

# Lexden History Group

*This issue features:*

**Lexden History Group  
'10 Years Old'**

**Tales from the Churchyard –  
William Redmore Bigg  
RA**

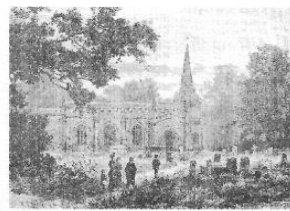
**Tragic Accident  
at Lexden Park**

**Mediæval  
Lexden**

**The Politics of  
Rebuilding  
Lexden  
Church in  
1820**

**Lexden History Group is 10 years old on  
20<sup>th</sup> March 2016.**

Below is the front page of our First Newsletter (back issues of all our Newsletters can be downloaded from the Group website).



Lexden  
History  
Group



Issue No 1 April 2006

**Now for the really good news!**

**BOOK THIS DATE!**

The first meeting of the Lexden History Group will be on;

**Wednesday May 10th at 7.45pm  
in Lexden Church Hall**

We have been doubly fortunate in that the well-known local historian, author and broadcaster **ANDREW PHILLIPS** has agreed to give the inaugural talk on;

**"The Rise of  
Modern Colchester"**

He has also agreed to become Honorary President of the Lexden History Group.

**Please attend and bring a friend.**

Membership forms will be available on that evening. The proposed programme for the rest of the year will also be available.

**Welcome** to the first edition of the Lexden History Group magazine.

Since our exploratory meeting at Lexden Church on March 20th lots of things have happened. We had two meetings of the volunteer committee members to discuss all the suggestions you made at the first meeting.

#### **NEW NAME**

You will see from the title of this newsletter that we are now the Lexden History Group. We left out 'local' because some members may be pursuing family history or some other research. It is a name that embraces all interests and all are welcome to join, not just Lexden residents, wherever the true Lexden is.

If you know of a family that has moved away who might be interested in joining do please get in touch with them.

**Newsletter No 40 – March 2016**  
**Website [www.lexdenhistory.org.uk](http://www.lexdenhistory.org.uk)**

# Your Committee

## **Chairman**

Dick Barton 01206 573999  
[bab@bartonlex.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:bab@bartonlex.fsnet.co.uk)

## **Vice-Chairman**

Tim Holding 01206 576149  
[carol@cholding.orangehome.co.uk](mailto:carol@cholding.orangehome.co.uk)

## **Secretary**

Liz White 01206 522713  
[alangwhite187444@hotmail.com](mailto:alangwhite187444@hotmail.com)

## **Treasurer**

Melvin White 01206 575351  
[melvin.s.white@btinternet.com](mailto:melvin.s.white@btinternet.com)

## **Membership Secretary**

Jackie Bowis 01206561528  
[jbowis@hotmail.com](mailto:jbowis@hotmail.com)

## **Social Secretary**

SusanMcCarthy 01206 366865  
[susan.mccarthy@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:susan.mccarthy@yahoo.co.uk)

## **Magazine Joint Editors**

Jackie Bowis /LizWhite  
[jbowis@hotmail.com](mailto:jbowis@hotmail.com)  
[alangwhite187444@hotmail.com](mailto:alangwhite187444@hotmail.com)

## **Archivist**

Bernard Polley 01206 572460  
[heath86end@aol.com](mailto:heath86end@aol.com)

## **General Members**

Sonia Lewis 01206 579950 [sonialewis@waitrose.com](mailto:sonialewis@waitrose.com)  
Peter McCarthy 01206 366865 [susanmcc1@cooltoad.com](mailto:susanmcc1@cooltoad.com)  
Ian Bowis 01206 561528 [jbowis@hotmail.com](mailto:jbowis@hotmail.com)  
Carol Holding 01206 576149 [carol@cholding.orangehome.co.uk](mailto:carol@cholding.orangehome.co.uk)

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 and application forms are available on the Lexden History website [www.lexdenhistory.org.uk](http://www.lexdenhistory.org.uk)  
If you have any change of details please use this form.**

**Membership Renewal is due before the AGM  
on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2016.**

# LEXDEN HISTORY GROUP – 10 YEARS OLD

## HOW IT ALL STARTED – Bernard Polley

In December 2004 the Spring Lane bridge over the River Colne was 100 years old. David Cawdell, who lived next to the bridge, organised a celebration which was attended by many local folk. Following that event David, in a conversation with Sonia Lewis and the late Geoff Pettit, thought there was enough interest to form a History Group for Lexden. With the co-operation of the Rev Stephen Carter a meeting was held in the Church on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2006 for anyone interested.

Eighteen people attended and it was unanimously agreed that a new History Group was a good idea. Volunteers from the gathering formed a steering committee; Geoff Pettit agreed to Chair the meetings, supported by Sonia Lewis, David Cawdell, Dick Barton, Jean Orpen-Smellie, David Wheal, Moira Green and Bernard Polley.

The steering committee on 27<sup>th</sup> March agreed the name of the group to be "*Lexden History Group*". David Cawdell took responsibility for publicity and Sonia Lewis, social events, but still no secretary or treasurer. Annual membership subscription to commence from 1<sup>st</sup> April was set at £10 per person and £15 for a family living at the same address. Andrew Phillips was invited to be President, which he accepted, and was prepared to give the inaugural talk.

David Cawdell produced the first newsletter which announced that Andrew's talk would be on 10<sup>th</sup> May on the subject "*The rise of Modern Colchester*". This was held in the Church Hall and attracted an audience



of eighty people, with many signing up as members that evening. (picture above)

A meeting of the steering committee met on 24<sup>th</sup> May at Geoff's house and the Group welcome Bob and Jane Thornhill who were willing to be treasurer and secretary. Dick Barton prepared a constitution for the Group, which was accepted.



Plans were made to hold an Open Day on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2006 (picture left) and members were asked to bring along any memorabilia that they may have on Lexden. This proved to be a great success filling the church hall with many exhibits, some of which were donated to us in order to build up our own archive collection.

From 2006 Lexden History Group has continued with monthly meetings addressed by guest speakers, social events, outings, production of two books on Lexden's past, an archive collection which is still growing, the great exhibition on World War One and

much else – no wonder we have a thriving membership!

# Tales from the Churchyard

## WILLIAM REDMORE BIGG, RA (1755-1828)



*William Redmore Bigg*  
by William Barnard 1774-1849 after William Fisk  
(1796-1872) National Portrait Gallery

On the left of the path to the main church door stands a large table tomb. It announces: "To the memory of William Redmore Bigg, Esq, Royal Academician of this County. He died February 6<sup>th</sup> 1828 aged 74 and was buried in the great vault of the church of St Giles in the Fields, London. Also of Martha Bigg, his wife, who died June 4<sup>th</sup> 1836 aged 89 and lies beneath this tomb." It records as well the deaths of Henry and Martha Vint who died in 1852 and 1867 respectively. Martha was the daughter of William.

William Redmore Bigg was baptised at Felsted, Essex on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1755, the third of seven children. His father, William, had married Grace Redmore of Glemsford, Suffolk, at Bulmer on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1749. Their families had been linked for several generations and the Biggs family was mentioned by Morant in his History of Essex when Samuel Biggs sold Clees Hall, Alphamstone to Edward Plumme of Hawkedon, Suffolk in 1685. Ninety years later his descendant, Edward Plume, married Elizabeth Green of Lexden and became a farmer tenant of Mrs Rawstorn of Lexden Manor. This was thought to be William Redmore Bigg's connection with Lexden but he was already known in Colchester when on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1784 he married Martha Frost at St Mary at the Walls. She was the daughter of Samuel Frost, a builder of Beaumont-cum-Moze.

In 1778 William enrolled in the Royal Academy (1714-1791) who influenced him in the painting schools, studying under Edward Penny of charitable scenes and as a result he exhibited most years at the Academy, the British Institution and occasionally at the Free Society. He became an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1787 but was not elected Academician until 1814. His small paintings often had a moral or charitable theme, but he also painted full length portraits in oil and pastel, and many pastoral subjects. Despite criticism, his paintings of the "virtuous poor" and other emotive subjects were popular and the best engravers were employed to render his work. Bryan's Dictionary reports "his pictures were generally of simple subjects, appealing to the domestic sympathies; they were painted with considerable power". Few of his pictures mention Colchester, but there is "The inside of a cottage, Lexden 1803 (see picture above right). Out of the window can be seen Lexden's mediæval church. This is very similar to another picture dated 1793 where not only can some of the "props" be seen in that one but the lady also looks very similar! Other local pictures include "A scene at Lexden Springs belonging to Mrs Rawstorn 1804", "Outside a husbandman's cottage, near Colchester - evening employment" and "Inside an outhouse near Colchester - morning employment 1808".



# Tales from the Churchyard

## **WILLIAM REDMORE BIGG, RA (1755-1828) – continued**

In contrast to the extravagance of wealthy town dwellers, Bigg's family ate a simple diet, fulfilling the contemporary ideal that it was vital for a humble rural life. John Constable, a family friend, preferred not to join them for meals as he did not like their diet of cheese and fat bacon, but Constable's first biographer, Charles Robert Leslie RA (1794-1859), considered old Mr Bigg to be "an admirable specimen both in look and manner of an old-fashioned English gentleman – a more amiable man never existed. In 1818 "poor dear old Bigg" sat to Leslie as Sir Roger de Coverley.

In 1827 at St Giles in the Fields, London, William was witness to the marriage of his daughter, Martha Elizabeth, to Henry Vint, a widower, a civil engineer, local magistrate and Mayor of Colchester in 1841 and 1843. He had apparently made his money as a shawl and bombazine manufacturer. Constable in letters of 1825 mentioned that when the first Mrs Vint was "a-dying" Miss Bigg was ready and willing to be his second!

After his earlier success waned William turned his hand to restoring rather than painting pictures. For many years he was based "at Mr Vints" in Tavistock Row and later Great Russell Street, London, working as an artist, dealer and picture restorer. As a restorer, John Constable called him 'the most skilful in London'. William was renowned by his fellow Royal Academicians as a picture cleaner and made a good living cleaning works by JMW Turner, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Murillo, Zoffany, etc, at various big houses such as Petworth, Hagley Hall, and Broke Hall in Suffolk, and also for Sir John Soane in Lincoln's Inn Fields. He often charged 6 guineas a picture and for working up to twelve weeks in a house the bill could be over £150 - a sum considered by both parties as "reasonable".

William Redmore Bigg died on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1828 at his house in Great Russell Street, London, and in April that year the Gentleman's Magazine reported "The works of this artist are well known to many of our readers, and duly registered from the earliest annals of the British School of Painting, founded by his late Majesty. The subjects of his pencil were mostly of a domestic nature. In these, benevolence, or the tender feelings, either of parental or rustic society, were forcibly portrayed (sic). His "Shipwrecked Sailor Boy," "Youths relieving a Blind Man," "Black Monday," with many others equally interesting, have been engraved; some have been copied by foreign artists, and are frequently to be seen in travelling throughout the continent. He was an intimate friend of Sir Joshua Reynolds; and the amenity of his manners endeared him to a numerous acquaintance, by whom, and his family, his loss will be sincerely regretted". An interesting footnote is that on his death a vacancy occurred at the Royal Academy and John Constable was admitted.



*Saturday Evening - The  
Husbandman's Return from  
Labour  
&  
Sunday morning - A  
Cottage Family Going To  
Church  
By  
William Redmore Bigg RA*



# TRAGIC ACCIDENTS AT LEXDEN PARK

A sad and fatal accident occurred in October 1831 to Robert Hewitt, a servant to Mr J F Mills of Lexden Park.

Mr Mills' carriage was returning from Copford in the evening, when Robert Hewitt, who was sitting behind, suddenly had a fit and fell upon the wheel. He remained there until the carriage reached Lexden Park, where he was found lodged on the wheel. He was severely injured by the wheel which had literally ground away a large portion of the shoulder, separating the arteries. The blood which flowed from the wound was traced back nearly two and a half miles. He lingered with little pain, until he died. He had no recollection of what had happened, except that he remembered his hat falling off. His hat was found near Mr. Ambrose's house at Copford.



Robert Hewitt left a wife and six children. He was buried in Lexden churchyard along with two other of Mr Mill's servants who died in three consecutive years. Mr Mills had the headstones made (*pictured left*) as a memorial to his three faithful servants.

During Christmas week 1832 there was a spate of burglaries in Lexden. Thieves had already broken into the Rectory in Spring Lane and Mr Mills of Lexden Park, thinking that they may be lurking in his parklands, brought out a pair of old pistols intending to give them to his butler James Marriage to clean

in case they were needed. One of the locks was stiff from misuse and in trying to ease it the pistol went off and hit the servant just as he was leaving the room. Mr Mills fainted from the shock but the servant staggered into the kitchen with blood pouring from bullet wounds in his arm, the bone of which was in splinters. Despite being attended by Mr Mill's private doctors James Marriage died that evening and with his last breath exonerated his master for a pure freak accident.

During the funeral at Lexden Church Mills was distraught and undertook to educate James Marriage's ten year old daughter as his own and to make a handsome provision for her future.

James Marriage was the second of three servants to die at Lexden Park in three successive years and is buried in a trimorial grave erected by Mr Mills facing his old master's house just across Church Lane.

Dick Barton

# Mediaeval Lexden

In the Middle Ages Colchester was the principal town of the region and Lexden a mere hamlet to the west through which ran the main road to London.

The many local springs were important and by 1066 a settlement had been established with some 16 'unfree' tenants and 4 serfs who worked the land. It was called Lessenden in the Domesday Book and described as a berewick - dependent settlement of Stanway manor - but soon became a distinct manor owned by Hubert de St. Clare. It was a sprawling area of 2,334 acres and was the wealthiest and possibly the most populated of Colchester's four outlying parishes which also included the hamlets of Berechurch (or West Donyland), Greenstead and Mile End. The status of Lexden was disputed for many years. In the late 13th century the burgesses claimed that a charter of Richard I declared them to be within



the borough but, although it granted hunting rights within the 'banlieu', Richard's only known charter did not accurately map the liberty and from 1296 the inhabitants of all four hamlets were still assessed with Colchester for subsidy - a tax based on the value of moveable goods which became the core of mediæval taxation. Some years later in 1313 Robert Fitzwalter, lord of Lexden manor and closely related to the Plantagenets, tried unsuccessfully to establish that Lexden was outside the borough's jurisdiction. The liberty of Colchester was not formally defined until Henry VI's 1447 charter.

Lexden village grew up around the church (*picture above left*) which had been founded early in the 12th Century, named after St Leonard of Noblac, the patron saint of prisoners. The patronage of Lexden was held in 1254 by John de Burgh in the right of his wife and remained with the manors of Stanway and Lexden in the families of Fitzwalter, Lucas, and later Rawstorne, and Papillon until it finally passed from the Papillons to the bishop of Chelmsford in 1978. The rectory was the richest living within the borough and valued at £5 6s 8d in 1291. Eudes the sewer (Dapifer) partly endowed St. John's Abbey with two thirds of the tithes from Lexden manor leaving the rector with the third share and all the tithes from other small estates.

Eudes had been granted Colchester and the castle by William II and probably acquired the manors of Stanway and Lexden at the same time. After his death in 1120 they descended over the years to the families of St Clare, Lanvalei, and Burgh and, when Stanway manor was sold, Lexden continued through marriage and inheritance to the Fitzwalters who, in the fourteenth century held thirteen manors in Essex (Ashdon, Burnham-on-Crouch, Cages, Creeksea, Little Dunmow, Henham, Lexden, Maldon, Sheering, Great Tey, Ulting, Wimbish and Woodham Walter). Although the main family estates were in Essex, the Fitzwalters also held Diss, Fincham and Hempnall in Norfolk and Shimpling and Thurstanton in Suffolk, and the family later acquired lands in Lincolnshire and Cumberland. By the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century the inheritance fell to John Radcliffe, Lord Fitzwalter, who was executed in 1496 and Lexden was forfeited to the Crown, but nine years later it was restored to John Radcliffe's son Robert, Lord Fitzwalter, later earl of Sussex.



*Modern impression from original silver die of Seal of Robert Fitzwalter (d1235).*

*Acknowledgment:  
Ealdgyth, Lobsterthermidor*

The class system of the Middle Ages determined the position of ordinary men: 'unfree' tenants were allowed a certain quantity of land but could never guarantee when the lord would demand their

## Mediæval Lexden - continued

service; bordars were workers below the rank of villein but above that of serf. By 1313 the tenants owed the lord winter and autumn week-work, additional ploughing and harrowing services in winter and spring, plus supplies of chickens and eggs at Christmas and Easter. The tenants' holdings at that time ranged from 8 to 50 acres and by the late 14th century were held individually.

In 1066 the Lexden manor land, cultivated by 6 villeins and 10 bordars, had 19 acres of meadow and woodland for 100 swine but by 1280 it was owned by the Lords Fitzwalter and had increased to 270½ acres of arable land, 22 acres of meadow and 150 acres of park pasture. The total value of rents and services amounted to 77s 10½d. Lexden Lodge, where the manorial courts were held, is believed to have been a free tenement of Lexden manor. It was a moated manor house and in 1313 the main house, kitchen, granary and chapel stood within the inner courtyard and the outer courtyard held two barns, a byre, dairy and small garden. It was later called Motts possibly after the family of Arnold de la Mott or Mote who had given some Lexden land to the Abbey of Waltham Holy Cross. His son, Thomas, also held land in the early 14th century but by 1360 another William Mott, probably Thomas's heir, was paying tithes in the parish. Later the land was acquired by the Spicer family who remained there for several generations

In 1086 there were two mills on the Colne in Lexden, one probably on the site of the later Lexden mill. The second mill could have been the one below Newbridge and owned by the lords of the manor, ie, John de Burgh in 1233. Thomas Godstone, the farmer of this land in 1403, may have built the later Lexden mill but by 1455 there were two mills either side of a bridge where the stream from Lexden springs fed the Colne. This presumably became Lexden bridge and the lord of the manor was responsible for its repairs. A lease of 1496 reserved the springs for the use of the mills and allowed the lessee of the corn mill to build a dam. From the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries the wool trade occupied much of the town's population and Colchester was surrounded by watermills for the fulling process.



Lexden contained numerous enclosed groves providing pasture and underwood. Underwood was ground cover usually of holly, hazel, willow, alder and thorn and space for cut wood and the produce of coppice or pollarded trees. During this time woodland was cleared and grazing rights determined. Rye and oats were grown on the Lexden demesne in 1287 and 25 calves were sold for 1s each with 40 milking cows earning the tenant up to 4s each. By 1351 the cows' earnings had reduced to 2s 6d each and wheat, oats, barley and peas were being grown. However, income from livestock (mostly cattle), together with hay and pasture still exceeded that from arable crops.

In the early 13<sup>th</sup> century the lords of Lexden manor created a park between the Colne and Bergholt Road and by 1287 rents of its pasture alone amounted to £6 17s ½d. The lord of Lexden also had a fishery between Newbridge and Lexden mill by 1245. Walter, Lord Fitzwalter in 1375 granted 3d a day to his parker. This fortunate worker was also keeper of the lord's warren and was given a livery robe every year, pasture for 6 cows, 12 swine, 12 sheep, and 4 mares with their foals, with pasture and hay for his horse!



## Mediaeval Lexden - continued

By the 13th century only the "unfree" and landless were bound by frankpledge - a system, dating back to 1035, under which all but the greatest men and households had a mutual responsibility to keep the peace. Every man, serf or free, was a member of a "tithing" which would guarantee not only his good behaviour, but also his appearance at court and compensation of an injured party. The tithings were grouped into larger units known as hundreds but a freeholder's land was deemed a sufficient pledge. The lord of Lexden manor Robert Fitzwalter 'held a view' of frankpledge in 1318 but the burgesses complained and the borough court questioned the Lord's right to do this without bailiffs present, especially as the tenants often suffered financial penalties for failing to pay suit (taxes) to the borough court. The frankpledge system declined in the 14th century and by the 15th century local constables operated under the justices of the peace. Lexden gallows, mentioned in 1379, may have been raised by the lord of the manor.

Problems were on-going for the lords of Lexden Manor and in 1312 a number of townsmen were said to have stolen goods from Robert Lord Fitzwalter and broken into his park at Lexden to hunt. A series of disputes erupted between the Fitzwalter family and their tenants over pasture rights, jurisdiction, and the liability of Lexden men to contribute to Colchester subsidies. This culminated in a Lexden man being killed in Mile End in May 1342 and the Colchester coroner became involved but John Fitzwalter thought he would be biased and called on the County coroner at Chelmsford to conduct the enquiry. This action infringed the Charter rights of the borough and when the verdict was not to Fitzwalter's satisfaction he not only attacked members of the jury but also any Colchester man found outside the borough! Finally the furious Fitzwalters blockaded the town from 20 May to 22 July which only ended when the burgesses had to pay a fine of £40. It appears that there was another attack on Fitzwalter's Lexden park followed by a second siege, from 7 April to 1 June 1343, which ended with the burgesses again paying £40!



There were three mediæval crosses in Lexden parish. Lamb's Cross (*picture right*), thought to have been built in 1278 by William de Lanvalei, stood at the junction of Halstead Road and Chitts Hill and marked today by a stone opposite King Coel Road. Stone Cross stood at the top of Lexden Hill opposite what is now Glen Avenue and the remaining brick and stone pedestal was recorded by Philip Morant in his History of Essex (1748) and is now marked by a small stone block by the pavement outside No 100 Lexden Road. Pedder's Cross was at the junction of Gosbecks Road and Shrub End Road and marking this site is a red slate plaque on the cottage opposite the Leather Bottle public house. Sadly little is known about the Lexden crosses but they could have been up to eight feet high and carved with symbols of Christianity marking boundaries or crossroads or just standing outside churches and monasteries.



Evidence of the Middles Ages can still be seen in Lexden where some late mediæval houses still survive (Nos. 126, 128, and 130 Lexden Road) and also Church House (No 197) - a hall house with cross wings and built in 15<sup>th</sup> century. Others are the Manor House and Weavers (No 187) which has a late medieval cross wing (*picture left*).

# The Politics of Rebuilding of Lexden Church in 1820

When the young Rev George Preston replaced his uncle, Samuel Sandys, as Rector of Lexden in 1804 he was keen to improve not only his own life but that of his parishioners. He first replaced the mediaeval rectory in 1814 with a modern gothic windowed house and then turned his thoughts to the church. This had been founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (*picture right*) and in his 1748 History of Essex Philip Morant wrote "Lexden church stands on the south side of London road, about the middle of the village; it is of one pace (?), as is also the chancel, and both are tiled; but on the north side of the church, there is a little isle (*sic*) or chapel, on the top of which stands a clock; at the west end is a spire shingled, containing one bell". The church and shingled bellcot (bell housing) were in ruins in 1600 and, although some work was carried out, more remedial work began on the chancel, wooden north porch, and vestry in 1609. The wooden clock tower mentioned by Morant had been a more recent addition.



*The original church demolished in 1820*

By 1819 the church was in a perilous state and Rev Preston applied to the "Society of Promoting the Enlargement and building of Churches and Chapels" (later the Incorporated Church Building Society) for funds to demolish the old church and build a larger one.

The Christian Remembrancer Quarterly Review recorded the proposal but the funding for the rebuilding was not straightforward and on 27 July 1820 the following, rather pedantic, letter was sent to the editor of that publication and illustrated that even in 1820 there were complicated formulae for acquiring funding for worthwhile projects. It also mentioned that "free and unappropriated sittings" should be available for those who are "unable to pay" – an interesting insight on church attendance!

*Sir;*

*In your Publication for the month of July, under the head of Provincial information, there is an error which it is proper to correct for the satisfaction of those persons who have contributed to the funds of the Society of Promoting the Enlargement and building of Churches and Chapels. Your correspondent from Essex has stated that a new Church, considerably larger than the ancient edifice, at Lexden, near Colchester, will be erected according to the late Act of Parliament; whereas in fact, the Church is to be built by aid from the subscription Society, and without any grant from the Parliamentary Commissioners.*

*An application was made to the Society in the month of May last, by the Rev. Mr. Preston, for assistance towards taking down the parish Church of Lexden, and rebuilding it on an enlarged scale, because it was too small for an increasing population, and had scarcely any free sittings, although the anxious desire of the poorer people to attend divine worship was very evident.*

*By the aid of the Society the Church will be so enlarged as to afford ample provision for the inhabitants of the parish; and care has been taken to secure in the whole 350 free and unappropriated sittings for the accommodation of those who are unable to pay.*

*It may be useful to state, for the information of your readers, the difference between the Board of Commissioners under the Act of Parliament for building new Churches and the voluntary subscription Society for Promoting the Enlargement and Building of Churches and Chapels.*

# The Politics of Rebuilding of Lexden Church in 1820 - continued

*The regulations of Parliament for the disposal of the public grant entirely exclude from any participation in its funds any parish whose population is under 4000 persons, however large the deficiency of church-room may be; or of any parish, however numerous its population, in which there is accommodation for one-fourth of such population; neither can its aids be extended to any cases of mere enlargement; thus leaving a very wide field open for the exertions of the Society in assisting those parishes where the want of church-room is perhaps equally great in extent and injurious in its consequences, however small may be its population.*

*Hence it will be evident, that the two expedients for relieving the lamentable want of church-room in this kingdom, viz, the parliamentary grant and the voluntary association, are well calculated mutually to co-operate; the one to supply the deficiency of those large and more populous parishes, and the other to promote the good work in such parishes as would otherwise be left to lament without redress the want of an opportunity to attend the public worship of Almighty God.*

*It will, therefore, appear that no adequate success can be expected except by the joint existence and successful application of both these expedients.*

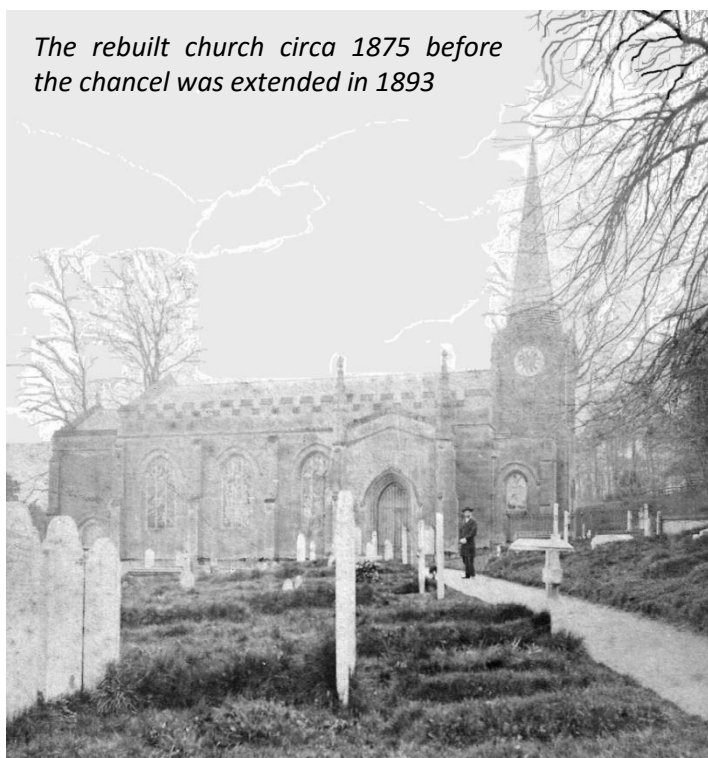
*Signed: A member of the Society for promoting the enlargement, etc, etc*

The Rev George Preston succeeded in obtaining a grant of £500 from the Society together with subscriptions of £900 and it was proudly announced by him and his two churchwardens, Henry Hayward and James Tillett, that the church would now accommodate 520 people and that, because of the grant, the original 50 free "sittings" were now increased by a further 300 "declared free and unappropriated for ever". This was deemed adequate for the population of 457 men and 475 women resident in the parish in 1821.

The new church was built to plans by

Mark Graystone Thompson (1783-1852), a Woodbridge born carpenter and architect who had designed many churches and public buildings in Suffolk and Essex, including Essex County Hospital. It was slightly south of the old church and was rendered outside. Inside the nave roof was plastered and there were small arches set in square frames to the north and south chapels with another arch into the organ chamber. Several monuments from the older church were incorporated including a grand wall memorial to Richard Hewett, who died in 1771. The design of this elaborate monument is attributed to Richard Hayward, a renowned figure of the art world at the time.

The church was completed in 1822. In 1893, together with many other alterations, a chancel was added to the church and a further extension, the Nicholls Room, was completed in 2008.



*The rebuilt church circa 1875 before the chancel was extended in 1893*

# FORTHCOMING SPEAKERS

Wednesday 13th April

**Jimmy Lawrence**  
Early Days Barging part 2

Wednesday 11th May

**AGM**

Followed by entertainment and light refreshments

Wednesday 8th June

**Pip Wright**  
Finding out about History Using Old Local Newspapers

## The demise of Glen Farm



**Before**



**After**