

Uses of the History of the British Civil Wars in Colchester in the long  
nineteenth and early twentieth century with special reference to the Siege of  
Colchester in 1648.

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## Abstract

This thesis provides an analysis of the uses and meanings of historical memory of the Siege of Colchester of 1648 in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. The study has two main aims. The first is to contribute to historical understanding of the long-term significance of the history of the Civil Wars in British culture. The second is to deepen appreciation of how nineteenth century identity, both local and national, was constructed through active engagement with the past.

Central to the argument of the thesis, is the recognition that the past needs to be viewed in pluralistic terms. Meanings of history vary according to age, gender, class and locality. They also shift over time and according to context. For this reason, the thesis takes a micro-historical approach that allows for a finely grained and multi-layered analysis of uses of the past that is sensitive to tensions between uses of the history of the siege by different individuals and groups, as well as between local and national historical narratives in the context of long-term processes of change.

Taken together, the chapters demonstrate that the Civil Wars remained an influential historical reference in both nineteenth century Colchester and more broadly in British culture. They challenge historical emphasis on a growing national focus of popular understandings of the past and argue that local history remained one of the most important sites in which memory was constructed. Meaning was tied closely to the local events of the 1648 siege as well as specific spaces, and people in Colchester associated with that tragedy, long after living memory was lost. While some remained indifferent to its legacy, for many the history of the siege remained a central component in the construction of Colchester's collective identity until the second half of the twentieth century.

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## **Abbreviations**

B.L.: British Library

E.R.O.: Essex Record Office

E.S.A.H.: Essex Society of Archaeology and History

U.E.S.C.: University of Essex Special Collections

U.L.: University of Leicester

## Introduction

*With a fervour given to few other historical periods, the Victorians lived and breathed the English Civil War*<sup>1</sup>

The Siege of Colchester, according to its leading historian Barbara Donagan, was ‘a central event of the Second Civil War and a focus of national attention in private letters and public print.’<sup>2</sup> The story was nurtured by Royalist and Restoration propagandists who depicted Colchester as a site of Parliamentary atrocity, made famous for the terrible suffering inflicted on the town by the Parliamentarian General Fairfax, and for the execution of the Royalist leaders Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle.<sup>3</sup> To what extent has this episode in Colchester’s history been remembered, commemorated and used in the centuries that followed? This question forms the focus of this thesis which began as a response to a query raised by Mark Stoye about why the British Civil Wars have remained prominent in British culture centuries after the conflict ended.<sup>4</sup> Does the memory of the Civil Wars in the seventeenth century ‘continue to exert a tenacious grip on the historical imagination’, as Stoye states? If so, where, how, and with whom? The analysis that follows addresses these issues through a case study of historical use and perception of the Siege of Colchester in the long nineteenth century. In doing so, it aims to contribute not only to historical understanding of the long-term significance of the history of the Civil Wars in British culture but also to wider debates about the use of history in the construction of local and national identity in Britain during the long nineteenth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Tristram Hunt, *Building Jerusalem: The Rise and Fall of the Victorian City* (Burlington: Phoenix, 2005), p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Donagan, *War in England 1642-1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 313.

<sup>3</sup> For discussion of seventeenth century propaganda about the Siege of Colchester, see Donagan, *War in England*, pp. 343-344; Andrea Brady, ‘Dying With Honour: Literary Propaganda and the Second English Civil War’, *The Journal of Military History*, 70.1 (2006), 9–30

<sup>4</sup> Mark Stoye, ‘Remembering the English Civil Wars’, in *The Memory of Catastrophe*, ed. by Peter Gray and Kendrick Oliver (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 19-30 (p. 27).

This thesis explores how a particular event in the past was used in a particular context by different individuals and groups and its connection to the construction of power and identity. The research draws on extensive scholarly and public interest in the cultural and political dimensions of the uses of history and its links to individual and collective memory that has developed over the last fifty years. The concept of collective memory was first developed by Halbwachs in 1925 and referred to the way that a society agrees to remember the past. He argued that varieties of individual memory are suppressed by a range of commemorative mechanisms that encourage conformity to a construction of the past that corresponds to the customs, beliefs and interests of the society in which they live.<sup>5</sup>

Social and cultural historians in the 1970s and 80s, devoted a great deal of attention to the uses of history in the construction of a collective memory in the nineteenth century that encouraged loyalty to the concept of nation in the context of massive and rapid social, political and cultural change. Highly influential in this regard was Benedict Anderson and his investigation of the components of nationalisms. Anderson conceptualised the nation as socially constructed and argued that history was a key tool used by elites to cement ties that bound different individuals and groups, specifically by selectively choosing what to remember and what to forget, what to include or remove from historical narratives of national identity.<sup>6</sup> Important too was the series of essays by Hobsbawm and Rainger on the ‘invention of tradition’, which investigated the use of cultural practices such as education, rituals, symbols and festivals that were represented as long-established, but which were actually relatively recent or in fact invented by elites in the nineteenth century, to secure the allegiance of diverse

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<sup>5</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).



populations in a period of social political conflict and division.<sup>7</sup> Pioneering work by Pierre Nora was also highly influential in this respect. Between 1984 and 1992 his three-volume study developed the concept of the *'lieu de mémoire'* or 'site of memory' to consider French negotiations with its national past. The work has proved highly influential for studies of the meaning and use of history and its relationship to collective memory and political power in a variety of local and national contexts. Nora argued that it was the process of rupture, of extreme change and transformation whether through war, industrial and social change or revolution, that produces the historical formation of memory.<sup>8</sup> He also drew attention to the way memory was articulated, expressed and experienced in physical sites ranging from books to museums and local and national monuments that had material, symbolic and also functional meanings.<sup>9</sup> He argued that history and memory were in fundamental opposition, because memory was 'necessarily selective'. He also drew distinctions between elite or official memory, imposed on the people for political ends, and popular memory, which was organic, selective and constantly shifting according to time and context.<sup>10</sup>

Influenced by Nora, scholars initially drew sharp analytical and conceptual distinctions between history, which was argued to be objective, and memory, which was a social construct.<sup>11</sup> This thesis, alongside much contemporary scholarship views history and memory as involved in a dynamic relationship. It is now recognised that historians select the history that they study, and these choices vary according to time, place and social group. Neither

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<sup>7</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>8</sup> Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*', *Representations*, 26 (1989), 7-24 (pp. 7-8).

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984); Michael Rothberg, 'Between Memory and Memory: From *Lieux de mémoire* to *Noeuds de mémoire*', *Yale French Studies*, 118/119 (2010), 3-12; Pierre Nora, '*Mémoire collective*', in *La nouvelle histoire*, ed. by Jacques Le Goff, Roger Chartier, and Jacques Ravel (Paris: Retz, 1978), pp. 398-401.

<sup>10</sup> Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> James Fentress; Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992), p. 5.

history or memory are fixed and each borrows from the other.<sup>12</sup> But Nora's scholarship has proved highly influential in research into the ways in which historical memory is used in the context of political and power relations. Walkowitz and Knauer have argued, for example, that historical memory is used by nation states to justify and maintain dominant positions.<sup>13</sup> Linked to this work has been the recognition of the care taken by governments to manipulate historical memory for contemporary ideological, moral and social purposes.<sup>14</sup>

The notion of a usable past connects to these explorations of the uses of history in the context of the construction and maintenance of political power. The idea of a 'usable past' has been applied to analysis of the ways in which historical memory has been cultivated and selected to suit the political demands of the present. Historians of the United States, for example, have argued that the construction of a 'usable past' was a key tool for the creation of a national consciousness and identity after the American Revolution.<sup>15</sup> Parker helpfully explains that 'using the past', may be 'characterised as a deliberate comparative, metaphorical or symbolic use in which the transfer effect between 'then' and 'now' is rendered simple and unproblematic.'<sup>16</sup> The past is used to make political arguments, construct political identities and enforce political concepts in the present.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, (London: Verso, 1994); Natalie Zemon Davis, and Randolph Starn, 'Introduction [to Special Issue on Memory and History]', *Representations*, 26 (1989), 1–6; Jennie Carlsten and Fearghal McGarry, eds., *Film, History and Memory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Daniel J. Walkowitz, Lisa Maya Knauer, eds., *Contested Histories in Public Space: Memory, Race and Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Malgorzata Pakier, *A European Memory?: Contested Histories and Politics* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), p. 52.

<sup>15</sup> Henry Steele Commager, *The Search for a Usable Past and Other Essays in Historiography* (New York: Alfred J. Knopf, 1967). For analysis of the concept of a 'usable past' in very different commercial contexts, whereby large businesses have constructed 'usable' histories to present a corporate identity for marketing purposes and also to encourage staff loyalty, see Rob Perks, 'Corporations are people too!: Business and Corporate Oral History in Britain', *Oral History Society*, 38.1 (2010), 36-54; George David Smith and Laurence E Steadman, 'Present value of corporate history', *Harvard Business Review*, 59, (1981), 164-173; George David Smith, and Laurence E. Steadman, 'The Value of Corporate History', *Journal of Forest History*, 26.1 (1982), 34-41

<sup>16</sup> Pakier, *A European memory*, p. 52.

<sup>17</sup> Cass Sunstein, 'The Idea of a Useable Past', *Columbia Law Review*, 95.3 (1995), 601-608 (p. 603).

The notion of a useable past connects to the concept of collective memory. It has been argued that a sense of common heritage is necessary for social cohesion and identity.<sup>18</sup> As Tileubergenov, Pelevina, Taubaev and Vasiliev argue, collective memory is, ‘the ability of social actors to preserve and transmit from generation to generation knowledge about historical events...(and) is the basis of cultural continuity of generations and national-civic identity.’<sup>19</sup> It has also been shown that history has been used to teach a common judgement of the past. Joseph Ober, for example has examined how after war and revolution the ancient Greeks turned to their past to try and reconstruct their identity.<sup>20</sup> He stated that, ‘Thucydides was also explicitly concerned with teaching his readers how they might use the past for judgment in their own present.’<sup>21</sup> The past needed to be processed in a way that helped them deal with concerns and issues that faced them in the present. Especially relevant to the study of memory of civil conflict, Ober further states that, ‘in the aftermath of revolution and counter revolution, the community may also feel a need to gain agreement about positive legacies. And so, civil strife, even when followed by amnesty, may be a spur to the practice of seeking to reconstruct a useable past.’<sup>22</sup>

Social and cultural historians have therefore paid attention to the uses of the past, how it was communicated and how uses changed over time and according to context.<sup>23</sup> In addition, they are also interested in which histories are forgotten and why.<sup>24</sup> Studies of post-conflict societies have explored the numerous ways in which official authorities in different places at

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<sup>18</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *National identity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991).

<sup>19</sup> Yerazak Tileubergenov, Natalia Pelevina, Baktibek Taubaev and Aleksei Vasiliev, ‘The Role of Social Memory in Reconstruction of the Historical Past. Social Memory and Historical Past’, *Astra Salvensis*, 12 (2018), 67-72 (p. 68).

<sup>20</sup> Josiah Ober, ‘Historical Legacies: Moral Authority and the Useable Past’, In *Athenian Legacies: Essays on the Politics of Going On Together* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 43-68 (p. 45).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>23</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

<sup>24</sup> Paul Connerton, ‘Seven Types of Forgetting’, *Memory Studies*, 1.1 (2008), 59–71.

different times have tried to control historical memory to suit contemporary political agendas and concerns. This leads to a process where certain individual, regional or group memories are suppressed or dispersed.<sup>25</sup> Official censorship is important here. The Act of General Pardon and Oblivion passed by the Republican regime after the British Civil Wars in February 1652 and the Spanish Amnesty Law of 1977 which included ‘A Pact of Forgetting’, are but two of numerous examples of post-civil conflict societies in different times and in different centuries where such policies have been applied.<sup>26</sup> Both interventions represent attempts by authority to suppress or even erase historical memory that was deemed to be damaging to political unity and stability. Processes of suppression, however, can be more subtle. Patricia Davidson has drawn attention to the fact, for example, that museums give a material form to the past, allowing them to cement official histories. In this way they choose to forget, remember, include or exclude a particular artefact or item, depending on the perspective of those who control them.<sup>27</sup> Archives too are frequently controlled by official authority and curate and shape memory since, as Rodney Harrison has argued ‘objects, places and practices are conserved according to criteria that are culturally determined’.<sup>28</sup> In considering how the past is constructed and used it has also been argued that we need to consider complex questions about power and its imbrication with gender, race and class.<sup>29</sup> For example, a study of post-

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<sup>25</sup> See for example, Michael Richards, *After the Civil War: Making Memory and Re-making Spain since 1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Bill Kissane, *After Civil War: Division, Reconstruction, and Reconciliation in Contemporary Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Cook, *Civil War Memories*.

<sup>26</sup> ‘February 1652: An Act of General Pardon and Oblivion’, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/acts-ordinances-interregnum/pp565-577> [accessed 17/03/2022]; Erin Peters, *Commemoration and Oblivion in Royalist Print Culture, 1658-1667* (Cham: Palgrave, 2017), pp. 46-59; Ruth Sanz Sabedo, *Memories of the Spanish Civil War: Conflict and Community in Rural Spain* (London: Ronan and Littlefield, 2016), p. 12.

<sup>27</sup> Patricia Davidson, *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*, ed. by Sarah Nuttal, Carli Coetzee (Cape town: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 145. See also, Nick Poole, ‘Change’, in *Technology and Theory in the Museum*, ed. by Ed. Rodley, Robert Stein & Suse Cairns (Boston: Museums Etc, 2015), p. 126. [www.Medium.com](http://www.Medium.com).

<sup>28</sup> Rodney Harrison, ‘Forgetting to Remember: Remembering to Forget: Late Modern Heritage Practices, Sustainability and the Crisis of Accumulation of the Past’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 19.6 (2012), 579-595 (p. 580).

<sup>29</sup> G. R. Gillis, ‘Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship’, in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. by John R. Gillis (Princeton, New Jersey, 1994), pp. 3–24.

conflict Northern Ireland has shown how often gendered memory was forgotten or ignored in discussions and negotiations over the ‘peace process’ in late twentieth century Britain.<sup>30</sup>

It is also recognised that in analysing the ‘forgetting’ of some aspects of the past which are not deemed useable, psychological and emotional factors need to be considered. Lowenthal argues for example that stories of the past that are celebrated, and which are expunged, vary as each generation reshapes its legacy in line with current psychological and cultural as well as political needs.<sup>31</sup> Roper, Dawson and Ashplant assert that political and physiological approaches to memory and use have often been separated but this should not necessarily be the case as each has an important role to play in the construction of collective and national identities.<sup>32</sup> Fentress and Wickham’s concept of objective and subjective memory is helpful in this respect. Objective memory is defined as facts, something that happened on a particular date at a certain location, whilst subjective memory is about feelings and opinions that we formed ourselves to create a version of the past that we are comfortable with.<sup>33</sup> Memories can be affected by, ‘emotions, feelings, and fantasies, or remembered sensory images,’ and ‘these are all things which we may remember without ‘knowing them objectively’.<sup>34</sup> Objective memory is passive, but subjective memory is active in the construction and use of history that is shaped by personal, political, social and cultural concerns. Therefore, history is made useable by subjective memory. We pick versions of events that matter to us and use history to make sense of our own environment and identity. Society preserves certain versions of the past which it finds comfortable, whether historical heroes, places, traditions, and stories, a

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<sup>30</sup> Patricia Lundy and Mark McGovern, ‘The Politics of Memory in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland’, *Peace Review*, 13.1 (2001), 27-33.

<sup>31</sup> David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), this is further expanded on in, Katharine Hodgkin, and Susannah Radstone, eds., *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts* (London: Routledge, 2005)

<sup>32</sup> Michael Roper with Graham Dawson, and T. G. Ashplant, *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

process Pakier describes as existential use of history.<sup>35</sup> Events and stories from the past are remembered or forgotten ‘in order to uphold or intensify feelings of orientation and identity in a society characterised by insecurity, pressure or sudden change’.<sup>36</sup> Both Radstone and Hodgkin note that, ‘contests over the meaning of the past are also contests over the meaning of the present and over ways of taking the past forward.’<sup>37</sup> In this way we can see that study of ways that the past has been represented in different periods tells us as much or more about the contemporary world than the historical event which is being represented.

In summary, analysis of the uses of the past involves consideration of processes of inclusion and exclusion, and the ways in which the meaning of the means of transmission of memory such as written histories, physical sites and rituals of commemoration can contribute to processes of forgetting, as some histories are privileged and used over others. It is important always to consider whose version of the past is being presented and preserved and why.<sup>38</sup> These approaches have encouraged scholars to consider how the past is remembered, presented and used as a contested process. Carrier has argued for example that, ‘the dictionary definition of a place of memory as ‘a symbolic element of a given community’ is rather misleading, for it suggests that a place of memory is a force of homogeneous political cohesion.’<sup>39</sup> Similarly Bodnar asserted that, ‘The shaping of the past worthy of public commemoration in the present is contested and involves a struggle for supremacy between advocates of various political ideas

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<sup>35</sup> Zheng Wang, *Memory Politics, Identity and Conflict: Historical Memory as a Variable* (Cham: Palgrave, 2018); Baljinder Sahdra, and Michael Ross, ‘Group Identification and Historical Memory’, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33.3 (2007), 384–95.

<sup>36</sup> Pakier, *A European memory?*, p. 47.

<sup>37</sup> Katharine Hodgkin, Susannah Radstone, eds., *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts* (Boca Raton: Routledge, 2005), p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Tim Benton, ed., *Understanding Heritage and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); Sarah Nuttal and Carli Coetzee, eds., *Negotiating the Past: the Making of Memory in South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Joan Tumblety, ed., *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as Source and Subject* (London: Routledge, 2013); Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Pamela Stewart, and Andrew Strathern, *Landscape, Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), p. 128;

<sup>39</sup> Peter Carrier, ‘Places, Politics and the Archiving of Contemporary Memory’, in *Memory and Methodology*, ed. by Susannah Radstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 37-57 (p. 41).

and sentiments.<sup>40</sup> Commercial interests also come into play here. Phil Hubbard and Keith Lilley note that tourism and heritage involve a ‘selective commodification of place identity in the interests of capital accumulation.’<sup>41</sup> History is shaped, selected and used to suit what the consumer wants. Readman noted that Edwardian guidebooks, for example, responded to a consumer demand, ‘for historical information about the places they visited’.<sup>42</sup> But the history was filtered to accommodate popular taste.

Recognition that the construction of a useable past is a process that involves selection, as well as dissent or conflict between ‘official’ memory and uses and meanings of the past by people of varying age, gender, class and locality has encouraged analysis of memory and the uses of the past to be viewed in pluralistic terms.<sup>43</sup> Research increasingly takes into account the variety of views about the past held by different individuals and groups.<sup>44</sup> In certain circumstances people might resist ‘official histories’ in order to maintain their own collective identity, for example.<sup>45</sup> Equally, alternative memories or uses of the past might run alongside one another, whether national, local, familial, or personal, since different individuals and groups might have different ideas about what was ‘worthy of memory’.<sup>46</sup>

These developments in the field of memory studies based on a pluralistic, malleable approach have produced a flourishing literature on memorial cultures and uses and meanings of history in post-conflict societies, including examination of forms of commemoration,

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<sup>40</sup> John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> Phil Hubbard and Keith Lilley, ‘Selling the Past: Heritage-tourism and Place Identity in Stratford-upon-Avon’, *Geography*, 85.3 (2000), 221-232 (p. 231).

<sup>42</sup> Paul Readman, ‘The Place of the Past in English Culture c. 1890-1914’, *Past & Present*, 186 (2005), 147-199 (p. 163).

<sup>43</sup> Anna Green, ‘Individual Remembering and ‘Collective Memory: Theoretical Presuppositions and, Contemporary Debates’, *Oral History*, 32.2 (2004), 35-44 (p. 36).

<sup>44</sup> Penny Summerfield, ‘Dunkirk and the Popular Memory of Britain at War, 1940-1958’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 45.4 (2010), 788-811.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, John Gooch, *History*, 81.263 (1996), 420-420; Alistair Thompson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>46</sup> Fentress and Wickham, pp. 87-143

official and ‘vernacular’, variations according to class and gender, and their changing political, social and cultural uses and meanings according to context and over time.<sup>47</sup> Especially relevant to this study is the burgeoning research on commemorative responses and their meanings in post-civil war states across time and place. Studies have shown how challenging it is to control memories of war in these circumstances and how authorities have struggled to create and maintain a ‘usable past’. In Spain for example, despite concerted attempts by authority in the 1970s and 1980s to suppress memory in order to encourage social unity, a variety of memories of the Spanish Civil War remained deeply embedded in localities and within political groups that contested established narratives and are now being recognised and commemorated in modern Spain.<sup>48</sup> Historians of the American Civil War have tracked changes in the representations and meaning of the memory of the conflict from the nineteenth century until the present and how they intersected in complex and varied ways with different individuals and social groups according to the political concerns of the day.<sup>49</sup>

These questions about the multiplicity of memories and their relationship to historical production have been addressed in detail by Sarah Lloyd and Julie More in the course of their work on local projects in public history.<sup>50</sup> They argue that the, ‘histories we live with can come into conflict with histories we live by: where personal and collective memory are at odds with one another, the outcome can be a forgetting or silencing of individual recollections which have no place to go.’<sup>51</sup> The histories we live by are selective and are about the stories of our

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<sup>47</sup> Michael Roper, and Rachel Duffett, ‘Family Legacies in the Centenary: Motives for First World War Commemoration among British and German Descendants’, *History and Memory*, 30.1 (2018), 76-115 (p. 76); Bowery Charles R. Jr, ‘The Chief’s Corner: The Importance of Army History and World War I Centennial Commemorations’, *Army History*, 109 (2018), p. 4; Jenny Macleod, ‘Britishness and Commemoration: National Memorials to the First World War in Britain and Ireland’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48.4 (2013), 647-665; Lucy Noakes, *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War* (London: A&C Black, 2013); Kissane, *After Civil War*.

<sup>48</sup> See for example, Richards, *After the Civil War: Making Memory and Re-making Spain*.

<sup>49</sup> Kissane, *After Civil War*; Cook, *Civil War Memories*.

<sup>50</sup> Susannah Lloyd & Julie Moore, ‘Sedimented Histories: Connections, Collaborations and Co-production in Regional History’, *History Workshop Journal*, 80.1 (2015), 234-248 (p. 244).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*



predecessors, of heroic deeds or sacrifice, while histories we live with may include local against national versions of events, different political ideologies, or long-standing residents compared to recent migrants.<sup>52</sup> Concerned to accommodate a variety of interests and voices, memories that sometimes conflict with one another as well as differences between local and national accounts, they recommend the creation of a ‘sediment’ of connected, but not necessarily uniform histories. As they explain:

Where voices and memories are contested or perspectives fragmented, where elements of the past are differently weighted or valued ... [creating] a ‘sediment’ of connected, but not necessarily uniform histories: rather like Raphael Samuel’s view of the built environment as ‘a sediment of geological strata, a multi-layered reality’, sedimented histories are available over time, adjacent to one another, but not thrust into a competition for survival of the historically fittest.<sup>53</sup>

This study draws on this concept of a ‘sedimented’ approach to the use of the past in a local context to explore how, in the long nineteenth century, the history of the British Civil Wars was remembered, used and deployed in Colchester by different groups in different ways at different times. It explores the multi-faceted, flexible and dynamic meanings of the seventeenth century Civil Wars in Britain during the nineteenth century. It looks at the long-term processes of the shaping of collective identity through use of the past, the relationship between uses of the past and political power, both individual and collective, the particular complexities that patterns of remembering and forgetting a civil conflict posed for the construction of local and national identity, and how the construction of the past shifted as it intersected with contemporary political concerns.

Research into the political and cultural significance of memory of the Civil War and use of its history has become a burgeoning field of historical enquiry over the last two decades.

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 234-248.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* p. 242.

Most research to date, however, has focussed on attempts by elites to shape memory of the history of the conflict in the period immediately after the war either to bolster their own authority or undermine the position of their political opponents.<sup>54</sup> Matthew Neufeld has considered how the public remembered the Civil Wars in the period immediately after they ended and into the Restoration, while Edward Legon has further contributed to this field with his study of seditious memories after the Civil Wars. Similarly, Erin Peters has examined attempts by the recently restored monarchy to control public memory in the decade immediately following the Restoration. Most recently Imogen Peck has produced a rich and interesting study of the ways Britain's Civil Wars were remembered during the years of the Republic, placing attempts by national authority to shape the meaning of the recent past alongside evidence of what English people of different class, age and gender remembered.<sup>55</sup> Research has also been undertaken to recover the meaning and use of memories of the conflict for local communities, military veterans and ordinary citizens in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. Mark Stoye, for example, has explored the memories of former soldiers who were involved in the fighting.<sup>56</sup> Innovative studies have also investigated the impact of the war on individual, local and communal experience of the landscape, both in terms of the physical damage inflicted by the conflict and the ways in which dark memories of the war shaped and changed its meaning.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Edward Legon, *Revolution remembered: Seditious memories after the British Civil Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019); Edward Vallance, *Loyalty, Memory and Public Opinion in England, 1658-1727* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019); Matthew Neufeld, *The Civil War after 1660: Public Remembering in Late Stuart England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), p.2; Erin Peter, *Commemoration and Oblivion in Royalist Print Culture, 1658-1667* (Cham: Palgrave, 2017). See also, David Cressy, 'Remembrancers of the Revolution: Histories and Historiographies of the 1640s', in *The Uses of History in Early Modern England*, ed. Paulina Kewes (San Marino: Huntington Library, 2006), pp. 253–64.

<sup>55</sup> Peck, *Recollection in the Republics*.

<sup>56</sup> Mark Stoye, 'Memories of the Maimed': The Testimony of Charles I's Former Soldiers, 1660–1730', *History*, 88.2 (2003), 204-226.

<sup>57</sup> Ann Hughes, 'The Accounts of the Kingdom': Memory, Community and the English Civil War', *Past & Present*, 230.11 (2016), 311–329; Andy Wood, *The Memory of the People: Custom and Popular Senses of the Past in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Nicola Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape: Place, Custom and Memory 1500-1800* (Oxford: Windgather Press, 2009).

Little historical scholarly attention has yet been paid, however, to what the war has meant for later generations, and how historical memory of the war was constructed and used. This is very surprising when we consider the scale and political significance of the wars for British culture. The British Civil Wars were amongst the most profound political events in seventeenth century Europe. Scotland, England, Ireland, and Wales were embroiled in religious and political conflict in 1642. The wars lasted nine years and by the end of them in 1651, hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians were dead and King Charles I had been executed. The country then lived through the only period of Republican rule in British history that lasted for eleven years. Although a King was restored to power in 1660 the relationship between monarch and Parliament shifted permanently. The conflict was fought over questions about the origins of political power and authority that led to debates about democracy and the beginning of the progress of Parliament towards its present position as the supreme instrument of power in the land.

The uses of the history of the war and its impact on nineteenth century culture has been analysed extensively in disciplines other than history. Studies in art and literature, for example, have explored the enormous interest in the war that developed in Britain and France in the aftermath of the French Revolution, and the ways in which literary and visual artists used the history of the seventeenth century as a vehicle for comment on issues of their own day.<sup>58</sup> Roy Strong, for example, calculated that during the Victorian period, ‘more works of art were produced depicting scenes connected with Charles I, Oliver Cromwell, Henrietta Maria and the struggle of Cavalier versus Roundhead than for any other period of British history.’<sup>59</sup> This argument is further cemented by Laura Knopper, who has gone so far as to

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<sup>58</sup> Susie L. Steinback, *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 4.

<sup>59</sup> Roy Strong, *And When Did You Last See Your Father* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), p. 137. See also, Karl Kroeber, *British Romantic Art* (London: University of California Press, 1986), p. 2; Edward Morris, ‘Nineteenth Century Paintings and Sculptures of Cromwell’, *The Wordsworth Circle*, 25.3 (1994), 173–192.

argue that the Victorians were ‘obsessed’ with the British Civil Wars, seeing in the conflict between Parliament and King Charles I a parallel with their own conflicts over political reform, Catholic emancipation and the reassessment of dissent. As the political situation changed, so too did society change in its memory of the wars, hence the century saw the rehabilitation of Oliver Cromwell from villain to pious leader. At the same time the marketing of Victoria and Albert as ‘domestic’ monarchs encouraged representations of Charles I and Henrietta Maria as loving husband and wife.<sup>60</sup> Literary scholars have also explored how, alongside the political interest in the wars, fiction, biography, history, and drama on the Civil Wars became unprecedentedly popular in the period.<sup>61</sup> This is evident in the parallels drawn by poets such as Coleridge and others between Cromwell and Robespierre, or Cromwell and Bonaparte, as did writers keen to use the history of the wars to demonstrate the strength of British political institutions.<sup>62</sup> Most importantly, perhaps, the *Waverley* Novels of Sir Walter Scott, published in the first half of the century, romanticised the history of the conflict and brought it to a much wider audience.<sup>63</sup> These fictional representations are argued to be major inspirations for the growing numbers of tourists in Victorian Britain, who, enabled by the expanding railway network and leisure time, were keen to visit historic sites associated with the conflict.<sup>64</sup>

Such evidence suggests that historical investigation into the use and significance of historical memory of the Civil Wars in the nineteenth century, its manifestations in political and social relationships and its meanings for individual and collective identity, would be a fruitful line of enquiry. Some historical studies have explored the reputation of historical actors in the War and Revolution over an extended period. Blair Worden, for example, has examined

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<sup>60</sup> Laura Knopper, *Politicizing Domesticity from Henrietta Maria to Milton's Eve* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> Kenneth R. Johnston, ‘[Foreword]’, *The Wordsworth Circle*, 25.3 (1994), 125-126 (p. 126).

<sup>62</sup> Johnston, *The Wordsworth Circle*, p. 126.

<sup>63</sup> Richard Maxwell, *The Historical Novel in Europe 1650-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 3.

<sup>64</sup> Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional : Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England 1838-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) pp. 77-78.

the changing reputation of Oliver Cromwell from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century.<sup>65</sup> Andrew Hopper has analysed changing public presentations of General Fairfax from early modern to modern times<sup>66</sup> Peter Gaunt has explored political use of images of Cromwell in the Victorian period as an emblem of imperialism, a mythical ‘Arthur-like figure’, who was invoked during military set-backs such as the Crimean and Boer war as an example of resolve, courage and protestant spirit to provide inspiration and encouragement.<sup>67</sup> Tristram Hunt has noted the prominence of representations of and interest in the conflict in Victorian culture his work on nineteenth century cities.<sup>68</sup> Levine has highlighted the regularity of references to the political and religious conflicts of the seventeenth century in nineteenth century political debates.<sup>69</sup> Whilst Pickering and Tyrrell have demonstrated ways in which historical actors associated with the war became embroiled in the spatial politics of commemoration in the nineteenth century, exemplified most notably by the installation of Thorneycroft’s heroic statue of Cromwell outside the Palace of Westminster in 1899.<sup>70</sup> Preliminary local studies have also been undertaken on the longer term legacy of the Civil War in Sheffield Castle, Winchester and York, focussing on how representations of individual historical actors in the Civil Wars were constructed and deconstructed and how Royalism has been remembered and used to the present day.<sup>71</sup> There is a growing interest also in the local impact and legacy of the wars.

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<sup>65</sup> Blair Worden, *Roundhead Reputations: The English Civil War and the Passions of Posterity* (London: Penguin Books, 2001)

<sup>66</sup> Andrew Hopper, and Philip Major, *England's Fortress: New Perspectives on Thomas, 3rd Lord Fairfax* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014). See also, Peter Gaunt, ‘The Reputation of Oliver Cromwell in the 19th Century’, *Parliamentary History*, 23, 3 (2009) 425-428; Kevin Sharpe, ‘“So hard a text?” Images of Charles I, 1612–1700’, *The Historical Journal*, 43, 2 (2000), 383–405; Andrew Lacey, *The Cult of King Charles the Martyr* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>67</sup> Gaunt, ‘The Reputation of Oliver Cromwell in the 19th Century’, p. 426.

<sup>68</sup> Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> Levine., *The Amateur and the professional*, p. 77.

<sup>70</sup> Paul A. Pickering and Alex Tyrrell, *Contested Sites: Commemoration, Memorial and Popular Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Studies in Labour History (London: Routledge, 2004). See also, Stuart Semmel, ‘Contested Sites: Commemoration, Memorial and Popular Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain’, *Journal of British Studies*, 45, 1 (2006), 200–202.

<sup>71</sup> Rachel Askew, ‘Sheffield Castle and The Aftermath of The English Civil War’, *Northern History*, 54, 2 (2017), 189-210; and see Sarah Betts research on public memory of Royalist Reputations of the English Civil War and Amy Saunders’s work on perceptions of seventeenth century in contemporary museums.

Preliminary local studies have also been undertaken on the longer term impact and legacy of the Civil Wars on Sheffield Castle, whilst research in Winchester and York has focused on how representations of individual historical actors in the Civil Wars were constructed and deconstructed and how Royalism has been remembered and used to the present day.<sup>72</sup>

This thesis will build on this work through an analysis of the uses of the history of the Civil Wars in the long nineteenth century in Colchester. In doing so, the study aims to contribute to historical understanding not only of the long-term significance of the history of the Civil Wars in British culture but also more broadly to a deeper appreciation of how nineteenth century identity, both local and national, was constructed through active engagement with the past. There are several advantages to a micro—historical approach.. Recent research on the meaning and use of history in Victorian culture has stressed its prominence in the culture and in constructions of national identity throughout the nineteenth century but also its rootedness in histories of locality.<sup>73</sup> Developments in memory studies have also emphasised the need to investigate the complex web of overlapping memory practices as we have seen.<sup>74</sup> Central to the argument of the thesis, and to the analytical focus of the study, is the recognition that historical memory needs to be viewed in pluralistic terms. Meanings of memory and uses of history vary according to age, gender, class and locality. They also shift over time and according to context. A local study allows me to explore the interaction of different manifestations and sedimentations of memory, local and national, official and unofficial, communal and individual amongst a wide range of social groups.

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<sup>72</sup> Rachel Askew, 'Sheffield Castle and The Aftermath of The English Civil War', *Northern History*, 54.2 (2017), 189-210; and see Sarah Betts research on public memory of Royalist Reputations of the English Civil War and Amy Saunders's work on perceptions of seventeenth century in contemporary museums.

<sup>73</sup> Readman, 'Place of the Past', p. 140.

<sup>74</sup> Susannah Lloyd & Julie Moore, 'Sedimented Histories: Connections, Collaborations and Co-production in Regional History', *History Workshop Journal*, 80.1 (2015), 234-248 (p. 244).

Colchester provides an excellent focus for study of these questions for a number of reasons. The most important of these is the enormous significance of the use of the history of the suffering inflicted on the town during the war for the way that the conflict was remembered in Britain long after the fighting had ended. The Siege of Colchester in 1648 was one of the most brutal events of the British Civil Wars. The first phase of the war lasted from 1642 until 1646 when the Royalists were defeated. A second civil war broke out in April 1648 when the King led a series of scattered, disorganised and unsuccessful campaigns that were defeated and had profound political consequences. Charles I was branded as unscrupulous by Parliament for plunging his kingdoms into a second conflict and was arrested, tried and executed in front of Whitehall Palace in January 1649 as 'a man of blood'.<sup>75</sup> The circumstances leading to Siege of Colchester were set in motion during this second phase of the war by the Royalist rising in Maidstone, Kent in 1648, later crushed by the New Model Army under Sir Thomas Fairfax. The defeated Royalist force of five thousand men led by the Earl of Norwich moved to Chelmsford, where they met fellow Royalist commanders, Sir George Lisle, Sir Arthur Capel, and Sir Charles Lucas, Royalist General for Essex. They then moved on to Colchester, home of Sir Charles Lucas, intending to re-group and march on London. Colchester was by no means an obvious choice for a Royalist safe haven at this point.<sup>76</sup> The town was Puritan and Parliamentary in its religious and political allegiance, and its citizens had a long history of quarrels with the Lucases that culminated in an attack on members of the family and their property in 1642.<sup>77</sup> When the Royalists arrived in Colchester in 1648 many cloth workers left immediately to join opposition forces led by General Fairfax who had moved to surround the town. Nonetheless the Royalists dug in. When Fairfax failed in his first expensive and dramatic attempt to defeat Norwich, his army decided to adopt a slow war of attrition, and the

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<sup>75</sup> Ian Gentles, *The New Model Army: Agent of Revolution* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2022), pp. 169-172.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> John Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution: The Colchester Plunderers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

defenders hung on in the hope that they would prevent Royalist defeats elsewhere by their stand-off with the opposition.<sup>78</sup>

The bitter siege that followed during a wet, cold summer in July and August 1648 had profound consequences for the civilian population. Citizens of Colchester suffered terribly from starvation, fire, sexual violence and destruction of property over a period of nearly three months. Around three hundred houses were burnt mostly in the suburbs of the town by both sides who thought they offered protection to their enemy. On one of the worst nights, it was reported that, 'a terrible red duskeye bloody cloud seamed to hang over the Town all night', and the crackling of the fire could be 'heard a mile or two' away.<sup>79</sup> The water supply was polluted or cut off. Fairfax blocked profitable trade routes out of the town, and the transport of foodstuffs back in. By the end it was said that not a cat, horse or dog was alive within the walls and the people had been reduced to eating starch and candles.<sup>80</sup> When hungry citizens protested to Norwich, he sent women and children out to meet Fairfax who refused to let them pass and forced them to go back in. Because the siege was so long and bitter there were accusations of atrocities from both sides. Claims that Royalists used poisonous bullets were matched by accusations of lethal mistreatment of prisoners by Fairfax's forces that breached the codes of war.<sup>81</sup>

The impact of the siege extended far beyond those who experienced it directly through the national news sheets produced by both sides of the political divide during the summer of 1648 that used reports of the tragedy to expose the cruelty of their enemies to gain propaganda

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<sup>78</sup> Gentles, *The New Model Army*, pp. 169-172.

<sup>79</sup> *Colchesters Teares: Affecting & Afflicting City & Country* (London, 1648), pp. 13-14.

<sup>80</sup> Philip Morant, *The History and Antiquities of the most Ancient Town and Borough of Colchester, in the County of Essex, in Three Books. Collected Chiefly from Manuscripts. With an Appendix of Records and Original Papers. Adorned and Illustrated with Sculptures* (London: W. Bowyer, 1748), p. 63.

<sup>81</sup> Donegan, *War in England*, pp. 312-368; Barbara Donagan, 'War Crime, and Treason in the English Civil War', *The American Historical Review*, 99 (1994), 1137-1166.



advantage.<sup>82</sup> An account by the Parliamentarian author of a pamphlet entitled *Colchester Teares* provides some insight into the profound effect of this writing on public perception:

How sad a spectacle it is to see goodly buildings, well-furnished houses, and whole streets, to be nothing but ruinous heaps of ashes, and both poor and rich brought almost to the same wofull state, to see such people scarce able to stand upon their legges, ... to see poor and rich men, late of good quality, now equal to the meanest, toying and sweating in carrying some mean bed or other away, or some inconsiderable household stuffes out of the burning, all of them with wailing weeping gastly countenances and meagre thin faces, shifting and flying in distraction of mind they scarce no whither.<sup>83</sup>

As Donegan has firmly established, it was through such accounts that Colchester acquired mythical status as that ‘mournfull city’ whose legendary anguish exemplified the horrors and tragedy of war.<sup>84</sup> But it was the notorious circumstances surrounding the ending of the siege that enshrined the town in national public memory for centuries.<sup>85</sup> By the 24<sup>th</sup> August 1648 Cromwell’s crushing victory at Preston confirmed to Royalists leaders that rescue would not happen and they could not go on. They had no choice but to surrender to Fairfax’s harsh terms of ‘mercy’ rather than ‘quarter’, which according to the rules of war meant that he could do what he pleased with the defeated. Even though large sections of the town had been reduced to rubble by bombardment from the Parliamentarians it was subjected to a fine of £14,000 which damaged the local economy for years, according to some commentators, even for centuries.<sup>86</sup> Fairfax also chose to sentence Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle to be shot by firing squad and on 28<sup>th</sup> August at eight o’clock in the morning they were executed outside the castle walls.<sup>87</sup> The killing of the two knights heightened an already ferocious polemical battle as Royalists accused Fairfax of atrocity and murder in cold blood, while the

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<sup>82</sup> Barbara Donegan, ‘Myth, Memory and Martyrdom: Colchester 1648’, *Essex Archaeology and History*, 34 (2004), 172-180; Brady, ‘Dying with Honour’; Anke Fischer-Kattner, ‘Colchester’s Plight in European Perspective,’ in *The World of the Siege: Printed Representations of Seventeenth-Century Siege Warfare*, ed. by Anke Fischer-Kattner and Jamel Ostwald (Leiden: Brill, 2019), pp. 44-84.

<sup>83</sup> *Colchesters Teares*, p. 16; Barbara Donegan, ‘Myth, Memory and Martyrdom: Colchester 1648’, p. 173

<sup>84</sup> Donegan, *War in England*, p. 313.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 383-388.

<sup>86</sup> Geoffrey H. Martin, *A Guide to Colchester* (Colchester: Benham Newspapers Limited, 1959), p. 10.

<sup>87</sup> Donegan, *War in England*, pp. 360-364; Gentles, *The New Model Army*, p. 174.

Parliamentarians branded the two knights as villains. Over the course of the next decade and into the Restoration, however, it was the loyalist story of tyranny that won out. Colchester was constructed as a place of martyrdom and heroic sacrifice and Lucas and Lisle became fixed in the public mind as heroic victims of Fairfax's infamy in drama and in print.<sup>88</sup>

The second reason why Colchester is an excellent place for study of the memory of the wars, therefore, is that because the events of the siege were publicised so widely at the time and for many years afterwards, source material for the study of the place of the atrocity in local memory and the use of its history is rich and extensive. Alongside seventeenth century prints and pamphlets that were regularly re-printed, local and national histories recounted the history of the siege from a variety of political perspectives from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Complete runs of local nineteenth century Colchester newspapers also survive for the nineteenth century. These texts contain a large number of references to the siege of Colchester and provide an especially fruitful source for the analysis of the uses of the history of the war by different individuals and political groups at different times and in different political and social contexts. Copies of the *Essex Standard*, for example are extant from its foundation in 1831 by the Rev George Tufnell. The paper was founded by the Tories to combat contemporary fears of revolution and provide an insight into how both Tories and later Conservatives dealt with the past. Equally copies of the *Ipswich Journal* survive in a complete run from its foundation in 1720 By John Bagnal and provide another perspective on Tory Anglican attitudes. The *Chelmsford Chronicle* was founded by the Whig non-conformist William Sturpar in 1764 and its journalism provides a different perspective on the uses of the history. Later a liberal newspaper, *The Colchester Courier* established in 1829 by Samuel Haddon provided a forum for reformist revisionism. These texts are held in a database

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<sup>88</sup> Donegan, 'Myth, Memory and Martyrdom: Colchester 1648', pp.172-180; Brady, 'Dying with Honour', pp. 9-30; Fischer-Kattner, 'Colchester's Plight in European Perspective,' pp. 44-84.

administered by the British Newspaper Archive and are full searchable by subject. During the course of research for the thesis they have been examined both qualitatively by subject, theme and individual, as well as quantitatively over particular decades that have been identified as significant politically and socially to explore differences in the ways the history of the war was presented and used at different times by different individuals and groups. Attention has also been paid to passing references to activities or comments of people who were present at a particular event connected to the use of the history of the siege or to a particular place associated with the war, included more to set the scene than to persuade the readership of any particular point of view about the meaning of the history. 'Reading against the grain' of these texts, details are analysed to try to identify the voices and attitudes of individuals of varying age and gender, especially those with no formal social and political power. Diaries and scrapbooks held in the University of Essex Special Collections have also been deployed to provide an insight into how individual, men and women interacted with the history. Local council minutes, museum documents and artefacts, local dramatic productions, guidebooks have been consulted to explore the impact of tourism on the uses of the history locally and the different perspectives, whether commercial or political, of individuals and groups of varying class, age, religious and political affiliation and its impact on local culture and identity in the Victorian period. Very unusually while many towns ravaged by the wars had repaired or restored the damage by the eighteenth century, Colchester also retained the scars of the siege on its buildings into the Victorian period.<sup>89</sup> The study is able to use these material traces of the conflict to develop an analysis of the longer-term influence on local identity of the impact of the siege by investigation of the meaning of the historical landscape.

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<sup>89</sup> Stephen Porter, *The Blast of War: Destruction in the English Civil Wars* (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2011), p. 120; Shani D'Cruze, *A Pleasing Prospect: Social Change and Urban Culture in Eighteenth-Century Colchester* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2008), p. 26.

Together with the richness of the source material, another reason why Colchester is an excellent place for the study of the use of the wars in the nineteenth century is that the social, and economic developments in Colchester in the Victorian period allow for an analysis that is especially sensitive to patterns of continuity and change. Up until 1835 Colchester was a small market town which served the local rural hinterland, depressed by the decline of its cloth industry and locally, politically stagnant, with borough politics dominated by an unrepresentative Tory oligarchy. The town was little affected economically by the arrival of the railway in the 1840s although tourism began to expand around this time. It was after mid-century that the town moved from economic stagnation, recession and deep political division to a period of economic growth and tourist development, linked to a claim of a distinct identity and urban ambition based on a rhetoric of civic pride.<sup>90</sup> Economic and political growth was generated by the expansion of a manufacturing sector that included engineering, as well as clothing, boot factories and breweries. The establishment of the garrison also encouraged economic growth as well as political and social prestige. Colchester's identity became intertwined with the military, as the town and country gentry and the senior ranks in the army made social connections, attending high social functions together. The garrison also reinforced a conservative identity amongst lower social ranks. By the 1870s most trade unionists voted Tory and military victories such as Mafeking were celebrated on the streets with great enthusiasm.<sup>91</sup>

Between the 1880s and 1914 the political, social and cultural context altered even more dramatically. Most local political activity and power moved from the parishes to the borough. The sixteen parishes in the borough, which retained few civil functions, were amalgamated in

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<sup>90</sup> A P Baggs, Beryl Board, Philip Crummy, Claude Dove, Shirley Durgan, N R Goose, R B Pugh, Pamela Studd and C C Thornton, 'Modern Colchester: Social history', in *A History of the County of Essex, Vol 9*, (London: VCH, 1994) pp. 222-229, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol9/>; Peter Sherry, *A Portrait of Victorian Colchester* (Hertfordshire: Egon, 1982), p. 15; A.J. Brown, *Colchester 1815-1914* (Chelmsford: Essex Record Office, 1980), p. 162

<sup>91</sup> Baggs and others, 'Modern Colchester: Social history.'

1897 to create one unified civil parish.<sup>92</sup> The service economy of the town was hit hard by an agricultural depression. Colchester was also humiliated by Chelmsford's promotion to county town in 1888 and the diocesan centre in 1908. But other developments were more positive. Industrial and commercial sectors expanded so that by 1914 most men in Colchester were employed in lucrative livings in factories, transport or building. Of course, deep social, religious and political divisions remained. Residential segregation divided the middle class in Lexden from working class districts in the parishes of St. Botolph's, St. Paul's, St James's and St Leonard's in the Hythe port district. Trade Unionism expanded and strikes were a regular feature of industrial relations during these decades.<sup>93</sup> Colchester was also divided along religious grounds between Tory Anglicans and a significant minority of non-conformists who were mostly politically liberal.<sup>94</sup> But men involved in business were well aware of these difficulties and divisions and used local political initiatives to try and overcome them. In the late nineteenth century, the leaders of new industries joined the borough council and in doing so transformed the old closed Corporation, dominated by a self-selecting oligarchy of Anglican Tories, into a town government led by industrialists committed to 'progress, vision and expansion'.<sup>95</sup> Alongside many other towns and cities in this period, most borough elections from 1870 remained uncontested.<sup>96</sup> The mayoralty alternated annually between Tory and Liberal, and the council became the focus of unified middle-class attention to urban improvement. In 1882 the waterworks company was purchased; two years later a new corn exchange was built and in 1894 a municipal library was opened. The most prestigious project of all was the new town hall. Completed at a cost of £55,000, paid for by Joseph Paxman, the

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<sup>92</sup> <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol9/pp208-221#fnn48>

<sup>93</sup> Brown, *Colchester, 1815-1914*, pp. 137-49, 176-8.

<sup>94</sup> <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol9/pp222-229>

<sup>95</sup> Cannadine, 'Oyster Feast,' p. 115.

<sup>96</sup> Baggs, A.P, and others, 'Modern Colchester: Political history'; Derek Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England: Structure of Politics in Victorian Cities* (Macmillan International Higher Education: 1979).

leading industrialist of the town and opened by Lord Roseberry in 1902.<sup>97</sup> Use of the past, in particular the history of the siege will be examined in these shifting contexts to explore changing connections between history, power and the construction of local identity.

Taken together the study aims to examine to what extent, by whom and why the history of the Civil Wars were used in nineteenth century local culture and politics in Colchester and, more broadly, how and why perceptions of the wars were re-fashioned in a particular time and place. In doing so it examines what this evidence reveals about the long-term significance of the conflict in British culture and more generally about the way different people in different ways in the nineteenth century understood, interpreted and made use of the past in the context of urban culture and identity.

Chapter One explores the use and meaning of the history of the siege in local politics in the Victorian period. Using a range of evidence including local histories, sermons and newspapers, the analysis examines the relationship between political context and the ways in which Colchester presented and used the history of the siege as a vehicle for contemporary political comment. How relevant and prominent was the history of the siege in political discourse in the nineteenth century? Did different political groups use the history in different ways? If so, how and why? How did meanings and uses change over time? What does this evidence reveal about the connection between the uses of history, politics, power and identity in this period?

Chapter Two explores the relationship between romance and realism in the uses of the history of the siege in the nineteenth century in the context of the expansion of tourism. It uses a variety of evidence, including posters, postcards, travel guides, travel diaries, descriptions and interpretations in museums to explore the extent to which, how and why the town used the

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<sup>97</sup> Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (University of California Press: 1993), p. 153; Geoffrey Martin, *The Story of Colchester* (Benham: 1959), pp. 106-8.

history of the siege to promote itself as a destination to visit by both individuals and institutions, locally and beyond its borders, during the nineteenth century. Was there a commercial interest in the history of the siege? How did the town cater to tourists who visited the town to explore its history? To what extent did the history of the siege have the capacity to attract a wider popular audience? How did romantic literature designed to appeal to the Victorian traveller shape the history that was told? To what extent did tourism shape and alter the relationship between history and individual and local identity?

Chapter Three analyses the extent to which historical memory and its meanings were inspired by and connected to the ruined buildings associated with the Siege of 1648 that were still visible in the town in the nineteenth century. Using diaries, histories, memoirs and borough records, pictures, maps, as well as buildings, monuments and material objects it examines the relevance of the historical landscape for individual and collective historical identity. How were ruined buildings associated with the siege used by different individuals and groups? Were uses and meanings contested, and did meanings change over time? To what extent, how and in what ways was Colchester's historic urban topography an important element in the town's self-representation? Did the historic material environment associated with the siege contribute to a construction of a sense of place?

Chapter Four examines the significance of historical characters associated with the siege, notably Lucas, Lisle and Fairfax in nineteenth century culture and politics. Why did Victorians find these characters so compelling? How were hero narratives constructed and by whom? Were they contested? How were they used? What do hero narratives reveal about the changing uses and meanings of the history of the siege in the period and its relationship to individual and local identity?

Chapter Five takes the form of a case study of the spectacular historical pageant that was staged in Colchester in 1909. It focuses particularly on the meaning and use of the history of the siege in its dramatic presentations. Why was the siege included in the spectacle? How was the history interpreted and presented and why? What did the performance mean for those who organised, participated and viewed it? Did meanings vary and if so, how and why? What does the pageant reveal about the relationship between history, place and local and national identity at the turn of the twentieth century?

Chapter Six aims to provide a brief investigation of patterns of continuity and change in how the war was viewed and used in the twentieth century. How was the history presented and used in the in the changed political, cultural and social circumstances before and after two world wars? Did the history still have the capacity to act as a vehicle through which to work through contemporary political and social issues and anxieties? In what other contexts did Civil War themes continue to be useful? How did debates over modernisation, tourism and heritage intersect with, shape or limit the prominence of the history in local culture and identity? To what extent and why were the Civil Wars less interesting and usable in the later part of the twentieth century despite the fact that it was a period of radical politics, warfare and uncertainty?

Taken together this analysis provides clear evidence that the Civil Wars remained an influential historical reference in nineteenth century Colchester specifically and more broadly in British culture. Elites used the history of the conflict in the first half of the century as a vehicle to promote partisan loyalty. However, by the end of the century the history was presented differently to construct a narrative of reconciliation that not only resonated with contemporary political and social priorities, but also offered a way to redress the wounds of the past locally. Questions of meaning were complex. Different individuals and groups 'consumed' the history differently. Meanings varied according to commercial, political or



educational interests. Yet while some remained indifferent to its legacy, for many the history of the siege remained a central component in the construction of Colchester's collective identity until the second half of the twentieth century.

## Chapter One: Local Political uses of the Siege of Colchester of 1648 in the Long Nineteenth Century.

*The worst incidents of the English Civil War are inoffensive when compared with the ferocities of the French Revolution which, after a reign of terror and bloodshed, only left the nation on bondage to a military despotism. The English Revolution, on the contrary, happily established the supremacy of Parliament, the great principles of civil and religious liberty; the government of the people, by people, for the people.<sup>1</sup>*

The British Civil Wars are amongst the most fiercely contested episodes in British history and each generation has debated their causes and meanings, often interpreted through a contemporary political lens.<sup>2</sup> The process was especially obvious in the nineteenth century. Several scholars have shown how the great political battles between Tory and Whig, and then Conservative and Liberal, were mapped on to the Civil Wars in Victorian Britain.<sup>3</sup> According to one contemporary, ‘Men still divide themselves into two camps...Liberals look to Cromwell as the founder and winner of their rights. On the other side, ‘Conservatives... heart will glow equally when he thinks of the Cavalier.’<sup>4</sup> Tristram Hunt, along with several other scholars, argue that the history of the Civil Wars was an extremely important part of cultural life in Victorian England, in part because of romantic interest in the distant past, but also because the upheavals of the seventeenth century provided a useful historical analogy for the political questions of a period preoccupied with constitutional reform.<sup>5</sup> Yet while there have been

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<sup>1</sup> ‘The English Revolution’, *Jackson’s Oxford Journal*, 25 February 1888, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Worden, *Roundhead Reputations*.

<sup>3</sup> Stoye, ‘Remembering the English Civil Wars’; Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, Morris, ‘Nineteenth Century Paintings and Sculptures of Cromwell’; Gaunt, ‘The Reputation of Oliver Cromwell in the 19th Century’; Johnston, ‘[Foreword]’, *The Wordsworth Circle*; Michael J Turner, ‘Defending ‘the Principle of Representation’: Andrew Bisset, ‘The English Civil War, and The History of the Struggle for Parliamentary Government in England’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 20.4 (2015), 531–548; Dale A Johnson, *The Changing Shape of English Nonconformity, 1825-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> ‘The Period of the Civil War and the Drama’, *Sunday Times*, 20 October 1872, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Hunt, *Jerusalem*, p. 133; Michael Aston, *Interpreting the Landscape: Landscape Archaeology and Local History* (London: Routledge, 1985); Nicole Reynolds, *Building Romanticism: Literature and Architecture in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013); Karl Kroeber, *British Romantic Art*; Valerie Chancellor, *History for this Masters: Opinion in the English History Textbook 1800-1914* (Bath: Adams & Dart, 1970); Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional*; Jonathan Mantle, *A Living Society*

several studies at a national level of the way the Civil Wars were imagined and used in nineteenth century politics, to date there has been little historical investigation into how far these insights hold true for the political and cultural significance of the history of the conflict at a local level in Britain.<sup>6</sup> These questions are significant and important given recent findings by Readman that have shown that while national historiography was important to Victorians, their sense of history and identity was rooted firmly in the local.<sup>7</sup> Middleton and Edwards also argue that, ‘collective versions of past events are available as grounds for justifying current and future action; and because they are so ‘useful’ it is quite ordinary to find them being reconstructed and contested.’<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Dickinson, Blair, and Ott assert that, ‘memory is activated by present concerns, issues, or anxieties’ and that these memories, ‘narrate shared identities, constructing senses of communal belonging’ whilst also being, ‘partial, partisan, and thus often contested.’<sup>9</sup> Scholars have emphasised the connection between history and memory is complex but the two are interlinked and need to be understood within a framework that it is shifting and contextual. They also argue that there is a need to investigate the constructions, uses and meanings of the past not only by the elites, but of all classes, ages and genders of a society.<sup>10</sup> These insights suggest that investigation of the ways in which the war was represented and remembered in different contexts at different times by different individuals and groups is important for understanding the connections between history, identity, time and place. Drawing on these approaches the following analysis examines changing relationships between the history of the siege, politics and local identity in Colchester in the late eighteenth

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(London: James and James, 1999); See also Worden, *Roundhead* and Stoye, ‘Remembering the English Civil Wars’.

<sup>6</sup> Morris, ‘Nineteenth Century Paintings and Sculptures of Cromwell’; Francis Haskell, ‘The Manufacture of the Past in Nineteenth-Century Painting’, *Past & Present*, 53 (1971), 109-120 (p. 110); Strong, *And When Did You Last See Your Father?*, pp. 164-166; John A. Phillips, and Charles Wetherell, ‘The Great Reform Act of 1832 and the Political Modernization of England’, *The American Historical Review*, 100.2 (1995), 411–426.

<sup>7</sup> Readman, ‘The Place of the Past’.

<sup>8</sup> David Middleton, Derek Edwards, eds., *Collective Remembering* (London: Sage, 1990), p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott, eds., *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Hodgkin and Radstone, eds., *Memory, History, Nation*, p. 16.

and nineteenth century. Using a range of evidence including local histories, sermons and newspapers, the chapter examines the changing construction and use of the history by elites as a tool to maintain political power or to undermine the authority of their opponents. It also explores the reception of these representations and the ways in which ideas about the history were modified, negotiated, or contested by individuals and groups of all classes and sections of local society to provide a more nuanced and multi-layered analysis of the relationship between the history of the wars, political power and local identity in nineteenth century Colchester.

### **The French Revolution and its Aftermath**

War and Protestantism as well as imperial and commercial expansion fostered a British nationalism in the eighteenth century that encouraged great interest in the nation's past.<sup>11</sup> History became fashionable and commercially popular and was presented in a variety of genres and formats. Towns like Colchester, frequently overlooked in broad national histories, began to produce local histories of their own. These histories arose out of antiquarian practices that were often mocked by their contemporaries, but which at their best set new standards of historical accuracy and perception. They also catered to a strongly felt sense of civic identity and patriotism.<sup>12</sup> The eighteenth century saw the publication of the first authoritative urban histories; and the *History and Antiquities of Colchester* that appeared in 1748 was one of the earliest.<sup>13</sup>

The book was deeply political. The author of the history was Philip Morant who was a staunchly Anglican, Tory clergyman and antiquarian and was appointed as Rector of St. Mary at the Walls, Colchester in 1737. Disappointed by the political division, economic decline and

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<sup>11</sup> On the context for the rise of British identity and nationalism in the eighteenth century, see for example, Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1992)

<sup>12</sup> Sweet, *Writing Urban Histories*, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Morant, *History and Antiquities of the Most Ancient Town and Borough of Colchester*; Sweet, *Writing Urban Histories*, pp. 6, 28.

strong dissenting voice in Colchester, he began his work to impress his bishop William Gibson, who was himself an antiquarian, in the hope that he would obtain promotion to a better living elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> Despite Gibson's advice to 'steer clear of all party work', however, it is clear that Morant's history was politically informed.<sup>15</sup> Morant's patron was Charles Gray, the antiquarian and local Tory MP and the book was written from a Tory point of view at a time of political turbulence in the town. Morant's theme was urban decay and the need for restoration of civic pride. A Tory majority in the Corporation had been defeated by what they regarded as Whig manipulation and corruption which led to the loss of the borough charter in 1742.<sup>16</sup> Gray and Morant were committed to the campaign to restore the charter and saw the history as a means to uphold the importance of the charter and a way to renew the honour of the town.<sup>17</sup>

The history recounted Colchester's impressive past as the *Camulodunum* of the Romans. It traced the ancient Saxon origins of its liberties and privileges and its significance as a prosperous medieval commercial and ecclesiastical hub. It also paid great attention to the siege and lamented the indelible mark it had left on the fabric of Colchester. Morant combined antiquarian methods with an appeal to primary sources and interpretation in the writing of his history. He drew on a mass of pamphlet material from the 1640s as well as published papers and histories that had appeared in print a few decades before.<sup>18</sup> But his account of the siege

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<sup>14</sup> Sweet, *Writing Urban Histories*, p. 265.

<sup>15</sup> Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2004), p. 54.

<sup>16</sup> This is evident in Browns work on the political life of Colchester where the legacies of 1742 were still felt in the nineteenth century, Brown, *Colchester 1815-1914*, p. 37; also, D'Cruze, *A Pleasing Prospect*, p. 131.

<sup>17</sup> Sweet, *Writing of Urban Histories*, p. 269.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England*, p. 347; James Heath, *A Chronicle of the Late Intestine War in the Three Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland with the Intervening Affairs of Treaties and other Occurrences Relating Thereunto as also the Several Usurpations, Foreign Wars, Differences and Interests Depending upon it, to the Happy Restitution of our Sacred Sovereign K. CHARLES II.* (London: J.C, 1675); William Younger, *The History of the Late English Rebellion* (London: Rooks, 1665); James Granger, *A Biographical History of England, from Egbert the Great to the Revolution*, (London: T. Davids, 1769-74); Bulstrode Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs: or, a Historical Account of What Passed from the Beginning of the Reign of King Charles the First, to King Charles the Second His Happy Restauration:*

drew predominantly on the mid seventeenth century pamphlet written by the Royalist Quartermaster General Matthew Carter, first published in 1648, and edited and re-printed by Morant himself and others in 1745.<sup>19</sup> He did dismiss as ‘vulgar’ the claim made by Carter that the grass would not grow where the martyrs had fallen, preferring the more practical explanation that the spot was worn out by ‘the great resort of people to see the place’. But while discarding these more mystical elements, in all other respects Morant re-affirmed and perpetuated the Royalist myth of Colchester’s past as a place of Parliamentary treachery in the face of local loyalty, martyrdom and honour.<sup>20</sup> He recounted the two hundred houses destroyed, the churches damaged or destroyed and the key buildings like the castle left dilapidated or in ruins that were still visible to his readers into the eighteenth century.<sup>21</sup> Acknowledging that the majority of the town, ‘were in the Parliament’s interests’ at the start of the Civil Wars, he condemned Cromwell as ‘self-seeking’ and denounced the subjugation of the town under the ‘tyranny of the army’, which ‘shattered and demolished a great part of ‘so eminent a Town as this’.<sup>22</sup> He described the hunger, fire and sickness suffered by the people. He also adopted wholeheartedly the Royalist narrative of the execution of the Royalist leaders Lucas and Lisle that was constructed as martyrdom in Royalist newsprint in 1648, and officially proclaimed as tyranny at the Restoration in 1661 when the two knights were re-buried with full civic honours and a black stone slab laid over the vault that declared they ‘were ... by the command of Sir Thomas Fairfax, the General of the Parliament army, in cold blood barbarously murdered’, a myth that was kept alive thereafter through dramatic and poetic accounts.<sup>23</sup> Dismissing the claim made by General Fairfax that Lucas had forfeited his honour

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*containing the Public Transactions Civil and Military Together with the Private Consultations and Secrets of the Cabinet* (London: J. Tonson, 1732); Morant, *The History and Antiquities*, p. 57.

<sup>19</sup> Mathew Carter, *A True Relation of that Honorable, though Unfortunate Expedition of Kent, Essex, and Colchester, in 1648* (Colchester: J. Pilborough, 1745); ESAH; ‘Two forgotten Essex Antiquaries: John and Thomas Lufkin’, *Newsletter No: 161-172* (Summer 2010-Autumn 2014), 12-13 (p. 13).

<sup>20</sup> Donagan, p. 385.

<sup>21</sup> Morant, *The History and Antiquities*, p. 68.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Brady, ‘Dying With Honour’, pp. 9–30; Donagan, *War in England*, pp. 385-9;

because he had breached his parole, Morant excoriated Fairfax and his colleagues as unsoldierly murderers and barbarians who had killed in cold blood and celebrated Lucas and Lisle as Royalist martyrs, noble, heroic, and loyal.<sup>24</sup> The history was not simply a work of scholarly ambition, therefore. It was designed deliberately as a vehicle for condemning contemporary political events. Morant bemoaned the destruction and decline inflicted by a war caused by radicalism and the danger of tyranny and division. In doing so he emphasised the need for stable, Tory leadership in the present to restore the greater dignity and pride of Colchester's distant past.<sup>25</sup>

The political ambition for the *History* was confirmed by its intended audience. Morant's volume was published in an expensive large folio format and aimed at a small network of antiquarians and gentlemen from whom he and Gray expected to garner political support.<sup>26</sup> Its immediate impact was, however, limited. Morant had difficulty in raising interest and only achieved eighty subscriptions at first. He explained this lack of enthusiasm by the inadequate intellect of his fellow townsmen and also in terms of cost. His biographer explained that he had probably also excited local animosity amongst potentially sympathetic local elites when he found the books bequeathed to the town by Archbishop Samuel Harsnett neglected, and listed them, with some excoriating criticisms of their disregard by the town.<sup>27</sup> But it is notable that Whig gentlemen were conspicuously absent from the eventual total of two hundred long list of subscribers. Local politics was also a factor in explaining the popularity, or lack of it, of Morant's interpretation of local history.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Morant, *The History and Antiquities*, pp. 57-70.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Sweet, *The Writing of Urban Histories*, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Geoffrey Martin, 'Morant, Philip (1700–1770), Historian and Church of England Clergyman', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004,

<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-19159>

[accessed 26/11/2021].

<sup>28</sup> D'Cruze, *A Pleasing Prospect*, p. 40.

Nevertheless, after the calamitous loss of the charter by the Whigs, the Corporation remained staunchly Tory from mid-century until 1834. According to Brown, town government during that time consisted of ‘forty-eight Tories and only two Whigs’, and so was an ‘oligarchic constitution.’<sup>29</sup> Most of the freemen were Tories and those who were not, tended to keep quiet for fear of economic boycott.<sup>30</sup> Tory rhetoric remained dominant in public political discourse in these contexts and Morant’s conservative, Royalist interpretation of the local history of the Civil Wars played well into these perspectives. New editions of his *History* followed, in cheaper, abridged formats that were more accessible to a wider readership and judging from the number of sales, more popular. Interestingly too, the 1768 edition included a copy of Carter’s pamphlet in an appendix.<sup>31</sup>

The *History* was given renewed topicality and became even more prominent in local political discourse around 1789. The French Revolution encouraged intense interest nationally in the history of the British Civil Wars. Many believed that the disputes of the seventeenth century had relevance to the controversies of their own day because both conflicts arose out of questions about the legitimacy of monarchical authority and the right to rule.<sup>32</sup> In Colchester, as elsewhere, politics was divided between radicals who were often non-conformists committed to constitutional reform, and Tory Anglicans who supported the status quo.<sup>33</sup> But once news of the violent events of the revolution became more widely known, and certainly by

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<sup>29</sup> Brown, *Colchester 1815-1914*, p. 37.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>31</sup> ESAH, DA 670.E7C700, Philip Morant, *The History and Antiquities of the Most Ancient Town and Borough of Colchester in the County of Essex; Collected Chiefly from Manuscripts; with an Appendix of Records and Original Papers* (London: Osbourne, 1768).

<sup>32</sup> Phillip Connell, ‘Edmund Burke and the First Stuart Revolution’, *Journal of British Studies*, 59.3 (2020), 463-494; Carolyn Harris, ‘The English Civil Wars and the French Revolution’, *Queenship and Revolution in Early Modern Europe. Queenship and Power* (Cham: Palgrave, 2016); Emma Vincent Macleod, ‘British Attitudes to the French Revolution’, *The Historical Journal*, 50.3 (2007), 689-709; David Armitage, ‘Every Great Revolution Is a Civil War’, in *Scripting Revolution*, ed. by Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2020), pp. 57-68; Simon Schama, *A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 2004); Linda Colley, *Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); J. C. D. Clark, *The Unexpected Revolution: France, 1787-1802* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 233, 250, 272.

<sup>33</sup> D’Cruze, *Pleasing Prospect*, pp. 142-146.



the time the British declared war against Napoleon at the end of the century, caution amongst more conservative reformers together with new laws and practices designed to suppress political dissent, meant that radical voices became more and more suppressed<sup>34</sup> Thomas Paine's, *The Rights of Man* was considered subversive, for example, and Richard Patmore, a Colchester baymaker, was indicted in 1793 for distributing part of it.<sup>35</sup> A dominant 'cross party' ideology, an 'uncritical appellation betokening support, especially in foreign affairs, for one's country right or wrong' held sway in public political rhetoric at least, and in these contexts, it is perhaps no surprise that Morant's loyalist and Royalist version of the siege became prominent in the features and articles published in the local Tory press.<sup>36</sup> For example, the Tory *Ipswich Journal* recorded a reprint of the account of the siege written by the Royalist Quartermaster General Matthew Carter in 1781. It noted that to Carter's recollection of the siege, 'will be now first added, the HEADS of Sir CHARLES LUCAS and Sir GEORGE LISLE, Knts, and other prints, neatly etched.'<sup>37</sup> A report in the same paper in 1790 focused on the villainy of Cromwell with comparisons between the regicide and the French Revolution. The Lord Protector was depicted as a revolutionary Republican tyrant:

turning out the lawful Parliament, and placing in their stead, a junto of bloody soldiers and creatures of his own; imprisoned the Bishops; voted away the revenues of the Church; and the estates of many Lords and gentlemen, murdered, imprisoned and whipped others, without law or mercy.<sup>38</sup>

Another feature focused on a story of 'the stealing of the head of Edward the Confessor from his monument in Westminster Abbey ...in the time of Oliver Cromwell, and it was generally believed that Oliver was privy to the matter.'<sup>39</sup> Cromwell was the villain in these stories. The

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 144.

<sup>35</sup> E.R.O, D/B 5 Gb9, Government Assembly Book 1789-1827, pp. 221-2.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country: The English Loyalists and the French Revolution* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), p. 22.

<sup>37</sup> 'An Engraving', *Ipswich Journal*, Saturday 08 September 1781, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> 'The Corporation and Test Acts', *Ipswich Journal*, Saturday 06 February 1790, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> 'London', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 09 April 1784, p. 4.

destruction of the established church, the removal of the gentry and the lawlessness of rebellion served to provide a useful moral of historic times for their own contemporary world.

Colchester Tory politicians and churchmen also used the history of the siege in their speeches and sermons to warn against the political radicalism that was growing in the country, particularly London, that had been inspired by events in France and that fuelled debate about political reform and the role of government.<sup>40</sup> It is clear, as Brown has argued, that locally, borough officials were insecure about their own position. St. Peter's, the foremost town church, where the bishops' and archdeacons' visitations were held, and where the mayor and commonalty attended on a Sunday and for special services, became a forum for Tory propaganda. The history of the sufferings of Colchester at the hands of Parliamentarians during the siege served usefully to warn against the dangers of radicalism and revolution in the present day.<sup>41</sup> For example, in a sermon preached by James Round in St. Peter's in 1789, he told an uncomplicated story of Colchester's past in terms of loyalty and support for the Monarchy against Parliament and revolution, to reinforce the need to defend the existing constitution:

This ancient town has ever been famed for its loyalty-it has on former occasions supported the cause of its King and Country, and bravely defended it with its blood-and it affords me no small gratification, to perceive that there are even now many of its inhabitants determined, like their ancestors, to convince the world, that affection to the constitution as by law established still reigns in their breasts.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Brown, *Colchester*, pp. 133-134.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p. 37.

<sup>42</sup> James Round, *A Sermon Preached before the Loyal Colchester Volunteers, in the Parish church of St. Peter, on Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1798, At the Presentation of their Colours, By the Right Honorable Lady Howe* (Colchester. W. Keymer, 1798).

Similarly, Thomas Twining, Rector of St. Mary's in Colchester echoed these sentiments when he preached to the Corporation in 1794 that, 'loyalty, in particular, is now scarce ever mentioned by some men, but as an object of ridicule, and with a smile of contempt.'<sup>43</sup>

### **Reform and Division**

The use of the history of the siege in political rhetoric was not however claimed solely by right-wing Anglicanism in the early nineteenth century, or simply by the elite. As several historians have argued, the language of patriotic loyalty was a deeply contested concept in the period, used differently, with various meanings by a number of separate individuals and political groups.<sup>44</sup> This malleability of meaning was evident in the ways in which political radicals appropriated and translated Morant's narrative to further their own political programme in this period.<sup>45</sup> For example, Benjamin Strutt, a Colchester lawyer, intellectual, businessman, and radical Whig politician who served as a borough official, reformer, historian, and artist in the town, published a revised and updated edition of Morant's history in 1803, but with a very different political agenda in mind. His work was grandly titled, *The History and Description of Colchester: (the Camulodunum of the Britans, and the First Roman Colony in Britain,)*, with an Account of the Antiquities of that Most Ancient Borough.<sup>46</sup> He devoted one hundred and twenty-five of his two hundred and seventy-six pages of his history to the siege and followed Morant's interpretation very closely. Admittedly, Ireton rather than Fairfax was moulded more as the tyrant, but Lucas and Lisle remained heroic defenders of liberty, the 'two knights thus sacrificed at the dark shrine of malicious revenge.'<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Thomas Twining, M.A, *A Sermon Preached in the Parish Church of St. Mary, Colchester, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September, 1794, Before the Mayor and Corporation and Published at their Request* (Colchester: W. Keymer, 1794); 'The Corporation and Test Acts', *The Ipswich Journal*, Saturday 06 February 1790, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Hugh Cunningham; Jennifer Mori, 'Languages of Loyalism: Patriotism, Nationhood and the State in the 1790s', *The English Historical Review*, 118.475 (2003), 33- 58; Hugh Cunningham, 'The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914', *History Workshop*, 12 (1981), 8-33.

<sup>45</sup> Cunningham, 'Language of Patriotism', p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> D'Cruze, *Pleasing Prospect*, p. 196.

<sup>47</sup> Benjamin Strutt, *The History and Description of Colchester* (Colchester: W. Keymer, 1803), p. 257.

Strutt's interest in the romance of the past made the siege an absorbing topic for him.<sup>48</sup> From his early twenties he published engravings, the first of which was a map of the 1648 siege of Colchester, in 1783. He also produced a painting of the execution of Lucas and Lisle and set the subject of their heroic martyrdom against the backdrop of the ancient castle. The caption to his picture read, 'The deaths of the two most valiant Knights Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle, who for their loyalty to their Sovereign Charles the 1st Honourably suffered at Colchester, the 28th August 1648....' The painting was dedicated to Lucas's family, 'To the Right Honourable Jemima Marchioness Grey & Baroness Lucas', reflecting the personal connection to the family but also the appreciation of grand history paintings by local elites, both male and female.<sup>49</sup> The painting did well. It was also reproduced as a print and sold throughout the nineteenth century as were the series of prints he produced in 1824 of figures such as Lucas, Lisle, Fairfax and Goring for the Proprietors P. Youngman & J. Greig by Messer's Swinbourne & Walter, Colchester. Surviving scrapbooks of the period show that men and women from a variety of middling as well as elite social groups, cut out the engravings from books and newspapers and kept them for themselves.<sup>50</sup>

But Strutt's interest was more than simply romantic or artistic. Like Morant, he had a political purpose in producing his book but unlike his predecessor he used the history to promote a radical rather than a conservative agenda. The core theme of his 1803 history was political liberty, an important question that had both a national and local dimension for the people of Colchester at that time because a new garrison had just been established to house troops stationed there during the Napoleonic Wars.<sup>51</sup> Strutt reconfigured the meaning of

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<sup>48</sup> D' Cruze, *Pleasing Prospect*, p. 200.

<sup>49</sup> E.R.O, I/Mo 90/2, Colchester.

<sup>50</sup> Prints of the paintings seemed commonplace, E.R.O, I/Mo 90/1-3, Colchester.

<sup>51</sup> D' Cruze, *Pleasing Prospect*, p. 200.

Morant's history as a vehicle for criticism of the present polity, 'the boast of which is a conservation of public and private rights, and the general principles of political liberty'.<sup>52</sup>

The meaning and use of the history of the civil wars in general and the siege in particular became even more sharply contested in Colchester and beyond it in the decades that followed. The battles between authority and liberty in the 1640s were seen as a mirror of nineteenth century conflicts over religious and electoral reform and a vehicle by which each side of the politico-religious divide expressed their ideas and agendas. These were difficult and divided times in Colchester as elsewhere in Victorian Britain. The Tories retained their monopoly over borough and national politics, but the town was divided politically and depressed economically for much of the first half of the nineteenth century. By this stage, the cloth industry was in terminal decline and the economy of the town depended principally on the less lucrative servicing of a large agricultural region. The arrival of the railway in 1846 had little effect and a guidebook noted twenty years later that there were, 'no manufactories in the town.'<sup>53</sup> The Corporation became an increasingly unrepresentative Tory Anglican body of four hundred and fifty resident freeman in a town of over sixteen thousand population. While Colchester was predominately conservative and the working classes were more likely to support Friendly Societies than revolution, many residents opposed Tory exclusivity. Citizens of Colchester in their thousands signed a petition in support of electoral reform which the Tories of course opposed. Three thousand Colcestrians also attended a Chartist rally in 1838, and there was a repetition of this ten years later.<sup>54</sup> Although there were no formal party organisations at this stage, both parties ran clubs in public houses and by the 1830s it is estimated that there were at

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<sup>52</sup> Strutt, *Colchester*, Vol. 1, p.272.

<sup>53</sup> George Measom, *The Official Illustrated Guide To The Great Eastern Railway* (London: C. Griffin and Co, 1865).

<sup>54</sup> Brown, *Colchester*, pp. 113-14. For contemporary press coverage of the event, see, 'Chartism in Essex', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 28 April 1848, p. 4.

least twenty in the town.<sup>55</sup> Loyalty was the language used by both sides of the political divide in these circumstances but its meaning was deeply contested.<sup>56</sup> For example, the Tory Freeman's Loyal True Blue Club in the 1820s held loyal and constitutional toasts to local worthies, while a Whig society titled itself the, 'Loyal Independent Whig Club.'<sup>57</sup> Indeed in 1832 at a Whig club in Colchester, speakers during December argued that it was the Tories who nearly brought the nation to the brink of a new Civil War.<sup>58</sup>

The Civil Wars carried great resonance in debates about a variety of political and religious conflicts and questions in these contexts. Parallels were drawn, for example, between seventeenth century religious conflicts and the divisive issue of parliamentary support for Catholic emancipation. Colchester's Protestant and non-conformist population vehemently resisted government policy and the town sent a petition of three thousand signatories against the Emancipation Act.<sup>59</sup> Overt criticism of the association of the Stuart monarchy with Popery began to appear in the local press as a way to undermine emancipation legislation. In 1827, the Tory supporting *Ipswich Journal*, included an article which referred to, 'Charles I ascended a prosperous throne... But Charles betrayed the sacred trust of Protestantism. He had formed a Popish alliance.'<sup>60</sup> According to the paper, 'Popery [was] Incompatible with the Prosperity of England.'<sup>61</sup> Sermons preached by the evangelical minister, Mr William Marsh, at St. Peters in Colchester in 1825, also drew on the history of the wars to warn against the dangers of Popery in the present. The church having been taken over by the Simeon's trust had its power diffused and taken away from the local elites. Marsh asserted that, 'I hesitate not to say, it was

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<sup>55</sup> Brown, *Ibid*, p. 75.

<sup>56</sup> Martin Speight, *Politics in the Borough of Colchester 1812-1847* (PhD thesis: London, 1969).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p. 180.

<sup>58</sup> 'Local Intelligence', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 14 December 1832, p. 4.

<sup>59</sup> Speight, *Politics in the Borough*, p. 185.

<sup>60</sup> 'Wednesday Post', *Ipswich Journal*, Saturday 21 April 1827, p. 4.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*.

the encouragement given to Popish principles, which led, in the next reign, to the civil wars.’<sup>62</sup> In another sermon preached in the same church in 1831, one Samuel Carr declared that ‘History teems with traitorous deeds, and with the traitorous deeds of Englishmen too.’<sup>63</sup> He went on to warn against Popish plots, making links between the dangers posed by Catholicism in the present as well as the past.

The crisis over electoral reform that precipitated intense public debate along party political lines also prompted comparison with seventeenth century issues. The siege featured quite often in local debates about the question as both sides of the political divide used the history to claim to an identity as a party of patriotic loyalty.<sup>64</sup> As a consequence, Morant’s conservative, Anglican history and its rhetoric of patriotic loyalty occupied a malleable space in political rhetoric. Admittedly, judging from close analysis of the contents of the liberal minded and reform supporting *Colchester Gazette* and the liberal *Suffolk Chronicle* the history of the siege was not a widely used and popular topic for them. While Whigs in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century had close links with Cromwell and the cause of Parliament, they were always ambivalent about public support for past policies of regicide and republicanism because of the questions they raised about loyalty and the legitimacy of monarchy. It was not 1649 and the execution of Charles I, but the Glorious Revolution of 1688 that was their historical benchmark.<sup>65</sup> As the leading Colchester Whig politician, Daniel Harvey, proclaimed in 1818, ‘the revolution of 1688 was the brightest page in the country’s History.’<sup>66</sup> In letters

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<sup>62</sup> William Marsh, *A Sermon Preached by the Rev. W. Marsh, M.A. at St. Peter’s Church, Colchester, A Warning to Catholics* (Colchester: Swinborne and Walter, 1825). Interestingly, Charles Simeon in 1807 had bought the right to appoint the vicar from Mr. S. Thornton and so removed a strong Tory stronghold, ‘Who appoints the vicar’ *St. Peters Church*, <https://www.stpeterscolchester.org/resources/history-heritage/simeon-trustees/> [accessed 21/05/2021].

<sup>63</sup>E.R.O, LIB/SER/18/3, *A Sermon Delivered at St. Peter’s, Colchester, on Thursday, Sept. 8th 1831, the Day of His Majesty’s Coronation* (Ipswich: S. Piper, Old Mutter Market, 1831)

<sup>64</sup> Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, p. 18; Phillips and Wetherell, ‘The Great Reform Act of 1832,’ p. 427; Cunningham, ‘The Language of Patriotism’, p. 17.

<sup>65</sup> Blair Worden, *The English Civil Wars* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009), p. 204; D’Cruze, pp. 144-5; Brown, *Colchester*, p. 74.

<sup>66</sup> Brown, *Colchester*, p.77.

exchanged amongst antiquarians between 1793-95, Whigs declared their opposition to ‘Puritanism and Popery.’ They also noted the ‘gloomy policy of the Puritans under Cromwell.’<sup>67</sup> Later care was taken for example, during the campaign for reform in 1830, when the *Suffolk Chronicle* had to issue an apology to a Mr Sparrow, free burgess of Ipswich for the publication of a story that suggested Republican sympathies. A review of a history book of Ipswich mentioned the Sparrow family hiding Charles II. A letter was then sent to the paper, stating that this was not so and that the Sparrows were Parliamentarian. It transpired that apparently a certain Sparrow family served against the King at Colchester. The author was forced to make note that he did not intend to mix up the Parliamentarian Sparrows with the current John E. Sparrow whose loyalty, the Chronicle assured its readership, ‘is unquestionably genuine.’<sup>68</sup>

But, as scholarship has shown, loyalty and patriotism were highly contested terms in the period and the language of loyalty was also harnessed by radicals to criticise the polity they sought also to defend.<sup>69</sup> In the context of the fight for reform, for example, radicals in other contexts took possession of a conservative history of the siege, imposing their own meanings upon it, using the language of patriotic loyalty and sacrifice as inspiration for their cause. In doing so, the local Tories had lost control of the siege narrative. A radical election song written in 1820, the year in which the Colchester radical Whig, Daniel Harvey was returned to Parliament, for example, invoked the history to present the Whigs as the loyal defenders of the liberties of the town:

On the banks of the Colne stands a garrison'd Town, Where anciently freedom and loyalty shone; When Fairfax besieg'd them and beat their walls down, They were firm to a Man for their King and Crown, And for the Rights of the Town, or the King and the Crown, and For the Rights of the Town....And Perhaps you may

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<sup>67</sup> As seen in letter exchanged by Whig antiquarians, E.R.O, T/B 587/4, Letters from 1793-5.

<sup>68</sup> ‘To the Editor of the Suffolk Chronicle’, *The Suffolk Chronicle; or Weekly General Advertiser & County Express*, Saturday 19 June 1830, p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> Cunningham, ‘Language of Patriotism’, p. 10; ‘Languages of Loyalism’, p. 33.



laugh when I tell you the rig, The Staunchest old Tory did vote for a Whig<sup>70</sup>

The song suggested to the listener that they could be loyal, could remember the heroic sacrifice of the town, and yet still be a supporter and voter for the Whig party.

Similarly, when Queen Caroline visited the town the same year, radicals claimed an identity as patriotic loyalists, invoking a loyalist version of history to symbolise their goals. The ‘Queen Caroline Affair’, was an unprecedented episode in British History that saw the Queen put on trial for adultery. The case stimulated questions and controversy over the rightful role of Parliament, the monarchy and the people and Queen Caroline became an important symbol for the radical movement as a representative of the oppressed.<sup>71</sup> The Queen visited Colchester in 1820 but the Corporation opposed her visit and banned public expressions of support for her. In response, a radical song circulated in the town that invoked the siege to attack the Tory dominated Corporation as corrupt and self-serving.<sup>72</sup> It demonstrates that the towns elites could lose control of the narrative, and that the townsfolk were very much aware of the siege story and could use it for their own agendas. The lyrics argued that it was the radicals who were loyal, ready to ‘serve the king and guard the peoples’ right; Ready t’ uphold the great and virtuous cause, of King and church, their government and laws’, and used the history of the Civil Wars to prove it. The lyrics went as follows:

Whee in the noble cause of church and king,  
 When subtle treason on its vultures wing,  
 Had spread with hasty flight to mine our laws,  
 And bound a mass of rebels in her cause  
 'Allegence wav'd her banner midst the storm,  
 And dar'd the murd'ring watch-word of Reform;  
 Form to their latest breath her warriors stood,  
 And sign'd the yielding treaty with their blood...  
 'instead of valliant squire, or a wealthy knight,

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<sup>70</sup> E.R.O, D/Y 37/3/12, Miscellaneous Printed items, Newscuttings and Papers, some relating to Essex, including Letters and Reports on the 1820 election.

<sup>71</sup> Edward Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963), p. 794; Mantle, *A Living Society*, p. 16.

<sup>72</sup> Brown, *Colchester*, p. 37.

Some booby govern'd, who could scarcely write<sup>73</sup>

Within this contested political landscape, the conservative interpretation of the history of the siege, and more generally a Royalist perspective on the Civil Wars was still promoted intensively as tool of Tory propaganda to counter radicalism and accusations of corruption. In keeping with national convention, the bells of the churches in Colchester were rung on the date of the Restoration of Charles II, as a symbol of loyalty to the crown, until 1841.<sup>74</sup> Oak Apple Day remained a prominent date in the calendar to celebrate the Restoration of Charles II until its abolition in 1859. The Chartist antiquarian William Wire recorded in his diary that in the early part of the nineteenth century every householder considered it a duty to have an oak branch before his door to show his loyalty, and:

During the days boys went from door to door with a...dressed up with flowers saying at each house, "A stuck and a stake for King Charles Sake, Pray remember the poor bonfire"...collecting money which was expended in the purchase of fireworks to set off in the evening...Towards the close of the day, boys and young men went in gangs and took down the boughs from doors carried them to a favourite spot in some street in the evening...a bonfire was made one of the favourite spots was near water lane in Middleborough.<sup>75</sup>

Wire noted that some people, sadly he did not specify who, tried to bring the festivities back even after their abolition.

Political debates staged by the Tories in Colchester and elsewhere in Essex made regular reference to the Civil Wars to express the fear that another major internal conflict would destroy the nation. For example, at a Tory meeting in Romford, Essex in 1832, the speaker noted that the Duke of Wellington was doing all that was possible to avoid another Civil War.<sup>76</sup>

Tories in Colchester drew on the history of the siege in particular as a way to inspire fear of

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<sup>73</sup> B.L, RB.23 a.29781, Pamphlets, songs, memoirs and sermons.

<sup>74</sup> E.R.O, D/P 200/8/1, All Saints Churchwarden Accounts 1686-1753; E.R.O D/P 178/5/6, Churchwarden Accounts of St. Peters 1808-1860.

<sup>75</sup> E.R.O, D/Y 37/1/3, William Wires Journal 1842-.

<sup>76</sup> 'Mr. Wellesley's Dinner at Romford', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 14 September 1832, p. 4.

revolution, as well as lessons in sacrifice and love of King and country. In a speech at one conservative club in 1832, the following remark was made:

I adjure you as fathers and as Englishmen-by your hearts and by your altars-by the innocent blood that was shed in this very town-by the shades of the murdered Lucas and Lisle, who speak with conservative eloquence from out of the peaceful grace...Honour the King and meddle not with them that are given to change<sup>77</sup>

The Tories founded the *Essex Standard* specifically to oppose reform in 1831, and the title of the paper was intended as a rallying cry to ‘the loyal, the religious, and the well-affected of our Country.’<sup>78</sup> As part of its campaign, the *Standard* filled its pages with stories of the siege that used the history to inspire respect for monarchy and fear of revolution.<sup>79</sup> It also advertised the regular re-publication of Morant’s history, re-prints of Carter’s pamphlet and the history written by Strutt, as for example in 1831:

A Diary and Plan of the Siege of Colchester, in 1648, on a large sheet, price One Shilling. 2. A Plan of The Town, by Thomas Sparrow...3. History and Description of Colchester, with an account of the Antiquities, by the late B. Strutt, Esq... as well as the history from Cromwell and Morant<sup>80</sup>

A seventeenth century pamphlet that was presented as a diary written by a Parliamentarian formed the subject of another article and was reinterpreted and used by members of the local

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<sup>77</sup> ‘Essex and Colchester True-Blue and Conservative Club’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*. Friday 16 November 1832, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Speight, *Politics in the Borough of Colchester*, p. 203.

<sup>79</sup> ‘The Essex Standard’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 21 December 1838, p. 2; ‘Colchester Reform Association’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 29 January 1836, p. 3; ‘Colchester Mechanic’s institution’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 28 February 1851, p. 3; ‘Colchester Mechanics Institute’, *Essex Standard*, Wednesday 04 October 1854, p.6; ‘Colchester Oyster Feast’, *Essex Standard*, Wednesday 28 October 1857, p 3; ‘Colchester Town Council’, *Essex Standard*, Wednesday 11 November 1857, p. 4; ‘Colchester Literary Institution’, *Essex Standard, and General Advertiser for the Eastern Counties*, Saturday 05 November. 1869, p. 3; ‘The Battle of Colchester’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 10 May 1884, p. 8.

<sup>80</sup> ‘The Following Publications may be had of’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 10 September 1831, p. 1.

Conservative Party to plot the progress and plans of Royalist troops. Similar features continued to be published throughout the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>81</sup>

Locally too at that time, interpretations of the wars were presented on the stage to appeal to a popular Tory sentiment amongst a wider public. Across the nation in this period Victorian theatre put on numerous productions in which radicals and conservatives re-worked the divisions of the Civil Wars and presented contemporary political arguments through historical drama. Cromwell and Charles were cast as characters in fiction and theatre, 'slightly yet significantly recast as Romantic or Victorian heroes or villains.'<sup>82</sup> In Colchester, plays focused on the siege specifically, and dramas were produced that dwelt on themes such as loyalty and local identity, using Lucas, Lisle and Fairfax as historical exemplars.<sup>83</sup> A play about the Siege of 1648 was written in 1824 and sold in booksellers in Colchester, Chelmsford and London before it was staged by J. Smith in Ipswich and Colchester theatres in 1830.<sup>84</sup> The dedication to Sir George Henry Smith, one of the leading Tories and mayoral candidate in the town of Colchester, is noteworthy.<sup>85</sup> At a time of tension between Tories and advocates of electoral reform, the themes of war between Royalists and Parliamentarians seems to have chimed with the political climate, providing a call to arms to Tory conservatism, and a warning against radical change.

Revolution abroad and radicalism at home continued to generate anxiety amongst the Tory Anglican elites throughout the middle decades of the nineteenth century and the history of the siege continued to be used to counter these political trends. Between 1854 and 1856

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<sup>81</sup> 'A Splendid Copy of Morant's History of Essex', *Essex Standard*, Friday 22 December 1837, p. 1; 'Morant's History of Essex', *Essex Standard*, Friday 12 June 1835, p. 1; 'Annuals, Pocket-Books, and Almanacks' *Essex Standard*, Friday 06 November 1840, p. 1; 'Charity Commission Inquiry at Colchester', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 24 July 1886, p. 3; 'Essex Morant Society', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 09 April 1841, p. 2.

<sup>82</sup> Johnston, *The Wordsworth Circle*, p. 126.

<sup>83</sup> 'Sales by Auction', *Morning Chronicle*, Wednesday 20 June 1827, p. 4.

<sup>84</sup> Anon, *The Siege of Colchester; Or, the Year 1648, an Historical Drama, in Two Acts* (1824).

<sup>85</sup> David Fisher, 'Smyth, Sir George Henry', *The History of Parliament*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/smyth-sir-george-1784-1852> [accessed 31/03/2020].

when barracks were built in Colchester to house the troops of the Eastern Command, their presence also added to local tensions.<sup>86</sup> The army's arrival initially stirred fears and uncertainties about military dominance and interestingly these were frequently related back to the siege and the occupation by the army in the 1640s.<sup>87</sup> A report in the *Standard*, recorded a speech made by the commander of the garrison at the Oyster Feast in 1857 in which he apologised to the Mayor and Aldermen for the trouble his troops had caused.<sup>88</sup> More importantly, Colchester Chartism, though not militant, was regarded by the Tories as a serious social and political threat and warnings were issued to the populace in Essex and Colchester by drawing comparisons between the radicalism and revolutions of 1848, and the Civil Wars two centuries before. The *Chelmsford Chronicle* noted, for example, that at a sermon given at the Essex Summer Assizes of 1848, the Rev. C.S. Bouchier declared, 'let us look back to the history of our own country, and tremble lest the misery of our own civil wars should be repeated.'<sup>89</sup> The same year, another article was published which stated that, 'The authorities had made ample preparations for the protection of the public peace, but the first glance at the Heath dispelled all apprehension of another Siege of Colchester.'<sup>90</sup>

Morant's conservative and Anglican interpretation of the history of the siege continued to resonate in a climate of radicalism and reform in the 1830s and was used by local conservative minded politicians to present an image of the benefits of loyalty to monarchy and hierarchy to the people of Colchester and those beyond it. The next historian of Colchester was the antiquarian Thomas Cromwell who published a history based extensively on Morant in 1825 just after a new town charter was issued in 1818, at a time of political strife when the

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<sup>86</sup> Brown, *Colchester*, p.69.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, p. 108.

<sup>88</sup> David Cannadine, 'The Transformation of Civic Ritual in Modern Britain: The Colchester Oyster Feast', *Past & Present*, 94 (1982), 107-130 (p.112).

<sup>89</sup> 'Essex Summer Assize', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 21 July 1848, p.2.

<sup>90</sup> 'Chartism in Essex', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 28 April 1848, p. 4.

Tory Parliamentary political control had slipped.<sup>91</sup> Morant's history was itself also republished again in 1837 and the evidence suggests that a copy of the *History* was the most common title owned by mid-Victorian middle-class residents in the town.<sup>92</sup> As Sweet has argued, these volumes were substantially larger than guidebooks and catered to local interest rather than visitor led demand, but they sold well.<sup>93</sup> What the readers' responses to the history might have been is impossible to tell but these were the books which formulated the memory of the siege in the minds of their middle class readership and the subject seems to have resonated with conservative interpretations of contemporary events.

But while Morant's interpretation of the siege was harnessed intensively to legitimise Tory power locally in this period, political actors who opposed them also began to revive, contest and make use of the past to promote their own program of reform. Nationally and locally, after 1840, political and cultural shifts led to significant reappraisals of the history of the wars, the siege, and the key historical actors, and the political use and meaning of the history began to shift. Carlyle's publication of Cromwell's *Letters and Speeches* in 1845 and the brief biography in his *On Heroes and Hero Worship and the Heroic in History* did much to capitalise on Dissenters' admiration for Cromwell and rehabilitate the Lord Protector's reputation to the extent that he became a leading national hero.<sup>94</sup> Politically, Chartist radicals also found inspiration for their own struggles for parliamentary representation in the supporters of Parliament in the seventeenth century.<sup>95</sup> These national changes were reflected in local trends.

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<sup>91</sup> Baggs and others, 'Georgian Colchester: Town Government and Politics', in *A History of the County of Essex, Vol 9*, (London: VCH, 1994), pp. 156-169, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol9/>; Thomas Cromwell, *History and Description of the Ancient Town an Borough of Colchester in Essex, Vol 1* (London: R. Jennings, 1824).

<sup>92</sup> 'Household Furniture', *Essex Standard*, Friday 12 February 1836, p. 1; 'Colchester, The Entire Modern and Elegant Drawing Room Rosewood, Dining-Room, Library and Furniture', *Essex Standard*, Friday 04 April 1851, p. 1.

<sup>93</sup> Sweet, *Writing of Urban Histories*, p. 273.

<sup>94</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1845); S.R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War, 1642-1649* (Harlow: Longman, 1893); as argued in Worden, *Roundhead Reputations*, pp. 215-263.

<sup>95</sup> Malcolm Chase, *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

History was a popular pastime in mid-Victorian Colchester as elsewhere in England at that time and people from a wide variety of social backgrounds became engaged in serious historical scholarship on Colchester and its past. Tory Anglicans formed The Colchester Antiquarian Society in 1850 and joined other antiquaries in the county to form the Essex Archaeological Society based in Colchester Castle in 1852. But individuals from more humble backgrounds with different political allegiances also had deep interest in the history of the town. The moderate Chartist and autodidact artisan William Wire was a strong advocate for reform and liberal policies in Colchester. He was also an enthusiastic antiquarian who devoted much of his time to studying the history of his town. He was especially interested in the Roman period and presented his collection of objects in his own museum in 1840. But he also developed an interest in the history of the Civil Wars and the impact of the siege on the ordinary citizens and soldiers of the town. In doing so, Wire created space for a Parliamentary and liberal interpretation of the siege to develop. For example, he discovered and republished the Parliamentary pamphlet version of the history of the siege, *Colchester Teares* in 1843 and in a circular letter which he published and printed alongside it, Wire pointed out that its account of events presented the Royalist leaders in Colchester as less heroic than had previously been assumed. He explained that:

detailing the sufferings of the inhabitants when the Town was besieged by general Fairfax in 1648, and which was circulated during that disastrous period. The Particulars related in this pamphlet, are not noticed by Matthew Carter, in his account of the memorable event, nor by Morant the Local Historian...<sup>96</sup>

Wire was a careful scholar and would often refer to Carter and Morant as authoritative sources in his diary. On one occasion he wrote to the Tory *Ipswich Journal* pointing out that an article published in the paper on the siege had some incorrect information which could not be verified

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<sup>96</sup> E.R.O, D/Y 37/3/12, Miscellaneous Printed Items, Newscuttings and Papers, Some relating to Essex, including a copy of a Printed Circular Letter, 17 April 1843 from William Wire giving notice of his intention to re-publish the pamphlet 'Colchester Teares'.

by Carter. He requested politely that, ‘the writers of that article inform the public through your columns at what period during the siege the conflict took place where it was said to have been found as Mathew Carter...takes no notice of such an occurrence.’ He also wrote in May of 1844 that, ‘several people said that Oliver Crumbell [Cromwell] had it [a circular entrenchment] made and that...the Church of St. Mary at the Walls was knocked down by cannon planted there.’ But he dismissed the theory noting that Carter had recorded that it was from the cannon by the Abbey Gate, and was clearly comfortable with the reliability of the source.<sup>97</sup> He praised Lucas and Lisle in his poem of 1840 in the following terms:

O gallant loyall souls, thrice blest be you  
 who have pay'd nature and your Ceasars due!  
 'and stand condem'd because a Cavalier!  
 'Where mercy becomes cruelty: and shame<sup>98</sup>

He also criticised the Parliamentary forces for the harshness with which the town and its defenders were treated under the granting of mercy which he regarded as a shameful act. Wire was a time-keeper, he preserved relics from the siege period, he maintained the old Royalist stories, and he brought in new documents to present a different narrative. Nonetheless, his interventions and his publication of the *Colchester Teares* were part of the beginning of a more liberal divergence from the Royalist narrative. The political and cultural climate was changing. In 1863 Thomas Davids, the non-conformist minister of the Congregationalist Church in Lion Walk published his *Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in the County of Essex* which described in detail the sufferings of non-conformist ministers and their families at the hands of the state after the Restoration between 1660 and 1662.<sup>99</sup> Davids included some account of the

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<sup>97</sup> E.R.O, D/Y 37/1/17, Booklet of Draft Letters from Wire to Various Correspondents 1852.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> ‘Protestant Nonconformity’, in *A History of the County of Essex, Vol 9* (London: VCH, 1994), pp.339-351; T.W. Davids, *Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in the County of Essex, From the time of Wycliffe to the Restoration; with Memorials of the Essex Ministers who were Ejected or Silenced in 1660-1662, and Brief Notes of the Essex Churches which Originated with their Labours* (London: Jackson, Walford and Hodder, 1863), p. 309.



history of the Civil Wars and the siege in his book and his political and religious sympathies lay with the Parliamentary side. His description of the Siege of Colchester was based on Parliamentary sources.<sup>100</sup>

The expansion of associational culture in Colchester in the early nineteenth century opened up spaces for representation and discussion of the history amongst groups, mainly male, below the level of the elite. Different historical perspectives and interpretations that reflected and reinforced party-political divisions were stimulated by the foundation of the Mechanics Institute in 1832, promoted by Colchester Liberals and non-conformists, to encourage the education of the 'working man'. Although led by local elites, the institute was an important forum for the discussion of history as well as science and literature amongst skilled artisans.<sup>101</sup> As one lecturer commented, the Institute aimed to encourage , 'the working class to devote a portion of their spare time to reading, and also to give them an opportunity of attending lectures on mechanical, moral, and historical subjects.'<sup>102</sup> The Civil Wars were certainly a part of discussion at the first meeting of the Colchester Institute in 1833, even if the subject was not greeted with universal enthusiasm. When Cromwell was mentioned one of the speakers, a Mr. Grimes, commented that he had enough of talking about sieges.<sup>103</sup> The intervention might explain why little mention of the subject is made in records of the meetings that followed, but residents from Colchester visited other Mechanic Institutes to give lectures on the siege, which suggests it was certainly an important and widely discussed topic by Liberals across the county.<sup>104</sup> In 1848, for example, a Mr. Durrant of Colchester delivered a lecture on the siege and the wider British Civil Wars to the institute at Chelmsford.<sup>105</sup> His interpretation was

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<sup>100</sup> Davids, *Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity*, p. 309.

<sup>101</sup> 'Colchester Mechanic's Institute', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 13 September 1833, p. 3.

<sup>102</sup> 'Colchester Mechanics Institute', *Essex Standard*, Friday 16 August 1839, p. 3.

<sup>103</sup> 'Colchester Mechanic's Institute', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 15 March 1833, p. 3.

<sup>104</sup> B.L., RB.23.b.6538, *Mechanics Magazine* (London, Knight & Lacey, 1825)

<sup>105</sup> William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Essex; Comprising, Under a Lucid Arrangement of Subjects, a General Survey of the County* (Sheffield: R. Leader, 1848), p. 108.

balanced but broadly sympathetic to Parliament. According to reports, he ensured that, ‘He drew an able picture of the character of Charles, praising him on many points, but dwelling on that faithlessness in dealing with Parliament.’<sup>106</sup> Durrant’s moderate political perspectives and motives in giving the lecture are made clear by a remark he made later that, ‘our liberties were secured, were strengthened by the guarantees of 1688, and by the Reform Act of 1832; and while other countries had been convulsed, and their cities assailed by war, England undisturbed had been enabled to revise her social laws, to throw off restrictions, and allow her children untaxed bread.’<sup>107</sup> Nonetheless this history was less about heroic Royalist sacrifice and more directed to interest in reform and liberty.

Liberals began to use an interpretation of the history of the siege that favoured Parliament more often as a rallying point focusing on themes of liberty from tyranny and the idea of freedom and rights associated with their campaign for electoral reform in 1832. A good example was John Gurdon Rebow who was a powerful Liberal presence in the town, elected as Colchester’s Liberal M.P in 1857, kept his seat until 1859, and returned in 1865-70.<sup>108</sup> At the Oyster Feast in 1857, he thanked the speaker Mr. Du Cane for his speech on the Siege of Colchester, and commented on, ‘the great sufferings which were then endured in the cause of liberty.’<sup>109</sup> Nevertheless, he then added that, ‘while he would be the last to detract from the reputation of those who so held out and defended Colchester in the interests of the Crown of England,’ he was, ‘quite sure his honorable friend...did not, in the tribute he had paid to the gallantry of the besieged intend to cast any slur upon those who fought and bled outside the walls.’<sup>110</sup> Some sense of the deep divisions that were reflected and reinforced by interpretations of history can be gleaned from a remark from a Mr. W. R. Havens who then rose to speak

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<sup>106</sup> ‘Chelmsford: The Chase’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 22 November 1850, p. 3.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> ‘Modern Colchester: Political history’, in *A History of the County of Essex, Vol 9* (London: VCH, 1994), pp. 208-221.

<sup>109</sup> ‘Colchester Oyster Feast’, *Essex Standard*, Wednesday 28 October 1857, p. 3.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

proclaiming that, ‘if they really wished to promote the trade and prosperity of their town they would endeavour to unite both parties...The horrid distinctions of party and the division of feeling which difference of seat produced tended more than anything to destroy the trade and prosperity of Colchester.’<sup>111</sup>

A picture of unity was hard to find in this period, however. According to Wire, the Colchester Literary Institute was formed by Anglicans and Tories in 1849, ‘expressly to crush the largely Liberal Mechanics Institute’ and to curb the influence of Chartism in the town after a shock Tory electoral defeat in 1847.<sup>112</sup> In little over fifteen years, the topic of the siege was the institute’s most widely covered subject, suggesting that its history was regarded as a useful means to undermine the Liberal message to its audience. It was certainly regarded as politically useful for the mayoral candidate for Colchester, Dr Peter Duncan, in 1857. According to the *Essex Standard*, the series of lectures that he delivered on the siege was, ‘a subject for the instruction and information of those among whom he lived, [and] constituted in itself a very strong reason why he ought to be elevated to the highest position in their town.’<sup>113</sup> Duncan followed Morant’s interpretation of events quite closely and made special mention of the location of the forts and what buildings were seized by the besiegers to help his audience identify with the story.<sup>114</sup> His talks proved so popular that he provided new lectures on Colchester’s history and expanded on his work on the siege in the years that followed, even providing repeat performances on occasion.<sup>115</sup> Talks on the siege were also given to labourers by conservative inclined farmers, it seems to discourage radicalism. One John Ruse delivered

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Kim Heonsook, *Charitable Associations in Colchester, 1800-1870: A Study of Middle -Class World* (PhD thesis: Essex: 2004), p. 208.

<sup>113</sup> ‘Colchester Town Council’, *Essex Standard*, Wednesday 11 November 1857, p. 3.

<sup>114</sup> ‘Colchester Literary Institution’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 23 October 1857, p. 2, and on the 30 October 1857, p.3. The second lecture was also covered in the *Chelmsford Chronicle* on the 30 October 1857, p. 3. Duncan reported his intention to deliver the lectures in *Essex Herald* on the 03 March 1857, p. 3.

<sup>115</sup> ‘Colchester Literary Institution’, *Essex Standard*, Wednesday 06 April 1859, p. 3.

a lecture on the siege in Kelvedon in 1871.<sup>116</sup> Apparently anxious about the legacy of, ‘Chartists and their insurrection’, he was no doubt pleased that his audience, ‘expressed themselves much pleased with the lecturer’s kindness.’<sup>117</sup> Both Liberals and Conservatives were using the siege to engage with the general populace to present their political and religious arguments.

Revised liberal and non-conformist interpretations of the siege did encourage a degree of reflection by local Conservatives on established narratives. The Tory mayoral candidate Duncan, for example, acknowledged in 1857 that, ‘Lucas had no right to shut himself up in a town which he knew, from his former experience, was hostile to the principle to the Royalist cause.’<sup>118</sup> But it is apparent that the concession to revisionist interpretation was short-lived. Ten years after Duncan’s last lecture on the siege, the institute organised another talk by an outsider who followed Morant’s narrative faithfully and reminded the audience of the, ‘indomitable native courage by which [Lucas and Lisle] asserted their opinions even unto death.’<sup>119</sup> He affirmed that, ‘he knew of no event in the annals of our country, he had almost said of any country, more abounding with romantic incident, high principle, courageous endurance, heroic patience, and preserving self-sacrifices than the Siege of Colchester.’<sup>120</sup> The trials of the siege were represented as stereotypically English; heroism, self-sacrifice, courage and endurance and moved Colchester on to the national stage.<sup>121</sup> History was deployed deliberately here by the Literary Institute to promote conservative patriotism and local political identity.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> ‘History of Little Bardfield Parish’, *Little Bardfield parish*, <https://www.littlebardfieldparish.org.uk/index.php/history/history-little-bardfield-parish> [accessed 09/12/2021].

<sup>117</sup> ‘Lecture to Working Men on the War’, *Essex Herald*, Tuesday 10 January 1871, p. 8.

<sup>118</sup> ‘Colchester Literary Institution’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 23 October 1857, p. 2.

<sup>119</sup> ‘Colchester Literary Institution’, *Essex Standard*, and *General Advertiser for the Eastern Counties*, Friday 22 October 1869, p. 2.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> ‘Colchester Literary Institution’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 29 November 1872, p. 5.

Alongside the Literary Institute, the Essex Archaeological Society, dominated by leading Tory Anglicans, showed great interest in the history of the siege, relied principally on Morant's interpretation of events and bought into the nineteenth century notion of the history as a quarry for exemplars of contemporary issues.<sup>123</sup> One of the first items discussed at the first meeting of the society was Morant's history. Records show that, 'At the request of the Secretary, Mr. C. G. Round called attention to the interesting features of several articles which he had exhibited, viz.: 'Morant's History of Colchester, large paper, 1748, with MSSS. Notes and additions by the Author. Ditto, 1748.'<sup>124</sup> Subsequent meetings include numerous references to the Royalist and Tory version of the wars. In 1868, the language used in one discussion regarding a family in Colchester emphasised their loyal and Royalist past. The *Chelmsford Chronicle* reported with some pride on a discussion about an individual who appeared to have been one of the Cavaliers present at the Siege of Colchester and one of the loyal gentlemen who signed the royal memorial at Chelmsford.<sup>125</sup> The same small group of Tory Anglican antiquarians who attended the borough Oyster Feast a few years later were treated to a talk 'on the Siege of Colchester, which the speaker declared was a 'highly important and interesting subject.'<sup>126</sup>

The local conservative press also continued to include articles on national as well as local histories of the conflict, always interpreted through a Royalist lens and used to bolster Tory political perspectives. Loyalist martyrdom and heroism was centre stage, for example, in

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<sup>123</sup> Found in most volumes of the Society Transactions, but examples can be found ESAH, 'Siege of Colchester', *Society Transactions*, 2.4 (1893), 205-218 (p.205), <https://www.esah1852.org.uk/publications/transactions> [accessed 13/12/2021]; ESAH, 'The Will of Miles Gray of Colchester: Bell Founder', *Society Transactions*, 2.3 (1889), 74-75 (p. 74), <https://www.esah1852.org.uk/publications/transactions> [accessed 13/12/2021]; ESAH, 'Messing's Contribution to the Siege of Colchester', *Society Transactions*, 2.9 (1906), 351-354 (p. 352), <https://www.esah1852.org.uk/publications/transactions> [accessed 13/12/2021].

<sup>124</sup> ESAH, 'General Report of the Proceedings at the Inaugural Meeting, 14 December 1852', *Society Transactions*, 1.1 (1858), 1-5, (p. 1), '<https://www.esah1852.org.uk/publications/transactions>' [accessed 13/12/2021].

<sup>125</sup> 'Essex Archaeological Society', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 31 July 1868, p. 5.

<sup>126</sup> 'Colchester Oyster Feast', *Essex Standard*, Friday 22 October 1869, p. 2.

stories that described the place where the two knights were shot. In 1858 the *Essex Standard* stated that, 'there was some time a vulgar notion that the grass would not grow where these two gentlemen were executed; but that was owing to the great resort of people to see the place. It is now covered with grass equally with the rest of the Castle Bailey...the last and the most noble and soul stirring sight, perhaps, that the Bailey ever saw.'<sup>127</sup> The author quoted Morant directly and so, perhaps unsurprisingly styled himself, the ghost of Philip Morant, presumably to add intellectual authority. Some articles were styled as letters written into the paper which noted the cruelties that were inflicted on the knights.<sup>128</sup> Other articles retold local tales of individual experience of the siege<sup>129</sup> Tales with local connections were popular as for example, in 1874, when a feature noted that, 'while the Siege of Colchester was going on during the summer of 1648, Roundhead cavalry and infantry might often have been seen in Bergholt.'<sup>130</sup>

It continued:

Long did the Cavaliers of Bergholt and elsewhere talk lovingly to one another of their royal master who had suffered "at the ninth hour," dressed in kingly robes "as for his second bridal." They remembered how that "comely head" rested as peacefully upon the fatal block "as upon a bed," and how when the executioner held it up to view crying "This is the head of a traitor" there was heard on all sides a "dismal universal groan"<sup>131</sup>

The language of the text depicts the conventional Royalist view of Charles as martyr. Interestingly too, the article also pointed out that during the conflict no parish meetings were held among 'us', a warning perhaps of the risks to local politics of reform and social and political division.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> 'Castle Bailey', *Essex Standard*, Wednesday 10 November 1858, p. 4.

<sup>128</sup> 'Colchester Castle', *Essex Herald*, Tuesday 17 January 1871, p. 8; 'Colchester Siege', *Essex Herald*, Tuesday 11 June 1892, p. 7.

<sup>129</sup> 'The Siege of Colchester', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 20 June 1891, p. 5.

<sup>130</sup> 'Bits about Bergholt', *Ipswich Journal*, Tuesday 24 November 1874, p. 1.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

### **A Politics of Consensus**

Between the 1880s and 1914 the political, social and cultural context altered dramatically, however, and the political uses of the history of the siege shifted with it. The service economy of the town was hit hard by an agricultural depression. Colchester also suffered two serious blows to its corporate confidence when Chelmsford was made the county town in 1888 and the diocesan centre in 1908. Other developments were more positive. The arrival of the railway in 1843 transformed Colchester into a tourist destination. Industrial and commercial sectors expanded so that by 1914 most men in Colchester were employed in more lucrative livings in factories, transport or building. The leaders of these new industries also joined the Borough Council. The effect was to transform the old closed Corporation, dominated by a self-selecting oligarchy of Anglican Tories, into a town government led by industrialists committed to ‘progress, vision and expansion’.<sup>133</sup> As a consequence of these shifts, political consensus was prioritised over party conflict in order to encourage development and, as was the case with many towns and cities in this period, most borough elections from 1870 were uncontested.<sup>134</sup> The mayoralty alternated annually between Tory and Liberal, and the Council became the focus of unified middle-class attention to urban improvement. In 1882 the waterworks company was purchased; two years later a new corn exchange was built and in 1894 a municipal library was opened. The most prestigious project of all was the new town hall. Completed at a cost of £55,000, paid for by Joseph Paxman, the leading industrialist of the town and opened by Lord Roseberry in 1902, the building was a monument to what Briggs has termed ‘civic one upmanship’. The imposing one hundred and sixty two feet high tower was designed, as one

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<sup>133</sup> Cannadine, ‘Oyster Feast,’ p. 115.

<sup>134</sup> ‘Modern Colchester: Political history’, VCH, pp. 208-221; Derek Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England: Structure of Politics in Victorian Cities* (London: Macmillan International Higher Education, 1979).

historian has put it, ‘to put Chelmsford, with its newly acquired official status, firmly in its place which, according to Colchester, was undoubtedly second rank’.<sup>135</sup>

The political landscape also changed nationally. Late Victorians in England hoped more for consensus in their politics as well in as their interpretation of the past. Many middle class citizens and politicians believed partisan division impaired local ( and national), political, social and economic progress , and that partisan histories of the Civil Wars were, ‘mere fodder of party controversy’.<sup>136</sup> For example, Tories were greatly exercised, by the way that conventional liberalism had assimilated Carlyle’s rehabilitation of Cromwell that was cemented by Samuel Rawson Gardiner’s *The History of the Great Civil War, 1642-1649*, (1893), and *History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, 1649-1660* (1894-1901). But with agreement from the Conservative Party, Parliament permitted the Liberal Prime Minister Lord Rosebery to build a statue of Cromwell outside Westminster Hall, admittedly at his own expense. The Conservative leader Lord Balfour agreed that to object to the statue would be ‘to carry ancient feuds too far’.<sup>137</sup>

These changes in political priorities had their effects on the political uses of the history of the siege locally and on its representation and interpretation. The history of the siege was not used so explicitly in symbolism or rhetoric because it was so divisive. For example, history was harnessed overtly to middle class promotion of civic pride when the magnificent new town hall was constructed in 1902. Notable historical characters associated with the town were put on display on the exterior of the building.<sup>138</sup> But the leading actors in the siege were not included in the presentation. Helena, mother of Constantine and Patron Saint of Colchester, transcended the tower and the niches of the building were filled with local historical figures of

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<sup>135</sup> Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, p. 153; Geoffrey Martin, *The Story of Colchester From Roman Times to Present Day* (Colchester: Benham, 1959), pp. 106-8.

<sup>136</sup> Worden, *Roundheads*, p. 340.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*, p. 312.

<sup>138</sup> Cannadine, ‘Oyster Feast,’ p. 117.



national importance including Boudicca and Archbishop Harsnett. The arms of the legendary King Coel were also displayed in stained glass. The siege, on the other hand, was commemorated inside the building in a way that allowed the middle-class elite, fractured by social, religious and political divisions, to foreground common interest and social and cultural bonds. Portraits of the leading protagonists on both sides of the conflict, Lucas, Lisle and Fairfax, were hung on the walls of a meeting room, alongside one another, but not displayed for external public view.<sup>139</sup>

A consensual approach to the history was reflected and reinforced in several other ways. In 1909 the borough organised and staged the Colchester Pageant which was reported as a great success.<sup>140</sup> The spectacle will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter, but suffice to say while the siege was given great prominence and formed the final act of the spectacle, the scenes were carefully choreographed to present an even handed rather than partisan approach that honoured the Parliamentary Fairfax and the Royalists Lucas and Lisle in equal measure. Similarly, a programme published to accompany the Oyster Feast that took place in 1899, included images of Lucas, Lisle *and* Fairfax alongside Elizabeth 1, Edward IV, King John, John Ball, Eudo, Boudicca and Claudius. The feast was by this stage a civic ceremony that was nationally renowned and reported and attended by a host of celebrity guests. Its publicity material celebrated local history but associated itself with an image of Cavaliers and Roundheads facing each other, self-consciously articulating unity, dignity and pride in Colchester's present as well as in its past.<sup>141</sup>

Civic pride and consensus were by no means the whole story of course. Social and political tensions and conflicts also persisted in late nineteenth century Colchester, reflected

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<sup>139</sup> 'Colchester and County Notes', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 19 May 1900, p. 2.

<sup>140</sup> As noted in Canadine, 'Oyster Feast', p. 118.

<sup>141</sup> E.R.O, D/F 23/4/16, Photograph of Programme of Colchester Oyster Feast made by Edwin J Sanders, with Humorous Cover by W. Gurney Benham (October 25<sup>th</sup> 1899); Cannadine, 'Oyster Feast,' p. 119.

and expressed in labour militancy as well as national elections which remained fiercely partisan. Rivalries and enmities simmered beneath the surface and Civil War history continued to act as a touchstone for political conflict. For example, in 1884, Sir John Bennet, Sheriff of London, Common Councilman and Watchmaker and a strong Liberal supporter gave a lecture at the Colchester Liberal Reading Rooms during his campaign for reform of the House of Lords.<sup>142</sup> Bennet presented a firmly Liberal, anti-aristocratic non-conformist perspective of the history of the wars, laying the blame firmly at the door of Charles I and his wife Henrietta Maria, referred to by Bennet as ‘the Catholic Wife.’<sup>143</sup> He argued that Charles, ‘brought the thing to a crisis. He was a fine, gentlemanly, aristocratic fellow (Laughter). He was born, you know, with a peculiar notion in his royal noddle (Much laughter).’<sup>144</sup> According to Bennett, on the other hand, Cromwell was a great man of ‘genius’ and ‘noble ambition.’<sup>145</sup> The seventeenth century radical demand for ‘no bishops, no hereditary position’, was re-worked here for a contemporary political context and a local Liberal audience was receptive to his theme.

Local Liberals were also more willing to associate themselves and their families with a history of support for the Parliamentary cause.<sup>146</sup> At an election campaign meeting in Colchester in 1887, the Liberal candidate Sir William Brampton Gurdon, proudly proclaimed that ‘his ancestor took part in the Siege of Colchester under Cromwell.’<sup>147</sup> Brampton Gurdon, Colonel of a regiment of horse during the Civil Wars served as a member of the court martial which condemned Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle to death after the siege in 1648.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> B.L., RB.23 a.29781 (5), Bennet, John, *The House of Lords, an Address by Sir John Bennet* (London, Bogue, 1884).

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12.

<sup>146</sup> For an example outside Colchester, see ‘Norwich Notes and Notion’, *Eastern Evening News*, Friday 05 July 1907, p. 1.

<sup>147</sup> ‘Liberal Conference and Demonstration at Colchester’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 17 December 1887, p. 5.

<sup>148</sup> ‘Colchester and County Notes’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday, 19 May 1900, p. 2.

Generational links to the war appear to have been important for people on both sides of the political battle, and it tells us that memory of the war stayed within families. It appears that it had become more and more acceptable to refer with pride to personal historical connections to and support for the Parliamentary cause.

Female campaigners also harnessed the history to their cause. In the lead up to the election of 1894, at a meeting of the Women's Liberal Association, striking parallels were drawn between the siege and the election where Liberals were compared to Parliamentarians and presented as liberators from Tory Royalists who it was argued were set for another defeat.<sup>149</sup> A speaker was reported to have declared that:

He was half inclined to think there would be a General Election in 1894 and he should not be surprised if a little bit of old Colchester history were repeated. In 1648 they stood a siege, and at the present time, and not until they were relieved by the General Election, this town was in the hands of the enemy. They should find on that memorable day Lexden would be again invested by the Roundheads – (laughter)- and their grand chieftain and his Ironsides would be attacking strongholds in another direction, and the candidate for Colchester, who would undoubtedly be their good friend Mr. Pearson...would make a triumphal entry by the way of North Gate<sup>150</sup>

Representations of Royalist martyrdom and heroism had no resonance here. Fairfax and his followers now enjoyed a more favourable reputation.<sup>151</sup>

Non-conformists were also more confident in their position after shifts in legal and social attitudes to dissent and were highly vocal in their use of interpretations of the history of the siege that contested conventional Tory narratives to provide remedies for present day concerns.<sup>152</sup> They joined Lord Rosebery's national campaign to support the erection of statue

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<sup>149</sup> 'Women's Liberal Association', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 18 November 1893, p. 8.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> 'Norwich Notes and Notion' *Eastern Evening News*, Friday 05 July 1907, p. 1.

<sup>152</sup> Hunt, *Jerusalem*, p. 140; Gaunt, 'The Reputation of Oliver Cromwell', p. 427; Alfred Bate Richards, 'Mr. Froude's Historical Accuracy', *Daily News*, Wednesday 25 December 1872, p. 6; 'Oliver Cromwell', *Every Boy's Magazine*, Thursday 01 December 1864, p. 35.

of Oliver Cromwell in 1899.<sup>153</sup> The same year the Rev. T. Batty, a long-time resident of Colchester, spoke in favour of Cromwell at a meeting of the Essex Congregational Union. He acknowledged that the town would never forget Cromwell ‘when they looked at the battered walls, or shaken condition of some of the church steeples.’<sup>154</sup> But he also complained of ‘the epithets applied to Cromwell, like regicide, usurper, rebel and monster, and the pictures portrayed of him in their public elementary schools and went on to assert that never had this country felt the need of so much a leader like Cromwell to deal with the great conspiracy recently disclosed...to take this country back to Rome.’<sup>155</sup>

Conservatives remained equally vehement in their support for the Royalist cause and saw it as a mirror for their own times. For example, at the opening of the Peckover School in 1900 an article was printed in the *Essex Standard* that went into detail about the founder’s ancestor who had served under the troop of cavalry in Cromwell’s New Model Army led by Colonel Fleetwood, described in the article as the ‘enemy.’ The piece ended with the comment that:

It is pleasing to think of the handsome way in which the generous descendant of Edmund Peckover has compensated the town for any little damage which his ancestor may have unintentionally done to some of our local buildings.<sup>156</sup>

At a gathering of the Tory, Colchester Association for the Protection of Property, the past clearly continued to resonate with the writer and his intended readers but in deeply partisan ways. The speaker noted that:

he thought there was no town which had so many disasters to contend with as Colchester. In 1648 there was the siege of Colchester, a most lamentable occurrence, when half the houses were destroyed, heavy fines levied, upon the inhabitants, and the people were practically ruined for many years.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> ‘Oliver Cromwell,’ *Blackburn Standard*, Saturday 29 April 1899, p. 9; ‘Cromwell Tercentenary speech by Lord Rosebery’, *The Evening Star and Daily Herald*, Wednesday 15 November 1899, p. 3.

<sup>154</sup> ‘Essex Congregational Union’ *Essex Standard*, Saturday 29 April 1899, p. 5.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> ‘Colchester Jottings’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 09 June 1900, p.3.

<sup>157</sup> ‘Colchester’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 7 May 1892, p. 6.

Officers of the garrison also, perhaps unsurprisingly, promoted a conservative and Royalist political tone. However, it does demonstrate that control of the narrative had now broadened to outside influences. According to a press report, when the commander of the garrison General Evelyn Woods gave a speech at the Oyster Feast in 1895 he:

reminded them of an incident in the Siege of Colchester by the Parliamentary forces, when an offer was made of free egress to all private soldiers (who were then in a starving condition), if they would abandon their officers, but none would accept the offer [Applause] That, he said, was the sort of lesson they ought to try and teach the rising generation.<sup>158</sup>

Earlier, when the army arrived in the town 1860, Colonel Palmer suggested the garrison might stage a re-enactment of the siege, ‘by 10,000 Volunteers being brought down from London to make a demonstration of attacking Colchester.’<sup>159</sup> An association between the army of the present and the honour and sacrifice of the ordinary Royalist soldiers of the past, provided a powerful vehicle for the expression association of the local garrison with values of loyalty and civic pride. Similarly, during the Boer War, when a Colchester infantryman, Captain Capel, was captured by the enemy the local Tory press noted that he was, ‘a lineal descendant of Lord Capel who was prominent at the Siege of Colchester, and lost his head in consequence.’<sup>160</sup> Mary Maxse, a leading anti-suffragist and Conservative Party campaigner, clearly also thought that a seventeenth century Royalist connection was useful politically. She declared to a meeting of the League of Honour that her husband’s ancestor, a General Maxse, fought for the King at the siege in 1648, and that ‘her husband was the first General Maxse to be stationed in the town since.’<sup>161</sup> As one reporter from *The Essex Standard* remarked after attending an

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<sup>158</sup> ‘Colchester Oyster Feast’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 25 October 1895, p. 3.

<sup>159</sup> ‘Essex: Proposed Volunteer Demonstration at Colchester’, *Bury and Norwich Post*, Tuesday 26 April 1864, p. 7.

<sup>160</sup> ‘Society and Personal Notes’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 25 August 1900, p. 6.

<sup>161</sup> David Thackeray, ‘Home and Politics: Women and Conservative Activism in Early Twentieth-Century Britain’, *Journal of British Studies*, 49.4 (2010), 826-848 (p. 829); ‘War Items’, *Essex Newsman*, Saturday 13 March 1915, p. 2.

election meeting in 1888, ‘it almost made one think that the echoes of the cannons of the Civil War had hardly died away, and that at this time Cavaliers and Roundheads were beginning their contest again. (Laughter).’<sup>162</sup>

The majority of history books in the period still promoted a Royalist and conservative based view of the siege. Alfred Kingstone and Penn alongside several other authors wrote histories which were based on Morant’s work.<sup>163</sup> The wars were also a useful vehicle used by Anglican clergymen to express their ongoing anxiety over Catholic emancipation, and increasing calls for disestablishment with the rise in popularity and respectability of non-conformism.<sup>164</sup> In a lecture in 1885 in Tillingham, the vicar referred to, ‘the reign of terror, hypocrisy and blasphemy under Oliver Cromwell. Many thousands of the clergy were driven from the churches...’ as he drew parallels between the threat posed to the Church in the seventeenth century and the problems of his own day.<sup>165</sup>

Perhaps the most powerful evidence of the passions and partisanship that the history of the wars could arouse, was the fierce debate that erupted during the visit of the Royal Archaeological Institute, which held its annual Congress in Colchester, under the joint presidency of Lord Carlingford, Lord Lieutenant of Essex, and the Liberal politician and Regius Professor of History at Oxford, Edward Augustus Freeman in 1876. This debate will

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<sup>162</sup> ‘Presentation to the Mayor & Mayoress of Colchester’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 10 November 1888, p. 5.

<sup>163</sup> George Fyler Townsend, *The Siege of Colchester or An Event of the Civil War A.D. 1648* (London: Society from Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1874); Alfred Kingstone, *East Anglia and the Great Civil War. The rising of Cromwell’s Ironsides in the Associated Counties of Cambridge, Huntingdon, Lincoln, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, and Hertford* (London: E. Stock, 1897); John Webb, *Memorials of the Civil War between King Charles I. and the Parliament of England as it Affected Herefordshire and the Adjacent Counties, Vol 1*, (Harlow: Longman, 1879); George Buckler, *Colchester Castle a Roman Building, and the Oldest and Noblest Monument of the Romans in Britain. With Illustrative Plans and Sketches* (Colchester: Benham & Harrison, 1876-82); A. Penn, *The Siege of Colchester* (Colchester: Wiles & Son, 1888)

<sup>164</sup> E.R.O, D/DR C7, Election Notes 1868; J.H.S. Kent, ‘The Role of Religion’, p. 323.

<sup>165</sup> ‘The Church and the People: Third Lecture by the Vicar of Tillingham’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 16 January 1885, p. 7; E.R.O, LIB/SER/9/1, Arguments can also be found in, ‘*Religious Equality- National Apostasy*’, A Sermon preached in St. Peter’s Church, Colchester, on the Occasion of the Visitation of the Venerable the Archdeacon of Colchester, June 17, 1881, by the Rev. John. W. Irvine, M.A, Rector of St. Mary at the Walls, Colchester, and Rural Dean (Colchester: U. B. Mattacks, Head Street; C. Clark, High Street; Chelmsford: E. Durrant and Co, 1881).

be examined further in Chapter Four but it is worth noting here that in a letter to his friend James Bryce, Freeman remarked that ‘There [Colchester] Clements Markham and I had much striving with a mad Cavalier, which is still going on in print.’ The ‘mad Cavalier’ was one John Pigot, who reacted ferociously to one of the papers delivered by the eminent explorer, president of the Royal Geographical Society and scholar Clements Markham on ‘The Siege of Colchester’ in which he defended the execution of the Royalist leader Sir Charles Lucas. Markham had recently published a very positive reassessment of Fairfax in his *A Life of the Great Lord Fairfax* (1870).<sup>166</sup> The meeting led to angry clashes between Conservative Royalists and Liberal Parliamentarians that were reported in the national press.

Vehement debates on this subject continued in public for several years after the meeting. It is not clear if the historian and staunch Tory Anglican John Horace Round had been present to listen to Markham, but he was obviously enraged by the revisionist interpretation and in the years that followed spent a good deal of energy and ink in its repudiation. He reiterated a Royalist account of events in his *History and Antiquities of Colchester Castle* (1882). He also published a series of articles and delivered lectures that mounted an excoriating attack on what he described as, ‘an historical theory which is not only absolutely without foundation, but at direct variance with all the evidence in the case’.<sup>167</sup>

Round had friends and acquaintances from a variety of political parties and denominations. He met with the liberal historian Samuel Gardiner in 1891 and provided him

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<sup>166</sup>Clement Markham, *A Life of the Great Lord Fairfax* (London: Macmillan, 1870); ESAH, W.R Powell, ‘John Horace Round and Victorian Colchester: Culture and Politics’, 1880-95’, *Society Transactions*, 3.23 (1992), 79-90 (p.80), <https://www.esah1852.org.uk/publications/transactions/eah-volume-23-1992-contents-list> [accessed 20/12/2021]; Elizabeth Baigent, ‘Markham, Sir Clements Robert (1830–1916), Geographer’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-34880> [accessed 29/04/2021]; Frank Barlow, ‘Freeman, Edward Augustus (1823–1892), historian’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 06 January 2011, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-10146> [accessed 29/04/2021].

<sup>167</sup> John Horace Round, ‘The Case of Lucas and Lisle’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, New Series, 8 (1894), 157-180.

with a tour of the town's historic sites.<sup>168</sup> During his research for his book on Colchester Castle, he also corresponded with Liberal Mayor and social reformer J.B. Harvey, about his discovery of an eighteenth-century copy of the seventeenth century Parliamentary pamphlet, *A Diary of the Siege of Colchester* written in 1648, which he acknowledged contained many details not recorded elsewhere, and which had been used by Morant in his *History of Colchester* but had since been forgotten. One of its longest entries was a description of a day-long battle, early in the siege, when Fairfax tried unsuccessfully to storm the town from the south. In May 1884, at J.B. Harvey's suggestion, Round gave a public lecture on this battle, in Colchester Town Hall, using seventeenth century weapons as visual aids.<sup>169</sup> The correspondence between the two men shows not only discussion but respect between the different sides.<sup>170</sup> For example, in a letter written in 1884 to Harvey, Round professed his devotion to Lucas and Lisle he but showed a new degree of conciliatory and openminded interest when asked if he could inspect a copy of the Parliamentarian pamphlet on the siege, *Colchester Teares*.<sup>171</sup>

To present a picture of a united community of intellectuals on the basis of this evidence would be misleading, however. J.H. Round was, in the words of one writer, a 'fierce, almost fanatical' political Conservative. He never lived in Colchester but through family connections had a lifelong interest in its history and was active in its politics through his friendship with his cousin James Round, Tory MP. He was an energetic campaigner against social reform and political radicalism and his politics were reflected in his history.<sup>172</sup> In 1899, the same year that the former Liberal Prime Minister Lord Rosebury paid for a statue of Cromwell to be erected outside Westminster Hall, Round gave a lecture in Colchester that vilified Cromwell and his rule. He railed against the Lord Protector, arguing that, 'he ...set a precedent to Charles the

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<sup>168</sup> 'Society and Personal Notes', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 20 June 1891, p. 6.

<sup>169</sup> Powell, *Round and Victorian Colchester*, p. 83.

<sup>170</sup> E.R.O, T/Z 596/1, Items Collected by J.B. Harvey in the Nineteenth Century.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> Powell, p. 85.



Second for the objectionable and dangerous practice of interfering with the constitution of local municipalities.’<sup>173</sup> According to Round, ‘the Cromwellian Charter lasted long enough to serve its purpose. It suppressed the opposition in Colchester during Cromwell’s lifetime.’<sup>174</sup> There is no doubt therefore that history remained deeply political for Horace Round as it did for his fellow Tory antiquarians who fiercely protected the Royalist historical narrative of the siege of the town.

Henry Laver, Tory Mayor and Alderman, was also a keen local historian and on the committee of the Essex Archaeological Association in the same period. He took great interest in the Castle Museum and was very interested in the history of the siege. A great admirer of Philip Morant, he even proposed a plan to construct a monument to his memory although that project never came into fruition.<sup>175</sup> Laver described the siege at a meeting of the society in 1886 in the following terms:

the siege of Colchester...and its gallant defence by the Royalists for nearly three months...The capture of this place was marked by an event which has eternally disgraced the fame of Fairfax, the two most prominent defenders- Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle- being shot at the back of the Castle.<sup>176</sup>

It may be of no surprise to learn that soon after he paid for a memorial to Lucas and Lisle to be erected in the newly established public park in front of the castle for all to see and supposedly on the spot where the Royalist leaders were shot. Laver’s influence guaranteed that at the Archaeological Society meetings, the siege was often discussed and used to celebrate a particular version of the past that suited a conservative vision of local identity and also the political position of the Conservative Party.<sup>177</sup> By these means he also ensured that the Royalist

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<sup>173</sup> ‘Oliver Cromwell and Colchester’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 02 December 1899, p. 5.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> ‘The Grave of Morant’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 08 August 1891, p. 5.

<sup>176</sup> ‘The Cyclists Congress at Colchester’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 5 June 1886, p. 5.

<sup>177</sup> ‘Essex Archaeological Society’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 21 March 1891, p. 7; ‘The London and Middlesex Archeological Society’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 31 August 1889, p. 5; ‘Archaeological Meeting at Chelmsford’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 6 December 1884, p. 7; ‘Annual Meeting of the Essex Archaeological Society’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 31 August. 1877, p. 8.

narrative of martyrdom was not eclipsed. Buckler, interested in the architecture in Essex, noted in his book on Colchester Castle that, 'It transpired that Essex families are, even to this day, divided on the questions which agitated England during the Civil War, some of them being distinguished as Cavaliers and others as Roundheads.'<sup>178</sup> These passionate and partisan historical divisions must be recognised but they were at a party and personal level. By the early twentieth century, the Borough Corporation maintained a careful, even-handed presentation of the history to chime with its policy of political consensus.

### **Conclusion**

The history of the siege was a central component in political culture in nineteenth century Colchester and acted as an important touchstone for people for comprehending and condemning political, social and religious upheaval in their own day. But the historical narrative was not static or simply imposed by elites. Different political actors revised, challenged and made use of the history in different ways according to political circumstances and to suit their own priorities and concerns. The Tories used Morant's history that emphasised Royalist heroism and martyrdom very successfully to promote their loyalist and anti-radical political agenda in the early nineteenth century. Yet their interpretation and use of the history was consistently contested, especially after mid-century, by political opponents from a wide social range. Political radicals and later Liberals and non-conformists harnessed the history to their campaigns for liberty and electoral reform. Associations for both men and women below the elite that were established in the middle of the century, many of which had particular religious and or political affiliations, helped challenge elite narratives as they became important spaces for the dissemination, negotiation and contestation of historical narratives and their political uses. By the end of the century, at least at the level of official borough politics, the historical narrative was revised, re-shaped and re-presented in ways that reinforced a politics

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<sup>178</sup> Buckler, *Colchester Castle a Roman Building*, p. 28.

of consensus, unity, civic pride. Nonetheless, enmities simmered beneath the surface, and passions and partisanship survived. The Royalist narrative of the siege did not disappear from political culture in Colchester or beyond it, however, as the next chapter will show, the contexts and meanings shifted. More often officials and business interests in the town used the myth of martyrdom in tourism development and these commercial uses played an increasingly significant role in the perpetuation, use and meaning of seventeenth century siege narratives into the twentieth century.

## Chapter Two: Tourism and the Use of the Siege of Colchester in the Long Nineteenth Century.

*Tourism...promotes and reinforces collective identities, and generates and exacerbates conflict while at the same time playing its own part in construction and content of those identities. It provides an excellent laboratory for the examination of a spectrum of social tensions on a very public stage, where interests, hopes and fears are articulated with unusual openness.<sup>1</sup>*

Tourism became an important element in the local economies of British towns during the long nineteenth century and history played a crucial role in how they marketed themselves to visitors.<sup>2</sup> According to Hubbard and Lilley, Victorian local authorities deliberately conserved and promoted ‘particular aspects of the town's history and development in a way that conformed to a marketable image.’<sup>3</sup> Yet to date there has been little historical investigation into the extent to which and how the Civil War was marketed to Victorian visitors, or how and why Colchester in particular used the story of the siege to increase its popularity as a tourist destination. This chapter aims to add to our understanding of these issues through the analysis of the uses of history in tourism in Colchester and the extent to which it marketed itself as a historic town. It focuses on how the town used the history of the siege to promote itself as a destination to visit by both individuals and institutions, locally and beyond its borders, during the Victorian period. It examines the impact of commercialisation on the representation and presentation of the history. It also explores the range of meanings and uses of the history for those who visited the town..<sup>4</sup> Using a variety of evidence, including posters, postcards, tourist guides and travel diaries, the chapter argues that while the Royalist history of the siege lost its political utility for the Borough Corporation by the end of the nineteenth century, the

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<sup>1</sup> John K. Walton, ed., *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict*, (Buffalo: Channel View Publications, 2005), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Hartmut Berghoff, Barbara Korte, Ralf Schneider and Christopher Harvie, eds., *The Making of Modern Tourism: The Cultural History of the British Experience, 1600-2000* (Cham: Palgrave, 2002), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Hubbard and Lilley, ‘Selling the Past’, p. 231.

<sup>4</sup> Readman, ‘The Place of the Past’.

conservative narrative of martyrdom survived and thrived in promotional literature designed to attract visitors to the town. The meaning of the history was shaped by different impulse into these contexts, however. The period marked a peak of great popular interest in the history of the Civil Wars, encouraged by paintings, poetry and plays but most of all perhaps by the publication of Walter Scott's hugely influential novels such as *Rokesby* (1813), and *Woodstock* (1826), that projected the idea of the combatants in the Civil Wars as romantic heroes. The impact of Scott's writing was reflected nationally, and indeed internationally, in the explosion in print of popular plays, novels and poems as well as paintings that subsumed history beneath a haze of romanticism and images of noble and loyal Cavaliers.<sup>5</sup> This popularity was also exploited by towns and villages across the country keen to develop a tourist industry to cater to these tastes.<sup>6</sup> It was in these contexts that Colchester promoted itself to the romantic visitor as a place of martyrdom and tragedy. But meanings were not simply imposed by political, cultural and commercial elites on the tourists who visited the town. People applied their own attitudes, values and imaginations to the history to construct meanings of their own. While the historical narrative remained similar, its uses and meanings were multi-layered and highly complex. Although the history owed much to a Tory, and later Conservative political sympathy, its meaning to visitors was tied less to explicitly contemporary political references but more to romantic mythology and as the century progressed, the power had diffused from a central Tory perspective to other various social groups.

### **Georgian Colchester**

Interest in visiting historic sites associated with the Civil Wars began long before Scott

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<sup>5</sup> Strong, *When Did you Last See Your Father*, p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> Ian Brown, ed., *Literary Tourism, the Trossachs, and Walter Scott* (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2012); George Dekker, *The Fictions of Romantic Tourism: Radcliffe, Scott, and Mary Shelley* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Murray Pittock, ed., *The Reception of Sir Walter Scott in Europe* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007); Ian Yeoman, Alastair Durie, Una McMahon-Beattie and others, 'Capturing the Essence of a Brand from its History: The Case of Scottish Tourism Marketing', *Journal of Brand Management*, 13 (2005), 134–147.

published his novels in the 1820s, even if confined in the main to a relatively small number of elite and middle-class travellers.<sup>7</sup> Domestic tourism expanded significantly in the middle of the eighteenth century in Britain as improved roads, growing incomes and the promotion of the health benefits of travel stimulated interest amongst middle class female visitors as well as male elites.<sup>8</sup> Indeed the closure of war-torn Europe after 1790 led to nothing short of a domestic tourist boom.<sup>9</sup> A growing taste for the gothic as well as the influence of William Gilpin and the broader movement of the ‘picturesque’, encouraged interest in local and national sites of antique ruin as a source of aesthetic enjoyment and interest.<sup>10</sup> The importance of history for late eighteenth and nineteenth century culture and the imperative to establish a national past also made sites associated with British history an engrossing topic for travellers.<sup>11</sup> The groundwork for visits was prepared by publications such as the *Gentleman’s Magazine* and Francis Grose’s *Antiquities of England and Wales* (1773–76), that produced and printed topographical surveys with images full of ideas for interesting destinations for day trips as well as longer visits to historic sites of interest.<sup>12</sup>

Colchester was among many smaller towns that appeared regularly in these publications. It is clear that alongside the Roman archaeological sites in the area, the ruined buildings that survived the Siege of Colchester in 1648 were a major attraction, as the siege had been well known as a significant event of national importance since the seventeenth

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<sup>7</sup> Timothy Mowl, and Brian Earnshaw, ‘The Origins of 18th-Century Neo-Medievalism in a Georgian Norman Castle’, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 40.4 (1981), 289–294.

<sup>8</sup> Aston, *Interpreting the Landscape*, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional*, p. 61.

<sup>10</sup> *The Making of Modern Tourism*, p. 5; Andreas Huyssen, ‘Nostalgia for Ruins’, *Grey Room*, 23 (2006), 6-21 (p. 9); William Gilpin, *Observations Relative to Picturesque Beauty... Particularly the Mountains, and Lakes of Cumberland, and Westmoreland*, 2 vols (London: 1786), pp. ii, 188.

<sup>11</sup> Sophie Thomas, ‘Ruin Nation: Ruins and Fragments in Eighteenth-Century England’, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 38.3, (2014), 130–136; Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Mowl, and Earnshaw, ‘The Origins of 18th-Century Neo-Medievalism’; Rosemary Sweet, ‘Rituals, Pageants and the Use of the Past in British Cities, c. 1790-1900’, in *Kommunale Selbstinszenierung Städtische Konstellationen zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, ed. by Christian Kiening and Martina Stercken (Zurich: Chronos, 2018), pp. 207-22.

century. During and immediately after the blockade of the town, printed reports were produced on both sides of the political divide that preoccupied readers throughout the country. After the Restoration, the Royalist narrative of the martyrdom of Lucas and Lisle at the hands of the tyrannous Fairfax was kept alive in poetry and in print and Colchester was established in national historical memory as a place of martyrdom and tragedy.<sup>13</sup> It is perhaps no surprise therefore that Colchester attracted a significant number of visitors. The famous antiquarian William Stukeley included Colchester in one of his expeditions in 1718 and produced etchings of a number of buildings that had been damaged in the siege including the north and south side of St. John's Abbey Gate as well as a detailed map of siege sites.<sup>14</sup> The travel diarist Celia Fiennes visited Colchester in 1698 and although she was mainly interested in the cloth industry located there, she also recorded in her travel journal her impressions of the 'ruinated' churches damaged by the siege.<sup>15</sup> Daniel Defoe also stayed in Colchester and included a detailed description of the town in his famous *Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, first published 1724–26 and regularly reprinted throughout the century. His principal subject was the contemporary economy and urban landscape, but he was also moved by the physical evidence of Colchester's Civil War history. Commenting that the town 'still mourns, in the ruins of a civil war', uniquely amongst his urban descriptions, he paid detailed attention to the Civil War's impact on the urban fabric which gave him a platform for his political railing against 'tyrannical and *jure divino* rule.' Defoe included a reproduction of a seventeenth century Royalist siege diary, reprinted as an antiquarian document to illustrate the history with

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<sup>13</sup> Donagan, *War in England*.

<sup>14</sup>David Boyd Haycock, 'Stukeley, William (1687–1765), Antiquary and Natural Philosopher', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-26743> [accessed 02/03/2021]; E.R.O, I/Mp 90/4/1/2, The North side of the Gatehouse of St. John's Monastery, Colchester M.G.1860, The South Side W. Stukley 1718; E.R.O, I/Mp 90/4/1/14, Print: The North West view of St. John's Abbey in Colchester; E.R.O, MAP/CM/25/1, Map of Colchester 1748, probably James Deanne; E.R.O, /Mp 90/1/1/38, A 1724 Map of Colchester drawn by William Stuckley.

<sup>15</sup> Celia Fiennes, *Through England on a Side Saddle in the Time of William and Mary* (London: Field and Tuer, 1888).

an image that had been printed for the opposing side at the time of the events.<sup>16</sup> The antiquarian Francis Grose also included images of Colchester's buildings in his volume on *The Antiquities of England and Wales* published in the 1790s and designed for middle class travellers, accompanied by historical notes. The descriptions were admittedly brief, based mainly on Morant's short architectural accounts, and filled with clichéd, picturesque descriptions. The view and description of St. Botolph's provides a good example:

This ruin not only merits the observation of the curious traveller, as a piece of antiquary, but also for its picturesque form, and the beauty and variety of its tints, which, together, make it a subject well worthy the pencil of some one of the many eminent artists, of whom this Kingdom may at present to justly boast.<sup>17</sup>

This combination of antiquarian and picturesque interest alongside concern for preservation is well captured in a newspaper article from around the middle of the eighteenth century on St. Botolph's which states:

besides the damage done to this building during the civil war, it has from time to time suffered repeated depredations and been much defaced. At length, however, the parish officers, to prevent its total demolition, took the laudable resolution of enclosing and locking it up. This has permitted the weeds and shrubs to sprout up among the mouldering walls and scattered tombs; a circumstance which adds greatly to the beauty and solemnity of the scene.<sup>18</sup>

Grose also included remarks on contemporary use that suggested a less enthusiastic interest in the building. While extoling the manifold pleasures of viewing the picturesque beauty of the ruins, he noted, for example, that St. Botolph's had been fenced in by the parish because 'idle youths' had damaged the building.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, all of this publicity encouraged interest and

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<sup>16</sup> Trevor Speller, 'Violence, Reason, and Enclosure in Defoe's Tour', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 51.3 (2011), 585-604 (p. 594).

<sup>17</sup> Francis Grose, *The Antiquities of England and Wales by Francis Grose, vol 2* (London: Hooper & Wigstead, 1783-97), p. 113.

<sup>18</sup> E.R.O, T/P/110/5, A Folder with Newspaper Cuttings from the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century.

<sup>19</sup> Grose, *The Antiquities of England and Wales*, E.R.O, D/P 203/5/1, Churchwarden Accounts of St. Botolph 1753-1782.



attention from outside the town.

A number of artists visited Colchester and produced etchings, landscape paintings and watercolours of varying quality that depicted the ivy clad siege ruins of Colchester and its castle in romantic settings. For the most part, these artists, influenced by the romantic movement, were less interested in the history of the buildings than in their emotional impact on the viewer.<sup>20</sup> Typically, they included contemporary visitors in the foreground of their pictures, slightly away from the ruins, in leisurely poses, displaying the appealing nature of the siege ruins with amateur as well as professional artists of the period. The idea was for the viewer to associate with the visitor, and the imaginative experience of the visit. A drawing made by Robert Withman of St. John's Abbey Gate in 1791 is just one of numerous examples.<sup>21</sup> Local antiquarians also diligently collected images and descriptions of Colchester's ancient and ruined buildings. Some comprised of unpublished notebooks, as for example, the 'Topographical Collections of the County of Essex part 2', compiled by the antiquarian Reverend John Pridden which included pictures of the siege ruins of Colchester.<sup>22</sup> Some topographical collections also included news cuttings alongside the images which told the story of the siege, adding to the impression that the history was of great interest. Several of these local works were also printed and published.<sup>23</sup> They complemented the more ambitious guides

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<sup>20</sup> For a more nuanced analysis of the historical and political use and understanding of ruins in the period see, David Stewart, 'Political Ruins: Gothic Sham Ruins and the '45'', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 55.4 (1996), 400-411 (p. 400); See also Walsham, p. 146.

<sup>21</sup> E.R.O, I/Mp 90/1/1/35, Engraving of Colchester by J.W.M Turner 1827; I/Mp 90/3/1/20, 1807 Castle; I/Mp 90/3/1/16: 1807 Castle by Hassell; E.R.O, MAP/CM/16/13, Map of Essex made by Robert Morden and Joseph Pask made in 1695-1700, Sold by Robt Morden at the Atlas in Cornhill, and by Joseph Pask Stationer at the West end of the Royall Exchange London.

<sup>22</sup> E.R.O, D/DU 23/139/1/2, Rev. John Pridden's Notebook, 'Topographical Collections of the County of Essex part 2'. For biographical details of Pridden, see Richard Riddell, 'Pridden, John (1758-1825), Antiquary and Architect', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-22780> [accessed 14/02/2020];

<sup>23</sup> See also John Parker, E.R.O, T/P 110/5, Pictures of Colchester were Published by John W. Parker and sold by all Booksellers. These Images included the Castle, Abbey and Churches.

geared to a national audience and tourist market.<sup>24</sup> All of this evidence points firmly to the assumption that while Colchester was widely recognised for its Roman history in the second half of the eighteenth century, the siege was also well known and of great interest to visitors. This conclusion is confirmed by Morant in his history of 1748, when he discounted the mystical theory that grass would not grow where the Royalist leaders were shot, instead asserting that the explanation lay in the ‘great resort of people to see the place.’<sup>25</sup>

The popularity of the siege sites accelerated in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Political upheavals in France encouraged great interest in the history of the Civil Wars in England due to the parallels that could be drawn between contemporary and historical events, and these developments made Colchester an even more appealing destination to native and international traveller alike.<sup>26</sup> An Italian gentleman referred to the ruins and the history in a travel journal on his visit to Colchester.<sup>27</sup> Letters written by the Frenchman Francois de La Rochefoucauld during his tour of Suffolk in 1784 show how well known the history was to him and how intrinsic the sites of the siege were to the attraction of the town as a visitor destination. He wrote:

Three things in Colchester should excite the curiosity of strangers. First, the castle, which is extremely ancient, is square built and very large, its position commands the town and surrounding country: one sees from the top all the land around for a great distance; it was famous in the time of Charles I for the sieges it withstood.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> ‘St. Botolph’s Colchester’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 02 January 1835, p. 1; Morant, *The History and Antiquities*, p. 61; E.R.O, I/Mo 90/1/60, Colchester produced in 1741; Samuel Buck, *Proposals for Publishing by Subscription, Twenty Four Perspective Views of the Present State of the Most Noted Abbies, Religious Foundations, Castles, and Other Remains of Antiquity, in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex. By Samuel and Nathaniel Buck* (London: Buck, 1737).

<sup>25</sup> Morant, *The History and Antiquities*, p.68 after quoting Whitelock, p.333.

<sup>26</sup> E.R.O, MAP/CM/25/1, Ichnography of Colchester 1748; E.R.O, /Mp 90/1/1/38, A 1724 Map of Colchester Drawn by William Stuckley.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Essex Archaeological Society’, *Essex Standard*, 21 March 1891, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Francois de La Rochefoucauld, *A Frenchman’s Year in Suffolk, 1784*, ed. and trans. by Norman Scarfe (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1988), p. 113.

## The Nineteenth Century

Providing for visitors became part of the rhythm of local life in Colchester as numbers expanded in the nineteenth century and tourism became a significant contributor to the local economy.<sup>29</sup> Local and often Tory antiquarians lured learned visitors to Colchester with the offer of specialist tours of siege sites. In 1855 the local antiquarian, the Reverend E. L. Cutts led a tour for the Essex Archaeological Society, who after visiting Colchester Castle and viewing its ‘objects of interest ... proceeded on a tour through the town to inspect its antiquarian curiosities, including St. Botolph’s Priory, St. John’s Abbey Gate...’<sup>30</sup> The visit was clearly regarded as an important event and covered not only by the local press but also by newspapers across the country, for example in York and Suffolk.<sup>31</sup> The local antiquarian Henry Laver also organised many walking tours of the siege sites in the town, and in 1884 the local historian and Tory politician, John Horace Round guided the London based antiquarian society known as the, ‘The Cocked Hat Club’ around sites of historic interest and entertained guests to a summary of the history of the siege.<sup>32</sup> A local press report explained that Round, ‘led the party next to St. John’s Abbey Gate, where he was able to point out much of the general scheme of attack and defence at the Siege of Colchester.’<sup>33</sup> Amongst other specialist visitors from London were The British Archaeological Society who visited in 1864 and frequently thereafter, as well as the British Archaeological Institute who came to Colchester to inspect the Abbey Gate in 1876.<sup>34</sup> Admittedly, the Civil Wars were not the main attraction for all. The Roman and Norman historical sites were of great interest to visitors as well as local historians who

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<sup>29</sup> ‘Colchester Literary Institution. Roman Sepulchral Remains’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 06 April 1849, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Essex Archaeological Society’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 31 August 1855, p. 3; The Society made numerous visits to Colchester, first in 1846 and again in 1860

<sup>31</sup> ‘Archaeological meeting’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 16 October 1846, p. 3; ‘The Antiquities of Colchester’, *York Herald*, Saturday 24th October, 1846, p. 5; ‘The Antiquities of Colchester’, *The Suffolk Chronicle; or Weekly General Advertiser & County Express*, Saturday 17 October 1846, p. 4; ‘Essex Archeological Society’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 21 September 1860, p. 3; ‘Royal Archaeological Institute at Colchester: Perambulation of the Town’, *East Anglian Daily Times*, Wednesday 09 August 1876, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> ‘The Cocked Hat Club at Copford and Colchester’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 12 July 1884, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> ‘British Archaeological Association’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 12 August 1864, p. 2-3.

were keen to promote the historical credentials of their town. The London based antiquarian society, *Noviomagians*, for example visited Colchester in 1883 and their tour conducted by Henry Laver concentrated on the Norman and Roman antiquities entirely.<sup>35</sup>

But the siege and the buildings associated with its history continued to be a powerful draw. Guidebooks were published to cater for the needs of tourists who preferred to explore the sites on their own, such as that produced and published by Charles Benham which included a walking tour of siege ruins with accompanying text.<sup>36</sup> Benham noted a list of buildings in Colchester worthy of a visit. Amongst the most important were Colchester Castle, St. Botolph's Priory, St. John's Abbey and Holy Trinity Church.<sup>37</sup> Images of these buildings were also complemented by increasingly detailed historical content. Essays about St. Botolph and Colchester's Castle were written and published in 1805 and 1807 that told the history of the sites accompanied by images that recounted details about the damage done in the siege and the individuals involved.<sup>38</sup> Local and national newspapers also published illustrated histories of the siege, as for example an article in *The Illustrated London News* of 1869 which featured a short history of the Siege of Colchester together with images of the ruins of St. Botolph's, St. John's and Colchester's Castle.<sup>39</sup>

All of these reports accepted uncritically and perpetuated significantly a narrative of Colchester as a place of martyrdom and tragedy that greatly appealed to the Victorian visitor steeped in a haze of romantic melodrama. They were bolstered in their efforts by novelists

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<sup>35</sup> 'The Noviomagians in Colchester', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 14 July 1883, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> Charles Benham, *Colchester: Notes on Some of the More Interesting Features of the Town* (Colchester, Benham, 1895).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p. 16.

<sup>38</sup> E.R.O, D/F 23/4/8, An Essay Towards A History and Description of Colchester Castle, Essex (printed 1807 with 2 engravings); The Priory Church of St. Botolph. At Colchester, Essex (printed 1805 with engraving), found in Britton, John, *The Architectural Antiquities of Great Briton* (London: Longman Hurst, 1807).

<sup>39</sup> 'The Town and Camp of Colchester', *Illustrated London News*, Saturday 19 June 1869, p. 8; 'Ruins of the Priory Church of St. Botolph, at Colchester', *The Saturday Magazine*, 6.185 (1835), 199-200.

who saw the potential that the setting of the siege had for romantic fiction.<sup>40</sup> For example, Matilda Charlotte Houstoun's novel, *A Heart of Fire*, was set in and around the town of Colchester. She described the protagonist imagining herself, 'walking; with the man whom she dared not call her lover, amongst crumbling ruins, and clambering, with his aid, over the rough places, now overgrown with a wilderness of self-sown plants, and trees that had been the growth of centuries.'<sup>41</sup> All of this publicity raised the profile of Colchester as an ideal destination for the Victorian romantic traveller to visit.

The tours and guides that were provided for visitors helped preserve and disseminate the Royalist narrative of the siege because they were organised and produced mostly by local antiquarians and historians, the majority of whom were local clergy or Conservative Party politicians. As Rosemary Sweet has argued, promoting the town's history offered an ideal opportunity for these men to develop their reputation and position in the local community.<sup>42</sup> They were also driven by patriotic zeal to enhance the honour of the town and its place within a national British history.<sup>43</sup> It is perhaps no surprise therefore that the history they told was inseparable from their politics and offered a strongly Royalist, Anglican interpretation of the siege in line with Morant's history of events. For example, print workers from the regional newspapers were treated to a tour of siege sites in 1866. It seems the stories of romantic martyrdom told uncritically alongside the picturesque ruins made the Civil Wars an appealing experience for them. According to reports 'they explored 'the remains of the old castle, surrounded with so many historical associations of the civil wars of the 17th century... Quitting the festive board, they visited the ruins of St. Botolph's Priory and St. John's Abbey Gate,

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<sup>40</sup> Farah Mendlesohn, *Creating Memory: Historical Fiction and the English Civil War* (Cham: Palgrave, 2020); Walter Scott, *Kenilworth* (London: Hurst, Robinson, 1821).

<sup>41</sup> Matilda Charlotte Houstoun, *A Heart on Fire. A Novel, vol.3* (London: F.V. White, 1887), p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>43</sup> Sweet, *The Writing of Urban Histories*, p. 3.

passing St. Giles Church, where lie buried the remains of the two knights, Lucas and Lisle.<sup>44</sup> A newspaper which reported another of these tours in 1886, stated that St. Botolph's was, 'used as a Parish Church until the Siege, when the Puritans utterly destroyed every part.'<sup>45</sup> Similarly, during a tour put on by Henry Laver, he apparently, 'warmed up while talking upon this subject (Civil War), and spoke with measureless severity of Fairfax and Ireton, amid the approving "hear, hears" of a clergyman, whose Royalist zeal led him temporarily to forget he was in a church.'<sup>46</sup> Charles Benham included a detailed description of the impact of the siege on the abbey in his guidebook, blaming the 'puritans' for its destruction.<sup>47</sup> As Benham commented:

The capture of this place was marked by an event which has eternally disgraced the fame of Fairfax, the two most prominent defenders- Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle- being shot at the back of the Castle, after being treated in the most heartless manner by the Court Martial.<sup>48</sup>

Benham's tendentious interpretation of events shows that for him the implications of radicalism and revolution were still well understood and he used his guide to promote a conservative view.

### **The Castle Museum**

The Castle Museum in Colchester was another important means by which local elites and commercial interests sought to enhance the prestige and prosperity of the town through its history and the memory of the siege was disseminated through the curation of its exhibits. As several scholars have commented, the growth of civic pride associated with a more general ambition to improve urban fabric were amongst the motives for museum development in the period. The civilising power of the arts and moral improvement was another important driver.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> 'Printers' Holiday Excursion to Colchester', *Essex Herald*, Tuesday 03 July 1866, p. 8, and *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 06 July 1866, p. 8.

<sup>45</sup> 'St. Botolph's Priory', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 05 June 1886, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> 'The Chelmsford Odd Volumes at Colchester', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 14 September 1894, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> Benham, *Colchester: Notes*, p. 16.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7.

<sup>49</sup> Priscilla Boniface and Peter Fowler, *Heritage and Tourism in the 'Global Village'* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 103; Daniel J. Walkowitz, Lisa Maya Knauer, eds., *Contested Histories in Public Space: Memory, Race and Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), p. 9.

Until recently it had been supposed that urban areas considered their status as deficient if they did not include a museum. However, recent research has shown that far fewer museums were created in the Victorian period than had previously been assumed.<sup>50</sup> An 1888 report identified two hundred and eleven museums in the UK, almost half of which were built after 1872.<sup>51</sup> Colchester was therefore making an important statement about its ambition and its vision of itself as a ‘historic town’ when the decision was made to establish the museum in 1860. There had been attempts to institute museums before this date. It seems there were plans to open a museum in the late eighteenth century with the entrance fee set at one shilling but the trustees believed it excluded too many.<sup>52</sup> William Wire, the liberal antiquarian and autodidact also had his own museum for a brief period in 1840 that displayed his private collection of Roman, Medieval and Stuart objects such as coins and cannon balls from 1648.<sup>53</sup> It was not until 1860, however, when the Conservative M. P. Charles Gray Round offered the crypt of the castle as a site, that Colchester’s Corporation and the Essex Archaeological Society supported plans for a public museum.<sup>54</sup>

Museums in this period tended to reflect the interests of their founders and this was no more obvious than in the museum in Colchester. They were a way for the local elites to preserve and control the local narrative of the past. Conservative members of the society and borough politicians took charge of the selection of objects and themes to be displayed and they shaped the history of the siege that was presented to the public.<sup>55</sup> John Horace Round and

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<sup>50</sup> Boniface, Fowler, *Heritage*, p. 103.

<sup>51</sup> Sara Selwood, ‘Looking Back: Understanding Visits to Museums in the UK Since the Nineteenth Century’, *Cultural Trends*, 27.4 (2018), 225-231; Silke Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 17.

<sup>52</sup> E.R.O, D/DRb Zi, Correspondence Between Antiquarians such as Robert Ainsworth George Ashby, Philip Morant, Charles Godwyn and others, Along with Some Discussion on Gibbon. 1728-1776.

<sup>53</sup> E.R.O, D/Y 37/1/2, Colchester Museum by W.Wire 1840, Catalogue; ‘Museum’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 20 November 1840, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> E.R.O, D/F 23/4/19, Souvenir Booklet issued by Colchester Town Council for the Centenary of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1835 (Colchester: Colchester Town Council, 1936); E.R.O, D/B/ 6 M3/1, Special Committee Minute Book 1856-1878.

<sup>55</sup> For more on selection and representation in museums, see Crane, *Museums and Memory*, p. 3.

Henry Laver were very influential in this respect and it was their vision of the history of the town that was put on show to the visitors.<sup>56</sup> Antiquity in this period commanded high respect and the museum took great trouble to display Colchester's origins as the *Camulodunum* of the Romans. The debate as to whether Colchester was *Camulodunum*, one of the first Roman cities in England, had been settled in the previous century after years of academic dispute. It was with some considerable pride and note of triumph therefore that the author of the *Great Eastern Railway Guide*, proclaimed that, 'if anyone doubted that Colchester was *Camulodunum*, then they should check the museum in Colchester and the Roman relics located there.'<sup>57</sup> Members of the Essex Archaeological Society purchased Roman coins from the archeologist S.J. Duncan who had recently conducted an excavation of the castle site and donated them to the museum soon after it was founded in the 1860s.<sup>58</sup> Roman coins, helmets and even children's' coffins were put on display.<sup>59</sup> Interestingly a catalogue of exhibits in the museum published in 1876, recorded who owned what and the list underlines the influence of the conservative dominated Archaeological Society and local elites on the content of the exhibitions.<sup>60</sup>

There appears to have been some reluctance by museum organisers to foreground the history of the Civil Wars, perhaps because it was so contentious. It is clear from the collection that the vision of the identity and historic importance of Colchester presented to the public was most closely tied to antiquity, since artefacts from the Roman, Greek and Egyptian past dominated the display. Seventeenth century exhibits were fewer in number. But the siege nonetheless represented a significant exhibit. Displays included a small collection of cannon balls and weaponry, and some 'Photographs of Antiquities and Views in Essex', that included

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<sup>56</sup> E.R.O, D/B/ 6 M3/1, 1856-1878.

<sup>57</sup> Measom, *The Official Illustrated Guide To The Great Eastern Railway*.

<sup>58</sup> E.R.O, D/B/ 6 M3/1, 1856-1878.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*; a wider collection was published in 1893 ESAH collection pamphlet (p DA 670.E7C700), Henry Laver, *A Guide to the Collection of Antiquities: the Property of the Corporation of Colchester and the Essex Archaeological Society, in Colchester Castle* (Colchester: Wiles and Sons, 1893).



images of the siege sites.<sup>61</sup> Seventeenth century pamphlets were also displayed and interestingly included the Parliamentarian version of events outlined in the *Colchester Teares* of 1648, found and published in 1840 by the political radical, William Wire.<sup>62</sup> The chronology of the history of Colchester on display in the museum ended with the siege in 1648, suggesting that local historians saw the blockade as the last local historical event of national importance.<sup>63</sup> The siege was also given considerable prominence in literature produced in association with the exhibits. These volumes included conventional conservative narratives of the Royalist myth of martyrdom and tragedy. Henry Laver, the conservative inclined antiquarian, became the honorary curator of the museum in 1876, for example, and he published a guide for the growing number of visitors in 1893, ‘to direct attention to those specimens considered to be the most interesting’. Siege artefacts were included amongst them.<sup>64</sup> Later in 1900 Charles Benham also wrote and published a guide to the castle and museum, describing the building as, ‘a truly commanding edifice which has stood the brunt of many a siege and defied alike the ravages of time and the determined efforts of man,’ including the efforts of the ironmonger John Wheeley to demolish it.<sup>65</sup> Consideration was given to the origins of the castle and to the great debate amongst archaeologists, both local and national, as to whether the site was Roman or Norman.<sup>66</sup> But Benham also paid great attention to the impact the siege had on the castle, describing the storming of the walls by Fairfax and his troops and what to him was the ‘tragic’ and treacherous imprisonment and death of Lucas and Lisle within its walls.<sup>67</sup>

As the Castle was increasingly promoted as a site of national importance to visit, publicity material perpetuated the Royalist myth of martyrdom, often uncritically. George

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> ‘Colchester Teares’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 14 March 1885, p. 7.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Laver, *A Guide to the Collection of Antiquities the Property of the Corporation of Colchester*.

<sup>65</sup> Charles Benham, *Benham’s Castle and Museum Guide* (Colchester: Benham, 1900); R. E. M Wheeler, ‘The Vaults under Colchester Castle: a Further Note’, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 10 (1920), 87–89.

<sup>66</sup> Benham, *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

Buckler, an architect and artist, part of a dynasty characterised as ‘key propogandists and actors in the nineteenth century Gothic revival’, wrote an illustrated history of the castle, published in 1876, for example, designed to appeal to the romantic visitor.<sup>68</sup> The emphasis was decidedly architectural, but the text also included its history from Roman times until the siege. Buckler extolled the magnificence of the building and its resilience in the face of the Parliamentary attack, commenting, ‘Of how few castles in England can this be said, the massive and compact walls of Colchester Castle withstood all the storms of war and depredations and even the fierce attack made upon them by Cromwell’s Army.’<sup>69</sup> It was clear who the enemy was here.

Similarly, and unsurprisingly, the vision of noble sacrifice of romantic doomed Cavaliers was at the heart of history books that were produced in increasing numbers for visitors by prominent members of Colchester society on the castle and the siege during the Civil Wars. For example, in 1882, the local conservative minded historian John Horace Round wrote a history of the castle, which deliberately appealed to popular interest in antiquity and picturesque scenery as well as to the popularity of romantic representations of the Civil Wars. He described the castle in the following terms:

The picturesque quaintness of Stuart days gave way to the prim sobriety of the formal Georgian edifice, on which the Victorian era has in turn bestowed frontages of pretentious motley. Yet behind their modernised exteriors, the old houses have lingered on... carries us back, in thought, to the Colchester of Lucas and of Fairfax.<sup>70</sup>

In similar vein, Bertha Golding wrote a short history of the castle alongside other buildings damaged during the siege that reinforced the conventional view of the villainous Parliamentarians. In it, she declared, ‘At the time of the siege, Fairfax turned his thoughts to the dismantling the wall and fortifications... Fairfax then addressed himself in a slight and

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<sup>68</sup> ‘The Buckler Topographical Collection: a Dynastical Reading’, *British Library*, <https://www.bl.uk/picturing-places/articles/a-dynastical-reading-of-the-buckler-topographical-collection> [accessed 01/02/2022].

<sup>69</sup> George Buckler, *Colchester Castle a Roman Building, and the Oldest and Noblest Monument of the Romans in Britain. With illustrative Plans and Sketches* (Colchester: Benham & Harrison, 1876-82), p. 9.

<sup>70</sup> John Horace Round, *The History and Antiquities of Colchester Castle* (Colchester: Benham, 1882), p. 109.

contemptuous manner to Sir Charles Lucas.<sup>71</sup> The book covered the execution of the knights as well the destruction of other historic sites such as St. Botolph's and the villainy of Fairfax was uncritically declared.<sup>72</sup>

Colchester Castle Museum was a great success and promoted the historical credentials of the town on a wider national stage.<sup>73</sup> As well as specialist visitors such as the British Archaeological Association and the Archaeological Institute, the museum attracted tourists from the local area as well as outside it.<sup>74</sup> A local newspaper report of 1870 stated that the museum threw its doors open, 'for the general benefit of the inhabitants of this town.'<sup>75</sup> Another report the same year said that:

The interest taken by the public in the Colchester Museum still seems to be on the increase, if we may judge by the number of visitors to it, and by the contributions which are constantly being sent in from all parts... It is gratifying to find that the public of Colchester are appreciating the museum of the town. Nearly 8,000 persons have inspected the objects contained during the last year...<sup>76</sup>

By 1872, visitors were exceeding ten thousand annually.<sup>77</sup> The status of the visitors cannot be deduced from this evidence but the undoubted importance of the museum as a tourist attraction is underlined by the fact that by 1909, when a visitor count was taken for the committee it was recorded that, 'visitors in the last twelve months is 34,453.'<sup>78</sup> The high number may have been associated with the magnificent pageant that took place in Colchester that same year and which will be examined in more detail in Chapter Five.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, it is evident that history and antiquity was an attraction for increasingly large numbers of visitors to Colchester during the

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<sup>71</sup> Bertha L. Golding, *A Short Account of Colchester Castle: Its Founders, Governors, Constables and Owners* (London: S. Catling, 1883)

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 6-12.

<sup>73</sup> 'Colchester Museum', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 09 September 1870, p. 2.

<sup>74</sup> Round, *History and Antiquities of Colchester Castle*, p. 132.

<sup>75</sup> 'Essex Archaeological Society', *Essex Standard*, Wednesday 03 October 1860, p. 2-3.

<sup>76</sup> 'To the Editor of the Essex Standard', *Essex Standard*, Friday 04 February 1870, p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> Brown, *Victorian Colchester*, p. 45.

<sup>78</sup> E.R.O, D/Z 72/8, Report of the Museum and Muniment Committee 1909.

<sup>79</sup> 'Tourism and Travel', *The Redress of the Past*, <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/key-themes/> [accessed 16/04/2020].

nineteenth century and that the history of the siege, presented in a romantic almost mythical style, was an important part of the appeal. Thomas Alleyn, a visitor to the castle in 1897 had this to say of the site, 'no very vivid imagination is needed to people its courts with Norman barons and squires, and to see the fierce Parliamentary soldiers battering at its walls.'<sup>80</sup>

The attraction and accessibility of the castle and its museum increased still further when its grounds became a public park in 1892 and a new monument was erected that ensured that the Royalist memory of the siege became a focus for the cultural heritage on display. It may have been no coincidence that at the high point of controversy over the proposal by the Liberal Prime Minister Lord Thorneycroft to install a statue of Cromwell outside Parliament, the conservative minded Henry Laver commissioned and donated an obelisk to commemorate the death of the two knights at the hands of Fairfax, which was installed in the park on the spot supposedly where the two knights were shot.<sup>81</sup> The shape of the obelisk suggests that Laver was perhaps inspired by William James Erasmus Wilson and his installation of Cleopatra's Needle in London in 1878.<sup>82</sup> Civic pride and Tory conviction was probably a catalyst for its creation. The monument acted as a material memorial promoted by a particular political constituency to the Royalist myth of martyrdom. But the memorial was also widely publicised in tourist literature that was designed to resonate with romantic Victorian visitors and enhance their experience.<sup>83</sup> For example, soon after the monument was opened officially, a visit by some tourists to Colchester and its castle was described in the provincial press:

The visitors before leaving the spot inspected a monument erected by Mr. H. Laver to the memory of Lucas and Lisle, two Royalist officers who were shot after the surrender of Colchester to the forces of the Parliament when the town was besieged during the Civil War. The procession next passed on through the Castle, and returned then by Museum Street and High Street to the Town Hall, where it finally dispersed.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Annie Berlyn, *Photo Pictures in East Anglia by Payne Jennings. With Descriptive Letterpress.* (Ashtead: 1897), p. 57.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>82</sup> [Anon.], 'Cleopatra's Needle', *Scientific American*, 36.14 (1877), 215–216.

<sup>83</sup> Anthony Grafton, 'Obelisks and Empires of the Mind', *The American Scholar*, 71.1 (2002), 123–127.

<sup>84</sup> 'New Park for Colchester', *Norfolk News*, Saturday 22 October 1892, p. 9.

People expected to see memorials to their heroes in Victorian Britain and the obelisk was thereafter routinely mentioned as an object of interest. In a report in the press on the visit to Colchester by the British Archaeological Association in 1902, for example, it was noted that, ‘Within the grounds, now the Castle Park, an obelisk marks the spot where the Royalist Commanders, Lisle and Lucas were shot by the orders of Fairfax, probably urged to the deed by the sterner Ireton.’<sup>85</sup> A report on ‘observations while cycling’ in a local publication a few years later remarked that:

The Castle is the largest Norman keep in the country, being twice the size of the White Tower of London; a solitary tree grows on the top of the wall by the round turret. In the castle-grounds is a small obelisk which bears the following inscription: THIS STONE MARKS THE SPOT WHERE, ON AUGUST 28, 1648, AFTER THE SURRENDER OF THE TOWN, THE TWO ROYALIST CAPTAINS, SIR CHARLES LUCAS and SIR GEORGE LISLE WERE SHOT BY THE ORDER OF SIR THOMAS FAIRFAX, THE PARLIAMENTERIAN GENERAL.

The article then recounted the tale of the knights’ heroic and martyred death.<sup>86</sup>

Popular interest amongst visitors to nineteenth century Colchester in the historical events that took place during the siege is further indicated by the content of guidebooks that deliberately exploited the popular taste for ruined spaces and chivalric stories in the histories that they told. These books exposed visitors to the narratives of martyrdom that allied with the politics of the local historians who wrote them. Nonetheless, the accounts were re-worked to appeal to an audience steeped in the popular literary genre of historical romance that transformed history more to myth. As one guidebook for ‘professional excursions’ put it in

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<sup>85</sup> ‘Visit to Colchester: British Archaeological Association’, *London Evening Standard*, Friday 19 September 1902, p. 2.

<sup>86</sup> ‘Colchester’, *Graphic*, Saturday 24 March 1894, p. 23; ‘Observations’ *Cycling*, Saturday 07 February 1903, p. 36.

1843, 'Colchester was undoubtedly, one of the most important of the Roman Stations...the Cavaliers and Parliamentarians; deluged it with blood'.<sup>87</sup>

### **The Railway**

It was the arrival of the railway that enabled Colchester along with destinations all over Britain to increase dramatically the number and social type of tourists that visited, because rail travel was so much quicker and cheaper than other forms of transport.<sup>88</sup> The era of the railway coincided with growing incomes and increased leisure time for middle and working-class groups.<sup>89</sup> It also marked a peak of great popular interest in the history of the Civil Wars, encouraged by paintings, poetry and plays but most of all perhaps by the publication of Walter Scott's romantic historical novel *Woodstock* that had an enormous impact on people's interest and attitudes to the past.<sup>90</sup> Colchester was an important stop on the Great Eastern Railway, on the line between Norwich and Clacton. Its first station opened in 1843 and unsurprisingly, the town saw an enormous increase in the number and diversity of visitors to its sites of historical interest as men and women came to the town in groups.<sup>91</sup> History was the great attraction for Colchester, and the siege was a central part of the appeal.

Railway guides became an important medium through which the history of the siege was disseminated and framed to appeal to romantic tastes. Railway companies were all private enterprises, whose aim was to create profit.<sup>92</sup> Railway guides were published by the different rail companies to persuade people to travel to interesting destinations. The aim was to promote aspects of the culture and history of the nation to people of all classes, as well as to point the

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<sup>87</sup> E.R.O, LIB/914.2094267 EXC, *Professional Excursions, by an Auctioneer Part 1* (London, Alfred Greenland, 1843).

<sup>88</sup> Jack Simmons, 'Railways, Hotels, and Tourism in Great Britain 1839-1914', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19.2 (1984), 201-222 (p. 201).

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Strong, *When Did you Last See Your Father*, p. 31.

<sup>91</sup> William Hunt, *The Puritan Moment: The Coming of Revolution in an English County*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 14.

<sup>92</sup> Choi Tina Young, 'The Railway Guide's Experiments in Cartography: Narrative, Information, Advertising', *Victorian Studies*, 57.2 (2015), 251-284 (p. 266).

reader to sites ‘worthy of interest.’<sup>93</sup> Descriptions transported their readers to locations across the nation through telling stories of familiar histories and mysterious situations.<sup>94</sup> Significant cultural documents in their own right, these guides are very useful for establishing how the nation’s tastes were catered for in the histories that were told. They often covered a whole line and took the reader through the many different destinations en-route, and each location had to offer something distinctive to the traveller. Colchester stood out as a prime location because of its history and by the middle of the century it was marketed by the railway companies as one of the most interesting locations to visit.<sup>95</sup> The guide produced by the Great Eastern Railway in 1865 presented the town as an ancient and historic town, keeping pace with civic progress but avoiding industrialisation.<sup>96</sup> For example, it is interesting to note that when the Eastern Counties Railway officially opened at Colchester, ‘A party of ladies and gentlemen from London had already visited the town by railway and inspected the castle ruins, St. Botolph’s Priory and St. John’s Abbey Gate.’<sup>97</sup> The siege past was being accessed by an increasingly number of outsiders, from a variety of different backgrounds.

The trauma of the siege alongside the myth of the martyrdom of Lucas and Lisle had commercial value and was promoted intensively in the guides to cater to public tastes. The first one was published in 1851 and Colchester was clearly marketed as a historic destination.<sup>98</sup> The entry in the guide for the town included short summaries of its Roman past and ended with a detailed account of the Siege of Colchester during the Civil Wars that drew mainly on Morant’s history. The text invited visitors to explore the romantic ruins and told mythical stories of the martyrdom of the Royalist Knights.<sup>99</sup> Detailed attention was also paid to

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<sup>93</sup> [Anon.], *The Eastern Counties Railway Illustrated Guide* (London: James Truscott, 1851), p. 1; Tina Young, ‘The Railway Guide’s Experiments’, p. 252.

<sup>94</sup> *The Eastern Counties Railway Illustrated Guide*, *Ibid*, p. 277.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, p. 266.

<sup>96</sup> Brown, *Colchester*, p. 162

<sup>97</sup> Sherry, *A Portrait of Victorian Colchester*, p. 15.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1.

buildings that were damaged by the Parliamentarians during the siege and great emphasis was placed on the destruction caused by Fairfax and his troops to the castle, the priory and the abbey.<sup>100</sup> The ‘visual experience’ of a location was very important in the guidebooks to allow for creative and individual interpretation as history moved from the page to a particular location.<sup>101</sup> In the 1851 guide, for example, the anonymous author noted that ‘St. John’s Abbey was destroyed by the guns of Fairfax and that what remained was the porter’s lodge and a few monastic buildings which became a barn.’<sup>102</sup> The story of Fairfax’s complicated connection to the Duke of Buckingham was also included in the text. According to some accounts, Buckingham, who was married to Fairfax’s daughter, asked Charles II to erase the inscription on the tomb of Lucas and Lisle in St. Giles Church in Colchester, which stated that Fairfax barbarously murdered the knights.<sup>103</sup> Such stirring stories of intrigue and treachery were romantic images that captured the imagination of the reader and shows how marketable Restoration mythology could be.

As time went by more illustrations were included in the guides. George Measom, railway topographer, illustrator and philanthropist pioneered this approach.<sup>104</sup> His guide to the Great Eastern Railway was published in 1865 and provides a good example.<sup>105</sup> He addressed his guides directly to the reader, providing practical information as well as descriptions. He wrote his guide in a narrative style, designed to engage and fire the imagination of the reader by using the present tense. For example, he described an episode of combat outside the town during the siege in the following terms:

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<sup>100</sup> *The Eastern Counties Railway Illustrated Guide*, p. 56.

<sup>101</sup> Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 58-59.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>104</sup> G. H. Martin, ‘Measom, Sir George Samuel (1818–1901), Publisher and Philanthropist.’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 22 September 2005,

<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-89945>

[accessed 22/03/2022]; Measom, *The Official Illustrated Guide To the Great Eastern Railway*.

<sup>105</sup> Measom, *The Official Illustrated Guide*.



The guns of Fairfax, planted on the high ground towards Wivenhoe, are levelling the old Church of St. Botolph, and scattering our path with shattered columns, roofs, and archways. At length the murderous turmoil ceases; the waves roll back; and all that remains of the splendid edifice are these crumbling walls.<sup>106</sup>

Measom drew out the romantic and heroic aspects of the story to add depth and interest. In the section on the castle he explained that, ‘On the ground floor beneath, opening on the ruined quadrangle, is the little arched, dark, dismal room in which Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle were lodged the night before they were led out to receive their death shots.’<sup>107</sup> As with the majority of guides to Colchester in the nineteenth century, the Parliamentarians were depicted as undisciplined, violent and destructive, as the account drew on Morant’s Tory and Royalist interpretation to construct its narrative of events. In his description of the abbey he noted that the site, ‘suffered greatly in the civil wars, being first plundered by a Puritan *mob*, and afterward occupied, during the siege, by the troops of Fairfax, who, when they left Sir Charles Lucas a corpse, left also the house of his family a *ruin*...Tradition has forgotten where its church stood.’<sup>108</sup> There is no evidence that Measom’s intentions here were overtly political. Nor does it seem Measom was interested in questions of balance or in uncovering the historical ‘facts.’ He understood the appeal of the romantic myth of the noble sacrifice of the two knights to Victorian visitors and shaped a story that appealed to popular tastes.

These guides were produced throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and alongside the Roman past, the history of the siege was always centre stage.<sup>109</sup> The author of the 1910 guide is unknown, but the focus was the same as earlier publications. Considerable attention was given to the story of the siege and detailed descriptions were included of the the buildings that were damaged in the conflict. Interestingly, the writer used the expression, ‘the

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, p. 144.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, p. 141.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, p. 146.

<sup>109</sup> [Anon.], *The Official Guide to the Great Eastern Railway Illustrated* (London: Cassell &Co, 1910).

memorable siege,' a phrase derived from Carter's pamphlet and repeated regularly in newspapers and histories throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>110</sup> He also included sections with individual descriptions of the buildings and their histories of the castle, the priory as well as the new town hall.<sup>111</sup> An account of the death of Lucas and Lisle was once again included to stir the imagination. The writer stated that, 'The triumph of Fairfax was sadly marred by the precipitate execution of Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle, two gallant noblemen who had commanded the Royalist infantry.'<sup>112</sup> The railway guide of 1914 was written along similar lines.<sup>113</sup> It consisted of very short descriptions of the history of the buildings associated with the siege and included aspects of their Medieval and Norman histories as well. Maps were included that enabled the public to organise and follow their own tour of the sites that were of particular interest to them. The history of the town that was told from Roman times to more recent history, also made connections to the author's contemporary world, noting connections between the Siege of 1648 and the army presence in Colchester since 1860.<sup>114</sup> Interestingly, perhaps in keeping with a move towards political consensus of the time but fairly exceptionally for these publications, the author dealt more delicately with the politics of the period, steering a more respectful line towards Fairfax's victory, yet still mentioned the two knights, described as men who displayed 'loyalty and sufferings for their King.'<sup>115</sup> The memorial in St. Giles Church was mentioned, but the text did not refer explicitly to the excoriating inscription to their 'barbarous murder.'<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> 'March of Intellect', *Reading Mercury*, Monday 12 October 1835, p. 4, 'Chelmsford, *Essex Standard*, Friday 25 May 1849, p. 2; 'Essex and Colchester General Hospital', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 18 November 1893, p. 8; 'Colchester Town Council', *Essex Herald*, Tuesday 10 May 1892, p. 3; Mathew Carter, *A True Relation of that Honorable, though Unfortunate Expedition of Kent, Essex, and Colchester, in 1648* (Colchester: 1745), p. iv.

<sup>111</sup> *Great Eastern Railway* (1910).

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, p. 123.

<sup>113</sup> [Anon.], *The Official Guide to the great Eastern Railway* (London: Cassell &Co, 1914).

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, p. 124.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, p. 123.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*.

General purpose guidebooks to both counties and towns also appeared more frequently throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>117</sup> In Colchester, as elsewhere, the majority were published after the arrival of the railway. The narrator became the reader's companion in these volumes, directing them through the streets to various sites.<sup>118</sup> According to Thomas, they 'whetted the appetite and even seem to have motivated the trip.'<sup>119</sup> Interestingly, in Stratford, guidebooks actively discouraged tourists from talking to local inhabitants who touted their trade as town guides. This cannot be said for Colchester; local historians seemed pleased and excited to show people the ruins, but it does show more generally that local inhabitants across the country were very aware of the history and popularity of the sites around them.<sup>120</sup> It is also notable how prominent the history of the siege was in guides to Colchester compared to those produced for places with similarly powerful associations with the Civil Wars. Birmingham and Bournemouth, for example, where fighting had been intensive, did not mention the impact of the war at all. Other places only mentioned the subject in passing as was the case for West Somerset.<sup>121</sup> Admittedly, some towns which were deeply impacted by the conflict were more likely to discuss the wars but interestingly interpreted and presented events in very different ways to Colchester. For example, a guide to Bristol dwelt at length on the siege and occupation of the city by Royalists that took place in 1643. Despite a long-standing political association with Royalism in the seventeenth century, the account condemned the King's troops and the plunder that followed it, hailing Sir Thomas Fairfax as a liberator when he led the New Model Army into the city in 1645.<sup>122</sup> The guide to Oxford, another Royalist stronghold during the

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<sup>117</sup> Julia Thomas, *Shakespeare's Shrine: The Bard's Birthplace and the Invention of Stratford-Upon-Avon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), p. 123.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> R.S. Kirk, *What to See in Birmingham* (Birmingham: Kirk, 1899); Philip Brannon, *The Illustrated and Picturesque Guide to Poole and Bournemouth, and the Surrounding Country...* (Poole: R. Sydenham, 1864); Edward Jeboult, *A General Account of West Somerset, Description of the Valley of the Tone, and the History of the Town of Taunton* (Taunton: Somerset and Bristol Steam Press, 1873)

<sup>122</sup> George Pyrcce, *A Popular History of Bristol, ... from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Bristol: W. Mack, 1861), p. 406.

Civil Wars and site of the alternative court established by Charles I, avoided commentary on the conflict altogether, and simply presented images of the impact of the war in its guide.<sup>123</sup>

By contrast, the romantic and Royalist interpretation continued to dominate in Colchester. Many writers of guidebooks referred to Morant as their source and his influence on how Essex and Colchester saw their past is clear. One anonymous publication written in the 1860s, for example, referred to, ‘the brave and loyal Cavaliers’, and ‘the traitorous leaders of the victorious Parliamentarians?’<sup>124</sup> The author also noted the, ‘Rage of the Parliamentarians,’ when they attacked St. John’s Abbey but described the ‘brave martyrs Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle.’<sup>125</sup> Edward Walford, the son of the rector of St. Runwold’s wrote a national guide in 1882.<sup>126</sup> He included a section on the Siege of Colchester in his book in which he stated that all people in the town should be proud of such a history. He also acknowledged Morant ‘s importance for his interpretation in his introduction:

The outline of the chief events of the Siege of Colchester in 1648, from its commencement to its conclusion, occupies no less than fourteen or fifteen pages of Morant’s History of Essex’, and no topographical or historical work in the county would be complete without making mention of it, seeing that it was an episode in the Civil War of which the men of Colchester have no reason to feel ashamed...<sup>127</sup>

The Royalist perspective is perhaps unsurprising given the fact that most of the writers and publishers of guides were of Tory persuasion. But, as with the railway guides, romantic stories of heroes and villains also made good marketing material for the town.

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<sup>123</sup> John Parker, *The Visitors Guide to Oxford* (Oxford: Parker, 1881); John Parker, *A Hand-book for Visitors to Oxford*. By John Henry Parker. Illustrated by One Hundred Woodcuts (Oxford: Parker, 1875).

<sup>124</sup> Heaton Edward Von Strümer, *An Historical Guide to Colchester: Containing Descriptions of its Churches, Libraries, & Public Buildings, Embellished with Engravings* (Colchester: W. Totham, 1860s)

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, p. 30.

<sup>126</sup> Robin Woolven, ‘Walford, Edward (1823–1897), Writer and Compiler of Reference Works’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004,

<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-28462> [accessed 02/12/2021].

<sup>127</sup> Edward Walford, *Tourists’ Guide to Essex with Some Preliminary Remarks as to its Early History. Antiquities, Worthies, etc.* (London: E. Stanford, 1882), p. 7.

A similar theme was evident in guidebooks published by local residents which became more prominent as the century progressed and more and more texts were published to market the ‘historic town’ to visitors. For example, the Benham family, who owned the *Essex Standard* published a series of histories of the Roman Conquest, King Coel, the Norman Conquest, Elizabeth I and the siege in 1890 that were re-printed again in 1900 and 1907.<sup>128</sup> Benham’s description of the siege underscored a strong local, Royalist view of events. He wrote that, ‘The year 1648 witnessed the commencement of the misfortunes unparalleled in the History of Colchester, the town sustaining a long and most terrible siege of 76 days against the forces of Fairfax, after which the inhabitants were obliged to surrender.’<sup>129</sup> He also understood that tales of heroic sacrifice were popular. In his guide he included a detailed account of the death of Lucas and Lisle, in which he embellished and romanticised still further the description of their dying speeches as described by Morant.<sup>130</sup> He also pointed visitors to landmarks such as King’s Head, the public house, where the Royalist officers, along with two knights were placed after the surrender, Lucas and Lisle were then later marched to the castle where they were imprisoned before their execution.<sup>131</sup> An advertisement for his guide in the *Essex Standard* in 1900 included images of the ruins and characters from the siege. A few pictures of Roman artefacts were also incorporated but the siege dominated the marketing. No other period received such treatment.<sup>132</sup> Benham made the point that the siege had shaped the identity of his town and that the blockade had demonstrated the strength of character of the people of Colchester. He also believed the siege cast a very long shadow:

There is every reason to believe that for but the unhappy siege, Colchester would have been a larger, and more prosperous, as well as more interesting, town than it now is, for the shock of that troublous time it could not ever entirely rally, and

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<sup>128</sup> Mary Benham, *A Guide to Colchester and its Environs; With a Map of the Town and Notes on the Flora and Entomology of the District* (Colchester: Benham, 1890), p. 11.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>132</sup> ‘New edition of Benham’s Guide to Colchester’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 07 July 1900, p. 4.

become that great and eminent town with the advance of civilisation and general progress would otherwise undoubtedly have brought it to<sup>133</sup>

According to Benham Colchester may have rivalled some of the larger industrial towns in the country, had the siege not occurred. The siege helped to explain Colchester's position in the contemporary world, and also provided a warning to the reader that they must never allow such a war to happen again and damage progress. The same guide appeared again in the early twentieth century, where a copy made in 1907 shows the same text being used.<sup>134</sup>

Mary Benham, his sister, wrote a guide to Colchester in 1874 using typical picturesque, gothic description. St. Botolphs, for example was depicted in the following terms: 'The noble nave, now richly mantled with ivy, is formed of a double row of Norman semi-circular arches, indicating that period of architecture, when the pointed arch was only just coming into vogue.'<sup>135</sup> She began her history with its Norman origins as a monastic establishment' and ended with its 'sustained serious injury during the Siege.'<sup>136</sup> The narrative of the foundation of the priory and then its destruction in 1648 was of great interest.

Histories and guides continued to be produced at regular intervals throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century and the presentation of siege history rarely wavered from the standard interpretation. In 1873, for example, J. Breton Davies produced a volume on Colchester history which included a chapter on the siege by Frank Wright that included a description of the martyrdom of Lucas and Lisle who, 'bravely and unflinchingly met the sentence meted out to them by Lord Fairfax.'<sup>137</sup> Wright directed the readers' attention to the obelisk established by Laver stating, 'There is outside the castle proper but little to interest the

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<sup>133</sup> *A Guide to Colchester and its Environs*, p. 15.

<sup>134</sup> [Anon.], *Guide to Colchester* (Colchester: Benham, 1907).

<sup>135</sup> Mary Benham, *A Guide to Colchester and its Environs; with Notes on the Flora and Entomology of the District. By Mary Benham. With Plates and a Map* (Colchester: 1874), pp. 43-44.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>137</sup> J. Breton Davies, *Wrights' Colchester with a Chapter on the Siege of Colchester by Frank Wright* (Bristol: Wright and Sons, 1899), p. i.

antiquarian beyond the obelisk or monument already referred to, and generously erected by Henry Laver, Esq. F.L.S., F.S.A., to indicate the spot whereon the hapless Sir Chares Lucas and Sir George Lisle met their doom.’<sup>138</sup>

The siege also took centre stage when special editions of guidebooks were produced, as for example, the Jubilee edition of a guidebook in 1897 which turned the siege into a celebration of the monarchy, and in doing so, intervened in the debate on the reputation of Cromwell.<sup>139</sup> It may be that the Jubilee provided an occasion to reignite centuries old debates. In many ways this guidebook was unexceptional amongst publications at the time. Although borough politics favoured a more conciliatory view of the history at this juncture that chimed with a more consensual political landscape in local politics in the town, tourist texts consistently promoted a Royalist narrative and praised the knights who remained loyal to the end.

### **Colchester: a ‘Historic Town’?**

The end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw an intensification of tourism in England and towns increasingly used their history to attract visitors.<sup>140</sup> Indeed, Readman argues that it was through ‘an imagined past’ generated by ‘heritage tourism’ that a powerful sense of national collective identity was constructed in this period.<sup>141</sup> Colchester’s Corporation explicitly harnessed history to the cause of local identity, patriotism and civic pride through ritual, spectacle and architecture, most obviously expressed in the exterior decoration of the magnificent new town hall built in 1902, the Pageant of 1909 and the increasingly elaborate

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<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, p. 52.

<sup>139</sup>[Anon.], *Guide to Colchester: Diamond Jubilee Edition* (Colchester: Benham, 1897)

<sup>140</sup> Rosemary Mitchell, review of ‘Paul Readman, *Storied Ground: Landscape and the Shaping of English National Identity* (2018)’, *The American Historical Review*, 124.5 (2019), 1957–1958; Readman, ‘The Place of the Past’, p.198.

<sup>141</sup> Readman, *Ibid*, pp. 160, 176, 179, See also Paul Readman, *Storied Ground: Landscape and the Shaping of English Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 4. Louis Parker’s comments on the subject are illuminating, in, ‘The History of the English town’, he commented, was ‘bound up in the most extraordinary way with the history of England’, in *The Warwick Advertiser*, 30 June 1906, p.7.

annual Oyster Feast, where toasts were made to ‘loyal and historic Colchester.’<sup>142</sup> Colchester’s history was undoubtedly impressive and its historical credentials were further acknowledged in a book series published by Longmans of London in 1888 that included Colchester amongst the select band of cities including Exeter, London, Bristol and Oxford that were thought to possess a history sufficiently prestigious to claim such a label.<sup>143</sup> In these ways the town increasingly reimagined and described itself as a ‘historic town’ in its tourist promotions.<sup>144</sup> Railway companies included the term in their posters and advertisements that tried to entice people to visit.<sup>145</sup> Guides presented Colchester as an ancient and historic town, keeping pace with civic progress but untainted by the corrupting effects of industrialisation.<sup>146</sup> One stated for example, that, ‘Within and without the all it is, in respect of antiquity size, population, and trade, the chief town in the county.’<sup>147</sup> Posters and advertisements were produced that tried to entice people to visit ‘historic Colchester’.<sup>148</sup> One pamphlet of 1901 proclaimed that the town was:

especially noted for its Ancient Camps of Britons and Romans, and the important Military Depot of the present day; also for its oysters...There are some interesting ruins- The Castle, St. John's Abbey, and St. Botolph's Priory. The museum, which is in the Castle ruins, contains many Roman relics...remains of the once stupendous Roman earthworks at Lexden, are well worth a visit<sup>149</sup>

When a new station opened primarily for goods transportation in 1866, it was named St. Botolph’s, using historical association to attract additional visitors.<sup>150</sup>

A symbiotic relationship developed between the railway companies and the town’s economy in the nineteenth century that used history as a marketing tool and the siege was a

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<sup>142</sup> ‘Colchester Oyster Feast.’ *East Anglian Daily Times*, Friday 21 October 1910, p. 5.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Cannadine – see also chapters one and three.

<sup>145</sup> E.R.O, D/Z 346/1641, Great Eastern Railway Tourist and Sea-side Arrangements’ October 1901.

<sup>146</sup> Brown, *Colchester 1815-1914*, p. 162.

<sup>147</sup> Measom, *The Official Illustrated Guide*, p. 136.

<sup>148</sup> *Great Eastern Railway* (1910).

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> ‘St. Botolph Station’, *Essex Standard*, Wednesday 04 April 1866, pp. 2-3.



central theme in their strategy.<sup>151</sup> Postcards were developed locally to take advantage of the developing and booming tourist industry. Produced by the *Essex Standard*, the cards depicted Colchester's historic sites such as the castle and the Abbey Gate, as well as people of historic interest, including Lucas and Lisle.<sup>152</sup> Guides were also advertised in local newspapers which recognised their value to the local economy. The 1910 Great Eastern Railway guide, mentioned in its publicity, for instance, 'Visitors interested in the story and relics of ancient Colchester should know that some excellent handbooks thereupon are published at the High Street offices of *The Essex County Standard*.'<sup>153</sup> Local guidebooks were easily located and sold at nearby railway stations as well as in the town hall.<sup>154</sup> Businesses increasingly took advantage of the audience for historic guides and paid for advertising space for their product in the texts. Originally, it was only local businesses and industries that took advantage of them, but as the century progressed, national firms placed adverts in local as well as national guides.<sup>155</sup> Hence, guidebooks became more commercially minded as for example Mary Benham's *Guide to Colchester* which included adverts placed by local businesses including wine merchants and bookmakers in the publication.<sup>156</sup> Interestingly too, Colchester firms took advantage of the great interest in the concept of the 'historic town' and the romantic nature of the siege ruins in their marketing. In 1892, for example, a local pharmacy owned by Walter Everett located in St. Botolph's Street used the site of St. Botolph's Priory to sell perfume.<sup>157</sup> According to the advert, 'The bottles and style are extremely elegant, the label bearing a

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<sup>151</sup> Brown, *Colchester*, p. 211.

<sup>152</sup> 'Essex County Standard', *British Newspapers Online*, Sunday 01 June 2014, [www.Britishpapers.co.uk/england-eang/essex-county-standard/](http://www.Britishpapers.co.uk/england-eang/essex-county-standard/) [accessed 26/11/2020]; E.R.O, D/DM 2506/4, Post Cards from 1900-1920.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid*; 'Essex County Standard', *British newspapers Online*.

<sup>154</sup> *Guide to Colchester: Diamond Jubilee Edition* (1897).

<sup>155</sup> Nead, *Victorian Babylon*; Eric Niderost, 'Charles Dickens and the Victorian Railways', *History Magazine* 12.4 (2011), 44–46.

<sup>156</sup> Benham, *A Guide to Colchester and its Environs*.

<sup>157</sup> 'Colchester Roses', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 16 April 1892, p. 6; UL, BCL8011, Historical Directories of England & Wales, *Kelly's Directory of Essex, Hertfordshire and Middlesex 1894*, p. 126.

beautiful engraving in miniature of that interesting ruin St. Botolph's Priory.'<sup>158</sup> In these contexts politics carried little meaning as individuals and businesses promoted an image of seventeenth century historic identity that suited their commercial interests because they chimed with popular tastes.

### **Conclusion**

Sites of Roman antiquity and seventeenth century ruins associated with the siege of Colchester had attracted middle class antiquarians and visitors who could afford to travel to the town to view them from at least the eighteenth century. However, the long nineteenth century saw a great increase in the numbers and social range of tourists largely because the railway provided a cheap and accessible means of transport. It is evident that history was a selling point for Colchester. In publicity campaigns to attract visitors, the story of the siege, alongside its Roman heritage, was an intrinsic part of Colchester's construction of an image of itself as a 'historic town'. Guidebooks enticed tourists to experience ruined architectural spaces that were the site of seventeenth century chivalric tales of knights and battles that delighted the Victorian visitor and put the town onto the national and international tourist map. The events of 1648 which had once scarred the town and impacted its immediate development could now be used to sell Colchester to the nation. Morant's version of the history of the siege predominated in this tourist literature and presented Colchester's experience of the Civil War in terms not only of suffering and damage but also martial heroism and sacrifice. The political meaning of the narrative carried less traction in these contexts than its appeal to the romantic imagination. In this way tourism encouraged a wider engagement with the past than had been possible before but its narrative encouraged the development of multiple layers of meaning, not necessarily imposed by political or commercial elites but malleable enough to accommodate individual imagination and identity. This does not mean that there was not tension between those who

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<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*, 'Colchester Roses.'

supported modernisation and others keen to preserve 'heritage' but the elite in Colchester were well aware of what attracted people to the town especially after the arrival of the railway. The great advantage for Colchester was that unlike many other towns in England damaged by the Civil Wars, its ruined buildings survived for a variety of reasons, and so there were a great many sites for the tourist to visit. Even when new buildings were constructed, as for example a new parish church in St. Botolph's, the ruined remains of the original building was preserved. The following chapter aims to explore the meaning of the material remains of the tragic events of 1648 for the people of Colchester, and their significance for individual and local identity.

## Chapter Three: Material Memory of the Siege of Colchester.

*the memory of the destruction carried out during the Civil Wars gradually recedes with the passage of time as the process of rebuilding covered many of the scars.<sup>1</sup>*

The British Civil Wars had a dramatic impact on the physical environment as well as people, culture and politics, in the seventeenth century and beyond it. Yet, by contrast with historians of modern warfare, scholars have been slow to investigate the relevance and use of the spatial and material dimension in the construction of the historical memory of the history of the Civil Wars in Britain and its contested legacy. Excellent pioneering studies on landscape and historical memory by Andy Wood, Nicola Whyte and Alexandra Walsham have considered the relationship between landscape and memory of the wars within wider studies.<sup>2</sup> Imogen Peck has also written a ground-breaking analysis of the significance of place for the construction of memory of the wars in its immediate aftermath during the years of the Republic.<sup>3</sup> Ian Atherton has analysed the processes of remembering and forgetting battlefields of the Civil Wars.<sup>4</sup> However, to date most historians have concentrated on the impact of the conflict on individual buildings and places.<sup>5</sup> The built environment has tended to be treated as a passive backdrop to the momentous events of the wars and the period of reconstruction that followed it. Yet modern scholarship now recognises that landscape is a ‘repository of collective memory’. The way people use, control and experience the built environment are an important means by which

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<sup>1</sup> Porter, *The Blast of War*, p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*; Wood, *The Memory of the People*; Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*; See also; David Lowenthal, ‘Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory’, *Geographical Review*, 65 (1975), 1-36, Stewart, Strathern, ed., *Landscape, Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives*.

<sup>3</sup> Peck, *Recollections in the Republic*, pp. 128-164.

<sup>4</sup> Ian Atherton, ‘Remembering (and forgetting), Fairfax’s Battlefields’, In *England’s Fortress: New Perspectives on Thomas, 3rd Lord Fairfax*, ed. by Andrew Hopper and Philip Major (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 259-283.

<sup>5</sup> Bann, *Scenes and Traces*; Porter, *The Blast of War*.

historical memory and identity are created, maintained and sometimes challenged.<sup>6</sup> Historic buildings are not simply objects, but are highly symbolic and so a study of how people project historical meaning on to the built environment can be highly revealing about the uses and meanings of history in a particular time and place. The following chapter will analyse how, why and to what extent, people of the period projected historical meanings on to buildings associated with the Siege of 1648 and their relevance for individual and collective historical identity. Colchester provides an excellent area for study of these questions because it borne many scars of battle on its buildings well into the Victorian period. There is also a rich array of source material available including diaries, histories, memoirs, borough records, pictures, maps, as well as buildings, monuments and material objects that afford insight into the different historical meanings of spaces and places associated with the wars in Colchester and the diverse ways they were used by different individuals and groups at different times during the late eighteenth and nineteenth century.

### **The Politics of Memory and Materiality**

The Civil Wars left marks on the urban topography of Colchester that remained visible in the long nineteenth century and up to the present day. The fabric of the town was very badly damaged by the siege of 1648. Eyewitnesses described ‘many fair houses’ and ‘fair streets ... of stately houses burnt to ashes’.<sup>7</sup> At least one hundred and ninety-three tax-paying houses were burned or demolished and many houses and cottages belonging to the poor were destroyed by both sides. Manor houses belonging to the gentry including St. John’s Abbey owned by Sir John Lucas, the Crutched Friars held by Sir Harbottle Grimston and Henry Barrington's house

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<sup>6</sup> David Rollison, *The Local Origins of Modern Society: Gloucestershire 1500-1800* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 73; Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, p. 134; Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz, eds., *Memory, Histories, Theories, Debates* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010); Wood, *The Memory of the People*, pp. 28, 84, 91, 107. Lowenthal, ‘Past Time’, pp. 3, 6; Stewart, Strathern, ed., *Landscape, Memory and History*, p. 128; Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, pp. 125-164. For work that relates this to the Civil War, see, Matthew Neufeld, ‘Introduction: Putting the Past to Work, Working through the Past’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 76.4 (2013), 483-97 (p. 492), or Peck, *Recollection in the Republics*.

<sup>7</sup> Donagan, *War in England*, p. 314.

in the fields south-east of the town were laid to waste. Many prominent buildings, including the Norman castle and several churches were damaged or destroyed. The ancient Roman walls were damaged by cannon fire. Three churches were ‘ruined’: St. Botolph’s, St. Giles’s, and St. Mary’s-at-the-Walls. St. Martin’s and St. Mary Magdalen’s were damaged and St. Runwald’s was left ‘out of repair’ as a result of the fighting. St. Nicholas’s tower collapsed around 1700, significantly scarring the building. Residential houses which survived, such as the Old Siege House in East Street, retained marks from the volleys of gun fire.<sup>8</sup> Parishes such as St. Botolph could no longer meet in their own church buildings, and the congregation was exiled to the church of All Saints until the early nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Recollections in travellers’ accounts provide some insights into how extensive the visible devastation must still have been in the eighteenth century and how powerfully it conveyed a sense of the tragedy of the past. Daniel Defoe remarked in his 1722 *Tour through the Eastern Counties of England*, that Colchester ‘still mourns in the ruins of a civil war’, and described its ‘battered walls, breaches in the turrets, and ruined churches’.<sup>10</sup> Celia Fiennes noted in her travel diary that Colchester ‘was still very much ruinous’.<sup>11</sup> Guy Miège, remarked in 1701, that the ruins of Colchester were ‘a sad monument to the day of the Civil War of those times’.<sup>12</sup> Ann Taylor, who moved to Colchester as a young woman in 1796, noted the, ‘twelve churches, more or less dismantled, and with dilapidations dating from the rough work of the civil wars, especially of the siege by Fairfax’.<sup>13</sup>

The connotations that the siege ruins conveyed for visitors and locals alike provides interesting evidence of the lasting impact of seventeenth century propaganda on the construction and representation of the meaning of the historical landscape in Colchester in the

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<sup>8</sup> ‘Tudor and Stuart Colchester Introduction’, in *A History of the County of Essex, Vol 9*, (London: VCH, 1994), pp. 67-76.

<sup>9</sup> E.R.O, D/P 200/8/1, All Saints Churchwarden Book from 1686-1753.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through the Eastern Counties of England, 1722* (London: Cassell & Company 1891).

<sup>11</sup> Fiennes, *Through England on a Side Saddle in the Time of William and Mary*.

<sup>12</sup> Guy Miego, *The New State of England* (London: R.J, 1701), p. 42.

<sup>13</sup> Anne Taylor, *Autobiography and other Memorials of Mrs. Gilbert* (London: C. Kegan Paul, 1888), pp. 70-71.

late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>14</sup> As Barbara Donagan has shown, the Siege of Colchester was a significant propaganda event in the Second Civil War and newsbooks and pamphlets produced by both sides of the political divide established the town in the national consciousness as a place of tragedy.<sup>15</sup> The physical details of landscape and place were central to the ways in which meaning and memory was created, communicated, and maintained in these texts. Newsletters and pamphlets published in 1648 that told the story of the siege, which formed the basis of successive narrations, drew on traditional seventeenth century European siege representations. These consisted of topographical ‘siege views’ of important landmarks and fortifications accompanied by a journal of events that detailed the physical destruction and suffering inflicted on the town.<sup>16</sup>

Perception of the urban topography of Colchester in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was built on these strata of historical memory. The principal architects of tradition were the group of Tory genteel antiquarians, who recorded, reflected but also shaped the meaning of the ruined buildings of the siege according to a distinctly Tory and Royalist disposition. They were men for whom the material traces of the past held intense fascination. Important cultural trends shaped by the French Revolution and romanticism, had a significant impact on historical consciousness, imagination, subject matter and discourse in the period. Until this point, histories had been written mostly by professionals who based their work on accounts produced by scribes and clerics dedicated to the preservation of the authority of monarchs. However, in the eighteenth century a growing army of enthusiastic amateur antiquarians appeared with different methods and perspectives. Their interest in history was inspired in part by a rising nationalism, but their subject was rooted in the everyday and in the

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<sup>14</sup> Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, p. 530.

<sup>15</sup> Donagan, p. 385.

<sup>16</sup> Fischer-Kattner, ‘Colchester’s Plight in European Perspective,’ pp. 48-52; For a good example, see, ‘The Siege of Colchester by the Lord Fairfax’, *British Library*, <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-siege-of-colchester-by-the-lord-fairfax> [accessed 03/09/2021].

local. They were empiricists who carefully collected evidence and conducted precise observation of the material remains of the past within the landscape. They believed strongly that people should learn about the past, not only in books but also through visiting the sites to see, feel and experience them for themselves.<sup>17</sup> For example, John Britton, with Edward Brayley, wrote the eighteen-volume *Beauties of England and Wales* (1801), one of the most important topographical projects of the early nineteenth century, that included detailed accounts, as well as engravings, based on surveys of antiquarian sites within the landscape. Britton argued that only through seeing ‘ancient buildings in their native places, and imbued ... with realities, with a tangible character and expression’ did they become ‘objects to convey forcible truths and data for history’.<sup>18</sup>

The cultural impact of antiquarian modes of studying the past were clear to see in Colchester as elsewhere in late eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain. An enthusiastic group of mainly gentlemen and middle-class professionals, such as Charles Gray, lawyer, and Tory MP, dedicated a great deal of time to the recovery, recording and where possible preservation of the physical remains of Colchester’s history. Gray carried out extensive renovations to the castle in which he lived, for example, and in 1749 established a library, mostly of antiquarian books. The following year, he gathered a group of like-minded individuals and formed the Castle Library Book Club, catering to the interests of a select group of gentlemen readers. A century later in 1850, an antiquarian society was founded, and Colchester joined other antiquaries in the county to form the Essex Archaeological Society in

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<sup>17</sup> Paul Readman, ‘Walking, and Knowing the Past: Antiquaries, Pedestrianism and Historical Practice in Modern Britain’, *History* (2021), 1-23; Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past*; idem, *The Writing of Urban History*; Rosemary Hill, *Time’s Witness: History in the Age of Romanticism* (London: Allen lane, 2021); Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional*; Stuart Pigott, *William Stukeley: an Eighteenth Century Antiquity* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1985); Stuart Pigott, *Ancient Britons and the Antiquarian Imagination* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1989).

<sup>18</sup> Readman, *Ibid*, p. 8.



1852.<sup>19</sup> The fruits of the labour of these enthusiastic investigators are visible in the numerous records of site visits, lectures, excavations, essays, and detailed engravings that were produced in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although intense interest was shown in the antiquities of the Roman period, a great deal of attention was also paid to the discovery, recording and preservation of the relics of the events of 1648.<sup>20</sup> Among numerous examples, was an essay authored by local archaeologist Peter Duncan for the Archaeological Society, that focussed on the Roman wall, and the impact of the siege on its fabric.<sup>21</sup> Another was by the Rev. F. J. Manning who wrote a piece about St. Leonards Church at the Hythe and the impact of the siege upon the building.<sup>22</sup> Siege shillings were presented and recorded by the society.<sup>23</sup>

A visit from the Royal Archaeological Institute in 1876 noted:

The mark of a badly directed cannon shot, intended to aid in the demolition of the Castle during the siege, is still to be seen ... Adjoining the gateway was formerly the mansion of the Lucas family, which was stormed by the Parliamentarians during the siege, and only carried after desperate hand to hand fighting from room to room.<sup>24</sup>

Accumulation of antiquarian knowledge about the siege shaped the way people understood and imagined Colchester's historic identity. The town attracted the attention of specialists of national significance who visited the town in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and while Colchester's Roman monuments were regarded as important, buildings associated with the

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<sup>19</sup> 'Modern Colchester: Political history', VCH, pp. 208-221 and 'Social and Cultural Institutions, VCH, pp. 298-303.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, E.R.O, D/F 23/4/8, John Britton, 'A History and Description of Colchester Castle, Essex (printed 1807 with 2 engravings)'; 'The Priory Church of St. Botolph. At Colchester, Essex (printed 1805 with engraving)' in *The Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain* (London: Longman Hurst, 1807); ESAH, 'Report of Third General Meeting, at Castle Heddingham, July 20, 1853', *Society Transactions*, 1.1 (1858), 139-140-58 (p. 139), <https://www.esah1852.org.uk/publications/transactions> [accessed 13/12/2021]; 'Drawing, by Parish, of the Gatehouse of St. John's Abbey; Essex Archaeological Society', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 04 August 1882, p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> ESAH, Peter Duncan, 'The History and Description of the Walls of Colchester', *Society Transactions*, 1.1 (1858), 33-58 (p. 32), <https://www.esah1852.org.uk/publications/transactions> [accessed 13/12/2021].

<sup>22</sup> ESAH, Rev. F.J. Manning, 'St. Leonards Church, the Hythe, Colchester', *Society Transactions*, 2.2 (1884), 350-356 (p. 350), <https://www.esah1852.org.uk/publications/transactions> [accessed 13/12/2021].

<sup>23</sup> ESAH, 'Donations 1878', *Society Transactions*, 2.1 (1878), 62-64 (p. 64), <https://www.esah1852.org.uk/publications/transactions> [accessed 13/12/2021].

<sup>24</sup> 'Visit of the Royal Archaeological Institute', *East Anglian Daily Times*, Wednesday 09 August 1876, p. 4.

siege were also of great interest. William Stukeley, for example, first secretary of the re-established Society of Antiquaries (1717), and author of the two volume, *Itinerarium Curiosum* (1724, 1776), visited Colchester several times in the early eighteenth century and produced detailed engravings of St. John's Abbey Gate, St. Botolph's Priory and Colchester's Castle.<sup>25</sup> Richard Gough, director of the Society of Antiquaries from 1771-1791, included detailed descriptions of the castle, St. Botolph's and St. John's Abbey and its gatehouse, in his topographical volume of 1780.<sup>26</sup> A map was produced around 1696-1700 by Robert Morden and Joseph Pask, which drew attention to siege sites.<sup>27</sup> Another map, possibly from 1748 also made note of the ruins from the siege.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Samuel (1696–1779), and Nathaniel Buck (active 1724–59), the leading topographical print-makers of the 18th century, famous for the detailed engravings that accompanied their topographical 'Town Prospects', included Colchester in their series of engraved views of England and Wales that pictured Britain's historical relics as well as its contemporary towns and cities.<sup>29</sup> In 1741 they also produced a series of engravings of historic sites in East Anglia that included detailed reproductions of buildings ruined in the siege as well as a brief summary of historical events.<sup>30</sup>

The proliferation of the publication of images of the buildings encouraged a growing number of tourists to visit Colchester in order to see the ruins of the siege for themselves as

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<sup>25</sup> E.R.O, I/Mp 90/1/1/38, A 1724 Map of Colchester Drawn by William Stukeley. On William Stukeley, see Piggott, *William Stukeley*.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Gough, *British Topography. Or an Historical Account of What has been Done for Illustrating the Topographical Antiquities of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol.1* (London: R. Payne, 1780), p. 350. For more details on Gough, see Rosemary Sweet, 'Antiquaries and Antiquities in Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 34.2 (2001), 181–206.

<sup>27</sup> E.R.O, MAP/CM/16/13, Map of Essex by Morden and Pask.

<sup>28</sup> E.R.O, MAP/CM/25/1, Ichnography of Colchester.

<sup>29</sup> Buck, *Proposals for Publishing by Subscription*. Sweet, *Writing Urban Histories*, p. 136.

<sup>30</sup> 'The East View of Naworth Castle, in the County of Cumberland: To the Right Honourable Henry Howard Earl of Carlisle, Viscount Howard of Morpeth, Baron Dacres of Gilsland This Prospect is humbly Inscib'd by his Lordship's most Obedient Servants Saml: & Nathl: Buck. / Saml. & Nathl. Buck delin: et Sculp', *British Library*, [http://explore.bl.uk/prime\\_library/libweb/action/dlDisplay.do?vid=BLVU1&search\\_scope=LSCOP-ALL&docId=BLL01004896456&fn=permalink](http://explore.bl.uk/prime_library/libweb/action/dlDisplay.do?vid=BLVU1&search_scope=LSCOP-ALL&docId=BLL01004896456&fn=permalink) [accessed 30/03/2020]. See also interest displayed by the architect and antiquarian James Essex, *Remarks on the Antiquity and the Different Modes of Brick and Stone Buildings in England. By Mr. James Essex, of Cambridge. Read at the Society of Antiquities, Dec. 8&c. 1774* (London: W. Bowyer and J. Nicholas, 1775).

Chapter Two has shown. As the eighteenth century progressed, the small number of specialist visitors to the town soon became a steady stream of polite and middling sort travellers. The antiquarian impulse, with its emphasis on imaginative engagement with place, and pictorial as well as textual observation, established a close connection with romantic and picturesque ways of viewing the landscape that made its mark on artists, poets and novelists such as Sir Walter Scott. The effect was to engender a fascination with the ruinous and romantic. Well to do travellers toured Britain to see and experience for themselves the monuments of the British past and the ruins of the Siege of Colchester were an important point on their itinerary. As Ann Taylor commented in her diary, ‘the fine ruins of St. Botolph’s Priory and St. John’s Gate, added to the picturesque and historical interest of a place which was full of interest for both antiquary and artists.’<sup>31</sup>

Stephen Bending has charted the increasing numbers of more affordable antiquarian prints and guidebooks that were published in the period to cater to these visitors, and illustrations of Colchester’s ruined buildings alongside brief summaries of their history was generally included in the itinerary.<sup>32</sup> Francis Grose pioneered and popularised this approach. His ten volume *The Antiquities of England and Wales* (1772–76), comprised of a thousand plates with accompanying descriptions, based on his and others’ views and research.

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<sup>31</sup> Taylor, *Autobiography*, p. 71.

<sup>32</sup> Stephen Bending, ‘Writing in Ruins: Immediacy and Emotion in the English Landscape Garden’, *Journal Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes An International Quarterly*, 36.4 (2016), 272-281; see for example, Richard Brookes, *The General Gazetteer, or, Compendious Geographical Dictionary Containing a Description of the Empires, Kingdoms, States, Provinces, Cities, Towns, Forts, Seas, Harbours, Rivers, Lakes, Mountains, Capes &c. In the Known World with the Government, Customs, Manners and Religion of the Inhabitants* (Montrose: D. Buchanan, 1800), p. 167; Peter Muilman, *History of the Town of Colchester with a Description of the Castle...Particulars of the Execution of Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle, Government of the Corporation; Its Privileges, Charters, Fairs & Antiquities; Gifts and Benefactions Belonging to the Corporation; Churches, Monuments, Inscriptions &c.* (Chelmsford, Hassell, 1770). For biographical details on Muilman, see Janet Cooper, ‘Muilman, Peter (1705–1790), Antiquary and Merchant’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-45708> [accessed 22/12/2021]; See also T. Cocke, ‘Essex, James (bap. 1722, d. 1784), Architect and Antiquary’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-8887> [accessed 22/12/2021].

Colchester's ruined buildings such as St. Botolph's Priory and St. Martin's Church were amongst those described, together with a brief history of the siege based on Morant's account. Grose's intended audience was not the historical specialist but the polite tourist whose imagination had been stirred by romantic tales of knightly chivalry and who wished to learn about the past by seeing its material remains for him or herself.<sup>33</sup> Methodist John Wesley visited the town in 1758, noting in his diary that, 'Today I walked all over the famous castle (Colchester), perhaps the most ancient building in England.'<sup>34</sup> The Duc du Rochefoucauld also visited Colchester in 1784. Judging from the comments he recorded in his travel journal, he knew the history of the siege and was very interested to see the buildings associated with the events for himself. He commented that the castle was one of the three things in Colchester that should excite the 'curiosity of strangers' and that it was 'famous in the time of Charles I for the sieges it withstood'. His notes suggest that he wanted to visit the place of the execution of the Royalist commanders, Lucas and Lisle, but that the site 'isn't known'.<sup>35</sup>

Royalist histories clearly shaped Rochefoucauld's perception of the topography of the town.<sup>36</sup> The influence of their narrative was also amplified by local Tory antiquarians for whom the historic landscape was a vehicle for perpetuating a politicised historical memory as well as a symbol of current identity. The interest of these men in antiquarian history was often driven by a local, as well as national patriotic zeal in a period where history and antiquity carried great authority and respect. According to Rosemary Sweet, Charles Gray commissioned Philip Morant, the antiquarian historian and clergyman to write his *History of Colchester* (1748), to enhance the prestige of the town, for example. The work also had a political purpose. As seen in Chapter One, Morant and his Tory patron lamented what they

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<sup>33</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p.319.

<sup>34</sup> John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1951).

<sup>35</sup> Rochefoucauld, *Frenchman's year*, p. 113.

<sup>36</sup> Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, p. 530.

regarded as the long-term decay of the town and the loss of the Borough Charter through Whig mismanagement and manipulation in the middle of the eighteenth century. Morant used descriptions and images of the ruins of 1648 to delineate his narrative of decline. He outlined the damage caused by the conflict very specifically in his writing, noting for example that:

In St. Mary's at the walls, 5 [houses] burnt and ruined. In H. Trinity, 32 burnt and destroy'd. In St. Martin's 5 pulled day. In St. James's 28 burnt. In St. Botolph's 53 burnt and ruined. In St. Giles's 17 burnt...Such was the End of this unhappy Affair which shattered and demolished a great part of "so eminent a Town" as this.<sup>37</sup>

He also drew extensively on seventeenth century Royalist propaganda and the literary life that followed it to use the urban landscape to reinforce a historical memory of Colchester as a place of martyrdom and tragedy. He laid responsibility for the suffering and destruction in an uncomplicated fashion at Parliament's door. Morant concluded, for example, that the ruination of St. Mary's Church in Colchester was caused by returning fire from Parliamentary guns which, 'beat down one side of it in a short time, with a great part of the church, breaking the saker that was planted there ... the gunner, and one of the matrosses, were killed.'<sup>38</sup>

He and Gray commissioned James Deane to produce a series of engravings of prominent buildings in the town for the *History* which depicted the marks of damage left by the siege that were still visible in the eighteenth century. Deane also drew *The Ichnography of Colchester* for the book. It was a fairly typical eighteenth-century town plan, a hybrid of, 'a bird's eye view' and a two-dimensional survey, including numerous pictograms of dilapidated churches, the ruins of St. Botolph's and St. John's Abbey as well as the castle.<sup>39</sup> While the images were no doubt intended to add prestige to the publication, as well as to provide light relief from the printed page, the engravings were also a means to enhance the visual identification of readers with Morant's interpretation of historical and political truths. By

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<sup>37</sup> Morant, *The History and Antiquities*, p. 68.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 61, 69.

<sup>39</sup> Sweet, *Writing Urban Histories*, p. 136.

combining factual reports of military activity with vivid descriptions and images of material destruction, Morant intended to convince readers of the treachery, and cruelty of Parliament. He also had an eye on current politics and used the material evidence of ruin and dilapidation that was still visible to communicate what he saw as the decayed state of the town.<sup>40</sup>

While Morant's work reached only a limited and elite readership in the eighteenth century, his interpretations were reproduced uncritically in a variety of media in the nineteenth century and continued to shape the ways people from a wider social and geographical range understood and imagined Colchester's historical landscape retrospectively. A growing tourist industry became an important part of the local economy in Victorian Colchester as Chapter Two has shown, and popular histories and guides were produced to cater for visitors. The books included maps, plans and illustrations of the siege ruins. By this stage, antiquity and accuracy had become less of a priority than picturesque scenery designed to appeal to romantic tastes. For instance, the commercial writer Thomas Cromwell, produced a history of the town in 1824 and included a map which noted the sites of damaged buildings. He also incorporated images of ruins, as well as an illustration of the abbey as it would have looked before it was destroyed.<sup>41</sup> Similarly when George Flyer Townsend published his history of Colchester in 1874, he included the siege map and images of ruins.<sup>42</sup> But the meaning of the topography in this and most other publications was mapped and mediated by Morant. The unknown author of another history entitled, *A Descriptive Account of Colchester* printed by George Rickwood and sons of Colchester in 1893, that included illustrations, photographs and maps of historic sites, drew the uncomplicated conclusion, for example, that the damage still visible in the fabric of the town was caused by, 'the wanton brutality of the Cromwellian soldiers.'<sup>43</sup> Even in more

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<sup>40</sup> Sweet, *Antiquarians Antiquaries*, p. 303; See also Readman, 'Storied Ground: Landscape and the Shaping of English National Identity', *The American Historical Review*, 124.5 (2019), 1957–1958.

<sup>41</sup> Cromwell, *History and Description of the Ancient Town*, p. 224. See also, Townsend, *The Siege of Colchester*; See Sweet, *Writing Urban histories*, p. 141; E.R.O, I/Mo 90/1/60, Colchester produced in 1741.

<sup>42</sup> Townsend, *Siege*; 'Literary Notices', *Essex Standard*, Friday 16 October 1874, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> E.R.O, D/F 23/4/14, *A Descriptive Account of Colchester: Illustrated*, with Messrs Davey, Paxman & Co's,

scholarly publications, architecture was consistently interpreted through a conservative and traditional lens. For example, the historian John Horace Round who was vehement in his condemnation of Fairfax and the conduct of his forces, wrote the chapter on the siege in his *History of Colchester Castle* (1882), from the perspective of a Royalist soldier standing guard high up on the castle walls.<sup>44</sup> Round explained his intentions in his preface to the volume as follows:

I have endeavoured to give life and interest to the 'dry bones' of Archaeology by using the castle as a means of elucidating some fresh facts on the History of Colchester, and of throwing occasional light on the manners and customs of the time. I would hope that, by grouping historic events around this one building, I may rouse among those who have it ever before their eyes, a new and keener interest in the general history of their country.<sup>45</sup>

Round recognised that positioning his readers in a particular place captured the historical imagination. But he left little room for visitors themselves to plot alternative meanings on to buildings beyond the dominant narrative of Republican tyranny.

The development of the railway in the nineteenth century encouraged exponential growth in the number and social range of visitors to the town and there was a growing awareness that the historical landscape of the siege was an important attraction for visitors. Features and articles on the history of the siege with images of the ruined buildings appeared regularly in the national press and encouraged attention. Most relied on Morant's Tory and Anglican interpretation of their meaning. For example, an article in the *Illustrated London News* of 1869 comprised of a narrative history of events in Colchester in 1648 accompanied by images of the siege ruins of St. Botolph's, St. John's and the castle. A Saturday edition of the *East London Observer* in December 1871, entitled a 'Walk through Essex', included a history

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compliments (1893).

<sup>44</sup> Round, *History and Antiquities*, pp. 120, 124-5.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, Preface.

of St. Botolph's and the damage inflicted on the building by 'Republicans'.<sup>46</sup> Posters, postcards and new, cheaper, more accessible town guidebooks were also produced that encouraged imaginative engagement by tourists who wished to investigate the ruins for themselves. *The Eastern Counties Railway Illustrated Guide* published in 1854, for example, listed the siege amongst several historical 'events of importance' that took place in Colchester, provided a brief history of the siege that included details of the destruction of buildings and included a suitably picturesque illustration of the ruined remains of St. Botolph's with groups of visitors walking through the building and others looking on.<sup>47</sup> A series of fourteen illustrated guides to Colchester were also produced in 1864, in 'carte-de-viste size', at a cost of sixpence each, and included volumes on the castle, St. John's Abbey, St. Botolph's Priory, as well as other notable 'public buildings' and Roman remains.<sup>48</sup> Another example can be found in 1883, described by the Ipswich journal in the following terms:

"Our Own Country," Part 54. London: Cassell and Co. This part of this valuable work contains matter of special interest for us in the Eastern counties. A description of Colchester, charmingly illustrated, occupies many of its interesting pages. The illustrations include St. John's Abbey gateway, the West door of trinity Church, the Castle, St. Nicholas Church, St. Botolph's Priory, and Lexden Church.<sup>49</sup>

The volume also contained a detailed narrative history of the 'far-famed' Siege of Colchester which outlined the destruction inflicted on the urban landscape and ended with the death of Lucas and Lisle, suitably depicted in heroic sacrificial style. Mary Benham's, *Guide to Colchester* published in 1874, covered a wide variety of subjects including the town's modern economy and fauna and flora, as well as significant events in its history, including the siege. It

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<sup>46</sup> 'The Town and Camp of Colchester', *Illustrated London News*, Saturday 19 June 1869, p. 8; see also, 'St. Botolph's Priory Church, Colchester, Essex (From the British Magazine 1834)', *Essex Standard*, Friday 12 December 1834, p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> [Anon.], *The Eastern Counties Railway Illustrated Guide* (Bristol: James Truscott, 1851), p. 56.

<sup>48</sup> 'Colchester', *Essex Standard*, Friday 19 August 1864, p. 3, reprinted on Wednesday the 24th, also in the *Illustrated London News* on the 20 August 1864, p. 21; 'A Walk through Essex', *East London Observer*, Saturday 16 December 1871, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> 'Literary Notes', *Ipswich Journal*, Tuesday 24 April 1883, p. 1.



was also illustrated by maps, photographs and sketches of historic buildings, including the ruined abbey and gate.<sup>50</sup> Similarly in a book on the history of Colchester, Thomas Allen wrote in the section on the castle that, ‘no very vivid imagination is needed to people its courts with Norman Barons and squires, and to see the fierce Parliamentary soldiers battering at its walls. Against others than these it had held out, too, for it was a Royalist stronghold so far back as John’s time’<sup>51</sup> All of these publications placed great emphasis on the destruction to the castle, the priory and the abbey that was still visible for visitors to see and laid the blame for damage at the door of Fairfax and his troops.<sup>52</sup>

Walking tours were another key means by which antiquarians attempted to shape and control topographical traditions. Responding to public demand and in keeping with their convictions that learning about and imagining the past required ‘pedestrianised knowing’, local antiquarians led excursions to historic sites to explain their meaning for visitors.<sup>53</sup> At first, they tended to cater for specialists from the town as well as outside it.<sup>54</sup> But, as time went by, tours were conducted for a wide range of social types of people from a variety of locations. For example, in 1862, the Reverend Edward Lewis Cutts, the curate at Coggeshall, who later wrote a history of Colchester (1888), led a party of schoolmasters around the castle, where according to press reports, he provided, ‘a most able and lucid exposition ... of the various objects or curious interest connected with Colchester Castle, Balcerne Gate, Trinity Church Tower, St. Johns Abbey Gateway, St. Giles Church, and St. Botolph’s Priory.’<sup>55</sup> The United

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<sup>50</sup> Benham, *A Guide to Colchester and its Environs*, reprinted in 1890, p. 15.

<sup>51</sup> For his view see, Berlyn, *Photo Pictures in East Anglia* by Payne Jennings, p. 57.

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, Benham, *A Guide to Colchester*, p.15; *The Eastern Counties Railway Guide*, p. 56; *Guide to Colchester* (1907); ‘A Walk Through Essex’, *East London Observer*, Saturday 16 December 1871, p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> Readman, ‘Walking the Past,’ p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> For example see the visit of the British Archaeological Association in 1846 and 51 ‘The Antiquities of Colchester’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 16 October 1846, p. 2-3; ‘The British Association’, *Suffolk Chronicle*, Saturday 12 July 1851, p. 4; for local trips see, ‘Essex Archaeological Society’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 24 August 1855, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> ‘Essex Church School Masters Association’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 25 July 1862, p. 3.

First Day Adult Schools from Ipswich and Norwich visited the ruins in 1893.<sup>56</sup> St. Ann's Blackfriars came in 1891.<sup>57</sup> Serious minded scholars and citizens saw the educational and cultural value of embodied experience of the historical remains of the siege for children but the messages and meanings were conservative. One correspondent to the *Essex Standard* commented in 1884, for example, that, 'one stone only, I think, is required, and that I hope shall remain an enduring witness and monitor to the youth of Colchester earnestly to seek for and to follow the path of duty in whatever field it may be cast.'<sup>58</sup> The duty that was implied was to God and King and from the point of view of this correspondent the children were probably in safe hands. For example, when J.H. Round conducted tours for visitors where he expounded upon his conservative and Royalist interpretation of events, he commented on one such occasion on a visit to St. Botolph's Priory in 1894, that the building was 'ruined in 1648 by the Parliamentarians.'<sup>59</sup>

One visual response to the history of the siege at the end of the nineteenth century by a Tory antiquarian was an even bolder political statement. In 1892, Henry Laver commissioned and paid for the construction of a memorial to the Royalist knights, Lucas and Lisle. The monument was installed on the spot where the two men were executed in front of the castle by then transformed into a public park in 1892. The memorial reflected and reinforced what is sometimes termed by scholars, a 'cult of heroes' that emerged in Britain during the period. Memorials and statues proliferated in public spaces to celebrate 'great men' who were thought to show courage, honour and leadership in time of crisis.<sup>60</sup> Subjects ranged from military

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<sup>56</sup> 'Friends Adult School Demonstration: A Visit of the Norwich and Ipswich Schools', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 01 July 1893, p. 7.

<sup>57</sup> 'Colchester', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 25 July 1891, p. 8.

<sup>58</sup> 'The Castle Bailey Stone', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 09 December 1882, p. 8.

<sup>59</sup> 'Essex Field Club', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 08 August 1884, p.2; *Essex Standard*, Saturday 09 August 1884, p. 7; 'The Chelmsford Odd Volumes at Colchester', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 14 September 1894, p. 6.

<sup>60</sup> Paul A. Pickering and Alex Tyrell, eds, *Contested Sites: Commemoration, Memorial and Popular Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 2017).

leaders to ancient kings and their commemoration was not always uncontested. The nineteenth century conflict between the old establishment and the new classes and reformers that found its expression in the Civil Wars was also fought out over which seventeenth century heroes should be set in stone. Despite the advance of liberalism and constitutional reform that led to a rehabilitation of the legacy of Oliver Cromwell in the nineteenth century, for example, Thorneycroft's statue of the Lord Protector outside Parliament that was commissioned by Lord Roseberry, generated passionate public debate and controversy.<sup>61</sup> In similar vein, just as the revival of non-conformism and constitutional reform in the period allowed Cromwell to emerge as a national hero of popular sovereignty, a louder liberal voice in Colchester opened up space for historical revision of the posthumous reputation of the Parliamentarian commander, Lord Fairfax.<sup>62</sup> Laver's intervention can be seen as a deliberate political strategy that used the memorial as a means to counter such revisionist interpretations and to cement Royalist mythology in material form. Interestingly, much later in 1968, Lyndon seemed to think that the monument had been erected in the seventeenth century. He wrote that, 'At the Restoration an obelisk was erected to their memory on the spot where they died beneath the walls; it tells that for their conspicuous loyalty to their King in adversity they were barbarously murdered in cold blood'.<sup>63</sup> Lyndon appears to have confused the memorial to the two Royalist knights erected in St. Giles in the 1660s, with the Obelisk. But his comments do confirm that Laver's monument succeeded in memorialising a memory of martyrdom for succeeding generations. Admittedly, the language of murder and martyrdom was avoided on the monument's inscription. The text simply stated that, 'This stone marks the spot where on August 28.1648, after the surrender of the town, the two Royalist Captains Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George

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<sup>61</sup> Worden, *Roundhead Reputations*, pp. 296-315, Blair Worden, 'The Victorians and Oliver Cromwell', in *History and Culture, Essays in British Intellectual History 1750-1950*, ed. by Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 112-135 (pp. 112-13).

<sup>62</sup> Worden, *Roundhead Reputations*, p.242. See also chapter on Lucas, Lisle and Fairfax which explores how the individuals were reconciled by the end of the century.

<sup>63</sup> B.P. Lyndon, *The Siege of Colchester* (London: Young Essex Historian Award, 1968), p. 53.

Lisle, were shot by order of Sir Thomas Fairfax, the Parliamentarian General'. The moderate tone may have been strategic in that Laver needed the Council's permission to erect the monument. It probably also reflected a realistic acknowledgement of the need to work within a political culture of consensus that characterised borough politics by this stage, as we have seen. There is also no doubt that the Laver had an eye to the development of the local economy. The obelisk appeared often in marketing literature after it was installed and soon became a popular attraction for tourists and locals alike.<sup>64</sup> For example, when J. H. Round conducted a tour of the castle for a group of visitors in 1895, the obelisk was an important landmark on the trip. It was noted that:

In passing the spot where Sir Charles Lucas Sir George Lisle were shot, in 1648, for their brave defence of the town, the monument to their memory was pointed out. These heroes, said Mr Round, were not in supreme command of the defenders, but Sir Thomas Fairfax was afraid if he shot a peer he would get into trouble, peers being of some consequence in those days (laughter).<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, Laver's monument to the execution of the Royalist leaders at the hands of Parliamentary forces was profoundly political. It left no doubt about who should function as an inspirational embodiment of honour and heroism in Colchester in 1892. In line with Pierre Nora's characterisation of places of memory, his memorial was a deliberate effort to glorify the Royalist leaders and inscribe a profoundly conservative historical meaning on to public space that was intended to construct a highly political collective memory and identity.<sup>66</sup>

### **Hidden Histories and Contested Meanings**

The dominant influence of Tory antiquarianism on the interpretation of physical evidence of the siege had other distorting historical effects. Aspects of the tangled layers of history

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<sup>64</sup> As noted in chapter two and seen in Benham's publication, *Benham's Castle and Museum Guide*; but the tradition continued into the late twentieth century, Peter Berridge, *Colchester Castle Museum: Souvenir Guide* (Peterborough: Jarrold, 1997), p. 19.

<sup>65</sup> 'The British Association at Colchester', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 21 September 1895, p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 23.

embedded in these buildings were neglected, effaced or lost. Several scholars have argued that the construction of historical memory is an intertwined process of remembering and forgetting.<sup>67</sup> John Walter, for example, has pointed to ‘a collective amnesia’ in Colchester after 1660 about the conflict between John Lucas and the town that led to the sacking of the family seat at St. John’s Abbey in 1642. Walter argues that at the Restoration and after, it was both profitable and politically expedient for public memory to focus on the Royalist myth of the miracle of the martyrdom of John Lucas’s brother Charles rather than the more complicated conflicts that had preceded it.<sup>68</sup> Evidence also shows that the lens of antiquarian assumptions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that was distorted by religious and political affiliations, sometimes served to hide as much as it revealed about the layers of meaning evident in the material remains of the past.<sup>69</sup> For example, the account given by Morant of the destruction of St. John’s Abbey, overlooked elements of the history from earlier as well as later dates. Echoing allegations made in Royalist newsbooks, Morant simply asserted that the building was ‘blown up’ by Parliamentary forces during the siege. The reality was more complicated and multi-layered.<sup>70</sup> The dilapidation and destruction inflicted on the building began during the riots in 1642, continued during the siege and subsequently in the Anglo-Dutch War of 1665. According to archival evidence, the building was also damaged after the Restoration by Dutch prisoners held there during the Anglo-Dutch War. There are references to captives being kept at a ‘house called St. Johns’, when the then occupier, Mr Cockshutt, sought ‘some remedy or recompense’ from the Treasury.<sup>71</sup> Old buildings were requisitioned

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<sup>67</sup> As argued by Crane, *Museums and Memory*, p. 1; For more information on forgetting the past see, Benton, ed., *Understanding Heritage and Memory*, p. 17; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Tumblety, ed., *Memory and History*; and Paul A. Shackel, ‘Archaeology, Memory, and Landscapes of Conflict’, *Historical Archaeology* 37.3 (2003), 3-13, For work on how history is shaped and reformed, Halbwachs, *Collective Memory*.

<sup>68</sup> Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution*, p. 336; for more information on the Abbey’s relation with the town see Phil Jones, *The Siege of Colchester 1648* (Stroud: Tempus, 2003).

<sup>69</sup> Daniel Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500-1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 187.

<sup>70</sup> Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, p. 530.

<sup>71</sup> William Shaw, ed., *Calendar of Treasury Books Volume 1, 1660-1667*, (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1904), p. 676.

relatively frequently to hold prisoners during this war. Leeds Castle was used in 1665 to house Dutch prisoners, and, interestingly, suffered significant damage at the hands of prisoners, as did a medieval leprosy hospital (later an almshouse), in Winchester.<sup>72</sup> The complaint suggests that although the abbey might have been in a state of disrepair after the siege, it was still standing and when they first arrived there, and could provide some shelter to the inmates. Morant, by contrast, simply stated that the abbey had already been destroyed by the Restoration and by 1748, people only knew its location because of ‘tradition’.<sup>73</sup> Histories that followed reiterated Morant’s narrative of events. Laver, when providing a tour for the Middlesex Archaeological Association stated that, ‘after the Reformation St. John’s Abbey came into the hands of the Lucas family, who built upon its grounds a house that was taken possession of by Fairfax during the Siege of Colchester and was eventually destroyed by the Parliamentarians.’<sup>74</sup> Clarke Benjamin, writing a hundred years later, similarly asserted that, ‘There are some ruins of St. John’s Abbey, built by Eudo Dapifer in 1097, still remaining: it was destroyed in the Parliamentary war, as was also St. Botolph’s Priory’<sup>75</sup> The *Chelmsford Chronicle* reported that, ‘St. John’s Abbey, founded by Eudo in 1096, was demolished by the Roundheads in 1648, during the siege and the very fine Abbey Gate-way built early in the 15th century only remains to testify to its former grandeur and to the horrors of war.’<sup>76</sup> As late as 1979, J.J. Maling, when commenting on the devastation wrought by the war on the fabric of Colchester, contended that during the siege, ‘The Lucas mansion at St. John’s Abbey had been utterly destroyed.’<sup>77</sup> Remnants left after the Anglo-Dutch War fell into disrepair and its history after the siege was forgotten. The prison camp seems to have been edited out of the historical memory of the

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<sup>72</sup> ‘Magdalen Hill Archaeological Research Project’, *University of Winchester*, <https://www.winchester.ac.uk/research/exploring-the-past-and-the-world-around-us/research-projects-exploring-the-past-and-the-world-around-us/mharp/> [accessed 13/09/2018].

<sup>73</sup> Morant, *The History and Antiquities*, Book II, p. 2.

<sup>74</sup> ‘The London and Middlesex Archeological Society’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 31 August 1889, p. 5.

<sup>75</sup> Benjamin Clarke, *The British Gazetteer, Political, Commercial, Ecclesiastical, and Historical ... Illustrated by a Full Set of County Maps, etc. With plates, Vol. 1* (London: H. G. Collins, 1852), p. 699.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Essex Field Club’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 08 August 1884, p. 2.

<sup>77</sup> J.J. Maling, *Colchester Through the Ages* (Ipswich: East Anglian Magazine, 1979), p. 39.

abbey which became a convenient mnemonic for a polemical history constructed around a Tory and Royalist discourse of Parliamentary treachery.

Yet, while historical perceptions of the material traces of the siege were driven by powerful male conservative voices, meanings did not always go unopposed. Men from more humble origins with different political perspectives, who dedicated a great deal of spare time to study of the material remains of Colchester's past, questioned, and sometimes contested dominant narratives. Most notable amongst them in Colchester was William Wire, clockmaker and Liberal radical who was active in the Working Men's Association that became a local Chartist Branch. Wire was also a great autodidact and self-taught archaeologist. He bought and sold antiquities from his shop in the High Street which was a favoured 'resort' for those interested in antiquities. From 1842 until his death in 1857, he also kept a detailed record in diary form of all his archaeological findings in the town, noting the site of any discoveries and their condition, alongside detailed drawings which are still invaluable for archaeologists working today. Building developments in the period meant that artefacts were constantly being brought to his attention. In 1842/3 the railway arrived in Colchester and Wire, made regular visits to the site to search for findings and was so respected that the chief engineer gave him a pass. He recorded and preserved artefacts that were found when footings were dug for the new sewer system and his reputation ensured that most local archaeological finds came to his notice. If labourers found any object of interest they were told to 'take that to Mr Wire'.<sup>78</sup> Roman and Anglo-Saxon remains were of great interest to him, but the siege was also important. He recorded in his journal, for example, that he found a siege shilling on the 2nd of June 1842. On another occasion he was told that human remains had been found on East Hill and he noted that they were probably; 'the remains of some poor fellows who lost their lives

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<sup>78</sup> Arthur Brown, *Essex People 1750-1900: from their Diaries, Memoirs and Letters* (Chelmsford: Essex County Council, 1972), pp. 162-3; E.R.O, D/Y 37/1/3, William Wires Journal.

during the Siege of this Town.’<sup>79</sup> He also recorded and preserved cannon balls that were found at the bottom of Mr Walter Johnson's field which he assumed were fired during the siege from St. Mary at the Wall.<sup>80</sup> Wire noted in May of 1844 that people were asking him questions about what the traditions regarding a circular entrenchment...several people said that Oliver Crumbell Cromwell had it made and that...the church of St. Mary at the Walls was knocked down by cannon planted there.<sup>81</sup> His interest was in the experience of the ordinary person during the conflict, and as the previous chapters have already shown, in 1843 he secured republication of the seventeenth century pamphlet, *Colchester's Teares*, that challenged dominant conservative interpretations about the siege. Written by a self-styled ‘moderate man’, the author of the pamphlet resolutely attributed blame for that ‘mournfull city's’ sufferings to the Royalists who held the town.<sup>82</sup> When in 1840 Wire failed in his attempt to realise his ambition of establishing a public museum, he founded one based on his own collection. Sadly, ill- health and financial problems meant most of the artefacts had to be sold off over the next few years. By 1859 however, a public museum was opened in the town and included his artefacts and these and many other historical objects moved out of private ownership into public view.<sup>83</sup> Wire had begun a process by which ordinary people could enjoy a lived engagement with the material remains of the past. He also promoted an alternative narrative of the siege that encouraged the possibility of a reimagination of its material legacy.

There was always room for multiple stories, versions of the past and understandings of place that were different from the dominant narrative.<sup>84</sup> It is striking, for example, how histories of the siege served to stimulate landscape legends and myths that continued to give

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<sup>79</sup> Wire, *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Colchester's Teares* (1648); Donegan, *War in England*, p.313.

<sup>83</sup> Brown, *Essex People*, p. 163.

<sup>84</sup> For discussion on ways in which different memories can co-exist with one another, whether local and national, or based on different political perspectives, see Lloyd and Moore, ‘Sedimented Histories’, pp. 234-248.



significance and meaning to historic sites despite efforts by conservative scholars to extinguish them. Accounts of the miracle of the martyrdom of Lucas and Lisle, over whose site of execution, according to the Royalist propagandist Carter in 1656, the grass would not grow, provides a good example. Morant dismissed the story as ‘vulgar’ and explained the absence of grass by the ‘great resort of people to see the place’. Others suggested, more cynically, that, the grass was kept from growing deliberately, ‘by art...for the sake of getting money by shewing people this lying wonder’.<sup>85</sup> The uses of the legend may have shifted over time from a rhetorical political strategy employed by Royalists to enhance attacks on Parliamentary tyranny, to a tale told to attract tourists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries interested in romantic tales of chivalry. But as Peck has argued, the mystery is a testament to an enduring power of place in historical memory.<sup>86</sup>

The myth lingered and a sense of the supernatural persistently pervaded the imaginative landscape of the place where the two knights were killed well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some people in the middle of the nineteenth century became concerned, for example, that the story may be lost. An anonymous author in the *Essex Standard* in 1858, who wrote under the pseudonym of the Ghost of Philip Morant, expressed concern that the site was ‘now covered with grass equally with the rest of the Castle Bailey ... Oh, Sir! Shall cattle pens desecrate this spot?’<sup>87</sup> Another report in 1893 noted, ‘the ‘white stone’ at the back of Colchester Castle, which marks the spot where Sir Chares Lucas and Sir George Lisle fell, and around which, thought it stands in a grass-field, no grass has, for hundreds of years, grown’.<sup>88</sup> People recalled visiting the site as children and the imaginative historical memory it elicited. One correspondent to the *Essex Standard* wrote in 1896, probably in response to news of the

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<sup>85</sup> Morant, *The History and Antiquities*, p. 68; E.R.O, LIB/PER 2/34/1/58, *Essex Review*, 58 (1949), p. 54.

<sup>86</sup> Peck, *Recollections in the Republics*, p. 151.

<sup>87</sup> ‘Castle Bailey’, *Essex Standard*, Wednesday 10 November 1858, p. 4.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Legends and Stories of the North’, *Newcastle Chronicle*, Saturday 28 January 1893, p. 9.

construction of a memorial to the knights in 1892, that he did not know about, ‘the circumstance of the grass not growing there’, but:

As a lad at school in your town, I drank in the story of the death of those two heroes, and I earnestly beg your contributor, as he values my friendship, not to level in the dust one of the few remaining ideals of my youth. When a boy, I have sat on the odd stone outside the castle walls, that I was told marked the place of their fall and tried to picture the scene, and I may perhaps be pardoned for imagining now that the present memorial covers the same spot.<sup>89</sup>

In 1910, the *Chelmsford Chronicle* mentioned this story in detail, describing the legend in antique language as follows:

the ground where Sir Charles Lucas fell when he was shot there hath grown no grass; where the print of his body was, still remaining bare, notwithstanding round the scene the grass flourished with verdancy; what this should signify concerning his guilt or innocency as the ways of God are unsearchable, so shall I not determine anything, but leaving everyone to his own opinion, please myself with the only traditional relation of it.<sup>90</sup>

At the end of the piece the reporter admitted that, ‘the cause of the non-growth of the grass in modern times was attributed to the fact that children were constantly at play round the stone, which marked the scene of the execution. At the present time the place is marked by an obelisk.’<sup>91</sup> It seems then that ideas about the supernatural qualities of the site may have diminished over the course of the nineteenth century, but they did not disappear and continued to act as a catalyst for individual historical imagination and the construction of collective memory of place.

Equally it must also be acknowledged that while for some people historic buildings and ruins were jealously guarded as precious relics, for others the landscape had lost its historical potency. Sites associated with the siege were frequently treated with indifference, often

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<sup>89</sup> ‘A Cyclist’s trip to Colchester’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 05 September 1896, p. 2.

<sup>90</sup> ‘The Essex Review’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 28 January 1910, p. 4.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

neglected, sometimes adapted, converted or simply pulled down. According to one observer of Colchester's topography, for example, by 1900 the Roman walls had 'tumbled away' and St. Botolph's Priory had 'all but succumbed to the devastations of time'.<sup>92</sup> Further concern was expressed later in the century that, the stone that was said to mark the spot where the two knights were executed had apparently been neglected. According to the *Essex Standard*:

Your Correspondent, Clio, courts an expression of opinion, gathered, of course, from any history one may have, respecting the stone or stones, marking the spot or spots on which the chiefs of the noble defenders of the town in 1648 are said to have been shot, and the removal, or absence of which from decay, you were pleased to note and deplore some six or nine months since.<sup>93</sup>

The castle, such a powerful physical symbol of local historical identity had been largely neglected for most of its history, used as a prison until 1835 (apart from a few years in 1703-6 and 1712-16), and as a depot for arms for the eastern battalion of the militia from 1819 until 1859.<sup>94</sup> It was not until its acquisition as a museum in 1860 that its significance as a historic site became firmly established.<sup>95</sup> In similar vein, St. John's Abbey grounds were put to a variety of uses during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that were more practical than historical. A private house was built on part of the site in the 1830s. Another area of the grounds was known for a while in the early 1800s as the 'Pinnacle Garden' and used by local people. St. John's Green was also the site of the annual fair. In the 1830s the 'nurseryman' Edward Auston occupied part of the grounds and turned it into a market garden, which appears to have lasted until the War Office purchased the Abbey Precinct and Abbey Farm in 1860 for the building of Colchester garrison.<sup>96</sup> The military put the site to a variety of uses, proposing

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<sup>92</sup> Brown, *Nineteenth Century Colchester*, p.181.

<sup>93</sup> 'The Castle Bailey Stone', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 09 December 1882, p. 8.

<sup>94</sup> 'Colchester Castle House of Correction', *Prison History*, <https://www.prisonhistory.org/prison/colchester-castle-house-of-correction/> [accessed 03/08/2021]; E.R.O, Q/AGb 3 Plans of House of Correction in Colchester Castle; E.R.O, Q/AMm 1/1, 1/2, 1/4, Lease for 14 years by C.G.Round, esq, to Clerk of the Peace, of One Room in Colchester Castle, for the Eastern Battalion of the Militia; in 1859 it appears the Militia Depot moved to Chelmsford; E.R.O, D/DR A2, Rental book of Round Estates in Colchester and District 1796-1834.

<sup>95</sup> E.R.O, D/B/ 6 M3/1, Special Committee Minute Book 1856-1878.

<sup>96</sup> E.R.O, MAP/CM/25/1 Ichnography; E.R.O, D/P 178/27/2, Tithe Map1848; 'St. John's Abbey', *Colchester*

at one point that a ‘Crimean memento’ should be erected in the grounds to take the form of ‘a games house and concert hall for the use of the staff and officers of the garrison.’<sup>97</sup> The historic meaning of the site had largely evaporated for many by this stage as circumstances and uses had changed.

Similarly, the ruined St. Botolph’s Priory was a popular place for people to meet and walk, as well as to bury their dead.<sup>98</sup> For those of a romantic inclination the ancient buildings had lost their association with war and tragedy and were simply picturesque scenery that provided a pleasant location for an enjoyable day out. Indifference by some people to the historic value of the site is indicated by Grose’s mention of Idle Youths at the site who reportedly damaged the ruin.<sup>99</sup> This indifference continued as seen in a report about vandalism inflicted on the priory ruins in 1873. According to the *Chelmsford Chronicle*, the churchwardens caught some local boys causing damage:

St. Botolph’s Priory Damaged- Chas. Dunningham, 12, son of a painter, and Jas, Roule, an illegitimate child living with his grandmother, Mrs. Dunningham, were charged with doing damage to the ruins of St. Botolph’s Priory, on Sunday, the 18th...The information’s were laid by Messrs. F. A. Cole and R. Blomfield, churchwardens. – The church clerk, Mr. Jos. White, hearing a noise in the ruins, left the church and went to the Priory, where he found the defendants in the act of throwing big stones at one of the pillars, in which a hole three feet by one feet had been made since the service commenced.

The wardens also complained that they had had ‘much trouble in getting voluntary subscriptions to protect the ruins as interesting relics of antiquity’.<sup>100</sup> As several commentators have noted memories and meaning were not static. Different generations and different social groups or individuals reinvented or even neglected the historic traces left in physical sites.

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*Archaeological Group*, 56 (2016), 4-34 (p. 6).

<sup>97</sup> ‘Today’s Gossip’, *Nottingham Evening Post*, Thursday 03 April 1902, p. 2.

<sup>98</sup> ‘Died’, *The Suffolk Chronicle; or Weekly General Advertiser & County Express*, Saturday 08 May 1813, p. 3.

<sup>99</sup> Grose, *The Antiquities of England and Wales*.

<sup>100</sup> ‘Petty Sessions’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 30 May 1873, p. 2, also reprinted in the *Essex Newsmen* on Saturday 31st May 1873, p. 4.

## Preservation and Modernisation

The construction of a civic, collective identity based around a turbulent seventeenth century history was not one that everyone wanted to embrace. The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of great social, political and economic change that encouraged Colchester to re-imagine itself as a thriving, confident and prosperous town as seen in both Chapters One and Two. There was widescale debate over ancient buildings and whether or not they should be replaced or restored.<sup>101</sup> Many inhabitants of Colchester were more interested in a burgeoning economy and modern architecture than a historic identity and landscape of antiquity. While economic development was slow, and Colchester remained a country town until some industrialisation developed in the latter half of the nineteenth century, clashes did occur between those who were keen to preserve historic buildings and those more interested in promoting modernisation and improvement. In this context how people remembered the history of the siege became very important and the process was not uncontested.

Controversy emerged, for example, over the building of a new town hall after the old moot hall was demolished in 1843 and a new building was placed upon its site at a cost of about £6,000. Opposition railed against the loss of the building which ‘was of great antiquity. Parts of it were of Norman workmanship, and it is believed that Eudo Dapifer, the founder of St. John’s Abbey, of St. Botolph’s Priory, and (probably) the castle, had also a hand in the building the first Moot Hall of the Town.’<sup>102</sup> Matters were made worse when it transpired that the new hall was defective in its planning and in the materials from which it was constructed, and a third one was planned to replace it.<sup>103</sup> This led to more debate about whether the second hall should be replaced, as a retrospective report explained:

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<sup>101</sup> On the growing patriotic notions that influenced the preservation movement see Readman, ‘The Place of the Past,’ pp. 176, 181. For Ruskin’s views for example on preservation, see John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn. (New York: Wiley, 1885).

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1.

<sup>103</sup> Benham, *Colchester Town Hall: Full Illustrated Description of the building*.

strong opposition was manifested in the town, and many meetings were held vigorously protesting against the whole scheme, but more particularly against the demolition of the existing Town Hall. A petition was prepared urging the Council to abandon their intention to demolish the present Hall, and asking them to erect Municipal offices on the adjacent site. It did not appear, however, that this was the view of the ratepayers generally<sup>104</sup>

Apparently by 1897, all the anti-town hall councilors had lost their seats and an application was made to the Local Government Board for a loan of £36,000.<sup>105</sup>

Arguments also erupted over the ruined Roman walls. The walls were owned by property holders whose premises abutted on to them and piece by piece many of Colchester's original Roman gates, which also saw action during the siege, were demolished in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. When the Royal Archeological Society visited in 1876, they had to rely on their guide to explain the significance of the site where on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1648 a sizeable force of Royalists had attempted to force their way out of the town through the East Gate.<sup>106</sup> The Gate had admittedly been largely destroyed on the orders of Parliament in 1652 because they feared more uprisings and sieges and further destruction occurred again in 1676, but the Roman Guard House on the south side of the gate had survived until it was demolished by the Improvement Commissioners in 1819. St. Botolph's Gate was also torn down in 1814 to build a new theatre in Queen Street. According to modernisers, the change was carried out, 'in order to contribute a better effect to the edifice, which is to be both extensive and elegant.'<sup>107</sup> One article in the *Suffolk Chronicle* stated that a play was performed to help generate funds to remove 'that long standing nuisance.'<sup>108</sup> North Gate was also

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> 'Walls and Gates', in *A History of the County of Essex, Vol 9* (London: VCH, 1994), pp. 248-251.

<sup>107</sup> 'Colchester', *The Suffolk Chronicle; or Weekly General Advertiser & County Express*, Saturday 15 December 1810, p. 4.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

demolished in stages beginning in 1774 and ending in 1823 when the gate was removed according to urban improvers, 'for widening the carriage way and foot-path there'.<sup>109</sup>

The loss of the gates was keenly felt by antiquarians in Colchester later in the century. The Archeologist Dr Duncan lamented the loss of the parts of the wall which were destroyed by 'those who ought to know better', as in 1896 when an owner of a house in St. John Street broke down some of the Roman wall for the purpose of making a back entrance, The destruction annoyed the Museum and Muniment Committee who appointed Henry Laver and Charles Benham to inspect the site leading the owner to express 'regret and desired to make such amends as lay in her power.'<sup>110</sup> Duncan and others also complained about the lack of attention paid by the proprietors to maintenance of the walls and the gates.<sup>111</sup> For example, in 1843, William Wire recorded in his diary various damages to the town's historic fabric, noting that part of the Roman wall had been broken down by the owner of the adjacent King's Head Inn, in order to give his customers a better view of the trains at the new railway station. There was also an argument about cow-sheds built against the castle wall.<sup>112</sup> Not everyone held the historic ruins in high regard and contemporary concerns and business opportunities were of greater concern.

This clash of interests between modernisation and preservation was very well expressed by the debate about whether or not the churches of St. Nicholas and St. Runwald's should be restored or removed in 1873. One contributor to the discussion commented that:

I am as fond of ruins as anybody. I am as sensible, I hope to the picturesque charm of ruins as the most devoted lover of this old town can be...It is very pleasant to look on ruins when they represent a state of things that has passed away never to return. It is very pleasant to look on ruins of the old Castle at Colchester. The antiquarian and the patriarch both people in fancy those ruins with their former tenants-with that gallant band who held them at the peril of their lives...and at last those gallant

<sup>109</sup> 'Walls and Gates', VCH, pp. 248-251; 'Colchester', *Ipswich Journal*, Saturday 18 October 1823, p. 2.

<sup>110</sup> 'Colchester Town Council', *East Anglian Daily Times*, Thursday 03 December 1896, p. 2.

<sup>111</sup> ESAH, Duncan, 'The History and Description of the Walls', p. 38.

<sup>112</sup> E.R.O, D/Y 37/1/3, William Wires Journal.

men were led to their deaths. All of this is associated with the ruins of the old Castle at Colchester. But I am not so sure we can look with like feelings of an old Church in the main street of a thriving town, in the midst of a busy population<sup>113</sup>

Ultimately, St. Runwald's was demolished, and St. Nicholas was restored at great expense. However, it could be argued that Colchester, at least until the second half of the nineteenth century, was remarkable as much for the neglect or even destruction of its historic landscape as it was for its preservation. Until 1882 and the passing of a series of protection acts that gave local and national authorities powers of protection, preservation of Colchester's historic fabric as in other towns and cities across the country was left to the initiative of private individuals and institutions.<sup>114</sup> For example, in the 1740s, Charles Gray rebuilt the south-east turret on the Castle Keep; in 1749 he restored the 'chapel' (in fact the undercroft), and in 1750 he repaired a room on the west side of the castle for use as a granary. He also strengthened foundations of the keep and the damaged vaults. The surviving rectangular gatehouse on the north side of St. John's Abbey precinct, facing the town, that was destroyed when the site was stormed by Parliamentary troops in 1648, was not repaired till the 1840s when it was still in private hands.<sup>115</sup> Apparently one Lord Ashburton had planned to carry out some repairs in 1841, with a 'view of restoring to her the architectural beauties of the Abbey Gate.'<sup>116</sup> Further repairs were conducted by the army, led by the Garrison Commander Colonel Montague, in 1872. Montague arrived as commander of the army garrison in 1860, and apparently took, 'great interest in local affairs.'<sup>117</sup> It seems that some locals were worried about the future of the ruined gatehouse when the army arrived. The *Essex Standard* reported one resident stating that, 'he

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<sup>113</sup> E.R.O, D/P 138/28/9, News Cutting Album, June 20 1874, 'Proposed Restoration of St. Nicholas and Removal of St. Runwald's Churches'.

<sup>114</sup> Readman, 'Walking, and Knowing the Past', p.14.

<sup>115</sup> 'Georgian Colchester: Topography', in *A History of the County of Essex, Vol 9* (London: VCH, 1994), pp. 147-155.

<sup>116</sup> 'St. John's Abbey Gate', *Essex Standard*, Friday 23 April 1841, p. 3.

<sup>117</sup> 'Military Intelligence', *Essex Standard*, Friday 26 April 1872, p. 3; 'St. John's Abbey Gate', *Essex Standard*, Friday 23 April 1841, p. 3; 'St. John's Abbey,' *Colchester Archaeological Group*, p. 6.



should have to present a very strong memorial to the Government that at least they would not destroy this interesting relic of antiquity; and he was not without hope that they might be induced to restore it.<sup>118</sup> Others in the town were excited by the prospect, and the purchase of the land was greeted with cheers, as a large military base greatly increased the prestige of the town and boosted its economy.<sup>119</sup> Before the army had arrived in Colchester, newspaper reports from 1857 show that some people in the town wanted to purchase the site to be made into a promenade for those who could afford it.<sup>120</sup> It was not to be, but the debate suggests contested visions of Colchester's urban space between modern and historic uses and meanings.

The decayed priory church of St. Botolph's provides another example of support for preservation of local historic buildings by individuals and institutions from outside the town. The church was left in ruins after the siege in 1648 and damaged significantly again by the earthquake of 1884. But even though its parishioners were forced to worship in All Saint's Church because they had no space of their own, the parish remained a unit of ecclesiastical and secular administration, as well as social and cultural meaning, throughout the period. Perambulation of St Botolph's parish boundaries took place annually and the parish overseer's accounts record payments for maintenance of the churchyard and its gate which was kept locked right up until the middle of the nineteenth century and which was used to bury the parish dead.<sup>121</sup> St Botolph's vestry administered poor relief to the considerable number of unemployed cloth workers within its bounds until parochial systems of poor relief were disbanded by the New Poor Law of 1834.<sup>122</sup> But while the site had been owned by a series of wealthy families beginning with the Hendrick family in 1649, none of them attempted any

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<sup>118</sup> 'Essex Archaeological Society', *Essex Standard*, Friday 28 September 1860, p. 2-3.

<sup>119</sup> 'Colchester Property Protection Association', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 04 May 1860, p. 3.

<sup>120</sup> 'Colchester', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 06 November 1857, p. 3; 'Colchester Town Council', *Essex Standard*, Wednesday 11 November 1857, p. 4.

<sup>121</sup> E.R.O., D/P 203/5/1, Churchwarden Accounts 1753-1782.

<sup>122</sup> Brown, *Colchester 1815-1849*, p. 41.

renovation of the church building.<sup>123</sup> The overseers accounts reports also made clear that the parish was too poor to be able to contemplate rebuilding by themselves.<sup>124</sup> Concern was expressed locally and nationally about the deterioration of the building. A local newspaper commented that, ‘We learn that its condition is not unlikely to be brought under the notice of the British Archaeological Association before long.’<sup>125</sup> A letter from the Royal Institute of British Architects also stated after the earthquake that the site was of significant ‘public interest’, and in serious need of repair.<sup>126</sup> The following year the minute book of the vestry of St. Botolph’s recorded a discussion on the state of the ruined church, pointing out that the building was in danger of collapsing. Concern about the cost of restoration led to an attempt to pass on the responsibility for maintenance of the site to the Corporation through an approach to the politically well-connected historian John Horace Round and architect Loftus Brook. However, this achieved little.<sup>127</sup>

The condition of the ruin led to comments in the local press that questioned whether the people of Colchester cared about their heritage at all. The *Essex Standard* in 1887 included an editorial that accused local people of indifference to the antiquities around them, commenting that, ‘It is of course too much ever to expect Colchester people to take a proper pride or practical interest in their many antiquities, but we have no doubt if the British Archaeological Association determines to move in the matter, it will find ready co-operation from the Essex Archaeological Society.’<sup>128</sup> Another author wrote; ‘Now I am apprehensive

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<sup>123</sup> Essex Record Office., D/DMb T55, Includes abstracts of title of message in St. Botolph St., reciting 1650-1851, and of site of St. Botolph’s Priory, reciting 1536-1743.

<sup>124</sup> E.R.O., D/P 203/12/51, Overseers’ accounts of St Botolph 1750-1850.

<sup>125</sup> ‘Colchester and County notes’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 01 January 1887, p. 2.

<sup>126</sup> E.R.O, D/P 203/3/20, Letter from the Royal institute of British architects 24th January 1887.

<sup>127</sup> E.R.O, D/P 203/8/5, Minutes 1855-1985.

<sup>128</sup> ‘Colchester and County Notes’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 08 January 1887, p. 2.

lest it should be treated by local workmen,' presumably anxious about their indifference and ineptitude.<sup>129</sup>

These varying and conflicting interests notwithstanding, in the end the parish and its minister took successful steps to save the building. Loftus Brock explained in an article on St. Botolph's in the *Journal of Proceedings on the Royal Institute of British Architects* that, 'The interest taken in the ruin is not small, but the parish is poor, and it will be difficult matter for sufficient funds to be found in the locality.'<sup>130</sup> The vestry minute book of 1912 records that the Vicar of St. Botolph's decided to take the matter of the ruins to the Charity Commission and then suggested to his parish that the building should come under the Ancient Monuments Act of 1882. It is noteworthy that when the ruined building underwent a change of guardianship in 1912, it was the state that took responsibility and not the governing body of Colchester.<sup>131</sup>

A new church was constructed for the first time since the Civil Wars next to the ruins of St. Botolph's in 1837 but the building was paid for by a fund promoted by the *Essex Standard* because 'the parishioners were too poor to raise the money.'<sup>132</sup> Help came from all across the country, from Suffolk, Essex, even Derbyshire (Rev. Heathcote), Somerset (Rev. C.T Collins), and Mistley (J. T. Ambrose, Esq.).<sup>133</sup> Overshadowing the project was the rise of radicalism and class division which Tory Anglicans thought increased capacity for church attendance might suppress.<sup>134</sup> The fact that St. Botolph's did not have a church because of the Civil Wars was seen by some as a prime reason as to why groups like the Chartists had made such headway

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<sup>129</sup> 'To the Editor of the Essex Standard', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 05 February 1887, p. 5.

<sup>130</sup> 'St. Botolph's Priory', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 29 January 1887, p. 5.

<sup>131</sup> E.R.O, D/P 203/3/20, Correspondence and Papers Concerning Excavation and Preservation of St. Botolph's Priory ruins, 1887; including a letter dated 24<sup>th</sup> January from the Royal Institute of British Architects.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> 'St. Botolph's Colchester', *Essex Standard*, Friday 27 February 1835, p. 2.

<sup>134</sup> Arthur Brown, *Chartism in Essex and Suffolk* (Chelmsford: Essex Record Office and Suffolk Libraries and Archives, 1982), p. 106.

in the town. Newspapers, using emotionally charged language, told readers that ‘In the large and populous parish of St. Botolph, in the town of Colchester, there has been no Church for the accommodation of the Inhabitants for nearly two hundred years. The evil has from time to time been seriously felt by the true Friends of Religion.’<sup>135</sup> Their conviction that the church was a defence against social disintegration did not however prevent church leaders from requesting that police attend to control the crowd during the service of consecration.<sup>136</sup> A reference to the history of the impact of the siege on the site was provided by a plaque that was attached to the new building which explained that the area had been without a church since the ‘venerable siege of 1648’.<sup>137</sup> Mrs J. Round also sketched the priory in the year the new church opened in 1837 that placed the ruined priory alongside the new building.<sup>138</sup> In these ways retrospective material connection was made between seventeenth century and contemporary political conflict and division.

Even though there is considerable evidence of indifference and even outright resistance to efforts to preserve the material sites associated with the past therefore, the Victorian fascination with history and its links to local and national identity, nonetheless, had a significant impact on the relationship between the people of Colchester and the physical remains of the siege in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The historical topography of the town was shaped, for example, by the growing influence of the various strands of the preservation movement that had emerged in Britain by this date.<sup>139</sup> Many of the churches that were damaged during the siege were restored or rebuilt in the 1870s, even if the consequences

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<sup>135</sup> ‘St. Botolph’s Colchester’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 02 January 1835, p. 1.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> E.R.O, D/P203/8/4, Minutes of Meeting at St. Botolph’s Priory, about Subscribers for the New Church in 1835.

<sup>138</sup> E.R.O, I/Mp 80/2/1/1, On Stone by Deason from a Sketch by Mrs J. Round 1837.

<sup>139</sup> On the preservation movement see for example, Readman, ‘Place of the Past’, p. 161; Paul Readman, *Storied Ground*; Michael Wheeler, *Ruskin and the Environment* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Elizabeth Baigent, and Ben Cowell, eds., *Octavia Hill, Social Activism and the Remaking of British Society* (London: University of London Press, 2016).

for the visual and material legacies of the siege were mixed. Restoration projects were often inspired by the Gothic Revival that promoted Norman, medieval styles of architecture and decoration.<sup>140</sup> The result was that the changes and additions that were made during restorations were sometimes at the expense of original features which were obliterated or lost. St. Mary-at-the-Walls interior and exterior was remade in fashionable red brick, for example, and St. Nicholas's Church was restored in grand Gothic style with a magnificent spire added by eminent architect Sir George Gilbert Scott. While Scott was overseeing the project, he also visited St. Martin's and was so fascinated with the building that he brought the Royal Archaeological Institute to see it. He also paid for the chancel ceiling to be removed, revealing the ancient roof timbers. An ambitious plan of restoration was later prepared by another Gothic enthusiast, Rev Ernest Geldart, but it was never realised. The tower that was severely damaged during the siege was never repaired and the material scars inscribed on the building during the conflict were preserved.<sup>141</sup>

The reasons why Geldart's project foundered are not known. It does seem clear though that attitudes to the preservation of buildings were changing in Colchester as elsewhere in Britain by the late 1880s. Influenced by John Ruskin and William Morris who founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1878, increasing numbers of people began to oppose the excesses of the Gothic Revival and sought to preserve the integrity of historic buildings, preventing unnecessary changes and additions.<sup>142</sup> By 1891 the *Standard* reported, for example, that the 'Council decided not to interfere with the building [St. Martin's Church], or repair it, however recommendations were made that the Council should take great care in

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<sup>140</sup> Christopher Brooks and Andrew Saint, eds., *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

<sup>141</sup> 'St. Martin's Church, West Stockwell Street, Colchester', *Colchester Heritage*, <https://colchesterheritage.co.uk/monument/mcc396> [accessed 02/11/2021].

<sup>142</sup> On Ruskin see Wheeler, *Ruskin and the Environment*; Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*.

the preservation of old buildings in the town, as many contain fine woodwork, and are of superior architectural merit.’<sup>143</sup> It went on to state that:

The Church of St. Martin has already had much interest for Colchester people, irrespective of their religious views, from the historical associations connected with it and the picturesque appearance which the building has, until recently, presented. The tower, built for the most part of Roman tiles was a good deal injured by the cannon of the besiegers in 1648 and remains in about the same state as then<sup>144</sup>

Greater care was being taken of the material legacy of the past by local councils and individuals who were more attentive to the historical traces to be found in ancient buildings and their preservation. A good example of the shift in attitudes occurred in 1900 when the record of a memorial to the Royalist leader William Campion, in St. Peter’s Church was identified by documents and found to be damaged and hidden away. According to press reports:

Amongst other things it gives a monumental inscription in St. Peter’s Church, unrecorded so far by local historians, and I suppose unknown to them, for had they known of it they could hardly have refrained from publishing it. It runs thus: ‘Here lieth Sir William Campion, son of Sir William Campion of Kent, who was slain in the year of our Lord 1648 of his age 34, upon a sally out of this Town in June. He was pious, valiant, constant to his Prince, whose cause he chose, and whose he dyed in. Disturb not his ashes. Reader, if thou likest his judgment thou wilt praise his action’<sup>145</sup>

The contemporary website of the church speculates ‘whether or not this damage relates to the political nature of the memorial at the time it was first laid.’<sup>146</sup> But the greater interest in preservation and restoration by this stage was summarised in 1900 by a reporter who remarked critically that in the past, ‘unhappily, it seems to have been, with almost brutal indifference, covered up or hidden away.’<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> ‘St. Martins’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 04 July 1891, p. 2.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> ‘Floor Memorial’s’, Peter’s Colchester, <https://www.stpeterscolchester.org/resources/history-heritage/memorials-3/> [accessed 11/08/2021].

<sup>147</sup> ‘Colchester and County notes’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 07 July 1900, p.2.

At the same time the house in East Street known as the ‘Siege House’ was purchased and restored in 1902 by the Liberal Party politician William Marriage.<sup>148</sup> While working on the building the external plaster was stripped off to reveal many bullet holes in the timbers of the west side and south front, dating from the time of the siege in 1648.<sup>149</sup> A conscious decision was made to ensure that these marks were left exposed for passers-by to see them. The building was also used in advertising material produced for tourists as well as for the famous pageant of 1909.<sup>150</sup> Efforts were now made not only to maintain these sites, but also to exploit them for commercial gain by political and commercial elites.

These processes can also be seen in a variety of contexts in the latter half of the nineteenth century whereby history was as often harnessed by individuals and groups committed to nineteenth century visions of modernisation and civic ambition as it was by those who were opposed to it. Mythologies of history, displayed architecturally, were important elements in late Victorian Colchester’s self-representation. The politics of street naming was a case in point. Street names are more than simply markers of physical place. They are well recognised by cultural historians as strong symbolic markers of power and can contribute to the construction and perpetuation of the social and cultural values and ideals of civic elites who control them.<sup>151</sup> In Colchester, street names were used to celebrate connections to antiquity and history that were very important for its claims to political, cultural and social authority.

The process of revision of street naming began earlier in the century when a Committee of the Town Commissioners systematically altered several street names, revising them to connect more explicitly to places and events regarded by elites as significant in the town’s

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<sup>148</sup> Penn, *The Siege of Colchester*, p. 19.

<sup>149</sup> ‘The Siege House’, *Historic England*, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1123627>, [accessed 03/08/2021].

<sup>150</sup> Louis Parker, Arthur Jarmin and Charles Benham, *Colchester Pageant Programme, June 21 to 26 1909* (Norwich: Jarrold, 1909), p. xxv

<sup>151</sup> See for example, Maoz Azaryahu, ‘The Power of Commemorative Street Names’, *Environment and Planning, D: Society & Space*, 14.3 (1996), 311–330; Sanford Levinson, *Written in Stone. Public Monuments in Changing Societies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

history, the siege being prominent in this renaming project. Alderman John Bawtree Harvey recorded in his scrapbook, for example, that on the second of February, 1818, Gutter Street was renamed St. John's Street, and Headgate Street became St. John's Green.<sup>152</sup> On the 7th March 1836, 'A Meeting of Commissioners...ordered that the Street heretofore called Lodder Lane be henceforth called Abbey Gate Street.'<sup>153</sup> These changes did not go uncontested, however. The autodidact William Wire, who was interested in the history of the town as it affected its people rather than in the conservative antiquarian agenda, argued that the change constituted an obliteration of aspects of Colchester's past. Equally concerned by which histories were remembered and which ones were erased, another resident wrote a letter to the *Essex Standard* in 1851 arguing that, 'the old names are very significant, and, in most instances point to some matter of interest connected with them.'<sup>154</sup> Concern was raised again in 1856 by another correspondent who preferred that, 'old names, full of historical and archaeological meaning, would be revived, the new names by which they have been superseded having no real significance, and being destructive of many cherished historical associations.'<sup>155</sup> The removal of the name Lodder Lane was a particular bone of contention. Derived from the term used to describe the Pre-Reformation sanctuary offered by the abbey, a Mr. Harvey wrote to the *Essex Standard* in 1890 arguing that, 'The ancient and appropriate name ought to be restored. It belongs to ancient Colchester and should never have been altered'.<sup>156</sup> Other Colchester residents appreciated the changes, however. One correspondent to the *Essex Standard* in 1856, wrote of the renaming that, 'Among these we have "Gutter Street," at present called "St. John's

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<sup>152</sup> E.R.O, C210: Book 6, Scrapbooks Assembled during late 19th century by Alderman John Bawtree Harvey of Colchester (1809-1890); containing Broadsheets, Newspaper Cuttings, Correspondence, Notes and Invitations, c1749-1890, and Sacrament Certificates, 1719-74 (8 vols.).

<sup>153</sup> E.R.O, D/Z 227/1/2, Minutes of Navigation and Improvement Commissioners 1833-1847.

<sup>154</sup> 'To The Editor of the Essex Standard', *Essex Standard*, Friday 12 September 1856, p. 4.

<sup>155</sup> 'Street Names at Colchester', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 11 January 1890, p. 4.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*



Street:” and I venture to think, in deferential opposition to Mr. Wire, that this is an instance in which the new name is an improvement upon the old, both in elegance and appropriateness.’<sup>157</sup>

Later in the century, as residential areas of the town expanded and new areas were developed, new street names were used to reflect and reinforce, spatially, a historical narrative of the siege that fostered political unity. The residential development of New Town, south of the Hythe in 1878, for example, was led mainly by Liberals and those from the Co-operative movement such as J.F. Goodey, hence the name Gladstone Road and also Cromwell Road, the first street to be named that had a link to the Civil Wars in the 1870s.<sup>158</sup> But Lucas Road and Fairfax Road soon followed in the 1880s and thereafter there appeared a Lisle, Goring and Capel Road.<sup>159</sup> The map of New Town foregrounded ideals of unity, stability and democracy. It was a vision of the past refracted through the lens of a contemporary political culture of consensus.

These ideological messages were also reinforced spatially, through the design of the new town hall built between 1898 and 1902 at a cost of £55,000. Described by Cannadine as a ‘secular shrine to civic antiquity’, the building was a modern monument that linked the glories of the past to the confidence of the present. Lord Rosebery in his speech to the gathered assembly at the opening ceremony stated that, ‘there is no place in this country where the history of an island is so unfolded and spread out as in this old town of Colchester.’<sup>160</sup> The elaborate exterior decoration celebrated local connections to legendary historic figures such as Helena, Eudo and Boudicca. Significantly, however, the personalities associated with the siege were not displayed outside for everyone to see.<sup>161</sup> Unlike in Manchester where Cromwell was memorialised amongst other hereditary leaders in celebration of the, ‘struggle for religious

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<sup>157</sup> ‘To The Editor of the Essex Standard’, *Essex Standard*, Wednesday 24 September 1856, p. 4.

<sup>158</sup> E.R.O, D/B 6 M1/1/7, Council Minute Book 1871-1877.

<sup>159</sup> E.R.O C15 Box 8 plan of Wimpole Estate; E.R.O, D/DJ 2/5/30, Sale Catalogue of Various Properties in Colchester, Lexden, Brightlingsea and Tendring Heath 1888.

<sup>160</sup> ‘The New Town Hall at Colchester’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 16 May 1902, p. 5.

<sup>161</sup> Cannadine, ‘Transformation of Civic Ritual’, p.118.

devotion and political liberty by what is depicted as a heroic, urban bourgeoisie', the decoration of the hall in Colchester negotiated the local history of the Civil Wars more carefully, and more consensually, inside the building.<sup>162</sup> The approach was a disappointment to Conservative Party supporters who had hoped for a more explicit celebration of the Royalist cause. One remarked that it was strange that in the old Town Hall there had not been, 'a portrait of any kind of any person connected with that most memorable incident of the town's history. It is late to begin making a collection 250 years after the event, but better late than never.'<sup>163</sup> According to the Tory *Essex Standard*, a worthy image of the new town hall would be 'the struggle at Head Gate, with the enemy "tiring beneath it, and throwing stones over it," and the gallant Lord Capel- whose portrait by the way is now being painted for the Colchester Town Hall.'<sup>164</sup> Decorations inside the splendid new town hall of 1902 indicate the affection and esteem with which buildings associated with the conflict were held. Apparently, the Tower room had a small apartment:

set apart as a tea room or smoking room for members of the Town Council. This room contains an oak fire-place made of oak from old St. Runwalds Church and surmounted by four water-colour drawings of (1), St. Runwalds (2), old St. Nicholas Church (3), the old Obelisk in High Street (4), the Old Moot Hall<sup>165</sup>

But the main memorial to the siege was a set of portraits of leaders on both sides of the politico-religious divide donated by local elites. The liberal trading family, Mr and Mrs. Bultitude, donated pictures of Fairfax and of Ireton that were hung grouped together alongside Royalist leaders in a picture gallery as an attempt to present a history that was less partisan.<sup>166</sup> The

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<sup>162</sup> Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, p. 133.

<sup>163</sup> 'Colchester and County notes', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 07 July 1900, p.2.

<sup>164</sup> 'The New Town Hall at Colchester', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 24 June 1899, p. 4.

<sup>165</sup> Hervey Benham, *Colchester Town Hall: Full Illustrated Description of the Building* (Colchester: Essex County Standard, 1902), p. 32.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid*, p. 29.

design of the decoration of the town hall reflected and reinforced an image of reconciliation and renewal which Colchester wanted to present to the nation.

### **Conclusion**

The ruins of the siege and their history shaped significantly the way people understood and imagined Colchester's urban topography in the nineteenth century. Historic sites became important element in the town's self-representation but their meanings and uses were dynamic, multi-layered and tied closely to a complex combination of contemporary political, economic and cultural developments. The scars left on buildings were exploited by local elites to establish a political history of place, and by and then re-presented by businesses who were encouraged by the potential of the interest in popular romantic history for the growth of domestic tourism. The values and meanings of the material legacies of the siege thus had an essential role in the process of building a political identity as well as a tourist industry. Control over the historical narrative and therefore the meaning of the historical landscape by elites was however never absolute. Their historical meanings and uses were always negotiated, contested or even sometimes ignored by residents as well as visitors, because they were indifferent to the history or because they created meanings of their own. St. Botolph's priory is one such example where the parish had its own identity and story wrapped in the siege ruins. Nonetheless, the ways in which the physical remains of the tragic events of 1648 were co-opted, contested and commemorated by different individuals and groups at different times in different ways during the period, provides evidence of the lingering presence of the history of the siege in the historical memory of the town in the nineteenth century and its importance for local identity.

## **Chapter Four: “We'll live and die with Lucas huzza huzza”: Representations of Lucas, Lisle and Fairfax in Nineteenth Century Colchester.**

*Men still divide themselves into two camps. The more hot-headed Liberals look to Cromwell as the founder and winner of their rights. On the other side, Conservatives are found so retrograde in sympathies that they espouse a cause of which there is no representative.<sup>1</sup>*

This chapter of the thesis examines representations of Lucas, Lisle and Fairfax as heroes and villains as well as how these representations were used and consumed in nineteenth century Colchester. The Victorians loved to read about heroes, and a range of texts deployed a discourse of heroism to attract their readers. Carlyle, whose *Heroes and Hero-Worship* was first published in 1841, thought that a nation's whole history could be told in terms of its 'great men'.<sup>2</sup> He regarded historical heroes as particularly important for a rapidly changing industrial society since they would provide examples of virtue for people to follow. The primacy of biography underscored not only his writing but also his role in the founding of the National Portrait Gallery in 1856, whereby portraits of notable historical characters were taken out of private collections and offered as inspiration to the public at large. The cheap illustrated books that did so much to popularise history in the period also followed Carlyle's approach. Made possible by the invention of lithography in the middle of the nineteenth century, and dealing with figures ranging from the Bible, through Alfred the Great and William the Conqueror, to Henry VIII, Elizabeth I and Oliver Cromwell, they effectively reduced history to a parade of heroes and villains, who variously displayed qualities of virtue and vice. Historical novels, a hugely popular literary genre during the period, were also frequently framed around historical

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Period of the Civil War and the Drama', *Sunday Times*, Sunday 20 October 1872, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History* (London: James Fraser, 1841).

characters who exhibited chivalric qualities of honour and self-sacrifice.<sup>3</sup> Of course, reliance on the significance of the individual for the study of history was criticised at the time, most notably by Karl Marx.<sup>4</sup> It is also an idea that has been largely dismissed by modern scholarship as a working theory of history. Nonetheless, historians have recognised that investigation into how historical characters were represented, celebrated, commemorated and appropriated in various periods at different times can offer valuable insights into the uses of history in a culture of historical change. Hobsbawm and Rainger, for example, have shown how the celebration and commemoration of national heroes provided a useful way for nineteenth century governments to foster political loyalty and identity.<sup>5</sup> Blair Worden has demonstrated the value of an extended chronological study of representations of Oliver Cromwell for understanding how changing historical contexts shaped the way in which historical characters were constructed and used.<sup>6</sup> More broadly, pioneering work by Jones and Price has shown that analysis of the ways in which different groups in varied places in separate times, selected, imagined and represented their heroes, provides insights into the values, beliefs and uses of history in the period and its connection to the construction of identity.<sup>7</sup> Building on these approaches, the chapter that follows examines how historical characters associated with the siege, notably Lucas, Lisle and Fairfax, were represented, commemorated, debated and

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<sup>3</sup> Strong, *When Did You Last See Your Father*, pp. 30-40; Rachel E Johnson, 'The Construct of the Hero 1850-1900', in *A Complete Identity: The Youthful Hero in the Work of G.A. Henty and George MacDonald*, 1st edn (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2014), pp. 125-69; Ian Ousby, 'Carlyle, Thackeray, and Victorian Heroism.' *The Yearbook of English Studies* 12 (1982), 152-68; John Clive, 'The Use of the Past in Victorian England', *Salmagundi*, 68/69 (1985), 48-65; J. E. Luebering, *English Literature From the Restoration Through the Romantic Period*, 1st edn. (Chicago: Rosen Educational Publishing, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* (Hamburg: Verlag Von Otto Meissner, 1867); Daniel Woof, 'Of Nations, Nationalism and National Identity: Reflections on the Historiographic Organization of the Past', in *The Many Faces of Clío: Festschrift for Georg G. Iggers* edited by Q. Edward Wang and Franz Leander Filafer (Oxford: Berghahn books, 2006), pp. 366-81; Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man, and Reason: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Thought* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971).

<sup>5</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*.

<sup>6</sup> Worden, *Roundhead Reputations*.

<sup>7</sup> Max Jones, 'What Should Historians Do With Heroes? Reflections on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Britain', *History Compass*, 5 (2007), 439-454; John Price, "'Capable of Splendid Deeds': Heroism and the Heroic in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', in *Everyday Heroism: Victorian Constructions of the Heroic Civilian*, ed. by John Price (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), pp. 1-30.

appropriated in Colchester during the nineteenth century..<sup>8</sup> The aim is to better understand to what extent, how and why Victorians of different class, gender and age found these characters compelling and in doing so develop further insights into the uses and meanings of the history of the siege in the period and its relationship to local identity. The chapter argues that the construction of hero narratives was a crucial tool used by elites to try and create a sense of local and national identity in the nineteenth century, but distinct practices of local memory can be identified that did not always coincide with and occasionally contested national perspectives. Nor were representations static. Uses and meanings varied according to time as well as between individuals, social groups and in various political, commercial and cultural contexts.

### **Royalist and Restoration Narratives**

The two Royalist knights, Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle played an important role in the Royalist cause at Colchester. After the surrender of the town, they were, along with two other knights, Bernard Gascoigne and Henry Farre, condemned to death under the orders of General Fairfax. Farre had managed to escape, and Gascoigne's sentence had been revoked.<sup>9</sup> However, Lucas and Lisle were executed outside the castle and almost immediately, paper wars broke out over the character of Lucas, Lisle and Fairfax.<sup>10</sup> Lessons in loyalty to monarchy were framed around a romantic Royalist narrative of atrocity, chivalry and individual integrity that transformed defeat into noble sacrifice. Something of the tone of the texts can be gleaned

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<sup>8</sup> Readman, 'Place of the Past', p. 149.

<sup>9</sup> B Lyndon, 'The Parliament's Army in Essex, 1648: A Military Community's Association with County Society during the Second Civil War (Continued)', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 59.240 (1981), 229–42.

<sup>10</sup> See U.E.S.C, ESAH, DA 410.C2, Mathew Carter, *A Most True and Exact Relation of That as Honourable as Unfortunate Expedition of Kent, Essex, and Colchester* (1650). This was published throughout the decades and centuries afterwards; *An Eligie on the Death of Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle* (1648); Demophilus Philanactos, *two epitaphs, occasioned by the death of Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle, basely assasinated at Colchester*. (1648); *The Loyall sacrifice: Presented in the Lives of those Two Eminent-Heroick Patternes, for Valour, Discipline, and Fidelity; the Generally Beloved and Bemoaned Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle, Being Both Shot to Death at Colchester...*(1648). Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies* (London: T.R, 1653; revised:1664).

from the following extract from a Royalist pamphlet by Heath on the shooting of Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle:

Sir Charles tearing open his Doublet and crying, Shoot Rebels, was presently dispatched. Sir George Seeing him fall, ran to him and fell upon his Face, and kissed him saying, Oh how soon hath a brave Soul expired! But I shall not stay long behind thee's, my death at hand shall joyn us both together again. And then standing up in a most heroically posture, drawing out of his pocket five pieces of Gold, four whereof he sent to four Friends, the other he gave to his Executioners<sup>11</sup>

Most loyalist texts followed a similar line. The commitment of the knights to the Royalist cause, their self-sacrificial and martyred death and their courage in the face of the wickedness ascribed to Fairfax and his followers was celebrated and circulated in paintings and in print. Lucas and Lisle, concluded one Royalist chronicler, were 'matchlesse twins of valour, and payre of glorious martyrs', who were given Christ-like comparisons that pre-figured representations of the execution of Charles I.<sup>27</sup>

Fairfax, on the other hand was presented by Royalists as 'Black Tom' of the north, unfaithful, gouty and uncouth. Unprofessional and cowardly, he acted from 'Vindictive spleen' and 'bloody inclination.' According to Donagan, Fairfax's position not only as Lord General and commander at Colchester, but also as the personification and leader of army power and a potential contender for supreme rule in the state, meant that he, 'overshadowed Cromwell in the Royalist pantheon of villains'.<sup>12</sup> Unsurprisingly, the Parliamentarians had a different story to tell. Their writers condemned Lucas as a callous and cruel commander, 'not regarding what miserie he brought upon that place where he was born.'<sup>13</sup> Fairfax, on the other hand was praised as an honourable soldier who had a legitimate grievance against the two knights because they had broken their parole and breached the codes of war. Milton wrote a paeon of

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<sup>11</sup> Heath, *A Chronicle of the late Intestine War*, pp. 179-180.

<sup>12</sup> Donagan, *War in England*, p. 384.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Bell, *Memorials of the Civil War: Comprising the Correspondence of the Fairfax Family with the Most Distinguished Personages Engaged in that Memorable Contest. Now First Published from the Original Manuscripts* (London: Bentley, 1849), p. 52.

praise to the Lord General in 1648 to celebrate his famous victory and Fairfax himself made diligent efforts to shape a positive public identity through his *Short Memorials* published in 1651.<sup>14</sup> But the Restoration ensured that the victims won out in the battle over representation. Admittedly, after 1650, some Royalist writers attempted to accommodate Fairfax's developing support for Charles II by attributing the blame for the controversial executions of Lucas, Lisle and Capel more frequently to Cromwell's son-in-law, Ireton or the Parliamentary commander, Rainsborow. In the Royalist restoration drama, *The Famous Tragedy of Charles I*, written around 1680, for example, Rainsborough was the villain:

I am no longer of your Base Society; Heaven Pardon what is past, my future Deeds shall amply expiate my former Crimes, the Blood of Noble Lucas, and Brave Lisle. On Rainsborow's base Head, I will require, and Send his Soul unto Eternal Night.<sup>15</sup>

However, Fairfax's retirement under controversial circumstances after the regicide and his traditional political sympathies introduced a note of ambiguity even into Republican and radical portrayals.<sup>16</sup> For the most part, Fairfax's villainous reputation remained entrenched in the decades after 1660 and in Colchester it was memorialised in stone. In 1648, Lucas and Lisle were privately buried in St. Giles' Church, which was closely associated with the Lucas family. In June 1661, their funerals were magnificently solemnised with full civic honours and a black marble slab was laid over the vault which proclaimed that they, 'were ... by the command of Sir Thomas Fairfax, the General of the Parliament army, in cold blood barbarously murdered'.<sup>17</sup> Legend had it that Fairfax's son in law, who married the daughter of the Duke of Buckingham, asked for the words that connected Fairfax to the murder of the knights to be

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew Hopper, 'Images of Fairfax in Modern Literature and Film', in *England's Fortress: New Perspectives on Thomas, 3rd Lord Fairfax*, ed. by Andrew Hopper and Philip Major (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 120-142 (p. 120).

<sup>15</sup> [Anon.], *The Famous Tragedy of King Charles I. As it was Acted Before Whitehall by the Fanatical Servants of Oliver Cromwell* (London: J. Baker. 1680), p. 19.

<sup>16</sup> Hopper and Major, *Fortress*, pp. 3-11.

<sup>17</sup> ESAH, 'Annual General Meeting', *Society Transactions*, 2.3 (1889), 81-84 (p. 82), <https://www.esah1852.org.uk/publications/transactions> [accessed 13/12/2021].



erased. The King refused, and the memory was preserved. Thomas Fuller wrote in 1662, ‘Here those two worthy Knights, Sir Charles Lucas, and Sir George Lisle...were cruelly sentenced and shot to Death, whose bodies have since had a civil resurrection, restored to all possible outward Honour, by publick Funerall Solemnities.’<sup>18</sup>

### **The Resilience of the Royalist Narrative**

The Royalist narrative of martyrdom remained prominent in public memory in the eighteenth century and continued to transcend local roots. In the context of the threat of Jacobinism, radicalism and religious and political division between Whigs and Tories, as well as Anglicans and non-conformists, the myth was especially useful for Tory Anglicans and was included regularly in eighteenth century histories that aimed to instil loyalty to monarchy and fear of revolution. For example, *State Worthies*, the biographical work by the fervently Royalist Restoration writer, David Lloyd, was republished in 1766 and reiterated the myth of the martyrdom of Lucas and Lisle uncritically. The knights were classical heroes, according to Lloyd, who, quoting a 1660 Royalist text directly, declared that, ‘Never did Roman with great courage, nor Christian with firmer confidence court grim death than did this matchless pair of heroes.’<sup>19</sup> The physician and biographer John Aikin also portrayed Lucas and Lisle as ‘gallant leaders’.<sup>20</sup> David Hume, the eighteenth-century Tory historian and philosopher included an account of the siege in his *History*, which was regarded by many as definitive, and described Lucas as, ‘the humane prince’ who was ‘not less beloved for his modesty and humanity, than

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<sup>18</sup> Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England*, p. 347.

<sup>19</sup> David Lloyd, *State-Worthies; or the Statesmen and Favourites of England from the Reformation to the Revolution: Their Prudence and Policies, Successes and Miscarriages, Advancements and Falls: Vol II* (London: J. Robson, 1766), p. 424. Lloyd’s source was the staunch Royalist William Winstanley and his *England’s Worthies* (London, 1660) which was of interest in Edwardian Colchester, ‘The Essex Review’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 28 January 1910, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> John Aikin, *England Delineated; or, a Geographical Description of Every County in England and Wales: with a Concise Account of its most Important Products, Natural and Artificial* (For the Use of Young Person) (London: Bensley, 1788), p. 235.

esteemed for his courage and military conduct'.<sup>21</sup> The 1769 edition of the *Annual Register*, described George Lisle as a 'brave man'.<sup>22</sup> The historian and children's writer, Arnaud Berquin, who criticised interpretations of the siege by Hume and Clarendon as distorted by their 'aversion to the Republican party', also included the siege in his very popular children's history book, *L'Ami Des Enfants*, first published in English in 1783-84. The text comprised of a collection of short moral stories that included the siege episode in the form of a drama. Capel, rather than Lucas and Lisle, was the resolute Royalist hero and blame for their fate was shifted on to Ireton, 'the sole instigator of this barbarity,' but Lucas and Lisle were also portrayed as blameless, chivalrous martyrs.<sup>23</sup>

Royalist and romantic interpretations of the heroic qualities of Lucas and Lisle were also expressed visually in portraits and in print. A complex combination of antiquarianism, romanticism and patriotism precipitated a fascination by British artists with the medieval and post-medieval past from the middle of the eighteenth century. American painters such as John Singleton Copley and Benjamin West were leading exponents of heroic scenes from British history and the painting of such canvases was encouraged by the founding of the Royal Academy in 1768, which offered prizes for pictures painted in the 'grand manner' of historical subjects.<sup>24</sup> While the institution emphasised intellectualism and elitism, romantic interest in the importance of the individual, experience and subjectivism also encouraged a focus on portraits of historical characters. Such images accustomed the public to the idea of 'seeing' the past and historical portraits were popular with members of the upper middle class who

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<sup>21</sup> David Hume, *The History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688*, volume 8 (London: Cadell, 1773), p. 383.

<sup>22</sup> *Annual Register Vol. 12*, (December 1769), p. 47,

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015028180449&view=1up&seq=327&q1=Lucas> [accessed 29/01/2022]

<sup>23</sup> Arnaud M. Berquin, *The Friend of Youth, Translated from the French of M. Berquin: Complete in Two Volumes* (Edinburgh: Creech, 1788), p. 104.

<sup>24</sup> Strong, *And When Did You Last See Your Father*, pp. 26-29; Haskell, 'The Manufacture of the Past in Nineteenth-Century Painting', p. 110.

could afford them.<sup>25</sup> Purchased for personal reasons, to display wealth and status, they could also be used to make a statement about political allegiance and loyalty to monarchy in an age of revolution. Charles I was a popular subject, for example, and in late eighteenth century iconography symbolised the nobility of *ancien regime* aristocracy, most famously depicted in Copley's, *Charles I demanding in the House of Commons the Five Impeached Members* (1782-95).<sup>26</sup> But portraits of the Royalist knights, Lucas and Lisle, were also a relatively fashionable theme. For example, in 1750, engraved portraits of Lucas and Lisle were printed for J. Hinton in Newgate Street, London, at the Kings Arms for the Universal Magazine.<sup>27</sup> The symbolism in the engravings was striking. The portraits were placed above a pediment and the knights were dressed in armour with sashes across their breastplate. The link to a Roman past is also evident with the stylistic armour on display. A chivalric, mythical quality was projected through reference to antiquity and virtue with sword, musket and helmet placed in the foreground surrounded by laurel leaves to symbolise glory and victory.<sup>28</sup> In 1761, the Tory *Ipswich Journal* reported for sale, 'A Set of Prints of Kings Charles I. And the Heads of the Noble Lords and Others, who suffered for their Loyalty in the Rebellion and Civil Wars of England, with their lives and Characters, engraved under each Print...Sir Charles Lucas, Sir George Lisle...' <sup>29</sup> It is perhaps unsurprising that a set of images depicting Royalist leaders as 'loyal martyrs' was placed in a firmly Tory local paper.

In the process of translating the history of the siege for a wider audience in the eighteenth century, however, distinctions between local and national memories began to emerge. Most significantly Fairfax largely lost his political potency as a national symbol of

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> See also Charles Edward Wagstaff, 'Trial of Charles the First 1846', *History of London*, <https://www.thehistoryoflondon.co.uk/in-brief-civil-war-restoration/> [accessed 29/01/2022].

<sup>27</sup> E.R.O, I/Pb 12/18/2, Print of Sir Charles Lucas, engraved for the Universal Magazine, printed for I. Hinton, Newgate Street, London

<sup>28</sup> Sweet, *The Writing of Urban Histories*, p. 266.

<sup>29</sup> 'This day was Publish'd', *Ipswich Journal*, Saturday 24 January 1761, p. 4.

Republican villainy in broader accounts. The main reason behind the shift was the effectiveness of Royalist propaganda, which constructed such a powerful public image of Cromwell as a tyrannous dictator that he dominated most national histories of the Civil Wars and its significant events.<sup>30</sup> Admittedly, Berquin's Fairfax was still heinous, a once 'great general', debased by 'Republican enthusiasm' into Machiavellian deceit.<sup>31</sup> According to *Biographica Britannica* too, Fairfax was flawed by 'boundless ambition'.<sup>32</sup> But more often Cromwell and not Fairfax was the villain in the drama. Hume concluded, for example, that Fairfax was under the thumb of Cromwell, merely his 'passive general'.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, while James Granger, in his *Biographical History of England* praised Lucas and Lisle for their courage and self-sacrifice and also expressed admiration for Fairfax in terms of public spirit, 'integrity, and military accomplishments', he also concluded that Fairfax was in the end simply the 'dupe of Cromwell'.<sup>34</sup> Rare Republican interpretations, most notably by the staunch Whig historian, Catherine Macauley, praised Fairfax as a 'humane general' and condemned Lucas and Lisle as 'implacable malignants'.<sup>35</sup> But for the most part because Royalist polemicists had found a new primary villain, Fairfax faded from national public attention.

However, as Andy Wood has argued, while a national historiography was of growing importance in the period, it did not always coincide with or entirely overlay local memory.<sup>36</sup> Representations, memories and meanings in Colchester differed from broader accounts in that Fairfax remained the prominent villain. Local historians and Tory elites continued to tell and

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<sup>30</sup> Hopper, 'Images of Fairfax', p. 121.

<sup>31</sup> Berquin, *The Friend of Youth*, p. 147.

<sup>32</sup> Worden, *Roundhead Reputations*, p.184.

<sup>33</sup> Hume, *The History of England*, p. 40; Worden, p. 194.

<sup>34</sup> Granger, *A Biographical History of England*, pp. 455-6; 465-66.

<sup>35</sup> Catharine Macauley, *The History of England from the Accession of James I to that of the Brunswick Line, Vol IV* (London: J. Nourse, 1764-71), pp. 272-3. for biographical details of Macauley, see Bridget Hill, 'Macauley [née Sawbridge; other married name Graham], Catharine (1731–1791), Historian and Political Polemicist', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-17344> [accessed 28/09/2021].

<sup>36</sup> Wood, *Memory of the People*, p. 12.

re-tell the history of the siege in the eighteenth-century in part because it had political utility but also because it was tied closely to local identity. Lucas and Lisle remained important local symbols of chivalry, loyalty and noble sacrifice with which members of both sides of the political divide could ally. Locally stories were printed and published, as for example in the *Ipswich Journal* in 1799 when a book was advertised that described the:

the hardships the inhabitants underwent during the long siege, articles of surrender, the shooting of Lucas and Lisle, beheading of Lord Capell, and every other curious particular. Printed and sold by J. Marsden, Colchester...and may be had of all booksellers in town and country.<sup>37</sup>

An example from a locally produced essay of 1807 gives further flavour of the language used:

The two [knights] were then murdered close to that castle which they had defended with so much heroic bravery, and which still stands a monument to their honour, and to the puny cowardice of those who could, unimpassioned, pronounce the decree.<sup>38</sup>

Another noted that:

The inscription in St. Giles Church to the brave Lucas and Lisle is calculated, in the deep significance touching eloquence of its very simplicity, to excite our most profound feelings, and at the same time to redeem the horrors of those days by the heroism of those loyal and gallant soldiers.<sup>39</sup>

It is interesting also to note ways in which, as we have seen, those politically opposed to the Tories also harnessed the history to their own cause of freedom from tyranny through reform. The Whig radical Benjamin Strutt wrote in heroic terms about Lucas in 1803 as a was man of ‘freedom’ :

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<sup>37</sup> ‘Just Published’, *Ipswich Journal*, Saturday 03 August 1799, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> E.R.O, D/F 23/4/8, An Essay Towards An History and Description of Colchester Castle, Essex (printed 1807 with 2 engravings.

<sup>39</sup> E.R.O, D/F 23/4/14, *A Descriptive Account of Colchester: Illustrated*.

Charles was a man of extraordinary courage and fortitude; to all the insulting taunts of Ireton and his colleagues, he looked and acted with the intrepid freedom and magnanimity which can only be known to the man of great and good mind<sup>40</sup>

Strutt also painted a romantic image of the execution of the two knights at the foot of the forbidding castle walls in 1776, and the image proved so popular that it was reproduced in cheaper form in print soon after in 1781.<sup>41</sup> The scene was set beneath the walls of the castle and the building dwarfed the execution of the two men. Strutt also produced printed images of Lucas, Lisle, Fairfax and Goring around 1824 for the Proprietors P. Youngman & J. Greig by Miss Swinburne & Walter, Colchester. The engraving of Lisle was very colourful. He wore a red and gold sash over an orange suit, whilst wielding a very ornate sword.<sup>42</sup> Originally designed as illustrations for his book, they also sold well separately and were cut out and kept in scrapbooks owned by local residents, as is evident by the collection of his son Edward. Hinton's engravings of the two knights were also purchased and saved in a scrapbook owned by an eighteenth century Colcestrian, suggesting a close connection between the heroic images and identity.<sup>43</sup>

It should be no surprise either that the Tories allied closely with representations of the heroic chivalry of their seventeenth century Royalist forebears and in 1750 included Hinton's engravings of Lucas and Lisle in promotional literature for the Tory election campaign.<sup>44</sup> But perhaps because the damage Fairfax was argued to have caused was still felt so keenly, he, rather than Cromwell remained the prominent villain in local public memory. According to Morant, Colchester's most notable eighteenth century Tory historian, Lucas was, 'one of the

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<sup>40</sup> [Anon.], 'ART II. the History and Description of Colchester (the Camulodunum of the Britains, and the First Roman Colony in Britain), with an Account of the Antiquities of that most Antient Borough', *The Annual Review and History of Literature*, 2 (1803), 380-383, [https://archive.org/details/sim\\_annual-review-and-history-of-literature\\_1803\\_2/mode/2up?q=Colchester](https://archive.org/details/sim_annual-review-and-history-of-literature_1803_2/mode/2up?q=Colchester).

<sup>41</sup> 'An Engraving', *Ipswich Journal*, Saturday 08 September 1781, p. 3; Reprint's can be found in good number at the E.R.O, I/Mo 90/1-3, Print of the Death Scene of Lucas and Lisle.

<sup>42</sup> E.R.O, D/DU 3075/1, Edward P. Strutt's Notebook on the Siege of Colchester & The Civil War 1648.

<sup>43</sup> E.R.O, I/Pb 12/18/2, Print of Sir Charles Lucas.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

best commanders of horse King Charles ever had' whilst the knights were the 'noble victims of tyrannous treachery'. But the harm that Fairfax had brought to Colchester, would make his name 'for ever odious and detestable' in the town.<sup>45</sup>

These attitudes and approaches were inherited and amplified by the French Revolution and meteoric rise of Napoleon that stimulated great interest in France and Britain in the personalities associated with the Civil Wars. Seventeenth-century historical characters associated with the war were seen as a quarry for exemplars for contemporary political leaders. For the most part radical voices were successfully suppressed in public rhetoric and authority at a national and local level used historical characters associated with the Civil Wars very effectively to construct a dominant mythology of unity and loyalty that warned against the dire consequences of revolution.<sup>46</sup> Across the nation in paintings and print Cromwell was depicted as the bigoted, tyrannical forerunner of Napoleon, and Charles I as the tragic yet honourable precursor for Louis XVI. In these contexts, representations of Colchester's Royalist knights as cultural exemplars of heroism and loyalty continued to resonate with the public. For example an 1820 auction in London drew particular attention to portraits of the knights in its advertising material, declaring its offering of, 'A Valuable and highly interesting COLLECTION of ENGLISH HISTORICAL PORTRAITS...a noble original portrait of Sir Charles Lucas, who fell during the Siege of Colchester.'<sup>47</sup> The death of the two knights also appeared in literature used to promote a volume on the 'The Siege of Colchester' in 1789 that

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<sup>45</sup> Morant, *The History and Antiquities*, p. 152; Phillip Morant, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex. Compiled from the Best and Most Ancient Historians; from Domesday-Book, Inquisitions, Post Mortem, and Other the Most Valuable Records and MSS. &c., the Whole Digested, Improved, Perfected, and Brought Down to the Present Time* (London: Osbourne, 1768), p. 73.

<sup>46</sup> J. W Croke, a Tory, saw the revolutions in France and looked back at what happened in England, and hated what he saw, a country in chaos due to a few 'agitators' as seen in Richardson's work on, *The Debate on the English Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1977), p. 65; also see Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> 'Sales by Auction', *Morning Chronicle*, Wednesday 20 June 1827, p. 4. See also, 'Fine Arts', *Belfast Commercial Chronicle*, Monday 10 September 1827, p. 2; 'Exhibition of the Royal Academy', *Statesman*, Monday 05 May 1823, p. 4; 'Sale by Auction', *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, Monday 18 June 1827, p. 8.

focused on the execution scenes of Lucas and Lisle, and Capel's death in Westminster, describing them as heroic.<sup>48</sup> The execution of nobles in the time of Civil War certainly resonated with a conservative audience that was looking anxiously towards France.

As with earlier decades, however, while Fairfax remained overshadowed by Cromwell in national narratives, in Colchester the treacherous reputation of Fairfax endured.<sup>49</sup> According to the Whig and radical Colchester historian Benjamin Strutt in his *History* of 1803, for example, Lucas was a man of 'extraordinary courage' and of 'great and good mind'.<sup>50</sup> He included a poem in his work that extolled the virtues of Lucas and Lisle and their, 'valour loyalty and truth.'<sup>51</sup> By contrast, while he laid the blame for the execution more on to Ireton, he drew the firm conclusion that Fairfax was a villain driven by 'private rancour', and his actions 'stained his memory with indelibly infamy'.<sup>52</sup>

### **Re-thinking Heroes**

While the construction and representation remained dominated by Tory elites for the most part up to 1840, by the middle of the nineteenth century the process of 'hero-making' became far more contested nationally and locally. A complex combination of antiquarianism, romanticism, civic pride, burgeoning liberalism and campaigns for electoral reform catalysed conflicts over historical memory and patterns of passionate but contradictory loyalties were played out in clashes over personalities associated with the Civil Wars. Highly influential in the new discourse of heroism was the liberal and non-conformist historian and philosopher Thomas Carlyle, whose best-selling *Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* was published in 1845. The book transformed the enlightenment view of Cromwell, in the words of Hume,

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<sup>48</sup> 'This day is published', *Bury and Norwich Post*, Wednesday 18 March 1789, p. 3; 'This day is published', *Ipswich Journal*, Saturday 28 February 1789, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Worden, p. 132.

<sup>50</sup> E.R.O. D/DU 3075/1, Strutt's *Siege of Colchester & The Civil War 1648*.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158; 256. See also, *The Annual Review and History of Literature*, 2 (1803), 380-383.



as driven by ‘enraged fanaticism’, into a hero for Victorian reformers, Liberals and non-conformists. Carlyle’s idealised portrait was transmitted all over Britain in newspapers, periodicals, novels, plays and paintings and contributed to a powerful mythology of Protestant imperial identity.<sup>53</sup> At the same time those who resisted the forces of social and political change found solace in the romanticism of Sir Walter Scott whose hugely influential novels such as *Rokesby* (1813), and *Woodstock* (1826), projected the idea of the combatants in the Civil Wars as romantic heroes. The impact of Scott’s writing was reflected nationally, and indeed internationally, in the explosion in print of popular plays, novels and poems as well as paintings about the Civil Wars that appeared in the middle of the nineteenth century. All of these works subsumed history beneath a haze of romanticism and images of noble and loyal Cavaliers.<sup>54</sup>

Representations of historical characters associated with the siege were shaped by these developments and their political and social significance began to shift. As Hopper has shown, while Carlyle’s idealisation of Cromwell continued to push Fairfax into the background in most national narratives, more positive interpretations of his character and legacy did begin to emerge.<sup>55</sup> Robert Bell, the Irish journalist and supporter of Catholic emancipation, interestingly published Fairfax’s correspondence in 1849, for example, apparently in an attempt to ‘restore honour to his memory.’<sup>56</sup> Clements Markham, explorer, naval officer, civil servant and distant relative of Fairfax also produced Fairfax’s first biography that praised him as a

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<sup>53</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘Thomas Carlyle’s Historical Philosophy’, in his *History and the Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 223–45; Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional*, p. 84; Trevor Hogan, ‘The Religion of Thomas Carlyle’, in *Reinventing Christianity*, ed. by Linda Woodhead (London: Routledge, 2019), pp. 149–162.

<sup>54</sup> Brown, *Literary Tourism*; David Inglis, and Mary Holmes, ‘Highland and other haunts: Ghosts in Scottish tourism’, *Annals of tourism research*, 30.1 (2003), 50–63; George Dekker, *The Fictions of Romantic Tourism: Radcliffe, Scott, and Mary Shelley* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

<sup>55</sup> Hopper, *Images of Fairfax in Modern Literature and Film*, p. 122.

<sup>56</sup> Francis Espinasse and Nilanjana Banerji, ‘Bell, Robert (1800–1867), Journalist and Writer’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-2024> [accessed 17/12/2021].

stoic, honourable and courageous leader, a man who lived a life ‘without a stain on his honour’, or ‘taint of self-seeking.’<sup>57</sup> The book helped to inspire the historic novel by Beatrice Marshall, *The Siege of York*, that moved Fairfax out the shadow of Cromwell as the hero of Marston Moor, and presented him as a military hero of courage, grace and decency.<sup>58</sup> The culmination of these efforts was the strongly favourable assessment of Fairfax by the Dissenter (and descendant of Cromwell), S.R. Gardener, in his magnificent multi volume series on the Civil Wars and Protectorate (1894-1901), that was reinforced by C.H. Firth.<sup>59</sup> According to Hopper, these interventions went some way to establish Fairfax amongst the national pantheon of ‘Victorian ‘great men’, a virtuous leader who could inspire patriotic feeling in the young’.<sup>60</sup>

Locally, too, deeper memories endured, and varied representations of Fairfax were presented to the public in different regions that reflected and reinforced the shifting dynamics of local and national memory and their interaction with broader political, social and cultural trends. Fairfax had always remained a hero in his non-conformist home county of Yorkshire, for example. Around the time of the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1830, poems and plays were printed and performed in Yorkshire, that celebrated his heroism in defence of the Protestantism during the siege of Bradford in 1642. Monuments at York Minster, the Bodleian Library in Oxford and in his parish church at Bilbrough also applauded variously his defence of culture, modesty, integrity and non-conformity.<sup>61</sup> In Colchester, too, attitudes began to shift and hero narratives contested. . While Tory, and later Conservative Party loyalism remained dominant politically, and representations of Fairfax’s villainy ran deep in popular memory, alternative presentations did begin to emerge mid-century associated with the rise of radicalism and specifically, the Liberal Party in Colchester. The turning point was the re-

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<sup>57</sup> Markham, *A Life of the Great Lord Fairfax*, pp. 361-2; 385; 401.

<sup>58</sup> Beatrice Marshall, *The Siege of York* (London: Seeley, 1902).

<sup>59</sup> Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War*; C.H. Firth, *Oliver Cromwell and the Rule of the Puritans in England* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1900).

<sup>60</sup> Hopper, ‘Images of Fairfax in Modern Literature and Film’, pp. 123-4.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p. 121.

publication of the Parliamentary account of the siege in the pamphlet *Colchester Tearres*, by the Chartist historian William Wire in 1843.<sup>62</sup> The text attacked Lucas for dishonourable conduct and breaking the codes of war. According to the writer Lucas had, ‘ensnared a woman if my Lord Goring had not come in and called upon him to go to one of the forts.’<sup>63</sup> Fairfax on the other hand was praised as a military hero of integrity, courage and honour. Liberals became more vocal in their defence of Fairfax and praised Fairfax’s actions and life. According to press reports a Liberal supporter publicly defended the honour of Fairfax at the Oyster Feast of 1857 and at meetings in Coggeshall and Bury St. Edmunds, speakers defended the legality of the executions and questioned the characters of the two knights.<sup>64</sup> Even the conservative leaning scholar and archaeologist Peter Duncan acknowledged in a lecture given to a local literary society in 1869 that there were legal justifications for the executions and that if they had been performed after the execution of the King, then Fairfax would not have been so harshly judged. He also argued that Fairfax was largely an ‘instrument of others’, namely Ireton. But in the end, he said that people still had to ask the question as to why Fairfax treated the inhabitants so harshly.<sup>65</sup> The local dimensions of the impact of Fairfax’s character could not be ignored. The hefty sum of a £14,000 fine imposed on the town was extreme, he argued, and like Morant, he felt it had hampered the development of the town.<sup>66</sup>

Lucas and Lisle remained prominent in the national parade of British heroes for supporters of Tory Anglicanism. Highly romanticised representations of their heroic sacrifice continued to be used locally and nationally to engender patriotism and fear of revolution. For

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<sup>62</sup> William Wire, *Colchesters Teares; Affecting and Afflicting City and Country; Dropping From the Sad Face of a New Warr, Threatening to Bury in Her Own Ashes that Wofull Town* (Colchester: John Bawtree Harve, 1843).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> ‘Colchester Oyster Feast’, *Essex Standard*, Wednesday 28 October 1857, p 3; ‘Coggeshall’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 28 March 1856, p. 3; ‘The Life and Times of John Owen’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 17 December 1880, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Colchester Literary Institution’, *Essex Standard*, Wednesday 06 April 1859, p. 3.

<sup>66</sup> ‘Colchester Literary Institution’, *Essex Standard, and General Advertiser for the Eastern Counties*, Friday 05 November 1869, p. 3.

example, the Anglo-Catholic clergyman and historian John Neale included a detailed account of the siege in the history that he wrote for children in 1849.<sup>67</sup> Adhering closely to Royalist accounts, his villain was Cromwell who he condemned for the ‘butchery’ of women and children.<sup>68</sup> But he extolled the virtue and honour of Lucas and Lisle, ‘two of the King’s best officers shot in cold blood’ for their loyalty.<sup>69</sup> In Manchester, too, a portrait of Lucas was included in an exhibition of 1857, which according to a press report represented him ‘with handsome regular features, olive complexion and light intelligent eyes.’ The description ended with a brief but caustic summary to the effect that, ‘he was basely shot by Fairfax after the Siege of Colchester.’<sup>70</sup>

Heroic romantic representations of Lucas and Lisle also remained very useful exemplars of Tory, Anglican loyalty and identity in Colchester. A local Anglican church man, the Rev. Townsend wrote a history of the siege which made Capel the ‘superhero ... so that the whole account is one of an Epic of Victorian standards.’<sup>71</sup> The history of the execution of the knights was also used extensively during the political uncertainty that arose around the Reform Act of 1832 and was an important rallying cry for the local Tories.<sup>72</sup> Meetings were reported regularly in a politically sympathetic local press and according to one account in a speech given at the True-Blue and Conservative Club in 1832, Lucas and Lisle were praised as pioneers of Tory loyalism.<sup>73</sup> One speaker proclaimed proudly, ‘I adjure you as fathers and as Englishmen- by your hearts and by your altars- by the innocent blood that was shed in this very town- by the shades of the murdered Lucas and Lisle, who speak with conservative eloquence

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<sup>67</sup> Rev. J.M. Neale, *English History for Children* (London: Joseph Masters, 1849), p. 216.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> ‘Art Treasures-Exhibition at Manchester’, *Morning Post*, Wednesday 27 May 1857, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> Townsend, *The Siege of Colchester*, p. 170; Lyndon, *The siege*, p. 72.

<sup>72</sup> ‘Local News’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday, November 16, 1833, p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> In Sheffield and Bristol at the same time the memory of the knights and other Royalists was invoked to promote the Tory cause during the debate about Catholic Emancipation, ‘Proclamation Extraordinary’, *Sheffield Independent*, Saturday 11 October 1828, p. 4; ‘The Posts Monday to Wednesday’, *Bristol mercury*, Tuesday 07 October 1828, p. 1.

from out of the peaceful grace...Honour the King.'<sup>74</sup> Romantic poems about the knights appeared reasonably regularly in the local Tory press that praised their, 'valour- loyalty- and truth- Unto their King- their God!'<sup>75</sup> A lecturer at one Tory meeting cast the Royalist Commanders as Roman heroes, true heirs with the Tories of Colchester's glorious Roman heritage.<sup>76</sup>

These representations were bolstered by local histories based on idealised, Royalist presentations that were in keeping with Scott's vision of noble and loyal Cavaliers.<sup>77</sup> Thomas Cromwell was the main local historian of that period. He was a commercial writer who borrowed most of his history from Morant, and he reproduced uncritically the Royalist narrative of Fairfax's tyranny and Royalist noble sacrifice. Admittedly, he pushed a great deal of the blame for the executions on to Ireton 'the chief odium of the transaction'.<sup>78</sup> But Fairfax was still condemned. Accordingly, he wrote:

It might prove a matter of some difficulty for the warmest admirers of Lord Fairfax, to clear this character from the imputation of an uncalled-for and cruel severity, in the military execution of these two gallant knights, and truly honourable gentlemen.<sup>79</sup>

The mythology was also reinforced by fictional and dramatic representations that were inspired by Scott's romantic visions. A few years after *Woodstock* was published, in 1830, for example, John Frederick Smith, a Catholic sympathiser, popular novelist and son of the manager of a Norwich theatre, wrote and produced a play about the siege that was performed in Norwich,

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<sup>74</sup> 'Essex and Colchester True-Blue and Conservative Club', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 16 November 1832, p. 2-3.

<sup>75</sup> 'Written on a Young Oak Growing on Colchester Castle', *Essex Standard*, Friday 25 September 1835, p. 4. See also, 'Colchester Literary Institution', *Essex Standard*, Friday 05 November 1869, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> 'Colchester Literary Institution', *Essex Standard*, and *General Advertiser for the Eastern Counties*, 5 November 1869, p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> Cromwell, *History and Description of the Ancient*, p. 154-5.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

Ipswich and Colchester.<sup>80</sup> The knights were depicted as exemplars of loyalty and preservers of unity in the face of treachery. Sir Charles Lucas was said to exclaim, ‘Oh be the hand that spread it first accursed; may future ages execrate his name, who reckless of a nation’s peace and honour, first draws the sword that wounds his native land.’<sup>81</sup> A romantic language of sacrifice pervaded the narrative throughout. Smith was a hugely successful and popular writer who knew how to make the play more compelling for Victorian audiences for whom chivalrous historical fantasy had become a national obsession. The playwright interestingly cast himself in the play as the character of Ireton, who following some Restoration representations, was presented as the villain in the drama. Fairfax remarked, for example, that ‘I have bethought me, Ireton, of the hardship of the terms we offered to our enemy, and wish to modify the rigorous degree. Say, we will give to every officer three day’s permission to depart the realm; after that tie, no further chance of mercy. It never must be said, that Fairfax stained his name by asking more e’en of his enemies than honor bade them yield.’<sup>82</sup> Ultimately, Fairfax was persuaded and the knights were executed. A flavour of the tone of the production can be gleaned from a line from a scene in which Lucas was depicted as generous to the people in the face of the tyranny of Parliament when he opened his private grain store to feed the people who were starving. According to Smith, the grateful population of Colchester responded with the cry, ‘We’ll live and die with Lucas huzza huzza!’<sup>83</sup> The last image the play presented was that of Lucas, falling ‘as soldiers fire- Sir Charles Lucas rushes forward, falling on one knee- endeavours to raise himself as if cheering and falls exclaiming “God save King Charles.”’<sup>84</sup> Smith did not deviate from the myth of martyrdom of these figures that had been constructed

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<sup>80</sup> Montague Summers, *A Gothic Bibliography* (London: The Fortune Press, 1941), p. 178; John Smith, *The Siege of Colchester, an Historical Play, in Three Acts. Dedicated by Permission to Sir George Henry Smith...As performed at the Colchester and Ipswich Theatres* (Colchester: Swinborne, Walter and Taylor, 1830).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Smith, *The Siege of Colchester, an Historical Play, in Three Acts.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

in 1648, reinforced at the Restoration, repeated by Morant in 1748 and those that used his work thereafter.<sup>85</sup>

These themes were amplified by the burgeoning tourist industry of the period which was keen to exploit public enthusiasm inspired by Scott's fiction for visiting places associated with romantic stories of hero Cavaliers.<sup>86</sup> Colchester and its siege sites were already on the itinerary for well to do travellers in the eighteenth century, as we have seen, and it was the arrival of the railway in 1843 which meant the infrastructure for mass tourism was put in place and numbers and social types of visitors increased. Railway companies saw the potential of the history of the Royalist heroes as an attraction for tourists and devised trips and tours supported by guidebooks that championed the Royalist, romantic version of the execution of Lucas and Lisle for visitors to read. These publications became an important medium through which the myth of heroic martyrdom was represented and reproduced. Measom, for example, the author of the *Illustrated Great Eastern Railway Guide* which was published in 1865, dwelt at length on Royalist accounts of the execution of Lucas and Lisle and Fairfax's role in the destruction of the town.<sup>87</sup> Charles Benham wrote in similar vein, and included a highly emotive account of the 'barbarous murders', echoing the wording on the St. Giles memorial.<sup>88</sup> Visitors were encouraged to go and see the black marble slab in the church for themselves, 'which after the Restoration was placed over their grave to commemorate their loyalty and sufferings for their King.'<sup>89</sup> These texts did not present the complexity of history to their readers but rather sold Colchester to visitors as a place to see and experience sites associated with a myth of the romantic tragedy of chivalric heroes. The meanings of hero narratives in these contexts, both for the understanding of the construction and promotion of the ideas as well as their reception,

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<sup>85</sup> Cromwell, *History*.

<sup>86</sup> Harry E Shaw, 'Form in Scott's Novels: The Hero as Instrument', In *The Forms of Historical Fiction: Sir Walter Scott and His Successors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 150–211 (pp. 150, 173).

<sup>87</sup> Measom, *The Official Illustrated Guide*.

<sup>88</sup> Benham, *A Guide to Colchester and its Environs*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>89</sup> *The Official guide to the Great Eastern Railway Illustrated* (1910), p. 123.

were therefore rather different from those deployed in explicitly political rhetoric. They became an integral part of Colchester's appeal to tourists and acted as sources of imagination and identity for individuals of varying age, gender, class and political affiliation, who could construct meanings and uses of the narrative for themselves.

### **Heroes and Villains**

Commercialisation did not mean that partisan defence of seventeenth century heroes disappeared in late Victorian Colchester, however. If anything, as political division and debate amplified, passionate recrimination and defence of valorised individuals intensified and increased. By the 1870s, although borough politics tended to be dominated by a policy of consensus Parliamentary partisanship remained intense. The fierce debate that erupted in 1876, already referred to in Chapter One, provides a good example of the ways in which contemporary political battles were fought out in proxy wars over seventeenth century heroes whose values could be harnessed to the issues of their own day.<sup>90</sup> The clash occurred during the annual Congress of the Royal Archaeological Institute, which was held that year in Colchester, under the joint presidency of Lord Carlingford, Lord Lieutenant of Essex, and the Liberal politician and Regius Professor of History at Oxford, Edward Augustus Freeman. At the meeting Freeman gave a paper on the siege that described Lucas as an 'insurgent leader', attacked the, 'indefensible conduct of the military defenders', and argued that Fairfax was correct in ordering the execution of the two knights<sup>91</sup> There followed a heated debate between delegates of different political persuasions.<sup>92</sup> John Pigot, reacted ferociously to Markham's paper on 'The Siege of Colchester' in which he built on his recently published revisionist biography of Fairfax and defended his decision to execute the Royalist leader Sir Charles Lucas.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, p. 531.

<sup>91</sup> 'The Royal Archaeological Institute', *Morning Post*, Tuesday 09 August 1876, p. 3.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>93</sup> Powell, 'John Horace Round and Victorian Colchester: Culture and Politics'; also see ODNB on Round, Markham and Freeman.



The debate generated a great deal of attention in print and so provides useful evidence of the reception of representations of heroism by readers as well as its projection and promotion at the time.<sup>94</sup> It was reported locally that the radical periodical, *The Fortnightly Review*, for example, was keen to use evidence presented in the debate to deconstruct established reputations or at least have them re-assessed. An editorial informed its readers that:

The excitement caused by the discussion at Colchester shows the very strong feeling that exists respecting the events of our great Civil War; a feeling which ought by all means to be encouraged...Many fallacies will be exposed, and the true bearing of historical events will be more correctly appreciated. Probably some popular idols will be displaced while the oft-repeated slanders of former times will be heard no more.<sup>95</sup>

Further controversy was generated in 1885, when the seventeenth century Parliamentary pamphlet *Colchester Teares* was republished by Messrs. E & G. Goldsmid of Edinburgh. The *Essex Standard* said it was shocked by its content, especially, ‘a horrible insinuation with regard to Sir Charles Lucas, in connection with his conduct during the siege.’<sup>96</sup> The report argued that the pamphlet had clearly been written, ‘with a view of prejudicing the Royal cause, and of advancing that of the Parliament.’<sup>97</sup> It also noted a critical comment made by John Horace Round that was attached to the copy of the text on display at the castle that the writers, ‘are wholly anonymous, and do not even pretend to have witnessed the conduct they relate, or, indeed, ever to have been in Colchester at all...’<sup>98</sup>

Revisionist views were also fiercely contested in correspondence submitted to the local Tory press. The *Standard* in particular reported on the debate and asked their readers whether

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<sup>94</sup> ‘The Siege of Colchester’, *Essex Standard, West Suffolk Gazette, and Eastern Counties’ Advertiser*, Friday 18 August 1876, p. 8.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> ‘Colchester Teares’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 14 March 1885, p. 7.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

or not Lucas and Lisle should be remembered as heroic martyrs.<sup>99</sup> John Pigot wrote to the paper to call for both Freeman and Clement Markham to prove their arguments or withdraw their charges.<sup>100</sup> Markham responded by acknowledging that while Lucas and Lisle might have been ‘brave Englishmen’, Fairfax’s decision to execute them was in accordance with military honour and martial law, because Lucas and Lisle had broken their parole.<sup>101</sup> Several local Conservatives wrote in to criticise Markham. Henry Church, from the Parish of St. Mary-at-the-Wall, for example, wrote to the *Standard* in September 1876, praising Pigot’s intervention and stating that, ‘the words on the tomb are correct, ‘In cold blood barbarously murdered’, will still remain as a great historic truth.’<sup>102</sup> He argued that:

Lucas and Lisle have slept the sleep of real martyrs for two hundred and twenty-eight years, with every prospect of sleeping on many ages, before their names are cut off from the martyrology of Colchester; and it is as patriotic martyrs they have built up for themselves in the hearts of loyal people.<sup>103</sup>

For men like Henry Church, Markham’s argument not only undermined the heroic reputation of Lucas and Lisle, it attacked individual and local identity, both political and cultural. The myth was more than simply historical memory. It explained where people came from and who they wanted to be.

The debate seemed to strengthen the popularity of Lucas and Lisle as symbols of Tory patriotism and identity in the months that followed. Conservative writers, both local and national, rallied to their cause, attributing to Lucas, Lisle and Capel the heroic qualities of a true Englishman. One article written in a national journal by John Brett in 1876, that presented

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<sup>99</sup> ‘The Siege of Colchester’, *Essex Standard, West Suffolk Gazette, and Eastern Counties’ Advertiser*, Friday 18 August 1876, p. 8.

<sup>100</sup> John Piggot, Jun, F.S.A, ‘The Siege of Colchester’, *Essex Standard, West Suffolk Gazette, and Eastern Counties’ Advertiser*, 25 August 1876, p. 3.

<sup>101</sup> ‘The Siege of Colchester’, *Essex Standard, West Suffolk Gazette, and Eastern Counties’ Advertiser*, 25 August 1876, p. 8.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Henry J. Church, ‘The Siege of Colchester’, *Essex Standard, West Suffolk Gazette, and Eastern Counties’ Advertiser*, Friday 15 September 1876, p. 6.

a parade of heroes imbued with appropriate qualities of imperial heroism that aimed to inspire, ‘boys and youth’, asked its’ readers, ‘Who does not know the Siege of Colchester?’ He then went on to describe Lucas and Lisle as, ‘the best and bravest Englishmen that watered their native ground with their blood.’<sup>104</sup> Closer to Colchester a report by the *Essex Standard* on a visit by an antiquarian society to Horkesley Hall the same year was accompanied by the following verse on the theme of Royalist martyrdom:

Brothers in arms, in same, in death, still rest  
Still sleep enshrined within your country’s breast  
Hither shall oft the stranger’s step be led  
To pay his tribute o’er the mighty dead  
Your deeds of valour, future times shall sing  
Ye died for God, your country, and your Kind.

Sleep on, ye martyrs for your country’ s weal,  
Victims to treason and misguided zeal  
Long shall Britannia hold your memoires dear,  
Long shall your fate invoke the generous tear  
Ages unborn shall here their offerings bring  
Ye martyrs for your country, God, and King

...Sleep on, ye brave! Omniscience endure  
Justice and vengeance yet shall both be yours....  
Whilst ye triumphant to heaven’s mansions wing,  
To meet your God, rejoin your martyred King.<sup>105</sup>

The language of the poetry, using words such as Britannia, linked the heroes of the seventeenth century to the imperial present. The knights represented moral examples of courage, devotion and chivalry with which local Conservatives could identify and rally behind and remained deeply embedded in the party’s popular political discourse.<sup>106</sup> The language of martyrdom also

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<sup>104</sup> ‘Castles and Battle Fields, Their History and Legends’, *Boys of England: A Journal of Sport, Travel, Fun and Instruction for the Youths of All Nations*, Friday 11 August 1876, n.p; Matthew Sweet, ‘Brett, Edwin John (1828–1895), Journal Editor and Publisher’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-53816> [accessed 23/04/2021]; Marjory Lang, ‘Childhood’s Champions: Mid-Victorian Children’s Periodicals and the Critics’, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 13.1/2 (1980), 17-31 (p. 22).

<sup>105</sup> ‘Visits to Horkesley Hall and Felix Hall’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 11 August 1876, p. 4.

<sup>106</sup> E.R.O, D/F 23/4/14, *A Descriptive Account of Colchester: Illustrated*.

fitted well for Tory Anglican opposition to the Public Worship Regulation Act (1874).<sup>107</sup>

Heated arguments on this subject continued in public for several years after the meeting, with one correspondent describing Markham's attempted rehabilitation of Fairfax as a 'whitewash'.<sup>108</sup> A writer for the *Essex Standard* stated in 1886 that the Siege of Colchester was an event which, 'has eternally disgraced the fame of Fairfax, the two most prominent defenders-Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle-being shot at the back of the castle.'<sup>109</sup> He noted with considerable displeasure that:

An attempt has been made by the historian of Fairfax—Mr. Markham—to show that these officers had broken their parole, and that they were, therefore, justly condemned; but I am informed the original documents in the British Museum do not bear this out, and that Mr. Markham has not fairly quoted them. With regard to another active agent in these hostilities, the savage Ireton, no one has ever, that I have heard, attempted to whitewash him.<sup>110</sup>

The same year it was reported that at a performance at Great Baddow where a Mr. E. Finch and Mr. Peace were asked to stage an encore after a recital of their songs, 'not the least interesting item in the programme was the recitation on the, "Death of Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle" (taken from Mr. E. Collier's "Siege of Colchester"), by Mrs. Shearman...'<sup>111</sup> Another article stated that, 'The Siege of Colchester was one of the most dramatic incidents of the Civil Wars, and the hasty execution of the Royalist chiefs a deplorable sequel.'<sup>112</sup> In 1884, the authoritarian historian, J.H. Round intervened to state forcefully that he, 'adhered to the old historians as to the general features of the siege, and particularly so in regard to Lucas and Lisle, and the cruel and unjust conduct of Lord Fairfax towards them.'<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Dominic Janes, 'The "Modern Martyrdom" of Anglo-Catholics in Victorian England', *Journal of Religion and Society*, 13 (2011), 1-17.

<sup>108</sup> 'The Cyclists Congress at Colchester', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 05 June 1886, p. 5.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> 'Great Baddow', *Essex Herald*, Monday 03 November 1884, p. 5.

<sup>112</sup> 'Men of the East Country. XIV.- Lucas and Lisle', *East Anglian Daily Times*, Wednesday 12 June 1907, p. 5.

<sup>113</sup> 'The Battle of Colchester', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 17 May 1884, p. 10.

A revision of Fairfax's reputation continued to build through this period, however, in local and national publications. For example, the great liberal historian Samuel Gardiner was invited to give a lecture to the Archaeological Society in Colchester 1891, when he defended the reputation of Fairfax, although not the executions. The visit aroused Round's anger still further and he mounted another attack on Fairfax in a paper published in 1894, contrasting, 'the shuffling and shifty Fairfax' with the 'dauntless martyrs.'<sup>114</sup>

Round was supported in his view by most local histories written in the latter half of the nineteenth century that defended Lucas and Lisle and vilified Fairfax. Penn described the 'fanatical rage of the Puritans', in his book in 1888.<sup>115</sup> Later in 1897 the conservative Charles Benham wrote a book aimed at younger people in which he wrote of the events of the siege and the great qualities of the Royalist leaders whom he described as 'Heroes'. Benham was equivocal about Fairfax, musing that, 'Some say that Fairfax himself was a man of mercy, and would have wished to spare the lives of the brave defenders of the town... Whether this was so or not...'<sup>116</sup> Later in 1907, a writer for the *East Anglian Daily Times*, commenting on the Parliamentary Pamphlet *Colchester Teares*, criticised accusations of cruelty meted out to townsfolk by Lucas during the siege, arguing that these were 'not borne out by other statements'.<sup>117</sup> The article then went into great detail about the heroic actions of the Royalists and their gallant defence of the town. Quoting Hume, the author stated, 'Soon after, a gentlemen appearing in the King's presence clothed in mourning for Sir Charles Lucas... The significance of these lines lies in the fact that the King himself fell a victim to the resentment

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<sup>114</sup> 'Professor Gardiner on the Siege of Colchester', *Essex Standard*, Saturday 21 November 1891, p. 5.

On Gardiner and his association with the liberal party, see John Adamson, 'Eminent Victorians: S. R. Gardiner and the Liberal As Hero', *The Historical Journal*, 33.3 (1990), 641–657.

<sup>115</sup> Penn, *The Siege of Colchester*, p. 52.

<sup>116</sup> Charles E. Benham, *Old Colchester: A Few Chapters for Young Colchester* (Colchester: Essex County Standard office: 1897), p. 114, 143.

<sup>117</sup> 'Men of the East Country. XIV.- Lucas and Lisle', *East Anglian Daily Times*, Wednesday 12 June 1907, p.5.

of the Roundheads very shortly afterwards.’<sup>118</sup>

It is through heroes and villains where we find that genealogical memory was important in relation to the Civil War. Local Tories were keen to link themselves to the Lucas family genealogically to enhance their claim to ancient status and authority and the press was littered with claims made by residents to a Lucas family ancestry, even if they later had to be corrected.<sup>119</sup> To take but two of several examples, on the death of one Colonel Lucas, it was claimed that he was, ‘in direct descent from Sir Charles Lucas who was shot with Sir George Lisle by order of Lord Fairfax, in the important and ever memorable Siege of Colchester in 1648, and belonged to one of the oldest Essex families.’<sup>120</sup> A different claim was made soon after that, ‘Dean Angelo Lucas, a well-known Roman Catholic dignitary, who has died at Colchester was a direct descendant of Sir Charles Lucas, the Royalist leader, who was shot by the Parliamentarians after the Siege of Colchester in 1648.’ Later on in a feature headed, ‘After Dinner talk’, mention was made that Fairfax was the one who ordered the shooting.’<sup>121</sup> It transpired that one of the claims was false and had to be corrected. ‘It is desirable to correct the statement in your last issue that the late Col. Lucas of Witham “was a direct descendant of Sir Charles Lucas.” Sir Charles, as far as is known, was never even married, and all the family soon became extinct in the male line.’<sup>122</sup> The report was however, quick to note that, ‘His present representative is the heir of his elder brother, Lord Cowper, High Steward of Colchester.’<sup>123</sup> The paper also went on to discuss new details that had been shed upon the execution of Lucas and Lisle.<sup>124</sup> In 1907 another report appeared to state that:

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> ‘Death of Colonel Lucas, J.P.’ *East Anglian Daily Times*, Saturday 03 November 1894, p. 5; ‘Sir Charles Lucas.’ *Essex Standard*, Saturday 17 November 1894, p. 4.

<sup>120</sup> ‘Death of Colonel Lucas, J.P’, *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> ‘News in a Nutshell’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 20 June 1902, p. 5.

<sup>122</sup> ‘Sir Charles Lucas’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 17 November 1894, p. 4.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

The “Committee for Privileges” has decided that Lord Lucas, otherwise Mr. Auberton Herbert, nephew of the late Earl Cowper, has made out his claim to be the 8<sup>th</sup> Baron Lucas of Crudwell. The first baroness was Mary Lucas, daughter of John Lucas, of St. John’s Abbey, Colchester and niece of Sir Charles Lucas, who was shot after the Siege of Colchester.<sup>125</sup>

The myth of the heroic martyrdom had a powerful legacy with which certain groups in the community continued to want to be linked. It should be of no surprise that phrases such as ‘Gallant feats of her defenders bold’ and ‘how their champions treacherously shot’ appeared throughout the period in conservative papers.<sup>126</sup> Lucas and Lisle were lauded, by the Conservatives at least, for their actions in 1648.

### **Civic Identity and Consensus**

But while amongst the local Conservative Party, personal and political loyalties remained powerfully linked to the myth of martyrdom, the potency of partisan historical memory meant that by the end of the nineteenth century, as we have seen in previous chapters, seventeenth century hero narratives were less often used as a tool for the construction of collective civic identity. By this stage late Victorian borough politics was shaped more by consensus between Liberals and Tories, as shown in chapter one. Because hero narratives aroused such partisan loyalty, they were very divisive and the value of heroes as symbols of local unity, was largely lost. The history of the siege was not hidden from the public, but late Victorian civic presentations of historical memory were deliberately designed to be impartial, as we have seen. The 1887 Jubilee celebrations, for example, were arranged by a committee of middle-class ladies and so provide an interesting insight into gender- based opinions about the construction, representation and use of local historic heroes. The celebrations included a children’s historical pageant that was designed to celebrate heroic individuals with local connections who had been

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<sup>125</sup> ‘Story of the Week’, *Essex Newsman*, Saturday 15 June 1907, p. 3.

<sup>126</sup> ‘The Siege of Colchester’, *Essex Standard, West Suffolk Gazette, and Eastern Counties’ Advertiser*, Saturday 09 October 1886, p. 7.

important to the nation, and in doing so, incorporate Colchester into the national story. The theme though, while interestingly showcasing several notable women Boudicca, St. Helena, Queen Elizabeth and Lord Audley, for example, also foregrounded themes of unity and consensus. Sir Charles Lucas, his sister Margaret Duchess of Newcastle, Lord Fairfax and a Puritan Maid, Page and Soldiers were presented together to symbolise unity.<sup>127</sup> The programme for the Oyster Feast of 1899 included three historic characters from the siege; Lucas, Lisle and Fairfax. The inclusion of the Parliamentary General would have been unthinkable thirty years before when the ritual was dominated almost entirely by Tories and demonstrates how the power and control of the narrative had changed.<sup>128</sup> When the new town hall was constructed in 1902, Fairfax, Lucas and Lisle were not included amongst the historical heroes celebrated on the exterior of the building.<sup>129</sup> Instead, they were imagined and presented together facing one another in a series of portraits inside the building in an upstairs meeting room.<sup>130</sup> Harry Becker, who was born in Colchester painted a portrait of Lucas and Lisle descending the Staircase in Colchester Castle.<sup>131</sup> John Reilly, who painted many works on local Colchester worthies, supposedly presented another portrait of Lucas that was in fact Richard Neville, a Royalist officer in the Civil War.<sup>132</sup> Interestingly, the portrait of Fairfax was provided by Mrs. Benham, a member of that prominent local Tory dynasty and editors of the *Essex Standard*. Fascinatingly though, the family managed to construct a suitably Royalist

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<sup>127</sup> E.R.O, C937, Papers of the Sowman Family Relating Mainly to Events in Colchester.

<sup>128</sup> E.R.O, D/F 23/4/16, Photograph of programme of Colchester Oyster Feast with Humorous Cover by W. Gurney Benham.

<sup>129</sup> Cannadine, p.117.

<sup>130</sup> As described in the Town hall programme when it opened in 1902; Benham, *Colchester Town Hall: Full Illustrated Description of the building*, p. 6-8.

<sup>131</sup> 'Harry Becker (1865-1928), Cart Horse', *Victor Batte-Lay Foundation*, <https://www.vblfcollection.org.uk/harry-becker-1865-1928-cart-horse/> [accessed 31/03/2020]; COLEM: 260A, 'Lucas and Lisle Descending the Great Stair, Colchester Castle', *Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service: Colchester Collection*, <https://artuk.org> [accessed 18/12/2019].

<sup>132</sup> COLEM: 206A, John Lewis Reilly, 'Colonel Neville (copy after William Charles Thomas Dobson)', *Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service: Colchester Collection*, <https://artuk.org> [accessed 18/12/2019]; WA1964.60, William Dobson, 'Colonel Richard Neville', *The Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology*, <https://artuk.org> [accessed 18/12/2019].



gloss. The paper noted, ‘Large painting in oils of Lord Fairfax and Lady Fairfax... Lord Fairfax was General of the Parliamentarian Forces at the Siege of Colchester, 1648. Lady Fairfax was also a remarkable woman of much force and character, and the anecdotes related of her in connection with the trial of Charles I are well known.’<sup>133</sup> Lady Anne was famous for her intervention in opposition to the trial of King Charles I and was asked by Queen Henrietta to intercede on his behalf and so the Benham Royalist credentials were perhaps safely preserved. Other presentations however were more overtly balanced. The programme for the official opening of the splendid building in 1902 included illustrations of Boudicca and a chariot, as well as the Royalists Lucas and Lisle alongside the Parliamentarians Fairfax and Honywood.<sup>134</sup> The Pageant of 1909 also presented a very even-handed interpretation as the following chapter will show.<sup>135</sup> All of this demonstrated how the siege past had been debated, changed and repurposed by various different local groups in the town.

Admittedly, in 1892 Henry Laver paid for the construction of a monument to the memory of the execution of Lucas and Lisle that was sited in the place where they were shot beneath the castle walls.<sup>136</sup> On the other hand, as argued in Chapter Three, the memorial can be read as an expression of conservative political historical memory, the inscription was worded carefully and did not refer to the myth of martyrdom overtly, simply stating that the two knights, ‘by order of Fairfax’, were shot.<sup>137</sup> Some people were clearly dissatisfied by the lack of reference to murder or martyrdom, calling for stronger words of condemnation on the inscription.<sup>138</sup> The language was indeed rather neutral but also probably strategic because the plan raised no objection from Liberals when it was suggested. According to press reports when

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<sup>133</sup> ‘The New Town Hall at Colchester’, *Essex Standard*, Saturday 24 June 1899, p. 4.

<sup>134</sup> Benham, *Colchester Town Hall*.

<sup>135</sup> ‘The Colchester Pageant’, *The Redress of the Past*, <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1036/> [accessed 28/01/2019].

<sup>136</sup> ‘Arrangements for this day’, *Morning Post*, Friday 30 September 1892, p. 5.

<sup>137</sup> ‘Sir C Lucas and Sir G Lisle’, *Imperial War Museum*, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/22337> [accessed 08/05/2020].

<sup>138</sup> ‘Men of the East Country. XIV.- Lucas and Lisle’, *East Anglian Daily Times*, Wednesday 12 June 1907, p.5.

the Mayor, ‘announced that Dr. Laver had offered to erect a memorial...on the spot where the Royalist...Lucas and Lisle were shot’, the assembled company simply shouted, ‘[Hear Hear].’<sup>139</sup> The lack of opposition may also have been tied to the fact that the meaning of the memorial was multi-layered and more than simply a polemical gesture. Laver always had an eye to the development of the local economy in his decision making. By this stage, Victorian tourists had come to expect to see suitable monuments to their romantic historical heroes and so the monument was very useful for the tourist trade. It appeared regularly in marketing literature after it was erected and soon became a popular attraction for visitors and locals alike. Guides regularly drew attention to the obelisk to, ‘Lucas and Lisle in Castle Park, given by Mr. Henry Laver, ...who were shot upon this spot after the Siege.’<sup>140</sup> Moreover, once the castle grounds became a public park, they became a communal space used as much for recreation as for remembrance and people sat on or played around the monument with friends and neighbours, possibly without much reflection on its connection to the past. It was noted that often, ‘Military bands played in the park that was used by the townspeople,’ for example and the park was used for a variety of other spectacles and shows.<sup>141</sup> While intended to cement the myth of the martyrdom of the knights in local collective memory, the meaning of the memorial was complex and varied according to individual use and context. Each of these presentations were constructed and represented by local elites and provide insights into their values and preoccupations at the time but because they were, to varying degrees, spaces and performances that were open to the public they contribute to an understanding of the varying ways these ideas were variously received, modified or even ignored by a wider variety of individuals and groups.

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<sup>139</sup> ‘Colchester Town Council’, *Essex Herald*, Tuesday 10 May 1892.

<sup>140</sup> *Guide to Colchester* (1907), p. 35.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

## Conclusion

The social and cultural significance of hero narratives based on seventeenth century mythologies did not diminish in the latter half of the nineteenth century. But their meaning and use shifted considerably. After around 1850 these representations were not only and simply a means by which political elites could shape local memory and identity according to their own ideas and values the myth of heroic royalist martyrdom began to be used extensively in tourism development. This commercial context played an increasingly significant role in perpetuating, representing and altering the meaning and use of the narrative. Writers of guides delighted their readers with romantic tales of Royalist chivalry and noble sacrifice and the martyrdom myth became ever more integral to the appeal of Colchester as a destination for visitors.<sup>142</sup> The author of an 1893 guide proclaimed that the town, ‘has been the theatre of many of the most dramatic events in British History from the days of Cunobelin [Shakespeare’s Cymbeline] to the tragic murder of Lucas and Lisle’ and went on to add, ‘The sickening story of the cowardly murder of the gallant Royalists leaders...is too well known to need repetition.’<sup>143</sup> Even by 1935, images of the death of Lucas and Lisle appeared in tourist literature.<sup>144</sup> Attention to the varied forms of engagement with hero narratives through the expansion of tourism, tourist literature, tours and individual visits draws attention to their varied meanings according to context and to age, gender and status. For many people these hero narratives were no longer contested emblems of religious and political conflict but mythical, sentimental, commodifiable subjects of individual imagination and identity. These complex and changing uses of history are also evident in the magnificent historical Colchester

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<sup>142</sup> *The Official Guide to the Great Eastern Railway Illustrated* (1910), p. 123.

<sup>143</sup> E.R.O, D/F 23/4/14, *A Descriptive Account of Colchester: Illustrated*, pp. 3-10.

<sup>144</sup> [Anon.], *Old Colchester (Camulodunum)*, photographic booklet (Colchester: Davey, Paxman and Company, n.d.)

Pageant that was staged in the town in 1909 and analysis of that splendid spectacle forms the focus of the next chapter.

## Chapter Five: The Colchester Pageant of 1909.

*Then comes the most thrilling incident of the whole Pageant in the trial and execution of Lucas and Lisle, who were actually shot by order of Fairfax outside the walls<sup>1</sup>*

In 1909 Colchester put on a magnificent historical pageant to celebrate its rich and diverse past, which it was extremely proud of. Staged during June in the grounds of the castle, the performance was a great success. Over the course of five days, six performances, performed by three thousand people, drew a total audience of sixty thousand from Colchester as well as from outside the town. Louis Napoleon Parker, a composer and theatre impresario, was the Pageant Master. He had produced the astonishingly successful Sherborne Pageant of 1905, and inspired other towns to exploit the financial and civic benefits of what became known in the period as an outbreak of ‘pageant fever’.<sup>2</sup> The Colchester Pageant was similar in many respects to those that Parker produced in Warwick (1906), Bury St. Edmunds (1907), and York (1909).<sup>3</sup> The spectacle divided Colchester’s history into six episodes that were chosen to mark important parts of Colchester’s history and to celebrate some of its greatest trials and triumphs. The famous Oyster Feast was displayed in the first episode by the discovery of oysters and the first ‘feast’. The conquest by the Romans and Boudicca’s subsequent uprising and destruction of the town was depicted in a spectacular way. Other scenes presented the visits of various monarchs to Colchester, including Elizabeth I. What marked Colchester’s

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<sup>1</sup> Parker, Jarmin and Benham, *Colchester Pageant Programme, June 21 to 26 1909*.

<sup>2</sup> Readman, ‘The Place of the Past’, p. 170; Bartie, and others, *The Redress of the Past*, <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1036/> [accessed 28/01/2019]; R. C. K. Ensor, and Nilanjana Banerji, ‘Parker, Louis Napoleon (1852–1944), Musician and Playwright’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 03 January 2008, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-35387> [accessed 08/05/2020].

<sup>3</sup> Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme, Alexander Hutton and Paul Readman, ‘History Taught in the Pageant Way: Education and Historical Performance in Twentieth-Century Britain.’ *History of Education*, 48.2 (2019), 156-179; Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme, Alexander Hutton, and Paul Readman, *Historical Pageants Local History Study Guide* (St. Albans: Regents Court Press, 2020).

Pageant out from other similar spectacles, however, was the decision to portray the Siege of Colchester in the Second Civil War during the last episode. Indeed, this was the first time that Louis Napoleon Parker portrayed the Civil Wars in any of his spectacles.<sup>4</sup> Pageants, according to Parker, were a means to foster social unity and up until this point he had avoided the subject because it was so divisive.<sup>5</sup> The inclusion of the 1648 siege in the pageant therefore raises important questions about the uses of Civil War history in early twentieth century Colchester and more generally in Edwardian Britain. Scholars have long recognised the choice of historical episodes for presentation in pageants, which periods were chosen, which were omitted, and how events were portrayed, was a matter for careful consideration and reflected the type of historical and civic identity that producers wanted to present.<sup>6</sup> Some historians have argued, for example, that pageants fostered popular imperialism, especially through references to the Roman past.<sup>7</sup> Readman, by contrast, concluded the history presented in pageants emphasised the links between local ideals of Englishness and national identity.<sup>8</sup> The analysis that follows supports that argument. It takes the form of a case study of the Colchester Pageant of 1909, focusing particularly on the meaning and use of the history of the siege. Drawing on a rich archive of the minutes from numerous committees and their respective sub-committees along with other various meetings and printed material relating to the pageant, as well as newspaper reports both local and national, it aims to show that a strong sense of localism ran through the spectacle. It also agrees with Readman that evidence demonstrates a willingness to use the past to inform the present by presenting the history of the siege in ways that fostered a sense of unity and hope that chimed with the priorities of borough politics at that point.

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<sup>4</sup> 'The Colchester Pageant', *The Redress of the Past*.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Withington, 'Louis Napoleon Parker.' *The New England Quarterly*, 12.3 (1939), 510-20; 'The Sherborne Pageant', *The Redress of the Past*, <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1193/> [accessed 02/03/2022].

<sup>6</sup> Cannadine, 'The Colchester Oyster Feast', p.118; M. Freeman, *The Pageants of St. Albans: An Illustrated History* (St. Albans: Regents Court Press, 2020); Tom Hulme, "'A Nation of Town Criers": Civic Publicity and Historical Pageantry in Inter-War Britain.' *Urban History*, 44 (2017), 270–92; Yoshino, *Pageant Fever*.

<sup>7</sup> John M. MacKenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Readman, 'The Place of the Past'.

However, the analysis also argues that the pageant was more than one of Kershaw's 'spectacles of domination' or 'rituals of the powerful.'<sup>9</sup> Several scholars have drawn attention to the multiple ways by which people engaged with pageant performances, arguing that meanings were not simply imposed on spectators by the elites who organised the pageants.<sup>10</sup> They could have a range of meanings for those who participated in and watched them. While the Colchester Pageant was deployed by civic elites in support of the promotion of civic unity, pride and prestige, meanings were not simply forced on the people who participated in and watched the theatrical display. Commercial considerations were very important to many people who were involved in the production. The extent and enthusiasm of public engagement with the event also reflected and reinforced a wider, popular interest in local history and deepened the links between the history of the siege and local identity amongst those who both participated in and observed it.

### **Planning the Pageant**

The Colchester Pageant was held in 1909 to mark the 2000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the town. The success of the Sherborne Pageant of 1905 and those that followed it showed Edwardian local politicians that a pageant was a highly successful way to use history to promote civic pride amongst local people and increase the reputation and prestige of the town to those who lived outside it. Colchester in this period was growing in self-confidence and civic ambition but still anxious about its secondary status in relation to the county town of Chelmsford, with whom it had shared an intense rivalry in the previous centuries.<sup>11</sup> Its prestigious history was a major

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<sup>9</sup> Baz Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 214-15, 222-7; Mark Freeman, "'Splendid Display; Pompous Spectacle': Historical Pageants in Twentieth-Century Britain.' *Social History*, 38.4 (2013), 423-455.

<sup>10</sup>Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Alexander Hutton, and Paul Readman, eds., *Restaging the Past: Historical Pageants, Culture and Society in Modern Britain* (London: UCL Press, 2020); D.S. Ryan, 'Spectacle, the Public and the Crowd: Pageants and Exhibitions in 1908' in *The Edwardian Sense: Art Design and Spectacle in Britain 1901;1910*, ed. by Michael Hatt, Morna O'Neil (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp.43-71.

<sup>11</sup> Cannadine, 'Oyster Feast', pp.118-120; 'Essex and the Eastern Counties in 6 Nutshell', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 19 November 1880, p. 3.

object of interest and a historical pageant was an excellent means to cement its identity as a 'historic town' in the national consciousness as well as increase the standing of the town both locally and nationally.<sup>12</sup> As a reporter for *The Observer* commented in June 1909, 'it was inevitable, in these days of pageants, that Colchester should sooner or later seek to prove its claim to be considered, in many respects, the most interesting city in Great Britain.'<sup>13</sup>

Plans for a Colchester Pageant began in 1907 after a visit to Colchester from Louis Parker, the self-styled 'Pageant Master' of Sherborne. Parker had offered, through the secretary at the Bury Pageant which had just been performed and had been very well received, to give a public lecture on why historical pageants were a good idea. His letter was read to the Colchester Borough Council on the fourth of December 1906 and an invitation was issued to Parker to speak to them on the subject on the twenty first of January 1907.<sup>14</sup> Parker clearly convinced local politicians of the merits of such a grand project. The matter was publicly discussed and addressed by 'leading inhabitants' in a meeting at the new Moot Hall on Thursday the twenty first of February 1907, where it was agreed to approach Louis Parker with a view to arrange and organise a pageant for the town.<sup>15</sup> Sir Henry Howarth, President of The Royal Archaeological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, remarked during a visit to

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<sup>12</sup> On the growing significance of the concept of the 'historic town' in urban cultural and economic life in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, see Readman, *The Place of the Past*, p. 164; Lara Rutherford-Morrison, 'Playing Victorian: Heritage, Authenticity, and Make-Believe in Blists Hill Victorian Town, the Ironbridge Gorge.' *The Public Historian*, 37.3 (2015), 76–101; Edward Liveing, *Adventure in Publishing: The House of Ward Lock, 1854-1954* (London: Ward, Lock & Co, 1954), pp. 68-9; Harry Smith, Robert J. Bennet, Dragana Radicic, *Towns in Victorian England and Wales: A New Classification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Charles Dellheim, *The Face of the Past: The Preservation of the Medieval Inheritance in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Rosemary Sweet 'Antiquarian Transformations in Historical Scholarship: The History of Domesticity from Joseph Strutt to Thomas Wright', in *Revisiting the Polite and Commercial People: Essays in Georgian Politics, Society and Culture in Honour of Professor Paul Langford*, ed. by Perry Gauci and Elaine Chalus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 153-170.

<sup>13</sup> 'The Colchester Pageant', *The Redress of the Past*; 'Colchester Pageant', *Observer*, 13 June 1909, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> E.R.O, D/B 6 M1/1/25, Minutes from the Council, 1906-1907.

<sup>15</sup> E.R.O, D/B 6 M30/2, Composite Volume of Minutes of Sub-Committees (signed) 1904-1920.



Colchester in 1907, that ‘the Corporation was perhaps without exception the oldest in England’ He also said that ‘Colchester was perhaps, without exception, the oldest town in England’.<sup>16</sup>

Preparations were spearheaded by key elite, local individuals, and an organising committee was formed at the town hall in January and February of 1907. The composition of the committee reflected the consensual tone of local borough government in Colchester, and in towns in England more generally, in this period when urban politicians tended to suppress party interests in favour of civic pride and improvement.<sup>17</sup> The group was led by the Conservative Mayor of Colchester, William Gurney Benham and the Liberal Quaker Alderman, William Marriage. Sub-committees were established whose membership also showed a balance of political interests. Groups responsible for finance, properties, costumes, music and seating were formed that drew in individuals from varied backgrounds, admittedly mainly from the middle class, in planning and staging the spectacle. The army were involved at an early stage. General F.S. Robb, Commander of the Colchester Garrison led the military committee and Colonel H.L. Griffin was in charge of properties as well as being Master of Horse. Women also took leading roles in the organisation.<sup>18</sup> The Ladies Committee led by the wife of a previous Liberal Mayor, Henry Goody, took charge of costumes, scene design, dance and stencilling.<sup>19</sup> Presiding over proceedings was Francis Greville, the Lord Lieutenant of Essex, local Conservative MP for Colchester 1882-1885, and the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Warwick.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> ESAH, *Newsletter 158*, Summer 2009, p.8, <https://www.esah1852.org.uk/publications/newsletters> [accessed 13/12/2021].

<sup>17</sup> Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, pp. 133, 179; Whyte, ‘Building the Nation in the Town’, p. 209; Brown, *Colchester 1815-1914*, p. 51; Susie L. Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians: politics, Culture and Society in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 12; B.I Coleman, ed., *The Idea of the City in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1973); Miel Groten, *Glasgow’s New Town Hall: Imperialism, Nationalism and Civic Pride, 1877–1889* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Simon Morgan, *John Deakin Heaton and the Elusive Civic Pride of the Victorian Middle Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>18</sup> *Colchester Pageant Programme*.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Bailiffs and Mayors’, in *A History of the County of Essex, Vol 9* (London: VCH, 1994), pp. 374-381.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*.

Louis Parker, the self-styled ‘Pageant Master’ was commissioned to write and stage the pageant and Major E. A. Jackson was appointed to act as assistant. The poet James Rhoades wrote the choruses for the songs as well as the Triumphal Song which ended the performance. Members of Colchester’s flourishing community of antiquarians and historians from both sides of the political divide were also actively involved. Henry Laver, conservative minded curator of the museum led the Historical Committee that also included amongst its members the antiquarian and member of the Essex Archaeological Society, Revd T.H Curling. The Liberal Councillor, Arthur M. Jarmin, and the Headmaster of Colchester Boys Grammar School, Percy Shaw Jeffery, were also enrolled to become authors with antiquarian and Conservative Party Mayor, W. Gurney Benham of the Book of the Pageant.<sup>21</sup> Benham’s brother Charles, who owned the Tory *Essex County Standard*, was also involved in the writing of the script. James Round, Conservative MP, lent a room in his house at Holly Trees for the pageant committees to meet, make costumes and build sets.<sup>22</sup>

The *Chelmsford Chronicle* predicted in April 1909 that the pageant ‘bids fair to become another great triumph for Colchester,’ and its prophecy proved to be correct.<sup>23</sup> Planned on a grand scale, props were purchased at considerable expense. Armour for the actors in Roman and seventeenth century scenes were obtained from Dover for £10. A chariot for Boudicca was bought from Gorleston in Norfolk for £10.<sup>24</sup> An estimated three thousand local people participated and performed in the spectacle. There were also about two hundred speaking parts. Most of these went to prominent members of the community, including the Mayor and Mayoress of Colchester and the principal citizens of the town. The wife of General Robb, for example, took the part of Boudicca. ‘By special request’, one J. E. Revett played Sir George

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<sup>21</sup> ESAH, *newsletter*, 2009, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> ESAH, *Ibid.* The *Essex Standard* was renamed in 1892 to become the *Essex County Standard*

<sup>23</sup> ‘Colchester Pageant’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 16 April 1909, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> ESAH, *newsletter*.

Lisle in the siege episode.<sup>25</sup> Lucas was played by Mr. Gordon Jones, and Goring by the Rev. W. M. Bellamy (Rector at St. Giles).<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, Mr. W. B. Daniell, member of the prominent brewing family and leading political Liberal, took the part of the Liberal Party champion, but still locally controversial and divisive character of Fairfax.<sup>27</sup> Ireton was performed by Major Freeman, whilst Henry Barrington was played by Mr. Heath.<sup>28</sup> According to the *Chelmsford Chronicle* ‘prominent families’ volunteered for court groups, ‘Churchmen are accepting the ecclesiastical parts’, and the ‘military authorities of the ancient Roman fortress are co-operating in a way which will render the military scenes most impressive.’<sup>29</sup> But in keeping with Parker’s aim that pageants should be ‘democratic’ and socially unifying, most of the local volunteer performers, costume makers, and other contributors came from a wide social range.<sup>30</sup> Judging from press reports, ‘practically every district of Essex’ was represented.<sup>31</sup> Children also took an active part in the production. The Colchester Blue Coat School scholars sang ‘Old King Coel’ and the Royal Grammar School scholars sang ‘*Carmen Colcestriensis*’, a song written by Percy Shaw Jeffery, the Headmaster, with the music composed by Mr Cuthbert Cronk, the music master. Boys and girls from The Colchester High School took part in dances which their Headmaster Mr C. Harold Watkins choreographed and produced. The staff, parents and scholars of Colchester Royal Grammar School were also asked to become actors; together with the local Clergy and their wives and families; local firms and their employees.<sup>32</sup> Women were also involved in a wide range of roles. A Miss Peck, honorary Secretary of the Ladies Committee led a team of women seamstresses including

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<sup>25</sup> ‘Colchester Pageant’, *Evening Star*, Friday 12 March 1909, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> George Rickword, ‘History of the Parish and Church – St. Giles.’ *St. Giles Centre*, <https://www.stgilescentre.org.uk/downloads/History%20of%20the%20Parish%20and%20Church.pdf> [accessed 07/07/2021].

<sup>27</sup> Brown, *Victorian Colchester*, p. 101; ‘The Colchester Pageant’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 18 June 1909, p.2.

<sup>28</sup> ‘The Colchester Pageant’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 18 June 1909, p.2.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Colchester Pageant’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 19 February 1909, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Readman, ‘Place of the Past’, p. 171

<sup>31</sup> ‘Colchester Pageant’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 19 February 1909, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> ESAH, 2009; ‘In the Provinces’, *The Daily Telegraph*, Wednesday 25 August 1909, p. 7.

Misses Bawtree and Montague, Mrs Reginald Beard and Mrs Edward J. Sanders, as well as Mrs R. Stanyon, mother of Miss Stanyon, a mistress in the Prep Section of the Grammar School, between 1907 and 1909. Together they made between 20-30 decorative banners that were displayed in the final tableaux.<sup>33</sup> Miss Hastings-Irwin was appointed Mistress of Designs; Mrs W. Claridge was Mistress of Robes; Embroideries were overseen by Mrs Reginald B. Beard and Mrs Edwin J. Sanders; Mrs Sansom was in charge of Wardrobe; Miss Senior was Mistress of Head-Dresses and Miss Gladys Francis was Mistress of Dances.<sup>34</sup> Ellen Wilson of Clarkson and Wilson, Photographers of The Royal Studio, High Street, was appointed Official Photographer having paid £60 for this privilege.<sup>35</sup>

The organisers staged a magnificent opening procession to the pageant that gave powerful expression to a vision of civic pride. Royal and foreign dignitaries were invited, including HRH the Princess Louise and representatives from the Russian Duma on a state visit to Britain.<sup>36</sup> The splendid new town hall, with its exterior decoration that depicted Colchester's impressive past, provided a suitable setting for the commencement of proceedings.<sup>37</sup> Led by the Lord Mayor of London and representatives from thirty cities, accompanied by mounted police, the Colchester Fire Brigade, and the scholars of Colchester Royal Grammar School; thousands of people then paraded up the High Street in colourful costume, accompanied by banners and music to the pageant ground at the castle. A master of the Boys' Grammar School remembered with pride that, 'the purple tunics and scarlet cloaks of its present boys formed a brilliant group, even amid that brilliant spectacle.'<sup>38</sup> HRH the Princess Louise, was apparently so impressed by the spectacle that she asked that the banners of the towns of Colchester beyond

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<sup>33</sup> ESAH, p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> 'Colchester Pageant', *The Redress of the Past*.

<sup>35</sup> ESAH, p.9

<sup>36</sup> E.R.O, T/Z 89/5, Report of Pageant and Pictorial Supplement in '*Essex County Standard, West Suffolk Gazette and Eastern Counties' Advertiser*'.

<sup>37</sup> 'Colchester Pageant', *Sunday Times*, Sunday 27 June 1909, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> ESAH, p. 9.

the seas be presented to her.<sup>39</sup> At the ground in the castle, approximately ten thousand people attended a service conducted by the Bishop of Colchester accompanied by clergymen of different denominations, including non-conformists, who read lessons and led some of the prayers.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, all churches took full advantage of the mass gatherings of the people in the town during the week to try and attract support in the context of a fear of rising secularism.<sup>41</sup> The Bishop of Colchester emphasised that the pageant should teach lessons in hope and thankfulness and the performance ended with a verse from the hymn ‘All people that on earth do dwell.’ The Bishop of St. Albans delivered a sermon on the Sunday of pageant week at St. Nicholas Church, a short walk from the pageant ground, even though there were no pageant performances that day. Reference was made in that Sunday Eucharist sermon to the local Marian and Elizabethan martyrs and Philip Morant, the local historian and vicar as the Bishop commemorated local Christian patrons. Every day during pageant week, proceedings began with a church service and celebration at the historic siege ruin at St. Martin’s Church at 8:15 in the morning.<sup>42</sup>

Colchester’s Pageant drew thousands of people from a wide variety of backgrounds and locations to watch the performance. A grandstand with a capacity of five thousand seats was purchased from Dover at the cost of £1,200, with tickets priced at 2/6, 5/6, 7/6, 10/6 and 21/.<sup>43</sup> After complaints were made that even the cheapest seats at 2/6 were beyond the budget of working people, a scheme was organised to make them more accessible. The *Evening Star* noted that the Pageant Committee had every intention ‘to give facilities to every section of the community to view the dress rehearsals’, and the offer was ‘fully appreciated by the organisers

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<sup>39</sup> ‘Colchester Pageant’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Tuesday 25 May 1909, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*; *The Redress of the Past*; ‘Colchester Pageant’ *The Daily Telegraph*, Tuesday June 22 1909, p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Religion’, *The Redress of the Past*, <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/key-themes/>, [accessed 16/04/2020].

<sup>42</sup> ‘Colchester Pageant’, *Evening Star*, Saturday 12 June 1909, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> ESAH, 2009.

of the Friendly Societies, elementary school parties, and of the working-class organisations.’<sup>44</sup> Children were prominent members of the audience and a schools’ day was organised for elementary schools in the local area.<sup>45</sup> At the end of the whole performance, Colchester Grammar School boys marched on to the stage with banners and sang a song which celebrated local history and ‘those who went before us.’<sup>46</sup> Bartie has shown Edwardian pageants were regarded by local elites as important vehicles for education, ‘a tool for teaching local and national history, and perhaps most commonly, a focus of patriotic sentiment.’<sup>47</sup> It seems that the Colchester Pageant was widely regarded as a success in this regard, instilling historical knowledge into young minds.<sup>48</sup> One journalist went as far as to comment after seeing the performance that, ‘it would be better for a boy to attend six pageants such as this than that he should attend sixty lecturers on English history. For which reason we congratulate Colchester.’<sup>49</sup>

The success in attracting large numbers of visitors to the event was due in large measure to the considerable investment made by civic elites in the publicity surrounding the pageant to promote and enhance the image of Colchester as an interesting place to visit. Parker developed a highly sophisticated and multi-layered advertising campaign. Posters were designed and printed by W. Gurney Benham that promoted historical landmarks including the castle and the ruins of St. Botolph’s. Individually inscribed enamel pendant badges were commissioned from B. H. Joseph, who was a Birmingham manufacturer. Hervey Ewles produced artwork that was

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<sup>44</sup> ‘Colchester Pageant’, *Evening Star*, Thursday 10 June 1909, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Colchester Pageant’, *East Anglian Daily Times*, Saturday 08 May 1909, p. 6; ESAH, 2009; ‘In the Provinces’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 25 August 1909, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> *Colchester Pageant Programme*.

<sup>47</sup> Ayako Yoshino, “‘Between the Acts’” and Louis Napoleon Parker – the Creator of the Modern English Pageant’, *Critical Survey*, 15.2 (2003), 49-60; Roger Simpson, ‘Arthuian Pageants in Twentieth Century Britain.’ *Arthuriana*, 18.1 (2008), 63-87.

<sup>48</sup> Bartie, and others, ‘History Taught in the Pageant Way’, p. 113.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

used by W.H. Goss to produce commemorative pieces decorated with a King Coel Design.<sup>50</sup> Miss M. Irvin from St. Mary's Church Rectory produced coloured and black and white postcards of several pageant scenes and performers at the relatively high cost of 6d each. The Committee also enlisted the help of the local and national press. National and regional publications ranging from *The Times* to *The Norwich Post* as well as local papers such as the *Chelmsford Chronicle* and *East Anglian Daily Times* were courted and given privileged access.<sup>51</sup> On the inaugural day, local papers such as the *East Anglian Daily Times* provided full page spreads of the events and the programme. The paper also gave a good description of each episode and of the buildings involved, promoting a, 'Feast of Colour' and 'Stirring Episodes'.<sup>52</sup> The siege was noted as a particular attraction, when one report proclaimed, 'what more thrilling a spectacle could be presented than the execution of Lucas and Lisle by the order of Fairfax and his grim associates.'<sup>53</sup>

Parker knew from his experience in Bury St. Edmunds of the benefits of the recent advances in printing technology and graphics to market the event and persuaded the Pageant Committee to commission professionals to design the official publicity material.<sup>54</sup> Jarrold and Sons of Norwich were appointed to produce the Pageant Programme, booklet and cards and were paid the rather considerable sum of £100 for the publishing rights.<sup>55</sup> Parker, alongside the organising committee, designed the programme carefully.<sup>56</sup> He made extensive use of civic heraldry to display historical identity as well as authority.<sup>57</sup> He also filled the pages with images

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<sup>50</sup> Ellie Reid, 'After the Show Is Over ... Souvenirs and Mementos: The Material Culture of Historical Pageants', *Restaging the Past: Historical Pageants, Culture and Society in Modern Britain*, ed. by Angela Bartie et al (London: UCL Press, 2020), pp. 252-280 (p. 266).

<sup>51</sup> E.R.O, C1432 BOX 1, Pageant Minute Book.

<sup>52</sup> E.R.O, T/Z 89/5, Report of Pageant and Pictorial Supplement in *Essex County Standard and West Suffolk Gazette and Eastern Counties' Advertiser* 1909.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Reid, 'After the Show is Over', p. 256.

<sup>55</sup> 'History and Heritage', Jarrold, <https://www.jarrold.com/about-us/history-heritage/> [accessed 27/05/2021]; Louis Parker, *Souvenir and Book of Words of the Colchester Pageant, June ... 1909*. (Norwich: Jarrold, 1909); E.R.O, C1432 Box 1, Pageant Minute Book.

<sup>56</sup> Reid, *Material Culture*, pp. 254-5.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p. 255.

of historical events, characters and buildings that were to be presented in the performance. Councillors Jarmin and Benham, a Liberal and a Conservative, introduced the programme with a summary of the town's rich history, starting with the Roman period and ending with the siege. Photographs of members of the organising committee including Charles Benham and William Marriage, alongside Mrs. Wm. Claridge, Miss Senior, Mr. G. Wilby, Mr. H. L. Griffin, Mr. C.H. Martin, Mr. A.M Jarmin, Mr. R. B. Beard were included, reflecting the status attached to their role in the event.<sup>58</sup> The programme also offered local businesses the opportunity to display their support for the pageant. Enterprises such as *A. J. Waterman*, the ladies' and gentlemen's hairdresser on the High Street; the official photographers for the pageant, *The Royal Studio*, based in Head Street and *Alfred Barnes*, furniture dealer and a garden store *R. Wallace & Co*, both of which were located five minutes from the railway station paid for advertising space.<sup>59</sup> Hotels and business from further afield also appeared in the programme, doubtless hoping to entice visitors to the pageant to continue their journey to holiday to Norwich and the coastal resorts of Hunstanton and Felixstowe.<sup>60</sup>

The railway was of course key to the commercial success of the pageant due to its ability to transport large numbers of people to the event. It also saw the benefits of 'pageant fever' for its own business and offered special promotions and discounted tickets.<sup>61</sup> The offers made by the rail companies were enticing and promoted in the local and regional press. *The East Anglian Daily Times* stated that, 'THE GREAT EASTERN RAILWAY COMPANY has arranged to STOP one of the Fast Trains to Northern East Anglia at COLCHESTER during every day of the PAGEANT WEEK, so that visitors from Norwich, Yarmouth, Aldeburgh, Lowerstoft, Etc., can Return the same evening if desired.'<sup>62</sup> Another promotion explained that,

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<sup>58</sup> *Colchester Pageant Programme*, p. xxi.

<sup>59</sup> Choi, 'The Railway Guide's Experiments', p. 252.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, pp. i-xix.

<sup>61</sup> 'Colchester Pageant', *East Anglian Daily Times*, Wednesday 21 April 1909, p. 4; *Colchester Pageant Programme*.

<sup>62</sup> 'Colchester Pageant', *Ibid*.



‘During the pageant week, the Great Eastern Railway and other companies will, on production at the booking office of a pageant ticket, and the surrender to the booking clerk of a perforated portion, issue Return Tickets at a Single Fare and a Quatre to Colchester by any train, from all Stations within 150 miles.’<sup>63</sup> Buses were also important forms of transport for visitors and promoted their own part in the event. A photo in the National Steam Car company’s magazine recorded many children packed onto buses provided from Chelmsford, to take them to the performance.<sup>64</sup>

Such evidence provides a useful reminder, as several authors have commentated, that pageants meant different things to different individuals and groups. The promotion of civic pride and historical identity were important, but many people, including the organisers of the spectacle, had an eye to the commercial benefits of the pageant for the town.<sup>65</sup> Yoshino has shown how towns publicised themselves as tourist destinations through pageants and the evidence for this in Colchester is clear to see.<sup>66</sup> The Committee was consistently preoccupied with using the pageant to promote the town as a tourist destination.<sup>67</sup> The Liberal A. M. Jarmin wrote in his introduction in the Pageant Programme that, ‘Colchester hopes to entertain tens of thousands of visitors during her pageant week, and she is looking for thousands of actors from Sherbone, Warwick, Bury and Dover to join as spectators in her celebration.’<sup>68</sup> The Mayor even had high hopes that the pageant would lure visitors from America and the British Empire.

In a report by the *Evening Star* the journalist noted that:

The Mayor (Mr. W. Gurney Benham) has produced a most effective leaflet, which the Advertising Committee are hoping will be the means of brining many American and Colonial visitors to Colchester...developed a plan for bringing a description of

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<sup>63</sup> *Colchester Pageant Programme*

<sup>64</sup> E.R.O, D/DU 2281/4/1, Brochure, *A National Transport Service. For Peace and for War* (National Steam Car Company: 1909).

<sup>65</sup> Bartie, A, Fleming, L, Freeman, M, Hulme, T, Readman, P, & Tupman, C, ‘The Redress of the Past: Historical Pageants in Twentieth-Century England.’ *International Journal of Research on History Didactics, History Education, and History Culture*, 37 (2016), 19-35 (p. 4).

<sup>66</sup> Yoshino, *Pageant Fever*, pp. 57-98.

<sup>67</sup> E.R.O, C1432 Box 1, Pageant Minute Book.

<sup>68</sup> *Colchester Pageant Programme*.

the Pageant before practically the whole cabin passengers of the great liners during May and June. The leaflet, besides being description of Colchester history...<sup>69</sup>

Whether or not the plan to entice foreign visitors to Colchester worked is not clear, but it is certain that huge numbers of people visited. As already stated, it was estimated that over sixty thousand visitors came to the town which meant that both tourist sites and businesses benefitted significantly.<sup>70</sup> Numbers of visitors to the museum, for example, increased from ten thousand annually in 1872 to thirty four thousand, four hundred and fifty three in the pageant week of 1909.<sup>71</sup> Businesses that promoted and supplied the pageant also did well. Retailers such as H. Elwes designed souvenirs that were sold by Cheshire's China Shop at St. Botolph's Corner.<sup>72</sup> The Wright Bros who had restaurants in the High Street and Crouch Street capitalised on the spectacle by providing catering for the whole event, whilst the contracts for five thousand chairs for the grandstand were secured by the Colchester firm run by Mr. W.R Simkin and Messrs. Joslins Ltd.<sup>73</sup>

### **The Siege**

The political, social, commercial and organisational aims of the Colchester Pageant were characteristic of those that were presented by many small towns across southeast England at the beginning of the twentieth century. The format that was chosen was also fairly typical. The programme consisted of a dramatic re-creation of six successive episodes that linked Colchester to important events in national history but that also showcased local historical developments. Similar to most Edwardian pageants, the script focused on the distant past rather than more recent history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, because periods of modern economic and social change were regarded as divisive in a period of industrial and social

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<sup>69</sup> 'Colchester Pageant', *Evening Star*, Friday 19 March 1909, p. 2.

<sup>70</sup> 'The Colchester Pageant', *The Redress of the Past*.

<sup>71</sup> E.R.O, D/Z 72/8; also seen in ESAH, Colchester Museum Reports, For Years ending 31 March 1907 to 31 March 1909, <https://www.esah1852.org.uk/library/files/C0907910.pdf> [accessed 23/08/2021].

<sup>72</sup> ESAH, *Newsletter* 2009, p. 8.

<sup>73</sup> 'Colchester Pageant', *East Anglian Daily Times*, Tuesday 25 May 1909, p. 8.

unrest.<sup>74</sup> One of the aims of the pageant for the middle-class leadership of towns in this period, as many scholars have commented, was to use the dramatic recreation of the past to foster unity and civic cohesion.<sup>75</sup> The Colchester spectacle thus avoided contentious episodes in its history such as its connection to the priest John Ball, the burning of Protestants under Mary I, and the siege by King John. Instead, it began with the first supposed Oyster Feast in AD 5 and ended in 1648 with the siege. In between scenes were included that depicted the conquest of Britain by the Romans, the establishment of the Roman *Colonia* from which the town derived its name, the invasion of Colchester and the dramatic defeat of the Romans by Boudicca, the story of the Norman Conquest, the ‘Normanisation of the Castle’, the construction of St. John’s Abbey, the Reformation and the execution of the abbot as well as visits to the town from monarchs including Henry II to Elizabeth I. Scenes were staged in spectacular style in beautiful costume, and included horsemen, music and dancing. The *Times* remarked that ‘the beauty of some of the scenes is quite remarkable, even in these days of brilliant pageantry.’ Lavish praise was heaped on the scenes with Claudius, the arrival of Boudicca, and the procession of Plantagenets and Lancastrians which ‘afforded great delight to the audience yesterday, to judge from the applause which was evoked’.<sup>76</sup>

What made Colchester different from most pageants of the period, however, was the decision to present the tragic siege of 1648 as the last episode and in such spectacular style. Indeed, it was the first time that Parker had included the Civil Wars in any of his pageants because its history was still so contentious. For example, his pageant at Bury St. Edmunds, began with the Roman occupation and the exploits of Boadica.<sup>77</sup> It did not feature controversial histories such as the riots of the fourteenth century, in which the abbey was burned to the

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<sup>74</sup> Bartie and others, ‘History taught in the pageant way’.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167; Sir Charles Oman, ‘In Praise of Pageantry’, in *The Handbook of the Harrow Historical Pageant* (Harrow: Pageant Office, 1923), p. 8.

<sup>76</sup> ‘The Colchester Pageant’, *Times*, Tuesday 22 June 1909, p. 12; ‘The Colchester Pageant’, *The Redress of the Past*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

ground and the library pillaged by angry townsmen, and it ended with Elizabeth I. In fact, very few pageants depicted any moments from the Civil Wars at all. If they did so they did not give it a full episode, and invariably focused on community involvement in the wars from a distance. The pageant in Norwich, for example, included the impact of the wars after they had ended, when the Puritans were portrayed as ‘sacrilegious killjoys.’<sup>78</sup> The Oxford Pageant, was staged by another Pageant Master, the Shakespearean actor Frank Lascelles in 1907. Admittedly, Lascelles was far less anxious about featuring the British Civil Wars in his pageants than Parker and, for example, included the arrest of Charles I and the fall of the monarchy in his famous London Pageant of 1911 which ended with ‘Oliver Cromwell, riding slowly and alone, a monarch in all but name’.<sup>79</sup> He also included a scene from the conflict in the Oxford Pageant. Unlike Colchester, however, the presentation was small scale, did not depict military action and showcased Oxford’s loyalty to the Royalist cause explicitly. Similarly, although the Chester Pageant of 1910 put on by George Hawtrey, included reference to the siege of the city by Parliament in the final episode, unlike Colchester, it consisted of only one scene and that was quite short.<sup>80</sup> There was no dramatic spectacle, fighting was referred to off stage and although critical of the King, the drama represented Chester’s Royalist sympathies very clearly.<sup>81</sup>

The representation and interpretation of the wars in the Colchester Pageant was very different. First of all, the siege episode was spectacular. Parker took advantage of the military presence in the town to recreate battle scenes on a grand scale. The local press tried to whip

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<sup>78</sup> ‘Peter Mancroft Pageant’, *The Redress of the Past*, <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1353/> [accessed 28/01/2019].

<sup>79</sup> ‘The Pageant of London’, *The Redress of the Past*, <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1305/> [accessed 28/01/2019]; Deborah Sugg Ryan, ‘Staging the Imperial City: The Pageant of London, 1911’, in *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity*, ed. by Felix Driver and David Gilbert (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 117–35.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> ‘Chester Historical Pageant’, *The Redress of the Past*, <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1028/> [accessed 08/01/2020].

up public enthusiasm and excitement about them early on. The *East Anglian Daily Times* told its readers in February 1909 that, ‘On Friday night the Master of the pageant concluded a hard week’s work by rehearsing the siege episode. The large muster of soldiers made it possible to introduce a good deal of realism into the proceedings.’<sup>82</sup> The *Chelmsford Chronicle* gave more details about the ambition of the spectacle, stating that, ‘The final episode, depicting the Siege of Colchester, is to be enacted over miles of country, guns being fired on the site of the old forts and the hedges lined with musketeers, who will give great realism to the battle scenes.’<sup>83</sup> It seems that troops from the garrison, the Eighth Hussars, part of the Royal contingent, relished their role as Parliamentarian and Royalist soldiers in the pageant even though participation was not always straightforward.<sup>84</sup> There was one unfortunate accident. During one of the dress rehearsals one Corporal Watson, a Cavalier whose horse bolted and collided with other Cavaliers, was hurled from the horse; he was attended by doctors who were taking part in the pageant and suffered ‘a fractured skull and broken nose.’ It is not known what happened to his horse.<sup>85</sup>

Nevertheless, the decision to include the siege and to dedicate the whole of the last episode to it, was presumably made not only because Parker saw the theatrical potential for dramatic military re-enactments, but also because of the significance of the event for national as well as local history.<sup>86</sup> Judging from the minutes of the meeting of the Pageant Committee there was little debate about its inclusion, or the interpretation of events presented. It seems that Parker and the General Secretary, the Liberal politician Arthur Jarmin, who was well versed in local history and went on to publish a history of the castle in later years, took charge of the

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<sup>82</sup> ‘The Colchester Pageant’, *East Anglian Daily Times*, Monday 24 May 1909, p. 6.

<sup>83</sup> ‘The Colchester Pageant’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 19 February 1909, p. 2.

<sup>84</sup> ‘The Colchester Pageant’, *Sunday Times*, Sunday 20 June 1909, p. 7.

<sup>85</sup> ‘The Colchester Pageant,’ *The Redress of the Past*.

<sup>86</sup> *Colchester Pageant Programme*.

script, and reported back to the whole Committee once it was finished.<sup>87</sup> The only hint of dissent was an occasion where the Liberal Vice-Chairman Alec Blaxhill, later mayor of Colchester in 1909 and 1937 resigned, apparently for ‘personal reasons’ stating ill health and the pressure of public duty.<sup>88</sup> There is some suggestion of a degree of nervousness about public reaction. For example, Jarmin’s introduction to the Pageant Programme emphasised the historical accuracy of the siege episode but gave fewer details of its history in comparison to other scenes.<sup>89</sup> The smaller and cheaper copy of the Pageant Programme also dealt only briefly with the siege. It noted simply that the performance ‘deals most impressively with the siege of 1648,’ but focused more explicitly on the Roman episode as did the pictorial pageant supplements that were provided in the local newspapers.<sup>90</sup> The final ‘Triumph Song’ of the pageant contained verses mostly on the Roman, Norman and medieval era and only a one line reference to the war that proclaimed, ‘Come Plantagenets, and Tudors, and the Stuarts Baneful reign.’<sup>91</sup> Boudicca, rather than Lucas Lisle or Fairfax was the historical figure who was most often depicted in the literature and an image of her riding a chariot with a spear raised in the air adorned the cover of the Pageant Programme. Roman images were scattered among the pages rather than pictures of Roundheads and Cavaliers.<sup>92</sup> Most significantly, on the second of December 1908 Parker read the recently completed script of the siege episode out loud to an audience of three hundred that comprised of the Pageant Committee and local elites. No other episode was reviewed in

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<sup>87</sup> A.M. Jarmin, *The History and Mystery of Colchester Castle* (Colchester: Essex Telegraph, 1923); E.R.O, C1432 Box, Pageant Minute Book.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*; ‘Colchester Pageant’, *East Anglian Daily Times*, Saturday 10 October 1908, p. 6; Sir Robert Russell, ‘In Honour of Late, Great Colcestrian Alderman Blaxhill’, *Gazette News*, Wednesday 31 August 2016, <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/14712316.sir-bob-column-in-honour-of-late-great-colcestrian-alderman-blaxill/> [accessed 20/08/2021].

<sup>89</sup> *Colchester Pageant Programme*, p. xxv.

<sup>90</sup> E.R.O, T/Z 89/5, Report of Pageant and Pictorial Supplement in *Essex County Standard, West Suffolk Gazette and Eastern Counties’ Advertiser*.

<sup>91</sup> *Colchester Pageant Programme*, p. 67.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*.

this way, indicating a level of concern about the interpretation of the history to be presented and public reaction to it.<sup>93</sup>

The siege episode undoubtedly raised problems for the organisers of the pageant because its history still divided the town and indeed the nation. How were the claims of the two sides to be represented? One strategy was to place great emphasis on historical reliability. Jarmin wrote in the forward to the Pageant Book that all of the scenes were based on the information in the Borough Muniment Room in the castle and that the evidence for the performance came from one of ‘many diary records’.<sup>94</sup> Episode six, the siege episode, also received special attention by Parker in the forward where he stated that, ‘Every incident in the pageant is based on either local tradition or on authentic history; and in many cases the characters repeat words spoken by their prototypes. It is especially the case in episode six.’<sup>95</sup> He also noted that in writing the siege episode, along with episode three, he had had the ‘invaluable assistance of C.E. Benham’, the conservative minded local historian and antiquary.<sup>96</sup>

The organisers also designed the historical narrative to dignify division and bring the past into the service of the consensual borough politics of the present. In this, the authors steered clear of the dominant but also divisive Royalist and conservative history of the siege produced by Morant. The authors drew instead on the newer scholarly histories of the wars by S.R. Gardiner and C. H. Firth that included favourable reassessments of Parliament in general and General Fairfax, the Earl of Warwick in particular.<sup>97</sup> Parker and the authors still had an eye to the appeal of the story of the execution of the Royalist knights to an Edwardian audience

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<sup>93</sup> E.R.O, C1432 Box 1, Pageant Minute Book.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*; *Colchester Pageant Programme*.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, foreword.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>97</sup> Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War*; Firth, *Oliver Cromwell*; G.M. Trevelyan, *England under the Stuarts* (London: Methuen and Company, 1904).

greatly attracted by the idea of chivalry and the heroic individual. The Pageant Programme, for example, featured romantic illustrations of the Royalist knights alongside the siege episode.<sup>98</sup> The dialogue also brought out the heroism, humanity and tragedy of the knights to appeal to the romantic sentiments of the day. At one point after Lucas was arrested, for example, he told the Chaplin, ‘Go to Lisle, and comfort him, as you have comforted me. And, look you (he takes a locket out of his breast)- deliver this as I have besought you, and give her my last blessing.’<sup>99</sup> Lucas was not married and so the ‘her’ probably referred to his famous sister Margaret Duchess of Newcastle who wrote a lamentation on his execution after the Restoration that contributed significantly to the construction of the myth of martyrdom.<sup>100</sup> Lucas showed his bravery by declaring that, ‘I have often faced death in the field of battle, and you shall now see I dare die’. The devotion and loyalty of the knights to one another and to their cause was also given centre stage. Lisle ended with the famous line, ‘I have been nearer to you, friends, when you have missed me...I am now ready. Traitors! Do Your Worst!’<sup>101</sup>

Despite the tone of romantic tragedy, however, the history was nevertheless presented in an even-handed way. Lucas, Lisle and Fairfax were the central characters in the story and all three were encompassed in a narrative of heroism and chivalry. The Parliamentarian Fairfax commended the Royalist Lucas for, ‘the great valour with which you fought.’ Lucas defended the soldierly honour of Fairfax and admitted his own, ‘dishonourable’ breach of parole. ‘At Marston Moor’, said Lucas, ‘I used Fairfax roughly and now he’ll give me better than I sent’. Lucas admitted his guilt and in his own words had cleared Fairfax of any guilt or accusations. Fairfax was depicted as treating the two Royalists with military honours after their execution and in doing so he displayed respect. He ordered his men to line the route on one side of the

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<sup>98</sup> *Colchester Pageant Programme*, p. 56.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, p. 63.

<sup>100</sup> Margaret Cavendish, ‘An Elegy on the Death of my Brother Killed in these Unhappy Wars’, in Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies* (1653), p. 124.

<sup>101</sup> *Colchester Pageant Programme*, p. 64.



street while the people stood on the other as the bodies were placed on stretchers and carried out. According to reports in the press, ‘The men, on horse and foot, marched forward with trumpets sounding and colours flying, surrounded by the rejoicing crowd’.<sup>102</sup>

The siege episode itself was quite sombre and displayed the tragedy and suffering inflicted on the town. The scene began with the Royalist forces, led by Sir Charles Lucas, forcing their way through the gates. It depicted the suffering of the people eating cats, dogs and horses. It showed the ordering of horses to be killed and the people fighting over a dead cat. It depicted Fairfax sending over notice that the Royalist army had been defeated by Cromwell at the Battle of Preston; it showed the Royalists’ attempt to enter into negotiations with Fairfax and his demand that the officers give themselves over to him. It depicted the Royalists being presented to Fairfax and then their execution at the hands of his men. It also included details about the catastrophic economic impact on the town of the financial exactions imposed as punishment by Parliament after the siege – the loss of the estates of Lucas and Lisle and the demand for the payment of a £14,000 fine, half of which was paid by the Dutch baymakers; which left Colchester in decline for decades afterwards.

Equally, the narrative did not shy away from condemnation of the army and their role in the damage of the town. However, in this interpretation, unlike that of Morant and other conservative histories, and in line with some Royalist and more recent interpretations by liberal historians including S. R. Gardiner, C. H. Firth and Strutt, Fairfax was presented as the moderate face of Parliament. Ireton was constructed as the villain in the drama, conveniently perhaps avoiding embarrassment to the President of the pageant, the present Earl of Warwick.<sup>103</sup> Capel called Ireton, ‘Bloodhound! This is your doing and divide us you shall not!’ Ireton, not Fairfax, insisted on the execution of the Royalist knights, slamming his fist

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Donegan, *War in England*, p. 373.

onto tables demanding that they be shot. When the town was told that it would lose estates and land, it was Ireton who issued the proclamation.<sup>104</sup> Ireton was a complete outsider to Colchester and a more convenient villain to blame.

After presenting the difficult and tragic history, the authors ensured that the episode ended on a positive note that reflected the desire of the pageant organisers to project their vision of the growing optimism, confidence, prosperity and political consensus of Colchester in 1909.<sup>105</sup> In the face of tyranny, the people of the town were presented as ‘loyal citizens of this realm’.<sup>106</sup> At the end of the episode, the Parliamentary troops galloped away in triumph, leaving a mourning figure called Colcestria on the stage with a maiden. The mourning figure represented the town of Colchester broken by the siege and the maiden represented hope. Colcestria cried, ‘I am Colcestria; and here I sit mourning my children dead, my ruined walls, The town is waste, fulfilled with brotherly feud; Famine and Pestilence and haggard woe Stalk through the empty streets where merchants thronged.’<sup>107</sup> Hope intervened and proclaimed ‘Sister, look up! The Glory is at dawn! The King returns and many after him; And, at the last, one greater than them all...To do thee homage- City set so high...Get thee ready for thy triumph!.’<sup>108</sup> Hope took Colcestria by the hand and helped her through her grief.<sup>109</sup>

Overall, the content of the script makes clear that the siege episode was intended by the authors to be understood as a narrative of progress and resolution that fitted with local political priorities of consensus and ambition.<sup>110</sup> The presentation allowed both sides of the political divide to claim an honoured place in a history that combined and balanced them. The message of reconciliation was made clear in the Pageant Programme. Lucas, Lisle and Fairfax were

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<sup>104</sup> Donegan; Smith, *The Siege of Colchester, an Historical Play*.

<sup>105</sup> *Colchester Pageant Programme: A Round table of Colchester Worthies*.

<sup>106</sup> *Colchester Pageant Programme*; Smith, *The Siege of Colchester*.

<sup>107</sup> *Colchester Pageant Programme*.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> E.R.O, C1432 Box 1, Pageant Minute Book.

depicted sitting together around a table with Colchester Worthies celebrating the Oyster Feast.<sup>111</sup> Accompanying the illustration Charles Benham wrote:

Lucas and Lisle and Fairfax now united hand in hand; Like soldiers and like Englishmen, they vex their souls no more About the fortune -whether it was good or bad of war. Perhaps they see, as we their sons may see with pain and pride, What godlike faults, what godlike virtues shone on either side.<sup>112</sup>

Another picture that featured in the Pageant Programme contained key representations of the nation's history with which Colchester was involved, from the Norman conquest with Eudo Daipher, the surrender of the castle by the French Dauphin to King John, Richard I, the Spanish Armada, the Dutch weavers, Lord Chancellor Audley, Sir Harbottle Grimston, Dr Gilbert of Colchester, and Archbishop Harsnet's donation of his library to Colchester. Lucas and Lisle were shown in the bottom left corner with Fairfax and Honeywood on the right. Honeywood was credited with preserving much of the town wall and so was a Parliamentary historical character who members from both the Conservative and Liberal parties could admire.

This was the period of civic unity as has been shown by the histories at the town hall and the pageant; and the fact the pageant ended at the town hall is important.<sup>113</sup> Together they cemented the image of a reconciled past which the town elite wanted to project. As shown in previous chapters, the town hall was also a symbol of the town trying to display a unified local history which fitted in with the national story. The histories displayed in these town halls, and other great municipal buildings of the era, along with their statues and paintings, were seen 'through the lens of Whig History.'<sup>114</sup> This meant that the images stressed, 'England's unique and uniquely successful-constitutional development, the English talent for self-government and the overwhelming desire for liberty.'<sup>115</sup> The pageant and the town hall are linked in what they

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<sup>111</sup> *A Round table of Colchester Worthies.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> 'Colchester Pageant', *Sunday Times*, Sunday 27 June 1909, p. 7.

<sup>114</sup> Whyte, 'Building the Nation in the Town', p. 223.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

were both trying to achieve; celebrating a shared past in which people from Colchester and visitor alike could find a history that they could all recognise. In both of them, histories such as the Civil War and the siege could be found, because they had become important for Colchester's local identity. This has been explored in Chapter Four, but it is important to note here too that the histories displayed at the town hall were similar to that at the pageant,

‘On the exterior of the building, facing High Street, are four statue representing four famous men connected with different eras in the history of Colchester, viz (1) Eudo Dapifer, the Norman Lord of the town who built the Abbey and (probably) the Castle; (2) Lord Chancellor Audley, Town Clerk of Colchester, Member of the Borough, Speaker of the House of Commons, and Chancellor to Henry VIII.; (3) Dr. William Gilberd, Physician to Queen Elizabeth, the famous pioner of Electrical Science. He was born and buried at Colchester; (4) Archbishop Harsnett, native of Colchester, who bequeathed his valuable library to the town...’On the Stockwell Street facade two other statues are to appear, viz, Edward the Elder (promise by Mr. Charrington Nicholl) and Boadicea<sup>116</sup>

There is a clear link between the town hall and pageant and they both demonstrate what histories the town wanted to tell visitors and locals. The individuals and the histories they represented were carefully selected and chosen. However, it is important to note that the Civil Wars were not displayed on the outside. As seen with the pageant it was still controversial, Jarmin could not go into great detail when talking about the siege in the programme, and here the town could not put a Civil War figure on display. They had to be careful with this piece of history. Certainly, in both the pageant and the hall, in the early twentieth century, one side could not be preferred over another.

### **Reception and Meaning**

Of course, while the historical narrative sheds light on the ways the authors and their civic elite patrons wanted the siege to be understood, the meaning of the scenes for those who participated or watched them are more difficult to ascertain. Judging from the report in the Boys Grammar

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<sup>116</sup> Benham, *Colchester Town Hall: Full Illustrated Description of the building*, pp. 6-8.

School Magazine, *The New Colcesterian*, which was written immediately after the pageant in 1909, the editor understood and appreciated the message of resolution and unity and was inspired by its contemporary political and social relevance:

we have seen the quixotic loyalty of Lucas and Lisle quenched in blood, and Cromwell's East Anglian Ironsides charging home whose name and honour must be kept untarnished and augmented in the future to which we, as schoolboys, belong then Colchester Pageant will not have been in vain.<sup>117</sup>

Nonetheless, it is also clear that the message of reconciliation and hope did not always get through to those who watched the performance. The meaning seems to have been lost on a reporter for the *Times*, for example, perhaps reflecting a difference between local and national perspectives. He thought the dialogue between Lucas, Lisle and Fairfax was too long, going as far as to say that he did not see the need for such a scene at all.<sup>118</sup> A report in the *Evening Star* also noted the comments of a 'Royalist Lady, 'in the audience for whom themes of reconciliation appear not to have resonated at all. She was heard to remark, 'The Roundhead Cavalry ("How splendid they are: but I don't like their religious opinions!"),' and dashed away down Stockwell Street'.<sup>119</sup> The Bishop of Colchester was also fairly partisan in his comments in the sermon that opened proceedings. He was full of praise for, 'the noble example of those who defended their city for the King', but omitted to mention those who opposed him.<sup>120</sup> These comments serve as reminder that, beneath the surface, Colchester remained a divided town politically, and so it is unsurprising that not everyone agreed with the theatrical and even-handed interpretation of the history presented in the pageant. It certainly led to some criticism from academic historians and vehement local Conservatives. In the years that immediately preceded the spectacle, Professor J. H. Round, Cambridge medievalist and historian of

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<sup>117</sup> ESAH, *Newsletter*, 2009, p. 9.

<sup>118</sup> 'The Colchester Pageant', *Times*, Monday 14 June 1909, p. 8.

<sup>119</sup> 'Colchester Pageant', *Evening Star*, Monday 28 June 1909, p. 4; 'Colchester Pageant', *East Anglian Daily Times*, Monday 28 June 1909, p. 6.

<sup>120</sup> 'Pageant Sunday' *East Anglian Daily Times*, Monday 21 June 1909, p.4.

Colchester Castle had publicly criticised the newly published positive historical reassessments of Fairfax and the Parliamentarians, as we have seen.<sup>121</sup> A ‘fanatical conservative’ and intellectual elitist, he was fervently opposed to the expansion of popular education in general and pageants in particular, arguing that they perpetuated ‘travesties of history’.<sup>122</sup> It was perhaps to be expected therefore that he took ‘strong exception to historical inaccuracies in several episodes,’ of the pageant and refused to contribute to its script.<sup>123</sup>

It also seems that despite the educational aims of the pageant, many of the children who watched it were uninterested or unaware of its historical significance. Jones, in an essay in which he looked back on his memories of the pageant which he attended as a child, doubted ‘whether our knowledge of history was greatly improved, but the fun of imitating the Iceni and Trinobantes routing the Romans provided the basis of street games for many weeks’.<sup>124</sup> The Roman episode was the one he remembered most vividly. The other scenes, including the siege episode, were apparently a ‘blur’.<sup>125</sup> For many it seems the history of the town in general and the siege in particular was a matter of some indifference, and the pageant was an entertainment and little more.

That said, while some people either failed to notice or disagreed with the interpretation, many greeted the pageant and the siege episode with great enthusiasm. The Roman episodes and Boudicca’s triumph admittedly captured enormous public interest. The pictorial pageant supplements, for example, were filled with images of Boudicca in her chariot and other

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<sup>121</sup> Round, ‘The Case of Lucas and Lisle’, pp. 157-180; Edmund King, ‘Round, John Horace (1854–1928), historian and genealogist.’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-35847>, [accessed 17/07/2021].

<sup>122</sup> John Horace Round, *Peerage and Pedigree: Studies in Peerage Law and Family History*, 2 vols (London: James Nisbet, 1910), p 305.

<sup>123</sup> ‘Dr Horace Round and the Pageant’, *East Anglian Daily Times*, Friday 23 April 1909, p. 6.

<sup>124</sup> E.R.O, T/Z 25/1548-1571, Essays Presented for the Competition, ‘High Days and Holidays’ (1979-80).

<sup>125</sup> *Colchester Pageant Programme*; E.R.O, T/Z 25/1548-1571, Essays Presented for the Competition, ‘High Days and Holidays’ (1979-80).

classical battle scenes.<sup>126</sup> But great excitement was also generated by the Civil War episode too. The grandeur of the military spectacle was especially promoted and admired in the finished performance.<sup>127</sup> Headlines in the local and national press declared that the depictions of the execution of the Royalist leaders were the most dramatic scenes of the entire pageant. *The Times* asserted that, ‘The last scene, when the Royalist captains are shot down in full sight of the audience, is the most dramatic moment of the whole performance ...The execution did take place, in 1648, in the very grounds which are the theatre of the pageant.’<sup>128</sup> It went on to proclaim that, ‘the horsemanship displayed is vastly superior to that which is generally to be seen in pageants...another troop of cavalry belonging to the Colchester garrison, dressed as Roundheads, charge widely across the front of the stand...very much the real thing.’<sup>129</sup> A reporter for the *Tamworth Herald* was equally captivated by the ‘thundering charges of Parliamentary troopers and mounted Cavaliers...in front of the stand.’<sup>130</sup> More generally, judging from reports in the local and national press, the siege episode was very well received and regarded as impressive. According to *The Evening Star*, ‘The siege scene with the execution of Lucas and Lisle, was viewed with eager interest by all...dramatic effect was at its height when the Cavaliers leaders were shot down...as the Parliamentary horseman galloped away at a great pace, the audience cheered loudly.’<sup>131</sup>

There is no doubt that the pageant offered an exciting and memorable way for a wide range of people from Colchester and beyond it to engage in the history of the siege through preparing, performing and watching it. *The Evening Star* reported that an unknown donor

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<sup>126</sup> E.R.O, T/Z 89/5, Report of Pageant and Pictorial Supplement in the *Essex County Standard* and *West Suffolk Gazette and Eastern Counties’ Advertiser*.

<sup>127</sup> Kathryn Thompson, ‘Godebog’, *Redress of the Past*, <https://histpag.digsum.kcl.ac.uk/publications/blog/godebog-kathryn-thompson/> [accessed 11/08/2021].

<sup>128</sup> ‘The Colchester Pageant’, *Times*, Monday 14 June 1909, p. 8.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> ‘The Colchester Pageant’, *Tamworth Herald*, Saturday 26 June 1909, p.6.

<sup>131</sup> ‘The Colchester Pageant’, *Evening Star*, Tuesday 22 June 1909, p. 3. See also, ‘The Colchester Pageant’, *Yarmouth Independent*, Saturday 26 June 1909, p. 3.

provided the funds for the entire school at Brightlingsea to watch the rehearsal of the siege episode. Local musicians, singers and dancers took part in the scenes and many people donated or made props.<sup>132</sup> For example, a banner ‘of the Commonwealth’ was ‘beautifully copied’ from the original by a Major Ball and donated to the pageant for the siege episode. One Mr Fitch had also bought an ancient heraldic banner that belonged to Sir Charles Lucas that ‘might have been used in the siege’ and gave it to the Pageant Committee to be used in the siege scene.<sup>133</sup>

The pageant also increased public awareness of historic sites associated with the siege because of Parker’s concern with the performance of history in its ‘place’.<sup>134</sup> It is no coincidence that the final episode ended at the Town Hall, that ‘storehouse of local history’ and magnificent statement of civic pride.<sup>135</sup> The setting of the pageant in the park in front of the castle was very important because of the association of the building with so many events of the history of the town but especially perhaps with the siege and the scene of the execution of Lucas and Lisle. Illustrations of buildings associated with the history were also integrated into the Pageant Programme. The castle was depicted in great detail, and a picture of the Siege House was included, recently restored by Alderman William Marriage.<sup>136</sup> Romantic eighteenth century drawings of the ruins of St. Botolph’s were also displayed.<sup>137</sup> The preoccupation of the pageant organisers with historical settings connected to events depicted in the spectacle meant also those other less well-known historic buildings were given greater recognition. *The Evening Star*, for example, reported on the services at St. Martin’s Church on pageant day mornings. It also told its readers about the damage that was inflicted on the building by cannon fire during the siege and the bullets that were still in the church.<sup>138</sup> In some versions of the

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<sup>132</sup> Reid, ‘The Material Culture of Pageants’, p. 38.

<sup>133</sup> ‘Colchester Town Council’, *East Anglian Daily Times*, Thursday 07 October 1909, p.6.

<sup>134</sup> Yoshino, ‘Between the Acts’, p. 50.

<sup>135</sup> Cannadine, *Oyster Feast*, p. 117.

<sup>136</sup> *Colchester Pageant*, p. xxv.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*, p. 60.

<sup>138</sup> ‘Colchester Pageant’, *Evening Star*, Saturday 12 June 1909, p.3.



programme, the seventeenth century siege map was also included to draw attention to historic buildings associated with events presented in the performance to add authenticity and interest.<sup>139</sup>

### **Pageant Legacy**

It is clear from the evidence that the huge success of the pageant increased the national status of the town in the early part of the twentieth century. The central role of the siege in the spectacle also shows that the history of the tragedy was a major object of local as well as national interest in the period. However, the narrative presented was not the conventional Royalist and Anglican interpretation of heroic martyrdom that dominated most popular representations. The historical narrative of the siege episode in the pageant was more even-handed and deliberately designed by the local political elites who promoted the spectacle to reflect and reinforce the consensual politics of the present. Local politicians certainly benefitted from their involvement in the event. Several members of the organising committee built their political careers on the basis on their role in the pageant. For example, when the Liberal, Reginald Beard was nominated as Mayor in 1911, the Conservative, Alderman Benham seconded him, praising his, ‘work in connection with the Colchester Pageant.’<sup>140</sup> William Marriage and A.M. Jarmin, the Honorary Secretary, drew on the triumph of the pageant in their successful campaigns to become Mayor in 1913/14 and 1917.<sup>141</sup> When Jarmin died in 1927, his obituary was full of praise for his work on the Colchester Pageant.<sup>142</sup>

The pageant was also a huge popular success. Papers anticipated the event to be ‘one of the finest spectacles of its kind ever produced’ and ‘praised that great event which...presented the glorious history of the ancient borough to delighted audiences of

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<sup>139</sup> *Colchester Pageant Programme*, p. 48.

<sup>140</sup> ‘Colchester’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 10 November 1911, p. 5.

<sup>141</sup> ‘Court and Social’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 28 October 1910, p. 4.

<sup>142</sup> ‘Death of Ald. A. M. Jarmin of Colchester’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 28 January 1927, p. 8.

thousands every day.’<sup>143</sup> Parker himself believed Colchester was one of his most successful pageants.<sup>144</sup> At the end of the last performance he was dragged through the town in Emperor Claudius’ Triumphal Car by the local grammar school scholars, led by a curious group of Danes and Civil War cavalrymen.<sup>145</sup> Many people in the town did not want the event to end and several hundred of those who had taken part in the pageant reassembled at Colchester Town Hall in costume a few months later to enact several of the scenes from the pageant again.<sup>146</sup> Papers reported that crowds swarmed to the hall and it was a ‘unparcelled scene of delight and enthusiasm.’<sup>147</sup>

People kept personalised scrapbooks, postcards, books of words, programmes, decorative ceramics, and even ticket stubs long after the event had ended and these material objects helped ensure that the history of the siege, as well as the pageant more generally, lived long in the memories of individuals who had participated in or seen it.<sup>148</sup> Souvenir editions of local papers with pictures of key characters in the siege story were published after the pageant was finished.<sup>149</sup> The special edition and pictorial supplement to the *Essex Standard* had pictures of the death of Lucas and Lisle, alongside images of Boudicca as well as Lord Audley, and Ireton. Items, props and appurtenances were sold off after the Colchester Pageant at an auction and people bought them for their own interest and pleasure.<sup>150</sup> Images from the event were presented at the Corn Exchange in Chelmsford in September that year which were well received by the audience.<sup>151</sup> Some wanted a more permanent memorial. In a letter to the

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<sup>143</sup> ‘Colchester Pageant’, *Grantham Journal*, Saturday 26 June 1909, p. 6; Canadine, ‘Oyster Feast’, p. 118, *Essex County Standard*, Saturday 26 June, Saturday 23 October 1909.

<sup>144</sup> ‘The Colchester Pageant’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 02 July 1909, p. 7.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> ‘The Colchester Pageant’, *The Redress of the Past*.

<sup>147</sup> ‘The Colchester Pageant’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 02 July 1909, p.2.

<sup>148</sup> Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme, Alexander Hutton, Paul Readman, ‘Historical Pageants and the Medieval Past in Twentieth-Century England’, *The English Historical Review*, 133.563 (2018), 866–902; Reid, *Souvenirs*, p. 259.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> ‘Colchester Pageant Sale’, *Diss Express*, Friday 09 July 1909, p. 8.

<sup>151</sup> ‘Chelmsford’, *Essex Newsmen*, Saturday 25 September 1909, p. 4.

Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Colchester Pageant, one governor from the local Colchester Grammar School asked the committee to provide the boys who participated with some sort of permanent material memory and suggested a stained glass window in the assembly hall of their new building.<sup>152</sup> L.C. Jones noted in an essay submitted for a competition in 1970 that reminiscing on his childhood, one of his ‘highdays’ was ‘the day off from school to attend the ‘Colchester Pageant’. He recalled that he ‘had a proud interest in the ‘props’ because my father was one of the decorators of Claudia’s Temple’. He went on to say how vividly he remembered the spectacle because, ‘the era of the movies and films of cowboys and indians had not arrived but the gang instinct of boys was stimulated by the fighting scenes in the Pageant.’<sup>153</sup>

The 1909 spectacle also began a pageant tradition in Essex that ensured that the siege retained an important place within communal and national historical memory. According to press reports recorded by the Archaeological Trust and Archaeological Society, The Essex History Faire of 1989 followed in the tradition of the 1909 Pageant, ‘and presented a play about the siege to mark the 800 years of the borough charter’.<sup>154</sup> An exhibition was put on at Holly Trees Museum in Colchester in 2009 to commemorate the 1909 Pageant that included images of the siege scenes. Organisers remarked that the pageant had been remembered and talked about by the grandparents of Colchester’s children for 100 years.<sup>155</sup> Attempts were even made

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<sup>152</sup> E.R.O, C1432 Box 1, Pageant Minute Book.

<sup>153</sup> E.R.O, T/Z 25/1548-1571, Essays Presented for the Competition, ‘High Days and Holidays’ (1979-80).

<sup>154</sup> ‘Bringing the Past to Life’, *The Colchester Archaeological Trust*, 3 (1989-1990), 6-7 (p. 6), <http://cat.essex.ac.uk/reports/MAG-report-0003.pdf> [accessed 13/12/2021]; ESAH, *Newsletter 101-115*, September 1989, p.14, <https://www.esah1852.org.uk/publications/newsletters> [accessed 13/12/2021]; Howard Brooks, *An Historical Survey of Castle Park* (Colchester: Colchester Borough Council, 1997), p. 81.

<sup>155</sup> Wendy Brading, ‘Colchester: 100 Years on, Your Chance to Take Part in Pageant’, *Gazette News*, Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2009, <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/4032212.colchester-100-years-on-your-chance-to-take-part-in-pageant/> [accessed 16/10/2020]; ‘Colchester’s History was Re-enacted in Pageant of Memories’, *Gazette News*, Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2019, <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/17957675.colchesters-history-re-enacted-pageant-memories/> [accessed 16/10/2020].

to restage the pageant but funding could not be acquired.<sup>156</sup> When the First Site Gallery opened its doors to visitors for the first time in 2011, it included local historical ephemera in its exhibition on *Camulodunum*. Along with photographs of mayors and molluscs, there were pictures, posters, tickets and fliers for the 1909 Pageant, billed as ‘perhaps the last headline-grabbing celebration of all things Colcestrian.’<sup>157</sup>

## Conclusion

The Colchester Pageant of 1909 provides clear evidence that the Civil Wars remained an influential historical reference in Edwardian Colchester specifically and more broadly in British culture. It suggests that Peter Mandler’s doubts about whether ‘the relevance of the national past’ gripped the popular mind in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century are unfounded.<sup>158</sup> Thousands of people of varied age, gender, and social status from Colchester as well as outside it became engaged in the history of the siege through participating or watching it. Crowds were enthusiastic about what they saw. The interpretation of the siege presented in the pageant also supports Readman’s argument about the influence of localism on historical perceptions.<sup>159</sup> Unlike other towns that staged pageants in this period that avoided the Civil Wars in their productions, because it was regarded as divisive, Colchester depicted the conflict directly and in a highly arresting manner because it was regarded as of central importance to the town’s history and identity. Very interestingly though, the performance did not follow conventional and dominant historical narratives based on Royalist myth and memory. Elites used a more even-handed interpretation of the history to construct a narrative of reconciliation that not only resonated with contemporary political and social priorities, but also offered a way

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<sup>156</sup> Clare Jeffs, ‘Colchester: Unique Artifacts on Display at Pageant Exhibition’, *Gazette News*, Saturday 25 April 2009, <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/4313951.colchester-unique-artefacts-display-pageant-exhibition/>, [accessed 23/08/2021].

<sup>157</sup> ‘Firstsite Opens Doors to Colchester Past, Present and Future with Camulodunum.’ *Culture 24*, <https://www.culture24.org.uk/art/art364910> [accessed, 27/07/2021].

<sup>158</sup> Peter Mandler, *History and National Life* (London: Profile Books, 2002), p. 51.

<sup>159</sup> see also Readman, ‘The Place of the Past’, pp. 147–99.

to redress the wounds of the past locally. Questions of meaning were complex. Commercial, political and educational motives attracted some to the production. Others were involved simply to be entertained. Different people 'consumed' the history differently and meanings varied amongst different individuals and groups. The pageant nonetheless demonstrates that the history of the siege remained central to the construction of Colchester's collective identity into the early twentieth century and the next chapter will show that its legacy extended even further beyond it.

## Chapter Six: The Twentieth Century: Continuity and Change.

*In fact one comes rapidly to the view that Colchester has an embarrassment of historical riches...Colchester's answer, it would seem, is to ignore absolutely priceless assets which other towns, not only in England, but anywhere on the continent, would give their eye-teeth to possess.<sup>1</sup>*

Over the course of my research for this thesis, evidence has come to light about the longer term uses of the history of the siege in a very different context in the twentieth century. To provide a conclusion to the study as well as to suggest avenues of future investigation, the final chapter of the thesis provides a preliminary analysis of this evidence, and in doing so explores important questions regarding patterns of continuity and change in the uses of the history of the Civil Wars in Colchester in the different circumstances before and after two world wars. Peter Mandler regards the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a period of public scepticism about ‘the relevance of the national past’.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, Paul Readman noticed an enthusiastic interest in history in this period, rooted very much in the local context and reflected in the popularity of history books, architectural styles, theatre and preservation movements.<sup>3</sup> Some scholars have suggested these trends persisted through the very different contexts of the inter-war years and that history continued to play an important part in the construction of local and national identity after the First World War.<sup>4</sup> This chapter agrees broadly with these conclusions. It argues that in the face of social and political upheaval, the history of the siege was harnessed to further national and conservative ideological political agendas in an attempt to foster social and political unity nationwide. However, a strong sense of local and particular

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<sup>1</sup> U.E.S.C, DA 1.E72, ‘The Roman Remains Ignored’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 23rd July 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 109-17. See also Peter Mandler, *History and National Life* (London: Profile Books, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Readman, ‘Place of the Past’, p. 149.

<sup>4</sup> Freeman, ‘Splendid Display’; David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London: Reaktion Books, 2016); Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory, Volume I: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994); Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain*, 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1985 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Aston, *Interpreting the Landscape*, p. 186

connection to the history persisted in Colchester and the siege remained an important element in the construction of its local historic identity. After the Second World War in 1945, however, that attachment to history and ‘heritage’ began to clash more overtly with definitions and ambitions of an identity constructed around notions of ‘progress’ and ‘modernity’ and the history lost its prominence in local collective culture.<sup>5</sup> This chapter also identifies the increasingly loss of Tory control power that had originally dominated the narratives of the siege and highlights how different social groups used the siege.

### **The Inter-War Years.**

Recent research has emphasised considerable continuity between Victorian attitudes to history, heritage and preservation of the past and the inter-war years. Furthermore, some scholars have argued that a combination of trauma over wartime destruction and fear of future conflict widened and deepened public interest in protection of emblems of the past which had previously been the concern of a narrow intellectual and social elite.<sup>6</sup> These trends are evident in Colchester after the First World War. It is clear that a variety of groups and individuals continued to have a great interest in the preservation of historic sites, many of which were associated with the Civil Wars. The castle, for example, had been widely recognised as a historical monument of national importance for several centuries but had always been in private hands. Concern for its future changed that arrangement soon after the First World War. Alarm was prompted by an offer from an American buyer to purchase Colchester Castle for one million dollars in 1917. According to the *Chelmsford Chronicle*, ‘our friends and good Allies, the Americans, are sweet on obtaining things in the historic line. It is not, therefore, a surprise to read that they once made a bid for Colchester Castle.’ The reporter argued that the

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<sup>5</sup> Wright, *On Living in an Old Country*.

<sup>6</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*; pp. 14, 25-100; Readman, ‘Place of the Past’, p. 199; Ben Weinstein, ‘Heritage, Civilization and Oblivion in Inter-War Britain: The Case of the City Churches’, *Cultural and Social History* (2022) 39-55.

intervention was nothing short of ‘vandalism’ and made clear that the offer was swiftly and firmly rejected.<sup>7</sup> The great building was taken into public ownership for the first time shortly afterwards in 1919. In May of that year, a committee was set up to organise the funding, design and installation of a war memorial to Colchester’s war dead, reported that:

It has been felt for many years that should a suitable opportunity arise it would be fitting and desirable for the Town of Colchester to acquire the Castle which is one of the most remarkable ancient buildings in England and of great historical interest to the inhabitants as also to many tourists and visitors to Colchester<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, the local Council acquired the land around the castle, as well as the Georgian buildings that surrounded it, including Hollytrees which had once been owned by the antiquarian Charles Gray, on the condition that the buildings would be preserved and used for some approved public purpose.<sup>9</sup> A few years later in 1931, the Castle Museum was relocated and expanded when the Roman vaults began to collapse through overstrain and exposure.<sup>10</sup> The extensive repair work was paid for and carried out by Colchester Borough Council and thereafter the museum began to expand into other areas of the castle. The dedicated curator of the museum, Edward Rudsdale whose extensive notes and diary recorded the history of the museum up to 1945, proclaimed that the developments were a ‘notable event, to be remembered for all time in our annals, for it marks a new era in the history of this magnificent memorial of the past.’<sup>11</sup> He also asserted that the fact that the museum was sited in the castle, ‘made its collection famous all over Europe.’<sup>12</sup>

The purchase of Colchester’s Castle and its grounds was made possible by a donation of £10,000 given in 1919 by Viscount and Lady Cowdray to the Borough to acquire the

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<sup>7</sup> ‘Sign of the Times’, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 7 September 1917, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> E.R.O, D/B 6 M29/2, Borough War Memorial Committee and Sub-Committees Minutes 1919-1925.

<sup>10</sup> David Clarke, *Colchester Castle: A History, Description and Guide* (Cornwall: Beric Tempest & Co, 1966-89), p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> E.R.O, D/DU 888/38, Diary and Papers of E.J. Rudsdale of Colchester 1935.

<sup>12</sup> E.R.O, D/DU 888/62, Rudsdale, Notes and Diary from 1940-5.



building and the precincts, and to clear the site, so that a war memorial to the men and women from Colchester who died during the First World War could be constructed.<sup>13</sup> Judging from evidence from press reports and council minutes, unlike many other communities at the time, there appears to have been very little conflict over the choice of location. It seems there was widespread conviction amongst members of the Borough Council, as well as the wider community, that the Castle Park was the most suitable site. The Committee agreed in 1919 that the purchase:

would give the utmost satisfaction to the inhabitants and enable an important public improvement to be carried out. They also feel that the open space thus acquired would be a very suitable position for a monument to the memory of Colchester men and women who have given their lives for their country...<sup>14</sup>

War memorials in England in this period were mostly planned and funded by local communities. They took a variety of forms ranging from parks and public buildings to monuments and statues.<sup>15</sup> The location could also be symbolic, and it is notable that in Colchester, sites associated with local loss and tragedy during the siege of 1648 were chosen to commemorate the dead. The memorial in Colchester was a grand and elaborate monument and the location was an integral part of the design. It consisted of a three-stepped base surmounted by a tall stone pedestal and bronze figure of winged victory on an orb holding an inverted sword and laurel wreath. The pedestal was flanked on two sides by figures of St. George mounted on a dragon and Peace holding a dove. Two bronze plaques bearing a First World War inscription in relief was mounted on one side of the pedestal. A Terracotta casket with First World War names and ephemera from the war was buried within the foundation of the monument. The memorial was placed in front of the decorative metal park

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<sup>13</sup> E.R.O, D/B 6 M29/2, Borough War Memorial Committee.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Jenny Macleod, 'Britishness and Commemoration', p. 647. See also, Alex King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford: Bloomsbury, 1997).

gates, railings and stone that were positioned in front of the castle.<sup>16</sup> Nearby was the relatively recently installed memorial to the Royalist knights Lucas and Lisle. Spatial connections to the past therefore underpinned commemoration in significant ways. Monuments to the memory of wartime violence in numerous conflicts at various times with very different meanings and outcomes linked and defined the meaning and use of space.

The site of St. Botolph's Priory, ruined during the siege of 1648, was also used during and after the First World War, for the general public to mourn the dead. The site had long been popular with visitors and its beauty was regularly extolled in the local press. The *Chelmsford Chronicle* wrote in 1894, for example, that, 'The Priory is now one of the most beautiful early ruins in the Kingdom. It is a dream in grey stones and Roman bricks, with clinging ivy.'<sup>17</sup> By this stage the ruin was established and organised as a tourist site so that by 1914, a caretaker had been appointed to attend to visitors, collect fees and sell guidebooks. A charge was also suggested for admission at 3d or 6d a head, probably to help with maintenance costs.<sup>18</sup> But in July of 1915, a service was held there, led by the Bishop of the Diocese, to pray for the war dead. The parish magazine stated that, 'the sentimental interest that attaches to mouldering ruins may be replaced by the religious attachment due to the place which God has chosen once and for ever.'<sup>19</sup> At the end of the war the Vicar of St. Botolph's also suggested the lawn between the ruined priory and the church should be used as a site for the memorial to the war dead but the offer was not taken up.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly he calmed local fears stating that the admission charge to the priory was only for outsiders and that, the 'Inhabitants of the Borough of Colchester will be admitted free,' as should 'soldiers in uniform' from any location.<sup>21</sup> These

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<sup>16</sup> 'Colchester Memorial', *Imperial War Museum*, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/2107> [accessed 09/03/2022].

<sup>17</sup> 'The Chelmsford Odd Volumes at Colchester', *Chelmsford Chronicle*, Friday 14 September 1894, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> E.R.O, D/P 203/28/11, Bound Copies of Monthly Parish Magazine, January 1914-December 1921 (Colchester: St. Botolph's parish, 1914-1921).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 12 December 1919, VOL XXXV.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 6 June 1915, Vol XXX.

patterns of access, use and experience suggest interesting connections between historic and contemporary memory and a local sense of place. Meanings were not simply imposed on people but layered onto sites conferring legitimacy, linking past and present in a continuous narrative of loss for ordinary people as well as elites.

In addition to sites of memory associated with particular places, the history of the siege remained prominent in local culture through the publication of details of new local archaeological excavations and histories in the inter-war period. Extensive excavations during the 1930s revealed parts of the network of fortifications built outside Colchester by the Parliamentarians in 1648.<sup>22</sup> Antiquarianism and local antiquarian and history societies continued to be popular pastimes for educated and mostly middle-class men after the war and members of local societies produced a great deal of historical writing on local history.<sup>23</sup> For example, the antiquarian and Liberal politician Arthur Jarman, who had been the driving force behind the highly successful Pageant of 1909, wrote and published a history of Colchester in 1923. Consensual town politics remained in place until after 1945 and Jarman's interpretation of the history of the siege showed many parallels with books that had been written in a similar political context at the turn of the century.<sup>24</sup> He emphasised amity more than division where possible, for example commenting that during the 1640s, 'The sympathies of the townsmen were divided between King and Parliament, but in many instances private friendships continued in spite of political diversity'.<sup>25</sup> He also made generous but non-partisan comments about Lucas and Lisle stating that:

Many opinions have been held as to the execution of Lucas and Lisle...I do not intend to take sides. One feels, however, that such gallant soldiers deserved a better fate, for their actions during the Siege of Colchester and previously in many another

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<sup>22</sup> 'Civil War Fort', *Colchester Heritage*, <https://colchesterheritage.co.uk/monument/mcc115> [accessed 11/04/2022]. For further details of the excavations, see C.F.C. Hawkes, and M.R Hull, *Camulodunum: First Report on the Excavations at Colchester 1930-1939* (London: Society of Antiquaries, 1947)

<sup>23</sup> Readman, 'Place of the Past', p. 160.

<sup>24</sup> 'Modern Colchester: Political history', VCH, pp. 208-221.

<sup>25</sup> A.M. Jarman, *The History and Mystery of Colchester Castle* (Colchester: Essex Telegraph: 1923), p. 13.

contest of the great civil war had been brilliant in the extreme.<sup>26</sup>

Civic pride also remained a prominent theme in his history when he commented of the siege that:

This was perhaps the last incident in the tale of the centuries which linked the mighty stronghold to national history. And yet not the last, for surely it is permissible to say that the impressive and touching words by Viscount and Viscountess Cowdray as they dedicated the Royal Castle of Colchester to the custody of the City Fathers of this ancient borough make it once more of definite national interest<sup>27</sup>

Consensual interpretations and presentations of the history were not uncontested in this period, however. Public performances and celebrations were staged regularly in Colchester that helped to maintain the memory of the siege in local life in the inter-war period. However, they were shaped more by national than local political preoccupations and presented a more explicitly Royalist and conservative interpretation. The 1920s and 1930s were dramatic political decades that saw widespread, republican and anti-monarchical revolutions in Europe, as well as the rise of socialism, the Great Depression and General Strike in Britain in 1926. The social and political establishment, including the monarchy in this period, staged public spectacles, both in local and national settings, that used history to bolster loyalty to monarchy and social and political unity in the face of these threats.<sup>28</sup> In Colchester, for example, civic events and spectacles were performed regularly by the local authority in the 1920s and 1930s that included historical presentations of an imperialist and Royalist tone. Aided no doubt by the military presence in the town, the Castle Park was frequently the site of these splendid celebrations. For example, processions were hosted, marking the British Empire Exhibition in London in 1924-5, when Rudsdale noted that the area ‘was full of troops and crowds as the

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p. 42.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>28</sup> Heather Jones, *For King and Country: The British Monarchy and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

area was used for a military tattoo.’<sup>29</sup> Historic re-enactments were also popular and many performances were staged in the park, as for example in 1929, when *The Times* reported that, ‘particularly interesting is a scene from the Siege of Colchester in 1648, which is being enacted just below Colchester Castle.’<sup>30</sup> The town also organised its own celebrations of the first Royal Silver Jubilee of King George V in 1935, that were performed in the Park, and which included a presentation of the history of the siege. A more overt display of patriotism and conservative royalism was evident in these performances, however, that were in sharp contrast to the consensual tone adopted in the pageant. For example, Rudsdale recorded the words of the Jubilee song which ran as follows:

Hears a Health Unto His Majesty  
All Cavaliers will please combine,  
With a fa la la la la la la  
To drink this loyal toast of wine  
With a fa la a la la la la

If anyone should answer "No"  
I only wish that he may go  
With a Roundhead rogues to Jericho  
With a fa la la la la la la la la la  
With a fa la la la la la la!<sup>31</sup>

Similar Royalist and Tory political sentiments about the siege were displayed in the local conservative press at the time, exemplified for example, by the publication of a series of poems by a local writer that expressed overtly Royalist attitudes to the conflict. One that was written in celebration of the ancient walls included the following verse:

Of Roman troops and British Slave  
Proud Norman Lords and Saxon knaves  
Of days when Cromwell's hosts did siege,

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<sup>29</sup> Howard Brooks, *An Historical Survey of Castle Park* p. 79; E.R.O, D/DU 888/38, Diary and Papers of E.J. Rudsdale of Colchester 1935.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Colchester Carnival Week’, *Times*, Wednesday 10 July 1929, p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> E.R.O, D/DU 888/38, Diary and Papers of E.J. Rudsdale.

Stout hearts that to their King held liege...<sup>32</sup>

Conservative political attitudes and priorities were also in evidence at the Essex Pageant, which was staged in Ilford in East London in 1932 to an audience of around fourteen thousand people.<sup>33</sup> The pageant devoted a whole episode to the siege, and it was presented on a grand scale, with a replica of Colchester Castle as its centrepiece. It is clear from the content of the script, however, that unlike the 1909 Pageant, Colchester Borough Council had far less influence over the tone of the performance. The consensual interpretation of the history that was presented in 1909 and which continued to chime well with local Colchester politics in this period, was entirely absent. Interpretations by Jarman and others that conveyed a picture of local political harmony despite a divisive history were entirely disregarded here.<sup>34</sup> The authors and producers had little or no connection with Colchester. The script was written by the Walthamstow antiquarian and place-name expert P.H. Reaney and the Pageant Master was Frank Lascelles, a contemporary of Louis Parker.<sup>35</sup> Lascelles was more a showman than an idealist. He was far less interested than Parker in using pageants as a means to foster social unity. He included scenes from the Civil Wars in several of his pageants, for example, in Oxford and London and did not shy away from a partisan narrative. The performances were overtly Royalist in tone and the siege episode in the Essex Pageant continued in the same vein. Military advisors produced and stage managed the scene, with Rudsdale noting in his diary that he was very impressed by the cavalry display of Roundheads and Cavaliers.<sup>36</sup> In contrast to the 1909 Pageant, however, the siege episode ended not with symbolic demonstrations of reconciliation and hope but with the conventionally Royalist interpretation of the heroic, 'Loyal

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> For more on inter-war historic pageants, see Hulme, 'A nation of town criers',

<sup>34</sup> '4,000 in Pageant', *Daily Mail*, Monday 28 June 1932, p. 10; 'W.I. Handicraft's Exhibition', *Essex Newsman*, Saturday 26 May 1928, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Bartie, and others, 'The Pageant of Essex', *The Redress of the Past*.

<sup>36</sup> E.R.O, D/DU 888/15, E.J. Rudsdale, *Colchester Journal* 1932.

Sacrifice' of Lucas and Lisle. The last scene ended with the execution of the two knights. Depicted as defiantly loyal to their King, the last line was spoken by Lisle who declared, 'Traitors, do your worst!', before he was shot dead.<sup>37</sup> The memory of martyrdom was preserved and promoted as an integral part of Colchester's identity through the spectacle. However, the history had a different political use and significance in these contexts. Shaped more by national than local priorities, it was used to project the ideology of loyalty to monarchy onto a wider social and political stage. Civic and national pride may have been linked in this period through the local origins of national history, but loyalty to monarchy and country were prioritised over local political unity and amity in these contexts.

Admittedly, judging from evidence in the local press there was very little opposition to these presentations in the town during the inter-war years. This absence may be explained in part by the relatively moderate political landscape in Colchester in the period. Support for the labour movement developed slowly but steadily in Colchester and thousands protested and participated in strike action in the 1920s. Nonetheless, protest was peaceful and orderly, borough politics retained its consensual tone, and according to most commentators, 'for the most part the community went its way in a half-hearted manner.'<sup>38</sup> Commercial considerations may provide another explanation for the lack of criticism. There had always been a financial angle to the promotion of local history, as small historic towns like Colchester aimed to stimulate a growing market for tourism. The business expanded in the inter-war years and the story of the martyrdom was always a popular history to sell.<sup>39</sup> Tourist guides to Colchester continued to be produced and new volumes were written that always included detailed narratives of the siege and the execution of the two knights. The local antiquarian and historian

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<sup>37</sup> 'The Pageant of Essex', *The Redress of the Past*.

<sup>38</sup> 'Modern Colchester: Political history', VCH, pp. 208-221.

<sup>39</sup> John Heeley, 'Planning for Tourism in Britain: An Historical Perspective', *The Town Planning Review*, 52.1 (1981), 61-79 (p. 63).

W. Hervey Benham produced a guide in 1937, for example, that included descriptions of the physical evidence of the conflict that tourists could still see in the town alongside a brief narrative of events and a description of the executions. For example, in his entry on the castle, Benham wrote that, as a consequence of the ‘Siege of Colchester, the Castle was ruinous but Lucas, Lisle and Gascoigne were placed in one of its dungeons before execution.’<sup>40</sup> He continued that, ‘according to Tradition the compartment now used as a store on the south side of the larger quadrangle was the prison in which Lucas and Sir George Lisle were confined previous to their execution.’<sup>41</sup> Groups of antiquarians and archaeologists remained regular visitors and were provided with tours of siege sites as recorded for example in *The Times* soon after the First World War in 1919. As ever the memorial to the two Royalists proved a highlight:

The party saw the memorial in St. Giles Church to Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle, two defenders of Colchester, who were shot outside Colchester Castle when the town capitulated to Fairfax after a siege of 76 days.<sup>42</sup>

The siege and the ruins proved popular amongst ordinary tourists as well. A map of Colchester was produced for visitors entitled ‘Essex Surprise: over 100 places to visit,’ that listed St. Giles, Colchester Castle, St. John’s Abbey and the ruined St. Botolph’s Priory as important attractions.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Benham included the ruined sites in his map for visitors in 1947.<sup>44</sup> Post cards from 1930 to the 1950s were printed with images of the ruins of St. Botolph, Colchester’s Castle, the Castle Park, the High Street and of St. John’s.<sup>45</sup> The history of the siege remained important in Colchester, both for business and for a local sense of place.

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<sup>40</sup> W. Gurney Benham, *Benham’s Guide to Colchester* (Colchester: Benham, 1937), p. 50.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p. 53.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Archaeologists at Colchester’, *Times*, Saturday 26 July 1919, p. 14.

<sup>43</sup> [Anon.], *Essex Surprises! Over 100 Places to Visit!* (Chelmsford: Essex County Council, 1984)

<sup>44</sup> E.R.O, C/DP 6/2/1, Essex Surprises; [Anon.], *Benham’s Map of Colchester* (Colchester, Benham, 1947).

<sup>45</sup> E.R.O, C1297 Box 1, Postcards from 1930-50.



Admittedly, there were always individuals in the town who were keen to develop and modernise and who had little interest in the preservation of the historic fabric in this period. The first Civic Society in Colchester was founded in 1933 and led a campaign for the preservation of Bourne Mill which was threatened with demolition, for example, and which was eventually purchased by the National Trust. An area in Priory Street was cleared of houses to give a good view of the Roman wall and in 1935 the Society ran a project to restore the timber framed building in East Stockwell Street known as Peake's House.<sup>46</sup> In 1935, Rusdsdale asserted at a meeting of the Society that, 'the majority of people did not care about the destruction of old buildings and the like, and only the few at these meetings 'deplore' the 'vandalism of all kinds' for their 'own selfish pleasure'. He also noted that of those interested in the preservation of the past, for example, at an Archaeological Society meeting held in the same year, he was the only person there under the age of 50.<sup>47</sup> Broadly speaking however, there was little evidence of an appetite for systematic destruction of the historical landmarks of the town for purposes of 'modernisation' in the inter-war years. As recent research has begun to show, the period was characterised more by a 'popularisation' of interest in preservation and heritage.<sup>48</sup> For a variety of commercial and cultural reasons, the material vestiges of the siege continued to play an important role in the construction and projection of Colchester's identity between 1919 and 1939.

### **The Post-War Years**

The difference in approach after the Second World War is striking. David Matless and others have shown ways in which definitions of modernity placed the past in opposition to 'progress' and development after 1945. The destruction of the blitz generated official and unofficial plans

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<sup>46</sup> 'A Brief History', *Colchester Civic Society*, <https://www.colchestercivicsociety.co.uk/a-brief-history/> [accessed 21/03/2022].

<sup>47</sup> E.R.O, D/DU 888/38, Diary and Papers of E.J. Rudsdale of Colchester, 20th May 1935.

<sup>48</sup> Weinstein, 'Heritage, Civilization and Oblivion'.

of reconstruction that incorporated modernist visions of reconstructed towns and cities that clashed with ideas of preservation and heritage.<sup>49</sup> These processes were evident in post-war Colchester. Judging from the content of local newspapers, history lost its prominence in politics and culture. There were fewer articles on local history in general and the siege faded from popular view. Modernisation triumphed for the most part and a significant part of the historic fabric of the town, including buildings associated with the siege, were lost. The re-establishment of the Civic Society in the mid-1950s, re-named the Colchester Preservation Society was a signal of the level of anxiety generated amongst certain sectors of the population about the consequences for the historical fabric of the town of modern development. The society was re-formed initially to protect the houses in the Dutch Quarter that had been condemned as unfit for human habitation and with the help of Dr Kershaw, the Borough Medical Officer of Health, the houses were saved. Campaigns continued and were successful in saving a variety of other historic buildings from demolition.<sup>50</sup>

St. Nicholas Church, located near to the castle on the High Street and damaged during the siege, was one of the most prominent historic buildings to be destroyed in this period, before it could benefit from the protection of the Society. On the 10<sup>th</sup> October 1952, the Council acquired the site after it was closed by the Church of England due to lack of use. Parishes at that time were being merged to make them more viable.<sup>51</sup> Initially efforts were made by members of the Museum Committee to save the building. Writing to the Ecclesiastical authorities on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1951, the Committee objected, 'To the proposal for the demolition of St. Nicholas Church on the grounds of the loss of amenity which such demolition would cause.'<sup>52</sup> Later in December the Museum committee stated that, 'the Council's architects

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<sup>49</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*; Russel Haywood, *Railways, Urban Development and Town Planning in Britain: 1948-2008* (London: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.colchestercivicsociety.co.uk/a-brief-history/>

<sup>51</sup> E.R.O, D/P 176/1/20, St. Nicholas: Register of Service 1923-1943.

<sup>52</sup> E.R.O, D/B 6 M25/2, Minutes of Town Planning Committee 1947-1956.

report supports Council's view that the building could be reused.<sup>53</sup> Letters were then sent to the Church Commissioners to argue the case that the building should not be demolished. Support for preservation was also garnered from local parishes including St. Giles, Holy Trinity and St. Martin's.<sup>54</sup> However, in 1953, the Council abruptly changed direction. It seems from the minutes that the Council succumbed to pressure from the Ecclesiastical authorities, who argued in a letter read to the meeting that the preservation of St. Nicholas Church was not in keeping with Borough Council policy:

it is inconsistent with accepted business methods adopted by the Council and others of realising upon assets in order to make improvements to fulfil social obligations demanded by the needs of today...the letter further pointing out that the Council's suggestion is not consistent having in mind that the site on which St. Runwald's Church once stood is now a public highway.<sup>55</sup>

Whatever the motive for the change in policy, in the longer term the High Street and its development became more of a priority. According to minutes of the Council meeting members agreed that for reasons of safety and development, 'for the protection of highway interests and public safety' as well as 'in order to secure a well-planned development,' the church should be removed and the site redeveloped.<sup>56</sup> A new building, a shop, was erected on the site and the High Street was widened.

The decision was not uncontroversial. But there is little evidence of organised opposition. Judging from press reports the Church was widely regarded as part of Colchester's historic heritage but its destruction was reported more in sadness than in anger in the local press in 1955. The historic site took three months to demolish, and the *Essex Standard* covered progress in detail.<sup>57</sup> Pictures of various stages of demolition were published regularly to keep

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> E.R.O, D/B 6 M1/1/71, 1952-53 Borough of Colchester: Council Summonses and Minutes, and Committees' Minutes, Reports, Etc.

<sup>57</sup> U.E.S.C, DA 1.E72, *Essex County Standard*, 14th January 1955, 'Page Dedicated to the Destruction of St.

their readers aware of what was happening.<sup>58</sup> Art students produced drawings of the ruined building and a caption explained that they had seized, ‘a last chance to sketch one of the architectural landmarks of the borough.’<sup>59</sup> On the 25th March, the Standard finally reported ‘a famous landmark disappears.’<sup>60</sup>

Destruction of historic buildings continued, seemingly relatively unopposed apart from by specialist societies during the 1960s and 70s and had a significant impact on the historic landscape associated with the siege as well as many other sites. The Civic Society was re-formed again in 1964, with members coming from various backgrounds in Colchester, in the context of widespread local and national concern about partnerships between Corporations and developers that were leading to the destruction of town centres. The prioritising of modern development and retail expansion over heritage was a constant theme in local political discussions in this period. It was even suggested that Colchester Castle should be knocked down to make space for parking, at least according to a report in 1962 in the *Daily Mail*.<sup>61</sup> During a Council meeting in the 1970s, an application was made to demolish Holy Trinity church, (not the tower), another site closely associated with the siege so that more shops could be built in the centre of the town.<sup>62</sup> Local traders argued that the area was run down because of lack of parking and one suggestion was that the St. Botolph’s site should be altered to allow for more space for cars.<sup>63</sup> All of these suggestions were rejected and Councillor Jo Edwards who mounted an effective argument in defence of the historic sites on the grounds of the income that they attracted through tourism. In this instance the benefits of heritage outweighed the desire to ‘modernise’, but many sites did not fare as well. For example, management of the

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Nicholas’.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> ‘Castle is saved’, *Daily Mail*, Friday, April 06, 1962, p. 11.

<sup>62</sup> E.R.O, D/B 6 M25/5, Council Town Minutes May 69 to March 74.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

Roman wall in Colchester which was also closely associated with the history of the siege proved highly contentious. As early as 1955 an argument had erupted between the Council and the Church of England about who was responsible for its restoration.<sup>64</sup> Plans had also been mooted in 1951 to demolish the Balcerne Gate. According to Rudsdale, ‘the Ecclesiastical Commissioners were behind the plot, with the idea that the value of St. Mary’s Vicarage garden would greatly increase if the scheme went through.’<sup>65</sup> Early plans did not go ahead but in 1976 the Council decided to remove a large part of the Roman wall to improve access to the town for larger vehicles. Reporting on the demolition, the *Essex Archaeological Society News* ran a story about, ‘the new ‘Hole-in-the-Wall’, which it argued was viewed with mixed feelings.’<sup>66</sup> These developments highlight the varied groups that used and interacted with the siege sites; business owners, local inhabitants, councillors, the church and historic societies who all used the sites in different ways.

Improvements to the road system in the town also impacted negatively on the historic fabric of the town associated with the siege but met with little opposition from local politicians or the wider public. Expressions of concern were confined to specialists. As John Ashdown Hill wrote recently, ‘the construction of Colchester’s southern bypass, Southway, in the 1960s, effectively cut off the abbey prescient from the town almost casually or by accident.’<sup>67</sup> As Colchester expanded south, the old town, which included St. John’s Green and the Gatehouse, was cut off from the main centre, and there was no direct access to the site anymore. A news report in 1971, stated that, ‘Leonard Vincent...claims that if the green dwellers had their way they would find traffic cutting through their privacy to reach the ring road.’<sup>68</sup> The use of the

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<sup>64</sup> E.R.O, C1123 Box 1, Ministry of Works 1952: Ancient Monument Architects: Colchester Castle. Essex. Advisory Services.

<sup>65</sup> E.R.O, D/DU 888/34, Diary of Rudsdale 1951.

<sup>66</sup> ‘The AGM’, *Essex Archaeological News* (Autumn 1976 to Summer 1980), p. 6, <http://esah1852.org.uk/research/newsletters-blog>, accessed online 27/02/2019.

<sup>67</sup> John Ashdown-Hill, *Medieval Colchester Lost Landmarks*, (Derby: Breedon Books Publishing Company, 2009) p. 28.

<sup>68</sup> U.E.S.C, DA 1.E72, ‘The Present in Search of the Future’, *Essex Standard*, Friday 19th March 1971.

term ‘green dwellers’ demonstrates the point that St. John’s Green became a distinct entity, separate from the town to which it had once been connected. It seems that historic buildings associated with the siege amongst other events, that lay in the way of the bypass were of little concern to local politicians. The minutes of the Town Development Committee the same year stated that, ‘the Minister should be requested to exclude from the list, when made, 39 properties which are either affected by the Inner Relief Road proposals for which planning consent has already been received.’<sup>69</sup> In December 1972, more of St. John's Green was claimed by the highway.<sup>70</sup> According to one commentator in the battle between preservation of the past and the ambitions of modernity, it was modernity that had won out:

In fact one comes rapidly to the view that Colchester has an embarrassment of historical riches...Colchester's answer, it would seem, is to ignore absolutely priceless assets which other towns, not only in England, but anywhere on the continent, would give their eye-teeth to possess.<sup>71</sup>

Colchester’s development in the twentieth century highlights very clearly the tension between new and old, memory and modernity. The siege ruins were at the centre of the debate, alongside other historic buildings. An important material legacy of the Civil Wars restored by the army in the nineteenth century was now obscured and cut off.

Tensions emerged not only between developers and preservationists but also between those interested in preservation and others keen to change the use of historic sites. St. Botolph’s Priory provides a good example. The ruined building had been secured from demolition when it came under national protection in 1912, but the terms of the agreement restricted its use. The Rev. W. G. Murray, Vicar of St. Botolph’s in 1969, went ahead nonetheless and used the site to stage a play which upset the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works.<sup>72</sup> They wrote to

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<sup>69</sup> E.R.O, D/B 6 M25/5, Borough of Colchester: Minutes of the Town Development Committee From 21st May 1969 to 19th March 1974.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> U.E.S.C, ‘The Roman Remains Ignored’, *Essex Standard*, 23rd July 1971.

<sup>72</sup> E.R.O, D/P 203/3/26, Letters to and from the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works to the Rev. W G

Murray after hearing about the performances, stamping their authority over the ruined building, reminding him that, ‘permission must be obtained from this office before the ruins are put to any use other than for their viewing by the general public and certain conditions agreed.’<sup>73</sup>

Murray wrote a forceful response to the Office of Works, stating that:

The Priory has been used by the Vicars of St. Botolph's for many years before I became Vicar. Markets to raise funds have been held in the ground; plays which were suitable to place have been performed in the ruins of the old Priory; there is a small portion used for the burial of the cremated remains of those who desire it. As far as I know no vicar has sought your permission in the past.<sup>74</sup>

This difference of opinion was summarised succinctly by Murray when he stated that, ‘what I wish to do is bring the old Priory to life by presenting an old treasure to people. What the Ministry want to do is, in effect, to make it a dead duck!’<sup>75</sup> Murray used history, including the siege, to bolster his claim to longevity of local use and meaning stating that, ‘according to Morant the Priory was the Parish Church of Colchester until the Siege of Colchester in 1648 regularly attended by the Mayor and Corporation. Owing to artillery fire etc...It became ruinous.’<sup>76</sup> The Ministry seemed unimpressed, simply responding that, ‘the Vicar's energies might perhaps be better employed in seeking to promote a change in those laws which seem to cause him so much indignation’, further asserting that ‘if he continues to act in total disregard for the Ministry’s legal powers under the Ancient Monuments Acts, the Ministry will be left with no alternative but to enforce them.’<sup>77</sup> Concepts of national heritage could be complex and therefore sometimes clashed with local history, use and meaning of the material remains of the past.

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Murray.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

In summary, interest in history and its material legacy in this period was confined mainly to a minority of people, in particular members of the Civic Society and Archaeological Society who were keen to preserve the historical fabric of the town.. Interestingly Murray's successor, the Reverend Peter Evans, wrote to the Director of Ancient and Historic Buildings a few years later to complain about the deterioration of the ruined priory since they had removed the position of 'custodian':

St. Botolph's Priory, being the first Augustinian house in England is a site of national importance and is one of the main tourist attractions in the historic town of Colchester. During the last few years; however, care and interpretive services to the public have inevitably declined since the custodian was removed to effect savings. There is certainly scope for improved presentation, but this is likely to add to expenses rather than to increase profitability.<sup>78</sup>

There is evidence in the letter of recognition of the value of local history for the town economy which Evans deployed deliberately when he referred to 'tourist attractions', 'national importance', and 'profitability' to try and argue for more protection. There are other indications that that the meaning and value of history for local identity was not overlaid entirely. For example when a new school was constructed in 1965 it was named the Sir Charles Lucas School.<sup>79</sup> Impressive local histories also continued to be written in the period, for example, by Arthur Brown, Grammar School Master and tutor whose lectures were well attended and popular.<sup>80</sup> Leading figures in the town such as Albert Sloman the first Vice-Chancellor of the University of Essex and the Area Bishop of Colchester also joined with the Civic Society in protecting sites from demolition and local papers sometimes sponsored their

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<sup>78</sup> E.R.O, D/P 203/3/32, Letters to and from Mrs H M Abbot (Hon. Secretary to the St. Botolph's Parochial Church Council) 'Vandals', 'Rubbish' and Security in and around St. Botolph's to the Director of Ancient and Historic Buildings (Department of the Environment) 1982.

<sup>79</sup> 'Education', in *A History of the County of Essex, Vol 9*, (London: VCH, 1994), pp. 352-366; 'Sir Charles Lucas School', *Gazette News*, Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2020, <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/18936889.sir-charles-lucas-school-biggest-purpose-built-comprehensive-colchester/#:~:text=The%20school%20opened%20in%201968,for%20looking%20like%20a%20factory.&text=It%20was%20given%20a%20specialist,Sir%20Charles%20Lucas%20Arts%20College> [accessed 21/02/2022].

<sup>80</sup> Brown, *Colchester 1815-1914*; See also Maling, *Colchester Through the Ages*, Sherry, *A Portrait of Victorian Colchester*; Daphne Woodward and Chloe Cockerill, *The Siege of Colchester 1648: a History and Bibliography* (Chelmsford: Essex County Library, 1979).



campaigns.<sup>81</sup> These individuals and organisations were assisted in their efforts in 1974 by the passing of the Town and County Amenities Act, which made it mandatory for permission to be acquired to demolish unlisted buildings in Conservation areas (formed under the Civic Amenities Act 1967).<sup>82</sup> The law was still vague though in how to protect historic buildings. A fine of only a hundred pound meant to be the punishment and was a fee many developers could afford.<sup>83</sup> It does seem that in Colchester as elsewhere in Britain, as Andreae argues, ‘destruction decreased by the middle of the 1970s as public perception of landmarks and conservation increased.’<sup>84</sup> But campaigns for preservation remained at odds with modernisation and it was often the modernisers who won out. For example, as late as 1998 plans were put forward to demolish part of the Roman Wall in order to allow vehicular access to a new multiplex cinema in Queen’s Street. A vociferous campaign was led by Dr Chris Thornton, leading local historian of Colchester and Essex who explained the situation in a leading article for the *Essex Archaeological Society News* and used the siege as a means to communicate his views about the meaning of the site:

Society members will no doubt be alarmed to hear of another potential threat to the integrity of Colchester's Roman wall. In the 1970s, parts of the wall were removed after confusion about its scheduling, and other breaches have been made over the last 25 years for the construction of underground car parks. The most recent was in 1985, when a 30 foot section of the wall was demolished for a service road to the Culver shopping precinct. Now, in the anniversary year of the 1648 siege in which the walls helped to shrug off the Parliamentary cannon, a plan for the redevelopment of the Queen Street site for a multiplex cinema has raised the possibility of the wall being pierced for car access yet again.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> E.R.O., A12739 Box 1, Colchester Civic Society: Minutes of AGM and Exec. Committee Meetings Prior to Nov. 1986.

<sup>82</sup> Sophie Andreae, ‘From Comprehensive Development to Conservation Areas’, in *Preserving the Past: The Rise of Heritage in Modern Britain*, ed. by Michael Hunter (Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton, 1996), pp. 135-155 (p. 135).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, p. 142.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 142.

<sup>85</sup> Chris Thornton, ‘And the Wall Came Tumbling Down’, *Essex Archaeological News* (Spring 1998), p. 6, <http://esah1852.org.uk/research/newsletters-blog> [accessed 27/02/2019].

The siege added to the symbolism of the resilience of the ancient edifice and provided ammunition to attack the modernisers. Ken Mabbitt had written a poem in 1985 which deployed references to the siege to lament the destruction of a 30-foot section of the wall to build a service road for the Culver Shopping Precinct in Colchester, and the society reused it in reference to the most recent destruction to enforce the point. The verse went as follows:

The Roundheads knocked the thing about  
Time and neglect did their share  
Three centuries of wear and tear  
Yet stands the wall still, tall and stout.

And so we thought it would remain  
But then the money spinners came  
And breached the wall, and to our shame  
They plan to do the thing again!<sup>86</sup>

It appears that the wall was saved in this instance and the work did not go ahead.

There were signs of a shift in attitudes to the historical urban fabric of the town as ‘heritage’ tourism expanded and ‘the history boom’ gained traction in the culture more widely in the 1980s and 1990s. It was recognised that history sold well. Colchester marketed itself increasingly prominently again as a historic destination to visit and the Council began to pay more attention to the maintenance of historic sites. For example, the ruins of St. Botolph’s were acquired by Colchester Council with the help of English Heritage in 1990 in order to create a pleasant and peaceful area of open public space for the local populace to use.<sup>87</sup> Money was also found to illuminate the castle and the Roman walls.<sup>88</sup> Heritage weekends were organised that encouraged visits to prominent historic sites.<sup>89</sup> Online websites and blogs were

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> ‘St. Botolph’s Priory’, *The Colchester Archaeological Trust*, 5 (1991-1992), 6-10 (p.10), <http://cat.essex.ac.uk/reports/MAG-report-0005.pdf> [accessed 13/12/2021].

<sup>88</sup> ‘Council leader Mark Cory on the Better Colchester campaign’, *Gazette News*, Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019, <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/17410550.council-leader-mark-cory-better-colchester-campaign/> [accessed 20/02/2019].

<sup>89</sup> E.R.O, A12739 Box 1, Colchester Civic Society.

developed to present the history of the town in an accessible format.<sup>90</sup> Local business also promoted themselves through reference to Colchester's history.<sup>91</sup> Archaeological excavations continued and when fortifications constructed by Parliament in 1648 were found, great attention to the history was paid by the local press.<sup>92</sup>

What is clear though is that towards the end of the twentieth century, at least at the level of marketing for tourists, Roman and Norman history, rather than the Civil Wars was used to promote Colchester's historic identity. A Roman helmet was adopted as the town logo and events were staged that showcased Roman more often than seventeenth century history. For example, in 2019, the Council produced a paper entitled *the Centurion* that advertised a marketing event whereby, 'Liverpool Street Station is to be invaded by Romans this month to promote Colchester as an exciting visitor destination.'<sup>93</sup> The feature was accompanied by a picture of a Roman Centurion with the caption, 'Start Your Roman Invasion here.'<sup>94</sup> Nowadays the siege does not appear routinely in the historical presentations for tourists either at a local or national level whereas Norman and Roman narratives do. England's Tourist Board, for example, is very aware of the castle as being an important site to bring visitors to Colchester. But the siege is not mentioned in the background information which simply states that, 'Colchester Castle is the biggest Norman keep in Britain, in fact, it's the biggest ever built by the Normans anywhere in Europe.'<sup>95</sup> Most websites foreground the Norman and Roman origins of the building, as for example, *Essex Offer* which states that, 'Colchester Castle is the

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<sup>90</sup> Ben Johnson, *Historic Essex Guide*, <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryMagazine/DestinationsUK/HistoricSitesinEssex/> [accessed 13/02/2019].

<sup>91</sup> See for example, 'BrightHouse Colchester', *BrightHouse*, <https://www.brighthouse.co.uk/store-finder/colchester> [accessed 13/02/2019].

<sup>92</sup> 'Colchester Archaeological Trust Unearths English Civil War Star Fort', *Gazette News*, Friday 26th August 2011, <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/9215505.colchester-archaeological-trust-unearths-english-civil-war-star-fort/> [accessed 12/02/2019].

<sup>93</sup> 'Romans to Invade Liverpool Street', *Centurion*, March 2019 (Colchester: Colchester Borough Council, 2019).

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> 'Discover a New Visitor Experience at Colchester Castle', *VisitEngland*, <https://www.visitengland.com/experience/discover-new-visitor-experience-colchester-castle> [accessed 13/02/2019].

largest Norman Keep in Europe. It was constructed on the foundations of the Temple of Claudius, built when Colchester was the first Roman capital of Britain.<sup>96</sup> Similarly Ben Johnson's guide declares, 'Discover Essex's historic past. Visit Roman Colchester, Britain's oldest recorded town and home to the largest Norman keep in all of Europe at Colchester Castle.'<sup>97</sup> Colchester deliberately foregrounds its status as the Roman's first city in England and focuses attention on its Roman heritage. As Johnson states, in Colchester:

Today history leaves behind an impressive castle, a Roman circus, ruined priories, Roman remains, Roman walls, the first Roman church in Britain, the ruins of one of Britain's earliest Saxon churches, and there's St. Peter's, one of the oldest established churches in England. We also have numerous Tudor buildings and the Dutch Quarter of residential housing, built from the profits of a long since declined industrial past. When it comes to history and heritage, Colchester has it all.<sup>98</sup>

It appears that the Romans rather than Cavaliers and Roundheads have become a more usable history for marketing purposes in the twentieth and twenty first centuries.<sup>99</sup>

That said, while the history of the siege is less prominent in publicity material, it is still disseminated through a variety of genres and formats by different individuals and groups within the town. It is always included in historic guides and tours of the siege sites are still put on in the present day. Nonetheless, the history is presented in a very different way from the Victorian and Edwardian narrative.<sup>100</sup> The focus is on the tragic consequences of the episode for the people of the town and its historic landscape. For example, a tour is described on the town website that states, 'Return to 1648 to a Colchester under siege from General Fairfax and the Parliamentarian Army. Our guide will bring the sights and sounds of this dramatic period to

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<sup>96</sup> 'Colchester Castle', *Essex Local Offer*, <http://www.essexlocaloffer.org.uk/listing/colchester-castle/>, date accessed 13/02/2019.

<sup>97</sup> Johnson, *Historic Essex Guide*.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> 'Stuart Colchester', *Visit Essex*, <https://www.visitcolchester.com/explore/historic-colchester/stuart-colchester.aspx> [accessed 11/03/2020].

<sup>100</sup> 'Guided Walk - The Siege of Colchester at Visit Colchester Information Centre', *Visit Essex*, <http://www.visitessex.com/thedms.aspx?dms=3&venue=0650012&feature=1037> [accessed 11/03/2020].

life, while exploring how the siege has left its mark on buildings across the town.’<sup>101</sup> The myth of Lucas and Lisle or the treachery of Fairfax is not mentioned at all. History has not been demythologised completely. A more recent claim to fame that began in the twentieth century and widely used in local tourist material, despite never being substantiated, is that the famous nursery rhyme character Humpty Dumpty began life in Colchester as the one eyed gunner Thompson, a Royalist soldier who with his cannon crashed to the ground from the top of St. Martin’s Tower during the siege of 1648.<sup>102</sup> But political parallels are drawn less often. For the most part, the emphasis in tourist literature is on suffering and destruction inflicted on ordinary people. Publicity for the Siege House unsurprisingly, for example, makes reference to events of 1648 on their website, stating that, ‘two days later the Parliamentarians took back control of the East Bridge when they stormed the castle, killing the Royalist Commanders by firing squad.’<sup>103</sup> But no details are given about the identity of the knights or the controversy surrounding their killing. The siege features quite prominently in the display in the Castle Museum, renovated and expanded in 2013/4. But the interpretation focuses on the misery inflicted on the people of the town rather than on the myth of martyrdom or its meaning in political and partisan terms.<sup>104</sup> One event put on in Colchester to celebrate National Archaeology Day, in 2003, for example comprised of a tour of the ruins of St. Botolph’s Priory, when according to publicity material, the public would have a ‘chance to see how people lived at the time’. Demonstrations were staged on seventeenth century weaponry. Talks were given on ‘how the siege devastated the town during the Civil War’, but there were no judgements

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> ‘Humpty Dumpty and the Fall of Colchester’, *Myths and Legends*, <http://myths.e2bn.org/mythsandlegends/origins1-humpty-dumpty-and-the-fall-of-colchester.html> [accessed 28/02/2019]; ‘Was Humpty Dumpty an Egg?’ *The Fact Site*, <https://www.thefactsite.com/humpty-dumpty-egg/> [accessed 28/02/2019]; Tom Parkes, ‘Humpty Dumpty Origin St. Mary at the Wall’, *Gazette News*, Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2008, <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/3670300.colchester-can-humpty-dumpty-have-a-great-find/> [accessed 28/02/2019].

<sup>103</sup> ‘History’, *Siege House*, <https://www.theoldsiegehousebarandbrasserie.co.uk/index.php/history> [accessed 11/03/2020].

<sup>104</sup> ESAH, p DA 670. E7C729B4, Peter Berridge, p. 1.

made as to which side was most responsible.<sup>105</sup> A similar approach is adopted in most forms of popular discussion on the history of the siege nowadays. Local papers occasionally include features on the siege but again the focus is on the historic fabric of Colchester and the sites affected by the siege.<sup>106</sup> After discussing the damage to the Siege House, St. Botolph's, St. Mary's and St. Martins, one article remarked recently that, 'Given all the events of the three month siege, we are lucky to have the buildings which do remain today.'<sup>107</sup> It also appears that objects relating to the siege are rather valuable. The *East Anglian Daily times* reported that, 'A 'very rare' English Civil War sword, which belonged to one of the Royalist leaders at the Siege of Colchester in the summer of 1648, is set to fetch about £5,000 at auction.'<sup>108</sup> The siege, to some, still held significance. The Royalist leader in question was Lord Capel, and the paper made note that it was this figure that Capel Road was named after.<sup>109</sup> This object was then linked with the siege story and discussed the buildings in the town and ended with a brief note that, 'eventually the Royalists surrendered and two of their leaders, Lucas and Lisle, were promptly executed.'<sup>110</sup> Another reporter stated recently that:

Colchester became involved with events during the English Civil War. Firstly in 1648, there was the Battle of the Head Gate in which the Parliamentary Army failed to capture the town from the occupying Royalists. This in turn led to the eleven-week siege, which brought hardship, hunger, poverty and misery to the town and her people.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> 'Civil War Rages for Crowd at Prior', *Gazette News*, Monday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2003, <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/5451160.colchester-civil-war-rages-for-crowds-at-prior/> [accessed 30/03/2022].

<sup>106</sup> 'History: Reminders of the Siege of Colchester', *Gazette News*, Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2016, <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/14510445.history-reminders-of-the-siege-of-colchester-are-there-for-all-to-see/> [accessed 12/03/2020].

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> 'Sword with Siege of Colchester Link Set to Fetch £5,000 at Auction', *East Anglian Daily times*, Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2017, <https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/sword-with-siege-of-colchester-link-set-to-fetch-5-000-at-auction-1-4945164> [accessed 12/03/2020].

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> 'Shouting Colchester's Heritage from the Rooftops', *Gazette News*, Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> December 2018, <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/17311406.shouting-colchesters-heritage-from-the-rooftops/> [accessed 13/02/2019].

Local histories of the siege written in the late twentieth and twenty first centuries also focus on the physical damage inflicted on the town and the suffering of ordinary people, more than on myth, and political responsibility.<sup>112</sup> Patrick Denney focuses on these themes in two books he has written on Colchester and its history. Relatively recently he also re-published Carter's Royalist pamphlet entitled *Starvation or Surrender* but he made clear in his preface that his aim was to raise public awareness of a contemporary account of suffering and not to endorse Royalist interpretations.<sup>113</sup>

Re-enactments of history for public entertainment continue to be staged in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, but their contexts and meanings are very different from the civic pageants and national celebrations put on in Edwardian and inter-war Britain. Organised and presented by groups of enthusiasts, their aim is less to use history to promote local and national identity through celebration of a particular political ideology, than to make history more accessible to the modern audience through 'experience'. According to the 'Sealed Knott', for example, the oldest re-enactment group in Britain, they 'operate with a view to educating the public and encouraging an interest in their heritage'.<sup>114</sup> Between 2011 and 2019 the Sealed Knott staged a re-enactment of the siege in Castle Park every year in August, the month when Lucas and Lisle were shot. They also helped design a display for the museum which describes the life of a Civil War soldier, and an exhibition on the execution of the two knights.<sup>115</sup> In 2018 they organised a fund-raising event for the local hospice called *Invasion Colchester 1648*, which was a two-day event that involved around 150 volunteers re-enacting the siege in Castle

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<sup>112</sup> Maling, *Colchester*, p. 38; Jones, *The Siege*, p. 141.

<sup>113</sup> Patrick Denney, *Images of England: Colchester*. (Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 1998); John Hedges and Patrick Denney, *Starvation or Surrender* (Isle of Wight: JMH publications, 2002), p. x.

<sup>114</sup> Babette Smits Van Waesberge, 'Historic Re-enactment: Playtime or Education', <https://publichistory.humanities.uva.nl/blog/historical-reenactment-playtime-or-education> [accessed 11/04/2022]; Alexander Cook, 'The Use and Abuse of Historical Re-enactment: Thoughts on Recent Trends in Public History', *Criticism*, 46.3 (2004) 487–96.

<sup>115</sup> 'Colchester Castle Park', *Sealed Knot*, <http://www.thesealedknot.org.uk/events/year/2018/east-of-england/colchester-castle-park> [accessed 29/03/2022].

Park. Admittedly, they had to share their audience with a number of other ‘invasions’, most notably of ‘superheroes’ who took over the shopping centre re-imagined as a fantasy world.<sup>116</sup> It appears that performing the history remains relatively popular even if its political significance has changed. The history of the siege was not presented or used to rouse Royalist sentiment at the Jubilee celebrations in 2012, for example, or at the festivities organised to mark the Queen’s ninetieth birthday in 2016.<sup>117</sup> It seems that a mythical history of Royalist tragedy translates less effectively in current political and cultural contexts.

This is not to imply that interest in the contemporary political resonances of the siege has disappeared completely. Occasionally they have emerged strongly although political uses and meanings differ sharply from those of the inter-war period. In the context of clashes between left and right in Thatcherite Britain during the 1980s, for example, the history was utilised more often by left leaning radicals who opposed established political and business interests than by Conservatives who supported the social and political status quo. Representations of the wars that drew inspiration from Marxist academic histories, most notably by Christopher Hill, had begun to appear in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>118</sup> The distinguished left-wing intellectual and Hill’s student, David Cawte, wrote the novel *Comrad Jacob* published in 1961, which focussed on Gerrard Winstanley, radical leader of the first communist movement founded during the Civil Wars, known as the ‘Diggers’. A film based on the novel entitled, *Winstanley*, directed by Kevin Brownlow, was then released in 1975.<sup>119</sup> Christopher Hill’s classic study of radical groups during the wars, *The World Turned Upside*

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<sup>116</sup> Katherine Palmer, ‘Friendly Invasions Coming to Town’, *Gazette News*, Monday 20<sup>th</sup> August 2018, <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/16444558.friendly-invasions-coming-town/> [accessed 30/03/2022].

<sup>117</sup> Ellis Whitehouse, ‘Spectators Gather at Castle Park for Gun Salute for Queen’s birthday’, *Gazette News*, Sunday 12th June 2016. <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/14552067.spectators-gather-at-castle-park-for-gun-salute-for-queens-birthday/> [accessed 05/03/2019].

<sup>118</sup> See for example, D. Keith Peacock, *Thatcher’s Theatre: British Theatre and Drama in the Eighties* (London: Greenwood Press, 1999); Siân Adiseshiah, *Churchill’s Socialism: Political Resistance in the Plays of Caryl Churchill* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), p. 30.

<sup>119</sup> Hopper, ‘Images of Fairfax’, pp. 128-132.



*Down*, was published the same year and these works were major influences on a play about the siege written by Roger Howard and performed in the studio at the Mercury Theatre in Colchester in 1981. Howard was a prominent radical playwright, founding director of Theatre Underground and lecturer at the University of Essex from the 1970s to the 1990s.<sup>120</sup> Influenced by radical politics and the threat of nuclear war, Howard used the history of the siege to tell a story about men and women struggling for survival and freedom in the terrible conditions of the blockade and held against their will by the Royalist enemy.<sup>121</sup> In sharp contrast to romantic Victorian dramatisations of the siege, Howard's central characters were members of a fictitious middling sort Parliamentary family called the Goodwins. The Royalist knights were far less important in the play. Fairfax was depicted as a scheming and ruthless commander but his decision to execute the knights was justified by his loyal servant Ebenezer who announced dismissively, 'Sir Charles Lucas and a couple of other Scum are to be shot.'<sup>122</sup> Frustratingly, despite extensive searches in local and national newspapers, little information has been gleaned about the reception of the play locally. Reviews by BBC East in 1981 and *The Stage* magazine agreed that the Mercury had presented local history brilliantly.<sup>123</sup> But no comments could be found about responses from local audiences. It is interesting to speculate however, about the extent to which the drama put local as well as national contemporary political conflicts into sharp relief. Colchester was a conservative dominated town in the 1980s where the majority supported the values and ideals of Margaret Thatcher but a significant minority of left-wing radicals in the University and beyond it vehemently opposed them. It may have been no coincidence that simultaneously with the staging of Howard's radical re-telling of the siege in

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<sup>120</sup> Roger Howard, 'The Theatre Underground and Essex University's Theatre Writer's Residency 1979–1992', *History of European Ideas*, 20.1-3 (1995), 13-18; U.E.S.C, p PR 6058.O72, Roger Howard, *The Violent Irruption and Terrible Convulsions of the Siege During the Late Lamentable Civil War at Colchester, In The Year 1648*.

<sup>121</sup> p PR 6058.O72, Howard, *The Siege*, preface.

<sup>122</sup> Hopper, 'Images of Fairfax', p. 133.

<sup>123</sup> 'Television-Tuesday', *Daily Telegraph*, Tuesday 27 January 1981, p. 27; 'Colchester', *The Stage*, Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November 1981, p. 26.

the ‘studio’, the Mercury chose to put on Alan Ayckbourn’s 1977 comedy, *Ten Times Table* in the main auditorium at the same time. The plot of the play explored polarisation of attitudes and political extremes in a public social context. It centred on a group of local members of a community called Pendon who were brought together to form a committee to organise a town pageant based on a lost piece of local history, the massacre of the Pendon Twelve - where the Earl of Dorset crushed an uprising of rebellious workers, led by John Cockle. The committee members comprised of individuals with very different views of what the pageant should be and what it should represent. As the meetings progressed, the group became ideologically divided between a left-wing group led by a Marxist Polytechnic teacher, who envisaged the pageant as a political rally and a right-wing opposition who formulated plans for a violent confrontation in response. Whether or not the production was meant to be a comment on events closer to home in Colchester is not known but the theatre presumably thought that the play carried some local resonance.<sup>124</sup>

Dramatic representations of the siege have continued to be produced ever since, but while they have not been as explicitly party political, and all of them have focussed on civilian suffering rather than on Royalist heroes or political and ideological myth. In 1987, a musical documentary by *The Rough Justice Band*, was performed in Sudbury which covered a variety of historical topics ranging from the siege to the earthquake of the nineteenth century.<sup>125</sup> Another community production of a play about the siege, especially commissioned by the theatre to mark the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Borough Charter was staged in 1989, and although Lucas, Lisle and Fairfax were key characters in the play, the production involved a vast cast

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<sup>124</sup> ‘Programme for Ten Times Table by Alan Ayckbourn’, *Mercury Theatre*, <https://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/mercury-voices/programme-for-ten-times-table-by-alan-ayckbourn/> [accessed 01/04/2022].

<sup>125</sup> ‘Laughter and Song’, *Suffolk and Essex Free Press*, Thursday 14 May 1987, p. 18.

that foregrounding civilian suffering.<sup>126</sup> Much later in in 2016 and supported by the local Borough Council, a play along similar lines was performed at St. Martin's church, a setting that carried particular resonance because it was ruined during the conflict of 1648.<sup>127</sup> Written by Paul T Davies, directed by Paula Baker and performed on the weekend of the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> September, the plot focused on the impact of the siege on the lives of individual citizens. Sir Charles Lucas did make an appearance but only a brief one.<sup>128</sup> The script included contemporary themes such as post-traumatic stress but also references to the famous witch trials that had taken place in the area around 1646 led by Matthew Hopkins. Publicity material explained the play in the following terms:

A family are trapped in the church during the siege as Royalists and Parliamentarians battle for control of Colchester. The town walls are locked, food is running out. But who do you trust? Do you give a loved one sanctuary? Do you trust that your neighbour is not a witch? Who will feed your baby? And, as weeks turn into months, what would you eat?<sup>129</sup>

The production was reviewed in the local press and given lavish praise, noting resonances with contemporary events such as the siege of Aleppo and the war in Syria that still continues today.

The *Gazette* commented for example:

Not only should local schools be getting this on their curriculum, the council should include it in their annual tourism plan because while it may be one of the town's more darkest hours, it's a story that requires telling today, to as many people as possible.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> 'Siege-a Celebration of Colchester', *Mercury Theatre*, <https://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/mercury-voices/programme-for-siege-a-celebration-of-colchester-by-jill-burrows/> [accessed 28/03/2022]. 'Siege', *Hugh Bonneville*, <http://www.hughbonneville.uk/project/siege> [accessed 29/03/2022].

<sup>127</sup> Neil D'Arcy-Jones, 'Play Brings the Siege of Colchester to Life', *Gazette News*, Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2016, <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/14749968.play-brings-the-siege-of-colchester-to-life/> [accessed 29/03/2022].

<sup>128</sup> 'Jacky', *Mercury Theatre*, <https://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/archived-event/scratch-nights-2/> [accessed 29/03/2022].

<sup>129</sup> Auditions were posted on Facebook in 2016, 'Auditions- Siege 1648-a Play for Colchester', [https://www.facebook.com/events/551108468394961/?\\_rdr](https://www.facebook.com/events/551108468394961/?_rdr) [accessed 29/03/2022].

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

It seems then that the siege has not simply been consigned to the past but still has the power to speak to the present. Each generation uses the history to promote their own political aims and concerns.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion it seems from this preliminary examination that in the post-war era the Civil Wars became less important in terms of local identity. The town had a clear desire to modernise and move away from its historic image in the 1950s and this led to the destruction of many historic sites. The need for transport links and roads ensured that sites like the Abbey Gate were separated from the town both physically and visibly, and historic churches were torn down because they no longer had a practical use and were in the way of progress. The history boom of the early twenty first century has led to something of a revival of interest, and there is evidence of popular engagement with the history through dramatic performances that focus on civilian suffering. It is clear though that for local politicians and the siege has less political utility. It is also less prominent in publicity material designed to attract tourists than the Roman and Norman past. The reason for this needs more investigation in both national and local spheres. In previous chapters, it has been noted that power, throughout the nineteenth century was being diffused, but by the twentieth century it is apparent that the council and local elites had almost completely lost its control over the narrative and the siege was used by left wing political groups, historical societies, tourist companies and business owners in different ways for different purposes. Men and women were actively engaging with the history in different spheres and purposes; it was still incredibly useable, but it had to contend with an ever growing interest in the Roman past. This chapter has only been able to sketch out these themes and processes. Further research is required on the twentieth and twenty first centuries to fully understand how historical memory of the Civil Wars are viewed and used in different ways by

different individuals and groups and to see how local towns, and nations deal with such complex and divisive pasts.

## Conclusion.

*The English Civil War was another popular topic, combining religious preoccupations with contemporary politics. The turbulent events of the seventeenth century were near-contemporary in their significance and highly relevant<sup>1</sup>*

This thesis began with a question. Was Mark Stoye right to argue that the British Civil Wars continued to exert ‘a tenacious grip’ on the British imagination in the centuries that followed the end of the conflict in 1651 and if so, how and why?<sup>2</sup> It is rare for historians to consider the memory of the conflict beyond the seventeenth century and so the study represents one of the first contributions to a long term historical perspective on the significance of the Civil Wars in British culture. It also adds in original ways to historical understanding of how people understood, experienced, represented and used the past in Victorian Britain. The analysis has shown that the conflict remained an influential historical reference in Colchester specifically, and more broadly in British culture throughout the long nineteenth century. Questions of the meanings of use and perceptions were complex and malleable however and were consistently refracted through a contemporary lens. Political groups interpreted, reinterpreted, represented and used the history of the wars to fit their own agenda meaning different individuals and groups ‘consumed’ the history in a range of ways. Interpretations varied according to political, religious or commercial interests as well as according to context. Reviewing Colchester’s evolving construction and use of the story of the wars is highly revealing about the evolution of political, social and cultural identity in a specific local context. The research also contributes in original and significant ways to wider and important questions in the current literature on historical memory about changes in the construction, meaning and use of historical memory from direction and focus on the nation in the nineteenth century to becoming more fragmented

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<sup>1</sup> Levine, *Amateur and the Professional*, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Stoye, ‘Remembering the English Civil Wars’, p. 27.

as regional and group identities came to the fore in the twentieth century. The conclusion that follows draws the main findings of the study together and suggests avenues for future research.

Several key themes emerge. The study shows how the past was deliberately shaped, adapted, re-framed and used to suit changing social, political priorities as various groups and circumstances competed to control the story. Politicians and their supporters used the Civil Wars as a touchstone for comprehending and condemning political, social and religious upheavals in their own day in songs, plays, paintings and in the rhetoric of political debates in the nineteenth century either to maintain power or to contest it. But the historical narrative consistently shifted according to political affiliation, social group and to context. The dominant historical narrative of the war in Colchester was produced by the conservative, Anglican clergyman and antiquarian, Philip Morant in the eighteenth century. His interpretation of the Siege of Colchester followed Royalist tradition almost entirely and constructed a history that foregrounded local loyalty and heroic resistance to Parliamentary tyranny. The narrative was deployed extensively by Tory political interests to promote their own power and position. Interestingly, in the early part of the century, radical supporters of electoral reform and religious dissent appropriated rather than opposed the history and discourse of loyalty to carve out a public voice with which to criticise established authority. But by mid-century, as the political climate shifted in favour of non-conformity and constitutional reform, Liberals and radicals made a concerted effort to re-shape the way the conflict was remembered to serve their own political priorities and concerns. A different interpretation of the history emerged that was more sympathetic to the Parliamentary cause, and which contested the dominant narrative. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the political landscape changed. Consensus dominated borough politics in Colchester as elsewhere in many parts of urban Britain by this stage, and ambitious local leaders focussed on the future through the broader programme of civic pride. History was an important vehicle for promotion of local prestige and authority to

the local population and wider nation in these contexts. But elites favoured more and more historical narratives that celebrated reconciliation, unity and authority as they aimed to present a unified story that promoted the wider town to the nation. While partisan memory of the war did not disappear, other histories such as Boudicca, and Colchester's Roman origins were more prominently promoted, as exemplified by the choice of historical characters used to decorate the exterior of the magnificent new town hall built in 1902. The history of the siege precluded easy absorption into the town's usable past in these contexts. Institutional memory did not go so far as to try deliberately to suppress memory. But the siege lost prominence in the public political narrative because it was so divisive.

At the same time though, the historical narrative of the siege was commodified as much as it was politicised in the nineteenth century and the thesis highlights the significance of tourism for the making and shaping of the representation, use and meaning of the history and its significance for local identity. The war played an important cultural role in Colchester throughout the long nineteenth century as the town reimagined itself as a historic town. The royalist memory of the siege was the narrative that dominated guidebooks, railway guides and newspaper features in these contexts, influenced and encouraged by the growing popularity of romantic historical fiction. The era marked a peak of great popular interest in the history of the Civil War, encouraged by the publication of Walter Scott's hugely influential novels such as *Rokesby* (1813) and *Woodstock* (1826) that depicted combatants in the Civil War as romantic heroes. The myth of the martyrdom of Lucas and Lisle played well into these narratives and was widely promoted by individuals and organisations in Colchester less interested in the history as a vehicle for political comment than the income that visitors would provide.

None of this is to imply that the history of the siege was comprehensively constructed, represented and used by elites alone, however. The thesis argues against the notion of history



as a 'tool of elite domination'.<sup>3</sup> In the context of tourism, meaning was adapted and re-framed as a tool of individual imagination. Equally in contexts of radical political resistance, women's liberal and reformist political meetings, working class educational associations or in the great Pageant of 1909, the analysis has shown that meanings and uses of the past were not simply imposed by elites. People of different ages, classes and genders adapted, negotiated or simply ignored the history, and made meanings of their own.

These shifting patterns of meaning, use, power, and control are exposed by the analysis of the material legacies of the siege in Colchester. The analysis has shown how historical memory was constructed and maintained through the varied ways in which individuals and groups used, experienced, and imagined the landmarks left by the conflict. The scars left on buildings were exploited by local elites to establish a political history of place, and by businesses who were encouraged by the potential of domestic tourism, for commercial gain. But memories and meanings varied according to social and political perspectives, as well as over time. Layers of history could create confusion and conflation and in certain circumstances, most notably in the case of St John's Abbey, historical texts generated topographical traditions that were selective and partisan. Moreover, meanings of material marks of history were re-shaped by new generations after centuries of distance from the war. For some the historical landscape had become a place of recreation, while for others ruins were reduced to association with romantic myth and tragedy. Urban development also created friction. Many individuals motivated by civic pride and commercial ambition recognised the value of historic sites such as the castle and the abbey for the tourist trade. But others who were keen to encourage economic growth were less interested in the preservation of the historical urban landscape than in plans for development and improvement.

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<sup>3</sup> Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance*, pp. 214-215.

Throughout the study therefore, the evidence has shown that while the history of the siege was an important tool used by elites to maintain and legitimise political power and control, representations were not static but constantly shifted and different groups and individuals created meanings of their own from what they read, visited, or saw. These findings are reinforced by the analysis of the significance of hero narratives for historical understanding of how, why and from where people developed attitudes and approaches to the meaning of the past. Hero narratives were crucial tools used by elites to try and create a sense of local and national identity in the nineteenth century. But representations were not static. The analysis shows that the uses and meanings varied according to time as well as between social groups and political, commercial, and cultural context. Moreover, reinforcing Readman's argument about the significance of local history for the development of identity, distinct practices of local memory can be identified that did not always coincide with and occasionally contested official perspectives projected at a national level.<sup>4</sup> The images of Lucas, Lisle, and Fairfax were primarily constructed by Royalist propaganda after 1648. As the Royalist party gradually evolved into the Tory party in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it did all it could locally to preserve and promote an image of the heroism, martyrdom and noble sacrifice of Lucas and Lisle at the hands of the villainy of the Parliamentarian forces led by Fairfax to underpin their political authority. But by the middle of the nineteenth century just as Cromwell was transmogrified from national villain to hero of liberalism, imperialism and non-conformity nationally, so too the reputation of Fairfax began to be restored and claimed by liberals, radicals and reformers who contested tory representations. By the turn of the century Lucas, Lisle and Fairfax were celebrated as Englishmen possessing of imperial qualities of valour and heroism, by all sides of the political spectrum. There were though conflicts and frictions between different meanings and constructions. Shifts in posthumous reputation according to

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<sup>4</sup> Readman, 'Place of the past'.

contemporary political developments were of little interest to those who wanted to encourage tourism in the town. Drawing on idealised romantic images of civil war characters constructed by Scott and other writers of popular fiction, the literature that was produced to attract visitors to Colchester continued to promote the myth of the martyrdom of the two knights and the villainy of Fairfax because it appealed to the imagination and interest of the romantic visitor.

Analysis has also highlighted the role of ritual and spectacle in the construction and production of memory through analysis of the magnificent pageant staged by the town in 1909. The spectacle highlighted the pride of the town in its illustrious past and confirms that it was through local histories that its identity was expressed. The dramatization of the history of the siege in the Pageant also points to a generational change in historical memory at the turn of the century. The myth of martyrdom was suppressed in the Pageant in favour of a historical narrative of the siege that was deliberately even-handed in its interpretation. The siege episode was designed by its promoters, who were mainly civic political leaders committed to political consensus, to bring the people of Colchester together to commemorate a shared local tragedy but also to look to the future with optimism and hope. Yet while the spectacle was deliberately deployed by elites politically to promote unity, pride and prestige locally, meanings were not simply imposed on the people who participated in and watched the theatrical display. Commercial considerations were very important to many people who were involved in the production. We also catch glimpses of personal engagement through the collection of photographs, postcards and other memorabilia that were kept long after the pageant was over. This and other evidence of the extent and enthusiasm of public engagement with the pageant reflected and reinforced a wider, popular interest in local history and deepened the links between the history of the siege and local identity amongst those who participated in and observed it.

Taken together the study deepens historical understanding of the uses that people made of the past in general and the history of the war in this period. The evidence demonstrates the complex, varied and changing ways in which the history of the siege was used in nineteenth century Colchester.<sup>5</sup> The study shows how, in the way Lowenthal has argued, construction of the history of the past was deliberately shaped adapted and re-framed to suit changing social, political priorities as various groups and circumstances competed to control the historical narrative.<sup>6</sup> It highlights the complex relationships between the representation, meaning and use of history and structures of power and control. It shows the significance of history as a means by which elite attempted to impose power and legitimacy. It exposes tensions that resulted from the competition for the meaning of memory between different individuals as different social and political groups as well as individuals negotiated, contested or even rejected established historical narratives. But it also demonstrates that meanings could not simply be imposed on people and individuals who read, listened to or watched performance of the history made uses and meanings of their own, as demonstrated for example by the frictions that emerged between academic and popular interpretations of the veracity or lack of it of the miraculous clearing of the ground on the site where Lucas and Lisle were shot. The myth nonetheless provides powerful evidence of the links between space, place and the construction of memory. It also illuminates the role of commercial interests associated with tourism in the making, shaping and changing of memories of the siege and the meaning of the legacies it left. Finally, the analysis exposes interrelationships but also tensions between local and national narratives of historical memory, modifying Woolf's argument for a growing national focus of popular understandings of the past, and adding evidence to support Readman's assessment that the local remained one of the most important sites in which memory was constructed. History

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<sup>5</sup> Connerton, 'Seven Types of Forgetting.'

<sup>6</sup> As argued by Tileubergenov, Pelevina, Taubaev and Vasiliev, 'The Role of Social Memory.'

shaped by national authorities and institutions, whether intellectual or political, contributed to the making of memories of the Civil War in Colchester in the nineteenth century, but local and communal memory was also very important. Meaning was tied closely to the local events of the siege in 1648 and to specific spaces, places and people in Colchester that were associated with that tragedy, long after living memory was lost.

Taken together, the chapters demonstrate that histories of the Civil Wars were indeed popular and useable in the long nineteenth century, in a variety of ways. Although Hunt perhaps exaggerated his claim that the Victorians lived and breathed the Civil Wars; this work has shown that the wars were undeniably important for town elites and for communities up until the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> This study has deepened our historical understanding of the uses that people made of the past in general and the history of the war in particular in this period. It has shown how important the Civil Wars were for local communities in the centuries after the conflict had ended and how the wars had impacted and changed local landscapes and communities. The analysis demonstrates that the wars survived through both histories of individuals and the material sites that were visible. The research has demonstrated the particular and changing ways in which towns in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries dealt with complex and controversial histories. It has developed our understanding of the relationship of local to national historical identities and demonstrated the importance of local understanding of what the history of the conflict meant to people and how it was deployed in political, cultural and commercial contexts.

Recognition that interest in the history of the Civil Wars did not just survive into the nineteenth century but thrived and continued to play an important role in Colchester's political and cultural life into the early twentieth century has important implications for future research.

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<sup>7</sup> Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, p. 133.

There needs to be more investigation across towns and cities in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland to help understand the different and complex ways in which localities dealt with the controversial histories of the wars to explore similarities and differences in the part its history played in local political and economic life. In doing so better understanding will develop about the construction of local identity and how national historiographies of the wars related to them. Preliminary findings in Chapter Six of the thesis have opened up a range of questions related to the clear shift in how the siege was viewed in the twentieth century. In the context of deep economic depression, the rise of radicalism and profound social and political division, the history of the siege was harnessed to national and conservative ideological political agendas in attempt to foster social and political unity in the wider nation. A strong sense of local and particular connection to the history persisted in Colchester and the siege remained an important element in the construction of its local historic after the First World War. Links were made between past and present memories of loss in the choices that were made about the site of the collective memorial to the fallen in 1919. After 1945, however, that attachment to history and ‘heritage’ began to clash more overtly with definitions and ambitions of an identity constructed around notions of ‘progress’ and ‘modernity’. There is evidence that the history lost its political relevance, prominence and significance in local collective culture by the middle of the twentieth century. Additional research could usefully explore applications of the history and its meanings in the twentieth century that raise an important question for us today. What changed to make the Civil Wars less interesting and usable in the later part of the twentieth century despite the fact that it was a period of radical politics, warfare and uncertainty?

Preliminary research for this study suggests that the political and cultural relevance of collective memory of the Civil War in Britain, unlike in America, has diminished in contemporary culture, however. This is not to argue that interest in the war in Britain has disappeared altogether. There is evidence of a revival of attention to the subject in the 1970s,

for example, associated with the rise of political radicalism and the new social history.<sup>8</sup> Alongside a plethora of Marxist interpretations of the war in academic literature, most notably by Christopher Hill, popular cultural presentations in films such as *Cromwell* (1970), *Winstanley* (1976), the *Young Montrose* (1972) and the novel *Comrade Jacob* (1973) presented sympathetic portrayals of seventeenth century radicals and their causes that were popular with audiences at the time.<sup>9</sup> Decades later during debates over Brexit in 2016, academics, journalists and political commentators drew attention to the relevance and importance of the war that was fought over differences of conviction about the place of the royal prerogative and the powers of Parliament in the constitution for contemporary arguments about sovereignty and the location of political authority in the present day.<sup>10</sup> One journalist wrote that, ‘The political map of the Brexit vote resembles the regional distribution of support for the King, Court and Tories against Parliament, Merchants and liberal Whigs.’<sup>11</sup> A few years later, Conservative MP Jacob Reece Mogg intervened in the recent controversies over statues and their meanings by reviving the Victorian debate about the memorial to Cromwell outside Parliament, when he remarked that he would draw, ‘a moustache on the statue of Oliver Cromwell outside, much though I am opposed to regicides in principle and think that they deserve to be removed from pedestals,

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<sup>8</sup> See for example, Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (London, 1972); *God's Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972); Lawrence Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972);

<sup>9</sup> *Cromwell*, (Columbia Pictures: 1970); *Winstanley*, (BFI Production: 1976); David Caute, *Comrade Jacob* (London: Quartet Books: 1973); Nigel Tranter, *The Young Montrose*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1972). For further discussion on the historiography of the war and the place of Marxist interpretations within it see, see for example, Andrew Hopper, *Turncoats and Renegades: Changing Sides during the English Civil Wars* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012); Tim Harris, ‘Revisiting the Causes of the English Civil War’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 78, 4, (2015), pp. 615–35; Jon Lawrence, ‘Popular Radicalism and the Socialist Revival in Britain,’ *Journal of British Studies*, 31, 2, (1992), pp. 163–86.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Are There Any Meaningful Historical Analogies for Brexit?’ <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/head-head/are-there-any-meaningful-historical-analogies-brexit>, date accessed 21/03/2022. David Murrin, Brexit and its Parallels with the English Civil War’, <https://www.davidmurrin.co.uk/blog-entry/brexit-and-its-parallels-with-the-english-civil-war#:~:text=At%20the%20time%20of%20the%20June%2023rd%2C%202016,to%20expand%20to%20become%20a%20new%20Global%20Britain>, date accessed 21/03/2022; Anthony Barnett, ‘Brexit brings about a very British Civil War’, <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/brexit-brings-about-a-very-british-civil-war-1.3774902>, date accessed 21/03/2022.

<sup>11</sup> Roch Duin-Wasowicz, Brexit has the semblance of a new English Civil War,’ <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2018/03/09/brexit-has-the-semblance-of-a-new-english-civil-war/>, date accessed 21/03/2022.

broadly speaking.’<sup>12</sup> Locally too, judging from the burgeoning numbers of online presentations on the history of the siege and the Civil War more generally in Colchester, it seems that people are not indifferent to the history per se. But all of that said, despite the constitutional significance of the war for the making and shaping of modern Britain, its history no longer has the resonance that it did in the Victorian period. While it is commonplace for American commentators to draw parallels between their civil war and contemporary politics, for example, equivalent comparisons are rarely drawn about the significance of the Civil war in the UK. Why that is the case we do not yet know. We need more investigation into what aspects of the past we remember, when and why, and how it shapes individual and collective lives and identity today.

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<sup>12</sup> ‘Rees-Mogg defends jury system as Tory MPs raise concerns following Colston trial’, <https://www.northwaleschronicle.co.uk/news/national/19828833.rees-mogg-defends-jury-system-tory-mps-raise-concerns-following-colston-trial/>, date accessed 21/03/2022.



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