

Spring 2010



# NEWSLETTER

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*Registered Charity 237885*

This Newsletter has been edited for Colchester Civic Society by Austin Baines. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of Colchester Civic Society.

Contributions are always welcome and should be sent to Austin Baines, 37 Valley Road, Wivenhoe CO7 9LZ; tel. 01206 82352; email: abaines@talk21.com

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**The Society's website can be viewed at [www.colchestercivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.colchestercivicsociety.org.uk)**

Check the website for up to date news and information about the society and its work.

**The objects of Colchester Civic Society are:**

- a) To encourage high standards of architecture and town planning in the Borough of Colchester.
- b) To stimulate public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the area of the town and its surroundings.
- c) To encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity and of historic interest.
- d) To 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) To co-operate with other local, regional and national organisations in the pursuit of the same objects on a broader geographical basis.

#### **OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE FOR 2009-10**

**Hon Life President:**

**President:**

**Vice Presidents:**

**Chairman & Programme** Jo Edwards, 43 Priory Street, Colchester CO1 2QB

**Organiser:** 21206 868254

**Treasurer:**

**Secretary:**

**Membership:** "

**Newsletter Editor:**

**Footpaths:**

**Tree Group:**

**Other elected members:**

## **CHAIR'S REMARKS**

*Jo Edwards*

I have achieved a long held ambition. I have reached the end of a quest. I am happy! Back in the late 60's, when the Society was only a few years old, it was decided that we ought to commission a film of the town. So many changes were taking place. We deplored many of them, but were powerless to stop the destruction of much of the market town we knew. Southway was about to rip a swathe through the little houses just south of the town centre. The Lion Walk Shopping Centre would take away more houses and some extraordinary historic buildings right in the heart of the town. We felt that we should record what we had before it went, but also promote what remained. We were proud of the town and wanted everyone to know it! Contact was made with the Colchester Cine Club who agreed to make the film for us. I can clearly remember our delight at the result. We showed the film to a large audience of members who were equally pleased. Some years later, our records and, I think, the film, were given to Essex County Council for safe keeping. That was the last we saw of either the records or the film. All have now vanished. Over the years, I have tried to track down a copy of the film. Neither the Colchester Cine Club, now the Colchester Film Makers Club, nor the East Anglian Film Archive had a copy. I asked all over the place, everyone I could think of. I was hampered by the fact that I didn't know which Cine Club member had actually made the film. Nor did I know the title of the film or even the year it was made, although I thought it was about 1969. Then, a few days ago, I spoke to Ken Rickman, long standing member of the Colchester Film Makers Club and mentioned, in passing, my regret at the loss of the film I so wanted to see again. "Ah", he said "You should ask our Mr Polley. He'll remember it. He'll know who made it and when and he may even know whether a copy still exists." He gave me a phone number. I rang, and spoke to Mr Polley. Incredibly, he DID know. "Leave it with me and I'll see what I can find." It didn't take him long. He was soon back on the phone to me. Not only had he found the names of those who made the film, the date it was made and the title, but he had found a copy of the film itself, on Super 8 and, unfortunately, minus its soundtrack which had disintegrated over the years. I now have the film and I am about to send it off to a company that can reproduce it in a digital format. And then we can watch it! Apparently it has scenes of the old Cattle Market at Middleborough and of Lion Walk before the shopping centre was there. I will try to get it reproduced before our AGM when the Colchester Film Makers Club will be showing films of old Colchester - a real treat! I do hope that you will be able to attend the AGM. It's later again this year as I know many of you don't like coming out in the dark.

I hope, too, that one or two of you will volunteer to join the Executive Committee or the Social Committee. There is so much we want to do, that we ought to be doing, but we need some enthusiastic assistance!! If you are not sure what is involved, please give me a ring on 01206 868254 so that I can explain.

## CHRISTINES'S CORNER

*Christine Mabbitt*

When I was a child, we did not have a car, which wasn't unusual. We walked or cycled. Living in Irvine Road, our usual walks took us out to Shrub End and then on to Butcher's Wood or Olivers on the far side of what is now Gosbecks Archaeological Park. Sometimes, though, we would visit my future husband, Ken and his brother, Harold, who lived in Mersea Road. Ken and Harold had decided to develop Ken's hobby of woodcarving into a business. Ken had learnt how to carve at evening classes where my father was his tutor. Father was keen to encourage his eager young pupil and the visits to support and advise were frequent. We would walk to Mersea Road via Goojerat Road and the Abbey Field, which was crisscrossed with bumpy paths. Little did we know as we walked past the Cavalry Barracks what exciting things were to be found beneath our feet. Never did we dream that we were walking beside a Roman Circus! We usually crossed the corner of Abbey Field about 2 o'clock, just in time to hear the bugler. He stood in an open area near the Military Hospital. The bugle was sounded regularly during the day. When the wind was in the right direction, we could hear it in Irvine Road. I had a kite, which we would fly on our fortnight's holiday in Mersea each year. The kite flew beautifully at Mersea. We thought we would try it on the Abbey Field, but it was a dismal failure, even though it seemed just as windy! The Abbey Field was a splendid open space, which the townspeople were allowed to use. The Army did not appear to use it at all. They, of course, had, and still have, their firing range at Middlewick and the huge open space to the south of the town, over which the public continue to have more or less unlimited access, even during military exercises. (Jo, will, I'm sure, tell you of her great embarrassment ...!) Long may the Army stay in Colchester. Although public access to Middlewick is now an issue, we still have a huge area of beautifully managed open land that we can use for walking, pony riding, and blackberrying. Colcestrians are most fortunate.

*Footnote*

*Jo Edwards*

For those of you intrigued by my mother's reference to my great embarrassment, I will explain, again, the incident to which she is no doubt referring. I am sure many of you will have heard the tale. If you have, you can skip over this bit of the Newsletter!!

I regularly walked Bert, a very large black Cocker Spaniel of somewhat limited intelligence and Alf, a Norfolk Terrier Jack Russell X, both now, sadly, deceased, across the Army land. One morning, I decided to take the route from Bounstead Road through to Rampart Lane, near Park Farm. I walked through the wood and out onto the open land beyond. It was strangely quiet. There was no-one about, but I had the very uncomfortable feeling that I was not alone and was being watched. It was rather creepy. I carried on, noting that even the birds were silent. Alf and Bert were unconcerned. Bert bounded ahead, sniffing here and there, without a care in the world. Alf, who had been waylaid by a rabbit hole in the woods, was running to catch us up. Reaching me, he veered off the path onto the rough grass, cocked his very short back leg against a large tummock of turf and began to pee copiously. As he did so, the tummock slowly rose. Alf leapt away, sending a stream of urine straight into the face of a Gurkha soldier, who, with his companions, had been lying, completely hidden, in the grass just beside the path. His helmet was covered in turf. It was incredibly good camouflage. Alf,

recovering from his initial shock, started to bark. As the Gurkha stood up, dripping, the barking became more and more hysterical. Bert came back to find out what all the fuss was about. He had no idea what was happening but obviously thought he'd better support his mate. Bert's bark started in the very depths of his being. It began as a growl that became louder and louder and more and more intimidating and then he would really go for it! The noise was horrendous. Soldiers, obviously thoroughly un-nerved, began to appear from everywhere, rising from the grass, from bushes and from behind trees. No wonder I'd felt uncomfortable! Having completely wrecked the exercise, I caught both dogs and fled. A year or so later, my husband, Jim and I were passing through Guildford, when it occurred to us that we could go and check out the disabled parking at the University where our son's graduation ceremony was to be held. We stopped at the gate on the University approach road. The security man came out of his lodge to speak to us. Alf, who was asleep on my lap, opened an eye. He seemed totally unconcerned about the man talking to me through the car window. But then the man turned to point out our route and Alf saw his face. He was a Gurkha. All hell broke loose. Alf was still muttering to himself when we reached Colchester. I suspect the poor security man took even longer to recover!

## **ROMAN CIRCUS APPEAL**

*Paul Weston*

The Colchester Archaeological Trust have initiated an appeal to raise in excess of £200,00 to help buy the former Sergeants' Mess and secure the site of the starting gates of the only known Roman circus in Britain. The aim of the appeal is to create a free public facility with informative displays, a café and a well laid out and attractive garden featuring the remains of the eight starting gates of the circus. Good progress has been made in the initial stages of the appeal and the Executive Committee feel that this is a project in line with the aims of the Civic Society and worthy of our support. During 2009 we received a legacy of £1,000 from a longstanding Civic Society member, Barbara Hines, and we have decided to donate these funds to the appeal. The money is refundable if CAT are unsuccessful with the appeal. We very much hope that this valuable part of Colchester's Roman heritage can be saved, and wish CAT every success.

## **HOSTS NEEDED – a plea for help**

Even without the snow which caused us to cancel this year's New Year Party, we were having to face the fact that sadly, its days may be numbered unless we can recruit a new and (relatively!) youthful catering committee. In the meantime, to provide other opportunities for members to meet each other, we would be delighted to hear from members who would be willing to host a coffee morning or tea party for us. We can provide cups and saucers if necessary, will reimburse your expenses, and of course will come to help if you need us.

Please contact: (Removed for this digital version)

## **CIVIC SOCIETIES INITIATIVE**

*Paul Weston*

You will be aware that the Civic Trust was placed into Administration in April 2009. The Civic Societies Initiative was launched to gauge the views of civic societies as to their future needs, and the result is that there is strong support for a new national body. This has chosen the name Civic Voice. The cost of funding the new body is between £300,000 and £400,000 per annum and to begin with a per capita fee of £1.50 per member has been proposed. For our society this would cost about £375. In the future this may well rise, fees of up to £3 were mooted, and at this sort of level could cost the Society something the region of £640 or even more. This could only be sustained in the longer term by an increase in membership fees. The Executive Committee feel that we should support the initiative and propose paying the first year's membership from our existing funds. The effectiveness of the new national body will be evaluated over the next 12 months, at which time a decision will be made to either increase membership fees to make this a permanent arrangement or decline to renew our subscription for 2011.

A booklet detailing the initiative and the benefits of the new national body is enclosed with this Newsletter. We would welcome your views as to whether you support the Executive Committee by completing and returning the slip to be found at the end of the Newsletter.

## **The 2011 Census – how to get involved**

### **What is the census?**

In less than a year, residents in Colchester will take part in the nation's biggest survey, as the Office for National Statistics (ONS) carries out the 2011 Census in England and Wales on Sunday 27 March. Every ten years a census takes a numerical snapshot on a single date to gain an accurate picture of the population. The census statistics that ONS produces help Colchester Borough Council to correctly target funding and public services (such as transport and housing) where needed. That's why it's crucial that all Colchester's residents take part (and it's compulsory).

In March 2011 your questionnaire will arrive by post and can be returned using a pre-paid envelope or, for the first time ever, can be completed online via a secure internet site. The questionnaire should take around ten minutes for each person's details to be entered and the information you provide will help shape our community for years to come. A wide range of help and support will be available. Your personal information is protected by law and is kept confidential for 100 years.

### **How accessible will the Census be?**

2011 Census materials have been designed in order to encourage response from the population across England and Wales and to take into account a range of accessibility issues. Census day is 27 March 2011 but accessibility tools will be available well in advance to help people complete their questionnaires.

Working with key accessibility groups, ONS have been actively seeking expert opinion to make sure they capture everyone's needs. All their guides are being designed, developed and tested in partnership with:

- Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)
- Royal Nation Institute for the Deaf (RNID)
- British Deaf Association (BDA)
- Deaf Connections
- SCOPE
- Help the Aged/Age Concern
- Equality 2025
- National Literacy Trust

For more information on the accessibility of the Census please visit [www.census.gov.uk/accessibility](http://www.census.gov.uk/accessibility)

### Further information

If you would like to learn more about the Census and how you can be involved you can visit the official 2011 Census website at [www.comms.census.gov.uk](http://www.comms.census.gov.uk)

If you would prefer to do this more closely to home then please contact (Removed for this digital version)

## ROOM WITH A VIEW

*Jo Edwards*

Oh, how I wish that Colchester's CCTV cameras had eyes in the back of their heads! I have spent an inordinate amount of time over the last few weeks sorting out insurance claims for my mother, whose front door was badly damaged on the eve of St. Valentine's Day. She came down in the morning to find her neighbour calling her through a gaping hole in the door. He had been alerted by the paper-girl and had gone round in his pyjamas to check that she was OK. There is something to be said for being deaf! She hadn't heard the almighty kick that took the inch-thick panel out of the 18<sup>th</sup> century front door. She had been oblivious to the sound of the panel, now split in two, hurtling across the hall and knocking her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday bouquet of flowers off the chest of drawers onto the floor. She phoned me and I abandoned the luxury of a lie-in, watching the Andrew Marr Show, and dashed to her rescue.

The scene was something to behold. Like blood, water seems to increase in volume as soon as it escapes its usual confines. It wasn't a huge vase, but there was water absolutely everywhere, incredibly slippery on the polished wood floor. Lying in it were pink roses, lilies and carnations – again, spread to the four winds. Intermingled with them were dozens of fragments of broken pottery, the remains of an ornament and several pieces of the door, some large, some small. A policewoman arrived soon after and took a statement, whilst I started the clear-up. She was great. She eventually left, saying that she was going to search the CCTV footage for any sign of the incident. Despite the fact that nobody had heard it happen, we realised that she would have a fair idea about when it was done because two windows in the Visitor

Information Centre, a few doors away, were also smashed too, and their alarm would probably have been triggered. The CCTV camera is on the traffic island in front of the VIC, and both premises are in full view of that camera. The following day, a builder came to survey the damage. In a better light he spotted the footprint on the broken pieces of door panel. “Hmm,” he said “That panel could only have been kicked out by someone taking a run at it, from the other side of the road.” Later we heard from the policewoman. There was nothing on CCTV. She had checked a night’s worth of footage to no avail.

The following weekend I was phoned by a neighbour, who told me not to take the car out because I wouldn’t have been able to get back into Priory Street. “The police have closed the St. Botolph’s end of the street,” she said. It wasn’t until late morning that cars started to move along the street and the car park began to fill. The following day we found that a very unfortunate woman had been sexually assaulted at the end of the street. At least two CCTV cameras cover that area. One can only assume that both were pointing the wrong way when she was accosted as, apparently the police found her in a distressed state *after* the attack. I’m not knocking the CCTV staff. They deal with Helpline enquiries too, and do a wonderful job with the elderly and disabled who really appreciate having someone there at the push of an emergency button. But there is something wrong. I’ve said it before and I will say it again that, in my experience, the cameras never seem to pick up the disturbances and vandalism in our residential area. If something happens we automatically glance up at the camera outside our house, which is invariably looking the other way, sigh and potter off to the phone. “Can you turn the camera to face the group wandering down Priory Street kicking wing mirrors off cars, please?” That does the trick. They whirl into action. But we shouldn’t have to make that call, should we?

## **How to Respond to Planning Applications**

### *Eight Simple Steps*

1. Look at the planning application.
2. Visit the site of the proposed development.
3. Decide your stance on the application.
4. Examine the development plan.
5. Decide on your action.
6. Put your comments in writing.
7. Gather support.
8. Speak at committee meetings.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England’s excellent guide “*How to respond to planning applications*”, which gives detailed instructions for carrying out the simple steps above, can be downloaded from CPRE at [www.cpre.org.uk](http://www.cpre.org.uk) for your information and is highly recommended for any of our members who would like to make their opinion known about a particular planning application.



## HAS ANYONE GOT A HAMMER?

*Elisabeth Baines*

It has probably not escaped your notice that our splendid War Memorial, given to the town by Viscount Cowdray in 1923, is in need of a spring clean. Conservation consultants have identified the need to remove carbon and sulphur deposits, algae and leached green deposits from the bronze statues, which themselves need to have dirt and pollution deposits removed, when funding is secured. Presumably the gates at the new entrance to the park from Cowdray Crescent, opened during the same ceremony by Lord Cowdray with a golden key, may also eventually need to be removed temporarily for refurbishing. In this case I would like to draw the attention of whoever may be responsible for putting them back to the following report from the *Essex County Standard*, July 1923.

“There was a somewhat amusing incident at the ceremony in connection with opening the gates. After Lord Cowdray had opened one of the gates with some slight difficulty, he proceeded to endeavour to open the other gate. This, however, refused to move and the efforts of the Mayor and other gentlemen proved entirely unavailing. The incident was ultimately closed by an assistant, who obtained a hammer and amid cheers, persuaded the reluctant gate to swing wide open.”

This “amusing incident” took place in front of the photographers and cinema operators who were given special facilities right at the front, assembled civic dignitaries, representatives of public bodies, massed choirs, colour parties from the RAF, the Territorial Army, the British Legion, as well as the band and buglers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment. As the article claims, it is likely that “The scene at the Cowdray Crescent was one that will long be remembered by those who could get a good view of the whole picture.”

### **Why we need a park-and-ride scheme, but not a bus station.**

In last summer’s Newsletter there were two transport-related articles: Tim Oxtan explained why Colchester needs a bus station and Peter Kay argued that Colchester doesn’t need a park-and-ride scheme. I think that they are both wrong, and will explain why.

First the bus station. Some 72 per cent of bus movements in Colchester are on cross-town services, from one suburb to another. Because of the one-way circuit in the town centre, a half of these (over a third of the total bus movements) do not call at or near the bus station. So not everyone can board or alight at the bus station.

This does not matter because you are more likely to want get off in Head Street, High Street, or St John’s Street than in Queen Street, which is not near the town’s “centre of gravity”. Tim admits that, but claims that if you have a cross-town journey which involves changing buses (and these must be a very small minority) then this has to be done at the bus station.

Some of his examples are wrong. If you live in Rowhedge and you are going to work at Severalls Lane you **cannot** get a bus to the bus station – as Tim suggests – but you can change easily in Head Street or Station Way. And if you want to go from Monkwick to Stansted Airport and use the Excel X6 coach you would have to change in Osborne Street, as it does **not** call at the bus station. The general point is that you

cannot always use the bus station to change buses, but again this does not matter because it is usually more convenient to do so in Head Street, High Street or Osborne Street.

The main use of the bus station is **not** as a passenger interchange but as a parking lot for out-of-town buses “laying over” between journeys. There has to be somewhere for buses from towns such as Sudbury, Maldon, Chelmsford and Clacton to be parked between trips, but that does not have to be a single location where passengers can also alight and board. Colchester needs a bus park (or several bus parks) but does not need a bus station.

In the second article, Peter attacks park-and-ride schemes because they “abstract” passengers from “real” public transport, and thereby “damage” it. Quite clearly, he is considering only the interests of the bus operators. But buses should be run for the benefit of passengers, not the operators. In reality people prefer cars because buses are too infrequent, too slow, too unreliable and (unless you qualify for a senior bus pass) too expensive.

Firstly, buses are too infrequent. Nearby villages like Eight Ash Green, Wormingford, Tiptree, and Elmstead Market have only one bus an hour. Places such as Dedham, Boxted, and Layer de la Haye don’t even have that. If, as Peter suggests, you park your car at Earl’s Colne and travel from there on the 88 bus you must be prepared to wait up to an hour for the bus in, and another hour for the bus back.

Second, buses are too slow. The bus from Earl’s Colne, when it comes, takes 40 minutes to get to town, compared with 20 minutes in a car. From Dedham it is 30 minutes by bus, but 15 minutes by car. On a trip to town and back you have to spend an extra half hour or 40 minutes travelling, compared with using a car.

Third, buses are too unreliable. On the town services that are scheduled to run every ten minutes it is not unusual to wait more than twice that long, and then have two buses come together. On the less frequent services you have to get to the stop at least five minutes before the bus is due because they sometimes run early – although they are more likely to be ten or twenty minutes late.

Fourth, buses are too expensive. From Prettygate to the town centre costs £1.90, which is over £1 a mile! From Earl’s Colne to Colchester it costs a couple £10.40 return – far more than the (marginal) cost of using a car.

If we are going to encourage people not to drive into the town centre then we need a park-and-ride facility, with a free, non-stop bus service, running every few minutes, and with adequate parking, costing significant less than in the town centre. That’s what they have in Cambridge, Norwich, Ipswich and Chelmsford – why not Colchester?

*Roger Dennis*

*Preamble to Bob Woodd – Walker’s report on RPO Concert*

*Bob was accompanied on this visit by his wife, Christine. She spoke to me as we boarded the coach for our journey home, and said how much she had enjoyed the evening. When I asked for a volunteer to write a report for the Newsletter, she immediately offered. I was therefore extremely shocked to hear that she died, very suddenly, in her sleep a few days later. Bob insisted on writing the report himself. We send him our condolences.*

*Jo Edwards*

**VISIT TO CADOGAN HALL AND GERSHWIN CONCERT BY THE R.P.O.  
Robert Woodd-Walker**

Once again Jo demonstrated her amazing expertise in sniffing out an unusual (to a Colcestrian) and interesting thing to do, and arranging it all for our delight.

A Kings coach picked us up conveniently mid-afternoon with the warning to bring sandwiches as there might not be time for a meal, but in fact we had a smooth journey and scattered to find ourselves something around Sloane Square. We then returned to the floodlit 100-year-old church-like structure in somewhat of a backstreet and entered the large square foyer on the ground floor before ascending by lift or by two rather narrow staircases to the auditorium on the first floor. We were comfortably seated in the main body, but there were good seats also in the wide encircling balcony. I have not been in a Christian Scientist church before and do not know how much the original design by Chisholm has been modified to make it so appropriate as a concert venue, but what a fine, wide lofty hall it is. Contact with the stage, unimpeded by pillars, seems close, but it is a big place – a credit to the imperialism\* of 100 years ago and certainly a prestigious home for the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

We went to the introductory talk, which may have mirrored what was on the Third Programme some days before and was to some extent repeated before each piece, by the energetic and ebullient conductor, Andrew Litton. He is well known internationally as a great admirer and interpreter of Gershwin and as an expressive and dextrous pianist (despite his apparently podgy fingers!). And so the crowd flocked in to fill the 900 seats and soon we were being energised by the large orchestra and the lively music; American, loud, but not necessarily garish or sentimental. I went for the *Rhapsody in Blue* and the *Gershwin Songbook* which had been compiled by Mr. Litton and filled the second half. Jo was right: everyone could enjoy this sort of evening. Applause was prolonged and we got a showy encore on the piano.

Back on the coach, time passed quickly and we were home again – well pleased.

## VISIT TO THE OLYMPIC SITE, LONDON

*Eileen Sheldon*

Making an early (8.00 am) start and taking the now favoured route to the East End of London up the A120 to Stansted and then the M11 to Redbridge, we were pleased to arrive at the Olde Black Bull in Stratford for good, hot coffee and biscuits. The Black Bull is an old fashioned pub, quite similar to the Queen Vic of TV fame, and the reception was a cheery and efficient one.

Christine, our guide, had boarded the bus earlier and explained that we would have to circuit Stratford town centre several times during the day. This turned out to be true but the town centre is more open and attractive than it used to be. It sports a sculpture, nick-named "The Octopus" which is made from re-cycled railway lines and recalls the importance of Stratford to the railway industry.

Stratford and the marshy area of Newham and Hackney and the huge marshalling yards at Temple Mills has been one of the most deprived areas of London for years. It contained many small polluting industries and squalid houses. Temple Mills had to be closed because of the organized crime which made it an unsafe place for goods to be left on the trains marshaled there.

Before the Olympic plan was accepted Stratford had its own plan of modernization and rebuilding, financed and taking place. Called "Stratford City," its emphasis was on re-housing and providing employment and recreational facilities for the future...its legacy. It was because of this far sighted project that the Olympic bid was accepted as an addition.

The site is huge. It's very secure, surrounded by high metal fences and numerous check points. Supply lorries are stopped and checked at distant sites before being called in by radio to deposit their cargoes. The general public is not allowed on site but may view it from "The Nose," part of the mound that covers the Victorian sewer that runs to the Becton Outfall. A museum, information centre and café there is good facility for school groups.

Stratford Station, so beautifully designed for the Millennium, is being enlarged to accommodate the fast train to France as well as under-ground and over-ground trains. A huge bus station is being built. The skeleton of the stadium is up and being fleshed out as is the swimming pool. The flats for the participants are up and awaiting the interior finishing touches. The building site is a hive of activity with huge earth-moving vehicles looking like toys from our view point. It is planned to open the site one year before the Olympics start. The work force is now several thousand strong and will increase to about 30 000 once the site is opened. After the games, work will have to be done to adapt the flats for family living before the local people can move in.

Our patient driver circumnavigated the site a couple of times before we returned to the pub for a hearty lunch of roast-beef with plenty of vegetables and anything else we wanted.

Back to the bus we went and set off to see the site of Excel, the huge shed like exhibition centre nearer the River Thames. It could hold three jumbo jets, but will play a large part in indoor events for the Olympics. We passed the "Digging School" where training in operating mechanical diggers takes place. As the sun had come out

Christine decided that we should cross the river to Blackheath by the Woolwich Ferry. The crossing was quick and pleasant. Gone are the smells that sickened one fifty years ago when the propellers started turning. The river is much cleaner now.

From the coach we saw the lovely buildings at Greenwich where the equestrian events will take place and ended up at the Woolwich Arsenal where the shooting events will happen. The Arsenal has a good museum which time did not allow us to see but the Gunpowder Café, manned by combat uniformed personnel made an excellent cup of tea and the shop had some really informative books about the Royal Artillery, who's Head Quarters it was. It was a good ending to an interesting day. Many of us felt that the mighty expenditure on the Olympic Site was vindicated by the improvements that would result in lifestyle and employment changes for the area for many years to come.

*[Editor's note: Eileen also provided me with a splendid photograph to accompany her report, but sadly I'm too inexperienced to use it. AB]*

## **Programme 2010**

This is really my first opportunity to apologise to you all for the cancellation of the New Year Party. The weather was so bad during the weeks leading up to the party that many of our usual party goers did not apply to come. Our numbers were very low and then the cancellations started to come in! We really had no choice but to call it off. It was therefore a tad galling that the weather promptly improved, the snow cleared and the sun shone! The lack of a New Year Party, coupled with lower numbers for last year's outings and events (the recession certainly hit us) has caused a bit of a hiccup in our Social Fund. With coaches to London now costing upwards of £500, I have to be very careful this year and so you will see that our programme reflects this. Yes, we still have our visits to places further afield, but we also have more local visits with an emphasis on car sharing! I hope you will understand. My husband, Jim, has finished his medical trial at the Brompton Hospital (it was unsuccessful) but is now undergoing tests for suitability for lung transplant at Papworth, so I suspect that I will have another year of intensive hospital appointments. I have kept everything pretty simple so someone can take over from me at a moment's notice. Again, I hope you will understand. It is for this reason that I have decided to leave the St Ives visit until I feel strong enough to do it!!!!

As always, we welcome non-members to all our events, so please encourage others to join us. Although our main pickup point is at the Bus Station (Stand One) we do try to pick up *en route* too, so we can stop at Tollgate, in Lexden Road, and, if we are going into Suffolk, along Ipswich Road and at Stratford St Mary too. Don't hesitate to phone me and ask. Nearly all our coaches have a loo on board and we do try to stop for a comfort break on longer journeys - although, on some routes, suitable places are few and far between. Our insurance covers members up to the age of 85. If in doubt about your ability to cope, physically, with a day out, please contact me. Generally, I will attempt to provide an alternative itinerary for those who can't walk far. Being disabled myself, I appreciate the difficulties!

So here we go with the rest of this year's events so far. There will be others in the next Newsletter, so please read that one too!

## **Friday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2010 Meet at Colchester Bus Station at 8.15am for a return to Handel House and a visit to the Foundling Museum.**

You may or may not know that the Friends of the Minories are responsible for maintaining the charming garden behind the building, a wonderful oasis in the town centre. Bearing in mind the enormous wear and tear inflicted by the volume of visitors to the Colchester Institute's Gallery in the building and to the cafe, this maintenance is not cheap, and has been even higher this spring as a number of plants and shrubs suffered badly from the weight of the snow and have to be replaced. The Friends arrange several events to raise enough money to do the work and, in a moment of dubious sanity, I offered to arrange a joint outing, with, unusually for us, a small element of fundraising included in the price. So, we are returning to the Handel House Museum which the Civic Society visited a few years ago and thence to the Foundling Hospital Museum. We start our day at Handel House in Brook Street, near Hanover Square in London's West End. A guided tour of the very lovely house, once home to Handel (where Jimi Hendrix once lived too) will be followed by a recital in the beautiful performance room where Handel once entertained his guests. Leaving Handel House, we make our way the short distance to the Foundling Hospital

Museum. The museum has a good cafe where we can buy lunch. After lunch we have a guided tour of the Museum, or, if you wish, you can wander on your own. The Foundling Hospital was founded in 1739 by Capt Thomas Coram, who was horrified by the sight of dead and dying babies abandoned on the streets of London. Coram was supported by Handel and by William Hogarth who both raised funds for the hospital. Their art and music forms part of a remarkable collection shown at the museum today. The hospital closed in 1953, having cared for more than 27,000 children. There will be time for a cup of tea in the cafe before we join the coach for our journey home. The cost of the day is horrendous. I promise that the intended profit margin is very small. It does, however, include morning coffee and biscuits, the two-guided tours and the recital, which really is an experience! Numbers are limited - the performance room is not big - so please respond promptly if you wish to come.

**Cost £45**

**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2010 Meet at St Botolph's Parish Hall (on the south side of the church) at 7.30pm for our Spring Up Meeting**

Each year we have two meetings for members - and guests, as we welcome all Colcestrians - to discuss the issues of the moment that concern the town and our lives within it. This is the first of those meetings. The other is the Burning Issues meeting in November. It is your opportunity to raise matters of concern, matters that you would, perhaps, like the Executive Committee to tackle. Both meetings are very informal and certainly give food for thought. If you need a lift, please ask.

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2010 Meet at the Titchmarsh Marina at 9.30am**

**OR**

**Friday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2010 Meet at Titchmarsh Marina at 12.30pm for a very unusual boat trip.**

The James Stevens No 14 Lifeboat is the oldest motorised lifeboat in the world. She was Walton's second lifeboat, launched in 1900 as a rowing/sailing vessel and fitted with a motor in 1906. She remained in service until 1928. She was restored by the Frinton and Walton Heritage Trust and relaunched in 2009. Included in the list of UK Top 250 Historic Ships, she is a fascinating floating exhibit. But she is also licensed to take passengers out into the very beautiful Backwaters. We have chartered her for a couple of two hour trips, and, if enough people wish to go, can charter her for a third. We'll see how it goes. Please let us know whether you need or can offer a lift. Maps to the marina are available. Please note that the James Stevens is an open boat so bring warm and waterproof clothing with you and wear flat, non-slip soft shoes. Life jackets will be supplied.

**Cost £25**

**Wednesday 16 June 2010 Meet at 7.00pm at St Botolph's Parish Hall for our Annual General Meeting**

We will keep the meeting as short as possible so that we can enjoy the films of Colchester to be shown by Colchester Film Makers. If you need a lift to the meeting, please let us know.

**Monday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2010 Meet at Hall Farm, in the shadow of Stratford St Mary Church, at 7.15pm (PLEASE NO EARLIER) for our Annual Birthday Dinner.**

We are back at Hall Farm again this year as, from my point of view, it's so easy! They are so helpful, and the surroundings are really delightful. If you need or can offer a

lift, please let us know. The menu is attached to the back of the Newsletter. Please return it with your choices as soon as possible and at least a fortnight before the event. I do hope you can join us to celebrate the Society's 46<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Cost £28**

**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2010 Meet at Colchester Bus Station at 10.30am for a visit to Kirstead Hall, near Norwich.**

Today we visit the very fine Elizabethan Manor house at Kirstead. The house itself is Grade 1 listed. It was built in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and is E shaped with stepped, Flemish style, gable ends. The house is built of brick, with a blue diaper decoration and has a tiled roof. Within the 4-acre site on which the house stands are a Grade 2\* octagonal dovecote and two wonderful Grade 1 listed Elizabethan barns. Our afternoon includes a guided tour of the house and dovecote by the owners, and also a visit to their antique furniture restoration business in the dairy wing, interesting in itself. We will have free time to wander around the gardens and to visit the church, which is opposite the house. Tea and cakes will be served too. And on the subject of food, we will stop on our way for a sandwich lunch at the Castle Inn at Bungay.

**Cost, including lunch and tea, £35**

**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2010 Meet at Colchester Bus Station at 8.45am for a visit to Rochester, in the footsteps of Charles Dickens.**

We begin our day at Cooling, where we will have morning coffee. Just down the road is the parish church of St James, where, in the churchyard, Pip had his first encounter with Magwitch the convict in Great Expectations. The graves of thirteen babies - "little stone lozenges each about a foot and a half long, which were arranged in a neat row beside their [parents'] graves" - can be seen. We will have time to explore before making our way to Rochester, where you will be free to have lunch. After lunch you have a choice. I have arranged a guided tour of Rochester, with an emphasis on Dickens or, if you prefer, you can wander at your own pace with an excellent trail leaflet. For those who would like to take it even easier, Restoration House (home to Miss Havisham in Great Expectations) will be open to the public. It is a fine Elizabethan mansion with wonderful gardens. For those on the guided tour, there will be time to find a cup of tea and to explore a little on your own before our return journey. Rochester is a very interesting town with an extraordinary history, well worth a visit.

**Cost £23 to include morning coffee and guided tour or trail leaflet**

**Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2010 Meet at Beeleigh Abbey (near Maldon) at 10.50am**

I have had a couple of requests for a visit to Beeleigh Abbey, home of the Foyle family, yes, the same family who opened that wonderful bookshop in Charing Cross Road all those years ago. This is a 12<sup>th</sup> century abbey, supposedly haunted. King Edward I and Queen Eleanor visited Beeleigh Abbey to celebrate Mass in 1289. The building has had a chequered history at one time being, of all things, a pub! The current owners have restored and modernised the building and have researched its history very thoroughly. They will be showing us around the house. We will see the calefactory, the warming room, which was the only room with a fire in monastic days. We will also see the parlour which was the only room in which monks could converse. We will visit the Chapter House which houses Handel's organ, retrieved



from the Foundling Hospital in London. Handel supposedly wrote his “Largo” on this instrument. The abbey is surrounded by gardens in which we will be free to wander after the tour. We will also have coffee and cakes! Again, I’m not using a coach for this visit, hoping that we can car share, so if you need or can offer a lift, please let us know on the slip. Maps are available. Numbers are limited, so please reply promptly.

**Cost £15 including refreshments**

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> September and Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2010. Heritage Open Days**

Please keep these days free. As usual, we are going to need your help, please, to steward buildings that will be open to the public as part of the Heritage Open Days event. *Please read, and complete, the separate sheet accompanying this Newsletter.*

**Monday 13<sup>th</sup> September to Friday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2010 Our Annual Holiday**

This year the holiday will be based on the North Devon coast. Jim and I are just about to do the recce for this holiday, so, although we have a pretty good idea what we are going to do, we haven’t finalised the details or the cost yet. We certainly hope to venture over to Lundy Island on one day, although we will sort out an alternative for those who might prefer to stay on dry land. As usual, we will concentrate on some really interesting coffee, lunch and tea stops. For those who have not ventured onto a Civic Society holiday as yet, this is not as awful as it sounds. We do find some truly amazing and bizarre places! If you are interested in joining us and would like the details as soon as they become available, please complete the slip at the end of the Newsletter.

**Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November Meet at St Botolph’s Parish Hall at 7.30 pm for our Burning Issues Meeting**

This is the second of our meetings for Colcestrians to raise “burning issues”. If you would like a lift, please get in touch.

**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> December Meet at Colchester Bus Station at 8am for our Christmas Outing - Kill or Cure- in London**

Joining our guide for coffee in Holborn, we will then be taken on a tour of 2000 years of the history of medicine and nursing history, from barber surgeons and body snatchers to cosmetic surgery in Harley Street! We return to Holborn for lunch (with a wide choice) before making our way to a fascinating new museum, the Medicine Man Gallery. Sir Henry Wellcome was an amazing character. He was born in a frontier log cabin in America, the son of a travelling preacher. With a passion for science and experimentation, he invented invisible ink and then went on to create the first medicinal tablet. Shortly afterwards, he founded the vast pharmaceutical company Burroughs Wellcome. Sir Henry amassed the most extraordinary collection of mind-boggling artefacts from around the world. These have now found a permanent home in this fascinating gallery. There will be time to buy a cup of tea in the adjoining cafe before we board our coach for a quick visit to Regent’s Street to see the Christmas lights before our return to Colchester.

**Cost including morning coffee and main course at lunchtime £28**

And one date already for 2011

**Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

Following our visit to the Olympic sites earlier this year, several people asked whether we could return in a year to see the progress. Their wish is my command.

This will be a different tour. We will see the site from our vantage point above the sewer(!) but will then travel north to the Lee Valley where the canoe and kayak events are to be held. We then take to the water ourselves for a cream tea. More details in a future Newsletter.

[And. in the context of the programme, just to remind you of an item from earlier in the Newsletter]

### **HOSTS NEEDED – a plea for help**

Even without the snow which caused us to cancel this year's New Year Party, we were having to face the fact that sadly, its days may be numbered unless we can recruit a new and (relatively!) youthful catering committee. In the meantime, to provide other opportunities for members to meet each other, we would be delighted to hear from members who would be willing to host a coffee morning or tea party for us. We can provide cups and saucers if necessary, will reimburse your expenses, and of course will come to help if you need us.

Please contact: (Removed for this digital version)

**REPLY SLIPS**

Please return slips with payment to Jo Edwards, 43 Priory Street, Colchester CO1 2QB. Her telephone number is 01206 868254. Cheques should be payable to Colchester Civic Society.

**Monday 17 May - Spring Up Meeting (7.30pm)**

I/We would like a lift

I/We can offer a lift and have ..... places

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Tel. No. ....

**Friday 21 May – Visit to Handel House and Foundling Museum Cost £45**

I/We would like to come:

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Post Code ..... Tel. No. ....

A cheque for £ ..... is enclosed

**Thursday 27 May - Titchmarsh Marina (*James Stevens No. 14*) Cost £25**

**N.B. Meet at 09.30am**

I/We would like to come

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Post Code ..... Tel.No. ....

Cheque for £ ..... is enclosed

I/We would like a lift

I/We can offer a lift and have ..... places



**Wednesday 16 June - Annual General Meeting. (7.00pm)**

I/We would like a lift

I/We can offer a lift and have ..... places

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Tel. No. ....

**Monday 21 June - Annual Birthday Dinner**

**Cost £28**

I/We would like to come.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Post Code ..... Tel.No. ....

Cheque for £ ..... is enclosed. *Menu choices enclosed.*

I/We would like a lift

I/We can offer a lift and have ..... places

**Thursday 15 July - Visit to Kirstead Hall**

**Cost £35**

I/We would like to come:

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Post Code ..... Tel. No. ....

A cheque for £ ..... is enclosed

**Thursday 22 July - Visit to Rochester**

**Cost £23**

I/We would like to come:

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Post Code ..... Tel. No. ....

A cheque for £ ..... is enclosed



**Friday 30 July - Titchmarsh Marina (*James Stevens No. 14*) Cost £25**  
**N.B. Meet at 12.30pm**

!/We would like to come

Name .....

Address .....

Post Code ..... Tel.No. ....

Cheque for £ ..... is enclosed

!/We would like a lift  
I/We can offer a lift and have ..... places

**Monday 23 August - Visit to Beeleigh Abbey Cost £15**  
**N.B. Meet at 10.50 am**

!/We would like to come

Name .....

Address .....

Post Code ..... Tel.No. ....

Cheque for £ ..... is enclosed

!/We would like a lift  
I/We can offer a lift and have ..... places

**Monday 13 September to Friday 17 September**  
**Annual holiday – to North Devon Cost *tbc***

I/We would like to be informed:

Name .....

Address .....

Post Code ..... Tel. No. ....

**Monday 3 November - Burning Issues Meeting (7.30 pm)**

I/We would like a lift  
I/We can offer a lift and have ..... places

Name .....

Address .....

Tel. No. ....





**Tuesday 7 December – Visit to London (Kill-or-cure)**

**Cost £28**

! / We would like to come

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Post Code ..... Tel.No. ....

Cheque for £ ..... is enclosed

**Civic Societies Initiative (Civic Voice)**

The Executive Committee should/should not look favourably on renewing the subscription to Civic Voice.

Name(s) .....

(Removed for this digital version)



## ANNUAL DINNER MENU

Name(s)

.....  
.....

Please remember that, if there is more than one of you, we need to know who wants what, so initials against your choices would be helpful! If there is nothing on the menu that you like or if you would like something adapted slightly for you, please let me know as soon as possible. The chef is very helpful and will do what he can to meet our requirements as long as he has enough warning!

Today's soup with crispy croutons

Baby beet, broad bean and Pinney's smoked mackerel salad with horseradish and crème fraiche

Fresh local asparagus with hollandaise sauce

~~~~~

Slow braised shoulder of Hall Farm reared lamb with wilted spinach and wild mushrooms

Organic farmed salmon with pea puree and crab mousse

Cauliflower cheese tart with creamed leeks

~~~~~

Gooseberry and strawberry crumble

Layered chocolate fudge cake

A selection of cheeses from around Britain

~~~~~

Coffee or Tea