

Spring 2015



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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The Society's website is
<http://www.colchestercivicsociety.co.uk>
(the website is currently being developed).

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A ROOM WITH A VIEW

My dear old neighbour, Kath, now sadly deceased, used to remark that those passing our houses never seemed to realise that their conversations could be overheard. She was quite right. Often it's just intriguing snatches, sometimes quite scandalous gossip, all too frequently it's obscene or foul mouthed boasting from young men about their conquests. Late at night, it will be sobbing girls begging their boyfriends to sober up or men yelling into their mobile phones, trying to ascertain which bar their mates are in. We hear it all. But the conversation I overheard a few days ago was truly a one-off. Two elderly women stopped just outside. My front room window was wide open. Looking carefully around to make sure nobody was within earshot and completely ignoring the window, one said to the other

"Come here, dear, and I'll whisper in your ear!"

I was sorting books, no more than six inches away from the pair of them, so I could hear every word. I know I should either have walked away, or made my presence obvious, but, with an armful of books, and holding a pile with my knee, I confess that I didn't.

"Well, dear, he flushed her RIGHT THROUGH, dear, RIGHT THROUGH!! I thought, well! She said it all bubbled! Don't seem to have done her no harm, but fancy all them bubbles!!!!"

"How did he do it?"

"I don't know, dear, with a long tube down her throat, I suppose."

"He can't have used a tube because the water won't have touched the sides!"

"Well, I don't know. I shall have to ask her....."

And, with that, they both moved on. My mind boggles!

A ROOM WITH A VIEW (chapter 2)

It is twelve minutes past seven on a cold,

wet, Saturday night. Groups of young people are already making their way along Priory Street en route to the bars and clubs in the town centre. A substantial amount of pre-loading has obviously taken place during the afternoon. How, otherwise, can one explain the choral efforts of several young men:

'We love you car park, oh yes we do!

We love you car park, with a love so true.

We love you car park, we do

Oh car park we love you!

Oh well, whatever turns you on!

Jo Edwards

YOUR NEWSLETTER

You will have noticed that the newsletter is in a new format. This is a style used for some other newsletters, and as it is smaller, it may be more convenient to keep. The main reason is that the new format will be cheaper. Postage and envelopes will be substantially less expensive and it will be easier to despatch.

The Executive Committee discussed this and felt that there were good reasons to go ahead. However, nothing is set in stone and I would be glad to have your comments and suggestions.

Peter Evans EDITOR

MEMBERSHIP

New members – Rosalind Green of West Mersea, Sandra Turner of Halstead and Vivien Teague of Colchester.

We are sorry to report that long standing member Bob Bacon has died.

We must also report that Bill Hudson, our Life President died recently. We will print a tribute in the next edition.

If you know of any people who wish to join, please contact Ann Turner, our membership secretary for a membership form. (Or refer them to our website, www.colchestercivicsociety.co.uk, where there is one that can be downloaded).

CIVIC SOCIETY HOSPICE VISIT – MORE INFORMATION

I have been asked to write about the St Helena Hospice as some of the information after the Civic Society visit was not quite accurate!

St Helena Hospice was opened in May 1985 (30th anniversary this year). It was, in fact, St Christopher's Hospice in Sydenham, London, founded by Dame Cicely Saunders, which opened in 1965 (50th anniversary this year).

Originally St Helena Hospice was mainly for patients with advanced cancer needing expert symptom control and support. It was always the idea to expand this concept in due course.

Day care was made possible by the building of a Day Centre next to the hospice and later one in Clacton. This enabled patients to come for a day, not only giving the family respite, but providing many supportive services. Various therapies: relaxation, massage, art therapy, baths, hairdressing and many others are enjoyed.

The hospice beds, daycare, and Hospice at Home try to bring the specialist skills needed to those with life-limiting illness whatever stage they may be at. Such care may also be needed earlier in an illness when prognosis is unknown but symptoms and stress need support. This means that sometimes the need goes and discharge is possible, but the care is always available if required.

Later it was recognised that other life-limiting diagnoses needed similar specialist support and the care was extended as was found appropriate.

It was recognised that the best way to ensure more people could get this care – symptom control and family support in particular – was to teach other health care workers. The Education Centre was built, providing courses and resources to try to make sure

that wherever anyone was being treated the right skills were available.

Most people want to be in their own home and choose to die there, but are worried about getting the right support for themselves and their families. Hospice at Home can help in bringing the hospice skills and practical care to people in the last few days or weeks of their lives.

Things have changed over the past thirty years. The population in N E Essex has increased. Treatments have improved so that people often live longer but they and their families still live with uncertainty and sometimes disabilities. Also the support in the community has been cut back. This means that the Hospice will be considering how it can respond to these changing circumstances. As when originally founded, it is still true that Hospice is not just a building but a concept of care. Also Dame Cicely's words still ring true: 'We must help people to live until they die and the family to go on living afterwards.'

Dr Elizabeth Hall

PRESERVING THE HERITAGE – LIFE IN THE PLANNING OFFICE

We invited Colchester Borough Council's Conservation Officer, Libby Kirkby-Taylor to attend a meeting of the Executive Committee in autumn 2014 so that we could discuss matters of mutual interest and get to know each other. I asked if it would be possible for Libby to write us an article about her role for the newsletter. Libby said that she would never get round to it, but would I like to interview her? So here we go.

Libby's actual title is Historic Buildings and Areas Officer within the Major Projects Team of the Commercial Services Division of the Council. Her team deals with major projects and specialist planning issues. In particular, she works alongside the Council's

archaeological and design experts and the Museum service. More straightforward planning services – relating to modern properties and less controversial issues – are dealt with by the planning team in a different division. This is not a problem and she can soon walk round to meet her colleagues to discuss individual matters and keep up to date, although co-ordination could sometimes be easier as everyone has busy schedules.

She has been with Colchester Borough for 2 years but has lived in the town centre for 7 years. Her home is quite close to Jo Edwards' house but they have only recently met and realised that they have interests in common. (Jo must be slipping!). After studying History of Art and Architecture at Reading University, Libby did some further studying and had jobs outside her area of expertise, including at a bank, before getting a conservation post with Essex County Council Historic Buildings Team in 2008. The first area that she had to look after, albeit as long-term sickness cover, was the Braintree district, including Coggeshall. She then moved on to look after the Southend area, but found this lacked any variety because there are only about 80 listed properties and they are well looked after. (Coggeshall has many more despite being much smaller). Later, she was involved with the Braintree, Colchester and Tendring areas, before leaving to work for Colchester Borough.

This must be an almost ideal job for Libby. She feels that the Council takes its responsibilities seriously and does more than many councils do. Not all councils have conservation officers, for example. Colchester should be more positive and prouder about what it has achieved.

Libby says that she spends part of her time feeling a bit like a tourist looking at buildings and the other part making herself unpopular by having to refuse people's requests to make

unsuitable changes to their properties. She tries to be as helpful as possible by working with owners to find alternatives when she is unable to agree to proposals. These are all included in the 1,500 properties that have been individually listed, which equates to some 2,500 actual properties, because some listings cover several buildings.

She has said that to understand individual historic buildings better she will consult whatever records that she can find, such as the Museum collection and the Local Listing records compiled a few years ago, several local organisations and experts. Local Listing is the name given to the properties flagged as being important locally and for this reason worth preserving for historical or architectural reasons although they are not important enough to have been added to the national list. Colchester has a number of heritage groups and working with them can be a big help to Libby.

The areas that give her most concern are the properties recorded as at risk, of which there are 40 in Colchester, including 'Jumbo'. Other important buildings at risk at St George's Hall (rear of St Peter's Church) 21, 22 and 23 East Street, 48 North Hill and 13 Queen Street. She would love to solve the problem of East Street, full of buildings with potential, but with massive traffic problems. With so many listed properties, she has her time cut out.

Libby, thanks for talking to me about your fascinating job and thank you for all your efforts keeping Colchester as we would like it to be.

Peter Evans

PLANNING

The Borough Council is reviewing the Borough Plan, which it needs to do, partly because of changes to legislation but also because of differing requirements. They are

carrying out consultations with parish and neighbourhood councils. Wivenhoe Town Council is putting together a document itself, along with the Planning Officers.

The Council has identified a number of sites that are likely to be developed, as they have received information from developers. The number of sites available within the town itself is getting smaller although there is more scope in rural areas.

Some of the Executive Committee were invited to meet Karen Syrett of the Council's Spatial Policy Team and another planning colleague for an informal discussion about the process. This was an interesting meeting for all of us and we have taken part in the consultation process.

The work that the Civic Society has been doing with Street Naming and installing Blue plaques do contribute to the Heritage element of the Borough Plan.

One planning application that has appeared recently that is of special interest relates to Winnocks Almshouses in Military Road, where some 1930's bungalows are being replaced as they are outdated and incapable of adaptation. As yet, no applications have been made for redevelopment of the Essex County Hospital site, but we will be keen to see what is proposed.

Peter Evans

BLUE PLAQUES

Civic Societies are well known for erecting plaques. Possibly the success of the Frank Daniell plaque recently, had spurred others to ask for advice about erecting one. They all wanted to know how, what to do and what not to do.

Therefore, in February 2015, I compiled two lists of instructions; one for listed buildings and one for none listed buildings. Having completed them, I'm now ready to advise the next person or group that comes knocking at

our Civic Society door!

In January, Sir Bob Russell MP, consulted us about a plaque he wanted to erect to commemorate the first Colchester air raid of WW1. I was able to advise the route he should take, so that his green plaque would be ready



Green plaque in position on the wall at the rear of Colchester Police Station, Butt Road

for the unveiling on the 21st February. Of course, one newspaper report got the wrong end of the stick, they wrote that I had 'made' the plaque! Hmm... if that's true, I had better get back to my foundry and start making the next... I wonder who that will be for! Perhaps a professional plaque maker would be better, I do know a very good one and I'll continue to offer advice!

Rosemary Jewers

OTHER SOCIETIES

We receive newsletters and correspondence from other societies, such as Norwich and Ipswich. It is interesting to read what is happening elsewhere and how they deal with it (and from your editor's point of view, the style and printing of their newsletter). Not all societies call themselves Civic Societies – for

example the Wivenhoe Society and the Frinton and Walton Heritage Trust. Their roles vary.

One recent problem that Bury St. Edmunds has faced and that their Society has reported on is a major fire in the town centre that all but destroyed Cupola House, an admired 17th century historic building in the Buttermarket. It is being restored but the architects are coming across a number of unexpected issues. The same issue of their newsletter reported on the sudden closure of the Angel Hill Tourist Information Centre right at the start of the tourist season.

Peter Evans

5/6 ST NICHOLAS STREET, COLCHESTER – A SUITABLE PROPERTY FOR LISTING?

This was previously occupied by Jack's Discount Stores and currently has a temporary occupant. It is owned by Colchester Borough Council but although it is about 400 years old, it has not been listed under the Listed Property rules. The Society has decided to make an application to English Heritage for it to be listed, as it is an important building dating back to the 17th century, if not earlier.

The procedure for listing involves a lengthy application form but there is a good case. This will be the first time the Society has made an application like this and we will give more information about the progress of the application and the building as it becomes available.

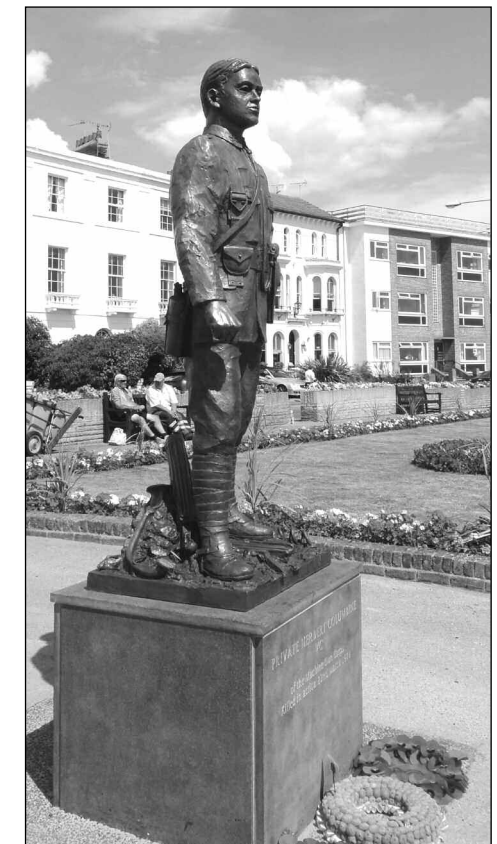
Peter Evans

LOCAL HERITAGE ISSUES

The Guildhall in Lavenham has had a revamp by the National Trust. I was surprised to find it open on a Saturday in February but apparently the work was done promptly and the NT is keen to show it off and it is worth seeing. I think an exhibition of the railway in Lavenham is being 'rested' but the informa-

tion on *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* and the Taylor sisters has definitely been removed. There has always been dispute about whether Colchester or Lavenham can claim the poem. I am told that recent information makes it less likely to be Lavenham, but there are other possible claimants.

In Walton-on-Naze, a special fund was set up to provide a statue of Herbert Columbine, a man with local connections who received a VC in World War 1. This was created by Essex Sculptor John Doubleday and unveiled in the summer. One unexpected contributor to the fund was Dame Judi Dench, a native of York. Apparently she had a relative who died in



Statue of Herbert Columbine, The Parade, Walton-on-Naze



Columbine VC looking out to sea at Walton-on-Naze

WW1. The statue is well sited on the promenade between the Pier and the High Street. Unfortunately, one house in the attractive early Victorian terrace directly behind the statue is in such a poor state that Tendring Council has had to serve notices on the owner.

I wonder how many members took children or grandchildren to the Pier at Walton-on-Naze to ride on the Carousel, sometimes called the steam horses? The fine old 1898 equipment, designed by Frederick Savage, was sold in 2008 and replaced by a replica. It was said that it was going to America but it actually ended up at Great Yarmouth as part of a display at an attraction called *Yesterday's World*, which closed on 31st December 2014. (Their Battle branch is still open). The Carousel was due to be auctioned by sealed bids in February, with an estimate of £100,000.

The Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service has been awarded £660,000 extra funding over 3 years from the Arts Council Resilience fund. The Museum had lost a lot of central government funding over recent years so this will be very welcome.

Developer Taylor Wimpey has renovated a former sentry box from the Garrison and installed panels in it commemorating local military history, in conjunction with the Museum. This is to be found on the Blenheim Park estate, off Butt Road. Let us hope other developers are equally aware and supportive of our heritage.

We must not forget the entirely appropriate statue of Peter Wright unveiled in February on Turnstyle Way, on the site of Colchester United's former ground at Layer Road

Peter Evans

STREET NAMING

Since the Civic Society has started to be consulted about appropriate street names for new developments, we have directly named 2 streets. In the last newsletter, Henry Spyvee explained the background to Ruth King Close on the Park Road site and we can now report that a new road in the Berechurch area is to be named after Richard Nicholls, one of the Colchester Martyrs who died for their faith in 1553-58. The rest of the area is already named for other Colchester Martyrs, including

William Harris, Rose Allen and John Hammond. The original suggestion for the road name would not have fitted in with the estate.

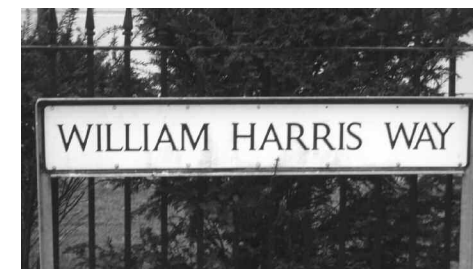
Many residents of this estate are likely to be unaware of the reasons for the names, but they are included in the plaque commemorating the martyrs in the Town Hall, just outside the Moot Hall.

Before we had this formal relationship with the Council, we did draw the attention of the developers of the former Betts site on Ipswich Road to the crash of a Lancaster aircraft from 626 RAF Squadron on 25th April 1944.

The crew of 8, including a Scot, 5 Englishmen and 3 Canadians, all died. This information was provided by Vic Lewis, one of our members, and the developers have agreed to the suggestion.

LAMP COLUMNS

You may have noticed that one of the lamp columns outside the Town Hall has been replaced by a box. Presumably somebody has



Street name plate from the estate named for Colchester Martyrs

clouded it with a car and a repaired column will soon reappear. There are, however, problems with replacement lamp columns and an article from the Roman and Castle Road Residents Association newsletter follows:

Roman and Castle Road Residents' Association has taken an interest in street lighting because during the last 3 or 4 years two of our original cast iron street lights have been

knocked down by delivery vans and replaced by Essex County Highways with modern steel ones; and in the first case with a completely different design and size. More recently I attended a meeting arranged by Sir Bob Russell MP with representatives from County Highways lighting section and Colchester planning department to discuss the issue of the loss of original cast iron street lights. Sir Bob took an interest in this when a number of original Colchester Pattern cast iron lamp columns were replaced in Catchpool Road in Colchester, where he lives.

A consequence of this meeting was that I undertook to research how other councils around the country have dealt with upgrading their street lighting and in particular how this impacted on the original cast iron lighting. The outcome of the research undertaken by our Residents' Association team is that we discovered there are many areas where the upgrading has resulted in the large scale removal and loss of original cast iron lamp posts. We also found, however, that a number of councils, including Hampshire, Camden, Ealing and Bristol have adopted policies which allow for the restoration and reuse of the original lamp posts in designated heritage or conservation areas.

The Street Lighting Manager at Bristol City Council was particularly helpful in response to one of my freedom of information requests and put me in touch with a small company recently formed by a voluntary group in the west-country (Sight Designs) who are working with Bristol Council to install new LED lighting systems in a traditional style lantern on top of the old cast iron posts. This company claims that in the long term it is actually more cost effective to do this than install modern steel street lights with an average life span of only 30 years, whereas the cast iron columns which have already been in place for over one hundred years are good for many more.

We discovered however a rather salutary story about the process of upgrading in Ealing,



The Town Hall with only one lamp column standing outside

in which the removal of original cast iron street lights resulted in such a public uproar that the leader of the council felt it necessary to put a stop to the work and find a way to save the remaining columns while continuing with the upgrade. The solution again was that the originals were removed in stages, restored and refitted with modern lamps. Some seven hundred restored original lamp posts were eventually re-sited in a designated heritage area. A full account of the story is available here: <http://www.westealingneighbours.org.uk> (once on this page click the link 'SEAL' in the left hand column).

I then wrote to Rodney Bass (portfolio holder for County Highways) informing him of this and explaining that our association is concerned to do all that we can to see that the large scale loss of original cast iron street lighting

does not occur here in Colchester, or indeed in other parts of the County, and asking that the Essex County Highways Lighting Engineers explore the possibilities for reusing at least some of the existing stock of cast iron lamp-posts for installation in conservation areas such as Roman and Castle Road, in preparation for the possibility of a switch over to a more widespread use of LED lighting, following the recently announced trial.

Mr. Bass replied saying that he strongly supports the preservation of cast iron street furniture wherever it is viable to do so and in appropriate locations and that he would ask the Highways Engineers to consider what can be done to facilitate our request and adding "I would have thought that, prima facie, Colchester is a good candidate for such preservation."

Naturally we were pleased with this response, but it remains to be seen whether a program of restoration and relocation will be adopted as part of a changeover to LED street lighting. Not all councils responded so positively to public opposition as Ealing Council. In Harrogate for instance North Yorkshire Council is continuing to replace cast iron lamp columns with steel ones, despite protests from town councillors and Harrogate Civic Society.

I believe, however, that we have the opportunity at present to influence ECC policy in favour of the development of such a program in Essex. The renovation, relocation and upgrading of cast iron lamp columns is not a simple or (at least in the short term) a cheap option, so public pressure may well be the deciding factor if such a policy is to be adopted.

For this reason we ask that Colchester Civic Society joins with us in campaigning for the long term conservation of cast iron lamp columns in Colchester.

John Salmon

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STOP PRESS

A ROOM WITH A VIEW (Chapter 3)

Emerging from my front door the other day, I was nearly knocked off my feet by a car travelling the wrong way along Priory Street. The pavement is so narrow that, even as one steps over the threshold, one can be hit. Jim, my husband, had his wrist broken years ago by a cyclist, who collided with him as he went out. I managed a domino effect on some foreign cyclists. I was leaving the house when a group of them came the wrong way at speed. The handlebars of the first caught my arm even though I wasn't even out of the door. He fell off. The one behind him ran into him and

so on. They added insult to injury by swearing at me!

So why am I telling you this? Because Essex County Council, in their wisdom (?) have proposed the reversal of the traffic flow in Priory Street and we are worried. Now, that sounds really NIMBY, but it isn't. In England, we are conditioned to driving on the left and automatically do so even in one way streets, thus most vehicles coming along a reverse flow Priory Street will be incredibly close to the houses, so, yes, we are worried about our safety. But we are also incredibly worried about the safety of the children at St Thomas More's Primary School, about the safety of people using the five religious buildings in the street, about the safety of elderly and vulnerable people living at the residential home and sheltered accommodation, about visitors to the Priory who leave through a gate straight onto the road. The problem of vehicles passing close to the majority of buildings in the street will be exacerbated by the huge increase in the volume of traffic. Everything coming down High Street wishing to access all points south and west, which currently does the Lewis Gardens U turn or the Roman/Castle Road loop etc, will come through Priory Street instead, causing chaos on East Hill and putting the listed buildings on either side of the entrance to the street in considerable danger. Much of the traffic coming up East Hill will do the same. Why go all the way up to the Queen Street corner if you can cut through Priory Street? Priory Street is very narrow. By my house it is not wide enough for two vehicles to pass each other (I stop all the traffic when I pull up outside to get Jim, who is disabled, into the car).

It cannot cope with so much traffic, especially when there is a wedding or a funeral at St James the Less church, an ambulance at the residential home or the street outside the Mosque is packed with people attending

Friday lunchtime prayers. And don't get me started on the end of the school day, already an accident waiting to happen as children flood out onto the street and cross the road onto the car park or walk down to East Hill on a pavement a foot wide. Priory Street car park has quite a large area designated for disabled parking. Both the residential home and the sheltered accommodation have a number of wheelchair users. Most access the town centre from the St Botolph's Street end of the street. There is no pavement at all on the south side and the north side pavement is difficult because of street furniture and the sheer vol-

ume of people, many of them looking in Markham's window. Most wheelchair users take a risk and use the road. Can you imagine what that will be like with so many vehicles coming from behind? The idea is insane. It is designed to aid the smooth running of Park and Ride, just like the introduction of further bus lanes and the removal of pedestrian crossings. I am all for Park and Ride but this is ridiculous! We have both paper and online petitions. For further information, please get in touch with me!

Jo Edwards

REPORTS OF SOCIAL EVENTS

Boat cruise on the Lady Grace from West Mersea to Salcott Creek, various dates in March 2014.

This was an opportunity to explore Salcott Creek and get close to the number of birds feeding on the mud banks rich in molluscs and worms.

Weather-wise it was the opposite of a Spring afternoon. The sky was leaden and threatening rain and the wind speed was in excess of 20mph. Nevertheless and in true British spirit, seven doughty passengers stepped abroad assisted by the lady Captain.

Due to the rough conditions there was a change in our itinerary to Tollesbury Channel instead of Salcott Creek. To reach the Tollesbury Channel we had to experience open water, a plunging swell and a regular dousing of spray. We entered the Creek on the South channel side and immediately benefited from the protection it afforded from the swell, spray and wind. In this peaceful environment we were rewarded with a variety of bird species. The channel enabled us to get close the feeding birds. We were able to identify Curlew, Godwit and Bar Tailed Godwit, Eider Duck, Oyster Catcher and Red Breasted

Merganze. We also saw a Marsh Harrier.

Our return to shore was not so rough. Our Lady Captain was thanked for her navigation skill and her knowledge of bird species.

A group photo was taken. No member of the party was sea sick.

Peter Evans

Not your Editor, but from Roman Road

Dedham River Cruises, various dates July and August 2014.

What better way of spending a warm August afternoon than on a boat on the Stour? Six of us and 2 crew boarded at Le Talbooth and sailed to Dedham on a silent engined boat (the *Kathleen*). It was so peaceful. the only noise was from rippling water and the leaves in the tress. We were even honoured by a kingfisher who escorted us part of the way.

Having reached Dedham, we turned and sailed back up to Stratford St Mary, then back again to Le Talbooth, where Jo did an excellent job of ferrying people back and forth between there and Maison Talbooth, where we had tea and delicious cakes in a relaxing atmosphere. A lovely occasion.

Aileen Leighton



Meal at the Minories, 30th November 2014

This meal combined the traditional New Year party, a final celebration of our 50th Anniversary and a chance for a get together. We also took advantage of the chance to inspect our Roman Wall display board on East Hill just below St James' Church, unveiled only the previous day.

After we had eaten, Henry Spyvee, Chairman of the Friends of the Roman Wall, thanked the Society for sponsoring the Board and gave us an update on the other Interpretation boards. We were then able to view an exhibition of photographs from the last 50 years of the Society.

This was a popular event and all available space was filled, in fact, I understand some bookings had to be refused. The food was a



Above: Former Civic Society Chairman John Egan cuts the anniversary cake.

Left: The anniversary cake about to be cut.

Below: Civic Society members inspecting the Roman Wall interpretation board.



buffet with hot and cold food, and a rather splendid desert option. The staff at the Minories took very good care of us and it was pleasing that John and Caroline Egan were able to visit us from London.

The Minories was closed to the public but we were able to have a look around the building and to examine the exhibition. It was a shame that this was interrupted by a fire alarm, but we had finished eating by then, and the Minories garden is always pleasant gives a good view of both the Venetian window and the Folly.

For me a meal in the Minories is always an interesting experience. My mother was a maid for Dr Ruth Bensusan Butt and her husband in the 1930's, and my father visited her there, in the kitchen, now the café part of the Minories. I understand that this was what was called 'courting' but that it does not happen now. I am sure that they would have enjoyed the meal.

Peter Evans

16th January 2015 Late Turner Exhibition, Tate Modern, London

Turner- the greatest English Painter?

Until our recent visit to the Late Turner exhibition, I would not have been prepared to agree with this judgement. However the lecturer who introduced our tour explained that not all the canvases in the exhibition would have been displayed in Turner's time, as they would not have been considered finished. Her guide to the best of the exhibition made me more disposed to agree with this statement.

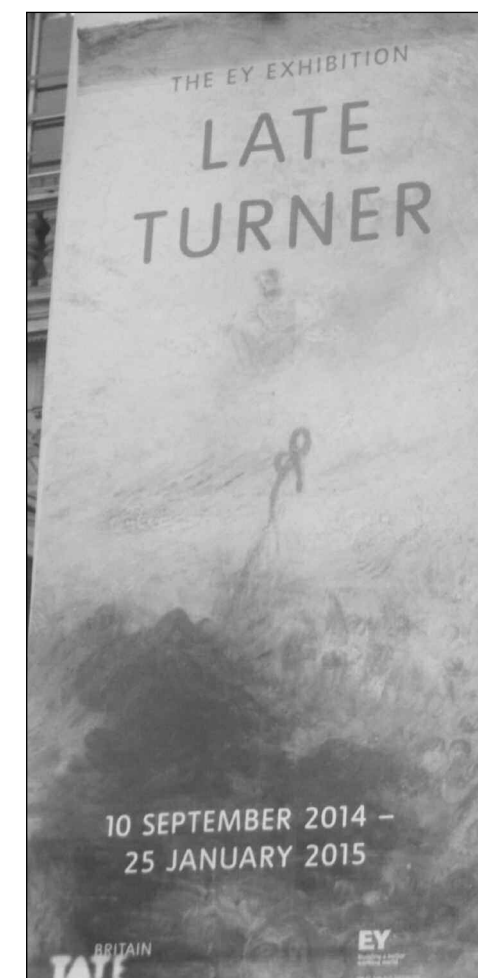
His paintings were often the subject of controversy, and his reputation was subject to numerous reverses, described in detail in the catalogue.

He was criticised for his generous use of yellow and was once called a "Yellow Dwarf," and his patron William Beckford once complained Turner "painted as if his brains and

imagination were mixed on his palette with soapsuds and lather." Constable however, claimed that he "painted with tinted steam." Turner's aim to paint light itself informs many of his late paintings: I was particularly drawn to his seascapes by this quality, but found it hard to appreciate the watercolours.

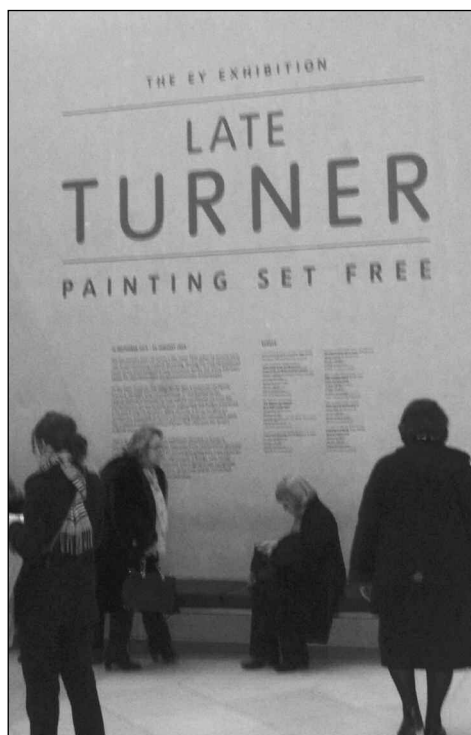
Between 1833-1851 Turner used many varied techniques to present the world, to quote from the catalogue, "as mutable, everchanging, where solid forms become tremulous in light."

Elisabeth Baines





Inside Tate Modern



The entrance to the Late Turner Exhibition. The slogan 'painting set free' is misleading. There was no free gift - it was Turner's style that had been set free.

Visit to Beacon House, East Hill, Colchester 5th March 2015

A group of 20 visited Beacon House, opposite St James' church on East Hill. Beacon House is a property for the 'Relief of poverty and sickness amongst people who are homeless or have no permanent accommodation, by the provision, according to Christian principles and faith, of healthcare, counselling and other support services'.

It is run as a Charitable Trust with directors from all specialities advising on its day to day running. Beacon House became operational in August 1966 and therefore is 18 years in existence. The current manager, Vivienne Wiggins was appointed in September 2013 and greeted us with tea, coffee and an introductory talk on their work.

There are 10 part time staff, one part time apprentice and a considerable number of volunteers. Their work was supported by students on placement from Essex University and Colchester Institute. Their hours are 10.00am to 2.00pm Monday to Friday.

Vivienne told us that, on the whole, they have very good relations with the local community and receive many donations, financial as well as in food. However there will always be those that are critical but probably innocent of the fact that Beacon House is not the cause of the problem but helps in trying to solve it.

Whilst many of their clients are drug addicts, many have fallen on hard times, are in broken relationships, lost their jobs and have found themselves losing their homes, with no where to go. Vivienne explained the complexities of homelessness and the difficulties in trying to get social housing and back on the road again into work. The 'battle-back' was hard enough without trying to cope with mental health issues, anxiety and where the next bed was for the following night. She further explained the current welfare reforms,

although necessary, have created greater problems for vulnerable groups.

We were split into 2 groups and given a tour of the premises, which included a nurse-led clinic, showers and toilet facilities; a laundry service; 2 daybeds for tired people; refreshments and cooked meals; a computer suite; art and crafts activities and a barbering service in operation while we were there. The atmosphere was relaxed and professional, we were told a range of activities to build skills and confidence. Their entire on-going support programme is designed to assist people towards more stability and independence, they are introduced to other associated agencies.

The ratio of male/female users was 83%/17% in the year ended 31st March 2014 - 397 male and 77 female users, the bulk aged

between 25-60. Only 25% needed support for more than 5 years.

A very enjoyable visit which told me so much that I did not know. When I next pass the Beacon House complex, I will have a greater understanding of the intent and the plight of those trying to work through their many problems to fully rehabilitate and get housed. Thank you Jo for organising this one. A fee of £5 per person went to Beacon House to help towards their work.

Lynn Sturgess

AN INVITATION TO JOIN ANOTHER GROUP

**Friends of The Minories – private view of
Munnings Art Museum, Dedham, 19th May
2015 2.30pm**



The Friends of the Minories Committee warmly invite you to a

**Private View
of
The Munnings Art Museum**

The Museum presents a complete redisplay of paintings by Sir Alfred Munnings and a focus exhibition, "The Horse's Tale", using previously unseen material.




Tuesday 19th May 2015 2.30pm-5pm

There will be a curatorial talk at 3pm with a chance to ask questions and view the exhibition, followed by tea and homemade cakes at 4pm.
A raffle will also take place with prizes kindly donated by Castle House.

Sir Alfred Munnings was a celebrated and prolific artist best known for his outstanding equestrian portraits. In addition, his beautiful rendering of the East Anglian landscape, full of character and light, shows his passion for traditional ways of life in rural England.

This really does promise to be a very special occasion so do come and bring a friend.

Cost: **£20.00 per person**, to include entry fee, tea & homemade cakes.
Tickets are strictly limited and as we anticipate this will be a very popular event, please book in good time.

All enquiries to Elizabeth Parker, telephone: 01206820742, mobile: 07971 903311
Email: r.parker@btinternet.com

Please make cheques payable to **The Friends of the Minories** and send to
Mrs. Elizabeth Parker, 7, Pearl Walk, Wivenhoe, Essex CO7 9GS

N.B: There is a large free car park within the grounds of Castle House, Castle Hill, Dedham, Colchester CO7 6AZ. There is no house lift but the stairs are shallow and gradual. There is an accessible toilet to the rear of the house, reachable from the grounds and car park.

www.thefriendsoftheminories.org.uk

SOCIAL PROGRAMME 2015

I am still pursuing the idea of a visit to the House for Essex but have run into a problem. Part of the conditions for planning permission were that there should be minimal disruption for neighbours and therefore accommodating the large number of people who wish to see the building is proving difficult! I am keeping my fingers crossed that the situation will be resolved. I am visiting Greyfriars next week for my own personal preview!! They hope to open this summer and I will be discussing a tour of the building when I go. So, if you are interested, please, if you haven't already done so, let me know as soon as possible. Foulness is still on but I am flying even more by the seat of my pants on this one than I was because so many of you want to go. I will be in touch as soon as I can with those who have expressed an interest. The London cinema visit will be in the Autumn. Full details in the next Newsletter.

Please note that although our main pickup point for our trips is at the top of East Hill (strictly speaking the bottom of High Street as East Hill actually starts halfway down the hill, just to confuse you all!!) we do pick up elsewhere too. I can normally arrange to stop in Lexden Road and, if we are going to Suffolk or Norfolk, in Ipswich Road too. There is now no long term parking at Tollgate but some of you have parked in Lexden, on the hill between the erstwhile Sun and the Lexden Crown, or at Wyevale at Stanway. Please phone me and ask if you want to be picked up anywhere else but East Hill and I will try to oblige!

Tuesday 12th May 2015 Meet at St Botolph's Church Hall (on the south side of the church) at 7.30pm for our Spring Up Meeting

Spring up and tell us about issues in Colchester that are concerning you! This is a

very informal meeting where we discuss matters big and small and see what we can do about them. If you need a lift, please let us know. Coffee and biscuits will be served.

Saturday 16th May 2015 Meet at the Bus Stop outside Greyfriars at the top of East Hill at 8.45am for our first visit of the year to Aldeburgh.

Just as we were about to go to press with this Newsletter, I discovered, purely by chance, that information given to me by the Landmark Trust was completely wrong and the booking I had made with them could not go ahead on the day we had arranged. I have therefore returned to the drawing board. Those who were expecting one visit to Aldeburgh (I announced dates at the Minories party) will now see that we have two!

The visit to the Red House will now be later in the year. More information about that in the next Newsletter. I am frantically picking up pieces and, at the moment, the arrangements are not fully in place for the re-scheduled visits but the first should be something like this. Fingers crossed!

It is the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Landmark Trust and we thought that a visit to one of their properties to mark the occasion would be nice but there aren't a lot within easy travelling distance. However, there is one that is really worth seeing!

So we are off to the Martello Tower at Aldeburgh, converted into a holiday cottage. It is the northernmost of all the Martello Towers built on the South and East Coasts during the Napoleonic Wars. Most are circular but this one is quatrefoil. It was designed to have 4 large guns on the top, each able to fire over the parapet. The accommodation floor had room for 8 ordinary soldiers, 5 NCOs and an officer. The Aldeburgh tower

was part of the village of Slaughden which has now gone, having been overtaken by the sea. Sea defences built in the 1950's have saved the fort for the time being, although it has lost much of its moat. Perhaps the fact that is now firmly on the beach is part of its attraction as a holiday cottage! It was sold by the Ministry of Defence in 1931 and was used as a holiday home (the Mitfords stayed several times) until it was sold again for use as a studio.

At that point, building work, supervised by an architect, was carried out but it was in a very poor state when it was acquired by the Landmark Trust. They have done an enormous amount of work on the building but still haven't managed to cure the leaky roof! They have solved the problem of the drips in a very novel way! I have, luckily, been asked whether I can incorporate lots of free time in Aldeburgh. That suits me wonderfully as the afternoon is something of a logistical nightmare!

Why? Because I need to divide the group into three to visit nearby Thorpeness where we have planned a short guided tour, not, you will be pleased to know, on foot, but by horse drawn carriage.

The trouble is that the carriage can only take five people at a time! So Group One will leave Aldeburgh by coach at 12.45pm for the carriage tours whilst Groups Two and Three have free time in Aldeburgh. Group Two will leave Aldeburgh at 1.45pm and Group Three at 2.45pm. The coach will pick up Group One when it drops off Group Two and so on so everyone will have time to explore Aldeburgh, I hope!

While you are waiting for your tour in Thorpeness there will be time to wander down to the Meare. Thorpeness was, until 1910, a tiny fishing village. Then Scottish barrister, Glencaire Stuart Ogilvie, bought a huge swathe of land which included the village and decided to develop a fantasy holiday centre

for his family and friends. This included a golf course and country club and the Meare, a shallow artificial lake with a Peter Pan theme. J M Barrie was one of his friends. It is, altogether, an extraordinary place.

We will all reconvene in Aldeburgh for a cream tea before leaving for home.

Cost, including morning coffee and biscuits and cream tea, £27.50

Wednesday 17th June 2015 meet at the Minories at 74 High Street at 7pm for our Annual General Meeting.

Please note the 7pm! After the business part of the meeting, we will have a break for coffee before a talk from Dr Elizabeth Hall about Dr Ruth Bensusan Butt. Dr Butt, a pioneering GP in the town, lived and worked at the Minories and a blue plaque, instigated by the Civic Society, will be put up on the front of the building this year. It may even be ready for unveiling at the time of our meeting but that is a matter of conjecture! Dr Hall is an authority on the life and work of Dr Butt, who, incidentally, was the mother of one of our founder members, John Bensusan Butt. She is also an authority on the other early women doctors in the town, who, with Dr Butt, were a formidable group with extraordinary energy and determination. Please do try to come. Lifts can be arranged. Parking in the area is very limited although there is some on East Hill. Please contact me if you need a space close by and I will see what I can do!

Friday 19th June 2015 Meet at the Bus Stop outside Greyfriars at the top of East Hill at 9.45am for a visit to the Old Vicarage Gardens at East Ruston in Norfolk.

I have been asked by a number of members whether I can arrange a visit to the gardens at the Old Vicarage in East Ruston in Norfolk. Your wish is my command! Graham Robeson and Alan Gray bought their house in the late

1980's and then proceeded to develop a garden out of 32 acres of flat, windswept, farmland within sight of the North Sea. The creation of carefully thought out windbreaks and lots of 'rooms' has enabled them to develop this unlikely site into a spectacular garden crammed with an enormous variety of plants. From herbaceous borders to wildflower meadows, from tender exotics to vegetables, from woodland walks to desert wash, it has the lot! I know, full well, from long experience, that you will fill the coach boot with plants from the sales area. I also know that you will enjoy the tea garden, where you can buy tea and cakes after your explorations. For those worried about getting tired, there are lots of seats in strategic places around the gardens where you can just rest and watch the bees. The gardens open at 1pm and we want to be there as near to that time as possible because there is so much to see, so I have arranged an early sandwich lunch for everyone at a pub a few miles away from East Ruston.

Cost, including sandwich lunch, £32

Sunday 28th June, Monday 29th June or Tuesday 30th June 2015, all at 6.30pm. Meet at the jetty by the car park on the Hard in Coast Road, West Mersea for an Evening Cruise from West Mersea to Salcott Creek.

This series of cruises aboard the Lady Grace follow the same route as those at the end of March. Leaving the jetty in West Mersea, we travel out into the Blackwater estuary and then turn into Salcott Creek, where, after a while, we moor whilst our Skipper, Stacey, makes tea for everyone and then serves her delicious homemade cakes. It's the perfect trip for most of you!! We will be out on the water for about an hour and a half, so please bring warm clothes and, of course, please wear "sensible" shoes! Stacey's knowledge of the waters around Mersea, the boats, the wildlife etc is enormous and she will hap-

pily point things out to us. If the weather is poor, we will postpone and find another day suitable for you all. Please state on your reply slip which evening suits you best but also, if possible, give a second choice. If you need or can offer a lift to Mersea, please tell us.

Cost, to include tea and cakes, £10

Tuesday 14th July 2015 Meet at the bridge into Colchester Castle at 6.55pm.

Some time ago, I attended a lecture at Firstsite given by Philip Crummy. During that fascinating lecture, one throwaway comment he made caught my attention and imagination. He mentioned the extraordinary mix of building materials in the walls of the Castle. Now I knew that there was Roman brick amongst the stone but I must confess that I have never really studied the building close up. The Normans had a problem when they came to build the Castle because there was a dearth of suitable building material here. They recycled with a vengeance and still struggled to find enough, which is probably why the Castle lacks height! This evening, Philip Crummy, archaeologist extraordinaire, will take us round the outside of the Castle to look at its walls in detail.

Cost £5 to be donated, in its entirety, to the Colchester Archaeological Trust.

Friday 31st July 2015 Meet at the Bus Stop outside Greyfriars at the top of East Hill at 8.45am for a visit to Letheringham Lodge near Wickham Market and Woodbridge Tide Mill.

We start our day with morning coffee at Woodbridge where our group will divide into two. Group One will visit the Tide Mill whilst Group Two travel the few miles to Letheringham Lodge. At lunchtime, we will swap over, Group One visiting Letheringham and Group Two the Tide Mill. The owners of Letheringham Lodge are providing lunch for

us all. I understand that this is likely to be soup, a ploughman's and a dessert. Letheringham Lodge is a lovely old house built on the smallest moated site in Suffolk. The original house, dating from 1472, has additions dating from 1610. Was it built as a hunting lodge, as its name suggests or was it a dower house for Elizabeth Wingfield, grandmother to Sir John Wingfield, eminent politician in the reign of King Henry VIII? We will hear the evidence! The present owners have taken on the restoration of this Grade 2* property and are trying to undo some of the damage caused by previous owners who, for example, removed the historic windows and replaced them with double glazing. During the course of the restoration, they have discovered quite a bit about the house and its construction. It should be a very interesting visit.

The Tide Mill is another building with a fascinating past. There has been a mill on the site since at least 1170. Earliest records show that it was owned by Augustinian Priors who held it for 350 years until it was confiscated by Henry VIII. It was eventually sold by Elizabeth I to the Seckford family who then, after a century or so, sold it again. It passed through several hands until, in 1793, the present mill was built. By the early 1950's, it was the only working tide mill in the country. Unfortunately, in 1957, it closed. By 1968, it was in danger. A huge restoration project was undertaken and, in 1973, it opened to the public as a heritage site. Further restoration recently has brought it back to life as a working tide mill once again and flour is again being produced. It is available for purchase. How good is that?!

Cost, including morning coffee and lunch as detailed above, £37.

Saturday 12th September and Sunday 13th September 2015 Heritage Open Days.

Yes, we will need your help again, please, to

steward some of the properties that will be open to the public this weekend. No experience needed. It really is good fun and you meet some really interesting - and interested - people. Do sign up!

Sunday 4th October 2015 A visit to Foulness Island.

This is definitely a fly by the seat of your pants day. I am just keeping my fingers crossed that all goes to plan! Why is that? Well, Foulness is generally pretty inaccessible as it is owned by the MOD. It is "where the bangs come from"; the huge explosions that can frequently be heard all the way along the Essex coast. The area has been used for artillery testing since 1855. Foulness (from the Old English fulga-naess meaning fowl or wild bird promontory) is an internationally important migratory stop over and breeding ground for birds. It's saltings, mudflats and arable land provide food for a wide variety of wild-fowl and waders and also, in winter, hen harriers. Invertebrates abound as do unusual plants. Part of the island is an SSSI. It is a strange, wild place. The road onto the island, an experience all on its own, is relatively new, constructed by the War Office in 1922. Before it was built, the only way on to the island was by boat or by the Broomway, a path across the incredibly dangerous sands that dates from Roman times or even earlier. These were the routes taken to bring fresh water to those who lived on the island as, apart from rainwater, none was available. The island still has a very small population of non military residents but the pub closed in 2007 and the church in 2010. I am still in the process of arranging this visit as far as anyone can. We might be able to have tractor and trailer tours of part of the island but it depends on whether the farmer needs his tractor that day! It's that sort of visit! But we will get there and see what happens. Whatever it is, it will be worth it. I have been

there and it is an extraordinary place. More anon, but please put the date in your diary!

Friday 16th October 2015 Meet at the Bus Stop opposite Greyfriars, just below East Hill House, at 8.30am for a visit to the South Kensington Museums.

Following the amazing response to our Imperial War Museum visit, Peter Evans had one of his brainwaves! The South Kensington Museums are not the easiest places to get to from Colchester. Why not hire a coach to take members of the Civic Society and the Friends of the Museums (and anyone else who would like to tag along) to Exhibition Road and just let everyone loose to do their own thing for

the day? The V and A, the Natural History Museum and the Science Museum are all within easy reach of each other and Kensington Palace is not far away. So that is what we are doing! More information anon, when details of the museums Autumn 2015 programmes are finalised. Cost £20.

Monday 2nd November Meet at St Botolph's Church Hall at 7.30pm Our Burning Issues Meeting

Another opportunity to raise and discuss issues of concern. Do come! If you need a lift, please let us know. Coffee and biscuits will be served.

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

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President:	Vacant
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