Trust and project team have been privileged to work with Kay Pilsbury Thomas Architects, Fairhurst Ward Abbots conservation specialists and Press and Starkey surveyors. They are grateful to the **Essex Heritage Trust**, English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund and all other generous donors.

by Jackie Bargman

Retired Trustee of Finchingfield Guildhall Trust

Opening hours for 2014 are as follows:

From **Easter Sunday (April 20th 2014)** to the last **Sunday** in **October**, the museum will be open from **11am to 5pm** on **Saturdays** and from **2pm to 5pm** on **Sundays** and **Bank Holidays**.

At other times the museum can be opened to view by request by contacting:

info@finchingfieldguildhall.org.uk. More information, including hire of the Guild Room and Library opening hours, can be found at the website at **www.finchingfieldguildhall.org.uk**

Group visits are welcome – please contact the e-mail address above.



SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM

Conservation, mounting & display of the 17th Essex Rifle Volunteers "colour"



Before conservation - Colour half netted

This "colour" or flag was in a sorry condition in the textile store of Saffron Walden Museum. Stored flat and taking up a lot of space, it was very fragile and held together with unsightly coarse brown net to stop the deteriorating fragments of the silk border fluttering away, which made it difficult to see. About 80cm square, it was dirty, distorted and creased in the painted central emblem, and falling apart at the silk border.

It is a military flag made for the 17th Rifle Volunteers of the town of Saffron Walden. Ian Hook, Keeper of the Regimental Museum, says that historical sources document the organisation of these Volunteers, who affiliated themselves with Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire regiments, which enables this colour to be precisely dated to 1860-1872. Almanacs state that they were founded on 9th October 1860 with 81 members on the Rolls, and this had risen to 100 members by 1872 with a sixteen-strong Band, and recruits were still joining up. This was a Saffron Walden regiment.

The local community would have made the colour and presented it to the Volunteers who were raised in response to threats of French invasion under Napoleon III in about 1859. They were formed to defend the area of Saffron Walden and this flag is therefore of local historical significance. As far as we know it is a unique and rare textile survival.

It is colourful and of great interest, and depicts the 3 seaxes of Essex beneath a crown within an oak wreath, and the words '17th Essex Rifle Volunteers' around. We thought it would make an attractive addition to our Local Militia case in Saffron Walden Museum, which displays some uniforms, helmets, a drum and associated paraphernalia. On display we had a photograph of a sergeant wearing his greatcoat, a cap, sash, haversack and greatcoat, all of the 17th Essex Rifle Volunteers. The "colour" now on display ties the group together and helps complete the picture.

Skilled conservation with the help of a generous grant from **Essex Heritage Trust** allowed this item to be safely handled and displayed. Poppy Singer and Annabel Wylie, textile conservators, were very brave. They removed the old cotton net and surface cleaned the painted area. Gentle wetting with a pipette eased creasing. All the layers were supported by adhering onto prepared silk crepe line support fabrics. Dyed silk crepe line made up a suitable backing fabric which is the border we can see. Overlay net was stitched to the front face to secure it and then it was mounted for display onto a prepared board. During this process it was found that the flag was double-sided, but not made to last – although modern science has now stepped in to help!

by Lynn Morrison

Conservation Office, Saffron Walden Museum



After conservation and on display at Saffron Walden Museum

THE FRY ART GALLERY SAFFRON WALDEN

A ceramic platter with legs by Grayson Perry, Artist Potter.

This plate, acquired by The Fry Art Gallery in Saffron Walden, is a good example of Grayson Perry's early pottery and plate making. Andrew Wilson's essay in the Barbican Art Gallery catalogue 2002 states "Perry's elaboration of a private magickal language for both his films and ceramic work brought together Masonic and Tarot imagery...with a Neo Naturist mythic understanding of the spirit of place realised in images of Essex, overlaid by all manner of brutal perverse sexualised imagery. His manner of drawing, whether scratched into the surface of the pot or painted into the glaze, has been described by Perry as that of an adolescent sixth former - both direct and illustrational." This description could have been written about this very plate, inscribed 'Whore of ESSEX, I love thee', and covered in local imagery as well as the central painterly face, which could be a self portrait drawn in the glaze.

Grayson Perry is known mainly for his vases which have classical forms, decorated in bright colours, depicting subjects at odds with their attractive appearance. There is a strong autobiographical element in his work, in which images of Perry as "Claire", his female alter-ego, often appear.

Grayson Perry was born in Chelmsford but when he was seven, his father left the family and Perry subsequently moved to Bicknacre, Essex, with his mother and stepfather, and attended Woodham Ferrers Church of England School.

In his childhood Perry took an interest in drawing and model aeroplanes, both of which were to become themes in his work, and a military plane features on this plate. At 15 he moved in with his father's family in Chelmsford and was educated at King Edward VI Grammar School where he was interested in conventional boys' activities and was involved in the Chelmsford punk scene in the late 1970s.

He then returned to his mother and stepfather at Great Bardfield. Marina Warner of the University of Essex has included in her project, in conjunction with the V&A, a large part of Grayson Perry's autobiography which refers to Great Bardfield, his education and growing up in this area, where he was the local paper delivery boy.

Encouraged by his art teacher, he took a foundation course at Braintree College of Further Education and later graduated with a BA in fine art at Portsmouth. He exhibited his first piece of pottery in 1980 and made glazed plates with text because he could not make anything else.

In 2003 he was awarded the Turner Prize, the first time it was given to a ceramic artist; since 2003 he has had many exhibitions including the recent exhibition at The British Museum. Grayson Perry has also recently started making documentaries and has filmed in The Fry Art Gallery, referring to the inspiration of Edward Bawden and Eric Ravilious. He said; "The Fry Gallery is a concentrated burst of loveliness, a shrine to the art of my home county." This contemporary work is unlike any other work in our collection and yet strongly reflects the idea of artist craftsman found in the other artists.

by David Oelman

The Fry Art Gallery
Saffron Walden, Essex, CB10 1BD



**'A unique collection of work by artists
in and around Great Bardfield and
Saffron Walden.'**

www.fryartgallery.org



ST JAMES' CHURCH DENGIE, SOUTHMINSTER

Organ Restoration



The parish of Dengie is situated at the eastern end of the Dengie Peninsula between Bradwell-on Sea to the north and Burnham-on-Crouch to the south. The 14th Century parish church of St James is an integral part of the community. The pipe organ in the church is a two manual instrument with the pedals having been long out of use. In 1933 some major work was carried out by Cedric Arnold. This is the only work that has been carried out apart from in 1993; our organ builder, Peter Wood, together with David Felstead, converted the hand operated blower to be electrically driven and also made the instrument playable, which had not been the case for some time.

In June 2011 our present organ builder Michael Young produced a plan that would help with the general upkeep and appearance of the organ, which would also help to extend its working life. This would involve adjusting the problematic swell box, fitting tuning slides to pipes, checking key actions, providing new supports for the front case and spraying the front pipes. The estimated total of the cost of the work was £2,900 including VAT.

Dengie is a very small parish and even fund raising of this order is a problem. The PCC decided to go ahead with the project. The Church Warden (and Organist) volunteered to go on a sponsored walk. The Dengie Peninsula is surrounded by a sea defence wall. The wall prevents a vast area of farm land and many properties being flooded at high tide. There is also a public footpath on the top. It was decided to do a walk of 25 miles from Fambridge to Bradwell, via Burnham. The walk took place on 14th April, 2012 and the total sum raised from this was £1,300.

We applied to the **Essex Heritage Trust** for a grant and we were delighted when they offered £1,500. With a £100 donation from a local firm, the money had been raised!!!

In September 2012 the work started. The organ was virtually stripped down (a church member entering the church at this time was amazed to see organ bits from one end of the church to the other). The organ builder discovered the front casing had never been securely attached to the church building for 70 years!

The work was completed in October 2012. The result is that the organ has greatly enhanced the services in the church and for use in concerts and special events. This could not have happened without the generosity of **Essex Heritage Trust**.

by Andrew Burnett
Church Warden & Organist

Have you got a
project
needing a
grant?

*Contact our office for information
about assistance with your heritage project.*

COPPED HALL, EPPING

The Loggia



The Loggia was built as part of the 1895 additions to Copped Hall. It is situated adjacent to the south facade of the mansion and provided a sheltered west-facing sitting area - facing an enclosed garden. Originally, the Loggia had a marble floor and carved oak panels fitted to its back wall. Opposite the Loggia was a glazed corridor leading from the mansion to a vast glazed winter-garden.

When Copped Hall was being stripped of anything of value around 1950, Lord Chelmer obtained the Loggia and took it to his home at Bullwood Hall at Hockley in Essex. He erected four of the columns and some of the hardwood entablature to form a summer house.

Some time later he sold Bullwood Hall to the Home Office as a women's prison. He took the remaining columns to his new home which was Peacocks at Margaretting. He constructed a temple there using four of the columns and erected two single columns as features in the gardens and landscape. After Lord Chelmer died, Peacocks was sold to Philip Torr.

After much negotiation, the Home office agreed to return to Copped Hall all the material taken from there in the 1950s. Philip Torr was also kind to us and returned the two freestanding columns.

In all, we obtained the return of 6 of the 10 columns and some of the teak entablature – sufficient to erect a large part of the Loggia in a structurally sound form. The four missing columns can be made and fitted later when funds are available.

A particular advantage to us is that the erection of the Loggia will provide a sheltered entry point to the gardens from the forecourt. The enclosed garden, onto which the Loggia faces, provides a popular adjunct to the very useful South Room in the mansion. The Copped Hall Trust is very grateful to the **Essex Heritage Trust** for their assistance with this restoration project.

by **Alan Cox**

The Copped Hall Trust

www.coppedhalltrust.org.uk

ESSEX RECORD OFFICE

Conservation of the Chancellor archive of architect's plans

The Essex Record Office (ERO) is fortunate to look after the large collection of architectural plans from the firm of the well known architect Fred Chancellor (1825-1918). Chancellor was a prolific architect with offices both in Chelmsford and London. He worked on most churches in Essex and designed many public buildings, including schools and hospitals.

His collection of architectural plans and drawings, around 10,000 individual items, was deposited at the ERO with a brief but, by modern standards, inadequate catalogue (D/F 8).

Continued on p7...



...Continued from p6

This means the collection is underused and difficult to access. The current condition and storage arrangements make the plans unsuitable for production to researchers. They are stored in rolls, very much as they first came to us, which are awkward to handle and make it difficult to look at individual plans. The plans are also dirty, which can lead to dirt being transferred to other documents that researchers are looking at. A proportion (estimated at 5%) are damaged to such an extent that makes it impossible to produce them for consultation.

Ideally, in order to make the plans more accessible they would all have to be cleaned, flattened, re-packaged and re-catalogued. Because there are so many plans there are just not sufficient staff on hand to be dedicated to processing them all. Therefore it was decided that it would be an ideal project with which to recruit volunteers to assist with the mammoth task ahead. Not only does the ERO get the assistance of the volunteers' hours but the volunteers are given access to and taught some simple conservation techniques.

An initial pilot project saw around 300 plans processed, which allowed the work plan to be amended in the light of practical experience. Those plans in need of conservation work were treated by ERO's in-house Conservation team and, following repackaging, all then received a detailed individual catalogue entry in ERO's online catalogue, Seax, to further improve accessibility and awareness about the availability of this important collection.

With 300 plans completed there only remained the small issue of another 9,700 to go.

While the initial pilot was carried out in-house, the next hurdle to overcome was the funding of the special materials needed to repackage the plans.

Acid free manilla and specially commissioned boxes are used to ensure that, stored in the ERO's climate-controlled strong rooms, the plans would be given the best possible chance of surviving for centuries to come. Such materials from specialist companies, however, do not come cheap and it meant that external funding organisations had to be sought. Luckily for the project two successful bids were made to cover the costs of the materials.

The National Manuscripts Conservation Trust (NMCT) was approached with a bid to help with the funding towards the cost of materials. Established in January 1990 by the British Library and the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts,

with funding from the Office of Arts and Libraries and from private donors, the NMCT gives grants to support the conservation of important manuscripts and archives. NMCT Trustees benefit from specialist advice provided by The National Archives; this advice covers the significance of the material, its status, and the appropriateness of the proposed conservation treatment. This advice informs the Trustees' decisions about which projects should be awarded grants. With support from The National Archives they can also advise applicants on issues relating to preservation and conservation best practice. With advice from the NMCT the ERO was able to modify its plans for repackaging to make it more efficient both in terms of time taken and cost of materials. In the light of these amendments a total of £9,500 was awarded to the ERO towards the costs of materials.

While this was a great contribution towards the total estimated cost of the materials for the project there was still a shortfall. Fortunately the ERO was able to make a bid to the **Essex Heritage Trust**. The ERO has been lucky to be awarded £5,000 which will be used to purchase materials required for the project.

The ERO is very grateful to both the NMCT and the EHT for their very generous grants which will allow the work outlined above to be carried out. Look out for further news on the project via the ERO Blog:

www.essexrecordofficeblog.co.uk

by Neil Wiffen
Public Services Team Manager
Essex Record Office



On a recent visit to the Essex Record Office Neil Wiffen, Essex Journal Honorary Editor and Essex Record Office Public Services Team Manager, shows Lord Petre one of the Chancellor plans before it is cleaned and re-packaged.

This article has previously appeared in the Autumn 2013 issue of the Essex Journal and it is reproduced by courtesy of the ERO and the Essex Journal.



Income and expenditure may be summarised as follows:	2012/13 £'000	2011/12 £'000
Income from investments	58	53
Subscriptions, Donations and Legacy received	24	4
Aggregate income	82	57
Less: Administrative costs	8	7
Available for grants	74	50
Grants (Net)	47	37
Net income for the year	27	13
Realised and Unrealised gains less losses on Investments	129	31
Increase in the value of the Trust's funds	156	44
Value of the Trust's funds - at the beginning of the year	1,301	1,257
- at the end of the year	1,457	1,301

The Trust's grant distribution policy (subject to the performance of the Trust's investments) continues to be that an aggregate amount of up to £60,000 be set aside for grants each year. Whilst income alone may not achieve the desired target, the value of the Trust's investments continues to show positive growth, and with this in mind, the Trustees propose to continue to distribute grants up to £60,000 per annum, looking to the total return on the Trust's investments including valuation gains.

Copies of the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2013, from which the above information has been extracted, have been subject to examination by an independent qualified accountant. Copies of the accounts may be obtained, on request, from the Trust office.

Peter J Mamelok DL FCA, Honorary Treasurer

Be a Friend of Essex Heritage Trust

Since 1990, our members' generous support and financial contribution to the Trust has enabled us to award over 400 grants, totalling over £800,000. It is clear that you are helping to preserve our rich and diverse heritage and making it accessible for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of Essex and our many visitors.

For 2014, in order to help maintain the real value of the Trust's income, our Friends' yearly subscription will be £25.00, the first increase in over 10 years. With your help we can continue to ensure that valuable buildings, artefacts, objects or areas of great beauty are not spoilt or lost for ever.

If you wish to become a "Life Friend" (£250), take out Corporate membership (£150 per year) or make a Gift Aid donation, please contact our Administrator at the office or visit the website.

Trustees

Chairman: Mr J Douglas-Hughes OBE DL **Managing Trustee:** Mr B J Moody

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