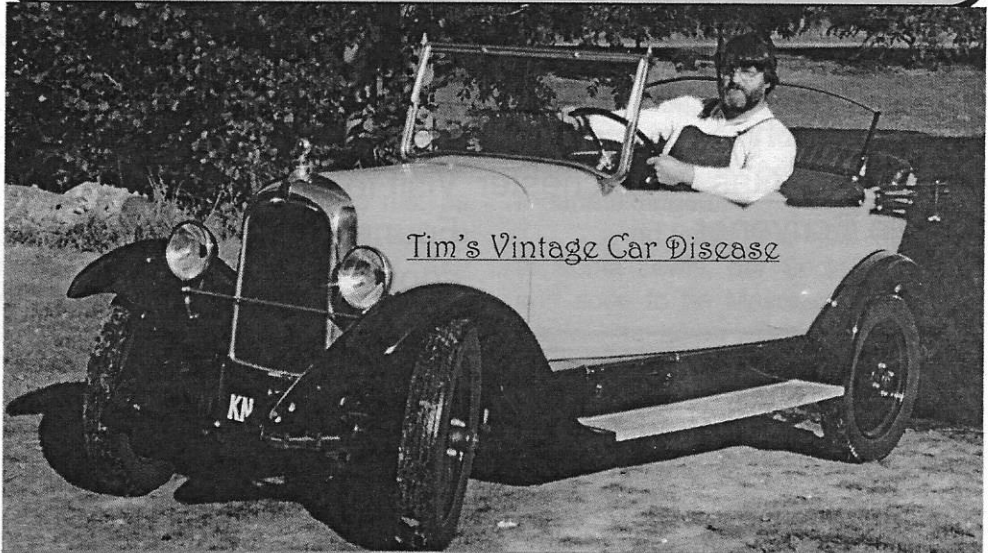


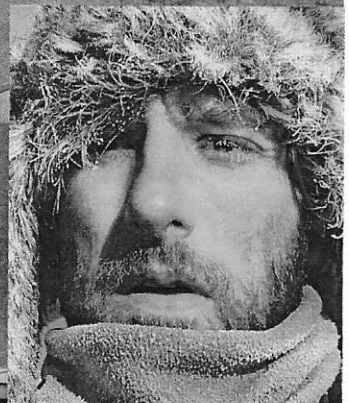
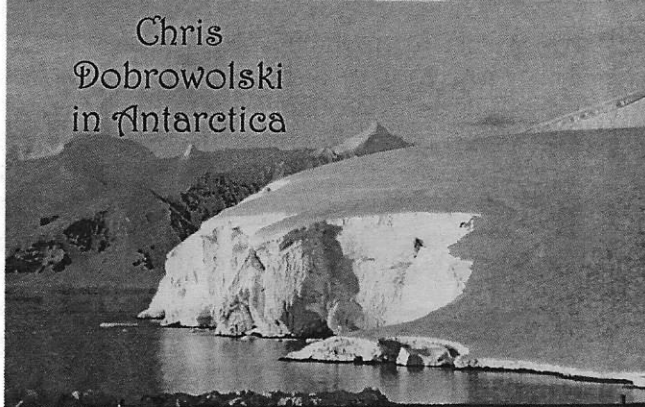
Christmas Newsletter

Issue No: 15 December 2009



Tim's Vintage Car Disease

Chris
Dobrowolski
in Antarctica



Programme of Events 2010

13th January

Mersea Oyster Company
Richard Haward

10th February

Recorded Life Stories of
Local People
Jess Jephcott

10th March

History of Gas in Colchester
Colin Scrivener

14th April

Acquisitions for Colchester
Museums
Laura McClean

12th May

AGM +The Village Sign
a talk by Tim Holding

19th May

Visit to Whitechapel Bell
Foundry - tickets available
soon

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, £15 for family living at same address.

Web address: www.lexdenhistory.org.uk

Editorial

I know we all find it hard to believe that another year has passed and the time has now arrived for our Christmas issue. This is our fourth year in existence and what a busy year we have had.

Your Committee is already planning and booking speakers and outings for 2010.

Thank you to those members who have contributed stories and art work for our magazine. This has helped me to include many interesting articles. I hope you have enjoyed reading them as much as I have. Please keep sending them to me, as our magazine is only as good as you make it with your contributions. Any special photos you lend me, will always be returned to you.

Our Lexden in Wartime book, volume II is out now, and Liz White should be contacted for a copy, which costs just £10.

I have one important date for your diary for 2010. Most of you will remember our famous Open Day for local history, held in the Church Hall and the crowds of people who came to look and learn all about our local heritage. Well, the Committee thought Lexden was ready for another Open Day, so - after checking the availability of Colchester's Mayor, who will open the event, (Sonia), we now have a firm date. Saturday 25th September. We are booking the Church Hall for Friday

24th and the Saturday, so that we can all help set everything up on the Friday. More information will be published in the next issue of this magazine.

As 2009 comes to a close, I should like to thank our Committee members for their commitment to making our Group so successful, also our Archivist, Bernard Polley, who tirelessly records many of our events on film. I would also like to thank our President, Andrew Phillips, whose experience and knowledge of local history, is coupled with his dedication in bringing a love of local history to as many people as possible. We are fortunate indeed.

And finally a special thank you to Sonia Lewis, our Social Secretary and soon to be Mayor of Colchester. Sonia has taken responsibility for all our catering needs throughout the past three + years. Her professionalism and high standards have helped the Lexden History Group live up to the highest expectations.

2010 promises to be even busier than this year, with many interesting speakers booked and many extra events planned. We hope you will continue to give the LHG your support. Do tell your friends too!

Wishing you all a very happy Christmas and New Year. See you at our January meeting!

Jane Thornhill

President's Page

For the last few weeks I have been tramping the streets of Colchester, hoping to save some of the buildings of Lexden. I should explain. A group of us (local historians, historic building experts and architects) have persuaded the Council to adopt a LOCAL LIST of buildings which, in normal circumstances, the Borough would not allow demolition under its own planning procedures. In fact, legislation now requires local authorities to have such a list. It has limitations. It is in no way binding – certainly not upon any developer who has purchased a particular building. But it might discourage developers if the Council turns down the building they propose to put in its place.

We have included Lexden, but not the outlying parts, like Wivenhoe, Tiptree and 'the villages.' It has nevertheless been a massive undertaking. I have been to streets I have never visited before, even some I had never heard of. It is also a rather agonising process. However much some of us would like to, we cannot list everywhere. Indeed, we cannot list lots

of ordinary houses, in ordinary roads, even though many are fine examples of (say) roads of the 1880s – a particularly busy period in Colchester house building. Nor can we make it too long, or the Council probably

would not accept it.

You can imagine the arguments we have had among ourselves.

By the time you read this, we will have gone public. That is to say we are inviting the public to make their suggestions to add to the list. A web site will show those

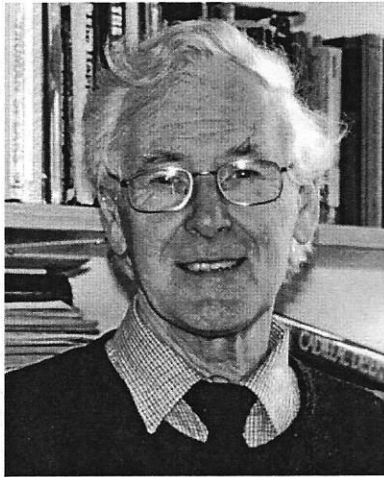
we have ourselves

earmarked. Now, you all know Lexden far better than we do, so here is your chance to get involved. All this will be explained in the local press, but you have been alerted. Now it's up to the Lexden History Group to make its suggestions.

Oh –

and a happy Christmas to you all.

Andrew Phillips.

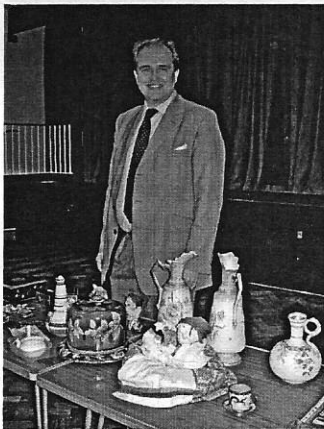


2009 - That was the Year that Was!

LHG has had a very productive and interesting year, beginning in January with the Geoff Pettit Memorial lecture by Andrew Phillips on "Photographs and the Local Historian". Then Jess Jephcott in February entertained us with his "Inns, Taverns and Pubs" talk. The following month Ray Spiller - who, I think surprised a lot of people - entertained us with a fascinating evening about the music charts from 1952 to date. In April Ian Baalham gave a talk about the development of Castle Park.

The next meeting was in May which is the new month for our AGM, after which one of our founder members, David Cawdell, entertained us with his presentation, "Grandad played the Cornet". In June, our treasurer, Bob Thornhill gave a slide presentation on "How the Railway came to Lexden". Instead of a normal meeting in July, we had a BBQ at Tim and Carol Holding's lovely house and garden in Spring Lane. There was no meeting in August, but we enjoyed a morning visit to the Bulmer Brick works, followed by lunch in a local pub. In September Robert Needham, the Town Crier entertained us, followed in October by James Grinter from Reeman Dansie. On 21st October, we had our second Tea Party, for contributors to our Lexden in Wartime Volume II. Our final speaker for 2009 was Chris Dobrowolski, recently returned from his trip to Antarctica.

December - Christmas Party



James Grinter

Antiques Valuation Evening



2nd Lexden in Wartime
Tea Party

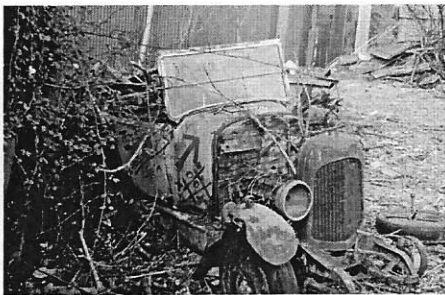
My Vintage Car Disease

by Tim Holding

When I was a child my Dad owned several Austin Twelves, which started life as our family transport, but inevitably got converted into trucks for the family business - a building firm in Bournville.

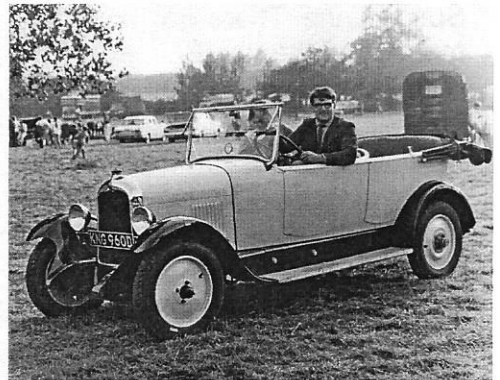
So it wasn't too surprising that when I grew up, as soon as an opportunity arose, I acquired an Austin Twelve which I bought from Sargent's Engineering Firm in Northgate Street for the princely sum of twenty pounds!

One day I visited Palmer Bros scrap yard in Middleborough, Colchester.



What I found was to change my life. In a forgotten corner of the yard was an ancient

open tourer with a large tree growing through it. I cut the tree down, had the car transported home and started to research what it was. The car turned out to be a 1924 B2 Citroën. Shortly after starting to restore it, a friend told me of a Citroën of a similar date and appearance was already "on the road." Red rag to a bull! We drove to Norwich immediately and viewed the beast. I fell in love and agreed a sum of £420 with the owner and



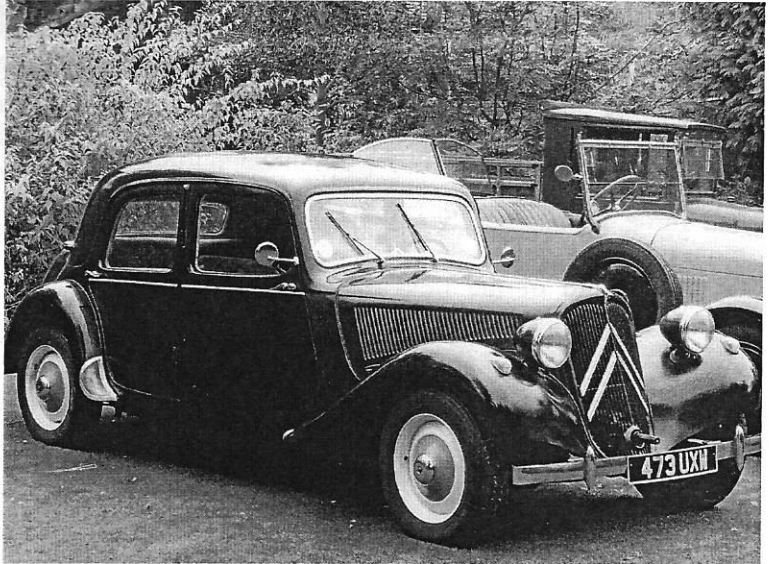
drove the car home. That was forty years ago. It has given me and my family years of delight and heartache ever since, including the fact that we had to sell it when we were hard up. After ten years, my family bullied me and offered to help with funds so forcefully that I agreed to buy back the car. We had to wait until the owner was out on bail in

order to do the deal. After more restoration and following some further research she was back on the road and has been ever since. She always starts on the button first time, even after being laid up for six months! Not bad for a car that is eighty three years old!

My interest in Citroëns has been consolidated more recently by the restoration of a 1924 B12 "Boulangier"

- another ex-saloon converted to a truck with wooden hoops and a tilt to keep the bread dry. More latterly still, I have restored a 1953 11b legère "traction avant" - to my mind the most beautiful and elegant car that André Citroën ever conceived. It is a classic if ever there was one. It was years ahead of its time. It was the first production car to have front wheel drive. It had torque suspension (that means a bar that twists to

provide springing, rather than heavy and cumbersome leaf springs), monocoque body (meaning no massively heavy chassis), hydraulic brakes as well as many other



improvements. This was truly wonderful when one compared the Citroën light 15 to say the average Ford Popular of similar vintage.

Although all things Citroën come top of my list, I have restored many other vehicles. You've guessed it, there are stories linked to all these restorations! The good news is that I won't be boring you with them now.

THE WALK TO MARKS TEY

by Peter Tweed

In about 1937 my much older brothers, Alan and Harold, started a poultry farm at Marks Tey. The site now houses the Marks Tey Hotel. My sister Janet and I often used to walk there from Heath Road to spend the day as bird scarers for the chickens which were, what today would be called, free range. They had huge wire netting enclosures to run about in so our job was to drive off the sparrows, starlings and turtle doves, which probably had more of the food than the chickens did! At the bottom of the field the fence



between us and the railway was simply wires pulled tight between the posts and we would stand on the wire to get a good view of the trains rushing by, sometimes the streamlined one called the Silver Link.

The scenery on the road to Marks Tey has altered a lot since we walked it. Opposite Johnson's shop were "The Pits", where we used to be able to have a go on the swings. These have long gone and the field leveled out so there is no chance of hide-and-seek among the hillocks and bushes. The



further (southern) end of that same field used to be an Air Show field on special occasions and is where my brother, John, got his first aeroplane flight having saved up his hard-earned money for weeks. Next along the London Road was the "Spike" or, more correctly, St Albright's Hospital – a home or last resting place for folks without the means to look after themselves anymore. They came from all over the county for sustenance and shelter and local people worked within its walls to keep the place

going.

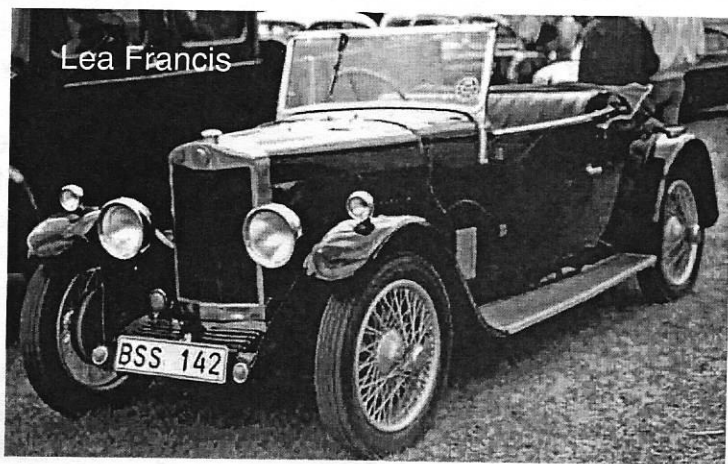
Next we walked past Colliers sand pit which was still working at that time and right beside it was Blythe, the bakers, with the mouth-watering aroma of new bread. The market gardener, Bugg, came just before Ira Miller, the bespoke tailor, then came a general store, which brings us to the fried fish and chip shop! After several houses came Gower's, the shoe and boot repairers and set back with a driveway to it was the hardware store of Mr Harry Boothe. The store was an

ancient cottage with a pond behind and the Boothe's new bungalow between that and a rear entrance to Millers Lane. On the western corner of Millers Lane with the London Road stood the Stanway water tower (demolished c1960) and behind that a very deep worked-out pit. A row of cottages fronted the length of London Road from there to a large white house on the corner of Villa Road.

Continuing west we walked on past Juds farm and the strange shaped little cottage called the Toll House. Now we were out in open country with just the huge telegraph poles beside us. These carried so many wires that the poles were very close and twinned with another beside. The wind made a continuous orchestra of sound that became even louder when we went to a pole and put an ear against it. Having walked another mile or so we crossed over a river (Roman River) and we were in Copford. Up the hill was a huge new building which we learned was to be a repeater station for the telephone service. I remember the vans which

some post office engineers used to drive. They looked a bit like little greenhouses on wheels for the forward area had lots of glass especially over the top of the driver. We thought this was to enable him to see any broken wires more easily. We didn't have far to go before we crossed over the road to begin our bird scaring jobs.

Luckily for us, Harold or Alan would drive us home at the end of the day. I remember the great big open Lea Francis car with the top folded down and how the sound would jump back at us as we went by buildings which were close to the



road, especially right by Cants Roses office. With the failure of the poultry business, Harold began his hire car business operating from Heath Road. A phone was installed and adverts put in the local papers and people from nearby used us and gradually the firm became quite busy.

Art Deco - follow up

Following my article on Art Deco in the last issue of this magazine, Edgar Beattie wrote to say that he had Crittall curved “sunshine” windows on his house. These windows are typical of many houses of the 1920s and 30s, but I had not made any reference to them in the article because of space constraints, however I am glad to do so now. They were introduced during the 1920s and 30s and although Edgar said that he liked the look of them, because of the appalling draughts these windows permitted, he had them replaced.

There were some “sunshine” windows in the houses in Roddam Close where I live, but the last of them were replaced a few months ago. You can see some still in Elianore Road on the left hand side when you enter from Glen Avenue. Although these windows are

attractive and look right on houses of the 1920/30s, there does not appear to be a modern replacement which looks right. Most installers use two angled windows to overcome the curve, but this is nowhere near as attractive as the original. I looked at the Crittall web site which claims that it can replace all its 1930s windows with steel double glazed units, but I could not find any curved windows listed.



I have never had to live with these “sunshine” windows, but from what I have heard it is more of a penance than a pleasure and Edgar’s letter

certainly confirmed my impression, but that said, is it not a pity that something which is so attractive and so in period in a 1930s house can not be replaced by something which is as attractive, but which lives up to current insulation requirements?

Bob Thornhill

Committee

Chairman

Dick Barton: 01206 573999
bab@bartonlex.fsnet.co.uk

Vice-Chairman

Tim Holding: 01206 576149
Carol@cholding.orangehome.co.uk

Secretary

Liz White: 01206 522713
alangwhite187444@hotmail.com

Treasurer

Bob Thornhill: 01206 523767
bob.thornhill@ntlworld.com

Membership Secretary

Jackie Bowis: 01206 561528
j.bowis@eastofengland.coop

Social Secretary

Sonia Lewis: 01206 579950
sonialewis@waitrose.com

Magazine Editor

Jane Thornhill: 01206 523767
j.jane.thornhill@ntlworld.com

Archivist

Bernard Polley: 01206 572460
heath86end@aol.com

General Members

Susan and Peter McCarthy and Ian Bowis

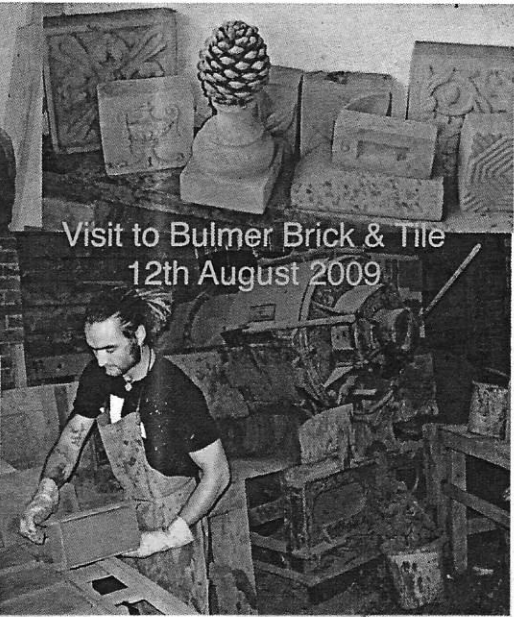
Committee Meetings

Your Committee meets once a month and discusses the availability and suitability of potential speakers. We also plan extra events, BBQ's, outings etc. The Treasurer gives a detailed breakdown of our Club accounts. Committee members volunteer for various tasks, including the preparation and setting out of refreshments and clearing away afterwards, at our normal monthly meetings. Volunteers are always appreciated on Club nights. New Committee members can be voted for at the AGM.

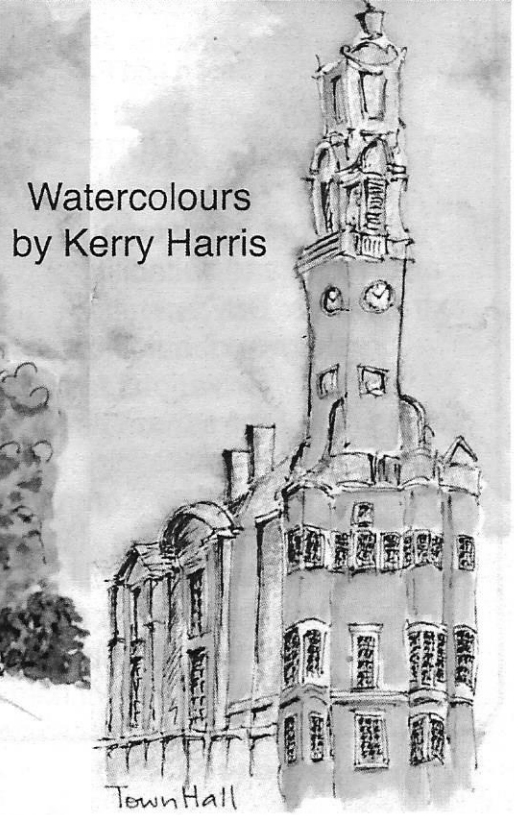
Next year Sonia Lewis will be Mayor of Colchester and will be unable to continue in her role as Social Secretary of LHG, with particular responsibility for the catering.



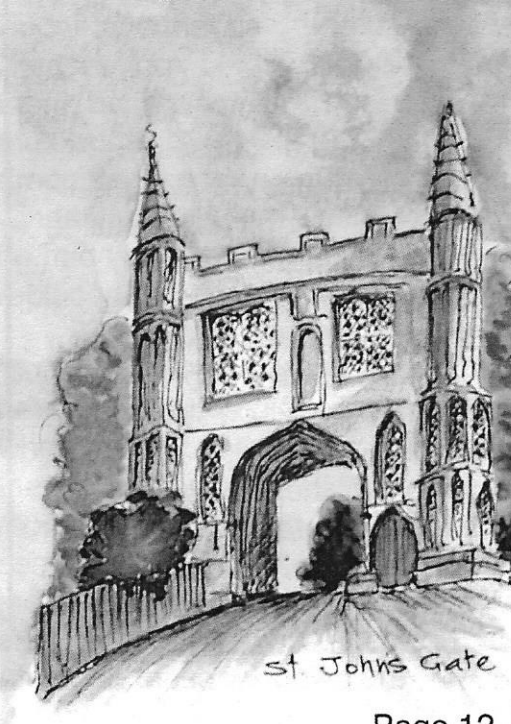
Visit to Bulmer Brick & Tile
12th August 2009



Watercolour by David Marshall



Watercolours
by Kerry Harris



St. John's Gate

Town Hall