

**Winter 2016**



*Registered Charity 237885*

This Newsletter has been edited  
for The Colchester Civic Society by Peter Evans.

Opinions expressed by contributors  
are not necessarily those of The Civic Society.

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## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2015/2016 GIVEN AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING JUNE 2016**

As our newsletter reports, this has been a very busy year for the Society, and for some of us a difficult one. I am deeply indebted to Jo Edwards and Rosemary Jewers for their support in spite of their own very significant problems.

This will be an unusually optimistic report. During the year we have been able to co-opt three new committee members although unfortunately Jackie Kinsey then had to resign because of pressure of work, and we have four (see note) new nominations for committee members. No existing members want to resign and we will still have a chair, a treasurer and a secretary, as well as a very experienced committee. This is the eighth AGM I have attended this year, and few organisations are still in such a fortunate position. As well as thanking the committee, I would also, like to thank those members who deliver newsletters or who took a turn at the Wishing Wall or acted as stewards on Heritage Open Days or who have helped in any other way.

Jo has once again arranged a stimulating and varied programme; Peter Evans edits our newsletter and contributes his own well-researched items. Paul Weston, as well as acting as the Society's Treasurer, reports on the Civic Voice, the umbrella organisation for Civic Societies. Rosemary Jewers has been responsible for our establishing our website, which has enhanced our public profile, and Neil Almond has now agreed to take over from her.

Ann Turner is our membership secretary, and is also currently writing a history of the Society. She organises the delivery of newsletters to our members and coordinates Heritage Open Days. Austin Baines acts as secretary and minutes secretary and with Brian Roach watches planning applications and comments

or objects on behalf of the committee. We are pleased that Jayne Richardson has agreed to take responsibility for dealing with Essex County Highways issues.

It is source of satisfaction that the Borough now regularly consults on planning matters, as a sub-committee has been formed to re-establish the Civic Awards Scheme the aim of which is to encourage good design.

Earlier this year a number of committee members met Jon Ruder, the Borough's Licensing Officer, to discuss the Draft Revised Licensing Policy before we formulated our response. We learnt then that unless a member of the public, or an amenity society, objects to a licensing application, it will be unopposed, so these applications must also be watched and responded to by Austin Baines for the committee.

Since January, a very successful new initiative, our monthly coffee morning at Greyfriars, gives members the opportunity to draw our attention to other matters of concern in the town. Our Wishing Wall at a park event was a more informal but effective opportunity for members of the public to raise their concerns about Colchester.

The committee continues its efforts to preserve and commemorate our heritage. With Doe's Mill, unfortunately, in spite of writing to the Borough for twelve years we have failed spectacularly to save this building and have asked Civic Voice to express our concern to Brandon Lewis, Minister for Planning, about the apparent ineffectiveness of listing legislation, citing the state of Doe's Mill. We were also consultees on the Jumbo appraisal.

Peter and Rosemary have begun the detailed research needed to make an application to list Jacks, and will offer advice on the necessary process to anyone who is concerned about a particular building. With Henry

Spyvee and former committee member Vic Lewis, Peter is involved in researching street names with local connections in cooperation with the Borough's Street-naming officer, and as a result, a former head mistress of the Girls High School is commemorated in Ruth King Close. The ceremonial unveiling by the Mayor and current students, was attended by old girls, residents and Civic Society members.

The Society has agreed to publish a High Street History, the work of former committee member Dave Stenning and Richard Shackle, with considerable support, advice and encouragement from Brian Roach.

Continuing our programme of installing commemorative plaques, we hope to restore the now repaired John Ball plaque to its original position in Stockwell. The plaque on Scheregate Steps, commemorating the Scheregate Steps Improvement Scheme has been cleaned, and on a beautiful summer day, with the Minories and its garden looking its best, our plaque commemorating Dr Ruth Bensusan Butt was unveiled by Dr Elizabeth Hall and Professor Simon Shorvon. We have to thank Jo Edwards and Rosemary Jewers for this triumphal end to our 51st year. Jo for organising the day itself and Rosemary for the work of many months involved in applying for the plaque.

Our latest project, in partnership with Colchester in Bloom, is to apply to the Heritage Lottery, the Hervey Benham Trust and other funding for the restoration of the Southway underpass murals, the work of Henry Collins and Joyce Pallott and we are delighted that Kath Wood has agreed to talk to us about these artists tonight.

*Elisabeth Baines*

*Chair, Colchester Civic Society 2015-6*

*Editor's note:* Neil Almond and Andy Cartmel were elected to join the Executive Committee in June but had to resign in September due to their business commit-

ments. We are sorry to see them go, but they will keep in touch.

## **A ROOM WITH A VIEW**

Chaos reigns in my house at the moment as every space is used with huge storage boxes from my childhood home now, finally, on the market. Said boxes should be in my attic but I am waiting for my next door neighbour's builders to replace the render on the back of his house before my builders repair the damage to my house caused by the builders who worked on the house the other side of me! Got that? The saga is endless. My kitchen is like the black hole of Calcutta as scaffolding has been erected against the windows. It has been there for two months but the builders who are supposed to be replacing the render have, so far, been on site for no more than half an hour.

Anyway, my front room is uninhabitable because of the boxes so I am spending most of my spare time in the room at the back of the house overlooking the garden - very pleasant! Cooper, the terrier, is very happy with this arrangement as it means he has free access to the great outdoors and can chase snails, flies and bees to his heart's content. He is, however, frightened of butterflies, running indoors and hiding behind my chair if one appears. Such a wimp! But he is afraid of something else, too, and I have no idea what it is. Pottering happily around the garden he will suddenly freeze, start to shake and then, with a look of absolute terror on his face, crawl, on his stomach, up the garden steps into the house and run upstairs to the bathroom where he cowers behind the door. This happens fairly infrequently but at all times of the year, day or night. Being in the garden room so much this year I have been able to examine this strange phenomenon far more closely than I have done before. However, I have failed to ascertain what his problem is. There

really is nothing out there that could account for his behaviour - OR IS THERE?

The big house next door to me on the end of the terrace is much older than the rest of the houses in the row although, at first glance, it appears to be the same age. It was refronted in the mid 1830's when my house and the rest of the terrace were built. It was the St Botolph's Parish Workhouse until, as a result of the passing of the 1834 Poor Law Act the new Union Workhouse was built at St Mary's. It was then sold as private housing and the rest of the terrace was built on some of its garden. Some years ago, the erstwhile workhouse was bought by a young couple. Both of them were down to earth, sensible, charming, people.

All seemed to be well for a few weeks but then I went round with a parcel left with me by a courier and found a very unhappy, worried, man. Extremely concerned, I asked him what was wrong. He was very reluctant to say anything but he was so obviously distressed that I persuaded him that a problem shared was a problem halved and he blurted out that the house was haunted. This was the last thing I expected him to say. Recovering from my surprise, and highly sceptical, I asked him why he had come to such a conclusion. He announced that he had actually seen a ghost in the hall. We talked about it and he gradually regained his equilibrium. I went home, somewhat bemused. Weeks passed and nothing more was said. Then, one morning, I met him in the street. He quietly asked me if I had heard 'the noise' at night. What noise? He explained that he had been hearing a muffled knocking noise coming from the corner of his bedroom. I told him that I hadn't heard it at all. A few days later, he told me he had heard it again. I hadn't, although the walls are fairly thin and my bedroom was next to his. This continued for several weeks until he reported that he heard the noise most nights.

Eventually, I realised that I had to do something about it as he was obviously completely freaked out. I suggested that he should telephone me as soon as he heard it again so I could listen for it too. At about 2.30am the following morning, my phone rang. I woke up and answered it. "It's happening! Can you hear it?" I sat up. Yes, I could hear it, Bert, our old spaniel, was sitting on the floor at the end of my bed having a very vigorous but thoughtful scratch, his paw hitting the floor as he tackled the itch on the side of his stomach. Thump thump thump thump! Laughing, I told my neighbour that I had identified the source of the noise. He was totally unconvinced. Shortly afterwards, they had a child and, a little while later, another.

They sold the house and moved to another within the catchment area of good schools. I was sorry to see them go. Earlier this year, having not seen him for ages, we met for a coffee. Reminiscing, I mentioned Bert's itch and laughed. I quickly realised that it was no laughing matter as he remains, to this day, convinced that the house is, indeed, haunted. Now, I just wonder whether Cooper thinks the same!

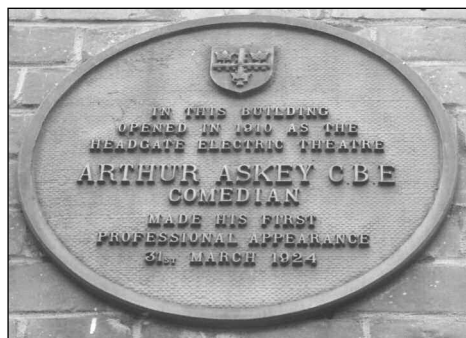
*Jo Edwards*

## **COLCHESTER PLAQUES**

We have finally achieved the installation of the Ruth Bensusan Butt blue plaque at the Minories, 74 High Street, after many problems. Dr Ruth was Colchester's first female doctor, a local councillor and a Fabian.

The plaque was organised by Rosemary Jewers, with some help from Jo Edwards. The installation became complicated as the Minories is a listed building but also because the Borough Council had introduced a new application form, which is not entirely appropriate for a Blue Plaque. However, a small ceremony was eventually planned for Sunday 5th June, attended by Society members, represen-

tatives of the Colchester Medical Society and Dr Ruth's family. The unveiling was performed by Dr Elizabeth Hall, on behalf of the Medical Society and Dr Simon Shorvon grandson of Dr Ruth. Indeed, the family turned out in force and were delighted to be there. It was the first decent day weather wise for ages and refreshments were enjoyed in the garden.



LEFT:

*The Blue Plaque for Dr Ruth Bensusan Butt*

BELOW LEFT:

*The unveiling of it by Dr Elizabeth Hall and Professor Simon Shorvon*

ABOVE:

*The Plaque for Arthur Askey*

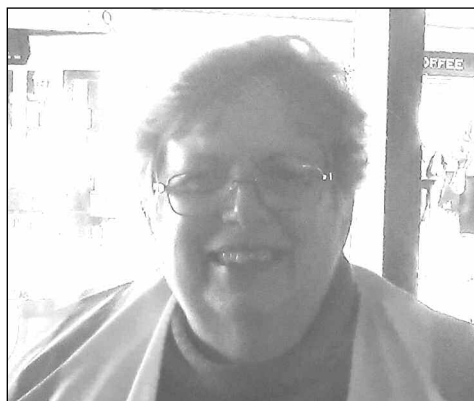
There is a plaque that should be known to all members but I would bet that it is not. It is not blue but bronze and thus not so easy to see. It commemorates the first professional performance of Arthur Askey, the short bespectacled Liverpudlian comedian, at the former Cameo Cinema at the top right hand corner of St John's Street in 1924. In his biography *Before Your Very Eyes*, Arthur recalls that he stayed at 38 Cromwell Road whilst appearing here, an even easier walk before the changes to the roads between.

Arthur had a proper job before he entered showbiz – he was in the education department of Liverpool City Council. He was always much respected in his profession and was a kindly, if fair, judge in talent shows in his latter years. He was actually a pioneer of radio and with his friend Richard 'Stinker' Murdoch starred in the ground breaking comedy *Band Waggon* in 1938. He is also famous for his comedy songs, such as *The Bee*, and called his audience 'playmates'. He died in 1982.

*Peter Evans*

## ROSEMARY'S ADVENTURE

Civic Society Executive Committee member, Rosemary Jewers, has taken photographing blue plaques to a whole new level. Whilst out and about with her camera in Colchester, recording plaques for a new Society project - more about this soon - she decided to capture the blue plaque she knew was at Colchester North Station. When she arrived at the station with me, Chair of the Society, Jo Edwards, who was driving her, we were unable to find the plaque on the outside of the building. Rosemary elected to go inside to enquire where the plaque could be. Luck was on her side, because the first person she spoke to knew about the plaque and where it was located. She was directed to the office of a manager who could grant permission for a photo to be taken. Luckily the man she had first talked to when she arrived accompanied her and when permission was granted, he offered to take her to where the plaque was sited - way



*Rosemary Jewers*

down along the track on the exterior wall of the Loco Shed.

A high visibility jacket was waved in Rosemary's direction and she put it on before her guide took her on a route march to see the plaque. Health and Safety regulations were closely followed. The journey started on the



*The plaque commemorating the Cromer Express Rail Disaster*

town platform side, down the stairs, along the underground section, up the stairs to the booking hall on the far side. Then out to the taxi rank, to the side of the car park, down an alley to the high security fence gate. Once through, her companion shepherded her across the line. They walked briskly beside the track before crossing another large expanse of track. Once across, the plaque was clearly visible, mounted on the Loco Shed wall. Rosemary and her guide paused to read and reflect on the tragedy which the plaque commemorates. Then she took her photo.

Meanwhile I was back at the car, wondering why Rosemary was taking so long to photograph a plaque. I was beginning to panic as an hour had passed and I was extremely relieved to see her emerging from the station. It was, however, a little while before Rosemary had the breath to tell me of her adventures!

The plaque commemorates the Cromer Express Rail Disaster of 1913 when a driver, fireman and guard were killed. The only way you can see this plaque is from a train after it leaves Colchester North Station, travelling towards Marks Tey.

*Jo Edwards*

At the present time there are fifteen commemorative plaques for Colchester listed on the Internet. Open Plaques is a website which allows members of the public to photograph and list blue and other plaques on its website. Colchester Civic Society has been busy adding to this ever growing list. To see the plaques already listed go to: <http://openplaques.org> then click on places and then look for the Colchester link. If you would like to help with this project, please add your contributions to this website.

*Rosemary Jewers*

## MEMBERSHIP

We welcome the following new members Neil Almond, Andy Cartmell, Tom and Natalie Booroff, Eve and Ronnie Campbell, Lynn Foster, Don Maxwell and Pam Schomberg, Kevin Nunn, Kath Wood and James and Geraldine Grundy, all of Colchester and Liz Bezzant of West Mersea

## Anne Crook-Williams

Long-standing members will be sorry to hear that Anne Crook-Williams died in September, aged 82. Anne, of Balcerne Heights and formerly Marks Tey and Boxted, was a Blue Badge guide and served on the Colchester Tourist Guides Association, being chairwoman in 1989. She helped the Civic Society with visiting groups and in many other ways, including delivering the newsletter. Her late husband John had been Chairman of the Society.

## NEWS FROM ABROAD

Congratulations are due to Stefanie Johnson Medina, granddaughter of Civic Society member Jean Johnson. Stefanie, who lives in Playa del Carmen in Mexico, took the brave decision to leave her parents and little sister in Mexico in order to attend Colchester's Sixth Form College and study for

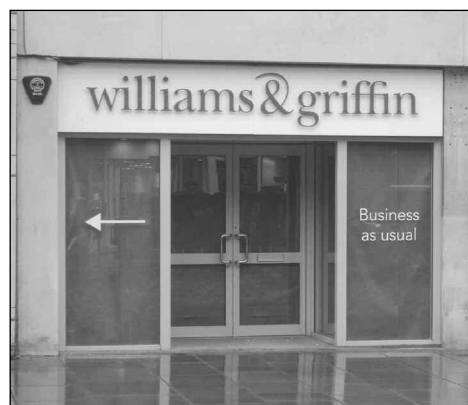
her International Baccalaureate. One of the requirements of the course was to complete 150 hours of voluntary work. Looking for as many opportunities as possible, she offered to help with our Wishing Wall during Heritage Open Days last year. Unfortunately, she was on the stand in torrential rain. She was absolutely drenched. We are happy to report that she passed her exams. She asked her grandmother to pass on her thanks to the Society and we would like to pass our thanks to her, too, as well as our best wishes for the future. Well done, Stefanie!

*Jo Edwards*

## HIGH STREET AND OTHER BUILDINGS

The work on Williams and Griffins has been completed and we still have the former Jacklin's restaurant and gun shop frontages. True, we are not quite sure of the background to the gun shop roof but it looks good. When the Executive Committee met with Fenwicks, we did ask about these buildings and it was clear that it was a problem area.

I like the glass frontage instead of the cement that was there before, but not everybody will. It is, of course, now Fenwicks not Williams and Griffins, but we will think of the store as Willie Gees, W&G or whatever.



*One of the original entrances to Williams & Griffin store in High Street*



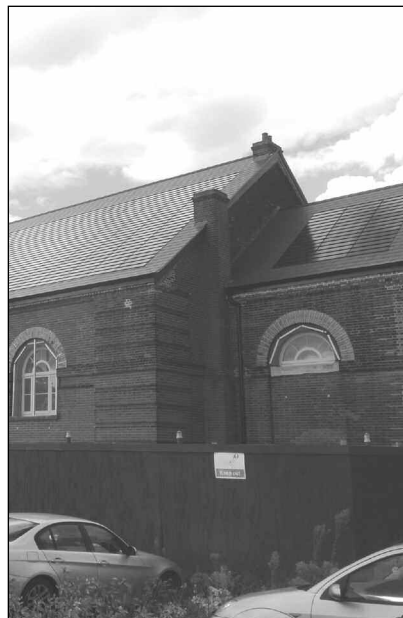


*The impressive new frontage to Fenwick's  
in High Street*

Fenwick's intend to install a panel commemorating W&G. Let us hope it is the start of a High Street revival.

I did, by chance, manage to photograph the last W&G sign in High Street but forgot to catch the Town Hall without a clock.

Members who visited the new Merville Barracks some years ago and the Roman Circus more recently, will remember that a lot of property that had belonged to the Ministry of Defence around the Abbey Fields was sitting empty. At the southern end was the old Garrison Swimming Pool, now gone, and the Old Gymnasium, which was the subject of a bad fire about 3 years ago. When the fire gutted the building, all the interior wooden panelling in the roof and the walls were destroyed, along with the parquet floors. The already vandalised Crittall windows buckled in the heat. The roof, walls, a new concrete floor and windows have been refurbished. Now



*Roof panels on the old  
Colchester Garrison Gymnasium*

that the interior panels which once covered the walls are gone, only brick remains. Unobtrusive slate effect solar panels have been installed on the south side of the roof. It has been given to the Borough and intended for community purposes. A church was going to move in but this no longer the case. A new use is being sought.

Properties closer to the town and St John's Green are undergoing conversion to housing and some are being replaced by new buildings as well.

*Peter Evans*

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ROUND UP**

There have been several important issues that have come up at Executive Committee meetings. These are few headlines;

- Lexden Road traffic proposals – responded to the Highways Authority along with many others. The original proposals were

widely unpopular and described by one councillor as ‘Bonkers’ but have been drastically amended.

- Colchester Borough Council Local Plan 2017-2032 – we sent a detailed response.
- A120 Highways Consultation.
- Long running highways issues –the Balmerne bridge and Priory Street traffic reversal, neither of which have been resolved.
- Pavilion Restaurant and other licensing issues.
- The Historic High Street 1100-1700 – we are assisting the publication of a booklet about Colchester High Street.

We have recently met Howard Davies, the Council’s Development Manager for the town centre, who updated us on proposals affecting central Colchester.

*Peter Evans*

## **CIVIC VOICE DESIGN AWARDS 2016**

The national Civic Voice Design Awards were successfully completed for the second year with nominations from local community organisations like Civic Societies, residents groups, town and parish councils and other community based voluntary organisations.

The overall winner and also new build winner was the Alder Hey Children’s Hospital, Liverpool.

The design was inspired by a 15 year-old girl, and took into consideration the views of children and families who took part in one of the NHS’s largest ever consultations. It was a drawing by Eleanor Brogan that impressed the architects and inspired their final design.

The result was a hospital designed in response to the needs of patients, visitors, staff and the community as a whole, which creates a home-from-home experience for children who need care. The project combines art, architecture and landscape design to create a new hospital which is warm, happy, calming and educational.

The City of Liverpool now has a hospital of which it is immensely proud.

The winner of the restoration award was the Master’s House, Ledbury.

A project first started in 2002 to restore a timber-frame medieval building previously on English Heritage’s Buildings at Risk Register. With the aid of a £1.25m grant this historic house has been restored and is now the hub of community life, including a library and one stop shop.

The winner of the public realm award was the Holywells Park Project, Ipswich

With the aid of grants and Borough Council funds the park has been fully restored for the use of local residents. The Orangery has been transformed into a light-filled, brilliant and noble structure with the restoration of the cast-iron framework, the replacement of the glazing, and cleaning and replacing of the original tiles inside the building.

These winning entries are a clear demonstration of communities wanting to celebrate development when they have had a chance to participate in it.

*Paul Weston*

## **THREE UNVEILINGS AND A DEDICATION**

This year there seem to have been a number of ceremonies that I and a number of members of the Civic Society and other local groups have attended. The press covered them quite well and to my embarrassment I found myself featured twice in the same edition of the *East Anglian Daily Times*. All good coverage of local heritage events, however.

Earlier in the year was the unveiling of the name plate for Ruth King Close – see the previous newsletter. In April, we had the dedication of Lancaster Approach, then the gates for Old Heath Recreation Ground (see page 9) and Ruth Bensusan Butt blue plaque (see page 4). There is also the Talking Bench in the



*Seated L to R: Cllr Julie Young, Mayor of Colchester; and Cllr John Jowers, Vice Chairman of Essex County Council. Standing, L to R: Don Scott, contributor; Cllr Tim Young, Colchester Borough Council; Peter Evans, Colchester Recalled; Sarah-Joy Maddeaux, Essex Record Office; Peter Constable; Patrick Denney, both Colchester Recalled; Cllr Annie Feltham, Colchester Borough Council; Peter Graham; Andrew Millar; Andrew Phillips, all Colchester Recalled; Jacki Barber, contributor; Martin Astell, Essex Record Office.*

Castle Park (see picture above). If you enter the Castle Park via the ornate gates in Cowdray Crescent, it is a black bench with a set of four recordings of people's memories of the Castle, which is immediately opposite.

The bench has been paid for by the Essex Records Office, with the assistance of Lottery funding. The recordings were arranged by Colchester Recalled, the oral history group, and includes the memory of one of our members. Borough Council staff will supervise it. Our Mayor, Councillor Julie Young, unveiled it with County Councillor John Jowers on 4th June. If you are passing, give it a listen. Other benches are being installed around Essex.

*Peter Evans*

### **OLD HEATH RECREATION GROUND – A HERITAGE PROJECT**

I have always known the 'Rec' as it is near where I live now and my previous home. My primary school had sports events there, and there were the Annual Co-op Fetes, visits

from Circuses, many local football competitions, bowls and of course, children's playgrounds. The Council had become concerned that it was getting somewhat tired and not so well used.

One of the first changes was the introduction of a Community Garden. When I last checked this did not look very exciting but it has now blossomed and looks wonderful. There is even a little pond. Dogs have their own exercise area where the grass has had to be replaced with artificial grass as it was so well used. A marker for a jogging track has been installed and is also well used by residents, including local councillors.

A major project has just been completed to install 5 brand new gates, each with designs inspired by historical connections to the 'Rec' and to the New Town and Old Heath areas. Explanatory panels on display by the gates were written by Andrew Phillips. There has been a long term consultation with residents, which led to the inclusion, for example, of a

flying trapeze representing Circus visits.

Artist Tim Ward, of Circling the Square, spent six months running workshops and speaking with local residents to help draw up the gate designs. The mandala laser cut gates were installed in March 2016 at the Recreation Road, Port Lane, Old Heath Road and Wimpole Road entrances. Each entrance cele-



brates a different aspect of local culture or history: the concept of New Town; the military connection; sport, leisure and retirement and the Co-op and Paxman's.

The Council received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2015 to work with an artist and local residents to design and create new gates for the Recreation Ground that celebrate the history and significance of the area.

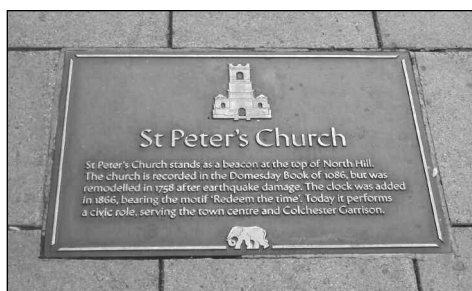
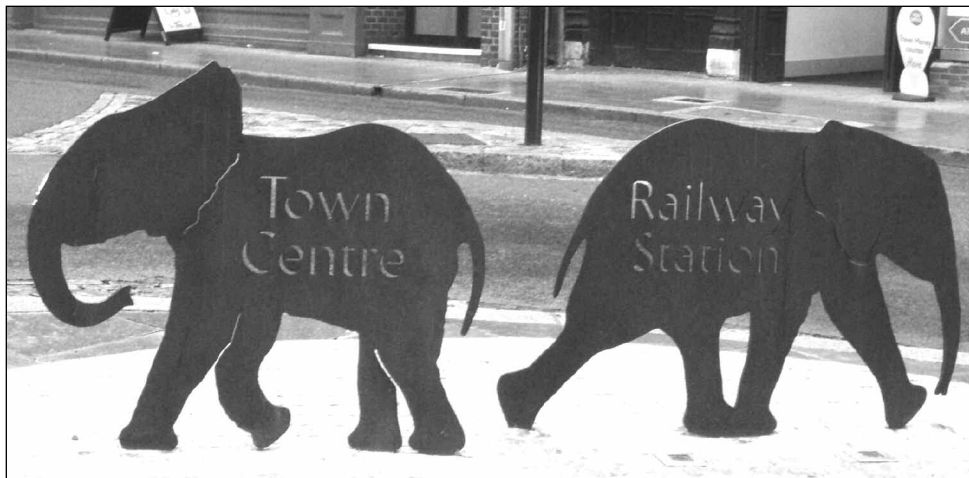
*Peter Evans*

### **THE WALK FROM NORTH STATION - WAYFINDING**

Members will have seen the yellow banners along North Station Road to High Street accompanied by big friendly elephants at the top of North Hill. This was discussed at the Executive Committee and we were bemused. This is a joint project led by Abellio Greater Anglia and involving the Borough Council and Essex County Council. The object is to make it easier for visitors to the town to find their way from the mainline station to the town centre. This is an idea from Abellio's parent company in the Netherlands and is the first in England, but was there a problem?



*Top: The new gates at Old Heath Recreation Ground and their unveiling in the lower picture in the presence of several residents*



*The wayfinding elephants and a plaque installed on North Hill*

The Executive Committee felt that it was a straight route to walk and a simple notice would sort out which buses could be used (basically any leaving from the nearest stop) and directions could be given to use the Colchester Town Station. There is a statement that it is 20 minutes' walk to the town but the youngest and fittest committee member thought this was very optimistic.

However, it is a work in progress and there are some attractive plaques being fitted into the pavements and there are decorative works being planned. The flags are sometimes blank so not much help to visitors but doubtless all will be fine when it is finished.

There is currently a proposal to have the

Colchester Town Station renamed 'Colchester Town St Botolphs'. This was the idea of local resident William Jolliffe and it has been given support by Will Quince MP. A petition has been sent to the Department of Transport. Of course, the old name was St Botolph's and some of us still think that it is. The organisers point out that the station made a contribution to the First World War as many troops left from there.

*Peter Evans*

## **HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 2016**

Once again, I have to thank all those who helped out at Heritage Weekend this year. I don't have the final visitor numbers but the two tours that I took had more on them than ever before. There were 21 students from Italy on one of the tours. I know that on some of the tours there were people from America and Holland, so what Colchester has to offer will be spread to other countries and may bring other overseas visitors in the future.

This year we only had to steward the Roman Theatre in the Town. We have to cover the morning and afternoon on the Saturday and Sunday, so I now double up the stewards for safety and to give you chance for a break.

I do need a total of 8 people for the weekend. If I had more then you would not have be there for so long, as I could split the sessions. So please, if you can, encourage others to give some of their time.

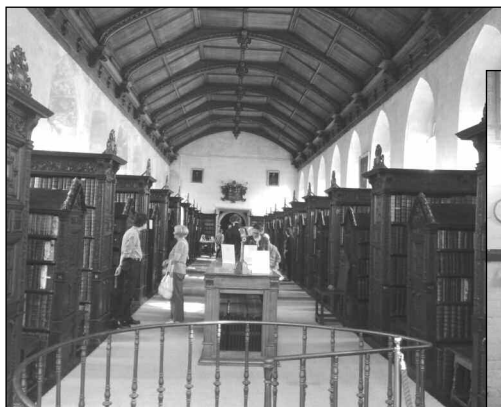
*Ann Turner*

This year, I managed to visit the libraries of four colleges and the Whipple Museum in Cambridge on the Friday and Long Melford Church Tower, the Guildhall and a Unitarian Chapel in Bury St Edmunds on Saturday. The Whipple Museum, which I had never heard of before, has a huge collection of ancient

globes, telescopes and similar instruments. Kings College Library had a rare Shakespeare first folio on display. The Bury Guildhall has never been open when I have been in Bury but this may be because it has recently had its roof repaired. It will shortly close again for more repairs. Although originally a medieval building, it now looks very Georgian, but upstairs is a complete World War 2 Observer's post which has somehow survived.

It seems that HOD's are popular everywhere and there are many people glad to visit the buildings.

*Peter Evans*



*The venues of Peter Evans' HOD visits - clockwise - Kings College Library in Cambridge; the belfry of Long Melford Church; the Whipple Museum and the Observers' Post at Bury Guildhall*



## IT'S A DIRTY JOB BUT SOMEONE HAS TO DO IT

The launch of Mercury Rising took place on the Terrace at the House of Commons on 5th September 2016.

Jo Edwards had received an invitation for the Colchester Civic Society to this event but was unable to go. I must admit that 'Mercury Rising' did not click with me at first although I knew that the Mercury Theatre had a major project pending. I actually thought it related to science fiction film. So, of course, I said 'Yes' when I knew what it was about.

I thought I should do some research and attended an open day at the theatre, which was explaining the work that they want to do, and included a short presentation from Daniel Buckroyd, Artistic Director, and Steve Mannix, Executive Director. Basically, the backstage areas need to be totally replaced. The workshop area is not big enough and the wardrobe department is housed in bedrooms of the former St Mary's Rectory. Better facilities for the cast and staff, plus an extended foyer, a new front door, a bigger bar and more toilets are included in the plan. They would then be able to offer costume hire (they have no storage space) and build sets for touring productions. The rectory, built in 1970's, will be demolished to provide space and there will be landscaping up to the Roman Wall.



*Buildings at the rear of the Mercury, scheduled to be demolished and replaced*

This will cost £8.7 million and they have £7 million promised. The Mercury Rising Appeal is for the remaining £1.7 million, which will unlock the £7 million that has been promised. Seeing the existing facilities which they have been struggling to live with since the Mercury opened in 1971, I can see why they need move forward and provide what could not be provided when it was built.

Come the day, I literally hobbled off to London, as I had developed sore feet, and was going embarrassingly slow. I felt worse when Paddy Ashdown, aged 75, came steaming over Westminster Bridge. However, I felt slightly better to see the rather sinister figure of George Osborne go past.

Passing through security at the House of Commons, I found re-threading my belt took ages but I had allowed plenty of time and was able to enjoy Westminster Hall. The contingent from Colchester Borough Council arrived, faces I knew, arrived after a while, and I tagged on and limped up the stairs to the House of Commons lobby. I was able to enjoy one of those comfy looking green leather benches whilst details of events about to happen in the Commons itself were announced.



*Peter Evans and Pam Ayres at the Mercury Rising Appeal*



*The Terrace at the Houses of Parliament, with scaffolding etc on the roof of the building*

We were then conducted through to the Terrace for the launch, nibbles and drinks.

The appeal has four patrons – actors Martin Clunes (first professional appearance) and Hugh Bonneville (a season 25 years ago), singer Michael Ball and Pam Ayres, who has been one their most popular and regular ‘turns’ – her phrase – since 1993. She was the only one able to attend. Councillor Lyn Barton got to her first but I was not far behind, as I have attended most of her shows. Councillor Tim Young arrived a bit later. Pam and her husband William are fond of the

Mercury and our part of the world and say that they always have a welcome here.

After speeches about the appeal, including one by Will Quince MP, who arranged for the event to happen here and the directors, Matt Hancock the Arts Minister and MP for West Suffolk pressed the button to launch the web-site [www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/support](http://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/support). After a short agonising pause, it worked! Let us hope all goes well. A brochure is enclosed to give you information about the appeal.

Whilst the Terrace is pleasant and there is a lovely view, the inside of the Palace of Westminster is fascinating. Puginesque decorations are everywhere and the gaps are filled in by carved doors, Victorian engravings and paintings. As I was not up to the walk along beside the Thames, I caught the tube back to Liverpool Street (with David Mellor).

I should mention that Amber Rudd, the new Home Secretary, smiled at me as she passed through the lobby. Mind, she smiled at everybody, presumably in case we were important. All in all, a trip to remember.

#### **MERCURY RISING APPEAL**

The executive Committee discussed the reasons for appeal and believes that this is an



*Councillor Tim Young and Pam Ayres on the Terrace at Westminster Palace*



initiative that the Society should support, as we did when we sponsored a display panel for the Friends of the Roman Wall. We know that many members enjoy visits to the Mercury and might like to support the project. Details of the Appeal are enclosed. You will see that it is possible to adopt a seat for £475.

We think that this would be a pleasant idea to have a seat bearing the name COLCHESTER CIVIC SOCIETY. You are, of course, free to send a contribution direct to Mercury Rising but if you can send a payment to the Civic Society, then we could combine them to adopt a seat. If you have completed the Gift Aid declaration form, we can claim gift aid on your donation, and increase the value by 20% - that is to say £1 extra for each £5 given.

A reply slip is provided for donations.

*Peter Evans*

## THE PALLOT COLLINS SUBWAY MURALS

You will have seen reports in the local press about the restoration of the murals and Kath



*Work on restoring  
the Pallot Collins Subway Murals*

Wood gave an interesting talk at the AGM about them and their history. The restoration project is being managed by Pam Schomberg, of Colchester in Bloom, arts consultant Kath Wood (formerly of Firstsite) and Jo Edwards, representing the Civic Society. Funding has been arranged with help from Essex Heritage Trust and a private donor for the first stage, the Abbeygate underpass.

The murals were installed in the 1960's and 1970's locally, but others designed by Joyce Pallot and Henry Collins are to be found around the country and indeed abroad. Their worth is now being recognised.

The other murals are part of the long-standing project but an advantage of completing the first stage is that it may provide evidence of the original colours. Apart from funding raising, establishing ownership was a problem but has been confirmed as Essex County Council.

*Peter Evans*

## AND FINALLY...

We are compiling a summary of Colchester commemorative plaques and signs. Information will be included in the next newsletter. We are also looking at all war memorials but some of these are well hidden and members may be aware of some unusual examples. Please let Jo Edwards know.

The Friends of the Roman Wall are installing more interpretation panels around the town, with the latest panel to be unveiled at the top of Scheregate Steps by the Mayor on 26th November at 10.30am. A further panel will unveiled at the top of Sir Isaacs Walk, to commemorate Headgate, date to be confirmed. See their website *Friends of Colchester Roman Wall* for details

## REVIEW OF SOCIAL EVENTS

### **Mere House, Meresworth, Kent 28th June 2016**

This was one of those fascinating 'Invitation to View' events, when we are allowed to go into interesting houses of historical and architectural interest where people actually live, so you can inspect their books and interests. We end with afternoon tea. In this case, our hosts, Alan and Tessa Wells produced a delicious selection of cakes, served in their old kitchen.

As this June, the weather was doubtful from the start but remained dry, although chilly in the afternoon. We were inside most of the time. As a visit, it did have a few unusual moments. We started for a meal at the *Swan on the Green* at the nearby village of West Peckham. The food was fine, and we had time to walk around the immaculate village green, with oast houses and a fascinating looking church, which only a few of us were able to visit.

However, Peckham set me wondering. Were we in Del Boy country with David Jason

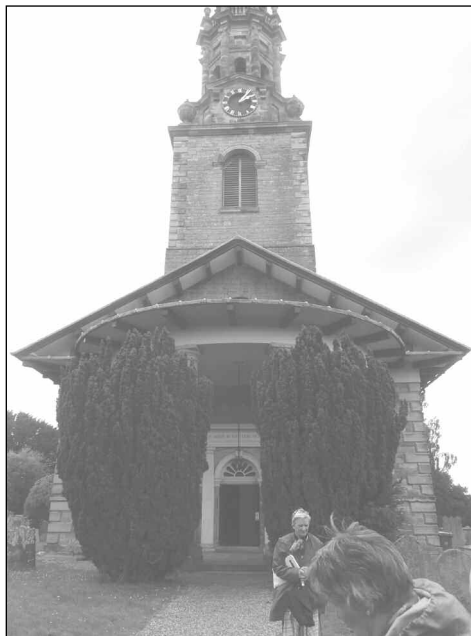
and Nelson Mandela House and other blocks of flats? Actually, it was David Jason's other show *The Darling Buds of May* which was really appropriate. Lush countryside.

There was a big funeral at the church and we then had a few surreal moments, as Martin our coach driver could not get past the parked hearse and funeral car. Once the funeral party resumed the cars, a stately procession left West Peckham, made up of the funeral director on foot with top hat, the leading car with the coffin, the first car with the chief mourners and then a Kings Coach vehicle with the Colchester Civic Society.

We then went to Meresworth about a mile away, passing the impressive Yotes Court. (Wonderful name). We arrive just behind Alan Wells, of Mere House, who took us into the unusual and impressive church of St Lawrence, which built in 1742-4. Had we arrived the day before, we would have seen a traveller's funeral with a congregation of 600. The church looks like a Wren building from a distance with a tall steeple but has a large



*West Peckham, the church where the funeral took place*



*Meresworth Church*

colonnaded entrance. Inside is some wonderful armorial glass high in the east window. And some other glass, including a millennium window with a view of the village. Much of the decoration is *tromp l'oeil* and so the interior is exactly plain, but very effective. Oddly, some of the decoration is Greek letters. There are also some monuments transferred from the original medieval church. There is a memorial to a local Sir Charles Lucas.

Mere House itself is a short distance away, and has small herd of sheep grazing around the house. The garden is charming and a few weeks earlier a whole host of golden daffodils would have been found in the middle of the lawn. We entered the house through the dining room. This is a perfect example of Georgian furniture and design. There are many family portraits or views of the houses of the Wells family and Tessa's relations, which are linked to the Gurneys of Norfolk.

Much of the furniture throughout the



*Mere House*



*Enjoying Mere House*

house is mellow Georgian or a little later and the decorations and furnishings are sympathetic. There is a modern kitchen and computers but I did not spot a TV and one landline seemed elderly. Alan told us that his grandchildren had found that some of the bells for servants still work. I don't think that there are any servants, however.

The house was built in 1780 as the rectory for the recently completed Meresworth church by Lord Le Despencer, better known as Sir Frances Dashwood, politician and libertine, who inherited lands locally from his uncle, the Earl of Westmorland. In 1958, the house and some land (now 6 acres) were sold and was bought by Alan's family, who have been based in West Kent for over 400 years ever since.

It was time to leave this lovely family home. Despite the splendid and appropriate furniture on several floors, it is the family touches that stay in your mind. There is the collection of ten hats, mostly military except for a pith helmet, formed by Alan and Tessa's sons, who became army officers. On a landing, there is a beautiful ornately framed mirror, inherited from an old 'Invitation to View'.

*Peter Evans*

#### **Flatford to Cattawade Boat Trip 11th July 2016**

It was a fine, if blustery, Monday morning when a group of us watched from the bridge at Flatford, as the *Stour Trusty II* with its smart green canopy, rounded the bend in the river from Dedham and glided silently under the bridge to the landing stage, ready for us to board. Our crew were two volunteers from the River Stour Trust which is dedicated to the restoration and conservation of the River Stour as a navigable waterway. It is the Trust that is responsible for bringing the lock at Flatford into use and thereby making our voyage to Cattawade possible.

We set off and entered the lock while one of our volunteer crew undertook the considerable feat of opening and closing the lock gates. It had been a condition of the grant to pay for the restoration, that the gates should work in the traditional way with ropes. This might have been easier with a horse to take the strain!

Once through the lock we moved into the



*From Flatford to Cattawade  
on the River Stour Trust's Trusty II.*

large pond fronting the mill which once belonged to John Constable's father and then into the sheltered peace of the river. The river is seldom navigated by anything other than the occasional canoe. Willows and reeds lined the banks and at times threatened to impede our progress. In places the river was carpeted by yellow water lilies. The undisturbed tranquillity felt far removed from the usual hustle and bustle of life. Once past Judas Gap, where a large concrete weir separates the salt water of the estuary from the river, and a favoured swimming place for generations of local children when the weir was less formidable than now, the river becomes inaccessible from the land. Here we encountered wild life unused to being disturbed. Several startled heron flew up at our approach and two very young cygnets were fiercely protected by their

anxious parents. As we neared the site of what had once been a Pepper Mill we passed through the remnants of an old sea lock and into the last stretch of river before the barrier separating the river from the estuary waters. We turned, with some difficulty as the water was shallow, and began the slow, peaceful meander back, again disturbing heron and swans. We were also able to enjoy damselflies and families of ducklings and tiny moorhens who were less concerned by our presence. Our journey ended once we had been raised by the lock, with great exertion, to the level of the river at Flatford. We greatly appreciated the opportunity to enjoy such a rare pleasure through the efforts of the River Stour Trust and the time given up by our volunteer crew.

*Cindy Salmon*

### **Hever Castle, Kent 19th July 2016**

The weather for this visit to Kent was much better, in fact glorious, in comparison to the Mere house visit. This was at the invitation of the Friends of Colchester Museums.

Hever has strong connections with Anne Boleyn and her family in the 16th century. It

has a fascinating collection of portraits of the Tudor Royal Family, including Anne and the other wives of Henry VIII. The Castle has medieval sections but was restored and improved by the Astor family around 1900. The workmanship is remarkable and the contents well worth the visit.

The grounds are extensive and impeccably maintained. There are statues in the gardens and even a waterfall. There was a charming area near the lake that allowed us to sit in the shade and enjoy the views. There was a café near the lake and the main restaurant served as nice a steak pie as you could hope to find. There were also some really inquisitive ducks



*Two photographs of the beautiful grounds of Hever Castle*

around the restaurant area.

I nearly missed the display on model houses near the main shop. These were not toys but detailed historical displays and I wish I had had more time to see it properly and I totally missed the nearby parish church and the military museum. There was (of course) a well-stocked shop and the plants were reasonably priced.

Hever certainly looked like the Garden of England today.

*Peter Evans*

## **A Cinematic Experience**

**21st September 2016**

It was an excellent idea to put two cinematic attractions together, even if one was in upper Regent Street and the other in Lambeth. One is one of the earliest buildings in London to show films and the other is a museum of the cinema.

The Regent Street Cinema was in 2015 restored to much how it appeared during its 1920's heyday when it was a cinema and now shows, among other things, a variety of matinee films at the ridiculous price of £1.75 a seat with tea or coffee, even cheaper than the silver screen at the Head Street Odeon. It was built in 1848 as a theatre, but equipped for 'optical exhibitions' so it was suitable that in 1896

it became Britain's first cinema. It is owned and run by the University of Westminster although their organisation caused Jo (when arranging the trip) and myself on the day running the trip, some problems.

The receptionist was presumably a student who actually said to me when we arrived at 11.45 "I am not good in the mornings". Very honest of him and very true. When an adult arrived we were shown into the auditorium, which is splendid 1920's decor and shown a short film about how it had returned to life as a Cinema. Then Richard Hill, the cinema organist and a true expert, played the organ, which he explained needed some work. He also knew about the cinema organs in Colchester and was very informative. We had been told that we were getting an hour of organ music, which could have been too much of a good thing, but we had an excellent 10 minutes from the instrument that has been in the theatre from the start.

We were able to see the projection equipment and the projectionist explained why traditional prints of films are still often used. We then had free time to get a snack. I wandered the short distance to the BBC headquarters, even venturing inside, to see the new building my licence fee had bought. I did see some familiar journalists dashing about.

The Cinema was packed for the matinee, which seems to have become hugely popular locally. It was *The Bells are Ringing*, from 1960, starring Dean Martin and Judy Holliday. It is not a classic but with songs like *Just One of Those Things* and *The Party's Over* by Jule Styne, Comden and Green most of us enjoyed it as a piece of period escapism. (It does NOT include the song *The Bells are Ringing*, that is older).

On to the former Lambeth Workhouse where the Cinema Museum is housed. Whilst this is a chance combination, it is appropriate as Charlie Chaplin lived in this workhouse as



*Inside Regent Street Cinema*

a child whilst his mother was ill. This is an interesting building and unlike many work-houses as it was built in 1890's. This Museum uses every space to display the collection, unlike some. The Museum is using an image of Chaplin to raise money for a statue in his memory.

The Museum houses examples of everything connected with the Cinema. Tickets, many and glorious posters, other advertising material, projection equipment and staff uniforms. Most amazing are the chunks of fixtures and fittings - seats, art deco doors, signs ticket offices, carpets, everything imaginable. Ronald Grant and Martin Humphries, the founders, were lucky to be offered much of this stuff from a cinema chain with a major Cinema in Aberdeen (James F Donald) and they were glad to see it go to a good home. We had a thorough and interesting Powerpoint



*Lambeth Workhouse*

presentation from Martin, and then had time to wander around, looking at the huge variety of items on display and fitting in some period newsreel films. There were exhibits that we had forgotten we had ever seen.

We were made very welcome at both places, once we got inside the Regent. The day went really well and we had the ever reliable support from Kings Coaches to get us from place to place.

*Peter Evans*



*Exhibits from the Cinema Museum*



## SOCIAL PROGRAMME 2017

Another year approaches. How quickly they pass! I am attempting to get as much of the programme for 2017 as possible into this Newsletter but find myself thwarted, as usual, by the 'we haven't looked at dates/prices/plans/guide availability etc etc for next year yet' responses to my enquiries. Even the MOD can't give me dates for group access to Foulness until the Spring. Yes, I am still pursuing this but from a different angle. It is looking promising but our numbers might be more limited than I had hoped. Maybe we will have to run two trips. I am ever the glutton for punishment!

Foulness is not the only imponderable. St George's Hall is another but, again, we WILL get there, eventually! However, the John Ball plaque unveiling draws closer! What an incredible saga that has been. Ann Turner attended a site meeting with Colchester Borough Council and Colchester Borough Homes a few weeks ago and a solution to the problem of where to put the thing was found. The Society is paying for a metal stand for the plaque and it will soon be re-erected in John Ball Walk, off Stockwell. If you would like to attend the unveiling, which might be at fairly short notice, please let me know on the attached slip.

I am intending to try to re-book a visit to the Sky Garden in London, combining it with a visit to Fulham Palace again. Most of you will remember that, after a very difficult time trying to book this last year, I thought I had finally managed to work my way through the myriad of obstacles, misinformation, appalling customer service, daft regulations, total lack of understanding about the concept of group booking etc, only to be told, at

almost the last minute, that the date I had been given was no longer available as they had changed their maintenance day. I promised the staff at Fulham Palace, who were quite the opposite and very accommodating and helpful, that we would visit in 2017 and we will. I would very much like to know how many of you would be interested in this visit in May or June and, particularly, whether you would come even if the Sky Garden is not possible. It would help me very much to have some idea of numbers. I suspect that I will still have to book the Sky Garden only a couple of weeks in advance (they just do not appear to understand that this is not enough notice when you have a group - and a coach to arrange!).

Please remember that all our events are open to guests. They are more than welcome! Now for a couple of reminders about coach trips. We always aim to pick up and drop off at various points convenient to members so it is always good to ask if you would prefer an en route stop. For those who don't want to bring their cars into town, Kings have an arrangement with the Marks Tey Hotel where you can park for a small fee, currently £1. However, if you wish to take advantage of this, I MUST know at least a week in advance and I must have your vehicle registration number, please. And the second reminder? Tips! We do not include the cost of a tip in the price of any event. This is because we feel that the giving of a tip is a personal decision based on the service that you, as an individual, have received. We send a bag for tips around the coach on every outing but it is entirely up to you whether you contribute.

I think that is it, so on with Programme details so far as they are known at present:



**Monday 2nd January 2017 Meet at Greyfriars Hotel (the Venetian Lounge, next to the bar) at 10.30am for our monthly Coffee Morning.**

The Coffee Morning idea really has paid off. Each month, members meet to discuss what is happening in our town, to raise issues of concern, to make suggestions, to find out what progress we have made in resolving problems and to generally chat and enjoy coffee and Greyfriar's very nice biscuits! We have been running these events for a year and the Executive Committee have taken up a lot of the issues raised with some really good outcomes. It is, on occasion, remarkably satisfying! We do hope you will join us at some, if not all, coffee mornings this year, always held on the first Monday of the month, including Bank Holidays if they happen to fall on the first Monday.

Cost: Free but donations to the work of the Society welcomed on the day.

**Saturday 14th January 2017 Meet at The Siege House in East Street at 12.15pm for our New Year Lunch**

I have booked the area at the far end of the ground floor for us again. Please come and enjoy a three course meal (with coffee to follow) with us. Parking is available behind the restaurant, although the car park is not vast. I would suggest car sharing with friends if you can, or come by bus as the bus stop is close by. Please don't park in the nearby streets as parking wardens patrol regularly.

Cost £16.50 This price does not include a tip as we feel tipping is a matter of personal preference.

**Saturday 4th February 2017 Meet at COLCHESTER INSTITUTE, SHEEPEN ROAD at 9.10am for a visit to the Paul Nash Exhibition at Tate Britain**

We have been invited by the Friends of the Minorities to join them on a visit to see the Paul

Nash Exhibition at Tate Britain. Paul Nash, of course, has a connection to Colchester as his brother, John, also a wonderful artist, lived locally. John was a founder member of Colchester Art Society and a great supporter of the Minorities. I remember him well. But I digress. Paul was an official War Artist in both the First and Second World Wars, although he fell out with the RAF in the latter, by all accounts. He was a gifted landscape painter and something of a surrealist and his pictures of both wars are extraordinary, stark, haunting, frightening and dramatic in equal measure. This exhibition examines his work as a landscape artist in its widest sense, examining his fascination with the Downs and coastlines of Southern England. He saw the Downs as ancient and mystical and that reflects in his work. I wish I was well enough to go .....! Please note the pick up point as it is obviously different to ours. Cars can be left in the Institute car park but please leave yourselves plenty of time to park. If you want to join this visit, please apply very soon.

Cost £39.50 If you are a member of the Tate, please ring me for further information.

**Monday 6th February 2017 Meet at Greyfriars Hotel at 10.30am for our monthly Coffee Morning**

Cost: Free. Donations welcomed

**Probably February (but it could be late January or March!) A visit to 37 Queen Street**

I have arranged a visit to 37 Queen Street, aka The Old Police Station, Chicago Rock Cafe or TP's Sports Bar but, unfortunately, I cannot give you a date yet as the builders have yet to hand over the keys! Ann Turner, our Vice Chair, is going to represent the Society at the slightly premature Launch on 7th December, which will be really exciting for her as she was a Police Sergeant there. She is going to find that a tremendous number of changes

have been made! The building looks amazing. There is now a wonderful courtyard at the back, really showing off what is actually a very lovely building and the front, beautifully restored, has never looked better. Inside it is light, bright and modern to suit its new role as artists' studios - and I use the word 'artist' very loosely. Colchester is a very important centre for the Creative Industries, believe it or not. 37 Queen Street will, hopefully, ensure that both those currently working within the field and young people coming into it, will stay in Colchester rather than move to London. The building will be managed by SPACE, a visual arts organisation with a proven record of providing affordable creative workspace and support programmes. There will be 40 studios on site, complete with ultrafast broadband. There will also be cafe facilities and meeting rooms. It will become home to artists but also to designers, illustrators, programmers, developers, digital media creatives and technologists. Please let me know as soon as possible, on the attached slip, if you would like to join us on this visit. I think it will be absolutely fascinating on all sorts of levels, one not to be missed!

**Monday 6th March 2017 Meet at Greyfriars Hotel at 10.30am for our Coffee Morning and discussion.**

Cost: Free but donations welcomed

**Monday 3rd April 2017 Coffee Morning at Greyfriars again 10.30am**

Cost: Free but donations welcomed

**Sunday 9th April 2017 Meet at the War Memorial in Cowdray Crescent, outside the main Castle Park Gates, at 2pm for a guided Town Centre Walk.**

Ann Turner, our Vice Chair, Membership Secretary and a Colchester Blue Badge Guide, has offered to take us for a guided walk. It has become apparent that many of us have never

been on a guided walk in our town. Isn't it odd? We grab the opportunity to do such walks in other towns but rarely do we do so in our own. I think I have said before that, by the time I was in my mid teens, I had probably visited 95% of all abbeys and priories in the country but had never been to St Botolph's, no more than 300 yards from my home!! Ann's knowledge of the town is incredible. I can guarantee that you will learn a lot!

Cost: Free but donations towards the work of the Society very much appreciated.

**Thursday 27th April 2017 Meet at Fingringhoe Wick Nature Reserve at 7.15pm for a guided walk to hear the Nightingales**

I hope that there are as many, very vocal, nightingales in 2017 as there were in 2016. If so, we are in for a treat. There are normally 30 to 40 birds singing their hearts out at dusk at this time of the year and, of course, we should hear other species too, those like blackcaps, whitethroats, robins and possibly even cuckoos. Guided by a member of the Reserve staff, we will be taken to the very best places to hear these magical songs. Please wear suitable shoes and bring warm clothes.

Cost: £6

**Monday 1st May 2017 Meet at Greyfriars Hotel at 10.30am for the monthly Coffee Morning**

Cost: Free but donations welcomed.

**Tuesday 16th May 2017 Meet in the Venetian Lounge, next to the bar at GREYFRIARS HOTEL at 7.30pm for our Spring Up Meeting**

A change of venue for this regular annual meeting. Although we now have the Coffee Mornings as a place to raise issues affecting the town, we are very much aware of the fact that a number of people are unable to attend these because of work or other regular com-

mitments. We are therefore continuing our annual Spring Up and Burning Issues Meetings, at least for a while. Greyfriars, of course, has its own car park, accessed from the public car park opposite the Forester's Arms. Press the button on the entry phone on the right as you approach the gates and they will open for you. If you need or can offer a lift, please let us know. It would be good to know in advance whether you intend to come so I can give Greyfriars some idea of numbers, so please complete the slip. However, if you find yourself unexpectedly free and have not told us you might come, there will be no problem, I'm sure. Just turn up!

Cost: Free but donations towards the work of the Society welcomed.

**Monday 5th June 2017 Meet at Greyfriars Hotel at 10.30am for our Coffee Morning**

Will I be there? My first grandchild is due on 3rd June and my son is already panicking!!

Cost: Free. Donations welcomed.

**Wednesday 14th June 2017 Meet at St Botolph's Parish Hall, on the south side of the church, at 7pm for our Annual General Meeting**

This year, our guest speaker will be Phil Douce from Civic Voice, the national umbrella group for Civic Societies. Civic Voice has very few staff but those they have seem to have boundless energy. The organisation lobbies in Whitehall and Westminster on behalf of Civic Societies, undertakes research, campaigns, builds partnerships and does all it can to foster civic pride. Please come. It should be a very interesting meeting! If you need or can offer a lift, please let us know.

**Friday 23rd June 2017 Meet at the bus stop outside Greyfriars, East Hill at 12 noon for a visit to Columbine Hall, near Stowmarket**

Columbine Hall, a beautiful and romantic

mediaeval manor house, rises up from a spectacular moat. It is set in an acre of formal garden designed by Chelsea Gold Medal winner, George Carter but there are a further 28 acres of woodland, wild flower meadow, bog garden and farmland to see. The house was bought by its present owners in 1993. It had been unoccupied for some time and needed considerable restoration. It is now filled with the multifarious acquisitions of two avid collectors, which range from Nelson's battered mug to a mandarin's silver fingernail guard! We will be guided through the entire house by the owner. Our visit will take place in the afternoon and will culminate with tea and cakes but we have been invited to arrive early so that we can eat a picnic lunch in the gardens - fingers crossed for good weather. Don't mention the R word!! Please bring your own picnic!

Cost £22 to include tea.

**Monday 3rd July Meet at Greyfriars at 10.30am for the monthly Coffee Morning and discussion**

Cost: Free but donations welcomed.

**Tuesday 18th July 2017 Meet at CROUCH STREET or MARKS TEY HOTEL (two coaches!) at 9am for a visit to Battle Abbey and Hastings.**

We have been invited to join the Friends of the Museums on their visit to Battle Abbey and Hastings. Battle Abbey was built soon after the Battle of Hastings, fought on 14th October 1066. It was founded as penance for the bloodshed in that battle. Little remains of the original Norman Abbey but later monastic buildings survive, including the Great Gatehouse and the east range with its fine vaulted undercroft. Much of the battlefield site became part of the Abbey's Great Park which formed the core of the country estate which followed after the suppression of the

Abbey in 1538. There will be time to visit the battlefield, the Abbey ruins, the walled garden, the icehouse and the dairy, built in 1818 and recently rethatched. There is an informative Visitor Centre where an interesting film can be seen. A cafe serves light lunches and afternoon teas. The other half of the day will give free time in Hastings. The coach will travel along the seafront, past the recently rebuilt pier, to East Beach, close to the Shipwreck Museum, the Jerwood Art Gallery, the True Crime Museum, the Blue Reef Aquarium and the Funicular Lift. Plenty to keep those with energy occupied! Those whose energy is less could, of course, make use of a deck chair on the beach and just watch the boats bobbing on the sea! Hastings has plenty of cafes and restaurants to enjoy. Please note the pick up points as they are, again, different to ours.

Cost: £30

**Saturday 22nd July 2017 Meet at 13a, President Road, off Oaklands Avenue, at 2pm for our Summer Party.**

And what a venue! Very few people know this wonderful place exists and it is a gem. We will have the use of the Colchester Society of Model and Experimental Engineers' clubhouse for afternoon tea AND unlimited rides on their trains! Yes, these are available for adults, too. I kid you not! By all means bring children and grandchildren. If you can bake a cake for the occasion, it would be most welcome. Please let us know what you can provide when you complete your reply slip. Lifts can be arranged. There is some parking available. Please let us know if you need a map.

The entrance to the venue is near the far end of President Road on the left, down a short drive. It is unsigned but quite obvious. President Road is off Oaklands Avenue which is, in turn, off Lexden Straight Road.

Most importantly, wear clothes that don't matter too much. Trains produce smuts!

Cost £10 Children £3 Train rides free!

**Monday 7th August 2017 Meet at Greyfriars at 10.30am for Coffee**

Cost: Free but donations welcomed.

**Monday 4th September 2017 Meet at Greyfriars at 10.30am for our Coffee Morning**

Cost: Free but donations welcomed.

**Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th September 2017 Heritage Open Days**

As usual, volunteers for stewarding properties open to the public this weekend are required. We do need your help. It is really enjoyable. No experience or in depth knowledge required!

**September Dates and full details still to be confirmed. Cruise from the Hythe to Brightlingsea aboard the Brightlingsea Ferry.**

Boarding the ferry near the Lightship on the quay at the Hythe, we will cruise gently downstream to Brightlingsea, a journey of nearly 7 miles which takes about an hour. For those who have never taken this journey, it provides quite a different perspective of the Colne. Leaving Colchester, passing the University buildings, the river remains quite narrow. Views of Rowhedge from the river are delightful. Rounding the slight bend in the river, Wivenhoe comes into view, with Fingringhoe up on the ridge opposite. Again, a beautiful sight.

Once through the Colne Barrier, which appears huge from the boat, the river widens providing vistas of water and sky. The peace brings bird life and the occasional seal. Nearing Brightlingsea Creek, the river becomes busier with sailing boats and, perhaps, jet skiers, enjoying the estuary. The boat takes 12 at a time. Access to it is relatively easy, you will be pleased to know! I will probably have to arrange more than one trip

because of numbers and these will, because of the tides, have to be on different days. It would be very useful if you could let me know, fairly soon, whether you would be interested in this trip. Incidentally, I will arrange for a taxi to bring us back to Colchester!

**Monday 2nd October 2017 Meet at Greyfriars at 10.30am for our monthly Coffee Morning.**

Cost: Free but donations welcomed.

**Week beginning 16th October 2017 (actual date to be confirmed) Our second visit to Fingringhoe Wick.**

This time, we will be concentrating on the new inter-tidal part of the Reserve. Nearly £150,000 was raised in an appeal to buy 83 acres of land adjacent to Fingringhoe Wick so that a new wetland habitat could be created as a habitat for rare species. Coastal mudflats are fast declining and this was an opportunity to engage in managed coastline realignment which reduces both coastal erosion and flooding whilst introducing saline lagoons, new mudflats, freshwater reed beds and salt marshes. These provide a nursery for marine fish and for birds like little terns. The purchase of the land also provided some valuable unenriched

grassland and native species hedgerows. We will explore, with a ranger, what this new acquisition has to offer.

Cost: £6

**Monday 6th November 2017 Meet at Greyfriars at 10.30am for our Coffee Morning and discussion.**

Cost: Free but donations welcomed.

**1st November 2017 Meet at GREYFRIARS HOTEL at 7.30pm for our Burning Issues Meeting**

Again, a change of venue. Another opportunity, particularly for those unable to get to our coffee mornings, to come and discuss issues affecting the town. Please let us know if you want or can offer a lift. It would be useful if you could tell us if you are hoping to come, although not essential.

Cost Free but donations to the work of the Society always welcomed

**Monday 4th December 2017 Greyfriars 10.30am**

Please join us for the last Coffee Morning of the year.

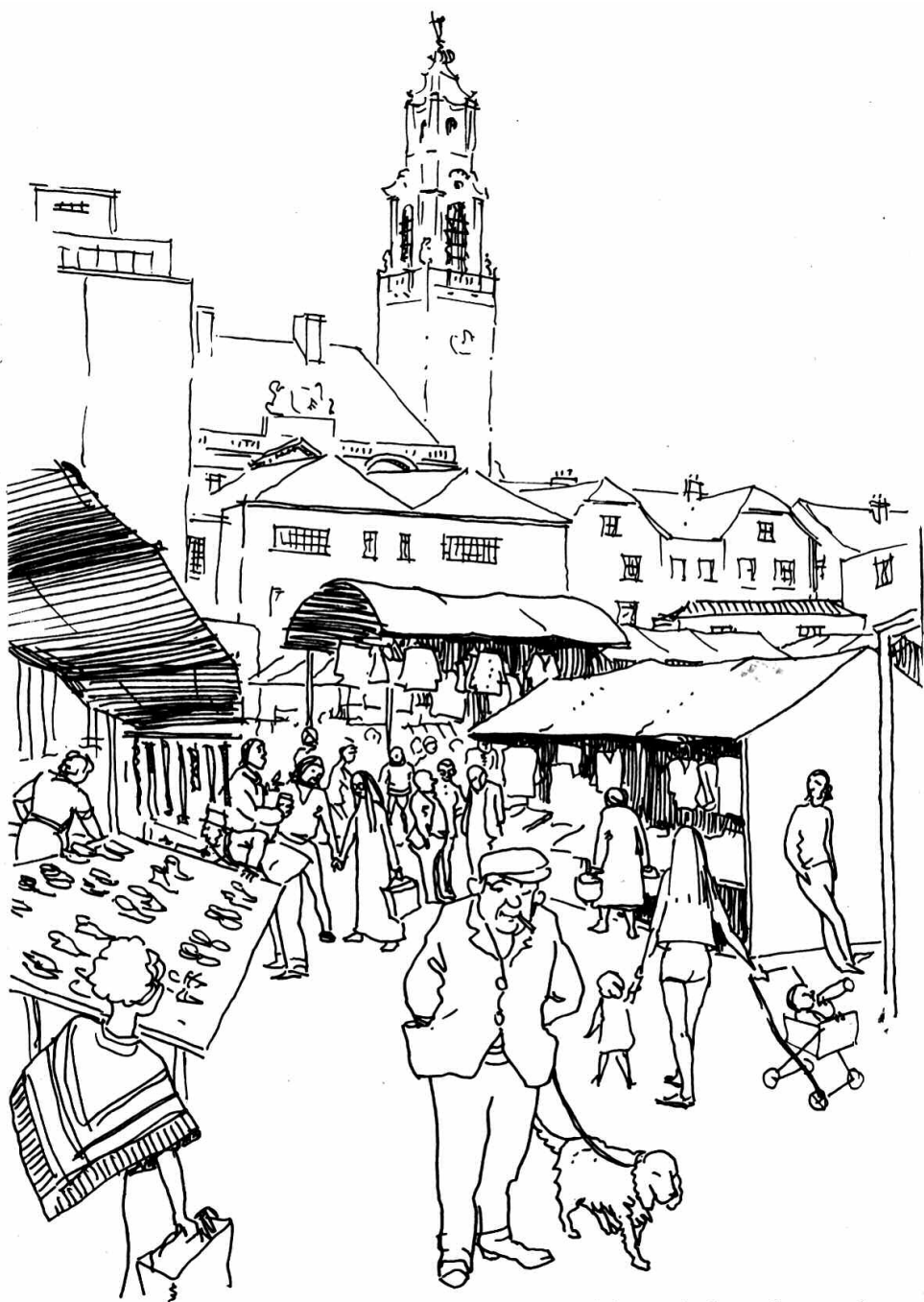
Cost: Free, donations welcomed.

### The Objects of The Civic Society are to:

- a) Encourage high standards of architecture and town planning in the Borough of Colchester.
- b) Stimulate public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the area of the town of Colchester and its surroundings.
- c) Encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity and of public interest.
- d) Pursue these ends by means of meetings, exhibitions, lectures, publications, other forms of instruction and publicity and the promotion of schemes of a charitable nature.
- e) Co-operate with other local, regional and national organisations in the pursuit of the same objects on a broader geographical basis.

### CURRENT OFFICERS

Hon. Life President:	Vacant	
President:	Vacant	
Vice Presidents:	John Burton, Ray Chandler	
Chairman and Programme Organiser:	Jo Edwards, 43 Priory Street, Colchester CO1 2QB.	01206 868254
Vice Chairman and Membership Secretary:	Ann Turner, 1 Robin Close, Great Bentley CO7 8QH.	01206 250894
Treasurer:	Paul Weston, 46 Wordsworth Road, Colchester CO3 4HR.	01206 548511
Secretary:	Elisabeth Baines, 37 Valley Road, Wivenhoe CO7 9LZ.	01206 823523
Newsletter Editor:	Peter Evans, 5 Grimston Road, Colchester CO2 7RN.	01206 540990
Other elected members:	Austin Baines, 37 Valley Road, Wivenhoe CO7 9LZ.	01206 823523
	Ken Cooke, 35 Northgate Street, Colchester CO1 1EY.	01206 767068
	Rosemary Jewers, 16 Abbeyfield View, Colchester CO2 7US	01206 543287
	Jayne Richardson, 61 Byron Avenue, Colchester CO3 4HQ	
	Brian Roach, 92 Lexden Road, Colchester CO3 3SR.	01206 562177
	John Salmon, 68 Castle Road, Colchester CO1 1UN	01206 543287
	Henry Spyvee, 16 Wakefield Close, Colchester CO1 2SD.	01206 524077



*Colchester's Saturday market*