

JANUARY 2022



Registered Charity 237885

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

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

Contributions are always welcome and should be sent to
Peter Evans, 5 Grimston Road, Colchester CO2 7RN
Telephone: 01206 540990
or emailed to peterevans7978@btinternet.com,

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

CONTENTS

Urgent notice	1
A Room With a View	1
Heritage Open Days - Cannock Mill.....	2
Twinkle twinkle little star	3
Art news	4
Plaque trails.....	5
Roman Circus house	5
Irvine Road Community Orchard	6
Mersea Road barrack gates	7
Ruth Davis - Colchester's Town Sergeant	8
Margaret Cavendish née Lucas	9
Colchester Town deal	10
Membership	10
LED lighting for Colchester's cast iron lampposts	11
Book review	11
HRH the Duke of Gloucester visits Colchester Almshouses	12
The late Alistair Day	12
Appeal for Poppies	13
Colchester on Film	13
Many hands make light work.....	13
Stop Press	14
Social Programme	15
Aims and Officers	17

EMAIL ADDRESSES - URGENT

IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, WE MAY NEED TO CONTACT MEMBERS QUICKLY ABOUT EVENTS SUCH AS THE RETURN OF COFFEE MORNINGS, THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OR OTHER MATTERS SO PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU INCLUDE YOUR CURRENT EMAIL ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER ON YOUR SUBSCRIPTION FORM.

IF YOU PAY THROUGH YOUR BANK, PLEASE COMPLETE OR RETURN THE SUBSCRIPTION FORM OR EMAIL ME AT peter.evans7978@btinternet.com IF YOU HAVE CHANGED YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS OR HAVE NOT HAD AN EMAIL FROM US DURING THE LAST 6 MONTHS.

Peter Evans, Hon. Editor

A ROOM WITH VIEW

I realise that I could be considered a fool, rushing in where angels fear to tread, but so be it. I am about to comment on the touchy subject of weeds, or, perhaps, plants in the wrong place. Years ago, the Roman Wall in front of my house in Priory Street was covered with plants. It was a glorious sight. Bright yellow wallflowers and vivid blue alkanet in the spring, white, pink and dark red valerian, bindweed, dandelions, bryony, comfrey and rosebay willow herb in the summer and buddleia in every shade from white to deep purple in the early autumn. Unfortunately, many of these plants were deep rooted and they embedded themselves in the Wall, causing obvious damage. When serious maintenance work was done, the plants were removed and few returned. In some respects, I was very sorry, but I realised that the safety of the Wall was paramount and there is no doubt that the Wall no longer looks unkempt.



*Vineyard Street when houses
fronted the wall*

However, the strip of land at the base of the Wall and the similar stretch bordering the pavement now seem to attract weeds instead. Not the vibrant coloured ones of the past, but those straggly wasteland individuals with tiny, nondescript flowers, white, pale yellow or insipid pink. Covered in dust, oil residue and pee, both human and canine, they serve little purpose to wildlife and, catching litter, they look awful. Our Civic Society Eyes and Ears Team reported them to the Council and asked if they could be cleared.

Shortly afterwards, I happened to look out of my window and was pleased to see a couple of men with spades and brooms clearing the border on the street side of the car park. They were doing a great job, clearing the straggly, yellowing, plants and the tufts of rank grass. Holding Cooper the terrier firmly by his collar, I opened my front door and told them how pleased I was to see the car park being smartened up. They looked at me in amazement. Obviously being thanked was a completely new experience. I asked whether I could take a photo of them as I was going to add it to our Twitter and Facebook 'Reported and Sorted' comments with a public thank you. Now whether they realised that I would have to let go of Cooper to take the photo (he was showing them his teeth) or whether they wished to remain incognito, I wasn't sure, but they asked me not

to photograph them so I didn't.

Afterwards, I thought about their reaction. I suspect that they had received a lot of flak and didn't want any more. They were not using weed killer. They were clearing dying vegetation that had already seeded. They were making Priory Street look so much better. I thought how sad it was that they were worried.

I am completely in favour of roadside verges full of wild flowers. I think they are beautiful. I love pockets of wild flowers on wasteland, flowers that provide food and shelter for wildlife. But wild flower 'meadows', in whatever form, must be managed and maintained otherwise the grass becomes rank and some thuggish species take over, driving others out. We all need to recognise this and accept that there must be some control.

Jo Edwards

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 2021 – CANNOCK MILL

In 2021, Cannock Mill was an addition to the Heritage Open Day list about 8 years ago we reported that the Civic Society had been invited to meet the group that was proposing a Co-housing site the old Colchester mill before the scheme was confirmed.



The Co-housing idea originated in Scandinavia where people live as a community and share cooking and transport facilities, whilst retaining their own home and independence. The Colchester Community is mixture of retired and employed people, with no common religious or social ethos. The houses were to be built according to the highest eco "Passivhaus" and the Mill itself converted for communal use. The architect appointed was an expert in this field and she is still on board. I was a little sceptical that this would



work, so I was interested to find how it was progressing.

I had watched the site being developed.²³ Modern eco homes in striking colours had been built and have been occupied for just over 2 years. Whilst the site was being adapted, it was appropriate that a nearby urban farm grazed sheep on vacant land – a very odd sight to be seen from Old Heath Road. (Cannock Mill is in the dip in Old Heath Road below the entrance to the Barnhall Estate. It is next door to the Bourne Valley trail leading to Bourne Road, which the CCS was heavily involved with setting up.

Well, it seems to have been a success. There were good relations with the Colchester Planners and we were told that the main issue had been with the colours used on the houses. Whilst a quite strong orange was accepted, a pale green was not. Units vary from 3 storey 3 bed units to single bedroom flats.

All rainwater falling onto the properties is reused and recycled, composting of all goods and rubbish is a priority. None of the residents has a private car and a car pool system is working well, our guide confirming that he had never failed to find a car when he needed one. (There is bus stop outside the gate). Residents take part in common interests such as beekeeping and a natural pond on site provides wildlife and birdwatching.

Some of the original group did not go on join the final company that had to be formed. There is a waiting list to join. Although the price of the properties may be higher than the standard, running costs can be lower owing to energy saving, the car pool and some aspects of communal living.

The houses are built into the hill, so the lowest of the 3 storeys provided a garage. However, nobody uses their garage for a car – 2 residents make pottery there and one is a library, Some artefacts left by the last owner of the site, Mr Lock, have been reused. An old ladder with his name on it is now a plant stand.

The site is not yet complete. Whilst the Mill is indeed used for communal purposes, Mr Lock's house is now being converted into flats. It will be worth checking next year for developments.

Peter Evans

DONATE ONLINE FOR TWINKLE STAR STATUE



People can now donate online to help pay for a statue of the Colchester woman who wrote the world famous nursery rhyme “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star”.

A dedicated GoFundMe page has been set up. Donations, of any amount, can be made using debit/credit card, PayPal or ApplePay via this link: <https://gofund.me/c1bfae10>

The poem was written in 1806 by Jane Taylor. The proposed statue will feature Jane and her sister Ann. Both were prolific writers of poems for “infant minds” as described on a plaque on the front of the house where the family lived in West Stockwell Street

Planning permission for the statue was given in July by Colchester Borough Council. It will be sited diagonally opposite the Town Hall, on the wide section of pavement to the east of Pelham's Lane.

The campaign for the statue is being led by Colchester High

Steward Sir Bob Russell. So far he has raised £14,000 towards the estimated cost of £75,000.

Sir Bob said: "Now that I have planning permission I hope that individuals and organisations will wish to be associated with what is intended to be both a tribute to the sisters and also something that has the potential to be a major tourist attraction.

"In addition to individual donations, the more the merrier, it is to be hoped that businesses which will benefit from such tourism will be generous benefactors."

Cheques payable to "Twinkle Star Fund" can be sent to Sir Bob at 35 Catchpool Road, Colchester CO1 1XN.

Sir Bob added: "Colchester should be proud that this internationally recognised nursery rhyme was written here. It is sung throughout the world in scores of different languages."

Further background information about the Taylor sisters and the Twinkle Star statue project can be viewed on a "History Indoors" YouTube discussion at <https://youtu.be/MK48Gghs7ZE>

STOP PRESS On 1st January 2022, Sir Bob led his 14th New Year's Day Walk, this time around New Town, including its military connections, with fees for the walk going to the Twinkle Star Statue. (Your editor, a New Town boy, accompanied him). This was the day that the latest supporter of the fund, Joanna Lumley, was announced, Dame of the British Empire.

.....

ART NEWS



The new extension to Gainsborough House Museum, Sudbury, before completion.

Congratulations to Firstsite for winning the Museum of the Year Award 2021, presented by the Art Fund. This was in part for Firstsite's work with the community during the Pandemic. It is good to see Colchester receiving credit for something

Just over the county border, Gainsborough House in Sudbury is undergoing a revamp and like the Mercury Theatre, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). When it reopens, it will be several times the size of the original building as the former Sudbury Unemployment Offices came available and the site is being incorporated into the new Museum. The former offices were acquired by Babergh District Council and have been gifted to the Gainsborough House. All the existing facilities, especially the garden, have been retained. Reopening is planned for March 2022, although work is still progressing.

Also in Suffolk, Sutton Hoo has also benefited from HLF funding. Overall there is £4 million project including new visitors facilities, a 17 metre high viewing tower, and plans for a full size replica of the original vessel discovered on the site just before the 2nd World War.

As the Mercury Theatre funding was from the same source at much the same time, our part of the world has done very well recently. As funding is so important for Galleries and Museums, Colchester Borough Council has established the Colchester Museum Development Foundation to spearhead major fundraising projects. These will include an upgrade of the All Saints Natural History Museum.

Peter Evans

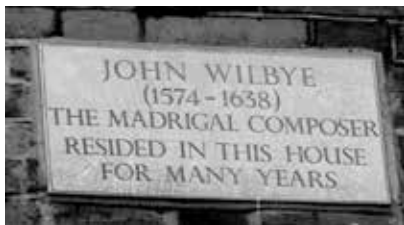
PLAQUE TRAILS – CAN YOU HELP?

Whilst the Plaque Trails have been created with many plaques included, we are still finding more unnoticed ones and new plaques are now being added. Much of the work was done by Rosemary Jewers, Jo Edwards, Henry Spyvee, Sir Bob Russell and Ann Turner, amongst others. It would be a great help to widen the team that have been working, researching and “writing up” the stories behind the newly found plaques.

If you enjoy researching Colchester’s own history or doing family history – or are just nosy – then this could be up your street. Apart from the Margaret Cavendish plaque, the most recent was installed by Myland Parish Council to commemorate the 38 patients killed by bombing at Severalls Hospital in August 1942. Here is an example of one plaque already on the trail website;

From The Plaque Trails - John Wilbye’s plaque is situated in Trinity Street.

“John Wilbye (baptised 7 March 1574 – September 1638) was an English madrigal composer.



Wilbye, the son of a tanner, was born at Brome, near Diss, Suffolk. The Cornwallis family of Brome Hall were his patrons. Elizabeth Cornwallis, wife of Sir Thomas Kitson, appears to have recruited Wilbye in the 1590s. Wilbye began living at Hengrave Hall, Suffolk, which was the seat of the Kitson family. His first book of madrigals was published in London in 1598; the madrigals being described as ‘newly composed’. Wilbye never married but on the death

of Lady Kitson; her daughter, Mary Darcy, inherited Hengrave Hall. At some point, Wilbye left Hengrave and retired to Mary Darcy’s house in Colchester, where he died. He is buried in the graveyard of Holy Trinity Church, Colchester. Wilbye Close is named after him.

Researched and written by Rosemary Jewers

To listen to one of Wilbye’s madrigals, ‘Lady When I Behold’ type in this short internet link. <https://bit.ly/311hCfz>

If you would like to help or would like more information, please contact Pamela Bradley by email at pjbradley2244@gmail.com

Rosemary Jewers and Pamela Bradley

ROMAN CIRCUS HOUSE

Plans are in hand to surround Roman Circus House with Roman-inspired gardens. Some plants are becoming established beneath the windows on the wall on the right hand wall of the building but more are planned. A visitor to the Centre (having experience of designing gardens) has kindly prepared a design for the Roman gardens with plants, introduced and/or used by the Romans tailored for the site. The gardens are designed to be fully accessible to all visitors, particularly those with mobility and/or sensory challenges.

Many of us will have the same plants and herbs in our gardens as the Romans did – lavender, borage, acanthus, Madonna lily, chives, sage, rosemary, thyme and I certainly didn’t realise that Romans introduced the rose to Britain. The draft plans need to be agreed by Historic England.

There are other developments at Roman Circus House. Improvements will make the site more visible as visitors approach. At the same time, Colchester Borough Council is considering a development plan for the former ABRO site, north of the site. This includes protection for open spaces and for land neighbouring Roman Circus House.

Peter Evans

IRVINE ROAD COMMUNITY ORCHARD

For many years, the Irvine Road Area Residents Association (“the Association”) worked to protect and conserve the Irvine Road Orchard through a succession of campaigns. Most notably, we secured a Tree Preservation Order on the trees, hedgerows and boundaries and succeeded in getting the orchard designated as a Local Wildlife Site in the Local Development Plan. However a change of ownership triggered a series of events that have led to the community taking on a lease for over half of the Orchard, with six houses being built on the remainder.

Tony and Mary Locke bequeathed the Orchard to a mixture of charities and individuals who, in 2014, put the land up for sale. The sale included a clause requiring the purchaser to ‘make all possible efforts’ to develop the land, with the beneficiaries of the previously mentioned will receiving a significant proportion of the profits.



When the draft Local Development Plan was published in 2017, despite the community’s representations, the Plan said that “Whilst the site has some limited wildlife value, a small amount of development, of up to a maximum 8 dwellings, covering no more than 40% of the site is considered appropriate at this location. The remaining 60% of the site should be brought back into suitable condition with management to improve the site’s ecological value and to ensure it continues to contribute to the local Green Infrastructure network.”

This policy gave notice that Colchester Council would be likely to approve a planning application that met the requirements listed. Following this news The Association talked to the developers to see what kind of deal could be reached and subsequently approved an agreement with the owner and developer, Jonathan Frank of Lexden Restorations. The Association agreed to support Lexden Restorations’ planning application for 6 houses on 40% of the Orchard. Lexden Restorations granted the Association a 50 year lease, for a minimal rent, over the remaining 60% of the Orchard. We have set up a charitable body to manage the Irvine Road Community Orchard. Lexden Restorations offer the Association a 999 year lease if £45k can be raised in the first five years.

The planning application was granted and the buildings are complete. The lease is identical whether it is for 50 or 999 years and:-

1. requires the Community Orchard to be managed in accordance with a Management Plan aimed at maintaining a traditional orchard. An initial plan has been produced by Essex Wildlife Trust’s consultancy services which will be reviewed every 5 years.
2. provides for managed access for the purpose of restoring and managing the Orchard and for open days and fruit-picking.

3. gives an opportunity for local primary schools to use the Orchard on 6 days per year
4. requires us to take out public liability insurance

In addition, Lexden Restorations made the following commitments:-

1. During the course of the clearance, Contractors for Lexden Restoration felled the fruit trees and cut the logs to an agreed size and moved the logs to the Orchard site to allow them to be used as wildlife refuges within the Orchard.
2. A new hedge has been planted behind the new fence.

Further detail on the history of IRARA's involvement in the Orchard is provided on the website (<http://www.irara.org.uk/?p=261>) and you can find out the latest on

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community/Irvine-Road-Community-Orchard-26338227389815/>

or email info@irara.org.uk

.....

MERSEA ROAD BARRACK GATES

I don't spend a lot of time on Social Media but there are some fascinating photographs and postcards of old Colchester to be found there. This view of the Barrack Gates is one I have not seen before. It shows local people very close to the soldiers, something not allowed more recently. These gates are still in place despite the area being a housing development now. When the army was finally leaving Meeanee and Hyderabad, they became very familiar as Colchester soldiers were involved in the Afghan campaign, which started in 2012, and images of the gates, covered in flowers, were on television as there had been a number of deaths amongst the British Troops out there. A far cry from this charming postcard.



When I first moved to the Mersea Road area, I was comforted when walking home in the evenings by an armed guard near the gates, as there were few people about. However the soldier on duty always seemed to be about 12 years old.

Peter Evans

.....

RUTH DAVIS – COLCHESTER’S ONLY FEMALE TOWN SERGEANT

During the summer of 2021, I became involved with a little research to find out more about the acting Town Sergeant who was appointed in February 1916 to cover the post whilst William John Lambert was away fighting for King and Country in WW1. Whilst we had a name, we did not know anything more about her. Yes, you read that correctly – it was a female covering the post. Quite remarkable really when you consider that we were still 6 years away from appointing a female Mayor here. The media of the time reported that the ancient town of Colchester had made a record by appointing a Female Town Sergeant. How utterly disappointing that within 100 years, we had forgotten her. I needed to find out more about who Ruth Davis was.

Paul Lind is the current Town Sergeant. He mentioned in passing that nothing was known about her. With the help of Andrew Phillips in 2017, her name became known. Armed with this, I started with the 1911 census. She was not listed in Colchester. I fast forwarded my search to the 1939 Rationing Register and found nothing.

Not too disheartened, I started with the newspaper archives online – there were many articles around the UK about Ruth Davis having been appointed as the female town sergeant. It was groundbreaking for the time, but there was nothing to give away who she really was. The content only tells the reader that her duties would be limited and that she had 5 brothers fighting and one brother had been killed in action by February 1916. A small clue! I researched all Davis or Davies names listed on the roll of honour in the town hall. No connection was found.

With all avenues exhausted, I turned to Sarah Demelo, a friend who works at the University of Essex. She tracked down an article from the Essex County Standard. This mentioned that Ruth lived in Crouch Street. However, she hadn't been listed on the 1911 census and the 1921 census is not yet released. In 1916 being unable to vote meant that she was not listed on any electoral registers. Using Benham's Street Directories of the time, I wrote down every Davis surname listed and each address. None lived in Crouch Street. With ever increasing determination to find Ruth, I wrote down all residents in Crouch Street and used the 1911 census to search each.



Ruth Davis robing his Worship the Mayor

Living at No 20 Crouch Street was Thomas Robinson - a dental surgeon. He piqued my interest. His sister-in-law Vivienne Mary Davis was living with the family. More tracing revealed that Thomas's wife Elizabeth (nee Davis) did have a sister called Ruth who was born in 1896. BINGO – had I found Ruth?

Ruth McNaught Davis was certainly the right age. She had several brothers who were away fighting in WW1, with one who had sadly died in Jan 1915. In 1939, she was a civil servant and living in Westminster. Having traced family members who remembered her, I was told that she was a real live wire and no shrinking violet. Just as one would expect a female Town Sergeant to be. Her great nephew is 99% certain that the female Town Sergeant Ruth from 1916 is his great aunt. He provided me with a photo of Ruth and her husband Bill on their honeymoon in 1949 to confirm this.

Thomas Robinson, Ruth's brother-in-law was the brother of Catherine Buchanan Alderton – Colchester's first female mayor. And that is a very interesting connection indeed. Colchester's first female Town Sergeant connected by marriage to Colchester's first female Mayor.

I believe I have finally tracked down Ruth Davis and that she can now take her place in Colchester's History – not to be forgotten any more.

Sharon Mooney.

PS if anyone knows anything more about Ruth Davis, please let us know

Sharon has produced a NEW TOWN 2022 Calendar, featuring photographs of New Town buildings past and present, together with some interesting information. These are sold in aid of New Town charities and are available from Sharon. (email mooneys1970@hotmail.co.uk)

.....

MARGARET CAVENDISH NEE LUCAS – BLUE PLAQUE

On 22nd September 2021, a new Blue plaque was unveiled at Arena Place to commemorate the former Margaret Lucas, later Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, who was born at St John's Abbey, on this site, in 1623, or about then. The plaque was organised by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Essex, in conjunction with Wimpey's the Developers, but with some advice from CCS.

Sir Charles Lucas, famous from the Siege of Colchester, was one of Margaret's brothers. He was a professional soldier in the King's service and had already been involved in the English Civil War of 1642-9, and it was because of this that he and his colleague Sir George Lisle were executed after the Siege had been lost by the Royalists. Margaret had already left Colchester by then, the Abbey having been destroyed by a Colchester mob in 1642. She went to the Royal Court and was in service to Queen Henrietta Maria.



Whilst she was there, she met the widowed William Cavendish (born 1593), at the time Marquis, later Duke of Newcastle and a leading supporter of the King. He was leading the defence of York but lost the major battle of Marston Moor nearby in 1644 and had to flee abroad. He and Margaret married in Paris in 1645 and lived as exiles mainly in Antwerp until the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660.



Wall, just south of the Abbeygate where the plaque is placed

By this time, Margaret had started to write, writing 10 books on scientific and philosophical subjects but also plays, publishing 11, including "Ladies' Academy", "The Bridals" and "Wits Cabal". Whilst this was unusual enough for a woman in the 17th century, her nickname, Mad Madge, tends to suggest that she was considered a little eccentric. There was also a biography of her husband and an autobiography. She died in 1673, 3 years before her husband.

Peter Evans

COLCHESTER TOWN DEAL FUND

You will have read of the grant of £18.2 million awarded by the government to We Are Colchester under the Town Deal scheme. The Society has been given some more details of how this grant will be spent. When the application was originally made a sum of over £25 million was applied for, but like other applications, an award was made but not for the full sum.

A summary has been provided by “We are Colchester” (which is organising the project for the Borough Council) of the individual projects making up the total, as below;

PROJECT	BUDGET
Improved Local Youth Provision	£1,320,000
Town Centre including Kerbless Streets and public realm work at Balkerne Gate (phase 2), Holy Trinity Square, Vineyard Gate, Essex County Hospital site	£3,000,000
Jumbo – repair works only *	£1,000,000
Holy Trinity Church -conversion to Community Hub *	£500,000
Heart of Greenstead	£6,600,000
Digital Connectivity (Digital Hub and digital working Hub at Wilson Marriage Centre)	£2,800,000
Physical Connectivity – cycling and walking routes to Essex University	£2,980,000
TOTAL	£18,200,000

Peter Evans

.....

MEMBERSHIP

We welcome as new members Richard Arnopp, Angela Livingstone, Andrew Lynn, Beverley Oxford, Tom Edwards and Rosie Longmate, and Natalie Sommers, all of Colchester and Samantha of Little Oakley

.....

LED LIGHTING FOR COLCHESTER'S CAST IRON LAMPPOSTS.

On hearing that Essex Highways are planning a major change to street lighting by replacing all of the old style lighting units with the more energy efficient LED version, we decided it was best to check that this was not going to mean the loss of any of Colchester's Cast Iron lampposts. So when it came to reporting this years batch of repainted cast iron lampposts to Highway's Director of Maintenance and Operations I also took the opportunity to ask if this would affect them.

Along with an appreciative response for all the work carried out this year by the members of Irvine Road Area Residents Association and also the couple in Burlington Road, who made a beautiful job of repainting the road's one remaining cast iron column, he was able to reassure us that they will be sourcing new lighting units to fit the existing columns and sourcing suitable embellishment kits for the conservation areas. We were assured that "They would only be replaced if they became a safety hazard, at risk of falling down"

We can then continue the work already planned for next year in Beverley Road and Salisbury Avenue safe in the knowledge that these historic columns will have a new lease of life with the upgrade to the new technology.

There are many more cast iron columns in the town, most of which are in a sorry state and desperately in need of repainting. So please get in touch if you are interested in helping with this project (info@colchestercivicsociety.co.uk). You don't have to be part of a residents association or group. Many of this year's batch were painted by couples who adopted a lamppost in their street. The Civic Society can supply the paint and equipment needed.

Take a look on your street and check if you have one near you. The Cast Iron Lamp Columns we are working to conserve look like this one recently repainted in Burlington Road.



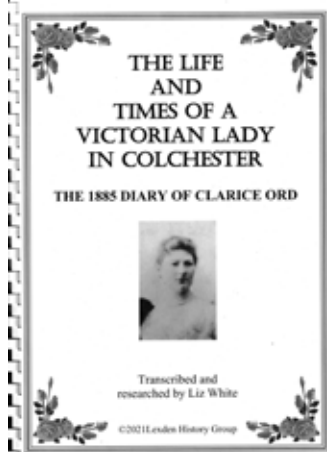
Smart looking lamppost in Burlington Road

John Salmon

BOOK REVIEW; THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A VICTORIAN LADY IN COLCHESTER

by Liz White published by the Lexden History Group

Liz White of the Lexden History Group was given a Victorian diary by Victoria who had found it in her new home, part of the former Lexden Manor, It became her lockdown project. It appeared to be the diary of middle class lady of the late 19th century but had no date, name or address.



Liz set about transcribing it – not easy in itself – and researching the entries. She discovered that it had been written by Clarice Ord, the daughter of a baronet and MP, and married to an Army Officer stationed in Colchester. Her diary entries are listed and interpreted. Most of the people mentioned are researched, and there are photographs, views and cuttings.

Quite apart from the experience and effort that went into the book, there is the fact that we have a direct window into Clarice's day to day life in detail. It is church, visits to friends, the health of the family, servants and friends, the weather, shopping and the detail of life. We have her accounts. Nothing major happens but it is very real and very busy. Fascinating to read.

Copies are available from the Lexden History Group.

Peter Evans

HRH THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER VISITS COLCHESTER ALMSHOUSES



Royal visit to Almshouses at Magdalen Green - includes (centre) the Mayor and Mayoress of Colchester; the Bishop of Colchester and HRH the Duke of Gloucester

The St Mary Magdalen Hospital Almshouse Charity, Trustees & Residents, were delighted to welcome HRH the Duke of Gloucester graciously recognising the 900th anniversary of the founding of the Charity by King Henry I through Eudo, the Royal Steward (or Dapifer) Eudo, who also was responsible for building Colchester Castle and St John's Abbey. He was buried in St John's Abbey and a statue commemorating him is on the outside of Colchester Town Hall.

Coincidentally the Town was then in pandemic; the Hospital Almshouses, at the top of Brook Street, next to St Mary Magdalen Church, were established to house people with leprosy alleged to have been brought to Colchester by crusaders returning from Jerusalem.

The Almshouse Foundation was rebuilt on the footprint of the St Mary Magdalen Church demolished in the early 1990s. The new flats (numbers 1 -6 Magdalen Green) provide homes for people with a learning difficulty but wanting to live independently.

HRH went on to open the nine new Almshouses at Military Road Colchester built by the Winnocks and Kendalls Almshouse Charity completed in 2019 but now occupied by local residents nominated through Colchester Borough Council.

Michael Siggs

THE LATE ALISTAIR DAY, SPECIALIST PLANNING MANAGER, COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCILLOR

The Council recently suffered the loss of a senior member of the Planning staff. The following request was made to Councillor Pauline Hazell, chair of the Planning Committee and was sympathetically received:

‘May we ask that you, as Chairman of Colchester Borough Council Planning Committee, record in your minutes that the Colchester Civic Society presented to the Planning Committee their condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Alistair Day, Colchester’s Specialist Planning Manager, who died on 24th of October.

Colchester has benefited greatly from Alistair’s professional skills. A recent example is the work Alistair undertook in advising you as a planning committee on a way of developing an extremely complex and important site known locally as the ABRO or Artillery Barracks site. As was typical of Alistair he gave us and others opportunities to share ideas with him as he developed his brief for that site. The Society is saddened that this planning brief for the ABRO site was to turn out to be his last major work as a planner. Colchester will sorely miss his planning skills

The Society had built up a great deal of respect for Alistair. As a Civic Society we often voiced objections to proposals. Our objections were always responded to with understanding by Alistair and where he was determined to advise you differently he explained why he was taking such an approach. Colchester has tragically lost a truly professional planner.

Would your committee be prepared to take on an idea we have formulated of naming a building or the principal road on the ABRO site as a lasting memorial to Alistair Day.’

*John Burton MBE
President of Colchester Civic Society*

APPEAL FOR POPPIES

To commemorate the centenary of the British Legion, Society members were invited to knit poppies for the organisation's volunteers to sell during the November Poppy appeal. Several Society members joined in with the initiative and a total of 130 poppies of various design were handed over for sale.

Sincere thanks to you all. We intend to make this a yearly event and welcome any others who'd like to help.

Sheila Anderton

.....

COLCHESTER ON FILM

Following the rediscovery of several films of Colchester dating from the 1970's and earlier we plan to create a new page on the website to provide an access point for viewing these films online. One of these films was commissioned by the Civic Society in the late seventies and has yet to be transferred from it's original super8mm format onto MP4 for use online, another has been transferred to this format from VHS by Darius Laws who has made it available to us to host on the new page. A third film is already online on the East Anglian Film Archive. You can view this one direct by going to the Archive website and search for What Have They Done to Our Town? Or type in this link <https://eafa.org.uk/work/?id=2218>

All three films were the work of Bernard Polley and other members of the Colchester Cine Club, which is now defunct. However Bernard has given permission for us to make them available again.

A new Film of Colchester – would you like to get involved?

This has prompted discussion about the Civic Society producing a new film (or films) about Colchester. There have been an enormous amount of changes and developments in and around the town since the 1970 and we feel it's time to begin recording these on film. If you are interested in getting involved in this project then please get in touch with John Salmon via info@colchestercivicsociety.co.uk

John Salmon

.....

MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK

When the current Civic Society was launched in 1964 (I remember it well!) it had an Executive Committee, a Council and a number of extremely active Committees, including Long Term Planning, Improvements, Publications, Education, Fundraising, Footpaths, Tree Group etc. We moved mountains! But times changed as did members' work/life balances and, eventually, the Committees were reduced to one or two people trying to do the work once done by ten. We changed the way we operated, with individual Executive Committee members leading on each of the major aspects of our work. This succeeded to an extent but put enormous pressure on those 'Leads'.

It has become apparent that the time has come for us to revive those Committees in order to spread the load. I know, from conversations with members, that there are a lot of you who would be more than happy to help. Bob Mercer, who leads on both Heritage and Planning, would love a Committee for each. Peter Evans hopes that someone would help with Street Naming. John Salmon would welcome the formation of a Committee to help with Highways issues. I would love some support with Licensing matters, please. Apart from new Committees, you will note from

articles elsewhere in this Newsletter that we would like some assistance with research about local plaques and John Salmon would love some assistance with his new and very exciting film making project. And, of course, John Collett and Sheila Anderton would love more volunteers for our Litter and Footpath Clearing working parties.

The Civic Society is flying off in all directions, taking on a huge variety of tasks and really making a difference. I appreciate, very much, the contribution you, our members, already make, even if it is simply by giving much needed moral support, and I would like to thank you all. However, if you are interested in becoming more involved in the work of the Society, please consider joining a new Committee or Working Party. An interest and enthusiasm are all you need, although expertise would be amazing! We can give you basic training. Please ring me on 07771626562 or email me at josiemedwards@hotmail.com if you would like to know more.

Jo Edwards



STOP PRESS – ROLLING OUR SLEEVES UP

On 10th January 2022 six Civic Society members completed the clean-up of the shared-use path from Sheepen Road to where it turns right onto Hilly Fields - part of the well-used cycling route from Lexden to Colchester North Station. The first part of the clean-up was done by the same group on 13th December 2021.

Emily thanked us as she passed by while the work was in progress - followed a bit later by a chap on an e-cargobike

John Collett



Before



After



SOCIAL PROGRAMME

As COVID restrictions lift, we are returning to a limited programme, although we are not going to throw caution to the wind for a while yet! As you will see, most of our events for the spring and early summer are out of doors and those indoors will allow for social distancing so I hope you will feel confident enough to join us. I do not anticipate coach trips this year as I know many of you are worried about spending time in a confined space. I must have a reasonable number to make such trips viable and I suspect I would struggle, so I'm afraid that is something I will have to postpone until 2023.

I have deliberately only given you dates for the first half of the year, simply because I want to see how many of you are happy to venture out and also to find out from you how you feel about some indoor events later in the year. This particularly applies to our Coffee Mornings. You will see that I have arranged a couple, one in May and one in June, but they will both be outside. Thereafter, we can go back indoors if you feel happy to do so. If not, we can continue with outdoor meetings until September. It's up to you! And for those of you who are wondering, I hope that it won't be long before we can have the severely delayed formal launch of our Corporate Membership scheme, although, of course, there is nothing to stop companies joining us now. It only costs £40pa.

Jo Edwards

So here are the events for the first part of 2022.

Monday 28th March 2022 Meet at the Town Hall at 2.30pm for a talk about the proposals for sites identified for Town Deal funding.

At the end of last year, Civic Society members were invited to tour some of the sites that would receive Government funding under the Town Deal scheme, Jumbo, Holy Trinity Church, Trinity Square and the 'Kerbless Streets', to find out more about the proposals. It was a bitterly cold day and I knew that a number of members, including the less ambulant, would, reluctantly, feel unable to go. I asked whether it would be possible to arrange another event indoors for those people and this is it. Spaces are limited so if you went on the walk, please don't apply for the talk. We will be in a very large room so will be able to socially distance with ease. If you are interested, please apply as soon as possible by completing and returning the booking slip enclosed with your Newsletter.

Cost? Free

Thursday 31st March Meet outside the front of Grey Friars Hotel (please take care not to block the pavement) at 10am for the first of our Great British Spring Clean litter picks.

As usual, we are taking part in this national event arranged by Keep Britain Tidy. We will provide rubbish bags, litter grab sticks and latex gloves. Please bring your own heavy duty gloves and hand sanitiser if required. Refreshments at Grey Friars afterwards, usually about noon.

Thursday 7th April Meet outside Grey Friars at 10am again for our second Great British Spring Clean Litter Pick.

Exactly the same arrangements apply.

Friday 22nd April Meet at the Starlight Tea Room at Colchester Cemetery in Mersea Road at 10am for a Cemetery Tour.

Our tour will start with coffee or tea and a slice of cake to fortify us for our walk. Our guide, Sharon Mooney, will take the opportunity to talk about the origins of the Cemetery before taking us to see some interesting graves - not necessarily the well known ones usually pointed out on the 'official' tour. I am aware that the Friends of the Museums are due to have a talk by Sharon later this year (I wasn't when I booked the event) but she assures me that, although there might be a little overlap, she will talk about different things so it will be worth it to do both! The Starlight Tea Room is a lovely. It was built in 1855 as the Cemetery's Non-Conformist chapel. The Grade 2 listed building was decommissioned about 45 years ago and left empty for a long while before

being used firstly by the Cemetery gardeners and then as a florist's shop. It is close to the lower gate to the Cemetery if you are walking or coming by bus. There are a few parking spaces close to the cafe but others nearby as well. Please complete and return the reply slip enclosed with this Newsletter if you wish to join us.

Cost? £11.50 including refreshments. Sharon donates her fee to the Go4 Cafe at the Old Heath Recreation Ground. Go4's mission is to create volunteering, work experience, training, and employment opportunities for unemployed people whilst providing quality support and help to increase their skills, employability, and well-being.

TUESDAY 3rd May 2022 Meet on the Lower Terrace at Grey Friars Hotel at 10am for our first Coffee Morning/ Discussion Group for over 2 years!

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE COFFEE MORNINGS IN MAY AND JUNE ARE ON THE FIRST TUESDAYS IN THE MONTH NOT THE NORMAL MONDAYS. The reason for this is avoidance of the Bank Holidays, not normally something that bothers us but as we are outside, we thought it would be better for Grey Friars whilst they are recovering from the effects of the pandemic.

For those who have never been to a Civic Society Coffee Morning, this is something of a misnomer. Yes, we have coffee and tea but the morning is really an opportunity to discuss what is happening in our town - planning, highways, public transport, heritage, cleanliness, open spaces, the environment and whatever else takes your fancy! We have no agenda apart from a bit of feedback at the beginning of the meeting and the occasional guest speaker talking for a few minutes about a particular issue. It is your chance to ask about things that are affecting the town, to suggest a 'plan of action' for the Executive Committee to consider; perhaps to offer your knowledge or expertise or simply to listen. It is our chance, as committee members, to hear your views. We normally finish about noon. This is very much an experiment. We are hoping for fine weather but please bring a mac or an umbrella, just in case! IF THE WEATHER IS AWFUL, PLEASE TELEPHONE ME BY 9.30am ON THE DAY TO SEE WHETHER WE ARE GOING AHEAD Tel No 07771626561.

Cost? Free but donations towards the cost of coffee always welcomed.

Sunday 22nd May 2022 Meet by the gate to Hollytrees Museum at 2pm for a 'Georgian Colchester' Tour

Ann Turner, Civic Society Vice Chair, Membership Secretary, Heritage Open Days Coordinator and very experienced and knowledgeable Blue Badge Guide, has offered us her walking tour of Georgian Colchester; based mainly in the area around East Hill. I do hope you can join us. Please complete and return the booking slip if you would like to come

Cost? £5

Tuesday 7th June 2022 Meet on the Lower Terrace at Grey Friars at 10am for our June Coffee Morning/Discussion Group

Please read the May Coffee Morning details for information.

Thursday 16th June Meet at Colchester's Mercury Theatre at 3pm for a tour of the building.

It seems absolutely ages since we met at the Mercury to find out what the plans were for extending and refurbishing the building but it is actually not that long ago. You will remember, too, that we raised a good sum towards the Mercury Rising Appeal. This is your chance to see what has been done. Hopefully, you will be impressed. Apart from the front of house area and the auditorium itself, there will also be the opportunity to see what has happened backstage. Please bring a mask with you as it may make those who feel a little uncomfortable more confident if they know that people will wear masks if asked. Please complete and return the booking slip if you would like to join us.

Cost? Free BUT contributions towards a donation to the Mercury Theatre gratefully received. Like all theatres, COVID has knocked them for six!

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
VICE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	Ann Turner , 1 Robin Close, Great Bentley CO7 8QH 01206 250894 ann@hollytreehouse.com
TREASURER	Paul Weston , 46 Wordsworth Road, Colchestetr CO3 4HR paulweston523@gmail.com
SECRETARY	Mike Fitt , 31 Roman Road, Colchester CO1 1UR
NEWSLETTER EDITOR	Peter Evans , 5 Grimston Road, Colchestet CO2 7RN 01206 540990 peter.evans7978@btinternet.com
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

AN A.B.C. THEATRE
PLAYHOUSE THEATRE

TELEPHONE—3080 COLCHESTER Manager—G. CHADWICK

TWICE NIGHTLY 6.0 & 8.15 **MONDAY, OCT. 27th** **MATINEE on SATURDAY at 2.30**
ON THE STAGE

THE ONE AND ONLY

DR. CROCK AND HIS CRACKPOTS

THE MAD MUSICIANS

THE B.B.C.'s GREATEST COMEDIAN

HARRY SECOMBE

THE GOLDEN VOICED GOON

THE SENSATIONAL **SKYLONS**

EUROPE'S TOP TRAPEZE STARS

DIRECT FROM THE CONTINENT

LIZZET & EDDIE

FROM THE U.S.A.

ALLEN & LEE

FRED ATKINS

NEW STYLE VENTROLOGUET

TWO **ARISTOCRATS**

BOX OFFICE OPEN DAILY—10.30 a.m. to 8.0 p.m.

THEATRE TRUST, Ltd. London & S. Africa