



**CHURCHES VISITED AND REVISITED  
(17/12/16 TO DATE) – BOOK 1**



Back in 2013, I spent most of my Christmas holiday from work visiting most of the churches in Colchester, then others in the surrounding areas, then those in Norwich, Woodbridge and in January 2014 in Ipswich too. Now on my full time retirement in late December 2016, to keep myself fit, I was going to retrace my routes again, but six days before I retired I went to Woodbridge and I include this as the start of my journey. Most of the photos and materials used were of my own work, but this has been supplemented by additional material from the internet, which I now want to pay thanks, for all other information used. Many new churches have been added now.

Prior to going to the Western Homes Community Stadium in Colchester to see the U's play and beat Notts County 2-1 in a League match in Division 2, I spent the morning in Woodbridge and then walked the mile to Melton to see the church there.

**SATURDAY 17th DECEMBER 2016**



**This is a view across from Elmhurst Park**





**In 2016 it was a misty morning, when my new photo was taken.**



### **St Mary the Virgin, Market Hill, Woodbridge**

They are a parish church, dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin, in the Diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich. Their worship reflects the broad mainstream tradition of the Church of England, and, whilst emphasising the importance of liturgy within the catholic tradition. They aim to be inclusive in their understanding and approach to spirituality, theology and pastoral care. Their Church is the heart of their worshipping and working life as Christian people. Here they come to concentrate on deepening our relationship with God, to break bread together, and to try their best to love all others. Here is the springboard for their mission, articulated in the following statement: *"We are here for the glory of God; to be the body of Christ, broken and restored to reflect the Gospel in our lives."* The Domesday Book records in 1086 that in "Wodebryge" there was "A church with 19 acres valued at 2 shillings".

The indications are that this was a Saxon church, built probably at the close of the tenth century, so that there has been a church on this site for nearly a thousand years. The present building dates from the beginning of the fifteenth century. A leaflet and a full guide are available in the church, and visitors are encouraged to discover the beauties and memories and inspiration for the future contained in its living history.

Externally, this is one of the great English churches. Its setting is superb, wholly urban, and yet conscious of its presence in an ancient space. It has a narrow churchyard which climbs away from it, surrounded on two sides by 18th and 19th century houses. To the north is the Market Square, and a stairway leads down from it to the great porch. The whole thing is just about perfect; the relationship between town and church expressed exactly.

The tower is one of Suffolk's biggest, bold and dramatic in the landscape, particularly when seen from the quayside. Close up, it is even moreso, because it rises from below the level of the graveyard, sheer up for more than a hundred feet, a stark, clinical job of the late 15th Century. St Mary has much in common with Southwold St Edmund, being only slightly smaller, and built all in one go over a similar period and timescale.

Through the great doors is a fine, grand Victorian interior, the work of Richard Phipson. It is reminiscent of his rebuilding of Ipswich St Mary le Tower, although the nave here is not encumbered by that church's unfortunate heavy glass. Here, you find yourself in a wide, light space, a seemly setting for a number of fascinating medieval survivals. The greatest of these is St Mary's Seven Sacrament font, one of thirteen survivals in Suffolk. The panels show the sacraments of the Catholic Church, and are a reminder that our Medieval churches were not built for congregational Anglican worship. The panels are a little bit battered, but are all recognisable. Despite Cautley's doubts about the rayed backgrounds, it seems likely that it was a product of the same workshop as the fonts at Denston and Great Glemham. The butterfly head dresses of the women date it to the 1480s, making it contemporary with the other two.

The panels are, in clockwise order from the north, Ordination, Matrimony (the two sacraments of service), Baptism, Confirmation (the two sacraments of commission), Reconciliation, Mass, the Last Rites (along with Reconciliation, one of the two sacraments of healing) and, in the final eighth panel, the Crucifixion. This last panel, anathema to the Protestants of the 1540s, has been particularly vandalised. The survival of so much Catholic imagery, when we know that the 17th century puritans were particularly active in this area, may seem surprising. But, ironically enough, it is a result of the destruction of a century earlier.

During the early Reformation of the 1540s, Woodbridge was wholeheartedly Anglican, and the wrecking crew went to work with a vengeance. The destruction here probably took place in the Autumn of 1547, during the first months of Edward VI's reign, when there was a bit of a free-for-all in places like Suffolk. The easiest way to deal with the font was to knock off the more prominent relief, and plaster the whole thing over. When Dowsing and his Biblical fundamentalists arrived at this church almost a century later on the 27th January 1644, they found very little to do.

The Anglicans had also destroyed the roodscreen; in 1631, 13 years before the visit of William Dowsing, the antiquarian Weever lamented the fact that *how glorious it was when it was all standing can be discerned by what remaineth*, showing that its destruction had occurred before the Puritans were ever on the scene, despite decrees of the time that this should not happen. What survives is two ranges of ten panels, about a third of the original number, which have been placed in recent years on the west and south walls by the font. They are splendid, although their protective glass makes photographing them rather awkward. Part of the donor's description survives, but nothing above the dado rail.

The modern screen has been recently curtailed, and the surviving panels were in the aisles. They are actually pretty good, including attempted replicas of some of the medieval panels, the figures a bit like the same artist's work in the sanctuary at St Mary le Tower. Otherwise, there's a grand memorial of the 1620's to Geoffrey Pitman in the south aisle, climbing to heaven in tiers that seem rather extravagant for a town weaver and tanner, but a weaver in Suffolk might be the equivalent of a factory owner elsewhere. two hundred years previously, another Woodbridge weaver had donated the screen.

**Personal view 2013** - For my first visit, I mistakenly had tried to enter it from the college grounds and got a little lost trying to locate the entrance, so now I knew the town, I could approach it from the right road. It was a very impressive building and souvenirs were brought from it.

**Personal view 2016** – As on all previous visits, the church was open, so I was able to go in and take a few photos inside and outside and buy some gifts.



**St John's, St John's Hill, Woodbridge**

It seems that in the 1830's there was something of a revival in Woodbridge; the population of the country was increasing rapidly and Woodbridge was a significant town with a military barracks and a population of about 5,000. St Mary's church, which dates from the 15th century was drawing large congregations and in 1839, the church was overflowing with people coming to hear the preaching of the Rev Henry Hardinge.

A project was launched to build a new church in the town and when sufficient money had been raised, the Building Committee advertised for designs for a 'plain and moderately sized' building, to be a daughter church for St Mary's.

42 designs were submitted ! One of them, from the chief builder in Woodbridge at the time, Alfred Lockwood, who had as its motto, the Bible verse, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that built it".

This design was then selected and tenders for construction obtained, again won by Mr Lockwood. However it was said that he made a serious final loss on the project.

The foundation stone was laid in 1842, unfortunately as part of a grand Masonic ceremony in the town, but they have no such links now. The building then took some years to erect but eventually the white brick building, complete with magnificent spire rising to 138 feet was complete and ready for its consecration on 27th August 1846.

The building was built to seat the surprising number of 800 people, with a gallery extending from the arrear along the north and south walls. An organ was situated at the back of the gallery, and the central focus of the apse was a three-decker pulpit. Truly a building for proclaiming the word of God !

At first the parish was not defined as a separate entity and there was no vicarage for the incumbent, but in 1853 the Parsonage House was built (now known to us as the old Vicarage), and in 1854 the ecclesiastical parish of St John was formed. From the first the ministries have been definitely evangelical, the benefice being in the patronage of the Church Patronage Society.

A religious revival in Woodbridge in 1876 is said to have been largely due to the running efforts of the then vicar Rev. Thomas Hyne Edwards. During subsequent years many physical alterations were made to the church building. In 1888 the three-decker pulpit was removed and replaced with a stone pulpit on the north side of the apse and other alterations were made in that area.

In 1896 the North and South wings of the gallery were removed, a new organ was installed in the South-East corner of the nave, and the choir moved from the gallery to the chancel facing the new organ. Seating was added in the gallery in space under the tower formally occupied by the organ.

Up until this time the flooring of the nave had been rough and primitive, and the seating comprised ugly benches and seats nailed together. In 1901-2 the flooring was redone, new teak pews were installed and new leaded windows fitted. Gas was laid on to replace the oil lamps and the interior repainted. Electric light was installed in 1925.



Problems with crumbling of the brick and stonework of the pinnacles of the tower became evident and the Diocesan Architect advised that they be lowered to half their original height. In the 1970's serious problems evident due to the corrosion and expansion of the iron reinforcement of the stonework supporting the spire and, regrettably, the structure was declared unsafe and the spire had to be removed. For some time worship had to be undertaken in the church hall. In the 1970's they had a striking colour scheme, the east wall of the chancel area was dark brown and the apse featured an orange ceiling. When redecoration became necessary in the early 1980's a lighter look was chosen; the brown and orange disappeared but the interior furnishings remained a while longer. Then in 1987-88 major changes were made at the front and the rear of the building. The pulpit and the choir stalls were removed to make way for a raised dais surrounded on three sides by a removable wooden communion rail. A lobby and vestry were added at the main entrance to the building.

Then in 1997 the most recent phase of internal change was completed with the objective of increasing the flexibility of the building for use in a growing variety of ways, both in worship and appropriate social events. The pipe organ was removed and replaced with a very convincing electric organ. The pews were removed, the floor levelled and carpeted and stackable upholstered chairs introduced. The dais was extended to gain extra space for leading worship. A small servery was constructed under the balcony at one side and a small vestry under the other. The previous 'new vestry' added in 1988, became an additional toilet equipped for wheelchair access. They praised God for the resources that have enabled these changes to be made, and the building which serves them so well. The church is of course the people and not the building, but we pray that the building known as 'St John's Church Woodbridge' will in itself speak to the community of the presence and accessibility of God.

**Personal view 2013** - On my first visit in 2012, I managed to get in and chat to ladies who were doing a flower arrangement, but sadly for my return in December 2013, the door was locked but there was music coming from the inside.

**Personal view 2016** – further visits in 2014 and 2015 were also unsuccessful but this year, I managed to go in. A couple were preparing to cover up a window with a wooden board which was showing too much light through it and was making things difficult to see things on the display board for the services.



**Methodist, Grundisburgh Road, Woodbridge**

WMC is a Church with a mission: to serve Christ by meeting the needs, both spiritual and physical, of our local community and the wider world. Whilst a traditional Methodist Church in many senses, our worship seeks to encompass both traditional and contemporary styles. Children attend our services from time to time; they have well qualified and enthusiastic staff, who encourage young people to develop their faith, study the Bible and discuss challenging questions in their world from a Christian perspective. There is also provision for a creche. They'd love to have you worship with them !! Everyone is invited to share light refreshments and a time of fellowship after the service. They are a Fair Trade Church. To support this cause, many Fair Trade items are available for sale each Sunday. At the heart of our congregation is the driving force of Christian living and worship in which faith is deepened, and where there are new exciting opportunities for experiencing a church life which offers a welcome to people of all ages and all backgrounds. We look forward to sharing this life and vision with you!

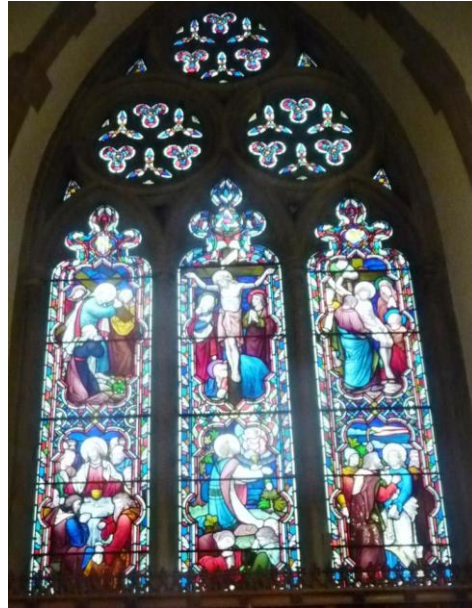
**Personal view 2013** - I paid my second visit there and again I was very welcomed. They serve drinks and cakes on a Saturday morning, and for a bargain £2, I had a good mug of coffee and a piece of fruit cake. On my December 2013 trip, I went twice and prior to leaving to return home, I went back for a second coffee as they had a scheme, of a "FREE REFILL" cup and the man serving who was a "Surrey" cricket follower would not let me pay.

**Personal view 2016** – again I was back for my coffee, but having been to the new Subway now based in the Thoroughfare Co-op store, I did not want any cake, and just settled for one free biscuit. Having chatted to the lady on my table, I bid farewell, having bought a small green trinket box for a Christmas gift and also taken away some church literature.

**Travel advice** - By train from Colchester, cross the road and cut up any road into the Thoroughfare. All three churches are situated in the area behind it. St Mary's to the far left St John's slightly right of middle and the Methodist to the far right. St Mary's is usually always open St John's rarely and the Methodist normally on a Saturday between 10 and 12am where there are toilets. Other toilets were situated just the station side of the Thoroughfare near the car park.







**St Andrews, Melton**

**Melton** is a village in Suffolk, England, located approximately one mile north east of Woodbridge. The 2001 census recorded a population of 3,718. The village is served by Melton railway station on the Ipswich-Lowestoft East Suffolk Line.

Melton was covered in the *Domesday Book*. In 1774 a local Act established the Loes and the Wilford Hundred Incorporation at Melton. The House of Industry (workhouse) operated until 1826. From 1826 the building became the Suffolk County Asylum for Pauper Lunatics. Much altered during the 19th and early 20th centuries, in 1916 the asylum became known as St Audry's Hospital, which was closed in approximately 1993. The buildings have now been converted into some residential accommodation. Melton was originally settled around the old church in the north east of Melton, later moving to Yarmouth Road, which is the old road between Great Yarmouth and London. The best selling Victorian novelist Henry Seton Merriman died at Melton in 1903.

**Personal view 2016** – as on all my previous visits there, the church was open and this time, I had made the walk there from Woodbridge a distance of around a mile. All other visits there have seen the church empty, but this time, there were several ladies preparing the floral displays. I then managed to get a copy of their Melton Messenger magazine, before leaving to catch the train back to Ipswich.

**Travel advice** - By train from Colchester, go out of the station and turn left, cross the road and you will see the church on the road up to the right. The church is normally always open but there are no toilets there or at the station. However at the station at the front, there is a butcher's shop which sell meat obviously drinks and numerous other food items.

**SATURDAY 24th DECEMBER 2016**



### **All Saints, Wakes Colne**

The surviving church dates from the 12th century and remained a rectory following the descent of the manor from 1349 or earlier until 1719. This was retained by the Grimston family, later earls of Verulam. In 1938 it then passed to the Diocesan Board

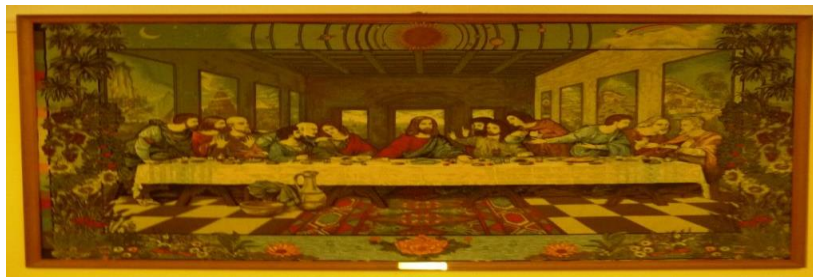
**Personal view – 2016** – On my visit the church was open as a couple were flower arranging. They mentioned that the vicar there covered four churches, the one there, Marks Tey, Little Tey and Chappel. I mentioned my friends Alan and Pauline who went to Little Tey church, and they said that they knew them very well.

**Travel advice** – From Colchester, by train change at Marks Tey and take the train to Sudbury and get off at Wakes Colne and Chapel. Go out of the station and go around to the right where you will see Station Road, turn left and go to the bottom and cross the road which is the A1124 and go straight across into The Street.



A short way down, having crossed the river, around to the right, you will see the church. By bus, it is an 88 bus from the Colchester Bus station, get off as soon as you pass under the Chappel Viaduct and turn left at the crossroads into the Street (instructions then as above). There was a toilet at the rail station but not noticed at the church, which is unlikely to be open.

**SUNDAY 25th DECEMBER 2016**







**St Cedd's Church, Iceni Way, Shrub End Colchester**

The dual purpose church was built in 1955 and at a later date it was planned to do a church rebuild, but this never took place. There were very detailed drawings made of a major working around about the time when CCCP was set up, but these were well scaled down. However many years before this a house was built in the area of Eldred Avenue/Iceni Way for the curate to live in, but in recent years this has now been rented out. Richard Cooper (who sadly died on 25th December 2015) recalled that to the left of the door at St Cedd's Church, as you enter the building from the car park, that the brickwork was left in a way, as that was where the building was to be extended around across the grass for the church to be built on, but that never actually happened.

Now looking more to the modern times, one of the continuing problems around the roads in Colchester are the amount of potholes and the drive into St Cedd's is the same, but thanks was given in the church magazine in late 2012 to Dave, John, Terry, Robin and Adrian who filled in the potholes. Also cleared away were the soak away drains. Inside the buildings there are various pictures and other wall hangings, one features "The Light of the World" this was donated by Win Johnson in memory of her husband and a "Last Supper" in the Committee Room/Chapel which was given by the Youth Group many years ago, after being bought by Colin King and his father Don.

We have already heard that St Cedd's was built in 1955, and Barbara Stephens believed that the nearby Roman Catholic Church of St John's was built around about the same time and we have shared numerous Good Friday Stations of the Cross services with them, either in their church or at St Cedd's and in recent years at both. This she felt began in the mid 1970's whilst the curate, the Reverend Chris Boulton was here who was part of the instigator.

Personal view 2013 - This is the church that I have spent most of my life attending until the recent years, it is place I did sidesman's duties, bible reading, intercessional prayer, but since I now attend services in the main at All Saints at 8am service, I just visit to do my printing work on our church magazine and my other groups. On this December day, I was completing the church magazine.

Personal view 2016 – as is my normal for Christmas Day, I was on duty for the 10am morning service where I read the lesson and acted as the sidesman. This is where I print the church magazine and also hope to attend more at the 930am Tuesday morning service, on my retirement from work. Using my material from my book of the parish here is my narrative about magazine printing and an old photo of me.



The photos above are a few historical of myself printing the church magazine, a job that I have done since about 1972. The top is the risograph graph currently used. The bottom is the material used and machine parts and the middle, the finished job and an older machine that was used in the past.

All the early work was done on a Gestetner machine, these were messy black stencils where the operation could be motorised or by hand. In those days I think I was printing off over 600 copies. Now in 2016, only 250 copies were done.

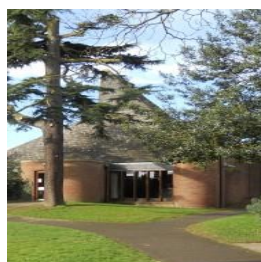
**MONDAY 26th DECEMBER 2016**



### **Colchester New Church, Maldon Road, Colchester**

Colchester New Church at 175 Maldon Road was built in 1924. In 1967 the church building was expanded. The sanctuary was extended two metres in length, a new school room, and a new entrance porch were also added. The designer of the new additions was architect Geoff P. Dawson.

**Personal view 2016** - It was the New Church I believe where the minister came across from USA and soon after arriving there was flood damage in church. This was verified on their Facebook page which said it was a frozen pipe that saw water damage to their sanctuary.







**Christchurch Parish, Ireton Road, Colchester**

**Christchurch URC, Ireton Road, Colchester**

A church is usually considered to be a group of Christians meeting together and drawn from a local community. In the early church, these meetings often took place in houses. The Christian group at Christchurch has a beautiful modern church building in which we can gather for larger meetings and a number of local homes that can be used for house groups and prayer meetings. In 1978 the Anglican parish church of St Mary-at-the-Walls got together with the URC congregation in the Colchester area and built the new Christ Church building in Ireton Road. They now share the management and the use of this building with their URC friends, who meet for worship after their service each week.

**Personal views 2013** - I attended there for funerals of a farming client after going to one there previously for the secretary of an agricultural club.



**Maldon Road Chapel, Colchester**

The chapel is probably by Gilbert, Brown & Roberts for the New Church Society.



**Police Station, Southway/Butt Road, Colchester**

Excavations in the 1980s for a new police station near the Maldon Road roundabout unearthed 371 Roman graves and a long narrow building. The building was built between AD 320 and 340. Oriented east to west, an apse was added to the east end in a later phase. The building was divided by a wooden screen and two rows of posts ran down the eastern half forming aisles. The building has been interpreted on strong circumstantial evidence as an early Christian church. If this is correct, it is probably the earliest known Christian church in Britain. The remains have been preserved and are visible from the public footpath.

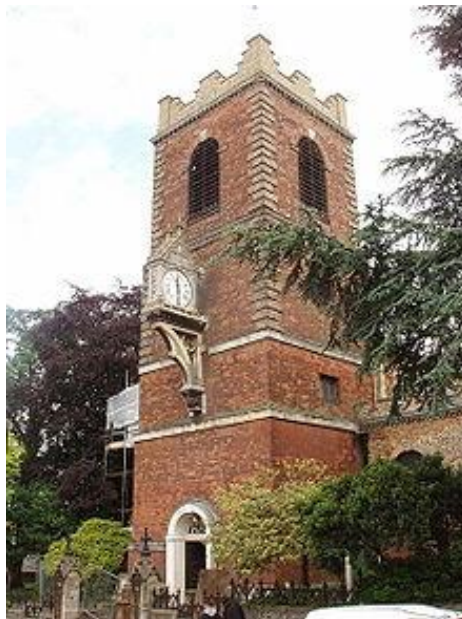


**Salvation Army, Butt Road, Colchester**

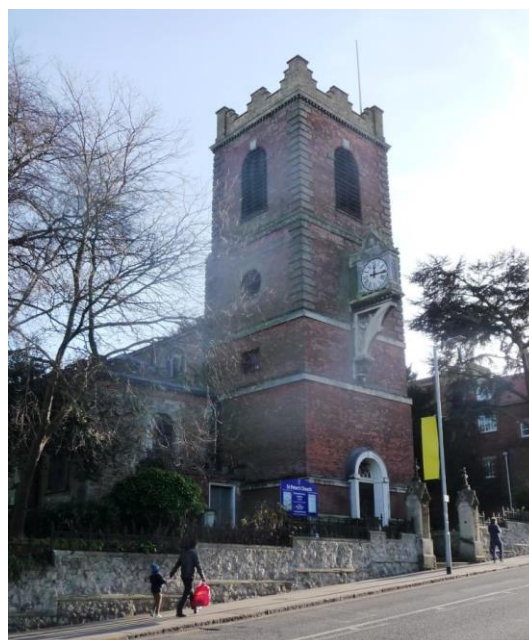


The Essex area has 37 churches and the Salvation Army is a worldwide Christian church and registered charity. They are always extending a helping hand to those who are homeless, friendless and in need. We passionately believe that no one is beyond hope, however great their problems. That disadvantaged people are given respect and access to the practical, social and spiritual support they need to realise their God-given potential and recover their personal dignity.

**Personal view 2013** - I have not been inside this building but members from there have come to the St Raphael Club to sing and play for us.







**St Peter's, North Hill, Colchester**

Also still a church with a surviving bell tower, St Peter's is on North Hill and appears Georgian due to a major remodeling in 1758, but the building retains mediaeval fabric and underwent a further remodeling in 1895–96. The bells are rung every Thursday. The church is usually open through the day and details of its history are available there.

**Personal view 2013** - This is another church that I have not been in but from memory Pauline Millatt and her late husband Harry did the bell ringing there



The plaque on the right was seen over the back wall behind the building below.



**Society of Friends, Church Street, Colchester**

The history of the Quaker movement in Colchester dates back into the middle of the seventeenth century. This was a time of tremendous religious ferment and change in the aftermath of the Civil War. James Parnell, a young follower of George Fox (the founder of Quakers), preached in Colchester in July 1655. Some of his hearers in this strongly Puritan town were convinced by his words although there was much opposition. Later he spoke in Coggeshall but was arrested for allegedly having caused a disturbance and spoken blasphemy. At his trial he was found not guilty but ordered to pay a fine, which he refused to do. He was returned to jail in Colchester Castle where he was ill treated and eventually died in April 1656.

Around this time Friends suffered considerable persecution for their beliefs, being prosecuted, beaten and jailed. Friends' goods were seized for non-payment of fines. A law called the Conventicals Act was passed to prevent premises being used to hold unlicensed acts of worship. Premises could be forfeited for disobedience. A member of the meeting set up a home and business in the meeting house to get around the law, as we could lawfully hold meetings in the "home" of a member. This practice established the presence of resident Meeting House Wardens in Quaker Meeting Houses, which is still common today.

Encouraged by letters from Parnell in prison, Quakers gained many followers; Meetings for Worship were held in Thomas Shortland's house until, in 1663, they purchased premises on the north side of St Martin's Lane (now Quakers Alley) to convert into the Great Meeting House. Religious persecution eased after the passing of the "Toleration Act" in 1689. Friends settled into a long, quiet period, worshipping in their own way and engaging in community work, education and the relief of poverty. In keeping with the Puritan spirit of the age, Friends were strict in their rules and observance of dress codes. It was not until 1871 that members could marry outside of the Quaker community without dismissal from membership.

The Great Meeting House was repaired, altered and partly rebuilt over the next two centuries until it burned down in 1871. Meanwhile St Helen's Chapel was also purchased in 1683 and used for smaller meetings. Adjacent land was used for burials until the Chapel was sold in 1800. Another Burial Ground was opened in Roman Road, which is still in use today. New premises were built in Rebow Chambers in Sir Issac's Walk in the town centre. Around this time there was a great revival of interest in Quakerism, locally and nationally. Local membership grew from a handful of family members to more than 100. Quakers engaged in a wide variety of public activities, including organising much-needed adult schools.

The Rebow Chambers premises proved too expensive to maintain and in 1938 a new Quaker meeting house was built in Shewell Road and was opened with much celebration. This building was in use until the early 1970s, but it proved inadequate and needed expensive repairs.

With the planning of the Culver Square shopping complex, it was decided to allow the demolition of the Shewell Road building. They acquired their present building in Church Street, St Mary's House (originally built for John Constable's lawyer in 1803) from the Post Office in a derelict state and carried out extensive renovation and alteration. Friends set up meeting in Church Street in 1974 and have been here ever since.





### **St Mary at the Walls, Balcerne Hill, Colchester**

On Church Street, to the east of Balcerne Hill is St Mary-at-the-Walls, built against the Roman walls and overlooking the western suburbs of the town. First recorded in 1206, the church has a notable history. It is the site where 23 Protestant martyrs were executed by burning in the reign of the Mary I.

In the English Civil War a Royalist army used the church tower which was as a gun emplacement, which resulted in its destruction by New Model Army siege batteries. The theory that the tower gave rise to the rhyme Humpty Dumpty is now probably disproved.

The lower part of the tower is Norman; the upper parts were rebuilt in 1729 and the top in 1911. The rest of the church was rebuilt in 1872 to designs by Arthur Blomfield. Philip Morant, the Essex historian, was Rector 1737–70.

There was a further major rebuild in 1872. In 1978 the parish was united with Christ Church in a new building in Ireton Road. The old church was made redundant; the bell was moved to St Leonard's in Lexden and the organ to Brentwood Cathedral. In 1980 the building was reopened as Colchester Arts Centre.



### **Holy Trinity, Trinity Street, Colchester**

Holy Trinity is the oldest surviving church building in Colchester. It is on Trinity Street in the town centre. Parts of the church tower are Anglo-Saxon, believed to date from about 1020. The Saxon doorway in the west side of the tower has a triangular head: a feature common in Anglo-Saxon windows but unusual in a doorway. An earlier church building may have existed on the site.

The churchyard reportedly includes the graves of William Gilbert, discoverer of electromagnetism and physician to Elizabeth I, and the composer John Wilbye. The Church is now a café and youth venue for arts and music.

**Personal view 2013** - This was not used for a very long time, but it was a museum for a while but then probably in 2011, I went in there for a coffee as it was been used as a fund raising café.





**Christian Scientist, Trinity Street, Colchester**



Christian Science Sunday church services are for everyone! The hymns, prayer and a Lesson-Sermon read from the Bible and Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures provide spiritual inspiration and a healing atmosphere.

**Personal view 2013** - No real thoughts about this church, but I do think one of my school friend went there, which suggests that it has been there for over 40 years.

**Personal view 2016** – the building currently seems to be up for sale.



**Eld Lane Baptist, Eld Lane, Colchester**

In Eld Lane, built in 1834 on the site of Colchester's first purpose-built Baptist chapel of 1711. The first Baptist church in England was established by Thomas Helwys in 1612 in London. He died in Newgate Prison but the faith spread.

There were Baptists in Colchester by 1630. In the Civil War period views of what the Christian faith should be contended within existing churches. With the Restoration in 1660 the Church of England was supreme and those who had other views had to worship underground. The Glorious Revolution of 1689 gave toleration to Dissenters. It was then that Colchester Baptist Church was formed.

In 1690 the Church registered its meeting house in East Stockwell Street, just off the High Street, and its minister, John Hammond. In 1711 the church moved to Eld Lane on part of its present site and called John Rootsey as its minister. Rootsey built up the church and made the first contacts which led to Baptist churches in Ipswich.

In 1832 the site of their premises was increased fourfold and the present church was built on it in 1834. This was largely due to the benefactions of Benjamin Nice, a farmer living in Ardleigh. One of their members at that time, James Paxman asked that his name be removed from the roll due to 'improper conduct'. Thus his son, James Noah Paxman, was brought up in the Church of England. He went on to found the major engineering company that bore his name.

In January 1850 the young Charles Haddon Spurgeon came to a knowledge of Christ in a Sunday morning service in the Primitive Methodist Church in Artillery Street. That evening Spurgeon worshipped at Eld Lane and it is as a Baptist that Spurgeon became the foremost Christian influence in 19th century Britain.

In 1866 with the minister ill but unable to retire Eld Lane looked to Spurgeon, who had just founded the theological college that bears his name, for help. He offered Edward Spurrier as assistant minister and agreed to preach himself twice a year to cover the cost. Spurrier soon had the church in a healthy state. On one of his visits Spurgeon saw the need for a school hall. With a gift and a loan from him the Church was equal to the challenge. In recent years this hall has needed rebuilding but is essentially the hall Spurgeon built.

Spurrier stayed at Eld Lane over 40 years. In that time out-stations were built at Parsons Heath (Wycliffe) and Blackheath (Orchard). Both are now independent churches. One of their ministers **in subsequent** years, Warwick Bailey, served from 1944 to 1972. He was a Borough Councillor for nine years and was mayor of Colchester in 1949/50. Two further additions have been made to the premises. That in front of the school hall was named after Spurrier and opened in 1923. A wing on the other side was added in 1991. It houses Open Door, founded in 1986 as a welcome to all who want to come on four weekdays.

**Personal view 2013** - This is another building which I have not been inside but I believe they do act as a soup kitchen for the waifs and strays.



**Lion Walk URC, Lion Walk, Colchester**



In 1648 Sir Charles Lucas, commander of forces loyal to Charles 1st in Colchester, surrendered his sword to Cromwell's army in an inn just off Head Street. At that time the tiny stream which was to become Lion Walk Church had already begun to flow, and some of its first members could well have been besieged with Sir Charles and watched as he was marched down High Street to be shot under the castle walls. For in the minutes of a church in Great Yarmouth dated 1642 is recorded "In the meantime John Ward, being called to Colchester, did there with others gather into church fellowship and there continued".

John Ward died in 1644 but the faithful few to whom he ministered worshipped in private houses, with difficulty and often persecuted, until in 1688 William Rawlinson bought land in Moor Lane for a meeting house, the site of the present St. Botolph's Parish Hall in Priory Street. There the church flourished - early in the 18th century the congregation numbered some 600

The second chapter begins with the purchase for £75 of part of the garden of the Red Lion Inn and the erection thereon of the Round Meeting House. This was timber-built, a strict octagon, and for 100 years the life of the church revolved around it vigorously. It was enlarged during its lifetime and eventually seated over 700. The congregation were not placid; they dissented to the extent that in 1843 nearly 30 members left and formed Headgate Congregational Church.

The period was notable for the ministry of the Revd T.W. Davids who came to Lion Walk at the age of 24 and stayed 33 years. His wife Louisa pioneered Sunday School work in Colchester, to the point where at times 1,000 children attended each Sunday. In 1863 the Round Meeting House was demolished and in its place was erected a Victorian Gothic-style edifice, built of Caen stone at a cost of £6,500. One prominent member left because of the design - a "steeple house" pointing to Rome. In fact large parts of the steeple fell before the end of the century once in a violent storm and once in, of all things, an earthquake.

The church rode these calamities and was led through the first half of the 20th Century by a succession of popular ministers. By 1940 however, the Caen stone had begun to deteriorate. By 1972 - the year in which Lion Walk became part of the newly-created United Reformed Church.

The painful decision to demolish and rebuild had to be made; it was agreed that Lion Walk must remain a town-centre church. Planning permission for development of the site was made conditional upon the tower and steeple remaining. It has been underpinned and renovated so that more than ever before it lifts the eyes and heart skywards.

The church's new position above shops means that most of the £1.5 million cost of the new complex has been borne by the developers, but members and friends of the church have worked and given sacrificially to create a worthy place of worship. The fine Willis organ has been enlarged and re-installed.

In Lion Walk, this Gothic Revival church was designed in a Geometrical Decorated Gothic style and built in 1863 for a Congregational community that had been said to have met in Colchester since the 17th century.

The 1884 Colchester earthquake damaged its steeple. The church became part of the new United Reformed Church in 1972.

**Personal view 2013** - This building is opposite the Boots Store and I once attended the funeral in there for my former boss David Foster and after leaving Shrub End, Paul and Vivienne Thompson, who use to live in Walnut Tree Way, became the caretakers there.



**St Botolph's Priory, Priory Street, Colchester**

The Augustinian priory of St Botolph's, generally called "St Botolph's Priory", was also established in the 11th century. This adopted the Augustinian Order in around 1200 and became the mother church of the order in Britain. At the Dissolution of the Monasteries the priory church of St Botolph's became the parish church. It was also used by the Corporation on civic occasions until the English Civil War. In 1650 the church was described as burnt and ruined after the Siege of Colchester, and it has been left in ruins. Until the construction of a new church in 1837, parishioners attended All Saints church instead, although burials continued in the churchyard.

**Personal view 2013** – I have often looked at are the priory ruins which are just behind St Botolph's Church in Priory Street.





**Colchester Islamic, Priory Street, Colchester**

**Personal view 2013** - The Islamic centre is found between the houses opposite the car parks at the St Botolph's Street end of Priory Street.



**Colchester Spiritual, Fennings Close, Priory Street, Colchester**

**Personal view 2013** - In an alley off Priory Street in Fennings Close and down the slope is first the Spiritual then the Jewish Centres.



**Colchester Jewish, Fennings Close, Priory Street, Colchester**

(1939-43) "Several families evacuated to the Colchester area during the Second World War joined with local families and Jewish service personnel to hold services."



(1943 & 1944) "Communal sederim held locally with service personnel from the Commonwealth and the United States." (1945-47) "Jewish National Servicemen held Friday evening services on Garrison premises." (1950s & 1960s) "Regular services begin and the Community forms - strengthened by several new families moving into the area." (1969) "The synagogue built on land purchased from the Spiritualist Church." "From this point the focal point provided by having their own synagogue premises, aided by the reinforcement of the Community by staff and students from Essex University, re-established the Community."



### **Sisters of Mercy Convent, Priory Street, Colchester**

**Personal view 2013** - This was not on my original list but further down the road was the nun's convent, which was also a customer on my dad's round at the Old Heath Laundry.

**Personal view 2016** – I am fairly certain that this is the same building, which seems now to be an educational site.



### **Cardinal Bourne Hall, Priory Street, Colchester**

This is the Roman Catholic church hall and club room designed by Scoles & Raymond in 1911.

It is a red brick gabled front with Neo-Norman doorway and window. This was extended in 1913 and form a group with the church of St James the Less and presbytery. The wall and gate on the south side.

**Personal view 2013** - This was the building known to be attached to the catholic church.



**St James the Less, Priory Street, Colchester**



This Roman Catholic Church of St James the Less and St Helen in Priory Street was designed by JJ Scoles, built in 1837 and enlarged in 1909–10. It is a Norman revival building with an apsidal chancel.

**Personal view 2013** - When I was younger still at school I travelled on the round with my father and the church caretaker had a dog called Paddy which I fed when they went back to Ireland I got the dog. He could be quite aggressive as he was a cross corgi terrier mix but sadly he died from illness.



**St James the Great, East Hill, Colchester**

St James the Great is a Church of England church on East Hill in Colchester. The oldest part of the church is Norman dating from the 12th century. The nave, tower, and two aisles were built between the 13th and 15th centuries. The chancel and the Chapels of Our Lady and Saint Peter and Saint Paul were added around 1500. The radical priest John Ball, a leader of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 preached at the church.

Nikolaus Pevsner in his *Buildings of England* series describes St James' as being the best Perpendicular work in Colchester. Architectural evidence shows that the church was founded by the 12th century or earlier.

From 1328 or earlier until the Dissolution St Botolph's priory was patron, presenting regularly except on two occasions in 1469 when Coggeshall abbey presented. The living was poor, but not the poorest Colchester living and vacancies were usually filled.



One of the Rectors in 1406 was accused of keeping a concubine and Edmund Coningsburgh, Rector for under a year in 1470, was employed by Edward IV as an envoy to the pope in 1471 and became archbishop of Armagh in 1477.

The living was vacant from 1554 or earlier until 1586. In 1575 as many as 11 people were fined for repeated absence from church. Robert Holmes, Rector 1586-92, was accused in 1585 of 'slack administration' of the communion, and in 1588 he described the wearing of the surplice as superstitious. In 1595 Thomas Farrar, Rector 1591-1610, was accused of serving two cures in the same day; in 1616 his successor Samuel Crick was non-resident and his curate unlicensed.

William Shelton, Rector 1670-99 was a staunch defender of the Church of England, and opposed papists, Quakers, and other dissenters. In 1723 there were two Sunday services and monthly communion. By 1738, services at St James' had been reduced to one on most Sundays. John Milton, Rector 1743-67, held only one Sunday service in 1747 when he also served Lexden.

By 1766 Milton, then also vicar of Fingringhoe, was in poor health and employed one curate to perform the Sunday service and another to say prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays; monthly communion was administered to 60-70 communicants.

In 1810 the resident Rector John Dakins provided an evening lecture as well as one full service on Sundays, and communion eight times a year for 50-60 communicants, a number little changed since 1778. By 1815, he increased the Sunday services at St James's to two. In 1841 three quarters of the population of 1,439 were said to belong to the church, but on Census Sunday 1851, out of a population of 1,845, only 270 in the morning and 370 in the afternoon, including 70 Sunday school children on each occasion, attended church.

By 1902 there were four Sunday services and two each weekday at St. James's, reflecting the Catholic Churchmanship of Fr CC Naters, Rector 1895-1918, who introduced incense, vestments, processions, lights, and holy pictures, into the church. When in 1914, without a faculty, he erected a rood loft and screen, and an altar in the south chapel which obscured the monument to the philanthropist Arthur Winsley, a case was brought against him in the consistory court.

Fr Naters was ordered to remove the rood loft and some of the candlesticks and pictures. When a further judgment compelled him to replace the altar with a small Jacobean table to reveal Winsley's monument, he then complied, but with solemn ceremonial and a defiant sermon against state interference in religion.

The Catholic tradition has been maintained by Fr Naters's successors and today the church continues to be a focus for catholic faith and worship in Colchester. The church of St James, the largest in Colchester, stands in a commanding position just inside the former east gate at the top of East Hill. It is built of rubble with ashlar dressings, and comprises an aisled chancel with north-east vestry, aisled and clerestoried nave with north porch, and west tower.

The Roman brick north western quoins of an unaisled nave survive and the later medieval development suggests that in the 12th century the church may have been cruciform. The lower stages of the tower are late 12th or early 13th century, and the upper stage is 14th century. The presumed transepts were extended as aisles c. 1300 when the two eastern bays of the arcades were built. Money for a new aisle was being collected in 1403. The church underwent a major reconstruction in the late 15th century; new work was done on the chancel in 1464 and in 1490 money for the enlargement and enrichment of the church was raised by an entertainment in the street outside the church. The two western bays of the arcades were built and the arches of the eastern bays were reshaped to match them. The aisles were extended and the older parts improved. The chancel and its chapels and vestry were built or rebuilt, as was the chancel arch and the matching arches between the chapels and the nave aisles. The tower was remodeled and given diagonal buttresses. The tower was said to be decayed in 1633. The church was in reasonably good order in 1835 except for the north wall, but by 1870, it was so dilapidated that the services were no longer being held there. Restoration work was carried out in 1871-2 under Fr SS Teulon. The north porch and tower arch were rebuilt, and all the roofs were renewed except for those of the chancel aisles.

A new organ was installed in the north chapel in 1890, and screens to designs by TG Jackson were erected in the south chapel in 1899-1900. In 1951 the 19th century choir stalls were removed from the chancel and the floor was lowered. In 1954 the north chapel was restored, and the existing organ removed and replaced by the organ from St Nicholas' Church. The organ console was moved to the west end of the church in the 1970s. Two brasses of the late 16th century to Alice and John Maynard survive. A large marble statue of Arthur Winsley was erected in 1738 at the east end of the Lady Chapel. It was moved to the west end of the north aisle in 1923 when the south chapel was restored. A painting, the Adoration of the Shepherds, presented by the painter George Carter in 1778 as an altar piece, hangs above the north door of the nave. A painting of the Last Supper by Sir William Archer of 1855 is located in the Sanctuary to the left of the High Altar.

**Personal view 2013** - One of our previous curates at Shrub End, the Reverend Timothy Thompson, became the vicar there and drew attention to himself when he did a sponsored roof sit. He was my confirmation teacher I am sure, that was back in 1965. He later became the vicar of St Lukes in Tiptree, then went to work at the Cathedral in Chelmsford.





**St Botolph's, St Botolph's Street, Colchester**

The current church building was dedicated in 1837, It is built in the style of the old Norman building, with semicircular arches and Norman ornamentation and was designed by William Mason of Ipswich. The Church was nearly destroyed by fire in the 1943 air raids. It had its own team of fire watchers which dealt with several incendiary bombs.

**Personal view 2013** - This church has featured quite a lot in my life. My mum attended church there. It was also the place where mum and dad were married on 2nd January 1943 and also where I was confirmed on 10th June 1965. Later years saw myself meet up with mum and dad on 2nd January 1993, I think, for their 50th wedding anniversary, I tried to go inside with them, but the building was locked, so it had to be a photo taken outside, then it was off to BHS for a "large" breakfast. I also believe one of my former Grammar School teachers, Colin Nicholson, who is the organist. His brother, Allan, use to be a client of mine, and ran the nursery in Priory Street, and the housing development now there, bears his name. Many a visit to his premises, saw me return home with flowers. In fact just prior to him retiring, I had been off work, and my parents took me there in the car, and the boot and the back of the car, were full of flowers and pot plants.







**St Giles, St John's Green, Colchester  
(Church now Masonic Centre and Church Hall)**

Originally built on part of St John's Abbey cemetery around AD 1150, contains work from every century since. It was declared redundant in 1956 and then used as a St. John Ambulance depot until 1975 when it was converted into masonic centre. The centre exists to serve the Masonic community of Colchester

**Personal view 2013** - After speaking with my brother, it was in this hall that we attended the 21st birthday party for his wife, Tracey.

**Personal view 2016** – A cross on a building in St John's Green, drew my attention to check what number 50 was. It appears to be St Giles' church hall.



**Abbey Gate, St John's Green, Colchester**



The Benedictine abbey of St John the Baptist, generally known as "St John's Abbey," founded in 1096, had a late 11th-century church until the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the execution of its abbot in 1539. Now all that remains is the gatehouse on St John's Green, which dates from the 15th century, and the small church with a wooden tower (St Leonard's) which was built for the layworkers on the site.

**Personal view 2013** - Situated up on St John's Green is the gate and is the entrance to the Officer's Club which was badly damaged by fire in July 2010. My only memory of the club was watching Mary Pope, a work colleague play squash there.



### **Strict Baptist Church, Stanwell Street, Colchester**

Formerly in Stanwell Street, demolished in 1971 to make way for Colchester's Inner Ring Road. The chapel was built in 1811 or 1812 for a new congregation, some of whom had seceded from the Baptists in Eld Lane. Colchester Elim Pentecostal Church used the chapel 1957–71.

As the building is no longer there, all that can be shown is area that it was in, which the Southway with Stanwell Street behind it.





### **Abbeyfield Community Church, Abbeygate Street, Colchester**

Abbeyfield Community Church began in 1880 when 4 men met together to pray for their neighbourhood around Vineyard Street in Colchester.

The room they met in, soon became too small, and so a room was hired over the theatre Royal in Queens Street and the group that met there was known as “The Gospel Band.” Music being a significant focus. As this group then grew, it became apparent that a permanent meeting place was needed. Land was bought in Abbeygate Street and became the site for a mission hall. This building which we still occupy was opened in 1902 and officially registered as a place of worship in 1912. Eight years later a Sunday school was started and numbers grew to 50. Church life continued knowing particular times of God’s favour as well as times of little growth and discouragement. In 1966 the step was taken to change the name of the church to Colchester Evangelical Church and to become affiliated with the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches. Other changes then took place. The former superintendent became the Pastor followed by the purchase of a manse and building alterations including the putting in of a baptistry. In 1987 the first full time minister was appointed. The church is also affiliated to the Evangelical Alliance. Pastor Graham became the Minister in 1992 leaving to pastor Bethesda Baptist church in Ipswich from 1998 to February 2003 when he felt it was right to return to this church. In 2006 the name of the church was changed again, this time to Abbeyfield Community Church. God has given them a love for the Abbeyfield and the people that make up this growing community.

We believe this is where God wants us to live and serve him. With this in mind a new manse was purchased on the Churchill gate part of the Abbeyfield development and they are looking to see a Church and community building established there soon.

**Personal view 2013** - In years gone by, I can remember the building being there as the Mission Hall as the area behind it where Iceland, Wilkinsons, QD Stores (now Poundland) and a car park is now, was once Tesco’s and before that it was I believe it was the Eastern National Bus Station.



**DNA Network, Whitewell Road, Colchester**

DNA Networks is a church planting initiative, which began in 2001. From an Alpha course with students at Colchester Sixth Form College and ministry with international students at Essex University, DNA has developed into a vibrant community of faith. Beginning in Colchester, DNA Networks emerged when Janie and David Beales returned from Australia to live in England. Having been granted a Licence by the Bishop of Chelmsford, they prayer-walked the walls of Colchester virtually every weekday in the year 2000.