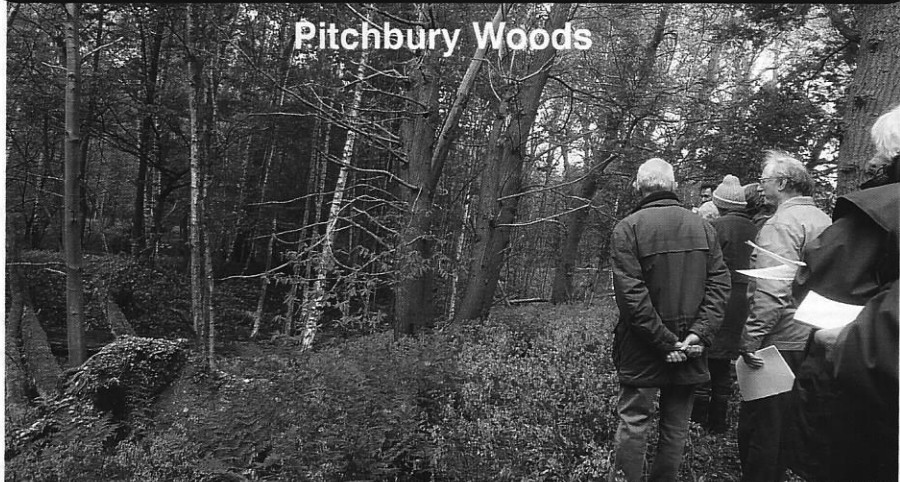


Summer Newsletter Issue
No: 29, June 2013



Pitchbury Woods



Wildflower garden, Lexden

Programme of Events

10th July
Sir Alfred Munnings Life
and House - Marcia
Whiting

9th October
The History of Hatfields
- David London

10th August
Summer BBQ at Tim and
Carol Holding's

13th November
The story of Colchester
Corporation's Tramways
- Peter Jones

11th September
The History of the
Concertina - Roger
Digby

11th December
Christmas Party

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

From the President

By the time you read this Summer may have started, your garden blue tits may have fledged, the first bats danced around Lexden Park and gatekeeper butterflies flown on Hilly Fields. Moaning about our weather is very British, but now these matters are serious. Spring was late because so much Arctic Ice melted that the jet stream shifted south. Late Springs mean late caterpillars, so fewer young tits will live. Gatekeeper lava have died in the bitter weather of March and April, and bats suffer a shortage of moths whose numbers have dramatically fallen. And Lexden is not an island; we are all in this together. But if we have gardens we can help. Trees are essential; bees prefer native flowers; and if we have no shrubs or bushes most birds cannot nest. Much of Lexden is still 'green' and the river valley is secure, but the Borough which owns it could delay cutting the grass meadows and let Essex Wildlife Trust advise them on wildlife-friendly stewardship. As a history and heritage organisation we should help 'the fastest growing town in England' retain its natural heritage, even as cuckoos and hedgehogs become history, and fields of cowslips a forgotten sight. See Jane and Bob's wildflower garden on the front cover.

Andrew Phillips

Pitchbury Ramparts

On Wednesday 15th May a dozen intrepid LHG members met at the car park at Pitchbury Wood. It was rather windy and cold with rain threatening but, heavily shod and waterproofed, we started our trudge into the past. Mitch McLean gave us diagrams and maps to help us understand the site and explained the position of extended Grymes Dyke. He also told us of the importance of the small brook for extra defence and fresh water. Despite the rain of the previous day, it was not too treacherous underfoot and we continued in this delightful wood carpeted in blue bells, until we reached the base of the Iron Age Fort.

The entrance to the fort was clearly visible and people would have made their way through this into the defensive structure in times of threatened attack. As we progressed to the top we could see that this was just the first of two ramparts and ditches. It was astounding to consider the man hours necessary to complete these earthworks. Although the corrosion of a couple of millenia would have reduced the height of the ramparts and slightly obscured the ditches, the original size and depth could easily be imagined. Today's fallen trees, slippery bluebells and badger setts did not help our progress but we continued (without the benefit of a Risk Assessment) reaching the top of the second rampart where the fort area became visible – today just a farmer's ploughed field.

Further along an early drove way was clearly visible and we walked along it into the fort site itself. It was about five acres and the ditches and ramparts would have continued all round.

Thanks to our knowledgeable guide Mitch McLean, we felt that we had really visited an Iron Age Fort.

Liz White

Tales from the Churchyard Farmers and Corn Millers

The two graves in the centre of Tim Holding's painting of Lexden Churchyard (illustrating June in the Lexden History Group 2012 calendar) record the families of John Vince and Charles Phillips. Such a prominent position would suggest that they held positions of some importance in the

in 1812 and George in West Bergholt in 1815 where John had become the Miller at Newbridge Mill or Cooks Mill. The mill had converted from fulling to corn milling and is probably where George learnt his trade.

By 1836 Lexden Mill had become derelict and the Papillon family who owned it and much of the land around decided, in common with many other mill owners, to revert from a



area.

John Vince of Weeley married Martha Lett on 12th July 1806 in Bromham, Bedfordshire, by licence and, as she was under age, with the consent of her parents. They had two children, Ann born in Bromham

fulling mill to a flour mill. The Rev Jonathan Rawstorn Papillon, who was abreast of new developments, installed one of the earliest steam engines in the town to drive the mill when the spring-fed pool could not. He also updated the whole site adding a stable block, mill

office, some piggeries to use up the remaining husks from milling, a counting house and a cottage for one of the workers.

George Vince took over Lexden Mill in 1842, living in the Mill house and bringing up his family there. John, born in 1845, also became a miller but George James, born in 1842, became an evangelist moving to East Grinstead to continue his calling. David Cawdell records in "The Story of Lexden Mill" that George ran Lexden Mill from 1842 until his death in 1883 and became influential in the town supporting traditional milling against the new methods being introduced. Corn was traditionally ground between horizontally mounted revolving stones but a new process from America and Europe crushed the grain through rollers producing a much finer and better quality product. He attended a "Meeting of Owners and Occupiers of Corn Mills" in Colchester on 19th Feb 1842 to discuss the implications of Sir Robert Peel's proposed Repeal of the Corn Law which would introduce a sliding scale of tax payments. Colchester held one of the most "formidable strongholds of protection" of the status quo!

George Vince had married Mary White Kirkham in Lexden in the summer of 1838. She was born in 1805, the daughter of William and Sarah Kirkham of Coggeshall., and was named after her maternal

grandmother, Mary White. William Kirkham was an Ironfounder and must have been a highly successful businessman for when he died in 1846 he left to his three sons the freehold of two houses, one in West Street, Coggeshall and another in Earls Colne. A few months before Mary married George Vince he had also advanced money to her for "her business", noted in a codicil to his will dated December 1837. Was this money to help George set up as the miller of Lexden Mill?

George Vince was not only a miller, but also a farmer of 30 acres. His sister, Ann, had married Charles Phillips, the farmer at West House Farm, Lexden, and the two families continued living side by side for many decades. Robert, the eldest son of Charles and Ann also became a farmer in Little Clacton but two other sons, John and Frank, went into the drapery business, eventually moving to London. Charles died in October 1870 and, when the farm was taken over by Robert Orpen, Ann moved to a cottage in West Bergholt. She lived there until her death in October 1880 with her son, Travis, a draper, until he married and her daughter, Fanny. Fanny then moved to Lexden Mill where she continued to live with her uncle, George Vince, who had been widowed in 1873.

Liz White

Parliamentary Trains

In Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera "The Mikado", there is the well known song: "A more humane Mikado" in which the Mikado lists the crimes which particularly irritate him and for which he has a suitable punishment. One such concerns the railway:

*"The idiot who, in railway
carriages,
Scribbles on window-panes,
We only suffer
To ride on a buffer
In Parliamentary trains."*

Britain's railway system was built purely on the initiative of private enterprise. The very first railway had opened in 1825 between Stockton and Darlington with the aim of transporting coal and ore from the mines to the River Tees for onward shipping. The success of this venture prompted the construction of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, which opened in 1830. At this time Liverpool was the largest port in England and Manchester had grown from a village to a city with a population of a quarter of a million inhabitants and a major manufacturing centre. The canal system between Liverpool and Manchester, although more efficient than any alternative means of transport available at this time, was not a speedy method of carriage and the canal companies charges, having no effective competition, were expensive. After learning of the success of the Stockton and Darlington venture, which had

proved the viability of a moving steam engine, the locomotive, the industrialists of the North West invested in a steam powered railway between their two cities. It was of course a tremendous success and prompted the construction of other lines throughout the Country.

The investors in the Stockton and Darlington Railway had intended purely the carriage of freight and gave little thought to carrying passengers. However, being the entrepreneurs that they were, the railway investors soon realised the potential for carrying people and laid on passenger services.

In the early 19th Century the class system was deeply embedded in the English psyche and inevitably this was reflected in the arrangements for transporting passengers, with first, second and third class carriages. No-one had never before constructed a railway carriage, so designers turned to what they knew already. The first class coaches were copied from horse drawn road coaches and carriages, but with flanged wheels for the rail track. They were comfortably upholstered and had glazed windows. The second class coaches were similarly constructed, but were less comfortably equipped. As for the third class coaches these generally were the same construction as coal carrying trucks, but with doors fitted and usually, but not always, simple wooden benches. They were completely open to the weather and passengers were liable to have their

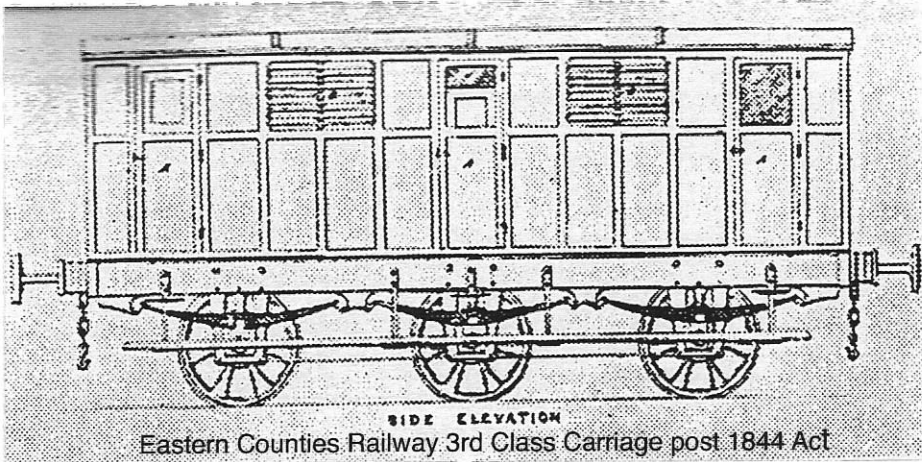
clothes burned by cinders coming from the locomotive's smoke stack.

The success of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway led to what became known as the "railway mania". In the mid 1840's parliamentary powers were obtained for the building of 9,000 route miles and the raising of more than £500 million for British and Irish railways.

Although as already stated the railways in Britain were built by private investment, the Government found it

Act of 1844 amongst many other provisos laid down that:

"And whereas it is expedient to secure to the poorer Class of Travellers the Means or travelling by Railway at moderate Fares, and in Carriages in which they may be protected from the Weather...all Passenger Railway Companies...shall, by means of One Train at the least to travel along their Railway from one End to the other of each Trunk, Branch, or Junction Line...once at the least each Way on



necessary to take an interest and in 1837 Parliament appointed a "Select Committee on Railroads". Various acts resulted from this Committee's recommendations such as the Act of 1840 requiring Companies to send annual returns on traffic and accidents on their lines to the Board of Trade and the Committee began to take an interest in the social aspects of rail travel. The

every Week Day... provide for the Conveyance of Third Class Passengers...at an average Rate of Speed of not less than twelve miles an hour for the whole Distance travelled on the Railway, including Stoppages."

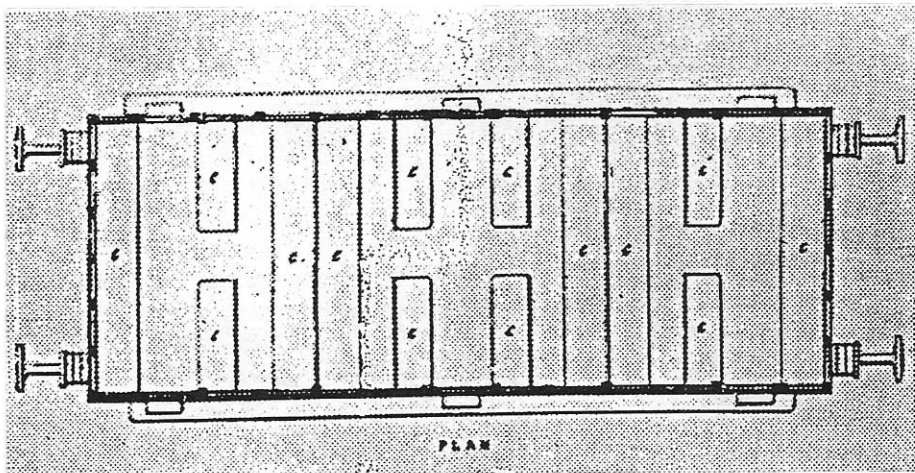
The train was, if required, to pick up and set down passengers at every station and importantly the carriages "shall be provided with seats, and shall be protected from

the Weather, in a Manner satisfactory to the Lords of the said Committee." The fare was set at one (old) penny per mile, children over 3 but under 12 years a half penny and children under 3 were to be carried free.

The penalty for not enacting the above regulations was a fine of £20 a day *"for every Day during which such Refusal, Neglect, or Evasion shall continue."*

This Act of Parliament provided cheap transportation for all,

The Eastern Counties Railway which extended its line from London to Colchester in 1843, rapidly gained a poor reputation and was threatened with action under the 1844 Act for its tardy introduction of third class carriages which complied with the requirements of the Act. It did, as was required by law, introduce a compliant "Parliamentary Carriage." The doors had openings with wooden shutters. Blinds fitted between the doors admitted air and



Plan of Eastern Counties Railway 3rd Class Carriage post 1844 Act

but these "Parliamentary Trains" as they became known, gained a reputation for their tardiness and inevitably as they carried the poorer end of the travelling public, earned a low reputation, so the Mikado's punishment for the window scribbler was to ride only on the buffer of a parliamentary train - a severe punishment indeed!

light when the shutters were closed. The seating for a total of 46 passengers consisted of simple wooden benches with back-rails in 2+2 and 5-across arrangement as in the diagram.

Bob Thornhill

Colchester Tramways

When the railway came to Colchester in 1843 the population of the Town was in the region of 18,000 and grew still further with the

the High Street. When the line reached Middleborough the company carrying out the work ran into financial difficulties and the scheme ceased. The Council was left with the problem of removing the track laid so far.



development of the barracks in the 1850s. The Town Council turned its thoughts to having a tramway system mainly to connect the railway station with the town centre, a distance of about one mile, but having to cope with North Hill. The first proposal came in 1883 when a bill was presented to Parliament for steam trams. A provisional order was obtained and track laying was started between North Station and

In May 1887 Colchester Tramways Company Ltd produced a prospectus offering 17,000 shares for sale at £2 each in order to run steam powered trams.

Nothing further happened until 1898, the year in which a new electricity power station opened in Osborne Street, when the British Electric Traction Company applied for a Light

Railway Order to bring a system of electric tramcars on five short routes in the Borough, all converging on the High Street. This application was rejected by the Light Railway Commissioners, giving the reason that as the proposed system of tramways was wholly within the Borough, it should be classed as an urban tramway and should be promoted under the Tramways Act of 1870.

The Council was keen to have trams in the Town and several ideas were mooted. In 1901 the Corporation presented a bill to Parliament which resulted in an Act of 1901 giving Colchester Corporation permission to construct electric tramway of a 3ft 6in gauge.

In February 1903 Colchester Town Council led by Alderman Henry Elwes adopted by 18 votes to 9 an electric tramway system at an estimated cost of £63,414. Those

councilors voting against wished to wait a while to see how the somewhat unreliable motorbus would develop before deciding in favour or tramcars.

Work started in late 1903 as the rails were delivered from Belgium and construction work to both track and overhead lines was carried out by the contractors, J G White & Co Ltd. Messrs Lacey and Stillar were the engineers. Power for working

the trams was provided from the Corporation's own electricity works.

One major problem in laying the track was the junction of High Street with Queen Street due to a sharp bend. The road had to be widened and this involved purchasing

three cottages to be demolished. The Borough Surveyor found there was a weakness in the bridge over the River Colne in North Station Road, so this had to be strengthened and widened to take the weight of the trams. (to be continued next issue)

Bernard Polley



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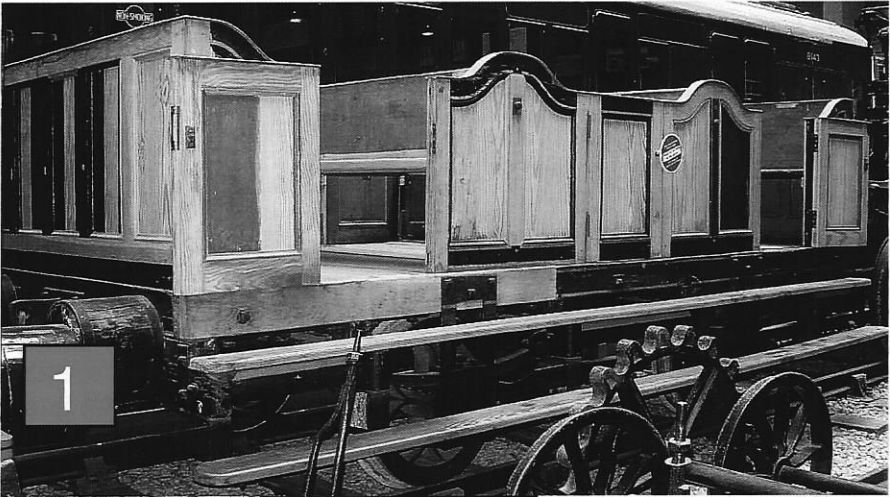
Editorial

It is five years since I volunteered to edit our Lexden History Group magazine. I have enjoyed every minute of it, specially reading our members' contributions and viewing their many photographs. Of course, home computers have made the job so much easier.

We are now looking for someone else to carry on the good work, as I am standing down as editor this year. So, here it is, the big question. Could you - would you like to volunteer to be the next editor? I am relying on Members to contact me either by phone or email. My details are above.

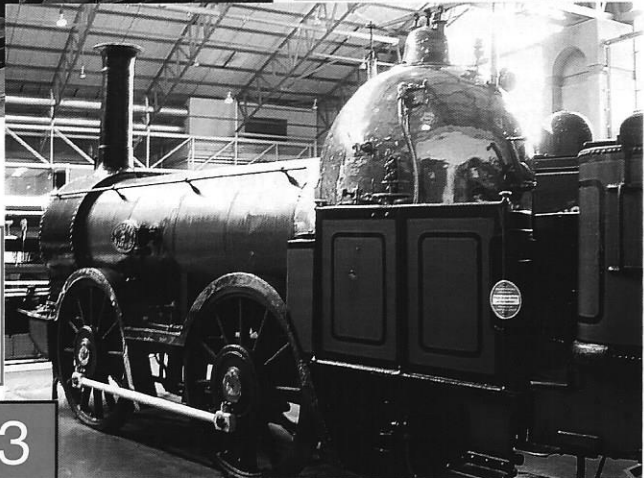
Whoever takes over from me this year, will be most welcome to work with me for their first issue. I will continue to provide any help that may be required by the new editor. If needed, Bob will be happy to help set up the template on a computer.

Now an apology - Mike Beattie's Aunty Joslin lived in Boxford, not Boxted as printed on the back cover of the last issue.



See article: "Parliamentary Trains" page 6

1. 3rd Class Carriage pre 1844 Act
2. 1st Class Carriage in Eastern Counties Railway livery.
3. Locomotive of the type employed on the Eastern Counties Railway in the 1840s on the line from London to Colchester.



*All photographs taken at the National Railway Museum, York.
Bob Thornhill*