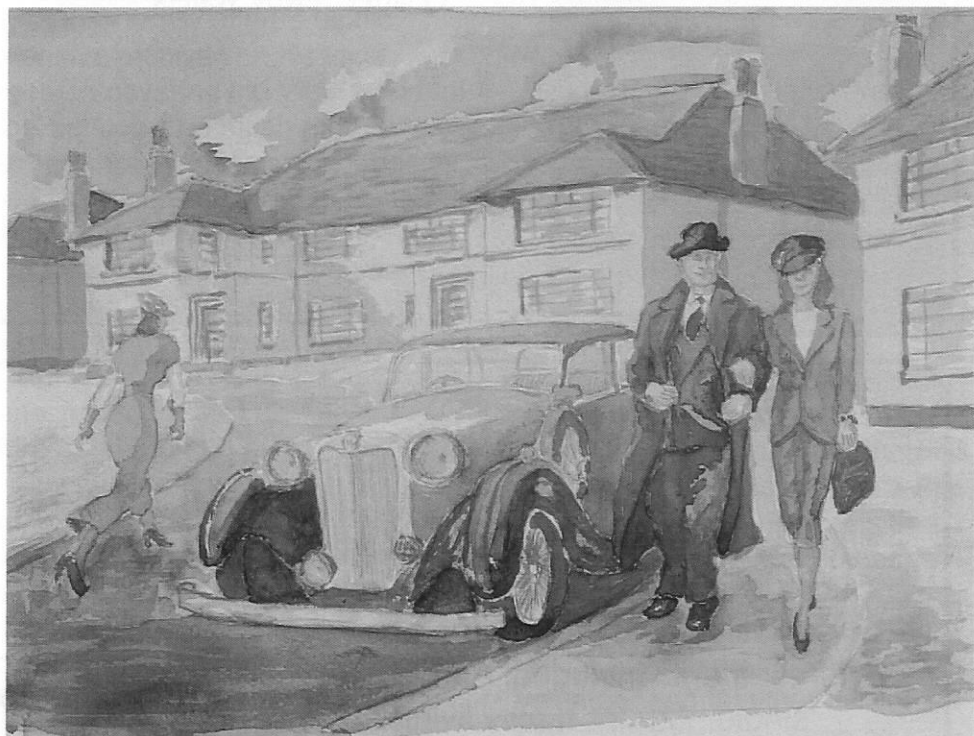


A historical map of the Lexden area, showing a river, a bridge, and various landmarks. The map is in a sepia tone with black text labels. Labels include 'Woolen Mill', 'Shepherds Bridge', 'Corn Mill', 'Shepherds Farm', 'A Tuller', 'Purton', 'Lexden', 'Rawston', and '50M'. The title 'Lexden History Group' is overlaid on the map in a large, black, serif font.

Lexden History Group

Spring Newsletter Issue
No: 24, March 2012



For an explanation of the error in the picture on the front
of the last magazine see page 10.

Programme of Events

14th March

**“Victorian Policing in Essex” -
Martyn Lockwood**

9th May

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

11th April

**“Essex and the Home Front” -
William Tyler**

13th June

**“Growing up in the Dutch
Quarter” - Roy Waters**

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

11th July

To be arranged

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

CAN YOU HELP?

We need members to help store our Lexden History Group archives. Anyone who knows of local storage please let us know. Do you have a dry cellar or a loft where you can offer to keep our archives safe? Or do you have any ideas where we could find suitable storage? Peter Potter has kindly offered us his extensive archives on his local research covering the War memorial, local schools and much more. Bernard Polley, our archivist, has all the LHG archives stored in his loft, which is now full.

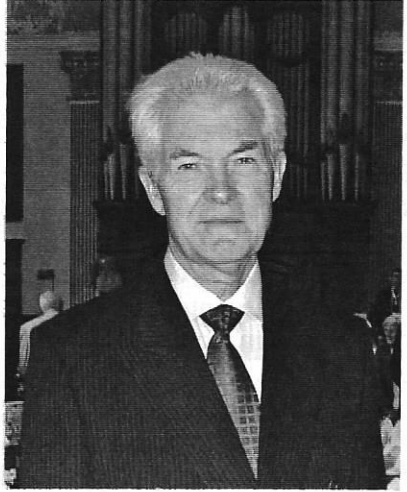
As this is the year of our Queen's Diamond Jubilee we will be holding a special Jubilee BBQ at Tim and Carol Holding's in Spring Lane, on Saturday 11th August. More details to follow.

Our calendars are now sold out, but we have some notelets for sale at £4 per box of 12 paintings. Each one of which is featured in the calendar. They make lovely gifts for anyone who lives here or has visited Colchester.

Please remember to renew your membership before the end of April, so that you can attend the AGM and vote. We have an entertaining programme planned, which includes several short films

made by our Archivist, Bernard Polley. Refreshments will be provided at no extra cost.

A THANK YOU TO OUR TREASURER BOB.



As you know, our Lexden History Group will be six years old this year. Our Treasurer, Bob Thornhill has been the Treasurer since the Club was formed, and feels that the time has come for someone else to take over this responsibility. We hope that there will be several members willing to volunteer and that they will let the Committee know as soon as possible. Bob will carry on being Web master and joins me as assistant editor and IT specialist.

Jane

TALES FROM THE CHURCHYARD

WILLIAM MARSON Prison Governor

Central in the area to the left of the pathway to the church main doorway stands a modest headstone with the following dedication "To the beloved memory of WILLIAM MARSON late Governor of the House of Correction at Colchester who departed this life May 20th 1861 aged 61 years". This simple inscription plainly opens up many lines of inquiry into his life and that of prisoners in Colchester Gaol 150 years ago.

William Marson was born in Aldersgate, London, in 1800. Little is known of his immediate family, but on 9th January 1820 he married Mary Ker in St Giles without Cripplegate, London. His early married life was spent in London working as a Pocket Book Maker and was punctuated by the births and deaths of several daughters, but by 1827 he was the only turnkey in the small Halstead Gaol and his one daughter had been joined by a further son and daughter. Three or four years later he became one of five turnkeys at the large new Springfield Gaol in Chelmsford and two more sons were added to his family. By January 1838 he was

Keeper (or Governor) of Colchester Borough Gaol at the old Moot Hall which in 1801 was described as "filthy and offensive" and without an exercise yard.

When he was appointed Keeper William Marson's annual salary was a comparatively generous 60gns which soon rose to £80. The inspectors noted that his interests were "at variance with his duty", although they fully acquitted him of neglect or misconduct as he was a "humane man" taking care that the prisoners were well fed and in good health. He was allowed 7d a day per prisoner to provide the "proper diet", but this system was actually illegal as the meals should have been supplied under contract, the Keeper's only duty being to ensure that the diet was good and sufficient. In addition, it was all served at about 8.30am, instead of two or three times a day, encouraging some prisoners to eat all their rations and go hungry for the rest of the day. Another criticism was that Marson kept no journal of occurrences or punishments and this lapse was mentioned to the mayor who agreed to ensure this was rectified. One male prisoner, sentenced to two months hard labour, was unlawfully "employed in the Keeper's services, cleaning knives and forks, boots and shoes, and kitchen utensils" and had thus constant access to the young female servant (Caroline Theobald

aged 15) – a “highly reprehensible” proceeding. The whole report makes fascinating reading, listing issue of clothes, bedding, food costs and punishments, eg, being locked up for one day for singing or talking! In the August 1840 Sessional Report to the House of Lords, it was stated that no alterations had taken place in the “construction or discipline” of the prison since the last report but that the condemned rooms in the older part of the prison were now only being occupied for a day or two or by prisoners in “a very dirty condition”. There were only five male prisoners being held at that time but there were two teenage girls who had been committed for 14 days hard labour for an assault on a constable! Prisoners committed to the prison in 1838 totalled 228, and in 1839 - 132. There had been complaints in the previous report that, contrary to statute, the male and female prisoners were not confined separately but could daily “see and communicate” via holes and the large ventilation gratings over the doors.

The Colchester born Rector of St Peters in North Hill, Rev Samuel Carr, was appointed as chaplain with a salary of £20 and although the prisoners were assembled in the Debtors’ Hall for Divine service on Saturday mornings and occasional visits were made, the

inspectors were concerned that



“the moral improvement of the prisoners seemed to be entirely lost sight of”. They also recommended that a “privy and washing place” be constructed within the females’ partition as it was inconvenient for them to take their cell-pots to a distant yard for emptying and washing! In 1841 the Chaplain reported “the excellent order and management which he daily observed in the prison” and that Mr Marson and other officials were very supportive to him.

William Marson’s first Governor’s report for Colchester was dated 1 January 1839 and his last 4 April 1843. He retired sometime before 1851, probably when the Moot Hall was rebuilt in 1844. The family then lived in a cottage in Church Lane. He died in 1861 and was buried in Lexden Churchyard, but Mary, his wife, is not recorded on the headstone for she probably moved to the Masonic Asylum in Croydon for the “Worthy, Aged and Decayed” where she died in 1879.

Liz White

When the Bypass came to Lexden

In the mid 1920s Colchester town centre was grinding to a halt with the increase in motor traffic. The A12 road London to Great Yarmouth passed along Lexden Road, Crouch Street, Head Street, High Street, East Hill, over the bridge, first left for Ipswich and straight on over the level crossing to Harwich and the Tendring coastal towns.

The Borough Council needed to find a way to deal with the problem by building a bypass road. In the summer of 1926 the Divisional Road Engineer of the Ministry of Transport came to Colchester

This was received with favourable consideration in 1929.

After much deliberation on the location of a bypass north or south of the town, it was decided on a northern route running from Lexden through to Greenstead, a distance of four miles. This route would cross the River Colne and a bridge was necessary over the coastal railway line by Ipswich Road. Contracts were drawn up for the purchase of the required land, much of it being owned by the War Department. The Borough Council set about the task with plans drawn up by the Highways Committee under Alderman Blaxill.

Work commenced May 1930 using much of the labour force drawn from local unemployed men. Some 330 were engaged, controlled by Harold Collins the Borough Engineer and H.O. Cousins, the Borough Accountant. The estimated cost of the project was just under £300,000, funded by Ministry of Transport 75%, Essex County Council



Lexden end excavations

to see for himself the traffic jams. His report back to his office resulted in an application for a grant for the construction of a new road.

15% and Colchester Borough Council 10%.

The first section of the bypass was to run through the Springs and the Glen to arrive at the outdoor swimming pool on the River Colne. This whole area would remain with a natural wooded landscape and not have any houses built on to it. £16,000 was spent on



Tree cutting in Lexden Glen

necessary equipment including one mechanical digger, seven concrete mixers, two pile driver, a derrick crane, two six wheel trailers, a road roller, four locomotives and tipping wagons to run on a light railway track.

Whilst excavating land by Sheepen Farm the archeologist found much of Roman interest including remains of timber houses, trenches and wells, as well as brooches and coins. Many trees had to be cut down on this part of the new bypass

road which was named Cymbeline Way. In their place some 260 new saplings were planted and a section on the north side between Glen Avenue and Water Lane became the Avenue of Remembrance with 120 silver birch trees in memory of service men who had lost their lives in the 1914 - 1918 War. Metal name plates were placed at the root of each tree, but sadly over the years these plates have disappeared.

The first section of the road from Lexden through to Ipswich Road was opened at a formal ceremony on 29th June 1933. The Mayor of Colchester, Councillor Maurice Pye invited Viscount Ullswater, ex-Speaker of the House of Commons to cut the tape and declare Colchester bypass road, the new A12, open to traffic.

All was well for Lexden Road, it was now free of passing traffic heading for Ipswich and Harwich, but London Road had to survive with congestion until the northern bypass was opened some 50 years later.

Bernard Polley

LEXDEN'S ROYAL CONNECTION

**(Tales from the Churchyard -
continued from the last issue)**

Who were the others named on this tomb? Col Cresswell Keane Charles Rooke was born in the East Indies in 1838 where his father Benjamin, originally from Bengoe in Hertfordshire, was Inspector General of the Medical Department of the Indian Army. Cresswell Rooke, having purchased his Captaincy, was appointed Adjutant of a Depot Battalion in 1868. He married Mary Payne in Hampstead in December 1869 and they had three children. Their first daughter, Mary Agnes was born in 1870 and in Spring 1906 married Edward Chichester, a doctor living at 22 Crouch Street. Their other children were Isabel Nina Emma b1871, who died in the Oceana tragedy in 1912 and Cresswell Paillet b1873, who eventually followed his father into the Army.

Col Rooke served in Africa and India with the Royal Scots, commanding the Second Battalion from 1887 to 1891 and retired in 1896. On moving to Colchester, the family lived in Broom Hall (now demolished), a large house with extensive grounds, on the corner of

Pownall Crescent and Mersea Road until after Col Rooke's death in 1903. His widow and their son, Cresswell Rooke, moved to Monks Horton, Lexden Road (today divided into numbers 72 and 74) which remained in the family's possession until 1959. Philip Cardy, born in Lexden in 1906, recalls that they were a "lively household" and "kept some hunters and a pair of coal black carriage horses". They were not popular with everyone, however, as some thought them to be "very grand!"

Col Rooke kept a fairly low profile until the death on 25 April 1885 of Queen Emma Kaleleonalant, the widow of King Kamehameha IV of Hawaii, a godson of Queen Victoria. Emma, who was born in 1836, was descended from Hawaiian chieftains

*Thomas Rooke,
Emma, Grace Rooke
(daughter of John
Young)*



and was also the granddaughter of an Englishman, John Young, friend and adviser of King Kamehameha I. (pictured on back cover) She had

been adopted under the Hawaiian tradition of hānai by her childless maternal aunt, Chiefess Grace Kama'iku'i Young Rooke, and her husband Dr Thomas Rooke, the court physician, and grew up at their English mansion, the Rooke House. Emma had lost her only son in 1862, aged 4, and was widowed the following year but,



Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV

inspired by Dr Rooke's teaching, she threw herself into establishing amongst others, a hospital, two schools and St Andrew's Cathedral - the latter being erected with \$30,000 raised by herself and Queen Victoria. On the deaths of Dr Rooke in 1856 and his wife in 1866, Emma inherited their substantial estate and continued with her good causes, but as she died without issue, the lands and personal estate passed to Dr Rooke's nephew and godson, Col Cresswell Rooke.

Col Rooke was keen to claim his inheritance of the Rooke estate (then worth \$250,000 - approximately £3m today!) and the court case, started in November 1897, was finally settled in his favour in May 1900. The result was

not popular in Honolulu as the Queen's Hospital and other beneficiaries lost much of their income. In fact, Col Rooke had already sold his interest in the lands to a certain Albert S Wilcox for \$1,000, although these were still listed in his estate! However, he magnanimously waived the back rents to which he was entitled claiming instead several items belonging to Queen Emma including a bracelet given to her by Queen Victoria. Fond letters had been exchanged by Queen Victoria and Queen Emma covering family matters, including details of their children and the deaths of their respective husbands, until Emma's

death. Queen Victoria said that "Nothing could be nicer or more dignified than her manner."

Queen Emma in later years



The bracelet was recorded by Emma herself on November 28 1865 – "from

Her Majesty's Queen Victoria's own hand, a bracelet of gold and onix (sic) with her portrait & hair in it and a writing of 'Victoria R Nov 27 1865'". The bracelet was received by the Rooke family in 1906 but was eventually returned in 1956 to the Daughters of Hawaii, protectors of the Heritage of Hawaii, and is on display at Queen Emma's Summer Palace.

Liz White

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

As a newcomer to the Group I have greatly enjoyed the articles published this year in the excellent Newsletter, admiring the careful research on which they are based. However, one small point in Liz White's interesting article 'Scandal in Lexden' would seem to require reconsideration. The great Duke of Wellington, pictured in the article, died in 1852. It must therefore have been his son, the 2nd Duke, a man of considerable ability but unassuming in manner, who presented the former jailbird Samuel Tillett at court in 1863. With Queen Victoria in seclusion after the death of the Prince Consort two years earlier, Lexden's scoundrel would have made his bow to the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII.

With very best wishes
Alistair Lexden
House of Lords
December 21 2011

Apologies for the error and thank you for pointing it out. We look forward to welcoming you to a Lexden History Group meeting this Spring/Summer.

Jane

What was wrong with the Vint Crescent painting on the cover of the last magazine?



The car is 1920s Standard, the men's dress is of the 1920s, the ladies are wearing the flapper dress and cloche hats which were in vogue between 1925 and 1930, thus placing the picture in the second half of the 1920s. At this time the site was occupied by St Mary's Lodge and Vint Crescent was not built until 1937.

The painting on the front cover of this magazine shows a scene that might have been when the Crescent was new, with a late 1930s MG saloon and people in the clothing of the time.

Congratulations to:

Keith Lewis
Edna Heinrich
Desmond Murray-Bligh
who spotted the error.

Bob Thornhill

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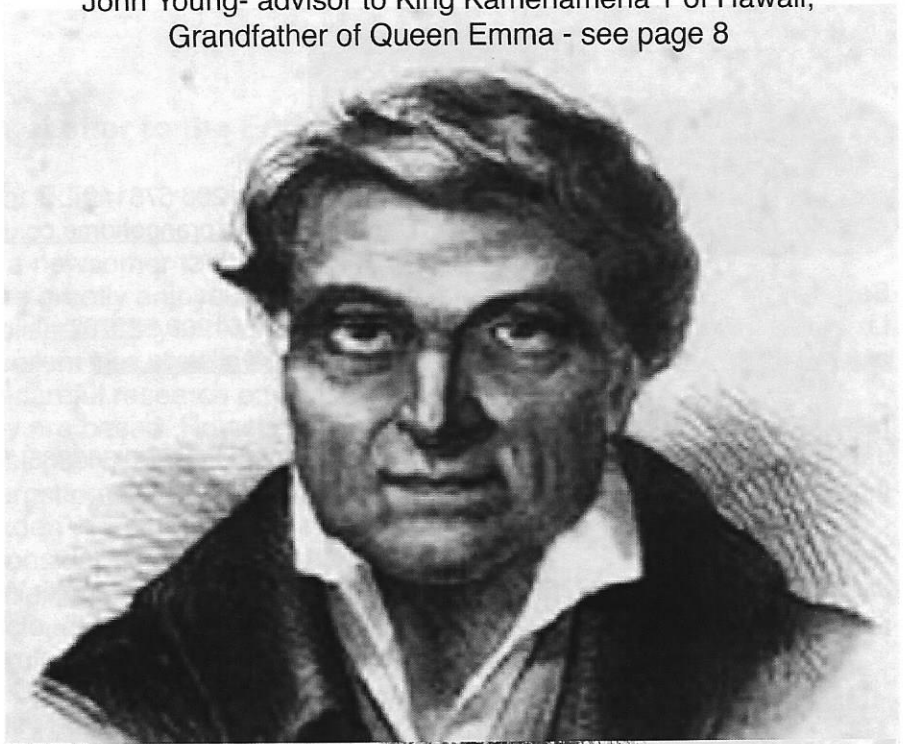
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Please remember to complete and return your renewal form enclosed, together with a cheque made out to **Lexden History Group**, to the membership secretary, Jackie Bowis, by the end of April, or at the April meeting. Annual membership is £15 for one member, or £20 for a family living at the same address. It is essential that you renew your membership before the AGM in May.

John Young- advisor to King Kamehameha 1 of Hawaii,
Grandfather of Queen Emma - see page 8



Queen Emma's Summer Palace in Hawaii