

Lexden History Group

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Exhibition**

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Churchyard –
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Soldiers from Lexden Heath Camp (now Nelson Road / Collingwood Road area) having their horses re-shod at Lexden Village Blacksmith (now Evans Garage below)



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Meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7.45pm in St Leonard's Church Hall, Lexden except August when there is no meeting. Entry £1 for members, £3 for non-members, refreshments included. Annual membership £15 for single person. £20 for a family living at the same address.

Annual Membership renewal is due before the AGM meeting on the 14th May, 2014.

Renewal forms are on the Lexden History web site (www.lexdenhistory.org.uk) or will be forwarded to you by email in April.

Who Remembers/Competition/Answers

ENDSLEIGH SCHOOL

Does anybody remember or attended **Endsleigh School 1955 - 1990?**

If you have any memories, pictures or information regarding this school the committee would like to hear from you.

MARCH QUIZ

1. Lexden was formerly a village mentioned in the Domesday Book – what previous name has Lexden been known by?
2. What cut the village in two?
3. In 1648 who lived in Lexden during the Siege of Colchester?
4. When was the Avenue of Remembrance built?

Answers in the Summer issue of the newsletter. No prizes, just a pat on the back for getting the answers. *Christmas Quiz Answers see page 11*

Message from your Chairman – Dick Barton

The December 2013 issue of the Newsletter was the last one to be edited by Jane Thornhill. Jane has been our Editor since 2008 when she took over from David Cawdell. Jane's tenure has been remarkable and we owe her a great deal. She also served as our Secretary 2006-07. During that time Bob Thornhill has been Assistant Editor and our Webmaster. To mark their retirement a presentation was made to them at our January meeting.

Did you know that Lexden has a new road – Hargood Close off London Road? As the new Close is opposite Trafalgar, Nelson and Collingwood Roads, it was decided to name the new Close after another Battle of Trafalgar Admiral – Sir William Hargood (1762-1839). He served through the American War of Independence, the French Revolutionary War and the Wars with Napoleon. He was given command of HMS *Belleisle*, which after a refit joined Nelson's fleet just two weeks before the Battle in 1805. His ship was engaged continuously during the action, sustaining 25% casualties with 126 dead and wounded. Badly damaged, his ship was towed to Gibraltar for repairs. He remained firm friends with King William IV, with whom he had served in the Navy. He died in Bath in 1839, where he is buried.

Supporting Our Community

Sussex Road Wall

For several years the low wall around a small meadow on the corner of Sussex Road and Lexden Road had been deteriorating. There had been some fine cedar trees and rosebeds on the site, carefully tended by an unknown person, possibly the owner of Sussex House before it became flats. The trees became unsafe and were removed, the roses were never pruned and weeds took over the flower beds. The wall, never in very good condition, gradually fell down, often helped by vandals and passers-by. It became dangerous and an eyesore. The owner had to be found, if not to pay for the repairs, to ask for permission to do so.

Much research was carried out to establish who owned it. It is in a Conservation Area, but the Borough Council is not responsible for it. For many years it has been called Martyrs' Field, Hangman's Corner, etc, but no evidence for this macabre use has been found, merely hearsay.

There was the risk of it falling into the hands of a developer and the picturesque corner would be lost forever. Unable to find an owner The East Lexden Residents' Association took it on and, together with nearby house holders and well wishers, started fundraising for the wall to be restored. Lexden History Group was asked if it would help and the committee agreed to give a one-off donation of £100. The work has now been completed, the front rebuilt with Suffolk yellows and the back with red bricks, as per the original. This historic site has now been restored for the benefit of local people.

Tales from the Graveyard

This poem was written by Joseph Barker who was born in Layer Marney (then part of Lexden Parish) on 10th January 1792, son of John and Jane (nee Goldie) Barker. His parents were married in Lexden Church on 25 Sept 1780 and had a total of eight children. Joseph married Susannah Kingsbury on 28th February 1816. She was born in St Martin's Parish, Colchester, on 22nd October 1797. They were grandparents to Ellen Hayward born in 1861, who married Frederick Greenfield in 1883. They were grandparents to Win and Heather Greenfield, who now live in Stanway and are members of Lexden History Group.

Joseph was a bricklayer by trade, living in Rose Cottage, Lexden Heath by the now demolished Hunter's Farm on the north corner of Heath Road and Straight Road.

Joseph died on January 21st 1870, four years after writing his poem, and Susannah died on 16th May 1885. They are buried together in Lexden Churchyard, near the corner with Church Lane and Lexden Road, although their headstone has since been lost.

LEXDEN ROSE COTTAGE – February 22nd 1866

**A few lines on entering my
Fifty first year of marriage and my
Seventy fifth year of my age.**

**Bless God He has preserved us
That we might live to see
Fifty years a married life
And keep the Jubilee.**

**Thank God we are both in good health
Though I am very lame
I've suffered much for years past
And I still remain the same.**

**Thank God our Children are grown up
And are all of (*sic*) our hands
And some are living far away
Though not on foreign Lands.**

**The Oldest One is forty nine
The youngest Twenty five
But of all the Children we have had
There is but nine alive.**

**We have twenty eight Grand Children now
Without going any further
And if I live before long
I shall be a Great Grandfather.**

**I little thought the day we married
That we should live to see
So many happy years together
And keep the Jubilee.**

(Signed J. Barker)

Lexden History Group First World War Exhibition

26th-28th September 2014, Lexden Church Hall

This year is the centenary of the First World War and Lexden History Group is planning to stage an Exhibition in Lexden Church Hall at the end of September. Our plan is to commemorate rather than celebrate the war which caused major devastation to countries and families regardless of national affiliations. Many groups all over Britain are planning similar events but we have thought hard about the direction we should take.

Our title is "Lexden commemorates the First World War" and we will be remembering the local Lexden men who are commemorated on the Lexden War Memorial. By choosing this title, although we will address the military story and the horrors of the Front, we plan to show what life was like for families waiting for the almost inevitable unpalatable news, given the carnage being meted out by both sides.

We shall cover the tribulations suffered at home, rationing and untold hardships. Another important factor is the work done by women in munitions factories, on the trams, in the local auxiliary hospitals, etc. The stories of conscientious objectors tell of the soul-searching misery of men having to serve against their consciences and religion, as well as suffering the ignominy at home. Music and poetry was important to many and we hope to have live performances. We also hope to enjoy the delights of a Field Kitchen!



At this distance from the tragedies and traumas of the theatre of war we must also consider the sufferings of the "other side". The ordinary German people did not want war, but were powerless to halt the inexorable progress created by circumstances beyond their control. We shall be remembering them together with members of the Commonwealth and other countries forced to serve their political allies.

These are just a few of the subjects which we hope will prove fascinating. We are also keen to have offers of help, eg, providing items for display, stories to be told, photographs, providing display cabinets, etc. The list is endless! If you feel you could add to the exhibition in any way, please contact Liz White on 01206 522713 or email - alangwhite187444@hotmail.com

The Colcestrian who became Lord Mayor of London

Not everyone can claim one of their ancestors became Lord Mayor of London but I can, for David Williams Wire, a Colcestrian, held this important office in 1858-59. A bust in his memory is displayed on the upper staircase in the Town Hall.



Bust of David W Wire on the upper staircase of Colchester Town Hall

David was the nephew of my great-great-grandfather Chignell Wire, who was a well-known Colchester businessman. David Wire was the third son of Samson and Susannah Wire. At the time of his birth in August 1801 the family were living in Bear Lane (now East Stockwell Street), Colchester where Samson traded as a baker and pastry cook. The family being staunch non-conformists, David was baptised at the Stanwell Street Independent Chapel in 1814. There is no recording of his schooling.

After leaving school he joined the firm of Betts, Solicitors, in Colchester as an office junior. Whilst with Mr Betts he was noticed as a bright pupil by Daniel Whittle Harvey, Colchester's Liberal Member of Parliament, who was a solicitor himself. Harvey engaged David in his own office and took him to the London office of John Dixon

in St Swithin's Lane and enrolled him as a legal student at the University of London, where he passed his examinations to become a qualified solicitor. By 1829 David had been appointed a partner in the firm now known as Wire & Child.

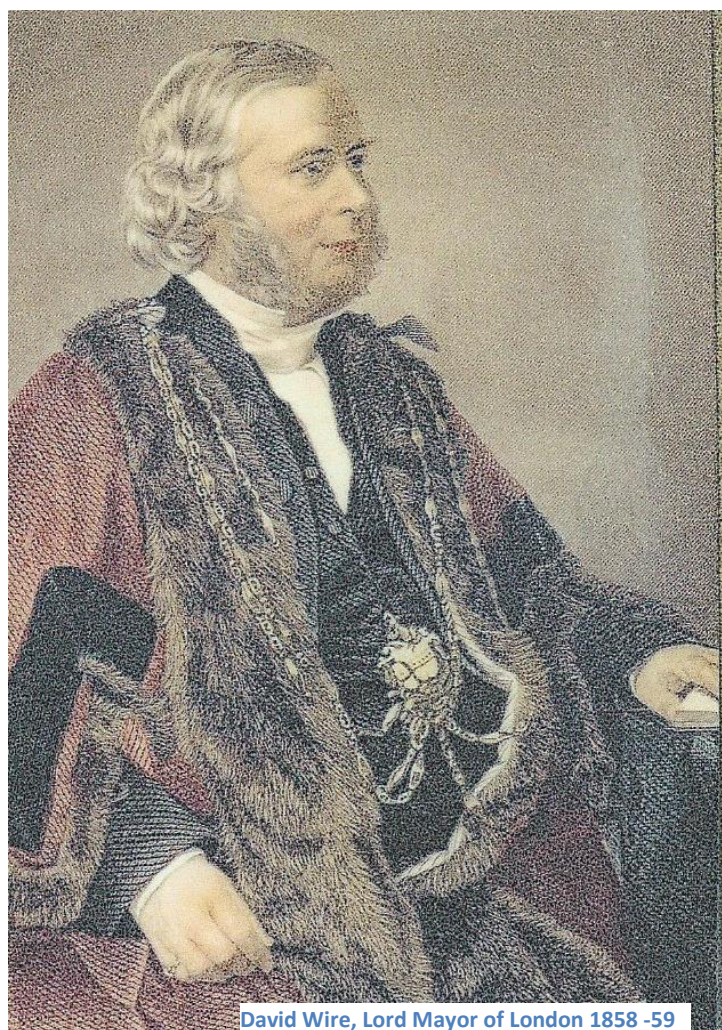
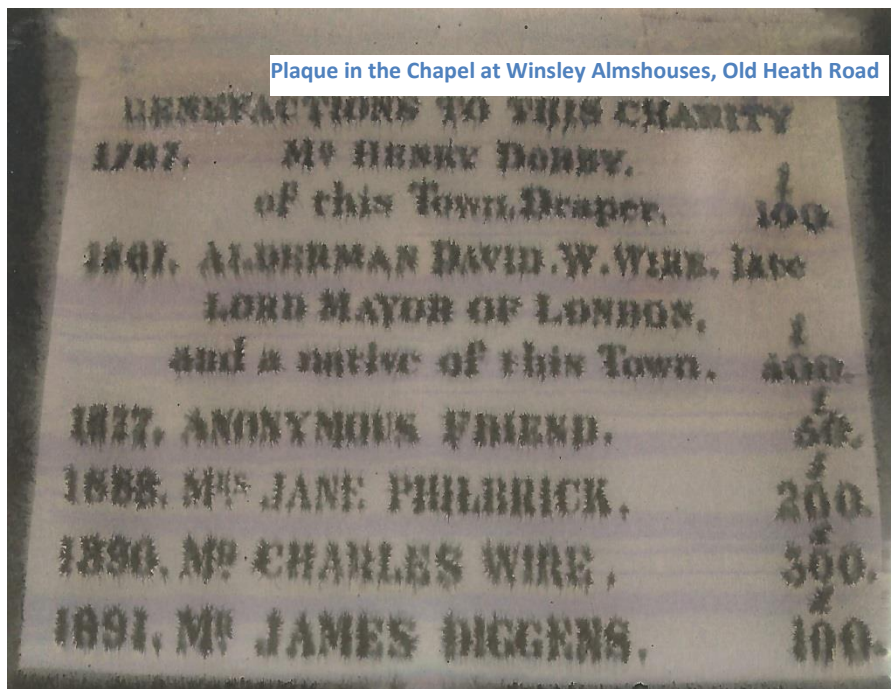
By Right of Birth, he was sworn in as Freeman of the Borough of Colchester in 1831, as had many other members of the Wire family. In November he was elected Freeman of the Innholders' Company and Freeman of the City of London. David, on encouragement from Harvey, became interested in politics and stood for election, winning the Common Council Ward in Walbrook, Lewisham.

He married widow Harriot Phippin (nee Briant) in 1834 and lived in Deptford where two children were born – Travers Barton and Judith Montefiore.

In 1839 David accompanied Sir Moses Montefiore, a Jewish financier, on a mission to Turkey in support of oppressed Jews.

Seven years later David Wire was granted his own Coat of Arms and in February 1851 he was elected, unopposed, as Alderman of the City of London and in 1853/4 served as Sheriff of London and Middlesex.

With a great deal of pomp and ceremony David Wire was elected Lord Mayor in November 1858 to serve for 12 months. Towards the end of his term of office he suffered ill health and he died aged 59. He was buried in West Norwood cemetery – a gravestone marking the grave. In his will David



David Wire, Lord Mayor of London 1858 -59

made a bequest of £500 to the Trustees of Winsley Almshouses in Colchester on condition that two more almshouses were built within two years.

Other members of the Wire family include William Wire, the amateur archaeologist and watch maker, who left his diary of events and happenings in Colchester in the mid-1840s to the town library; and Herbert Conrad Wire, a naval adventurer, and a plaque to his memory is in St Peter's Church, North Hill. My grandmother, Sarah Willsher (nee Wire), died before I was born.

Family history is a great hobby for you never know what will turn up next!

Bernard Polley

Prettygate Farm

Prettygate Ward of Colchester originally got its name from the picturesque gate which stood at the entrance to the farm - Prettygate Farm.

The gate was created by farmer William Baines in the early 19th century. There are no records of any farm buildings around this area until 1805 when an Ordnance Survey map shows un-named farm buildings in the location of Prettygate Farm. By 1881, maps show a named 'Prettygate Farm' on Roman Way (renamed Prettygate Road later).

In June 1923, Prettygate Farm was for sale by auction with Sexton and Grimwade, the auction catalogue read:

'Attractive Small Freehold Farm with brick and plaster-tiled residence. Farm buildings include brick and slated stables and coach house, timber and slated cattle shed, barn with lean-to piggeries, cart and implement shed, thatched shed, cattle shed and loose box, poultry houses and enclosed yard, all on 75 acres, 3 roads and 7 poles of excellent arable and pasture land'.

The 1923 electoral role shows the occupants at this time were Mary and Oliver Gentle. It is not known how much the farm was sold for, but it is believed the new occupant was to be William George Blake, whose family were to stay at the farm until it was demolished in the late 1950's to make way for the housing development.

Prior to the Second World War the only roads with residences were mostly Shrub End Road, Straight Road, King Harold Road, Dugard Avenue, Heath Road and Plume Avenue. The rest were taken up with farmlands comprising Plume Farm, Magazine Farm and Prettygate Farm.

Colchester Borough Council formed the new ward of Prettygate in time for the elections on 6th May 1976; previously this area had been covered by the Lexden and Shrub End Wards.

This feature was taken from; Bernard Polley - Research in to Prettygate Ward of Colchester Borough in 2002

Prettygate Farm continued



Above - Prettygate Farm in the 1930's and below how the site looks today, the tree still remains



Pre-ROMAN LEXDEN

Colchester is situated on a hill surrounded by flatter, sometimes marshy land and Lexden, which lies to the west, is situated on the old Roman road to London. The "Lexden" boundaries have changed over time and covered a much larger area than now.

There is an extensive Iron Age defence system, including Lexden Earthworks and Bluebottle Grove, enclosing about 12 square miles. These banks and ditches protected the western side of Camulodunum – pre-Roman Colchester. The longest is Grymes Dyke stretching nearly three miles to the west and south-west of Colchester.

Lexden Cemetery, first discovered when Lexden Park was built in the 1820s, dates from the early Iron Age and was used into the Roman period. There are some 14 Iron Age cremations but only two barrows, Lexden Tumulus and Marlow Way Tumulus, remain.



The Lexden Tumulus, now part of 30 Fitzwalter Road, Lexden, was excavated in 1924 and dates to about 17BC. It possibly dates from the Bronze Age with a later Iron Age burial although this is not fully confirmed. It is thought that Addedomarus, chief of the Trinovantes tribe, may be buried there, which would support the evidence of a principal grave dating to before 10AD. Later burials suggest that one could be that of Cunobelinus the Catuvellauni Chieftain from 10AD to 42AD. He captured Camulodunum, the capital of the

Trinovantes tribe, and continued to rule south east England until defeated by the Romans. The tumulus or barrow would have been nine feet high (now only 4ft) and 100 ft in diameter, surrounded by a ditch nearly 3 ft deep.

The main excavated grave was near the centre at a depth of 7ft below the old ground level and, although it had been disturbed, it still contained burial goods. The finds, which could be dated between 17BC and 43AD, included metalwork from a funerary carriage with a linch pin, traces of gold, silver studs, enamelled discs and two bronze studs with red glass inlay. It also contained iron swords and the Lexden Medallion, dated to 17BC, a coin depicting the Roman Emperor Augustus and mounted as a portrait medallion (picture above). This is now in Colchester Museum and is thought to have been a gift from the Emperor to win over one of the tribal kings. The grave goods also included Belgic pottery, amphorae, chain mail and a small statue of Cupid together with sculptured bronzes of a griffin, bull and boar, the origins of which confirm that there was already trade with Europe years before the invasion by Claudius in AD 43. Excavations at the Marlowe Way tumulus in Poets' Corner, revealed fragments of Roman tiles and pottery.

Many will remember the excavations of the Celtic burial ground in Stanway in the 1990s which uncovered fascinating items of the pre-Roman era. It appears that the site was originally a small farmstead in the second or third centuries BC, eventually becoming a select burial ground. The chambers were timber lined and the most remarkable were the Warrior's Grave and the Surgeon's grave which contained the splendid gaming board with glass counters still in place and medical instruments which are recognisable today! The later graves date to about AD60 demonstrating that prominent Britons were being buried there after the Roman invasion.



Gosbecks Park is one of the most significant pre-Roman and post-invasion sites in Essex, the Roman temple being discovered by Rev Henry Jenkins, an amateur archaeologist, in the 19th century. Aerial photographs in the 1930s established the immense scale of the site which includes a Roman theatre with seating for 5,000, a large Romano-Celtic temple within a huge portico and other walled enclosures. These three sites are now shown in outline on the ground. Much of the area was destroyed by successive farming systems bounded by defensive dykes. A road was built from the *colonia* (Colchester) to the east of site and to the west is the site of a Roman fort. Fragments of storage jars, amphora, Samian ware, etc, have been found over the years.

There is no clear cut division between historical eras as they merge almost imperceptibly, therefore Celtic and Roman history and artefacts BC and AD are similar, especially as there was trade between Europe and Britain long before the Romans invaded. The Celts were not as uncivilised as Roman historians would have us believe, quickly adopting aspects of the Roman lifestyle if it was politically advantageous and if it suited them!

Lexden Medallion picture (page 10) by kind permission of Colchester and Ipswich Museums

Christmas Competition Answers

1. 12 DOC! - 12 Days Of Christmas. **2.** 5GR! - 5 Gold Rings. **3.** W3KOOA! - We 3 Kings Of Orient Are. **4.** IS3SCSB! - I Saw 3 Ships Come Sailing By. **5.** 240OPIAP! - 240 Old Pence In A Pound. **6.** 3 LOAT! - 3 Legs On A Tripod. **7.** 7 YOBLFBAM! - 7 Years Of Bad Luck For Breaking A Mirror. **8.** 2 TD! - 2 Turtle Doves. **9.** 5 VITEA! - 5 Vowels In The English Alphabet. **10.** 168 SOASOD! - 168 Spots On A Set Of Dominoes. **11.** 8 PIAG! - 8 Pints In A Gallon. **12.** 6 WOHTE! - 6 Wives Of Henry The Eighth. **13.** 64 SOACB! - 64 Squares On A Chess Board. **14.** 39 BITOT! - 39 Books In The Old Testament. **15.** 90 DIARA! - 90 Degrees In A Right Angle. **16.** 15 PIARUT! - 15 Players In A Rugby Union Team. **17.** 7 SOAFPC! - 7 Sides On A Fifty Pence Coin. **18.** 3600 SIAH! - 3600 Seconds In An Hour. **19.** 4 SIAPOPC ! - 4 Suits In A Pack Of Playing Cards. **20.** 12 SOTZ! - 12 Signs Of The Zodiac

Forthcoming Outings

COMBINED MILITARY SERVICES MUSEUM – THURSDAY 5TH JUNE, 2014

The Lexden History Group Committee will be organising an afternoon visit to the Museum.

The Museum is based in Station Road, Maldon. The Museum holds the Mason Collection, one of the world's foremost collections of covert operations weapons, clothing and equipment. Many of the items in this collection are the only examples on display worldwide and are all genuine pieces of espionage equipment, some of which were used on operations by Peter and Prue Mason. The Museum also houses an extensive range of Special Forces equipment, including the only surviving Cockleshell Heroes Canoe.

We will meet at the Museum at **2pm**. Why not make a day out and visit the barges along Maldon Quay and have lunch in one of the restaurants along the water front?



- Admission Prices – **Adult £4.75 Concession £3.75** - payable on the day
- Own transport but we can arrange lifts
- To book your place(s) please give your details to Jackie Bowis – 01206 561528 who will co-ordinating the visit.

IWM DUXFORD-THE FLYING LEGENDS AIR SHOW - SUNDAY 13TH JULY, 2014



The Lexden History Group Committee will be organising a visit to the show.

The Flying Legends Air Show is famous the world over for its unique presentation of historic piston-engined aircraft in rare combinations and remarkable flying displays. In the air will be the authentic 1940s atmosphere that can be

experienced across the museum and Duxford in its flying heyday. The event offers an unmissable fusion of power, sound, excitement and nostalgia. The display takes place 2- 5.30pm which will give you time in the morning to visit the museum.

- The cost for entry will be **£22.95 per person** – a deposit of £10 per person will be required to secure your place
- The cost and mode of transport will be decided upon once the committee know how many people wish to attend the event.
- To book your place(s) please give your details and money to Tim Holding 01206 576149 who will be co-ordinating this event.

Forthcoming Speakers

9th April – Dr Jane Pearson

'The History of Colchester Hospitals'

14th May – AGM

'Colchester History Alive' – local acting group

11th June – John Enfield

'The History of the Colchester Operatic Society'