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

Opinions expressed by contributors
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COLCHESTER CIVIC SOCIETY SPRING 2020

For the first time in the history of the Society, we have been unable to hold an AGM this year because of COVID-19 restrictions and it seems so strange writing this knowing that I won't be standing before you, telling you what has happened over the previous 12 months and wondering what your reaction will be! However, just because I can't deliver the Annual Report in the usual way, it does not mean that you are unable to seek clarification, comment, complain or cheer! We would really appreciate some feedback. Please feel free to write to me:

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CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT

It has been another busy year for Colchester Civic Society. One would assume that all had been quiet since lockdown in March but that is very far from the case. We might not have been able to meet but, goodness, such a lot has been happening! The energy that Colchester Civic Society members have will never cease to amaze me.

Our fight against the Alumno application for planning permission for student flats on the erstwhile bus park site off Queen St continued as Alumno decided to appeal against the Planning Committee's decision to refuse. A small team of people, all but one Civic Society members, worked with OMCI, the owners of Greyfriars and East Hill House, their planning experts and their barrister, to present the best possible case to the Inspector. The hearing was held in the autumn. It was a steep learning curve for all concerned as the system had recently changed. Even the planning experts and barristers were puzzled on occasion! We were surprised to find that we were involved in the round table discussions held each day, rather than just give

the one, all encompassing, statement that we expected. Unfortunately, the Inspector ruled in favour of Alumno.

However, all is not yet lost as the Society and others have encouraged Essex County Council not to lift the covenant on the site and, so far, they have not done so. I would like to thank our President, John Burton, Bob Mercer, Sir Bob Russell and Dorian Kelly, and also Alan Short, who is not a Civic Society member but who fought so hard with us to overturn Alumno's appeal. I would also like to thank those who attended the hearing which lasted several very long days. It was very gratifying to hear the comments of the Inspector on the final day when he said how impressed he was that members of the public (mostly Civic Society members) had come back, day after day, to listen to the proceedings. He made it quite clear that this was extremely unusual. I would also like to thank OMCI, their planning consultants, Lawson Planning Partnership and their barrister for their wonderful help and support. Kathryn Oelman, the consultant allocated to the case, was just amazing and we learnt so much from her.

There have been other enormous planning applications that have required our attention. One, of course, was the conversion of Essex County Hospital into housing. We were invited to attend an initial discussion with the developers and made a number of points. We recognised that the cost of the conversion to housing was going to be vast and that the developers were struggling to produce a viable plan. We suggested some radical approaches but unfortunately, again, the plans were eventually approved. An opportunity missed. So sad.

Essex County Hospital is not the only site experiencing issues with viability. Another is the erstwhile Odeon in Crouch Street. Here the developers, Blumarble, are struggling with access issues. They have realised that the only way they can get vital heavy plant onto the site is via Crouch Street. That means that the "iconic" frontage, which is actually not in a good state, might have to be demolished and rebuilt so that they can redevelop the site, creating flats and

small retail units. Having read the application papers very carefully, the Executive Committee decided that demolition, although regrettable, was the best solution, as the building, as it stands, is blighting Crouch Street. Something must be done. It is not suitable as an indoor market or a concert hall, as many have suggested, because of servicing issues as well as the likely return from such enterprises. Conversion to residential units does seem the best way forward. We recognise that this is a very controversial matter and many members will be distressed by our view but we would urge you to think very carefully. Do you want the building to remain as it is, unused, shabby and vulnerable or do you want the site put to good use and the frontage rebuilt as it was originally - or even restored to its pre cinema days when there were particularly lovely houses on the site. My father always bemoaned the loss of the street scene he remembered from his youth.

Another long winded application that frustrated us was that for a huge development of particularly ugly flats on land off Brook Street, one of the most polluted and congested areas of the town. Despite an enormous fight by local residents and, on our behalf, by Bob Mercer, permission was granted. I despair!

The land at Doe's Mill also received permission for housing despite our concerns.

Those are the major applications that we have considered during the year but there have been a lot more. An application for new housing in Spring Lane, Lexden received short shrift from Bob Mercer, who works so hard for us on Planning issues. Another, for a Council owned property in Creffield Road, was tackled by Bob and our President, John Burton. The final design was far more acceptable than that originally mooted.

At one of our monthly Coffee Mornings, Peter Rudland raised the issue of the disintegrating window on the first floor of Superdrug in High Street. You may remember that I mentioned this in last year's report. Bob worked with the Enforcement Officer at CBC and managed to

get the window beautifully restored. Just below that window is a pillar box that Royal Mail want to replace with something very modern, totally out of keeping with the street scene. Bob has objected. There have been many more applications that have received our attention during the year but this gives a flavour of the wide variety that Bob has dealt with.

I mentioned that we were invited to meet those creating the design for Essex County Hospital. We were also invited by CBC to comment on initial proposals for the ABRO site on the junction of Flagstaff Road and Circular Road. This is the erstwhile 36 Command Workshop site. It is good to be involved at such an early stage.

Planning, as such, covers a much wider field than one would normally recognise. There are the issues of enforcement that I have already alluded to but there are also the opportunities to make sure that the small things that can make such a difference are considered. You may remember that we asked whether the very badly damaged barrack gates in Butt Road could be restored or replaced by replicas as part of the nearby housing development. Simon Cairns, the senior Planning Officer at CBC, supported this idea and did all he could to ensure that one set of gates was retained. We were very pleased to see that the developers had paid for replacement gates using the original ironwork. The work is not yet complete but we have been assured that it will happen. It is such detail that helps future generations understand the history of the town. We thank all those concerned.

And, in that vein, Bob Mercer followed up his amazing survey of street ironwork - cast iron lamp posts, bollards etc. (which is now available on our website) with another survey of ceramic street names. Both surveys formed the basis for applications for Local Listing which we hope will give some protection. A wonderful piece of work, Bob. You should be immensely proud of yourself! (See later in this newsletter)

Protection? Not, unfortunately, protection from delivery drivers who seem to be carrying out

some sort of vendetta against cast iron street lamps! However, John Salmon, who is both a Civic Society Executive Committee member and Chair of Roman and Castle Road Residents' Association, has finally managed to acquire the necessary permissions, materials and insurance to paint the historic cast iron lamp posts in those roads and we hope that we will be able to work in partnership with Residents' Associations and individuals elsewhere in the town to get more and more of these lovely lamp posts restored. Any volunteers? We thank Cllr Lee Scordis for his help.

Our programme of meetings and events has been severely curtailed by COVID-19. We made the decision to abandon everything until the worst of the pandemic was over and refunded all payments made for events up until the end of 2020. However, we did manage to visit the Museum of Brands and find out about London's Great Stink during the autumn, both visits that had previously been postponed for reasons completely beyond our control. We also visited the Ditchling Museum and Gallery and Farleys Farm, erstwhile home of Lee Miller and Roland Penrose, both in Sussex. Wildlife featured in further badger watching evenings and boat trips on Hamford Water to see the seals and bird life. And we took our penultimate trip to Foulness. Unfortunately, we were forced to postpone our visit to West Stow as numbers were too low to make this viable but we hope to try again as soon as we can.

We also explored two local buildings, each with an extraordinary history, the Garrison Water Tower and St Andrew's Church at Greenstead. Our thanks to Ellison's and to Paul and Anne Larkin for hosting these events. We visited Wiston Mill as guests of Civic Society member, Suki Cohen (thanks so much, Suki!) where we had afternoon tea in the river barn overlooking the mill stream. We also had a very pleasant New Year Lunch at Greyfriars which was well attended. Our annual Burning Issues meeting was an opportunity for members, particularly those unable to come to our monthly Coffee Mornings, to raise concerns, ask questions and generally catch up with the Society's activities.

And that brings me on to the Coffee Mornings themselves. Numbers attending continued to grow and before lockdown, there were at least 35 members at each Coffee Morning, and not necessarily the same people each time. Coffee Morning is a slight misnomer. It really is a discussion forum with coffee thrown in! We have no agenda whatsoever, slightly unnerving on occasion as I have no idea what issues will be raised! The discussions are extremely informative, often raising issues that need to be resolved. We do our best. Some solutions are quick wins, others take forever, but, overall, we have a great deal of success. We have the occasional guest speaker, too. This year, we heard about the Council's drive to curb some of the air pollution in our town, particularly at road junctions and near schools.

The Coffee Mornings have been the birthplace of a number of sub committees and working parties. Over the last couple of years we have gathered a group of members who will enthusiastically join litter picking exercises and here I must mention the efforts of Peter Rudland who, single handed, has cleared huge amounts of litter and rubble, the latter left by ECC Highways, from Vint Crescent and also planted a lot of bulbs. Civic pride in action!

This year, we have a further two groups, one looking at public transport issues and the other examining ways in which we could increase our membership. You have no idea how pleased I am that these three groups are up and running! Their work has been impacted by COVID but they have all had some success. The Public Transport Group were really pleased to report improved information at bus stops, the Membership Group, chaired by Pamela Bradley, who we have co-opted onto our Executive Committee, has come up with some great ideas. Litter clearing continues. We were extremely grateful to Cllr Simon Crow who gave us a sizeable portion of his Locality Budget allocation. Some of this has paid for fluorescent bibs with our logo on them. Not only will these make volunteers safer as they will be seen more easily as they go about their clearance work but it will ensure that members of the public recognise them as Colchester Civic

Society volunteers and not miscreants doing enforced Community Service!!!

Simon's contribution has also paid for some much needed tools to help with both litter picking and footpath clearance etc. One of our real achievements this year was work on East Bridge. Those awful red and white barriers on the bridge were erected by Essex County Council to stop heavy vehicles mounting the pavements (?) and putting too much weight on the rather weak edges. Over time, the barriers had been moved by the vibration of passing vehicles. They had also gathered weeds, litter, soil, chippings etc etc and they looked DREADFUL! A team of Civic Society members set to work and, over many hours, cleared the weeds, cut back vegetation obstructing the pavement, collected the litter, swept the detritus from the base of the barriers and, borrowing a crowbar from a nearby garage, shifted the barriers back into their correct position. The difference they made was astounding. Essex County Council were shamed into a promise to keep the area looking as smart as possible. Unfortunately, that is a promise that, so far, does not seem to have been fulfilled but I suppose we will have to blame the virus! And nor have the historic railings, badly damaged by a car going off the road, been repaired and replaced although, at our request, Sam Lancaster from CBC rescued them from the undergrowth and ensured that they were stored safely whilst ECC and CBC tried to decide which authority should replace them!

This year, unfortunately, the Great British Spring Clean had to be postponed because of the virus but it is hoped that some of us will be out for the reconvened event, the Great British September Clean instead. John Collett, co-opted onto the Civic Society Executive Committee during the year to lead our Litter and Footpath Clearance team, has been working closely with CBC to get as many volunteers as possible (not necessarily Civic Society members) involved in clearing their neighbourhoods. He is doing an amazing job with help from our Eyes and Ears coordinator, Sheila Anderton. Their energy is awesome!

John and Ged Dickinson have been exploring the possibility of creating the link between two paths to nowhere. This matter was raised several years ago by Executive Committee member, Henry Spyvee, who met with ECC people on site to explain the problem but we are still waiting for it to be resolved. So what is the problem? There is a very nice path that runs from Meander Mews, on the south side of Cowdray Avenue towards East Bay. Unfortunately, it stops dead in the middle of nowhere. Meanwhile, there is another such path that starts in Rouse Way, on the housing estate where By Pass Nurseries was. This path also ends in the middle of nowhere. A link between the two would create a very pleasant route along the river for both pedestrians and cyclists. John has engaged with other groups and they are now doing all they can to create a path over the short distance between the two that already exist. However, John and Ged are not stopping there. They are also trying to re-establish a path along the north side of the river as it runs through Cymbeline Meadows.



Abrupt end to Meander Mews footway

Abrupt end to Rouse Way footway



It has been a busy year for John Salmon, our Highways co-ordinator. The U turns in Lewis Gardens continue. John arranged a meeting with Kevin Bentley, ECC Portfolio Holder for Highways, to discuss the issue. The meeting was attended by Civic Society members and local residents plus several members of the public. We should have had a bigger room because so many people attended! Kevin was told, in no uncertain terms, just how dangerous the U turns are and how other ways to circumnavigate the bus lane were impacting both local people and heavily congested and polluted alternative roads. We called for the reopening of the Queen St bus lane but Kevin announced a list of measures that he felt would address the issues - bollards, notices and fines. These have now been introduced but we are still awaiting the results of a promised review. More positive was a meeting arranged with Kevin and a couple of ECC engineers to discuss the proposals for the new St Botolph's Roundabout. We had already made our comments which indicated our dismay about the complete disregard for pedestrians and cyclists in the plans, something that we reiterated in the meeting. We also said that the area should be looked at as a whole, including the bus station and the effects that the proposed developments on the Britannia site and Vineyard Street would have. Kevin agreed with all the points we made and asked the engineers to return to the drawing board. He also promised to talk to the developers of the erstwhile Garrison land to see if he could get an extension for the Section 106 money they are providing to help with the cost of the new roundabout. We heard later that he had reached a very satisfactory agreement with them.

Sheila and Ged are responsible for ensuring that issues picked up by our Eyes and Ears initiative are addressed. They deal with all those irritating, generally small, things that spoil the appearance of the town, such as graffiti, pockets of litter (particularly on private land), plastic cable ties (they, with the help of other Society members, have now cut well over 3000 from lamp posts in the last 18 months), out of date public notices, overgrown shrubbery (the buddleia growing in front of the memorial plaques by the Albert Roundabout, for example) abandoned shopping

trolleys, damaged/out of date signage, damaged street furniture, flyposting, poor paving, pot holes, yellow mats, damaged steps in Vineyard Street, illegal A boards, vandalised bus shelters etc etc. Flyposting is a real issue, particularly in empty shops. The people responsible feed them down the inside of doors through tiny gaps and glue them to the tops of the doors. The yellow mats placed over broken drains etc by ECC infuriate Sheila as they stay in place for months. They are, themselves, a trip hazard.

Sheila, John Collett, Bob Mercer and I were all amazed to receive awards at the Colchester in Bloom Awards Evening, a wonderful event. The awards recognised the work that the Civic Society does to try to make our town attractive to both residents and visitors.

Colchester's heritage, as you will see, continues to be important to us. Bob Mercer is undertaking a huge and challenging amount of work around the restoration of the Jesse Jones grave in St Botolph's Churchyard and the installation of a new interpretation board to provide information about other important Colcestrians buried there. Jesse Jones was a distinguished veteran of the Battle of Waterloo. The others to be recognised are William Hawkins, MP for Colchester and champion of railways and Dr Roger Nunn, the first surgeon at Essex County Hospital. Bob has been involved in negotiations with the Diocese, the Museum Service, Heritage England etc and also fundraising for the project. He is getting there as far as the fundraising is concerned but we still have a little way to go.

Speaking of heritage, we have been frustrated and disappointed by "We are Colchester's" approach to the application for a huge government grant to assist the town. We are Colchester consists of a small committee of both Essex and Colchester Councillors plus representatives from business, the voluntary sector etc. That is supported by another small Advisory Group. We managed to achieve a place on the Advisory Group after some pressure was exerted by Sir Bob Russell and our President, John Burton, became our rep. Sir Bob and I subsequently attended an event for the wider population. Suffice to say, we have all

been extremely disappointed by the approach the Board have taken. We have tried to explain that we are up against some seriously deprived towns and cities and we really need to stand out from the crowd if we are going to have any chance at all. We have encouraged the Board to major on our heritage and, apart from anything else, its tourism potential but they insist on a 'clone town' approach which is unimaginative and totally uninspiring.

Past projects? The framework around some of the Southway Murals, restored a couple of years ago, has been repaired after it came adrift. We have kept in touch with BT about public phone kiosks and have done a further audit which resulted in more repairs. Our History of the High Street books have been selling well and we have now broken even. We still have more so hope to eventually make a small profit.

We are still working on the design of a new membership form, something that has been surprisingly challenging. COVID hasn't helped our discussions but we have now decided on a front cover and have found someone who will do some delightful illustrations for it. Watch this space!

We have been extremely lucky to have had many mentions and some great articles in the local



CCS Stall at St Botolph's Priory event

papers this year, increasing our profile no end! I must thank Sir Bob Russell for his huge help and also Robbie Bryson at the Gazette. We have also had our Wishing Wall at an event organised

by Colchester Borough Council at St Botolph's Priory. And, of course, the Civic Society was, as usual, involved in Heritage Open Days in September with several members acting as stewards. Thanks are due to all those who helped with both the Priory event and HODs particularly Ann Turner, who is our HODs co-ordinator.

We have met with Councillors and members of the CBC Community Neighbourhood Teams on several occasions this year. We work very closely with the Neighbourhood Teams who do an amazing job for the town.

A meeting of note was one we had with Cllr Dave Harris who chairs the Licensing Committee. We spoke of our concerns which he took onboard. The Licensing Policy is regularly reviewed but it seems that it usually goes through 'on the nod'. Dave promised that the next review would be more thorough and our comments would be taken into account.

On the subject of Licensing, we expressed concerns about the small cafe attached to the new golf course in Castle Park. The application was for very long hours and late nights. How would customers get out of the dark and locked park? What about the effect on those living very close by? The application was rapidly reviewed and changed to something far more acceptable. We also raised the issue of queuing safety barriers blocking the pavement outside a bar in Crouch Street. This will be monitored by the Council and action taken if necessary.

We also hosted a meeting at Firstsite on behalf of Civic Voice, who invited Civic Societies from the Eastern Region as part of their annual



programme. Unfortunately, Civic Voice pulled out at the last minute but, room booked and paid for, we decided to go ahead. We spent the morning having a useful discussion, particularly on encouraging applications from new members and then Ann Turner took the group on a walk around the town.

Our Blue Plaque initiative continues as we researched the possibilities of three new ones, one for the Lock Hospital which once stood on a site by the Old Heath Recreation Ground, one for Charles Harrod, founder of Harrods in Knightsbridge, who was born in Lexden and baptised at Lexden Church and one for Ken Aston, the international football referee who invented, amongst other things, the system of red and yellow cards. He was born in New Town. I think Ken Aston's will be the first to be erected in the coming year.

Our Street Naming Committee has been working hard, gathering a list of people who should have roads named after them, including erstwhile Mayor, Cllr Joyce Brooks. I would like to thank that team, Henry Spyvee, Peter Evans and Vic Lewis for their work.

Peter also needs to be thanked for chairing the new Public Transport Sub Committee but also for producing our Newsletters, two during the year. Thanks, Peter!

Paul Weston, our long suffering Treasurer, does a great job with our finances. He also liaises with Civic Voice whilst John Salmon attends their meetings. And he arranges and hosts our Executive Committee meetings. We were, very unexpectedly, asked to hold a very large sum of money for the continuing work of Lexden Sanctuary. Unfortunately, time was very short and we didn't really didn't have the opportunity to get all the advice that we needed to enable us to consider this proposal fully. Regretfully, we therefore had to decline the offer. We must thank Paul for all that he does.

We must also thank John Salmon for looking after our website and Facebook page. He has revamped the former this year, a big task.

Facebook regularly gets some interesting comments and is certainly a very good way to keep people up to date with all our activities. I just wish some of those who view our posts would join the Society!

I am pleased to report that we have huge support from our President and Vice Presidents, John Burton, Dick Barton and our new Vice President, the Bishop of Colchester. We are so grateful for the advice and help that they give us. They all attend our Executive Committee meetings when they possibly can. Very sadly, however, we lost Ken Cooke, Vice President and erstwhile Chairman of the Society, in the spring. He had been ill for some time but still took an active interest in the work of the Society, attending meetings when he was well enough and keeping us amused with his wonderful tales of his many years as a Castle Ward Councillor. Ken was Mayor of Colchester and also a well respected and much loved Alderman. We will miss him, his knowledge, his passion for the town and his great sense of duty and of humour.

Now, almost at the end of this extremely lengthy report, designed to keep you all up to date with all that has happened both before and after lockdown (I know many of you want to know), I must thank a few more people. Michael Fitt, our Secretary, who has so much knowledge of the ways of local government having been a Parish Clerk, Jayne Richardson for her help on Highways matters (Jayne has been unwell for some time and we send our best wishes to her) Rosemary Jewers who, despite resigning from the Committee, still helps with Blue Plaques and the Society's Plaque Trail, Ann Turner, our Vice Chair, Minutes Secretary, HODs co-ordinator, Membership Secretary, Town Guide, Newsletter distributor (the list goes on and on!) and Howard Davies, font of all knowledge on Planning and Highways issues and a splendid addition to our Committee. We must thank them all.

And, finally (I promise) our huge thanks to the oh so helpful management and delightful staff at Greyfriars. They have bent over backwards to provide rooms for meetings and for our Coffee Mornings and have given us so much help

and support throughout the year. They are just incredible!

So that is a summary of our year. There is a lot more but I think this gives you the gist! Please do your best to recruit more members, not necessarily ones who want to take an active role (although we would welcome them with open arms) just people who take a pride in our town and want to support us.

I end by thanking all of you for your continuing interest in Colchester Civic Society and hope that you stay safe and well. We'll meet again as soon as we can!

Jo Edwards
Chair, 2019-20
Colchester Civic Society

ROOM WITH A VIEW

What a strange time it has been.

Undoubtedly, the most extraordinary thing that happened to me was the startling realisation that my son (aged 37, father of one, with another due in October) had become a man! More of that anon.

Meanwhile, for the most part, immediately after lockdown, Priory Street returned to being the place that it was when I first moved here, late in the 1970s. Utter peace descended. Normally, from my garden room, I can hear the hum of traffic in Magdalen Street, punctuated by the all too frequent sirens of emergency vehicles or the roar of motorbikes - but all was quiet. At the front of the house, there was very little traffic. The car park was almost empty, apart from residents' cars. Few walked along the street. It was bliss!

A couple of weeks after lockdown, things began to change very slightly. People began to appear. There were still very few. Nearly all were on foot and were predominantly elderly couples or small groups of young males in their early teens. Both, in their own way, were interesting. Normally, I wouldn't really notice either as Priory Street is

usually bustling with people but, in the otherwise deserted road and car park, their very presence was worthy of note. Extraordinarily, neither the elderly nor the teenagers seemed to have any concerns about social distancing. I understood the bravado and devil may care attitude of the young men but I was amazed by the elderly. On many occasions, they met friends coming the other way along the street, stopped and held long conversations, no more than two feet apart from each other. It was apparent that several were hard of hearing because they were speaking loudly enough for me to hear everything, even from deeper into the house. As I have said before, nobody seems to consider the fact that they can easily be overheard by those on the other side of the walls they are leaning against! Strangely, all conversations were about normal, everyday things such as vegetable growing, knitting patterns, Harry and Meghan, the grandchildren. Not once did I overhear any mention of the virus or its effects. But there was something else really special about those chats and that was the pure, completely unadulterated Colchester accent that was apparent in every one of them. You have no idea how pleasing that was to me! Recently, I happened to catch a small bit a video of Prince William talking to someone and even he has picked up that strange upward inflection at the end of sentences that I find so irritating! I have now realised just how important the Colchester Recalled interviews carried out by a number of our members really are. They are not simply recording the memories of elderly Colcestrians but their accents as well.

And so to the groups of young men, generally emerging from Ernulph Walk en route to St Botolph's St and the town centre. Noisy, attention seeking and often giving the impression that they are up to no good, they remind me of groups of cowboys riding into town, heading for the nearest saloon, as portrayed in the television westerns of my youth. There have been many such groups during lockdown. On one occasion, my son, Tom, was dropping off some shopping. A group of 3 came across the road from Ernulph Walk and into the car park. One kicked the litter bin with huge force whilst another checked the car park ticket machines for rejected coins. The

third tore two laminated posters down, leaving one hanging from a thread and the other on the ground. Tom, who I thought would ignore them, proved me wrong. He stopped what he was doing, turned towards them and stared. The expression on his face was one that I have never seen before. They all looked at him and obviously decided, very rapidly, that discretion was, without any doubt whatsoever, the better part of valour and sloped off as fast as they could, with the occasional backward glance to see if Tom was still watching them. He was. He stood absolutely still until they were out of sight, not saying a word. That's my boy!!

Life was not entirely on hold. I was very much moved when the driver of the train waiting at Colchester Town station at 8pm on Thursday evenings took to sounding the train's horn as part of the Clap for Carers/NHS. The haunting noise reverberated along the valley between Priory St and Magdalen St, joining the sound of the bells of St Peter's Church, fireworks, the clatter of metal spoons on saucepans and the cheers and claps of town centre residents - and the wuffs of a certain ginger terrier (who LOVES fireworks!). It actually reduced me to tears on more than one occasion.

The work on the utterly hideous Magdalen Street student flats continued during lockdown, too. The gib of the very tall crane seemed to be constantly moving. I became fascinated by the light on it. Normally, it seemed that it was painted black but, for a few short minutes on sunny evenings, it became brilliantly white as the sun hit it at a certain angle. I was quite sorry when it finally went. However, I pray that I will not see it again on the old bus park site, assisting the construction of more equally appalling and unwanted student flats, this time to be developed by Alumno. What a tragedy they would be for the town.

Jo Edwards
Chair 2019/20 Colchester Civic Society

EDITOR'S CORNER

One of my pet moans is queuing, or rather the bad behaviour of queuers. I am quite happy if the queue moves but if we are all standing there whilst someone at the head suddenly realises that it is time to pay. "Oh you want some money? Well I never did!. Now where did I put my money!" At this stage, there is a thorough but fruitless search in shopping bag follows before a purse – or wallet – is discovered in a pocket. The rest of us stand there with a selection of credit cards, correct money, bus passes, notes clutched in our hands. The worst case was when, in a charity shop the cashier was checking a batch of a dozen DVDs for the correct contents and final announced £8.38 please. Well of course this was a complete surprise to the customer that payment was necessary and I stood there like a lemon for several minutes until £8.38 was found. People like these are probably the same ones that block gangways on buses and are amazed at intervals in theatres or cinemas that people want to get up.

I wrote those paragraphs in January and was going to delete them but it occurred to me that it is as relevant as ever. We have to queue even more, so it is even more important to be alert!

The Lockdown has forced us to have a look at our neighbourhoods through new eyes. Perhaps spring always looks like this, but my lavender tree has never looked so good, the rhubarb is excellent, euphorbia was glorious and Clematis Montana has returned with a lot of other favourites, and now the Passionflower.



I am lucky to be near to Bourne pond and the Mill, a nice destination for a short walk. Views over the town from St John's Abbey gateway were uncluttered by traffic to start with. Protecting these assets and views is one reason why the society exists.



Most of my walks have been to old haunts in the New Town area. It is true that we look but we do not see. Views over the town have shown me things that were always there but I had never really noticed., for example the strange roof of several houses in Abbeygate Street. What really amazed me was a walk through Winnock Road, the road I thought I knew best, having lived there for my first 50 years. It is only now that I made a count of the 12 shops and businesses located between numbers 1 and 99 when I was a child. Only 1 shop remains. The former Forrester's Hall is still there, but not sure what it is used for, and there is still a storage building. All the others are housing and someone squeezed several flats in behind.

I always liked Gladstone Road and King Stephen Road, each with flowering trees, though not so many as before. King Stephen has become more quirky, as the Pillar box now has a knitted lid complete with knitted creatures. There are 2 bikes with shopping baskets, each with knitted cover and more creatures.

Barrack Street has sprouted some new houses recently and an eatery. In Victor Road, it seems my grandmother's house still seems to have her fuchsia but not her nicotiana plant. I had forgotten how wide Victor Road is, wider than any other terraced street. And how solid the Victorian houses are, much more so than any modern matchbox.

And still it is possible to infill with houses. About 2 years ago, Artillery Street, apparently completely built up, suddenly found enough land for more houses on the old coal yard (Merry's), which surely was tiny. In Winchester Road, a large garden is now 2 reasonable sized semis, just round the corner from four new 3-storey houses in Military Road opposite the chemists, once Morley's. I am still expecting a gap in my own road to be filled. All these roads were built before car ownership was unlikely for almost anybody, yet there they are now, boot to bumper, on both sides of the road.



View through St John's Abbeygate

Please see Bob Mercer's article on Street signs, at the end of this newsletter. Many signs are in New Town. I had never noticed the "Myrtle Terrace" sign high up in Myrtle Grove.

Other people have spent time catching up with reading. One of these was Richard Watkinson, who investigated the Civic Society website and back copies of the newsletter. He found in a 2017 edition an article in which I mentioned Crouch Street as it was before Southway and the 1960's changes. Richard has connections with the garage, Page and Scotts, and emailed me about it. Thanks for your interest and it certainly made me think about Crouch Street again, without reference to the Cinema.

If any of this has set your memory running off at tangent, let me know.

Peter Evans

HERITAGE LAMP POSTS IN ROMAN/CASTLE ROAD

The stripping and repainting of cast iron Colchester Pattern lampposts in Roman and Castle Road is nearly complete. A team of eight volunteers, all residents, tried a variety of methods, including wire brushing and chipping back with chisels, plus stripping with hot air gun or blowlamp and also stripping with a knotted wire brush on an angle grinder. The angle grinder method proved to be fastest, but required access to mains power, which wasn't always possible and when I tried it produced clouds of black dust that left me looking like I had been up a chimney. There was no health issue here however, as everyone was supplied with a carbon filter respirator and goggles as well as brushes and paint, paid for with contributions from our ward councillors Locality Budgets. And believe it or not it was good fun!

Although this was a Roman and Castle Road Residents Association project, it was carried out with the support of the Civic Society, who provided insurance cover. Also most members of the team, including myself are members of both the residents association and Civic Society and included two civic society executive committee members.

The aim is now to find other people to take on the challenge of restoring our unique cast iron lampposts in other parts of the town. Please get in touch if this interests you. It's not an especially difficult or challenging task. Most of us involved in this project are in our seventies with little or no practical experience. I will aim to establish permissions from County Highways and arrange funding from councillors for tools and equipment under the auspices of Colchester Civic Society.

John Salmon

johnsalmon@colchestercivicsociety.co.uk

The photo shows Michael Fitt painting a Roman Road lamppost that he had stripped using a hot air gun.

John Salmon



THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Much mention is made to members of the Executive Committee but apart from the Annual Report and perhaps coffee mornings, details are seldom circulated to members as such. Membership is elective but our president and vice presidents attend when possible.

Under normal circumstances, we meet about every 6 weeks at the Lexden Methodist Church Hall previously in the evening but we are experimenting with afternoon meetings. It is fairly informal but we do have an agenda, which has the usual items such as apologies, the previous minutes to be agreed, Treasurers report and membership update. There are 'Eyes and Ears' reports, updates from coffee mornings and other meetings and information on the current position with the newsletter, website and social media.

Of course, the real thorny issues are the controversial ones – Planning and Licensing. Some of these items can be major ones – the Alumno issue for example – but they depend on what is coming up and some meetings these agenda items may be surprisingly short. Footpaths, which used to be much discussed, has declined to be replaced by the wider Highways and Transport, as main roads and public transport are becoming important.

We have a wider number of heritage interests – Heritage Open Days the choosing and placing of Blue Plaques and we are invited to comment on Street Names for not only Colchester but the rest of the district on some occasions. We are pursuing restoration of water fountains, the commemoration of a Waterloo veteran and have had successes like the restoration of the High Street window mentioned in the last newsletter. Some items are reported at Coffee mornings or spotted by members. News is exchanged and the time soon goes, though we do find time for coffee and biscuits. If you are interested in joining us, please speak up.

Meetings had of course ceased after March but we met again on 28th July on line via Zoom, courtesy of Howard Davies. It worked very well

and doubtless many members have experience of something similar. It was good to see everybody, with glimpses of their homes. We had a special appearance from Cooper Edwards.

Peter Evans

CALLING ALL COLCHESTER WALKERS:

To claim an unrecorded public right of way along the south bank of the River Colne (from the stile on the NW side of the Westway pedestrian underpass, near the old outdoor swimming pool, to Sheepen Bridge on Water Lane) Colchester Civic Society is searching for people who have walked this way regularly for at least a 20-year period prior to it becoming blocked by a field fence about three-quarter quarters of the way along. If you, or someone you know, fits this description, please contact info@colchestercivicsociety.co.uk immediately. *(for illustrations see page 6)*

John Collett

EYES AND EARS

The 'Eyes and Ears' team continue to report day-to-day issues that, when resolved, make a real difference to the look and feel of the town. Since our last report we've flagged up endless examples of graffiti and we'd like to send a heartfelt 'thank you' to the team from CBC for removing them. Obsolete signage, damaged street lights, flattened cycle racks, broken bollards, missing drain covers, wobbly paving slabs and, as ever, potholes have all been reported. Much has now been sorted – which is really encouraging.

Litter continues to be an issue and the team takes part in regular litter picks as well as reporting particular 'grot spots' to the relevant zone teams. We frequently report fly-posting but, unfortunately, large posters advertising events continue to appear inside empty shops where, because the shops are empty, they are difficult to remove. This is a real problem and we're really keen to find a solution!

Our thanks go to NEPP for replacing the rusty parking post on Bergholt Road, for removing

posts no longer needed and for adding new signs to the top of posts where the originals had disappeared.

In our first survey of BT phone boxes at the end of 2018, we were shocked to find that only twelve out of Colchester's forty two phone boxes were fully operational. The Society was delighted with BT's response when we raised the problem with them and grateful that they promptly sent out a dedicated team of engineers to deal with all the issues. In January 2020, we repeated our survey. This time we found that ten underused phone boxes had been removed, one now contains a defibrillator rather than a phone and, of the rest, three didn't work. Again, BT's response was prompt and engineers were swiftly sent to deal with the problems. Thank you BT.

Seeing, Sorting and Reporting helps to improve our town. Please support the Society's 'Eyes and Ears' initiative and report issues to the relevant stakeholders.

Sheila Anderton

THE NAMING OF STREETS AND BLOCKS **- Alice Twyman House and others**

We are still being approached for assistance with street naming, the most recent being the development on the site of the former Masons factory. It has proved difficult to find suitable names deeply associated with E N Masons or its successors, but suggestions have been made. We have been contacted about new streets in the area to the West of Gosbecks

Rules for naming blocks of flats are different and no Council approval is necessary, as was the case with Albarn and Rowntree Houses, named after members of the Colchester pop group Blur, on the former Military site above St John's Green.

It is important to ensure that new street names do not duplicate existing ones so it was just recently that we realised that a name that we had on our list of possibles for new streets had already been used by Balcerne Gardens Trust. This was Alice Twyman, a former resident of

the site and Headmistress at the Gilberd School, until 1967. Balkerne Gardens have made a point of naming other properties after local people as with Parsley and Papillon.

Very likely some members will remember Miss Twyman, She was in charge of the Sunday School at St Botolph's Church and like her parents spent her career teaching. Her father was headmaster at John Harper Street School. She was at the Gilberd for over 15 years and previously at Brightlingsea. Firm but fair, she was known as 'Twanger' at the Gilberd but this was ironic as she never had trouble with discipline. She says as much on the 8 hour interview that is included in the Archives of Colchester Recalled and when part of the interview was played to members, those of us who had been taught by her all laughed. No one EVER considered disobeying her. At school assemblies, the entire school would rise as one at a sign from her.

I can still see her matronly figure, tall and erect, wearing a suit in blue or plum with her hair in a bun and holding a thick reporter's notebook, controlling her school. She had to retire some months early as her knees caused her great pain. Once this was resolved, she did some supply teaching at the Girls High School and elsewhere, was much involved at St Botolph's and also in the Women's Institute. Despite her training at Royal Holloway, I am sure that she was a born teacher. She lived for many years in Roman Road.

The Street Naming Panel has been led by Henry Spyvee for several years but he is moving from Colchester. He will be much missed and will keep in touch but we would welcome a new member. This need not involve joining the Executive Committee but a good knowledge of the town is desired.

Peter Evans

MEMBERSHIP

New members -we welcome Mrs Angela Livingstone of Colchester, and Tony Friedlander of Lexden, Betty Constable and Mary Felgate, also of Colchester

Obituary - Andrew Millar 1928-2020



Andrew was a long standing and active member of the society. Born in Paisley, Scotland, in 1928 his blind father made a living basket weaving. Things were bad and despite doing well at school, young Andy started work at 14

as a gas meter reader, but problems with eyes soon developed. It was juvenile glaucoma which could have been treated but became much worse and at 16, Andrew had to face the future with ever decreasing sight.

He decided to train as a physiotherapist in London, having gained advanced educational qualifications in Edinburgh. After 3 and a half years training, he obtained a post at St Mary's Hospital, Colchester, later at Essex County Hospital and finally Black Notley Hospital. He was Senior Physiotherapist in Orthopaedics. Before arriving, he obtained a street map of Colchester and with a friend's help, he learn the location of all the streets of Colchester, knowledge that he retained for the rest of his life and used as a town tourist guide for many years.

A doctor said of Andrew that he knew he was blind but did not believe it. Being a fit and healthy youngster, he continued to take part in sports, the Milton Club in Edinburgh for blind people wanting to take part in sports not usually associated with the blind, which he continued to do. More recently, he was put out when his doctor would not allow him to take part in a parachute jump after a major heart operation. I remember him going off to help crew a sailing ship in the Caribbean. Many people said the most dangerous thing that he did was to be driven by his long term partner, Marjorie, his chauffeur. He enjoyed many foreign holidays with her and later with a friend, Dorothy Jameson.

Andrew took a leading part in establishing the National Talking newspaper for the Blind and it was down to him that it was distributed free. He was an active member of many local groups and was a genial chairman with a talking watch of Colchester Recalled, the Oral History group, for 32 year from it's inception until his death. He regularly attended St Albright's Church, Stanway, escorted by Dorothy and the piano that he bought for the Church was played at his funeral, A bagpipe player escorted his coffin into the Church.

A truly remarkable and inspiring man.

Peter Evans

Obituary – Ken Cooke 1941-2020

Kenneth George Cooke was born and brought up in Layer-de-la-Haye. He had 3 brothers and a sister and worked at East Essex Co-operative Society Funeral Department and later, the University of Essex. He was a board member of the Colchester and East Essex Co-operative Society for many years.

A member of the Labour Party, he represented Berechurch Ward and then Castle Ward on Colchester Borough Council. Serving on many committees, and in 1990 he was made Mayor. He retired from the Council and soon after was made an Alderman in 1999.

In 1999, he joined the Colchester Civic Society and was soon on the Executive Committee where his knowledge of the Borough's Planning Department came in very useful. He served as Chairman and recently became a Vice-president. He was a member of St Peter's Church and was at one time on the Parochial Church Council. It was at St Peter's that, on his request, his funeral was held.

He will be remembered as a person concerned for others and always willing to help when ever he could. He fought many battles on behalf of his constituents and will be greatly missed by his family and his many friends of all political parties and elsewhere.

Ann Turner

SNIPPETS

Mercury Theatre – Work is progressing on the theatre improvements and will be completed in time for reopening. As supporters, the Civic Society have been invited along with other organisations to hear how building is progressing and plans for many events at the opening weekend were presented, but of course this is delayed.

Colchester Borough Council Heritage Task and Finish group – the Society was invited to observe the meetings of this group, set up to review various Heritage projects and areas of interest. Items covered include floodlighting of the Roman Wall, which progressing. Money has been put aside for the repair of the tomb of Jesse Jones, who fought at the battle of Waterloo, which is in St Botolphs Priory. There will also be an information panel. Feasibility plans regarding the display of the Gosbecks Archaeological Park were considered. This was not a permanent Committee (sadly) and it is now regarded that the task is complete.

The Moors (Open space between Brook Street, Barrack Street and the railway line) – This area, accessed from East Bay, Brook Street or near St Leonards-at-the-Hythe Church, has caused many people concern. It is important that it remains in its undisturbed state but it was difficult to trace the owner. It now appears that they are Crown Lands. The previous owner went bankrupt and the land was vested in the Crown.

Curzon Cinema – members who took part in a tour of the Cinema last summer may remember that one of the staff on duty, Nicola, told us that she was an actress. Soon after, she was to be seen in an episode of the American TV series 'Catch 22' directed by George Clooney. She played a very convincing American military clerk.

Essex County Hospital

Early in March, the old hospital site was opened to the public. Photographs have been provided by Sir Bob Russell and are shown on page 31. The plans for development of the site have caused a lot of discussion and it is to be hoped that they will be revised.

The Roman Church, Southway

The Roman Church which can be seen from Southway near the Police Station has been repaired. Sir Bob Russell, High steward of Colchester and a Civic Society member has organised this.



The Bishop of Colchester, Sir Bob Russell and others at the Roman Church

Rosemary's Walk There was an article in the last newsletter about Rosemary Jewers' plan to walk Peddars Road, the Roman Road from Colchester to the North Norfolk coast. This was due to start in ?March but of course was postponed. She is fund raising to repair the roof of Little Massingham church. Rosemary is intending to start her walk on 22nd September and it is planned to take 8 days.. You can follow her online by googling Rosemary or Peddars Way. Contributions to support her effort can be sent via <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/rosemary-peddars-walk> or by cheques payable to Rosemary Jewers c/o Lings Country Gifts, Lynn Lane, Great Massingham Kings Lynn PE32 2HJ

Peter Evans

TREASURER'S NOTE

A full report on the 2019 annual accounts will be made when we are able to hold our AGM but in the meantime we have included a copy in this newsletter. Whilst the accounts have been signed off by the Independent Examiner they cannot be ratified until the next AGM.

The accounts record a significant deficit for the

year of £1964 which I feel requires clarification at this earlier stage.

In 2018 we took the decision to upgrade our website at a cost, including some training, of £1382 and we were expecting a shortfall for the year of a similar sum, but in fact we recorded a surplus of £377. The main reason for this was year end adjustments in the form of

- 1) Outstanding bills totalling £819 and
- 2) Receipts from members of £819 for social events which were rescheduled for 2019.

The trips were subsequently completed, and along with the outstanding bills, were paid in 2019 hence the deficit shown in the latest accounts. The Full accounts are shown on pages 28/29.

Paul Weston, Hon. Treasurer

ESSEX BOOK FESTIVAL

In normal times, a lot of neighbouring communities hold Book Festivals but most of them had to be cancelled this year. The Essex Book Festival, with events throughout Essex, with many in or around Colchester, had to close half way through, the organiser calling it "Short but sweet".

If you have not come across the EBF but like reading, then you have missed something. This year I only managed to attend a talk by local author, Liz Trenow), whose latest historical drama concerns Bawdsey Manor and the work started there, associated with Bletchley Park. Amongst the events cancelled were A N Wilson talking about Prince Albert at Layer Marney Towers and the cancelled crime fiction weekend at Southend. I have never managed to get to the sell-out Dorothy L Sayers talk at Witham Library. Some talks are all over Essex but we have a good selection locally.

Last year, Simon Scarrow, who lives in Norfolk came to Firstsite to talk about Macro and Cato, Roman centurions, in his well researched

fictionalised stories of Roman campaigns. I went along and am now hooked. Successful authors have been well represented – Sophie Hannah, licensed by the Agatha Christie estate to write new Poirot novels, Jill Paton Walsh, who likewise completed 2 Lord Peter Wimsey stories, Ruth Dudley Edwards, an expert on Irish history who has written hilarious detective stories, Frances Fyfield, friend of P D James, Simon Brett (a favourite), who has 3 detectives series, and Martin Edwards, who has edited a massive series of classic crime fiction for the British Library. I am sure we have all found books a great benefit recently.

Not all is fiction. In 2018 a heavy snowfall meant that few could attend a meal at Tymperleys with Anne De Courcy who writes on early 20th century society. As a result I had quite a chat with her. She had travelled all the way from Chelsea. I hope that it will return in some form in 2020.

Peter Evans

LITTER PICKS

Individuals who are shielding, in ‘at risk’ groups or displaying symptoms, or in contact with anyone with symptoms, or who have been advised to self-isolate should not litter-pick. Due to the COVID-19 situation no large ‘public’ clean-up events are allowed. Instead only small ‘private’ group clean-ups (family members and friends, up to a maximum of six people) and litter-picking alone or in pairs is permitted - with social distancing. Plastic bin bags, bin bag hoops, and litter-picking sticks can be loaned from Colchester Borough Council by arrangement through your Neighbourhood Team Warden <https://www.colchester.gov.uk/find-my-zone-team/#ValidationSummaryEntityFormView>.

Keep Britain Tidy recommends separating the litter into three categories:

- 1) All kinds of plastic bottles.
- 2) Aluminium cans.
- 3) All other general waste

One way of doing this is to clean-up in groups of three people, each person with a litter-picking stick and a plastic bin bag. If you’re litter-

picking on your own or with one other person, one solution is to put everything in the same bag and then segregate at the end of your litter-pick. KBT recommends filled bags from individual litter-picking and/or litter-picking in pairs should be taken home for collection through the appropriate household waste collection stream. Ideally clear bags should be used for the plastic bottles and the aluminium cans, and black bags for the general waste (tin cans can be put with the aluminium cans). If you pick up any glass, KBT recommends you use a bucket rather than a plastic bag as glass can break easily and can rip through a plastic bag causing injury. Ideally take the bucket of glass items home and place the items in the appropriate waste recycling stream. Alternatively, at the end of a group clean-up, carefully transfer the glass items from the bucket and place in the bag of aluminium cans for collection by CBC. Filled bags from group clean-ups should be securely closed and left for collection by CBC operatives at collection points agreed with your Neighbourhood Team Warden.

To make your clean-up as thorough as possible, it’s good to have one person in the group with a long-reach litter-picking stick. Their task is to grab all items beyond the reach of a standard litter-picking stick and place them where the other group members can pick the items up and selectively bag them. It’s advisable this person wears a hat and safety glasses to protect themselves when reaching into the undergrowth. DO NOT pick up syringes/ needles, broken glass, sharp items, or any dangerous or suspected poisonous and/or hazardous items. Report to your Neighbourhood Team Warden who will arrange safe collection and disposal. KBT encourages you to register your small ‘private’ group clean-up on the GBSC website under “Organise a Private Clean-up,” or if you litter-pick alone or as a pair, register under “Pledge to Pick.” <https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/get-involved/support-our-campaigns/great-british-spring-clean/coronavirus-guidance> Upload your results on the GBSC website - the number of bags in each of the three categories, the number of people who participated, and the time taken to complete the work. If you like, you can take before and after photos for uploading on the

GBSC website and/or for sharing through social media. For more information regarding the Great British September Clean campaign please see their Frequently Asked Questions page

John Collett

FURTHER STOP PRESS

Due to new anti Covid-19 restrictions, any members interested in litter picks should check the Keep Britain Tidy website or John Collett for the latest advice

COLCHESTER CIVIC SOCIETY FOOTPATHS & LITTER STOP PRESS

The efforts of John and his team have been recognised by CBC and he received the following message and a certificate

I am delighted to announce that you have been nominated by our Neighbourhood teams, for Colchester Brough Council's Community Recognition award.

Thank you for making a difference within the community. You are an inspiration to the residents of Colchester and it is people such as you, that make our community a wonderful place to live.

I would encourage you to print and display your certificate somewhere prominent for it to be seen, to celebrate this fantastic achievement. Please also share the news with your family and friends, and through social media channels, so you get the recognition you deserve.

I wish you continued success in your future endeavours,

Best wishes

Chrissy Henegan

Colchester COVID-19 Community Response Team



A LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER BOB MERCER

Dear Members

Some of you may have heard talk last year of the story of Jesse Jones who is buried in St Botolph's Priory graveyard.

He was a soldier in the First Foot Guards, which later became known as the Grenadier Guards, during the Peninsular War. He fought in several actions there but particularly the Battle of Barrosa where he helped secure the Colours for which he was promoted to Sergeant.

He later fought at Waterloo in the defence of the Hougoumont farmhouse in the orchard with the Light Company. It was here he was wounded through the chest and the ball was later found in his coat much flattened. This he would proudly show as he recounted the story.

On his discharge from the regiment he was appointed as Adjutant to the East Essex Militia with the rank of Captain and moved to Colchester with his family. He became well known and respected in the town and was a churchwarden of the new church of St Botolph's.

His first wife and a young son are also buried within the family grave in the Priory. Sadly the grave has become quite unmarked now, the inscription lost to time and acid rain.

It has become a joint Civic Society / C.B.C /Museum Service project to firstly install an Interpretation Board explaining his story as well as that of Dr Nunn, one of the first surgeons at the Essex County Hospital and William Warwick Hawkins M.P who are also buried there. Secondly to restore the grave and hopefully recut the inscription on the stones for all to see.

The Board is very much under way but we are still in need of contributions toward the restoration costs.

We have already secured grants from the Grenadier Regiment and the Essex Association of the Guards, the Hervey Benham Trust and the Remembrance Trust as well as monies from Colchester Council.

There is funding available for most of the total cost from various sources but there is likely to be a short fall of about £1000. We are still, therefore, in need of further contributions and it would be wonderful if any of you like to help with this interesting project in this way.

If any cheques might be made out to the Colchester Civic Society and posted to The Treasurer a donation. If you have already completed a gift aid certificate, he will be able to claim gift aid on :

Paul Weston
Hon. Treasurer
46 Wordsworth Road,
Colchester CO3 4HR

We would be especially grateful.
Kind regards
Bob Mercer

AND COMING IN THE NEXT EDITION...

Colchester Civic Society has contributed towards the purchase of the Middleborough portion of Colchester's Roman Wall with other local organisations. You may well have seen mention of this in the local press and we will soon be in a position to tell you the full story.



REPORTS OF SOCIAL EVENTS

New Year Meal 2020

Greyfriars Hotel 19th January 2020

Over 30 members and friends attended an excellent meal to celebrate the New Year. This was particularly gratifying for Jo as it had been difficult to obtain a menu and to put the details in the last newsletter. The main course was pork or a beetroot risotto, with a fish alternative, with a choice of pear tar or Greyfriars sticky pudding. Staff made us very welcome and we had the main restaurant to ourselves.



Visit to St Andrews Church, Greenstead

20th February 2020

This was at the invitation of Alan, a member who is much involved with St Andrews, his parish church. The result from members was quite enthusiastic, but mostly with the comment “where is it and how do I get there?”. This is how I felt though I must have passed it at some stage.

It is actually quite close to St Andrews Avenue – amazing – but quite well set back. About 30 of us turned up to find out more. We found it warm, comfortable and with modern wooden fittings. An upstairs chamber has been added, giving a view over the church. It is almost totally

surrounded by open country, with a long and uneven churchyard behind. It is rather open to winds, but has good views beyond.



It is one of those well kept Colchester secrets, like the Audley Chapel, or even Bourne Mill. It is a Norman church and has been in constant use for worship for close on 1000 years. It is small, with a modern aspect to it, Norman, with Tudor and Victorian additions, as described in the article



on the church in the main newsletter. It has a huge churchyard, which unfortunately can be windswept. The parish made us very welcome and provided wonderful home made scones and coffee.

We were lucky to get the chance for a visit. Do look in if you can if you are passing.

Peter Evans

Delayed article

CIVIC SOCIETY HOLIDAY TO EAST KENT, SEPTEMBER 2008

I was tidying some old newsletters when I found notes on our Civic Society holiday 12 years ago. As many of us are missing out on holidays just at present, (me included) I became nostalgic. We stayed at a hotel at Ramsgate and travelled between Ramsgate, Margate, Sandwich and so on. This what I wrote, with just a few explanations.

1. The nun with a Harrod's shopping bag at Aylesbury Priory (a coffee stop.)
2. The towers of a closed Power Station that seemed to follow us around.
3. The wild fleet of parakeets resident outside the Pegasus Hotel at Pevensey Bay, Ramsgate.
4. The road sign with directions to Ham and Sandwich
5. The bungalow on the flat shingle at Dungeness, which was called "Helvitia"(Switzerland)
6. The remote house at Romney Bay, once owned by Hedda Hopper, the Hollywood gossip columnist, where we had a cream tea.
7. Kentish miners who formerly wore M&S ladies underwear for warmth.

Peter Evans

SOCIAL PROGRAMME

Needless to say, there is no current Social Programme this year under the present circumstances.

Heritage Open Days for 2020 will have happened in a reduced form by the time you receive this but the Colchester Museum Service are planning to make short films of some of the usual sites, such as the Roman Theatre, a Wall Walk and a piece on Roman Colchester by one of our members, Janet Gardner. They will be available on VisitColchester website.

If you have access to the internet, please watch the Society's website to see up to date news of when we are able to start events. The Society also has a Facebook page and twitter account, both of which are kept up to date.

THE COLCHESTER COLLECTION OF HISTORIC STREET NAMES.

Robert Mercer 2019



Sir Isaac's Walk junction with Eld Lane and Trinity Street . 1903 "Images of Essex,the photographs of Alfred Wire 1875-1913" D Mander ,Vestry House Museum publication.

Colchester is fortunate indeed to have a considerable legacy of late 19th century ceramic street names formed from Minton Hollins & Co encaustic tiles. This Stoke on Trent Pottery Company was formed by Thomas Minton in 1790 to produce table wear. Herbert Minton took over the company on his father's death in 1836 and he developed new production techniques notably including encaustic tile making through his association with leading architects and designers.

The encaustic process involves a pattern that is a product not of glaze but of different colours of clay . The pattern appears inlaid into the body of the tile so that the design remains as the tile is worn down. They can be glazed or unglazed. However it is process that imbues a tile with a particularly long life.

What is uncertain is when the lettering tiles were first produced given the lack of factory records. Perhaps the pattern numbers of 2916 – 2919 indicate a late date of circa 1890 to meet the new demand for street names.

There are several other towns with Minton lettering tiles and perhaps one of the most noteworthy is Torquay where Herbert Minton acquired a house in 1836. He died in 1838 but the house remained in the family until 1890. Nearby Dawlish, Exeter and Ilfracombe also used the same blue coloured tiles.

The Minton street name tiles also survive in good numbers in Hampstead; East Dulwich; Gosport; Aberdeen and Hull. Individual examples remain in Berwick Street, Soho; Ball Alley in the City of London; Cambridge and Wolverhampton. Time and progress have seen their numbers dwindle

but it is more than probable that Colchester has the largest collection at 198 signs surviving.



*A Minton Hollins & Co Pattern
2917 & 2919 Catalogue 1900
Leicester Record Office ref 16D69/262*

The tiles were available in a black /white and reverse or a blue/white as in Torquay. Two tile sizes were in the range and the smaller tile measures 2½” high and 2 “wide. The large tile is 5” high and 4 ¼” wide or 3” wide for the blank space or letter ‘I’ for example.

The choice of tile sizes did offer the possibility of recording in smaller type, the more ancient original name where applicable for many of the older Colchester town names while using the larger type for the main name. This was a particular interest to Alderman Bawtree Harvey, the Chairman of the Borough Roads and Drainage Committee.

E. Alex Blaxill’s “The Street Names of Colchester” (1936 Benham Printers) quotes from Alderman Harvey’s report of 1889 on street names. This states that in 1882 a Committee was appointed “to place at the entry of streets, plates giving their destinations in conspicuous letters” and that 113 name plates were fixed. This would have been in response to the 1847 Town Clauses Improvement Act, section 64 which states how houses are to be numbered and streets to be named. This need was largely a reaction to the recent rapid growth of new house building in Colchester as in so many other Victorian towns and to the specific needs of the new Postal Service.

The decision in 1882 was possibly to use cast iron signs almost certainly made by one of Colchester foundries perhaps Stanford’s of the High Street, A.G. Mumford’s of Culver Street or more probably Bennell of Greenstead Road as all appear in the Council accounts.

All are 14cm or 5 ½ “high and between 80 cm / 31 ½” wide and 107cm/ 42 ¼” wide and use a simple block type face.



This sign in very original unpainted condition does illustrate how hard these are to see and read and perhaps why the Council Roads and Drainage Committee would seek to improve on the clarity and size.

These signs would seem to have been installed in the early phase of building in the New Town development and the streets between the town centre and the new Garrison such as South Street and Wellington Street as well as the Town centre streets themselves.



Providence Place cast iron sign .Photo: Nigel Henderson 1953 Tate Collection

One of the lost

Of these signs the Survey now shows that only 12 survive in 2019.

In 1983 E.J.Russell had reported that iron signs were still in Albert Street, St Peter's Street and Grays Cottages (East Street) which unfortunately have now disappeared. (Colchester Archaeological Group Bulletin no 16, 1983).

As Alderman Harvey states, 113 signs had been installed when the work was stopped leaving many street, courts and yards still requiring to be indicated in the same way.

The main purpose of Harvey's report was to examine the original names that many of the streets would have been known by and would illustrate much of the town's local history. He then follows with the results of his study of the contemporary names and their previous historical names, many with an explanation.

The research that formed the report on 'street nomenclature' was resolved unanimously to be entered on the minutes of the council with their best thanks. This research still forms the basis for our knowledge of the historic street names and it forms the core of Alderman Blaxill's 'Street Names of Colchester'. This small book has long formed the only history of the street names.

An examination of Council records has revealed a Report of the Parliamentary Committee on 11th Oct 1892 to adopt various abbreviations, additions and substitutions of street names. This changed a number of names to the familiar today.

For example:

Park Lane becomes Port Lane

Osman Road becomes Three Crowns Road

Water Lane becomes Sheepen Lane

Pelham Road becomes Papillon Road

Nunn's Cut Road omits 'Cut'

Northgate Street adds 'formerly Dutch Lane'

Abbeygate Street adds 'formerly Lodder Lane'

Clearly the Roads and Drainage Committee were now of the Chairman's view that preservation of the old names would now be desirable.

On the 10th March 1897 the Roads and Drainage Committee reports that "the Surveyor submits samples of tile letters used for denoting names of streets and is desired to make arrangements for having same fixed in Head Street and High Street as an experiment". The bill for payment to Minton Hollins & Co appears in the accounts by April 24th 1897 for £1 13. 3.

The Benham's Guide to Colchester 1900 shows a photo of No 1 High Street circa 1897 with the new trial signage.



As with all the Colchester tiles, these have been inset to the wall in a rebate to appear flush to the surface. A fine example of this can be seen at King Coel Road where tiles have been removed and re fixed further down.



Clearly this experiment was judged a success as a further purchase was to be paid by July 24th for £ 7 19. 4

At the 1905 cost of 10/- per square yard of tiles this would have been a determined step and the records show a history of tile purchasing from Minton Hollins & Co until Sept 25th 1914.

The references to earlier street names are more uncertain.

In 1879 -81 amounts were paid for “painting names and lamps”

During 1882-1883 £ 9 11.11 was paid for street names.

In 1892 the large sum of £31 19. 4 was paid for street names followed by smaller bills in 1893, 1895 and 1896. It is possible that these were the accounts for the iron street names and the most likely foundry was Bennell’s who were doing the majority of the Roads Committee’s work.

The survey has included the two remaining examples of early developer’s street names. One is at Kendall Road and the name is on a stone plaque in the wall and the other is a small iron street name at St James Street of a quite unique pattern.



These would have named the streets in the period before the Council would have adopted them and no doubt enabled prospective purchasers to find the new houses.

The last of the street names patterns are a small group that appear to be a light metal possibly aluminium. These have a black colouring with white lettering today.



These are quite possibly street name plates that were purchased in 1921 or 1928 according to the accounts. There is a payment to Bluemel Bros Ltd of £ 6. 4.11 in 1928 for street name plates and these would no doubt be in the style of car number plates for which they were well known.

What is apparent in the Council records is the imperative placed on them to provide accurate naming but most particularly the numbering of the houses. The numbering programme ran in tandem and was the subject of much correspondence from the Post Office and the Register General of the 1901 Census as houses were regularly incorrect.

The earliest reference in the Council records is on the 18th March 1890 when the Borough Surveyor is authorised to obtain from Mssrs Willing & Co according to the design now elected at a cost of 3/- per dozen . These would be an enamelled plaque and a possible example is shown below at no 4 Beaconsfield Avenue



The payment records are shown in parallel to the street names payments in the supplementary excel file and do illustrate the significant cost to the Council of this programme .

The large number of the Minton Hollins & Co street name tiles that have survived in Colchester are a testament to the high quality of the manufacturing process and to the wisdom of the Roads Committee in their choice . During a 120 years of change and rebuilding in Colchester many have been lost but some may have survived behind the more recent enameled signage as with the Oxford Road sign with the junction of Lexden Road which is placed directly upon the

original. There may be others still in hiding.

Some are damaged or have missing tiles. These can be replaced by Craven Dunnill at the Jackfield factory in Stoke on Trent .

A partial list of the missing:

Sir Isaacs Walk by Scheregate Steps (see header photo)

Sir Isaacs Walk at side of Rebow House

Pelham Lane Crouch Street at corner of Headgate House

Headgate East Bay & Brook Street on the Port Reeves House

Quakers Court and Quakers Alley

North Station Road on side of the Riverside pub

Middleborough at the corner with North Hill.

Vineyard Street on wall at ‘Aspects of Beauty ‘

Scheregate Steps at corner with St John’s Street.

St Leonards Road on Hythe Hill. Serpentine Walk off North Station Road.

Hawkins Road on the side of the “Rising Sun” chimney.

This list is far from complete and many must have been lost at the building of Southway.



Pelham's Lane street sign circa 1955.

One of the Lost Signs.

Photo: Nigel Henderson Tate Collection



Receipts and Payments Accounts

Charity name COLCHESTER CIVIL SOCIETY

Charity number (if any) 237885

For the period from (start date) 01/01/19

to (end date) 31/12/19

Section A

Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
DONATIONS	12			12	303
SUBSCRIPTIONS	1567			1567	1787
PROF OF GIFT INTEREST	284			284	1510
BOOK SALES	492			492	230
WINDMILL FOUNTAIN MEMORIAL APPEAL	-			-	250
MURALS	-			-	143
SOCIAL EVENTS	5799			5799	5100
Sub total	8178			8178	6565
A2 Asset and investment sales, etc					
Total receipts	8178			8178	16183
A3 Payments					
DONATIONS	-			-	310
SUBSCRIPTIONS	294			294	303
INSURANCE	285			285	212
EXPENSE RE MEETINGS	1045			1045	180
POSTAGE / STATIONERY / PRINTING	634			634	953
SOCIETY EXPENSES	166			166	98
MEMORIAL APPEAL WEB SITE FEES	153			153	183
MURALS	-	72		72	23001
BLUE PLAQUE BOOK PRINT	295			295	778
SOCIAL EVENTS	7270			7270	5727
Sub total	10162	72		10214	33527
A4 Asset and investment purchases, etc					
Total payments	10162	72		10214	33527
Net of receipts/(payments)	-1964	-72		-2036	-17344
A5 Transfers between funds					
A6 Cash funds last year end	17833	556		18389	35733
Cash funds this year end	15869	484		16353	18389

Section B

Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

B1 Cash funds

Details	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £
CURRENT A/C	1864		
SPECIAL FUNDS	1994		
DEPOSIT A/C	17031		
MUNICIPAL		236	
MIDDLEBURY FUND		350	
TOTAL cash funds	15869	486	

(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))

B2 Other monetary assets

Details	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £
SCHOOL EVENTS 2019 0/5	526		
PETTINGER	12		
BOOK STOCK			
169 20 cent	263		

B3 Investment assets

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)

B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)

B5 Liabilities

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
NEWSPAPER PRINTING	539		

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf
of all the trustees

Signature

Print name

Date of approval



PAUL WESTON

ON THIS DAY 14TH SEPTEMBER 2020
THIS NEWSLETTER WAS COMPLETED.
ON THIS DAY 14TH SEPTEMBER 1820
THE ESSEX COUNTY HOSPITAL OPENED



Illustrations of the excavations at the Hospital site (with thanks to Sir Bob Russell)



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, others 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

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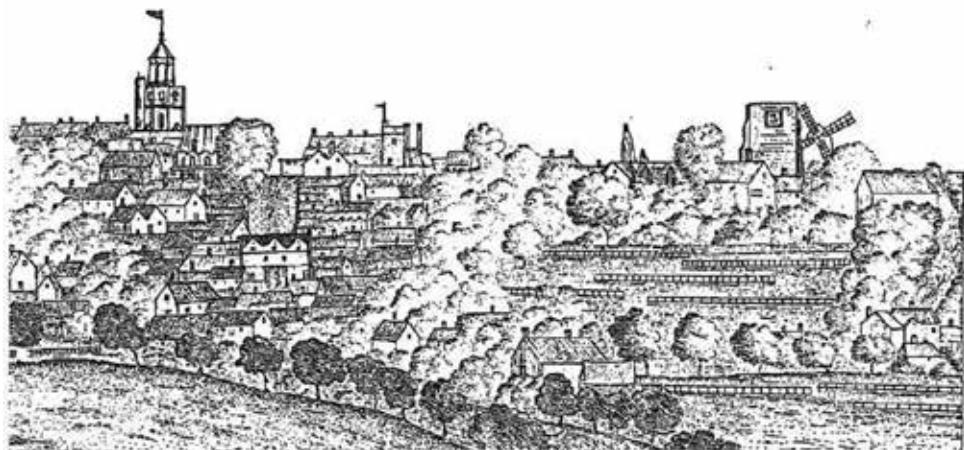
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Bob Mercer, 59 Shrub End Road, Colchester CO3 4RA
Jayne Richardson, 59 Byron Avenue, Colchester CO3 4HQ
Henry Spyvee, 16 Wakefield Close, Colchester CO1 2SD
Howard Davies, 60 Rawstorn Road, Colchester CO3 3JH

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



Part of a prospect of Colchester from the north, 1697 showing the tower of St. Peter's church on the left, the roofless tower of St. Mary's on the right with the windmill beside it, and tender grounds in the foreground to the right