

Local history buffs encouraged| Things to do| localsecrets

- The local historian behind a drive to commemorate Pink Floyd musician Syd Barrett's ties to Cambridge invites you to discover the rich past of this area and join in bringing to life the history around us.

'Communities are changing at a fast pace now with many new developments popping up all the time, if you pull the layers of the present day away you will find many interesting facts about the community you live in', says local historian Fonz Chamberlain, 36, a writer and researcher with a passion for unearthing Cambridge's past. 'Sometimes the past is still visible but we just miss it in our busy day to day life, I recommend taking a few hours out and enjoying a slow walk around where you live, you may see a faded street sign or a plaque on a wall.'

Fonz himself is actively pursuing his journey through Cambridge's history via his [Facebook page](#), but was also behind the campaign that led to the coming commemoration of Pink Floyd musician Syd Barrett in the Corn Exchange and is an example of local historians who are preserving the past around us.



He is part of a thriving community of historians behind the city's rich resources, such as [Capturing Cambridge](#), a website set up to encourage everyone to experience the history of the streets around them. It is a great place to begin for some inspiration with the site containing a wealth of fascinating information.

The project began in 2013, focusing on the Mill Road community, one of Cambridge's most iconic areas, the team behind it hope it will inspire other communities to get involved and add their research to the site.

Another great resource for local history research is Cambridge Central Library's [Cambridgeshire Collection](#), a room with over 60,000 items, including a fascinating array of books, newspapers, microfiche records, maps and photographs.

Cambridge Association of Local History's (CALH) [website](#) also contains a wealth of information including links to local history society's and groups, meetings and details of how to join the group, which holds regular talks, meetings and historical trips for members.

Not least the [Museum of Cambridge](#), brings to life the local history, sharing objects from daily life, like an old fashioned vacuum cleaner, mangle and long-case clock, or a range of folklore including bizzare objects called 'witch balls'. Encourages residents to visit and share objects that could become part of the collection. But they don't accept everything so do take a look at the [policy](#).

Fonz himself 'first became interested in local history as a young boy after walking around Cambridge and wondering how it used to look, what shops used to be there and how the streets had changed, he says. 'Around that time I also remember buying a book 'From Cambridge One and All' by local resident Fred Unwin', said Fonz, instantly recognisable in his trademark black top hat.

'I remember reading it and chatting with my Nan about the war years, which then lead on to other subjects, before I knew it I was hooked on Cambridge's history. It's been a big part of my life ever since,' he says. When he was 10 he began collecting photos and information, which he has continued to do, he says he discovers something new and exciting every week, a feeling he likens to a 'child given the key to a sweet shop'.

What has been the most interesting thing he has discovered during his research? 'What I do like is hearing about the people, Cambridge has been home to some wonderful characters from Snowy Farr, Trevor Hughes and Fred Unwin to name a few,' says Fonz.

Fonz launched a campaign to ensure Syd Barrett be remembered in his home city, and this resulted in plans to install a plaque in the Corn Exchange, where Barrett gave his last local performance.

'I first began the campaign on a radio show in 2010 as I felt Cambridge should honour him, after all other cities are proud of their musical heroes, Cambridge should be too. To begin with it was quite slow, I would get supportive comments through the radio show, adding them to letters I sent to the council. At the time I either received no reply or would be told there was no funding available.

Then in 2013 things quickly changed for his campaign with the help of social media 'A fan noticed my campaign on social media and decided to share a comment I had placed on several Pink Floyd pages. Suddenly fans all around the world were contacting me with support in their thousands, the press and radio picked up on it, helping to promote the campaign which lead to the council finally granting funding'.

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