

East Gate board unveiled



Elizabeth Baines of Colchester Civic Society at the unveiling of the East Gate Board

for by the Colchester Civic Society and it was installed by the Colchester Museums Service. It was formally unveiled by Councillor Tim Young, CBC portfolio holder for heritage watched by a small crowd of members of the Civic Society and the Friends of Colchester Roman Wall.

The board stands half-way up East Hill and explains the history of Colchester's East Gate. The original gate was built by the Romans in the 1st century AD but later destroyed. All that remains are stretches of the Wall itself and a Roman drain. The gate was rebuilt in medieval times and was the site of a dramatic event during the Civil War siege of Colchester in 1648 when the besieged Royalist army attempted to recapture the East Bridge over the river but were repulsed by the Parliamentarians.

The first two boards of the Roman Wall Walk were installed at Balkerne Gate near the Mercury Theatre, at Duncan's Gate in Castle Park. More boards will be installed over the next year or so to create a multi-stop tour explaining the history of the Wall.

The third of Colchester's Roman Wall heritage boards was unveiled on Saturday 22 November - very kindly sponsored by the Colchester Civic Society to mark its 50th anniversary. For the first time, residents and visitors to Colchester now have a permanent explanation of the history of the East Gate - located at the actual site. The board will form a key part of a heritage walk around the entire length of the Wall

Our Chair, former Mayor of Colchester Henry Spyvee, said, "We hope that that the Wall Walk will give the townspeople some pride in their heritage and attract visitors to explore Colchester's long and fascinating history."

The bulk of the cost of the board was paid



FocRW Chair Henry Spyvee, CBC Heritage Portfolio Holder Cllr Tim Young and FocRW Trustee Andrew Phillips

AGM – 5 March, Colchester Town Hall

Our fourth AGM will take place on **Thursday, 5 March, 2015 at 7.30 pm** in the **Mayoral Suite at Colchester Town Hall**. This relates to the year ending 30 June, 2014. However, the report on our work will be much more up-to-date.

There will be a presentation of the accounts and an election of officers and committee. The present Committee is Henry Spyvee (Chairman), Vivien Spyvee (Minute Secretary), Barry Donovan, Bill Hayton (Publicity Officer) and Elisabeth Baines, Anthony

Bartleet, Barbara Butler, Mark Davies, Andrew Phillips and Rob Waites. It will be proposed to add to these Bryn Smart who was co-opted during the year and to replace Anthony Bartleet by David Balcombe (both represent the Colchester & North East Essex Building Preservation Trust who are Corporate Members of the Friends.)

Barry Donovan wishes to step down as Treasurer so there is a vacancy there. Both Anthony and Barry have been with us from the start and have given us excellent

support. Replacing Barry will be a challenge.

After the business of the AGM **Adam Wightman** will talk to us about **'BEFORE THE WALL - Excavations at the Williams and Griffins department store: further evidence for the effects of the Boudican uprising on the unwallled colony at Colchester.'** Adam is an archaeologist with the Colchester Archaeological Trust and has directed their dig at W & G's. You may have seen him telling Richard Wilson all about this on ITV recently.

North Gate Board

Our fourth Interpretation Board will be unveiled on **Saturday, 21 March, 2015 at 10.00 am**. The North Gate Board has been sponsored by Sir Bob Russell MP and Lady Russell - commemorating five generations of the family in Colchester. We hope that three of those generations will be there on the day. We want to encourage as many members of the Friends to come and join us as we mark the completion of another link in the chain of boards surrounding the Wall.



The living wall

Our friends at Colchester Natural History Society have long known that, as well as being a unique ancient monument, the wall is also a nationally important botanical site. With its 2000 year history, the wall has become a unique habitat for plants of many kinds, including rare lichens, mosses and flowering plants.

The brickwork is covered with mosses and lichens but look, in particular, for the small Black Spleenwort fern and the scarce Rue-Leaved Saxifrage (pictured left) in early Spring on the Roman Wall between upper and lower Castle Park.

Next steps...

The text for the Interpretation Board at **Scheregate** has been drafted and the application for it to be installed is now going through the various processes needed for it to be legal.

The board is being sponsored by the Colchester Town Guides who have explained this and other points on the Wall to countless visitors. The Board explains why Scheregate is there and what the name means and features a

Colchester character who many of us remember.

The Board at **Priory Street** will be delayed but for a good reason. Colchester Borough Council is planning to improve this stretch of the Wall in a drive to increase tourism. We will be consultees as they develop their proposals. We look forward to working with them. A cause for celebration!

The Board at **Head Gate** is planned to feature a new painting, commissioned by

us, to show what this area looked like during the Siege of Colchester in 1648. It will recreate the 'Battle of Headgate, one of the bloodiest actions of the Siege.

The last Board of our second stage will be in the **South West Corner** of the Wall. It too will focus on the Siege and show that we are fortunate to have as much of the Wall as we have following that cataclysmic event in the history of Colchester.

WEBSITE

While our Publicity Officer has been away, working on the radio of Burma and writing a book about his experiences our website has suffered. He and we plan to get it up-to-date shortly. It can be found on www.romanwall.org.

Sponsorship

What we are doing and will be doing is only possible thanks to our supporters who give regularly towards the work of the Friends - and to those groups and companies who sponsor individual Interpretation Boards. Those who give £500 or more earn the privilege of having their names on the Board indefinitely. Most Boards are now sponsored but there are still vacancies. Get in touch if you are interested. We also need more Friends. Spread the word! To be a Friend, get in touch with our Treasurer, Barry Donovan at barrydonov@aol.com or use the form below

Membership form

Name:

Address:

Telephone: Email:

Please return to our Treasurer: Barry Donovan, 2 Rudd Court, Colchester CO4 3EL

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