

Lexden History Group

Spring Newsletter Issue
No: 20, March 2011



Grahame Page
with his MG
-see Page 6.

Programme of Events

13th April

"British Post Box Design and Use in the First 100 Years"
by Steve Knight

11th May - AGM

Talk by Andrew Phillips or film by Bernard Polley.

8th June

"The History of Tiptree jam"
by Tim Came

13th July

"Essex Martello Towers"
by Roger Kennell

13th August (Saturday)

No meeting, but Summer BBQ at Tim & Carol's, Little Glebe, Spring Lane, Lexden

14th September

"Foul Deeds & Suspicious Deaths"
by Patrick Denney

12th October

"Colchester's Hidden Treasures – A Miscellany"
by Mark Davies

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

Spring is in the air. As I type this, a pair of blue tits are busy inspecting a nesting box part way up a large holly tree in our garden. I don't know whether they are potential buyers, or are just being nosey. Time will tell.

I would like to thank those members of LHG who have taken the time and trouble to send in interesting tales and photographs for including in our quarterly magazine. I am aware that sometimes it seems our articles show a bias towards old cars and steam engines. This is because those are the articles I have been given. So if you would like me to include other material, then the solution is in your hands. I await an avalanche of post from you!

No charge was made to members who attended the February meeting. This was to make up for the less than successful January meeting.

President's Column

As many of you know I have been involved for many years in ORAL HISTORY. This usually means tape recording people's memories. Usually we tend to think of flower-hugged

Lexden lanes, meadows long ago and a rural Edwardian world. That world has gone. If you do the sums, you realise that lots of 'old' people were not adults until the 1950s – or 1960s. The time has come to record the world of post-war rationing, shortages, and, grudgingly, at last, new buildings. This included a whole new generation of schools. They are everywhere. So, somewhere, are the then pupils who went to these newly-opened schools. Where are the first pupils of Alderman Blaxill 1955, the Girls High School 1957 (its present site) and Philip Morant 1965 (I think)? What do they remember of that brave new world of glass and 'modern architecture', as we then called it.

I am now getting interested in this world – still a world before Permissiveness, Youth Revolt, and Universal Motor Cars. I think we should tape record their memories now. Why wait until they are all (if they survive) 84? If only I had the time, between all the things I set my hand to. But maybe, maybe, someone reading this would be interested in how this world came to Lexden. After all, it is the job of a President to get other people to do things. Isn't it?

Andrew Phillips

An introduction by Peter Potter explaining how he became interested in researching the heroes named on the Lexden War Memorial

I started family research when I retired early in 1995, and began to help my Mother-in-Law, Daphne, with the loss of her foster brother Leslie King (Wyatt). He was part of the crew of a Lancaster bomber which was the only one of 20 'planes which did not return from a mine laying sortie over the Frisian Islands in 1941. There was then no information available on the internet as there is today; it is absolutely amazing what you can find out now, a great deal for free.

This is a long story, with a sad ending really, suffice it to say I found out the actual name of the German pilot who shot down Leslie's plane but by this time Daphne had become ill and never became aware of our endeavours.

My wife Christine has been a researcher into family and local history since she was training to be teacher in the 1970's, and we decided to research the other people on the Galleywood War Memorial; this went well and we eventually had the results

published. Christine has always said researching this kind of information was/is like a detective story and I was captivated, so it was her fault really.

As a Lexden boy, the War Memorial at St. Leonard's was the obvious place to start. What I didn't realise was that there were over 125 Casualties named, and when I looked at the list there were many names I didn't recognise. What had I let myself in for?

I expect team work is, maybe, the best way forward, but if you work individually you can do as you wish, if it doesn't get done its your own fault. However to look at a list of what has to be done can be very daunting.

I have found that there are always people who want to help, usually in a small way and with the right encouragement their help is invaluable.

The local newspapers, library, record office and radio station are always very helpful, and provide sources of information that you cannot do without.

However the most important sources will always be eye witness accounts and family memories.

This isn't a secret, but you soon learn that the girls of the family hold the key. They keep the photos, they know the stories, and the secrets, they know the family friends etc. They do silly things like changing their names when they marry; but still call their friends by their maiden names, but do persevere and they will come up trumps in the end.

The following article is edited by Jane Tnornhill.



Cecil Edward Noel John Morton 66160 Captain, Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment who died in Palestine on Tuesday 26th November 1940 aged 25 years.

Captain Morton was educated at Holmwood House School, Lexden, followed by Bradford College, Berks and Sandhurst. He was the only child of the late Captain C.E.H. Morton, R.M.L.I., of Heath Lodge, Lexden, who died in Alexandria in 1915, from wounds received at Gallipoli.

Cecil Morton joined the army at the age of 19 and saw service in Palestine before being transferred to GHQ at Jerusalem as Cypher Officer. After which he was transferred to Cairo. He met his death in 1940 whilst doing observation work with the RAF.

His niece, Mary Beattie lives in Heath Lodge, and features in our Lexden in Wartime book Vol.1.

The Life of a Certain MG Car by Grahame Page

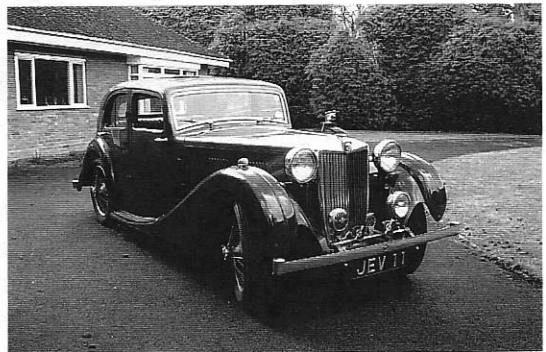
My father Percy Gordon Page or "PG" as he was sometimes known, went into partnership with the two Scott brothers to sell motor vehicles in 1912 in Military Road under the name of Page and Scott. In 1923 the partnership was amicably dissolved and my father purchased a house and land at 36 and 38 Crouch Street, where he built a garage at number 38, when he was appointed distributor for Morris cars for North East Essex. In 1929 he added a new two floor show room with car lift, but sadly this is all that remains of PG Page's Garage in Crouch Street.

During the twenties the MG marque (Morris Garages) was added to the Morris empire, which later became the Nuffield Organisation after the acquisition of Wolseley and Riley in the thirties.

1939, with war clouds gathering fast, was not a good year for selling motor cars and by September of that year, Page's Garage had about a dozen new Morris cars, two new Wolseleys and an MG type VA, one and a half litre

saloon, which is the car I now own. Towards the end of 1939 my father decided to licence this MG for his own use, the registration being JEV 11. I was 14 years old at the time and when I got into the MG for the first time, my father said to me "I think I am going to like this MG."

During the war part of Page's Garage business went over to war work at their Mill Street Depot, where various components for aircraft, including the Hurricane and Mosquito, were manufactured. Because of this my father had a special petrol allowance to travel in the MG to various aircraft factories, so the



car did a certain amount of war work. My father always said that of all the cars he had driven up to that time, he could make the best

average speed across country in the MG.

The MG VA saloon in 1939 was priced at £325 new and was rated at 12 horse power under the pre-war tax system. Its price was relatively expensive when compared to a new Morris or



Austin 12 HP which sold for £225, but its performance was much superior. The MG's maximum speed was virtually 80 mph, whereas the other 12 HP saloons had a maximum speed of only 65 mph, or so.

For the 1939 season, MG added the extra colour of metallic dark grey to the range, something practically unheard of before the war. My car is in this finish. About twelve years after the car was built, my father had occasion to visit the MG works at Abingdon in his MG. On his return to the car, he found it surrounded by a number of

workmen from the factory. The foreman from the paint shop had been showing his fellow workers and apprentices around the coachwork and explained: "I am so pleased to see this car again with its metallic finish, as I was the person who actually painted it before the war!" To speak to

someone who had actually helped to produce it twelve years earlier was quite extraordinary and I cannot imagine a similar situation at the present time. After the war, several car manufacturers in the UK did

introduce metallic paint finishes, but some of them initially did suffer from the paint fading badly after a comparatively short time. As far as I know my MG is now the only MG in existence still with its original metallic paint finish to the saloon body.

For many years I have attended an annual gathering of MG cars of my particular model type, which were all manufactured from 1937 to 1939, organised by the MG Car Club. These very enjoyable events take place at different venues in the UK and

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Europe and I have three times travelled to the gatherings in Holland.

Wonderful as my car is, no car is immune to mechanical problems. A few years ago I travelled to West Yorkshire for a MG Car Club event, when I thought I had a puncture, but it turned out that the rim of the near side front wheel had split. I had a new wheel rim with new spokes fabricated by a specialist wheel manufacturer. They made a splendid job of it, but it cost with VAT more than my whole car did in 1939!

Some years ago when the car had done about 65,000 miles the cylinder head was removed so that the engine could be converted to run on unleaded petrol and the opportunity was taken to carry out a partial overhaul of the engine at the same time. The car has now done a total of 72,000 miles since new, but so far nothing has ever had to be done to the gearbox or back axle.

Most cars have problems during their lives, but mine have been spread over so many years and in between there were many times and many miles of most enjoyable MG VA motoring in a car I have always enjoyed driving.

Grahame Page

STAR INN, STRAIGHT ROAD

By Liz White

Henry Luther Lusted was born in Tunbridge, Kent in 1838. His third wife, Sarah Ardley, was born in Witham and they were married in 1886 in Lewisham before moving to Colchester. By 1891 he was established in Lexden at the Star Beershop in Straight Road, with Sarah, their two children Henry aged 4 and Annie, 3, and a live-in domestic servant, Jane Percy. Both Henry junior and Annie were married in the summer of 1915, with group photographs taken in the pub garden opposite. William Moore and Annie helped her father in the Star and when Henry senior died in 1921, William (Bill) became the licensee. Henry's wife Sarah died on 25th March 1925 aged 75 and both are buried in a double grave to the west of Lexden Church, just outside the Nicholls Room. To the right of their grave is another double grave for William Ernest Moore who died on 27th June 1949 aged 65 and the other for Annie Sarah who died on 18th January 1977 "in her 89th year". They had no children. (Plot C81 Church Inscriptions Book)

Annie was very straight-laced with a no-nonsense attitude but most people respected her. She knew how to run an orderly establishment with no "malarkey" and would throw people out who didn't behave.

Daniells, later Trumans, at West Bergholt were the local brewers owning and supplying the Star after

brewing ended on the premises. The Star pub itself was old and L-shaped. It was very dark, full of low beams and yellow with nicotine - they didn't decorate in those days! It had a strange layout with two bars and Bill would handle the first bar leaving Annie down at the other end. There were large barrels on the gantry at the back and a mug was held under the barrels. One or two customers had their own mugs and others had their own regular spots.

It was a social place. In those days cards and dominos were played and immediately after the war there was a darts team. A quoits area with metal pins in the ground was at the rear by Back Lane. There was also a very popular snooker or games room to the left forming the L-shape. Some regulars kept their own snooker cues there, but to play snooker you almost had to be invited in - it was quite a club. However the urinals at the end of the snooker room by the pavement were very smelly! Bill Moore's hobby was his lovingly tended large garden, across the road from the pub, with lawns, arches of roses and dahlias and where there was a timber shed big enough to garage a car.

The locals called the lobby-type area through the central door of the Star, the "Jug and Bottle". It was quite narrow with a lift-up counter and Annie

would emerge from the depths to fill a jug with beer, probably for about a penny. You could also buy cigarettes, a bottle of beer, tobacco, Smith's crisps (with the blue twist of salt!), stout for the Christmas pudding and in season, bags of cherries from the garden.

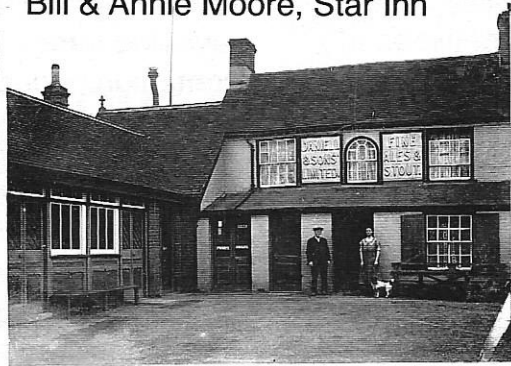
For a Saturday treat, families would go there, maybe at the end of a walk, and sit round a table in the garden opposite.

When Bill died in 1949 Annie continued running the Star. She retired aged 67 in 1954 and moved to

a bungalow (No 70 Straight Road) along the road from the Star. Mr WJK Ling is recorded as the landlord in 1957, selling ales, stouts, wines and spirits and some two years later Mr G Sleebush took over and

the pub was rebuilt, but the general opinion was that it was never the same. In 1984 new owners, Anglia Hosts of Norwich, changed the image to a more modern drinking house to be called Chaplin after Charlie Chaplin, but Colchester Council refused a brightly illuminated sign and in retaliation the owners called it "Brights"! It only lasted about 10 years and was demolished, together with the adjacent cottages, to be replaced by a row of houses.

Bill & Annie Moore, Star Inn



Odds & Ends

From Mike Beattie:

Thanks for the article about Mallard. I have always been a bit of a steam buff and during my commuting to London days used to read various books about the great engineers and various railway histories. I cannot now remember the actual book but it was very possibly a biography of Gresley. There was great rivalry between the LNER and LMS in general and Gresley and Stanier in particular. Apparently Stanier published some figures, possibly about coal consumption which Gresley thought suspect. Gresley came to the conclusion that Stanier's dynamometer car was at fault but thought if he raised the matter it would not be admitted. He therefore adopted the ploy of asking Stanier if he could borrow his dynamometer car as his own was out of commission. Stanier agreed and Gresley then coupled both dynamometer cars in tandem and thus proved that Stanier's car was at fault which would

account for the optimistic figures.

From Dick Barton:

Roman Cemetery.
During 2010 the rear of No. 12 St Clare Road was partly dug up for an extension to the house. As the site lies within the area of the Lexden cemetery, where Late Iron Age and early Roman burials have been recorded, the work was monitored by the Colchester Archeological Trust. The work revealed three Roman cremation burials.

Correction:

Regarding Mike Beattie's article on page 9 of December 2010's magazine. Leeds the butcher built his house about 1938, not 1838.

The Committee:

We have been investigating buying a new sound system for use in the Church Hall during our meetings. However, the Church already has a system which was put in the Hall for the pantomime. There is a possibility that we could be given permission to use this system which is far superior to anything we could afford. Negotiations are on-going and once finalised, there will be an announcement made at our monthly meeting.

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AGM

Wednesday 11th May

No admission charge, refreshments provided, members only. There will be either a talk by Andrew Phillips or a film by Bernard Polley.

Subscriptions (£15 single, £20 family) are due by the 13th April meeting at the latest. Nominations for Committee posts must be delivered to the Secretary four weeks before the AGM.



Lexden in Winter 2010/11