

The former ROMAN URN PUBLIC HOUSE

From 1824 to 1851 the lower area of the Grey Friars site (sometimes known as Priory Fields) was laid out as the Colchester Botanical Garden, designed to combine a nursery, pleasure gardens and botanical educational facility. Despite many efforts to keep going, the costs of maintenance were never met with income and the Gardens became bankrupt. The land was purchased by the National Freehold Land Society which sold off plots to a wide range of builders and developers who set them out as Castle and Roman Roads, although for decades afterwards the area was known locally as 'The Botanic'. A number of the residents ran 'cottage industries' such as a milk distribution service, a bakery, a tailor, a pullets and eggs merchant and a photographic business – and one resident, in Roman road, applied for a licence to brew and sell alcohol. Later, circa 1881, two cottages in Castle Road were combined to form The Foresters. This, combined with other similar businesses locally, may have contributed to the demise of the Roman Urn.



There have been various owners / licensees / residents of this building in Roman Road ...

1862 - J H Naylor was the first to be granted a licence.

1864 – scandal when an illegitimate child of Naylor's was delivered by a carter sent by the mother.

1867 – landlord was John Hurrell.

1870 – court case as Hurrell accused of removing and secreting assets prior to bankruptcy sale.

1871 – Mr Gooding 1872 - Mr Crabb 1876 – Mr Nicholls

1876 – Landlord Edward James summoned for allowing his ponies to stray.

1878 – Johnson (various) 1882 – Mr Ciccoganani 1886 – Mr Butcher

1899 – closed. Now a private residence.



OF 20 HORSES.

ROMAN URN, ROMAN ROAD.—Mr PHILBRICK, in applying on behalf of J. H. Naylor for a license for this house, which is built on the old Botanic Garden, said the Bench were well aware that the neighbourhood in which this house was situated had entirely sprung up within the last few years, and that there was not a public-house within some long distance of it. He had a memorial signed by all the persons in the vicinity of the garden, and also one as to the applicant's character, signed by the clergyman and churchwardens of the parish.

This being the whole of the applications, the Bench consulted for a short time, after which the MAYOR said he was happy to announce that the Bench were unanimously of opinion that the whole of the applications should be granted; and they did that with the pleasant feeling that they were justified in coming to that decision, because the whole of the applications had been so well supported by good character.

Ellen Vincent was brought up on remand charged with

1862

THE BREWERS.

SINGULAR ATTEMPT TO DISPOSE OF A CHILD.

—A singular occurrence has taken place at Colchester. On Thursday evening, the 14th inst., a little before eleven o'clock, as a cab driver named Peggs, in the employ of Mr. W. G. Siggers, of Lion-walk, was leaving the station-yard after the arrival of the down mail, he was hailed by a female, who inquired if he was engaged, and asked to be driven to the corner of Head-street, near the Fleece, where she expected her husband to meet her, having (she said) missed the quarter to eight train. She had a hamper under her arm, and, opening the door herself, she placed it in the cab and then got in also. On getting out in Head-street she asked him if he would be sure and deliver the hamper that night in the Botanic Garden. He said he thought the people it was for would be in bed, but she replied "Oh, no, for they keep a public-house." He mentioned Mr. Naylor's name, and she then said that was who it was for, and asked him "Will you be sure to deliver it?" He said "Yes," and having paid him 1s. she went away towards the Fleece. It being late he did not deliver for, and asked him "Will you be sure to deliver it?" He said "Yes," and having paid him 1s. she went away towards the Fleece. It being late he did not deliver the hamper according to promise, but left it in the cab till the next morning, a little after eight o'clock, when he took it to Mr. Naylor's, and left it there. A very short time after this the hamper and its contents—a living infant—were brought to the police office by Mr. Naylor; and the result of a council there held was to transfer the little stranger to the Union-house, where, according to present appearances, there is every prospect of its being nursed up. The hamper, besides a stuffing of hay or straw, was lined with calico, in the fashion of a cradle, with a pillow, &c.; and outside was a card directed in a female hand—"Mr. Naylor, Roman

Urn, Botanic Gardens, Colchester, Essex." Some drug must have been administered to the child, as it did not awake until some time after being brought to the police office. The cabman was of opinion that the woman had not come off the train; and this conclusion has been confirmed by the inquiries of the police, who have ascertained that the hamper had been purchased the same day of Mr. Sowman, basket-maker, East-street—a circumstance which will probably lead to further discoveries in the matter.

1864

DIGBY v. HURRELL.

To the Editor of the Essex Standard.

SIR,—As my name has appeared in your paper in connexion with the above case, may I request a short space in your columns to narrate a "plain tale" of the circumstances which have made Benjamin Hurrell the "nine days' talk" if not the nine days' wonder of Colchester? I shall extenuate nothing, neither shall I set down aught in malice, for fiction is not my forte, nor have I any taste thereof. The public of Colchester, however, are entitled to a full and truthful explanation of the whole case, and that explanation I desire to offer to those before whom I have for forty years appeared, and in the same parish and town, as an Auctioneer and Estate Agent.

Some little time since I received instructions from Mr. G. E. Digby, Solicitor, of Maldon, to offer for sale the Roman Urn Inn, Botanic Garden, together with the brewing plant, in one entire lot; at the sale, however, it was arranged not to sell the plant with the house, as a separate sale would be likely to realise more for the mortgagee. The sale came off at the Waggon and Horses Inn, when the property was sold for £540. I subsequently advertised the brewing plant to be sold at the house, on the 11th of July; but on the morning of the day of sale I learnt that the brewing plant and a large quantity of the furniture had been clandestinely removed by Hurrell and others. Part of the things thus taken away were found under a search warrant in a cottage at the Hythe, which had been

1870

STRAYING PONIES.—Edward James, landlord of the Roman Urn, Roman Road, was summoned for allowing his ponies to stray on the highway on the 30th May.—Police-constable Robinson proved the offence. The ponies were in a narrow folly at the back of the Botanic Garden, one of them was very vicious, and persons were afraid to pass it.—Defendant said he was in ignorance that the animals were out of the stable. His sister had accidentally let them loose.—Mr. SAVILL. You know the animals are about the Botanic constantly. I have spoken to several constables about it.—The Head-Constable was about to make the same remark. When not at work the ponies lived in the streets in the Botanic Garden, and were a great annoyance.—Defendant said he would take care they did not get loose again.—The DEPUTY MAYOR said this was not the first time the animals had been straying and the defendant did not take proper care to keep them secured. He would be fined 5s. and 9s. costs., or 7 days' hard labour. The money was paid.

FRAUDULENT ENLISTMENT.—Samuel Whuatt, a private in

1876

With thanks to the current resident who came out to tell us some of the history during the 2023 Heritage Open Day guided walk around the former Grey Friars site. HOD events are held in September every year under a national scheme: [Homepage](#)