

COLCHESTER RECALLED

Published by Colchester Recalled Oral History Society Price £2.00 Issue No. 37

Colchester Station in 1962
with the Railway Laundry chimney
in the background

See page 14 for the story
of The Railway Laundry



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Who Do You Think They Are? No.11

A Letter to the Editor

Working at Hollingtons' Clothing Factory

Colchester Recalled Oral History Society 2023-2024

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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.

The Annual Subscription is now due - £7 per member or £12 for a couple residing at the same address. You can pay by cash, cheque or bank transfer to our Treasurer, Peter Evans, 5 Grimston Road, Colchester CO2 7RN. email: peter.evans7978@btinternet.com
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Please go to our website to download the Application and Gift Aid Forms under the JOIN US page. This helps us in our fund raising.

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OUR PROGRAMME

We have arranged a series of meetings on Monday mornings, one a month at 11am at the Roman Circus Visitor Centre. This facility will be open just for us, with tea, coffee and cakes available.

The dates are as follows -

Monday 18th September

Dorian Kelly: *Theatre from the Rep to the Mercury.*

Monday 16th October

Roger Kennell: *Clacton at the Outbreak of WW2.*

Monday 13th November

Liz White: *Colchester's first By-Pass and its Memorials.*

Monday 11th December

Patrick Denney will be hosting another Colchester Picture Quiz.

Admission is £2 per member, £3 for non-members, including refreshments.

WELCOME TO ISSUE 37

As usual several new interesting illustrated articles are included as well as the latest regular features, which it is hoped that you will enjoy reading.

If you have any comments to make about this issue, please send your comments to the Editor.

OUR NEXT ISSUE

Number 38 is due to be published in Autumn 2024.

Articles and illustrations should be addressed to the Editor -

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WANTED VOLUNTEERS

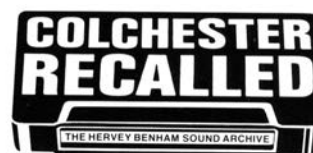
To make summaries of our recordings.

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

BACK ISSUES

Some back issues of COLCHESTER RECALLED magazine are available, along with copies of our CDs.

Details are available from the Treasurer, Peter Evans on 01206 540990.



Charity Registration Number 1000166

The Butcher's Poetess - from Frank Wright's

Readers will recall two of the town's leading butchers' shops in Crouch Street - Leeds, just a few yards in at the Headgate end and Frank Wright's, almost opposite what was *The Odeon* cinema and before that *The Regal*.

What readers probably will not know, is that regularly every Christmas, a well-known local

poet, and satisfied customer, would write a poem of thanks to the staff of the shop, for serving her so well during the previous twelve months. This would be given to me on the staff's behalf, and I include two such poems here for readers' amusement and enjoyment.

ALAN P THURLOW, *Manager*



A BUTCHER'S BALLAD AT CHRISTMAS

You're out of luck if you're a duck when
Christmas is in sight,

But if I must be plucked and trussed then buy
me from FRANK WRIGHT.

All gourmets fancy venison when lanterns are
alight,

'Twill cost a pretty penny, but order me from
FRANK WRIGHT.

I'd rather roam through wooded glades with
some selected doe,

Than grace medieval masquerades as food of
long ago.

But I accept my Yuletide plight
if you obtain me from FRANK WRIGHT.

It's infra dig to be a pig when Christmas lights
are shining,

Your head may form a centre-spread where
revellers are dining,

And oh! - you feel an awful slob
with leaves on brow and fruit in gob!

It's best to be in some disguise -
as gammon joints or well-filled pies,

Or Suffolk ham that's sheer delight, when
purchased from the HOUSE of WRIGHT.

Pheasants and turkeys on display when
Christmas trees are glowing,

Hang up on high traditional way and make a
tasty showing.

Farewell to moor and farm and field,
your culinary fate is sealed.

So make the most of being a roast -
(a splendid change from beans on toast)!

Depart in style washed down by punch
or port or hock at festive lunch.

But don't forget from whence you came -
FRANK WRIGHT of CROUCH STREET is
the name.

THE GIPSY VIOLINIST

I'm the hallmark of all cafés with a
Continental flavour
Where the scampi and the goulash are not all
the patrons savour.
It's my job to promote amongst the jaded
clientele
An appetite for other spicy offerings as well.
In my braided red bolero and a shirt that's
quite revealing
I sing my sad Slav love songs with explosive
fire and feeling.
I cast a spell around the place directly I begin,
The epitome of passion with my GIPSY VIOLIN.

With my ardour soaring fast between the
Borsch soup and the caviar
I sing of stormy wooings on the shores of wild
Calabria.
To suit the meat and veg. I switch to quite
another area
And tell of sly abductions in the mountains of
Bulgaria.
To give your flame-ringed Crepe Suzette that
extra bit of zest
I turn to Magyar courtships in the heart of
Budapest,
With Tokay flowing freely and a Czardas in
full spin
I strike a tender tremolo upon MY VIOLIN.
I wend my wistful, wailing way from table to
table
Becoming Cupid's right hand man as hard as

I am able.
A whisper from my sighing strings yields
magic transformations
And blasé, balding businessmen all leap to
action stations.
While pimply youths with weedy frames all
feel like Casanova
And skinny girls with mousy looks start
blossoming all over.
It is our aim to fan the flame, me and MY
VIOLIN.
But don't you *dare* to label it an instrument
of sin!

And when a girl is worth a look I flirt a bit -
mock seriously
And indicate my mood by pizzicato-ing,
deliriously.
Then she's convinced I must have close
relations in Seville,
But really I was born within a few miles of
Bexhill.
There is not *one* romantic touch in life that I
can boast,
I catch the last bus home to have a meal of
beans on toast,
In a decaying boarding-house kept by an
aged Finn,
Who can't abide my singing, or my GIPSY
VIOLIN.

MARGARET PODGORSKA

Alan, who was Butchery
Manager at Frank Wright's for
30 years, and retired ten years
ago, would like to make contact
with any of his old customers.

He says that you can 'phone
or write to him at:

Mr A P Thurlow,
Crossways, Newbridge Road,
Layar Marney, Colchester,
Essex CO5 9XU.

Telephone: 01621 815077

Thank you.

*The photograph right,
shows the shop as many customers
would remember it, with poultry
hanging in the windows.*



Coronation Day 1953

I was too young to have any memories of Coronation Day 1953, but my sister tells me that for her it was just a normal day at St Helena Secondary Modern School, nothing out of the ordinary. At a later date the School took the pupils to the cinema to see a film of the Coronation.

I am fortunate to have an archive of papers from the early days of the Young Wives group at Wimpole Road Methodist Church. As it was founded in 1948, I wondered what it revealed of how they celebrated Queen Elizabeth

II's Coronation. Here's what I discovered.

There was a Coronation Supper on May 28th 1953. It was a fish supper.

On May 14th, two weeks earlier, a Beetle Drive was held with 73 tickets sold at 1s.6p and 35 people paying 3d each towards the prizes purchased from Winsley Stores. This was a shop at the entrance to Winsley Square and long since demolished. It was run by the Simons, Mrs Simon being one of the Young Wives. The prizes were a tin of chocolate toffees, a box of chocolates,

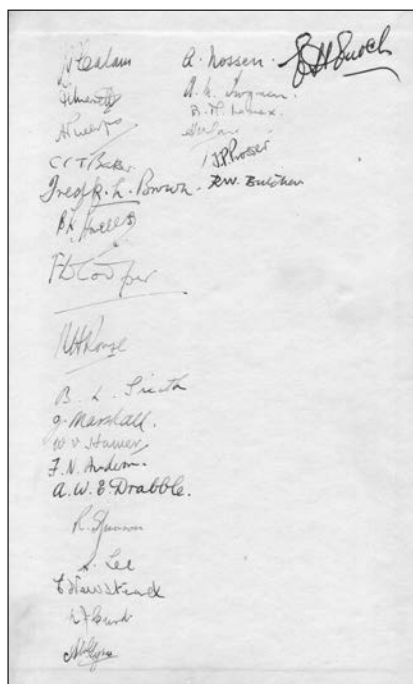
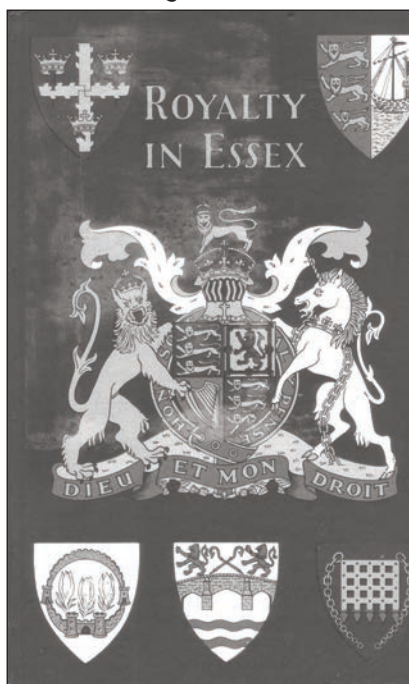
two Mars bars and two lollies. It must have been rather noisy with so many people enthusiastically shaking dice and exclaiming in joy or disgust at the result, but a profit of £4.9s.9½d went towards the costs of the Coronation Supper.

For the Supper itself 75 tickets were sold at 3s. each. So a lot of people to cater for and it must have been challenging keeping everyone's meal hot. Records do not say where the fish and chips were purchased but the total cost was £5.6s.3d averaging out at 1s.5d per person, which fits with my memory of a bag of chips costing 6p in the 1960's. Some left over fish and chips were sold for £1.0s.3d.

Other expenses - fairly predictable - Tea, Margarine and Sugar, but 11 tins of Gooseberries at 1s.6½d each, Sweets, Serviettes, 10 pints Milk (all these from Winsley Stores), 19 dozen Bridge Rolls from the Scotch Bakery (around 3 rolls per person), Ice Cream, Caretaker (10s). For prizes - a pencil sharpener and a packet of pencils both from Boots.

Afterward £8 profit was given to Church Funds. Alf Farrow acknowledging receipt congratulated the members on how very successful the Supper had been.

JOAN GOMER



The illustrations above, supplied by the Editor, features the front cover of the book published by Essex Education Committee in 1953, of which a copy was given to every pupil of every secondary school in the county. On the right is the inside back cover of the Editor's copy, which he had signed by many of the staff of the North East Essex County Technical School, which became The Gilberd School on North Hill prior to moving to High Woods.

'Good Morning Sir, Can I Help?'

If it seems a long while since I asked that question, it is, - about 66 years as I recall.

This was when I began my

first 'proper' job on leaving school. Mother thought that my earning good money then at a poultry packing station in

Great Horkesley was not good enough, having received a good education at The Gilberd School. She encouraged me to

apply for a position as Sales Assistant advertised in *The Essex County Standard* at Geo. Loyd and Son in Head Street.

Both Mr Loyds - Mr Cecil and Mr Leslie interviewed me and although they both thought that I was a little too young, ensured that I could add up and give the correct change, and that I was big enough to carry heavy boxes of boots up two flights of stairs, they both thought that I was worth risking to serve in their Gentlemen's department as assistant to Mr Horrie Sage.

I did my best to not let them down, in fact, I stayed there for about 18 months until one of my brothers arranged a job for me in the Publicity Department of E N Mason and Sons at the Arclight Works, although I still worked in Loyd's on Saturdays, due to Mr Sage's ill health.

The work at Loyd's was full on at first, as I had to learn how to serve customers as was the custom in those days. Self service? No way! Welcome the customer, get him sitting down, take off one of his shoes to get his size and fitting. After that ask style what he wanted. Boots, shoes, sandals, slippers, sports equipment, like football, rugby, or cricket boots, tennis shoes... Loyd's stocked them all. You also had to know where they were stored, including those wellingtons which you had recently humped up two flights of stairs to the 2nd floor stockroom.

That was not all. Every day the record of sales had to be logged from the receipt books into the stock ledgers and at the end of each month the exact number of sales of each



The present day building where I worked for Geo Loyd & Son

type of footwear had to be checked with the number at the end of the previous month, including any increases in stock. Once a year was Stock-Taking, when every pair in the shop was accounted for and compared to the previous year's count, plus any stock purchases made during the year, less any transfers from stock to the two other shops, (St John Street and Witham), made during the same period.

Even that was not all, as two other things had to be learnt. One was the counter to the left on entering the shop. This was where customers took or collected repairs, purchased laces, polishes and creams etc and asked any questions. Once you had spent a little time with a few customers, this became the easiest part of the job.

The final item to master was a little more complicated, especially at first. It was an X-ray machine! It was, I believe, the only one of its kind in Colchester and was a real boon when serving young children to see if there was some room for growth in the

footwear their parents were purchasing for them.

The job was interesting on Saturdays when the shop was really busy. It was, of course, the day when I felt that I should have been playing either football or cricket - early closing in those days was on Thursday - and I was lucky enough to get games with The Chamber of Commerce cricket team, playing alongside former Test player Peter Smith, and football for Colchester Borough Transport (the buses), because they often had difficulty raising a team and the wife of one of their player's also worked at Loyd's.

Not only was Loyd's a good shop it was a good place to work, with two bosses who really cared for their staff. They both were very helpful and considerate, hence the staff turnover was quite slow. At the Head Street shop which covered all the ground floor of the building, the Ladies department consisted of Mr Gordon Sawyer as Manager, (he was previously assistant to Mr Sage, the Manager of the

Gentlemen's department), and his staff consisted of Miss Gardiner, (Mrs Pettican); Miss Jowers, (Mrs Mead); Mrs Randall; Mrs Cox; Miss Beckinsall; Mrs Whittaker and a part-timer, Mrs Blowers, who worked on Fridays and Saturdays, or as relief in cases of illness or holiday. The Gentlemen's department was just Mr Sage and myself.

My daily duties included the early morning sweep of all the wooden floors, using a broom and Dustmo to keep the dust down. (The ladies took it in turn to Hoover the carpets). I then had to log all the sales from the previous day's receipt books into the stock control ledger, before starting the role of Sales assistant. That sounds overly commercial, which was not what both Mr Leslie and Mr Cecil intended, we were encouraged to 'serve' not sell. If a shoe did not fit properly we should not sell it as they did not want dissatisfied customers - if we had not got the exact fitting, we were told to tell the customer, to invite him to try elsewhere and if he could not get what he wanted he should return and we would get the pair in under special delivery, and even then he would have no obligation to buy! He would not even be charged postage - the internet was not even thought about in those days...

The first floor of the building housed Mr Leslie and Mr Cecil's office; a general office in which Mrs Wadley worked three days a week. She was simply wonderful - kind, obliging, helpful and very efficient. The room also had storage facilities for a some of the stock. Further along the

passage was Miss Lee's office, who also was also very efficient, handling all the ladies stock, with good humour. The rest of that floor was dedicated to being stockrooms, complete with the Ladies toilet. Upstairs Mr Wally Cook had his office which was really the hub for the recording of all repairs, both male and female. Most repairs were sent away, either to the makers or a local repair shop, although some were sent to St John Street, where at the back was the workroom of a man whose name I cannot recall who carried out the more simple repairs like heels, stick-on soles and any stitching that was required.

The shop was the main stockist in the area for K Shoes, but also sold many of the top of the market makers, like Church, Trickers, Norvic, Crockett and Jones, Grenson, Lotus, Clarks and surprisingly, Wearra. I say surprisingly (because they were quite a lot cheaper than the others), but it was explained to me that this was because during WW2 when the supply of shoes was short, Wearra always sent as many pairs as they could to the shop, something that Mr Leslie and Mr Cecil appreciated, and also as they made shoes upto size 14 and sometimes 16 in various fittings, customers with very large feet could be served. Again Mr Leslie and Mr Cecil were always very happy about this and ensured to gave the Wearra representative an order whenever he visited the shop.

There is no doubt that the clientele of the shop were mainly from the better off families in the district. The farming, professional and

upper echelons of the military personnel were always to the fore. The garrison at that time was full - with National Service still in full swing, army officers and their families were always regularly visiting the shop.

On one occasion I had an interesting situation when a rather loud-voiced military man announced that he had awkward feet and found great difficulty in getting a pair of shoes to fit properly. Everyone in the shop heard him. I rather gingerly led him to a chair invited him to sit, moved the fitting stool in position and removed one of his shoes. It was size 8 and a half, medium fitting, the most common size at that time and I knew that any one of probably 30 pairs in stock would fit him very well. But I said nothing, other than to "Try this pair for size", guiding his foot in the shoe with my shoe horn.

"Capital, Capital, my man", he shouted, "I'll take them, I'll take them!"

Delightedly, I took his money, wrapped his new shoes up and he left the shop, as they say, as 'happy as a sandboy'. Of course, not all customers were so easy to satisfy!

However, like a pair of shoes, nothing lasts for ever...

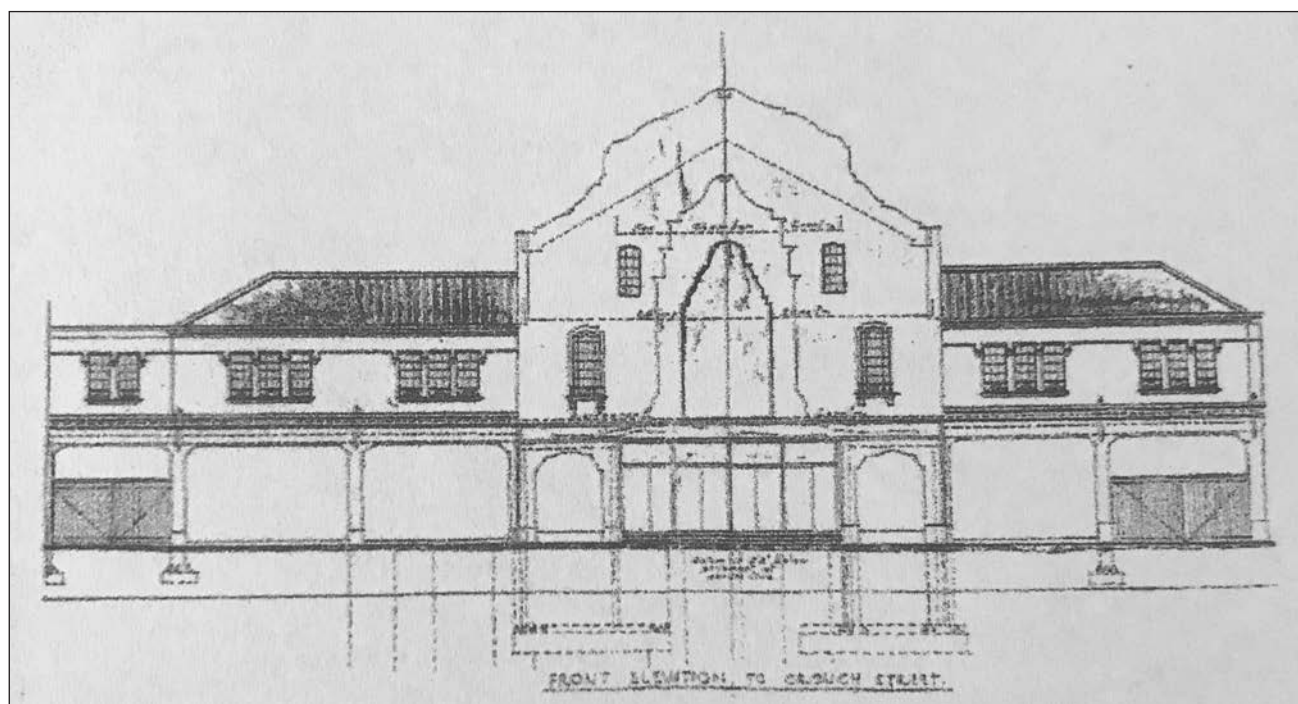
Mr Sage passed away and Mr Rodney Loyd took over, by which time I was working in various London advertising and design agencies and playing weekend sport. Within a few years Geo. Loyd and Son ceased trading. This is sad, because it was a good shop, selling good shoes to good customers, who received good service from good assistants.

PETER CONSTABLE

Memories of The Odeon, Colchester

In July of 1991 I came to Colchester from Ayr in Scotland to take over as General Manager of *The Odeon* cinema in Crouch Street. Once I had settled in the job I decided to find out as much as I could about the history of the cinema where I worked.

Opened on the 23rd February 1931 *The Regal*, as it was initially named, was a luxury cinema purpose-built by David Ager, a leading light in Colchester films. It was the ultimate in luxury and had a coffee shop at the back of the circle on the first floor where the general public could enjoy a drink and a bite to eat. The auditorium seated approximately 1,300 and had a small orchestra and an electric organ to entertain the public between films. During World War II watching films was a real morale booster for British audiences as it kept their minds off the deprivations of war.



Architect's plans for the new Regal cinema, later to be called the Odeon Colchester

In 1961 *The Regal* was re-named *The Odeon* by its new owners and in that decade many pop-stars appeared on stage, including Cliff Richard and the Rolling Stones. In the 1970s, with decreasing audiences as a result of increasing TV ownership, the era of the multi-screen cinema began and the cinema was sub-divided into four screens. Screens 5 and 6, one above the other, were added to the right-hand side of the original building and were opened in July 1991, just before I arrived as General Manager.

Odeon Cinemas regularly arranged advance screenings of major films in London for their managers and many

famous film stars attended to be photographed with each manager. These could be later sent to the local press and printed under the headline "Local Odeon Manager meets Famous Star". In my case I met James Bond star Pierce Brosnan and Richard Attenborough, among many others.

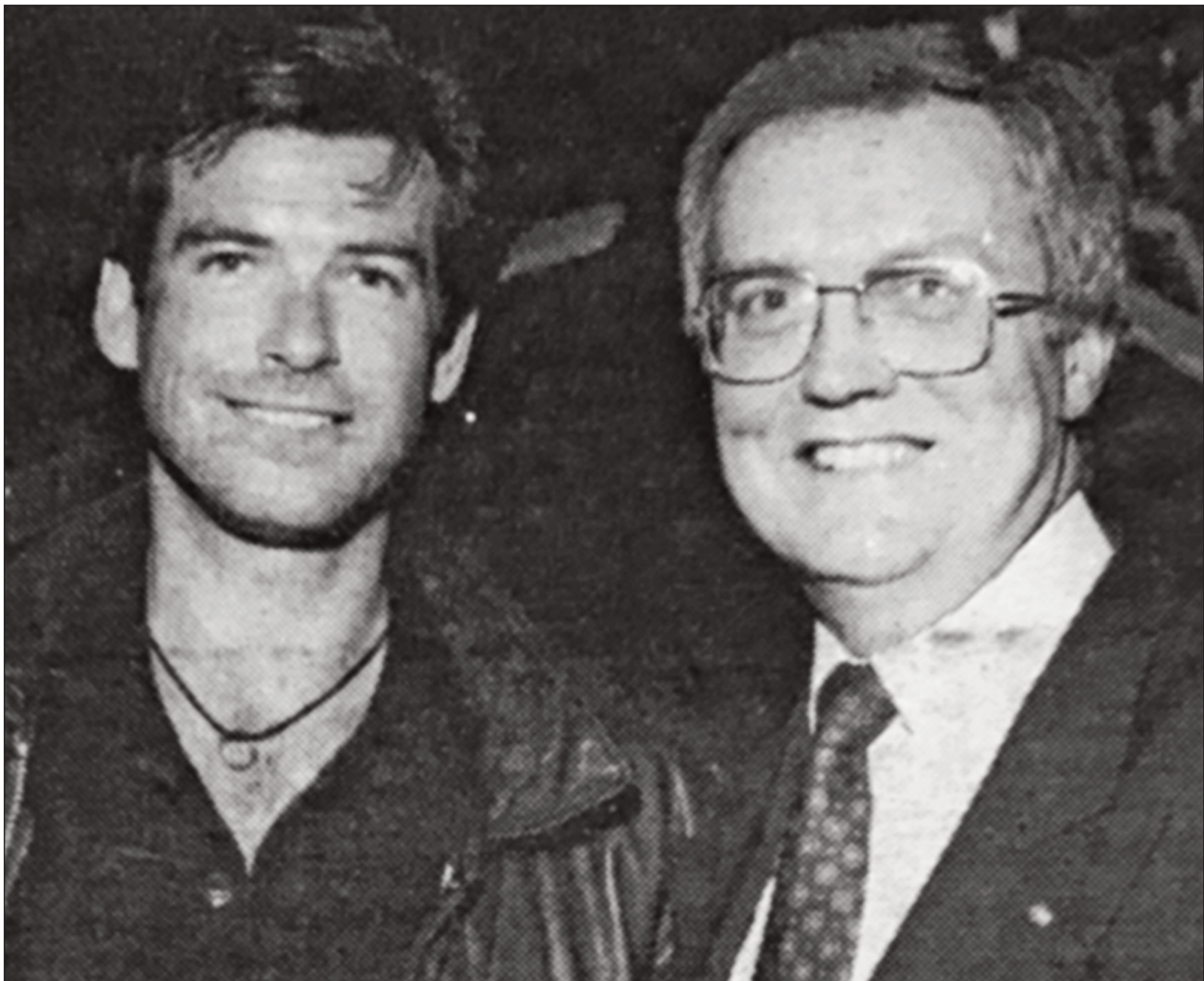
Having previously worked in London's West End and assisted at Royal Film Premieres, I was often called in to help out with these. I often told my friends, "Tomorrow I'm off to the pictures with the Princess of Wales". A little white lie; Diana went to watch the film and meet the stars, but for me it was just a normal

working evening.

In 1997 the big hit of the year was *TITANIC* and, because it was over 3 hours long we had to "block" the usual exits at the back of the cinema and usher the audience of the 5pm performance out by the front of the auditorium, so that they would not clash with the 8.30 pm ticket holders who were crammed in the foyer waiting to go inside.

I finally left *The Odeon* Colchester, and Odeon Cinemas, in August of 1999. The cinema closed on 13th October 2002 and a new Odeon opened on Head Street five days later.

HARRY ROYLE

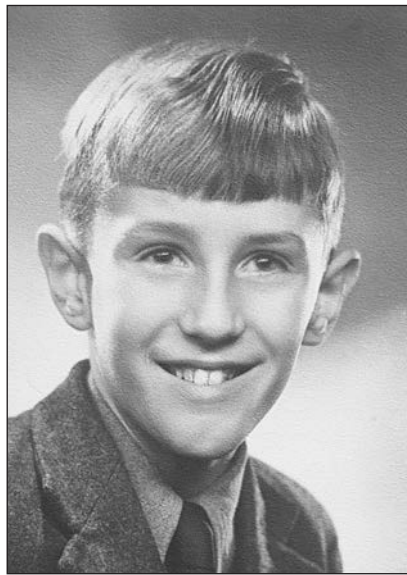


The author (Harry Royle) meets James Bond (Pierce Brosnan) at a film preview in London

“I saw Lancaster bomber in a ball of flames before it crashed”

I can remember when a Lancaster bomber crashed not far from my home on the Ipswich Road during the Second World War in the early hours of 25th of April 1944. It was about four o'clock in the morning when my grandma came in and called me and mum and said, 'There's a ball of fire in the sky'. So we went and had a look and followed it until it went out of sight. In the morning my friend Kenny Young, who lived further down the road, came up on his bike and said, 'Come on, get on your bike there's been a crash up the road.' So we cycled up there and had a look and dumped our bikes by the side of the hedge and started walking across the field, which was somewhere in the middle of what is now the Severalls Industrial Estate.

You could see the plane, or what was left of it, from the road - only the tail unit was still



Michael Heath as a schoolboy during the war.

intact. The rest of the plane had exploded and did quite a bit of damage. As we were walking across the field to have a look at this tail plane section, someone said to us, 'Where are you two going?' So we said that we were going to have a look in there - pointing to the tail plane. And he said to us, 'No

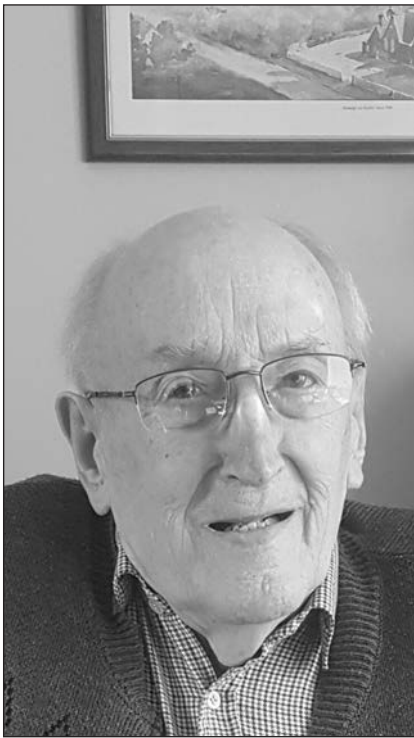
you're not.' And it wasn't until we got back that we discovered that the body of the tail gunner was still in there. In fact, all of the crew, which included four British and three Canadian airmen, were killed in the crash.

Now the story behind that Lancaster, which we followed up many years later, was that it had flown out of RAF Wickenby in Lincolnshire and it was one of three Lancasters which were lost that night. The plane had been on a raid to Karlsruhe in Germany and on its way back it was followed in by a German intruder. The German pilot intercepted it near Diss in Norfolk, and this is where the mystery starts. Why it went to Diss, we don't know, instead of going straight back to Wickenby. And why after turning south did it fly on to Boxted, skipping other airfields in between, we will never know.

The tragic thing is - if they



The remains of the tail section of the Lancaster which survived the crash nearly intact.



*Michael Heath (b.1932)
Wartime Memories...*

had been just a couple of minutes earlier, they would just about have made it to Boxted airfield. Under normal circumstances the Americans would never have turned their landing lights on at night because a German intruder might have seen them and created havoc. So they must

have known that the plane was in trouble and tried to help by putting the lights on, but the plane was unable to make it and blew up about a quarter of a mile short of the runway.

Actually a part of one of the engines went through the roof of one of the Nissan huts and landed between the bunks of two sleeping men – so they were lucky. Many years later, on 25th of April 2013, we installed a special Memorial just off the Ipswich Road dedicated to the airmen who lost their lives.

Shortly after the war the Americans put on one or two special open days at Boxted which I went to. I remember on one occasion my friend and I cycled up to the airfield at Langham Road and we noticed that there was a lot of activity over at the control tower. So we spoke with one of the ground crew at the hanger who said to us, ‘If you go round to the main entrance you’ll probably get in.’

So we cycled all the way back to the main entrance on the

Ipswich Road and rather cautiously approached one of the guards and asked if we could go in and have a look round. So he said he would check with someone and he said them, ‘There’s a couple of boys here – can they come in?’ And the answer was yes, so we cycled our way up to the control tower.

There were some RAF people there and a few civilians, and we saw a couple of Thunderbolts parked where you could walk round and have a look in. There was also a Flying Fortress from one of the bases up in Suffolk, and also next to the Fortress the Americans had parked their latest acquisition which was a German Heinkel 111 bomber. So anyway we managed to get into the Fortress through one of the doorways, and we went and had a look at the rear gunner’s position, and then came back right through the whole aircraft which was quite an experience. When we got to where the waste gate guns were located, we found that we were able to unhook one of the guns and we had a ‘running battle’ with the Heinkel 111. And I remember looking down at the ammunition boxes which were placed underneath the guns and saw that they were full with live ammunition. Of course, nothing was actually connected and I don’t suppose we would have known which button to push anyway!

EDITED FROM A
CONVERSATION WITH
PATRICK DENNEY.

Picture credits:
OPPOSITE PAGE
Michael Heath collection.



This Memorial dedicated to the memory of those airmen who lost their lives was unveiled on 25th April 2013.

My Memories of Old Heath School

Geoff Crick 1939-2022

I first attended Old Heath School when I was four or five years old and on the first morning can remember being ushered into a classroom. We were greeted by a pleasant Miss Holford who would be our teacher for the first year of our school career. Memories fade a little over the years but I seem to remember that much of that first year was taken up by doing physical things, and also using our chalk and slates for drawing and attempting to write the alphabet.

I don't think that we had to wear an official uniform, although it was expected that pupils would wear grey. All the boys wore short trousers, with the cloth being made from wool, including the underwear which tended to irritate the skin. Later black and red ties were introduced to go with the grey clothing to make up the school uniform. Black and red striped shirts with black shorts were also introduced for the



ABOVE:
Geoff pictured in his Old Heath School team uniform.

BELOW:
Class photograph from c.1949. Geoff is standing in the centre of the back row.

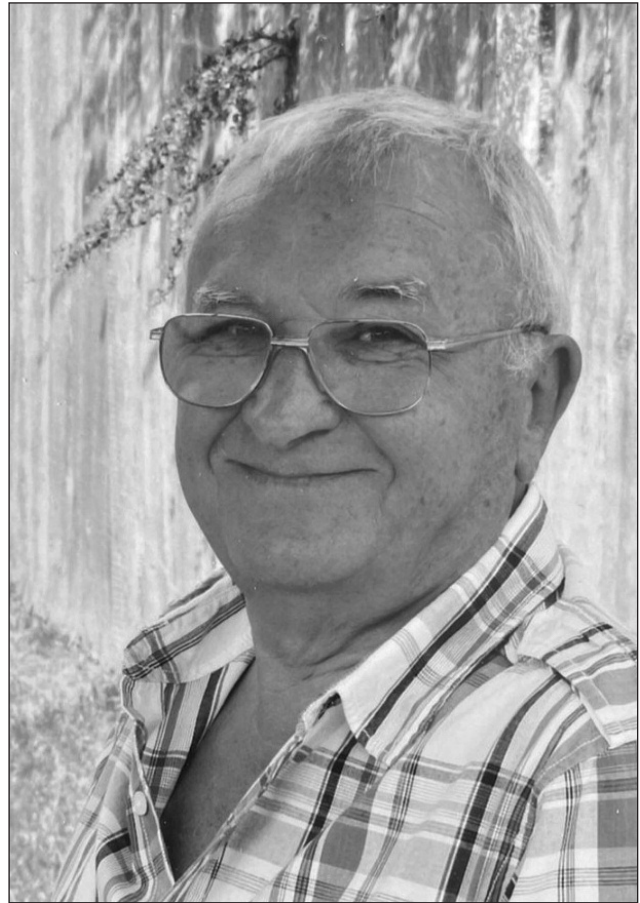
school football team. We came second in our first year being pipped at the post by a very good Canterbury Road team which included at least one member of their side who went on to play professional football for Ipswich Town.

The teachers were very good considering the state of the country in those hard times during and after the war. The government didn't have a lot of resources, which I feel showed up on those like myself who required more attention to bring us up to a good standard. But then with between 30-40 pupils in a class what could one expect. I recall some of the teachers' names including Miss Holford, Miss Heart, Mr Holmes, Miss Bryant, Miss Keeble, Miss McKeever (the football coach), and the man in charge of them all was the headmaster Mr Hindle. Mr Hindle kept his show Rex rabbits in a shed in the playground. I wonder if this





*Geoff Crick and his wife Daphne
on their wedding day in 1966.*



Geoff pictured in more recent times.

All photographs courtesy of Daphne Crick.

would still be allowed today.

I can remember seeing a hole left by a shell that was dropped in the playground, by our then enemies the Germans. I also remember hearing the sirens being sounded from somewhere in the Hythe area, which was a signal for the whole school to go to the air raid shelters which were situated at the back of the playground. We all had to sit on hard wooden slatted seats, and it was very dark with the only light being filtered in from the entrances at either end of the shelter. Miss Holford stood near the door talking to another teacher who I used to think was very brave when she went outside before the all clear was sounded. Thankfully, I don't remember any bombs

being dropped when we were at school. Although there was a time when my mother was talking to a neighbour at the front gate of our house in Old Heath Road, and I was playing with my friends nearby, when a German bomber came very low over the houses. It was so close to the ground that I remember being able to see the crew with guns looking out of an open door half way along the fuselage. Needless to say we were taken at a fast rate to our air raid shelter.

The dreaded 11 Plus exam was the main event of our final year with the aim being to pass and go to the Grammar School. At most, only two or three would be good enough to pass. The rest of us had to take

our chance at the secondary modern. After leaving Old Heath School I went to Wilson Marriage where I spent the next four years before leaving at the age of 15 to start work as an apprentice fitter/turner at Paxman's.

When I was 20, I decided to join the Merchant Navy and spent the next 10 years travelling the world before returning to Colchester to get married and getting a job as a service engineer for a refrigeration company. In time, together with two colleagues, we decided to set up our own business and we ended up producing industrial refrigeration plant for many blue-chip companies both in the UK and around the world.

My Memories of Essex County Hospital

At a recent Colchester Recalled meeting at Roman Circus House, we found ourselves washing finds from the excavations at Essex County Hospital site.

It made me think of my links to the old hospital.

I wasn't born there, but at the old Maternity Home, the site of Sovereign Close. I think my first visit was when I was about 2. I was treated for a bad burn on

my left arm, which happened when our neighbours took me out for a walk. I have no memories of what happened but I was told that to protect the wound to stop me fiddling with it, my mother took the sleeve out of my romper suit and replaced it with a bag. Our GP, Dr Augustus (Chalky) White, was very complimentary.

I returned about a year later to have my tonsils removed. I had not been very well and Dr White sent me to the hospital to be checked. The diagnosis was a bit out, as my tonsils should not have been removed before they had stopped growing and it was not my tonsils but my appendix that was the problem. I was rushed in for an emergency operation 6 months later, at 3 years 6 months.

My memory of the Children's Ward was that it had perhaps 10 beds on one side, about 8 on the other side with

the entrance to a conservatory used as a day room, with a few more beds at either end. The main doors were at one end, and Sister's office and

there, a huge teddy bear was sitting in a bed at the head of the ward. I was told this had been Stephen's bed and that he had been about my age and

had died from appendicitis. He was an only child whose mother had already died. I still remember hearing about this sad event and it made a great impression on me.

I have a huge scar.

Whether this was affected by my stitches bursting, I don't know but I can recall it clearly. The smell was appalling and the surgeon and his team cleaning the wound and sewing me up again all wore masks. I assumed that this was because of the smell and asked if I could have my vase of Lilies of the Valley to smell. The team thought this hilarious but I still think I had a point. These had been brought by an elderly neighbour who we called 'Old Lady McCarthy' which was a common form of address then. I wish I could get my garden to grow them now. I think I was in hospital 3 weeks.

I had a follow-up operation to remove the rest of my tonsils at Black Notley in about 1960. Visiting was difficult for us there as Dad didn't drive (that's another story as Mum had Hyacinth Bucket's view of driving so Dad gave up).



bathrooms and other 'necessaries' beyond. Toilets were at the other end of the ward. They did not discharge you so quickly after an operation then, so I got to know it quite well, and Sister Watts would take me with her - I had blonde curls then, believe it or not - when she would visit other ward sisters. She was keen for me to see a fish tank in another ward.

Sister was lovely but disciplined, with strict visiting hours - not too bad if you were living in Colchester. The Staff Nurse in the Children's ward was Nurse Pierce and she was not so popular. I remember being bathed with a girl, both of us being embarrassed and there was a lot of scrubbing and ordering about.

Appendectomy was a serious operation then and can still be fatal if not dealt with quickly, so I was lucky. Whilst I was in

Luckily, the mother of the older lad in the bed next to me offered Mum a lift so she could visit. The entire ward watched the Cup Final when I was there, in black and white, of course.

My last visit to Essex County as a patient was in February

1960. My Mum had been in hospital the previous week for a serious operation. A friend of Mum's referred to it with a stage whisper as 'Having it all taken away', (another common expression, this time with overtones of Les

Dawson's 'Cissie and Ada' routines.) I had a rough idea that it was big operation and had an image of someone with a wheelbarrow in a hospital white coat.

This was not a good time to be involved in a road accident. To make it worse, it was witnessed by my father and a girl from my class. I was hit by a large refrigerated van from Baughan's, whose pie factory was opposite our house in Winnock Road. It was utterly my fault as I did not look properly before crossing the road to my father, although it was difficult, as a large green box had been positioned by Post Office Telephones right on the corner of Wimpole and Winnock Roads, where I was crossing. It was removed later. Apparently I performed a somersault and landed in a heap, causing damage to the

pies in the van. It must have been horrific to see, but I only suffered a broken collar bone and mild concussion, not that this was realised at the time. A witness told her mother who had the job of telling my Mum.

It was opposite the Co-op



Christmas Day in the Children's Ward at Essex County Hospital, 1938, with children dressed up as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

Butchery shop and I was taken to hospital quickly in a butcher's van, presumably with Dad. When I woke the next day I think I was opposite my previous bed. I felt a little sorry for myself and decided on a whimper. A girl in a nearby bed said 'Wasser matter with you?' and I shut up. It was a Saturday and as a young Royalist, I asked about the Queen's baby, which was due - I was told Prince Andrew had arrived, so it was 19th February 1960.

Mum could not visit me, of course, but Dad did and Jimmy, the foreman from Baughan's brought me a present. (We bought eggs and chickens from him for years). Dad's sister Aunt Barbara bought me a present of a goose that laid eggs which I wish I still had... I was sent home on Monday afternoon, possibly by ambulance, I don't remember. I had one wing up -

my left arm in a sling - and bruises, but I was lucky.

I returned as a visitor for my parents in due course but hospital wards and practices had changed.

In about 1982, one of the chaps (Roy, now our auditor), in

the office was taken ill, and two of us took him to A&E, then at Essex County Hospital. As Roy had gone from his usual pale colour to green and he needed help. My colleague Betty and I were thinking 'Appendicitis' but it took the

medics a while to agree. They had him behind the curtains and the nurse opened them to say to us 'Isn't he pale?'. (He still is). She also had to phone his mother - we could hear her cry of alarm over the 'phone. The hospital staff kept asking if we were his parents. I am only six years older than Roy and Betty already had a daughter and wanted a son. I have not seen Roy's scar but understand it is small.

There is a follow up story to the road accident. About 12 years later, I was receiving a large order of stationery for Colchester Borough Treasurer's Department from Cullingfords. It turned out that one of the delivery men was the driver for Baughan's and the other one offered to hold him whilst I hit him. I said it had been all my fault and we had a good laugh.

PETER EVANS

The Railway Laundry

By the late 1800s the Great Eastern Railway had a virtual monopoly on train services in the Eastern Counties. It was also involved in running restaurants, refreshment rooms, restaurant cars, hotels and ferry services to the continent. All of these activities generated a lot of washing that was put out to contract. The opening of the Great Eastern Hotel at Liverpool Street in 1884 with over 250 rooms resulted in a lot more soiled linen.

Faced with so much washing the GER decided to build their own laundry and the site they chose for it was at Colchester. Situated adjacent to North Station and costing £12,000 to build, the railway laundry opened for business on the 13th March 1888. It was a large building with a tall, factory-like chimney and included a house

and garden built on site for the manager.

The machinery was quite substantial and all British made. The building housed eight washing machines made by Manlove, Alliot & Co of Nottingham. Each machine had a horizontally mounted tub 6 ft diameter by 4ft deep capable of washing 700 towels or 300 sheets. There were also five 'Hydro Extractors', what we would call spin driers. These were 4ft diameter by 2³/₄ft deep; there was also a rinsing machine that used soft water that was distilled by heat from the boiler.

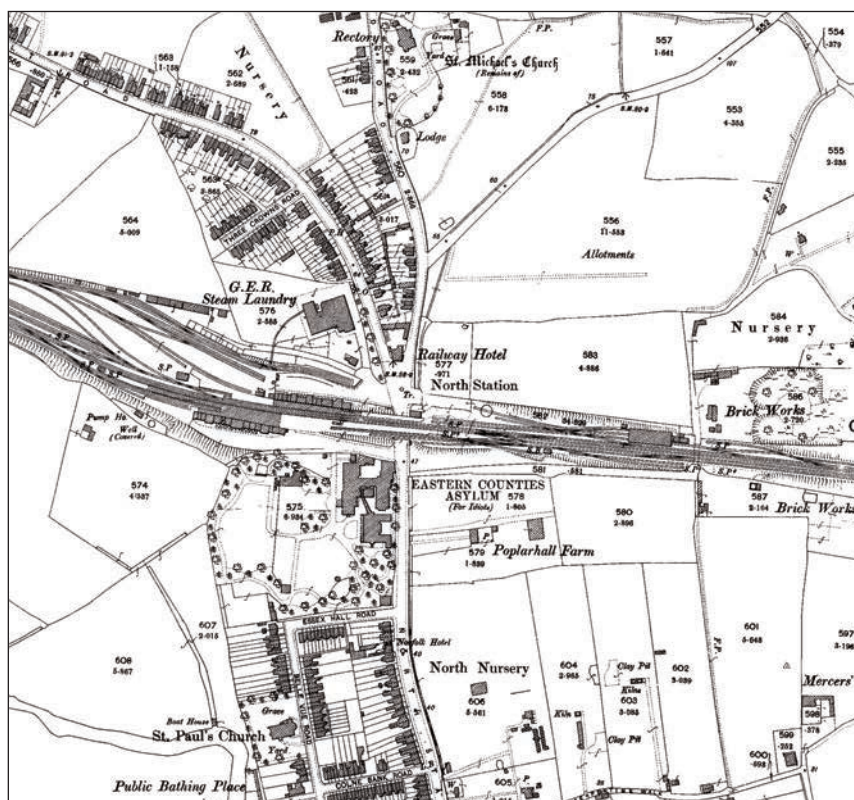
After being spun the washing passed to the drying room. There steam heated pipes and boiler flues passing under the floor kept the room warm and dry. After drying came the ironing. The laundry had a number of Decoudun ironing

machines, these were of French design but made under licence in England. Working on the wringer principle these consisted of steam heated rollers 10ft long by 2ft diameter. The washing was passed through these twice and emerged dry and ironed. There was a separate area for washing small items; it had its own drying room with the ironing undertaken by girls in a side room using electric hand irons. There was also a well lit mending room where women sat at large tables with needle and thread or sewing machines making 'unapparent' repairs to holes and tears in damaged items.

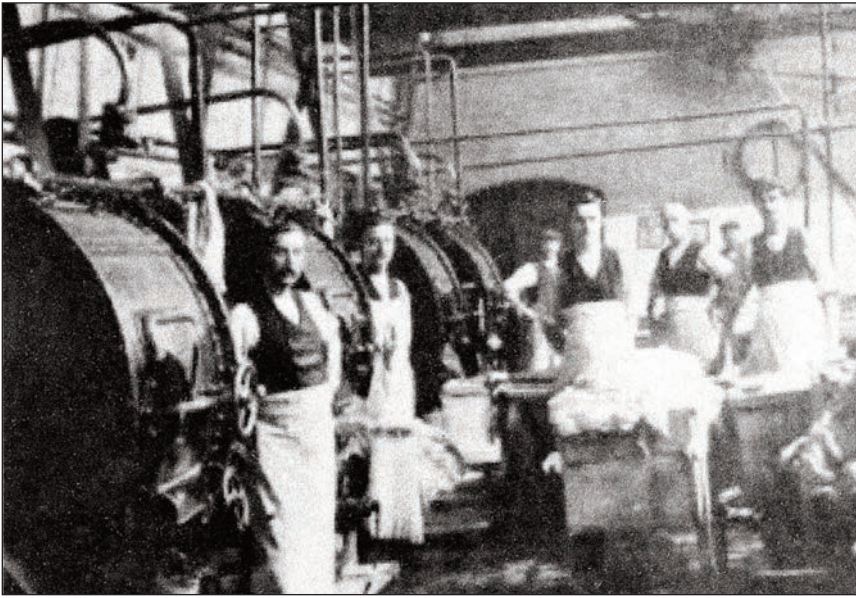
Power was supplied by a Paxman horizontal steam engine; they also supplied the shafting to drive the washing machinery. The engine ran a generator as well to supply electricity to the building but as a backup there was a battery room containing 120 lead/acid cells.

The laundry employed 59 women and girls and 12 men all overseen by a manager and his wife. In 1893 a Mr & Mrs Bellchambers became managers. Mr B looked after the general running of the place and his wife oversaw the small and delicate items operation that often included hotel guests' laundry. A visitor described the laundry as having "Well lit airy spaces in which healthy looking women appear pleasantly occupied."

The building incorporated an extensive kitchen with separate dining rooms for men and women. The Bellchambers ran



North Station and the Laundry as it was on a 1896 map



The Main Washing Room showing the giant washing machines

the laundry for over 25 years, Mr B was very involved in first aid and the laundry played host over the years to many first aid classes and competitions. On the 2nd September 1918 Lord Claud Hamilton who was Chairman of the Great Eastern Railway visited Colchester to inspect the laundry and to present First Aid medals.

The output of the laundry was phenomenal and for many years it washed around four million articles per annum. Half of this was from the railway's hotels. A large proportion of

the remainder coming from the company's ships, refreshment rooms and dining cars. Prior to 1914 the Great Eastern were running 35 trains daily with a restaurant car service. Also in the wash was bedding from the train crew dormitories, uniform and work clothing. In fact any item of textile that was used on the railway could be washed. The laundry also catered for hotel guests' clothing and even did the laundry for the General Steam Navigation Company, (an independent shipping line mostly involved in passenger



Women at the Laundry - using flat irons (heated by hot air?) c.1910.

and cargo services to Europe). The four million output was equivalent to 180 pieces per employee per day.

Linen did not stay in the laundry for long. For example the entire dirty washing from one of the 400 berth ferries arrived one afternoon and was washed, dried, ironed, packed and dispatched within 24 hours. On another occasion 500 table napkins were dealt with within an hour. All this was done before the days of 'Persil' and its kind, the soap they used then was known as "Best Yellow" and they used 25 tons a year.

The laundry continued in business through the London North Eastern period and into ownership by British Railways.

The recent history of this building is scarce, photographic evidence showed the chimney still there in 1962 (see cover picture). The site is now occupied by Station Square, residential apartments block in a converted office building.

If you know

- When the chimney was demolished?
- When the Philips office building on what is now the Station Square site, was built?
- Or if you have any knowledge or pictures of the laundry I would love to hear from you.

Please email jonesjp@outlook.com

Thank you.

PETER JONES

Who Do You Think They Are?

No.11



Another significant figure in COLCHESTER RECALLED: but who is she? Follow her answers.

What is your earliest memory?

I remember having lunch with my mum eating smoked haddock 'soldiers' at our 1960s Formica table. Then watching 'Bill and Ben the Flowerpot Men' or the 'Magic Roundabout'. I confess I had no idea what it was all about, but didn't mind as I got my mum to myself, being one of four daughters.

What is the scariest event in your life?

When I was 4 we moved to Trinidad. We were assured that hurricanes were very rare. We had been there a week when the hurricane hit. We all huddled together in our bungalow, terrified at what might happen. We were in fact fortunate. Our house was in the eye of the hurricane, and we didn't get much damage, but our neighbour's whole roof was blown off, their house flooded, and the contents destroyed.

Give us an unusual school memory

On one very special occasion

a large television was bought into school where all 30 pupils watched the 100 metres men's final at the 1976 Olympics. For those 10 seconds, the atmosphere was electric as Hasely Crawford won Trinidad's first Olympic Gold. He became an instant national hero. We were given the rest of the afternoon off to cool off in the pool.

What brought you to Colchester?

I came to Colchester in 1985 to do my 2-year Nursery Nurse training at Endsleigh Annexe on Lexden Road; 38 years later I'm still here!

What is your favourite place in Colchester?

St Peter's Church at the top of North Hill - a wonderful building that is steeped in years of history.

What is the most famous event you have attended?

I was proud to be invited on 6 May 2023, to the Colchester Royal Gun Salute and Coronation Breakfast at Merville Barracks for His Majesty's Coronation.

Who is this? The answer is on the Back Cover.

Delay To Taylor Statue Unveiling

Unfortunately, the unveiling of the Ann and Jane Taylor statue being promoted by Sir Bob Russell has been delayed. The statue has been completed and it was hoped that it could be unveiled on September 23rd, the 240th anniversary of Jane's birth.

However, unexpected issues around the installation, the supply of materials and rising costs has resulted in an estimated 6-month delay while the extra funds are raised.

A Letter to the Editor

Jack Austin's recollections of the Carrier and then Bus service to Rowhedge in the last issue brought back many memories. I was brought up at Old Heath and well remember the little rattling brown buses run by Fales but known locally as 'Scatties'.

It was necessary to prepare to get off well in advance otherwise you would rattle past the desired bus stop as the driver seemed to have only one objective - to keep ahead of the No.6 Corporation bus and perhaps to have a longer rest at Rowhedge. Indeed, it was common for one bus to leap frog the other only for the other to speed past the first at the next stop.

We always arrived safely, but it was an experience still remembered with affection.

MARTIN BROOM

Working at Hollington's Clothing Factory

When I started at Hollington's clothing factory a woman called Ethel taught me for a month on how to put patch pockets onto men's jackets. After the month was up, I went on my own and it was all piece work. And when I took my first bundle up for the forewoman to pass it she said, 'I don't think much of your work.'

She didn't think that it was good enough and I had to unpick them all and do it again. On another occasion, when I was about seventeen, I went up to the forewoman and she gave me a bundle of leather jackets and I'd got to put the patch pockets on them. And there was only that bundle to do and she told me what the price would be. And I said to her,

'I'm not going to do them for that price.' She said,



Margaret Golby born 1901.

'You'll have to.' I said, 'I shan't.'

She then said that she would go and tell the manager and I said,

'I don't care if you do, I shan't come in this afternoon.' And I didn't go in.

When I went in the next day they were still there so I thought that I'd better get on with them. And the forewoman came down to me

and said that she'd had a word with the manager and that they had agreed to give me a few coppers more for doing them. So I said, '

Well that's not a lot is it?' So she said,

'You're not British,' I said, 'I'm as British as you are.'

It was all piece work at Hollington's and if you earned a pound, you were well off.

They used to put your wages in separate little tins with your number on it and on Friday night we used to have to go up to the bench where the old forewoman stood to get our money. Everyone knew how much you'd got because she would be saying,

'This is yours and there's so and so in it.', and if anybody earned a quid (one pound), my giddy aunt, all eyes were upon them.'

MARGARET GOLBY



One of the workrooms at Hollington's clothing factory in the 1930s



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Answer to Who Do You Think They Are? is Laura Davison, our new Projects Manager