



Lexden History Group

Christmas Newsletter Issue
No: 23, December 2011



Can you spot the error in this picture? Answers to the Editor by email or post. No prizes, but lots of kudos for the correct answer! See more on page 11.

Programme of Events 2012

11th January

“The Essex Dialect” -
Martyn Astell

11th April

“Essex and the Home Front” -
William Tyler

8th February

“My Year as Mayor of
Colchester” - Sonia Lewis

9th May

**AGM to include a film
show by Bernard Polley**

14th March

“Victorian Policing in Essex” -
Martyn Lockwood

**(Subscriptions due in April
and must be paid before
the AGM)**

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

As this issue of our magazine goes to print, we are looking forward to our Christmas party on 14th December. Anthony Roberts will be performing a reading of A Christmas Carol for our entertainment. If you are unable to come along and join us, I would like to wish you a Very Happy Christmas and New Year, on behalf of myself and the Committee.

Thank you to all members who very kindly contributed articles during the year. It would be really nice if more of our members could write to me with items to put in our magazine. A special thanks to Liz White and Bernard Polley, both of whom sent many interesting articles throughout the year.

Our calendar is selling well, and we only have a few left now. It seems that members like the fact that it has been made up of paintings by some of our members of local scenes. The notelets have proved even more popular, and are excellent value at £4 for a box of 12.

We need to find some dry storage space for all our Lexden History Group archives. If anyone knows of somewhere nearby that could be made available to us, please let me or any Committee member know asap.

Don't forget - if you think you know the answer to the puzzle on the front cover, please let me know.

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF CHILDREN.....

MATHS

The total is when you add up all the numbers and a remainder is an animal that pulls Santa on his sly.

If it is less than 90 degrees it is a cute angel.

GEOGRAPHY

Sir Walter Raleigh circumcised the world with a big clipper.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

If you marry two people you are a pigamist, but morons are allowed to do this.

NATURAL HISTORY

Crabs and creatures like them all belong to a family of crushed asians.

SCIENCE

Helicopters are cleverer than planes. Not only can they fly through the air they can also Hoover.

THE ARTS

In last year's Christmas concert, Linzi played the main prat. I played one of the smaller prats and I would like to be a bigger prat this year.

Well that's all folks.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A
HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Jane

Scandal in Lexden

Lovely, leafy Lexden has a glorious reputation for decent living, but 170 years ago scandal hit the national headlines! During the 1840s a professional man with a wife and six daughters, a governess and servants, moved into the prestigious double-fronted property of Hill House on Lexden Road.



Samuel Tillet was a conveyancing solicitor and money scrivener, wealthy and apparently well-liked in the area. Hob-nobbing with the notable families at Lexden Park and Lexden Manor, he attended charitable events and entertained in style. He was elected to Colchester Council in 1843 and in 1848 became an Alderman. Life was good.

He was equally well known in London, with Chambers at the Inner Temple, acting as a Special Pleader and Master Extraordinary at the High Court and enjoyed the prestige of entries in the main business and social directories of the day. Little did they realise that he was a “hunger-bitten charity-boy” of

lowly birth and financed his extravagant lifestyle by defrauding his clients. This unpleasant aspect of his character caught up with him in November 1850 when he was imprisoned for contempt at Springfield Gaol in Chelmsford. He refused to acknowledge that he was not telling “the whole truth and nothing but the truth”, frequently writing to

the Essex Standard declaring his innocence and that it was wrong to have had his voting rights removed as he was still a resident of Lexden. This was despite many of his household effects from Hill House and office contents in Church Lane being sold in 1850! However, his wife and two of his four living daughters were still there, but with no staff. He

remained incarcerated in the Debtor Wing for nearly three years, but still maintained his professional entries in the various Directories. Finally on 15th July 1853 Samuel Tillett was found guilty of perjury at the Essex Assizes in Chelmsford and sentenced to seven years transportation!

Even after such a dire sentence he had lost none of his manipulative abilities for, having served two years in jail in England, he was on the loose again after obtaining a report from the Medical Officer and Chaplain (and probably the Governor) that he was threatened with paralysis. He resumed his old life of high profile charitable and parochial matters in his new family residence in Bayswater and found a situation as a

Superintendent with the Australian Department at the 1862 International Exhibition in London. Through this he skilfully managed to ingratiate himself with the nobility and persuaded no lesser person than the Duke of Wellington to present him at Court in 1863.

The Duke never thought that such a “pleasant, well informed, smooth

spoken, well-mannered Exhibition acquaintance and *cicerone* (of) being a ticket-of-leave man”. However, it was at this point that his luck ran out, amusingly recorded by James Hurnard in his epic poem, “The Setting Sun”. It happened that the judge who had sent him down in Chelmsford, was also at that grand occasion and, recognising Samuel Tillett, called for the “man in blue” to escort him off the premises!

His life then seemed to go downhill. His wife died in the summer of 1870 but he continued to live with his daughter, Frances, in Kensington. A couple of years later he was arrested in London, masquerading as a clergyman (Dr Tilley) and begging with an ex-prostitute, Mrs Mary Richardson. The Middlesex Quarter Session found him guilty of conspiracy to defraud a certain Miss Mary Guntage, for which he was again jailed, this time for 12 months. The case was reported in the

Manchester Guardian of 15th April 1873 reminding readers that this was the person whose presentation at Court by the Duke of Wellington (10 years earlier) created so much attention! He died in obscurity in Holborn in 1879.



Duke of Wellington

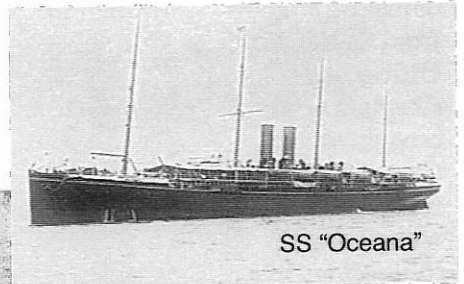
Liz White

Tales from the Churchyard

Hidden in the churchyard under the rampant laurel hedge in the corner of Church Lane and Lexden Road is an impressive table tomb with a central vase, although the previously recorded iron anchor at the west foot is now missing. The three inscriptions read “CRESSWELL KEANE CHARLES ROOKE, Colonel, The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment) died at Broom Hall 17th August 1903. North face: MARY, his wife, of Monks Horton died Easter-Day 1935. West face: NINA, their daughter, who, with her husband The Revd JC LEISHMAN, RN and

Endymion, receiving the China Medal in 1900 for service during the Boxer Rebellion. At Lexden Church in 1909 he married Isabel Nina Emma Rooke, the daughter of the late Col Cresswell Rooke and his wife, Mary. The Leishman’s daughter, Annie Vera Mary, was born in 1911.

The P&O ship SS Oceana was a 6,610 gross ton ship, 468 ft long and 52 ft wide with two funnels, four masts, a single screw and a speed of



SS “Oceana”

Leishman family



their child VERA died in the “Oceana” accident 16th March 1912”. What really happened and who were they?

The Rev John Craigie Leishman, a naval chaplain, was born in Dollar, Clackmannanshire in 1871 and served on HMS

15 knots. Built by Harland and Wolff, Belfast, for the Peninsular and Oriental Navigation Co, her maiden voyage was in March 1888 sailing from London for Colombo, Melbourne and Sydney and in 1905 transferring to the London-Bombay route. On 15th March 1912, laden with £747,110 in gold and silver, she left Tilbury bound for Bombay with 240 passengers, including the Rev Leishman, his wife and daughter. Also on board, bound for Secunderabad in India, was a brass memorial plaque commemorating the 1,494 men, women and children of the

45th Nottinghamshire Regiment who had died, mostly from disease, between 1819 and 1836 during service in Ceylon, Burma and latterly Secunderabad, India.

The following day off Beachy Head in the Straits of Dover, a 4 masted German barque, the Pisagua struck the SS Oceana amidships, tearing a 40 ft gash in her side.

Fortuitously there was sufficient time for the passengers and crew to board lifeboats to safety but, tragically, one lifeboat overturned whilst being launched with the loss of several lives including the Leishman family. The ship sank 6 hours later, and the wreck was blown up but as the

Oceana should have observed the marine code that “steam gives way to sail” the Pisagua was judged not to be at fault.. The Pisagua was towed to Dover for repairs and then to Hamburg where she was sold for the princely sum of £5,000 and rebuilt as a whale factory. However, luck was not on her side for early the following year she was stranded off the South Shetland Islands and never sailed again, losing her owners the

princely sum of £50,000! The Oceana collision was frequently discussed in the House of Commons with questions regularly being asked about the tardiness of the inquiry and percentage of Asiatic crewmen on board and

answers were carefully avoided! The regimental memorial plaque was recovered from the wreck in 2009 and was finally returned to the Regimental Museum.

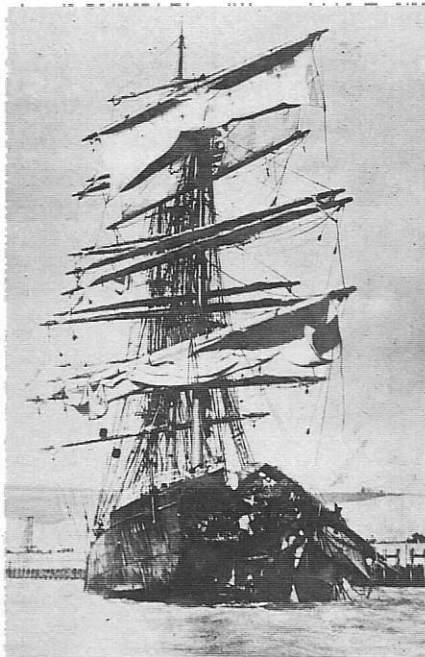
The tragedy was felt keenly by the Rooke family who remained in Monks Horton, (Now 72/74) Lexden Road and Philip Cardy records in his memories that

“the life seemed to die in the house

after that”. A month later, on Sunday 14 April 1912, this very personal and local heartbreak was eclipsed when the RMS Titanic sank after hitting an iceberg in the Atlantic on its maiden voyage from Southampton to New York.

Liz White

(To be continued in the next issue)



Collision damaged “Pisagua”

Non-conformist Churches of Lexden.

(continued from last edition)

Lexden Assembly of God:

On a site in Straight Road, just south of the Methodist Chapel, stands a hall that was built in 1892 as the Church Institute. In 1927 it was taken over by the Lexden Men's Social Club, and during the last War, Lexden and Winstree Rural District Council used the hall for storing ARP equipment. Since the mid 1940s the building was used by the Full Gospel Mission group of worshipers who had been meeting in a private house in Straight Road. In 1991 plans were submitted to demolish the old building and build a hall capable of holding 150. The Mission which was now part of the Evangelical Assemblies of God had a congregation of about 20. In more recent days the building has received a make-over by improving the facilities for the weekly meetings held there.

The Kingsland Church:

Samuel Hurnard, who lived at Hill House on Lexden Road, although a Quaker was governor of Lexden Church School. After falling out

with the Church of England authority he built the village hall, now the Evangelical Church opposite the by-pass roundabout. He laid the foundation stone in 1884. He was strongly opposed to alcohol although he made his money out of brewing. Hurnard purchased the King's Head Inn next to the Church on London Road and turned it into a temperance hotel. He held bible study meetings in the village hall every Sunday morning, particularly for folk who could neither read nor write. From 1890 the church was registered for services for Protestant Dissenters and became known as the Lexden Evangelical Church. This continued for many years, and as congregations multiplied an extension was built onto the church. From 1980 it was known as the Kingsland Church, and the house next door was purchased to accommodate the Pastor. Bringing the story up to date, in January 2010 the Church moved into a new location on the upper floor of what is now the Aldi supermarket on the corner of Straight Road. The current Pastor is Rex Neil Loxley, who also oversees Kingsland meetings at Gosbecks, Tiptree and Stanway.

Bernard Polley

ABOUT THE DIARIST ALWYNE R. GARLING

Heather Johnson is transferring the war time diaries of Alwyne Garling onto the internet. Only the entries of 70 years ago are shown, so you can follow the developments of the war day by day through the eyes of a Lexden resident. The diaries are at: www.WW2inColchester.com

Alwyne Rosmond Garling

was born in Lexden, on 1st August 1909.

His parents were Albert Garling, of West Bergholt, and Annie Major of Lexden. Father Albert was a son of West Bergholt baker Abraham Garling and his wife Mary and a brother of Lexden baker Edgar Garling. Mother Annie was a daughter of

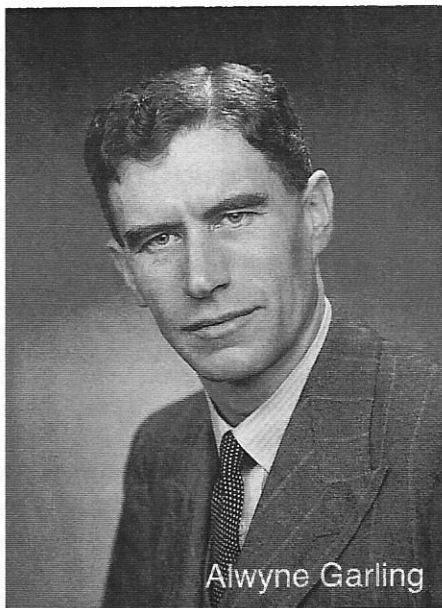
Horatio Nelson Major and his wife Louisa. Horatio was a Corn Merchant, based in London Road, Lexden.

Alwyne had one younger sister, Vera.

In the Census of 1911, the family of four were living at 31 London

Road, Lexden. Albert was a Prudential Assurance agent. Perhaps soon after 1920, when Albert was named beneficiary in his late mother-in-law Louisa's estate, the family moved along London Rd to number 93. This is where Alwyne wrote his diaries.

The family were Methodists and regularly attended the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Straight Road, Lexden. Alwyne and Vera played the organ at Chapel and sang solos there on a regular basis. Albert and Alwyne were consecutive caretakers at the Chapel.



Alwyne Garling

The family always gave a cheery "Good Morning" when greeting other folk but were also considered to be a very formal family. The Straight Road Chapel has a room called 'The Garling Room'.

Alwyne worked for the Essex & Suffolk Insurance Society, at their Chelmsford branch. At the 1933 Chartered Insurance

Institute Examinations, Alwyne qualified. Initially, he travelled to Chelmsford by train but then started catching the bus. Perhaps it was more difficult to travel by train once the war started. Alwyne held a very secure job and,

year on year, a salary increase arrived in the January or February. On the 15th October 1945, Alwyne became Chief Clerk at the Chelmsford office. Working on a Saturday had been part of the working week for him but this promotion meant that he didn't have to do that any more.

The diaries describe the gardening that took place at 93 London Road throughout all seasons. Great pride was taken in a well-kept appearance and satisfaction expressed whenever a harvesting of vegetables and fruit took place. Alwyne often referred to the garden as "the estate".

As is the occupation of present-day folk, Alwyne was fascinated with the weather. With total dedication, the conditions and temperatures were noted daily. Alwyne was also pre-occupied with health. His mother Annie, as the diaries suggest, was a very sickly woman and some might say that Alwyne inherited more genes from her than his father in this respect. The doctor was asked to call at the Garling home numerous times and many visits were made to the surgery. Such services would have had to have been paid for on a personal basis. The National Health Service did not come into existence until 1948. It is highly likely that the Garling family paid into a 'Penny In The Pound' Scheme (or something similar) offered by Alwyne's 'Essex & Suffolk' or Albert's 'Prudential Assurance', for any required hospital treatment.

The diaries document the worry that Alwyne felt about what role he might play in WW2. But all things taken into account, it was appropriate that he was graded III (3) at his 1942 National Service Act Medical Board because his poor health would have been a total hindrance to the war effort. Achieving a Grade III meant that Alwyne would not be 'called up' - only a Grade I (1) could be active at the Front Line.

Half way through the war years, George the kitten arrives at 93 London Road. George, gardening, health and work prove to be, for better or worse, distractions from any war-time worries. The reader experiences many emotions through these diary entries. There may be feelings of boredom, exasperation, nervousness and fear – contrasted with humour, joy, pride, relief and jubilation.

Whatever opinions are formed of Alwyne, from these entries, credit must be given where credit is due. By listening to radio broadcasts and observing the restrictions that the war placed upon all citizens, Alwyne has given us a most extraordinary insight into what it was like for one family living in Lexden and, thus, Essex during WW2. Of course, this family appear to be comfortable compared to some (apart from the health issues) but they, like every one else, did not know how the war would proceed and finally end.

Heather A. Johnson

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Spot the Mistake!

When thinking of pictures for our 2012 calendar, I had the bright ideal of painting Vint Crescent in the early days when it was newly built. I did some research, but started the painting in the meantime. I finished my researches after I had almost completed the painting and realised that there was something fundamentally wrong with what I had painted. This being the case, LHG would not have looked very clever had it been selected for the calendar.

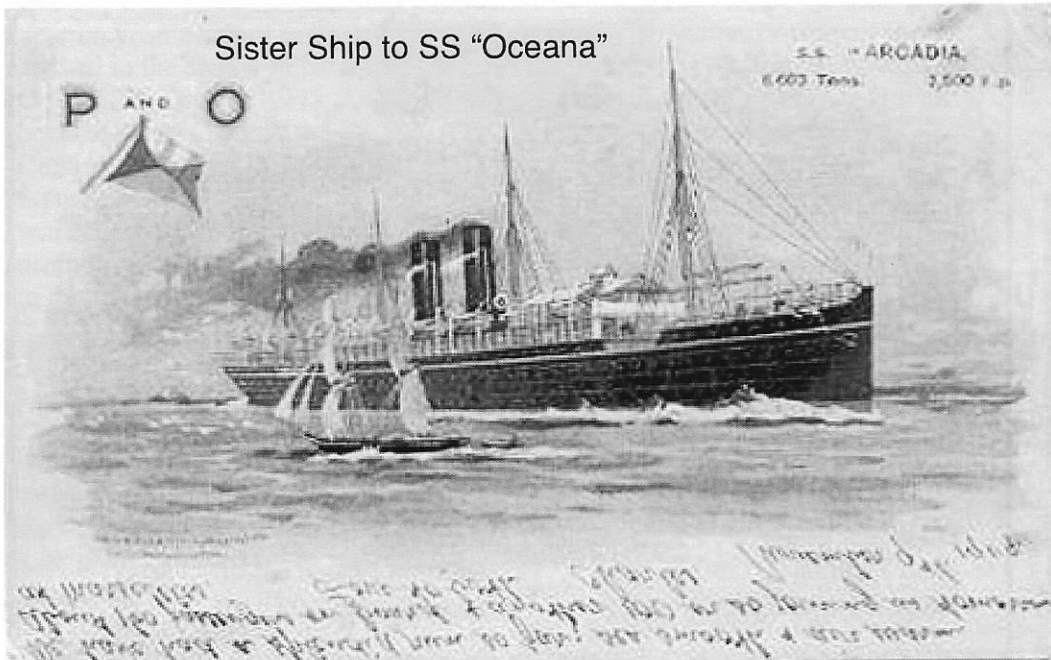
Can you spot what is wrong? Answers by email or post to the Editor. No prizes, but lots of kudos for anyone who spots what is wrong.

Bob Thornhill

Sister Ship to SS "Oceana"

S.S. "ARCADIA"
6,602 Tons 2,500 F.P.

P AND O



See article: "Tales from the Churchyard" - page 6

Four masted German barque "Pisagua"

