



Friends of Colchester Roman Wall

Hoardings - Gone For Good!

It took a year of dogged effort, but the advertising hoardings on top of the Wall in Middleborough have finally gone. After a frustrating wait, and a Question in Parliament from Bob Russell MP, the decision and the removal came very quickly. It sends two messages – the Council does care about our heritage, despite appearances to the contrary at times, and a group of activists like the Friends can make a crucial difference.

The 'Essex County Standard' in an editorial happily called 'An advert for town's heritage' said "It is reassuring that a planning inspector has listened to the Friends of Colchester Roman Wall. As long as its heritage is protected, Colchester will always be unique." Amen to that.

We now have the happy challenge of working out what is the best way to enhance this stretch of the Wall. Removing the hoardings has revealed a less-than-wonderful view of parked cars and chain-link fencing.

The section of the Wall, running along Middleborough and up Balcerne Hill, is easily the most visible. Thousands of people drive and walk past it every day and, importantly, most visitors to our town arrive by this route. What kind of message do we want the Wall to send?

The removal of the hoardings – together with the imminent start of repair work on this section of the Wall – gives us an opportunity to consider how we can improve this very important aspect of our town.

We strongly encourage Friends of the Wall to put forward their views about what should be the best way forward. We will, of course, require the consent and co-operation of others before we can move forward.

One suggestion has been to replace the chain-link fencing with a variety of evergreen hedge which will look attractive but which won't damage the Wall beneath. We also need to assess how the trees in the area add to, or detract from, the site.

Interpretation Boards

Can we move just as quickly on this project? Now that the Museums Service has the green light for its Heritage Lottery Fund-backed redevelopment, we hope to be able to get designs approved for the new interpretation boards in the next few months.

Our target is to have the first board, at Balcerne Gate, in place by Easter 2012. We'd then like the next two, at Duncan's Gate and behind Roman Road, in place very soon afterwards. That is a challenging target for our

Museum Services who are busy on several fronts both in Colchester and in Ipswich.

We have made a very good start to the fundraising for the boards. The one at Duncan's Gate will have support, and input, from the Friends of Castle Park and the Riverside Residents Association. Likewise the board behind Roman Road has the support of the Castle & Roman Road Residents Association. We want to say a very big "thank you" to all of the people, now numbered in the hundreds, who

are involved in the project. The financial support of the Friends remains crucial.

The Balcerne Gate will set the standard for the rest. It is intended that the collection at Colchester United in January (see below) will support this.

Other partners signed up so far include the Colchester Archaeological Group, the Civic Society and the Tourist Guides. We are very grateful for their support. There's more information on our website: www.romanwall.org

Work on the Wall

As Friends will know, maintenance work on the Wall remains the responsibility of Colchester Borough Council. Contractors have recently been at work along the section of the Wall in Priory Street and it has been very good to see the improvements that they've made.

Some work, including on the bastion at the Queen Street end of the section, remains outstanding as it needs liaison with the owner of the Bus Garage.

At the time of writing the choice of contractor for the more substantial job on

Balkerne Hill and Middleborough has not been made. This is now the stretch most in need of work.

We will update Friends with more news as we receive it.

Colchester Town Wall Management Plan

As we heard at the AGM, this very important document continues to progress. Valuable points made at the AGM will be reflected in the finished document, as will aspects which relate to town planning. The officers taking this forward are primarily Philip Wise (Museums) and Laura Chase (Planning).

Steering Committee

The Friends Committee was formally elected at our first AGM in October. Who are they? They were described as a strong team at the AGM. Like some other winning teams they operate on a 4-3-3 formation, four experts, three workers and three enthusiasts who keep the rest's feet on the ground.

The experts are local historian Andrew Phillips, former Museum Services head and Wall expert, Mark Davies, Chairman of Colchester & North East Essex Building Preservation Trust, Anthony Bartleet and Town Guide and author of a booklet on the Wall, Barbara Butler.

The workers are Barry Donovan (Treasurer), Bill Hayton (Communications) and Vivien Spyvee (Minutes). The enthusiasts are Cllr Henry Spyvee (Chairman and founder), Elizabeth Baines (Friends of Castle Park) and Robert Waites.

In goal (ex officio) is Philip Wise, the Council's Head of Museum Services. His presence gives another expert voice and also ensures that communications between Friends and the Council are immediate and clear. Again, like other good teams, they can, and do, all play in any position!

Fundraising opportunities – please support the Wall Colchester United

The club has agreed to allow us to hold a collection at the match against Chesterfield on **Saturday, 21 January 2012**. We need at least ten volunteers to make the collection a success – can you help please?

We need volunteers to join us outside the Weston Homes Community Stadium from 2-5pm that afternoon to shake buckets and tell fans what we're collecting for. If we can raise £500 we will put the Club's name down as sponsors for the first Interpretation Board at Balkerne Gate.

Please get in touch with our chair, Henry Spyvee, on 01206 866757 or email chair@romanwall.org

Sponsored Walk

A sponsored walk to raise funds for the Friends will take place on **Sunday, 26 February 2012**. This will start and finish in Castle Park and be 5 miles in length. Friends Barry Donovan, Jo Hayes and Henry Spyvee will be taking part.

If you would like to join them (and get sponsors) or sponsor a walker, please contact Barry Donovan on 01206 869804 or email treasurer@romanwall.org

Website news

We hope you like our new logo – which you can see on the front of this newsletter and also on our growing website www.romanwall.org. Many thanks to Peter Butler for the design which, as you can see, echoes the design of the Wall itself. Peter has also been helping improve the look of the site. All suggestions for the site and articles and photographs for publication will be warmly received.