

SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM

Gold Finger Ring from the time of the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms

A remarkable archaeological find has been secured by Saffron Walden Museum, thanks to grants from the **Essex Heritage Trust** and several national funding organisations. The large gold finger ring, measuring up to 27mm across and weighing over 20 grams, was found by a metal-detectorist in November 2011 in Uttlesford district (north-west Essex) and reported under the Treasure Act 1996. It immediately aroused the interest of specialists in the Anglo-Saxon period, and was featured in ITV's first series of Britain's Secret Treasures in July 2012. Following a lengthy process of examination, inquest and valuation, the ring was acquired by Saffron Walden Museum in December 2013, after a concentrated four-month fund-raising campaign.

This find is of exceptional importance not only as an early Anglo-Saxon ring of very high and possibly royal status, but also as a signet ring with an engraved bezel. The bezel features a human figure who is apparently naked except for a belt, walking to the left and carrying a cross-headed staff in one hand and a small bird-of-prey on the other. Above the figure is a larger bird-of-prey, depicted in a style characteristic of early 7th century art which is best known from its use on high-status objects such as those from the royal burials at Sutton Hoo, Suffolk or Taplow, Berkshire. The ring's shoulders are covered with relief decoration which have been interpreted as schematic animal heads. The hoop is divided into panels featuring birds with crossed wings, either side of a panel of symmetrical interlace ornament. Experts have dated the ring to around 580 – 650 AD, the period which spans the rise of the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, including Kent, Essex and East Anglia; St Augustine's mission and the introduction of Christianity, and the remarkable royal burials at Sutton Hoo and

Prittlewell, Southend. The derivation of the motifs on the ring and what they represent has already been the subject of expert debate. Put simply, their combination of late Roman-Christian and pagan north-European imagery seems to encapsulate this formative period of English history when the emergent Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were coming under the influence of Christian missions and Continental politics.



Image taken by Steve Bond
and © Saffron Walden Museum

The location of the find-spot is being protected. The site has been thoroughly investigated, but there was nothing to provide a context for the ring - it appears to have been a solitary loss, and not from a burial or settlement. While the identity of the ring's original owner, and the circumstances which led to its loss in north-west Essex, remain matters for speculation, it will continue to fascinate visitors and attract further study in Essex and at national level.

Saffron Walden Museum thanks and acknowledges the following: **Essex Heritage Trust**, the V&A Purchase Grant Fund, the Art Fund, the Headley Trust, the Beecroft Bequest and local donors for their generous

support of the appeal; the finder and landowner (who wish to remain anonymous) for their co-operation and patience through the treasure process.

Carolyn Wingfield
Curator, Saffron Walden Museum

Grants Awarded

Financial year 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014

Essex Society for Archaeology & History	£500	High Ongar Parish Council	£350
<i>Printing of Index Volume Transactions</i>		<i>Wooden fingerpost</i>	
St Mary the Virgin, Farnham	£1,500	St Giles Church, Mountnessing	£2,500
<i>Conservation of Stained Glass panel</i>		<i>Organ restoration</i>	
Sible Heddingham Parish Council	£1,500	Castle Heddingham Tennis Club	£5,000
<i>Blue Plaque scheme</i>		<i>Restoration of boundary wall</i>	
St Peter & St Paul Church, Foxearth	£2,000	Dawn Sailing Barge Trust	£5,000
<i>Organ overhaul</i>		<i>Restoration of Wooden Tiller</i>	
Canvey Island Town Council	£5,000	Chelmsford Museum	£3,000
<i>Enhancement works for Canvey Lake</i>		<i>Publication of excavations at Pleshey Castle</i>	
Waltham Abbey Church	£5,000	St Peter's Church, Great Totham	£2,000
<i>Replacement of pipe organ</i>		<i>Restoration of two Paintings</i>	
** Saffron Walden Museum	£4,000	Publication by Dr Patrick Chaplin	£400
<i>Purchase of Anglo-Saxon gold ring</i>		<i>Langford - An Obscure Essex Village Transformed</i>	
The Fry Art Gallery	£550	** Ashdon Windmill Ltd	£1,360
<i>Acquisition of oil painting by John Aldridge</i>		<i>Ash hurdle safety fence</i>	
** The Armstrong Gibbs Society	£2,000		
<i>Publication of biography of Armstrong Gibbs</i>			

** *Featured in this Newsletter*

ASHDON WINDMILL - Ashgate safety fence

Ashdon Windmill has been in restoration mode since the completion of all the paperwork to acquire the Windmill was completed in 2000. The project was a zero based start as the structure was due to fall down at any moment.

Fortunately we had Vincent Pargeter, a renowned millwright on hand, who rapidly built an 'A' frame over the Windmill to keep it standing before it was taken apart! We also had financial support from Thurlow Estate, who gave the Windmill to us, the Essex Environment Trust and the Heritage Lottery Fund also, which all amounted to £100,000. The progress was immediately visible and gave us the courage to continue.

The whole idea was a Village Community project and supported by many people with all the various skills you can still find in an old established village like Ashdon. After fourteen years we think we have the end of the restoration in sight and hope to have the sails turning the millstones in 2015 – just over 100 years since they stopped. However, as a 'working' Windmill the hazards of a Miller's life became apparent with among other things, the stark reality of the sails sweeping round within three

feet of the ground, so we had to devise a safety fence to avoid mishaps.

For trial purposes we had used iron stakes and rather horrible plastic orange tape which rather spoilt the view! After much discussion one of our team came up with the idea of demountable ash hurdles which we pursued and we were very pleased with the effect, particularly as they were made in a village workshop and from locally grown trees.

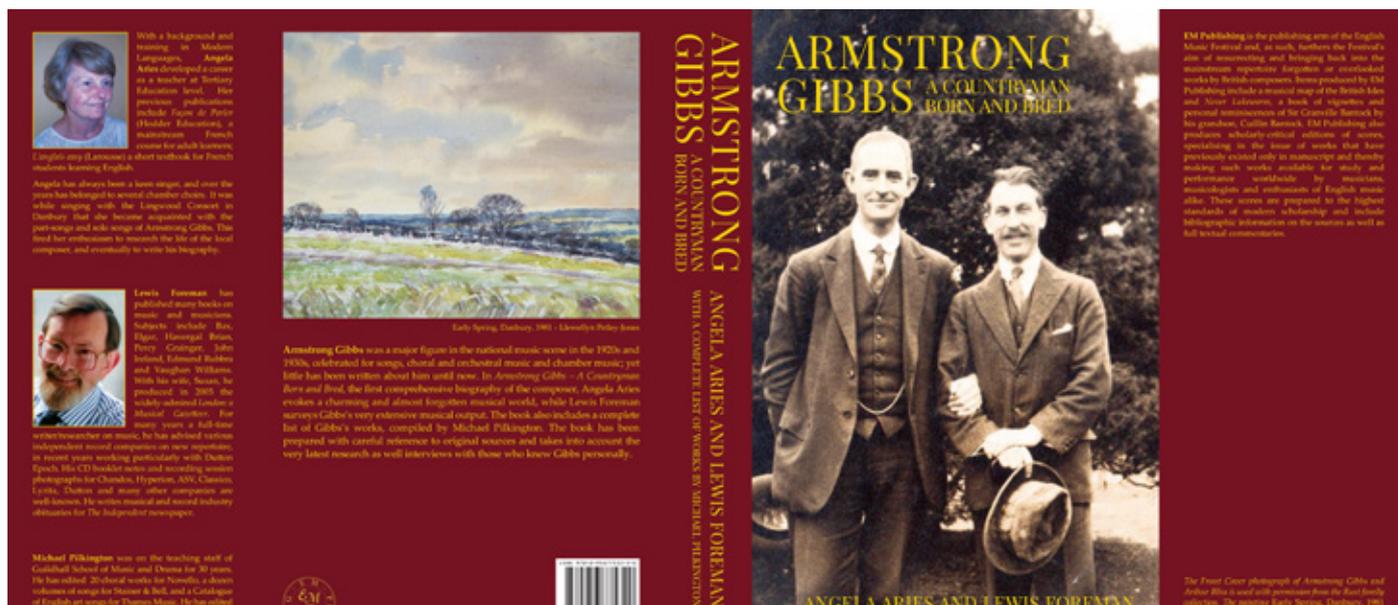
However, the cost was much more than horrible plastic tape, but **Essex Heritage Trust** came to our rescue and awarded us a grant and some useful comments.

With the aid of the grant and taking note of their suggestions, we were able to build the safety fence ready for our last public Open Day of the year in October 2014. Ironically the wind did not blow hard enough for the sails to turn but 2015 will, we hope, see it all working.

David How
Senior Trustee
Ashdon Windmill Trust Ltd

ARMSTRONG GIBBS

A Countryman Born and Bred



This handsomely presented 400-page hard-bound book is published by E M Publishing and was the brainchild of author, Angela Aries. Angela has lived in Danbury for over 20 years and is an established author. She has always been a keen singer, and it was while singing with the Lingwood Consort in Danbury that she first became acquainted with the music of Armstrong Gibbs. This fired her enthusiasm to research the life of the Essex composer, and eventually to write his biography.

The book, which has spent the best part of 15 years in the making, places on record the life and work of a prolific Essex composer with a national reputation. It is in three parts:

In the first part Angela evokes a charming and almost forgotten musical world and gives many, fascinating insights into rural life in a typical Essex village. Mention is made of the people (many of whose names will be recognised by present Danbury residents), and organisations, amongst which are the church, the Danbury Choral Society, and the cricket and bowls clubs. This section represents a substantial body of research by Angela using, among other sources, interviews with members of his family and individuals who knew Gibbs, and documents held in the British Library and the Britten-Pears Archive. During this phase Angela was befriended by Gibbs' daughter and her husband, the late Ann and Lyndon Rust.

Lewis Foreman, for many years a well-known full-time researcher and writer on music, has published many books on music and musicians, and material for recording companies. In the second part of the book Lewis surveys Gibbs' very extensive musical output.

Gibbs was born in 1889 in The Vineyards at Great Baddow. He read history at Cambridge and stayed on to take his Mus.D., studying composition under Charles Wood and E.J. Dent. After a time as a schoolmaster, he returned to music and was offered a place as a mature student at the Royal College of Music, studying conducting under Adrian Boult and composition under Vaughan Williams. Although he is known principally for his solo songs, Gibbs wrote a substantial amount of chamber music, three symphonies and a wealth of sacred and secular choral music.

The sub-title of the book, A Countryman Born and Bred, reflects the fact that although a national figure in the nineteen twenties and thirties, Gibbs shunned London life, preferring to live in his native Essex, in Danbury and Little Baddow. In addition to his musical activities, he played a full part in village life, and served on many committees and governing bodies, including the Parochial Church Council, the Landisdale Trust and the Bowls Club, of which he was President for many years. He died in 1960 and is buried in Danbury churchyard with his wife Honor.

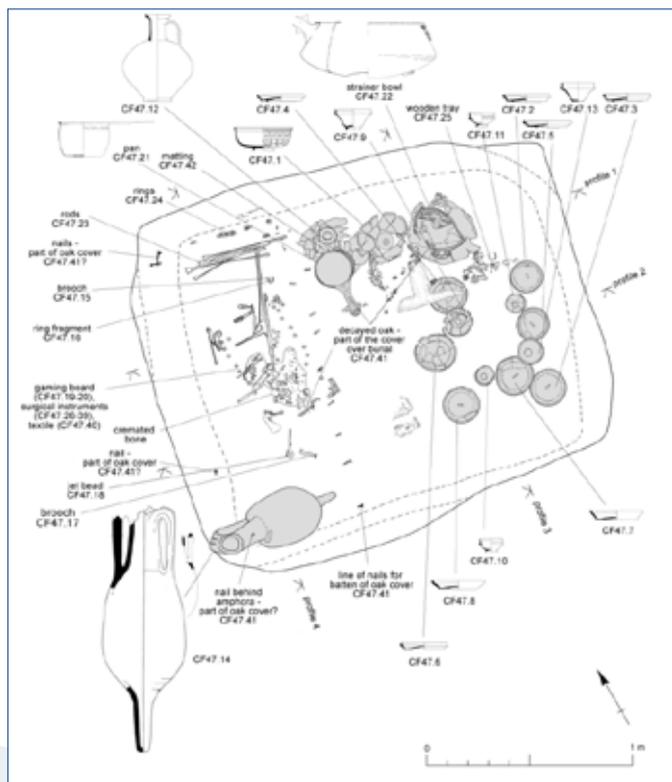
The Armstrong Gibbs Society is most grateful to **Essex Heritage Trust** for its generous financial support which transformed this project from a possibility to a certainty.

Christopher Kingsley
Chairman, The Armstrong Gibbs Society

Copies of the book may be obtained by sending a cheque for £35 (£30 + £5 p&ap) payable to EMF Endeavours to;
Sue Parker, 17 Ainsdale Grove, Cullingworth BRADFORD BD13 5AU

COLCHESTER CASTLE

The Doctor's Grave Display



Back in 1996 Colchester Archaeological Trust were excavating at Stanway, to the west of Colchester, in advance of gravel extraction by Tarmac. The site had already yielded a number of late Iron Age graves dating to the years either side of the Roman invasion in AD43. So the archaeologists' hopes were high, and they were not disappointed.

Surface stripping revealed the top of a Roman amphora. As they dug down into a pit, roughly two metres square, the remains of a grave full of fine pottery emerged. Alongside the pottery were a bronze saucepan and another bronze vessel which was badly crushed. Careful piecing together of the fragments revealed a strainer bowl used to prepare alcoholic drinks. Further chemical analysis revealed traces of wormwood and honey in the bowl that had been used to flavour the drink.

In another part of the grave there was a complex tangle of bronze and iron implements and two rows of glass blobs. As the layers were unpicked, the blobs were revealed to be counters on a gaming board overlaid by surgical instruments and sets of iron and bronze rods and rings. There were also two Iron Age brooches and microscopic traces of a woven textile that was most likely a cloak with a purple and white check pattern which had been fastened by one of the brooches.

Almost all traces of the body had disappeared because of the nature of the soil. However the grave goods pointed to someone who was part of the local Iron Age elite and

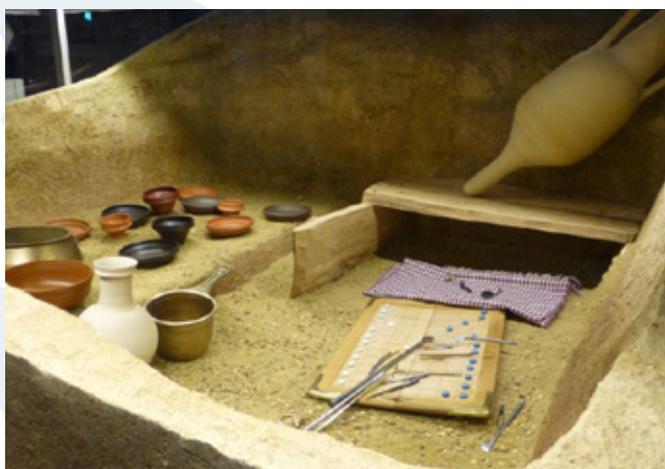
wealthy enough to surround themselves with imported Roman goods and indulge in the local drinking culture that was a feature of a high status life in late Iron Age Britain.

The surgical instruments, the earliest known from Britain, suggested that this was someone who practised medicine and so the burial has come to be known as the Doctor's Grave.

Some of the finds had been exhibited in a temporary exhibition at the Castle in 2005, however the HLF funded redevelopment of the Castle gave the opportunity to make the Doctor's Grave a major feature of the new displays. **Essex Heritage Trust** have been generous in offering £5,000 match funding to help make this a reality.

The design team wanted to achieve a number of objectives with the Doctor's Grave display. The wealth of the grave needed to be clear and also the rarity and specialness of items like the surgical instruments. The display was also an opportunity to illustrate the many different archaeological principles and techniques that were involved in interpreting the burial.

The decision was taken to display the grave goods as they would have appeared at the point of burial, minus a body, and so exact replicas of the objects were commissioned, through the scenic fit-out sub-contractors, Dartura, from Nodge Nolan and Chris Lydamore. Dartura themselves in the persons of Jerry and Jane Headford arranged the weaving of the check cloak and the creation of the grave pit. Sadly, Nodge Nolan, a very fine craftsman with a well deserved reputation for the quality of his work, died during the project and the metal objects that he created are a memorial to his skill.





Some deviation from the literal appearance of the grave at the point of burial had to be made. The traces left by the cloak show that it was used to wrap or cover the gaming board and surgical instruments. There was also evidence that the grave was boarded over and the amphora placed on top. Both these actions if followed through would have obscured almost all the contents of the grave, so the cloak has been folded back and the boarding only partially recreated. The show case is backed by the archaeological plan showing the arrangement of the grave.

Visitors can view the recreated grave from three sides. Two adjacent small show cases display some of the actual grave goods, such as the strainer bowl fragments. The display is also supported by replica objects on open display that can be touched by all visitors, but especially those who are blind or have visual impairments. The labels for these objects feature Braille.

The Doctor's Grave is a very good example of the partial survival of archaeological evidence, which has been demonstrated on an interactive panel close by. Images of the replica strainer bowl, gaming board, a Roman dish and the cloak and brooch appear on the front of flaps that can be lifted to show just how much of each of these objects have survived after being buried for almost 2,000 years. The dish is virtually intact, but of the cloak there is nothing visible to the naked eye.

The final part of the Doctor's Grave interpretation is a computer touch screen which allows visitors to pick various objects and ask the question, how do we know? This then reveals the various types of archaeological research that have been employed to uncover and better understand the evidence from the grave.

This process also reveals that archaeology is not cut and dried, but is constantly developing. We do not have all the answers. The best idea about the rods and rings found in the grave is that they were used for divination to decide whether the time was right or not for a surgical operation. Given the perilous nature of surgery 2,000 years ago, a little nudge from the gods would have been welcomed. There are many theories about how the board game was played and no consensus view.

Perhaps the most fascinating theory of all is a re-evaluation of what the evidence as a whole from the grave tells us about the person. High status, skilled in medicine, surgery and potions, asking questions of the gods through divination - was this person a druid?

Please visit and see what the evidence tells you about the Doctor's Grave.

Please check the museum website: www.cimuseums.org.uk for Colchester Castle opening times & admission prices.

Tom Hodgson
Colchester Development Manager

Have you got a
project
needing a
grant



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

MOOT HALL, MALDON

Restoration of the Painting of the Inquest of the Murder of William Belsham



Before restoration

The Moot Hall on the High Street in Maldon is a Grade I listed brick tower and is the surviving fragment of a manor built by Sir Robert D'Arcy in about 1420. In 1576 it became the home of the Maldon Borough Corporation, and is still owned by Maldon Town Council. It is believed to be the earliest secular decorated brick building in the country and is managed by The Friends of the Moot Hall Charitable Trust, who have undertaken to encourage public access to the hall, and to advance knowledge of the Hall's cultural importance.

In April 2011 Maldon District Museum offered the Friends a 19th century painting depicting a court case at the Moot Hall. The painting had been donated to the museum in the 1920s but was in no condition to be displayed. Done in oil on card it was torn almost in half, soot blackened, the paint was flaking off and the frame broken. It was hard to make out many details. As there are no known pictures of the inside of the Moot Hall prior to the 20th Century it was an exciting find.

Research showed the picture was of the inquest into the murder of William Belsham in October 1814. The murder was part of Maldon folklore. On 25th October 1814 Mr Belsham was robbed and killed in a cow shed, on Fambridge Road, Maldon. The chief suspect, a sailor called William Seymour, was captured at the Crown Inn, Mucking.

The inquest on 27th October 1814 gave a verdict of Wilful Murder. Seymour was sent to the Assizes and hanged at Chelmsford in March 1815. Gruesomely his body was sent for dissection, and his skull survives to this day, in the care of Maldon District Museum.

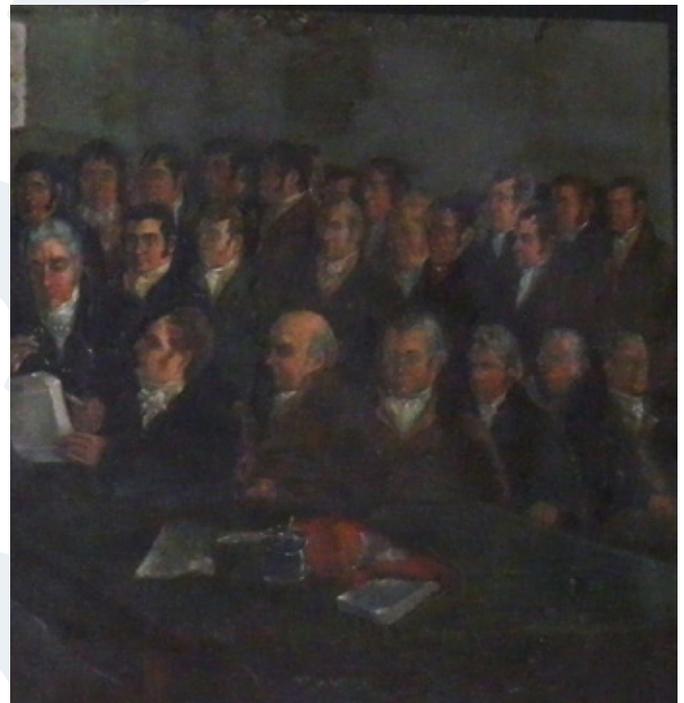
The picture was probably commissioned at the time by the Maldon Association for the Prosecution of Felons who had raised a reward to capture the murderer. Further work is ongoing to identify the many individuals depicted in the painting.

The Friends set about raising the funds to have it restored, and we were fortunate to be given a generous grant of £2,000 from **Essex Heritage Trust** towards the £3,500 project. We were able to secure the services of restorer Judith Wiesner and paper conservator Konstantina Konstantinidou and their careful work has given remarkable results. The restoration was finished in September 2014 in time for its 200 year anniversary and now hangs in the former gaol of the Moot Hall and is available to view every Thursday, Friday and Saturday afternoon between March and October.

We have, with the help of **Essex Heritage Trust**, rescued a precious piece of the town's history which will hang in the Moot Hall hopefully for at least another 200 years.

Julie Miller

Trustee, Friends of the Moot Hall Charitable Trust



After restoration - detail

ST ETHELDREDA'S PARISH CHURCH, WHITE NOTLEY

Church Organ Restoration

Our Parish church in the village of White Notley dates back around 1,000 years and is full of historical interest, including what is believed to be the oldest piece of stained glass in Essex. Although White Notley is a small village, the Church continues to hold regular services and we are lucky to have an organist who plays at every service.

Whilst our church organ is more modern than the building itself, it does have some history of its own, having been constructed and installed in the 19th century by Alfred Monk of Holloway, London. Monk (b 1848) was an organ builder of repute, with 67 of his pipe organs installed around Britain, and other installations around the world including Africa and Australia. Our organ is undated, but is thought to have been installed around 1875-1885.

The organ has been used ever since its installation, but was badly in need of restoration, as its touch had become very heavy and some of the wind runnings were blocked. White Notley PCC commissioned Andrew Stevens of Steeple Bumpstead, Suffolk to examine the organ, recommend restorative actions and carry them out. Andrew wrote, "There is no doubt in my mind that the instrument is worthy of restoration, having given well over a century of good service there is no reason to think it won't do the same again."

Andrew's work began in July 2014 and lasted over 3 weeks. The organ was completely dismantled, cleaned and its parts were replaced or refurbished and repaired. An electrician ensured the power supply was updated and also improved the lighting to assist our organist. Some parts had to be taken back to Andrew's workshop for overhauling.

Finally in August the organ was completely reassembled and tuned, much to the delight of the organists who play for us.

The cost of the restoration was around £8,000 – a huge sum for a small village church with a tiny congregation and many running costs. We are therefore so grateful to **Essex Heritage Trust** for their generous grant of £5,000 towards the costs – this enabled us to go ahead with the work and preserve our organ to be enjoyed by churchgoers for many years to come.

Ian Bentley

Churchwarden at St Etheldreda's, White Notley

BEECROFT ART GALLERY

Costume Showcase



The Beecroft Art Gallery has recently reopened its doors after being relocated to a very large building on Victoria Avenue in Southend-on-Sea that was previously home to the Southend Library. During this large-scale gallery relocation project, we were lucky enough to set aside display space for a dedicated costume gallery in order to display our collection of historic costume. This costume gallery required a large showcase to display the costume safely. The gallery was generously awarded £3,000 from **Essex Heritage Trust** towards this large showcase allowing us to provide an exquisite permanent display of changing exhibitions of historic costume for our visitors.

Prior to the construction of this showcase, it was not possible for us to display costume in the new Beecroft Art Gallery due to the fragile nature of historic costume and the necessity of a showcase to protect these objects from the immediate environment.

Our visitors have been very pleased with the costume gallery and the increased accessibility of the costume collection thanks to this large showcase, making us one of the only dedicated costume spaces in the region. With the popularity of costume exhibitions and displays, it seemed like a fantastic opportunity for us to set aside an entire space for this collection that has both widened our audience and enhanced our reputation for putting on interesting and exciting costume exhibitions

Ciara Phipps

Assistant Curator of Social History
Southend Museums – The Beecroft Art Gallery

Income and expenditure may be summarised as follows:	2013/14 £'000	2012/13 £'000
Income from investments	60	58
Subscriptions, Donations and Legacy received	5	24
Aggregate income	65	82
Less: Administrative costs	18	8
Available for grants	47	74
Grants (Net)	44	47
Net income for the year	3	27
Realised and Unrealised gains less losses on Investments	58	129
Increase in the value of the Trust's funds	156	156
Value of the Trust's funds - at the beginning of the year	1,457	1,301
- at the end of the year	1,518	1,457

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 2014, 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 £900,000.

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.

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 Friend on an annual basis (£25) or 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

Honorary Treasurer: Mr P J Mamelok DL FCA

Lord Petre, HM Lord Lieutenant of Essex

Councillor N Hume, Chairman, Essex County Council,

Dr J Bettley JP DL FSA Mrs S Brice Mr M F Pertwee Mr R H Wollaston

Councillor K Twitchen OBE

Address: Cressing Temple, Braintree, Essex, CM77 8PD **Telephone:** 01376 585794
Fax: 01376 585794 **Email:** mail@essexheritagetrust.co.uk **Registered Charity No:** 802317

