

Winter 2019



Registered Charity 237885

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

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

Contributions are always welcome and should be sent to
Peter Evans, 5 Grimston Road, Colchester CO2 7RN
Telephone 01206 540990
or emailed to peter.evans7978@btinternet.com

The Society's website - <http://www.colchestercivicsociety.co.uk>

CONTENTS

Chair's Annual Report 2018/9	3
AGM ; presentation by North Essex Heritage	10
A Room With a View	10
Jumbo Study Group	12
Your Newsletter	11
Membership	11
A Seat on the Bus	11
Colchester Books	12
Heritage Open Days 2019	13
Eyes and Ears Issues	
Ugly barriers	13
St Botolph's Priory public consultation	14
Superdrug window	15
Litter pick	16
Priory wishing well	16
Lewis Gardens	16
Peddars Way	17
St Botolph's roundabout	17
Civic Society's Finest Hour	20
Restoration of Colchester lampposts	21
Reports of Social Events	
Visit to Bury St Edmunds	22
Unveiling of Blue Plaque for Margaret Thatcher	22
Visit to Curzon Cinema	23
Visit to Bath House (Ellison's)	24
Trip to Farley Farm, Chiddingly and Ditchling	25
Visit to Wiston Mill	26
Wildlife Cruise	28
The Big Stink	28
Social Programme 2020	30

Aims, Officers and Committee inside back

CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

I never know quite where to start but, this time, it is obvious. Our first action of the year was to present the Mercury Theatre with a cheque towards the Mercury Rising Appeal. Members had very generously donated to our own appeal to raise enough to sponsor a seat in the theatre for a period of 10 years. It was very pleasing to hand over the money at the AGM and I would like to thank those who contributed.



This was the beginning of another incredibly busy year for the Society. We certainly involve ourselves in a hugely diverse range of activities, something that will really become apparent as

I present this report.

You may remember that Paul Rusiecki completed his 'audit' of all the First World War memorials in the town just before the last AGM. We had been asked by our umbrella organisation, Civic Voice, to check our memorials in case any needed any TLC. However, we didn't know where they were. Paul offered to do some research. Not only did he find them and check their condition; he also photographed and researched each one, finding newspaper reports of their unveiling ceremonies etc. We decided that his work should be put onto our website as a resource for all to enjoy and Paul agreed to mark the launch by giving a talk on Armistice Day services in Colchester. This was held in the Mayor's Parlour and Civic Suite in

the Town Hall at the beginning of November in the presence of the Mayor and Mayoress and the Garrison Commander and was our contribution to Colchester's programme of events for the 100th Anniversary of the end of the First World War.

Paul was not the only member to produce an extraordinary piece of research. There has been considerable concern about Colchester's historic cast iron lamp posts which are not being maintained by Essex County Council. The Dutch Quarter Association and Roman and Castle Road Residents' Association as well as the Civic Society have been in conversation with Essex County Council for some time but we are not getting very far. However, we were not really sure how many lamp posts there are in the town. Sir Bob Russell's father recorded them many years ago but it was apparent that a lot had been lost since. And it is not just lamp posts at risk. Bob Mercer got on his bike. He spent many, many hours searching every street within the old borough boundary for lamp posts, bollards, drain covers, railings, gates etc. made by Colchester foundries. His amazingly detailed report is now also on our website. Colchester Borough Council is working with us to get this historic street furniture listed which will hopefully focus some bureaucratic minds! One thing leads to another, of course, and Bob soon found himself on his bike again, this time recording all the old ceramic street names which the Council wish to preserve. How lovely! It is good to be able to work so closely with the Council on such projects. Paul and Bob really deserve our thanks.

We provide assistance to the Council in many ways. Street naming, for example. The Civic Society provides an advisory service and, this year, our Street Names Committee has ensured that the names of a number of past Mayors live on as they now have roads in Tollgate named after them. They are Peter Crowe, Reg Hilham, Martin Hunt, Allen Aldridge, Christopher Garnett and Westley Sandford. The street signs were unveiled at a ceremony in the spring. Our thanks to Henry Spyvee, Peter Evans, Vic Lewis and Bob Russell for their efforts.

Our monthly Coffee Morning/Discussion Groups have grown so much that we are now

using the main restaurant at Greyfriars. When I realise that two years ago, we expected only half a dozen members each month, it is amazing to find a regular attendance of 30 now. The discussions are interesting and very varied. We have no agenda. Each month Sheila and I are both tasked with reporting matters of concern (although we can't emphasise strongly enough the need for individuals to report these themselves as well. We are happy to explain how to do this). Some of these concerns need to be drawn to the attention of the Councils, but others are the responsibility of other bodies. I will return to the Councils in a moment but first of all, I will mention some other outcomes. In the early days of the Coffee Mornings, someone raised the state of the Grade II Listed Anglian Water Pumphouse at the foot of Balkerne Hill. It did, indeed, look awful. I contacted my very helpful 'go to' person at Anglian Water, Grant Tuffs, and he immediately started to make enquiries. Within days, he reported that he had persuaded his powers that be to restore the building. This year, the work was duly done, very well. We were so pleased! It is unfortunate that the windows have been boarded up but permission was given for this some years ago and there was little we could do.

BT phone boxes also featured prominently on Sheila and my post Coffee Morning to do list. It became apparent that we needed to do something fairly drastic as some, including two of our four listed red kiosks, were in a sorry state. We decided to check every BT phone box within the old Borough boundary. I phoned BT for a list of locations and, after an enormous amount of toing and froing, I was told that this was confidential information!! I wrote to the Gazette, asking readers to let me know the location of their local kiosks and, armed with this information and limited info from OS maps, Sheila and I spent a couple of days searching for and checking every public BT phone we could find. We got some very strange looks! We compiled a report, which confirmed that only 12 out of 42 were operational, and sent it to BT. The reaction was astounding! They pulled engineers off other jobs across the Eastern Region and sent them to Colchester. In the weeks immediately before and after Christmas, boxes were cleaned, glass and Perspex replaced, phones mended, light

bulbs renewed, some phones, subject to regular theft, were converted to card only, a couple of boxes were removed altogether. Shortly after Christmas, two very senior BT managers came to Colchester to meet us. We discussed the four red boxes, all loss making. They hoped that the Society would be prepared to adopt them and find an alternative use for them. We didn't really want to do so but made various suggestions which they will pursue when the time comes - a defibrillator in the East Bay box, for example. I must admit that I feel very proud of our achievements when I pass that box. It had 46 panes of glass missing before our intervention. The other one that pleases me is the ordinary kiosk on Baker's Corner, the junction between Drury, Maldon and Shrub End Roads where the Perspex had been covered in thick green lichen. It now sparkles and it really lifts my spirits! What DOES that say about me?

Other Coffee Morning issues dealt with by Sheila with her Eyes and Ears hat on include graffiti, fly posting (how many posters does one circus need?), litter, abandoned road works barriers, cones, signage etc., potholes, faulty street lights (some with bare wiring), faulty Belisha beacons (ECC rely on the public to report these) damaged bins, public seating, street signs and signposts - it goes on and on and on. This year has seen the development of our plastic cable tie campaign. Irritated by the vast number of ties attached to lamp posts, street lights etc, ties that had held temporary planning or licensing application notices, information about parking restrictions and so on, Sheila and others have been clipping them off. Over 2000 have now been removed. We have spoken to the Councils and to NE Essex Parking Partnership and are trying to find a solution to the problem. We have also explained that gaffer tape, sometimes used as an alternative, strips the paint off cast iron lampposts. Whilst we were talking to Planning, we also suggested that their notices should be dated and laminated. At the moment, they are put in polypockets with the opening uppermost. The pockets soon fill with rainwater and the notices become unreadable! One success has been the repair and general refurbishment of seats in the Priory grounds. It has taken ages to get this work done but I think the message

finally got through when we showed a particular photo to those with the authority to act. Sheila, walking through the Priory one day, came across a kitchen chair. Some of the street drinkers who gather there saw her puzzled expression and told her that one of their friends brought it with him every morning because sitting on the broken benches 'hurt his bum'!! Actually, we have developed a very good relationship with Zone Wardens and Operatives who are usually quick to sort out the problems we identify. They welcome reports from us, and the public as a whole, so don't ever hold back. Our success with Essex County Council is more limited but we persevere! We are still battling for a sensible resolution of the U turns issue at Lewis Gardens, considering the proposal for a traffic island at the entrance to the road utterly pointless. The red and white barrier at East Bridge is another bone of contention as are the awful barriers on the railway bridges. We are watching the railway engineering work timetable for an opportunity to clear the litter on the embankment, near Ipswich Road, which is truly awful.

It is, very much, a case of getting to know the people who are responsible for dealing with issues. To that end, we have met with many of them during the year, mostly over coffee here at Greyfriars! We certainly don't just moan. We have constructive discussions, offering our help, giving praise where due, too. It is surprising how well a 'thank you' is received. Obviously they don't get many, which is sad. We have met with senior Councillors, the Police Licensing Officers (more in a minute), Zone Managers/Wardens etc, CBC Officers from various departments, the men from BT, etc etc. We are now in the happy situation where we can often resolve issues with a quick call or email because we have developed 'hot lines'. And those hot lines tend to be two way. We are now being consulted far more, which is really valuable. Consultations this year have included one about an application to the Future High Streets Programme and now we have been asked whether we can be involved in a consultation about a Walking Strategy for Colchester. I have agreed to a short presentation by Colchester Borough Council and Essex County Council at our July Coffee Morning.

Bob Mercer and Ged Dickinson have had a number of conversations with the Colchester Borough Council enforcement officer, Dale Keeble, about issues such as the condition of Listed Buildings (for example, the erstwhile tattoo parlour in Magdalen Street which had singularly inappropriate alterations and Superdrug in High Street where the beautiful first floor window is rotten and disintegrating) and also about the huge number of plastic banners being hung off barriers, buildings, lamp posts and so on. Dale is very much on the ball and responds very quickly.

Bob, Brian and our President, John Burton, have been very active with Planning matters during the year. The big one, of course, was the proposed development, by Alumno, of student housing and a hotel on the Cultural Quarter. The Society objected to the plans and encouraged individual members to do so too. Realising that only one person could speak against the application at the hearing, and knowing that there were several individuals and organisations who would want to do so, we gathered them all together for a series of meetings to try to work out how we could cover all the points that needed to be made in the allotted 3 minutes! OMCI, the owners of Greyfriars and East Hill House, who also objected to the plans, worked with us. Civic Society member, Howard Davies, who was working for them, was invaluable. OMCI employed a planning expert who gave us a huge amount of advice and spoke on behalf of OMCI and the myriad of other groups who wanted their voice heard, residents' associations, the Victor Batte Lay Trust, the Friends of the Minorities etc etc. She was prepared to speak on behalf of us all but, on the night of the hearing, we found that the Planning Committee Chair had agreed to 5 speakers so John Burton and Bob Russell spoke for us. Much to our amazement and joy, the Planning Committee were unanimous in their decision to reject the application. The Moot Hall erupted! I would like to thank all those involved. It was quite a journey! Alumno are sure to appeal but we will be ready!

We have had a number of other planning issues to contend with, for example, a dreadful planning application by Amphora, the commercial arm

of Colchester Council, to alter and extend 60 Creffield Road, a house in a Conservation Area. This is ongoing but there might be some light at the end of the tunnel. Similarly, plans for Doe's Mill in East Bay have been considerably altered following our intervention. Still far from perfect but we live in hope. Another issue was the conversion of the Upper Bowls Green and Pavilion in the Castle Park to a mini golf course and cafe. We managed to get the hours of opening restricted by the Planning Committee as there were huge concerns about late nights. However, we note that there is now a licensing application in for hours well beyond those agreed so we've won the battle but not yet the war. This is just a flavour of the work Bob Mercer and Brian Roach do as far as Planning is concerned. Not only is Bob tireless but he does write some cracking letters! We are, of course, looking at the plans for the Essex County Hospital site and have made a number of suggestions already. John Burton has given us so much expert advice and support and we are so grateful to him. Another small but significant development is that of the new gate fronting the High Street at Fenwicks. Bob, our Colchester Foundries expert, was not impressed with the inscription on it which implied that Fenwicks had owned the foundry that originally stood on the site. It looks as though it will be changed.

I mentioned Licensing. Georgia Tamblyn has been representing the Society at Licensing hearings during the year, doing an amazing job. She - and we - have been so frustrated by the Council ignoring its own policy on licensing and allowing licences for hours way beyond its own stipulated limits. Even more troubling are the applications for property it actually owns! Georgia has managed to thwart some excesses but the problems still remain. Apart from anything else, the Licensing Committee seems to forget that more people are now living in the town centre. Town centre living is great but the gilt can be removed very rapidly from the gingerbread when one is awoken, night after night, by revellers singing, arguing, bawling into mobile phones or just shouting to each other as they spill out of bars at 3am and begin to stagger home. By chance, Peter Evans had a conversation with the Police Licensing Officer which led to a

meeting. We had a very interesting discussion which we hope will inform further discussion with the Council this coming year. Watch this space. We are just tackling the problem of the crowd control barrier in front of the new Rubix nightclub in Crouch Street which blocks the entire pavement when the club is open, sending pedestrians into the cycle lane. It is not what goes on inside licensed premises that necessarily concerns us. It is the knock on effect outside, too. Incidentally, the signage on the front of Rubix is far from suitable for a building in a Conservation Area, but that is another Planning matter we are pursuing. Georgia has, very sadly, resigned from the Executive Committee but we will miss her very much. Her tenacity has been absolutely awesome!

And now to something really positive. Trees! We have some excellent things to report here. First of all, Bullock Wood, on the boundary between Colchester and Tendring; ancient woodland full of protected trees, has, for many years, been owned by someone who lives abroad. Unfortunately, the wood has been under threat because of lack of management and, being very close to new housing, has also suffered from misuse by the public. We have, for years, been worried about its future and have expressed our concerns. We now understand that Tendring Council have bought it. Relief! We were pleased to see that Roman and Castle Roads have had some of their roadside trees replaced. Their residents' association has worked very hard for this. Unfortunately, such trees are not so likely in other areas, as Roman and Castle Roads have Article Four Conservation Area status which makes them rather special. We have our own tree planting success although it is not exactly what was originally intended. A couple of years ago, we asked the Council to remove a dead tree in the Priory grounds. It was one of a number of young limes planted to shield the view of the Britannia car park and Colchester Town Station. They told us that it couldn't be replaced because of financial constraints. We offered to pay for the tree in remembrance of John and Anne Crook Williams, who had done so much for the Society. Unfortunately, because of appalling weather conditions, the ceremonial planting had to be postponed and then it was hard to get everyone,

including John and Anne's sons, together during the planting season this year. We decided that the tree should be planted, at our expense, which it was, and we will start again with the idea of a memorial tree elsewhere. I am pleased to report that our tree is looking good! We really pushed Colchester Borough Council to do something about All Saints Churchyard, aka the grounds of the Natural History Museum. Yes, we know it is a space for wildlife but it still needs to be managed. The ivy, particularly, was out of control, damaging graves, climbing, thickly, up the church tower threatening the fabric of the building, and also creeping over the wall and across the pavement in Culver Street East. Having a very highly regarded conservation architect, with vast experience of dealing with ancient ecclesiastical buildings, as a President helps in these situations! The work was finally done and it looks SO much better.

And now to footpaths. I am very pleased to report that Ged Dickinson is doing a great job, walking the town's public rights of way again, reporting graffiti, abandoned shopping trolleys, litter, overgrown paths etc. If anyone else wants to help with path checking, perhaps whilst walking their dog, please get in touch. Some paths really do need some TLC and we are very pleased to report that one has recently received at lot. Footpath 53, close to Mason Road, was transformed from an overgrown, littered path, full of dead leaves, to a smart clear walkway. This was the result of two days hard work, instigated by Civic Society member, John Collett, who gathered a small team including another Civic Society member, Paul Larkin, and tackled the job with secateurs, spades, brooms etc. John is on a roll, I think, so if anyone would like to volunteer their services, I am sure he would be very pleased. Others in the Society were involved in our Great British Spring Clean litter pick around the town centre. It is amazing what we find. This year it was a number of enormous plastic cooking oil containers and a stack of yellow buckets ! Yuk! We intend to do more litter picking in the coming year. Any volunteers? It is very satisfying!

On the subject of improving our pedestrian routes in the town, our work on the Henry

Collins and Joyce Pallot murals in the Southway Underpasses is still being recognised. Only last week I received an email from Bexhill, asking how we went about the restoration of our murals as they wanted to restore theirs. They had not recognised its importance until they saw our Concrete Legacy film on the Colchester Civic Society website. I was invited to Colchester in Bloom's annual award ceremony in the Moot Hall last autumn, a splendid evening. Ann Turner, our Vice Chair was also present. We were so pleased to receive a certificate from Colchester in Bloom in recognition of our partnership in the project.

Another of our major projects to come to fruition this year was the Colchester Civic Society Plaque Trail. It was initially the idea of Henry Spyvee, who thought our plaques should be the subject of a leaflet. We soon realised that this was not feasible as it would need to be reprinted every time a new plaque was erected. Rosemary Jewers, our plaque expert, started to research alternatives and came across Place Checker, a company who produce digital maps. Much to our joy, they offered to host a digital plaque trail for us if we did all the research. So we did. It took us ages to find all the plaques and we missed some - including the one above the front door of the house that belonged to my family for 70 years, which I finally sold 2 years ago! Hidden in plain sight! We photographed and researched each plaque, learning so much about the town as we did so, mapped all the plaques onto three maps for three different trails, inside the Roman Wall, outside the Roman Wall and Military and Wartime. It was a huge undertaking and I would like to thank Rosemary and Henry, who did the bulk of the work, but also Jayne Richardson, Georgia Tamblin and Sir Bob Russell who helped too. Dave Monk, from BBC Essex, launched the trails in the Autumn here, at Greyfriars. We are adding to them as we erect or discover new plaques, which reminds me that I must provide the information for that one over my erstwhile front door!

We have added to our list of Civic Society plaques this year with the erection, last week, of a plaque beside the front door of the Colchester English Study Centre at 19 Lexden Road. This plaque will be a huge selfie opportunity for

the students from all over the world who study here as it states that Margaret Thatcher, the first woman to be Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, lived in the building in 1948. Before anyone says anything, I will reiterate that the Society is totally apolitical and we are simply recording another piece of Colchester's wide and diverse history. Very few people know that a Prime Minister lived here. They hopefully do now. We have already started some of the work necessary for our next two plaques. We hope to be granted permission for a plaque showing the position of Lock Hospital at the edge of the Old Heath Rec which we would like to erect in 2020 and, in 2021, we would love to erect a plaque saying that Charles Harrod, founder of Harrods, was born in Lexden and baptised at Lexden Church. Rosemary is taking a break from the Civic Society Executive Committee - we really hope that it will be a short one because we are going to miss her terribly. She is simply extraordinary. Thank you, Rosemary, for your inspirational work for the Society.

The Balcerne Tower Trust erected an interpretation board this year to explain more about the Garrison Water Tower beside Butt Road. The Civic Society were pleased to contribute towards the cost of the board.

What else have we been doing? Well, there is the ongoing saga of the Middleborough Drinking Fountain. Oh dear! Working with Colchester Borough Council we offered to see what we could do about the restoration of the fountain and to see whether we could restore it to working order. We were well into initial research when I received an email from my Council contact. By sheer chance, she has discovered that two other departments within the Council had embarked on the same task. Each was completely unaware of the other. We had a meeting. I must admit that I was highly amused when I was told that the work had been entirely costed because it was immediately apparent that everyone assumed that there was a water supply to the fountain. Oh no there isn't! It was moved from its original position when the cattle market went and the site was developed. I gently explained. Oops! We are now fund raising and have already had some success. We have a long way to go, though,

because that water supply is going to cost a small fortune.

Sheila and I were invited to observe meetings of the new Colchester Council Heritage Task and Finish Group chaired by Cllr Darius Laws. Very interesting. I hope we are still able to go now that the Chair has changed. It was during one of these meetings that we heard that there was some concern about the Roman Church by the Police Station. Sir Bob had already asked the Civic Society for support for his idea, the formation of the Friends of Colchester's Roman Church. This we readily agreed to.

The Society is now firmly in the 21st century as far as social media is concerned. We have a new website. Our last one relied on my nephew, Oliver Clifton Sprigg, who lives in Norfolk, having the time to update it and, as he is one of the busiest people I know, this wasn't fair. However, I would really like to thank him for all he did for us. Our new site was set up professionally. John Salmon gave an enormous amount of time to the project and deserves our thanks. He now runs both the website and our Facebook page which, of course, he also set up. Rosemary set up a Twitter account for us, too. However, we now need someone to take over from her, so, if anyone is prepared to do so, please let me know.

Our public face has been very visible this year in other ways, too, with lots of mentions in the local newspapers and on local and Forces Radio. Rosemary and I were interviewed about the Plaque Trail Launch and the War Memorials Launch, Rosemary spoke on BBC Essex about the Margaret Thatcher plaque and Ann drew the short straw with another BBC Quest programme. They are simply awful as one has absolutely no idea what line the presenters are going to take. Mental agility is absolutely essential! So is the ability to speak at high speed. Ann coped remarkably well.

I have given a couple of talks about the work of the Society to other organisations this year, one to the Colchester Pensioners Action Group and the other to the Colchester Civil Service Retirement Fellowship. I have just been approached to give a talk to another group, too.

We have also tackled the matter of a new

membership form - not nearly as easy as one would think. We have finally got a very sound basis for the wording which now just needs a few tweaks. The design for the cover has been more contentious but I think, with the help of member, Adam Randall, a graphic designer, we are almost there with that, too. My thanks to Adam, Georgia, Rosemary, Sheila and Ann for their very valuable input into this project.

Despite serious illness, Peter Evans has produced two very interesting Newsletter during the year with lots of photos. He is always looking for copy so if you are willing to write an article for inclusion in a future edition, please let him know.

Our Programme was, without a shadow of a doubt, jinxed last year. The weather, asbestos, road works, vandalism - you name it, it happened! I had to postpone several visits for which I apologise profusely. There was little I could do but it was immensely frustrating and I felt awful. In the 40 or so years I have been arranging the Programme, I have never ever had such problems before. However, we still had some successful events, and I am very grateful to Monica Taylor and Elizabeth Fitt who led outings for me.

I have reported that many members who are not on the Executive Committee have given their time to help the Society achieve its aims and I would like to thank them all - your help has been appreciated so much. We really do want to involve more people. We are hoping to establish a programme of litter picking throughout the year, we need footpath walkers, we might start to tackle the job of cast iron lamp post painting - we are waiting for final clearance from Essex County Highways, we are in the process of establishing a sub committee to look at issues with public transport, and we need more plastic cable tie snippers and that is just for starters. If you feel you can offer your services, even for a couple of hours a month, please come forward.

We also need you all to pass the word about what we do, to try to recruit new members, Hopefully, if the motion to reintroduce Corporate Membership is passed tonight, we might find our numbers increasing, despite the proposed increase in membership fees. We have

kept these as low as we possibly can and haven't considered an increase for many years, but our costs are rising, partially because of the new website but also because we are doing so much, so we realise that we must bite the bullet.

On the subject of membership, I was thrilled to bits when the Bishop of Colchester agreed to become one of our Vice Presidents. He has already made his mark on the Society. It was he who suggested putting the Charles Harrod plaque on the church at Lexden! I would never have dared suggest such a thing!!

We have gained new members this year, all of whom are very welcome. Sadly, we have lost a few too, some who had been very active in the Society. We will miss them.

I must thank the Committee for their hard work. Everyone has a job. Some have more than one! Jayne concentrates on Highways issues, Henry chairs the Street Naming Committee, Rosemary has been responsible for everything to do with plaques as well as Press liaison and Twitter, Peter helps with street naming and is our Editor, Paul is our Treasurer and our point of contact with Civic Voice, John Salmon looks after the website and our Facebook page and also attends Civic Voice events on our behalf - he is currently arranging one in Colchester for us, Brian, who is retiring from the Committee after many years of service, advises on Planning matters as does Bob. Bob, of course, also did the cast iron survey and the ceramic street name survey and has done a lot of work on the Middleborough fountain, as well. Georgia was responsible for Licensing but gave huge help with other projects, too, Mike is our Secretary, Sheila deals with Eyes and Ears, reporting all those little niggly things that people notice. She also takes on the larger tasks, litter picking, phone box checking, cable tie snipping and liaison with Borough Officers and Councillors; and Ann is our Vice Chair, Membership Secretary, Minutes Secretary and ad hoc Town Guide! What a team! I must also thank Ged Dickinson, whose help to Sheila and Eyes and Ears has been superb and Howard Davies and John Burton for all the support that they have given me during the year. I am so grateful to you all.

Finally, I must, on behalf of us all, give

thanks to the wonderful management and staff of Greyfriars, who have absolutely excelled themselves this year. As usual, nothing has been too much trouble. They really put themselves out for us. I did ensure that they received several boxes of Quality Street at Christmas, by the way!

And that, you will be relieved to know, concludes my report for the year.

*Jo Edwards,
Chairman 2018-9, Colchester Civic Society*

The AGM was followed by a presentation by North Essex Heritage (formerly Colchester and North East Essex Buildings Preservation Trust) by David Balcombe, Director.

David heads this organisation, which is a close cousin of the Colchester Civic Society, as its main purpose is to be the “organisation of the last resort” and becomes involved with buildings that have failed. He gave the example of Birch Church, and told the story of how various options failed, and how the Church Commissioners had taken an unusually rigid position. The situation is still unresolved, but more positive and it is possible that it will be adapted into a family home. The Civic Society was not able to become directly involved, as our remit is for the town of Colchester itself.

Preservation Trust has been extremely successful and at Great Yarmouth there has been very close co-operation with the Borough Council. North Essex Heritage (NEH) has worked with Colchester, and is now becoming busy in the Braintree district but has done little in Tendring.

It is currently much involved with the Jumbo, Mercury and Arts Centre area. Jumbo – more properly the Balkerne Water Tower – is a Building at Risk and NEH has applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund to assist with a plan to save Jumbo. Funding has been made available to investigate options and to publicise the building. There is a Jumbo summer, with events, talks and a Jumbo Study Group is exploring the history of the building. The proposal that NEH prefers is a mix

It is good to know that there is a professional organisation available to carry out this role to preserve such treasured buildings.

Peter Evans

ROOM WITH A VIEW

Driving home along Priory Street on a wet, dark evening a couple of weeks ago, I was forced to brake rather suddenly when the car in front of me stopped dead. The driver got out and started a meaningful discussion with someone I couldn't really see. Why? Well, he was partially hidden by the car door but he was also dressed entirely in black. Black trousers, black hoody, black scarf covering most of his face and a black bike - without lights. He had been cycling the wrong way down Priory St, hugging the houses and away from the bright car park lights. He was almost invisible. The driver of the car in front of me had spotted him just in time as he swerved into his path and had jammed on his brakes. He was NOT happy. The cyclist was highly indignant. He told the driver, who, incidentally, was probably in his 30s, that he shouldn't be driving if his eyesight was so poor. It simply didn't dawn on him that he was at fault.

It was just another one of those potentially dangerous encounters with cyclists that are so frequent in Priory Street. I have lost count of the times I have turned into the street only to find a cyclist coming towards me in the middle of the road, going, at some speed, the wrong way. At some speed? No, surely not. They are approaching the junction with St Botolph's Street! Yes, they are, but that doesn't seem to matter. They frequently fly out into the traffic, sometimes going straight across into Vineyard Street, totally ignoring both vehicles and pedestrians. Terrifying!

The pavement outside my house is only a few inches wide. I think I have mentioned before that a cyclist hit my late husband as he stepped out of the house, breaking his wrist. The cyclist was, again, travelling at speed the wrong way down the road, so close to the kerb that his handlebar clipped Jim's arm whilst he still had one foot indoors.

I am certainly not anti bike. My husband and I ran a cycling holiday and cycle hire business for a while. But I am often horrified by the sheer lack of common sense demonstrated by cyclists of all ages. Does it not occur to the young man hurtling down East Hill on the pavement that someone might step out of the Goat and Boot in front of him? Does it not enter the head of the woman cycling along the Priory Street pavement with her two children on bikes behind her that the cars coming along the road might not be expecting her to suddenly swerve out into the road, shouting at her children to follow her as she leads them across the road and down Ernulph Walk to school - no cycling allowed, by the way!

Colchester, particularly the town centre, has a long way to go before it becomes cycle friendly. I am very pleased that Essex County Council has now realised that it must consider the needs of both cyclists and pedestrians in the new design for St Botolph's Roundabout, something that was almost entirely missing in their first proposal. We need safe, well maintained, paths for all. Priory Street would then become less hazardous; perhaps!

Jo Edwards

YOUR NEWSLETTER AND FOLLOW UP ON PREVIOUS NEWSLETTERS

All society members have the option of receiving the newsletter either electronically or on paper. Recently one member who suffers from macular degeneration requested an electronic copy (a pdf) and was very pleased to find that he was able magnify the text and read it easily.

If you have similar problems and feel that you would to try accessing the newsletter, please let me or Ann Turner, our membership secretary, know. The newsletter will be available on our website.

In a previous newsletter featured an article on a communal housing project at Cannock Mill. Building is now in full swing and it is possible to see an influence from the home of the project, Denmark, in the style of the buildings.

We have featured Beacon House, the homeless project, previously. It has moved from its base

on East Hill to larger premises in Crouch Street. The East Hill premises have been retained for development.

Peter Evans

MEMBERSHIP

Michael Batten, Richard Beauchamp, Pamela Bradley, Paul and Ann Larkin, Ivana Sallis, Philip Beeton, Dorian and Sheila Kelly, Jill McEwan, Keith and Alderman Sonia Lewis, John Collett, Adrian and Caroline Rushton all of Colchester.

Gill & Graham Bober, Pamela Southam of Colchester (rejoined)

Alderman Mary Fairhead of Nayland

With effect from February 2020, Plater Claiborne, of Tollesbury.

A notice is enclosed about the revised membership fees, the first increase for many years, and the new corporate members scheme.

A SEAT ON THE BUS

As our Chair offers a regular "a room with a view" article I thought I would offer this title.

The incident that set me off was a journey than seemed to take several days but was actually about 30 minutes, going from Osborne Street to Parsons Heath. Essex Highways seemed to be devising new ways of slowing journeys by having such short gaps between the changes of traffic lights so that traffic cannot move. We were late, therefore, when the bus driver forgot the diversion for Harwich Road, but managed a 5 point turn. OK, slow and a bit irritating, but what about the passengers?

There were 3 students, one of whom texted a friend at the back of the bus, but were otherwise fine. However, who remembers the comedian Jasper Carrott and a routine about "the nutter on the bus" over 30 years ago? The nutter is still there. He now has a mobile phone, which he speaks into quite loudly in an irritating voice and sits in the middle of the saloon of the bus so he can annoy as many passengers as possible at the same time. His hobby is playing war games on line via the internet. Apparently – honestly – his

involves the players “jumping on” and playing different roles in fantasy games throughout the evening. After hearing this detailed, loud, inane, childish monologue I was considering violence, which I feel sure would have been popular. I did wonder if the chap at the other end of the phone was so keen on the pettifogging detail or indeed if he had a life.

Luckily, the oldest of the students caught my eye and raised his eyes to heaven. The bus was moving fast now and I was relieved to be able to get off. I have managed to wipe most of the conversation from my mind. However, there was a follow up. Perhaps I have seen the friend on the other end of the phone. The following week a lad, aged about 22, was on a different bus and was wearing a bejewelled mailed glove made from genuine plastic, looking like the plastic armour I had at age 8. Quite what he thought he looked like I cannot guess –it was totally unconvincing and juvenile. I do wonder about the younger generation.

Whilst I am having a moan, is it me or is our language slightly altering? Railway stations have become train stations, which sounds a bit nasal and unpleasant. We are saying “two times” instead of twice or double for no reason. And there are other similar things that just spoil our language. We must keep the flag flying.

Peter Evans

JUMBO STUDY GROUP

Our AGM featured an address (see above) from North Essex Heritage, which is concerned with the current plans to restore and retain Jumbo (the Balcerne Water Tower). It begins to need some attention, thus the current application for funding. Before approval can be considered, the Heritage Lottery Fund feels that more awareness of Jumbo and its history, development and its role in local water supply. There have been a number of events publicising Jumbo, culminating in an exhibition on 21st July 2019 at Firstsite. There were 2 films, one created by students and the other filmed by Signals, featuring local historians Andrew Phillips and Patrick Denney telling the story of the largest surviving water tower in Britain.

Part of the process was the establishment of the Jumbo Study Group, to hear the story in more detail. Apart from Andrew and Patrick, we heard from Phillip Crummy on the Romans and their advanced water systems and later from Anglian Water staff from the 1980’s, who finally took Jumbo out of the water supply system. It was not a planned closure. One day they stopped using it, and never switched it on again, all very low key.

Just as we did not appreciate the sophistication of the Romans, we did not know how water supply and quality is now managed. Who knew – most of us didn’t. The Study group was mix of specialists and local enthusiasts. Some of us actually went up the 150 steps to the top of the tower, I would certainly like to have a copy of the film as a reminder of the course. Apparently, it will be available on Youtube.

Peter Evans

COLCHESTER BOOKS

Just as the Spring newsletter was issued with an article on Patrick Denney’s book, “Secret Colchester”, when a further title by Patrick “Colchester at Work” was published, by Amberley Publishing. Available, as ever, along with the books mentioned below, from your favourite local bookshop, as is our own Publication, “The Historic High Street” by Dave Stenning, although this is also available directly from us.

There is a new book Jumbo the Water Tower by Brian Light, published by the Balcerne Tower Trust. Available at Red Lion Books, Waterstones and the Visitor Information Centre, Colchester, price £9.99. All profits from the book will contribute to a future restoration of Jumbo.

Brian Light is recognised as Colchester’s leading expert on Jumbo, Colchester’s water Tower, having studied it in detail for about 20 years. He is chair of the Balcerne Tower Preservation Trust and has been involved in the plans for the protection of the building. He was responsible for the Listing of Jumbo being advanced from 2 to 2*. At last, he has published all his knowledge in a beautifully illustrated book.

Colchester Trams is also beautifully illustrated. Peter Jones has been studying Trams in Colchester and gathering an archive for years. His book includes a detailed tour of the various tram routes of Colchester, from the Hythe, Lexden, ??? using postcards. It is amazing how many postcards featured trams.

Peter Evans

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 2019

I hope members were able to take advantage of the Heritage Open Days again in September. One location worth a visit was the former Camp Church in Military Road, now St John's Orthodox Church. Visitors were made very welcome by Father Andrew, the Archpriest, who is a Colcestrian (indeed an ex-CRGS pupil) but has Russian blood.



Camp Church, now St John's Orthodox Church

The church has almost 600 members spread across Essex, Suffolk and beyond. It is so full of icons that Father Andrew does not know how many, as each church member can have their own.



Ikons from inside St John's Orthodox Church

The church took over the building from Taylor Wimpey in 2008, which was a relief to both parties. Much work has been done since and the congregation can enjoy a fully equipped and repaired building.

Some interesting facts. Icons include one for the family of the late Tsar Nicholas II. As they were martyred, they are now saints of the Orthodox Church. Priests of the Orthodox faith may be married when become priests, but one they have become a priest, they may not marry.

I understand from the Norwich HOD literature that whereas Colchester has a talking bench, Norwich has talking statues, 2 of which are voiced by Stephen Fry and Olivia Colman, both having Norwich connections. You do need a smart phone to make them speak.

Another interesting location is the Audley Chapel in Berechurch. There is some publicity at the Audley Chapel – and doubtless at other Churches Preservation Trust properties – about Champing. This is camping in closed churches, so if you want to spend a night in a church, here is an opportunity for you! Pets are allowed, alcohol as well. News to me but interesting

Peter Evans

UGLY BARRIERS ON EAST BRIDGE – THE CIVIC SOCIETY TAKES ACTION!

East Bridge is a conservation area and one of the main gateways to the town. Society members and others, fed up with the unsightly red and white barriers at East Bridge want a more deserving, permanent solution to ECC's concerns over the structure and unauthorised parking. We welcome the plan to carry out a feasibility study this financial year. The best option, surely, is to strengthen the bridge.

That said the area is an unsightly mess so members have sprung into action. The north and south sides of the bridge have been cleared of litter; pavements road side gutters and kerbs weeded cleared and brushed clean; overgrown conifers and evergreens cut back and safety barriers restored to their original position.

We recognise that the work done on the bridge by us will have to be repeated periodically, perhaps Colchester's Highway Rangers could be

tasked with this. ECC has said that it will make the bridge more presentable. The work received good coverage in the Gazette.

John Collett



ST BOTOLPH'S PRIORY CIVIC SOCIETY CONTRIBUTION TO THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- ◆ Colchester Civic Society welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation for St Botolph's Priory, a Grade One listed site in the town centre.
- ◆ The Society recognises, and appreciates, that various work was done about ten years ago to deliver improvements and make the grounds more welcoming. <https://www.lizlake.com/projects/st-botolphs-priory>. However, it questions what has been done by CBC since. The grass is cut, although not often enough, and the bins are emptied. What else? Some trees are now very large and need cutting back to create a lighter environment, other trees have a significant amount of epicormic growth, vegetation needs clearing from around the graves, a good 'tidy up' is

necessary. The St Botolph's gate area is unwelcoming with empty drink cans and litter often left close to the church steps. The St Botolph's Street shops need to keep a tidy rubbish area at the back of their premises.

- ◆ Unfortunately the area is a gathering place for drinkers, drug addicts, drug dealers and other individuals displaying anti social behaviour. This results, rightly or wrongly, in others avoiding the grounds.
- ◆ Councillor Mark Gocher will confirm that, because of the anti social behaviour, Colchester Sixth Form College has stopped taking its history students into the Priory. Visit Colchester staff will confirm that the vast majority of negative comments from visitors relate to the anti-social behaviour in the Priory. TripAdvisor reviews, whilst recognising the many positives, are littered with comments about 'drinkers' and 'druggies'. Visit Colchester is currently promoting the Leighton Literature travel report about Colchester town centre. The earlier report about the Priory speaks of 'a group of drunk morons larking about on some nearby benches'. These reviews travel the world.
- ◆ CBC can't have it both ways. It promotes the Priory on its Visit Colchester website, in guide books, on postcards and in its 40k advert. It must up the maintenance of the grounds and move the 'drinkers' on permanently if it wants to develop this wonderful highlight of Colchester's rich heritage for residents and visitors. If it cannot do this, anything else is pointless.
- ◆ Volunteer groups have tried to improve the Priory. The war memorial was cleaned by volunteers a few years ago but needs regular cleaning. The efforts of the Civic Society and Colchester in Bloom resulted in a new Heritage England interpretation board and some planting of bulbs in agreed areas. The persistence of the Civic Society has finally resulted in two new benches near the Priory Street entrance. The Society also paid to replace a dead tree in the row planted to screen the Britannia car park. However,

- more needs to be done by CBC. The Priory shouldn't be the poor relation of Castle Park, it deserves better.
- ◆ What can CBC do? Respect must be given to the religious foundation of both the Priory and St Botolph's Church when considering any future use. Heritage England and St Botolph's Church may well have ideas.
 - ◆ Could the modern building on the western edge be purchased and demolished and the area landscaped? This would improve the streetscape by widening the approach to the Priory, open up the view to the church and link the church and the Priory more satisfactorily.
 - ◆ Is floodlighting an option, particularly in the winter months? Does signage to the site need to be improved? Perhaps additional interpretation to tell the wonderful history of the site from the foundation of the Priory in the 12th century, to it's later use as a parish church until the Siege of Colchester when much was destroyed by cannon fire. Jesse Jones, a soldier from the Battle of Waterloo is buried here. Could something be made from this? Would audio guides, with a financial deposit, be an option? What about a talking bench?
 - ◆ It isn't an appropriate site for formal planting. However, the parkland would benefit from some appropriate low maintenance planting to bring a little colour; a mediaeval herb/plant garden may add interest for visitors.
 - ◆ The relocation of the war memorial provides a fair sized usable space besides the church. This could be used by schools and local religious organisations as well as the many creative residents and community organisations in our town.
 - ◆ Religious services are held in the room at Abbey Gate. Services are held at the Roman Church. Occasional services held in the Priory?
 - ◆ Consider music and dance events that are in keeping with the site. Mediaeval Fairs, Mummers and Mystery Plays, performances of the Canterbury Tales, re-enactments and costumed tours would also fit well. Would the Priory Players consider performing there again? Perhaps an annual event to celebrate St Botolph's Day (17th June)
 - ◆ Hopefully, a new future for St Botolph's Priory is on the horizon. Colchester Civic Society would like to play a part in the plans.

Sheila Anderton



SUPERDRUG'S WINDOW

Superdrug's shop in our High Street incorporates one of the fine Georgian gems to have survived with a beautiful bay window and very old iron light holders.

The Society saw in late November 2018 that part of the bay was in great danger of falling apart. We raised the issue with the enforcement officer at the Planning Department as this is a Listed building. And we hoped for speedy repairs to be undertaken.

Sadly part fell off onto the pavement and there was serious danger of the winter weather causing greater damage.

And yet nothing happened. We managed to obtain the contact address of the estate management surveyor and started pursuing him while regularly contacting the Enforcement Officer.

Thankfully our joint efforts have finally borne

fruit and the scaffolding went up a few weeks ago and now the restoration has been completed for all to see.

It only took ten months.

Bob Mercer

A VISIT FROM THE HIGH SHERIFF

Members of the Society took part in a litter pick with the High Sheriff of Essex, James Bettley. Seven sacks of rubbish were collected during the two hour session along a footpath leading to the Wivenhoe Trail.



ST BOTOLPH'S PRIORY EVENT AND WISHES FOR COLCHESTER

There were 141 responses to the Society's popular Wishing Wall at the St Botolph's Priory Event. Residents and visitors took time to pass on their wish for our town. Popular wishes included: cleaner, tidier streets, safer pavements, more trees and a firm no to the proposed student flats in Colchester's Cultural Quarter. A proper bus station, more cycle lanes, a new place for a revamped market, use of planning enforcement to protect buildings falling into disrepair and year-long effective security in the Priory were also requested. People care about Jumbo and would like it sensitively restored. Others requests included the removal of the Queen Street bus lane and effective development of the St Botolph's roundabout. One resident wrote 'Please give Colchester the tourist office it deserves, one of a decent size.' Another said 'I wish that Colchester recognised and made full use of its breath of heritage.' A third wrote 'My wish for Colchester is that it stays a unique town'

All the responses will be forwarded to CBC and those relevant to other stakeholders passed on.

Also at the event, we displayed Sheila Alderton's collection of tags removed from posts and fences around the town. A competition was held to guess the total and the winner won a Curzon Cinema voucher. The collection is still growing.



LEWIS GARDENS U TURNS

As many of you will know Colchester Civic Society has been campaigning for the removal of The Queen Street bus lane for nearly three years. During this time County Highways has continued to refuse to consider this proposal for resolving the problems created by vehicles coming from the High Street and turning at Lewis Gardens in order to circumvent the bus lane.

In January this year when the number of recorded accidents involving injury had reached the number requiring County Highways to take action it was announced that a traffic island would be installed at the entrance to Lewis Gardens.

In response to this Roman and Castle Road Residents Association conducted a survey of vehicles turning in Roman and Castle Road

on Friday 18th January, anticipating that this number would increase significantly once turning at Lewis Gardens was made more difficult by the creation of the traffic island. The survey, recorded a total of 499 vehicles entering Roman Road between 8am and 6pm and 50 of these vehicles did so in order to turn around and go back up East Hill in order to access Queen Street.

This survey was repeated on Friday 13th September, following the installation of the traffic island. The results this time showed an increase of the total number of vehicles entering Roman Road to 559 and that this increase roughly corresponded to the larger number of vehicles turning, which had increased to 115. This means that 20% of vehicles entering Roman Road now do so in order to turn there to circumvent the bus lane at the High Street entrance to Queen Street. Many vehicles continue to turn at Lewis Gardens, but many are now obliged to turn in and back out onto The High Street or drive down to Firstsite and make a three point turn there.

Anticipating that this is how it would work out, it was proposed to then Castle Ward councillor Darius Laws that he contact Highways and propose a review of the situation in which the traffic entering Queen Street be measured before suspending the bus lane and then measuring again. It was our contention that there would be very little change in vehicle numbers in Queen Street as a consequence of suspending the bus lane, because is ineffective and does not stop vehicles entering High Street in order to access Queen Street, because turning at Lewis Gardens, East Hill and Roman Road has become an established way to circumvent the bus lane.

The proposed survey and bus lane suspension could have proved whether or not the bus lane is effective. However Darius chose to ask head of Highways Kevin Bentley to arrange a public meeting.

This meeting was finally convened at Greyfriars in July with the help of the ward councillor Simon Crow. Here Kevin Bentley explained, to a packed room, the reasons for not removing the bus lane. These seemed to hinge mainly on the assertion that it was necessary to keep traffic levels down in Queen Street and

that they were obliged to find ways to reduce pollution levels from vehicle emissions in the area. Assertions that many speakers from the floor clearly regarded as unfounded or absurd. The proposal to conduct a traffic survey, involving a suspension of the bus lane was put to Kevin Bentley again. But he was not prepared to do this.

At one point the meeting paused while we all watched through the windows as a Kings Coach made a turn in the entrance to Lewis Gardens!

New signs were promised which would be set up to discourage turning at Lewis Gardens and Roman Road and the situation would be reviewed again in six months.

Since then these signs have been erected and a further measure of applying for legal powers to enforce no U turns at Lewis Gardens has been applied for. Once this is set up a third survey will be conducted in Roman Road.

John Salmon

PEDDARS WAY – ANCIENT ROAD

I have always been intrigued about the ancient route of Peddars Way, where Roman soldiers once marched and perhaps Boudica drove her chariot! From an early age I've been keen to follow up a story handed down through some four generations of my family, that Peddars Way went all the way from the north Norfolk coast to Colchester. Having been born and raised in a West Norfolk village where Peddars Way runs, this family story really resonated with me. In my fifties I even walked its known forty six mile route!

I moved to Colchester twenty plus years ago and over time I've speculated if this road did indeed run from Norfolk to Colchester. Peddars Way can still be walked from Holme-Next-The-Sea, Norfolk - where Sea Henge was discovered - to just into Suffolk. North of Thetford it is diverted around the Stanford Battle Area.

At long last I have a very good reason for trying to solve this mystery. If I can, I'm planning to walk from Colchester to my old village of Lt Massingham and then on to Holme-Next-The-Sea. When I leave Colchester I will try to follow

a possible Roman route joining the known Peddars Way. Whilst walking I hope to raise money to help replace the roof of St Andrew's Church, Lt Massingham, because three or so years ago this Grade I Listed church had all the lead stolen from it. This was devastating news for the parishioners and as Patron of that church I really wanted to help a small community raise the one hundred and fifty thousand pounds needed to complete the refurbishment. They have only a few years before the temporary roof covering will no longer be adequate and, unfortunately, time is running out. It's a very tall ask, but anything I can raise will go towards the fund.

Over the last month I have been in contact with several knowledgeable people, studied online books and articles which have all been illuminating. One article refers to a Dr Laver who was involved with the founding of Colchester Castle Museum. It mentions he traced the road leading from Rye Gate, 'across the river to Middle Mill Ford then towards Mile End. In the direction of Nayland there was probably a road communicating with Peddars Way...'

I have also found examples where others list the villages where the road passes through - including Woolpit and Stowlangtoft in Suffolk. I'm endeavouring to trace the route using OS maps - interestingly I found Peddars Way mentioned on a map to the west of Ixworth.

This journey will be a real challenge as I'm much older and not as fit as I was when I last attempted to walk the route, and this time it will be closer to ninety miles! I'm now training everyday as I'm determined to reach the Norfolk coast, raise as much money as I can and perhaps finally solve this Peddars Way conundrum.

I'll be setting off next Spring and I'm inviting others to join me to walk part or all of the way and I already have some volunteers! If you would like to join me or if you have any information about a possible route which leads from Colchester, please see my contact details below.

If you would like to support me by donating, I have an online fundraising page or I'll be delighted to take cash or cheques made payable

to 'Lt Massingham PCC'.

<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/rosemary-peddars-walk>

Rosemary Jewers

NB My family has had a connection with the church at Lt Massingham for many years, as my grandfather, gt grandfather and gt gt grandfather were all rectors there. The Patronage - Advowson - has been passed down through the family to me from my 3x gt grandfather, Joseph Wilson who was a wealthy London silk merchant who also owned a silk mill in Essex. In the early 1800s his wealth enabled him to buy the village of Lt Massingham.

ST BOTOLPH'S ROUNDABOUT

Colchester Civic Society submitted a detailed response to Essex Highways proposals for the redevelopment of St. Botolph's Roundabout. In this response we called on Highways to consult with Colchester Council over plans for the wider area and to consider alternative proposals first mooted two or three years ago by the Borough Council and currently being backed by County Councillor Lee Scordis.

This resulted in a meeting, arranged by Lee Scordis, with head of Highways Kevin Bentley and the engineers involved in this project. We are pleased to report that Kevin Bentley was broadly in agreement with us and will be seeking to work with the Borough Council on developing the plans.

The engineers also reported that one specific recommendation we made will definitely be taken up. This is to introduce a pedestrian crossing at the junction of Mersea Road and the roundabout.

John Salmon

Below is the full response which was sent to County Highways. To see the plans, please visit the Civic Society website.

The current proposal, by Essex Highways own admission is a short to medium term change which will cause major disruption to a key part of the town's road network while the work is carried out; and the end result promises little or

nothing in terms of enhancing traffic flow, while reducing the options for pedestrians to just one toucan crossing between North and South. Also it does nothing to aid cyclists.

We would like to see a major rethink in which Essex County Highways consults with the Borough Council in order to draw up a masterplan for whole area, which integrates plans for the St. Botolph's junction with those being developed by Colchester Borough Council for The Britannia Car Park, St. Botolph's Priory, the Vineyard Gate development and the Bus Station. This should also include measures to improve traffic flow for vehicles entering St. Botolph's from Mersea Road. The northern end of Mersea Road, from Napier Road to the St. Botolph's junction, is barely adequate at present and will need major changes if it is to cope with the increased traffic generated the proposed developments at Middlewick.

Highways appear to have ignored a scheme drawn up three years ago by the Borough Council and currently advocated by Lee Scordis, (County Councillor for Abbey Division) in which the current mix of traffic lights and roundabout is replaced with a lights only scheme that offers the reclamation of a large parcel of land in front of the St. Botolph's Hotel and provides the opportunity for major improvements to this rather run down area, while also improving and enhancing the experience for pedestrians and cyclists at this major gateway to the town centre.

Pedestrians converge here to enter the town from the Town Centre railway station, the new garrison developments via Mersea Road and St. John's Green and also from the east of the town via Military Road and Magdalen Street. Current housing developments in Magdalen Street and proposals for further major developments of housing on MD land at Middlewick will place further pressure on this junction and so we should be seeking a long term solution which attempts to take these into account.

We think this Borough Council scheme offers a promising basis for developing a radical redesign in which all these factors are taken into account.

We feel the Highway Authority should not have left it so long before producing their

scheme, given that the section 106 money from the Garrison Development will be lost if it is not allocated by sometime next year. However in our view, if it is not possible to draw up a more satisfactory plan and find adequate match funding for this in the time available, then it will be best to opt for a more limited plan for St. Botolph's roundabout.

Such a plan would in our view

- ◆ Retain the underpass from the south east to the north-west corner, where the ramps are available for push chairs and wheelchairs etc.
- ◆ Fill in the underpass outside the St. Botolph's Hotel and provide a broader and more attractive pedestrian access to St. Botolph's Street.
- ◆ Modify the pathway and planting in the area in the centre of the roundabout to discourage loitering, such as removal of walls and seating. And also improve the lighting here. It is proven that strategically placed lighting reduces anti-social behaviour at night.
- ◆ Install the proposed Toucan crossings on the eastern side of the roundabout.
- ◆ Provide a zebra type crossing at the Mersea Road junction to enable pedestrians coming from St. John's Green and the new garrison developments around Abbeyfields to access the Town railway station. At present many commuters heading for Town Station coming from this direction risk their lives crossing the dual carriageway at the eastern end of Southway.
- ◆ Possibly install peak time lights for traffic entering the roundabout from Mersea Road.
- ◆ Remove the steps which lead into Portland Road, but retain the ramp. Residents here have asked for this to discourage late night revellers using Portland Road instead of Mersea Road.
- ◆ Retain existing bus stops and shelters.

Finally, we propose that the section 106 money also be used to improve pedestrian access to the town centre from St Johns Green via the Abbeygate Street subway and Scheregate Steps. This is a busy pedestrian route into the town centre from many of the new garrison.

THE SOCIETY'S FINEST HOUR

Sir Bob Russell gives a personal account of how the Civic Society has done all it can to save Colchester from a planning disaster:

Should a Government-appointed Inspector turn down an Appeal by developers to build hideous blocks of residential accommodation for students on the site of the former Bus Station off Queen Street, many may well consider that this was Colchester Civic Society's "finest hour".

A Planning Inquiry lasting eight days, spread over three weeks, was held last month (October) and the result is due before Christmas, although there is some suggestion that the General Election may delay an announcement.

Civic Society President John Burton and Chair Jo Edwards were amongst Colchester residents who attended and gave compelling evidence as to why the development should not be allowed.

They – and other residents who also spoke – gave excellent reasons to the Inspector as to why the unanimous ten nil vote by the Planning Committee in refusing the application by a development company called Alumno should be upheld.

The biggest problem in arguing against the development was the stark fact that the corporate side of Colchester Borough Council – last year's Cabinet (composition now changed), comprising just eight of the Borough's 51 Councillors – had backed the scheme with a 250-year lease (subject to planning approval) being granted to Alumno for a single payment of £980,000.

The fact that the other 43 Councillors had never voted on the scheme, because of the over-powering system of "cabinet government" at the Town Hall (backed by enthusiastic officers) which amazingly prevented all councillors to be involved in making a decision on such a momentous development, meant that it was always going to be an uphill fight to get the Appeal turned down.

The Civic Society had, prior to the Planning Committee's unanimous refusal earlier this year (28th February), co-ordinated opposition to the application under the leadership of Jo Edwards with the other members of the "gang

of five" being John Burton, Dorian Kelly, Alan Short and myself – with the expert input of planning lawyer Kathryn Oelman engaged by the company who own Grey Friars Hotel who opposed the development.

The planning application had resulted in the largest opposition I can recall, with more than 800 individual objections to the Council. The Moot Hall was packed for the meeting which resulted in the Planning Committee's unanimous rejection.

But that was not the end of the matter. With just days to go before the period to lodge an Appeal could be made, Alumno struck. The umbrella opposition co-ordinated by the Civic Society quickly reconvened, and we prepared for the Appeal.

To their credit, the Borough Council engaged a specialist firm (Pegasus, from Cambridge) to defend the decision of the Planning Committee – but the barrister was severely hampered by the fact that the former Cabinet and Planning Officers supported the development!

Grey Friars also employed a barrister to oppose the Appeal. Alumno had a barrister and a big team of "experts" whose knowledge, and appreciation, of Colchester had me wondering if this was my home town they were talking about.

This was the first time that I had seen the new style of Inquiry which, in addition to the usual confrontational exchanges between the differing sides, included several "round table" discussions which allowed those who wished to participate on a specific aspect to join in what was more of a conversation.

Jo Edwards, John Burton and others including former Mayor Henry Spyvee (Civic Society member and Chairman of the Friends of the Roman Wall) used this opportunity to good effect – pointing out the obvious failings of the scheme.

I concentrated on the damage to "heritage assets" (official terminology) and felt that I got my concerns over more strongly than in my more conventional written evidence submitted ahead of the Inquiry and in oral evidence at it.

The first seven days of the Inquiry were held in

St Botolph's Church, conveniently just yards from the site of the former Bus Station so the Inspector had a daily view of the area including the Roman Wall (the oldest city wall in Britain) whose status as a Scheduled Ancient Monument would clearly be seriously harmed by blocks of flats towering up to five storeys behind it.

Astonishingly, and disgracefully, Historic England – the organisation which is supposed to support the nation's "heritage assets" – in the space of three months changed its mind from opposing the scheme to giving it a nod to go ahead. In my round-table cross-examination of one of the "experts" from the developers I established that this change of opinion had followed lobbying by them!

Evidence opposing the Alumno scheme ranged from over-development of the site, the appearance of the buildings and proximity to the Roman Wall, parking or rather lack of it, disabled access from Priory Street, traffic problems in Queen Street (already bad as we know), pollution, and conflict between pedestrians and vehicles within the development itself. This is just a precis of detailed arguments which were played out.

I further argued that the setting of the War Memorial, when looking south from Castle Park, would be permanently damaged because the height of the new blocks (flat roofed) would destroy the current open sky appearance of the roofline of the Listed Buildings in Queen Street. The War Memorial is a Grade Two starred Listed Building in its own right, and is in a Conservation Area.

The eighth and final day of the Inquiry was moved to the Town Hall (it was not available previously, hence why the first seven days were held in St Botolph's Church). This day was dominated by the three barristers holding forth. We were just observers.

However, is this perhaps a hopeful sign? Never before have I witnessed this. At the end, the Inspector thanked members of the public for their large attendance numbers throughout the eight days – many of them Civic Society members - observing that while it was frequently the case for there to be a big turn out on the opening day

of an Inquiry it was somewhat unusual for so many people to be present throughout.

My prediction? At best 50-50. If we lose, look to the Town Hall for what would be a disastrous decision for Colchester.

Colchester Civic Society can be proud of the leading role it played in seeking to prevent an appalling development being inflicted on our town. What a crying shame that so many in authority do not share the Civic Society's pride in Colchester.

RESTORATION OF COLCHESTER LAMPOSTS

Significant progress has been made in the attempt to begin restoring Colchester's original cast iron lampposts. Essex Highways has finally given approval for a team of residents to begin the preparation and repainting of lampposts in Roman and Castle Road, under what Highways term 'Devolution'. This usually means a formal arrangement between Essex Highways and a Parish Council. But in this case the arrangement is with Roman and Castle Road Residents Association, who have already worked in collaboration with Highways over the repair of pavements and the planting of trees.

As chair of Roman and Castle Road Residents Association and also a member of the Civic



Society Executive Committee I have sought to make this a joint project in which the work planned in Roman and Castle Road will be the pilot project for further work on cast iron lampposts in other streets across the town.

There will undoubtedly be much to learn as we begin the process of preparation

and repainting next summer, but once we are confident that we are going about it in a way that works, the aim will be to set up new projects to extend the work into other streets where the original cast iron lampposts are still in place.

Funding from the locality budgets of all three Castle Ward councillors will enable us to buy

the tools and equipment we need to get started. But further funding and new volunteers will be needed as the project is extended to other areas.

If you would like to get involved in a future project then please get in touch using this email address:

johnsalmon@colchestercivicsociety.co.uk

John Salmon

REPORTS OF SOCIAL EVENTS

18th April 2019 Visit to Bury St Edmunds

Members & guests at the Guildhall, Bury St Edmunds



Unveiling of the latest Blue Plaque at the English Study Centre, 19 Lexden Road, Colchester commemorating Margaret Thatcher. 7th June 2019

It is now 40 years since Mrs Thatcher, later Baroness Thatcher of Grantham (1925-2013) became Britain's first female Prime Minister on 3rd May 1979. It is pure coincidence that the day of the unveiling should also be the day on which Theresa May, Britain's second woman Prime Minister, resigned as leader of the Conservative Party. Colchester Civic Society is apolitical and has already installed plaques or named roads for local figures from the whole political spectrum.

Whilst working as a research chemist in Manningtree between 1948 & 1950, Margaret Hilda Roberts lived at 3 addresses in Colchester and commuted daily. The other addresses, apart from 19 Lexden Road, were in Maldon Road and finally Cambridge Road.

It was also a coincidence that it is 50 years that the English Study Centre (ESC) was established in Lexden Road. The building was built in 1837 as a home for the Catchpool family, and later the Nunn family. It was designed by the same architect, H H Hayward who designed the Grammar School and St Mary's Terrace, nearby in Lexden Road. Whilst rooms have been divided, most original features have been retained.

Sadly, being June, it rained when the unveiling ceremony started in the afternoon, not too seriously, but bad enough for a little speed with the ceremony. Introduced by Jo Edwards, Max Walsh, principal of the ESC, said a few words and was followed by Will Quince M P for Colchester, who pointed out Mrs Thatcher's important contribution to the advance of the position of women in society, something that he stresses to his daughters. The unveiling

completed in front of an audience of society members, Sir Bob Russell, High Steward of Colchester, local councillors and ESC staff, we moved inside before the heavens duly opened.

We were made very welcome by ESC and I was given a tour by Jane Sims, who has carried out research on the history of the building which is ongoing. The plaque itself is placed in the porch of the building and is likely to be very popular with the many overseas students passing through the centre and learning our language.

"The Iron Lady" was a very divisive figure and we are NOT celebrating her, purely pointing out that a Prime Minister of the United Kingdom lived in Colchester. This is another piece of Colchester's rich history and something that, until now, few people knew. Colchester has a statue to another female trailblazer, who made her mark on Britain. Her name was Boudicca.

Peter Evans



*The plaque and location in the porch at 19
Lexden Road, Colchester*



Visit to the Curzon Cinema, Queen Street, Colchester, 24th June 2019

After some effort, Jo Edwards managed to get us a tour of the building with a Curzon employee.

As I said the previous newsletter, there are excellent views, especially from the 3rd floor, and there were seats on the balcony, so you can take the air. This floor has a bar and there is one on the ground floor as well, where you buy your tickets. They have a good membership scheme.

Access from the ground floor to screen 1 on the first floor and to the other screens on the top floor is by a stairway surviving from the old Keddies' store. This came as a surprise to many of us, as we thought the building had been totally demolished. Not so, our guide Lee told us that the Curzon group likes to recycle if possible. There are about 12 cinemas in the Curzon group, scattered around the country. The largest screen is about 130 capacity and the smallest about 30-40.

We were all interested to see the projection room, only there is not one as such. Lee showed us what is basically a cupboard, with inside what appears to be a music centre, about double normal size. It is Lee's job to switch this on first each day but it can be operated from their office



Enjoying the view from the balcony

as well. There are no rolls of film, although not everything arrives electronically, some being films as such and others being broadcasts from theatres. There is a facility to override films if they need to make an emergency announcement.

The lift is smooth and speedy. Seats recline and some are doubles. You can eat in the cinema, but I am not sure there is popcorn. The choice of films is a mixture of ordinary films and those of an arthouse variety. Lee's colleague, Nicola (a professional actress), organised refreshments for us and it was a pleasant morning. Some of the 20-25 people attending had not been there before and indeed did not know it was there.

Peter Evans

**Visit to the Bath House – offices of Ellison's, Solicitors, off Butt Road, Colchester
10th July 2019**

We were welcomed by Robert Jones, a senior partner and in charge of the insurance and litigation department, and his splendid assistant, Poppy, who had arranged a delicious sandwich lunch for us.

The premises were the Bath House, a Victorian building within the former the Cavalry and Artillery Barracks, with a modern extension. Nearby is Roman Circus House and the former Cavalry Barracks accommodation, stables with grooms living quarters above. The area is on the far edge of the Roman Circus site, a part of town that has been used to train and exercise houses since Roman times and up until the Victorian established their barracks here.

The designer, Jonathan Franks, had the imagination to take that building, add an

apparently contemporary building and link them by a modern extension. There is a definite resemblance to the Anglian Water Building at the bottom north hill and also the nearby former military buildings. He has replicated the style of the development and has been involved in other parts of the conversion of the former military properties. Together they make 4000 square feet of modern office space.

Ellison's is rightly proud of the building and it serves this unit of the business well. They have a number of visitors and there is easy access and a car park. It is not far from the main Head Street branch.



The original Bath House before the building work

The Bath house was built in 1860s to provide water for the horses of the cavalry and Artillery barracks but also housed baths for the soldiers based there. How often they used them we don't know – perhaps once a month whether they need it for not, but make no mistake this was unusual for such men. The building contains a water tank



Ellisons new premises in Butt Road

to this day. We were few to wander, test the lift, but of course respecting the secrecy of all files etc. and they do indeed still have paper files

Peter Evans



Inside, an excellent lunch

Trip to Farley Farm Chiddingly, East Sussex and Ditchling Village – Thursday 8th August 2019

For this trip we headed back to the Sussex for the second year running, this time centring on Surrealism and the Arts & Craft Movement. We left fairly early as it is a long drive on what was the best day that week for weather.

The leaflet produced by the Farley House and Gallery states that Lee Miller and Roland Penrose ‘filled their home with a collection of contemporary art treasures’. The building now houses the Lee Millar Archives and the Penrose Collection but the overriding feeling as you are shown around is that you are in a dearly loved home. Loved not just by the couple who lived there for thirty five years, but also by the guides and other folks who currently care for it. Our guide was extremely well informed; her background stories brought the rooms and their artefacts to life. Sitting around the kitchen table where their visitors, key personalities of 20th century art and photography, had sat helping prepare the vegetables for the meal whilst discussing the issues of the day, was a memorable experience. Not all of the work displayed in the Gallery was to everyone’s taste, Surrealism divides opinion. For me it held a complete surprise, Desmond Morris, the Zoologist and television presenter,

was an acclaimed surrealist who shared his first London exhibition with Joan Miro in 1950.

There was also a pleasant sculpture garden to walk around or view whilst enjoying some very tasty cakes. We left here at 12.45pm and headed off for Ditchling village which was a little distance further west, further than expected as the shorter route was not suitable for a large coach. Our driver Tim delivered the smooth competent drive he always does and we still had time to fit in lunch and the two tours.

The village of Ditchling itself is fascinating with a diverse collection of houses spanning several centuries. It is situated in the South Downs National Park and in the early 20th century it became a unique experiment of communal life inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement and this survived until 1989. Eric Gill, Letter Cutter, Sculptor, Writer and Artist moved with his family to Ditchling from London in 1907. In 1912 he was joined by Edward Johnston, founder of modern calligraphy and designer of the London Underground font. Soon other artists and craftspeople, many already friends, joined them and the Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic was formed in 1920.

Our first guided tour took us around the village and our guide explained where and how the guild members fitted in plus additional information about Ditchling itself. If you would like to make a visit it has a number of very good places to eat.

The second tour was of the Ditchling Museum of Art & Craft, founded in 1985 by two sisters Hilary and Joanna Bourne as a place to display their collection of local artworks. In 2012/13, it was renovated with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other donors. The two original buildings have been joined beautifully by an additional section designed by London architects, Adam Richards.

We finished the afternoon sitting outside the museum under the fruit trees enjoying more scrumptious cake, tea or coffee provided by the museum. This helped to keep us going on our quite long journey home, oh the joys of the Dartford Crossing!

Elizabeth Fitt

18th August 2019 Visit to Wiston Mill, near Nayland, for afternoon tea

It was actually a pleasant, if breezy afternoon, and the rain had stopped. This put paid to any idea of sitting outside, so we were in a shed, overlooking the water bank, with an extensive spread of sandwiches, cake and scones.

We were the guests of CCS member Suki Cohen. Wiston Mill is just over the county border in Suffolk, with a glimpse of houses in Little Horkesley on the other side of the river bank. There may have been a mill on the site as long ago as the 11th century. It was a working mill until 1926, one of the largest in Suffolk and the millwheel is still there. The original mill building is weather-boarded but Tudor houses for mill workers are now incorporated into the house.

The grounds include a weir and 6 flood gates, gardens, barns etc. Suki finds the Environment Agency to be unhelpful to her neighbours and herself. It is peaceful, rural and yet only 20 minutes from Colchester North Station.

The weather was fine enough for us to wander around the buildings. It seemed a lived in and loved home. Agricultural and local signs had been gathered and hung in the shed we were eating in, and other images elsewhere. The toilet was just inside the house and even that had 2 charming views of Aldeburgh and Thorpeness.

Suki, who moved there with her late husband in 1985 will shortly be downsizing. Let us hope that her new neighbours make her as welcome as she made us. A very relaxed afternoon

Peter Evans

Views of Wiston Mill





Wildlife Cruises on Hamford Water 19th June and 15th August 2019

For the second of Jo's cruises this year on Hamford water, she has gathered together ten ladies who met up at Titchmarsh Marina in Walton to board "Karina". This had once been a Trinity House gantry lifeboat, which our skipper, Tony Haggis, when no longer a fisherman, had bought to run these summer trips. Knowing it was an open boat, we came prepared for the worst but the best, and the views across to Felixstowe Port and the huge container ships were stunning.

Hamford Water is a National Nature Reserve comprising 7000 acres and is an SSSI (site of Special Scientific Interest). It is home to a large colony of common seals which are unique as their skin takes on a bright rust colour from the iron oxide in the mud. As we chugged along their heads bobbed up around us to give us curious stares from a safe distance and included the cubs born in May/June which were now beginning to fend for themselves. They were also lying on the mud banks which we learnt was to digest their food and regulate their body heat. Tony switched off the engine, allowing us to drift silently so as not to disturb them. Unusually there were about 10 Atlantic seals in the Reserve which were a dark grey and much larger, but no threat to the Common Seal.

We were also lucky enough to see a good variety of birds; dunlin, ring and grey plover, grey heron, little egret, black tailed godwits (arriving here from the Arctic tundra) curlew, common tern, turnstone, avocet, oyster catcher (resident) lapwing and, wonderfully, marsh harrier which have been breeding here for 21 years.

On the way back we passed Skippers Island owned by Essex Wildlife Trust.

With the tide still high, we passed over an unseen causeway (approx. 1.5 miles) linking the mainland to Horsey Island which, at low tide, allows the owner to have his mail delivered by van everyday!

Jean Budd

Visit to London "The Great Stink" 20th October 2019

Shown here are photos from an extraordinary outing for Civic Society members. Titled THE BIG STINK, this trip began with a guided coach tour around central London where we learned about the development of London's sewerage system in the 19th century and how this was created to take away the sewerage from London's Streets and from being discharged directly into the Thames, which by this time had become a stinking open sewer.

The solution, we learned, was to build a sewer to take it all down river to a covered reservoir and a pumping station on the south bank of the Thames at Thamesmead. Our journey there began on a river bus from Westminster Pier to Greenwich where we met the coach again for the final stage of the journey through Woolwich to Thamesmead.

The central feature here turned out to be a giant steam powered beam engine, which was used to pump the raw sewerage from a covered reservoir into the river as the tide was running out! This was a truly spectacular sight, as you can see for yourself.





SOCIAL PROGRAMME FOR 2020

Trying to arrange a full programme before the beginning of the New Year has, as usual, proved impossible. I never cease to be amazed by the fact that many venues do not consider bookings until March - or even later! As a result, what follows is not the complete offering for 2020. There will be more in the next Newsletter.

I am hoping to finally deliver a couple of events that had to be postponed, West Stow Anglo Saxon Village and the Recreation Ground Gates. However, these are two that will appear in the next Newsletter as West Stow are not yet booking and Colchester Borough Council have little idea as yet about 2020 bookings for the Rec. We certainly don't want to clash with the fair or a music event! Next year we will have the final visit to Foulness as long as enough people want to go. Please advertise this far and wide! Our events are open to all, remember. There will also be another Hamford Water Wildlife boat trip to see the seals for those who missed out last year. Please let me know if you are interested. I am also intending to arrange a visit to Margate - the Turner Gallery, yes, but a lot more, including an opportunity for you to celebrate the 100th birthday of the listed Grade 2* Scenic Railway at Dreamland. Go on - I dare you! More information in the next Newsletter.

Our coaches normally leave from East Hill but other pickups are often possible so please ask. Parking is usually available at the Marks Tey Hotel at the cost of £4 per car as long as it is pre booked. Please contact me a week before if you would like to leave your car there. I will need your car registration number.

I must remind you all that, although I will try to refund you if you have to cancel your bookings for events, this is not always possible because I usually have to pay venues in advance and, of course, book the correct sized coach. Coaches are now enormously expensive and there is quite a difference between the cost of the 34 seater and a 53 seater. This year, I am intending to use minibus taxis for a couple of events as they may well be cheaper. I do not aim to make a profit from outings or events. If they seem expensive, that is the actual cost. Sorry!

Now a note for those who applied to join us for the King Tutankhamen exhibition in London. We didn't get enough people to make this visit viable BUT I am trying to arrange a joint outing with another Civic Society. At the time of going to press, we are still trying to work out the logistics! I will be in touch as soon as possible.

I am aware that one or two of you still want to see the badgers at Fingringhoe Wick. Please let me know ASAP whether you would like me to book some more badger watching sessions and I will do this.

And now for a quick commercial! Colchester will, in 2020, celebrate the 900th year of the work of St Mary Magdalen's Hospital Almshouses. The main event is a two day festival in the Upper Park of Colchester Castle on the 18th and 19th July 2020. The anniversary highlights the importance of Royal Steward, Eudo Dapifer, who built Colchester Castle & St John's Abbey as well as St Mary Magdalen's Hospital. He died in Feb 1120. A "Requiem" Mass is planned at St James the Great Church on East Hill for the evening of March 6th. If you would like further information, please let me know. Colchester Civic Society is hoping to arrange a Town Lecture as part of the celebrations. More in the next Newsletter. It is unfortunate that I had already booked the Foulness visit for the 19th July as I cannot now change the date. I do apologise for the clash.

Monday 6th January 2020

Meet at the Cloisters Restaurant at Greyfriars at 10am for the first Coffee Morning/Discussion Group of the year.

The 'Coffee Mornings' are an opportunity for you all to raise issues about Colchester that are concerning you, find out what we are doing, listen to the occasional speaker etc etc. They are very informal, with no agenda. Coffee/tea and biscuits provided.

Cost No charge but donations towards the work of the Society much appreciated.

Sunday 19th January 2020

Meet at the Cloisters Restaurant at 12.45pm at Greyfriars at for our New Year Lunch.

We are back at Greyfriars again by popular demand and have exclusive use of the room. The menu is enclosed with this Newsletter. Please make your choices and let me have them by 12th January. There is also a children's menu if you want to bring young family members. My grandson, Jimmy, hopes that you do!

Cost £26

Monday 3rd February 2020 10am Greyfriars Coffee Morning/Discussion Group

Thursday 20th February 2020 10.30am
Meet at St Andrews Church, 124, Forest Road, Greenstead, Colchester at for a guided tour.

When Civic Society members, Paul and Ann Larkin, offered this visit, I leapt at the chance because I know that many Colcestrians have never visited this lovely little church in the heart of the Greenstead Estate. Subsequently, I discovered that several Civic Society members were totally unaware of its existence! Others had heard of it but thought it was modern. Actually, there was a church on the site at the time of the Norman Conquest but the oldest part of the current building dates from the 12th century. A tower was built late in the 16th century and there have been subsequent alterations, additions and repairs to the building, some as a result of the earthquake in 1884. Paul will give us a guided tour. There is a possibility that the date of this event will have to change as St Andrew's is a working church and priority must be given for funerals etc.

Lifts can be arranged.

*Cost £5 to include Coffee/Tea and a slice of cake.
Proceeds to the Church.*

Monday 2nd March 2020 Meet at Greyfriars at 10am Coffee Morning/ Discussion Group

20th March to the 13th April 2020 The Great British Spring Clean Exact dates to be arranged.

We are looking for volunteers to join us, please, as we take part, as usual, in this nationwide

event. We haven't decided on an area or areas to litter pick as we would like you to make some suggestions. Do you know anywhere that is particularly in need of some TLC? If so, please contact Sheila Anderton via our Civic Society email address: colchestercivicsociety.co.uk or complete the slip.

Wednesday 25th March 2020 Meet at Public Car Park by the Jetty in Coast Road, West Mersea at 10.50am for a Cruise to Tollesbury.

I can hear your comments as I write this. An open boat, in March? She must be mad! But I am not. This is the opportunity to see the last of the overwintering birds in the estuary, before they disappear until Autumn. Unless the weather is particularly unseasonal, there should be knot, grey, golden and ringed plovers, black and bar tailed godwits, dunlin and Brent geese and, of course, the avocets that stay throughout the year. On reaching Tollesbury, we disembark and walk the short distance to the Loft Tearoom - menu available at www.thelofttearoom.com or ask me for a printed version - for a hot drink and something to eat before returning to the Lady Grace for the voyage back to Mersea and a second opportunity to see the birds. The Loft is well worth a visit in its own right. It's in one of the iconic Tollesbury sail lofts! Places are limited so please book in good time. Very warm clothing and 'sensible' footwear, please. Remember, the Lady Grace is an open boat. Lifts to Mersea can be arranged.

Cost £16 Boat only.

Monday 6th April 2020 Meet at Greyfriars at 10am Coffee Morning/ Discussion Group

Wednesday 22nd April 2020

Meet at Earls Colne Airfield at 10.50 am for a visit to the Essex Air Ambulance.

Our tour begins with a presentation about the work of the Essex & Herts Air Ambulance (EHAAT). There will be information about when and why the air ambulance is dispatched, the hospitals they take patients to and how long it takes to reach to these locations. We will also get an insight into some of the lives that have been

saved and how much it costs to run the service. One of the team will be available to answer questions, and subject to operational commitments, we may have the opportunity to speak to the Critical Care Team and see the air ambulance and rapid response vehicles up close! I do hope so!

If you can need or can offer a lift, please let me know. Maps available.

Cost? A minimum of £5, please, all proceeds to the Essex and Herts Air Ambulance.

Wednesday 28th April 2020

Meet in the Salon (off Reception) at Greyfriars at 7.30pm for our Spring Up meeting.

One of two evening meetings during the year for those unable to attend the monthly Coffee Mornings. Exactly the same format. Coffee/tea and biscuits provided.

Cost Free but donations welcomed

Monday 4th May 2020

Meet at Greyfriars at 10am for our Coffee Morning/Discussion Group

Thursday 14th May 2020

Meet at the car park by the Jetty in Coast Road, West Mersea at 4.50pm for a cruise to Bradwell on Sea.

We are off on the Lady Grace again, this time for an evening meal at the Green Man in Bradwell on Sea (food at your own expense, not included in the price) Menu available at www.greenmanbradwellonsea.co.uk or ask me for a paper copy. We return to Mersea as the sun sets. Great photo opportunities! Warm clothes, please! Lifts to Mersea can be arranged.

Cost £16 Boat only

Sunday 17 May 2020

Meet at the War Memorial by the Castle Park Gates at 2pm for a Walk around Georgian Colchester

This walk will be led by our Vice Chair and Membership Secretary, Ann Turner, who is also an extremely knowledgeable Colchester Town Guide. The tour will concentrate on the parish of All Saints and will take about 2 hours. Make sure you know all the verses of God Save the King.

Ann tells me that a test will take place during the tour!!

Cost £5 per head.

Wednesday 20th May 2020

Meet at Bus station, Magdalen Road. Hadleigh Suffolk at 10.55am for a Guided Tour of Hadleigh Past and Present.

The ancient market town of Hadleigh in Suffolk is one of the Wool Towns that prospered from the Woollen Cloth Trade in the 14th -17th Centuries, creating a legacy of many fine buildings. It is such a small town but 250 buildings are listed and very many of these are in Hadleigh High Street, itself full of independent shops and family businesses. A Viking King, a fearless long distance aviator, and an artist and plantsman are all part of Hadleigh's story. Do join us for a guided tour of this fascinating and delightful place.

If you need or can offer a lift, please let us know. I have, however, arranged some minibus taxis - much cheaper than a coach. The nearest car park is at Magdalen Road.

Cost £5 Additional cost for taxi - price dependant on numbers.

End of May, date yet to be confirmed.

We have been invited to join the Friends of the Minorities on their visit to Copped Hall, Epping, the beautiful 18th century house that stands proudly on the right of the M25 as it wends its way northwards around London. The house was gutted by a terrible fire in 1917 and, although the owners intended to restore it, they didn't and, by the time of WW2, it was totally stripped of anything of value. It was eventually saved by the Corporation of London and a trust was formed with the purpose of saving the building and bringing it back to life. We visited some years ago but, since then, a lot more work had been done. This is a chance to see that progress. If you are interested, please complete the reply slip and I will forward it to the Friends of the Minorities so that they can contact you with full details once they are known.

Monday 1st June 2020

Meet at Greyfriars at 10am Coffee Morning/Discussion Group

Tuesday 2nd June 2020

Meet in the Cloisters Restaurant at Grey Friars at 7pm for our Annual General Meeting.

I do apologise for the clash with a Friends of the Museums lecture. Unfortunately, in order to have as many Executive Committee members present as possible, to meet our Constitutional requirement, to have this venue and to suit our speaker, this was the only viable date. The AGM will begin promptly at 7pm and will be followed by a break for coffee/tea. We will then reconvene for a talk by Sam Good, from Colchester's BID team. The BID, or Business Improvement District, is a business led and financed organisation which was set up almost two ago. It promises to enhance Colchester Town Centre as a place where people want to shop, live, work, and relax by promoting a high quality, diverse and welcoming environment which is customer-focused and investment-friendly. It wishes to celebrate Colchester's history and provide a sustainable future. The BID provides extra resources, over and above those provided by the Councils and others, to make the centre of the town special. Many of the floral displays in the town last summer were provided by the BID, supplementing those of Colchester in Bloom, for example. I think you will find this talk very illuminating and Sam is prepared to answer your questions.

I do hope you will come.

Cost Free. Donations always welcomed

Probably June Date to be arranged.

A very special visit to Charterhouse in London.

'Peer closely through the half light of the Master's Court at dusk and you might make out the ghosts of Victorian physicians or plague victims, catch a glimpse of Elizabeth I commanding one of her courtiers – or spy the fourteen-year-old John Wesley kneeling at prayer.'

Charterhouse, built as a Carthusian monastery on the site of a Black Death burial ground in 137, flourished until the Dissolution when it became a mansion for wealthy noblemen and a refuge for Royalty until 1611 when Thomas Sutton bought the Charterhouse and established the foundation that now bears his name. Thomas Sutton's will

provided for up to 80 Brothers: 'either decrepit or old captaynes either at sea or at land, maimed or disabled soldiers, merchants fallen on hard times, those ruined by shipwreck of other calamity' as well as Charterhouse school. Thackeray, Robert Baden-Powell and John Wesley attended school here. When the school moved to Godalming in 1872, the Brothers remained at the Charterhouse in Clerkenwell. They are still there. Charterhouse is a wonderful, peaceful oasis in the heart of the City. It has a wealth of extraordinary and very beautiful architecture and it is that architecture, plus, of course some of the history, that we will concentrate on during this visit. I am so sorry that I can give you no further information at this time. No bookings are being taken until the Spring!

Tuesday 30th June 2020

Meet at the Jetty beside the Public Car Park on Coast Road, West Mersea at 5.50pm for another cruise to Tollesbury

This cruise is another of Stacey Belbin's wonderful offerings. This time, we chug quietly round to Tollesbury, on board the Lady Grace, a journey which takes about an hour, and moor at the Marina. Then you are free to explore the village or join the rest of the group at the Harbour View restaurant for an evening meal before returning to the Lady Grace for the sunset trip back to Mersea, arriving back at 9.30pm. Magical! The cost of this visit covers the cruise. Food and drinks are at your own expense. A copy of the current menu can be found at www.the-harbour-view.co.uk or contact me for a printed version.

Cost £16 - boat only

Monday 6th July 2020

10am Greyfriars Coffee Morning/Discussion Group

Sunday 19th July 2020

Meet at the bus stop at the top of East Hill at 12 noon for our final Visit to Foulness

I am not going to spoil the afternoon by telling you much about the place now. All I will say is that it is another world. Owned by the MOD and used, for decades, to test missiles, it is a large, flat island, 6 feet above sea level at its highest

point. Access is through Army checkpoints. Security is taken very seriously at Foulness. The church is closed and structurally unsafe. The pub has shut. The school shut several years ago when the number of pupils dropped to 11. The school building is now a quaint little museum and heritage centre. That's enough. I shall say no more apart from to tell you that it is an incredibly interesting and atmospheric place. Peter Carr, a local farmer, will take you on a tour of the island, mostly following the sea wall, in a big and easily accessible trailer pulled by a tractor (look there are steps up into it but even I could manage them). It has seats and is fairly comfortable. Peter's knowledge of the island is second to none; its history, its wildlife, its people. It is a fascinating experience. Tour complete, it is back to the heritage centre for a cup of tea and cake and free time to look at all the little museum has to offer. I am afraid that it is the tour or nothing. Visitors to the island must not explore by themselves, for both security and safety reasons. Cameras are allowed but you may be asked not to photograph certain things. Binoculars are OK. Mobile phones must be switched off whilst on the island. Please bring a packed lunch to eat on the coach and, however warm it seems, bring a jumper or light jacket. The sea breeze can be quite strong. And before you ask, there are loos at the heritage centre - and on the coach. If you have already been and would like to come again, please do.

Cost £35 to include your tea and cake.

Monday 3rd August 2020

**Meet at Greyfriars at 10am Coffee Morning/
Discussion Group**

Monday 7th September 2020

**Meet at Greyfriars at 10am Coffee Morning/
Discussion Group**

Thursday 10th September 2020

**Meet at the bus stop at the top of East Hill
opposite Greyfriars at 8.15am for a visit to
Highgate Cemetery.**

Arriving at Highgate Cemetery, there will be time for a quick coffee and biscuits (included in the cost of the day) before we meet our guides for a tour of the West side of the cemetery, the original

site, full of incredible, over the top, Victorian tombs. When we last went, it was a damp and misty day which added to the extraordinary atmosphere of the place. Hopefully it will be better weather this time because the terrain does tend to be a bit slippery when it is wet. Please wear suitable shoes, flat and 'sensible', whatever the conditions. Free for lunch, either find a local pub or cafe, bring sandwiches to eat in the park next door or visit Lauderdale House, deeper in the park. This is now a flourishing Art, Heritage and Community Centre, well worth a visit in its own right. The house was built in 1582, the build possibly funded by Sir Francis Drake's Spanish treasure, and has a fantastic history involving such diverse people as Lord Mayors of London (several) Nell Gwynn, William Morris, the Ireton family, a Tudor Master of the Mint and preacher, John Wesley! It has been a private house, a museum, a girls' school and a convalescent home. Conveniently, it now has a cafe, perfect for a light lunch. After lunch, it is time to wander around the East cemetery, still in use and last resting place of Karl Marx, George Elliot, George Michael etc.

Cost £43

Monday 5th October 2020

**Meet at Greyfriars at 10am Coffee Morning/
Discussion Group**

Monday 2nd November 2020

**Meet at Greyfriars at 10am Coffee Morning /
Discussion Group**

Monday 9th November 2020

**Meet in the Salon (off Reception) at Greyfriars
at 7.30pm for our annual Burning Issues
Meeting**

This is the second evening meeting of the year for those unable to attend Monday Coffee Mornings. Come to raise and discuss issues of concern and find out what is happening in the town. Coffee/ Tea provided

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

Monday 7th December 2020

**Meet at Greyfriars at 10am Coffee Morning/
Discussion Group.**

The Objects of The Civic Society are to:

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

CURRENT OFFICERS

PRESIDENT: **John Burton** MBE

VICE PRESIDENTS: **Right Reverend Roger Morris**, Bishop of Colchester

Mr B A Barton

Mr K Cooke

CHAIR AND PROGRAMME ORGANISER:

Jo Edwards, 43 Priory Street, Colchester CO1 2QB
01206 868254 josiemedwards@hotmail.com

VICE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY:

Ann Turner, 1 Robin Close, Great Bentley CO7 8QH
01206 250894 ann@hollytreehouse.com

TREASURER: **Paul Weston**, 46 Wordsworth Road, Colchester CO3 4HR
paulweston523@gmail.com

SECRETARY: **Mike Fitt**, 31 Roman Road, Colchester CO1 1UR

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: **Peter Evans**, 5 Grimston Road, Colchester CO2 7RN
01206 540990 peter.evans7978@btinternet.com

OTHER ELECTED MEMBERS: **Sheila Anderton**, 30 Rosebery Avenue, Colchester

Bob Mercer, 59 Shrub End Road, Colchester CO3 4RA

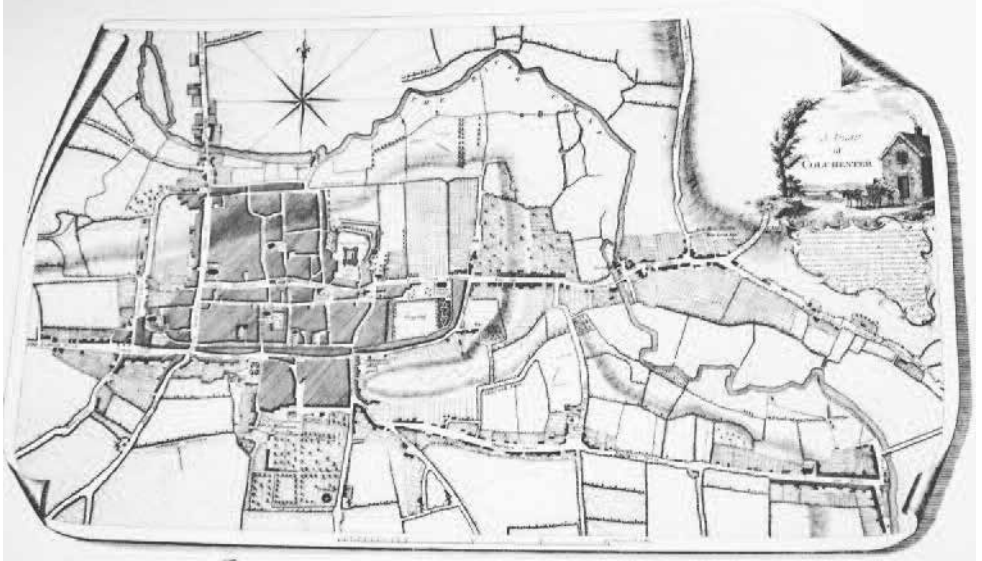
Jayne Richardson, 59 Byron Avenue, Colchester CO3 4HQ

John Salmon, 68 Castle Road, Colchester CO1 1UN

Henry Spyvee, 16 Wakefield Close, Colchester CO1 2SD

Howard Davies, 60 Rawstorn Road, Colchester CO3 3JH

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: **Pamela Bradbury, John Collett**



**The Map of Colchester
circa 1767
by Chapman & Andre**