

# Lexden History Group

*This issue features:*

Childhood  
Memories of Lexden  
- Mary Beattie  
1922-2014

Lexden History  
Group Archive

Thomas Twining  
1734 – 1804

GEORGE HENRY  
ERRINGTON'S  
STORY - PART 1



Lexden Bridge finally reopens on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2015



The original plaque from 1904 has been retained

A member of the Lexden History Group cycles over the bridge before the official opening

**Newsletter No37 – June 2015**

**Website [www.lexdenhistory.org.uk](http://www.lexdenhistory.org.uk)**

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Meetings are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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](http://www.lexdenhistory.org.uk)

## Message from our Chairman – Dick Barton

Colchester's refurbished and re-designed Castle Museum has recently celebrated its first anniversary and continues to draw visitors from far and wide. Its special activities for children, about the Romans, have five primary school classes visiting the museum every day in term-time.

There is good news also about the Grade 1 listed Bourne Mill. National Trust, the owners, has entered into a partnership project with the University of Essex. New displays and interpretation panels will be developed through the project which will also see the reconstruction of a working replica fulling wheel.

History students at the University will have the chance to take part in activities to develop the National Trust's work to interpret the history of the Bourne Mill. Student volunteers from the History Dept. will support the work and two Essex graduates will be recruited to supervise the project.

The National Trust head ranger at Bourne Mill has reported that the project will help to start the Trust's ambition to bring the Mill to life. The Heritage Lottery Fund and the University's Essex Fund of donations have contributed to the cost of the project.

Built as a fishing lodge in 1591, Bourne Mill was converted to a fulling mill in about 1640 and then to a corn mill around 1840. It remained so until the 1930s.

## Competition – just for fun

- 1. Lexden was formerly a village mentioned in the Domesday Book - what previous names 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 on the page 11 .....if you need them!*



## Childhood Memories of Lexden - Mary Beattie 1922-2014

Mary Beattie, who died recently, had known Lexden all her life, having been born in Heath Lodge, Heath Road. She was born on St Swithin's Day 1922. Her great aunt Lilian and uncle, Edward Pascoe Vaughan Morgan, bought Heath Farm on the corner of Heath Road and Straight Road (*now modern flats*) and rented it to Mary's parents, Gwen and Henry (Hazel) Beattie. They were there when WW2 broke out. There was a farmhouse, stables, a couple of barns and land. Fronting the farm between a five-barred gate to the farmyard and house was a long brick wall behind which, at the corner of Heath Road, were three cherry trees. Her father, an Army officer, would go up to the barracks on horseback and had a soldier servant, who looked after him.



*Mary Beattie with Kitty Nobbs, her donkey, and cart at Heath Farm*



*Mary Beattie with her mother, Gwendolen, c1930*

Mary kept her donkey, Kitty Nobbs, in the stable and she spent many happy hours driving around in her cart. Not far from the stable Mary planted an apple pip and she said it grew into the "most amazing apple tree absolutely laden with fruit" and it was there until Heath Farm was pulled down. Whilst living there they were looking after her grandparents' parrot. It was a lovely day and they were outside the dining room window when their blind piano tuner rang the bell. Her mother heard, "Get away you old devil" It must have been the parrot but they didn't answer the door!

Mary's maternal grandmother's family were Huguenots and her great great great grandparents were connected with Windsor Castle living in a grace and favour property called Sophia Lodge and enjoying evenings playing cards with George III. Her grandfather, Cecil Howard Morton, bought Heath Lodge in 1902. He was a solicitor in Colchester with Howard, Ellison and Morton, now Ellison's in Head Street. Locally he was instrumental in starting the British Legion and in getting the War Memorial built in Lexden churchyard in 1920. Her uncle, Cecil Edward Howard Morton, was killed at Gallipoli in May 1915 and his only child, Cecil Edward Noel John Morton, of the West Kent Regiment, was killed in Palestine during the Second War in November 1940 – he never knew his father. In the First World War her grandparents used to invite the men from the Red Cross Convalescent Home at Altnacealach, in Park Road (now under redevelopment) to Heath Lodge for tea.

For a short time her parents lived in "The Cottage" in Cherry Row but as it was so small Mary had to sleep at Heath Lodge. There was a copper at the back door of The Cottage for all the hot water – it was very primitive. Another time they rented White Cottage on Church Lane from the two Miss Colvins. The two Miss Grippers owned the triangular plot of land behind. Milk came from Home Farm and Mary would cycle to collect it in a small churn. She remembered Christine Chase as a smallholding orchard and a little market garden; also the Tweed family who lived in what is now No 67 Heath Road and made wooden toys. Opposite, where there are now two bungalows, was a row of three houses at 90° to the road. The first was a lean-to shop, belonging to the Cardy family and then backing on to them was another little cottage where an eccentric, Miss Horsted,



*Row of houses 90° to Heath Road, lean-to on right Mr Cardy's shop.*

## Childhood Memories of Lexden - Mary Beattie 1922-2014 - continued

known as "a bit of an old witch" lived. At the back of the house was the Crisell family, a couple and their young baby. Mary also remembered that there used to be, during the season, an otter hunt down by Bridge House in Spring Lane, which Mary's Aunt Marjorie enjoyed, often visiting the Orpen Palmers who lived there.

Heath Lodge, built in 1851, was originally "The Dog and Pheasant" pub, but nicknamed "The Diamond" because of the brickwork. Mary's grandfather added the wing to the right of the front door and built more on the kitchen. He kept a horse drawn gypsy caravan in the drive for many years which had a stove and washbasin and when the house was full they used to sleep in it. Many years later a man bought it for his Caravan Park at Nacton. Her grandparents had a cook and a housemaid who shared a bedroom and were allowed a bath once a week, a half day off a week and alternate half days on a Sunday.

At Heath Farm she had a hated governess, Miss Beckwith, who lived in Wellesley Road. Mary once tied a string across the bottom of the stairs to trip her up and was very pleased when it was successful! She had another governess, Miss Green, who on one occasion took her up to Myland Hall, then owned by the Misses Impey, to enjoy a vast expanse of lily of the valley. Mary went to St Mary's School in Lexden Road which was run by two sisters Miss Alice and Miss Lilian Billson who were fairly fierce and lived at 15 Lexden Road. When they retired Miss Comrie took over.



*Heath Lodge, Heath Road, Colchester*

The garden at Heath Lodge was three acres. Mary's parents sold the vegetable garden for a bungalow to be built and then later the bonfire area and tennis courts for a house. Mary was a keen tennis player learning on the courts at Heath Lodge. As a child she could get from the Heath Lodge garden to the back of Kingsmead in Straight Road and then to Cherry Wood to play with the children there.

Mary was always called Cuckoo, but father called her Porcky. He was half Scottish half Irish whose father was a Presbyterian Army chaplain. "Hazel" Beattie joined the army in 1910 and while stationed in Colchester during WW1 he met Gwen at a dance and they married in December 1918. Mary was an only child and when they were posted to India she was brought up by her very strict grandmother in Heath Lodge. Later her father returned from 5 years service with the Royal West African Frontier Force and she found herself, aged 14, being called poisonous and transferred to an all girl boarding school, Princess Helena College in Hitchin. She loathed it. She had hoped to be an interior decorator, but stayed for an extra year to learn catering from a fearsome cook who insisted they first learnt to scrub the floor. She wanted to join the WRNS but her mother would not let her precious "ewe lamb" do so and she joined Red Cross and St John Ambulance as a VAD. She also worked in hospitals for the injured forces cooking, with limited food supplies, for about 200 in Brasted and then Swanley in Kent.

Mary remembered Mr Tassell who became the vicar of Lexden after Mr Dolph, who was killed on the golf course. Mr Tassell was "such a character and his wife was like a Gaiety Girl with her hair all done up". Mary and her aunt, Marjorie Morton, gave the octagonal font to Lexden church in memory of the Mortons and Beatties. Decorated with the regimental badges of the Marines, Northamptonshire Regiment and the West Kents and three family crests, it stands at the west end of the church. There is also a tablet to the Mortons on the right of the main door. In the churchyard are two family graves, "with one space left waiting for me!"

Soon after Lexden History Group was formed it was decided to start an archive of items donated by members or friends, varying from old photographs, newspaper articles, documents, maps and personal written memories, etc. To give some idea what is held in the collection take a look at these five examples:

1. A collection of documents relating to the career of GEORGE CROSS, who was the last miller of Lexden Mill, makes interesting reading. George started as a boy in 1855 on the sailing ship 'Prince of Wales' registered in Colchester. He worked his way up to become Master of the sailing vessel 'Leading Star', also out of Colchester. He passed his seamanship exams for 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate, 1<sup>st</sup> Mate and Master and became captain of the P&O ship 'Conflict'; in the Liverpool to Australia run before returning to Colchester and becoming the miller at Lexden Water Mill. He died suddenly in 1909 of a heart attack whilst out on a partridge shoot at Great Wigborough and was buried in Lexden churchyard – there is an ornate memorial stone to him over the grave depicting an anchor and lifebelt.



George Cross's

2. There is an extensive collection of documents and photographs on LEXDEN PARK, particularly the sale of the Estate in July 1889. There is a full description of the handsome family mansion with stabling for six horses, 10 bedrooms, with three dressing rooms and the Tower is mentioned as '*gained by a separate staircase and forming a delightful suite of rooms, including sitting room, bachelor's bedroom, linen cupboard and water closet*'. The sale of Lexden Park was by order of the trustees of the late George Henry Errington. A map attached details the whole site including parkland that would eventually become St Clare Road and Fitzwalter Road. There also are several photographs of events held in the Park in days gone by.



3. The archive holds a collection of several original legal documents for LEXDEN MANOR dating from 1870, one of these dated May 1870 is '*Abstract of Title of the trustees under the will of the late Mrs Mary Warmington to a plot of land in Lexden*'. The document makes reference to Flower Vent Fields owned by Phoebe Tracey in 1821. This is thought to be the triangular piece of land between London Road, Halstead Road and King Cole Road (then known at Hull Lane). A coloured map is attached to the document. Also in this file is 'Particulars of the Sale of the Lexden Manor Estate in July 1931' which included the Manor House, Home Farm, Malting Farm, Moat Farm, West House Farm, The Mill House and 34 cottages and small houses. These were all to be offered for sale by auction in 347 lots. An extensive large coloured map shows the whole estate owned by Mrs Barbara Papillon, but at the last minute the sale was withdrawn.

4. The late PETER POTTER wrote two books on Lexden – '*The Many Faces of Lexden School*' and '*The Real Lexden Heroes*' (names on the war memorial). Just before he died Peter gave his research papers on these two subjects and other subjects, including Lexden football teams, to be retained in LHG Archive. This extensive collection is contained in nine A4 loose-leaf files. There is a wealth of information here, as well as photographs, particularly detailed references of the men commemorated on the memorial and names of teachers and children who were at the newly built school in the early days from the opening in March 1930.

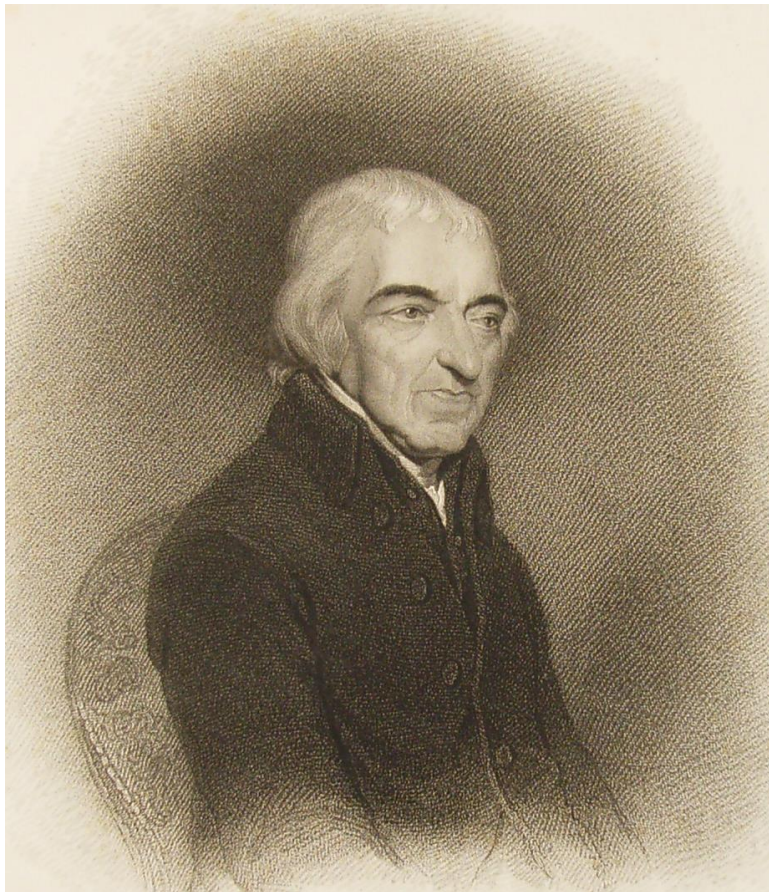


5. The LEXDEN SIGN was designed and created by Tim Holding. A file was prepared containing copies of Tim's work throughout the project in 2007 – photographs, newspaper cuttings and a record of the casting event held in Tim and Carol's garden on 23 April. The site chosen for the sign was at the Lexden end of the old bypass road. A brick tower containing a time capsule was built to support the aluminium sign. On 19 April 2008 the unveiling of the sign was held when many members and friends attended the event as the Major of Colchester, Ray Gamble, pulled back a curtain to reveal the unique sculpture which featured Lexden mill, Lexden church, River Colne, Sun Inn and trees presenting 'leafy Lexden' and a butterfly. In years to come it will be interesting to look back finding out how the Lexden Sign came into being.

There are almost 150 files in the collection covering a wide range of subjects including a WW2 air raid warden's whistle donated by Sonia Lewis!

### Thomas Twining 1734 - 1804

Trish Terry



Nearly all of us enjoy a nice cup of tea. Most of us have heard of, or drunk, Twining's Tea but did you know there is a connection between Twinings and Colchester? Thomas Twining, born in 1734, was the son of Daniel and the grandson of the founder of the company (also Thomas). They were tea merchants in London and expected young Thomas, to follow in the family trade.

In 1766 John Mills, another member of the Twining family, married Hester Carter, a grand-daughter of the founder and cousin to Thomas. John set up as a Tea Merchant at 2 High Street, Colchester and on 14 November 1787, with his cousins Richard and John Twining, opened one of the first banks in Essex "The Colchester and Essex Bank - Richard and John Twining and John Mills". The strange partnership lasted for 10 years with John Mills taking all the profits and losses but indemnifying the others against any claims. In 1875 it was known as Mills, Errington, Bawtree and Co, and finally closed in December 1891.

(Lexden Park had been bought by John Fletcher Mills, son of John Mills, in 1821 whose daughter Fanny married George Errington – a later owner of the Park.)

We return to Thomas Twining who was born in Twickenham, Middlesex in 1734 and was educated at Colchester Grammar School under the headmaster, Rev Palmer Smythies. As he had no interest in commercial life and was fond of study his father sent him to Sidney Sussex College in Cambridge in 1755, where he achieved his MA and his fellowship in 1760. He took holy orders and in 1764 married Elizabeth Smythies, the daughter of his former headmaster, who was rector of St Michael's at Mile End, Colchester.

Thomas Twining, a classical scholar, musician, critic, wit, linguist and prolific letter writer, became the resident curate at Fordham from 1763-89 with an annual salary of £40 and all the fees. During the summer he lived at the Rectory in Plummer's Road but occasionally toured England and Wales or attended music or literary gatherings. In the winter he lived in Colchester. He was the non-resident cleric of White Notley 1772-1804, Greenstead-juxta-Colchester 1793-6 and Rector of St Mary's at the Walls, Colchester, from 1788 where he lived

until his death on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1804. On the death of his wife in 1790 he relied heavily on the support of his cousin, Hester Mills.



Twining's reputation as a classical scholar was established by his translation, with notes, of Aristotle's *Poetics*. He was an accomplished musician and assisted Charles Burney in writing his remarkable *History of Music*. His calls on the Burney family in London in 1775 were vividly and affectionately described by Charles Burney's daughter, Fanny. "He is a man of learning, very fond of music and a good performer both on the harpsichord and the violin. Mr Twining, besides being deep in musical knowledge, is a man of great humour and drollery". Fanny (1752-1840) became a well-known novelist, diarist and playwright. (picture left)

In one of his letters to Charles Burney Thomas Twining wrote that he was looking forward to the long uninterrupted mornings in Fordham and the pleasure of having no visitors, no neighbours (worthy of note) and nothing to disturb his musical and literary pursuits. In the summer he would live the life of a hermit, grow a beard and enjoy rowing on the mat at the Rectory. His family considered him

thoughtful, humorous and charming yet in a large company of mixed society he was inclined to remain silent.

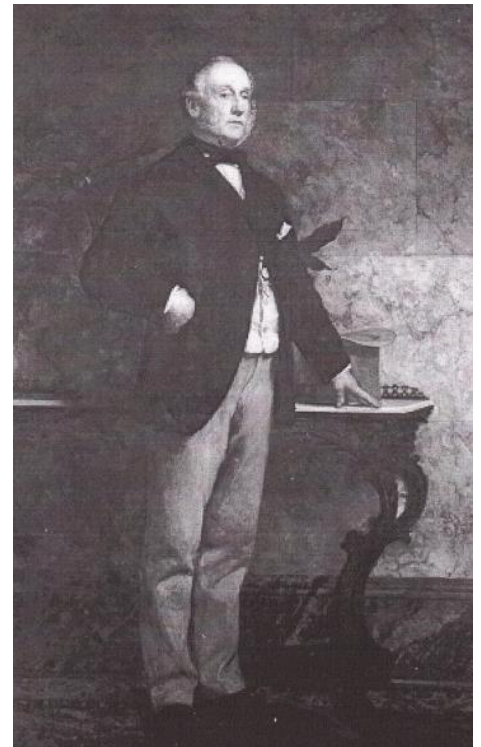
In the summer of 1765 he enjoyed a week of serious music at the rectory with fellow connoisseurs but commented that his parishioners did not approve. "The common people look upon music to be merely an affair of mirth and jollity, the produce of revelry and good living".

In 1774 Dr Burney visited Twining at Fordham and was influential in finding one of the new *pianofortes* to send to him. Twining admitted to "fiddle mania" and mentioned comparing his two violins, a *Staduarius* (*Stradivarius*) and an undersized *Stainer* saying that he preferred the sweetness of tone of the *Straduarius*. The quiet county life suited him perfectly and his leisure is tangible. "All the night in silver sleep I spend, All the day long to what I list attend".

He is buried in the churchyard at St Mary at the Walls Colchester (now the Arts Centre) and when the church was made redundant in 1976 the bells were sent to St Leonard's Lexden. His epitaph was composed by a lifelong friend and fellow scholar, Samuel Parr, (Headmaster of Colchester Grammar 1777-8) and Charles Burney wrote an obituary.



George Henry Errington was a pillar of Victorian society. Born in 1803, he lived for eighty years and was High Steward of Colchester from 1860 to 1883 and High Sheriff of Essex in 1860 as well. His death was marked by the Essex Standard (17 March 1883) as that of "the most genial and generous-hearted man in the district" – which is not how many bankers are described these days. For the funeral, the formal procession was led by the Mayor and Corporation and most of the business establishments of the town were closed, flags hung half-mast and "a continuous stream of persons of both sexes, mostly clad in mourning, wended their way to Lexden Church" to pay their respects.



For George Henry Errington was no politician, indeed Andrew Phillips' research into his voting record shows that he voted not for a party but for the best man for the job. He was however undoubtedly a Tory but head of the Liberal Bank, whose full name was Mills, Bawtree, Errington, Bawtree & Haddock – or Bawtrees Bank as it was more popularly known.

**THE ERRINGTON FAMILY**

There is no doubt our subject was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. The Errington family was rich well beyond its assets in Colchester. George Henry Errington's seat at Lexden Park was only the third he owned with other palatial piles in Ashbourne, Derbyshire and Chadwell St Mary, Essex.

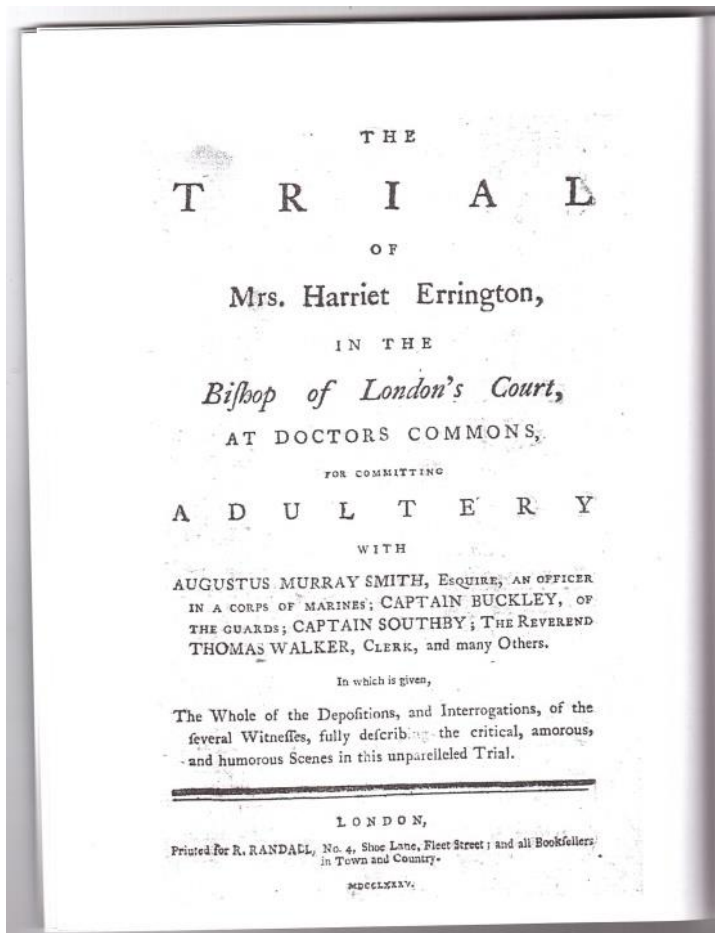
John Errington (1655-1726) lived in York, and made little impact beyond that base, but his second son, George Errington (1691-1769) reached levels far beyond. Burke's Landed Gentry described him as "possessed estates in Essex, Middlesex and Derbyshire". When he was appointed Sheriff of London and Middlesex in 1759, the Gentleman's Magazine reported that "five gentleman have paid their fines this month to be excused serving that office" because of the expense.

George Errington's son, George (1756-1795) inherited enormous wealth and qualified as a barrister-at-law, although whether he actually practised is another matter. That is particularly ironic because he was the principal subject of two scandalous legal trials.

**ADULTERY AND MURDER**

George Errington married in 1776, in his 21<sup>st</sup> year, Harriet Corsen, who bore him one surviving son and heir, our subject's father, also George. Within five years, according to witnesses, she started affairs with a variety of men. In 1785 this led to one of the most salacious divorce trials in history as Mrs Errington was accused of adultery with not one man but with "Augustus Murray Smith, Esquire, an Officer in a corps of Marines; Captain Buckley, of the Guards; Captain Southby; the Reverend Thomas Walker, Clerk in holy orders; and many others".

The depositions of the witnesses were rushed to the Press by instalments, such was the public interest, but no details of the judgment are available, suffice it to say that Mr Errington was granted his divorce. Some time after this George Errington entered into a relationship with one Anne Broadrick and, according to the Gentleman's Magazine, lived with her for three years. She thought they were engaged but it would appear he didn't have the same view and then left



her to marry another woman, Eleanor. Shortly after, in June 1795, Miss Broadrick called at his house and shot him dead with a pistol. At her subsequent trial for murder, she was acquitted on grounds of insanity following a most dubious direction from the trial judge, who must have found her a very compelling witness.

### LEXDEN AND RESPECTABILITY

So the Errington estate devolved upon George Henry Errington (1777-1843) who featured hardly at all in the newspapers. While owning the estates in Derbyshire and Essex, he had properties in Staffordshire and London, but chose to spend his retirement in Lexden, of all places. The County Standard later described him as "an enthusiastic lover of music, had purchased, and settled himself and family, in the Casina, a villa on the Lexden road, Colchester, for quiet retirement in his old age." Pigot's Directory 1827 records him living at 'Casini' when he would in fact have been just fifty. I believe 'Casina', which later became the home of a prominent lawyer, was what is

now St Mary's School – but I would welcome comments on this.

George & Elizabeth Errington had eight surviving children of whom the eldest was George Henry, born on 24 April 1803 at Westerfield, Suffolk – another property owned by his father and where other siblings were also born. Why they weren't living in any of the other county seats isn't yet clear! As the eldest son, clearly our George was destined to receive the bulk of the money as two of his brothers went into the Army and another into the Church.

The family must have moved to Colchester before 1827 however, as on 23 November 1824 George Henry Errington of the parish of St Mary-at-the-Walls, married Fanny Mills, spinster of the parish of Lexden, at Lexden parish church. This must have been one of the great society weddings of the year.

### TWINING AND MILLS

Fanny Mills (1803-1861) was the eldest child of John Fletcher Mills, head of Mills Bank and the proud owner of Lexden Park, which at the time of his daughter's marriage he was in the process of rebuilding and remodelling the grounds to provide (says White's Directory) "some noble trees, a great diversity of surface, and a fine sheet of water".

John Fletcher Mills (1776-1840) was the son of John Mills (1735-1822) who, about 1760 established a tea importing business in Colchester High Street in partnership with Richard & John Twining of London. It is no coincidence that John Mills' wife was Hester Carter, granddaughter of Thomas Twining, founder of the great Twining tea empire. Between Mills & Twinings they set up Mills Bank as the financial vehicle to fund the import of tea and other commodities,

through Colchester docks. Although the venture was described as joint it was entirely at John Mills' risk and profit. (See *Thomas Twining article on page 7 by Trish Terry*)

The bank thrived under John Mills and in due course passed to his son John Fletcher Mills who acquired Lexden Park shortly before his daughter married our subject George Henry Errington, who may well have already started in the banking business and, by marriage, became John Fletcher Mills' heir apparent.

### LIVING OVER THE BANK

But in those days marrying the daughter of one of the richest men in Colchester didn't mean Daddy buying her a sumptuous house. George and his new wife Fanny had a long wait before they could move into Lexden Park. Just like James Paxman, a customer of Bawtrees Bank sometime later, they first had the experience of living on the job.

John Fletcher Mills headed the bank, with John Bawtree (and later) George Henry Errington, as partners with considerable success. Mills was elected as Borough Councillor, representing Colchester's Second Ward, in 1835 and 1836 and served as magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant of the County, then High Sheriff in 1839. There cannot have been many more peaks to climb but he died a year later, at the age of 64. His obituary in the Essex Standard paid tribute to his "superior talents and eminent services in all matters of public business" – which is markedly less effusive than their description of his son-in-law's career thereafter.

Meanwhile George Henry & Fanny were living first with his parents at 'Casina'. Their first three children (Fanny Eliza 1825, George Henry 1826 and John Launcelot 1828) were all baptised at Lexden, which was also George Henry's address. But the last, (Margaret Jane Dorothy 1833, my great-great-grandmother) was baptised at St Peter's Colchester. Home from then was over the bank at 3 High Street. And that remained their home until the 1850s.

Mind you, it's not as though he had nowhere else to live. His tombstone describes him then as "George Henry Errington of Lexden Park, Chadwell Hall Essex and Ashbourne Derbyshire". All of that would have become his when his father died in 1843 and that will be the subject of the second half of this story.

To be continued - [chris@thegraves.co.uk](mailto:chris@thegraves.co.uk)

### Answers to the quiz on page 3

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**



Wednesday 8th July

**Dr Jane Pearson - St Albrights Work House**

Sunday 15th August

**Summer BBQ**

Wednesday 9th September

**Philip Lyons BA - A Sailors Life**

**Summer BBQ Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August**



**12noon – 4pm**

**Carol & Tim Holding**

**Little Glebe, Spring Lane**

**Tickets £5**

***Available at our June & July meetings***