

COLCHESTER RECALLED

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A rather formal pantomime cast for Cinderella at the old Repertory Company in the High Street

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Charity Registration Number 1000166

Colchester Recalled Oral History Society 2019-2020

New Visitors are welcome to our monthly meetings

OUR PROGRAMME 2019-2020 AT THE ROMAN CIRCUS CENTRE AT 7PM

October 10th -

An Evening With Steve Mannix,
Director of the Mercury
Theatre, discussing its new
building, its 'big tent' on the
Abbey Field and the busy life
of the Theatre.

November 14th -

Alan Skinner -
*On the Buses - How Local Bus
Services Came to North Essex
100 Years Ago.*

December 12th -

Our Christmas Meeting -
Patrick Denney is doing the
'Round Colchester' Photo
Quiz, then mince pies, wine
and two films -
The Jumbo Story and *I Married a
Stranger* - 90-year olds recall
courtship and marriage in
Edwardian times.

January 16th -

Lawrence Northall -
*The Archaeology of Mersea mud -
an Oral History.*
A project which uncovered a
mammoth tusk, ancient fish
traps and the lost harbour of a
forgotten fort.

February 13th -

Philip Crummy -
*The Water Supply of Roman
Colchester: a mystery?*
Philip will also discuss the
recent discovery of Roman
Public Baths under the former
Jacks store.

March 12th -

David Whittle -
'The Great Flood of 1953.

April 16th -

Peter Berridge, our former
Museum curator -
*Colchester Castle: Its Origin, Form
and History* as from his newly
published book.

May 14th -

Andrew Phillips -
*Colchester Gardeners 1750 to
2020, A Neglected History.*

June 18th -

Peter Jones -
Night Mail -
The historic postal service by
steam railway, all night to
Scotland, illustrated by the
documentary '*Night Mail*'
shown either side of our break,
following our AGM chaired by
our President Sir Bob Russell.

OUR NEXT ISSUE

No.34 is due for publication in
Autumn 2020. Letters, articles
and illustrations should be
addressed to

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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.

For monthly meetings see
left. Admission £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 OFFICERS

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Memories of Life in Domestic Service

My name is May Ethel Bareham and I am 106 years old. I was born at my grandmother's house in South Street in 1913 and one of my earliest memories is of when the Zeppelin came over in 1916 during the First World War and crashed at Wigborough.

I was about four years old when I started at Canterbury Road School and Miss Notley and Miss Parker were two of my teachers, and Mr Cheese was the head-master. I used to like going to school although I didn't like doing needlework very much. We stayed in the same class all day – we didn't move around to different classrooms. Some of the teachers were very strict and, of course, you got the cane if you misbehaved – especially the boys.

In the morning we all went in the hall for morning prayers which was taken by the headmaster and the head lady – they would be together. And then we went to our classrooms for the rest of the day.

I left school when I was fourteen and my first job was doing house work for a lady in Maldon Road. She was a Mrs Duff and wanted a daily help. I got paid five shillings a week (25p), and I had to work every day, including Sundays. There was a lot of scrubbing to do in those days. The outside toilet had to be cleaned, the kitchen had to be cleaned – everything

had to be done. I also had to do the shopping which I'd never done before – so I had to learn how to do that. It was a big house so there was always something to do. We used to do certain things on certain days. Monday was always wash day – I had to help the lady of the house do that. Some of the people there used to sleep in but I went home every day. I used to have to



May Bareham pictured in March 2019 aged 106

hand over my five shillings wages to my mother, and if ever I wanted to buy something such as stockings or gloves she would give me the money for it.

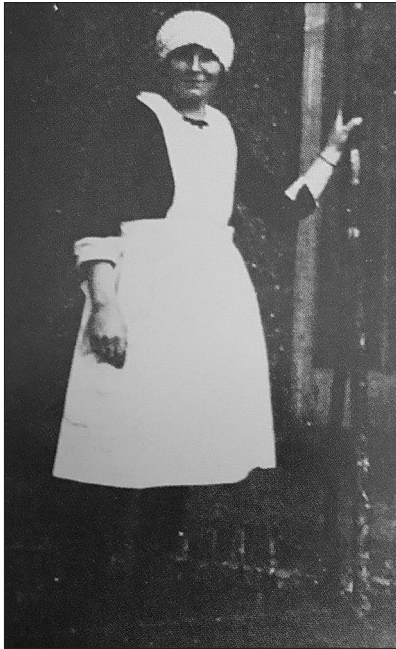
When I was about sixteen I was offered a job in London with a Jewish family who wanted a maid and I decided to take the job. I got seventeen shillings a week – seventeen shillings - I didn't know what to do with all that money so I got a little Post Office account to save it in. The house was in Sidmouth Road, Maida Vale and the work was much the

same as before but it was a big house and I was the only maid, although the lady of the house used to work as well and I used to help her. I had to get the breakfast ready, then do the washing up, make the beds, and clean all the rooms – it was working all day. I started at about seven in the morning and worked until about eight at night after I had finished washing up the dinner things –

I was on duty almost all of the time.

I had a lovely little bedroom to live in although whenever her daughter used to visit with her little child, I had to sleep in the kitchen on a fold-up bed that she had, but that wasn't too often. I had to wear a special uniform to work in. In the mornings it was a blue dress with a white cap, and in the afternoons it was a black dress, with a

white apron and just a little piece in my hair. We had to change in the afternoon because there might be people coming in and I would have to make tea and things like that. When the family were having dinner in the dining room, I would have to eat mine by myself in the kitchen. I used to have one afternoon off every fortnight when I could go into town or something like that. I might have gone to the cinema, depending on what was on, or perhaps had a look round the shops. I stayed in that job for about two and a half years



May, seen in a rare photograph wearing her servant's uniform whilst working in London



Domestic servants from the early 1900s using a washing dolly (on the left) and a mangle (on the right)



before I decided that I wanted a change and told her that I wanted to leave. She didn't want me to go but I wanted a change.

I eventually moved back to Colchester and managed to get a job at Woolworth's in the High Street. My sister was

already working there as a window dresser and she told me that they were looking for staff. I thought that working in a shop would be a change from doing housework so I took the job and started off working on the counters selling cotton and embroidery stuff. I stayed

working there for many years and eventually became a floor walker, and later a buyer where I had to order all the materials that we sold from the various suppliers.

Edited from an interview with Patrick Denney in March 2019

Memories of Fire-watching in WW2 and the Old Repertory Theatre

My name is Wyn Smith and I was born at Tiptree in 1919 which makes me 98 years old. At the time of the Second World War I was working at Barclay's Bank in Colchester High Street – opposite the old Repertory Theatre. One of my duties as a bank employee was to share in fire-watching duties – especially at night time. On the first floor of the bank there was a large Billiard Room where we had our camp beds and there was a little door

which led out onto a flat roof. So when the siren used to go off we would go out onto the roof and watch for any fires that may take hold. We used to take turns in doing this once every 10 days and there would be three of us on duty at any one time – either two girls and a man, or two men and a girl.

We were a part of a little group of fire-watchers because at the time Boots the Chemist was the corner shop, and there were various other offices

between them and us and we worked together as one team. It wasn't always three people from the bank. It would be a combination of three persons from that little section. But as the bank was the best place to have the camp beds and so forth, they used to come to us. Our equipment consisted of a stirrup pump and a tin hat! That's all we had but thankfully we never had to use it. I don't know, but if Hitler had known that we were just standing there

with a stirrup pump and a tin hat I don't know what might have happened!

We had to stay on duty for the whole night and then go to work the next day – we would just continue straight on to work when our shift ended. Of course, we used to often get some sleep overnight, but we weren't supposed to.

Over the road from the bank was the old Repertory Theatre. It was a lovely little theatre with funny little old dressing rooms down below.

When we knew that we were on fire-watching duty we used to go across to the theatre during the day and say that we were on duty that night and could we come over and see the show, and they used to keep us some seats. Upstairs there was a little gallery of about three rows so they used to save us two seats at the end of one of the rows. We always used to leave one person on duty at the bank.

So we would go over and sit in these two seats and if the siren went off while we were there someone would creep up the stairs, tap us on the shoulder and say, 'the siren has gone', and without disturbing the play or anything, we would creep out at the back, cross the road and come back into the bank, put on our tin hats, pick up our stirrup pumps, and we were back on duty.

The theatre was run by a couple called Bob Digby and Beatrice Radley. It was a weekly rep and they did some very

good plays. They used to run the box office themselves but they used to have local people come in to sell programmes and help out generally. It was almost like a home-made set-up, but it was very friendly. On occasions they used to do a play where they would want a number of extras and they would ask

various people if they would like to help out, and because they knew that I was interested in theatre they would often ask



Wyn Smith pictured in April 2017'

me. I didn't have any lines to say and would just walk on with the crowd and do whatever was needed.

On occasion we might have to use the dressing rooms which were absolutely awful. They were downstairs, two little rooms, with hardly any space for changing. There was a mirror on the wall with fluorescent lights down the sides so they could do their make-up. They had to keep all the costumes in these tiny little rooms.

The theatre itself was always

well attended – even during the war. It was a weekly rep so while they were performing one play, they would be learning the next play at the same time – which was jolly hard work. I got to know many of the actors because of my involvement with the theatre and one actor that I remember the most was Dora Bryan. She first arrived as an ASM (Assistant Stage Manager), a position which was usually referred to as a 'general dog's body'. And I remember

that on one occasion when the leading actress was taken ill, Dora Bryan stepped in and was absolutely brilliant.

All the actors were very friendly and they all mucked in together. They would normally be here for a whole season which would run for about three months at a time. Most of the actors lived in digs around the town while they were here, although several would stay at *The*

Pevenil, which was a small commercial hotel on North Hill, run by a lady called Ada. And because I had got to know many of the actors quite well by being in their shows, I used to get invited to some of the parties they used to have there. *The Pevenil* was the main gathering place where the actors used to hang out.

Edited from an interview with Patrick Denney in April 2017.

Wyn celebrated her 100th birthday in February 2019

Evacuation - and How It Happened

Our story is focused on the late Victorian Newtown area of Colchester during the early years of WW2. There, on 3rd of September 1939, we find Tom Cannon (aged three years and nine months) living with his parents and two older sisters, Joyce and Grace, at 40 Harsnett Road, while Harry Carlo (aged four years and three months) is living with his parents at 70 Morant Road, less than five minutes away.

Perusing the documents retained by the families, one is impressed by the fact that the War was being planned for well before the declaration by Neville Chamberlain on 3rd September. Tom's father's document as Air Raid Warden was delivered on 27th September 1938.

BOROUGH OF COLCHESTER
AIR RAID WARDEN
CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORITY

Name *R. F. Cannon*
 Address *40 Harsnett Rd*

J. H. Sturkell
 Chief Constable.
 Date *27.9.38*

R. F. Cannon
 Signature of Holder.

This card authorises the person named to carry out the duties laid upon Wardens by the Chief Constable.

Once War was declared, detailed local plans were being activated. Almost immediately troops were being billeted with local families as shown by this brief message from the Officer i/c Billets to Mrs Cannon, dated 7/9/39:

The troops at present billeted with you will be leaving Friday morning before breakfast. They will be

replaced by troops of another unit who will require breakfast. Payments for billets up to Friday morning will be made on Saturday. (At this time there was a shop in almost every road and rationing had not yet been implemented).

At Harry's Morant Road house there was a succession of billetes, the first being two soldiers, one of whom, Taffy, was killed at Dunkirk. Others included firemen, (while my fireman father was billeted at Tilbury), and WAAFs. My mother kept in touch with several after the war. Quite how our family and two strangers fitted into a house with an outdoor loo and a simple bathroom, accessible only through two bedrooms, is a mystery.

A variety of instructional documents were delivered dealing with how to react to air raids and how to treat wounds and to contact medical posts. A message from your local air raid warden P (such as Tom's Dad) asks *that a 'W' be placed on the gate post to indicate availability of water and a stirrup pump. Ladders, spades etc. to be placed in the garden to help in rescue. Will the women folk prepare hot water, hot bottles, blankets, bandages and tea and anything that might be helpful in dealing with casualties. Always have at least 10 gallons of water stored in your house. Also 30 lbs of dry sand. Gas attacks would be signaled by rattles. Gas masks in their cardboard packs were to be carried at all times. We can beat gas attacks if we know what to do, and do it.*

There was also advice on how to react to actual invasion including a leaflet *Beating the*

Invader signed by Winston Churchill himself. We were instructed to **STAND FIRM and CARRY ON. If you have a trench ready in your garden so much the better. If you are on your way to work, finish your journey if you can. Reassuringly, we are informed The Home Guard will immediately come to grips with the invaders, and there is little doubt will soon destroy them. If you see an enemy tank or a few enemy soldiers, what you have seen may be a party of stragglers who can easily be rounded up.**

The other reaction to possible invasion was evacuation of the non-essential civilian population, especially children. A *Temporary Transfer of Population* leaflet was issued on 19th September 1940 which specified those who should stay to run essential services and those who should consider leaving. For our area of the town, the assembly point was Wilson Marriage School from where there would be access to trains to Peterborough, Rugby, Kettering, Wellingborough, Stoke on Trent and Burton on Trent. Harry recalls setting off with his mother and gas mask before spending a night on the floor of a hall in Wellingborough. We were then billeted with an elderly couple and I was enrolled in a local primary school where the curriculum included knitting for both genders. (There was no long term effect on my

TRAIN 23
 Assemble at 9.30 a.m.
THURSDAY
 AS INSTRUCTED

knitting skills!) However, after ten weeks my mother decided to take us back to rejoin my father. A factor may have been that three girls from Lexden had been killed in a bombing raid on adjacent Rushden.

Tom writes:- *'My sister Joyce confirms that we were evacuated in September 1940. She says we had to assemble at Wilson Marriage school before leaving by train to an unknown destination. It was only when we arrived at Stoke that we knew where we were. I was just a month short of my 4th birthday on 13/10/1936. I think we spent the first night in a hall before being taken round Fenton to find lodgings. Joyce says that we were one of the last families to find somewhere and an elderly widower by the name of Mr Fenton reluctantly took us in. We all had to sleep in one bed and Joyce says the net curtains were so degraded that they were liable to fall apart if you were not careful with them!'*

I can remember some things about it as I had quite a nasty accident running out of the small garden into the lane and colliding with the milkman's cart, splitting open my forehead and knees. I remember going back to the house wondering what the warm liquid was running down my face. The milkman was very upset and helped clean me up over the kitchen sink. I still have the scars to prove it! Other things I remember are the nearby 'Lido', part of a river, which the lane looked down on and the railway, and some large dumps of China rejects which we used to frequent and collect pieces we liked. We took a lot of it home and there were remnants in the garden for many years after the war. Joyce was 12 and went to a local

school. I think at the time she was in her first year at CCHS at Greyfriars on East Hill under the headship of Miss King. I don't know about sister Grace but she would have been 10 at the time.

After some weeks of this uncomfortable existence my mother and a Mrs Corkerton (also of Morant Road) decided they were going to return home, against my father's wishes. Joyce says that they chose a day to return about the middle of November, but unfortunately the Luftwaffe bombed Coventry the night before and the railways were badly affected. Joyce says it took us about 24 hours to return home because of all the disruption.

A further *Invasion Danger* document was issued in March 1941. This was in a smaller format perhaps in response to paper shortages which had led

to a government ban on Christmas cards. The message was rather more strident.

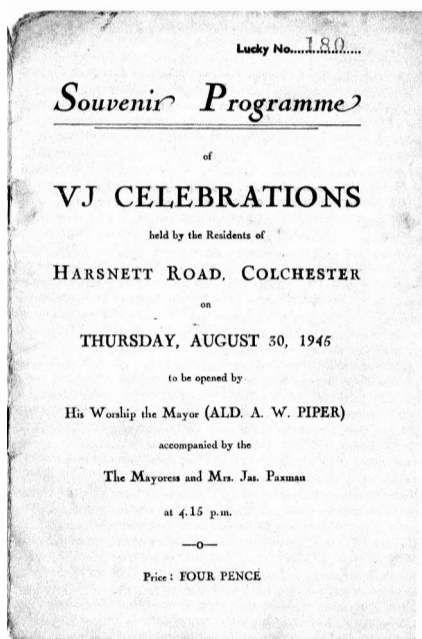
You can help to defeat the invader by leaving now if you can be spared and have somewhere to go. When invasion is upon us it may be necessary to evacuate the remaining population of this and certain other towns. Evacuation would then be compulsory at short notice, in crowded trains, with scanty luggage, to destinations chosen by the Government. If you are not among the essential workers it is better to go now while the going is good.

Mrs Cannon was asked to attend a meeting on 29th June 1940 to discuss the *Overseas Reception Scheme* which could arrange for children to travel to Canada. Some evacuation ships were torpedoed and she decided not to take a place. An invasion was still considered a threat to Colchester and other towns near the coast.

Harry Carlo and Tom Cannon



Colchester Evacuees arriving at Stoke on Trent in 1940. Far left is a future mayoress of Colchester, now Sheila Bouckley. The smallest boy in glasses is Tony London who created the modern Hatfield's store



The VJ Celebration Party for Harsnett Road 30th August 1945

Street Parties were held nationwide to celebrate the two victories of the Second World War; VE - Victory in Europe and VJ - Victory in Japan.

The illustration of the programme (left) is for the VJ party in held in Harsnett Road.

The illustration above is of the people attending that party. Do you recognise anyone?

I attended the celebration for Morant Road.

New Park Street held the star event, despite being one of the smallest streets in the area.

Harry Carlo

A Letter to the Editor Requesting Your Help

I am writing to ask if any of the members of the Colchester Recalled Oral History Society remember the old house that used to be set into the wall on the left hand side of Roman Road as you turn in from East Hill. I lived there for a short time around 1960/61. It was known to my family as 'The Garage' but it was actually the old stables for the main house. I was in Colchester recently and went to find the site.

I assumed that the entrance to the small car park nearest to the East Hill turning was the site of the house and I am certain that the actual car park was the garden. I can clearly remember as a child looking over the brick wall that now borders the car park down to the road. We rented the house from the Salvation Army who owned it at that time. It had been condemned as unfit for human habitation when we lived there but housing was in

short supply and we had to leave the rented house we were living in on Dead Lane in Ardleigh, where I was born in 1957, because the landlord wanted to sell it.

My mother knew about 'The Garage' because members of my father's extended family had lived in it certainly from the late 1920s when my father's cousin Iris Balls was born there. The Balls family was joined by my grandmother, Sarah Ann

Hampton, along with my father and my aunt, when they were evacuated from London during the Blitz. Apparently 13 adults and assorted children were living in the house at times during the war.

The house was very small with one room and a small galley kitchen downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs. The windows on the ground floor were at ground level as the house was set back into the bank. A channel ran down the centre of the downstairs room, presumably to carry away

water and urine from the horses! I cannot remember if there was a bathroom but there must have been a toilet. A glass conservatory led out into the garden on ground level, where there was an old peach tree and a large walnut tree. We lived in this house until a newly built council house was ready for us on the Greenstead Estate. We left Colchester when I was six years old and moved to Sheffield.

I would love to know if anyone remembers this house

and if by any lucky chance has a photograph of the front of it. I searched in vain through all the local history books whilst I was in Colchester and then saw a copy of your magazine and thought your society might be the best place to ask.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sarah Hampton

Please send any replies and photographs to the Editor who will forward them on and feature the most interesting ones in the next issue.

My Early Memories of the Old Repertory Theatre

My parents were not theatre-goers but my mother took me to the pantomime at least once. I remember the building - it was the old Repertory Theatre in High Street, now the Co-operative Bank. She also took me to an evening of Music Hall there, where I was shocked to see an actress singing in a revealing grass skirt. I was about 10!

Early in 1967, I was studying English Literature for 'O' level at the Gilberd School, then on North Hill. It was agreed that we would go to see *The Merchant of Venice* at a schools' matinee, and weeks later, *Great Expectations*, the book in the syllabus. (Sadly, the Rep was not doing *St. Joan*, the other play). I was excited by the idea and enjoyed both productions. I still have the remains of the programme for the Shakespeare, and have since acquired other copies.

The Merchant of Venice made a big impression on me and although I have seen other

productions, I rate it one of the best. I was impressed by the use of stairs in different guises. The newel posts at the bottom of the stairs were used in the scenes where the choices between three caskets were made. I recognised David Lawton who played *Shylock*, the Jewish merchant. He was taking time off from his role as *Bernard Booth*, Chef at Crossroads Motel, in the TV soap. Shortly afterwards, another of the cast, Neville Buswell, joined *Coronation Street* for many years as *Ray Langton*.

I don't know why I didn't go again but I did start going to the Mercury Theatre. I missed the first show *The Recruiting Sergeant*. However, I did see the leading man Michael Robbins, (from TV's *On the Buses!*), wearing a big hat on his way to the theatre. If he thought he would be noticed and get a lot of attention, he did not know Colchester people!

Twenty five years later, I met Chris Emmett, who was in *The*

Recruiting Officer as well, and also in the first show I saw, *Charlie's Aunt*, (an excellent choice for a first visit). This was at a recording of the radio show *The News Huddlines* at the BBC and Chris said that he had done a number of comedies like that and had happy memories of the time.

While I was working for Colchester Borough Council I sent several invoices to the theatre. I charged the Old Rep a share of the caretaker's and cleaners' wages as there was an arrangement that as the Council owned the building, they would pay part of the cost of maintenance. I had to calculate interest due on a loan made to the theatre as it opened. I remember seeing a photograph of the Borough Treasurer, Ernest Bailey, receiving the final cheque, but this was 'fake news' as the cheque had been received a couple of weeks earlier. Both theatres were good payers.

Peter Evans



From New Orleans to Colchester a

Among the earliest memories of jazz in Colchester are those from 1948 when Don Nevard remembers record sessions in a room above Manns Music shop in High Street. Also band sessions in the old *Grosvenor Hotel* in Maldon Road, about which little is known. Then the Colchester Jazz Society met at the Conservative Club in Museum Street, featuring players Don on piano, Bernard Watson (clarinet), Cliff Godbold (clarinet) and Dr Logan (banjo) among others now forgotten.

By 1954 a group of six played in *St Paul's Hall* in Colne Bank Avenue, later becoming familiar to Jazz Club fans, including Trevor Ince (drums), Dave Mayhew (trumpet) and Chris 'Robin' Banham (piano).

Sunday night jam sessions started in 1955 with John Addyman (piano), Ernie Wrigley (trumpet) with Bernard Watson in an upstairs room in *The Cross Keys* public house on the corner of Long Wyre Street and Culver Street, where Colchester Jazz Club was born in 1956. Ever since, the combination of good jazz music, good strong ale and good company, were to see the Club continue to the present day, despite many difficulties along the way.

In those early days a collection was made to pay for the hire of the room, with any cash over given to the musicians to help pay for their beer, which after a few weeks moved to a dingy room at the top of dark narrow stairs at *The Plough* public house at St Botolph's corner.

The next move was across the road to the beer cellar of *The Fountain* standing alongside St Botolph's Station. Madeline Addyman collected the entrance money at the door, seated on an upturned empty beer barrel. Often young jazz enthusiasts watched in envy and frustration at the amounts of ale passing through the transparent pipes transmitting their contents to the bars upstairs! The walls of the cellar had been whitewashed and not conducive to those who cared for their clothes, leading to the walls being plastered with comics the next week! Other features were a heap of coke beside the boiler and a leaky earthenware sink. Numbers attending rarely exceeded thirty but space was still limited for musicians, dancers and onlookers. Players of the time included the afore-mentioned Ernie, John, Trevor, Bernard

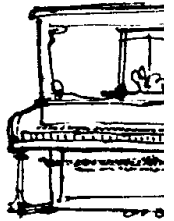
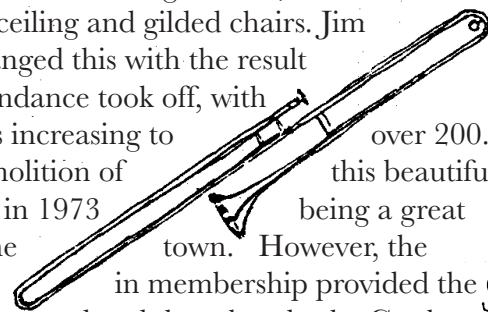
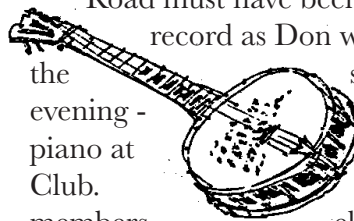
and also Mick Cooper (drums), Pete Whybrow (string bass), Terry Lewis (trombone) and blues singer Patience. Another memorable situation involved George Allen who volunteered to act as bouncer "cos he was the biggest".

Shortly after this, the Club was informed by the police that it was acting illegally as it had no official committee. Legal advice was sought by John Addyman, as a result a non-profit-making organisation to further the appreciation of jazz in Colchester was in motion, with a constitution drawn up, and a formal Committee elected, with Don Nevard being its first President. The first Annual General Meeting held at *The Gaiety* public house in Mersea Road must have been the fastest on

record as Don wanted to get on with the serious business of the evening - the playing of the piano at his debut for the Club. Other committee members elected were Jim Barnard, Jos Murray (secretary), Madeline Addyman and Pete Nice.

By 1957 the Club moved again, this time to *The Cups Hotel* in High Street, with its famous painted ceiling and gilded chairs. Jim had arranged this with the result that attendance took off, with numbers increasing to over 200. The demolition of this beautiful building in 1973 being a great loss to the town. However, the increase in membership provided the Club to expand and three bands, the Castle Jazz Band and Oyster Jazz Band both from Colchester and the Ipswich Jazz Band, with more accomplished musicians, were regularly featured. Regretfully, Trust House Ltd, owners of the hotel decided that jazz at *The Cups* did not fit their image and so the Club had to move...

George Allen made a 3 month contract for the Club to use the Garrison-based *Warrant Officers' and Serjeants' Club* (later the *Civil Service Club*) and the first night really was a 'hot' one - the Club caught fire! Half the Club was burnt



r and All That Jazz, for Over 60 Years!

out, although thankfully not the half that the Club used, so after the 3 months had expired, rebuilding the fire damage started and the Club was obliged to find a new home.

This was back to the High Street, at the *Corn Exchange*. The well known local dance band leader Arthur Williamson was the leaseholder, and Jim Barnard persuaded him to let the Club use the premises. Sadly, the hall had poor acoustics and little 'atmosphere', with one depressed musician describing it as 'an aircraft

hangar'. About 50 attended the opening night, but the attendance reduced alarmingly, putting the future of the Club seriously in doubt. Jock

Cameron, landlord of *The Albert Hotel* on the North Station Road/Cowdray Avenue junction came to the rescue.

Early attendances rose to 70, then 100 and suddenly mushroomed to over 300 every Sunday evening, where the amplification systems of the day consisted of a single microphone and amplifier fed into a single loudspeaker - very different from today's systems!

One year, following an early Christmas Eve party at *The Norfolk* public house, the merry makers lined up in North Station Road to march to the roundabout at *The Albert* where the band played Christmas carols. A passing policeman on his cycle rode round the island until the band played the National Anthem, whereby he dismounted stood to attention, then suggested that they all moved on quietly.

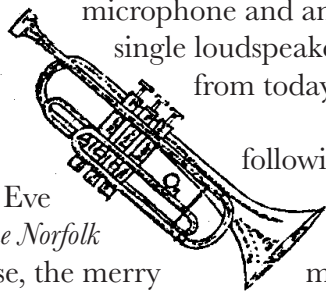
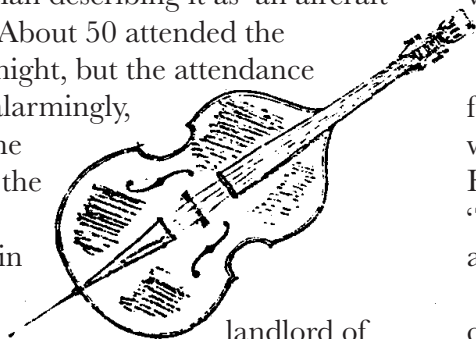
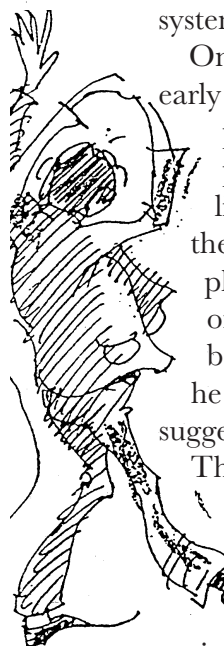
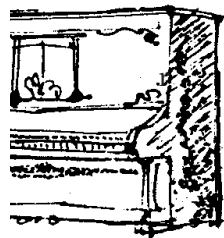
These early days at *The Albert* began the tradition of Christmas and New Year parties which continue to this day.

In 1963 the Club hit the headlines with the news that its most senior member was none other than Dudley

Narborough, the then Bishop of Colchester. The Club knew him as 'The Bish'. He told a BBC radio interviewer that mothers were more relaxed about their daughters attending the Club when he was present, hence the title of a book issued by the Club about this time entitled *Ain't Misbehavin'*. The *Daily Mirror* published a photograph of the 'The Bish' playing the drums at the Club, where one of the more bizarre sights was the avuncular, purple vested, chain smoking churchman speedily downing a pint of ale! At the time, unbeknown to the Club, he was actively involved in raising funds for a Youth House to be built in the town, where many years later the paths of Youth House and Jazz Club would meet. But sadly 'The Bish' retired to another part of the UK and was no longer seen at the Club.

After eight splendid years at *The Albert*, the current landlord Ian Lye required the ballroom for a restaurant and cocktail bar and the helpful brewery Greene King and Ken Jones, landlord of *The Langenhoe Lion*, agreed to spend hundreds of pounds to prepare a room for the Club's use. As this was not ready for 4 weeks, the Club arranged a temporary spell at *The Embassy Suite* in Crouch Street, before moving to the new venue in 1966. This move turned out be a huge success with attendances averaging over 300 virtually every Sunday evening, hence the decision to extend the car parking facilities. The now late Ken Jones was a great supporter of the Club, nothing being any trouble to him whilst the Club was there. As time passed, the number of local residents of *The Langenhoe Lion* and the number of cars travelling to and from the venue increased, along with noise levels, especially after jazz nights, and it became necessary for the Club to move again...

The Club Chairman George Allen negotiated the move to the *Colchester Youth House* in West Stockwell Street, with Youth House Chairman, Mrs A D Blaxill and Warden, Bill Palmer. Youth House membership more than trebled when Jazz Club members took on dual membership. The first session was in May 1977, admission 15p. Over 700 gathered in the gymnasium where the stark white walls were decorated with large monotone pictures of jazz greats to improve the atmosphere. At the far end a backlit



portable stage featured the band. Two years later membership of the Club rose to over 900, although after reaching this peak, membership declined and in 1975 the Club moved to the cellar. While the more intimate surroundings and subdued lighting revived older members' recollections of previous years, the atmosphere was spoilt by having members split between the bar upstairs and the music downstairs. The following year the Club had a major setback when the treasurer and funds departed to places unknown and the future looked extremely hazardous. Fortunately, the members saved the day by forming a supporters club, to raise extra finance, with Liz Taylor taking responsibility for this and the contributions helping the Club to survive difficult times.

**COLCHESTER
JAZZ CLUB**
(Langenhoe Lion Hall)
"The Guvnor" is back
on **SUNDAY, NOV. 26**
KEN COLYER
7.30 - 10.30
Members 4/- Guests 5/-
350 last time. So come early
in case we have to lock the
door

In 1977 the Club which had survived against all expectations celebrated its 21st anniversary, and with the jazz clubs in Ipswich, Chelmsford and Maldon all ceasing to exist, it probably became the oldest jazz club in the country, and its 25th anniversary co-incided with ten years at the *Youth House*, the ensuing party being commemorated by decorative tee-shirts being on

sale for members and guests.

In 1987 the Club moved to the *Hawthorn Suite* at Stanway Rovers Football Club. The suggestion for the move came from bass player Alan Arnold of the Tom Collins Jazz Band.

The venue was ideal for the Club's purposes and the last session there was in March 2013, when the Club moved to *Marks Tey Village Hall*, where the opening session seven days later took place on 17th March.

Today the Club is now over 60 years old and still going strong!

Bob Catchpole

This article is based on the book 'Aint Misbehavin' - the story of Colchester Jazz Club, compiled by Bob Catchpole and Phil Brown, featuring the illustrations by the late Barry Woodcock.



Members enjoying a LEPRa charity function at the Town Hall with the Mayor W Porter in the background in 1963



Colchester Jazz Club musicians at the Langenhoe Lion, left to right: Tom Collins trumpet, Mal 'Mac' Cox banjo, John Sharp clarinet, Joss Heard drums, Dave Turner trombone, Alan Arnold bass and Don Nevard piano.

Memories of a Choirboy

I never had the desire or patience, to learn to play a musical instrument, but I must have had a reasonable singing voice as a boy, because at different times, I was a member of three choirs. The first was at St George's Primary School and from there at the age of about 10, I progressed to the Colchester Boys Choir.

My memory is that it was a large choir with possibly 40 members, maybe more; we practised in St John's Green Primary School and took part in competitions in different cinemas against other choirs. We represented the 'Regal' as it was in those days, wearing yellow shirts and maroon trousers. I wasn't in that choir very long as I passed the 11+ and went on to the Colchester Royal Grammar School in 1955. (As an aside, that was back in the days when the

three selective schools in Colchester were for the benefit of local children and not drawing their intake from the whole of Essex and beyond, as the two surviving schools currently do.) I was one of six boys given places at the CRGS and a similar number of girls went on to the Girls High; in addition, another group of boys and girls went to the Gilbert Technical School).

Once at the Grammar School, the choir competitions which were on Saturday mornings clashed with rugby, so the choir had to go. I recall going with my Mother to see the conductor, Mr Finch, at his home in Maldon Road, to return my uniform.

I'd not been a member of the choir very long, possibly a year, but it proved to be very useful on my first day at CRGS when all new boys were subjected to 'hedge-ucating'

and ducking. The former ritual entailed being pushed through a hedge with potential damage to pupil/or brand new, very expensive purple blazer and the ducking meant having one's head shoved in a basin full of cold water. A couple of the choir members were already at CRGS and arranged to see me through these rituals with somewhat less vigour than other new boys had to endure.

I wonder if any reader can add to my rather hazy recollections of the Colchester Boys Choir or has any relevant photographs.

My academic progress at the Grammar School was initially good, but by the second year a propensity for mimicking the masters rather than paying attention led to a downward spiral. We had a written report at the end of each term and the Headmaster, Mr. Elam, added a comment in different

coloured ink, red indicating good; blue - average; green - must do better. In my first year I had blue, red and blue but my Autumn term report in my second year was signed in the dreaded green ink. (I have an aversion to using that colour pen to this day!)

I didn't have a bicycle but had hoped for one that Christmas, however, my Father took a dim view of the way I was wasting a good education, (history repeating itself as he had gone to the Grammar School and been a less than diligent scholar, however, you can't put an old head on young shoulders!)

As a consolation I was allowed to join the choir at our local church, St Stephens in Canterbury Road. Neither of my parents attended church in those days; my Father was nominally C. of E. and my Mother, who came from the Isle of Sheppey, had been a regular at their local Bethel Chapel. When I was about eight I had gone to St. Stephen's Sunday school but a

new Vicar, the Rev John Norman had taken over and, when I went home and told my parents that he had said we could call him 'Father' my Dad said "Oh, did he", and I wasn't allowed to go again!

Obviously in the intervening years my Father's views must have mellowed as the Rev. Norman was still the vicar and decidedly 'High Church'.

The photograph of the choir and altar servers was probably taken in 1955 just before I joined them. Carol Gentry, who was to become my wife in 1966, was already in the choir, so our paths first crossed when we were both aged 12, though neither of us can claim to recall the occasion.

The Choir Master and Organist was Peter Pitt, an accomplished musician though only in his very early 20's.

The choir was about 20 strong, practice was Friday evenings, and under Peter's direction, we tackled some challenging anthems which were sung at the Evensong service with the choir on

occasions outnumbering the congregation.

In the early 1960's members of the choir and the Women's Institute staged several variety shows in the old 'Tin Tabernacle' (so called because of its corrugated iron construction; erected in 1894 to serve as a 'daughter church' of St Botolph's until the St. Stephen's church was built in 1905. It then served as a very good church hall until it was demolished about 20 years ago to make way for the present day church, with the former church now used as the hall. What goes around, comes around!)

These shows were quite ambitious ventures and although, no doubt, rather amateurish when viewed impartially, they were hugely enjoyed by the participants and were generously received by the audiences, but that was hardly surprising since they mostly comprised the nearest and dearest of the performers.

One very short turn comprised six of us boys dressed in our choir uniforms singing about angelic choir boys. The first verse gives you the general idea:

*"Dear little choirboys robed
in white,
Angels of innocence sweet
and bright,
Butter wouldn't melt in our
mouths so round,
Sweeter little cherubs could
never be found."*

To our surprise and delight we were 'talent spotted' and booked to appear at a charity Midnight Matinee at the County Cinema, Sudbury to sing this ditty. Our fleeting claim to fame was that we



St Stephens Church Choir

were on the same bill as Percy Edwards, the bird and animal impersonator and a young emerging actress, Susan Hampshire. My fellow choristers were Colin Scott, John and Brian Carter, Barry Layzell and the late Robert Gentry.

We very much enjoyed the experience but obviously failed to make any lasting impact on the entertainment world, so went back to our day jobs, namely paper rounds, school and obscurity.

Clive Sims



*A skiffle group from a Variety Evening at St Stephens Hall c.1960.
Left to right: Carol Gentry, Jennifer Reid, Barry Layzell, Colin Scott,
Brian Carter, Robert Gentry, Norma Cater and Clive Sims*



*LEFT:
Another Variety Evening featured a medley from 'Oklahoma'.
Back row: Barry Layzell, Mr Scott, Robert Gentry, Peter Pitt, Clive Sims, John Carter, Dennis Scott, Colin Scott and Brian Carter. Front row: Jennifer Reid, Bill Carter, Harold Gentry, Norma Cater, unknown and Carol Gentry*

ROCK & ROLL, POP, SKIFFLE, FOLK ?

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Of 1940s AND 1950s MUSIC IN COLCHESTER

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My Life and Memories of Colchester

I was born in a private nursing home in Beverley Road, in June 1948, just prior to the start of the National Health Service. I was the first child of my parents Muriel and Antony Gurney. My mother was born in St Mary's Road, the eldest of six girls, while my father spent his childhood in Great Bromley, where his father was the Rector at St George's church and was the author of several hymns. Father was the second son of seven children.

My maternal grandparents lived in St Mary's Road which was demolished in the 1970s as part of the re-development of the town centre and was roughly where St Mary's Car Park now stands. Their name was Corkerton. 'Joe' was a butcher by trade, working in the slaughterhouse in Sheepen Road and later at the Co-op Butchery in Long Wyre Street. He had an allotment at the bottom of Balkerne Hill and was a very keen vegetable and rose grower. Later in life he suffered from tuberculosis.

Our family lived in a caravan for a brief spell in Scotland Street, Nayland, and, as you can imagine, times were pretty

tough for us. My parents then moved to Maldon Road to live with my Grandparents who had retired from the parish of Great Bromley. I remember going to a friends' house to watch the Coronation on their new television set.

At five I attended Hamilton Road school, but transferred to Lexden County Primary when father started working as a gardener for the Royal Eastern Counties Hospital at Lexden House, living in a tied cottage in the grounds. He was always interested in horticulture, so his new job was ideal. By the age of six, I had a little brother, named David.

The cottage had a splendid garden with a greenhouse and father grew orchids as a hobby. There was a spinney at the bottom of the garden and it was a delight to play in the small wooded area, whatever the weather. A lane at the side of the hospital lead down to Seven Arches Farm and my friends and I would walk the short distance, taking a picnic or just to go fishing down at the river's edge at the farm. I was very fortunate, as children who lived in the town knew of no

such delights.

On sunny Saturdays and Sundays coaches from London would go down to Clacton or Walton for the day and in the late afternoon the traffic would build up outside Lexden House, requiring the police to attend to control the traffic and mother would send out trays of tea for those on duty on those hot summer evenings, while we would sit and watch the coaches, waving to the passengers as they were heading home.

At age 11 I attended St Helena School, cycling along the pathway along the bypass to and from the school. I belonged to the Girls Friendly Society and a girls group connected to St Leonard's Church, Lexden and also the 1st Lexden Guides, helping with the Cubs group for a while. Later I joined the Lexden Youth Club.

My Grandmother Gurney arranged for me, while a teenager, to have typing lessons with a Miss Inder in Crouch Street. I remember that she was a strange lady, living in a dark, dismal house, which was all a bit spooky for my liking!

On leaving school I first



Making sausages in the Co-Op Abattoir in Sheepen Road

worked at Hyam's Clothing Factory in the town centre, in the Wages department and also on the switchboard, but this was not for me, so I trained as a dental nurse with Lees, McClean and Watson on North Hill. I then trained as a nurse at the Essex County Hospital, living in the Nurses' Home in Wellesley Road. I also worked at Myland Hospital (no longer in existence) on the Eye Ward, travelling there on my moped, right to the rear of the hospital which in past years had been an isolation hospital with its own TB ward, in which Grandad Corkerton had been a patient.

Around this time mother's health was deteriorating, I got engaged and with nurses' wages insufficient, I became a receptionist for dentist Roy

Tovey in The Avenue. I was married at St Leonard's Church Lexden and a little later worked for Messrs George Royffe and Norman Elliot, chiropodists in Crouch Street. George, a very accomplished photographer, and I worked there until my son Adam was born. When I left, George gave me a Canon Camera as a present and so started my own interest in photography which I enjoy to this day.

About this time my marriage failed and later, I married Dennis Leach, a well known local plumbing and heating engineer, and with Adam old enough, it was time for me to be employed again, with Crouch Street calling me back once more. I was delighted when I landed part-time employment with gentlemen's

outfitters Jolliffe's, with the dear Bill Jolliffe doubling as Colchester Garrison Tailor from separate premises in Butt Road. It was indeed a pleasure to be working with Bill at the helm, supported by his son William and a team of really friendly individuals. I retired from there when Dennis retired, enabling us to spend more time together.

Over the years I feel that I have been lucky to work for some of the nicest, genuine Colchester folk. I still reside in the town, and I am pleased to say that my dear father still lives in Lexden, so my connection with Colchester covers so many years of lasting fond memories.

Patsy Leach

Saturday Mornings in Colchester With My Father

My Father was probably quite unusual for his time. In the early 1950s he would take me into Colchester on Saturday mornings to explore the town.

I was born after Colchester United's legendary Cup success, but father had done some reporting for the local newspaper of those games and we would sometimes meet up with members of the famous team. Our meeting place was Wright's cafe in High Street and he would catch up on the news with them. They all seemed to work at Paxmans and only played at weekends with a practice during the week. Names such as Vic Keeble and Kevin McCurley spring to mind. Of course,

they were young men then, as was my father but they were always kind to me.

Other visits were to the Castle Bookshop, in Museum Street, where Tony Doncaster presided over more books than I had ever seen! I was allowed to look at some, remembering not to turn the edges of the pages down and to have clean hands, while they chatted. There was an artist there too, Mervyn Levy; at one stage my father lent him a small amount of money and, much to my mother's annoyance was repaid with a portrait of himself!

When the weather was good we went down to the cattle market in Middleborough to look at the larger animals before going to see my

favourites, the rabbits. It was a long walk back up North Hill and if I was lucky father would carry me. Sometimes we went down to North Station to watch the trains thunder through; I think some were named after regiments and I enjoyed seeing people setting off on journeys, luggage in hand and everyone, male or female wearing a hat. We visited over two or three years but when my baby brother was old enough to accompany us he was scared of the noise of the trains rushing past, so our visits to the station ended. I still remember the signs on the station welcoming people to Colchester 'home of Colchester lathes'. In later days there was a slot machine that



High Street in 1958 with the Essex County Standard Office on the left and the owner Hervey Benham chatting outside

held bars of chocolate, but that was not until rationing ended.

The *Essex County Standard* offices were just down the road from Wright's, almost opposite the Town Hall and the beautiful *Cups Hotel*. Some years later I would go with friends to the *Corn Exchange* where we roller skated, hands linked in long chains as we sped over the floor. But that had to wait until I was a Big Girl and went to school. The Standard Office also had the print works then and had a smell of ink and paraffin. The staff were always busy but would stop to speak to dad.

Sometimes we went elsewhere; my Godmother worked in the photographic department of Boots - on the corner of High Street and Head Street and we might call there. On other occasions we went into Forsdikes, the grocery shop in Head Street on the corner of Culver Street, where father bought small

amounts of spice like cinnamon to take home.

Father and I visited different shops from the ones I visited with my mother on weekdays when she walked into town pushing my brother in his pram. Then we would stop at Baker and Fairhead's, the chemist in Head Street which was up some steps; baby brother would be weighed in a large basket on scales. In Percy King's in Crouch Street mother would buy thread, needles and other items, and the money would be put into a little container and whizzed across the ceiling to the cash desk. Occasionally mother was annoyed to be given a small packet of pins if a farthing was not available in change.

Father and I sometimes went to Crouch Street where the other side of Rawstorn Road there was a small shop run by a herbalist; I think father used to try the home grown tobacco, cheaper than the blue tins of

tobacco he bought from the newsagent and tobacconist on the corner of Head Street and Crouch Street. We would look at the meat hanging outside Leeds and Wright's and I'd wrinkle my nose as we passed the fish shop (I think it was Hearsom's).

There were lots of fish shops in Colchester then, one by the *Hippodrome*, one or more along St Nicholas' Passage - where the old church still stood, and one in the narrow part of Culver Street behind Woolworths. Near that last shop there were Public Baths where you could have a wash and brush up; something that fascinated me.

I have vague memories of the burned out shop of Kent Blaxill down near Museum Street on the High Street. It seemed rather sinister to me.

Occasionally we would walk down Balkerne Hill to where a friend of father's lived. This friend had a large, old fashioned car which he lent to father over the weekend in the summer. I think it was a large Hillman and was known as *The Blue Streak*. It had tendency to backfire which always scared me. We, father, mother and baby brother and some friends of my father, who had a daughter about my age and who lived in a flat in Head Street, would go to Frinton on a Sunday. I think Jodie and I played with dolls on the floor behind the front seat.

It was a happy time, spending time with my father then returning home for our midday meal, and a long walk in the afternoon. No wonder we were so fit!

Sue Hood

Living history in print

by **LESLEY HEUER**

HOT off the presses and into the Mayor's Parlour. The first edition of a new magazine published by the Colchester Recalled Oral History Society was handed over to the Mayor, Westley Sandford.

The society was the brainchild of the Andrew Phillips, local history writer for the Standard. Since 1986 more than 500 recordings have been made of people's memories of life in and around Colchester.

Now the society has decided to put into print some of those recollections.

Andrew explained: "There are a lot of older people, especially those in sheltered accommodation, who would be very interested to read about the

memories of contemporaries.

"We decided to give back some of what we have taken in the form of interviews, and are hoping to make it a regular publication. We have rather stuck our necks out and paid for the magazine ourselves. There is a cover

charge of 50p to help meet some of the costs."

The magazine is produced by a small editorial committee and is available at the Visitor Information Centre and from Jim Robinson at 36 Mersea Road, Colchester, CO2 7QS.



Andrew Phillips (left) with Mayor and Mayoress, Wesley and Lilla Sandford and magazine committee members Jim Robinson and Patrick Denney

The item above is reprinted from the Essex County Standard dated 1996 announcing the production of the first edition of this magazine over 20 years ago

A Letter to the Editor

The article by Bruce Neville on the Hythe Maltings (Issue 30) and the accompanying picture of the silo tower brought back to me memories of its construction.

The silo was built in the late 1960's of reinforced concrete by means of a rising shutter (mould) system. The shuttering was raised and progressively upward as the concrete poured previously became sufficiently hardened to bear weight. Once construction commenced it continued 24/7 and the entire site was floodlit to allow this.

I cannot recall how long it took to reach the top but believe it was something like three weeks to a month, effectively encasing the whole structure as one solid slab.

'Urban myth' at the time was that the contractor for the work nearly 'lost it' on two occasions during the lift but, of course, this was never confirmed or denied.

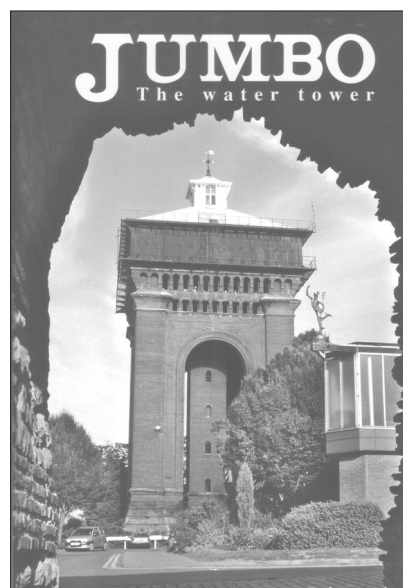
David Butcher

Back Numbers

Most back numbers of *Colchester Recalled* magazine are available. An Index of back numbers is available on the website and copies are available from the Editor.

At the time of going to press, numbers 1, 2, 10 and 22 are out of stock.

Numbers 3 to 9, 11 to 21 and 23 to 28 are 50p each or 5 copies for £2. Numbers 29-32 are £1.50 each.



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