

EMMAUS Colchester

The Newsletter of Emmaus Colchester

Edition 4 Summer 2007



Emmaus Colchester is going full steam ahead with a new shop already trading and a Community building in Magdalen Street on its way.

Back in business

A huge fire last July forced the immediate closure of our store at the Cowdray Centre, a thriving second-hand furniture warehouse visited by over 10,000 customers every year. We were given just an hour to leave the site for good but lost no time in searching for replacement premises.

Four months later, the new shop was opened by Terry Waite, President of Emmaus UK and former Beirut hostage, and Colchester Mayor, Richard Gower.

Praise

Our volunteers have returned to make sure the shop's reputation and success continues and Mr Waite praised them for staying with Emmaus through difficult times to help homeless people in the area.

New stock

The furniture at the Cowdray Centre had to be abandoned because of asbestos



Terry Waite thanks volunteers

contamination from the fire. Our stocks are being replenished and we are appealing to our supporters to remember us when replacing old furniture. We give items that many of us take for granted, like a bed and table and chairs, free to homeless people moving into a new home. We also sell at bargain prices to raise funds towards building an Emmaus Community in Colchester – see centre pages. Collections are free. Alternatively, why not have a browse in the shop and see what you can find? That room makeover could be just around the corner.

Where we are

The new shop is based in Arthur Street, opposite Gala Bingo in Osborne Street, Colchester - see map on back page.

Top marks for recycling

Emmaus has taken recycling to a new level with figures topping 100%. In every month of trading at the Cowdray Centre, the amount of furniture, bric-a-brac etc that came into the shop was matched by the same amount that found a new home. For example, in June (last figures before the fire) 436 items were donated including beds, sofas, dining tables and wardrobes. In the same month we sold or gave away 439 items (some donated in May) making a recycling rate of 101%!

We'd like to get these figures back up to what they were with your help. Whether donating, buying or volunteering, please work with us to make a real difference.

On the road with a new van

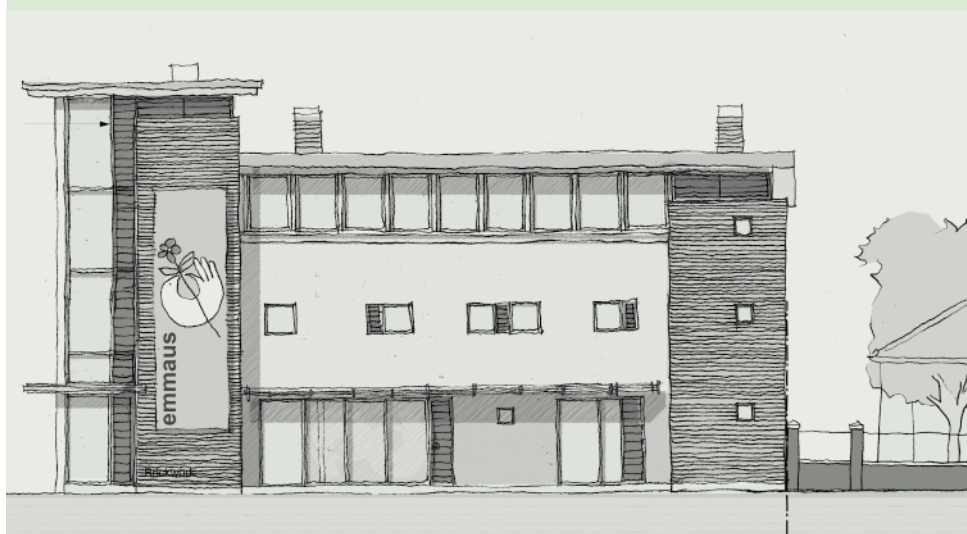


Oz Deane, Emmaus Colchester Trustee (left), received a cheque for £10,000 from Nick Moore, Managing Director of George Wimpey East London, earlier in the year towards a new collection and delivery van.

Giving people a bed... and a reason to get out of it



Construction starts



Impression of how front will look

March 2007 saw a big milestone in the history of Emmaus Colchester. All the hard work by volunteers and staff in the shop has been matched by other people searching for a site, preparing plans and applying for major grants to build an Emmaus Community in the town. And now we are set to turn our vision into reality.

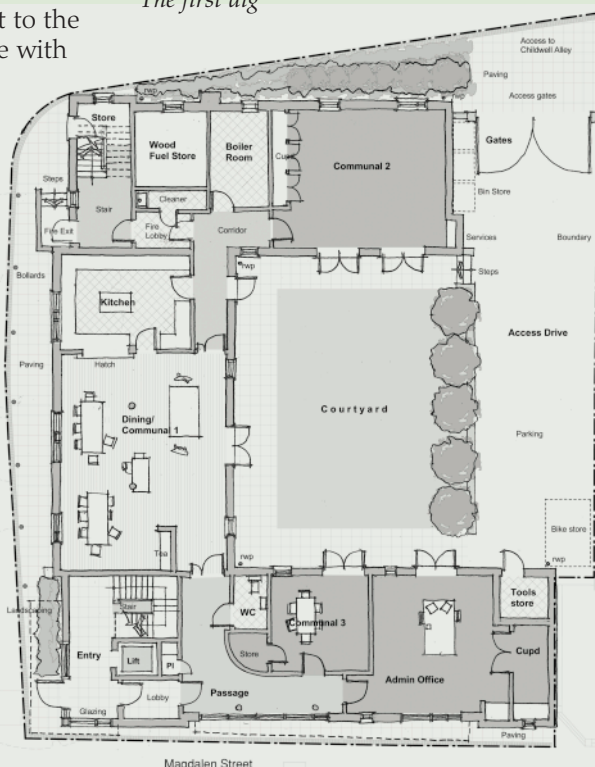
Architect-designed plans for custom-built residential accommodation in Magdalen Street were approved by Colchester Borough Council on 7 March. The development, next to the YMCA Foyer, is a joint venture with Genesis Housing Group, a Housing Association. Genesis has a long lease from the Council on the empty piece of land and the new building will make a big improvement to the area.

Not only that, we have reached the target for our first phase of fundraising of £1,650,000 which covers the building cost. We started clearing the site on 19 March and the main works will begin in June. We aim to open a year later in 2008.

Drawings reproduced with kind permission of Plater Claiborne, Architecture & Design.



The first dig



Plan of ground floor

How it will work

All Emmaus Communities have a goal to become financially self-sufficient through the efforts of their residents, called Companions. They agree to work full-time for the good of the Community and, with this in mind, our Community building has been designed for twenty places. This will be enough to cover the work that's needed in the residential part and in the business where they will collect and sell donated furniture. Companions will also be trained to refurbish items for resale.

Safe and welcoming

Emmaus provides a place that is secure and hospitable so each Companion will have an en suite bedroom that they can make home. A Community Leader and Deputy will have a flat on the site too. They will have the experience to run the Community from day to day and to support Companions to get their lives back on track.

Interviewing residents

Each Companion will be interviewed when they apply to join the Community to make sure it is the best place for them. Emmaus Communities are not set up to support people with a very high level of need, such as chronic dependence on drugs or mental health difficulties, and they will be referred to more suitable organisations. The communal room on the ground floor at the front will double as somewhere Companions can talk in confidence to staff or to other professionals they are in touch with from outside.

Living side by side

Companions will eat together in the dining room and take part in daily meetings there to talk about what is happening in the Community and what needs to be done. They will take it in turns to cook for everyone, getting new skills and qualifications on the way. Other training will take place such as learning about computers and improving on reading, writing and maths. Relaxation is important after a day's work and Companions will be able to watch TV and play pool together in the second communal room.

Local backing

Local residents and businesses were invited to see the plans and find out more about Emmaus at the Wilson Marriage Centre before the planning application was made. All the comments were positive and everyone who came along gave their full support. We hope you agree and share our enthusiasm for making the Community a place to be really proud of.



Green and economical

There were plenty of considerations in planning the new Community building although the site size, planning constraints and budget meant that we were limited as to which areas we had total control over. Our primary aim was to provide a home for twenty Companions and two staff plus as much communal living, dining, administration and reception space as possible.

High on our 'wish' list was the desire to achieve an environmentally 'friendly' building with as many green credentials as possible.

Woodchip boiler

We focused mainly on energy use and sustainable fuel supplies, and, having considered wind, solar and geothermal solutions it was decided to install a woodchip burning boiler for heating and hot water. Efficient, and with low carbon emissions, the boiler will be run by woodchips checked out as fit for the job as quality is extremely important.

Investigations are under way for Companions to generate the Community's own supplies elsewhere by producing chips from wood that would otherwise be scrapped and destined for landfill.

Low energy

Other economical and 'green' features include high standard thermal insulation, low energy lighting, control systems to cut down on wasted power, low flush WCs, natural ventilation where possible and the use of recycled materials. ■

A Very Big

Thank You to...

- The Housing Corporation who have awarded a Social Housing Grant of £800,000 towards the Community building; to Genesis Housing Group who made the application and Colchester Borough Council who backed the bid.
- The East of England Development

Agency for £500,000, towards the building.

- Emmaus UK who made a grant of £250,000 from its Solidarity Fund.
- A private donor who has generously pledged £100,000.
- George Wimpey for a donation of £10,000 (see front page).
- Hutton Construction for providing free office space after the fire.
- The Big Yellow Self Storage Company for donating space.

- Our furniture donors and shop customers.
- Local people, companies, churches, charitable trusts and other organisations for cash donations, often made on a regular basis.
- Our volunteers who work in the shop and project office.
- Powergen who have donated thousands of low energy light bulbs for shop customers. ■

Fundraising success - with more to go

Our 'very big thank you' means a time to celebrate - we have reached our fundraising goal of £1.65m for Phase I - constructing the residential accommodation.

Next phase

For the next and final phase we need to raise £500,000. This will fund the staffing, transport, equipment and furnishings needed to ensure a well-run and productive Community that can pay for itself within three years of opening. We will also boost our retail space in the town and make room for workshops and furniture restoration.

Changing lives

It's a rewarding task setting up a home and workplace for people who want to make a change in their lives. To help us by making a donation, please complete and return the enclosed form. To find out more or help in another way, contact Lesley Corner, Project Director on 01206 541616. ■

Joan's story

"I first heard about Emmaus eight years ago. The reason how I came to hear about it was I was staying in Colchester with my son and daughter-in-law. After my marriage broke up things did not work out with my daughter-in-law. Things came to a head one Saturday night, so I left the house. I did not know what to do or where to go, so I phoned the Samaritans. They were very kind and phoned the night shelter and I was told there was a place for me.

I was made very welcome and had no complaints about it and no regrets. The member of staff told me about Emmaus Cambridge and brought me to see it - that was 8 years ago.

The first time I came I stayed eight



months, then met a man and left to live with him. When he became violent I

ended up in the Women's Refuge in Cambridge. I called the Co-ordinators at Emmaus Cambridge to see if I could come back for a couple of weeks. I've been there ever since. I met a man there. John and I married and were thrilled when Terry Waite agreed to say a few words at our wedding which was held at the Community.

The Community itself is like a family. We all share the housework - you get a turn of cooking every three weeks, every six months you do a week as a kitchen porter and we take it in turns to clean the house. Some are better at things than others, but if you're not sure then everyone mucks in and helps you.

The whole experience made me take a look at my life and I hope I have been able to put something back in, that I took out of it." ■



Guess what?

Here are some close-ups of furniture donated by local people. Can you work out what they are? Answers at the bottom of the page.



A



B



C



D



E



F

Founder of Emmaus movement dies

Abbé Pierre, the French priest, wartime resistance hero and tireless campaigner against poverty and homelessness died in January at the age of 94.

In the 1940s, he founded the international Emmaus Movement to which Emmaus Colchester belongs.

Increasingly incensed by what he saw as the French government's indifference to the housing crisis, Abbé Pierre was spurred into action in the winter of 1954 when a baby and an old lady both froze to death on the streets of Paris. He was

allowed to broadcast a passionate and impromptu condemnation of the scandal of homelessness on the radio. The nation responded with donations and the construction of 12,000 emergency dwellings began.

A Nobel Peace Prize winner and human rights activist, Abbé Pierre recognized the fact that homeless and despairing people are valuable human beings who can make a contribution to society. We at Emmaus Colchester are proud to be part of his legacy.

Would you prefer to receive our news letter via email? If so, please email emmauscolchester@btconnect.com

The Duchess of Cornwall becomes Royal Patron

The Duchess of Cornwall has become Royal Patron for Emmaus in the UK.

In one of her first visits to an Emmaus Community she met Chris Adams, a Companion at Emmaus Bristol. Chris, 27, was homeless from the age of 16 until he joined Emmaus Bristol at 25. "I hate to think what would have happened to me if I hadn't found Emmaus", he explained. "They help you get your life back together and help get back into the work routine. These sorts of places should be available

for homeless people across the country. The experience here has completely turned my life around."

The Duchess of Cornwall went on to spend time talking to residents and staff and finding out more about how Emmaus works and where the Companions live.

She told Companions and staff: "I've loved seeing around the centre and seeing what you're doing - I've been very impressed with what I've seen."

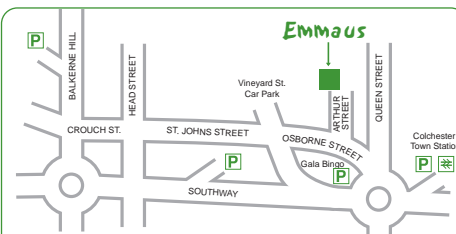


Zac wins

Easter egg hunt

Well done to all the children that took part in our Easter egg hunt this year.

Everyone who took part received a crème egg, but not all of them were as lucky as Zac, pictured, who was the winner of the giant chocolate egg - congratulations.

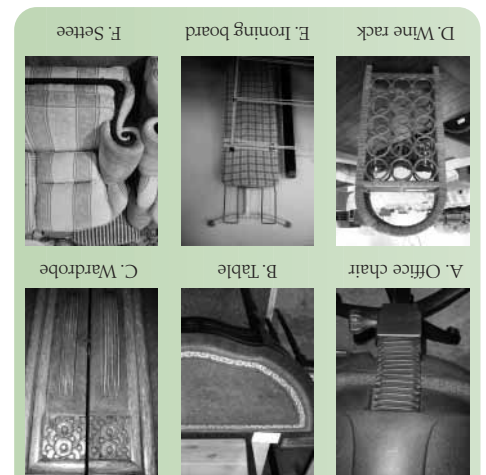


Emmaus Colchester

Shop hours

Monday - Saturday 9.30 - 5.00
To donate or buy goods or volunteer in the shop 01206 768887
To help in other ways/ find out more 01206 541616

Registered charity no. 1077805. Limited company 3805699



Guess what? answers