


A historical map of the Lexden area, showing a river, a bridge, and various landmarks. The map is in black and white and includes labels such as 'A Corn Mill', 'A Mill', 'Rawston', 'Lexden', 'Shephen Farm', and 'Shephen Bridge'. A scale bar indicates '50M'.

Lexden History Group

A black and white photograph of flowering trees, likely cherry blossoms, filling the background of the lower two-thirds of the page. The flowers are in full bloom, creating a dense, textured pattern of white and light grey.

Summer News Letter
Issue No:13 June 2009

Programme of Events

8th July

BBQ at Tim & Carol Holding's.
12.30 pm, tickets £7.50 in
advance. Entry by ticket only.

12th August

NO MEETING! Morning visit to
Bulmer Brick Works and lunch.

11th September

Town Crier Robert Needham

14th October

"Treasures in Your Attic"
by James Grinter of Reeman
Dansie

11th November

Trip to Antarctica
Chris Dobrowolski

9th December

Christmas Party. Admission by
ticket only bought in advance.

13th January

Mersea Oyster Company
Richard Haward

10th February

Recorded life stories of local
people
Jess Jephcott

Meetings

Lexden History Group meetings are held on the 2nd
Wednesday of every month at 7.45pm in St Leonard's
Church Hall, Lexden, except August when there is no
meeting. Entry £1 for members, £3 for guests,
refreshments included. Annual membership £10 for
single person, £15 for family living at same address.

Web address: www.lexdenhistory.org.uk

Editorial

At the last Committee meeting it was agreed that we needed to find suitable storage facilities for various pieces of equipment we have. The Church Hall Committee have very kindly agreed to our using a storage room behind the stage. We will be sharing it with others, so we will be buying a lockable storage cupboard in the near future. It was also agreed that we could reduce the price of admission to our monthly meetings as they are so well attended. At any time in the future, should the situation change, entrance charges would be increased if necessary.

The AGM went off very well and we had an enjoyable social evening afterwards with wine and nibbles. David Cawdell rounded off the evening with an entertaining talk with slides, about brass bands. There was no change to the Committee this time, but we hope that other members can be persuaded to join next year. Please give this some serious thought as to what contribution you could make to the continued success of our Group.

You will know from the events calendar that we are not holding our regular monthly meeting in July and of course there is no August meeting. Instead, on Wednesday 8th

July we are holding a lunch-time Summer BBQ at Tim and Carol Holding's home in Little Glebe, Spring Lane. Tickets are £7.50 each and must be bought in advance either at the June meeting or direct from me. The cost includes refreshments, so, unlike last year, we are not asking members to contribute anything else. I hear the experts are predicting a super Summer, so fingers crossed!

Dick Barton is giving a guided walk around Lexden on Wednesday 24th June in the evening. Anyone who missed out on going on the last one, has a chance this time. Please contact Dick for further details.

Tim Holding has organised an outing to the Bulmer Brick works on 12th August in the morning. Please contact him if you would like to go.

Have you remembered to renew your membership? If not, please let Jackie Bowis have your subscription as soon as possible.

With my thanks to all who contributed material for publication in our magazine.

Jane Thornhill

THE GRAND OLD GIRLS OF BRITAIN

You can talk about your monuments, your bits of ancient Rome
But there's a sight more stirring you can see right here at home
It's the Grand Old Girls of Britain who are somewhat past their prime
They'll never get their medals though they earn them all the time

The Grand Old Girls of Britain they're marching every day
With shopping bag equipment they tread the pavement way.

With footsteps rather weary and shoulders rather bowed
They toddle down the Broadway to join the queueing crowd.

The tired Old Girls of Britain they're wearing out their legs
Through trudging back and forward so as not to miss the eggs.

They scorn your five bob peaches, your posh ten guinea hat
But they'll climb up half a mountain for a bit of cooking fat.

The cute Old Girls of Britain, they're mighty hard to beat
They're smart as Mr Sherlock Holmes at finding stuff to eat.

They gaze behind the counter, their eyes are old but keen
They know what they are looking for, for it's very rarely seen.

The Grand Old Girls of Britain, when the war is nearly won
Will get their compensation and their little bits of fun.

When the tradesmen call for orders she'll say "Blimey so it's you"
"Well try the tradesmen's entrance and form a blinkin' queue."

The tired Old Girls of Britain with rheumatics in their joints
Through tramping round from shop to shop getting value for their points,

They spurn your fancy pineapples, your peaches and all that
But they'll climb up half a mountain for a bit of cooking fat.

So when you youngsters of today are in the prime of life,
And feeling fit and fine in spite of all the years of strife

You'll owe it all to the mothers who stood there in the queue
They didn't get things for themselves, they got them just for you.

My thanks to Beryl Poole for sending the above poem to me. Beryl does not know who wrote it, only that it has been in her possession for many years. If any one can shed more light on the origin of the poem and the poet, please do let me know.

Jane Thornhill

Life in Church Lane in the 1930s by Peter Tweed

During my Lexden School years I collected milk for the family and also several neighbours from Home Farm down Church Lane. Luckily the milk was in nice little cans which had lids and handles which were big enough to loop over the handlebars of my bike. I first went on the milk round with an older boy named Arthur Fincham who lived in the middle one of the row of cottages (now 6 and 7 Church Lane) on the other



side of the lane from the farm. He was about to start work full-time.

In that same group of cottages, on the Parsons Hill side, lived the Payne family and at the other end lived the

De La Salle family. I never knew much about them except that an old boy was always busy in his little shed making wooden figures which he put on the top of tall posts. Some were models with moving arms and all attached to a handle on a shaft at the end of which was a propeller to turn the whole assembly in a gentle breeze. The model made a fascinating attraction and when you looked left or right there were more different models to watch. For years of my boyhood it was an attraction to go and see if anything new was at work in this garden. Lots of people on their Sunday afternoon walk would stop to watch and admire them. It was to do with the Payne family that I and the other youngsters had our first experience of road traffic accidents. A large group of us walked home from the old "tin" school and it was as we lined up to cross over Straight Road to get to Heath Road that Peter Payne dashed across right into the path of a lorry belonging to Moss the builders. The driver swerved but the lorry seemed to sweep

Peter up as it careered across the road, up the kerb, through railings and hit the front of Hunter's Corner. We could not see a sign of Peter. People in a following car stopped to see if they could do anything to help and found Peter and wrapped him in a blanket. The lady took him on her lap and he was driven off to the hospital, but I don't think anything could help Peter. How Denny (the local policeman) broke the news to his mother I cannot imagine. I do know that the accident left our group of children very quiet and sad for a long, long time afterwards and I'm sure it made everyone of us more aware of the dangers of road traffic.

Another family living in the little cluster of homes near Home Farm were the Warrens. Mr Warren was in charge of the cattle and he and Mrs Warren had three children. The first was Peter – he was my age, then came Roy and the third a girl, named Joyce. Their cottage was built close under a bank,

still there today (Four Corners), which started where Church Lane met Heath Road and as the lane descended the hill, the fields stayed high until they gave way to the Farm House and yard. It went on toward the churchyard where a house called Little Hayne (now reverted to its former name, Cresseners), stood beside an entrance to Lexden Mount from Church Lane.



The bank was at its greatest height above the lane here making a grand tunnel effect with the trees on its slope meeting the trees growing in the Park across the lane. Turning back to the farm there was a retaining wall of mostly red brick holding the bank away from the road to make a high level

garden for the home of Major Adams and his wife (4 Church Lane). Their garden was at the level of the top of the wall which made it very strange to see people up there as we walked along the road. Harold Cross lived in the house which was the first one up Parsons Hill and was so high on the side of the hill that there was no chance of a lawn for tennis anywhere. Another change around the farm is the disappearance of the cottage on the south side of Parsons Hill junction with Church Lane which faced across the lane to the great big solid farm gates, closed and bolted each night. A Mr Poole lived in that cottage but we hardly ever saw him and I do not recall seeing a wife at all and what he worked at for a living I never did know. (A Poole family is recorded in the 1901 Census living at 9 Church Lane, Samuel aged 26, a builder's carman, and his wife, Edith 23. They were married in 1898, Edith Brett came from St Osyth). Looking at the site today it's hard to believe there ever was a cottage there tucked right into the bank!

President's Column

Annual General Meetings are a very British thing. We have just had ours. I have just been invited to that of one of our large banks. I shall not go. For AGM's, far from being a triumph of participating democracy, are more often an excuse for most of us to do nothing. Hopefully the same Committee, re-elected without discussion, will go on doing all the work for the next 20 years. I sometimes think it would be better if constitutions required ALL the named officers to serve a maximum of 5 years – i.e. if you want a society and all the benefits it brings, take your turn at being on the Committee.

Yes: this time we re-elected our Committee; they work very hard and do a good job. But it will be bad for this Society – it will not progress – if the same thing happens next year, and next year. I realise it is easy for me to talk; the President does virtually no work! So maybe I should not serve for 20 years either. Meanwhile, on your behalf, I sincerely thank the re-elected Committee, several of whom created this society, for another year of success.

Next Newsletter I will be back to my traditional Lexden history slot. One sermon a year is quite enough.

Andrew Phillips

History of the Setting up of Lexden History Group

The Lexden History Group was formed in 2006 following discussions among a few Lexden people interested in local history, including Bernard Polley, Blue Badge Guide Dick Barton, Lexden Ward Councillor Sonia Lewis and David Cawdell. In order to test the amount of interest in forming a local history group, an informal meeting took place Monday March 26th 2006 in the Lady Chapel of St Leonard's Church by the kind permission of the Rector, the Revd. Stephen Carter.

18 people turned up and a history group steering committee of about six was mandated to go ahead with the idea. They were; Sonia Lewis, Dick Barton, David Cawdell, Bernard Polley, Geoff Pettit and church archivist David Wheel. They assembled for their first meeting in the gallery of the church and later viewed the extensive archives the church already held. with Geoff Pettit becoming Chairman, Sonia Lewis, Social Secretary, Bernard Polley, Group Archivist and David Cawdell. Publicity .

Their first task was to spread the word that such a group was to be formed.

Bernard Polley produced posters and got them put up in all the shops in the area and David Cawdell contacted the local newspapers. Well known local historian Andrew Phillips, who had been approached earlier to become the President and to which he kindly agreed, was invited to give the inaugural talk. The date was arranged for Wednesday May 10th 2006 at 7.45pm in the Church hall which was kindly offered free of charge by Lexden Church. Over 160 people turned up for that first meeting so, as Sonia Lewis said afterwards, "the Lexden History Group was launched – big time".

We started the Group with no Treasurer and no Secretary and after appealing at the first meeting for volunteers we were very pleased and relieved to learn that husband and wife team of Bob and Jane Thornhill were willing to undertake those roles respectively. Bank accounts were quickly arranged and, as they say, all the rest, operationally, is history. Tim and Carol Holding also joined as members, and Tim's background as Head of Art and Design at the Colchester Institute was to shine as a beacon when the group project of creating a village sign was undertaken.

Speakers were researched and invited to the meetings. A quarterly members' magazine was agreed, to be produced by David Cawdell, and also a Lexden History Group website www.lexdenhistory.org.uk set up by David. In that first year we set ourselves some very ambitious targets. Two of these were to have a presence at the Colchester Oyster Fayre in Castle Park only two months after being formed. The other project involved the whole group and, if anything, was even more successful. We decided to hold a Lexden History Day, which needed the help of all our members to supply artefacts, pictures, information etc. for display in the Church Hall in September of that year. The items came in but would the general public turn up? Again the people of Lexden turned up in trumps and long queues of parked cars stretched all the way down Lexden Road and up Church Lane right throughout the weekend; more local publicity, more new members, and, importantly, more historical information about the village prompted by visitors' reminiscences.

Our first AGM was held in April 2007 at which most of the

'steering committee' were formally nominated.

Very sadly we learned of the illness of Chairman Geoff who had done so much sterling administration work in the early days. At his death in January 2008 Tim Holding took over as acting Chairman. A 'Geoff Pettit Memorial Lecture' was inaugurated in January 2009, with Andrew Phillips as the speaker, and the lecture will be held each year as a reminder of Geoff's work for the Group. On 4th February 2009 a copper beech was planted near his old boyhood home on Lexden Springs.

2007/8 saw two new projects being created, a group project to gather all the memories of local Lexden people during the wars (WW1 & WW2) edited by Liz White, and the other very visual project to design and erect a village sign - our thanks to Tim for his hard work, to raise the public profile of Lexden and to emphasise its community spirit as a village within a town. This was officially unveiled by the Mayor of Colchester, Ray Gamble, April 19th 2008.

2009 offers us all the opportunity to continue to explore and record our local history.

David Cawdell

Local Sketches by Beryl Poole



Sun Inn



Lexden Road



Siege House

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The Art of CV Writing

Judy Wallman, a professional genealogical researcher, discovered that Hillary Clinton's great-great uncle, Remus Rodham, was hanged for horse stealing and train robbery in Montana in 1889. The only known photograph of Remus shows him standing on the gallows. On the back of the picture is this inscription: 'Remus Rodham; horse thief, sent to Montana Territorial Prison 1885, escaped 1887, robbed the Montana Flyer 6 times. Caught by Pinkerton detectives, convicted & hanged in 1889.' Judy e-mailed Hillary Clinton for comments.

Hillary's staff sent back the following biographical sketch. Remus Rodham was a famous cowboy in the Montana Territory. His business empire grew to include acquisition of valuable equestrian assets & intimate dealings with the Montana railroad. Beginning in 1885, he devoted several years of his life to service at a government facility, finally taking leave to resume his dealings with the railroad. In 1887 he was a key player in a vital investigation run by the renowned Pinkerton Detective Agency. In 1889 Remus passed away during an important civic function held in his honour, when the platform on which he was standing collapsed.'

...that's how to write your C.V. (Thanks to David Cawdell)

Lexden In Bloom

