



Museum of
Cambridge



Case for Support

*Connecting communities through objects,
memories and conversation*

www.museumofcambridge.org.uk



Who we are

The Museum of Cambridge is dedicated to the social history of Cambridge and the surrounding region. Set in the Grade II-listed 17th-century White Horse Inn – on the important Roman street from castle to river to university – the Museum has told the extraordinary stories of ordinary people since 1936.

In a city that is rich with museums full of priceless art and artefacts from around the world, the Museum of Cambridge is distinctive as a centre for a different kind of history: the everyday stories of the people of Cambridge and the surrounding areas that might otherwise be overlooked.

Our wide-ranging collections – over 40,000 objects, including significant documents, photographs, artwork and more – help tell these fascinating stories of the extraordinary everyday. We work with schools and community groups to open up access to local history and help local people tell their stories, weaving together past, present and future.

The Museum is an independent charity; we are not part of either the local council or the University. This means we rely entirely on entrance fees, room hire, the work of volunteers and the kindness of our many generous donors.

Your support could make all the difference.

The difference we make

Caring for our collections

We hold an irreplaceable collection of significant objects relating to the history of Cambridge and the Fens. Looking after these objects, and keeping them safe for future generations, is at the heart of what we do. Here are just three pieces from our collection.

A View of Cambridge from Castle Hill by James Ward

This panoramic painting is a rare glimpse into the Cambridge of 1840, depicting the city's intricate architecture, farm workers, animals and distant rolling hills.



A crystal ball to ward off the witches of Gamlingay

This beautiful glass ball was made in 1721 and hung in the window of a house in Gamlingay. The reflected light was said to dazzle witches, protecting the home in which they hung.



A Fenland courtship token

This token was used by shy young people to declare their love and propose marriage. Two tokens were made, each from three ears of corn. With a token pinned to his top, the other would be given to the hoped-for partner – if they were still wearing it, pinned over their heart, on the following Sunday, the proposal had been accepted.



Providing opportunities for volunteering

Our team of around 60 volunteers play a vital part in the Museum's life. Volunteering here also provides people with access to training, the chance to learn new skills, and the opportunity to meet new people and build bridges.

Diana has been volunteering since 2018, helping with collections care as well as front of house.

“What sums up the Museum of Cambridge for me? The answer is people.

I immediately felt at home in the MoC community, whose members are unfailingly friendly, interesting and supportive.

It's a pleasure to welcome visitors of all ages, backgrounds and nationalities to the museum, to help with enquiries and learn things from them too.

Often visitors have memories and ideas sparked by things they have seen in the displays and want to share their stories, so I have had some lovely conversations at Front of House.”

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Working with local communities

Inspired by the pioneering oral history work of Enid Porter, working with communities is at the heart of what the Museum does. We want to empower all of Cambridge's communities to tell stories that might otherwise be overlooked or forgotten.

Recent community-curated projects and exhibitions include:

Barnwell at War – a collaboration with 100 Years of Coconuts and Wolfson College exploring the everyday lives of Cambridge people during the First World War.

St Luke's Primary School's 50th Anniversary – exploring 50 years of a Cambridge primary school with exhibits curated by current pupils.

Pride and Place – exploring the history of LGBTQ+ activism in Cambridge and documenting the first Cambridge Pride event.

Women, Unity, Strength – a collaboration with Corona House, which provides accommodation and support for homeless women, co-curated with 50 women artists.

“It was a fantastic experience; meeting so many talented women, working together and learning from each other; getting people who weren't very confident to make pieces of artwork that they were proud of; and learning new skills. It was tiring and exhausting, but I absolutely loved it.”

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Giving visitors an experience to remember

We want everyone who visits the Museum to enjoy their time here and to leave with exciting new stories to tell. Here's what some of our recent visitors have had to say.

“We visited here on a day trip to Cambridge. We highly recommend it... plenty of interesting facts to be learnt about the area and people”

“Near the punting station and main restaurant quarter for a full trip, v child friendly if you're looking after some! A curiosity worth visiting – especially interesting section on the Fens that used to be so much closer than now.”

“Lots of interesting displays. The staff are very helpful and knowledgeable. Worth an hour or two away from the more famous attractions in the city centre.”

“Absolutely charming local museum, housed in a 17th century former public house. The building is full of character and retains many features from its days as an inn. It was much bigger than I expected, and excellent value.”

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With your help, we can do much, much more

Cambridge has a wealth of museums that tell the story of evolution, Antarctic exploration, archaeology or the history of science, but very little about Cambridge and its people. We are here to make sure that the remarkable stories of the people of Cambridge and its surrounds are preserved for future generations.

Today, the Museum looks much as it has done for decades. For many visitors, this is part of the attraction the Museum holds. But we know we can do much more: from bringing new knowledge and understanding to bear on how we display our objects to using new technologies to help bring the past to life for our visitors. Furthermore, much of our collection is in need of urgent restoration and there is a pressing need to act to preserve our collections and make them much more accessible.

We want to do much more than simply maintain the building and preserve our collections.

We want to be as much a museum *for* Cambridge as a Museum *of* Cambridge, helping people from all backgrounds and ages to tell their stories, treasure their history, feel part of the city's rich tapestry of heritage, and understand the local area in new ways.

With the right investment, there is now a clear opportunity to transform the way we display our collections and chart the history of Cambridge and the surrounding area. This will significantly improve the experience we can offer our visitors.

With your support, we want to do more than just preserve the Museum that exists now: we want to do much, much more so that we can do justice to the vibrancy of Cambridge's many histories.

Our vision

To unlock the full potential of our historic building and collections, we have identified the following four key fundraising priorities:

1. Doing more with our collections

- It's vital that we take good care of the items in our collection, and we know that many objects are in unsuitable storage and many more need of urgent attention. But our records are incomplete and we have details on file for only around half our collection. Acting now to rationalise, catalogue and conserve our collections will ensure we can make best use of them and keep them safe for future generations.
- Digitisation: we want to make more of our collection available online, along with additional content including videos and blogs.

2. Looking after our building

- Accessibility: we can do more with what we have, reflecting the advances in museum practice that have happened since we were set up in 1936, to ensure that all our visitors have the best possible experience. We want the Museum to be accessible for all, but this will require investment.

3. Outreach work with local schools and community groups

- The Museum of Cambridge should be available to all the people of Cambridge, regardless of their background or means. Our outreach work is essential in realising this and ensuring that the Museum tells the stories of all the communities in Cambridge and the surrounding area.
- Additional funding would transform what we are able to do with local schools and community groups, benefitting children, the elderly and other under-served groups. Your support today would allow us to launch new school holiday activities for families in deprived areas.

4. Engaging Exhibitions

- The Museum currently has no core funding in place to mount temporary exhibitions, yet these are a vital part of what any museum offers. A changing cycle of exhibitions will not only allow us to tell more stories of everyday Cambridge life, but also help attract more visitors, aiding the Museum's long-term sustainability.
- Additional funding for curatorial staff will help us bring out the best in our collections and ensure we can show our collections in the best possible ways, with exciting, accessible exhibitions.

Acting now will ensure the future sustainability of the Museum. With your help, we don't just want to keep the doors open: we want to transform the way we operate and what we offer to visitors and the people of Cambridge.





Your support will make a real difference

Your generous support for these priority areas of need will have a great impact on what the Museum is able to do, and what we are able to offer both the people of Cambridge and visitors from further afield.

The experience of our visitors will be transformed by the re-display and re-interpretation of our collections and the improvements we will be able to make to our facilities.

We will be able to work with more schoolchildren and communities who might not usually visit or engage with museums, ensuring that their needs are met and that their voices are heard as part of our collective Cambridge story. Research has shown that making museums available in this way has a profound effect on people's quality of life and on children's educational attainment.

More than ever before, the Museum will be a hub for the people of Cambridge, encouraging a love of history and an appreciation of the local area. Just as the inn at the crossroads brought people together to exchange news and tell tales, so the Museum of Cambridge will provide a venue and hub for the people of Cambridge to tell their stories, preserving them for future generations.

Every penny you donate will go directly to supporting the Museum's work looking after collections and working with the local community. As a relatively small, independent charity, even modest amounts of money can make a real difference to what we do.

Please support the Museum of Cambridge today

You can support the Museum in a way that works for you – whatever you're able to contribute will make a difference.

- You can quickly and easily **make a one-off donation** or set up a regular donation via our website: www.museumofcambridge.org.uk
- Why not **become a Friend** of the Museum? Our Friends have always played a crucial role in supporting the Museum. Friends enjoy entry to the Museum free of charge and special Friends' events at the Museum. Pick up a Friends leaflet today, or [sign up online via our website](#). If you know someone you think would enjoy being a Friend of the Museum, why not buy them membership of the Friends as a gift?
- You might consider **leaving the Museum a gift in your will**. If you'd like to know more, [have a look at our legacy brochure](#) or feel free to ask us for further information.
- Do you work for a firm that supports local charities like us? Please consider introducing us to your firm's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) lead – we offer a flexible **corporate partnership scheme** for businesses at a competitive rate - [there's more information in our corporate partnership brochure](#). We are also open to offers of exhibition sponsorship.

Your support today could make all the difference.



How your generosity could make a real difference:

- **£50** would pay for an archive-quality box to house some of our objects
- **£100** would cover the cost of a dehumidifier to keep our collection safe and free from mould
- **£2,000** would fund a new fit-for-purpose set of racking and chests for our objects
- **£10,000** would fund a scaled-up education programme for a year
- **£20,000** would fund a major summer exhibition in the Museum





Museum of Cambridge

Everyday people. Extraordinary stories.

2-3 Castle Street, Cambridge, CB3 0AQ

enquiries@museumofcambridge.org.uk
01223 355159

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