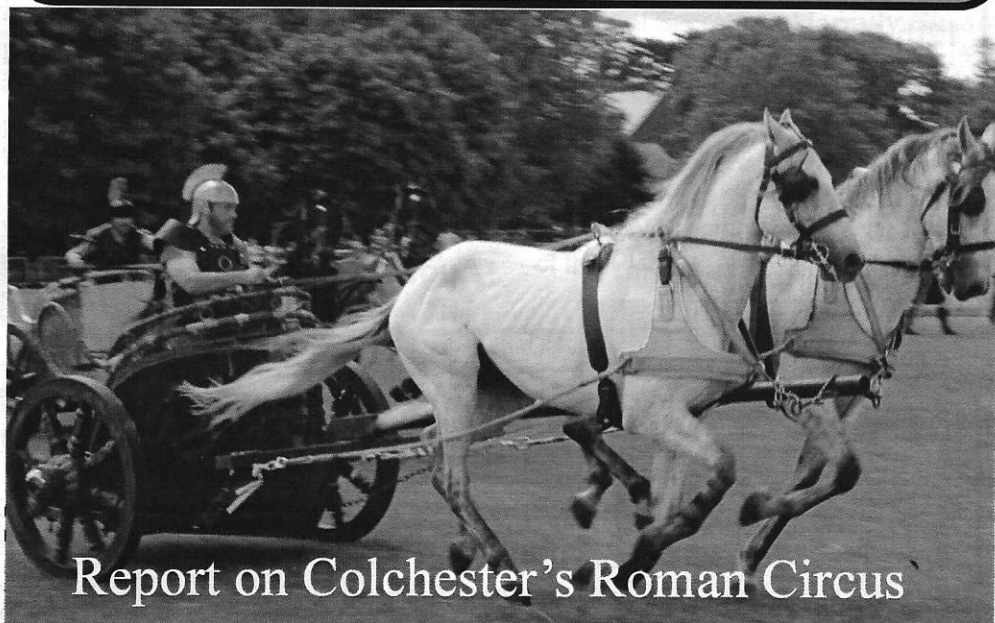


A historical map of the Lexden area, showing various landmarks and roads. Labels include 'A Corn Mill', 'A Fulling Mill', 'Rawden', 'Shepher Bridge', 'Shepher Farm', and 'Lexden'. A scale bar indicates '50 YD'.

Lexden History Group

Spring Newsletter
Issue No: 16 March 2010



Programme of Events

10th March

“A History of Gas in Colchester”
by Colin Scrivener

14th April

“Acquisitions for Colchester
Museums”
by Laura McLean

12th May

AGM + “The Village Sign” talk
by Tim Holding

19th May

Visit to Whitechapel Bell
Foundry - organiser Tim
Holding

9th June

“History of Essex, 1500 -
1700” (with particular reference
to Lexden) by Christopher
Thomas

14th July

Talk to be announced

17th July, Saturday

Lunchtime Summer BBQ at
Little Glebe, Spring Lane,
Lexden.

Details to be advised.

August - No Meeting

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 £15 for single, £20 for family living at same address.

Web address: www.lexdenhistory.org.uk

Editorial

*A*n exciting archaeological find is putting Colchester in the headlines. The only Roman Circus ever discovered in Britain is here. We members of Lexden History Group have donated £1,000 towards the appeal fund to save the Circus for the future. Things are looking promising as the fund is growing and by the time this magazine is printed, may well have reached its target.

Our Lexden in Wartime book volume two, is continuing to sell well and Liz White, our secretary, is still taking orders.

Please note that we have included your membership renewal form with this magazine. You need to send it to Jackie Bowis, Membership Secretary, at the address shown on the form, together with your cheque for £15 or £20 made out to Lexden History Group. **Please don't delay as you need to be in possession of your new membership card before the AGM in May.** Forms for proposing and seconding nominations for positions on the Committee can be obtained from our Secretary Liz

White either before, or at our April meeting.

Sonia Lewis, our Social Secretary is soon to become Mayor of Colchester. On behalf of our Group, I wish Sonia every success in her year as Mayor. Sadly though, it means that she is stepping down from her position as Social Secretary. Happily, Susan McCarthy, who has been helping Sonia, is willing to take over the reigns.

Below is a photo of Sonia Lewis on the stage with "A Centurion" at a fund raising dinner dance in aid of the Roman Circus.



Lexden History Group Archive Collection

**by Bernard Polley
LHG Archivist**

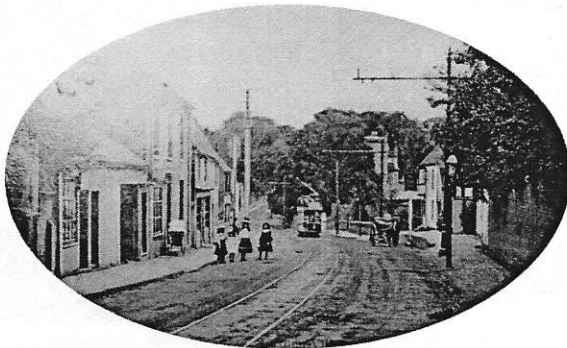
Being the Archivist for the Lexden History Group is a fascinating task, for since the Group came into being in May 2006 we are beginning to build up an interesting collection of memorabilia on Lexden. These include our own record in photographs, programmes and some DVD's of events such as the first Open Day in September 2006, the unveiling of the Lexden Village Sign and the tree planting in memory of our first Chairman, Geoff Pettit.

People have been kind in donating various items - old photographs, books, maps, old documents and write-ups about the Lexden Fire Brigade HQ,

Lexden Farms, Lexden Schools, St Albrights, Lexden Garden Village, Lexden Parish Players scrapbook and much else.

In the past I have received several requests from outside sources for information about the Village. Currently I have one that I cannot answer. Has anyone got a photograph of the outside of the old Parish Hall which stood on the corner of Nelson Road with London Road? I should be glad to borrow it and it would put another photo into our Archive.

The cupboard is getting full, but there is still room for more stock!



Appeal for Material

We have with this issue of the magazine used up our collection of articles and we should very much appreciate any contributions from members for future issues.

Perhaps you might remember motor cars owned by your parents when you were small and have memories of trips and expeditions in those cars? Of course any photographs of you with the family car would be wonderful. We could scan them into the computer and return the photographs to you. Also some of you will possibly have owned cars which will now be regarded as classics and will have memories you may care to share.

Plus any interesting photographs or other ideas you may have for articles would be most welcome. Please send them to me.

Jane Thornhill, Editor

Cover Story

The murals on the covers of this issue are all the work of Lexden artist Henry Collins. Henry's works emphasise Colchester's Roman heritage and were created in the 1960's. They are of even more interest today, in the light of the wonderful discovery of Colchester's Roman Circus. If you take a look around the Town centre, you will find many of his murals, mainly in the Town's underpasses, and also outside the Town Centre Sainsbury's.



VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF COLCHESTER'S ROMAN CIRCUS

Some members of the Lexden History Group Committee attended a fundraising event in the Mayor's Parlour on Thursday 14th January 2010. The Save Colchester's Roman Circus

Appeal is raising funds to buy the Sergeants' Mess building and the garden, within which lies part of the Circus including the eight starting gates. Philip Crummy and his team of archeologists

have found the remains of England's only known Roman chariot racing circus on land being redeveloped.

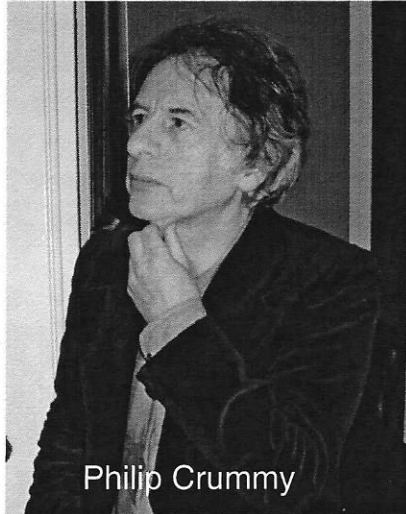
The evening started with Philip Crummy, Director of the Colchester Archeological Trust explaining how he found what was

originally thought to be the remains of Roman wall, but he eventually identified as a Roman Circus. A most unexpected and rare find! The only one in northern Europe. He showed slides of how it could look in the future, once restoration had been completed. Glass screens would be erected

around the edge of the Circus, superimposing chariot racing scenes from Roman times over the ruins so that people could see how it would have looked. The gardens would be landscaped with plenty of seating for people to sit

and enjoy the views. A cafe would be incorporated into the development and an interpretation centre.

The Heritage manager of Colchester museums, Philip Wise, said that the site was now protected and hopefully would become part



Philip Crummy

of the Heritage Trail, providing sufficient funds were raised to buy it for Colchester.

Sven Wombwell, the TV Gardener has contributed dozens of articles and participated in award winning garden designs at the Chelsea Flower Show. He would design the gardens in and around the Roman Circus, emphasising the views of the eight starting gates. While at the same time he would provide plenty of spaces for families to stroll or sit and enjoy the views.



A large amount of money is required to purchase the building and the gardens.

Essex County Councillor Jeremy Lucas has negotiated with the developers, Taylor Wimpey, for an extended deadline and they have given us an extra couple of months in which to raise the remaining £200,000 needed. Therefore, please consider what you can do in order to help us to secure the future of our Roman Circus for the generations to come after us. We, in Colchester, have this one chance to preserve something unique here on our doorstep. We can't afford to miss this opportunity.

Donations can be made online to friendsofcat.org.uk or romancircus.org
Or cheques can be sent to Colchester Archeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester CO3 3NF

Hopefully, by the time this goes to print, the required sum of money will have been raised, safeguarding the future of the Roman Circus.

Jane Thornhill

TALES FROM THE CHURCHYARD part 2

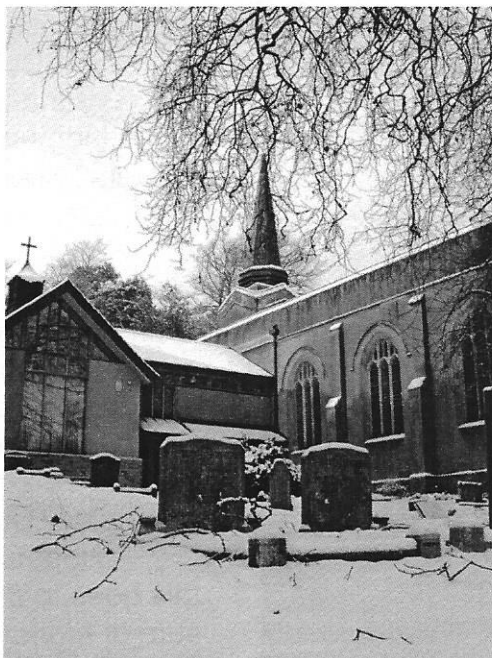
Leaning up against the east end of Lexden Church, facing Church Lane are several inscribed gravestones. The smaller of the pair on the right, probably a foot stone, simply says "W.H. died 1841/ H. H died 1888". The larger one gives the names, William and Elizabeth Horne. Who were these people recorded on such modest memorials?

William Horne was born in Copford in 1817 and in 1841 is working as an agricultural labourer. He lived with his wife and two small children close to James Baines' farm and possibly in one of their cottages. Ten years later he is still there, but is now a bricklayer – a step up the ladder

for him and giving him more money to support his seven children, the youngest only two weeks old! His first child, William, was born in 1837 in Copford, suggesting that soon after their marriage and the birth of their first child, the family moved to Lexden, the home of his wife, Hannah. Their last child, Frederick, was born in 1853.

Tragically, William dies aged only 41 years in 1857 and, as recorded in the 1861 Census, the family is separated. Three of the boys, Robert aged 19, an architect's clerk, Alfred 18, a groom and Thomas 16, a carter, are lodging with Sarah, the wife of a London artist

and painter living in Parson's Hill Farm, now known as Home



Farm. Sarah Davis's husband was Arthur Alfred Davis, 1824-1893, who was well-known, and still is, for his paintings of animals and hunting scenes. Their son, Arthur, born in Lexden in 1860, also made his living as an animal artist and sculptor.

Meanwhile, Hannah, a widow and working as a laundress to support several children, is living in Church Lane,



maybe in the same house as before, with William, aged 23, a bricklayer, Hannah, 21, a general servant, and Henry, Frederick and Emma all "scholars", attending the school in Lexden Road. Also living there is James, aged 6 months, Hannah's grandson, the illegitimate son of her daughter, Hannah. Sadly, James died in 1862. William did not stay in Lexden, moving in 1872 with his

wife and growing family to Fulham to work as a bricklayer in the rapidly growing suburbs of London.

Over the next few years life must have been hard for Hannah. By 1871 she is living in Magazine Farm, (opposite the top of Beech Hill today) with her daughter Emma, who is 20 and both of them are working as laundresses. The farmhouse is also being lived in by an agricultural labourer and his wife and a single man, working as a gardener. She is now in her mid-fifties, but ten years later she is living in Horseshoe House, Layer Road, Berechurch, with Emma and her husband, William Baker, a butler (later to become a grocer), and their two small children. The house is shared with the family of a coachman and it is possible that they were both employed at nearby Kingsford (not Berechurch Hall, who already had live-in butler!). Hannah may not have returned to Lexden as her death in 1888 is recorded in Colchester, but she is buried in Lexden Churchyard with her husband, William.

Liz White

Easter is round the corner and here is an Easter tale. For over one hundred years the Papillons were Lords of the Manor of Lexden and leaders in our affairs. In 1859 Philip Oxenden Papillon, the family's youthful heir, was hand-picked by the Colchester Conservative Party to stand as one of Colchester's two M.P.s. His fellow Conservative was Taverner Miller, a sitting M.P., and his opponent was John Gurdon Rebow, squire of Wivenhoe House. In those days a lot of money was needed to get elected – 'treats' for your supporters and 'threats' to your opponents, traditionally dispensed by a body of heavies, recruited at the Hythe, and known as the 'Colchester Lambs'. Papillon was selected, not just because he was well educated, but because he had lots of money. And it all worked: Philip Oxenden Papillon became an M.P. at 33 years old. As Lord of the Manor of Lexden he also appointed the rector. Understandably the job went to his uncle, Rev John Papillon. Not only did the family have its own pews set aside at the front, but they had their own door into the church and a private path from it to the manor house on Lexden Road (the house is still there).

John Papillon was very 'high church' at a period when 'low church' was becoming popular in Colchester with large congregations at St Peter's and St Mary's at the Wall.

Nonconformist chapels, by definition robustly low church, were also flourishing. This was good news for John Gurdon Rebow, since chapels were almost universally regarded as the Liberal party at prayer, even as the C. of E. was considered the bastion of Conservatism. In those days Lexden always had a traditional fair, held on 'the green' (today the best toboggan site in Colchester) every Good Friday. Stalls of all sorts were set up; girls spent months stitching Easter dresses and bonnets; men had a beer or two and, weather permitting, a great time was had by all. The rector however was unhappy. This was a very worldly way to spend so sacred a day and (this was Victorian times) broad hints were dropped that girls might not be safe as men drinking beer could not be trusted. In short, in 1864 the rector persuaded the squire to ban the Easter Fair. We do not know how far the squire shared his uncle's views, but he did not show much parliamentary tact.

(continued P11)

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Suspecting (quite rightly) that his ban would be ignored, Papillon marshalled the resources of his estate, purchased several cartload's of soot, and had it systematically spread all over the green on the night before. Just in case, he also had the stiles smeared with tar. This was not popular in Lexden, or Colchester. And then, such is fate, the government called a General Election. Poor old Papillon. His Liberal opponents had a field day."Three boos for POP and the soot of Lexden" were called for at

EVERY Liberal rally. Papillon was replaced as M.P. by John Gurdon Rebow. Recognising damaged goods, the town clerk of Colchester (who was, of course, a leader of the Conservative Party) had Papillon de-selected, making him, as a consolation prize, mayor of Colchester. Twenty years of service to the town lay ahead, but he never went to Parliament again. The morals of this story are clear: never trust your uncle, do not underestimate the office of mayor, and always enjoy yourself at Easter.



Roman Murals by Henry Collins