

# MILTON SOCIETY

## NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER



## Letter from the chairman

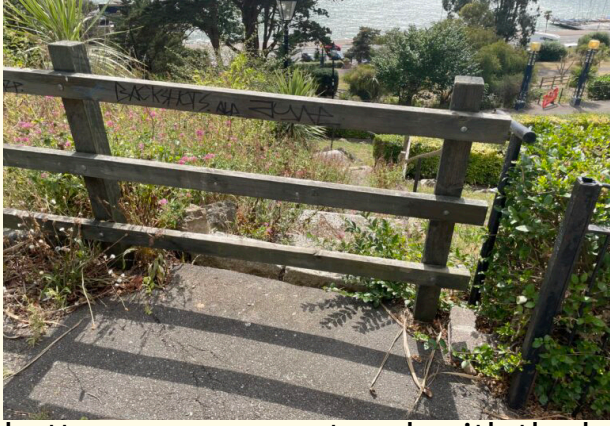
Our Society has now had its second full year in its new format (extending across Milton, Shorefields, Hamlet Court conservation areas, and the areas in between) and our heritage work has greatly expanded. This was explained at our very successful AGM on 12th October at The Westcliff Hotel, with talks with from myself, Mel Philips and Steve Savill on the Southend Cliff Gardens and conservation in action at Mel's and Steve's respective homes.



Following on from this year's succesful AGM, it is with great excitement that we are relaunching our newsletter, in an updated format. To be published quarterly, not only will we be keeping you up to date with our society work and relevant news, but there will be a number of local interest stories to be enjoyed.

And on that note, it is again with great excitment that we look back over 2024 and what has been a great year.

We have made a huge contribution to the Hamlet Court Calling project, which is a really exciting local development. First up, we led the formation of the working group and drawing-up the delivery plan. We've then helped the project to bring the Christmas lights back to our local high street, due for switch-on on Friday 22nd November. We are hoping that as many traders as possible will do something to help the evening so please mark the date in your diary and come along if you can. There is now huge ambition for the road, for local business, residents and visitors, and for a renewed sense of local place.



Our work has also included further research on our Cliff Gardens and re-submission to Historic England (HE) for the gardens to be nationally Listed. We heard back that our timing was perfect and HE were again looking at the gardens for Listing. We can now be very hopeful that Listing will happen and the gardens will receive the recognition that they deserve. This should lead to

better management and, with the help of heritage funding streams, maintenance improvements all around, removing the unsightly barricades preventing full public access.

*If you want to give your support please join our campaign and sign-up [here](#).*

We've also not forgotten our ambition to expand Hamlet Court conservation area to the south but this needs support from inside the council, which we are working on. Similarly, we have identified a massive heritage designation opportunity at our seafront where the promenade and beaches should be part of the seafront conservation areas of Crowstone, The Leas and (as noted above) a new designation at the Cliff Gardens. We have the support of Chalkwell Residents Association and are due to have talks with Chalkwell councillors soon.

And all the while our regular work goes on, monitoring development proposals. Here are a few of the more significant recent proposals and issues that we have helped influence:

- Essential wall repairs to Park Road Methodist Church
- Change of use to 179 Hamlet Court Road (the former Boots site) to 15 bed HMO – permission was refused
- 155 Hamlet Court Road – fire damaged building – we have referred this to the Secretary of State for consent for the council to intervene – decision awaited
- Permitted development change of use from shop to flat at 69 Hamlet Court Road – we objected and it was refused no less than 3 times

*For more information please email [chair@hamletcourt.org](mailto:chair@hamletcourt.org)*

**Andy Atkinson, Chairman**

## Keeping up with the Edwardians

Mel and her husband Ryan are slowly but surely bringing their Edwardian gem back to life.



Having watched Grand Designs, Restoration Man, Homes Under the Hammer and a whole host of other programs about buying and selling houses over the years, I knew I wanted to live in an old house. Nothing would make for better viewing in my opinion than a couple buying a dilapidated old gem and breathing new life into it and with every episode my husband and I watched, we knew we

wanted to do the same thing.

My first flat was on Genesta Road, in a pretty Edwardian building (once a house that had been divided into flats). Whilst it wasn't the renovation project I was eager to get my teeth into, it was at least a period property - and it had a sea view, so for the first rung on the ladder, I was pretty pleased.

However it was the home my husband and I bought together, just off Hamlet Court Road that was the renovation project we'd both been hoping for! This year will be four years since we got the keys to our own piece of history and whilst it's slow going, nothing compares to bringing a tired, diamond in the rough back to life.

As I sit here now, despite the fact most of our walls are still bare plaster or only half stripped of their wallpaper (wallpaper stripping is one of my least favourite jobs I've discovered!) and the stair case paint has only been half stripped (again, another job that shot to the top of the least favourite jobs list!) I can't help but smile with pride at the work we have managed to do over the years.

Whilst when we first moved in we did some stop-gap jobs to make it a bit more liveable (goodbye smelly old carpets!),







as soon as winter had passed, it was time to think big. So not long after we got the keys we tackled the first big job, the new roof - there were so many holes in the old one you could poke your head in the loft to check the weather! So as you can imagine, getting windtight and watertight was a priority.

It is strange the things you get excited about during house works - who knew just how much delight scaffolding for our roof works going up would bring me! But, as it was the start of getting watertight, it's perhaps not all that surprising.

Once the handcut slates were on, leadwork renewed and the roof finished, we worked our way down the building, moving onto sorting our windows. We replaced the sash windows, like-for-like, with double-glazed hardwood units. Whilst the originals were beautiful (we'll always be grateful they escaped the mass ripping out of character our house endured in the 1960s), they were all seized and rotted, so we decided to go for new units.

Two quite big jobs which we were pleased to get off the list! Once we were weathertight, we could start to think about some 'prettier' jobs. Sadly every fireplace in our house had been removed so we set about reinstating them - not only do they finish off a room but we have been kept warm and cosy over the last few winters. A crackling fire and glass of red is my idea of a perfect evening. The cats have certainly enjoyed warming their bellies by it.



Sat here living my shabby chic, bare plaster wall life, the sound of a plasterer upstairs teases the image of the finished rooms to come - but more about that next time!

**Melanie Philips, Secretary**

**Insta: @Meloniec\_90**

# Mud, sweat and years

Sandra White shares a brief history of some of the creatives inspired by the estuary



Helen Mirren was a pupil at the Hamlet Court School in Westcliff, where she played the Virgin Mary in the nativity play. The Oscar, Bafta and Tony-award-winner later attended St Bernard's High School for Girls in Westcliff, where she acted in school productions.

Dick Clement was born in Westcliff in 1937. His writing for television includes "The Likely Lads", "Whatever Happened to the Likely Lads?", "Porridge", "Lovejoy" and "Auf Wiedersehen, Pet".

Tony Holland, co-creator of "EastEnders", was born in Shoeburyness.

Graham Burnett is the author of "Southend on Zine" (2022), a history of Southend's alternative culture. Burnett writes: "Close enough to the the heart of London to get there in under an hour on the C2C line, Southend is also far enough away to have evolved its own distinctive cultural heritage and identity, in no small part defined by the almost otherworldly backdrop of the high tides, big skies and endless mudflats of the Thames Delta. It's a place that has always pioneered musical diversity, with highly influential rock, punk, indie, folk, jazz, avant garde and experimental scenes. It's a place where writers, artists, performers, poets, photographers and film makers thrive and find creative inspiration."

Wilko Johnson, guitarist, singer and songwriter, went to Westcliff High School for Boys and lived in Westcliff.

Lee Evans, comedian, has lived in Westcliff, and did a spell painting and decorating public toilets in Southend, perhaps helpful in honing a sense of humour.

Robert Buchanan, poet, novelist and playwright, lived at Hamlet Court from 1884, and is buried in St John's Church, Southend. Buchanan's last home was Byculla House, on Clifftown Parade (pictured below).



The novelist John Fowles went to Alleyn Court School in Southend, and enjoyed visits to the estuary, writing of “the thrill of hunting for caterpillars among the sloe thickets of Essex sea-walls near where we lived.”

Ian Fleming visited Southend in 1940 during his time with Naval Intelligence to observe a night-time landing of German agents from the Thames estuary, though the threatened incursion did not happen.

Frank Matcham, theatre architect, retired to 28 Westcliff Parade (see pictures above), and died there in 1920. He designed London's Hippodrome, Hackney Empire, Coliseum, Shepherd's Bush Empire and the Palladium.

Jane Austen wrote to her brother Frank in 1813 that their brother Charles and his family were in Southend, then becoming a spa town. In her novel, “Emma”, the title character



says: “I must beg you not to talk of the sea. It makes me envious and miserable; I who have never seen it! South End is prohibited, if you please.”

***Sandra White, committee member***