

# Dr Roger Nunn M.D 1783 – 1844.

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Roger Nunn M.D. Mayor of Colchester 1834 & 1842 .Unknown Artist. Gift of George Bawtree

Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service, Colchester Collection.

Roger Nunn was born to his parents John, a butcher, and Mary, at Nowton, nr Bury St Edmunds and baptised on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 1783. The Nunn family were well known locally and many of them were doctors and chemists.

There does not appear to be a record of him receiving any formal medical training but it is known he became apprenticed to Dr Robert R Newell, the eminent surgeon and apothecary in Colchester. The apprenticeship was for a period of training for five years and the fee was £160.

Dr Newell had founded the Colchester Medical Society on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 1799.

Roger Nunn started in practice at Stanway but later moved the practice into the town centre and started to build a reputation amongst his peers and the Colchester residents. He perpetuated the apprentice system and his ex-pupils practised in many of the villages round Colchester thereby giving him a large consulting practice.

By 1806 he had married Elizabeth, daughter of William Bunnell, an auctioneer, but sadly she died while seeking a health cure from the waters at Bath in 1808 aged 23. He married for a second time in 1809 to Harriet Farran, the daughter of his father in law's second wife and they went on to raise a substantial family.

*Advertised for Sale the* **J** *postponed*

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**TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,**

*Without Reserve, under the authority of the Comptroller of the Barrack Department.*

**By John Taylor,**

On Tuesday the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, 1818, and 7 following Days.

THE WHOLE OF THOSE EXTENSIVE AND VERY SUBSTANTIAL

**Timber-built Barracks**

*(Of Two Stories), calculated for 2800 Men;*

With several superior South-fronted Officers' Houses, of similar construction; and various Store-houses, Gun Sheds, Cooking Houses, and other Buildings.

LIKEWISE, THAT CAPITAL BUILDING,

**THE HOSPITAL,**

**For 500 Patients (with it's Appendages),**

*standing on the Strand 11 feet 4 inches below and 10 feet above, and containing numerous Apartments,—the chief of which measure 53 feet by 22 feet.*

The MATERIALS offered at this Sale are of the most unexceptionable Quality, and fit for the first-rate Works; Gentlemen, therefore, about to build, as well as the Trade and Speculators, have now an opportunity of Advantages in purchasing, which, in all probability, will never again be offered to public competition at an unreserved Sale.

THE SALE consists of upwards of 400 LOTS, of various sizes; in which, for the general accommodation of the Public, there are several, of particularly good Floors, Joists, and Stairs, sold distinct from the Buildings.

CATALOGUES, with Conditions of Sale, may be had one week prior to the day of Sale, of the Auctioneer at Colchester (who will forward them to any part, of application, Post paid); the Barrack-Masters at Norwich, Yarmouth, Ipswich, Harwich, Chatham, and Chelmsford; at the Barrack-Office, Spring Gardens, and the Auction-Mart, London.

*Sale to commence each Day at Eleven o'Clock punctually.*

PRINTED BY W. KEYMER, COLCHESTER.

In 1818, Colchester's Archdeacon, Joseph Jefferson, had the foresight to launch the idea of a general hospital for the poorer residents of the town. He convinced seven other leading townsmen to subscribe to his vision.

When the large army barracks were being demolished at the end of the Napoleonic War, the old Colchester military hospital building was purchased by the group for the materials. The following year, a three acre plot of land was bought from the Round family, in Lexden Road by these eight men and when the hospital building was taken down; it was rebuilt on this new site and called the Essex and Colchester hospital.

It was one of the first hospitals built for the poor since those provided by the old religious orders. The main building is the central core of the building we now know as the former Essex County Hospital.

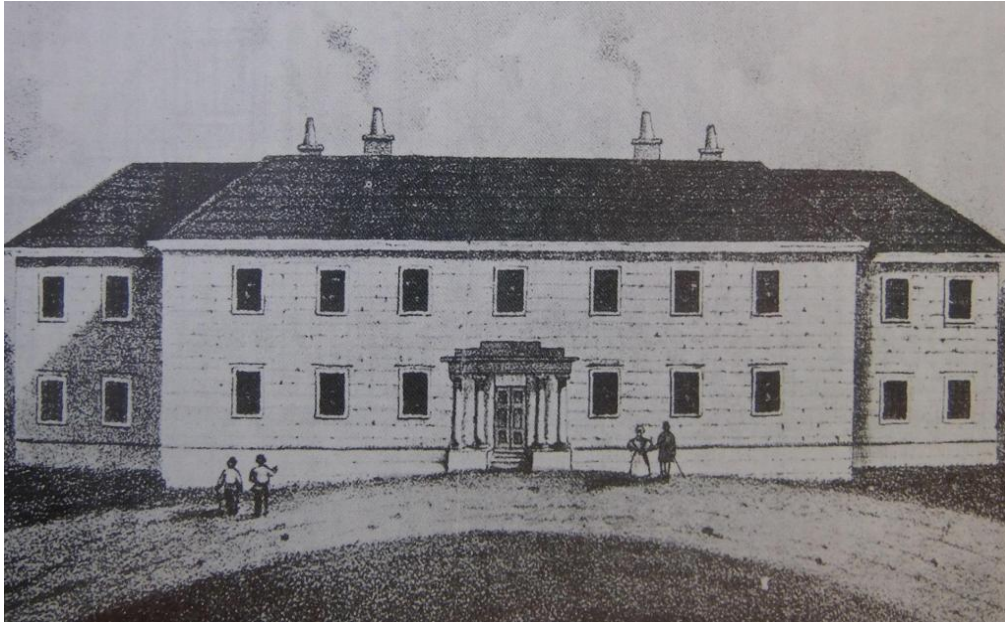
The new Hospital's Board of Governors held a vote amongst the greater subscribers to choose the three Honorary Surgeons and two Honorary Physicians to provide the hospital medical team.

By this vote, Dr Roger Nunn was created the senior Honorary Surgeon by 177 votes.

He was joined as his fellow surgeons by Dr Charles Boutflower, a Peninsular War veteran surgeon of the 40<sup>th</sup> Foot, with 106 votes, and Mr Alderman Partridge with 69 votes (Alderman was indeed his forename).

A Mr Thomas Calley received only 47 votes and was not elected.

It is worth noting that in 1816 the Drs Nunn, Partridge, Boutflower and a Dr Perkins had opened an Eye Infirmary at 6 Maidenburgh Street but the doctors quarrelled had amongst themselves and the opening of the Essex and Colchester Hospital undoubtedly led to its closure.



The Essex and Colchester hospital from an engraving of 1825 showing the newly added portico

The hospital consisted of only the central block with no portico or wings but it did have beds for 80 patients and an operating theatre supported by a salaried staff.

The two wings were added in 1839 and eventually the square projections to these wings were added in 1879-80 as well as a third floor.

Dr Nunn continued in private practice as a surgeon and apothecary as the hospital post was purely honorary and attracted no salary. He was originally living at the then large house on the corner of St Botolph's and Short Wyre Street but some years later moved to 11 Queen Street. ( His son Roger Sturley Nunn, also a surgeon, lived next door.)

In 1821 Dr Nunn became an MD of Aberdeen, a qualification that required only recommendation by two established doctors to be granted.

Surviving records from the hospital's early years indicate that Dr Nunn in a 16 month period treated 47 in-patients and 28 out- patients which compared most favourably with his colleagues.

The records also record that executed criminals might be dissected by the hospital staff if the Court so directed and Dr Nunn was recompensed in 1822 by £4. 2. 0. for the expense of procuring the body of a Daniel Seward, hanged at Chelmsford. There still remains in the Hospital, a pill case containing a considerable number of gall stones removed from his body.

A second body was obtained from Chelmsford Gaol in December 1823 for dissection. In their haste the doctors failed to obtain the Committee's permission and while they were recompensed for the expenses, they were firmly rebuked. This body was that of John Pallett and was dissected in the Wash House. Later the skeleton was articulated to provide a teaching aid for the apprentice apothecaries and eventually in the Nurses' Training School. The nurses affectionately called it "Jimmy" and much of the skeleton survives in the hospital historical collection today.

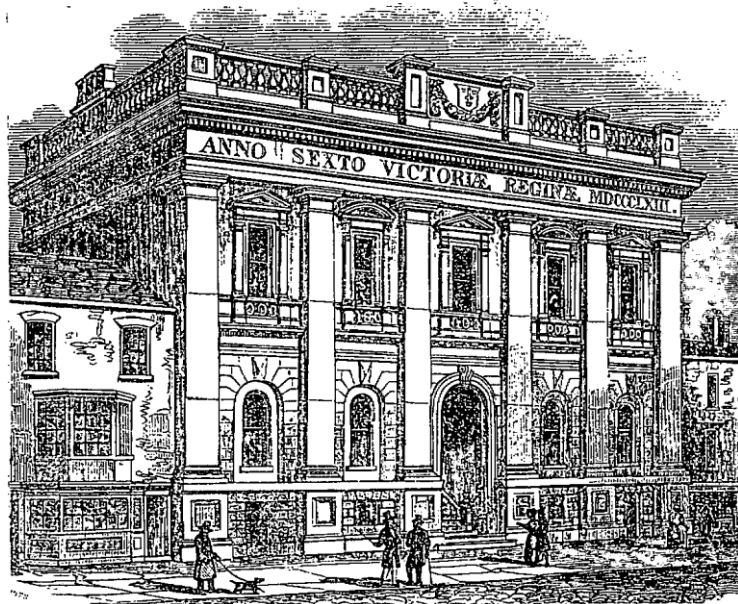
Dr Nunn was interested in various local societies, and increasingly by local government, leading to his membership of the Town Council. By 1834 he was elected as the Town Mayor.

He resigned from the hospital staff in November 1836, being succeeded by his son Roger Sturley Nunn at the age of 23.

He had also acted as the Surgeon to the Colchester Gaol from 1814-1839 and again was succeeded by his son.

He was elected for a second term as Mayor in 1843, a year which was marked with significant municipal improvements.

That year Dr Nunn laid the foundation stone for the first new Town Hall in a thousand years (which sadly involved the destruction of the original Norman Moot Hall) .



The first new Town Hall of 1844, replaced by the current building from 1902.

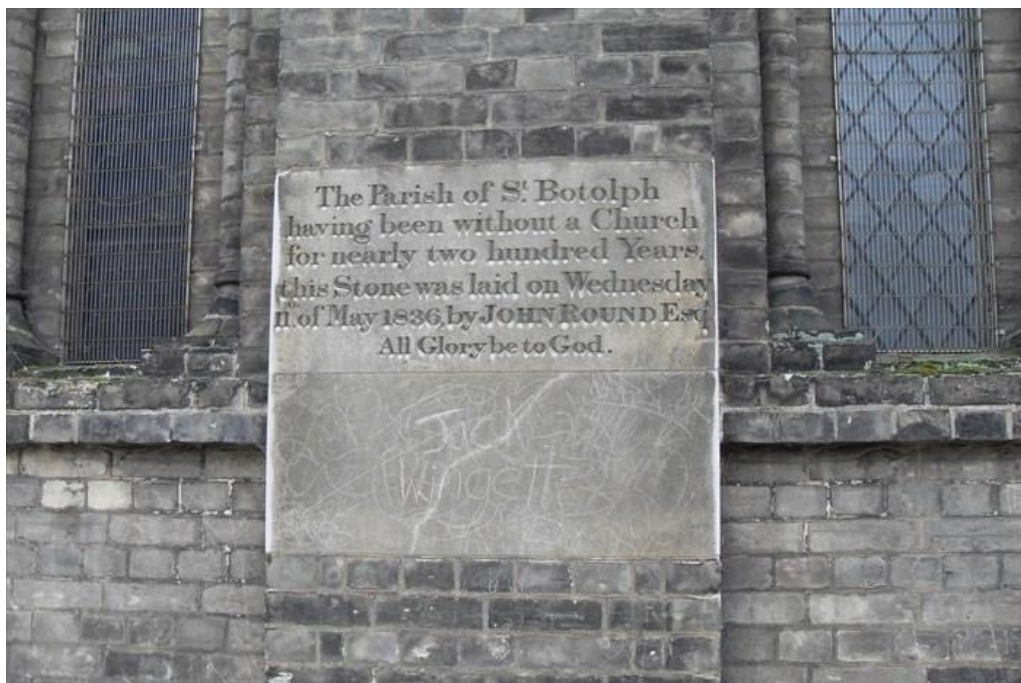
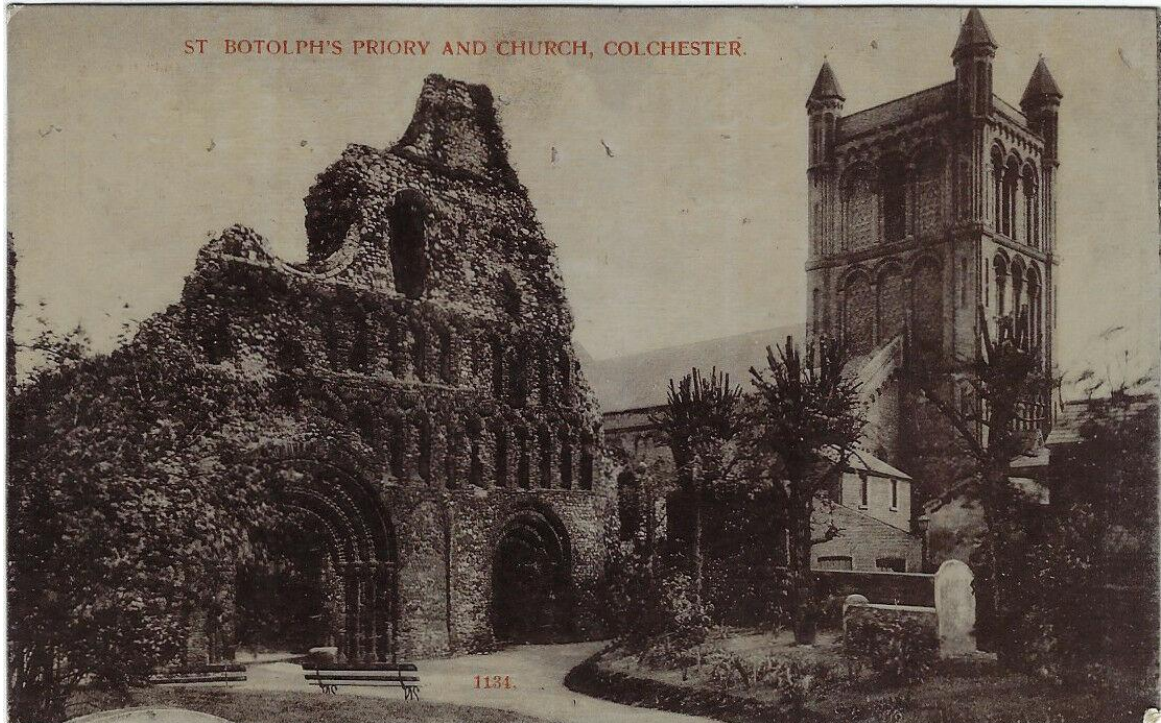
In 1843 he also opened the new cast iron bridge at Middleborough, North Station Road



His name is also perpetuated in the street name of "Nunn's Road", off North Hill.



Earlier, in 1836 Dr Nunn had been one of the subscribers to the building of a new parish church of St Botolph's with a contribution of £20. On completion of the building, the Nunn family became members of the congregation.



Sadly, " on the 10<sup>th</sup> May 1844 Dr Nunn died at his residence in Queen Street, having completed his 61<sup>st</sup> year on the previous day. He left a widow and 10 children, vis one son, R.S.Nunn and nine daughters.

Alderman of the Borough, he was a member of the old Corporation and the last gentleman who served the office of Mayor prior to the passing of the Municipal Reform Bill." (The Ipswich Journal 18<sup>th</sup> May 1844)

He was interred in the new family vault in the Priory of St Botolph's.





An early postcard showing the Victorian graves inside the Priory including that of the Nunn family vault.

