



Charity Registration No.237885

*60th Anniversary Edition*  
1964 - 2024



NEWSLETTER - MAY 2024

NUMBER B01

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](mailto:peter.evans7978@btinternet.com),

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

## CONTENTS

Remarks from the Chair.....	3
Room with A View .....	4
Magdalen Street .....	6
Our work with Highways.....	10
Bus and Electric Scooters news .....	11
Twinkle, Twinkle .....	12
Book reviews .....	14
Membership .....	14
Anniversaries .....	15
Editor's Corner .....	15
History of the Civic Society .....	16
From the Archives.....	17
Views of Colchester .....	18
From the Archives concluded .....	20
60th Civic Society AGM .....	21
Update on the lamp post project .....	21
A comedian commemorated .....	23
Reports of Social Events	
New Year Meal .....	25
Visit to Lavenham.....	25
Cannock Mill .....	27
Social Programme 2024.....	29
Jane's Walks .....	34
Back Cover: Holy Trinity Church from an old view c.1900	

## CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

You will see that we are celebrating our 60th anniversary by revamping the design to make it more up to date. This edition is in full colour although future issues will only have the cover in colour - colour printing is of course expensive. We would like to thank Adrian Rushton and Richard Arnopp especially for the colour photographs, and also to the contributors for their efforts.

Over 60 years, countless members have spent many hours and burnt the midnight oil trying to improve their town and working together to defeat proposals that would have damaged it. Of course, we have not always been successful but we would like to think that we have made a difference for the better. During that time, methods of working have changed from hand written or typed letters, to the speed of email and the internet, which has been a great boon.

No doubt the style of meetings has become less formal but the society has always had a social side, which has expressed itself in meals, holidays, outings, teamwork at meetings and the recent success of Society Coffee Mornings - an inspired idea from Jo Edwards - but also in Social Media.

I would like to add a special mention to members of the executive committee and especially to those who have been involved with the Colchester Civic Society during a large proportion, if not the entire 60 years.

Let us look forward to another 60 years, or more, working for Colchester, whether it's Britain Oldest Town or newest City."

*Howard Davies*

Chair

DO JOIN US AT GREYFRIARS  
FOR A GLASS OF FIZZ TO  
CELEBRATE 60 YEARS



BEFORE THE AGM ON  
10TH JUNE

## ROOM WITH A VIEW

Peter contacted me.

‘Perhaps your Room with a View for the special birthday issue of the Newsletter could reflect upon the changes you’ve seen from your window in the 60 years since the Society was founded?’

I sighed. Apart from anything else, during those 60 years there has been more than one room and, consequently, a number of views! I have lived in various places, High Street, the corner of Wellesley Road and Creffield Road, Mersea Road, Roach Vale and, of course, Priory Street. To be honest, the views from Wellesley Road, Mersea Road, Roach Vale and Harsnett Roads have hardly changed, apart from heavier traffic, although Harsnett Road is, sadly, no longer filled with cyclists travelling to or from work at Paxman’s as the huge factory has closed.

My thoughts drifted back to those early days of the Society. I was in my teens, living in my childhood home, close to the Minories in High Street. The view from the front has changed very little as it overlooks the Park, but the view from the back? Another matter altogether!



In 1964, the bus park built on Lewis Gardens was very new but initially, we couldn’t see it from our house in High Street as the view was blocked by two colossal red brick buildings that were at right angles to each other.

Both belonged to Watts, the stonemasons. The one at the end of our garden had originally been built as a rowing, or roughing, factory, in, I think, the late 1700s. Rowing was one of the processes in the production of cloth. It raised the nap on finished fabric using a rowing mill, a large wheel upon which hundreds of teasel heads could be mounted between rods. It was not long after the opening of the bus park that these buildings were demolished, to be replaced by Corporate House and its new car park which served the solicitors’ offices in High Street as well. At last we could have a garage for our car, which had, for a long while, been garaged behind the Cups Hotel in High Street.

Corporate House became the offices of Danny Watts, father of the developer of Stane Park. It was later Sir Bob Russell’s office and is now used by Open Road. Our access to the west and south changed beyond all recognition. No longer did we have to cross another garden, go through



a dark and spider filled covered passageway between two very temperamental doors and across a yard to reach Queen Street. It had its advantages but also its disadvantages. Our garden was no longer so secure, but that is another story or three! Oh my goodness!

The bus park soon became a car park as well as a huge multi storey car park over the top of the

bus stops was opened in 1972. It was one of a ring of multi storeys built on the fringes of the town centre. The car park developed structural faults and was demolished 20 years later.

Many assume the bus station was moved because of Firstsite but this is not the case. Very soon after the bus station was opened in the very early 1960s, the whole area was declared an ADO, Area of Development Opportunity. Somewhere, I still have the details. I must find them as nobody believes me! Was this a good idea? That is a rhetorical question! I don't intend to start an argument so I will leave the subject for another day. However, I cannot let the moment completely pass. I am SO relieved that the Alumno student flats were not built. That is NOT a NIMBY comment. The area deserved so much more. There are so many opportunities for tourism within that site which need to be explored. Our heritage could bring so much more wealth to the city and we really do need to grasp opportunities. Perhaps I should be careful what I wish for!!!

By the time the multi storey came down, I was living in Priory Street with the same view as my parents, but from the opposite direction. My view of the bus park itself was partially obscured by the trees above the Roman Wall but the multi storey lights meant that we never turned our bedroom light on! The houses on the Wall side of the street had been demolished two years before the current Civic Society was founded. Why? There were plans for a ring road which would circle the Roman Wall. The green space between the Wall and the Riverside Estate, Priory Street and Vineyard Street were all on the line of the proposed route. The car park in Priory Street was referred to as temporary until it was completely restructured in 2016. 1962 to 2016! It was good when it became properly laid out.



It was, however, the view from the windows at the back of my house that changed exponentially. When I first moved here, the valley behind me was the site of Nicholson's Nursery, the most idyllic oasis of peace and tranquility in the whole of the town centre. It had never been built on - ever. The whole valley was filled with soft coloured flowers in the summer, attracting a myriad of butterflies. The hum of thousands of bees filled the air. Watercress beds fed by several springs became the breeding ground for frogs, toads and newts. There were stag beetles, bats, foxes, the occasional muntjac deer and a huge variety of birds. Sadly, the nursery closed and the land was eventually sold to a developer. We fought to save it but the challenge was too great. Despite the springs, the Dell was built. Nicholson's Grove on the far side of the valley followed and then the huge developments in George Williams Way and Magdalen Street. The beautiful valley, by no stretch of the imagination a brownfield site,

disappeared for ever. Sometimes, despite the desperate need for housing, one still mourns the loss of such magical places.

## MAGDALEN STREET

Having looked at Military Road and Mersea Road, it seems appropriate that we should turn to Magdalen Street in the 60th year of the Colchester Civic Society, as few roads can have altered so much in 60 years as Magdalen Street.

The name comes, of course from St Mary Magdalen Church, originally sited at the crossroads with Brook Street, Barrack Street (originally part of Magdalen Street, but the site of the Napoleonic Barracks) and Wimpole Road (formerly Wimples Lane). The church was a medieval foundation, with the Leper Hospital next door, just down Brook Street. It was replaced by a Victorian Church, linked to the Primary School in Kendall Road, the church demolished for a road scheme in the early 1994. I remember this myself as my primary school was Kendall Primary and we had some services in St Mary Mag – it was called locally. It had not been in good condition.

However, part of the East Wall of the church survives near the Brook Street corner (have a look if you are caught in traffic there). The Almshouses in Brook Street that had replaced the Leper Hospital were in dreadful condition and themselves demolished in 1990s. When the site was excavated by the Archaeological Trust, all involved had to be masked due to possible survival of Leprosy spores. The site is now Magdalen Green.

MADGALEN STREET starts opposite St Botolph's (Colchester Town) Station and is numbered consecutively to Wimpole Road corner, then on the other side of the road from the Brook Street corner back to the Railway Station. This is unusual - most streets have odd and even sides - although Hythe Hill is consecutive. Mind, much of the south side of the street has been demolished, as we will see.

The first property is actually 7 Magdalen Street, facing St Botolph's Roundabout which looks like a fairly average 1950s' 3 storey building, currently a solicitors office. However, there is a photograph of 7 Magdalen Street during a flood caused by a damaged water pipe around 1980. It clearly shows only 2 storeys. The only time that I have been in the building was when it was the office of the Amalgamated Engineering Union. My father had served his apprenticeship and would take me along when he paid his subscriptions. I can't tell you much about the inside of the building as I could barely see across the smoke filled room!

Magdalen Street church in 1783.



There used to be a butcher's shop nearby that had bricked up windows, probably the result of the window tax. This stretch of the road ends with Military Road and includes the former Public House, the Prince of Wales (now a restaurant) and 8-10 Magdalen Street, a 3 storey building which could look handsome if it had a bit of attention.

Quite a lot of Magdalen Street buildings seem to have been pubs. The site, formerly hoardings, on



the Military Road/Magdalen Street corner was once the Railway Tavern and 17 Magdalen Street was apparently also a pub. Apart from a few buildings, much of this side of the street have been pulled down. Some had interest if not architectural style. Some were Victorian (or earlier) but only a few, such as 79 Magdalen Street survive to demonstrate what we are missing. Amongst the buildings that even I can remember are an early Victorian school and an S B Wheeler scrap yard. About 30 years ago, another part of the south side was cleared in preparation for the Aldi store.

79 Magdalen street with some houses attached!  
Colchester



Above it and beside it is Bakery Close. The Civic Society had not taken up Street Naming then but the developers were keen to have an appropriate name for the site. They asked the Council Rating Inspector for advice. She asked her manager, who knew the area, for ideas. He (OK, it was me) checked a few things and passed on the message that most recently it had been the Wonderloaf Bakery.

There are some Victorian terraced houses towards Wimpole Road, together with the site of the former Co-operative Society Works Depot,

but on the other side of the road, next door to the St Mary Mag site, now Magdalen Green, is the best building in the entire road. It is 110/111 Magdalen Street, a 15th century timbered framed L-shaped building on the corner of Simons Lane, fully described in the recent Timber Frame Buildings book. How many similar buildings of this date have disappeared from here? There are some other neighbouring buildings of a later date nearby. At various stages, a number of courts or yards - Garden Court, Lufkin's, Clarks,

Three Mariners, Colchester - another lost pub 111  
Magdalen Street, Colchester



Browns. Only Bretts Buildings survive.

There have not been so many demolitions on the northern side. Let us remember that Magdalen Street was busy, populous street and there would have been slums that needed to be cleared. A story quoted by Andrew Phillips gives an impression of the area in perhaps 1880, when there was a still developing sewage system. Councillor John Bawtree Harvey was walking through the area when he came upon a heap of "night soil", smelling sweetly. Harvey spoke to the householder about this and complained about the effects on public health, requesting its removal.

A man looks for a brake-light cluster for his Ford Escort while a lady cycles past Scriven's used car parts on Magdalen Street,



A few days later, he returns and find the heap has gone. He knocks on the door the house to congratulate the occupier, only to find that the night soil, which a high commercial value, had been moved inside.

At this time, there were many courts and large buildings full of people. Although these have gone, George Williams Way was built about 20 years ago, and named after a founder of the YMCA, which has a large centre here. There is also John Kavanagh Court, named after a boot factory a short distance away in Kendall Road. Like Magdalen Green, it is social housing.

Continuing along the northern side, there are surviving Victorian terraced houses, which give a flavour of the street 60 years ago. Going back towards the railway station, there were a lot of local businesses, now all gone, but at least number 187 (also a 15th century timber framed survival) and the premises of the former Leveridge grocery shop are still there. The substantial premises of the Magistrates Court building is on the site of some of these – originally cleared for the building of Southway – such as Licence's tobacconists – also the supplier of “the green’un”, a weekly football results newspaper, New's greengrocer and a newsagents that also stocked foreign stamps. 60 years ago this was a big community – very much down

at heel and in need of tidying up but World War II was only 20 years before.



At 176 was Evans' hair saloon (no relation—but we were customers), both male and female saloons, long demolished. Cutting men's hair was Basil, gay but absolutely accepted in the community of folks working at Paxmans. Nobody batted an eyelid. He had a male friend and was known to nurse devotedly his elderly mother,



and decorated the shop with original Hogarth engravings and antiques. There was a lot of banter, - for example “There's no flies on you, Basil”, “No,” he replied “but you can see where they have been”.

Mr Humphreys in the door of his shop at 207 Magdalen Street, Colchester.



Magdalen Street would be very busy at lunch times up until the 60s, as Paxman workers went home to lunch, usually by cycle, and it was unwise to get in their way!





courtesy of Sharon Mooney)

A huge chunk of Magdalen Street on the south side was demolished in the early 1960s. Only part of the site was replaced by housing, but whilst this had been a street populated by families, most residents of Magdalen Street itself must be young people in student accommodation or the YMCA.

*Peter Evans*

Over a hundred years ago, between 1902 and 1909 there was a Greengrocers called W Godfrey at 69 Magdalen Street. He was rather successful and had another shop in Covent Garden, London, where he sold his prize winning "Colchester Grass" (asparagus). He continued doing well and bought the substantial Limes, 1 Gladstone Road. He passed the horticulturist genes on and his great granddaughter, Sue Kent, now features on Gardener's World on BBC TV. She still retains links to North East Essex. There is a photograph of the building. (information



## OUR WORK WITH HIGHWAYS

Our work with Highways has changed in recent years. There used to be regular meetings with a Senior Highways Officer in which we would report problems on the roads that had been reported to us. Today Essex Highways expect these reports to be done via their online portal and we now provide a link on our own website to facilitate this process. This allows members issues to be raised with Essex Highways directly and eases the workload on the Executive Committee member involved.

Many such complaints do however go to County Councillors whose remit it is to report such problems to the County Council Highways Department and face the wrath of residents when these problems are not dealt with in a reasonable time frame as is so often the case. However a new initiative has been launched in which each county councillor will be able use a repair crew in their area for up to 10 days, working to the list County Councillors will provide. Their work will be focused on some of the most locally irritating potholes which may not normally be considered for immediate repair under existing maintenance policies. Essex Highways | Essex County Council

It has previously been recorded that Essex Highways expressed concern that their budget allocation was half of what they calculated was needed in order to standstill; and this made no allowance at all for pot hole repair! A direct grant from central government has now been allocated for this purpose and, it would appear, has enabled this extra investment in pothole repairs. However the budget for all other work remained unchanged.

A question that members might ask is: what about all this money being allocated for cycle lanes? Surely this could be used where it is desperately needed? And similar questions are raised over the millions being allocated for the current proposals at St. Botolph's roundabout.

The answer in both cases is no. These are separate funding sources, St. Botolph's Roundabout will be paid for from a combination of Section 106 money contributed by the developers of the housing built in and around the old barracks in Mersea Road and Abbey Fields; plus, a portion of the grant from the Levelling Up fund issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). This was a bid jointly submitted by Essex County Council and Colchester City Council.

This also applies to the funding allocated for cycle lanes. This is dispensed by the Department for Transport and must be spent in strict compliance with the standards specified by the department in its Gear Change and Cycle Infrastructure Design documents. More can be found here - <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f1f59458fa8f53d39c0def9/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf>

The proposals for cycle lanes and St. Botolph's roundabout are both areas in which the Colchester Civic Society have been active in responding to the consultation, and this will continue to be the case, as revisions come forward. This has not always been easy or straight forward, principally because the views of our members are so broad and diverse.

The challenge for the society has been to contribute to the consultations without taking sides. This has resulted in the creation of a Highways subcommittee whose remit is twofold. The committee assists in the effectiveness of the consultations by helping local community groups, churches, and businesses to participate in Highways Consultations. The committee also looks closely at proposals and provides feedback to the Highways design team, with a view to helping to produce the best possible design, but without passing judgement on the overall merits of the scheme under consideration. This process allows for some local/expert knowledge which is not always available to those who are designing infrastructure

This allows us to play an active part in the evolution of designs by raising objections or concerns

over specific aspects of a scheme. But it also enables us to advocate for additional elements, as we did successfully in proposing crossings at the Mersea Road Junction with St. Botolph's roundabout and also for a crossing on the Southway junction with the roundabout. Both are now part of the plan under development.

We were not entirely happy with this outcome however and objected to the use of two stage crossings. The Highways design team maintain that this is necessary, as single stage crossings will slow the traffic down too much, while we were concerned that two stage crossings mean that cycles and pedestrians cannot be separated at these points.

We now await the next draft of the St. Botolph's plan and the consultation on stage two of the Cycle Route from East Hill to the university. We would welcome some additional members the Highways subcommittee. So please get in touch if you would like to join us in this pragmatic and detailed approach to Highways Consultations for Colchester.

*John Salmon*

.....

## **BUSES AND ELECTRIC SCOOTERS NEWS**

We have been asked what to about the many Escooters, ebikes etc that we see so often. If you spot Tier EScooters or EBikes abandoned in hedgerows or ditches or even somewhere where they are causing a serious problem, please contact Tier's Operational Partners in Colchester:

**hello@ecargobikecolchester.com**

**Tel: 0800 061 4426**

**Mobile direct: 07852 958953**

Essex ECargo Cycle Logistics Ltd

t/a Colchester eCargo, Hills Business Centre

Brook Street, Colchester , CO1 2UZ

There has been good news about a bus service calling at Stane Park and the new Marks and Spencer store, amongst others. Service City 70, run by Hedingham and Chambers, has started between Marks Tey and Colchester City Centre. It calls at Stane Retail Park, near but not in front of M&S and is also useful for Sainsburys, Garden Centres, Car Boot sales, Homebase and all points between. The service runs from 8.30 am to 14.50, the rest of the day the buses provide school services.

*Jo Edwards & Peter Evans*

## TWINKLE, TWINKLE...

The campaign by Civic Society member Sir Bob Russell to have a statue of the Colchester sisters associated with the world famous nursery rhyme “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” has previously featured in the Civic Society Magazine. The following article by Sir Bob is about the unveiling on Saturday 4th May 2024.

A crowd estimated at around 400 gathered in Colchester High Street on a glorious sunny afternoon to witness the unveiling of the statue of Jane Taylor and her older sister Ann which is diagonally opposite the Town Hall, just to the east of Pelham’s Lane.

It is “Dedicated to the Children of the World”.

Proceedings started with the Choir of North Primary School singing “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”.

I explained that it was 13 years ago that I thought Colchester should have a statue to honour two remarkable sisters – Jane Taylor and Ann Taylor – who were prolific writers of children’s poems, with one written by Jane published in 1806, when she was aged 23, becoming the World-famous nursery rhyme.

Sculptor of the statue is Mandy Pratt, from Ardleigh. Many people have been involved in this journey – all will be named and thanked in public records, but as traffic in High Street could only be stopped for five minutes I could not do so in my brief speech.

But I want to thank all of them, collectively, because without them – including several generous donations in addition to fund-raising – the statue would not have happened. No Council money has contributed to the £90,000 project.



*Sir Bob Russell, His Worship the Mayor, John Jowers, sculptor Mandy Pratt and the Taylor girls.*

The poem written by Jane Taylor was called “The Star”. It comprises five verses, each of four lines. In 1828, someone – who and why is not known – put the words of the first verse to a French folk tune, repeating the first two lines to give us the nursery rhyme we know today as “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”.

The Taylor family lived in Colchester from 1796 to 1811 – in a house just 300 yards from the statue, the road next to the Town Hall, West Stockwell Street. It was from the attic bedrooms that the Taylor sisters looked westwards into the night sky – with Jane getting the inspiration to write the poem which became the nursery rhyme.

Where they lived is today in the catchment area of North Primary School. I then invited four pupils from the School to unveil the statue by removing the Flag of the City of Colchester. They were Sana, Freya, Esme and Reggie – all of whom had birthdays in April. They were helped by the Mayor, Councillor John Jowers.

After the unveiling I said I hoped the statue will be viewed with pride by residents of Colchester – and will encourage people from all over the World to visit Colchester.

I brought the ceremony to an end by inviting everyone to join the Choir in singing “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”.

The unveiling was followed by a reception in the Mayoral Suite at the Town Hall where an iced celebration cake was cut. The reception ended with the 100 or so guests joining the Choir in what is thought to be the first time the nursery rhyme has been sung in these prestige surroundings.

Feedback has been encouraging. Many people are stopping to admire the statue, and lots of photographs are being taken. I am aware that some have been “pinged” around the World.

My thanks to Colchester Civic Society for making a donation to the fund-raising appeal.

*Sir Bob Russell*





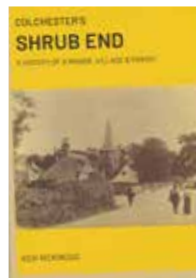
## BOOK REVIEWS

### Colchester's Shrub End by Ken Rickwood

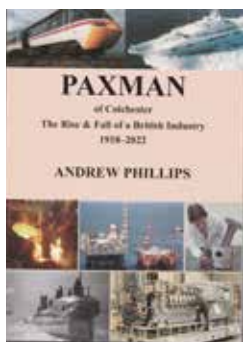
published by David Cleveland

I thought that I was reasonable familiar with Shrub End but no, it is more complicated than I thought. For one thing the boundaries have changed and do we mean ward or parish boundaries? Stanway Green is included and the original church is now part of the Zoo.

Ken Rickwood uses the original farms, all 14 of them, to describe much of the history of the area and their names often survive as Street names. Although the development of the area was started after the war, speeding up into the 1960s, it is still going on now. There is much information on local schools, churches, shops and businesses. It ends with a complete list of street names and their derivations, and includes many maps and photographs.



### Paxman of Colchester. The Rise and Fall of a British Industry 1918-2022 by Andrew Phillips



This is the concluding part of the definitive history 1867- 2022 of Colchester's major engineering works and major employer – see Andrew's previous volume *Steam and the Road to Glory* from 2002. For a large part of that time, Jimmy Paxman, his son Teddy and the family were leading figures in the town, whilst the factory employed an average of 2,300 residents in the 1950's and 1960's – more during the war! If you didn't work there yourself, you knew someone who did.

Although we may know how the story ends, I certainly didn't know all the stages of the story. Now I know why my late father was unfortunate to choose the early 1930's to finish his apprenticeship at Paxmans, as this was when the firm went bankrupt and there was no work for him. (However, my grandfather and 4 other sons retained their jobs). I had

heard of Teddy Paxman but did not realise how exciting it must have been in his time and what a shock his death must have been. Later, a visit to retired staff or their widows from Granny Paxman (Teddy's mother) was close to a royal visit. It is an important story for Colchester and Andrew tells it with style, precision, and humour.

The book is packed with illustrations of the products and the staff, plus statistics. The only drawback is that it makes the book heavy – nevertheless it is unputdownable.

*Peter Evans*

Each book costs £15 and are available at local bookshops, although the Paxman book may be sold out.

.....

## MEMBERSHIP

We welcome James Jeagar of Sudbury, David Addington, Georgina Ambrose, Benjamin Mills and Susan Ratoff, all of Colchester.

ANNIVERSARIES

This year Colchester Civic Society celebrates 60 years of campaigning, (hence this colour edition) but it is not alone in celebrating. The Norwich Civic Society is 101 years old, Peterborough 72, Ipswich Society just ahead of us at 64, and Chelmsford, Sudbury and Harwich not far behind us. In 1974, Colchester District Council was formed by the union of Colchester, Lexden and Winstree Rural District Council with West Mersea and Wivenhoe Urban District Councils was later renamed Colchester Borough Council until it was promoted to City Status – 50 years ago.

The Friends of Colchester Museums is now 75 years old and the Frinton and Walton Heritage Trust over 50. All this is small beer as the Clacton and North East Essex Arts and Literary Society has reached 120 years of music and talks – one talk being given by Sue Kent (See Magdalen Street article). We could of course go on, as are there many other societies, but Colchester Zoo celebrated their 60th anniversary last year and the Colchester Operatic and Dramatic Society is 100 years old

A fourth anniversary has just passed. It was early in the first stages of Covid that the clock on Osborne Street Car Park stopped. It has been 12.41 ever since but we understand that the Council is taking an interest. Others have tried to get it repaired without any luck!

Peter Evans

EDITOR’S CORNER

I found an interesting quote in The Times Diary Column TMS recently. The Victorian preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who “saw the light” in Hythe Hill, Colchester said about preaching and the lengthen of sermons “If you haven’t struck oil after 10 minutes, stop boring!” Spurgeon is possibly the only person locally to have 2 streets named after him – Spurgeon Street and nearby Haddon Park. Possibly also Charles Place, off Hythe Hill.

Patrick Kidd, who compiles the column, did not mention the Colchester connection but he is an ex Grammar School boy, so perhaps he knows.

What is it about Sudbury at the moment? Gainsborough’s House received a huge grant for an upgrade a couple of years ago and now St Gregory’s Church has just reopened after another grant funded project as the Sudbury Arts Centre. I was told there that the Heritage Lottery would be keen to support other local schemes, so clearly it is the place to be. Waterstones have opened a large new branch there, possibly bigger than ours, whilst Morrisons, one of the more upmarket supermarkets, now has a town centre store there. I still like the market.

Peter Evans

## HISTORY OF THE COLCHESTER CIVIC SOCIETY

The first Civic Society in Colchester was in existence in 1933 and was responsible for the purchase of Bourne Mill by the National Trust. An area in Priory Street was cleared of houses to give a good view of the Roman wall and in 1935 the Society undertook to restore the timber framed building in East Stockwell Street that is now known as Peake's House.

A member of the Society, Marshall Sissons, won the competition for the design of the library building in Culver Square. This first Society closed in 1939 with the outbreak of World War II.

There was a short lived Society in the mid 1950s and it was known as Colchester Preservation Society. It was formed due to the threat of the house in the Dutch Quarter being condemned as being unfit for human habitation. With the help of Dr Kershaw, the Borough Medical Officer of Health, the house were saved and the Society was awarded a Civic trust award.

Other buildings under threat of being demolished were saved. One of these was the Old Land Registry Office in Church Street and another St Mary's House, now the home of the Quaker Meeting House but previously the home of William Mason whose wife was a cousin to the artist, John Constable who often visited the house.

In the early 1960s there was concern that partnership between corporations and developers was leading to the destruction of town centres. Ken Mabbitt and John Bensusan-Butt urged the formation of a Civic Society to combat this destruction. The new Society was officially launched at a meeting held in the Moot Hall on 24 June 1964.

During the early days the Society managed to save 19 Lexden Road from demolition. Today it is the language school. Together with Scheregate traders, improvements were made to that area. One thing the Society failed to stop was the demolition of the Three Cups.

A working party improved the Colchester to Wivenhoe towpath. Tree surveys were carried out and many trees were planted.

A footpath connecting Bourne Mill and Cannock Mill was cleared of 10 lorry loads of rubbish. This opened up 8 and a half acres of land between the two mills as an open space for which the Society was awarded a Countryside Award by the Duke of Edinburgh.

The Society managed to get the Roman River Valley granted conservation status. Various pieces of land in the Borough were registered under the Common Lands Registration Act. The Society fought against the demolition of Holy Trinity Church and also fought the building of a small estate to be built north of the town centre that would have destroyed High Woods. The trees were saved but the small estate was built.

In 1983 over development around St Botolph's Priory was a concern that the Society felt was unnecessary and encouraged an archaeological survey and assessment of the Priory grounds.

The Society has campaigned against other developments and supported others over the years.

To commemorate notable people from the town, blue plaques have been erected around the town. The Society advises the Borough on street names for new roads.

*Ann Turner*

# FROM THE ARCHIVES - FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Monday, 29th March 1965, Colchester Royal Grammar School**

The President, the Right Honourable Lord Alport PC took the chair

Minutes

Apologies were received from the vice-president T C Hart, Paul Barwell (Hon. Treasurer), David Clarke (Chairman. Education and Publications Committee), Alderman L E Dansie, Mr & Mrs Hamilton, Mrs Thurley, and the Garrison Adjutant. About 65 members attended.

Minutes of the General Meeting held on 22nd September had been circulated with the agenda were approved and signed. Dr Norah Jones, following the films on trees shown at the meeting, asked for action on themselves.

Annual reports and accounts were received and adopted, as circulated.

The Constitution as drawn up by Mr V G Hines Q C with a modification of aims asked for by Inspector of Taxes to bring them into line with a formula agreed with the Civic Trust, was received and adopted.

The President, Lord Alport, and the Vice Presidents, the Bishop of Colchester, the Right Reverend F D V Narborough, Antony Buck, M P for Colchester, Dr A E Sloman, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Essex, and Professor Lionel E Penrose, (Chairman of the Pre-War Civic Society) were re-elected unanimously.

Officers of the Society were also re-elected as follows;-

Chairman: Mr Bernard Mason

Vice-Chairmen: Geoffrey W Bone and T C Hart (*all local businessmen*)

Hon. Secretary: J. Bensusan-Butt

Hon. Treasurer: Paul Barwell (*Manager, Martins Bank*)

Hon. Auditors: Messrs Bland. Fielden & Co

Taking the place of the provisional Executive Committee, the following duly nominated persons were elected to the new Council of the Society;

B.A B Barton (Dick Barton) - *Primary school teacher; later headmaster; town guide*

Robin Beacham - *Architect*

Hervey Benham - *publisher, Essex County Standard, printer*

Miss M Blomfield - *Civil servant, Ministry of Public Buildings and Works. Prepared the first report on Listed Buildings in Colchester*

Maurice Bond - *Antique dealer*

Stanley E Bragg - *Architect*

A F J Brown - *Head of History, Colchester Royal Grammar School*

M P Brown

Stephen Brown

David D-T Clarke - *Curator of Colchester Museums*

Frank S Clater - *Planner*

H W Collins - *Artist, creator with his wife Joyce Pallot of the subway panels*

## VARIOUS VIEWS LOOKING UP IN CO





# LCHESTER, BY ADRIAN RUSHTON



## FROM THE ARCHIVES CONCLUDED

Alderman L E Dansie - *Auctioneer, Mayor of Colchester*

A B Doncaster – *Antiquarian Bookseller*

John Donnelly - *Solicitor*

Norman Downie - *Architect*

J F Elam – *Headmaster of the Colchester Royal Grammar*

I H Gane

J E M Green - *Doctor*

Stephen Hibble

V G Hines – *Barrister, later judge*

W R Ireland – *Director of Williams & Griffins*

Miss S Jacklin – *Manager, Jacklins restaurant and shop*

Dr J Kershaw – *Medical Officer of Health*

K R Lambert

K R Mabbitt – *Joiner and carver*

C A Meadows – *Builder, scout commissioner*

Keith Mirams – *Artist and designer*

Horace Pearce - *Architect*

A Rowland Jones – *Surgeon*

Dr E Rudd - *Lecturer*

P Russell Walker

John Shippey - *Bookseller*

E E Simmonds

M Graham Smith - *Business head, NEETC, later the institute*

Dr G O Stephens - *Chief Executive of Colchester Institute*

Mrs M P Swan

Dr Paul Thompson - *University of Essex Sociology Department -  
leading figure in the study of oral History*

Mr E C Thurley

Councillor R Wheeler - *Wine merchant, later Mayor of Colchester*

*Autobiographical details have been added with help from Jo Edwards and Andrew Philips. If you know details of any of the others, please let us know. The document was “Roneoed” and some words and names are difficult to decipher.*

*Clearly the formation of the Civic Society in 1964 was welcomed by the great and the good of Colchester in 1964.*

*Editor*

# 60TH CIVIC SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

10th June 2024 7pm Greyfriars

A notice of this meeting was sent with the previous newsletter and you will have already received the AGM papers, which were sent to members either by email or if you do not have an email address, by post.. Further copies can be obtained at the meeting or by contact the Editor, Peter Evans, or the Secretary, Michael Fitt.

.....

## UPDATE ON THE CAST IRON LAMPOST PROJECT

As many of you will know by now Colchester Civic Society is running a project for the stripping and repainting of Colchester’s cast iron lampposts. This began in 2020 and has now just completed its fourth year, with lampposts in Errington Road, Wickham Road and the Avenue being stripped and repainted by resident volunteers who put in the time and effort to renovate the lampposts in the street where they live, using equipment provided by Colchester Civic Society and paint supplied by Essex Highways.

Volunteers in Morant Road, Gladstone Road and Hamilton Road had also hoped to make a start on renovating their cast iron lampposts. But for a variety of reasons this has not yet happened.



In Hamilton Road the reason for this is that during the recent conversion of Colchester’s street lights to LED, not one of the road’s four cast iron lampposts was deemed to be fit for conversion. We estimate that in total around thirty cast iron lampposts across the town have not been converted (around ten percent of the total remaining). In a few cases this was due to the post being found to be structurally unsound and these were immediately cut down to make them safe. However in the majority of cases, including all the Hamilton Road posts, the problems were with the swan neck brackets or the electrical control boxes, not the cast iron posts; meaning that it could be possible for new light fittings and distribution boxes to be fitted to the existing cast iron posts, instead of being replaced with new steel posts. This is something that has been done in previous years and several of the Roman Road and Castle Road cast iron lampposts were given a new lease of life in this way.

With this in mind I contacted the director of maintenance and operations at Highways to enquire what their plans were for these cast iron posts. I was told that they had ‘not yet come to a decision and that the outcome will depend on the latest results from the structural and electrical testing. We all know that they are very much out of favour with the lighting professionals and power providers, for good reasons (they are not commensurate for current standards). If they need to be replaced, this would be done as sensitively as possible, new column with embellishment kit and painted black.’

I was then put in touch with the project manager in charge of the conversion to LED across Essex and a meeting was arranged. While we toured the cast iron lampposts of the town, it became clear that there was no consideration being given to the possibility of extending the life of the cast iron posts and the thinking conformed very much to that already outlined by the Director. The intention being to replace the unconverted cast iron posts with black painted steel posts along with swan necks and embellishment kits much like those that have been used in the Dutch Quarter. He also pointed out that a number of unpainted galvanised lampposts had previously been installed as replacements for the cast iron posts and that he was concerned about the inconsistency here and would recommend this be remedied in some way. Possibly by having them painted black.

Concerned that galvanised posts would quickly suffer from peeling paint and look a mess, I was assured that this would not be the case with the new replacements, because the painting is now done as part of the manufacture and is expected to last around the same time as the posts themselves, which is around fifty years. I was also told that this is not necessarily a problem with the existing galvanised posts either, provided they have been installed for more than a year and are rubbed down before painting, in order to clean off the salts which have risen to the surface.

This was reassuring in that there was now some consideration being given to the type and appearance of street lights being installed, at least in the conservation areas; where previously fine Victorian and Edwardian Streets had cast iron posts interspersed with a number of different styles of unpainted galvanised steel posts, equipped with a variety of light fittings. However I remained unconvinced that replacement was necessarily the only viable option.

In the meantime Hamilton Road resident and civic society member David Molloy was working along similar lines. David set about looking at the possibility of attaching new swan necks and control boxes to the existing cast iron posts and discovered that in Penarth in South Wales the town's civic society had persuaded their Highways authority to abandon plans to replace all 300 cast iron posts with galvanised steel as part of the roll out of LED street lighting. The remaining posts were repainted and fitted with new Victorian gas style LED lanterns and traditional style ground sited feeder pillars (these replace the large control boxes which are mounted on the top of many of our cast iron posts).

So here was a case where very similar cast iron posts were being given a new phase life with new light fittings. Contacting Penarth Civic Society led to being provided with information from Vale of Glamorgan Council about the equipment they had used and the companies who had supplied them.

With this information, David set about procuring prices for both the lanterns and a traditional style swan neck, along with the ground feeder pillar. He also made a freedom of information request to try to establish the cost of the new galvanized steel posts which Essex Highways were likely to use as replacements.



Hopeful that we had found a way that the life of the cast iron columns could be extended indefinitely we submitted a proposal to Essex Highways outlining two ways in which those cast iron posts that have not been converted to LED could be fitted with new swan necks or traditional gas style lanterns for a price we estimated to be lower than complete replacement.

Our proposal was passed to the Project Manager for the LED roll out and in a second meeting with

him he explained that he had looked at our proposals and calculated that the cost of implementing these would be higher than the solution he had already outlined to me. He was therefore going to recommend replacement of the cast iron posts to senior management and that if they wished to take up our proposals they would have to find the additional costs from outside the budget allocation for the LED conversion program.

David has continued to try to persuade senior management to make a special case for at least some of the cast iron posts, such as those in Hamilton Road. However the process of replacing these unconverted cast iron posts began earlier this year

On the plus side we do still have many of our original cast iron lampposts and Essex Highways have made it possible and indeed been helpful in facilitating our restoration work. In addition they are assured of another forty years of life, which is the projected life of the new LED units and provided that the swan neck brackets do not fail or some other calamity befalls them.

Since our restoration work began we know of two restored cast iron posts which have been demolished by motor vehicles, the most recent being one in Beverley Road, which was hit by a car swerving to avoid a fox. Another was demolished in a similar overnight accident in Castle Road; and three more in Roman and Castle Road were knocked down by delivery vehicles prior to the start of the our work. If you become aware of any other cases such as this, then please do get in touch with the Civic Society using the email address provided below, so that where the lamppost is in a conservation area, we can request the replacement conforms to conservation area standards.

Our work will resume this summer with the teams in Morant Road and Gladstone Road intending to make a start. There are however many more of Colchester’s historic cast iron lampposts which would benefit from restoration. If you are interested in getting involved in this work then please do get in touch using the civic society email address [info@colchestercivicsociety.co.uk](mailto:info@colchestercivicsociety.co.uk) .

*John Salmon*

.....

## COMEDIAN’S 100TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATED IN COLCHESTER



On 31st March 2024 was the 100th anniversary of when comedian Arthur Askey made his professional debut...at the Headgate Electric Theatre, St John’s Street, Colchester. To commemorate this a floral tribute was placed beneath his plaque by Colchester High Steward Sir Bob Russell.

The young Liverpool comedian Arthur Askey’s first professional booking was in this small theatre. Later it became a cinema – many people of a certain age will remember it by the name “The Cameo Cinema”.

Many years ago, when the whole building on the corner of St John’s Street, Headgate and Sir Isaac’s Walk was converted into retail units on the ground floor, the





developer kindly agreed with Bob Russell’s request to him to place a plaque next to where the entrance to the theatre had been to commemorate the fact that Arthur Askey made his professional debut there on 31st March 1924.

Arthur Askey confirmed this was the case. In thanking the developer, he made two requests – firstly, that his name was spelt correctly. The second, that the plaque be sufficiently high up the wall “so that the dogs of Colchester do not pass an opinion on it!”

Arthur Askey OBE, born in 1900, was a star of music hall and an early big name on radio (Bandwagon), pantomime, with Cliff Richard, and was famous for his comic songs, including “The Bee song”. He died in 1982.

*Sir Bob Russell*

.....

## REPORTS OF SOCIAL EVENTS

### 14th January 2024 New Years Lunch at Greyfriars Hotel

A number of members attended Greyfriars for a lunch to mark the start of 2024. We are always made very welcome at the hotel and had our own room. The food, of course, is always good and is pleasant to meet without an agenda. Why not join us next year?

*Peter Evans*

### 11th April 2024 Guided Walk around Lavenham

Some of us arrived by minibus to meet the others, who had already arrived at the Lavenham Village Hall and Community Centre for refreshments, and our guide for the Pam Pudney, a qualified local and London guide. This is one of Lavenham’s newest buildings, completed in 2005 and within the £1 million budget. It includes the Public Library, the Pre-school centre and on the day we were there, a squash court.



We started the tour proper at the Church – where else? - one of the best in East Anglia. Pam explained that the De Vere Family owned the parish and that the village itself started by the church, not down the hill as now. As the wool trade made Lavenham wealthy, the merchants leased their sites from the Earl of Oxford, head of the De Veres, then had their buildings built offsite by

the carpenter, before being erected onsite. If trade fell off, then the buildings could be taken down to save money.

Many of these buildings have survived, perhaps with new fashionable fronts added, so that there are over 320 listed in Lavenham today and a population of 2000. It has moved from a wool town to the centre for horse hair cloth and coconut mats to a tourist centre with the splendid Swan Hotel, which has expanded along Water Lane, the Church (dedicated to St Peter and St Paul), the Twisted House, the Guildhall, the vividly coloured Priory Hall and many others.

There are also 2 Co-operative Stores, belonging to different Co-op trading groups, and rather more hills that you remembered, not necessarily well maintained and one of us had a fall (not me this time). The weather improved and became sunnier and warmer, which was a slight problem as the minibus got warmer and warmer. Lavenham is always a joy especially with a well informed guide, so thanks to Pam, who is shown below with the village sign.

*Peter Evans*





# CANNOCK MILL

## 21st April 2024 Visit to Cannock Mill

Our visit to Cannock Mill and the cohousing scheme of which the mill is now a part was hosted by Colchester Civic Society member David York.



Thanks to David and some of his fellow members of the community we were made very welcome and provided with accounts of how their cohousing community came about. We were also treated to homemade tea and cakes and biscuits in the communal dining room, housed in the grade 1 listed Mill building. I remembered the building well from a time in the late sixties when the Civic Society used this as a base for working on clearing the wooded valley upstream of the mill. The

completed boardwalk and pathway was eventually handed over to Colchester Council, who continue to maintain it to this day.

The mill today, as you can see from the photos, has been renovated and made into the community hub for the thirty two members of the cohousing group. They eat here twice a week and upstairs they have a beautiful sitting room equipped with a large TV screen and sound system. The mill also houses guest bedrooms for visitors. The Passivhaus standard houses built in the grounds of the mill provide two or three bedroom individual houses, each with their own terraced back garden on the sloping site. Above this is a community vegetable garden, which provides vegetables for the community meals. This area of the site is still in development and an orchard is being planned here too.

The houses were designed by an architect who is also member of the community. They are of timber construction and use







organic materials to provide the high level of insulation required for the very high Passivhaus standards. Each house has its own central heating system, but its main function is to heat water. The houses need little or no heating.

More recently the Victorian House has been converted to single bedroom apartments. There is one currently vacant.

If you would like to find out more then go to Cannock Mill Cohousing - [www.cannockmillcohousing.co.uk](http://www.cannockmillcohousing.co.uk)



*John Salmon*



## SOCIAL PROGRAMME 2024

Herewith the programme for the rest of the year - more or less! There are a couple of events in the pipeline that I haven't been able to finalise yet, though, so please keep an eye open for emails from the Society. If you change your email address, please let us know asap. Those without an email address will receive notification by post.

One of those events is rather special. We have, for some time, been trying to find a site in Castle Ward for a tree to commemorate Alderman Ken Cooke, a long serving member of our Executive Committee, who was also Chair of the Society and, eventually, one of our Vice Presidents. Ken was also a long serving Borough Councillor for Castle Ward and Mayor of Colchester 1990 - 1991. Ken died during the Covid lockdown and was therefore unable to have the funeral he wanted, a service at St Peter's Church, burial at Layer de la Haye and wake at the Town Hall. He was buried at Layer with 5 people present but that was that. Earlier this year, at VERY short notice, both a tree and a site was offered to us. And so it was that a very small group of Civic Society members, Ken's Mayoress, Gill Bober and a few of his Aldermen colleagues gathered to plant a Fastigate Oak tree (*Quercus robur Fastigiata*) at King's Meadow.

Sadly, there wasn't enough time to invite you all to the tree planting but I am arranging a formal viewing of the tree followed by a simple reception in the Mayor's Parlour at the Town Hall in the summer. Ken WILL, at last, have another of his wishes realised! On the subject of trees, the beautiful plane tree we planted on Southway in memory of another Executive Committee member, Jean Lamb, was so severely damaged in a storm that it had to be felled during the Winter.



We are hoping to plant a replacement in the Autumn. Again, we will let you know when.

And so to the dates we already have:

### Tuesday 4th June 2024

Meet at Greyfriars at 10am for our June Coffee Morning Discussion.

Cost? Free but donations welcomed.



*Vice Chair, Ann Turner, puts the first spadeful of soil around the roots of the tree.*

### Monday 10th June 2024

Meet in the Cloisters at Greyfriars at 7pm for our Annual General Meeting.

The present Civic Society held their inaugural meeting in the Moot Hall on Midsummer's Day 1964 so this AGM will mark our 60th Birthday - well, almost! It therefore seemed appropriate to invite St John's Green School to tell us about their superb One Square Mile Project as this was designed to celebrate their 125th Birthday.

You should have received the AGM paperwork and a draft copy of our suggested amendments to our Constitution. They are tweaks only. The draft will be put to the AGM for members' agreement,



so please make sure you read it in advance of the meeting and make a note of any questions. If you have not received your papers, sent by email to those for whom we have email addresses and by post to everyone else, please let me know.

Cost? Free, but donations welcomed.

### **Saturday 15th June 2024 is Civic Day.**

What, I hear you ask, is that? Promoted by our umbrella organisation, Civic Voice, it is a day for national celebration of Civic Pride. It is not just for Civic Societies. Anyone can hold an event to celebrate their area. I will leave you with that thought! However, the Colchester Civic Society's contribution to Civic Day will not be on the 15th but a few days later .....

**Tuesday 18th June 2024** Meet at the Old Heath Recreation Ground Car Park off Port Lane at 10.15pm for the unveiling of the Lock Hospital Blue Plaque.

The Society has erected many blue plaques over the years but this one is particularly unusual and poignant. It commemorates the Lock Hospital which was on the site now occupied by Falcon Crescent. All that remains is the boundary wall, which now forms the boundary of the Recreation Ground car park. The Victoria County History describes the hospital thus:

Following the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866, and 1867, which attempted to limit the spread of venereal diseases in certain military towns, including Colchester, by the compulsory treatment of infected prostitutes, a government lock hospital was built in 1867-8 in Port Lane at the east end of the town; it was closed in 1886.

However, Jane Pearson, who has written a fascinating book about the hospital, and has kindly agreed to unveil the plaque for us, will, I am sure, elaborate on that description.

After the unveiling, there will be a reception at the Go4 Community Cafe on the other side of the Rec. If you haven't been there, it is worth a visit in its own right. Please join us for this event if you can as we add even more to the interpretation of Colchester's history.

Cost? Free, but, as usual, donations welcome.

**Tuesday 25th June 2024** Meet in the Mayoral Suite at the Town Hall at 5.30pm for the next in our series of **Town Deal and Levelling Up Briefings**

Come to find out exactly where we are with the various Government aided projects in the city, from Jumbo to Holy Trinity Church and churchyard and St Nicholas Square to the St Botolph's Roundabout and loads more in between. As usual, there will be the opportunity to ask questions and give thoughts, although I would ask you to keep your comments reasonably brief so that we can cover as much ground as possible.

Cost? Free

### **Saturday 29th June 2024 Silchester.**

THIS VISIT HAS UNFORTUNATELY BEEN CANCELLED.

This was the first of our experimental joint outings with new partners, in this case FoCAT, the Friends of Colchester Archaeological Trust, who were organising the visit, and the Essex Society for Archaeology and History. Unfortunately, despite good support from the Civic Society, there were not enough applicants to make the visit viable. It will be our turn to arrange a joint outing next year - to Highgate Cemetery. I hope we have more success as, these days, joint outings really are the only way to go as the interest in our visit to Nymans in July is proving.

## **2nd July 2024** Meet at Greyfriars at 10am for our July Coffee Morning Discussion

Cost? Free but donations welcomed.

### **And on the same day, 2nd July,**

meet at the Visitor Centre at Abberton Reservoir at 6.15pm (for 6.30) for something completely different! **Pond dipping!**

Well, why not?? Why should children have all the fun? I am very conscious that we have made a number of visits to Essex Wildlife Trust's beautiful Fingringhoe Reserve to listen to the nightingales or watch the badgers, for example, but we have only gone to the Abberton Reservoir Reserve once. This redresses the balance a bit.

We will spend the evening finding out about the extraordinary little creatures living below the surface of the ponds very close to the Visitor Centre, so not a lot of walking involved. Our guide will have microscopes at the ready and will help with identification and give us a lot of information about the life cycles of the creatures we find. And then, at the end of the evening, weather permitting, we will toast marshmallows!

I am trying to arrange minibus transport for this event but it would be useful to know if anyone can offer a lift to those without their own transport, just in case.

Cost? £10 (I'm afraid that I cannot give a price for transport yet as it really depends on how many people need it.)

## **Wednesday 17th July 2024**

Meet at the bus stop opposite Greyfriars at 8am for a visit to **Nymans**. Coach can pick up along Lexden Road and will also stop opposite the Marks Tey Hotel (where cars can be left - see info below) at 8.15am.

The National Trust, rather sniffily, describes Nymans as 'a convincing creation of a medieval manor house remodelled in the 1920s and now a partial ruin.' It is actually rather lovely. However, probably its real charm lies in its gorgeous gardens, which is why we will be joined by various local gardening groups! I was determined to start running coach trips again so, again, have invited others to join us in order to make the visit viable. Nymans offer a buggy tour to those with mobility issues and also a pre-booked tour with one of the gardeners at an additional price of £3.50 on the day as long as they have staff available. When I enquired about the gardener's tour again this week, they still weren't sure whether it would be possible because of staffing issues. I am happy to try to book if anyone wants either the buggy or the gardener's tour but please let me know as soon as possible. I now need confirmations and payment from those who expressed an interest in this visit, please.

Parking at the Marks Tey Hotel.

Please phone Kings Coaches (01206 210332) at least 7 days in advance and give them your car registration number. There is a charge for the use of the car park. £4 to be given to the coach driver on the day.

Cost? £47 for non National Trust members and £30 for National Trust members. PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR NT MEMBERSHIP CARD!

## **Sunday 28th July 2024**

Meet at St James the Great Church on East Hill at 3pm for a guided visit to this beautiful church.

The church of St James the Great dates from the 12th century or possibly even earlier. It seems

likely that it was originally cruciform, but building work in both the 13th and 15th centuries dramatically altered its footprint, the church being substantially enlarged and enriched in major 15th century changes. In the 1870s, a huge restoration project was undertaken.

We will be treated to a short organ recital by the church's Director of Music, Philip Prior, shortly after our arrival, before our tour of the church. The organ was rescued from St Nicholas Church in High Street when it was demolished in 1954.

Our tour will include the magnificent memorial to Alderman Arthur Winsley, a wealthy wool and cloth merchant and Mayor of Colchester in 1721. In his will, he left property and money to provide accommodation for '12 men who had lived well and fallen into decay'. Winsley's Charity now provides 80 almshouses in the City.

The church has had some 'interesting' Rectors in its long history and I suspect we were hear about some of them. It should be a fascinating and very enjoyable afternoon.

The visit will end with refreshments.

**Tuesday 6th August 2024** Meet at Greyfriars at 10.00am for our August Coffee Morning Discussion

Cost? Free but donations welcome

**Tuesday 3rd September 2024** Meet at Greyfriars at 10.00am for our September Coffee Morning Discussion.

Cost? Free but donations welcome

**Friday 6th to Sunday 15th September 2024** Heritage Open Days

The full programme for Heritage Open Days in Colchester will be published on our website as soon as it has been finalised. However, I understand that the emphasis will be on the weekend of the 7th and 8th September when Civic Society members will be stewarding Audley Chapel on the Saturday morning and the Roman Theatre on both Saturday and Sunday. Do make the most of the opportunities to visit places not normally open to the public. You will learn so much about our city!

**Thursday 12th September 2024** Meet at Roman Circus House Cafe at 10am for a guided tour of the Cavalry and Royal Artillery (Le Cateau) Barracks.

I was amazed to discover that several Civic Society have never visited Roman Circus House so I have arranged coffee (or tea) and cake at the Visitor Centre Cafe to sustain us on our walk! Roman Circus House is one of the old Garrison buildings so it is a very appropriate meeting place. Today our guided tour will be led by Civic Society member Paul Knappett, whose knowledge of the area is staggering! Many of you will know that Paul has been raising money to fund a superb monument that will commemorate Le Cateau Barracks and the soldiers who were based here. Not only will this explain the history of the Barracks but it will also help those who are visiting the place where they were once stationed. Much has changed and the monument will help them orientate themselves. Hopefully the monument will be in place by the date of our visit, even though more funding is needed. This will be our opportunity to donate to the 'monument fund' and I hope that Civic Society members will be prepared to help Paul, whether they are coming on the walk or not. Paul says:

'The walk will start at the original entrance to the Cavalry Barracks off Butt Road which was the first permanent barracks to be built in Colchester. You will see many of the surviving historic buildings built in 1862-64 including the Officers' Quarters, Guard Room, stable blocks with

soldiers' accommodation over. Standing where the Parade Ground once was, we can reflect on such events as the return of the 17th Lancers who rode in the Charge of the Light Brigade during the Battle of Balaclava in the Crimean War. And of course, the filming of the opening and closing credits to Black Adder. We will make our way to the Royal Artillery Barracks past the riding school where Baden Powell, the founder of the Scout Movement, would have been trained as a young Cavalry Officer.

Reaching the Royal Artillery (Le Cateau) Barracks you will see such beautifully restored Grade 2 Listed buildings as the Adult School, Sergeants' Mess, Officers' Quarters, later designs of two stable blocks with soldiers' accommodation above, the water tower which provided water for all the horses and men and the bath house used by the Artillery officers. All being well, we will visit the Royal Artillery (Le Cateau) Barracks Monument to learn more about the history of the barracks including why it was renamed Le Cateau Barracks after the Great War. The tour will finish where the Roman Circus starting gates were discovered in the front garden of the original Officers' Quarters.

Cost? £4.50 for coffee/tea and cake PLUS a donation to the Memorial Fund. Please give generously as Paul is still some way off his target.

## **Tuesday 1st October 2024**

Meet at Greyfriars at 10.00am for our October Coffee Morning Discussion.

Cost? Free but donations welcome

## **Sunday 6th October 2024**

Meet at the War Memorial outside the main Castle Park Gates at 2.00pm for a **guided walk** in the city centre.

Glyn Barritt, Chair of Colchester's Tour Guide Association and our newest Civic Society Executive Committee member, invites you to immerse yourself in 'Colchester's Rich History' as she leads this afternoon's walk. Colchester is a thriving, successful City and Britain's newest in the 21st century. But back in AD43, after a successful invasion by the Roman Emperor Claudius, it was the first Capital City of the new Roman Province of Britannia. We'll see how the Roman fabric and foundations of the Roman City have supported Norman, Medieval and Tudor structures through the centuries and how some of those buildings still bear the scars of the Siege of Colchester which occurred at the end of the English Civil War. And we'll also marvel at the buildings that reflect the engineering prowess of the victorious Victorians! The walk will finish at the Mercury Theatre at circa 3.45pm.

Cost? £5 All proceeds to the Civic Society

## **Monday 14th October 2024**

Meet in the Salon at Greyfriars at 7pm for our annual **Burning Issues** meeting.

This, like the Spring Up meeting earlier in the year, is an opportunity for those unable to attend our monthly Coffee Mornings to catch up on what the Society is up to and to raise any issues of concern relating to Colchester that they would like the Society to address. All are welcome.

Cost? Free but donations welcome.

## **Saturday 26th October 2024**

Meet at the Mercury Theatre Box Office at 10am for a **tour of the Theatre**.

I am aware of the fact that several people missed out on our tour of the Mercury a couple of years ago so I have arranged another. There is nothing stopping you coming again if you wish because this tour will have an extra point of interest, Can you guess what that might be, boys and girls? Could it just be that the staff will be preparing for the legendary Mercury pantomime? Oh no they won't! Oh yes they will!

This is a really fascinating tour, thoroughly recommended. Children welcomed.

Cost? £10

**Tuesday 5th November 2024**

Meet at Greyfriars at 10.00am for our November Coffee Morning Discussion.

Cost? Free but donations welcome

**Tuesday 3rd December 2024**

Meet at Greyfriars at 10.00am for our December Coffee Morning Discussion.

Cost? Free but donations welcome



**JANE’S WALKS**

The annual series of local walks for 2024 were held 4th- 12th May. Member Richard Arnopp took some photographs



## **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	<b>John Burton</b> MBE
VICE PRESIDENTS	<b>Right Reverend Roger Morris</b> , Bishop of Colchester <b>Austen Baines, John Egan, Rosemary Jewers</b> <b>Brian Roach, Henry Spyvee</b>
CHAIR	<b>Howard Davies</b> , 60 Rawstorn Road, Colchester CO3 3JH
PROGRAMME ORGANISER	<b>Jo Edwards</b> , 43 Priory Street, Colchester CO1 2QB 07771 626561                      josiemedwards@hotmail.com
VICE CHAIR AND MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	<b>Ann Turner</b> , 1 Robin Close, Great Bentley CO7 8QH 01206 250894                      ann@hollytreehouse.com
TREASURER	<b>Paul Weston</b> , 46 Wordsworth Road, Colchester CO3 4HR paulweston523@gmail.com
SECRETARY	<b>Mike Fitt</b> , 31 Roman Road, Colchester CO1 1UR
NEWSLETTER EDITOR	<b>Peter Evans</b> , 5 Grimston Road, Colchester CO2 7RN 01206 540990                      peter.evans7978@btinternet.com
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	
OTHER ELECTED MEMBERS	<b>Sheila Anderton</b> , 30 Rosebery Avenue, Colchester CO1 2UL  <b>John Collett</b> , 208 Cranmere Court, Exeter Drive, Colchester CO1 2RX  <b>Robert Mercer</b> , 59 Shrub End Road, Colchester CO3 4RA  <b>John Salmon</b> , 68 Castle Road, Colchester CO1 1UN  <b>Glyn Barritt</b> , 17 Regency Green, Colchester
CO-OPTED MEMBER	





HOLY TRINITY, COLCHESTER.