

Lexden History Group

This issue features:

Tales from the Churchyard – The Adkinsons

Links with the Past – Roman Lexden & Trevanian Cipher

The Ghosts at Weavers



April 1917 Lexden Parish Magazine belonging to Jane Tanner who's grandmother, Annie Stevens, was born in Colchester in 1894, and married in Lexden in 1917.

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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.

Renewal forms are on the Lexden History web site (www.lexdenhistory.org.uk)

Competition Answers – March Quiz

1. Lexden was formerly a village mentioned in the Domesday Book - what previous names has Lexden been known by?

Answer - Lessendon, Lassendene and Laexadyne.

2. What cut the village in two?

Answer - The modern bypass in Spring Lane

3. In 1648 who lived in Lexden during the Siege of Colchester?

Answer - Lord General Thomas Fairfax

4. When was the Avenue of Remembrance built? **Answer – Started in 1930, Opened 1933**

Well done to all those members who got the correct answers

Message from your Chairman – Dick Barton

As readers know the Group is planning an exhibition in Lexden Church Hall, 26th-28th September, 2014, to mark the 100th Anniversary of the start of The Great War. Many thanks to those who have already offered to lend objects for the exhibition.

The Group will need a lot of help from members to set the Exhibition up, to act as Stewards and to help with refreshments. Please be ready to volunteer when boards are passed round to collect names.

Colchester's Conservative MP from 1910 to 1929 was Sir Laming Worthington-Evans. Throughout The Great War he held a number of Government junior posts in the War Office, the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Munitions, returning to the Foreign Office in July 1918 to become the Minister of Blockade, a post he held until the General Election of December, 1918. He continued to hold a number of senior posts until 1929.

Front Cover

Lexden Parish Magazine April 1917

Mentioned on the front of the Lexden Parish Magazine for April 1917 are two illustrious names - Rev T Stamford Raffles MA and Mr W Coats Hutton.

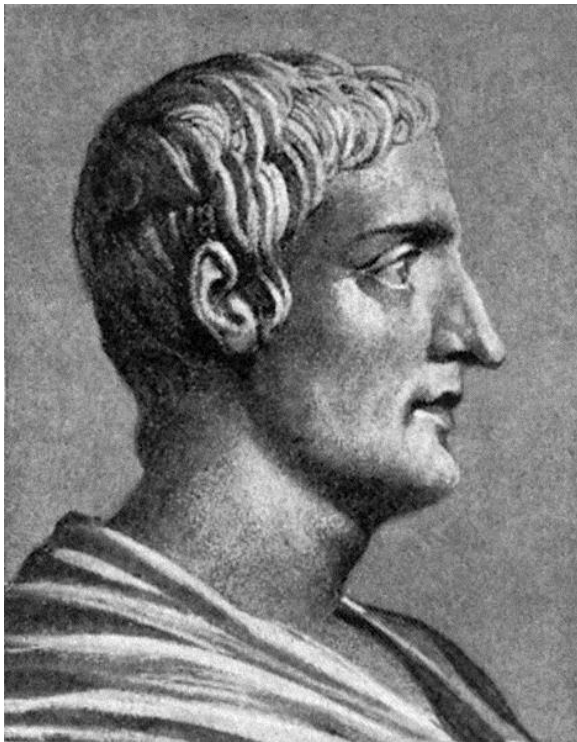
Rev Thomas Stamford Raffles was Rector of Lexden from 1914 until his death in 1926, living at the new Rectory in Glen Avenue. He had previously been Rector at Langham for over 25 years. He was born in Liverpool on 11th July 1853 and awarded his MA at Clare College, Cambridge. He married Cecil Helen Lovett in 1884. They had two sons, Stamford Cecil Raffles, born in 1885, who gained his Aeronaut's Certificate as a Lt in the 3rd Royal Welsh Fusiliers in 1915. He became a Major in the Royal Flying Corps, and was awarded the OBE. He died in Jersey in 1942. Reginald Lovett Stamford Raffles was born in 1888 and joined the Royal Welsh Fusiliers later transferring to the Royal Flying Corps. He too reached the rank of Major and in the 1940s leased the Dutch Barn from Southwold Council setting it up as an upmarket restaurant with his family. It was very badly damaged in the 1953 floods but was rebuilt and they were there for many years. He died in Southwold in 1974. Rev Thomas Stamford Raffles was a distant relative of Sir Stamford Raffles who was instrumental in the founding of Singapore in 1819.

William Coats Hutton was born on 7th August 1864 in Argyll, Scotland, to Anthony and Margaret Hutton. His mother's maiden name was Coats – a name he adopted, using it to preface his own surname of Hutton. He had two sisters, Glorianna and Jesse, and in 1893 he married Ethel FitzRoy Merriman in Kensington. They had 2 sons and 2 daughters and at one time lived in Lexden Manor. He was twice Mayor of Colchester - 1912/13 and 1914/15. Later they moved to the Grange in Lexden Road where he lived until his death in 1926.

ROMAN LEXDEN

Colchester or Camulodunum, the "Fortress of the war god Camulos" was the former capital of the Trinovantes, the first British tribe to establish trade links with Rome under a treaty dating to 55/54BC when Caesar first set foot in Britain. Later they came under the control of the Catuvellauni,

The invasion of Britain began in 43AD advancing from Kent towards Camulodunum led by Emperor Claudius, with a number of elephants, his elite Praetorian Guard, and some high ranking Roman senators especially brought to be important witnesses to his achievements rather than in Rome working to undermine him! This large expeditionary force would have taken the already well-established route from London, passing along what is now Lexden Road to their desired objective - Camulodunum. It is thought that their temporary encampment was at Lexden Heath, east of their newly dug Triple Dyke which ran parallel to present-day Straight Road. Another dyke (Prettygate Dyke) was dug to the south and together with the Lexden Dyke to the east of modern Lexden Park, only the northern side had to be defended. Large leather tents would have been erected in neat, ordered lines and the soldiers and horses would have made ready use of the nearby river Colne. They laid siege to the town, which quickly forced the British kings to surrender, and where they established a fortress to house the XXth Legion and the First Thracian Cavalry. Claudius, having captured Camulodunum and subjugated the surrounding tribes, stayed in Britain a mere 16 days, completing his round trip from Rome in only six months. This sounds impressive, but there is some doubt as to whether Claudius, who was not strong and lacked military experience, actually came himself!



The newly established city, with its population now accredited citizens of the Roman Empire, was renamed Colonia Claudia Victricensis. So great was this achievement by Claudius that not only was he given the title 'Britannicus', but also special consent for a victory parade in Rome and rich benefits for his family. The Roman historian, Tacitus (*picture left*), records that the Colonia was now a settlement used to enforce Roman law on the local rebels and, to underpin the status of the new capital of Britannia, a large Temple of Claudius, theatre, monumental arch and shops were quickly built, further enraging the dispossessed and enslaved locals. Boudicca, with her Celtic army rampaging through the region, razed the Colonia to the ground in 61AD, massacring the population. However, the complacent Romans, realising that their new capital had been woefully defended, quickly restored and rebuilt the Colonia, erecting

the first city wall in Britain.

The temple of Claudius was not the only one built around this time. A temple to Silvanus was erected in the area now occupied by CRGS playing fields and another to

Links with the Past – continued

Jupiter at Sheepen, south-east of Lexden, which was a manufacturing and trading area also retained by the Romans. Religious places and markets were often in close proximity which could explain the siting of this new temple.

Lexden was closely linked with Gosbecks to the south and this important farming area, with its temple and theatre, was hugely developed by the Romans from its Celtic origins. A small Roman fort, built during the period of the invasion, was used to police the area without disrupting the activities of the large established regional market for livestock and agricultural produce which the Romans were keen to continue for its economic benefits. The finding at Gosbecks of the large bronze statuette of Mercury, the Roman god of merchandise (*picture right*), further emphasises the importance of the links between the temple and market.



There is other evidence of the Romans in Lexden. A burial chamber dating to about 60AD was found in the Lexden Tumulus, later than the other burials there. It was probably for a woman as it contained a broken necklace and such a burial suggests that, even shortly after the invasion, some British nobles were content to use Roman coins and goods and still indulge their own customs. Another grave, with spear and shield, also appears to be that of someone accepted by the Roman authorities.

Three major roads, London to Ipswich, Colchester to Bishop's Stortford, and Colchester to Cambridge, cross in Lexden. Roman burial monuments were often sited close to roads and a portion of the London/Ipswich road, which was broad with gravel surfaces and a ditch on either side, was found in the grounds of Colchester Royal Grammar School. The site has been excavated for well over a hundred years and an area of Roman burials and cremations with tombstones have been found together with a rectangular walled cemetery. In 2005, the remains of a 3rd Century Roman temple-tomb with a number of cremation urns was also excavated at the CRGS site. It consisted of an hexagonal tower about 16ft in diameter with a circular central space about 10ft in diameter set in square walled enclosure 3ft thick and measuring nearly 30ft.

The Romans remained in England for several centuries, splitting from Rome a couple of times in the 3rd century. As their authority waned, a Christian Church was built in Butt Road in about 330AD and after many uprisings Britannia again split from Rome in about 409. This date is difficult to confirm, but the absence of new coinage and the heavy clipping of old coinage would suggest an economic collapse and demise of Roman influence in the area.

(Picture of Mercury Statuette from Colchester and Ipswich Museums)



No-one who knows me well would say that I was a woman of a fanciful nature. In fact, I tend to be somewhat sceptical about unexplained matters whether they are from another world or era. However, my outlook since arriving at Weavers twenty years ago has changed. On first viewing the house my mother, a lady of some 81 summers, who always declared that she would have been burnt as a witch at the stake centuries ago, said that it was a "happy house" and was quite keen to move into her own annex to the west of the building.

It was rumoured that ghosts of nuns crawling on dried peas along the attic corridor, paying the penalty for misdemeanours, occasionally made their presence felt. Footsteps were heard but we were never aware of the nuns' agonies. My first encounter with the unknown occurred early one morning when, answering an unwelcome call of nature, I made my way along the uneven passageway to the bathroom. I had an increasing feeling of unease and even slight fear as I continued and, not long after, this rapidly became raw fright when I heard, but did not see, a middle-sized dog behind me. I put it down to perhaps being still in a dream, but one afternoon, when clutching a cup of coffee and on closing the kitchen door, I suddenly shivered and the hairs stood up on the back of my neck. I have no idea what that was but it was to occur fairly frequently to me and friends in that part of the house. Even our cat seemed wary about crossing the passage, but that could be the presence of yet another canine intrusion!

My older daughter, Clare, seemed to be the most susceptible to these manifestations. Although she only mentioned it later, she did not want her large bedroom as she felt uneasy in it. It was apparently always several degrees colder than any other room, even though in the middle of the house. I was awakened one sultry summer night by a stifled scream of terror coming from her room. She stammered out that she had woken cold - strange on such a hot night - and then become aware of a presence making its way towards her. As the spectre went through the bed (and her) she was aware of loud whistling in her ears and then all went silent. We moved her bed that night! Over the next few years she witnessed a short, dumpy woman dressed in long dark clothing and wearing a shawl over her head just standing still, sometimes apparently half hidden by a large winged chair. On other occasions we would hear her say "I've got a lot of work to do, please go away!" or "I'm trying to sleep. Go away!" This is the way she dealt with these visitations except sometimes she would get really cross and shout!



My mother would often ask if we had gone into her room during the night as she had seen someone standing there, or whether we were making a lot of noise in the adjoining room – where our daughter had such encounters. Another strange but not unpleasant event she regularly experienced in her sitting room was the smell of violets, usually at about 3pm.

On returning to Colchester some years later, after my mother had died, Clare moved into the annex for a short while. She also became disturbed by a figure standing in the room or sitting on her bed, or an animal jumping on the bed. But the strangest event involved her camera. If I had not been there I would not have believed it! We were going out one afternoon and she went to get her car asking if I could collect her little red camera from the coffee table in the annex sitting room. It was not there – silly girl she must have put it somewhere else and forgotten! She was adamant that she had put it there so she would be able to find it that afternoon. “They’ve got it”! she exploded. She proceeded to stand in the middle of the room and announce “I want it back. I’m giving you a few minutes and I shall return.” We left the room, closing the door behind us (I was somewhat stunned!) and a few minutes later we returned and there was the camera sitting on the coffee table where she left it. I can’t explain it – can anyone else?

At one time we all shared a computer in the attic. One glorious windless October afternoon I went up to do some work but became increasingly aware of something there with me. Paper was rustled, the door moved, I was being watched and I felt distinctly uncomfortable. I had to return downstairs. Some months later my daughter and I were discussing the different happenings and she confessed that she had had exactly the same experience, except she had also felt someone, possibly a child, blowing in her ear. Another night I heard a loud noise from the same attic as if a child had jumped off a chair on to a wooden floor. “Old wood always cracks loudly at night because of the change in temperature,” my sceptical husband growled. However, having reinstated the dormer window up there, had a child jumped down from a stool after looking from that window? There had been a story about a dead child being seen by a window cleaner maybe 150 years ago.

There have been many similar episodes and they continue. We have become used to them and accept that in such an old house certain events must inevitably be recorded in the woodwork. We thought it was just us who were aware of these but occasionally visitors, with no knowledge of the house, would refuse to enter Clare’s room. Recently we had a young man with us for several weeks and although we never talk about our ghosts to people who are staying - it may upset them – he persisted in asking if we had ghosts and then whether there was a dog. He described exactly what I had experienced – so it wasn’t just me!!

My theory is that we are living in parallel time zones and that if past ages are haunting us, we must be haunting those in the future. What an exciting thought – time travel. Can we harness it to see the house as it was in the past or possibly in the future? Shades of Daphne du Maurier’s “The House on the Strand” – always a good read!

THE ADKINSONS - A close family in life and death

A number of graves in Lexden Churchyard have been badly damaged and obscured by a thick laurel hedge on the upper path to Lexden Road. They belong to several members of the Adkinson family but fortunately the inscriptions were recorded many years ago by a group from Lexden Church. The first grave records Charles Adkinson aged only 27 in July 1871 and buried with him a month later is his married sister, Elizabeth Steed. Slightly further along the path their father, Samuel Adkinson, who lived 1811-1865, is buried with his wife, Frances Maria, who died in 1890. Their third daughter, Sophia Balls, who died aged 27 in 1869 is nearby and with her is her only son, Ambrose, who joined her in 1925 aged 59. On the lower path to the south of the church, is the 1911 grave of Thomas Mills, aged 65, husband of Hannah Adkinson, who was buried with him in 1920 aged 72. There is also a vase, enigmatically engraved "Stanley" who was possibly their infant son born in 1888.

The Atkinson's seemed to be a very close-knit family and rejoiced in fulsome tear-jerking phrases, typical of the Victorian era, engraved on each headstone. Charles's inscription reads "Asking not if we can spare this dear soul it summons there. Had he asked us, well we know we should say, 'Oh spare this blow!' Yet, with streaming tears should pray 'Lord we love him, let him stay' ". It is a real cry from the heart and comes from the hymn "Christ will gather in his own" written by a German, Count Nikolaus L von Zinzendorf, (*picture right*) published in 1754 and translated by Catherine Winkworth in 1858. Elizabeth's dedication reads "To her the Cross with all its shame, with all its grace is given; her name an everlasting name, her joy the joy of heaven" - a verse from a hymn "The head that once was crowned with thorns" written in 1820 by Thomas Kelly. Thomas Mills' headstone reads "God saw our loved one falter then took him home to rest" and Sophia's says "Weary of earth and laden with my sin, I look at heaven and long to enter in; but there no evil thing may find a home and yet I hear a voice that bids me come" . This is again taken from a hymn, written in 1866 by S J Stone. Poor Ambrose just has "At rest".



The most effusive tribute is on Samuel's grave. It reads, "Weep not dear wife but be content for unto you I was but lent. We lived in love, in peace I died, you asked my life but was denied". This appears to be written directly to his wife but the phrases, with slight alterations, can be found on gravestones from many

different decades all over the English speaking world. The last lines, however, seem to infinitely vary, the more common ones including such as "As I am now so you must be, prepare yourself to follow me " which came originally from a European monastery. Other endings can be "Weep not for me, nor sorrow make, I'll wait for you at the heavenly gate". It seems that inscriptions were personalised for individual gravestones, but that begs the questions: how did they choose these inscriptions? did the stonemasons keep a book of suitable quotations?!

The family history reflects the rapid changes taking place over the country at that time. In 1841 Samuel was recorded as a Railway Porter living in Chitts Hill but soon after he became the brewer and keeper of a beershop in Chitts Hill called "The Locomotive". It sat adjacent to the Railway Gate House where the newly opened line between London and Colchester crossed the road. This name had become very popular as travel by steam railway was new and exciting. In 1861 Maria, his wife, had charge of the beershop with their son, Samuel aged 21, whilst Samuel senior ran a coffee house in Pelhams Lane with their daughters Sarah, aged 23, housekeeper, Elizabeth, aged 14, general servant and Hannah, aged 13, housemaid. A few months before Samuel's death in 1865 Maria took on the brewery and the "Locomotive" with Charles, who was living there and working as a Dealer. On her death in 1891 Maria's son-in-law, Thomas Mills, took over the licence with Hannah and their son, Charles, aged 27, working as a drayman. They kept the name "The Locomotive" until 1894 when it was renamed "The Victory".

In July 1870 Elizabeth Adkinson married Robert Steed, an agricultural labourer, and lived in Almshouses in Aldham. She died a year later and perhaps her parents decided to give her a decent burial with her recently deceased brother, Charles, rather than leave her in a pauper's grave in Aldham. She had no children. Robert Steed married a year later having moved to London to take work as a labourer. Sarah Adkinson married Edmund Keeble in 1864, her background with "The Locomotive" proving useful as Edmund became the senior beer retailer at The Compasses in Nayland.

The last survivor of the direct family, Ambrose Balls, was born in 1866, the son of Sophia (who died in 1869) and her husband, Isaac, but was brought up by his grandparents, Samuel and Maria. This continued until the late 1880s when he moved to live with their first daughter, Mary Ann and her husband William Manning, a farmer at Bradfield. Perhaps Ambrose was unable to work as over the course of several censuses no occupation is recorded for him, but neither is any disability. He died in 1925 aged 59 his address being given as God's House Farm in Ardleigh, with probate being granted to a couple of distant cousins, his effects amounting to £122 0s 7d. It is a shame that this interesting family history is in danger of being destroyed by laurel bushes.

Trevanion's Cipher

Asked about ciphers and codebreakers, and most people are likely to think of Bletchley Park and the World War II codebreakers, credited with the de-ciphering of the Enigma codes used by Germany to communicate with military personnel across Europe and North Africa.

Germany's armed forces believed their Enigma-encrypted communications were impenetrable to the Allies. But it is now widely accepted that the success of the Bletchley codebreakers in cracking the Enigma codes, in an operation codenamed 'Ultra', shortened the war in Europe by up to two years.

Well, what, you may ask, has this to do with Colchester? Codebreaking at Bletchley has no known links, but to find another codebreaking incident very much linked to Colchester, one has to go back 300 years to 1648 and the Civil War.

The story of Sir John Trevanion's escape from Colchester Castle has been the subject of much controversy over the years with many authors and historians questioning the authenticity of the incident. We shall probably never know if it was a true example of a spectacular escape from captivity, but if it was, it is possibly one of the first uses of ciphers in this country.

Believer or sceptic?

I shall leave it to the reader to decide. But the story goes at the time of the English Civil War, Sir John Trevanion, a high ranking Royalist fighting for King Charles I, was captured by Sir Thomas Fairfax's Roundheads following the siege of Colchester, and was locked up in Colchester Castle. His fellow Royalists, Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle had already been executed and his day of execution had been set. While Sir John languished in jail awaiting his fate, his jailers let him receive an innocent looking letter from a friend written on a piece of parchment.

On the following evening, Sir John asked to be allowed to pass an hour of private devotion in the chapel. The request was granted, but when the promised hour had expired, the prisoner was gone.

As it happened, the letter delivered at the last minute told Sir John a way to escape. The letter must have been examined so as not to allow conveyance of such information, but the message was cleverly hidden in apparently innocuous words from a friend consoling a doomed prisoner. The letter was, in fact, in cipher.

It read:

Worthie Sir John, - Hope, that is ye beste comfort of ye afflicted, cannot much, I fear me, help you now. That I would saye to you, is this only: if ever I may be able to requite that I do owe you, stand not upon asking me. 'Tis not much that I can do: but what I can do, bee ye verie sure I wille, I knowe that, if dethe comes, if ordinary men fear it, it frights not you, accounting it for a high honour, to have such a rewarde of your loyalty. Pray yet that you may be spared this soe bitter cup. I fear not that you will grudge any sufferings; only if bie submission you can turn them away, 'tis the part of a wise man. Tell me, an if you can, to do for you anythinge that you wolde have done. The general goes back on Wednesday. Restinge your servant to command. R.T.

Where was the code in this, apparently, harmless letter? Well, picking up each third letter after punctuation reveals the true message:

PANEL AT EAST END OF CHAPEL SLIDES

Kerry Harris

.....There seems to be some controversy around the Civil War story of Sir John Trevanion's escape from Colchester Castle in 1648. There was a John Trevanion but he died in 1643 and no one of that name is recorded with the other prisoners. Charles Lucas and George Lisle, were executed, Bernard Gasgoigne was a foreigner and reprieved and a Colonel Farre, did escape. No early works on cryptography mention Trevanion's cipher, but over 200 years later from 1853 there was a rash of publications repeating the story. The cipher itself seems too sophisticated to have no truth behind it, and although contemporary civil war publications did frequently report such thrilling accounts, there is no proof that Sir John Trevanion did dupe his executioners. What a shame! ...Your Committee

Forthcoming Events

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
- A coach has been arranged, cost to be confirmed nearer the time (the more people we get the less the coach will cost you).
- To book your place(s) please give your details and money to Tim Holding 01206 576149 who will be co-ordinating this event.

Lexden History Group - World War One Exhibition

Entry Free, 10am – 4.30pm, 27th & 28th September

Lexden Church Hall, Refreshments available



Summer BBQ - Saturday 23rd August

12noon - 4pm at Carol and Tim Holding, Little Glebe, Spring Lane.

Tickets £5, available at the June and July meetings.

FORTHCOMING SPEAKERS

**9th July – Ray Tolhurst
The Lancaster Bomber that didn't make it**

**10th September - Brian Billins
History of Smuggling in Essex**

**8th October - Ashley Cooper
300 years of Country Field History**

If you have the names and contact details of possible speakers for the forthcoming programme I would be pleased to hear from you.
Please email the details to jbowis@hotmail.com