

Autumn 2018



*Registered Charity 237885*

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Opinions expressed by contributors  
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## ANNUAL REPORT 2018

### BY JO EDWARDS, CHAIR, GIVEN AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AT GREYFRIARS ON 11TH JUNE

I began last year's Annual Report with the statement "It has been an incredibly busy year for the Society". How extraordinarily naive! If last year was incredibly busy, this year has been absolutely frenetic!

The year began with the unveiling of the John Ball plaque in the Dutch Quarter. We had struggled to find the missing commemorative stone which had been taken down from the wall of a house and then lost, and then, once we had found it, hidden in the darkest recesses of the Museum Resource Centre, and had it restored, we had the incredibly difficult task of finding a new site for it. However, all was eventually sorted, with enormous help from Colchester Borough Council Heritage Officer, Libby Kirkby-Taylor and Geoff Beales from Colchester Borough

Homes and the plaque was unveiled on John Ball Day by the Bishop of Colchester and Baroness Shami Chakrabarti. It was a wonderful afternoon with speeches, music and Dorian Kelly's splendid John Ball rallying rant! The feeling of achievement after all that work was extraordinary. I would like to thank the anonymous donor for her donation to the Society which paid for the specially made support stand for the very heavy stone. It was not cheap!

It has been quite a year for plaques generally. Soon after the John Ball unveiling, we unveiled a plaque to Colchester's first female Mayor, Catharine Alderton. It was something of a baptism of fire for the new occupants of Catharine Alderton's house in Cambridge Road. They had only just completed on the purchase of the house when we asked them whether they minded us sticking a plaque on the front of it! Luckily, they were thrilled to bits and were kind enough to allow the house to be used for a reception after

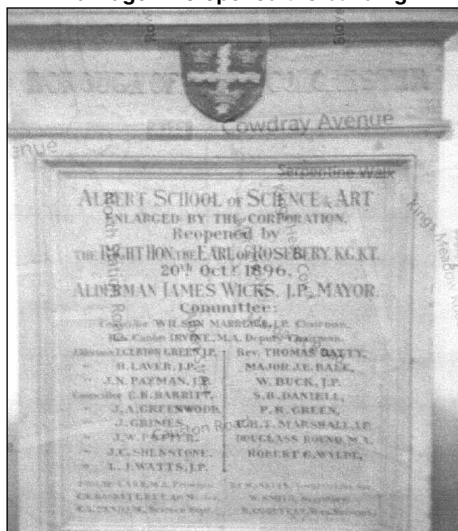


*Chair Jo Edwards receives the certificate confirming our contribution to the Mercury Rising Project from the Rebekha Hudson, of the Mercury Theatre, at the start of the AGM*

the unveiling ceremony. We are very grateful to them.

Two plaques down, two more to go! Rosemary Jewers has had dealings with Taylor Wimpey in the past, working with them to erect two plaques in the erstwhile Garrison area, one on the site of Sobraon Barracks and the other marking the site of the Military Hospital. It was time for some more. Using her contacts, she managed to persuade Taylor Wimpey to sponsor one on the wall of Hyderabad and Meannee Barracks in Mersea Road and the other in the midst of the old Flagstaff Complex. Taylor Wimpey were happy to pay for the plaques and

**These plaques commemorate Albert School of Science and Art and Wilson Marriage who opened the building**



**PLAQUES IN COLCHESTER CO-OPERATIVE BANK**

There are two plaques in the Co-operative Bank. The first, from 1896, reports that it was then that the Albert School of Science and Art had been enlarged and was now re-opening. The Mayor of the time was James Wicks and the Committee Chairman Wilson Marriage. The Committee members are also inscribed. They include non-Councillors, for example, the renowned local artist, Major John Bale.

*For Plaque Trails visit  
[www.placecheck/colchesterplaquetrails](http://www.placecheck/colchesterplaquetrails)*

to erect them, but the rest was down to us. We did struggle to condense all the information about the sites into a few words but finally managed it and the plaques were unveiled by the Garrison Commander and a rep from Taylor Wimpey in January. We were able to use Roman Circus House for a reception afterwards. The event was attended by reporter Liz Mullen, who interviewed several of us for a programme going out, worldwide, to British Forces overseas. Again, we would like to thank all concerned.

Not content with erecting plaques, we have also really got stuck into the research for our plaque trails and we are almost there. It has been another HUGE exercise. There are SO MANY PLAQUES! We have been beaten by only one; Abstinence Cottage in Greenstead Road. The plaque is probably the most extraordinary in the town and, as yet, we have no information about it at all. It will be the subject of a Newsletter article one day. Rosemary, looking for something on the Civic Voice website, noticed that they had used a company called Placecheck for a map, marking points of interest. She contacted the company and they offered to produce our trails for us, free of charge!! We have supplied them with photos of every plaque, marked their position electronically on their digital map and given them background details for each. They have done an amazing job, turning the information into something really special. Three trails will be launched in time for the school holidays and will be of interest to local people and visitors alike. The first ones are Wartime and Military, The Town Centre (within the Roman Wall) and Outside the Wall. More will follow. Huge thanks to Rosemary Jewers and Henry Spyvee, who have done most of the work, but also to Bob Russell, Georgia Tamblyn and Jayne Richardson.

Civic Voice, our umbrella organisation, have been trying to persuade Civic Societies to raise awareness of their First World War Memorials

and to ensure that they are in good condition. Grants have been available to help with the restoration of those that need it. We decided that there was little we could do until we knew where all the memorials were. Mike Fitt and Henry Spyvee got together to work out how they could find them. There was a record held by the Imperial War Museum but we knew that it was far from complete. Then, out of the blue, came this amazing offer from Paul Rusiecki, one of our members. He had already written a book about memorials in Essex and was more than willing to find the ones in Colchester, photograph them and research the background to them. Oh joy! Paul has now produced a huge piece of work which will be launched at a reception in the Town Hall close to Armistice Day 2018. It will, eventually, be available on our new website, an extraordinary resource for those researching their family history, apart from anything else! We know that they, like us, will be in awe of what he has discovered and will be as pleased as we are. Thanks so much, Paul. (Please see separate article)

Now, I have just mentioned our new website, currently in production. John Salmon, who is responsible for our highly successful Facebook page has been immersed in both our new Society website, which is being built professionally by a local company, and another website, already live, which is part of the Southway Murals project. We had no idea what we were taking on when we made the decision to try to raise the money for the restoration of Henry Collins' and Joyce Pallot's concrete murals. Would we have made that decision if we had realised? I like to think that we would have done so but I am not really sure. It was an incredibly steep learning curve. It was also very stressful and time consuming, particularly for Kath Wood who project managed the whole exercise, liaising with Colchester Borough Council, Essex County Council, the conservators, the funders (the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Hervey Benham

Trust, Essex Heritage, etc.), schools, the Museum Service, the artists' family, Firstsite, Colchester Arts Centre, Signals, designers, etc etc. She did an absolutely stupendous job. The Heritage Lottery funding was dependent upon us achieving far more than the restoration of the murals themselves. There were all sorts of associated projects that we had to consider.

St John's Green School children were involved in creating some amazing artwork inspired by the murals. That project was led by Civic Society member Nicola Burrell. The conservators talked to students about the work of a conservator. Young people from Signals produced a couple of brilliant films, Sarah Sabin devised a Family Trail with activities for children, Ann Turner and Kath took many groups on guided walks of all the Henry and Joyce murals in the town, some as part of the Jane's Walks programme, some for Heritage Open Days. They did a double act, Kath talking about the artists and how the murals were made and Ann talking about the historical figures portrayed. But Ann and Kath were not going to be on hand at every moment to explain the murals to passers by, so we provided interpretation boards too. You might not have seen them yet. They were put up at the end of May. And then, of course, we had to provide information to the Heritage Lottery Fund so we needed volunteers to gather the views of the public. Civic Society and Colchester in Bloom members came out in force. Armed with clipboards, pens and questionnaires, they stood in the underpasses engaging passers by in conversations about the murals and the restoration project. Thankfully, they had a really positive response and the information they gathered was invaluable. There are, of course, always some seemingly insurmountable challenges. The murals were going to look splendid but their surroundings were going to remain pretty grim. The underpasses are constructed from concrete partially faced with rather unpleasant tiles. However, they are of their time.

There was little we could do about them but we could use the project as a lever to get much needed maintenance done. Once asked, Colchester Borough Council leapt into action. The steam cleaners were out in force, much to the annoyance of local residents! Unfortunately, one clean was not enough. They returned and cleaned again and again. Drains were unblocked, lights replaced, broken mirrors removed. The St Botolph's Roundabout underpass which, we had been told, following an inspection by ECC, was quite safe, despite badly broken steps, was suddenly repaired. The ripples created by the Murals Project spread out, wider and wider. Of course, we had to celebrate our achievements and this we did at the Arts Centre in January. We had a wonderful morning. The Signals films F4 were premiered. The incredible artwork produced by the school children was on display. The Family Trail was launched. The conservators were on hand to talk about their work. Thanks were given to everyone involved in the huge achievement. And then we were free to eat, drink and chat. The noise levels were a measure of how successful both the event and the project as a whole were. My thanks go out now to all who have contributed but especially to Pam

Schomberg, Chair of Colchester in Bloom, who first had the idea to restore the murals, to Kath Wood, who has worked so incredibly hard to make it all happen and to our Treasurer, Paul, who has kept us on the straight and narrow financially - a terrible job. What a team! All Civic Society members, of course!

At this point, I will mention Rosemary Jewers, our Press Officer, who has done a splendid job this year. The Murals Project gave us many opportunities to get our name in the papers - and we did - but she also ensured that we had coverage for all of the new plaques. Her efforts have a lasting effect because we discovered that Colchester Civic Society plaques, with pictures, featured in a recent *Eastern Daily Press* article! With the 60th anniversary of the opening of the Minories as a gallery (I remember that opening day so well - oh dear!) the Minories has been featured several times in the Press, always with a large photo of the Ruth Bensusan Butt plaque. With the 60th anniversary of the opening of the Minories as a gallery (I remember that opening day so well - oh dear!) the Minories has been featured several times in the Press, always with a large photo of the Ruth Bensusan Butt plaque with Colchester Civic Society on it. We were



*A new wall is being constructed opposite the Minories.  
The delay in the progress of the project was an Eyes and Ears report*

pleased to note that a member of the public wrote to the local paper recently thanking the Society for putting up the Catharine Alderton and Ruth Bensusan Butt plaques. Henry Spyvee managed to have a letter about Colchester Civic Society's Street Naming Committee published in *The Guardian* and Fab Casale's recent letter to *The Gazette* about the possible naming of the new area at the end of Crouch Street, mentioning that the Civic Society could advise, has prompted further publicity about our Street Naming work. John Salmon gave a very, very good interview to BBC Radio Essex on the subject of the Lewis Gardens U turns and there have been further articles in the paper about our campaign.

And that brings me, neatly, to Highways issues. Before I go into this subject properly, I must mention the long running saga of Camp Folley South. Rosemary noticed that the street signs for Camp Folley South had disappeared after Hyderabad and Meannee Barracks were demolished and new housing built. She has been round in ever decreasing circles trying to arrange for the signs to be replaced as the buck passed from one organisation to another. However, she has finally persuaded the developers, Taylor Wimpey again, to erect new signs. Apart from anything else, this is such an important part of the town's history.

Jayne Richardson holds the Civic Society portfolio for Highways issues and Sheila Anderton looks after Eyes and Ears matters, so I will mention both in this part of my report. First of all, I'd better explain Eyes and Ears, I suppose I do apologise for this somewhat disjointed explanation of our year. It is just that so many things connect but then shoot off again at tangents so it is remarkably difficult to produce a linear report. It is far more of a very tangled web of interwoven strands, the sort my mother used to have in her needlework bag! So where was I? Ah, Eyes and Ears. Eyes and Ears developed from our monthly Coffee Mornings here at Greyfriars. Yes, we do have coffee - and biscuits

but the mornings take the form of a discussion group, with no agenda whatsoever, where any matter relating to our town can be raised. I never know what anyone is going to say. The subjects are incredibly diverse. Some issues are fairly easy to resolve, some can be resolved but take a long while. Some, unfortunately, are simply impossible - although we all agree that they shouldn't be. Highways issues - potholes, badly repaired potholes, loose and uneven paving slabs, cycle paths, bus lanes, bus services, road-side trees, abandoned roadworks cones, signs



*Greyfriars, our second home and site of  
AGM and Coffee Mornings*

and barriers, damaged and redundant street furniture, yellow mats covering broken manholes, damaged bus shelters, streetlight maintenance, flooded footpaths etc have all featured in our discussions, note has been made and, where possible, action has been taken to get these issues reported and resolved. We have had a number of successes, particularly with long abandoned road works equipment, yellow mats, damaged bus shelters and even some potholes. Other issues are work in progress.

Jayne arranges meetings with Alan Lindsey, one of the senior Essex County Council Highways officers. We now meet with him at least once a year to discuss all these issues and more and to get an update on future Highways plans. One of the issues we discussed last time was the U turns at Lewis Gardens, which remains our main Facebook campaign. We have done everything we can to persuade the powers that be that this is the most incredibly dangerous and polluting manoeuvre imaginable as well as one that disrupts traffic flow to an unacceptable degree. Will they shift? Will they heck! We have explained that the North Hill bus lane has stopped north south through traffic and that everyone wishing to turn right from High Street to Queen Street must have been in the town centre for a reason, but this falls on deaf ears. We have pointed out the danger of increasing pollution in residential Brook Street. They are not interested. The pressure will be maintained. Jayne has also attended the meetings about the new A120 route. Although this relates to an area beyond our boundary, we recognise that it will have an effect on Colcestrians. I would like to thank Jayne, Sheila, her brother, Ged and John for all their efforts on Highways matters

We have just begun a project to locate all the really old cast iron street lights in the town, most desperately in need of restoration. We are trying to resolve the issue of replacement roadside trees but, although we now have Colchester Borough Council on side, Essex County Council are flatly

refusing to agree to them being replaced. Watch this space.

Eyes and Ears is a lot about Civic Pride. Many of the issues raised relate to Civic Pride - litter, graffiti, badly damaged waste bins and benches, out of date tourist information boards and signposts pointing the wrong way etc. We have, during the year, tackled several pockets of land in the town centre, some owned by the Council, where litter and fly tipping have been allowed to gather. We found that the Council would eventually clear an area if we really pushed and nagged but still didn't add the area to their cleaning round so it immediately became filled with rubbish again. There were a number of irritating little issues like this that needed to be properly addressed as, if resolved, they would make the world of difference. Sheila and I decided that a conversation with the relevant Council Portfolio holder would be a good plan. We met Councillor Mike Lilley one afternoon in the Autumn and discussed our concerns. We also took the opportunity to congratulate him on the clearance of A boards from the town. We asked him not to weaken on this issue. We spent several hours with him and covered a wide range of subjects. He promised to forward some of our concerns to his colleagues.

Certainly, some things improved after our meeting but there is a long way still to go. He offered further meetings and I have just written to him asking for another. Ged and Sheila have a very good relationship with the Council's zone wardens and operatives. They have had considerable success with problems of graffiti and overgrown, dirty footpaths, reporting the issues to the wardens so that they can arrange for cleaning and clearing to be done. Sheila has sorted out the problem of badly damaged benches in the Priory grounds. One has been repaired and another replaced. Ged has successfully pushed for pillar boxes in the town to be painted, particularly the double one in High Street. Most of these have now received a long overdue coat of



bright red paint. As I said, little things - quick wins, perhaps - but so important. We don't expect everything to be done for us, however. We are not afraid to get stuck in ourselves. We took part in the Great British Spring Clean this year. Bob Mercer was particularly keen to clear the bank beside St Mary's Steps, just below the churchyard, a real mountaineering job. However, we had teams out all over the town centre. We collected 26 bags of rubbish plus a car battery, an ironing board and a surfboard in the space of a couple of hours and, yes, we got our photo in the paper too! I think this is an exercise we might do more often.

Also on the subject of Civic Pride, we started to investigate the ownership of several open spaces in the town centre where some maintenance is required. One, a very prominent site with a historic building on it, has caused a great deal of concern. I can say no more at the moment but we are on the case. More anon.

We have been investigating the possibility of restoring the drinking fountain on the wall of East Hill House and Bob Mercer has done considerable research about costs, grants etc. This is ongoing.

Twice during the year we were asked to support Heritage Lottery Fund applications, one for St James the Great Church and the other for North Station Road. We did both. Jane Thompson from Colchester Borough Council spoke both to members at a Coffee Morning and to the Executive Committee about the plans to vastly improve both the public realm and the buildings in North Station Road. I was asked to meet representatives from the Heritage Lottery Fund at Rowan House when they came to find out more about the project. Listening to the presentation by Colchester Borough Council, I was immensely impressed by the preliminary work that had been done and the plans for seeing it through. Unfortunately, the Heritage Lottery Fund bid failed. Will they try again? I sincerely hope so.

The Society has not been as active in Planning matters as we would wish this year but we are in the process of addressing this matter. If we achieve what we want to achieve, it will be absolutely amazing. As we are mid negotiation, I can say no more. All I can do is to ask you all to keep everything crossed. We have kept an eye on applications in conservation areas and have commented on or objected to a number. Very often, however, it is mightily difficult to find legitimate grounds to object, much as we deplore the planning application. Some we win, some we lose. We do flag up issues of concern, particularly with listed buildings or buildings within conservation areas, even when they are not the subject of a planning application. We have, for example, persuaded Anglian Water that they need to spend some money on their building at the bottom of Balkerne Hill. We have also expressed concern to Colchester Borough Council about the buildings in East Street and about the future use of the old Arena site on Abbey Fields. One issue has landed us with an interesting quandary. Bovis made an application for housing on the old garrison site bordering Butt Road. We grabbed the opportunity to ask whether restoration or repair of the barrack gates in the boundary wall could be included as a condition of planning permission. It was not feasible to save one set, unfortunately, but the other set were, indeed, protected. The quandary? Apparently, we are going to be offered the rotting, disintegrating gates that cannot be saved!! They are huge! Any suggestions?! I suspect that they are the original gates, historically valuable. Oh dear! Things have been relatively quiet on the Licensing front this year, although Austin Baines has been involved in a couple of applications. He has been our Licensing expert, attending hearings on our behalf, but is now intending to retire from the role - perhaps! He has trained Georgia Tamblyn so she can gradually take over from him. We wish her joy! And we thank Austin for all he has done.

The long awaited High Street book, written by erstwhile Executive Committee member, Dave Stenning, with help from Jane Greatorex and Richard Shackle, and published by the Civic Society, is hot off the press. It is currently being distributed. It will be formally launched at Red Lion Books next Saturday, Dave having agreed to a book signing session in the shop during the morning. Brian Roach has been responsible for getting the book typeset, proof read and printed. We are very grateful to him, and, of course, to Dave. Needless to say, a press release has been sent!

I mentioned earlier that we are in the process of creating a new, professionally produced, website for the Society. Most of the Executive Committee now have their own Civic Society email addresses. We are trying to improve our image generally, moving from a 'home made' look to something more upmarket. It will take time and some money but will, I hope, be worth it. Apart from anything else, we want to attract some corporate members again and, in order to do so, we need to look the part. We know we are achieving a lot, often punching well above our weight but are we promoting ourselves properly? Probably not. We have started to look at the membership form. Do we go for something brightly coloured with lots of photos? Do we retain the cover we have, with our logo, but have it printed professionally on quality paper? Do we just have one photograph on the new cover? What colour should that cover be? We are currently consulting widely, across the generations. We do intend to make more of our achievements over the years because some of them have been really big and few know about our involvement! I would like to thank those looking at the design of the form for all their work, but, especially, Rosemary, who has created some forms to give us a very good idea of what is possible if we decide to go for the bright look.

We were totally overwhelmed by a gift of £5000, given by Andy Hamilton in memory of

his parents, both active Civic Society members. This has made such a difference to us as it has given us the confidence to go ahead with improving our image. Thank you so very much, Andy.

Sadly, we have lost a number of committed, active members this year. They will be missed very much. A recent loss was that of Ray Chandler, who was, for a while, our Chairman, stepping in when nobody was able to take on the role. After he retired from the Chair, he became a Vice President of the Society, continuing to attend Committee meetings almost to the end of his life. A very special man.

We haven't forgotten our plan to plant a tree in memory of another past Chairman, John Crook Williams and his wife, Anne, both extremely active in the Society. We intended to replace a tree that had died in the Priory grounds, a lime. John and Anne's sons were to ceremonially plant it in the Spring but it wasn't to be. It snowed - heavily. We had to postpone the planting. Finding a new date was extremely difficult so we decided to start again in the Autumn.

We have continued with a varied programme of visits and meetings, although the beginning of 2018 was something of a nightmare. Two visits were cancelled at the last moment, one, to the new Postal Museum in London, as people dropped out because of illness and the visit was no longer viable and another, The Great Stink, because asbestos was found in the venue. That will be rebooked ASAP. Two further events were also postponed because of awful weather, the aforementioned tree planting and a guided tour of the Rec gates. The later has been rescheduled already. However, we have had several boat trips from the Hythe to Brightlingsea (the last is this coming Wednesday and I still have places if you want to go.) We visited Columbine Hall. We also, on a dreadfully wet day with poor visibility, explored the intertidal reaches at Fingringhoe Wick with the Reserve Warden. We had a guided tour of the Mercury, where all the plans for the



*A Civic Society stall at a MacMillan Coffee morning on 29th September at Abbey Field Centre, (formerly the Military gymnasium)*

development of the theatre were explained to us. We had a very interesting lunchtime meeting with Vivienne Wiggins from Beacon House when she spoke about the work being done to help the homeless and, particularly, the rough sleepers. She also told us about the move from East Hill to Southway. We had a guided tour of 37 Queen Street, the old Police Station and a visit to Claudius Gateway. And we partied! Our birthday party was at the HQ of Colchester Model and Experimental Engineers was a one off! Unlimited train rides on tiny trains. I will never forget the expressions on the faces of Civic Society members as they realised that they could be children again for a whole afternoon! Absolutely priceless! Our New Year lunch was held at the Siege House. We were invited to join

visits organised by the Friends of the Museums, the Minorities and Colchester Art Society and we opened our visits to them, too.

We also stewarded for Heritage Open Days. My thanks go to Ann Turner for coordinating this. Ann is pretty amazing. Vice Chair, Membership Secretary, HODS coordinator, Minutes taker, Newsletter enveloper and distributor, Murals tour guide-incredible! Thanks, Ann.

The Newsletter, filled with some very interesting articles, reports and information, is edited by Peter Evans. Two editions have been produced during the year. Thanks, Peter!

Incidentally, buoyed up by comments from Ian from Civic Voice, who spoke at last year's AGM, we decided to enter the Society for the Marsh Civic Award. We didn't win, but I think we might enter again this year. John Salmon attended a Civic Voice event in Norwich on our behalf and we hope that we can go to more in the future. We do keep in touch with the organisation and find them very useful.

Finally, I cannot finish this report without thanking Greyfriars for all their amazing hospitality and help again this year. They really do go above and beyond for us and I, for one, cannot thank them enough. We have had so many meetings here this year and they have allowed us the exclusive use of a room time and time again, providing a seemingly endless supply of coffee and biscuits as well as the occasional G&T. The staff are always delightful - utterly charming in fact. They just make life so ... easy!

And, last of all, can we thank our amazing, enthusiastic, committed, hardworking Committee, full of ideas and boundless energy. Yes, it has been a frenetic year but what a lot we have done!

*Jo Edwards  
Chair 2017-8*

## **EDITOR'S CORNER**

Can I thank the members of the Society that sent me get well messages whilst I was ill recent-

ly. These do really help in the recovery process and I appreciated so much the card of messages from everyone on the coach to Ousden House, (which I was unable to join). I would especially like to thank Jo Edwards and Rosemary Jewers for their generous support and helping me to get about and making me feel 'normal' again.

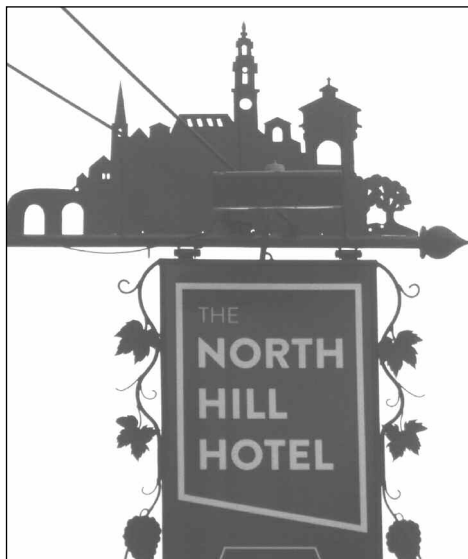
As the last edition was being finalised and I read through Cooper's contribution, I was reminded of diary articles printed in *Private Eye*, apparently from Denis Thatcher, Miz Lilian Carter (President Jimmy Carter's mother), Idi Amin and Denis Thatcher. These were hugely popular and put together by leading satirists, not that Cooper has quite the same viewpoint.

I hope members have seen the excellent floral commemoration of 1918 in the Castle Park. If not, please see the illustration below, which does not do it justice.

I also include the hotel sign for the North Hill Hotel. It is a splendid townscape and very imaginative of the owners. I was on a bus going up North Hill on the first day of the new term in September and there were pupils all over the

pavement on both sides.

Earlier this year, Sir Ken Dodd, the comedian, died aged 90, having given his last performance only a few months earlier. I saw Ken in about 1990 at Charter Hall, on the Saturday of the Grand National when most of the horses fell



over. Ken had plenty of material anyway as he had only recently ended his dispute with the Inland Revenue ("I told them I did not want to join") and the show lasted 4.5 hours, ending at midnight.

Famous for his research, he aimed his local jokes at Coggeshall but soon found that they didn't work. Times had changed. He joked with the audience and found that Frinton produced a laugh. He changed direction making Frinton his target thereafter. It was interesting to see the thought processes of the great comedian at work.

### **JOHN ASHDOWN HILL MBE** **(d. 18th May 2018)**

John was not a member of the society but had addressed at an AGM. He frequently addressed other local societies and was an entertaining, witty and highly knowledgeable speaker. His specialist period was the Wars of the Roses, and of course he was the man who identified the resting place of the body of King Richard III. Many members will have heard him speak.

John lived locally and for several years he was Head of Modern Languages at Farlingaye School, Woodbridge. It was not obvious, therefore, that he was a leading historian of 15th century England. He was a member of the Richard III Society and a key member of their 'Looking for Richard' Project. It was he who published Richard III's mtDNA sequence, meaning that his body could be linked to descendants of his family. At that time he gave talks explaining this and featuring a photograph of where he thought the body was buried. This was exciting in itself and when he was proved absolutely accurate, it was even more so. We were close to history.

After the reburial of Richard and the commemorations, John received due credit for his research. He had published several books on his period and an important one on the *Lost Medieval Buildings of Colchester*. It is a shame that we were denied more.

*Peter Evans*

### **NEWS FROM FRIENDS OF COLCHESTER ROMAN WALL**

It should be the aim of all charitable bodies to work themselves out of a job. Few manage it but the Friends are working well in that direction. It was our principal ambition to place 13 Interpretation Panels around our 1.7 mile Roman Wall. Of these 10 are now in place and three are at an active state of planning.

The Rye Gate/Lower Castle Park Panel is agreed and will be in production shortly with an installation date of October/November. The other two, at Vineyard Street and St. John's Wynd should (at time of writing) be ready shortly. In addition a 14th Panel is likely to be installed at the Queen Street end of the Priory Street Car Park, paid for from the car park update.

The place where the Wall is least visible is where the gates into the town used to stand. Metal plaques have been inserted into the pavement marking the sites of Head Gate, North Gate, East Gate, St. Botolph's Gate and Rye Gate. As they, with the exception of Rye Gate, are in both pavements they are difficult to miss.

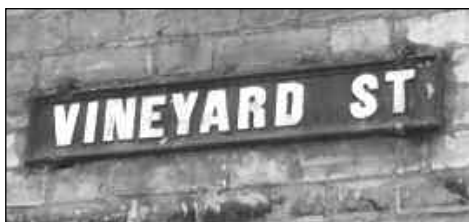
Colchester Museum Service has produced a leaflet called *A Walking Tour of the Roman and Medieval Gates*. This is available from the Visitor Information Centre. It is ideal for a walk around our Walls, even if the 'walk' is conducted from your armchair!

*Henry Spyvee*

*Chairman, Friends of Colchester Roman Wall*

### **COLCHESTER IRONWORK SURVEY**

At one of the monthly coffee mornings back in June someone suggested that we should survey the remaining Colchester iron lamp posts with a view to eventually having them listed if possible. Colchester is one of few towns to still have a large collection of the original cast iron lamp posts that were originally lit by gas. What does make them especially unusual and interesting is that they have the Colchester Foundry



name as part of the casting. Back in the late 1970's-early 80's, E.J. Russell, who was Sir Bob Russell's father, made this same survey and I have been able to find his results as a guide and comparison.

Jo Edwards also asked that the survey be expanded to include her favourites: bollards and street furniture generally. I was delighted to find that Mr Russell had done much of this too and found his descriptions and locations to use as a guide.

I have spent the past three months walking and cycling the streets of Colchester in search of them. I am fairly sure of having found the lamp

posts. However, some have been in rather obscure paths, folleys and tiny roads as well as Almshouses. If anyone should know of any unusual locations for me to check do please get in touch.

I have found most of the old iron bollards but two locations have defeated me: Hythe Hill, which had one by A.C. Mumford and another at the bottom of North Hill, also by A.C. Mumford. The name would be on the post.

Similarly he had listed the old original cast iron street names that survived and I have found most of these too but perhaps you may know what has happened to these:

Grays Cottages, East Street  
Hythe Hill  
North Hill  
Albert Street

St Peter's Street (I know this was on the side of the barge boarded cottage near the Ryegate entrance to the Park)

These all seem to be fixed at first floor level rather than the more modern lower down ones.

He also listed the iron lamp standards on major gateposts which again I have found except for those which were at the Park Road Education offices of EEC which has been recently redeveloped as luxury apartments.

Lastly, he listed the Colchester builders inspection covers that identified the house builder or plumber who had paid a foundry to have his own covers made. I have found several but they are in gardens and side passages etc, where they are hard to see from the pavement. Again I would welcome any sightings of these.

Mr Russell found 545 of the named lamp posts by 1983 and I have managed to locate 296. They are very much under threat from delivery vans and lorries but also from a need to convert lamps to LED lighting as a cost saving for EEC.

I am hopeful that the results of this survey can be added to the Civic Society web site in the near future as well as helping to preserve these rapidly disappearing products from our town's industrial heritage.

*Robert Mercer*

## **TROUBLE AT MILL**

We often forget Colchester's National Trust property, Bourne Mill. This is quite near where I live and I always think that it is an attractive property, with a pond, wood land and the full mill equipment. I sometimes take a walk to look at the pond and the wildlife on it, ducks, swans, coots etc.

The other Sunday I was stopped by a resident as I was walking along the pond. Had I heard, he said, that someone was taking ducks as food for



*Bourne Mill*

his dog? I was not convinced as his source seemed to be a strange unknown woman so later I called in to the Mill to see if there was any truth in the tale. Well, possibly, but as the Police had spoken to a bloke with a gun the NT was not too concerned about this but was keeping an eye on the situation and also on someone who had a motorised toy boat sailing on the pond.

But there is nothing new under the sun. The Mill has records of similar duck problems in the past and there still seemed to be plenty of ducks, coots and fish (although no swans at present) in evidence. The NT is used to having to deal with these issues especially as they own large estates.

The Mill offers a shop and small coffee shop, local books, a book shelf plus space to sit and enjoy the garden, then take a wander around the grounds, or if wet you can inspect the workings of the Mill. People have lived in the Mill within the last 50 years. Not a prospect that would suit me but I am glad to be in walking distance of a charming gem.

Incidentally, I am told that the houses oppo-

site were once known as Red Row, as some labour councillors lived there.

*Peter Evans*

P.S. Open 11.30–17.00 Wednesday till Sunday in the season.

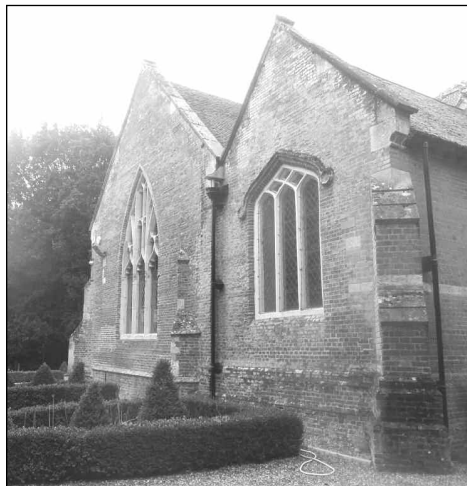
### **HERITAGE OPEN DAYS – THE AUDLEY CHAPEL, BERECHURCH, COLCHESTER**

The Churches Conservation Trust is guardian to the Audley Chapel, attached to the former St Michael's Church, Berechurch. Like many CCT properties, it is usually open but is difficult to find and remote unless you are visiting the architects or solicitors that occupy the rest of the church building. I had wanted to visit it for years and found myself steward for the Heritage Open Day along with Executive Committee colleague, Bob Mercer, who knew the chapel well.

As Bob said, it is a hidden gem. The hammer-beam roof is a wonderful piece of Tudor workmanship, reminiscent of the Spring Chapel at Long Melford Church. The Chapel is not large but includes a magnificent Audley tomb, showing the children of Sir Henry Audley, one small son carrying a skull, denoting that he had died in childhood. There other more recent memorials,



*The Audley family tomb*



*The Audley Chapel*



*The impressive Tudor hammerbeam roof*



some removed from the church. These relate to late residents of the area, several of which died abroad – Paris, Versailles, Chapoo (China), the East Indies and in the trenches of the Great War.

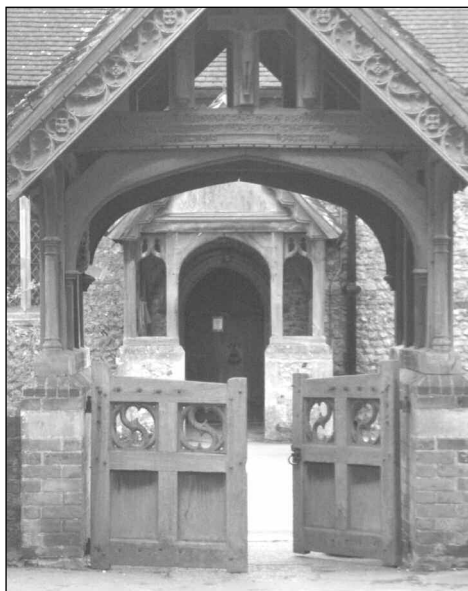
The Church dates back to the early 16th century, when Henry VIII gave it to Thomas, Lord Audley, his Lord Chancellor and former Town Clerk of Colchester. It formerly belonged to St John's Abbey. The Chapel was separated from the church was declared redundant in 1975 and the entrance from the church sealed. An iron screen from ? C17th which guarded the archway from the body of St Michael's, and remains in place. The building was repaired and extended in 1872, and again repaired after vandalism in 1981 by a certain architect called John Burton.

There is no need to wait for the next Open Day, as the Chapel is open daily. The roof and the Audley Tomb are worth it.

*Peter Evans*

## RESEARCHING COLCHESTER'S WAR MEMORIALS

In the autumn of last year I was invited by the Civic Society to a meeting in which Colchester's Great War memorials were being discussed. I think my invitation was based on the book I wrote on *Essex and the Great War*, in which I wrote about the county's war memorials and listed hundreds of them in an appendix. With the centenary of the end of the Great War approaching in November of this year the Society were keen to establish what exactly was the condition of these monuments, if any of them required repair or refurbishment, and whether they might be eligible for assistance from grants. Subsequently, I carried out an on the ground survey, taking many photographs of both indoor and outdoor memorials with the generous help of many individuals. I also offered to look up the newspaper reports which described the unveiling and dedication ceremonies of the memorials because these were events of the utmost significance for Colcestrians at the time.



*St Albright's Lynch Gate at Stanway*



*The Pieta from St James the Less Church*

This proved to be a massive undertaking. I had originally hoped to be able to make photo-

copies from the newspapers but the microfilm copies, when seen in the microfilm readers in Colchester Local Studies Library, were in most cases far too faint, and at times, almost indecipherable for that to be a realistic aim. Therefore, I bit the bullet and set about transcribing each ceremony by hand (or rather by laptop). This was a lengthy and painstaking process as the reports of some ceremonies were exceptionally detailed and others were hard to find! It took me several months to complete the transcriptions, which covered the great majority that were created.

One thing led to another and my research into the memorials led me to offer to write a history of the memorials in all their varied aspects, which, together with the photographs and the transcriptions, has now for the first time placed this body of knowledge together in one place. I for one have been stunned by the sheer range, style, and number of memorials that existed in what was then a small market town. The borough war memorial of course, is situated in one of the most magnificent settings for such monuments in the whole of the country.

The work shows that Colchester's war memorials were of inestimable value to the people who lived through the Great War. They were hugely important to those who subsequently devised the idea of them, who designed them, planned them, donated to them, and built them. They regarded them as commemorating the self-sacrifice both of the Fallen and those who served, and symbolising their duty, patriotism, religious fervour and valour. These may be regarded as outdated concepts today in a world where the accepted wisdom teaches that the Great War was nothing more than a senseless slaughterhouse. However, this was not the interpretation held by the vast majority of people who stood in silence with heads bowed as the Union Jack was pulled from these memorials on their day of dedication. How will we regard these memorials, still standing almost a century

after they built, on Sunday 11 November this year?

*Paul Rusiecki*

## **FRIENDS OF COLCHESTER ROMAN CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

The route of one of my Heritage Tours takes in the remains of arguably the oldest Christian Church in Britain, next to Colchester Police Station in the grass banked area to the south-east of the Maldon Road roundabout.

Dating from between 320 and 340 AD, it was discovered when Southway was built in the early 1970s. After the archaeological excavation was completed, the site was laid out to a high standard. Land inside the exposed lower walls and foundations was covered with small stones, and the location of the wooden posts which would have supported the roof of the church were indicated with blocks of wood. An interpretation board was erected, although whether this was from the outset or later I do not know.

Sadly, over the years the site has deteriorated. It is unkempt. Nobody looks after it. There is an abundance of weeds. The blocks of wood are rotting away.

I was so ashamed that I wrote to Colchester Borough Council, assuming that this historic site was their responsibility. I was astonished to be told that it was nothing to do with the Council, but it was a matter for Essex Police since the remains were on land owned by the Police!

Accordingly I wrote to the Chief Constable, who was amazed to be told that he was ultimately responsible (along with the Police, Crime and Fire Commissioner) for the remains of the country's oldest church.

He invited me to Police Headquarters in Chelmsford to discuss my thoughts, and as a result of a most productive meeting he has given me his support for the formation of a group to look after the site – with the Head of Police in Colchester as a Police representative on such a group.

Although this is the site of the oldest known Christian Church in Britain, astonishingly there are no direction signs to it. But nor are there any direction signs to the Roman Chariot Circus, the only one known to have existed in Britain. Can you imagine the councils and tourist promoters in say Chester or York ignoring such important places for people to visit?

Noting the lack of interest by the Council over many years, I have therefore decided that the best way to look after the site is to form a group of interested people – “Friends of Colchester Roman Christian Church”. If you are interested, I would be pleased to hear from you.

A positive footnote is that about two years ago, because the interpretation board had become unreadable, an excellent new interpretation board was provided.....I have found out, independently by a local historian because he was so ashamed.

Let us now emulate this by forming a group to look after this site which is of national importance.

*Bob Russell*

*Sir Bob Russell, High Steward of Colchester  
Co-ordinator of the proposed 'Friends of  
Colchester Roman Christian Church'*

## **MEMBERSHIP**

We welcome as new members Dr Peter Baker, Jonathan Green, Peter and Monica Douch, Rick and Jacqueline Poulton, Mrs Chris Davis, Dr Chris Davison & Prof Gill Green, Karen Fardell, Caroline Pearce and Frances Pierson.

In the last issue, we mentioned the death of Ray Chandler and an obituary follows.

We must also sadly report the death of other members, former Mayor Roger Browning, Patricia Gallifant and Ida Blower.

### **Ida Blower**

Ida, a veteran Society member, died peacefully on May 27th at the age of 94. She had just a

few months of ill health but remained mentally as sharp as ever and never lost her positive outlook or sense of humour. She started each day with "This is the day the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it" and treated each difficulty as something to be overcome.

Until quite recently, she had been an active member of the society. Her daughters were very proud of the fact that Mum was using emails as her way of keeping in touch.

### **Roger Browning**

A third generation farmer from Tey Brook Farm, Great Tey Roger Browning died in May aged 96. He was a long term Society member and was a local councillor for 24 years. He was Mayor of Colchester in 1981 and became an Alderman after his retirement as a councillor.

### **Ray Chandler 1930-2018**

We were so very sorry to hear of the death of one of our Vice Presidents, and former Society Chairman, Ray Chandler. Ray was born on the 25th May 1930 in north London, moving, with his family, to Steeple Bumpstead when he was still very young. He attended Earls Colne Grammar School before going to University. He emerged as a Bachelor of Science. For many years he ran his own scientific and technical business in Braintree, gaining a worldwide reputation, so much so that he was much in demand at international scientific conferences. Luckily, he spoke four foreign languages fluently and was able to communicate reasonably well in a further three!

Ray was married to Joyce, also from London (but south of the river!) and they had two daughters. He was very much a family man. His pleasures were simple, hiking, sailing, often with underprivileged children from London (he had a lifelong love of the sea and of boats), exploring historic sites and travelling, usually in his motor caravan. He was also a man who was prepared to give his time for his community. He was a Parish

Councillor for Panfield and also a Councillor for Braintree District Council. Ray had high standards and was always prepared to do what he could to support his community. He died on the 21st April this year. His funeral was attended by most members of the Civic Society Executive Committee who wished to say farewell to an extraordinary man who will be missed by us all.

*Jo Edwards*

### **Joan Gallifant 1st March 1923-26th June 2018**



I had known Joan for most of my life. Our paths regularly crossed as both my parents and I were good friends with various members of her family. Joan was the younger sister of Henry Collins, who, with his wife, Joyce Pallot, was responsible for the creation of the Southway Murals. When we were gathering the information needed for our Heritage Lottery Fund bid for money to restore the murals,

I spent a beautiful, sunny morning with Joan, listening to her stories about Henry and Joyce and looking at their art work on the walls of her home in Prettygate. It was a morning I will always remember, one of those joyous occasions that happen when you least expect them. I am so pleased that Joan was able to take part in the film

that we commissioned about the Southway Murals and that she was aware of the pleasure that her brother's newly restored work was giving to the people of Colchester. She was so delighted with our project. Joan was also incredibly artistic but her strengths lay in textiles. Such glorious, vivid colours! Just beautiful!

*Jo Edwards*

### **UPDATES**

In the previous newsletter we included an item on 'Fixing the Link', the project that involves the Borough and County Councils and Greater Anglia in improving the route from North Station to the Town Centre. An application was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund for assistance from their Townscape Heritage Fund. Unfortunately the bid was unsuccessful but good will has been established with local landowners, occupiers etc. that The Council is considering other options. The Society wrote a letter in support of the project.

Work funded by Greater Anglia is not affected.

We have had news from Beacon House, which we have visited to hear about their efforts to help homeless people and those without permanent accommodation. They are moving their Day Centre to a new ground floor town centre location (Crouch Street). They are converting their East Hill premises into 9 flats to provide assistance for people who have used their services and need help moving into the private rented sector.

Their annual report gave some interesting case studies. One rough sleeper complained of problems with his sight. Beacon House staff took him to an optician and he was diagnosed with Glaucoma and prescribed eye drops. These needed to be refrigerated and Beacon House funded this and were able to help by storing and administering the eye drops. His sight is much improved and he can now give the proper change to his Big Issue customers.

As you know, the society was behind the restoration of the Pallot Collins Subway Panels, which were a considerable success. May be they have inspired the decoration in St Mary's Car Park, that have just been unveiled. They are most attractive and feature Boadicea and her tribe, the Trinovantes. I don't want to be pedantic, but I thought that we called her Boudicca these days. Either way, worth a look.

*Peter Evans*

## **TROLLEYWISE**

In the UK, thousands of shopping trolleys are abandoned every year in car parks, by roadsides and in rivers. As the biggest trolley manufacturer in the world, German company Wanzl has a division called Trolleywise to help deal with this problem. Trolleywise have just launched a new Trolleywise app to collect repair and return trolleys to the relevant retailers.

Easy to use and free to download all you need to do is take a picture of the trolley, answer a couple of questions about the particular trolley and send. You will receive an immediate message confirming the message has been received and a second message when the trolley has been collected by a member of the local Trolleywise team. It really is simple to use.

Alternatively, you can email Trolleywise at: [trolleywise@wanzl.co.uk](mailto:trolleywise@wanzl.co.uk), phone 01926 451951 or contact a member of Colchester's Zone Team for the particular area – various telephone numbers are shown on the CBC website.

Members helping to keep Colchester clear of abandoned shopping trolleys would be much appreciated.

*Sheila Anderton*

## **GREYFRIARS AND OCTAV BOTNAR**

The society has developed an excellent relationship with Greyfriars Hotel and they are very cooperative hosts for our coffee mornings and other meetings. They have capped this by the generous offer on the final page of this newsletter.

They tell us that the biography of their founder has just been published – *Octave Botnar – A Life* by John Laughland. Botnar, 1913 – 1998 was born in Czernowitz, then in Austro-Hungary, now Western Ukraine. He was a communist, soldier, prisoner of the Germans, member of the French Resistance, prisoner in a Romanian Gulag before coming to Britain with his wife Marcella and daughter Camelia, who died aged 20.

He founded Datsun UK Ltd in 1970 which distributed Nissan cars in the UK, becoming one of the largest private enterprises in Britain under his driven, charismatic leadership. He used the same skills in his philanthropic interests, helping the young, the sick and disadvantaged and gave millions to charity. He also encouraged Nissan to set up factories in areas like Washington, Tyne & Wear and Sunderland.

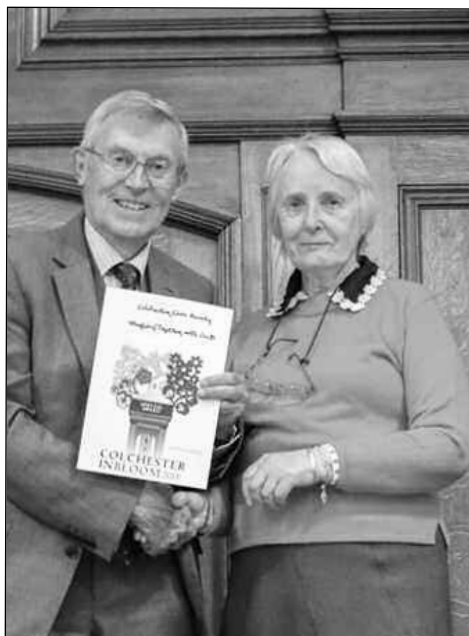
Botnar's final years included disputes with Nissan and the Inland Revenue. He gave millions to charities and was a figure of the 20th Century as worthy of recollection as any, but a very private and modest man, about whom most people knew little. This book corrects that.

Expertly researched and written by John Laughland, with a Preface by The Rt Hon Lord Tebbit CH. The book is available to order direct from the publisher at the price of £24.95. (Hardback; 265 pp; 32 pp colour plates) Enquiries: [biography@omci.co.uk](mailto:biography@omci.co.uk) (or your favourite bookshop).

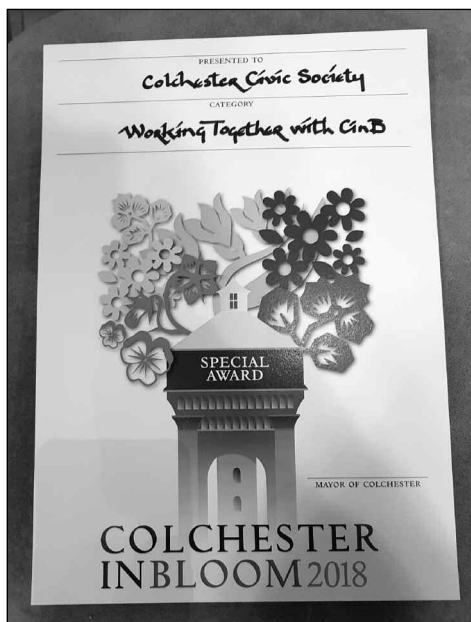
## **COLCHESTER IN BLOOM**

How lovely it was to be invited to the very prestigious Colchester in Bloom Awards Ceremony in the Moot Hall at the beginning of October and then to find that the Civic Society swas to be presented with a certificate!

This was in recognition of the strong partnership we forged in order to restore the Southway Murals, a partnership that will continue into further projects. Yes, we have at least one in mind! So thank you, Pam and the Team, for a great sur-



*The certificate being presented to Ann Turner, Membership Secretary, by the Mayor, Councillor Peter Chillingworth*



prise and you, Pam and the Team, for a great surprise and a splendid evening and thanks to Greyfriars, too, for sponsoring the event!

*Jo Edwards*

## HERITAGE WEEKEND 2018

Once again, I have to thank all those who helped out at Heritage Weekend this year. The final visitor numbers for all venues was 6,827. This was down on previous years but in 2018 the event was spread over two weeks for the first time. This meant that there were more things going on to show what Colchester has to offer. The most people attending was in 2014 when there were 13,261 visitors

This year we only had to steward the Roman Theatre in the Town and Audley Chapel. The visitor numbers for these two venues were 17 for Audley Chapel compared to 51 the previous year and for the Roman Theatre a total of 397 compared to 433 the previous year. This was spread over two days. We have to cover the morning and afternoon on the Saturday and Sunday at the Theatre so as I now double up the stewards for safety and to give you a chance for a break, I do need a total of 8 people for the weekend for the Theatre.

If you can recommend any other places that could open then please let me know. It could be a premise that we would not have to steward but would be of great interest to people to look around. How many times have you said, "I wonder what goes on in there?" Heritage Weekend is a time to find out.

*Ann Turner*

## REPORTS OF SOCIAL EVENTS

### **7th June 2018 Charleston Farmhouse and Monks House, Sussex, country homes of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell**

Well, what a lovely day we all had visiting Charleston House and Monks Hall in Sussex on 27th June. The sun shone, the birds sang and 32 of us, plus Tim our trusty driver, enjoyed Virginia Woolf's country homes, where the VERY liberal Bloomsbury Set wrote, painted and generally relaxed, in some quite extrnary liaisons! Talk about TOWIE!

Unfortunately we didn't have time to visit the Church with the murals on the way back, but there's always next time! My favourite was Charleston House, with its truly authentic interiors and fabulous gardens! No wonder Monty Don visited with Gardener's World. I remember even him being impressed! I'd swap my garden

any time and could have spent all day there. We enjoyed a tasty pub lunch between visits in the beautiful little village of Rodmell, East Sussex, real Miss Marple country. Can't wait for the next day out! Many thanks to Jo for organising a fab day, even though, sadly she couldn't join us, but put a lot of effort into us enjoying it. And a big hand, also, to Monica, her No. 2, who coped admirably with instructing Tim, with fingers crossed, and answering our many questions superbly! Well done, girls, and our best wishes to Peter who missed the trip while he is recovering. Hope to see you soon.

*Carole McLean*

*Our roving reporter from St Johns*

We also visited Ousden House and Hatfield House, amongst other venue and events. Further reports will appear in the next issue.



*The fascinating sculpture of all of the books written by Virginia Woolf*

# GREYFRIARS



## **EXCLUSIVE OFFER for Colchester Civic Society Members**

From now until Friday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2018, we have pleasure in offering you our Seasonal 3 course Table d'hôte menu at the 2 course price, namely, 3 courses for £21 per person instead of £26 per person. The Table d'hôte menu is available for Lunch (midday until 2.30 p.m.) and Dinner (between 5.30 p.m. and 7 p.m.), in the wonderful *Art Deco* Cloisters Restaurant from Monday to Saturday inclusive. If you wish to dine on a Sunday, we are delighted to offer our 3 course Sunday Table d'hôte menu at the 2 course price, namely £24.50 instead of £29.50. In addition, we have pleasure in offering you a glass of one of our popular wines to accompany your meal, with our compliments.

Alternatively, if you would prefer to dine from our à la carte menu, this letter represents a £5 credit towards a three course à la carte lunch or dinner, together with a complimentary glass of wine.

A sample of our current menus are available on our website or please do enquire in person or by telephone. Please note there may be slight variations to menu items at certain times, when our Chefs make their seasonal ingredient adjustments.

This offer is available strictly to members of the Colchester Civic Society and their guests, for a maximum of six persons per reservation, on presentation of this notice and is valid up to and including Friday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2018. It is not valid in conjunction with any other offer and is not redeemable for cash in full or in part.

Booking is not always necessary during the week, but is advisable on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, in order to avoid possible disappointment.

**GREYFRIARS • HIGH STREET • COLCHESTER • CO1 1UG**

**Tel: +44 (0)1206 575 913 Fax: +44 (0)1206 621 915**

**[reservations@greyfriarscolchester.co.uk](mailto:reservations@greyfriarscolchester.co.uk) [www.greyfriarscolchester.co.uk](http://www.greyfriarscolchester.co.uk)**



**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.

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**Rosemary Jewers**, 16 Abbeyfield View, Colchester CO2 7US

**Jayne Richardson**, 59 Byron Avenue, Colchester CO3 4HQ

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