

Lexden History Group

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Lexden Park Winter 1997



Lexden Park Winter 1930



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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

GLEN FARM, LEXDEN

Earlier this year Glen Farm, now known as 11 Glen Avenue, came into the news when a planning application was submitted to the Borough Council to replace the old Glen Farm house with a new building. Lexden History Group was alerted to the proposal by a Lexden resident. What was particularly concerning was that the Group was not aware that Glen Farm was a building that had been missed both from the national and local Listings, and therefore had no protection at all.

Glen Farm was built in the early 1800s and was the first building to appear in Cut Throat Lane (probably a corruption of 'cut through'). The second building was the Rectory built in 1909, which gave the Lane a new name, Rectory Road. This building is Grade 2 Listed.



Glen Farm c1900

The names of the earlier residents are not yet known but from the time of the first named ten-yearly Census in 1841 the farmhouse was occupied by tenants. The earlier tithe map of 1837 shows a dwelling that may be Glen Farm occupied by a Jeremiah Garrard on land owned by a William Downs. It has been suggested that Glen Farm house occupied a small plot of land and therefore may have been a smallholding. Future access to any surviving title deeds may throw light on the size

of the plot. Certainly there is no surviving trace of any other outbuildings normally associated with a farm. Nevertheless it was part of Lexden's historic past and a link with its former agricultural heritage, like the former agricultural labourers' cottages in Cherry Row off Heath Road. In the early 1900s Glen Farm was lived in by the well-known Cardy family who were greengrocers and served many people in the area.

Liz White, Secretary of Lexden History Group, completed an application form for Historic England in an attempt to obtain Listed Building status for 11 Glen Avenue, but this was rejected, "the building is not of sufficient interest to merit designation in the national context, and is therefore not recommended for listing." Its local interest was acknowledged, but unfortunately it was missed during a local survey conducted some years ago by the Colchester Historic Buildings Forum.

As the building is not listed the owner is entitled to demolish it. At the Council's Planning Committee meeting held on 27 August 2015, Councillors expressed their regret that Lexden was losing an attractive historic building, but there were no planning reasons for rejecting the application to build a new dwelling. As the site is not far from Roman burials, arrangements have been made to monitor the building work for any archaeological evidence.

Not to be confused in any way with the terrestrial parish council and clerk, Chris Graves (*right*) is a member of the Essex group of volunteers who 'adopt' one or more parishes, obtain a copy of the parish registers and help online family researchers freely, while gathering material about their village, its heritage and families. He has lived in Colchester for forty years and is a descendant of George Henry Errington (1803-1883) of Lexden Park, High Steward of Colchester for many years.



The Devon OPC Scheme

I was one of a small group of volunteers who set up the Devon Online Clerks scheme in about 2002. We 'met' through an email group on Rootsweb [See Note 1] and also worked with the Genuki website [See Note 2] and Devon family History Society. The scheme followed a pilot scheme in Cornwall but on a much larger base. My interest lay in East Devon where my father's mother's family came from: I started with Sidbury and Salcombe Regis, then added Clyst Honiton, Clyst Hydon and Whimple. Over the years I have helped hundreds of enquirers and they have sent me family trees and pedigrees, complete histories, photos, maps, copies of wills and deeds and extensive research notes.

Some of our group came from the local area, such as Honiton's librarian, others like myself and Thomas Peeke (also a Devon volunteer but now also responsible for Ardleigh and Dedham) on the other side of the country. Others like Paul Harding in Tucson, Arizona live even further away!

From Devon the movement caught on and now there are OPC schemes in Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Sussex, Kent, Hampshire, Warwickshire, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Cumbria, Lincolnshire, Wiltshire – and, since 2007, also in Essex.

The Essex OPC Scheme

I was a founder member of the Essex scheme as well. The driving force is Shirley O'Donnell who has worked very hard with Jim the webmaster to publish the scheme through a central website – though some of us have our own as well. [See Note 3]

The essence of all the schemes is that everyone is a volunteer and all help and research is free – while of course stressing the point that we are always looking for new material because without it there isn't much to pass on to others other than births deaths and marriages and the like.

I volunteered to take on Lexden (where the Mills and Errington families lived) and added the parishes of St Mary-at-the-Walls and St Peter in Colchester as I traced more people there. In the meantime I had moved to Langham and took that on as well.

How the OPC can help

Many family history researchers start with family recollections (often a family myth that may or may not be true!) and then research the IGI [See Note 4] and census records through Ancestry or one of the other subscriber sites. Through these one can often get back to the 1851 Census (1841 is very unreliable about ages which could be ten years either side) and trace an ancestor's birth to a rough date in the second half of the 18th century. That's when parish registers kick in as some go back to 1580 although you need a degree in vicars' handwriting to read them at that stage!

Early parish registers come in all shapes and sizes. The information can simply be the names and the date of a baptism, burial or marriage. Often pages are missing and the book itself is simply blank sheets with the vicar's scribble which may or may not be

OUR ONLINE PARISH CLERK - continued

legible. Some of mine have large ink blots obscuring part of a page. The quality of the microfilm copy may not be easy either. Later registers contain more information and sometimes the Vicar's own opinion of who was responsible for fathering a "baseborn" child, of whom every parish has many such cases!

Colchester is fortunate that Essex Society for Family History [See Note 5] has transcribed and indexed every parish register for 1750-1850 and markets them on CD for a very reasonable price. These cover not just the 12 town parishes but also the four "extramural" parishes of Lexden, Berechurch, Mile End and Greenstead. Every family history society has done work like this over the years and some have a lot of fascinating books on sale through their own websites.

As contacts increase, so does the range of material. I have a wonderful personal history of a soldier from Langham who joined the Army in 1827, later deserted, re-enlisted under another name and deserted again. His descendant has carefully researched all the local background. I have also put in touch different researchers with others interested in the same families. Some of them have sent me complete parcels of research notes or a string of photos.

Lexden

Lexden of course was much bigger once, encompassing Shrub End and a big rural hinterland. Some people misunderstand that 'Lexden & Winstree' registration area is far bigger than the one parish. What has always surprised me however is the estate agents' concept of 'Old Lexden' that certainly never formed part of our parish! However, as in all parts of the country, families didn't stay all that long in one parish and labourers moved many times looking for work. There are some surnames in each parish that persist over hundreds of years often with a range of spellings, some quite unrecognisable.

A quick look shows these as families I have particularly researched : Aldous, Bishop, Bailey, Beaumont, Davies, Everitt, Elsdon, Hayward, Johnson, King, Lay (but not Wheeler), Osborne, Shelton, Tracey.

I've been involved in researching the history of Altnacealgach (*the old Education Authority building in Park Road, now under development*) and a passing interest in the Fighting Cocks inn.

Then there has been the Errington family, for which I am much indebted to Andrew Phillips and the firm of solicitors who lodged extensive records at Essex Record Office. George Henry Errington was famous as head of Bawtrees Bank, who financed much of the development of the 'West End' of Colchester. He got the job through marrying the daughter of his predecessor John Fletcher Mills, whose father had done just the same by marrying a girl from the Twining tea family who originally set up the bank to finance the import of tea and other products from the Far East. I have had many contacts by people researching those families and even taken one lady from New Zealand for a guided tour of the grounds of Lexden Park.

What has always been interesting is that so many of us have roots far from home and visiting an ancestral home may not be practicable even if it hasn't been rebuilt into flats or now forms part of the site of the Police Station. And it's always great to receive their own records and stories which add to the colour of the parish.

Notes:

[1] Rootsweb : www.rootsweb.com [2] Genuki : www.genuki.org.uk [3] Essex OPC website : www.essex-opc.org.uk [4] International Genealogical Index : part of www.familysearch.org [5] Essex Society for Family History : www.esfh.org.uk



Our Vice Chairman, Tim Holding, has a fascinating family history – no generation after generation of agricultural labourers or landed gentry for his predecessors but a family that trekked from Iowa to Utah in the days of the Wild West! Daniel Holding, Tim's great great grandfather, was born on 5th April 1814 and was a tailor by profession. He married Sarah Middleton (*picture left*) on 2nd January 1844 at St John's Church in Chester and lived in Cotton Wood, Wem, Shropshire. Several children were born to them over the next few years but some died in infancy.

The Mormon Church, founded in New York in the 1820s, sent missionaries over to England and Daniel and Sarah Holding became "saints" as converts were called. Then Daniel worked as a missionary and for several years travelled around England to persuade others to become Mormons. On 15th February 1853, under the leadership of Joseph W Young, the family boarded the tall sailing ship "Elvira Owen" at Liverpool to sail to America. At that time British saints could travel on a reduced "£10 plan" from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake City a fee which barely covered travel, food, a wagon, cattle and provisions from England to Utah. On 20th February the sea was terribly rough, water came in and anything loose tumbled down and rolled about including the 345 passengers. On 23rd March they sighted Cuba, but the winds drifted them back a day. They finally landed at the bar mouth of the Mississippi River near New Orleans where they were transferred to a Mississippi River boat. Some 67 miles later on the 30th March Sarah gave birth to twins, Joseph and Josephine, and in a few days they arrived at St. Louis, Missouri, but Sarah was so weak that she was carried in a "chair with long handles at the front and back" to the Locket family, friends from England. Josephine died on 11th April 1853 and was buried in the cemetery in St. Louis but then the family continued by river boat to Keokuk in Iowa, arriving on 13th April 1853 to join the Cyrus H Wheelock Company. On disembarking the travellers spent their first night close to the wharf in various warehouses, houses and even sheds with only their luggage for relief.



Cyrus H Wheelock 1817-94

In 1853 Keokuk was the outfitting centre of the Mormon pioneers with numbers peaking in May that year. A local newspaper reported that the encampment covered about a square mile with tents arranged in "close order" sheltering "upwards of 2,000 persons." The ground was often muddy and, until the wagon trains moved off, those who could not get work in the town were given work on the roads. With this small income they could buy a few additional comforts. They had to prepare for their long journey learning previously alien skills such as how to handle the cows, securing them with lasso in order to milk them. Before they could start the long trail west they also had to become reasonably proficient in driving the cattle pulling their wagons.



The Cyrus H Wheelock Company was

TIM HOLDING'S ANCESTORS - continued

founded by him in 1853 and comprised 447 people, 17 horses, 2 mules, 216 oxen, 83 cows, 12 heifers, 52 wagons and one carriage. They left Keokuk in groups between the 1st and 3rd June 1853. The Holding family must have left on or just after then as the deaths of their two year old daughter, Margaret Hannah, and baby Joseph are recorded at Keokuk on 3rd June. The citizens of the nearby town of Nauvoo would not permit the burial of the children there, so Daniel borrowed a small boat and rowed across the Mississippi River where he buried them in a single box near the banks of the river. He piled many stones on the grave so that wolves would not disturb them. The family then had to continue their journey with their three surviving children

All the pioneers were keen to reach their destination and the wagon trains were expected to cover about twenty miles a day but often averaged only about eighty miles a week. The wagons were for baggage and the pioneers walked by the side, or ahead of the teams, perhaps riding once or twice a day for half an hour or so, but adults and children walked almost the entire distance. The hot sand burned and cactus thorns often penetrated their feet. Children were allowed to ride on the back of an ox or on a wagon if there was space, as their feet quickly became blistered and sore. The roads ranged from good to very poor but were generally "very bad" and May and June were rainy months when even the best roads turned to mud. Most of the rivers and streams lacked bridges and when they ran high, travel became difficult, causing some deaths. The thunder storms were the worst many had seen, the rain soaking through the tent and wagon covers and it was often too wet to even build a comforting campfire. If it was dry the grass, often waist high, caused further problems and as the land was largely unpopulated there was little local help. There were scattered native Indian tribesmen, often belligerent and demanding, and these together with the huge buffalo herds could be quite frightening for Europeans of the time. It was a perilous journey and the dead, both adults and children, had to be buried without coffins by the roadside before the company moved on. There was nothing else anyone could do.

The Holding family endured many trials including when their 9 year old son, Thomas Hiram, fell from the wagon on 13th August and the wheel ran over his arm, breaking it. There were no doctors or nurses to help but his arm was set by Sarah and it healed perfectly. Many years later another of Daniel's children, Ephraim then aged 4, recalled a distressing event on the journey. "We were coming across the plains and the ... freight completely filled the wagon box ... or a little above it. My sister (Sarah Jane aged 6) and I were playing on top of the wagon when a wheel went into a chuck hole and she was thrown off the front, directly under the wagon. The driver did not notice it and ... the front and rear wheels of this monster freight wagon passed over my sister's head. The people in the wagon train were all of the Church. They did what no other people I think would have done out in the plains alone and far from medical aid. They gathered up the little girl; found her head crushed to a pulp with portions of the brain showing. And then all the elders of the wagon train gathered around and submitted their cause to a God in whom they devoutly believed and trusted. They prayed for the little girl, and then with their hands anointed her and washed her head as best they could, shoving its skull bones back into shape. Instead of the death that all regarded as certain, the little one lived, and in a very few weeks was playing as usual with me on our wagon top, only more careful to keep away from the edges." Miraculously, Sarah Jane appeared to suffer no



TIM HOLDING'S ANCESTORS - continued

brain damage only a large facial scar and a deep dent on her head. She married and had several children and died in England in 1925 (*picture above*).

As they neared the mountains, they found that their wagon was so heavily loaded that the oxen were unable to pull it up the steep, rocky roads and they had to leave many of their belongings on the trail. Through their



many hardships, tragedy, shortage of food, harsh weather and almost impenetrable terrain, the family eventually arrived at Salt Lake City on 6th October. They had travelled over 1,300 miles in terrible conditions and were more than ready to settle down to a very different life in new land.



Daniel's father, Richard Holding, had died just after they left for America and in the spring of 1854 they had to make the arduous journey back to England for Daniel to claim his inheritance. Sarah was again heavily pregnant and gave birth to our Tim's great grandfather, Richard, in a barn in Savannah, Missouri on 15th July. Although they had converted to Mormonism, when they returned they had to rejoin the Church of England to fulfil the terms of the will. Daniel always wanted to return to "Zion" but he died on 6th August 1857 aged 44 from "ulceration of the stomach". Sarah was left as a 33 year old widow with five children to care for. Three of their children stayed in England (Thomas Hiram, Sarah Jane and Richard), while Sarah, their daughter Mary Ann and son Ephraim George returned to Utah in 1875. Ephraim became an electrician at the huge Salt Lake City Temple and installed the lighting there (*pictures above, picture right 1893*). He died in 1927.

Sarah always said she would gladly spend her time again as a pioneer if the "young people of the day could endure half a day of pioneer life". (The similar cry of each generation!) She was the mother of eleven children, five of whom died in infancy. She died on 16th December 1912 in her ninetieth year and was buried in Salt Lake City Cemetery. The eulogies described her beautiful character and her many acts of charity and self-sacrifice for the comfort of others, stating that many knew her to be a noble woman of sterling worth. What an example to follow!

If you would like to read more about the Mormon trail you will find the links below interesting.

mormonhistoricsites.org/lwp-content/uploads/2013/04/IMHS_Fall2003_1853-Migration-Through-Keokuk.pdf

http://files.lib.byu.edu/mormonmigration/articles/ChildrenOnTheMormonTrail_Dissertation.PDF

Lexden Hurricane – Andrew Philips , LHG President

Mention a hurricane and most of us think of October 1987 with 1.3 million reported cases of damage; 22 people killed across England and France; railways, roads, gardens and woods strewn with fallen trees, many of which can still be seen today – an event that only occurs in South-East England once every 200 years.

Less well known is the hurricane in Lexden in November 1840, reported in the Essex Standard. Its dramatic impact came 10 days before the death of the village's leading citizen, John Fletcher Mills, who built Lexden Park and laid out its lake and gardens. The wording of the press account is perhaps as interesting as the story, so I quote:

'The power of the wind appears mild compared with the violence of the tornado which terrified to the utmost the inhabitants of the picturesque village of Lexden, and in a few minutes laid prostrate nearly 100 trees on the grounds of the late J.F.Mills Esq, Mrs Papillon and J. Dehorne Esq, beside damaging every house in the place. An eyewitness has described to us the circumstances attending this calamitous visitation. Between the hours of 12 and 1 o'clock, the wind blowing very strongly from the S.S.W., a long narrow black cloud was observed stretching to the western horizon, and soon a dense mist came on, accompanied by a most terrific rush of wind. Nothing could be seen beyond a few feet from the spectator but in two or three moments at once the extreme violence of the tornado had abated, the mist cleared off and a scene of desolation presented itself in the village and adjacent grounds unequalled in the memory of the inhabitants. Immense oaks, cedars and other tree were torn up by their roots and with them masses of earth were wrenched from their beds which in a few cases weighed many tons. In some instances trees were split down to the ground and in others snapt off across the trunk. The magnificent elm standing near the high road in the grounds of J.F. Mills Esq of Lexden Park was broken off about 12 feet from the ground and, in falling, struck the residence of J Dehorne Esq., broke the roof in and several of the windows. An exceedingly ornamental oak in the park of Mrs Papillon, although it stood through the hurricane, had nearly every one of its branches broken; and several were not only completely dislocated but twisted round and left as if they had been ozier twigs. A man named Bush in the employ of Mrs Lambert was engaged in a building, which had a small door opening to the road: in a moment a 'coup de vent' lifted him from his feet and dashed him to the floor; and at the same time carried away the opposite side of the roof: the poor fellow, almost insensible from the violence of the fall, describes the sensation to have been as if a large body of water had been discharged against him; and which appeared to pass over him, while on the ground. The most intense terror was felt by the inhabitants; but happily no lives were lost; nor, beyond the above mentioned case, was any personal injury sustained.

The extent of the tornado may be distinctly traced; and it appears to have been about 400 yards in breadth; the first appearance of injury was on a tree near the residence of Mr Hayward on Lexden Heath and two dishes in that gentleman's garden were carried over a wall across the adjoining field and broken to pieces. We do not hear of any mischief being done beyond the farm of Mr Wright of Myland some of whose stacks suffered; this is almost two miles from the street above named.

Today we can still reconstruct this scene. Lexden Park is still there, as is the old manor house of the Papillons half way up the hill, while Mr Dehorne presumably lived in the house (once a Quaker school) across the road from the Lexden Park mansion. John Fletcher Mills's elm must have been very large to fall across the road and clobber the Dehorne roof. Henry Hayward of Lexden Heath was a builder and developer, who built many of the houses (now shops) in Crouch Street.

Over the past years there have been three motor garages within the village of Lexden, all situated along the main road.

A. BROOMAN & SON LTD, 24 London Road. Albert Brooman started repairing cycles in a shed in his garden at Colne (now Halstead) Road in the late 1890s. Later he acquired the former Lexden Working Mens' Club almost on the corner of London Road with Straight Road. Albert was able to expand his business of repairing and selling motor and pedal cycles, for at that time many models were available. As more motor cars took to the road he added "Light motor car repairs" to his advertising material. His son, Cyril, joined him in the business in 1920. Agencies were held for the sale of B.S.A., Royal Enfield and Budge motor bikes and sidecars.



The ground floor of the building was turned into a showroom and reception office, and the front forecourt was opened up on to the pavement with three hand-cranked pumps dispensing petrol by overhead hoses, which avoided blocking the pavement for pedestrians. Other services offered included 'battery recharging' - this was the time when wireless sets were powered by accumulator batteries which needed regular re-charging, useful to all customers whether they had vehicles or not. London Road at this time was the main A12 road through to Great Yarmouth and all vehicular traffic had to drive through the town centre until the bypass was built in 1933. Traffic for the coast on summer weekends passed by the garage so Broomans were on hand to help out motorists with overheated radiators and other necessary emergency repairs.



In 1960 the garage was taken over by Mr J W Weeks for a short time before G S Last Ltd, the motor company, acquired the garage; then Messrs Handley & Peas and of All Stop Garage on Ipswich Road took control and finally the Shell company had the business, obviously with modern petrol pumps!

After ceasing as a garage the whole site was cleared of buildings and was derelict for a time before Sainsbury's acquired it for an out-of-town supermarket. Today of course the building is occupied by Aldi and the Kings and Church.



THE LEXDEN GARAGE, 43-45 London Road. This small garage was owned by Frank Humm, and run by Dick Bugg. 'Overhauls to all makes of car' was the advertising message over the name board. Three petrol pumps stood on the tiny forecourt and another right on to the pavement edge.

In August 1938 there was a violent storm which resulted in London Road being flooded, causing traffic problems, and the Bugg was joined by his brother,

water reached the workshop floor. Later Dick Bugg was joined by his brother, Leonard, and they acquired the garage on London Road, Stanway. On the site today is Nicholas Anthony's, kitchen and bathroom fitters.

EVANS MOTORS. This small garage opposite the parish church on Lexden Road was originally a blacksmith's forge, at the address known as 14 Lexden Street, owned by a Mr Huntley.

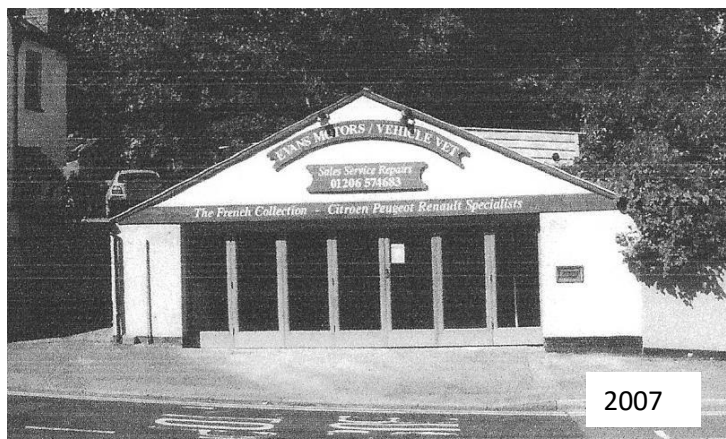


Following through information extracted from Benham's Co|chester Street Directories, there is no mention until 1932 when Mr J Kemp is shown at 'The Forge' By the early 1940s 14 Lexden Street had become 199 Lexden Road, still owned by blacksmith Kemp. In 1957, the address is



given as Flynn & Woodward, motor garage. As the last directory was published in 1973, it is not known when ownership changed hands.

Today, Evans Motors, 'the vehicle vet' specialises in supplying and repairing French cars - Citroen, Peugeot and Renault, as well as being an MOT station. The garage manages very well on a congestion site on a busy road.



December 11th

Friday 11th December - Christmas Party

Tickets still available from Liz White

January 13th

Geoff Pettit Memorial Lecture

Lynn Trenow

Author – 'The Last Telegram and the link to the family silk mill'

February 10th

Rev. Lovell

History of Essex Village Signs

March 9th

Peter Jones

Mail by Rail

Lexden Park 1997

