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Registered Charity 237885

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

Opinions expressed by contributors
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CONTENTS

Chairs Report	3
A Room With a View	13
Colchester Shops 2.....	14
Vaccine Stories	15
Thanks to the NHS	16
Membership	16
Corporate membership	17
Duke of Edinburgh's Remembrance Service	17
Colchester Civic Society Plaques Trail	18
Mercury Arises	20
If I had known, would I have done it?	21
Reopening of the Town Hall	22
You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone.....	23
New Town Open (front) Gardens 2021	24
Eyes and Ears	24
Litterpick	25
Planning Application - Proposed Mural.....	25
The View from Afar	27
Calling all Knitters!.....	27
Lamppost Painting Summer 2021	28
My Film Career	29
Heritage Open Days	30
The Wonder of Zoom	30
Aims and Officers	31

CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT JULY 2020- JUNE 2021

I do so regret the fact that we have been unable to hold our monthly Coffee Morning/Discussion Groups at Grey Friars, as they are a wonderful way to both receive and disseminate information. Hopefully, we will be able to resume these next year if it is safer to do so. We are very much aware of the fact that a number of Civic Society members have no email address or access to the internet but we are trying to ensure that we have up to date email addresses for the rest so that Peter Evans, our Newsletter Editor, can send occasional messages to alert members to, perhaps, a controversial planning or licensing application or a consultation document that might be of interest. I would like to take this opportunity to ask, again, whether you can let us know as soon as possible if you change your contact details or acquire a new email address.

Speaking of consultations, it has been particularly gratifying to find that the Society's opinions are now being actively sought by a number of organisations. Essex County Council have planned a series of consultations on Highways issues, the first of these being held near the end of the year covered by this report. John Salmon responded. Colchester Borough Council asked for comments on their new Parking Strategy and Peter Evans dealt with that. The Business Improvement District wanted our opinions on their proposed 'parklets' for the High Street. What, you may ask, is a parklet? It is a glorified planter come seat, probably made of wood, possibly housing a tree as well as seasonal planting. The idea is to place a number of these on the side of the road, yes, the road, not the pavement, on the south side of High Street. I am afraid we were far from impressed. They could possibly be acceptable elsewhere but they seemed completely inappropriate in this setting. We were asked to comment on the Council's Roman Circus Draft Management Plan and Peter dealt with that one as well. He encouraged the Council to be much more ambitious and courageous with their plans for the Circus, pointing out that it could be a spectacular tourist attraction of great benefit to the town if more was done to attract visitors.

Just before the end of the reporting year, we were contacted by Bradwell Power Generation Company Ltd who wanted to give us a presentation about the proposed new Bradwell Power Station. Because of a change of personnel within the company, this has not yet taken place but we are expecting dates as I write this report. We were also approached by the consultants advising CBC on a new Cultural Strategy for the town. I had a long conversation with one of the consultants who, much to my joy, had lived in the town and was already immersed in its culture. He will be meeting with the rest of the Executive Committee shortly. 'Culture' covers a very wide field and I recognised our superb theatres, music, galleries, creative industries etc. but also pushed our heritage. We were also very pleased to be consulted about the plans for old 'Eastern National' bus garage in Queen Street and made a number of observations both during and after a very useful Zoom presentation to the Committee.

One of the most unexpected highlights of the year was the purchase of part of the Roman Wall, not something that was ever envisaged by the founders of our Society, I would imagine! We received a plea from Philip Wise from the Museum Service. Could we help the Council acquire a small section of the Wall in Middleborough which had suddenly been advertised for sale? Obviously, we said that we could. You may remember that the Friends of Colchester's Roman Wall had, a few years ago, successfully campaigned for the removal of the huge advertising hoardings on top of the Wall. Unable to use the site any more, the advertising company who owned it decided to sell via auction. Time was of the essence and we clubbed together with the

Colchester Blue Badge Guides and the Friends of Colchester Museums to enable the Council to buy it. I would like to thank those who answered our appeal for funds to help us with this amazing acquisition.

Another highlight was the rescue of a pillar box, not any old pillar box but an 'anonymous' one, without a royal cipher. These are few and far between and very much part of our heritage. Peter Evans came across workmen removing the box from the pavement by the Grapes Public House in Mersea Road. They explained that it was



Buildings on top of and in front of the section of wall purchased in 2020

blocking access to a development site. Peter immediately alerted the Committee who sprang into action. There were obviously two issues, the removal of a well used post box and the potential loss of a historically important one. Councillors were alerted, Sir Bob Russell as well. The fight to save the box was on! Letters went right to the top of Royal Mail and, eventually, after making an enormous fuss, we were told that the pillar box had been retrieved and would be re-sited in High Street, outside Superdrug, replacing a more modern one. There is a certain irony here as the Society had fought an application for a very modern 'parcels' post box on this site only months before as we considered it aesthetically wrong in such a prominent place in our historic High Street! Unfortunately, we have yet to persuade Royal Mail that a post box should be restored to a site near the Grapes but our Secretary, Mike Fitt, is still on the case, trying to obtain a statement of policy relating to the removal of post boxes. Meanwhile, we have been given a wake up call and have ensured that information about the dates and locations of our historic post boxes is now held by the CBC Planning Dept. to try to prevent another removal.

Whilst on the subject of bright red street furniture, we carried out another survey of public telephone kiosks in the town - not just the 4 red boxes but the ordinary ones as well. We reported various maintenance issues to our amazingly helpful contact at BT (thanks, Derek!) and a team of engineers came very promptly to put things right, mending phones, replacing Perspex panels etc. Our survey revealed that some kiosks have been removed as they were hardly used and were in areas with very good mobile phone signals, something that BT had discussed with us.

The public phone audit is, of course, one of the many tasks undertaken by our Eyes and Ears Team, led by Sheila Anderton. Sheila reports graffiti, fly tipping, damaged street furniture, abandoned roadworks signage and cones, abandoned shopping trolleys, fly posting, etc. etc; all those general house keeping issues that make such a difference to people's perception of the town. One of the things that irritates her most is the proliferation of yellow mats on pavements which cover broken drains, meter covers or inspection pits. These often remain in situ for months, or even years, creating a trip hazard themselves. I was very amused when she phoned me, absolutely ecstatic, to tell

me that the one in the Crouch St underpass, which she had been complaining about for an inordinate amount of time, had finally gone after she had decided to go right to the top and speak to Councillor Kevin Bentley, then Highways Portfolio Holder at ECC, about it.

She raised the awful state of the external paintwork on the Holly Trees Museum, something that had bothered several Society members and we are pleased to report that, as a result of her intervention, repainting is scheduled for the early Autumn. Another of those annoying housekeeping issues has been the huge amount of plastic ties left around lamp posts when public notices are taken down. For the last two years, Society members have been removing them and, this year, sacks containing 4000 ties were handed to CBC for recycling.

The problem persists despite our pleas. ECC have listened to us and are hoping to use reusable ties but many redundant ties still remain on our streets. We continue to remove those no longer serving a purpose. We have had a number of discussions with the CBC Planning Department about planning notices. Very often they are inserted into poly wallets with the opening uppermost and they are then attached to posts with black tape or, even worse, sticky back plastic. They almost immediately become unreadable because rain seeps inside the wallets and the tape removes the paint from the posts to which the notice is attached. They have tried using string but it stretches and the notices slide to the ground. We do wish they would follow the examples of other towns and print notices onto recyclable plastic, tie them with recyclable ties and ask the Neighbourhood Teams to remove them as soon as they have served their purpose.

We are particularly worried about the tape that pulls the paint off lamp posts as John Salmon's superb lamp post painting project has really taken off. Following on from Bob Mercer's audit of all the historic cast iron lamp posts in the town, updating the survey done by Sir Bob's father, Ewart Russell, many years ago, John persuaded the residents of Roman and Castle Roads to restore the lamp posts in their immediate area as the beginning of a Civic Society project to tackle all of those remaining in the town. ECC had agreed to provide the paint and Councillors helped with the purchase of necessary equipment like angle grinders, giving grants from their locality budgets. We would like to thank former Councillors, Nick Barlow and Theresa Higgins and current Councillors, Simon Crow, Mark Goacher and Lee Scordis for their huge support. Roman and Castle Roads were completed this year and other Residents' Associations and individuals were approached to see if they would like to continue the work in other areas. Irvine Road Area Residents' Association has taken up the challenge and others are showing an interest. The posts that have been done look wonderful. We are pleased to report that the cast iron posts are now locally listed, thanks to Bob Mercer's sterling efforts.

Bob has been particularly busy this year because he leads on both Planning and Heritage, often a challenging mix! The Alumno application for student flats on the erstwhile Bus Park site has rumbled on throughout the year. Although the Planning Inspector granted Alumno's Appeal, he did so as long as certain conditions were met. Added to that, there was the matter of a covenant on the site and the issue of rights of way over the site that had to be resolved before work could start. A small team of Civic Society members and colleagues have continued to battle against the development as we know that the vast majority of Civic Society members are vehemently opposed



*Proposed access over the Roman Wall to Priory Street
would be on the site of these buildings*

to it. We have sought legal advice, we have lobbied, we have supported those affected, we have challenged. Colchester Borough Council, under the previous administration, appropriated the land, a legal move allowing them to override the covenant, but Essex County Council sought legal advice themselves. A year on, the rights of way issues remain unsolved, Essex County Council are, we believe, still holding out and work has not yet started. The last of the Inspector's conditions has been resolved despite our objections. This is the building of an access route from Priory Street

over the Roman Wall to the Alumno site. In our view, the design leaves much to be desired. We battle on.

Bob monitors the list of planning applications on the CBC website and formally comments, supports or objects where appropriate. Many applications are for small alterations to listed properties or buildings in conservation areas but some are for major development. There are far too many to list but I will mention a few. Bob objected, on our behalf, to the proposed conversion of the erstwhile Conservative Club (overlooking High Street on the corner of Maidenburgh Street and Museum Streets) into flats. The application was withdrawn. He also objected to the proposed mural on the vestry wall of Holy Trinity Church in Trinity Square. Holy Trinity is a Grade I listed building and the mural would have been totally inappropriate in this setting. It was an application that really offended a great number of Civic Society members and we were asked to object in the strongest of terms. The application was rejected by the CBC Planning Committee who also received a very forceful objection from Historic England.

Bob has also been expressing huge concern about some of the garish shop fronts in conservation areas. Other towns seem to control these and we wonder why Colchester can't do the same. There are some truly awful examples in the town centre. Although it couldn't be described as garish, we were very unhappy about the chosen colour for the front of the George Hotel and expressed our concerns to the Planning Department, who agreed that it was unsuitable. Bob was involved in negotiations about a different palette which resulted in a rapid repaint before the scaffolding came down. Bob works very closely with both the Borough's Conservation Officer and the Enforcement team, who are amazing, and is increasingly being asked to give the Society's view about planning matters and colour schemes. Our President, John Burton, is prepared to help too. One small conservation matter that pleased us this year was the restoration of the barge boarding on a building on the eastern side of Chapel Street North. We had raised concerns about it.

We do, of course, maintain a very good relationship with Councillors, both Borough and County, and with Officers and staff. Most of our contact with them this year has been by email, text or phone but we have had a few face to face meetings. I would

particularly like to record our massive thanks to the CBC Neighbourhood Teams for their extraordinary support during a difficult year. We report problems and they almost immediately get them sorted, even if they are really challenging. There are some outstanding people in those teams who will go above and beyond because they care so passionately about our town. We are incredibly lucky to have them.

Both Sheila and John Collett work very closely with CBC on litter issues. During the year, they met with CBC staff to discuss various approaches to the huge problem of litter, which includes the proliferation of discarded masks. Ugh! One proposal under discussion is the possibility of a deep clean of areas during the winter, when vegetation has died back and rubbish is both easily visible and accessible. The annual Great British Spring Clean of 2020 was postponed until September but we went out in force and cleared masses of rubbish, much from areas that are probably private but nobody maintains! I won't say where they are, but most are highly visible from the street and they look so much better after a quick raid by our teams! We now wear our hi vis vests with the Civic Society logo on them, which make us much safer but also prompts conversations with the public about the Society and its work.

We were out again twice in June for the Great British Spring Clean 2021, when we again collected an enormous amount of rubbish. I would really like to say how grateful we are to those who join us for this hugely worthwhile exercise. Before I leave the subject of litter, I must thank one of our members, Peter Rudland, who has taken it upon himself to clear rubbish from the little wooded area in front of Vint Crescent. After ECC Highways roadworks in Lexden Road, a lot of rubble was left in the undergrowth. Peter has cleared it all and planted bulbs. He continues to keep the area clear of litter etc. He has made such a difference. Well done, Peter!

Back to John Collett. Not only has John tackled litter but he has taken on the challenge of new footpaths too! For years we have tried to sort out the issue of the Path to Nowhere. I have mentioned this in previous reports. There was always an intention to link Rouse Way with Meander Mews but each road has a splendid, lit, pathway that suddenly ends. Henry Spyvee tried to persuade ECC to complete the link but there were issues, particularly regarding land ownership, that seemed insurmountable. John took up the challenge and managed to discover the probable owner of the land. He was contacted and has promised to find his deeds so that we can ask a solicitor, expert in the field, to ascertain whether we can remove the stumbling block.

In the meantime, John has worked with others to clear a route that can be walked. John has also been working on getting an unrecorded right of way along the south bank of the River Colne, between the former open-air swimming pool and Water Lane, added to the ECC Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way. The Society has gathered a lot of evidence from those who have walked the route for many years and a formal application has now been made to Essex County Council. It will be years before they can make any decision as the process is very complex and long winded but we have done all we can for the moment.

We continue to report issues with public footpaths. Some problems are quick fixes but others take absolutely ages to sort out because solutions are often hard to find. Sheila raised the issue of flooding in Childwell Alley years ago. The Civic Society and Rosebery and Smythies Avenue Residents Association alerted local councillors to the

fact that the path was always under water because of the proximity of springs. Together they pushed for action to be taken as it's a path well used by children going to school and they all had to wear wellies, even in the summer! Resolving the issue was a huge challenge but ECC's very committed Footpath Officer finally managed to get it sorted. We were so pleased!

Footpaths leads me neatly on to Trails. We have been working on our Plaque Trails again. New plaques have been erected and old plaques discovered so we have added a number to the Trails. Each, of course, has to be plotted on the maps, such a horrible job as you think you have the position pinpointed only to find that you haven't after you've pressed the button! Each has also required an explanatory script as well. Lots of research but it's amazing what you discover! Rosemary Jewers has done an absolutely incredible job with plaques generally and we are so grateful to her. She is now going to take some time out to concentrate on another charity very close to her heart. To read more about this, please check out this link: www.fosalm.org She is handing over to Pamela Bradley.

Pamela has already got our next plaque ready to go - the one for the Lock Hospital. During the year we have given advice about plaques to various people. One project was very much under wraps but is now coming to fruition so I can mention it. We were approached by one of the Deputy Lord Lieutenants of Essex who wanted our help. He was part of a small team of people who are trying to erect plaques throughout the county to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Not any old plaques but plaques that commemorate influential women. His committee had created a shortlist and were now consulting local organisations about their plans. They had discovered that we had beaten them to it with some of their suggestions and had already erected the plaques but they came up with other names that had Rosemary and I searching Google! We had Margaret Cavendish on our 'to do' list so we were happy when they announced that they had persuaded Wimpey to sponsor a plaque for her. Several of their suggested plaques were within Colchester District but beyond our own border so we were pleased when they found other sponsors for those. We have been left with two, which may well be extremely challenging, but we will see what we can do. However, Rosemary was able to provide a great deal of practical information about planning applications (plaques have rules all of their own!) and suppliers and gained a very sizeable gold star for her efforts.



*Plans of the Lock Hospital,
Port Lane*



The Rose and Crown, East Street

There is another 'plaque' that we may have to add next year, all being well. Most of you will know that the current Civic Society is actually the third such society in the town. There was a pre-war Civic Society that rescued such buildings as the Rose and Crown and the cottages opposite the Lexden Crown. It closed at the outbreak of the war. Then, in the 1950's, a Preservation Society was formed, its main

objective being the rescue of the Dutch Quarter, much of which was under serious threat of being condemned.

The Society bought and restored a house to show that it could be turned from a slum into a desirable home and then persuaded the Council to do the same with other properties. 42 houses were saved by the Council, restored and let to Council tenants. The Council received a very well deserved award from the Civic Trust for this project. A Civic Trust Award plaque and an interpretation board were erected on the wall of one of the houses. Unfortunately, it was taken down to allow for maintenance work and was not replaced. Subsequently, it was lost. A few years ago, we investigated the possibility of a replacement plaque and asked the Council whether they would consider acquiring one. Nothing happened.



The current Civic Trust Award

Periodically, we have reminded them, to no avail - until this year. I was contacted by the Head of Colchester Borough Homes who told me that he was going to set the wheels in motion prior to his retirement! I was so pleased! It is going to happen! But that is not all. The Council painted all those houses in the same, very distinctive, cream, red and vivid green. Now they are selling them as they are more costly to maintain than the average council property. We felt that the houses should retain that colour scheme as it is now so much part of the area's history. We have lobbied for covenants to be applied when the properties are sold, requiring the external paint colours to be retained and we understand that this is likely to happen.

Views of the Dutch Quarter (West Stockwell Street)



This is just one of the 'heritage' issues we have been involved with this year. Another project has been the Jesse Jones grave restoration at St Botolph's. Jesse Jones fought at the Battle of Waterloo. If you want to know more about him and two other very important Colcestrians buried in the churchyard, Roger Nunn, one of the founders of Essex County Hospital and William Hawkins, who brought the railway to St Botolph's, a new interpretation board has just been erected. This is the culmination of a huge amount of work by Bob Mercer, in collaboration with Philip Wise from the Museum Service. Bob successfully applied for a grant from the Hervey Benham Trust which paid for the board and we thank them very much for their help. Sheila came across

some people looking at the board a few days after it had been unveiled. They were from a re-enactment group specialising in the Napoleonic Wars and were thrilled to bits to find the mention of Jesse on the board. Sheila chatted to them about the restoration of the grave and they showed her lots of photos of their re-enactments. A group of VERY happy visitors. It is that sort of encounter that makes what we do so worthwhile.

The grave restoration is work in progress. You would never believe how difficult it is to restore an historic grave! Permission has to be obtained from so many people, some of whom have different ideas to others. Bob seems to be getting there, though, so we hope to have good news very soon. The work will be expensive but we have had a number of donations from members and others and we would like to thank everybody who has contributed.



The old bus depot with tram lines

As I have said, sometimes it takes a considerable length of time for things to come to fruition and thus it was with the 'Corporation Bus Depot', previously the tram shed, in Magdalen Street. As soon as the building was abandoned, now many years ago, we alerted the Council to the tram lines still in the floor and asked whether they could be rescued. Over the years, we have gently reminded the powers that be of their existence and, when the building was sold and an application for the development of student housing was made,

we again mentioned the tram lines, and the plaques on the wall of the old building, to the Conservation Officer. All were rescued and the developers have incorporated them into their new building, the tram lines laid in the path across the site for all to see.

Unfortunately, we have not had such success with trees. Those our Tree Group planted near the Mercury so many years ago were cut down as part of the development of the new square. We enquired about paying for their replacements but the sum was eye watering and we had to say no. We have expressed our sorrow about the decision to fell the trees at the new St Nicholas Square as well but we fear that this will happen.

Shortly after the sad death of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, I received an invitation to the Civic Memorial Service at St James the Great Church. Unfortunately, I am very badly affected by incense, liberally used at St James, and I didn't dare go, but our President, John Burton, agreed to represent the Society. He has offered to write a report on the occasion for the next Newsletter.

Peter Evans, our Newsletter Editor, continues to produce very interesting and readable Newsletters for us, for which we are most grateful. We decided to send them all by post during the pandemic for safety reasons, so please do not feel offended if you are one of our team of distributors. We really do appreciate your efforts!

Those members who use social media will realise that we now very active on Twitter. Apart from general snippets about Colchester, our followers, heading towards the 400 mark at the end of June, are treated each week to a photo of a tiny

piece of Colchester's varied architecture to identify and, each morning, to an 'On this Day' fact about the town. It has been a little challenging finding suitable entries without access to the Local History Library, but we are not often beaten! Thanks to all who have trawled through reference books, websites, and their memories etc. As the reporting year ends, we are also in the midst of a daily update about the progress of the Siege of Colchester which began on the 12th June 1648. It is fascinating! Our Facebook page is also a useful source of information about the Society.

John Salmon has been updating and refining our website as well. One of the major changes to that has been the necessary adjustments to enable new members to join the Society online. It has been a steep learning curve and a few tweaks have been required but, all in all, it has been very worthwhile. My thanks to John, to Paul Weston, our Treasurer and to Ann Turner, our Membership Secretary, for their hard work and brain storming efforts to bring this change to fruition.

One of the most remarkable highlights of the year has been the completely unprecedented flood of membership applications from Councillors! Never, in the nigh on 60 years of the present Society, have we had so many Councillors as members - and they represent different parties, too! We are over the moon! It is just wonderful! It is, however, sad that Henry Spivey, who has done so much to help the Society, both as a Councillor and as an Alderman, has now moved to Guildford to be nearer his son. We wish him and Vivien, his wife, also a great supporter of the Society, great happiness in their new home. Henry, as a Vice President of the Society, and, for the time being, Chair of our Street Naming Committee, continues to receive the Minutes of our Executive Committee meetings and often offers his comments and advice. Even so, we miss them greatly.

We remain consultees to the Council for new street names, although due to Covid, it has been a quiet year. Henry has agreed to remain on the Committee at present to see through unfinished business but hopes that someone with a love of our wonderful heritage will offer to join the Committee and ultimately take his place. Any volunteers? The team has built up a list of suitable names, some of which have been used. They have a short list of names they would like to be used soon, as memory of the people they commemorate is fading. They are:

- Joyce Brooks - the only deceased former Mayor of recent years not to have a road named for her following the demolition of Joyce Brooks House in Oxford Road.
- Vic Keeble - noted footballer who won the FA Cup with Newcastle United. Henry had to explain to Vic that the reason there was a road named for him in Newcastle but not his native Colchester was that Colchester has a rule that only the names of deceased people should be used! Vic has now died. We owe it to him.
- Joseph Litherland - WW2 American airman who died when his plane crashed in Layer Road near the former Football Ground.
- Jack Elam - an outstanding Headmaster at Colchester Royal Grammar School and one of the founders of the Civic Society's predecessor.

Executive Committee meetings have continued throughout the year despite Covid, thanks very much to Committee member Howard Davies who has been able to host Zoom meetings for us. Another steep learning curve for some of us, but we have now got used to them! There is a lot to be said for Zoom, especially on cold, wet nights!!

Many might wonder why we haven't had all member meetings via Zoom but we decided against it. We had permission from the Charity Commission to abandon our AGM again as we realised that a number of our members have no access to the internet, let alone Zoom. Although I was tempted to try virtual, or should I say, notional, Coffee Mornings, I chickened out because the whole essence of the Coffee Mornings is free discussion with everyone being able to chip in spontaneously and that is not so easy to manage on Zoom. We are not a Society that normally has lectures. We have visits, and, although it might have been possible to arrange some virtual visits, they are nowhere near as good as the real thing! So I'm afraid I have had a year off. Having arranged the Programme for well over 40 years, it has been a strange experience. I have a Programme ready and waiting to be revived as soon as possible but we have agreed that the safety of us all must remain paramount. We did, of course, take part in national events during the year, the aforementioned Great British September Clean and the Great British Spring Clean and also Heritage Open Days which didn't take its usual form but involved members in the making of short films about heritage sites in the town so people could 'visit' them virtually. I must thank Ann Turner for all she does to make HODs a success in the town

It is a great pity that we haven't been able to launch our new Corporate Membership scheme as planned. Nor have we been able to pursue the ideas that had been put forward by our new Membership sub committee which met for the first time just before Covid arrived. Hopefully, it won't be long until we are able to put our plans into action. However, in the meanwhile, we hope that you will do what you can as individuals to recruit new members. We punch way above our weight and are involved in a hugely diverse range of issues affecting our town. We realised, when we listened to some of the presentations made by other civic societies during Zoom events arranged by Civic Voice, that we are not doing too badly! However, we could do so much more if we had a larger membership! Please do whatever you can to encourage people to join, whether they are likely to be active or whether they would prefer just to be quietly supportive. After all, joining is easy now that it can be done online!

Finally, some more thanks, first of all to Grey Friars who welcomed us back so charmingly, as soon as they reopened, for small meetings with Councillors etc. Now, I would like to thank our President and Vice Presidents, our Officers, the Executive Committee, members of sub committees and our Society Tweeter for their huge amount of work and for their support during the year. They are so committed to 'Making Colchester a Town Worth Living In'. This is the strap-line from the promotional leaflets we produced when the current Society was launched in 1964. It is as valid now as it was then. And, last of all, enormous thanks to you all for sticking with us, for keeping in touch, for helping out and for your brilliant support throughout these difficult times.

Jo Edwards

Chair, Colchester Civic Society 2020-21



Greyfriars, when it was a nunnery

Illustrations for this report mainly come from local postcards circa 1920-50s

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

What a difference a tree makes! Many of you will remember my huge sadness when the beautiful silver birch just over the wall at the bottom of my garden died. It was hardly more than a sapling when I first moved here. In the 1987 hurricane, I watched, horrified, as it thrashed about in the wind that whistled along the valley. At one point, all of its branches were bent over at right angles to its trunk, but it survived. It was a constant joy to me. Its vibrant green leaves heralded spring, it shed a beautiful dappled light over my garden in summer and covered the ground with bright yellow leaves in the autumn. However, most of all, I loved the exquisitely delicate tracery of its branches and twigs against a blue sky in winter, especially when they were covered in light snow.

The tree was also beloved by a vast variety of birds. The blue tits and great tits were always exploring its branches for tasty snacks. Flocks of long tailed tits and goldfinches visited on a regular basis as the tree grew. Blackbirds and robins used it as a look out post so that they could hurl abuse at others intruding into their respective territories. Little wrens spent hours pecking at the branches, finding tiny insects. Collared doves conducted long courtships high up in the tree, oblivious to the danger of visiting sparrow hawks streaking across the gardens below. Sparrows and starlings flocked to the tree on winter afternoons prior to roosting for the night. It was also popular with squirrels who would infuriate our dogs, particularly Alf, our diminutive Jack Russell Norfolk Terrier cross. His lifelong ambition was to catch one but he never did. Poor Alf never really accepted the concept of 'flying mice' either. We used to see a lot of bats flying backwards and forwards over the tree, picking off the swarms of tiny insects hovering above and around it.

Sadly, the tree was in the grounds of the Spiritualist Church and they didn't want it. Several tree surgeons appeared over the years but most retreated when I told them, very firmly, and often in a less than ladylike fashion, to go away!!! Occasionally they sneakily came and removed a branch when I was out, eventually leaving the poor tree unbalanced and misshapen. Finally, after one particularly savage attack, it became apparent that my beautiful tree would not survive. Ironically, having announced that the tree had to go because it wasn't safe (I saw no evidence of that at all) the church left the dead tree in situ for two or three years, adding to my distress, so much so that I was actually glad when the surgeons eventually returned to cut it down.

Lockdown, however, made me realise just what a loss that tree had been. Nearly all those little birds have gone. I see a robin sometimes and the very occasional wren. The blackbird is about, still protecting his territory but I haven't seen anything else at all, not even sparrows. Instead, wood pigeons, magpies, a crow and a jackdaw have appeared. Cooper, my current Jack Russell, came nose to beak with the crow when he awoke from a snooze on the doormat last week. I should think the whole of Colchester heard the resultant commotion! One doesn't realise just how big crows are until viewed at close quarters.

I haven't seen a squirrel or a bat for a couple of years. How extraordinary it is that just one tree could make such a difference. I mourn its loss every day but, most of all, I mourn the gentle cooing of the collared doves which I found so soothing.

Jo Edwards

COLCHESTER SHOPS EPISODE 2

The article the January 2021 Newsletter caused some discussion with Jo Edwards. Several memories came back for us all.

Of course, when the idea of the article came along, little did I realise quite how many shops were at risk.

Forsdike was originally Forsdike and Bonners. We never even touched on the town centre empire of Colchester Co-operative Society. I was equipped for school at the Menswear and shoe departments. All our watches came from the excellent jewellery department. Then there was St Nicholas House.

Just before Christmas, I passed by my local butchers. He had a socially distanced queue of at least 30 customers and about the same the next day. In the new year, I went in and whilst stocking up I said that it was quieter now in the shop. He told me that on the day in question they were intending to close at 5pm, but continued to 9pm, by which time they realised they had sold all the meat prepared for the next day. So they worked on until 2am to reopen at 7am. Although 2 butchers shops have closed in the town centre, it seems that vegetarianism has not swept the town yet!

MORE COLCHESTER SHOPS

Whilst I left Colchester many moons back (in about 1964 really, to go to university), I have occasionally been back to visit my parents, friends, and, of course for the occasional wedding and the rather less occasional funeral. Over the past few very soggy days, I have been digging a French drain using a Second World war entrenching tool, made by Brades, marked with a War Office arrow and dated 1944. Some 50 years ago my Mother purchased this very useful tool for me from Jacks, and so Peter Evans' article (January 2021) mentioning this emporium down Long Wyre Street sparked off many memories. A similar purveyor of interesting left overs was, of course, the Army and Navy Store in Head Street which sold a wide range of goods - a pair of leather gauntlets lasted me many years of cycling to work in London - my Father, for some reason, had a small but useful discount on all purchases.

Near to Jacks on the High Street was Farmers, run by Mrs Farmer, a large general ironmonger old style - brown paper bags and a smell of paraffin. My Mother purchased one of the first paint rollers there in 1956 - a 'Victory' Decoroller, lambswool and a metal tray - used by me well into the 1980s. Here Mrs Farmer found many things important to a DIY teenager in the early 1960s - Araldite, Swarfega etc.

Missed by Peter Evans was Jacklins, another coffee shop in the High Street, where my Godfather, Peter Benham (Sparling, Benham and Brough, Solicitors, West Stockwell Street) would take my Father to ease his worries about matters legal. Nearby, Harpers (Sports and guns) sold me rather lethal steel tipped arrows.

Thorogoods was more than a cafe - it sold the best cakes in town. Run by Betty (after her husband Norman, a regular golfing partner of my Father, died) her son John (a renowned golfer) acquired one of the first microwave ovens - I remember dropping by to see him and being treated to a chocolate éclair defrosted in seconds from the freezer. Another first in the 1950s was at the Floral Box in Crouch Street (Mrs Worrall I think), where my Mother was surprised to be offered peas in winter - the first deep freeze had arrived from Birds-Eye.

Earlier, and just up Crouch Street from The Floral Box was a small sweet shop run by Mrs Coppin who was an occasional baby-sitter for me. The shop was dominated by large glass jars - chocolate limes - fourpence three farthings for an ounce - it was there that at the age of 7 or 8 I purchased a small bar of Cadbury's Dairy Milk (2d), for the first time free of ration coupons.

A mention of Messrs Fordikes in Head Street reminded me that as a small child, I would love to see their deliveries by horse and cart, driven by Fred Cooke, the horse having a nosebag with oats in it. Fred, in his later years used to come and help my Father in his garden whilst his wife, Nancy, used to help Mum with the ironing and the making of tea for the gardeners. This shop always fascinated us youngsters as it used a spring and wires system to fire cash and bills to a central point in the shop, receipts and change being similarly returned. There was a shoe shop nearby (Mr Purvis) where, whilst one's Mother was trying on shoes, we could play with the X-ray machine which showed the bones in our feet and hands. I wonder what became of such devices? Health and Safety, Sir !

Finally, of course, I have many memories of Baker and Fairhead, 36 Head Street, established as Prossers in 1836, closed in 1967 and demolished despite a preservation order by the Electricity Board of blessed memory. Here my Father worked from the late 1920s , selling beauty products (Mrs Coppin came to work for him, becoming the expert on Elizabeth Arden), photographic products, tea (occasionally), and of course, running the pharmacy. For a short while, he also ran The Regal Pharmacy (opposite the eponymous cinema). I too am a chemist but of the research variety - very sensibly on my Father's behalf not being encouraged to work with him.

Peter Baker, Prestwood, January 2021.

VACCINE STORIES

By the time this newsletter is published, I expect all members will have been vaccinated twice. We all will have stories about the booking process and the jabs themselves. I would like to include some in a future edition.

Here is mine. I didn't spot the text (I am bad with mobile phones) from my surgery inviting me to East Hill and had to go to the NHS website to find an alternative. I didn't want to go to Ipswich or Rayleigh and knew that the Football Stadium had just opened. I tried again and thought I had booked it but did not confirm properly. If I had booked that date, it would have been cancelled due to snow but I was more than happy to be offered the Pharmacy on Cavalry Road, 15 minutes walk away, closer than my surgery. I would have liked the Wimpole Road Surgery, equally close.

However there was snow and ice on the ground and it was bitterly cold waiting outside for 30 minutes. I am sure there was a feeling of Blitz spirit in the queue as we found how far each other had come – the lady behind me was from Layer-de-la-Haye. As 20 of us stood there, a man drove up and said "I'm looking for the Pharmacy". Quite what he thought we were queuing for in the middle of a residential estate (albeit on the Roman Circus site) in the snow I cannot imagine. Just for the good of our health? Well, yes it was actually.

Once warm inside, the vaccine itself was given very quickly, efficiently and with some humour. I was soon out in the cold and frozen snow. Luckily my route home took me past the local fish and chippery so I had a warm in the shop and a hot tea, but it still took a while to warm through. I had no reaction although I know of some who did, though nothing serious

A month later I took my first bus ride in 2021. On the way back I noticed a woman on the bus remove mask and apply lipstick. She then resumed her mask. There is some odd behaviour but most people remain good humoured.

My second vaccine was at the Football Stadium, which I had only visited once before. It was a beautiful sunny day, but the drawback was the sun was so bright I had problems seeing my phone to call a taxi.

Peter Evans

THANKS TO NHS STAFF FROM A CCS MEMBER

As a recent Covid survivor pushing 80 with COPD (lung disease) I want to express my gratitude to all medical and other staff who attended me.

From the paramedics who collected me, to those on duty at A&E and especially the staff on Easthorpe Ward at Colchester Hospital, all were cheerful, caring and efficient.

In less than 48 hours – helped no doubt by two vaccine jabs- I was well on the way to recovery.

The food was not bad either!

Long live the NHS!

Brian Light

The original of this letter was printed in the Essex County Standard on 6th August 2021

MEMBERSHIP

We welcome new members, all of Colchester - William & Elizabeth Bramhill, Jennifer Brown, Mr and Mrs Ross Courtier, Simon Crow and Helen Keating, Robert and Elizabeth Davidson, Thomas Goodey, Margaret Halford, Dave Harris, Pauline Hazell, Theresa Higgins, Chris Hunt, Jess Jephcott, Darius Laws, David and Sue Lissimore, Sharon Mooney, Barry Sears, Leigh Tate and Andrew Davis of Hardington Mandeville, Somerset.

Just before going to press (September 2021), we heard that Civic Society stalwart Eileen Sheldon had died aged 93. Eileen was also a regular fundraiser for the Society, attended many events and holidays, most recently in her motorised chair, which she rode with style and confidence. She will be much missed.

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

The Society has launched a new Corporate membership category for businesses and organisations who wish to support us and help expand our profile in Colchester. The membership will entitle them to:-

- copies of our newsletter
- full access to our programme of events
- the right to nominate a representative to vote on the future direction of the Society at the AGM.
- to use the Societies logo on their stationery to signify support
- participate in projects and campaigns that aim to influence the future direction of the Town.

The cost of membership is £40 pa and members will be listed in our newsletters and on our website, where they can also display their logo and web link.

We have two Corporate member sign ups to date, so spread the word and encourage our businesses and organisations to join us and to help grow our Society in an ever changing world. For details of our Corporate Members see next issue.

Please note The certified Annual Accounts for the Colchester Civic Society are enclosed. If you have any queries regarding them, please contact Paul as Hon. Treasurer.

Paul Weston

COLCHESTER CIVIC SOCIETY PRESIDENT JOHN M BURTON MBE ATTENDS HRH DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE ON 16 APRIL 2021.

A church service was held on the eve of the Duke of Edinburgh's Funeral at Windsor Castle in St James the Great, Colchester. The Churchwardens, Mrs Lucy Mason and Mr Stephen Pawlak, organised the service of prayer, remembrance and thanksgiving for the life of HRH the Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh 1921 – 2021. The Service was conducted by Father James McClusky SSC.

Three dignitaries, the Mayor of Colchester, the High Steward of Colchester and your President were verged into their seats during the introit: "Since by man came death" (G F Handel). All three wore masks and sat apart as we were still experiencing the Covid pandemic. The congregation were socially distancing and were masked.

Psalm 107 Verse 23 - 32 was sung by the choir reminding us of the Duke of Edinburgh's relationship with the sea and his trust in God.

" They that go down to the sea in ships and occupy their businesses in great waters"



The Mayor Councillor Robert Davidson read the lesson from Revelations 21: 1–7, this was followed by a tribute by Major General Jeff Mason MBE representative Colonel Commandant Royal Marines. The General spoke of the outstanding service that Philip had undertaken in the Navy and how that very appropriate life for him was sacrificed when he married and became our Sovereign's closest consort. The Prince's ability to talk to all ranks in the services on an equal footing was emphasised as was his expert knowledge on all matter's military. It was a very warm tribute by a General who held the Prince in very high esteem.

Father James in his sermon picked up on the themes expressed by the Major and the lesson read earlier. He talked about the importance of service and how the Prince had used his Christian faith to guide that service during his life which we were celebrating.

After we silently reflected on the life of HRH whilst the choir sang Psalm 121, the whole congregation spoke the Kontaktion for the Departed. The choir continued by supporting the singing of "O God our Help in Ages Past" and the service concluded with a rousing National Anthem.

Sir Bob Russell, the Mayor and your president were thanked by Father James and his wardens for their support at the service.

John Burton

A personal foot note; The service was particularly poignant for me as during my eighteen years at Westminster Abbey, I met HRH the Duke of Edinburgh on many occasions. He was always very knowledgeable about the matters in hand, and always with a humorous story to tell. A regular tale told whilst waiting to process into the Abbey; he would say that several of his American friends had told him they thought it rather stupid to build Windsor Castle so close to an airport. His Royal Highness invited me and other Abbey College members to his 90th Birthday lunch. I suspect he had many such lunches. He spoke about each of the 20 guest without notes, which I would find hard to do, but at 90 he did it perfectly.

Memorialisation at in the Abbey are at the direction of the Dean and Surveyor. Many are unveiled by the Sovereign, but the Duke would often present the memorials when there was some connection to him. "Longitude" Harris was one of those. I designed the memorial, which incorporated a bimetallic strip, the essential element of Harris's clocks, and laid this on the line of longitude marking it with the degrees away from Greenwich. The Worshipful Company of Clock Makers funded the memorial which is in the nave near Thomas Tompion memorial.

John Burton

COLCHESTER CIVIC SOCIETY PLAQUE TRAIL – MORE PLAQUES!

A few years ago an idea was suggested for a Colchester plaque trail. We realised a booklet featuring these plaques might soon be out of date. I decided to seek out an electronic option which we could add to as new plaques were erected. Having photographed, researched and written about each plaque our successful trails went live. We sat back and thought our work was done! Little did we know even more plaques would be discovered!

One plaque concerns Charter Wood. In 1189, Richard I ‘the Lionheart’ was planning to go on the 3rd Crusade to the Holy Land. The whole crusade was going to be very expensive and to raise funds he sold charters to various towns that were willing to pay £40 a year for the privilege of running their towns without too much interference from central government. Colchester was one town that decided to pay the £40 to give the burgesses the following rights:

- The right to elect their chief officers, the two bailiffs.
- To hold their own courts of law.
- To control the river and fisheries.
- To be free from the King’s forest laws and therefore the right to hunt fox, hare and polecat.
- The market was protected against outside unlicensed markets.
- Citizens were free from courts outside the Borough.
- Merchants were free from various taxations in all other ports.

Some of these rights were confirming rights already recognised by Richard’s predecessors. The charter was granted at Dover on 6 December 1189 as Richard and the other crusaders set sail for the Holy Land.

Charter Wood is an area of about ten hectares of mixed deciduous woodland. It was created to mark the 800th Anniversary of the granting of the Charter. It was planted on farmland in two stages; eight hectares being planted in 1990 and a further two in 1995. The trees

were donated by local people, businesses and organisations, including Colchester Civic Society. Public planting events were held. A number of children from the Civic Society planted trees. The project was supported by the Forest Authority. Trees included Sweet Chestnut, Grey Alder, Ash, Birch, Sallow, Lime, Field Maple, Oak and Hornbeam.

The wood is owned and managed by Colchester

Borough Council and is a public recreational area. Wildlife abounds and the wood is home to many species including wood mice, badgers and nightingales.

The ancient Charter history was researched and written by Ann Turner. Charter Wood modern history was researched and written by Jo Edwards

Rosemary Jewers



MERCURY ARISES

It seems ages ago that Colchester Civic Society was approached to support the Mercury Rising Appeal. Actually it was 2015. I remember the launch at the House of Lords terrace, when a junior Culture Minister, Matt Hancock (remember him?) performed the launch but prior to that quite a number of supporters were given a tour of the building and facilities. On 10th June 2021 I returned to see the result of all the hardwork, along with other invited supporters.



I had kept an eye on the works, as many of us had, but with all the barriers, boarding and workmen removed, it seems big.

The stage area has not changed much, although there is now a potential 50 additional seats, taking the total seats to 503, but the front row can be removed for an orchestra. We had seen the facilities behind, the upgrade of which was the main objective of the project. Gone is the

old St Mary's Rectory, which barely housed the costume department. The new design studio is clearly much better and I was pleased to see the team working on panto costumes, one of the team being a Colchester girl with a new degree in theatre costume design.

The technical departments have done well, the construction team being brought back to make the furniture for the bar and it has been a cornerstone of the project that local suppliers are used where possible. Whilst we were there, they were testing the fire alarms and also if the sounds from the main house would be heard in the studio theatre, and vice versa. The Studio will be fully programmed in future, as well as the main house.



We saw the offices, which like the rest of the theatre, are air-conditioned. Steve Mannix, the Chief Executive, was at his desk and told us that they were interviewing to fill 53 posts. Office and desk space can be hired for meetings or for project work. Education and rehearsal space can also be hired by other groups or businesses. At last they have decent in house rehearsal facilities, with a sprung dance floor and mirrors, replacing the previous very limited space. The new one seemed of cathedral proportions.

The main concentration is on facilities for the public. The existing bar is retained but downstairs has a large bar/restaurant space open for food, coffee or drinks. It should be a really useful and pleasant location.

Odd things impressed – the Green Room, which is cream, had a photograph of Hugh Bonneville from 30 years ago, when he was acting here. The Ladies toilets have been doubled in number. There are 2 customer lifts and a backstage one.



The Mercury opened in July and there is full season leading up to the pantomime, Aladdin, and beyond. I was pleased to see that one of their loyalest supporters, Pam Ayres, who was at the launch in 2015 and did a performance in aid of the appeal, filling the tent in 2019 is back in October for 2 nights. A nice touch of continuity.

Incidentally, if you are attending anything and want a programme, as I always do, it is wise to order one

in advance as the theatre is trying to avoid printing too many, so you may not be able to buy one when you attend.

Good luck to all who sail in her. A building to be proud of.

Peter Evans

IF I HAD KNOWN, WOULD I HAVE DONE IT ?

The story of the Jesse Jones Memorial

When I started the research into the life story of Jesse Jones, the Captain and Adjutant of the East Essex Militia who is buried in St Botolph's Priory graveyard, I had no idea what a long drawn out agony the process would turn out to be.

I had early on joined forces with Philip Wise of the Museum Service to have installed an Interpretation Board in the grounds and to restore the grave so that it might be identified. I agreed to raise the funding and to write the wording of the board and locate the images while Philip would tackle the necessary applications given his great experience.

The Board required consent from Heritage England and the Diocese Advisory Committee (DAC) and possibly planning permission from CBC. We could avoid planning consent by not using any emblems relating to ourselves or our funding from the Hervey Benham Trust. Thankfully they were persuaded to agree to that part. Historic England agreed to the re-use of the boundary wall site of a previous board. However the DAC in the form of a judge in London, rejected our application unless the surrounding population had an opportunity to object to the content and particularly the design, which he felt to be quite unsatisfactory. Up to this point we had taken nine months. Now we had a further three months of waiting for the statutory period to come to an end and to the next meeting and eventually to approval to install the thing. On top of this we had all the issues of Covid, remote working, no meeting and a closed Priory. Eventually with approval came some gradual relaxation. Production of the

board happened and suddenly we could have approved installers fit the board on the wall.

Hurrah ! It was unveiled in a modest but well attended ceremony that was well reported. Darius Laws, the new Heritage portfolio holder at CBC was able to attend, for which we were all most grateful .

This little modest project had taken two years.

Now we are trying ,just as slowly to gain the agreement and permission to restore and



Unveiling of the Information Board at St Botolph's Priory on 15th June 2021

Present: Mike Fitt, David Poppleton (churchwarden) Jo Edwards, Sir Bob Russell, Sheila Anderton, Bob Mercer, Philip Wise (CIMS) Trevor Orton, Councillor Darius Laws, John Burton, Caroline Rushton

Thanks to Adrian Rushton/Colchester Civic Society for the photos

re-mark the grave. With the change of Historic England Inspector in the meantime has come a quite different approach to how this might be done. We have now agreed a method and technique for cleaning and repair as well as a bronze plaque on a stone base with the original wording. This wording has been agreed with the Grenadier Guards Adjutant ,who are the main funders of this part of the project.

We hope now for permission from Historic England and then we can try again for the DAC agreement if we are very brave !

Robert Mercer

REOPENING OF COLCHESTER TOWN HALL

Colchester's spectacular Town Hall closed for the Pandemic in March 2020 but finally reopened on 7th June 2021. It was the last building in High Street to open. Postponed weddings have been rearranged and this must have been splendid for the families involved. This Town Hall has been at the centre of events in Colchester for over 125 years, whilst other Moot or Town Halls on the site provided that role for almost 1000 years.

Peter Evans

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'VE GOT 'TIL IT'S GONE.

This was the reaction of many of the residents in the Irvine Road Area Residents Association streets when, during lockdown, we began our initiative to renovate and paint the remaining heritage cast iron lampposts in our area.

Inspired by the work done by Castle and Roman Road and supported by the Civic Society we invited residents to volunteer to help with this project. We suggested that residents might like to adopt the lampposts nearest their home to work on and many people have signed up and finally work was able to begin in early summer. We now have over half of the lampposts finished or about to start.

Using the register on the Civic Society website I found that we have 17 lampposts of various designs, sadly one has disappeared since the last survey done in August 2018.



Neighbours that have had original lampposts replaced with modern concrete post are genuinely sad that they no longer have an original cast iron one with the soft light that adds much character to the area.

Other comments included those that said they had never really noticed before that the lamppost we

had were special, but appreciated them now, especially once they have been restored and look cared for again. One person wrote to tell me that she remembered standing in her Grandmother's house in Irvine Road watching the lamplighter when these lamps were powered by gas. I wonder when they were changed to electricity.

We are really grateful to John at the Civic Society who has been so helpful with lending us tools and providing paint for this work. Some were so neglected that they had barely any black paint remaining so seeing them finished and looking good is very satisfying.



There is always lots of interest when the work is taking place and we believe this project has been a great way for friends and neighbours to work together for the benefit of our local area.

Since getting involved I find I am now spotting these lampposts in so many parts of Colchester and I know there is a larger initiative to ensure that these are all preserved and protected for the future. I expect that we will have completed our work by the end of the summer so look forward to seeing the work continue in other areas of Colchester.

Helen Skipp
Irvine Road Area Residents Association

NEW TOWN OPEN (FRONT) GARDENS DAY

Like a number of other annual events, this returned in a slightly different form. Some years, the sun has beaten down on the open gardens but this year we even had a little light rain. However, it was the usual good humoured event, with plants, books etc. available for sale for charity. There were gardens all over New Town, with other activities including scarecrow competition, another knitted pillar box cover in King Stephen Road and a harpsichord recital in Gladstone Road, with 20 people enchanted in light drizzle, very civilised. (NB the harpsichord was played inside the house but there was a PA system linked to a speaker)

Of course, it was a good opportunity to meet other residents, who we have not seen



recently. I also took the opportunity to look closely at the vacant building site in Mersea Road, near the site of the removed post box and the Grapes Public House, which has returned to nature. It is now full of poppies and other wild flowers of all colours – and many bees.

Peter Evans

EYES AND EARS REPORT

The Society's Eyes and Ears team continue to report everyday issues that, when sorted, improve the look and feel of our town. Since our last report we've continued to flag up the usual graffiti tags, fly-tipping, fly posting and abandoned shopping trolleys. A particular fly-tipping 'grot spot' for a long time has been at the Brook Street/Barrack Street junction and we've been working with CBC to try and reduce the amount of fly-tipping there. Some progress has been made recently but there's still more to be done.

Our efforts to remove the irritating cable ties used to fasten notices to lamp posts etc. across Colchester continues. Another 1000 have been handed to CBC for recycling. We've now collected over 5000 in a campaign to rid our streets of these plastic eyesores. We're delighted to see that Colchester Planning department is generally moving away from using sticky-back plastic or tape to attach Planning notices to posts which, when removed, damages the posts.

Plaques and murals have been cleaned and repaired.

Damaged utility boxes have been repaired, a damaged street sign has been replaced and broken concrete bollards collected or/replaced.

ECC have collected abandoned road signs and repaired broken and damaged drain covers. However, we haven't enjoyed as much success with the damaged and wobbly paving slabs in several places around town.

We regularly post before and after photos on social media to thank the CBC team and give publicity to our joint efforts. Sincere thanks again to the staff who respond to our many requests for support. You know who you are!

Sheila Anderton

LITTERPICK 2021

In June, Executive Committee members John Collett, Sheila Anderton and the litter picking team collected 45 sacks of litter over 2 days, double the amount collected last year. This equated to 108 person hours and miles of rubbish. The litter included 110 face masks, plus a Christmas Tree, an ECC road sign (retrieved from river mud) and a broken bicycle. A great achievement and perhaps it will make litterers think.

John Collett

PLANNING APPLICATIONS - PROPOSED MURAL, HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

During 2021 the committee has been able to work together via Zoom, although more recently limited live meetings have become possible. There have been consultations that we have participated in and we have responded to various planning and licensing applications.

Consultations may take years to produce a result but applications are dealt with more quickly. A case in point was the proposed mural to be installed behind Holy Trinity Church. We did not consider that the site was suitable or the mural appropriate and we were not alone. A response was lodged and our President, John Burton (a nationally respected Conservation Architect) made the following speech to the Planning Committee on 8th July 2021 thoroughly and skilfully explaining our position:

Planning Application 211240 – Holy Trinity Church, Trinity Street

“ I am a Conservation Architect and I am speaking on behalf of Colchester Civic Society.

May I first of all, on behalf of the Society, say that we are very appreciative of the work that Councillor Martin Leatherdale and the Lion Walk shops are doing in attempting to beautify our Town.

We would also like to thank your officer for taking our objections seriously and incorporating them in her report. I will not repeat those objections now in order to save time.

I wish to emphasise the potential consequences of approving this scheme. This Committee and the Civic Society are aware that precedents in relation to planning matters can cause serious problems for local authorities especially when it comes to an Appeals process.

Even though the mural is proposed on a wall of little architectural feature, the wall is none the less in planning law, part of the Grade I listed building. Should you disagree with your Officer or be persuaded by others to grant permission you could open the doors to owners of all grades of listed buildings in Colchester arguing that painting the building the colour they like, or with murals, or even advertising is no different to the approval you gave on Trinity Church, a grade I listed building. We are certain you would not wish to do that, and will refuse this application.

Do remember that the words “less than substantial harm” in the Officers report is still harm.

The building is yours. The mural is being provided by a third party. From my experience as an Architect caring for historic buildings for some 50 years I can state that using “house paint” on a Victorian wall is certain to cause harm to the fabric. Anti-graffiti paint would add to the problems of moisture movement in the structure. Refusal of this application will protect your building from damage from rising damp, and potential costs to the Council.

The Civic Society accepts that the building is currently painted with an unattractive, one might say, dull coloured paint. The paint appears to be a microporous paint., allowing the building to breath. The current dull colour and matt surface, suppresses visually the building in the street scene and one’s eyes are therefore drawn to the shops to the East of it. Most people hardly notice the presence of this building. We believe this is much better for the conservation area than a brightly coloured mural.

We understand the Applicants did not consult Heritage England or yourselves before this Application was made. May we encourage Colchester Borough Council and the Applicants to get together to determine places which need beautifying which will be of benefit to both the town and the shopping area. Members of the Civic Society would be prepared to work with both parties if they wished.

Please refuse this Application as your Officer advises.

John Burton MBE RIBA”

There were other negative responses to the application, but the Borough’s Conservation Officer quoted extensively from our submission in her report The application was indeed rejected. We have developed good contacts with the Conservation Officer and other planning staff. Another success was with application for a development at 60 Creffield Road.

Whereas we have regularly commented on planning applications, we find that we are being contacted in advance of applications being made – for example the Paxman’s site and proposed changes to town centre streets referred to as ‘The Lanes’ and now called ‘The Indies’.

We were pleased to find that Ian Harvey, the Executive Director of the Civic Voice (our national body), has subscribed to our Twitter Account and has recommended it to others.

Peter Evans

THE VIEW FROM AFAR

In December 2020 we made the move from Colchester to Guildford 100 miles away and downsized to a bungalow. We are now a short distance away from our son, his wife and our three lovely grand daughters. Difficult time to move but we are settling in.

One of our wishes was to join similar bodies to the Colchester Civic Society but found there was no equivalent here. Guildford may not have the rich heritage of Colchester - where has? - but it does have things worth preserving and enhancing. Cherish the Society you have. Take it from me, you are fortunate.

My next move, bearing in mind my involvement with street names was to enquire of the Council why Chasefield Close, built in the 1980s, was so named. There is no record. Some neighbouring roads are named for people like Hanson and Hodgson. Could they be former Mayors? 'No, we have no record of former Mayors of the Borough' I was told. In fact, when I searched the Council website there was a list going back to the local government reorganisation of 1973. I am also told from other sources that the Mayors of the old Guildford Borough are recorded on a board in the former Town Hall. The list of more modern Mayors shows me that there is no tradition here of naming roads for Mayors. So I still do not know who Hanson and Hodgson were.

If you want to know about the origin of any street name in Colchester, the Street Name team at the Council will research it for you. If the road is in the historic Borough of Colchester and was built before 1935 it will be recorded in the booklet Alderman Blaxill wrote then. I have a copy and can tell you.

I am confident that the Civic Society will strive to keep the good you have and to make it better. In the meantime be thankful for what you do have.

Henry Spyvee

CALLING ALL KNITTERS!

The British Legion was established on 15th May 1921 and the Colchester branch on August 11th. To commemorate the centenaries of the two organisations, the Society is asking members who knit to get clicking and make some poppies for British Legion volunteers to sell during the November Poppy Appeal. Our initial target is 100 poppies.

There are plenty of different poppy patterns on the internet or you can use the pattern below.

If Tom Daley can do it, so can you!

Poppy Pattern

Using 3.5mm (or 3.75mm needles), cast on 60 stitches with red double knitting wool

Rows 1-6: Knit 2, purl 2 rib. 8 rows will make a bigger poppy

Row 7: Knit 2 together across the row (30 stitches)

Row 8: Slip 1, knit 2 together, pass slip stitch over across the row (10 stitches)

Break off yarn and pass back through the remaining stitches and pull tight. Join the edges to form a round and fasten off.

Attach a small black button to the centre or, alternatively, use black wool and cast on 16 stitches. Then cast off. Coil into a tight spiral and sew to the centre of the poppy.

Finally, fasten a small safety pin to the back.

If you wish to take part, please contact Sheila on 07871802442 or email sheilamanderton@gmail.com or Jo on 07771626561 email: josiemedwards@hotmail.com to arrange the collection of finished poppies.

Sheila Anderton

LAMPOST PAINTING SUMMER 2021

We are now into the second year of our cast iron lampposts painting project, with work underway in Salisbury Avenue, Beverley Road, Burlington Road, Castle Park Folley and The Irvine and Athelstan Road area, which is being organized by the Irvine Road Area Residents Association.

A report from Helen Skipp on the work underway by Irvine and Athelstan Road residents is included in this newsletter and as you will see the work is being carried out by both men and women and does not require special skills or great strength. Though you will have to put up with making some noise and getting a bit dusty while stripping off the old paint.

People are sometimes put off initially when told that it involves using an angle grinder to strip the paint. But as the photo shows they are small and easy to use for both men and women, and are set up with a wire brush, NOT a cutting disk!

One particularly important innovation in the way the work is organized here is that residents are asked to adopt a lamppost near where they live. This means that the work is mostly being carried out by husband and wife teams. This is also the case in Burlington Road where there is no residents association to oversee the project. So if you have a cast iron lamppost in your street that you would like to see restored and are prepared to do something about it then get in touch with me and I will arrange to supply you with the paint and equipment necessary, along with guidance on how to go about it.



John Salmon

Email - johnsalmon@colchestercivicsociety.co.uk

MY FILM CAREER AND HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

In 2020 I was asked by Colchester Museums to take part in a short film, one of a series for the Heritage Open Days, set in the Roman Theatre in the Dutch Quarter. Other films were made and the idea was considered a success, so more were planned.

I had done my first film in more or less one take. In March 2021 I was to talk about Bourne Mill and assumed it would go as well. As before I did some research put a short script together and turned up. However, it was to be filmed outside and the camera operator was concerned about traffic noise, so we moved closer to the Mill itself, beside the Pond. This turned out to be a mistake - . all you could hear was the water running into the Pond. Ducks and swans flew about. We tried again, and decided on a separate voice recording.



The National Trust representative was on duty and we moved inside the Mill, observing social distancing, it worked better. When the National Trust rep demonstrated how the mill machinery worked, I could not be heard again! We did a soundtrack, but don't forget, consulting notes means paper rustling and that is heard too. So I started again.

The Museum was pleased with the result after a certain amount of editing. It will be on the Council website in the Autumn, along with some other films. Now I know what Michael Portillo goes through for his art!

Peter Evans

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 2021

Thank you to everyone who stewarded at Audley Chapel and the Roman Theatre. Full visitor numbers are not yet in but they seem to have been up at the Roman Theatre. A request for stewards for next year's Heritage Open Days will be sent out on 2022. The comments that have been made will be picked up by Colchester Museum Service who are the organisers for Heritage Days and hopefully will be taken into account for next year. Thanks once again.

Ann Turner

THE WONDER OF ZOOM

One of the strange side effects of the Pandemic is that many of us who would not consider ourselves addicted to online devices is that we have benefited from Skype, Zoom, teams, Youtube and/or social media, something that we would not have predicted 2 years ago. I was spurred on by the success of a 90 year old friend. Civic Society Executive Committee meetings have been held very successfully on Zoom.

I have watched screenings from Theatres that I have never visited and attended WEA classes on line. I have watched talks from many local history groups and I know that Church services have provided much comfort to many, with huge audiences.

Free Zoom talks are available from Gresham College in Norfolk and the Essex branch of the Historical Association, based in Chelmsford, also offer free talks, see <https://essexbranchha.com>.

I attended one Zoom also attended by HRH the Duke of Gloucester. He was quite jovial and I was impressed with his Zoom skills.....until a minion logged out for him. I would normally miss some talks from the British Music Hall Association but watched their AGM online and this ended with a medley of the 10 most popular Music Hall songs voted by members. In case you are wondering, the top 3 were; "Don't Dilly Dally on the way" "The Boy I love is up in the Gallery" and "Burlington Bertie". All together now!

Peter Evans

STOP PRESS - BRADWELL

The Bradwell Power Generation Company have offered us a presentation about their plans for the proposed Bradwell B Power Station. This will be held by Zoom on a midweek evening in late October, date to be arranged. If you are interested, please email me ASAP at josiedwards@hotmail.com

Jo Edwards

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 Henry Spyvee
CHAIR AND PROGRAMME ORGANISER	Jo Edwards , 43 Priory Street, Colchester CO1 2QB 07771 626561 josiemedwards@hotmail.com
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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OTHER ELECTED MEMBERS	Sheila Anderton , 30 Rosebery Avenue, Colchester Bob Mercer , 59 Shrub End Road, Colchester CO3 4RA Howard Davies , 60 Rawstorn Road, Colchester CO3 3JH John Salmon , 68 Castle Road, Colchester CO1 1UN
CO-OPTED MEMBERS	Pamela Bradbury, John Collett



City of Colchester



St. John's Abbey

COLCHESTER

"THERE IS NO TOWN IN GREAT BRITAIN THAT CAN COMPARE WITH COLCHESTER IN THE FACT THAT IT IS THE OLDEST RECORDED TOWN THAT WE KNOW OF AT ALL IN THESE REALMS."

SIR HENRY HOWORTH, B.C.L. F.R.S. F.R.A., &c.



STATUE OF ROMAN CENTURION



COLCHESTER CASTLE BUILT ABOUT A.D. 1074



COLCHESTER TOWN HALL AND VICTORIA TOWER



ST. BOTOLPH'S PRIORY CHURCH



ST. JOHN'S ABBEY GATEWAY

VISITORS TO COLCHESTER SHOULD INSPECT THE FOLLOWING PLACES OF INTEREST. #

COLCHESTER CASTLE and **Streets** and the beautiful **CATTLE PASSE** with **Roman** houses and other objects of interest.

MUSEUMS are **UNPARALLELED** containing many thousands of **Gallic**, **British**, **Roman**, **Norman**, **Medieval** antiquaries—the **most** **valuable** **collections** of **Coins** and **Manuscripts** in **England**.

The **great** **mass** of **ST. BOTOLPH'S PRIORY CHURCH** the beautiful **chapel** **GATEWAY** **of** **ST. JOHN'S ABBEY** near the **Military Camp** **Hotel** and **Restaurants**.

The **YOUTH HALL** **with** **its** **various** **recreation** **grounds** and **objects** of **interest**.

The **ROMAN WALLS** **about** **1/2** **mile** in **length** **surrounding** the **old** **Roman** **Campus**—**Colonia** **Palmaria**. The **Roman** **Forum** at the **Balsham** and **elsewhere** **to** **be** **seen**.

The **single** **NASSAU** **CHURCH** at **High** **Street**, **formerly** **known** in **the** **middle** of **the** **last** century as **WILLIAM** **SILVER**, **Planet** of **Edith** **Queen**, **patron** of **St. Margaret**, **Physician** in **Queen** **Elizabeth** and **James** I.

TEMPERLEY a **fine** **Tudor** **Building** opposite **Holy Trinity Church**, the **Residence** of **the** **Mayor** **Citizens**.

ST. MARTIN'S and **ST. MARY** **of** **the** **WALLS** **CHURCHES** **being** **restored** by **the** **City** of **Colchester** in **1847**.

The **SEIGNIORY**, a **fine** **house** **standing** near **East** **Street**. The **old** **dwelling** **has** **been** **restored** by **the** **City** of **Colchester**.

ST. GILES CHURCH near **St. John's** **is** a **fine** **example** **of** **the** **style** **of** **the** **14th** **century** **architecture** **in** **England**.

ST. JAMES CHURCH at **the** **end** **of** **the** **High** **Street**, **formerly** **known** as **St. James** **Church** **at** **the** **end** **of** **the** **High** **Street**.

SING **COLE'S** **STATION**, an **extensive** **and** **valuable** **estate** **in** **the** **vicinity** **of** **the** **Victoria** **Tower**.

The **CITY** **is** **one** **of** **the** **best** **places** **in** **England** **for** **the** **study** **of** **the** **history** **and** **antiquities** **of** **the** **country** **and** **the** **people** **of** **the** **region**.



SEAL OF THE CITY OF COLCHESTER

COLCHESTER is **FAMOUS** for its **OYSTERS**, **ROSES**, **LILIES**, **ALPINE PLANTS** and **WATER GARDENS**; and also for its **ENGINEERING** and **MILLING INDUSTRIES**.

SEAL OF THE CITY OF COLCHESTER