

COLCHESTER RECALLED

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THE FLOOD AT PLOUGH CORNER 1974

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Some Memories of Lexden

My Life as a Butcher and Slaughterman

Freddy and Sydney Chapman

A Boy from 'Down the North'

Who Do You Think They Are?

and much more!

Welcome to issue No.31 of COLCHESTER
RECALLED.

Again, as you will see, we have another good selection of articles and photographs which we hope you will enjoy.

We are always delighted to receive your articles, letters and photographs. These should be sent to either

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or to

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Colchester Recalled Oral History Society 2017-2018

OUR PROGRAMME

7pm at the Roman Circus Centre

- **SEPTEMBER 14th (2017)**
Philip Crummy:
'What Actually Happened at a Roman Circus?'
- **OCTOBER 12th**
David Newman:
'The Ancient Salt Industry of Maldon and the Blackwater Estuary'
- **NOVEMBER 16th**
Adrian Hutson:
'How the Battle of Maldon 991AD Changed the History of Colchester and Essex'
- **DECEMBER 14th**
Colcheser Picture Qiz and Film:
'Archaeology Under the North Sea'
- **JANUARY 18th (2018)**
Peter Jones:
'The Coming of the Railway to Colchester'
- **FEBRUARY 15th**
Hugh Frostick:
'The Underground Army in Essex in World War II'
- **MARCH 15th**
Chris Strachan:
'The Rescue of the Electric Palace - the Early Cinema in Harwich'
- **APRIL 12th**
Ted Woodgate:
'Rural North Essex and the Campaign for Agricultural Labourers in the 1890s'
- **MAY 17th**
James Grinter's Antiques Roadshow:
'Reeman & Dansie the Auctioneers'
(Please bring your antiques)
- **JUNE 14th**
Annual General Meeting followed by
Dr Terry Smyth
'Your Father is in the Next Room'
Interviewing children of Far East prisoners of war

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Colchester Recalled Oral History Society,
 was set up in 1988 to record
 for future generations the memories
 of the people of Colchester
 and the surrounding area.

You are most welcome to join us.
 The Annual Subscription
 is £7 per person or £12 for a couple.

WANTED:

Volunteers to listen to our recordings
 and make summaries of them.
 If you are interested
 please contact
 Andrew Phillips on 01206 546775.

OUR NEXT ISSUE

No.32 is due for publication in Autumn 2018.
 Letters and articles should be addressed to
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THE FLOODING OF PLOUGH CORNER

The ladies in distress on our front cover, paddling along planks at St Botolph's Roundabout in 1974, helped by the arm of the law, link the long saga of building Southway with the ancient geology of Colchester.

18,000 years ago the site of Colchester sat under a large ice sheet that covered most of Britain. As the ice melted it dumped 50 feet of sand and gravel across this area – hence all that gravel extraction at Stanway. A large glacier scoured out the flood plain of the river Colne, cutting through the sand and gravel into the thick London clay below. Colchester thus stands on a hill of sand and gravel.

When it rains the water drains down till it reaches the London clay – which is impermeable. The water runs along it until it reaches the sides of Colchester's great hill, creating many natural springs bleeding off water. There is one on the Hilly Fields which feeds the large ponds by the old by-pass, Cymbeline Way, which was built in the 1930s on a raft across marshy ground.

Colchester's water supply depended on these springs for hundreds of years, either from wells dug down to the London

clay, or reservoirs collecting it from the springs. That is why the Waterworks was at the bottom of Balkerne Hill, and water from its spring-fed reservoir was pumped up the hill to the tank on top of Jumbo.

Down North Hill and East Hill, where the springs emerged, the Victorians built large breweries using the constant supply of free water.

One of the largest springs came out at St Botolph's Corner. It was this spring which led to St Botolph's Priory being built there. The monks used the water, which in recent times flushed the toilets at the Britannia Works and flowed through Nicholson's Nursery until it was sold for housing. The WOOLPACK pub at the bottom of St Botolph's Street and the PLOUGH Inn opposite (which gave its name to the Corner), both brewed their own beer from that spring, and in 1800 an enormous brewery was built off Stanwell Street called St Botolph's Brewery. This was later converted into a factory for making Army boots and, later still Hollington's, a factory for making men's clothing. When this was destroyed in the midnight bombing of St Botolph's Corner in 1944 and

the raging fires which followed, Jumbo pumped dry and fire brigades had to get water from the river, using 14 sets of pumps. Little did they realise that a vast reservoir of free water lay under the basement of Hollington's, where it had been ever since the days of the brewery. No one had told the fire brigades.

And no one told the Highways Department when Southway was built, and a large subway system was installed at St Botolph's Corner, renamed St Botolph's Circus by Councillor Bob Russell because of the new roundabout. The underpass kept filling with water and it cost £500,000 at 1974 prices to get it sorted.

There was a clue in the street name – Stanwell Street (stone well street) which exploited the same spring. Then a mechanical digger drilled into a water main. Water gushed forth and an enterprising press photographer took the picture on our front page.

During heavy rain that subway still fills up and the borough is considering its removal now that it is also a source of violence and mugging once darkness descends on our town.

Andrew Phillips

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE OLD EMPIRE CINEMA

I must confess that I have never really been a film fan. Once in a blue moon I will venture to the cinema for something that seems worth watching, so I never did

actually watch a film at the old EMPIRE, but I came to know it well in other ways.

The Manager, with whom my father was acquainted was Mr. Alexander, who lived in

New Town. Think of the character of the Town Clerk in *Dad's Army* and you have Mr. Alexander. Tall, upright, slim, smartly dressed with knife edge creases to his trousers and

polished shoes. A Gentleman from head to toe.

Mr. Alexander would take the occasional 'constitutional' arm in arm with, I was told, his sister, down the Old Heath Road where I then lived. A lady of similar stature and style, they made a handsome couple.

After the EMPIRE Cinema closed, the premises were acquired in the early 1960's by Mr. T.M. Locke the house furnisher for conversion into a depository and workshops. Mr. Locke, who had an extensive store spanning Queen Street through the old Arcade and into Long Wyre Street, was the Harry Selfridge of Colchester. In implementing Mr. Locke's plans for the EMPIRE, I played my part and came to know the place well.

The old Victorian builders knew a thing or two. There is an old adage that mortar is used to keep the bricks apart not to bind them together, (this gives flexibility). Beneath the wonderful plaster façade of the Mersea Road, the old Empire

was built like a fortress.

Constructing a single storey structure at Portland Road and maintaining a level roof line toward St. Botolph's Corner used the natural slope of the Mersea Road to produce a three storey structure at the St. Botolph's end of the site and therefore, provide an internal sloping auditorium, ideal for a theatre/cinema seating plan.

This resulting auditorium was cavernous and was then terraced to provide seating for a large audience. To show films the projection box was sited at the Portland Road end and the screen at the St. Botolph's Corner end. Under Mr. Locke's plan, the entire timber seating structure was removed right down to the earth beneath. A huge task involving a large amount of timber. I can never remember the actual seats themselves. By this time practically everything of the cinema had been removed although the vast curtains still hung at each side of the stage/screen. I do remember

workmen arriving to strip out all the equipment from the projection box.

A central sloping ramp was then constructed so that a furniture pantechnicon could be reversed down, passing through roller shutter doors installed at the Portland Road end. On either side of this ramp was constructed football ground style terracing to be used for the storage of furniture either on behalf of clients or stock for the store. All this work was carried out using considerable amounts of concrete, which subsequently must have provided the demolition contractors who raised the building, with quite a task. Since no actual excavations took place in carrying out the work no sign of the famous 'St. Botolph's Spring' was encountered.

At the St. Botolph's Corner end of the building, Mr. Locke's plans took advantage of the three storey height and a mezzanine floor was erected. This provided space for



The extension in Portland Road to the EMPIRE cinema as built for T.M. Locke's furniture depository

upholstery workshops, further storage and staff facilities. Of all the various workshops and equipment, I particularly remember the Mattress Refresher.

A long wooden box like three very large coffins placed end to end. The mattress would be carefully unpicked and its contents poured into a hopper at one end of the machine. Switching on produced much whirring and grinding and the

filling would emerge at the other end refreshed. The mattress would then be re-stuffed and sewn up to be returned to use.

The premises were provided with new electrical and heating systems, the Boiler Room being converted from the old Mersea Road ticket hall.

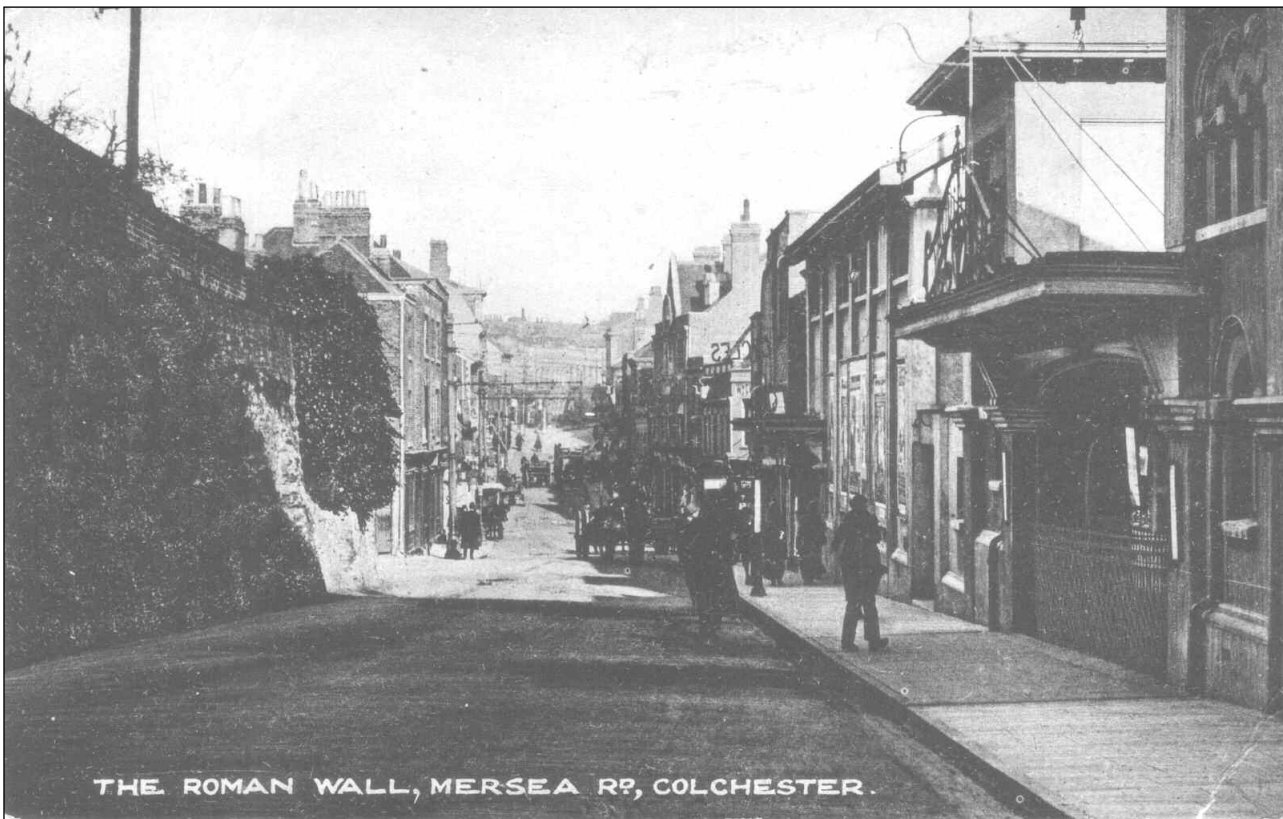
Oil tanks were installed at the Portland Road end of the building to supply fuel to both the Boiler Room and for

the various delivery vehicles.

Unfortunately, the days of the EMPIRE in its new role were relatively short lived. Locke's became Keddies and the old Arcade became Priory Walk.

The EMPIRE itself was demolished in 1976-? to make way for Southway. I remember the demolition and seeing the arched metal roof trusses of the building exposed to the sky high above St. Botolph's.

David Butcher



The photograph above is from a postcard dated about 1906 which has special memories for me, as my father Bill ran the family's tailoring shop in Mersea Road, next door to the Empire cinema shown on the right hand side of the road. In fact, I was born in the flat above the shop in 1953.

The Empire was originally known as the Vaudeville and popularly known as the Flea Pit!

WA Jolliffe and Sons, which became the Garrison Tailors, started trading in 1949 and moved to Crouch Street, when Plough Corner, as shown in the photograph was re-developed in 1974, the area becoming known as St Botolph's Roundabout. He also ran the Garrison Tailors shop in Layer Road. I vividly remember seeing steam rising from the engines at St Botolph's station and I am now active in the attempt to get the station name changed from Colchester Town back to include the St Botolph's name. So far, I have been informed by Greater Anglia chiefs that a new sign will be erected reading 'Colchester Town formerly St Botolph's'.

William Jolliffe

LEARNING TO DRIVE IN COLCHESTER IN 1958

Taking Driving Lessons in Colchester in 1958 does not seem, at first sight, to be so demanding but when you consider that Colchester is built on a high plateau surrounded by hills, this brought unforeseen problems. Amongst the several steep hills leading up to the centre of Colchester, each one held that hidden menace, the terrifying 'hill start' and the dreaded 'double-declutching'. From memory, there were no one-way streets in the centre of Colchester and all were two-way, each with oncoming traffic to negotiate. There were very few sets of traffic lights and no mini-roundabouts, but there was less traffic, I grant you.

My driving lessons started from Hammond's Garage, on the left of Shewell Road that later became Cheeseman's television shop. It was just past the Library that had opened in 1939 as the Food Office and next to the Garage was the Quakers' Meeting House, built the previous year. It had replaced the earlier Meeting House opposite, on the corner of Sir Isaac's Walk, called 'Rebow Chambers'. All of these buildings, except for part of the Library, were to succumb to the bulldozers in 1987.

My route around town took me out of Sir Isaac's Walk into Head Street and down to the bottom of North Hill, to the sharp left turn between the Roman Wall and the Cattle Market. This was the entrance to the fearful Balkerne Hill that

then bore no resemblance to the benign version of the present day. The road was narrow and it skirted close to the Roman Wall, with overhanging ivy and it became progressively steeper

On 4th January 1847, the rise in the ground in the High Street between Pelham's Lane and the *Red Lion Inn* was considered 'very dangerous'. These were the remnants of the



The HORSE AND GROOM - standing on the corner of Balkerne Lane and Crouch Street before the re-development of the town centre

and steeper. At last, like exiting from Hades, you reached the top by the KING'S HEAD (later the HOLE IN THE WALL). Here the road levelled out and it progressed to the narrow junction with Crouch Street by the HORSE AND GROOM. Opposite and slightly to the right was the narrow entrance to Maldon Road.

Like the present Balkerne Hill, over the years, other hills in Colchester have been smoothed out. Most notable was East Hill when it was closed to the 'passage of carriages' from 23rd April 1817 to enable eight feet of ground to be removed from the brow of the hill.

Roman fortress, rampart and ditch that crossed the High Street. The hump in the road was reduced but it is still clearly visible.

The speediest road in 1958 was the Colchester By-Pass that had been built between 1930 and 1933. The portion called Cymbeline Way, now the Avenue of Remembrance, ran from the junction with Sheepen Road, past Glen Avenue and Spring Lane on the left and then up the slope to where it joined Lexden Road. Here it became London Road and the island there was of a similar design to the present day, except that there was an RAC Box on the corner nearest to

The extraordinary thing about this portion of the By-pass was that it consisted of three lanes with the centre one being used for over-taking, in both directions, at the same time, with no priority. Leading up to the summer of 1944, the road was reduced to two lanes because prior to D-Day, the northern-most lane was full of parked army vehicles. The affects of three lanes are still apparent because although the

road has now only two lanes, the northern-most lane is much wider than normal.

I tackled the hazards of driving in Colchester on several occasions, including the 'hill starts' and the 'double-declutching', until the day of my test. That was in the afternoon of Wednesday, 22nd October 1958 from the Driving Test Centre in Wellesley Road, almost at the bottom on the left, close to the corner of

Crouch Street. After driving around Colchester for half an hour, very carefully, the examiner told me that I had passed.

My trip home was on the top deck of a double-decker bus and my spirits could not have been higher. I thought that if I can master driving in Colchester, I can master anything and I still think that sometimes.

Bruce Neville

FREDDY AND SYDNEY CHAPMAN

Patrick Denney's article about Freddy the Shrimp Man, which appeared in the last issue of this magazine, brought back for me, memories of Freddy's wedding in 1957. The ceremony was conducted in St. Stephens' church, Canterbury Road and, as a very new member of the church choir, I sang one of the verses of the 23rd Psalm as a solo. The church was packed, with people standing at the back as I believe Freddy had invited all his customers and, at the age of 12, I can recall feeling not a little nervous.

His bride was Blanche A. Hawes, (of all things to remember, the 'A' stood for Alice!) Freddy was 63 and Blanche was a couple of years or so younger.

I believe they had put their marriage on hold for a number of years as there were elderly parents to consider and, sadly, their marriage was to be a very short one, as Blanche died in 1959, aged 63.

My mother and I often



Freddy Chapman

bought shrimps from Freddy and after he gave up that business, I can recall being somewhat surprised seeing him, on one occasion, cleaning the ground floor windows of what was then THE CLARENCE public house. It may have been a 'one-off', as it would seem to have been a very unusual business venture, given his age at the time and his height disadvantage!

I can't add anything else about Freddy, but I can give a bit of an insight into his younger brother, Sydney, born 1900/1901.

Around 1955 my future

in-laws moved to a bungalow in Mersea Road and Sydney Chapman was their next door neighbour. I think it would be fair to describe him as a 'rough diamond' who made a living 'wheeling and dealing'.

He owned a piece of land on the left hand side of Mersea Road, going out of town towards Blackheath, where he kept a collection of old cars, breaking them up and selling components.

Sid, as my in-laws knew him, was known to be fond of a tippie and they thought a lot of his business was probably conducted in local pubs; on more than one morning they had found him asleep in his driveway and during the winter he would be covered in frost or snow.

In 1942, around Christmas-time, Sydney had suffered an horrific family tragedy that saw him lose his partner and their six children, the eldest aged just 8; they were all found gassed in their home, so that may have caused him to seek

solace in his cups thereafter.

Sydney, unlike his brother Freddy, was not vertically challenged, and even in later life he had considerable strength. His business premises were perhaps a quarter of a mile from his bungalow and, on one occasion, in the late 1960's, I met him midway between the two, heading for his bungalow; he was walking slowly carrying a sack and stopped for a brief word. He put the sack on the ground and said to me, "Feel the weight o' that boy".

I struggled to even lift it, and looking inside I saw that it contained at least two big vehicle batteries.

Sid kept chickens which were free to range anywhere, including his kitchen!

He appeared to lead a pretty

spartan life with few frills but in 1970/71 he sold his land to the developers of the future Birch Glen Estate.

I believe he was paid well for the land, but that did not stop him from bemoaning the fact that his poor health prevented him from being able to properly oversee the disposal of his cars, and he had therefore had to sell them for next to nothing to another scrap dealer.

That mortified him, "There was a lot o' good stuff there boy," he told me.

Sadly the money came too late for him to benefit, and he died in 1972.

Whilst Sydney could never be described as a model neighbour, my in-laws had a soft spot for him and when my father-in-law died a few weeks

before his own demise, Sydney had 'looked out' for my mother-in-law. She was very grateful and went to pay her respects at his funeral. Being back at the crematorium so soon after her own bereavement she was naturally very upset to the extent that she was unable to follow the proceedings and it was not until she was going out after the service that it became apparent that she had been attending the funeral before Sydney's, so had to sit through it all again!

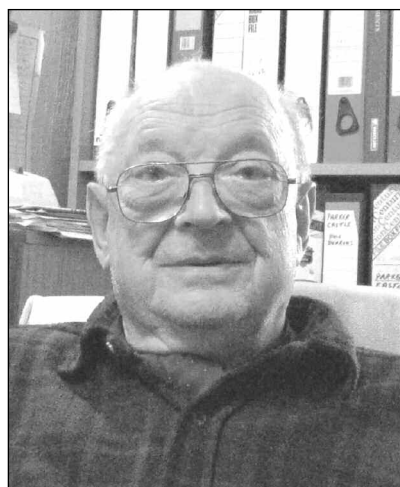
It obviously wasn't funny at the time but, as you might imagine, it was the source of some wry smiles in subsequent years.

Clive Sims

MY LIFE AS A BUTCHER AND SLAUGHTERMAN

I was born in Colchester in 1938 and our family lived over the butcher's shop at 27 Middleborough – which was at the bottom of North Hill on the corner of Sheepen Road. After we left there the shop was later taken over by Firmin's who also had a shop in the High Street. My father was a butcher and his father before him had been a butcher so I suppose I was destined to become one as well. My grandfather had first started as a butcher in Woodbridge where my father also started out and it was sometime before the war in the 1930s when they moved to Colchester.

Like most butcher shops of the day we had a slaughterhouse out the back but it was



Alan Thurlow seen in the study of his Layer Marney home in 2016

closed when the Second World War started because the Ministry shut all the slaughterhouses in the town and drafted all the slaughtermen down to the Co-op in Sheepen Road under war-time regulations.

Some of the slaughterhouses opened again in 1953 when they were de-controlled, but many remained closed. Our shop was right next to the Cattle Market and as young boys we used to love hanging around the market helping out with the cattle and the pigs.

I left school when I was 15 and first started work on a farm at Stanway where I stayed for about a year. But my father was always keen for me to learn a trade so I went and worked alongside him, who by this time was working in the butchery department at Turner Village Hospital. My first duties included cutting up the meat and making sausages and I was probably earning about £2-10-00 a week (£2.50p).



Alan Thurlow pictured above in Frank Wright's butcher shop standing in front of a 'Baron of Beef' (a joint consisting of two sirloins joined at the backbone), which had been prepared for a banquet in the Town Hall in 1985 to celebrate a milestone anniversary of the granting of a royal charter to the Colchester Royal Grammar School

After working there for about two years, I decided that I would like to move on so my father got me a job at John Knight's yard down at the Hythe. This was a knacker's yard and this is where I learned how to do slaughtering. We used to slaughter horses and cattle – some were brought in alive and others which had died would be collected from the farms. We used to have to skin them and the carcasses were then turned into dog's meat. Everything was done by hand.

You would skin the animals on the ground and then raise

them up and dress them on a hoist. The skins would be taken off in one piece and then be sent off to the hide merchants. The carcasses that were left would then be cut up for the dogs. People who used to keep greyhounds and that sort of thing used to come and collect the meat – it was all sold directly from the premises. The animals were shot with a captive bolt pistol, but before I was allowed to use one I had to take a test and get a licence to allow me to slaughter animals. All animals had to be taken to a designated slaughterhouse before you were allowed to shoot them.

When I finished there I went to work for Alan Cook in St John's Street which later became Geller's. I worked there for a while as an ordinary butcher. One of the first things that you had to learn in the butchery trade was how to sharpen a knife and this was always done on a carborundum stone. You would then use a steel for honing the blade.

After that you would be taught how to bone the meat and cut the joints up.

Later on I managed to get a job at Allen's in St Botolph's Street which at the time still had its own slaughterhouse. The bullocks used to be delivered to the shop from the market by lorry at that time and on one occasion I remember that one bullock got loose and crashed headlong into a shop window – it had apparently been spooked by seeing its own reflection in the glass. Once the animals had been shot we would cut their throats and drain the blood before rolling the animal on its back to complete the work. There used to be four of us working as a team. There would be two at the back – one on each side – and then the bullock would go up on the hoist and one would start taking the hide off while the other one would be taking the insides out from the front. That was the team and you had to pull your weight. Our busiest day at Allen's was on a Saturday when we would kill about 15 bullocks. They would be killed, dressed and then left hanging in the slaughterhouse to cool down.

My final job after working at Allen's was for Frank Wright's in Crouch Street where I stayed for the next 46 years before finally retiring when I was 70 years old. During that time I had worked my way up through the various positions to become shop manager.

*Edited from an interview with
Patrick Denney*

COLCHESTER RECALLED REVISITED

I recently looked through previous issues of *Colchester Recalled*. How refreshing it turned out to be!

Issue 1 arrived while my son was doing up an old house in Maidenburgh Street which was lit by gas. It had an old glass lamp shade on the wall with the name Owen Parry and pictures of animals on it. Unfortunately, when taking it down, he dropped it. I wonder what it would be worth today?

The sketch of A. Leveridge the walk racer who lived in Magdalen Street, was known as 'Sausage'. I have seen him race at the White City stadium.

Issue 7 mentions the open air swimming pool on Colne Bank Avenue.* I swam for my School Certificate there in the 1930s. The pool before that was a straight one, which when learning to swim a belt attached to a long pole was put around

the waist and the instructor walked along the bank holding you up. The man in charge of the pool was Len Parker. In those days there was a swimming race from the Hythe to Wivenhoe, which Len often won. Wally Whitten who was at the Blue Coat School with me also a won of the race.

Issue 10 features a photograph of Alf Medcalf. He had mororbikes outside his shop in High Street at the same time that Pauls had cycles outside theirs - I worked for Pauls for two years from 1933. While in issue 12 the policeman taking notes outside Pauls Cycle Shop in Barrack Street is PC McDowell and standing next to him is Detective Ted Pearson. I remember nearly all the names of the fruit and vegetable stall holders at the High Street Saturday market and also Mr Loyd, who had a meat stall who

also had a shop in St John's Street.

In issue 11 Bob Russell, now Sir Bob, called for the photograph of the 1st Nicholas Cub pack to be enlarged and hung in the Thorrington Cub Hall.

Issue 15 mentions the paper round by horse and cart that I was involved in while at that time Alf Medcalf was building a house on the way to Birch with a petrol pump in front. Other customers at that time included Vivian Blake at Prettygate Farm and Tim Blake at Magazine Farm, for whom the Stott brothers, Percy and Sid ran milk rounds.

The letter from Tony Leader (issue 22) brought back some memories as I often played darts against him and his father in the local Trumans' Darts League, while in issue 24 there is a picture of Jack Ashton being interviewed by Patrick



Denney. This bought back many happy memories, of our time together as railway steam engine drivers.

More recent memories not particularly involving *Colchester Recalled* include my knowing James Grinter the auctioneer, who previously worked at Paskell and Cann on East Hill. I used to go there every week to buy bicycles. He moved to Reemans when they were in Butt Road.

A photograph of Sturtons the ironmongers, when they were in St Botolph's Street, took my mind back 86 years, when I went there to get wire netting for some rabbit hutches that I

was making! The shop was situated to one side of the alley leading to Ralph Wright's slaughterhouse. A few yards further up the road was the Penny Bazaar.

On the opposite side of the road was the GREYHOUND public house. The stack pipe from the stove came out of the wall over the top of the pavement. I wondered if the photo of the London Central Meat Company could have been their shop at the bottom of Short Wyre Street, opposite Bob Digby's wholesale tobacconist. Bob played full back at Layer Road the same time as Pym Heasman, son of

the High Street jeweller.

I am 97 years old with a memory second to none. How many people still around can say that they have been in both the Penny Bazaar and the Soldiers Home when they were both open?

Ted Cant

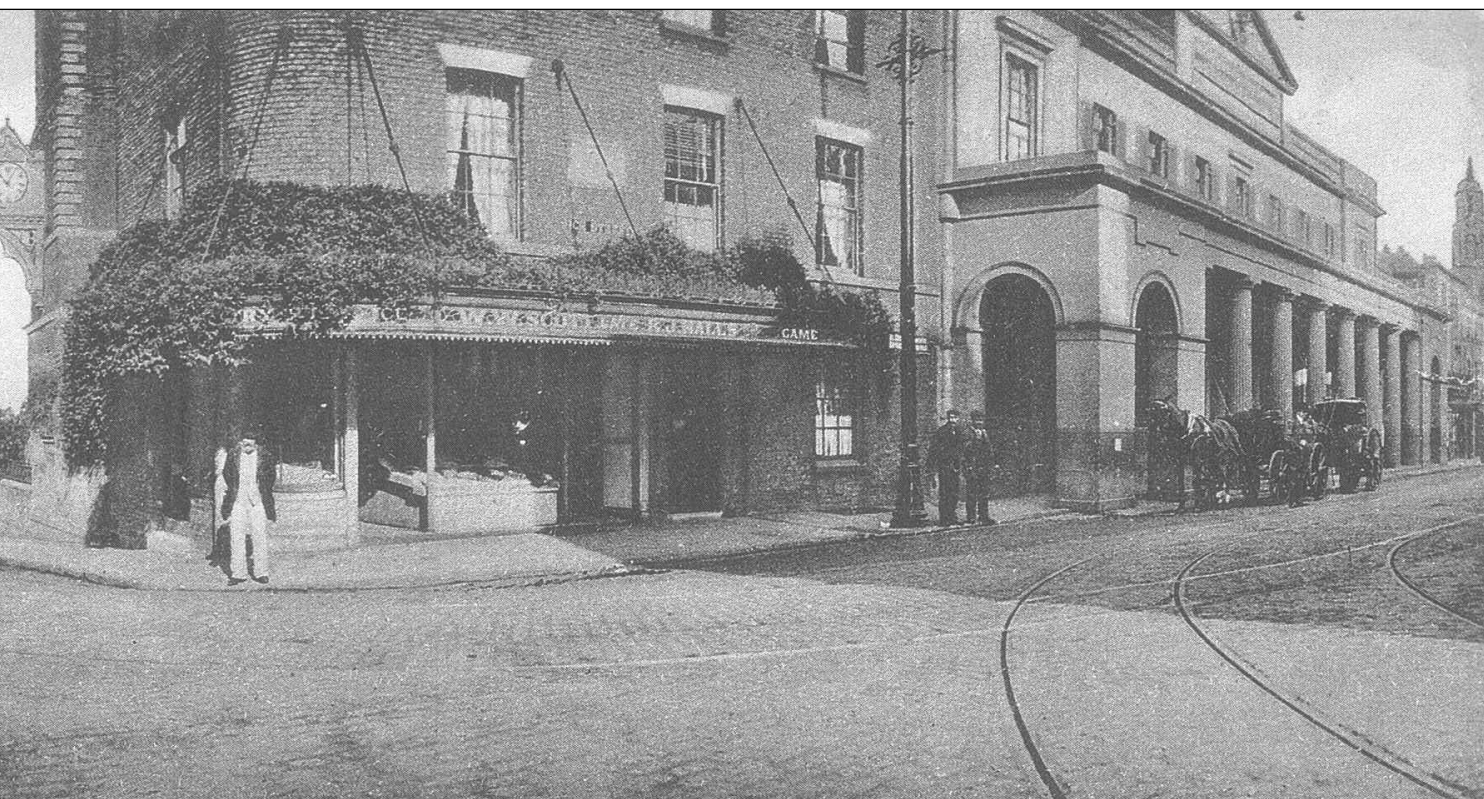
* See also page 14 of this issue. *Editor*

BACK ISSUES

If like Mr Cant you collect copies of *Colchester Recalled* and are missing any of the previous issues, please contact the Editor (details on the inside front cover). Copies are still available.

The photograph below is one of the four owned by Glyn Jackson, like the one of St Nicholas Church featured in the previous issue. This one shows the North Hill/High Street junction, in much more tranquil times. Note the pedestrians standing in the road, two horse and carts, the hand cart and the tram proceeding down hill. And fields on the horizon! All very peaceful compared to today.

Notice also the building line on the left hand side of Head Street. the public house today stands back further from the road, while opposite, the small trees above the churchyard, are much larger. Also to the right of the two standing figures, there appears to be a structure breaking the skyline - whatever was that?



SOME MEMORIES OF LEXDEN

Once a month the Sunday School I attended held a service at 2pm at St Leonard's Church, which was followed by a procession to the Parish Room on the corner of Nelson and London Roads. The procession was led by the vergier followed by the choirmaster, (who I believe was Mr Duff), the choir and then the Sunday School children. There was very little traffic due to petrol shortage. Now and again a Rummage Sale was held, and once my mother lent a piano stool containing music, sadly, it was sold by mistake!

The Sunday School Christmas Parties were lovely, with paste sandwiches and cakes. One year we ran out of milk so we had extra sugar in our tea. Mr Kemp, son of the farrier opposite Lexden Church caused great merriment by bringing his ventriloquist doll, the act was known as 'Clown Bertram and Kemp'.

Most Sunday afternoons my family walked across the fields belonging to the Misses Bird, of Home Farm. My father would buy freshly churned butter, which was delicious!

At No. 58 Heath Road lived Ena Tilbury, who at age 14 played hockey at her school. She was hit on the leg, which turned septic and was forced to have the limb amputated. Roughly opposite lived Olive Greengrass, the daughter of a gardener. One day she paddled in the River Colne in Spring Lane, where there was an old water mill. She was bitten

either by an insect or some other creature and that injury also turned septic resulting in her having her leg amputated. That was about 1930. Olive attended Lexden School, at that time in Spring Lane. The headmistress was Miss Stannard, the aunt of J. Woods, who years later became headmaster of St James' School on Riverside Estate near Marriage's Mill.

One day in Lexden School in 1941 we were four hours in the school shelter because of a 'dog fight' between English and German planes overhead. We were given a barley sugar sweet every two hours. After the raid the headmaster, Mr Mirrington (it might have been Mr Orrin), told the boys to pick up any cartridge cases or bullets, paying 3d for each one. On that day he paid out 11s.3d.

During the war years, Audrey Hagen of Heath Road delivered milk via a cart pulled

by Judy, the horse, which used to nibble all the hawthorn hedges. When Audrey had a new customer the horse refused to stop, while it insisted on stopping for old established customers.

No. 67 Heath Road was the home of the Tweed family. Mr and Mrs Tweed had eleven children. Mr Tweed made wooden rocking horses with real horse hair manes. Among the children I can remember are Eustace, Harold, Christine, Ivan, Janet, Mary, Peter and the youngest, Kathleen. In 1944 Mrs Tweed received an Air Ministry letter informing her that Eustace, a pilot, had crashed in Holland and was feared dead. Three weeks later I saw a small aeroplane circling over our house and two days later she was informed that Eustace had repaired the plane with the help of Dutch partisans, much to her delight.

Byfords of London Road used



The entrance gate to Prettygate Farm with its emblem clearly shown

to deliver bread. It was lovely. On Saturdays I collected the Sunday joint from Firmins the butcher, also in London Road.

Mr Beecham was the postman who when he saw an engineer working on the overhead telephone lines he would shout "The one above sees all!" The Post Office was opposite St Leonard's Church and the postmistress when she delivered my birthday cards to No. 56 Heath Road on the 21st June 1954, sang *Happy Birthday to You* with a German accent, followed by *You're 21 Today*.

Charles Arthur lived at 1 Richardson Walk and had a bedroom with a dormer window overlooking a wheat field at the back of his house. He often leaned out with a

shotgun calling to people walking to Shrub End, via a style, 'If you go in that corn I'll shoot ye!'

Mr Cross was the local policeman. One night he was badly injured in a dark dip in the road at Copford, leading to his early retirement from the force. Coincidentally, his father lost his life at the same spot.

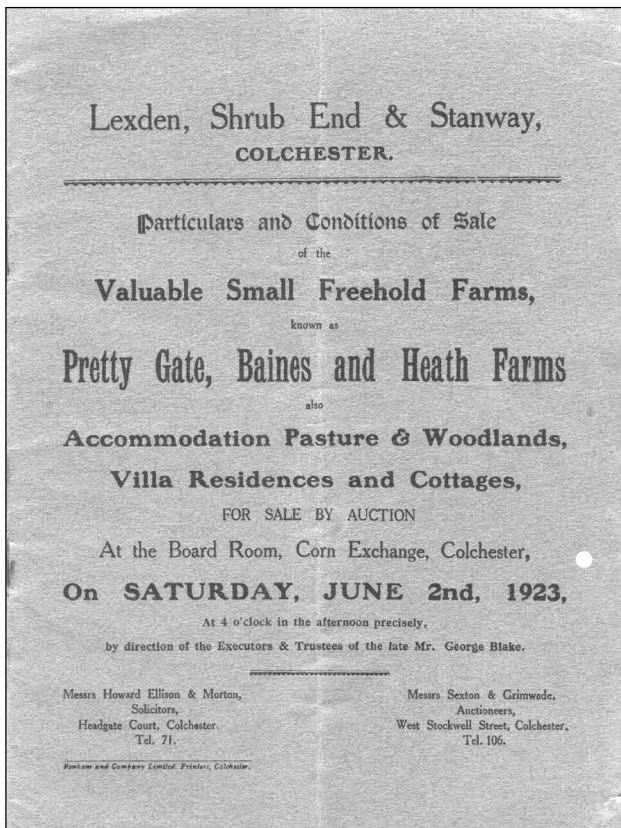
I believe Mr Samuel Cardy is featured on a memorial in the front of St Leonard's Church. He ran a sweet shop at about 74 Heath Road. In 1939 I used to buy chocolate bars at 1d and 3d each, my 3 year old brother went with me, I was about six at the time. Mr Cardy closed the shop at the outbreak of the War. I married his grandson Ronald in 1970.

Next door, George Cardy sold vegetables and local fruit from a horse and cart and doing the same was Thomas Cardy of Cherry Row (off Heath Road) and another brother who lived at West Bergholt.

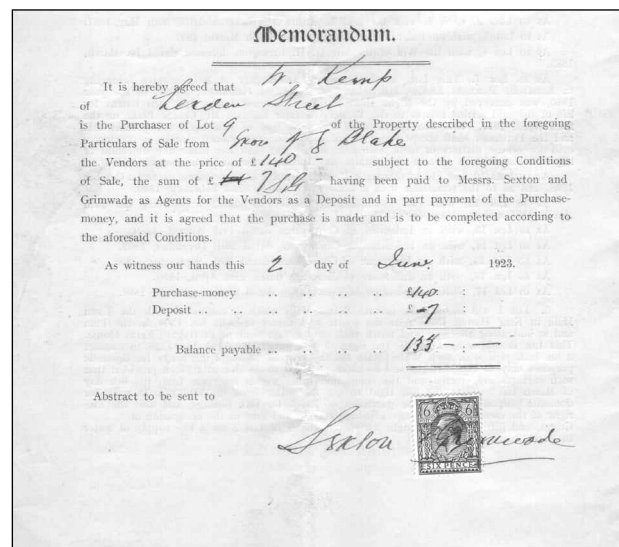
I also vividly remember Mr Freddy Chapman, the 'shrimp man', featured in issue No. 30 and also in this issue on page 5, he had a beautiful wooden cart, selling his shrimps and other fish in front of Lasts the bakers at the top of Scheregate Steps. The poor man was very short and in 1956 he married a tall woman. He would come to the Colchester Tax Office to claim his tax relief of £300 per annum and he could hardly reach the counter - I know because I was the counter clerk. I also remember an Indian tax payer who had four wives who would claim four lots of tax relief!

Happy memories from some pretty difficult times.

Wendy Cardy



The 1923 Particulars of Sale for Pretty Gate, Baines and Heath Farms and other properties, for which Howard Ellison & Morton and Sexton & Grimwade were respectively solicitors and auctioneers



The memorandum from the Particulars of Sale confirming that Mr Kemp the farrier, (whose son featured in Clown Bertram and Kemp), paid £140 to Mr George Blake for his blacksmith's shop



THE SPRINGBOKS AT CASTLE PARK IN 1955

The final cartoon in this series owned by Michael Buse, was drawn by 'Nobby', whose work appeared weekly in the *Colchester Gazette*.

This one features the visit of

the South African cricket team versus Essex in 1955.

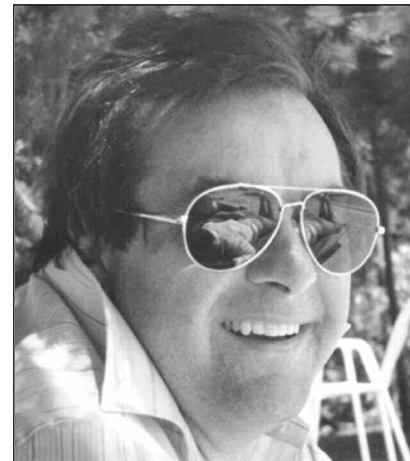
The two captains were Doug Insole and Dudley Nourse, and among the star players were Trevor Bailey and

Paul Gibb for Essex and Clive Van Reynveldt, (who was also an international rugby star), Peter Heine, (opening bowler) and Jackie McGlew, (opening batsman) for the visitors.

A BOY FROM 'DOWN THE NORTH'

*Memories of the late Peter Rose
submitted by his son Ian Rose.*

I was born on the 25th February 1938, and our family lived at 32 St Paul's Road. I probably first became aware of my surroundings when I started school in the nursery class at North Street School. This part of the school was more modern than the main building and to me always seemed to be bright and airy. There was a cloakroom where every pupil was allocated his own clothes peg, all being individually marked by a logo that the pupil could easily recognise, such as an apple, or a tree etc. The nursery class was a large hall type of room where the various activities took place, and in the afternoons we were all given a mattress to lie on while we took a half hour's rest. The room contained large French windows which opened onto the playground. Across the playground and against the boundary wall there were some air raid shelters and on



Two photographs of Peter Rose, left as a child living at 32 St Paul's Road and right, taken in about 1986, both copyright of his son Ian Rose

occasions when the air raid warning siren was heard, we were all herded in until the all clear siren was heard.

Our world at that time centred round the school catchment area and our main source of pleasure during the summer was the open air swimming pool, then known as 'The Bathing Place'. This had been constructed at the same time as the Bypass road had been built, about 1930, and the water was taken directly from the river, before passing through a sand and gravel filter

bed and a primitive treatment plant before entering the pool. The end nearest to the bridge was the deepest, about 10 feet deep, whereas the other end was about 3 feet. The wings at either side were only 1-2 feet deep for youngsters to paddle in. After the war two walls were built in the pool separating these two wings, because the floor shelved away quite quickly and it was considered risky. In fact, on one occasion before I learnt to swim, I nearly came to grief when I lost my footing and slipped down the



The air raid shelters at North Street Primary School, copyright of Patrick Denney



The open air swimming pool as it was in Colne Bank Avenue, photograph by the late Alf Jefferies

slope, but was saved by a teenage girl who lived near to us. Her name was Joan Thompson and she had seen what had happened and quickly grabbed my hair and pulled me out. Len Parker, the pool superintendent, then decided that he would teach me to swim, which he did in just a few days.

The pool was surrounded by concrete terracing, and at the far end was a café, open on good days for the sale of drinks and sometimes ice cream, which I remember as being more ice than cream. The end against the bridge had a diving board made of wood, comprising two boards about 15 feet high, one rigid and one springboard and spaced about 15 feet apart. Above and between them was another rigid board, which would have been about 25 feet high, and I can recall an occasion when a party of

German prisoners had been brought in for a swimming session (whilst working at reed cutting on the river), and one of these men, obviously an accomplished diver, jumped so hard on to the end of the top board that he caused the framework underneath to break in two, much to our amusement and Len Parker's fury. During wartime we were not able to visit the seaside so the swimming pool was an absolute godsend, especially to the locals. Parties from local schools were walked down there for lessons in term time, and the army used it for training. Squads of soldiers marched from the barracks and I remember them being ordered to jump in along one side and make their way to the other side. They were all dressed in their full uniform complete with tin hat and rifle and as some could not swim. There

were a number of accidents, the most serious being when one soldier drowned. When these activities were taking place, Len Parker was usually afloat in a rowing boat. Thinking about it now, they were probably training for the D Day landings.

St Paul's churchyard was another adventure playground for us boys and also provided an out of hours means of access to the swimming pool. It also served as a means of access to the Essex Hall hospital orchard, where apples and medlars grew quite prolifically, and also gave access to the many large conker trees which stood in the grounds - which were officially closed to us, but boys will be boys!

Nearly opposite the church, at 17 Belle Vue Road, lived three of my pals, Billy, Ronnie and Neil Aspden, whose father was away in the army during

the war. We used to go on 'expeditions' either down the fields along the Bypass, or up to High Woods, or even sometimes down to what we called the Low Woods – an area of worked out brick clay workings situated between the railway lines and the rear of Mason's factory in Cowdray Avenue. This area somewhat resembled a First World War battle field, being swampy land and small trees which provided a ready source of sticks for bows and arrows and catapults etc.

It was possible to cross the railway at this point via a level crossing beside the engine sheds to a footpath which continued the footway leading from Cowdray Avenue. Immediately over this crossing was an area of low lying land where Radcliffe's the High Street gunsmiths, had their shooting school grounds which included a tall tower for despatching clay pigeons. My cousin Derek Rose became an apprentice gunsmith with

Radcliffe's and spent some weekends shying the pigeons from this tower.

Toby Coleman, the poultry dealer also used this land for keeping his chickens and could be seen every day walking from his house at 1 John Harper Street carrying four buckets of chicken feed, two on each arm, all the way up to his chickens. Some Saturdays I would help him collecting new stock from the poultry market, situated next to THE CASTLE pub on the station side of North Bridge, and take them to his pens. At Christmas time I sometimes helped him and 'Rocky', his right hand man, with poultry plucking in his large shed behind *THE GLOBE* in North Station Road. Rocky was a funny old boy, always dressed like a tramp - had no teeth - and was always champing away on his gums and mumbling to himself. On one or two occasions when I had been helping Toby on Saturdays at the market he would give me a

cardboard box containing upto two dozen day old chicks to take home. My mum usually raised as many as she could by keeping them on layers of old newspapers in front of the fire, as they needed heat, and kept captive by the laid flat fire guard. After a few weeks they would be weaned off and gradually let outside in the garden run.

When not working for Toby, Rocky, and his equally 'well dressed' mate, known to one and all as 'Rubberneck' eked out an existence by walking round the streets plying for rags and bones and rabbit skins which were purchased for a copper or two from local housewives. They sold their day's collection to old Mr Amos, in St Peters Street who, in turn, sold the rags to a rag merchant, the bones to a glue factory and the rabbit skins to a factory in Brandon, for treatment, which then went on to fur coat makers.

To be continued

“WOT! NO MILK?”

It was Christmas 1944 when farmer, William Strang of Little Bromley went to Jacklin's Restaurant for his usual morning coffee, only to be told that there was “no milk”.

“NO MILK!?” he replied.

The waitress informed him that there was a shortage of milk in all of the restaurants in Colchester, due to the war.

Now, Bill Strang did not like black coffee and as a result of a £5 wager, he was challenged by

a friend to take matters into his own hands.

The following Saturday, he took one of his prized Friesian cows 'Bessie' to Colchester High Street in a trailer and parked it outside Jacklin's. 'Bessie' was led out onto the pavement amongst the

Christmas shoppers, a stool and bucket were placed beneath her and he proceeded to milk her.

With his bucket of milk in hand, he went inside and ordered his usual coffee, with

plenty of milk.

He told the waitress, “I can't drink coffee without milk, so I brought my cow with me”.

The proceeds of his £5 bet were paid although it quickly passed to the Red Cross, nearby.

Extracts from the *Essex County Standard* of 22.12.1944, the *Daily Mirror* of 27.12.1944 and local folklore.

Bruce Neville

WHO DO YOU THINK THEY ARE?

The subject of our sixth article of the series in our previous issue was me, your editor. In this issue we feature another Committee member, but who is it? His name will be revealed in the next issue - Number 32.

What is your earliest memory?

Being dragged out of bed by my mother with bombs and VIs exploding nearby where we lived in North London. This was at night with the blackout curtains up and we then dived into the Morrison shelter in the dining area and I remember my head banging on a table and cutting my eyelid.

Have you any unusual school memories?

I learnt how to make gunpowder when I was about 14 as one could buy the necessary chemicals in chemists in those days. Salt Peter 75%, sulphur 12% and carbon 11%. In the metalwork class I was good at turning things up on the lathe, managed to get a GCE in Metalwork, and managed to make rudimentary cannon. Combine the two, cannon and gunpowder, and after a few trials managed to fire a rivet out of the window with a rather loud bang. The result was that the headmaster



Do you have any idea who is this smiling cheeky chappie?

was not impressed and I received six of the best with his cane. A good school with a brilliant headmaster.

What brought us to Colchester?

We lived in Harwich but as the children grew up we felt that the schools in Colchester were so much better so we moved. This saved us doing 88 miles a day back and forth. Since then we have grown to like Colchester very much and I have joined a number of

clubs/societies all of which are very friendly.

What is your favourite place in Colchester?

Lexden Road on a summer evening with all the trees in full blown glory. Very peaceful and a delight.

What was the most scary event of your life?

Flying into Abu Dhabi on a hot summer day with thermals causing the plane to jump up and down. Much praying in the passenger compartment and sweaty hands gripping everything you could grab onto. Very pleased to get off and lie down.

What was the most famous event attended?

Lining the aisle of St. Paul's Cathedral when the Queen dedicated a memorial in London. The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh passed us going in with the Queen on the other side of the pair but when they left, after the service, the Queen was on our side and as she passed she caught each person's eye.

A very strange feeling when you both, for a very short second, are eye to eye. I have never forgotten that moment, it was brilliant!

DID I SAY THAT?

Our latest Colchester Recalled project is recording local people's memories of the Mercury Theatre.

We like this one:

'When I was little I went to the Mercury Pantomime and my Dad got picked on by the Two Ugly Sisters who chose

him for their love interest; and I shouted out in front of the whole audience, "You can't have him, he's married!"'

READERS' LETTERS

Further to the mention in the Culver Street article in issue 30, of the almshouses in St Nicholas' Square, I can add a more detailed description as, in the 1950s, I was a frequent visitor to my great aunt who lived at number 8.

The Square was actually a rectangle with four small dwellings either side of a paved courtyard. Inside there was a small living room and an even smaller kitchen off which there was a tiny yard with a wooden seated toilet. Steep stairs led to a small bedroom. Lighting was by gas lamp which actually gave a very bright light with a pleasant hum. Hardly likely to reach today's Health and Safety standards however!

Great aunt Annie Axson (nee Hurrell) was born in March 1877, twice widowed and childless. As I had no living grandmother, probably to some extent because they had produced a total twenty children between them, Annie



Annie Axson (nee Hurrell)
circa 1945, aged approx 68 years

and I had a close relationship. Visits were complicated by the fact that she was extremely deaf so communication was via a large brass ear trumpet!

Harry Carlo

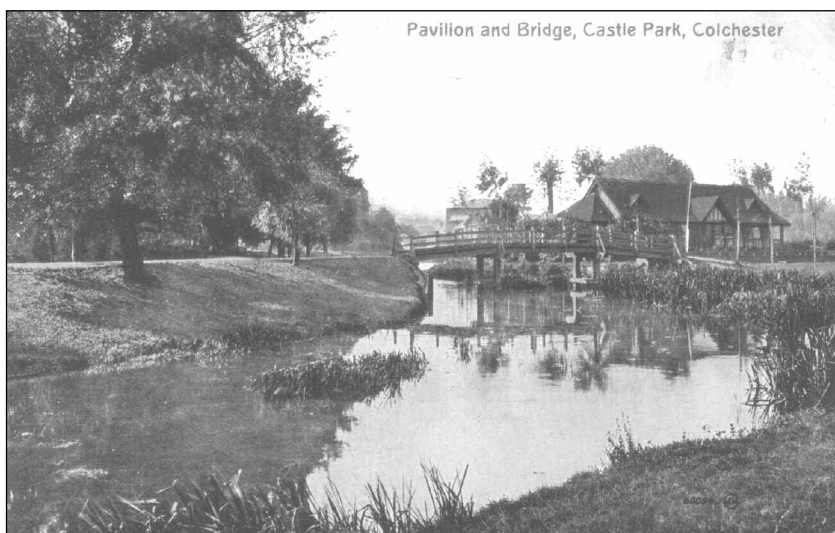
My mother in law, Amelia, attended St Nicholas Church Sunday School in 1908 and I remember the Methodist School in Culver Street, where BHS was, which charged scholars one shilling (5p) per week. This included Maths, English and Geography. History was an extra 6d (2.5p). These charges appeared on a blackboard with gold lettering before the school was demolished in about 1956.

To leave a bicycle for a day at Scott's Garage in 1945 cost 2d while on Whit Monday in 1947 I collected my unlocked bicycle, from the Public Library, which I had left there on the previous Friday!

I doubt I could do that today....

Wendy Cardy

The postcard right, is dated 1926, and kindly provided by Mr Dick Barton, featuring the River Colne flowing through the Lower Castle Park, with the bridge that links the pageant ground to the cricket ground, with its original pavilion. Note the absence of the trees and tall buildings behind it, which currently obliterates the view beyond



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