



Polly and Sarah with Chris and David at the Essex Cricket Museum

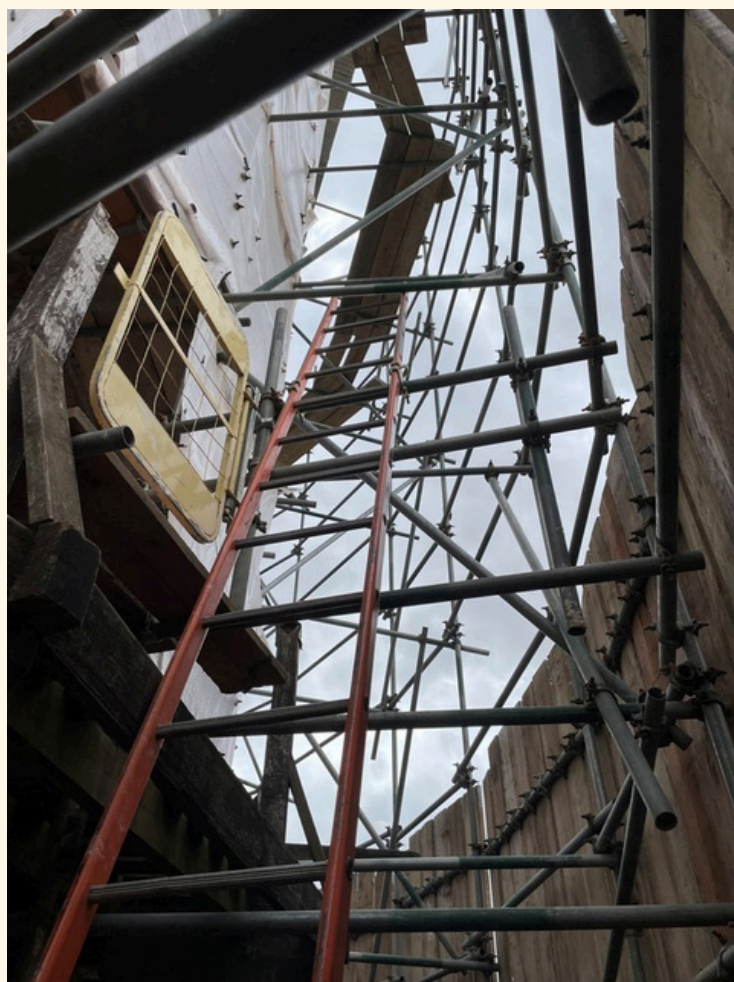
HELLO! FROM YOUR CHAIR

BY POLLY REDMAN, CHAIR OF MUSEUMS ESSEX

As Chair of Museums Essex, I am delighted to share our first Museums Essex Newsletter! What a fantastic round-up of the inspiring work taking place across our museum and heritage community.

From the restoration of historic buildings and new exhibitions to community-led projects, research and exciting new uses for collections, this edition demonstrates the remarkable breadth of activity taking place across Essex. What particularly stands out is the enthusiasm of volunteers, community groups, students and museum professionals working together to uncover stories, care for collections and make our heritage accessible to everyone.

The **Museums Essex Advocacy Report** provided a powerful reminder of just how much museums contribute to the life of Essex — to our communities, our economy, education, wellbeing and sense of place. This newsletter is the next step in that work. It will give us a regular opportunity to share the stories behind those statistics: to celebrate the people, collections, exhibitions, projects and partnerships that make our museums so special, and to showcase the amazing work taking place right across the county.



MY VISIT TO THAXTED WINDMILL

BY SARAH SINKA, ESSEX MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

At the end of July I visited Thaxted to meet Mark, Ian and Anne and see how progress is going with the NLHF refurbishment of the John Webb Windmill - Museums Essex members. Part of the funding is to conserve the Grade II listed Windmill so that it is no longer 'at risk'. They are also undertaking a series of community engagement activities with the funding, including sorting the archives, cleaning the objects, and learning how to produce content for exhibitions.

I was lucky enough to catch the end of one of the archive sorting sessions and the attendees were clearly thoroughly enjoying looking through the archival material and listing everything out. It was extremely well organised and it was so nice to see the community involved in preserving the history of the Windmill.

Mark gave me a tour of the Windmill 'building site' in the afternoon – hard hat, high viz and boots mandatory (what a treat)! It was so exciting to see the care and attention being taken to repair it - highlights being the revealed arched brickwork and intricate curved scaffolding that has been erected on the outside. It was a great opportunity to talk about interpretation plans whilst inside and can't wait to see how it all progresses!

ACCREDITATION SUCCESS - RAYLEIGH TOWN MUSEUM



Congratulations to Rayleigh Town Museum who achieved Full Accreditation Status from the Arts Council England last month.

The museum is entirely volunteer run and they have worked extremely hard looking at all aspects of the way that the museum is run and managed.

"This is a tribute to all the volunteers past and present who have worked tirelessly to gain this Award. This is all about Teamwork from Trustees to Management to Volunteers running front and back of house. My Personal thanks go to all of them, the public, our sponsors and our benefactors."

Alan Clark, Chair of Trustees

The Accreditation scheme sets out nationally-agreed standards of good practice and enables museums to assess their current performance, as well as supporting them to plan and develop their services. It covers three broad areas of museum activity:

- organisational health
- collections
- users and their experiences

If you are interested in Accreditation, find out more [here](#), or talk to your Museum Development Officer, [Sarah](#).



A NEW DISPLAY AT EPPING FOREST DISTRICT MUSEUM! ONGAR AND CERIZAY: ONE FRIENDSHIP, TWO TOWNS

A new, exciting display has just been unveiled at Epping Forest District Museum in Waltham Abbey as part of the Community Showcase Display Programme. The Community Showcase programme encourages individuals and groups in the Epping Forest District to take part in curating a display of their choice.

The newest display was curated by the Ongar and District Twinning Association and showcases the history of Ongar's twinning links with Cerizay in Western France. Town Twinning is an official partnership between communities in different countries, designed to encourage friendship, cultural understanding, educational exchange and international cooperation. Two other twinning partnerships in the Epping Forest District include Epping and Eppingen in Germany and Waltham Abbey and Hörstel in Germany.

The Ongar and District Twinning Association was founded in 1984 with the aim to promote friendship and cultural exchange between Ongar and Cerizay. The association is run by local volunteers and organises exchange visits, social events and community activities.

The display features a variety of commemorative objects exchanged between Ongar and Cerizay over the years, including an intricately decorated wooden jewellery box, a brightly coloured hand-blown vase and even a pair of children's shoes retrieved from a factory in Cerizay.

The display will be available to view until 16th December 2026 and can be seen in the Museum's Core Gallery on the Second Floor. The Museum is open on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 10:00am until 4:00pm. Entry is on a pay-what-you-can basis.



HISTORIC 'CART AND WAGON SHED' SECURES HERITAGE FUND GRANT

The National Lottery Heritage Fund has awarded a grant of £402,000 towards the Cart and Wagon Shed's £488,000 heritage and community hub project. Few visitors to Shoeburyness know its rich and internationally significant history. Through this funding, the Cart and Wagon Shed will continue to develop as the key heritage interpretation, community hub and wayfinding centre for visitors. This project will provide exhibitions, activities and events linked to the environment, early human settlements and the Shoebury Garrison. The Shoebury Ranges became Britain's main weapons development and testing site during the nineteenth century, playing host to many technical innovations. The Shed will provide opportunities for volunteering, learning new skills and community cohesion. It will build pride in place, support health and wellbeing locally, and combat loneliness, providing much-needed opportunities for young, disadvantaged people in Shoebury to gain valuable experience, skills and knowledge, creating paths into employment or further education.

"This is tremendous news for our community in Shoeburyness. Our exhibitions, events and activities will bring Shoebury's history to life, reveal what happened behind the Garrison's walls—much of which remains unknown to the public—and attract much-needed visitors to support the local economy. Our volunteer programme will improve health and well-being while helping disadvantaged young people gain new skills and pursue employment or further education. Our thanks go to National Lottery players and The National Lottery Heritage Fund for making this project possible."

David Hadjicostas, Chair of Directors



THE FIRST GREAT ESCAPE EXHIBITION

Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome has launched a new exhibition which recreates a dramatic escape from the dreaded Holzminden Prisoner-of-War camp in Germany during World War One.

The First Great Escape exhibition was formally opened by guest Sarah Paterson, Curator (World War One) at the Imperial War Museum, on Friday 24 July – 108 years to the day that 29 prisoners escaped through a narrow tunnel, dug using sharpened spoons. While many were recaptured following the escape, 10 made it safely back to England after travelling on foot for 150 miles to reach safety in neutral Holland. Supporting Ms Paterson was Dr Henry Raffal, Head of Collections and Research at the RAF Museum, especially relevant as all the escapees were aviators of the fledgling Royal Air Force.

The exhibition at Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome, set in one of its original WWI buildings, explores different aspects of this amazing feat, including a fascinating recreation of the entrance to the escape tunnel. The original was concealed in a tiny space beneath a staircase, with a cunningly designed pump made from a leather jacket and bed boards helping to keep some air flow into the narrow, rat-infested tunnel. Visitors to the exhibition can now get a taste of the cramped and difficult conditions in which the escape was planned and executed.



Members of the team of volunteers who built the exhibition



FOOTBALL! A LOCAL HISTORY OF THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

AT BRAINTREE MUSEUM

Braintree Museum opened the new exhibition, Football! A Local History of the Beautiful Game, with a big bang on Tuesday 28th July. We had Braintree Town Football Club mascot Buddy the Boar at the Museum all day, the Community Rail Partnership put on a special Football Train for families, and the Town Football Trail was launched with generous funding from Active Essex Foundation as well as support from local businesses.

From grassroots pitches and Sunday League teams to the origins of local clubs, the exhibition explores the people, stories and memories that have shaped football in the area for at least 450 years. Discover memorable matches, club legends, early women's teams and the many people who make football possible, from players and referees to media teams and volunteers.

The exhibition brings together an exciting collection of football memorabilia, including programmes, shirts and photographs. A particular highlight is the historic Essex & Suffolk Border Football League Reserves Cup, won by Silver End United FC in the 2025-26 season.

Local football historian Jon Weaver, who helped develop the exhibition, said: "I am delighted to have been given the opportunity to work with Polly and Lizzie on this exhibition. Football in the Braintree area has a very rich history, and unfortunately much of it is unknown today. This exhibition seeks to redress that and is sure to fascinate fans of all ages."

Designed with families in mind, the exhibition includes football games, dressing up, trails and opportunities to share football memories, offering something for lifelong supporters and new fans alike.

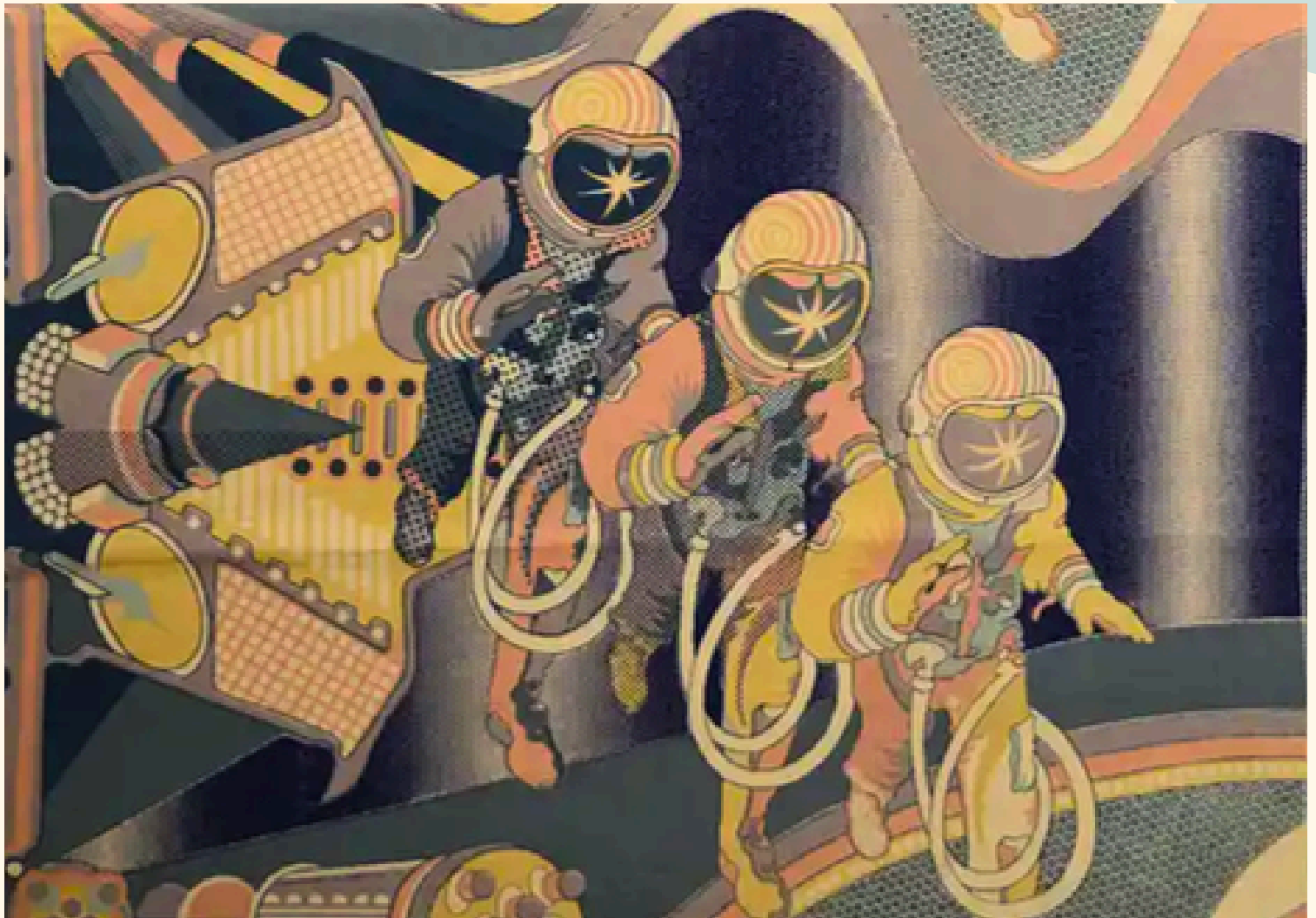
Jon also encourages visitors to support the local game: "All of our local clubs have so much to offer and I thoroughly recommend to everyone to get out and watch your local clubs. They are manned by very friendly people and you will be welcomed with open arms."

WARNER TEXTILE ARCHIVE LEND DESIGN TO SAATCHI GALLERY

The Warner Textile Archive were thrilled to be able to loan a screen-printed cotton sample of a textile called 'Space Walk' by Sue Thatcher, designed and printed in 1969, that celebrates the moon landing to the Saatchi Gallery for the exhibition 'The Sun and The Moon: Art Inspired by the Celestial'

The major exhibition held at the Saatchi Gallery during the summer explored how the two most powerful phenomena in the sky have inspired creativity, curiosity and belief throughout human history and across different cultures. Occupying two floors of the Saatchi Gallery and spanning nine major exhibition spaces, the show presented artworks, installations and objects that revealed how artists have responded to the Sun and the Moon. The exhibition featured the works by established artists, as well as emerging talent and archival material throughout.

The Saatchi Gallery welcomed over 100,000 people to the exhibition, offering a substantial number of visitors the opportunity to view the Warner Textile Archive's 'Space Walk' within the context of other significant female designers responding to the theme of space travel and exploration.



Space Walk, Sue Palmer, 1969 ©WarnerTextileArchive

MUSEUM'S TAXIDERMY BEAR SUPPORTS PROJECT TO END MODERN-DAY WILDLIFE CRIME

If you've visited the Museum of Chelmsford before, then chances are you've come across Boris the Bear! The 120-year-old taxidermy Brown Bear has become such a popular attraction with visitors that he's considered to be the museum's unofficial mascot. Now, Boris could help protect modern-day Brown Bears from illegal poaching thanks to a new research project by a student from the University of Staffordshire.

As well as wowing and inspiring visitors young and old, taxidermy specimens in museums can be an important tool for research purposes. This was recently the case for Boris when, in late 2025, Forensic Science student Hayden Leigh from the University of Staffordshire contacted the museum to request a sample of the bear's hair. Hayden was looking for Brown Bear hair to support their research into wildlife crime and animal hair analysis. Their research aims to develop a way to profile animal hairs to help identify and trace poaching of Brown Bears in parts of Europe.

After careful consideration of Boris's condition, the Museum of Chelmsford agreed to open his case and grant Hayden access to retrieve a few hairs for forensic analysis.

More is set to be revealed about this exciting project in an upcoming talk at the Museum of Chelmsford with Hayden, and their tutor, Claire Gwinnett. 'Behind the Case: A Bear Poaching Investigation' on 26 September will look at the science behind wildlife crime investigations and how microscopic analysis of bear hair can play an important part in a poaching investigation.



Hayden taking a sample of Boris' hair ©Museum of Chelmsford

PURFLEET HERITAGE & MILITARY CENTRE – A TRANSFORMATION OF THURROCK'S HIDDEN GEM

Purfleet Heritage & Military Centre continues its most ambitious programme of refurbishment and organisational change since opening, transforming its displays, collections, administration and visitor experience to create a sustainable heritage centre for future generations.



Displays have been reorganised into themed areas, with major improvements to the Armed Services and Local History sections and a new Geology display explaining Purfleet's unique landscape. A relocated reception, redesigned gift shop, improved visitor flow, digital screens, interpretation panels and LED lighting have created a brighter, safer and more welcoming environment. More than 150 professional museum display medal cabinets have also been acquired.

Educational and community activities have expanded considerably, including guided tours, school visits, talks, presentations and heritage, ghost and folklore walks. Partnerships with local community, educational and heritage organisations continue to develop. Behind the scenes, more than 6,000 records have been processed, collections digitised and improved management and filing systems introduced. Storage has been reorganised, new racking installed and a mezzanine created for boxed and catalogued artefacts.

Improvements to the Grade I listed former Royal Gunpowder Magazine include upgraded facilities, a new fire safety, security gate and work to address long-standing damp and drainage problems. Financial controls, retail sales, funding and income-generating activities have also strengthened the Centre's position. Challenges remain, particularly cataloguing, provenance research and historic damp. Nevertheless, supported by an enthusiastic volunteer team, the Centre is better equipped than ever to preserve and share Purfleet-on-Thames' remarkable heritage.

EVENTS

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT MUSEUM X BRICK LOCK ORCHARD, ROYDON! ESSEX CIDER TASTING

Did you know that it is thought the Romans brought new varieties of apples to Britain? Join us for a tasting of local, small batch, Essex cider and a wander round our new Roman exhibition! Everyone will get 4 tastings of Brick Lock Orchard cider with nibbles included in their ticket and a guided tasting from Mark and Helen. Afterwards, you can buy another glass of your favourite cider to drink whilst you wander the exhibition, or buy bottles to take home!

- At **Epping Forest District Museum**, Sun Street, Waltham Abbey, EN9 1EL
- Book here: www.ticketsource.com/efdmuseum

2.10.26
7.00PM

£20

BRIGHTLINGSEA MUSEUM: CONSERVATION DAY

A day to show case special objects which the Museum has had cleaned and restored. An opportunity to acknowledge the experts who have ensured these items will be available for decades to come and to thank organisations which helped with the costs (nearly £8000).

The first public display of the restored Isometric drawing of the Waterside in 1892 together with the album of watercolours painted between 1862 to 1875 of Thorrington and Frating. Not forgetting Mr Chaplin's barber's chair although without the plank which went across the arms for younger customers to sit on while they had a short, back and sides!

- At **Brightlingsea Museum**, Dove House, Station Road, Brightlingsea, CO7 0DT
- brightlingseamuseum.co.uk; info@brightlingseamuseum.co.uk

10.10.26
10.30AM-
4.30PM

FREE

THE PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME: ESSEX'S BURIED TREASURE

At **Museum of Chelmsford**, Wells Suite
Free, includes museum admission

- Book here:
<https://www.museumofchelmsford.co.uk/events/essex-s-buried-treasure-highlights-from-the-portable-antiquities-scheme/>

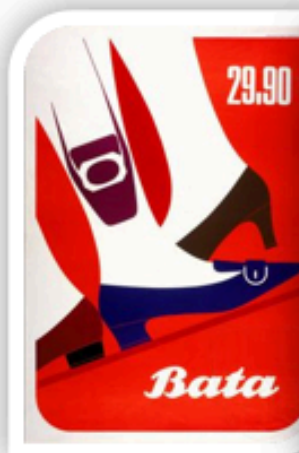
21.11.26
11.00AM

FREE



Bata
Shoemakers To The World

Heritage Centre Open Day



Bata Shoe Factory
Princess Margaret Rd
East Tilbury
RM18 8RH

East Tilbury Library
Princess Ave
East Tilbury
RM18 8ST
Tel- 01375 652688

SATURDAY
10th
OCTOBER
2026

TWO CENTRE
FACTORY
10am to 1pm
LIBRARY

<https://www.bataheritagecentre.org.uk>

**Guided Tours of
the Estate**

From Factory at
**11am, 11:30am &
12:00 noon**
£5 per Head
(Advanced Booking
Advisable)

**Bata Heritage
Talk**
Library at **1:15pm**

PURFLEET HERITAGE CENTRE:

25 October - Dracula's Purfleet, £5 pp

1 November - Purfleet-on-Thames Remembrance Day, donations

5 December - Santa's Grotto

5 December - Ghost and Folklore walk, £5 pp

6 December - Santa's Grotto

- At **Purfleet Heritage and Military Centre**, Magazine No. 5, Centurion Way, Purfleet-on-Thames. RM19 1QP
- www.purfleet-hmc.org; info@purfleet-hmc.org.

EVENTS

RAYLEIGH TOWN MUSEUM:

27 September – A talk by local historian and author Laura Adkins entitled “Lord Chancellor Richard Rich. Villain or Loyal Servant? Richard Rich lived at nearby at Rochford Hall; Tickets £5 for Friends of the museum or £6.

1 November – “Essex Myths and Legends”. A talk by Laura Adkins and Jane Piper; Tickets £5 for Friends of the museum or £6

15 November – “Stories from Colditz”. A talk by Dave Windle, an authority on Colditz Castle in WW2; Tickets £5 for Friends or £6

29 November – Ghost Stories with Jane Piper. Prepared to be spooked by some ghostly tales; Tickets £5 for Friends of the museum or £6

EXHIBITIONS:

September - Rare Maps

October - 70 Years Since the End of Steam and the Electrification of the Southend Victoria Line.

November - Remembrance exhibition

December - A Tudor Christmas

- At **Rayleigh Town Museum**, 1st Floor, 91 High Street, Rayleigh, SS6 7EJ
- All talks are held in the museum and start at 2.30pm. Refreshments included.
- rayleightownmuseum.org; welcome@rayleightownmuseum.org.

BRAINTREE MUSEUM & WARNER TEXTILE ARCHIVE:

BEHIND THE SCENES TOURS: *PATCHWORK & QUILTS AT THE WARNER TEXTILE ARCHIVE*

This behind the scenes tour offers you the chance to see patchwork and quilts which have never been shown to the public. Hidden gems include wonderful quilts from the 1800s, alongside intricate patchwork made from Warner & Sons silks, and original artwork for patchwork textiles.

16.10.26
10.30AM

£15

TOWN TOUR: *ODD AND OUTLANDISH PART 2*

A perfect Halloween walk! Join us on a unique tour of Braintree Town Centre exploring its odd and outlandish histories. Featuring historic buildings, locations and heritage, we will be discussing the weird and wonderful goings on in the town.

31.10.26
10.30AM

£5

ONLINE TALK: *DRESSING THE QUEEN: 200 YEARS OF MAKERS AND MONARCHY*

Join us online for a fascinating talk with Dr Kate Strasdin about her latest book, *Dressing the Queen*. The book reveals the often unknown stories of the many makers to royal wardrobes past, from Queen Victoria to Queen Elizabeth II.

18.11.26
7.00PM

£5

BEHIND THE SCENES TOURS: *ROYAL CELEBRATIONS AND PALACE DECORATION*

This exclusive behind the scenes tour offers you the chance to explore the history of the patterns chosen in the public and private spaces of royal residences and the planning process of designs for royal celebrations.

27.11.26
10.30AM

£15

To book: braintreemuseum.co.uk