

# COLCHESTER RECALLED

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## MEMORIES OF THE FAMOUS 'JACKS' STORE IN COLCHESTER See page 1

Welcome to issue No. 32 which I hope you will enjoy. If the letters received indicate that No. 31 was satisfactory then I am pleased. In this issue Readers' Letters on pages 15-I.B.C. Sadly the one from Ted Cant is his last, along with his article on page 6, which were both received before he sadly passed away in April.

Ted was a truly avid supporter of Colchester Recalled, one of the town's outstanding figures in its recent history, with an astonishing memory and he will be greatly missed as a regular contributor and friend.

Please keep sending your letters, articles and photographs. Every effort will be made to feature them. Peter Constable, Editor, 12 Claremont Heights, Colchester CO1 1ZU. Telephone 01206 517788. Email: [design.constables@btinternet.com](mailto:design.constables@btinternet.com)

### Also in this issue -

- Details About Colchester Recalled 2018-2019
- The Obelisk in Colchester Cemetery
- Market Day Memories
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- Do You Recognise Anyone?
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- Arthur Web: Our Forgotten Industrialist
- Colchester and the D-Day Landings
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- Our Three Most Popular CDs



Charity Registration Number 1000166

# Colchester Recalled Oral History Society 2018-2019

## OUR PROGRAMME

September 2018 to June 2019  
7pm at the Roman Circus Centre

### September 13th 2018

Film and talk about Henry Collins and Joyce Pallot, Colchester artists, inventors of concrete murals now being restored in Colchester  
by KATH WOOD

### October 18th

COLCHESTER'S AVENUE OF REMEMBRANCE  
by LIZ WHITE

### November 15th

THE GREAT COLCHESTER EARTHQUAKE OF 1884  
by PETER JONES

### December 13th

Picture quiz about Colchester; also mince pies and the Colchester Film Club's film about Colchester Recalled

### January 17th 2019

An evening with ADRIAN HUTSON  
LIFE AND TIMES OF A PUNCH AND JUDY MAN

### February 14th

SETTING UP WOMEN'S REFUGES  
JUNE FREEMAN looks at the problems of domestic physical violence suffered by women in Colchester and Essex and the establishment of refuges in the 1970s

### March 14th

LYNETTE BURGESS outlines the Bawdsey Story  
THE BIRTH OF WARTIME RADAR

### April 18th

THE LONG HISTORY OF COLCHESTER ROYAL  
GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
by TREVOR HEARN  
author of the first ever complete history

### May 16th

THE HISTORY AND RESTORATION OF THE STOUR  
NAVIGATION by a River Stour Trust Speaker

### June 20th

The AGM and COLCHESTER CASTLE UNDERSTOOD  
by PETER BERRIDGE  
author of the long awaited book

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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. Monthly meetings are held (see left hand column). Admission is £2 per member, £3 for non-members, including refreshments.

The Annual Subscription is £7 per member or £12 for a couple residing at the same address.

## WANTED:

Volunteers to make summaries of our recordings.

If you are interested please contact  
Andrew Phillips on 01206 546775.

## OUR NEXT ISSUE

No.33 is due for publication in Autumn 2019.

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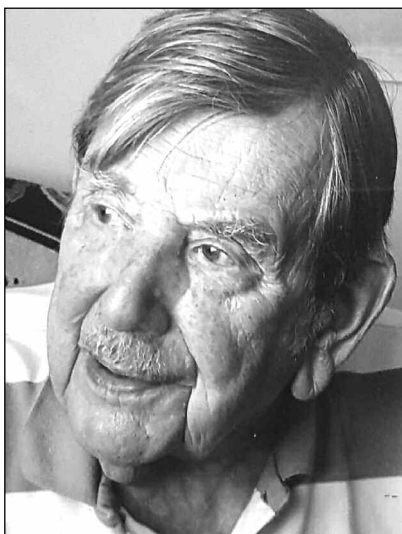
# MEMORIES OF THE FAMOUS 'JACKS' STORE IN COLCHESTER by Vysian Banyard

I was born in 1952 near Rayleigh in Essex and my father used to own the famous 'Jacks' store in Colchester. His name was Stacey Rowland Banyard and he was born in Romford in 1919, although the family lived in the Hornchurch area.

Sometime before the outbreak of the Second World War my father joined the regular army as a soldier in the ranks, before eventually rising to the rank of captain.

He once told the story that when he was just a regular soldier in the army he was asked to write a list of those who were going to be promoted, because he was the only one who could read and write, and he put his own name in the middle of the list! When the war ended he left the army, bought a lorry, and began to collect army surplus materials and traded in that.

His breakthrough in the business came when the Canvey Island floods occurred in 1953 because he had just bought two lorry loads of Wellington boots, which he immediately sold to the government – so he was in the right place and the right time. Soon after this he bought a shop in Southend which was very much like Jacks in Colchester used to be in that it traded in army surplus goods. However, due to planned road improvement works in the area around 1960 the shop was compulsorily purchased and he



*Stacey Banyard –  
the owner of Jacks*

decided that he would take his entire family off to Australia on a £10 ticket, complete with his van and the dog.

Unfortunately the venture didn't go very well and within a short while we were on our way back to England. This would have been sometime towards the end of 1962 and when he got back he rented a house for us in Tolleshunt D'arcy and purchased the shop known as Jacks in Colchester. I would only have been about nine at the time so I don't remember

too much about the shop in the early days, but I do remember that dad had a van that he used to go London in every week to get all the goods that he sold in the shop. Everything was collected from London at that time, nothing was delivered to the shop, and he had a barn in D'arcy which he used as a store. As time went on he would have the lorries deliver the goods directly to D'arcy and I can remember that my poor old mum got the lob of unloading these lorries.

I can't remember how big the shop in Colchester was to start with, but he eventually took on both sides of the frontage, and at the back there were three bedsits. It was an incredible warren – it was so tiny and I think it was about three storeys high right up to the attic. Sometimes you had to go on your hands and knees to get into the store rooms at the very top of the building.

I think what most people will remember about the shop is that everything was hung up outside. And this meant that



*Patrick Denney in conversation with Vysian Banyard*



*An external view of the shop showing the tremendous range of products for sale*

© Patrick Denney

every morning the staff had to spend time hanging up all manner of goods including coats, jackets, tools, dustbins and wheelbarrows. They used to use a long wooden pole with a hook on to put the stuff up. I can't recall anything actually falling off and hitting anyone, but I do remember that latterly things started to disappear from the front of the shop as people walking by would just take something.

I'm sure that modern-day health and safety inspectors would have been in hysterics if they had seen the property, because it was a very old wooden building and he used

to store all the gas canisters right in the middle of the shop. At the back of the shop you had the bedsits and the staff tea room which was a tiny little place. And on the first floor where the clothing was kept there was something like a loft hatch in the floor which was always kept open so that anybody upstairs could hear somebody shouting up, 'I want a coat size X', and they would just go and get it and drop it through the hatch, so it wasn't very safe and someone could easily have fallen through it. Nowadays, of course, it just wouldn't be allowed.

There were two further rooms

above which included the loft space, or attic, where more stuff was stored with these tiny little rickety ladders going up. So basically the whole building was a store for the shop. All transactions were carried out in cash – I can remember dad digging his heels in at the suggestion of introducing cash cards.

The shop sold army boots, camping equipment, garden tools, tilley lamps, dustbins and all sorts of other stuff including sweets and chocolates. I've spoken with several people who have told me that if they couldn't find something elsewhere they would always be

able to get it at Jacks. He had everything in there.

On one occasion when dad decided to renew the wooden floor in the shop – before someone went crashing down – they discovered a cellar with hundreds of old clay pipes in it. And it was assumed at the time that it must have been a clay pipe shop at some time in the past. In fact, I still have a few fragments that dad gave me.

Most people who can remember the shop will probably also remember that my father could be incredibly rude at times. He was a very forthright person and on one occasion he had purchased some ex government equipment and he didn't know what it was so he put it in the window with a

sign which read, 'Ex Government Thing'. And a lady came in to enquire what the 'Thing' actually was to which he replied, 'Madam, it is for sale!'



On another occasion he had bought some yacht spinnakers which I believe were quite expensive for people to buy at the time, and he just put them in the window for £1 each. And

there was this stampede of people trying to buy these very cheap spinnakers.

When the shop finally closed down a number of people in the area said how devastated they were because not only did it have everything in it to buy, but it was also quite an interesting place to visit. My father retired from the business when he was 82 years old. He was still working in the shop up to that time but his son-in-law David Williams had by then become the manager. He then stayed around the area for a year or so before moving down to Hastings. And that is where he died in 2012 at the age of 92.

*Edited from a recent interview  
with Patrick Denney*

## HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE OBELISK?

**W**hen walking down the main path in Colchester Cemetery, you cannot help but notice an unusual gravestone. It is well known by most people in Colchester that this was the Obelisk that used to stand in High Street and was subsequently purchased by Charles Wire. It is a mystery as to why he bought it, because at that time his wife, Mary Ann, who was the first to appear on it, was very much alive. There are, however, some other imponderables regarding the Obelisk that you might like to consider.

These include, from where did it originate? Who erected it, when and why? Exactly, when and why was it removed? The answers to some of these

questions are not known, for certain, but when one is in possession of a few facts, we can come to some reasonable conclusions.

It is generally accepted that the Obelisk was constructed by the builder, James Deane (1698 - 1765) who did a great deal of work for Charles Gray (1696 - 1782) and George Wegg (1706 - 1777). They both lived at the top of East Hill, Charles Gray in Holly Trees and George Wegg at East Hill House.

For Charles Gray, James Deane built several structures in the Castle Grounds and these included the west wing of Holly Trees. For George Wegg, he built the gothic folly in the corner of his garden that stretched to the rear of the Minories where it still stands.

James Deane was also an architect and surveyor who drew a plan of Colchester for the Rev. Philip Morant for his book on the history of Colchester, published in 1748. Included on his map are drawings of the structures that he had built by that date and although they are small, they are of a larger scale than in reality. He did not include the large windows on the south side of the Castle that he inserted into Charles Gray's library because this did not happen until 1754/5 and the dome over the staircase until 1760.

In a corner of George Wegg's garden, behind St. James' Church, James Deane has drawn an obelisk on top of a mound but there is no obelisk in High Street. This suggests that in

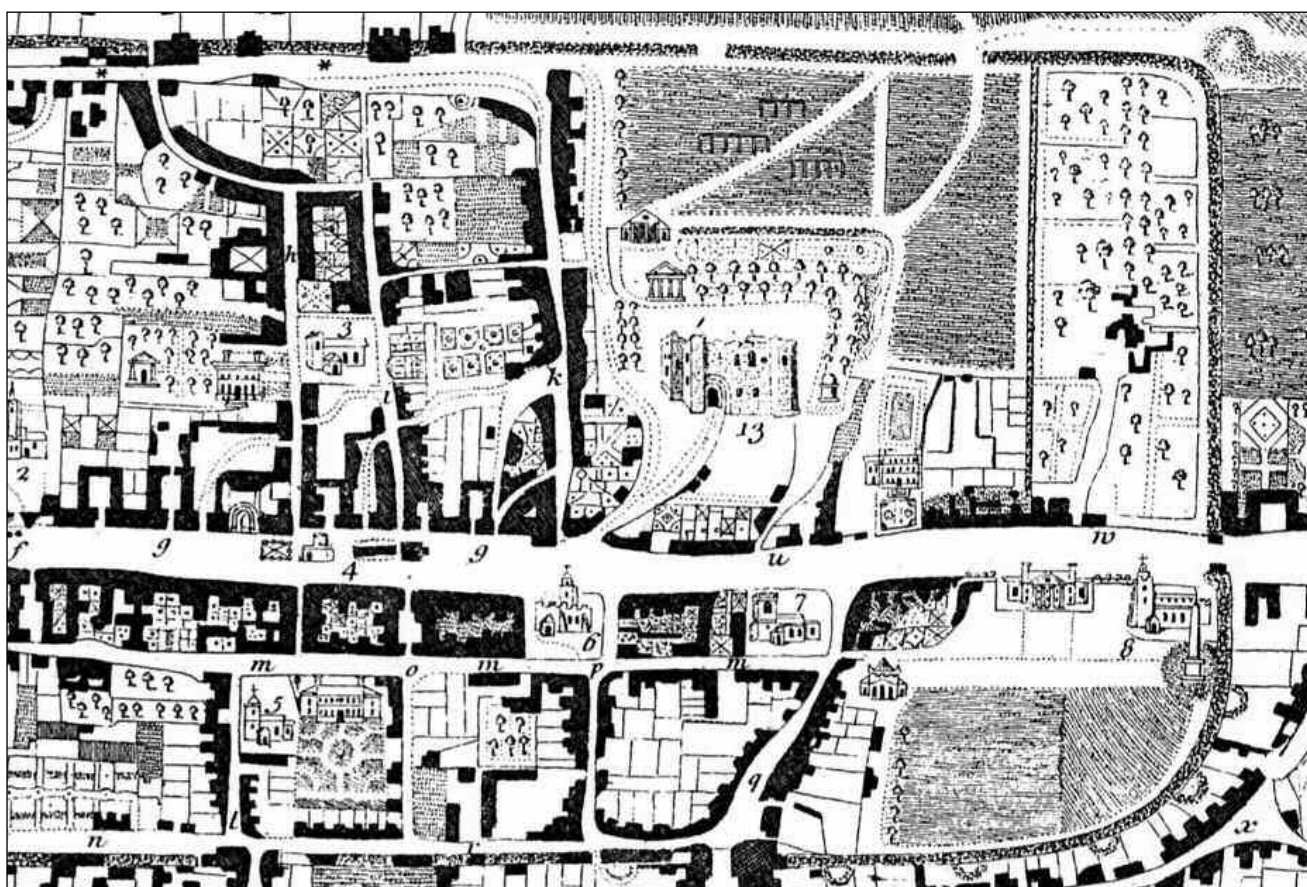
1748 the Obelisk, constructed by James Deane, had not yet been erected in High Street because it was standing in the corner of George Wegg's garden. On later maps, the Obelisk is shown in High Street and the top of the mound in George Wegg's garden is empty. In 1767, it is called a 'mount' and in 1777, it is drawn as an empty mound. On a map of 1876, the 'Site of Obelisk' is shown in High Street and the mound, then in the garden of Mrs. Margaret Round (1806 - 1886), is still present with steps leading up to a flagstaff. Alongside this is an entrance to an 'Ice House' and this clearly was the reason for the mound being there in the first place,

in order to cover the top of the brick-built Ice House. The remains of the Ice House are still there although now no longer accessible.

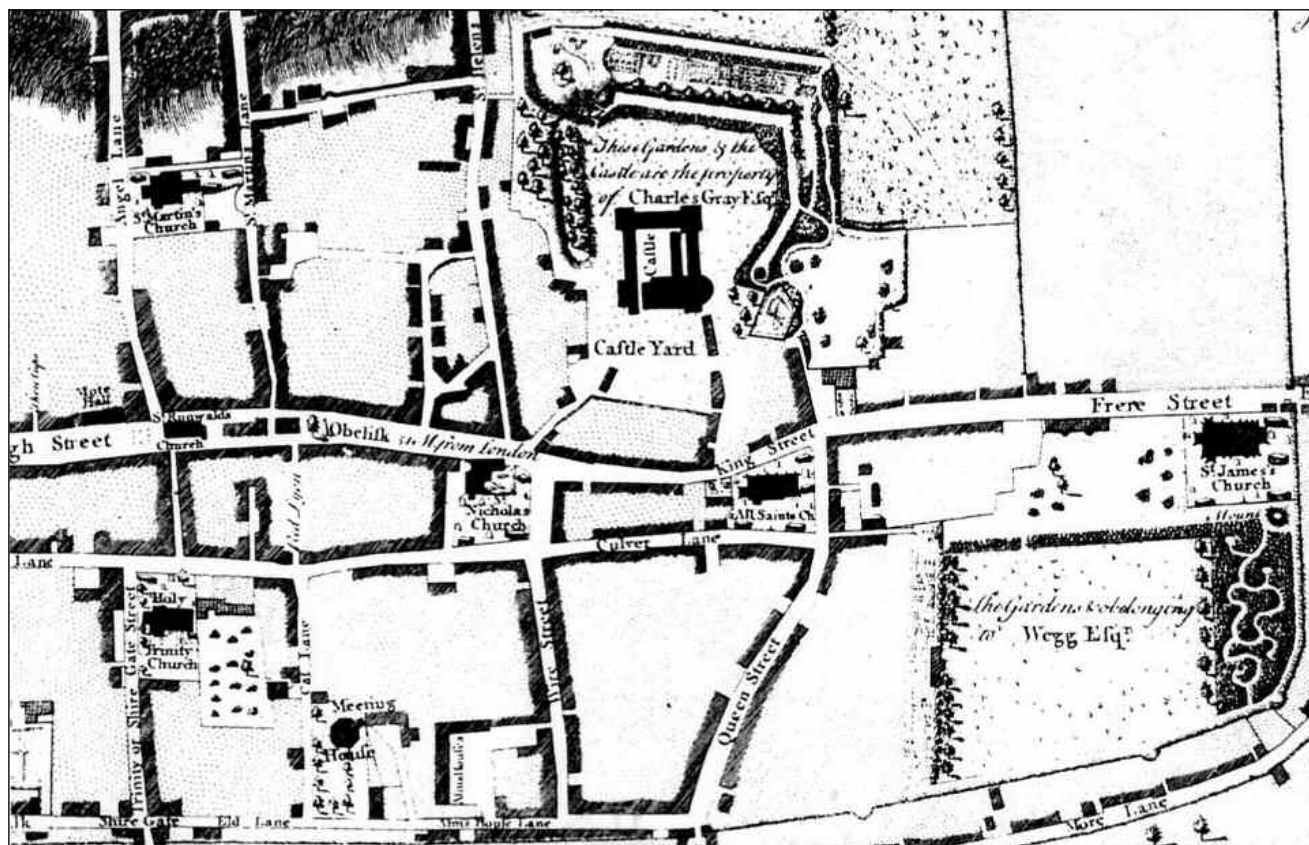
The exact spot in High Street where the Obelisk stood was opposite number 122, 23 feet from the shop front and 9 feet east of the eastern corner of 123 High Street (Mann's Music). Now, approximately, it is the site of a rectangular litter-bin. Close to that spot, there was a property and to the east of it a small piece of land, all owned by Charles Saunders until he died on 8th November 1754, aged 65. In his will of January 1755, he bequeathed the property and the piece of land to his friends, Charles Gray and George Wegg.

In 1755, they gave the property, later numbered 140 and 139 High Street, to the incumbent rector of St. Nicholas Church and its ownership continued with successive rectors until it was demolished in May 1816.

Although Charles Gray had been defeated in the General Election of 1754, he was a turnpike trustee and ideally placed to be responsible for the erection of a milepost on the small piece of land in the High Street, formerly owned by Charles Saunders. He must have asked James Deane to paint the obelisk, as I have suggested from George Wegg's garden, with lettering that showed the distance in miles from various places - 51 from London, 22



*The 1748 map shows, in the middle of High Street (ref. 4), the Butter Market, St. Runwald's Church, the two parts of the Shambles but no Obelisk. In the Castle Grounds, there are the three small buildings built by James Deane and the west wing of Holly Trees. Further to the east, on the opposite side of High Street, in the garden of East Hill House, is the gothic folly and to the rear of St. James' Church (ref. 8), is the Obelisk*



Harwich, 18 from Ipswich, 61 from Norwich and 71 from Yarmouth and a lamp was added to the top, either then or later. The first reference found for the existence of the Obelisk in High Street is in the *Ipswich Journal* of 29th November 1755 when a shop, that later became number 117 High Street, was reported to be 'near against the Obelisk'.

Therefore, my conjecture is that prior to 1748, James Deane constructed an obelisk for George Wegg and placed it in the corner of his garden, on a mound of earth covering the top of his Ice House, at the back of St. James' churchyard. Then, at the request of Charles Gray and George Wegg, he changed it into a



milepost, sometime between January and November 1755 and re-erected it on the small piece of land in High Street that they had inherited from Charles Saunders.

The Obelisk stood in High Street for 103 years until it was

ABOVE:  
The 1767 map shows the Obelisk, in the middle of High Street and the Castle Gardens, the property of Charles Gray. In George Wegg's garden is the empty 'Mount' at the rear of St. James's Church.

LEFT:  
Drawing by James Dunthorne, junior, published in 1792. It shows Joseph Mitchel, pie-man, standing by the Obelisk offering his mutton and kidney pies and challenging a boy to toss a coin for him to win a pie. The Obelisk is sited here, in front of the Bear Inn at 125 High Street that shows the sign of a bear and the name of the innkeeper, Thomas Chamberlain.

removed prior to the demolition of Middle Row because it was thought to be cluttering up the street. It was auctioned on 27th January 1858 and purchased by Charles Wire for £3.5s.0d (£3.25) and removed the next day. Charles Wire (1810 - 1888) was a baker, corn merchant and former tea dealer in the parish of St. Botolph at 186 Magdalen Street. He was a cousin of William Wire (1804 - 1857), the antiquarian, watchmaker and letter carrier, by virtue of them both being grandsons of Sampson and Ann (née Waterman) Wire who had married on 20th May 1766 at St. James' Church.

After the death of Charles Wire's wife, Mary Ann on 15th

June 1859, aged 47, the Obelisk was erected for her in Colchester Cemetery, Mersea Road and inscribed as being 'This Ancient Obelisk, removed from the High Street, Colchester'. On the plinth, that was not part of the original Obelisk, appear the names of other members of the Wire family.

It was suggested, soon after its removal, that as the cab fares were calculated from the Obelisk, a marked stone should be laid marking the spot where it had stood. This, however, has still yet to be done, although now this would require moving the litter-bin.

*Bruce Neville*



## MARKET DAY MEMORIES

**A**s a lad I helped drive cattle from the market in Middleborough, to the pens in the goods yard at North Station. We had to stop the cattle from going into the side roads.

The driver of the shunting engine gave me a ride on the engine which pulled the trucks up for loading. Little did I realise then, that I would become an engine driver!

I started going to the market in 1925 with my Dad, with a low wooden barrow on small cast iron wheels to cart store pigs to Mercer Farm allotments.

The main workers at the market were the Ketley's -Titch, Sonny, Charlie and Bob for Stanford's, with Harry and Bill Day, Herbert Papworth and his son Joe, accompanied by their

dog Jock, for Fenn Wright's. When the cattle were driven along North Station Road we used to run by the market gates and up North Hill. Children used to love watching Jock being sent to bring back any straying cattle, which was a challenge for him, but Jock always came out best.

Horace Ellis was Stanford's chief auctioneer and was followed by his son John. I worked part time for generations of the Ellis family.

When the market moved to Wyncolls Road in February 1972, with John in charge, followed by his son Graham, who was a gentleman who put all of his buyers at ease.

Eventually both Chelmsford and Ipswich cattle markets

closed, leaving Colchester as the only cattle market open in East Anglia.

William Brown's who had taken over the market and decided later to retain only the housing side of the business, so the market reverted back to Stanford's and was held together by Graham's hard work.

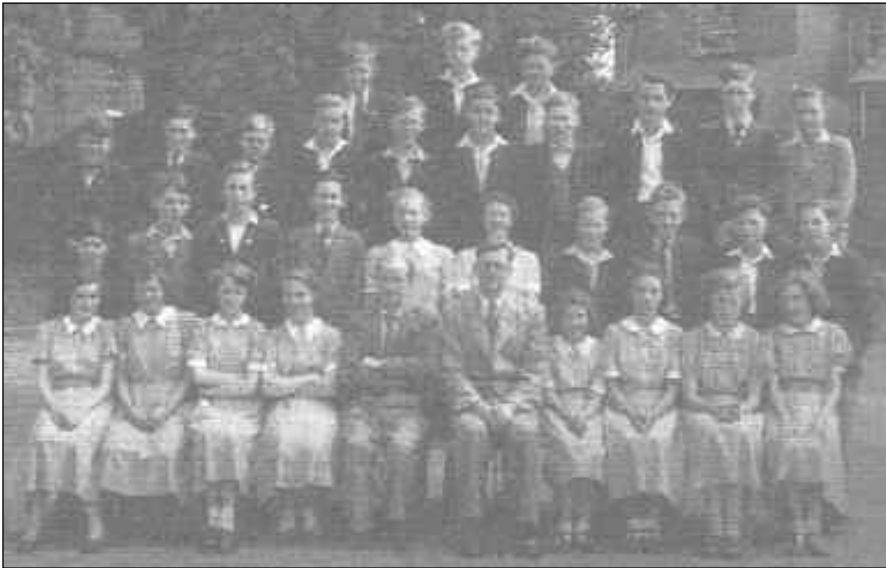
I cycled to the market when I was 94 on a bike which once belonged to Charlie Naylor, handyman for the *Essex County Standard* when their premises were in Culver Street.

I still visit the cattle market to have a chat with Graham and the many friends I have made there over the years. At 98 I am probably the oldest person still going there. Happy days!

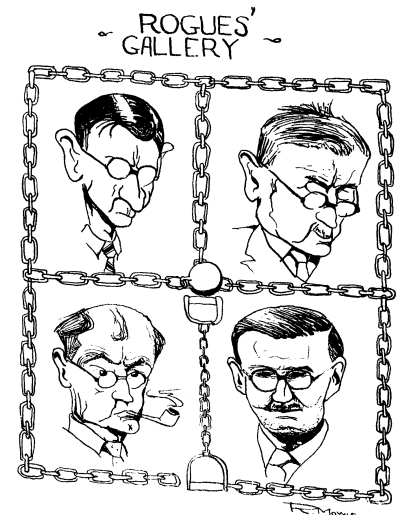
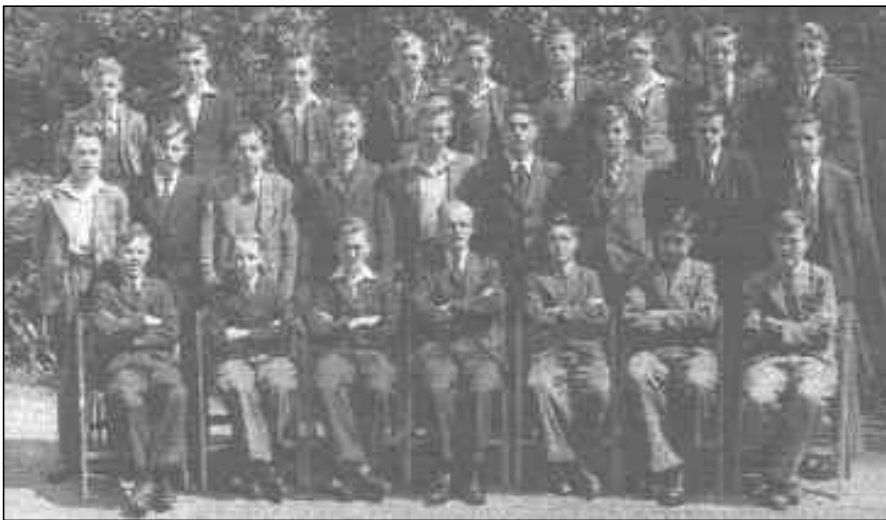
*Ted Cant*



# SOME OLD 'TECH' SCHOOL MEMORABILIA



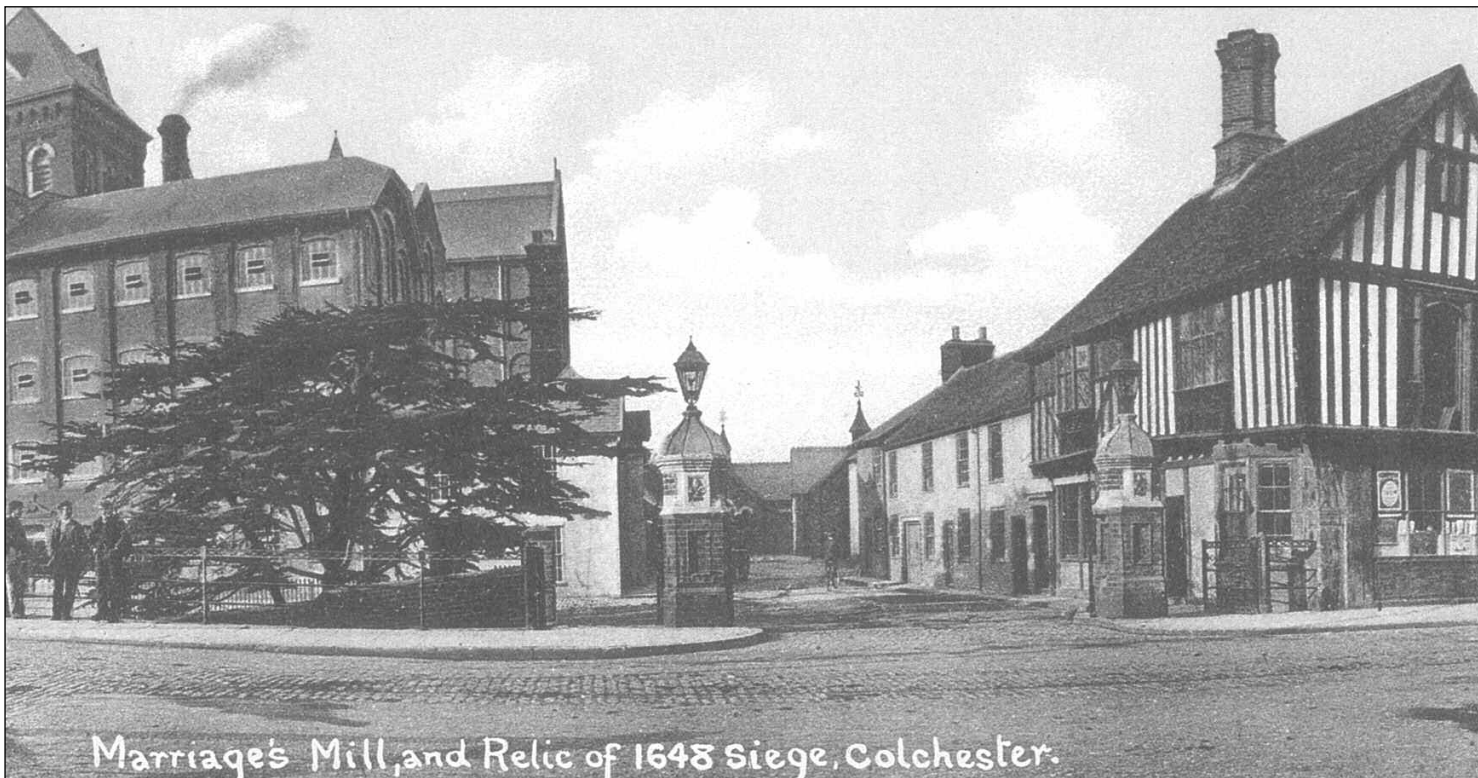
These items, supplied by Mrs Daphne Jones (see her letter on page 16). Her father, Mr Drabble is the staff member in the top picture (with Mr Cooper) and in the centre picture. The 'Rogues' (taken from *The Raven*) are Mr Hamer, Mr Baker, Mr Drabble and Mr Phillips. None of the pupils are recognised. Among the staff (lower photo) are Mr Enoch and Miss Twyman. How many others can you recognise??



## DO YOU RECOGNISE ANYONE?

The five numbered photographs featured belonged to Peter Evans' late uncle, Percy Read. The problem is that Peter does not know very much about them. For example, Percy appears in No.1 on the right end of the middle row and on the left end of the middle row in No 2. The football teams are Colchester Gas Company in 1933-4 and 1934-5. Numbers 4 and 5 are floats in a carnival or fete. Did they all involve Colchester Gas Company, if so, when? Do they feature anyone you recognise?

If you can supply any information please contact the Editor whose details appear on the front cover.



Marriage's Mill, and Relic of 1648 siege, Colchester.

Colchester Gas Company football teams competed in the Colchester and East Essex League, (formerly the Brightlingsea and District League), founded by W M Tavner in 1921, which changed its name in 1927. The team first appeared in 1930-1 finishing 8th in Division One, a position it held for the next 2 seasons, attaining 3rd in 1933-4, 6th in 1934-5 and winning Division 2 in 1935-6.



*The photograph below is one of four owned by Glyn Jackson and features the Siege House, which is now a restaurant, at the entrance to what was Marriages Mill. The entrance gates are still there and also the buildings to the left. Bullet holes in its walls which were made during the Siege can still be seen. What was Charlie Brown's shop which was redeveloped a few years ago can be seen on the left hand side of the road just before the junction with Ipswich Road.*



## LEARNING TO SWIM IN THE LATE 50s/EARLY 60s

I was born in Colchester in 1947, spent my childhood in the town, and moved away in 1971. I continued to visit regularly for the next three years, until my mother moved in 1974. My only visit to Colchester since was in 2008, when someone from my year at Colchester County High School organised a reunion. More than 40 'old girls', then aged 60/61, out of a total of around 150, turned up. I travelled to Colchester with two school friends, who had also moved north. We spent a few days in Colchester and took the opportunity to explore some of our former haunts.

The taxi driver, on our way from the station to the town, was the first to spark off old memories. We found ourselves looking down on the river from a road built since our early days in Colchester. He pointed out the old open air swimming pool, now just a widened area of the river. I determined to take a closer look...

During my early days in Colchester opportunities to swim were limited. The only pool regularly open was open air, during summer months. The indoor Garrison Pool was not generally open to the public. During my last couple of years at St. John's Green Junior School our class was taken on occasional visits to both of these pools. Amongst over forty children in the class, swimmers were less than ten, the majority like me were non-swimmers. On these excursions we were lined up at the shallow end,

encouraged to hold on to the bar, and to practice kicking our legs. Teachers watched over us, but I can remember no further instruction. Perhaps the teachers could not swim either!

Most of us made summer trips to the coast, where we would bathe, but not swim. My father could swim, but only, as I remember, on his back! He died in 1956, before my ninth birthday and before he had chance to pass on this skill to me. My mother could not swim. Around 1957 she decided it was time I could. Accordingly she enrolled me in Colchester Swimming Club and booked me in a course for beginners.

These lessons took place at Colchester Royal Grammar School, where there was (and probably still is) an open air pool. The pool, had been constructed in the 1920s. It was surrounded by wooden changing cubicles, each with a very short door. In the evenings when the lessons took place, the cubicles cast a long gloomy shadow over the pool, which was always cold and, to non-swimmers, very unappealing. Parents did not watch their offspring undertaking lessons, we were sent there on our own. For me, living in Wellesley Road, the Grammar School pool was only a five minute walk to the Creffield Road playground entrance.

There were no armbands to boost confidence. Even the method of a belt attached to a long pole (described in Ted Cant's memories in issue No. 31) seemed to have been

abandoned by the 1950s. Water wings and inflatable rings were available in the shops, but these were considered to be beach toys for infants. Certainly older children would not like to be seen using them. Lessons began with the instruction to duck our heads under the water. Anyone with any part of their anatomy left above the water was made to repeat the exercise. The rest of the lesson was spent trying to do a few strokes from a short distance, gradually increasing towards the side handrail. In those early learning days this consisted of a frantic jump and grab of the rail, with almost no swimming strokes in between. How I hated those lessons! After the first lesson I returned home sobbing that I would never go again. My mother calmly persuaded me to continue. She was right, of course!

Learning to swim was not unattractive even then. It was at this time that I was allowed, even encouraged, to try the public open air pool by the old Colchester bypass. That summer I used to go there nearly every Saturday morning with my friend and classmate, Sheelagh Marron, who lived nearby in Salisbury Avenue. Neither of us could swim. We were allowed to walk to the pool on our own, with the undertaking that we would go nowhere else and be home by lunchtime. Quite a walk for two ten-year-olds alone, with at least two busy roads to cross, but that was part of 1950s childhood!

I remember most of our route. Along Maldon Road to

Crouch Street, cross over to Balcerne Lane, then down Balcerne Hill. On the left hand side opposite the Roman Wall, there were houses with long front gardens, all demolished in the early 1970s to make way for the new road. One of these houses had in its garden a large aviary, filled with budgerigars of all colours. We would make a short pause to admire these birds, before proceeding along to the main road at the bottom of North Hill, where we would turn left to make our way to the bypass, the busiest road we had to cross. Was there a pedestrian crossing? I can't remember.

From here it was a short distance to the pool, with its entrance gate at the bottom of a concrete slope. At the pool gate there was a high window, to which we had to stretch up to pay our entrance money.

We then proceeded across the pontoon bridge under the diving boards to the female changing rooms situated in the corner of the poolside. This changing area was cavernous, built into and under the perimeter wall of the pool, stretching back under the road above. It was dank, dark and gloomy. There were always plenty of available cubicles. Nobody lingered long in this dreary cavern. At the back there were showers, which were stone cold. We avoided these. A stout metal basket-cum-coathanger was provided in which to place clothes. This was then handed over a counter in exchange for a numbered rubber bracelet. On busy days there would be more than one attendant on clothes counter duty.

Exiting the changing rooms to the pool meant wading through a large knee deep foot bath filled with cloudy grey disinfectant solution. The pool itself was large: 75 yards by 25 yards I remember, flanked by two crescent-shaped paddling pools. The shallow end of the main pool comprised about a third of the total area. A rope across marked the point at which the pool sloped quite rapidly to its 10 feet deep end. This rope was as far as we ventured. There was a lifeguard, who wandered around the pool, a large area for just one watcher.

Sheelagh and I generally splashed around and enjoyed ourselves, but we also practiced our hopeless attempts at swimming for the handrail from about four yards out. We stayed in the water until we became so cold we could stand it no longer, but in those days we expected swimming to be a cold business. We had not been softened up by holidays in warmer climes.

It was on one particularly sunny Saturday that a swimming breakthrough came for us. We had stayed in the water longer than usual and were finishing off our session by messing around in the paddling pool. In this shallower water we walked on our hands, whilst kicking our legs behind our outstretched bodies. Then we discovered that we could lift our hands off the bottom of the pool and make a few splashy dog paddle strokes without sinking. The water supported us. We tried out our new found confidence in the main pool. It worked! There was no need to rush towards the handrail. We

could manage to dog paddle in any direction, then stand up when we couldn't manage any more. We could swim!

After that, lessons at the Grammar School pool didn't seem so bad. Later, I progressed to the improvers' class, and even learnt to do elementary dives into the gloomy deep end.

Membership of the Colchester Swimming Club also brought another benefit. On one evening each week we were admitted into the Garrison indoor pool. What luxury! I enjoyed these sessions with several friends. There was one disadvantage.

The changing rooms, although better lit and more pleasant than those at the outdoor pool, they offered no safeguard for clothes. Watches and valuables (not that we had many) were left at home. Clothes had to be left in a neat pile on the wide bench at the back of each cubicle. The swimming sessions were popular and crowded. By the end of the evening each cubicle contained many piles of clothes. There were practical jokers, never caught, who searched out knickers from each set of clothes, dropping them into one of the puddles on the floor. The journey home offered two choices – wet pants or none!

I enjoyed the outdoor pool every summer going there many times with my friends throughout my teens. Sadly Sheelagh was not among them. After junior school, we attended different secondary schools and lost touch. Where is she now I wonder?

In our teens, when a group of us went to the pool, we would club together to hire a lock-up

cubicle. These were small wooden huts built on one of the terraces surrounding the pool. For a small extra charge a key for one of these huts was issued, saving the need to brave the gloom of the main changing rooms and the murky foot bath. The lock-up was then ours for that visit, allowing us to pop back to grab a towel to warm up between dips in the pool.

After St John's Green Junior School, I went to Colchester County High School in September 1958. The school's new building in Norman Way was in its second year. Already fund raising efforts to build a school swimming pool were

cold in the early weeks of term. Swimming was compulsory when the water was above a certain temperature, probably around 63F. Not everyone would swim in colder water, but I was by then keen to swim whenever I could. The ratio of swimmers to non-swimmers was now reversed from junior school days. Successful instruction was given to those who couldn't swim. When I returned to CCHS on my 2008 visit, the school was again fund-raising for the swimming pool. This time to enclose it, and perhaps now it is an indoor pool.

Swimwear for girls during my childhood was not becoming.

became fashionable. Our heads must have looked like bouquets afloat in the water. I don't think these were very effective in keeping the hair dry.

During my 2008 visit to Colchester I made my way to the former public outdoor pool. I had been prepared for this by the distant view from that taxi on arrival at Colchester.

Nevertheless, it still came as a shock. I remembered the pool, sparkling and blue, full of happy crowds enjoying themselves, as they appeared in Alf Jefferies' photo in your Issue No. 31. I had always known the pool was very close to the river. Indeed in past years, after



*CCHS new Swimming Pool June 1961.  
Left to right: Sally Holmes, Ann Wilson, Gwen Johnston, Christine Mather, Daphne Drabble, Carol Hodges, Marion Kirkwood, Mary Digby, Marion Palmer, Rosalind Beck, Christine Wood, Susan Baker, Angela Bailey*

underway. By summer 1961 enough money had been raised, and the pool constructed. The local education authority provided a fence to protect the pool from draughts, leaves and other debris, and "to preserve the modesty of the girls". We were delighted with our new pool, as is shown in the photograph from the *Colchester Gazette* of my form members, including myself, taking our 'first plunge'.

The pool was an outdoor one, so could only be used in the summer. Even then it was often

In junior school days we wore cotton swimsuits rucked into small squares with elastic. Later it was black 'regulation' swim suits, shapeless, unlined and absolutely plain. In my mid teens I wore my first flattering swimsuit, made of heavy elasticated material, boned from top to bottom – shapely, but uncomfortable. Thank heavens for Lycra! Swimming hats were always worn by girls and women. These were plain rubber helmets with a band under the chin. Later, colourful creations made of rubber flower petals

periods of very heavy rain, it occasionally flooded with unfiltered river water and had to be closed for a while. Now the pool had returned to being part of the river. Gone were the perimeter fences, the concrete terraces, the cafe, the lock up cubicles and the people. The water was brown, full of reeds and other plants. The widened area of the river, plus the concrete pool edge were signs of its former role. There were a few other indications. The high window in the entrance building remained. The curved

edge of the pool was obviously that of the paddling pool. Sections of metal hand rail were visible, as was the stump of the old diving board, projecting

from the side of the bridge. Was that the entrance to the old changing rooms on the other side? Perhaps, but there was no pontoon bridge to cross to take a

look. I was alone and the silence overwhelming. I took a few photos and hurried away with my memories...

*Daphne Jones, nee Drabble*



*The remains of the Colchester Open Air Swimming Pool in April 2008*

## ARTHUR WEBB: OUR FORGOTTEN INDUSTRIALIST

*David Butcher writes about a long forgotten entrepreneur.*

'Altnacealgach' in Park Road built in 1888 by brewer Arthur Thomas Osborne and in the recent past the Area Offices of Essex County Council, now refurbished and renamed as 'Osborne Manor' had another far less well-known incumbent.

After Osborne's death in 1913 'Altnacealgach' became the residence of Arthur Webb, partner in the manufacturing and engineering supplies concern of Truslove and Company based at 'Stanwell Works, Colchester, England'.

Stanwell Works were located in St. Peter's Street. Truslove and Company, through expansion and acquisition rapidly grew to become Trusloves Limited with Arthur Webb as Managing Director.

Through a long chain of

command, including his older brother, Arthur Webb was my late father's employer. Family correspondence in my possession shows that my father had an association with the firm beginning when he was just twelve years old, probably as a 'Saturday Boy'.

Trusloves were manufacturers of and dealers in engineering

supplies. The advent of electricity supply lead to an expansion, guided by my late father's brother who had studied the subject in London, into electrical engineering, manufacturing and contracting. In this the world became their oyster. In the days before a National Grid the landed country estates, desirous of



*Letterhead of October 1919 with an illustration of Stanwell Works and showing Arthur Webb now as sole Proprietor*

embracing the modern age, would have their own generation plant, all designed, manufactured and installed by Trusloves, who's contracting arm would carry out the appropriate electrical installations. Bringing electricity to a country estate had another benefit, the ability to pump water efficiently. Trusloves again embraced this opportunity both manufacturing and installing electric pumping sets together with valves and associated equipment.

The firm flourished throughout the early part of the 20th century. Arthur Webb must surely have been a contemporary of that other Colchester industrialist, James Paxman. One should, perhaps, take with a small pinch of salt the illustration of the Stanwell Works as shown on the Truslove

letterheading unless there exists some other source of evidence. But whilst Paxman went from strength to strength Webb, and Trusloves did not. My correspondence shows that the writing was on the wall in 1921. By 1933 it was all over.

My father's older brother went on to found his own company The Central Electric Company based on North Hill. All four of the Butcher brothers, Douglas Harold, Sidney Friston, Arthur Charles, Alan Scurrill and their descendants John, Tony and David were in some way involved in electrical engineering and contracting throughout North Essex and beyond right up into the 1990s. My son, Ian, follows in this tradition as a Camera Control Technician working on outside broadcasting equipment and control systems.

I will close with a little story of Trusloves as told to me by my father.

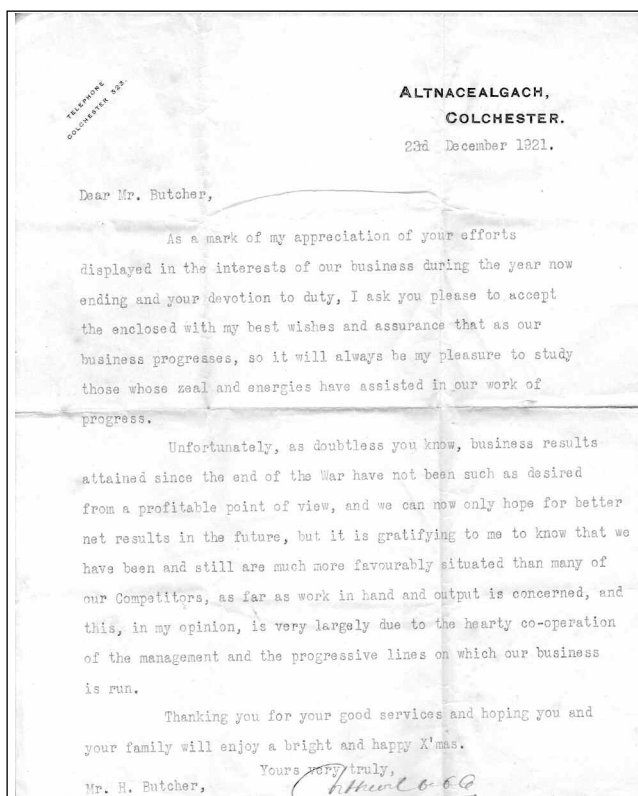
In the way that James Paxman, as is widely known, had a fondness for the ladies Arthur Webb was partial to a tittle. Returning to the office in his car after a liquid lunch (remember no breathalizer in those days, or driving test either) Stores had received a substantial delivery that morning the packing cases from which were strewn all over the driveway thus blocking his progress.

"I've got to find somewhere to put them all Mr Webb," said the hapless Storeman.

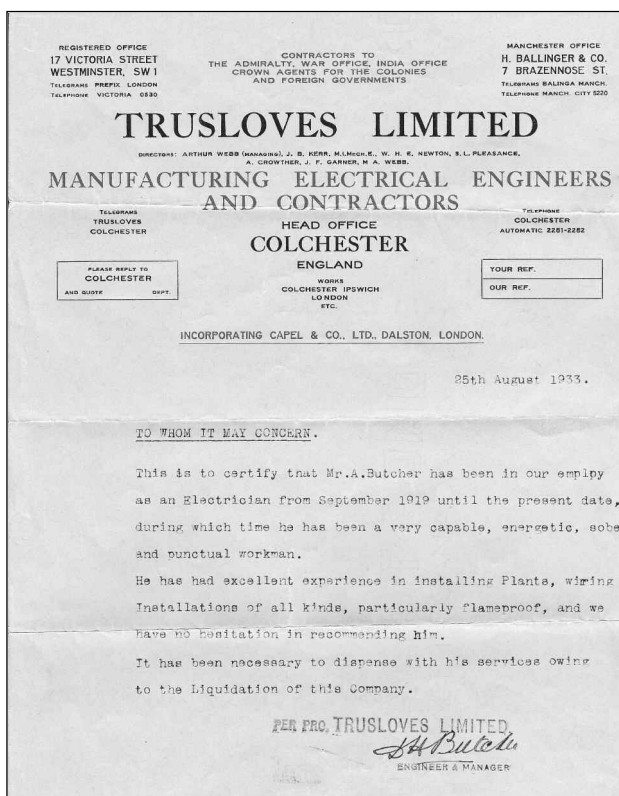
"Get them out of my way." Webb retorted. "Take them home for firewood if you like!"

The Storeman did just as he was bid.

Now this was a bygone age



*Letter of appreciation from Arthur Webb to Mr. H. Butcher, Christmas 1921*



*Letter of reference from Mr. H. Butcher to Mr. A. Butcher (his brother) on Liquidation of the Company, August 1933*



when everything was accountable and wooden packing cases were supplied on a 'Return or Charge' basis. Eventually accounts received a demand for payment and an enquiry was set in motion.

"Mr Webb told me I could

take them home for firewood," the Storeman in question admitted. "So I did."

"Then you best fetch them back here ASAP," his inquisitor replied.

"Can't Sir," came the reply.

"They're all cut up into pieces

nine inches long".

Apparently that was it. No recriminations, no one was fired. The matter was quietly forgotten and not mentioned again.

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## COLCHESTER AND THE D-DAY LANDINGS

**A** misunderstanding has occurred as a result of my article that appeared in Issue No 31. In it, I mentioned that leading up to D-Day in the summer of 1944, the northern-most lane of the By-Pass, now called the Avenue of Remembrance, was full of parked army vehicles.

I should have made it clear that the army vehicles were not going to be used in the actual Normandy landings, code named 'Operation Overlord' but were part of the deception plan, 'Operation Fortitude'. This was

a masquerade for the supposed main force to be used in the invasion of Europe, by way of the Strait of Dover. The bogus First US Army Group (FUSAG) pretended to be in Kent under the command of General George Patton and was preparing to cross over the Channel. The other part of the plan was to suggest that the earlier Normandy invasion was a mere diversion.

Like the army vehicles, conspicuously parked on the By-Pass, there were also dummy landing craft anchored in the

River Orwell. As a result of many forms of deception, the German Fifteenth Army maintained its presence in the region of the Pas de Calais for up to 7 weeks after the Normandy invasion, in order to fend off what they thought would be the main force. This US Army Group never existed and this deception plan helped to make the real invasion of Europe, by way of Normandy, a success.

*Bruce Neville*

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**F**urther to articles featured in No. 31, as a boy during the 20s and 30s I used to go to the 'penny rush' on Saturday mornings at the Empire cinema, to see cowboy films starring Buck Jones, Hoot Gibson and Tom Mix. Bob Jewell and Bob Bruce worked there at the time.

Len Parker, the swimming pool superintendent lived in Green's Buildings (now demolished) in St Peter's Street, before moving to Balcerne Hill. I was friendly with his son Bill, his other son was Claude.

The postcard from Dick Barton reminded me of the same

period. The scoreboard on the front of the pavilion, showing the runs scored by the batting team, how many wickets had fallen and the score achieved by the last man. To the right was the runs the opponents scored. For evening games I used to change those scores by hand.

The person referred to as 'Rubberneck' was Claude Turner. He lived in West Stockwell Street keeping his rag and bone barrow in the black barn at Mercer's Farm in Cowdray Avenue. On his rag and bone round he would shout "Rubberneck" and blow raspberries. Ted Meckon had the

same round and they were enemies. Sunday lunchtimes the Salvation Army used to play outside the STOCKWELL ARMS and the NELSON'S HEAD in West Stockwell Street. When Claude and Ted came out of the pubs at the same time, there was sometimes a fight.

I knew Alf Firmin the butcher very well and also Alan Thurlow and his father when he was a butcher at Turner Village Hospital. I played darts with his son Roger.

Freddy the shrimp man was known much further afield than Colchester and I remember his brother Sydney scratching his

head when bidding for a bronze medal at a market auction down the North. He had recognised that it was formerly his, someone had obviously stolen it from his garage!

*Ted Cant*

**T**hank you for sending issue 30. I am so delighted that you knew my father, as memories that I might have had, were sadly cut prematurely short. I am always pleased to hear from others who knew him.

I am attaching copies of three photos of North East Essex County Technical School groups\*. Thank you for your additional information about both the photographer (Oscar Way Studios) and those in the photos. I remember several of them and met some many years ago. Norman Curd I certainly remember, as he and his wife remained friends of my mother for some years after my father's death. I remember their two sons: Andrew (younger than me) and John (a couple of years my senior). There may have been another son, older still?

I remember too Miss Jessie Hickford from the late 1960s, when I worked at Barclays Bank. Miss Hickford was blind by then. She used to come into the bank with her guide dog, and, having been a colleague of my father, she always asked for me. She would cash a cheque, using a small card with a signature space, which fitted over the cheque. I would guide her hand to this space for her to sign. She was a lovely, cheerful lady. She wrote a book (or was it two?) on becoming blind and coping with the difficulties.

I read these long ago.

I remember accompanying my parents to tea at the home of Mr and Mrs Hamer. They had a lovely garden with a pond full of goldfish - too full, as they wanted to catch some to give to friends. I was given a small fishing net to catch as many as I could, whilst the adults chatted. I don't think I was very successful!

Another memory but I don't know of whom. The wife of one of the teachers was about to go to the Maternity Home to give birth. The couple had a daughter, Penelope, aged about eighteen months, but had no-one to take care of her whilst her mother was away. My parents took Penelope in. She stayed for ten days or so. I was aged about seven and during that time Penelope became the little sister I never had. I still have photos of her. I was so sad when her parents collected her. I never saw her again.

I have not yet read issue 30, but a quick browse has prompted some Colchester memories. Gunton's and the wonderful smell of freshly ground coffee as one walked along Crouch Street is unforgettable. I also remember St Nicholas Church, demolished in about 1955. I remember remarking to one of my St John's Green teachers that it was a pity to knock down such a lovely building. My admiration was dismissed with "It doesn't matter. It's only Victorian gothic". How tastes change! The tower was demolished at night. I remember lying in bed counting the thuds echoing across the town, as each stone block dropped to the ground,

but think I must have fallen asleep before the end! We looked forward to the new Co-op departmental store, which proved a disappointment, both in its building and contents. There were headphones against a wall, where shoppers hoped to listen to the latest Top Ten, without necessarily buying the records. They broke down almost at once and soon disappeared.

I also have a cutting entitled 'Popular Concert' in which my father took part, held to raise funds for a new organ for the Headgate Congregational Church. Unfortunately no date or newspaper source has been kept so there is a frustrating part missing!

With best wishes to all at Colchester Recalled.

*Daphne Jones, nee Drabble*

*\* These items are featured on page 7 of this issue*

*The Editor*

**I** was amused to see the cover on the latest edition but wondered how many readers had spotted that the building at the back of the picture now looks different.

It was then the offices of the Associated Engineering Union but it is now a lawyer's office with flats above. Instead of one storey, it is now has two above the ground floor. I don't know when the extra floor was added.

My father was a member of the AEU, having served his apprenticeship as a toolmaker. He was proud to have been a member when it was more of a craft union than a trade union. As we lived close to the office, Dad would go and pay

subscriptions for some of his colleagues. He took me once. All I can remember is that you could not see across the room for cigarette smoke.

Dad was once challenged for

under-paying his subs. This was not true but the records did not show that Dad had refused to pay the voluntary political levy. Dad felt that members were given little choice about this and many

did not realise that it existed. He thought this was underhand and had declined for that reason. Had he been given the choice, he may well have happily paid.

*Peter Evans*

## BACK NUMBERS OF COLCHESTER RECALLED

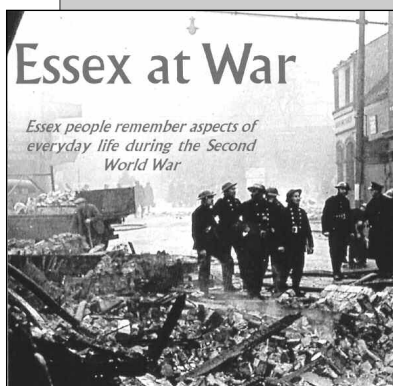
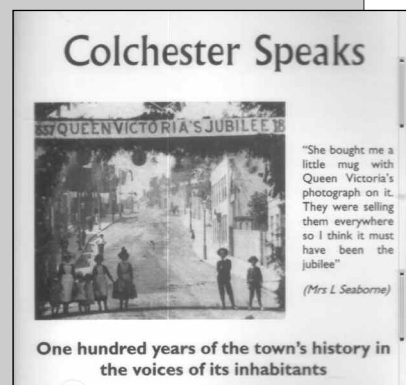
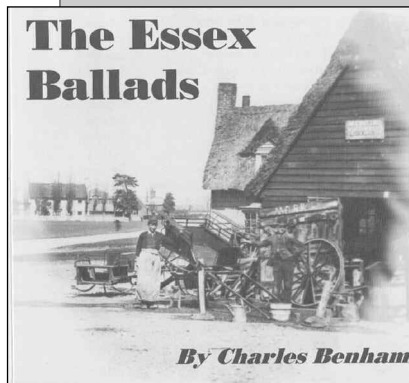
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