

MILTON SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER



Letter from the chairman



As autumn arrives, welcome to our latest newsletter and this is one of those occasions when we have some very exciting news!

We've been working on securing listed status for the Cliff Gardens for the last 3 years or so and submitted an initial application to Historic England (HE) in 2023 to list the Cliff Gardens which was rejected. Undeterred, we continued our studies and made a second application to HE in 2024. This led to them carrying out a further assessment which has now resulted in Shrubbery gardens and the 1930s sun shelter gaining listed status. This is the very first garden in Southend to be listed so it is quite an achievement for us!

The Shrubbery is very old, dating back to the late 17th century and the origins of Southend-on-Sea itself. It was first used as a garden giving access to the Victorian bathing huts and for the residents and guests of the Grand Terrace (later the Royal Terrace) to stroll amongst the trees and shrubs. By 1824 the gardens had fallen into poor condition but were revived by a Board of Trustees, enclosed and improved with an

attendant “*to expel improper persons and to keep the place in order*” and an entrance charge of 3d per day.

Famously, in 1935, the gardens became the magical themed ‘Never Never Land’ featuring model cartoon characters, goblins, smoke breathing dragons, fairies with magical castles, thousands of multicoloured lights and a model railways running throughout the park. In this way it became a key part of our seaside heritage and many children of this time carry fond memories of the place.



This has been a major success for the Society but we continue to campaign for the repair of the wider gardens and if you'd like to support this work you can do this online [here](#).

Elsewhere we are busy working on the explosion of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). We think it was our continued lobbying that has led to a HMO policy being drafted into the new Local Plan – there isn't one in the current plan. We are doing something similar on permitted development change of use to shops to help protect our local high street at Hamlet Court Road.

Finally, just space here to say that we are also preparing a character study of the non- designated local roads (starting with Burdett, St John's, St Helen's, Preston, Cossington, Ceylon, Argyll, Anerley, Ditton Court Road and lower Hamlet Court) to help with future town planning.

To hear more about these local roads, the work we do and a talk on the history of Westcliff from local historian, Ken Crowe, please come along to our AGM on Saturday 11th October 2025 from 1pm until 3pm at The Haven Community Hub in Hamlet Court Road. This year's meeting is open to Milton Society members and non-members, so please do bring along friends and family to what will be a very interesting day. There will be a opportunity for those who would like to become a member, to do so at the AGM (as well as the opportunity for current members to renew their membership). Refreshments will be available from the lovely onsite cafe.

Hamlet Court Road - a history

In this series society treasurer, Andrew Zoers delves into the history of Westcliff's high steet.



Both pictures are from the top of Hamlet Court Road which is now part of the Hamlet Court Road Conservation Area.

I will give you the history of the three shops in the old photo, Express Dairy, Lipton and Gilbert and the alleyway. From the names of the shops, I can tell that the picture is from the 1920's.

The information below was obtained from Kelly's directory which listed all the properties in Southend on Sea. Unfortunately, they stopped publishing the directory in 1969, so I do not have the names of the shops from 1970's to 2020 (if you have any memories, please do share them with us!).

The Express Dairy was previously the Alfred Cross Dairy and was numbered 131. When the street was renumbered in the late 1920's it became 193. In 1930 it was RA Jones a jeweller. Since then, it was Saxon Sportswear, Weatherall outfitters, Fields Menswear (now located at 110-112 Hamlet Court Road) and Granada TV rentals.

Next door to the dairy was Liptons, a Tea and Provisions merchant and they were there from the 1910's all the way through to mid-1960's when it became Sentence Ltd Builders merchants. It recently was the Digital Café and now the Phone and Gadget shop.

The last shop was Gilberts, a music warehouse. In the 1920's it became Freeman Hardy and Willis, a shoe and boot shop. It is now Westcliff Wools.

Next to that is an alleyway which originally lead to Kings Hall. I have been able to get it's history from a website called 'Cinema Treasures'.

The King's Hall was opened in January 1907. By 1909 it was operating as the King's Hall Picture House. It was operated by the National Bioscope Company. Seating was provided in stalls and a small circle and was equipped with a small organ. In 1912 it was operated by Andrews Pictures Ltd., followed by a couple of independent operators.

In March 1921 it was closed due to damage from a fire but was re-opened after repairs were carried out. Now operated by Ashby's Grand Halls Ltd., by 1930 it had been re-named King's Hall Cinema, and by 1937 it had become the King's Cinema.

The King's Cinema was closed in January 1940 and was converted to be used as a dance hall during World War II. The auditorium has since been demolished, and the site is used as a car park.

I hope you found the above interesting.

What are your memories of Hamlet Court Road and the surrounding area? We warmly welcome you to share any stories and pictures with us by emailing chair@miltonsociety.com and/or treasurer@miltonsociety.com

This time next year we'll be millionaires?!

For Melonie and her husband Ryan, a visit from the plumber goes from mundane to exciting...

When Del Boy and Rodney in Only Fools and Horses made their millions with the pocket watch that had sat on a stove in their garage for all those years, the nation rejoiced. But I'm sure it also had lots of us thinking about what 'rubbish' we had in our lofts, sheds or garage. Could that dust covered vase that cost 50p from a bootsale actually be Ming dynasty and worth millions? Like the dream of winning I have when I do the lottery each week, I also



think how amazing it would be to have my own Del and Rodney moment and be one of those people who stumbles upon treasure... Well, we certainly came very close recently, all thanks to our plumber.

Despite deciding not to do any major bathroom upgrades until we could do the bathroom as a whole, having a shower that produced just a trickle finally broke us. I love a bubble bath but it was time to enjoy a quick shower again! Cue a call to the plumber to sort out a shower upgrade. A nice to have but not the kind of job I was singing with excitement about.

Fitting day comes. I'm downstairs working from the dining room, minding my own business. Ryan is in the office, getting in on the plumbing talk (living his best life). The first murmuring of excitement comes when the plumber says there is a false ceiling in our airing cupboard. Interesting but not enough to tear me from my laptop.

A hole is made and the plumber pokes his phone through to take a picture. 'There's stuff up there!'. Ok so my interest is slightly peaking - Ryan's work is dead to him now and he is fully invested.

‘I’ve found a diamond!’, I hear the plumber shout. Now I'm half thinking, you guys are having me on to try and get me up here for a laugh so I stick with the laptop (work would be so proud). But the diamond chat continues so I head upstairs and true enough, the plumber is standing there, a box with a huge diamond in, in hand. Now I'm excited!

What’s it worth, what shall we spend the money on, do I need to tell the person I bought the house from about the find (true trainee lawyer in the making thinking there!) are all rushing through my head. The plumber is posting on gas chat and other plumbers are now fully invested - the fitting of a shower pump went from a run of the mill job to the most exciting Friday in a long time.

I head to the jewellers on Hamlet Court Road, diamond in hand. And that is sadly where the dream ended, because cubic zirconia is what we had found, not diamond. But to paraphrase Del Boy again, diamonds may be a girls best friend but cubic zirconia can be great company!