



Newsletter May 2020

An update from the Chairman

Friday 1st May - the day the museum should have opened for the summer season with the new exhibition that had been months in the planning. Of course it never happened. Even before the official lockdown it became clear that plans would have to be changed, the AGM postponed and the Art Group's show cancelled. We had hoped that we might be able to open the museum at some stage, perhaps to hold a couple of mini exhibitions later in the summer, but it now seems unlikely that we'll open at all.

Although we have been told that leisure sites could open again after July 4th if there has been no rise in Covid-19 cases, this would cause some problems for small museums like ours. Current advice for museums regarding social distancing includes such things as separate entrances and exits, timed tickets, protective screens and other things which we would find difficult to put in place. Also, we rely heavily on our retired committee members and attendants, many of whom are over 70 and even those who are fit and well may have partners with health conditions who need to be kept safe.

It's not just the museum itself that is on hold, but all the associated activities such as school and group visits, coffee mornings, guided walks and trips to the barrow. We were looking forward to receiving the Bronze Age boards which have finally finished the process of preservation and freeze drying in Portsmouth. The hole in the floor (remember that?) would be opened up and the boards installed ready for a grand unveiling. It will happen one day! Still with the Bronze Age, the cremation burials uncovered by CITIZAN last year were to be displayed after they had been reconstructed by students from UCL, who would also provide us with text and artwork. Again, it will happen. The Essex Native Oyster Restoration Initiative (ENORI) had received funding for an enhanced exhibition which is now also on hold.

The museum is still very much alive online (merseamuseum.org.uk)

Tony Millatt reports that there has been increased activity on our website. He has been adding many interesting articles and documents including ones on VE Day, memories from a 1940 diary and the history behind Abberton reservoir. Another 110 Lions Talking Magazine cassettes have been digitised, making a total of about 230. The Magazine has been published monthly by the Mersea Island Lions since 1979 and is a good source of local history, often delivered with a strong local accent. A

number of interviews have been extracted from the Magazine and are available on the museum website. Find links to all of the above on the website's Home Page <https://merseamuseum.org.uk/>

The Mersea Archives Research Group (MARG) has not been able to meet in the museum but members are still keeping busy transcribing old wills and documents. You can find these on the website. Sue Howlett has written a blog on their work for the Essex Record Office which can be found on the following link:

<http://www.essexrecordofficeblog.co.uk/>

More news

The bi-monthly 100 Club draws are still taking place and April's winner is Mrs J. Lee.

Annual members who paid their £5 subscription this year will have their membership rolled over to next year, so hang on to your card in 2021. If you pay by standing order you can request a refund.

We are all looking forward to opening our doors again and will give further updates when we have more information. At present we can only send this newsletter to our members on email as we can't deliver and there's no Courier or Mersea Life at the moment, so please spread the word about us when you can safely do so.

Finally, the museum is fortunate to be in a strong financial position to survive a lost season. We will of course lose income from admissions, shop sales, donations from groups etc. but we have at least got a rates "holiday" for the coming year.

Thank you to all our members for your continued support.

Joanne Godfrey