

A historical map of the Lexden area, showing various landmarks and roads. The map includes labels for 'A Corn Mill', 'A Mill', 'A Pulley', 'A Water Mill', 'Shepherds Bridge', 'Shepherds Farm', and 'Lexden'. There are also some smaller labels like 'Ravenshoe' and '500'. The map is drawn in a sketchy, hand-drawn style.

Lexden History Group

Newsletter

Issue No: 10 September 2008



Christmas Party!

8pm 10th December 2008

Tickets available at the October
meeting

Programme of Events

October 8th

"The Archaeology of Essex"

Dr Mark Curteis
Essex Record Office

December 10th

Christmas Social Event

Food, fun & frolics!
Entry at 8pm

November 12th

"Witchfinder"

Locally produced film

January 14th 2009

Inaugural Geoff Pettit Memorial
Lecture

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Meetings

Lexden History Group meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7.45pm at St Leonard's Church Hall, Lexden. Entry £2 for members, £4 for guests, refreshments included.

President's Column

Oral History is a vital activity if we are to pass on our recent history. Fortunately, our Society is doing its bit. How many of our oldest members know that there was a flourishing Lexden Archaeological & Arts Club in the Inter-War period? And no one, I imagine, knows how it came to be formed. Here is what I was told. A particularly active individual helped run the outings of the Essex Archaeological Society. They regularly ran visits to historic houses still in private ownership - indeed they still do. On one such trip this active individual was suddenly 'caught short'. In desperation they fled into a nearby bedroom where they found, under the bed, a chamber pot and promptly began to use it. Oh dear! At that moment the entire party entered the room. My informant knew someone who was there. The embarrassment of our 'active individual' was such that they left the E.A.S. and founded the Lexden Archaeological & Arts Club.

Do we accept this as true? I have carefully kept names out of this account. Outings to historic houses (with or without chamber pots) continued, concert parties and costume dramas came too.

The moral to this little story is twofold. Do not get caught short on Lexden History Group Outings and someone ought to write down now just how our splendidly successful society was thought up. For future generations will doubtless be curious to know.

Andrew Phillips

THE CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Welcome back after the summer break!

Patrick Denney made a welcome return to the Group in June with an illustrated talk - the story of bringing fresh water to homes and disposing of the resultant waste.

The Fish and Chip Supper on the Colne Valley Railway on 16th July was a great success. Our thanks go to Jane Thornhill for organising the visit for us.

The two Siege walks on 9th July took place in pouring rain, typical 1648 summer weather for Colchester! A lot of members were put off by the bad weather and to compensate another walk will be organised in the autumn.

Your Committee is planning to plant a commemorative tree for Geoff Pettit on the Lexden slopes just behind Geoff's boyhood home (Toll House). This will be done in the Spring 2009 by arrangement with the Council's Parks Dept. When the date is known members will be invited to the planting.

I am sure that members will have noticed that The Sun Inn on Lexden Road is up for sale. As far as I know it is not a listed building and there is no guarantee that it will continue to be an inn. We watch with interest!!

Dick Barton

Siege Walk July 2008

Bob Thornhill

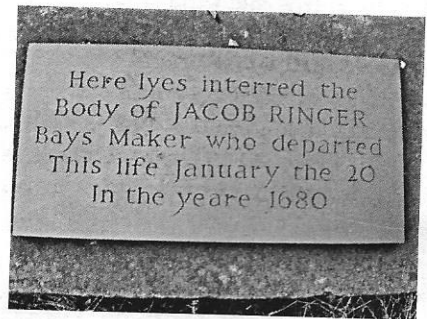
The summer of 1648, according to our Chairman and Blue Badge Guide Dick Barton, was a very wet one. So not much has changed there! Our tour of Colchester under his guidance took us to places of significance and of interest during the Siege of Colchester in 1648.

By the side of Holly Trees Museum is the commemorative plaque of Thomas Honeywood, commander of the Essex Parliamentary militia, who after the Siege disobeyed Lord Fairfax's order to destroy the Roman wall following the entreaties of his wife, a Colchester girl. At that time, Colchester town was secured for the night from dusk and the wall was essential in maintaining this security.

Behind the Castle, marked by an obelisk, is the site where Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle were executed by firing squad following the Royalist surrender. Their execution was

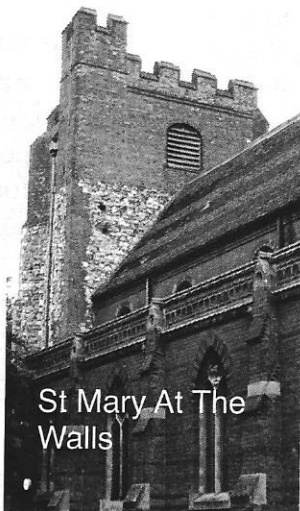
ordered by Lord Fairfax as an example to others as both men had previously been captured and had given their parole not to fight against the Parliamentary forces again. Also condemned were Colonel Henry Farr and Sir Bernard Gascoyne. Farr escaped to Yorkshire, but when it was discovered that Gascoyne was Italian, he was reprieved and subsequently returned to Colchester on the staff of the Duke of Tuscany and showed the Duke where he had come close to being executed with Lucas and Lisle.

In the graveyard of the Church



of St Martin in the Dutch Quarter lies the tombstone of Jacob Ringer, a weaver of bays, who when the town was fined £14,000 after the end of the

siege, made a contribution of £10 towards its payment. Other wool merchants paid as much as £500, a princely sum in the 17th Century. These Flemish, not Dutch weavers, came in large numbers to England, fleeing the persecution of Spain who included the Low Countries in their empire. Their effect on Colchester was to make it a prosperous wool town.



inflicted considerable damage on the besieging Parliamentary forces, artillery was brought up from London and when the range was found, the tower was demolished, the Royalist gunner killed and his saker destroyed. When the tower was restored red brick was used and so the repair is obvious to this day. The nursery rhyme Humpty Dumpty was said to recount these events, but modern historians

In what is now Crouch Street, near the old cinema a Royalist reconnaissance party encountered an advance party of Parliamentary troops. A vicious engagement ensued. Contemporary reports spoke of the gutters running with blood, before the Royalists retreated via the Head Gate into the town.

In the tower of St Mary at the Walls, now the Arts Centre, the Royalists placed a saker, a small cannon capable of firing a 1.5lb ball, in the tower. As the one-eyed gunner manning the gun

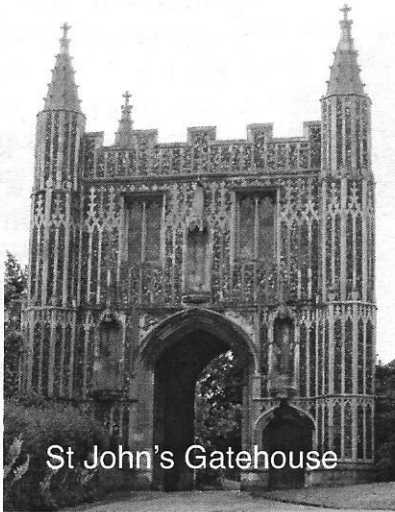
do not accept this as being the case, although Dick related that it used to be part of the official guides' talk in the old days.

During the siege, because of the wet weather, the Royalist troops were quartered in the churches and following their surrender, the churches of St James' and St Mary's were used to stockpile the surrendered weapons.

St John's Gatehouse, at St John's Green, was used as a gunpowder store by the Royalists. It came under attack

by the Parliamentary troops, who managed to throw a

the dead women and wore it as favours on their hats.

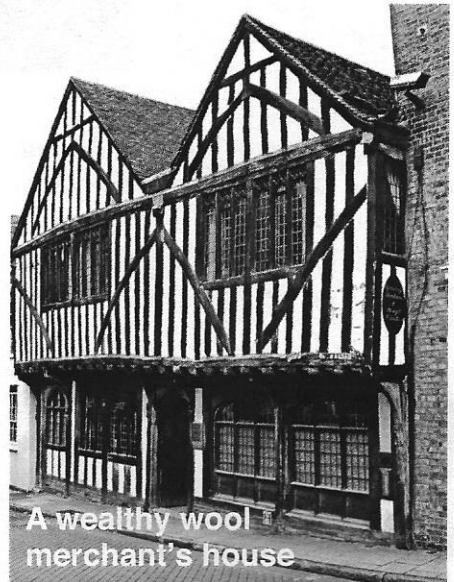


St John's Gatehouse

As we went our different ways after an informative and enjoyable walk, it was strange to see the streets which had run with blood and in which so many had met violent deaths now thronged with motor cars and busses, and people going about their peaceful pursuits.

Our sincere thanks go to Dick

grenade into the building and ignite the gunpowder. Although a successful attack by the Parliamentary troops, they suffered significant casualties, whereas the Royalists managed to retreat into the town without loss. In retaliation the Parliamentary troops entered St Giles church which is adjacent St John's Gatehouse and the vaults of which held the Lucas family remains. The bodies of Sir Charles Lucas's mother and sister were desecrated by the troops who removed the hair of



A wealthy wool merchant's house

Barton for his informative and entertaining walk.

TALES FROM THE CHURCHYARD

By Liz White

Wandering around St Leonard's Churchyard in Lexden, I was startled to see the words "In loving memory of Elizabeth White died Decr 17th 1925 aged 70 years." I didn't remember passing from this world, or indeed returning to it some decades later. So who was this namesake of mine? What did she do? Where did she live? Are there any of her descendants still in Lexden? I set out on a voyage of discovery and this is what I found.

Elizabeth, a dressmaker, married William John White in the Spring of 1889. William was about five years younger than his wife and in 1891 he is working on "own account" ie, self-employed, as a dealer in pigs and poultry and 1901 as a



gardener and dealer. In this last census the family was living at 21 Lexden Street (possibly one of the cottages opposite the Sun Inn) with their daughters Amy Elizabeth and Minnie Clarissa who were 11 and 7 years old respectively. All the family had been born in Lexden.

I believe my Elizabeth was born in 1855 to William (b 1812) and Mary Ann (b 1814) Everitt who had seven children and in 1861 they were living in Heath Road, Lexden with the youngest four children: James 13, Maria 11, (my) Elizabeth 8 and Hannah 1. William, having been an agricultural labourer for some years was

now working as an oil miller and his wife a tailoress, as was Maria, whilst James, at only 13 years old, was a railway gate keeper. What would the Risk Assessment be there?

By 1871 William and Mary Everitt had moved to Straight Road, Lexden Heath, with Elizabeth, now 16 years old and

working as a dressmaker, and Maria, who had changed her name to Mary Ann. Also living with them was Mary's father (Elizabeth's grandfather), James Digby, a widower aged 82 from Birch, who was still working as an agricultural labourer! He was born in 1789 and his wife, Charlotte, in 1794. In 1851 the Digbys were living in Easthorpe Road, Birch and James's mother, Elizabeth, (our Elizabeth's great



making clothes for the local ladies of Lexden. A closer reality might be that they worked at home sewing "slop" - cheap clothing for the growing ready-made market - at low rates of pay. Whatever they were

sewing, it was to bring much needed income to a probably impoverished household.

"dressmaker/tailoress was often a euphemism for prostitute..."

grandmother!) was living with them aged 85, b 1765 in Birch, and in receipt of parish relief.

I have read an interesting footnote to an essay on occupations which states that dressmaker/tailoress was often a euphemism for prostitute, although I would prefer to believe that Elizabeth and Maria (Mary Ann) were kept busy

To update this short history, William White died aged 96 and is buried in the same grave as Elizabeth. Minnie C, born 20 July 1893, married Victor Ranson in 1924 and there is a death record of a Minnie Clarissa Ranson aged 92 in June 1996. Perhaps there are some descendants of Elizabeth White still in Colchester! Amy Elizabeth b1889 married Albert C Bailey b1892 in 1915 and died in 1961. A final strange coincidence is that my maiden name was Bailey!

THE THIEF IN OUR MIDST!

Peter Tweed

I was attending Lexden County Primary school in Trafalgar Road and enjoying most of it. My brother Frank was the first of the family to attend there when it first opened. The older members had walked down Church Lane to the school, behind what is now 197 Lexden Road, opposite the church. Then later on it moved to a corrugated iron clad building in Straight Road which is now an evangelical chapel. I was going to write that it was opposite the Star Pub, but I realised that it too has long since gone and is now a small housing estate.

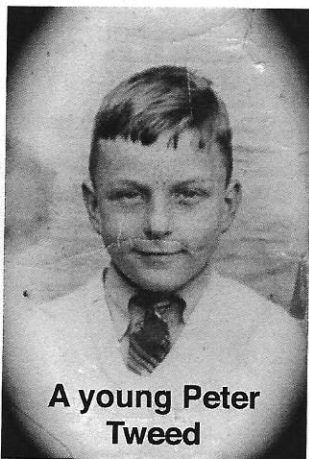
Starting with Frank, then Kenneth, Mary, John, Alan, Ivan, Christine, Peter, Janet and Kathleen, I think I was the only one to blot my record by being held up to the rest of the school as the boy who had stolen the coat belonging to another boy. In my defence I was only able to say that I had not intended to because when we were cold at home we could reach into the cupboard and take any one

which fitted. This must have been the way it happened at school and I just put it in the cupboard when I got home, then when I needed a coat next, out it came. On the way to school I picked up a pebble from the footpath and put it in the pocket. Later on in the day Mr Mirrington came round each class

asking who owned the coat with the pebble in its pocket. I stood up and Mr Mirrington told me I was the thief who had stolen another boy's coat. I was struck dumb and was taken by the hand, paraded round all the other classrooms and shown off as "the thief in our midst!"

This little episode didn't seem to bring fire and brimstone on to my head, but I have never

forgotten it. I do remember that a few days afterwards, Mr Mirrington came into our classroom to ask me if I would like to help Mr Howe in the school gardens the next day as a reward for passing the entrance exam to the Royal Grammar School. I only remember trying to push a lawn mower as my contribution to gardening but it was so very heavy that I was soon put to weeding. I don't expect that I was much better at that either, but at least I was outside!



**A young Peter
Tweed**

Fish & Chip Supper

Bob Thornhill

A 1950s royal coach and a 1920s Pullman hauled by a Central Electricity Generating Board steam powered shunting locomotive! A bizarre train and as Victor Meldrew might say, "I don't believe it!" But it was true. This was LHG's second annual visit to Colne Valley Railway for a fish and chip

supper aboard a steam hauled train.

Before boarding the train members were able to

watch the fireman stoking up the boiler raising steam before the off and we all breathed in that heady mixture of coal smoke and steam. Nothing like it! Unfortunately Colne Valley Railway has no more than a mile or two of track and so the train chugs one way down the line, the locomotive is unhitched, passes by its train



and hooks on at the other end and begins its journey back, where it repeats the exercise. At least one has many opportunities to see the locomotive in action. However, it took me back to those last days of steam when journeys between London and Manchester used to take hours, with much stopping,

starting and hesitating.

The food, as last year was excellent, the chef cooking everything on board the train so that we had piping hot fish, chips and peas followed by high calorific

chocolate and cream pudding. The tables were beautifully laid with white damask cloths, which served to show up the smuts from the engine which came through the open windows. Nevertheless it was a most enjoyable evening and everyone seemed to go home with a smile of his or her face.

Editorial

David Cawdell is one of our founder members, a former Committee Member and founder of the LHG magazine. Thanks to his enthusiasm and expertise Lexden History Group has both an excellent magazine and web site. His unceasing efforts in finding interesting speakers has proved hugely successful and has kept the membership informed and entertained since the inauguration of the Group. Regrettably David is relocating and can no longer undertake these tasks. We shall miss his contributions and wish him well for the future.

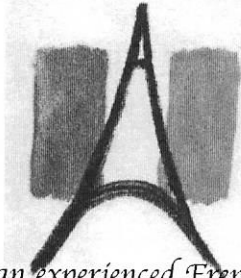
A big thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition of our magazine. Please continue to send articles to me for future editions. I am holding some submitted material for the next issue.

Do have a look at our updated website at:

www.lexdenhistory.org.uk

Jane Thornhill

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PORTRAITS FOR CHRISTMAS



**IN PENCIL, PASTELS OR
ACRYLICS.**

**JANE THORNHILL NDD ATD
01206 523767**

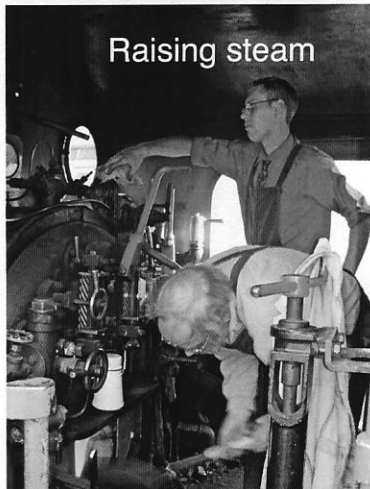
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Colne Valley Fish & Chip Supper -
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Ready for the off



Raising steam



In the bar



Waiting to board