

Lexden History Group



Before and After

*Brooman's shop
circa 1945*

*Replaced today by Aldi
Supermarket, previously
Sainsbury's*



This issue features:

- Avenue of Remembrance Project
 - Lexden Post Office
- Lexden under the Tudor and Stuarts
- The History of Mr Polly – in Colchester?

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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.

Lexden History Group Library

We now have a selection of reference books which are available to members:-

- *Britain in Old Photographs, Colchester 1940-1990. A Changing Town* (1996) Andrew Phillips
- *The Changing Face of Colchester* (2002) Patrick Denney
- *Colchester 800, a celebration, 1189-1989* (1988) Colchester 800 Association
- *Colchester 1815-1914* (1980) A F J Brown
- *Colchester A History*(2004) Andrew Phillips
- *Colchester in old picture postcards* (1984) George Pluckwell
- *Colchester Then & Now* (1996) Essex County Standard
- *Discovering Coggeshall - Timber-framed buildings in the town centre* (undated) D Stenning & R Shackle
- *Discovering Coggeshall -The 1575 rental survey and the dated buildings,*(2013) David Andrews
- *History & Guide, Colchester* (2004) Patrick Denney
- *A Portrait of Victorian Colchester* (1982) Peter Sherry
- *Ten Men and Colchester: Public Good and Private Profit in a Victorian Town* (1985) Andrew Phillips



*Avenue of Remembrance near Glen Avenue
© Glynn Baker*

AVENUE OF REMEMBRANCE PROJECT

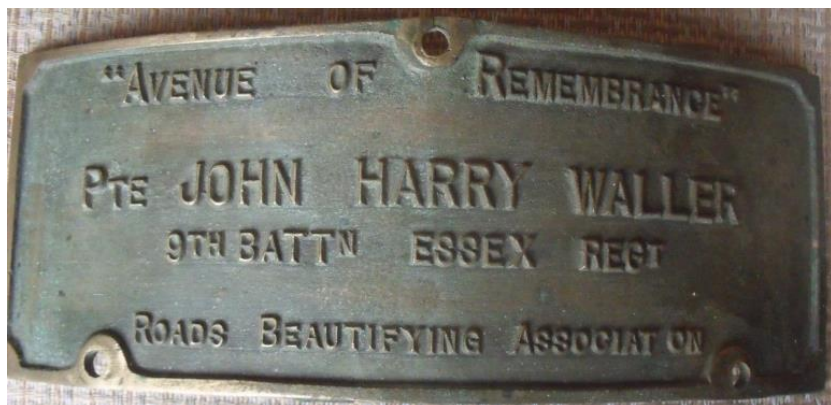
Everyone in Colchester is familiar the Avenue of Remembrance, but few know why it has that name. Its history is interesting and starts with the usual local government plans to ease increasing congestion in the town. The proposed by-pass had been the subject of "discussion and conjecture" for many years, estimating effects on local trading revenue, whether it should be north or south of the town and the expense and difficulties of purchasing the land. The total costs of £292,000 seem negligible today especially as the works were extensive. Huge amounts were

excavated, transported, tipped and spread. Two bridges, over the River Colne and over the LNER line, were built and a new bathing pool (*below*) replaced the old one. Gradients, marshy ground, extra concrete reinforcements on embankments, surface drainage, sewer diversions and many other obstacles and complications were overcome. Many trees at Lexden Springs had to be cut down, but 750 trees were planted along the new road, "many of them in areas hitherto plain and unattractive".

The 260 trees donated by local people and organisations were planted along the western part of the by-pass to create the Avenue of Remembrance from Cymbeline Way in Lexden, along Colne Bank Avenue and Cowdray Avenue to St Andrew's Avenue, Greenstead. Each tree was surrounded by a wrought iron structure and a plaque was fastened to the trunk inscribed with the name of the person remembered. One section commemorated servicemen who died in the First World War with another for former citizens including 25 former mayors. An avenue of flowering cherry trees in Colne Bank Avenue was known as Girl Guide Avenue as each local Guide Company subscribed to a tree in honour of the Movement. Another was called the Children's Avenue. The grand project was opened with due ceremony just after noon on Thursday 29th June 1933 by Viscount Ullswater (Ex-Speaker, House of Commons) and Jean Pye, "the Mayor's little daughter".



Years later in 1996 Cllr Christopher Arnold, supported by Cllr Sonia Lewis, proposed the restoration of the Avenue of Remembrance with the hope of replacing and displaying the memorial plaques. He said, "... This is a part of the Borough's heritage which should be better known and cherished. Many



of the trees were planted in memory of people who made outstanding contributions to the history of Colchester's 20th century and we should do our utmost to ensure that their memorial is spruced up so that the 21st century remembers them too." Mrs Jean Bell (nee Pye) invited them to see her albums of the event. She had various newspaper cuttings and photographs of the construction of the road and the opening ceremony. She, as a five year old, was responsible for presenting

the scissors for cutting the silk ribbon to Lord Ullswater, who performed the opening ceremony. He in return gave her a silver threepenny piece which had been collected that day from the Royal Mint. In her letter she continued, "At the conclusion of the memorable day Lord Ullswater gave the Scissors to my Father as a keepsake and they are now in my possession in their silk-lined red leather box." Over the years this grand Colchester memorial declined with even the carved signs at either end of the road disappearing.

AVENUE OF REMEMBRANCE PROJECT - continued

Many of the bronze plaques, originally attached to trees, were stolen and sold, either at militaria fairs or simply for scrap. Fortunately a local scrap dealer realised what they were and returned them to the Council where they were put in store for years - an action which prevented further pilfering. It was agreed that any remaining plaques should be removed to preserve them from damage or souvenir hunters. After various meetings it was also agreed that the garden at North Station Roundabout should be used to build a memorial to "beautify the corner and house the 8½ metres of bronze plaques". The brick built memorial would be about 7 yards deep and 13 yards wide. Three bronze plaques 25 inches by 35 inches and a header would be included. Granite obelisks 12 feet high and 4 feet square were also proposed. The cost would be £34,500 but an appeal was launched in April 1997 to raise £50,000 in the hope of including underground lighting. The Colchester Civic Society members were great supporters of returning the Avenue of Remembrance to its former glorious state and Peter Luxmore, their Vice Chairman, carved another Avenue of Remembrance sign to replace one that had been stolen and this was inaugurated on 16th April 1997 on St Andrew's Avenue at the rear of Greenstead Court. It matched the sign already erected the previous year near Glen Avenue, Lexden. The cutting of the first sod took place on 22nd April 1998 followed by an evening reception in the Mayoral Suite at the Town Hall.



October 2014 - Members of Lexden History Group holding plaques by the Avenue of Remembrance

Mr John Welham of Colliers agreed to donate the necessary bricks for building. Students from Colchester Institute gave their time freely to construct the wall which was completed in July 1998. The new large plaques were on the wall by 3rd October and shrubs and trees were planted in time for the official opening at 10.30 am on Saturday 17 October 1998. More landscaping continued over the next few months to further enhance the area.

The council appealed to the families of people commemorated on the plaques to claim theirs which had been removed. Any not claimed were put on sale at a minimum donation of £10 each to raise funds to pay for the memorial wall. Although some lost plaques have been recovered, out of the many plaques originally made, the council now has just 34.

Lexden History Group's project is to record the history of The Avenue of Remembrance and research those named on the special commemorative bronze plaques, ultimately producing a book. When this is complete, possibly in time to mark the end of WW1 in 1918, it should fill a large gap in the history of Colchester. Sonia Lewis has been featured recently in the local papers talking about the project in the hope that there will be some response from local people. Research has started on the plaques held by the Borough Council and some very interesting facts have already been unearthed. Help with this mammoth task would be welcomed. Not all names will give up their secrets, but we will try!



1946 O S map (sheet 149) showing the by-pass with trees

LEXDEN UNDER THE TUDORS AND STUARTS

For many years Lexden village was perhaps the most populous of the four outlying parishes near Colchester and certainly the wealthiest in the 16th century with 25 houses being charged with repairing the churchyard fence. In 1604 31 men were assessed for subsidy (tax) and 240 adults were rated for poll tax in 1692.

Lexden village had grown up around the springs and the church with some Tudor houses probably encroaching on the heath. Among surviving houses of similar date in what was Lexden Street are the Manor House (No 134), Weavers (No 187) and Church House (No 197), which is a late 15th century hall house with cross wings. An upper floor was created there in the 17th century together with a fine staircase. It is thought that a merchant's mark found in the house was that of John Baldwin, who worked as a tanner and lived there in the mid 17th century. Weavers (No. 187) also has a late 15th century cross wing and the rest of the house was rebuilt in the early 17th century with a continuous jetty along the street. Another 17th-century timber-framed house is now numbered as two houses (Nos. 205 and 207), but has returned to being a single dwelling. Nos. 209 and 211 are also timber-framed houses, again originally built as one. Others at the top of Lexden Road (Nos 221-233 and 152, 160-164 *pictured above*) are slightly later. Barely recognisable now is the frontage of a 17th century timber-framed house (Jacqueline Court).



A mediæval tenter house in Lexden Street, used for stretching newly-woven cloth, had fallen into disuse by 1561 and in the early 17th century Sir Thomas Lucas acquired it and built a new house, Lexden Manor, on that site. Parts still survive in the current house at the south-east corner and at its north end which was probably built later in the same century. During the 18th century there was more building including the original Lexden Park on the corner of Church Lane. The main road became a turnpike in 1707 and the cottage used as a toll house still survives (*picture left*).

There were ten inns in Lexden in the 17th century with five in Lexden Street, the Angel, Ship, Star, Sun and King's Arms, and their presence reflects the importance of the road - the main route to London. The Angel (Weavers) was recorded as an inn in 1683 but by the mid 18th century was a private house. The Ship and Star apparently closed in the early 18th century, but the King's Arms survived in 1789. The Sun was open until the 1790s, when it, too, became a private house, reopening as an inn by 1837 (*picture right*). The King's Head, at the top of Lexden Hill and now private housing, was recorded in 1656 and by 1721 was in need of repair but it appears to have remained an inn for many years.



The manor of Motts (later Lexden Manor now Lexden Lodge) was probably built on the site of a more substantial mediæval manor house within the moated enclosure. In 1547 it was passed from Henry Fortescue to George Sayer in whose family it remained until 1634, when a John Sayer left it to James Lemyng of Greyfriars. His daughter Mary married Sir Isaac Rebow (1655-1726), the leading Colchester Whig, and Motts later passed to his grandson Charles Chamberlain Rebow - all well-known local names! Other farmhouses recorded in 1655 were Maltings, Coopers (later Prettygate), Sheepen, and West House which remains with its 17th-century cross wing. The house at Maltings was probably a mediæval hall with a later inserted first floor and a Summer Hall was recorded there in 1583 and 1601. There is also evidence of a malthouse on Maltings farm in the early 17th century.


LEXDEN UNDER THE TUDORS AND STUARTS– continued

The other farmhouses were demolished during the 20th century

Lord FitzWalter had been executed in 1496 and his vast Lexden estate was forfeited to the Crown, but in 1505 it was restored to Robert Radcliffe, another Lord FitzWalter, later earl of Sussex. It remained with the Radcliffes, until 1612 when it was sold to Sir Thomas Lucas, who left it to his illegitimate son, also Sir Thomas Lucas (d. 1650). He was a Royalist during the Civil War but on payment of a large fine was able to keep Lexden and was later succeeded by his son Charles, Lord Lucas of Shenfield who died in 1688. This Lord Lucas left it to his wife for life and the remainder to their daughters, Anne, wife of Edward Cary, and Penelope, later wife of Isaac Selfe. In 1700 Isaac Selfe bought the rest of the estate and in 1701 it was sold to Samuel Rawstorn of London.



The 1640s had seen great national unrest with the polarising of people into the Royalist or Parliamentary causes. It was unfortunate in 1648 that Colchester was en route for a Royalist Army marching to East Anglia (probably down Lexden Road) and was attacked by the forces under Lord-General Thomas Fairfax, the Parliamentary Commander-in-Chief. Lexden was his headquarters and his army was camped on Lexden Heath during the Siege of that year. They also built a fort on Great Broom Heath (Hilly Fields) (*map left*).



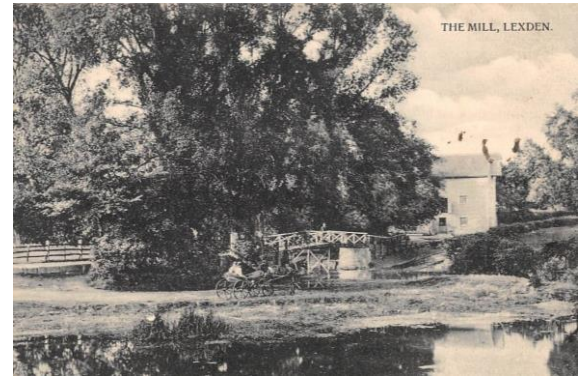
In the 16th century the pasture rights of commoners were limited to 100 sheep, overseers of estovers (the right of a tenant to take wood from leased land) were appointed, and a pound was set up in Lexden Street. The 140 acres of Braiswick wood was recorded in 1621 and Shrub Wood may have extended into Lexden in 1649 but woodland was being cleared in the 17th and 18th centuries. Sheep-rearing had increased dramatically to serve the local cloth trade and pressure was put upon local grazing resources, so much so that some arable land, including 50 acres or more in West Field, had been converted to grass by 1599. A few weavers were recorded in Lexden parish in the 17th and early 18th century and three tailors lived in the parish from about 1588.

Over the years farming changed and by 1676 fields of turnips were being grown and it was inevitable that their use as fodder would reduce meadow grazing in the area. However, in 1711 a flock of 200 sheep and their lambs was recorded on the Lexden manor pastures. For those interested in statistics, 538 acres of land were surveyed in about 1600 and the findings were: 290 acres of pasture, 172 acres of rye ground, and 76 acres of meadow. By 1645 tithes of Lexden church glebe were payable on 44 acres of rye, 26 acres of oats, 6 acres of barley, 5 acres of flax (a "flaxman" was recorded in the area in 1649), 4 acres of wheat, 3 acres of peas, 30 acres of meadow, 22 cows and 140 sheep. Gravel was also sold from Parsons Hill in the late 17th and early 18th century.

A lease of 1496 reserved the Lexden springs for the two mills which were farmed together from the late 15th century until the early 18th century. They were known as the great or undershot corn mill

LEXDEN UNDER THE TUDORS AND STUARTS– continued

north of Lexden bridge, and the little or overshot fulling mill, at the head of a pond south of the bridge. The lessee was allowed to build a dam for the corn mill. At Church House (now No 197 Lexden Road) in the 16th and 17th centuries there was also a bark mill and tannery which survived until 1790. (John Baldwin, tanner, lived there in the mid 17th century)



In the early 16th century the court at Lexden Manor, was responsible for electing constables and ale-tasters and argued that the Colchester serjeants had no right of arrest in Lexden but it was counter argued that this exemption only applied to Lexden Park - a right discontinued in the early 17th century. The late 16th century courts seem to have been concerned almost exclusively with the collection of wardsilver (a form of tax) and other dues, but the sheriff's court at Michaelmas in 1574 ordered the scouring of ditches and the repair of a highway. Like other Essex hundreds, Lexden had two chief constables from the later 16th century.

A poorhouse recorded in 1592 was thought to be an unendowed almshouse in Lexden Manor and a house on Parsons Hill was available to poor people in the late 17th century. Sir John Swinnerton, a merchant-tailor and Lord Mayor of London in 1612, acquired Stanway Hall estate in 1601 and in 1610 with his mother, Mary, he took £5 4s a year from this estate to provide bread for 14 "old, impotent poor of Lexden". Another local benefactor was Thomas Love who left £120 in his will dated 1565 for Thomas Rich to buy land from which the yearly rent of £6 was to help the poor in Lexden and 11 other parishes. Rich in his will of 1570 also left land in Lexden to the same charity. In Lexden this was usually in the form of bread later distributed at the same time as the Swinnerton charity. In 1673 poor relief was received by 48 of the 80 households assessed for hearth tax.

During little known 1626 outbreak of plague, concern was such that the Archdeaconry Court, usually held at St. Peters Church in Colchester, moved to Lexden in September and stayed for five months. In the Great Plague of 1665 and 1666 large sums were needed to provide relief in Colchester and, when the church levies proved to be insufficient, outlying villages were assessed to give help and Lexden was rated at £108 to be paid in November and December of 1665. This proved inadequate and the JPs increased it to £250 a month for three further months. Meanwhile the plague deaths in Lexden at this time reached 82, but the area was much larger than it is now. Sporadic high mortality rates were recorded in Lexden between 1514 and 1679, the result of outbreaks of epidemic disease - influenza and typhus or illness related to famine and malnutrition caused by high grain prices.



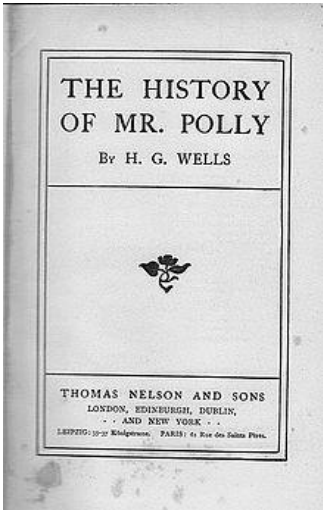
Robert Searle, rector of Lexden Church (*right*) from 1576 to 1610, was one of four Colchester clergymen threatened with losing their livings for non conformist practices, but was considered "diligent and sufficient" by his puritan brethren in 1604 and remained until his death. However, his successor, Stephen Nettles, offended the puritans on many occasions and eventually lost his livings in Lexden and Steeple. He even refused to pass the Lexden Rectory to his successor, Gabriel Wyresdale, until forced to in 1647 but this unfortunate man was not local and was harassed by his parishioners until he left in 1650 to be replaced by John Nettles, who may have been a relation of Stephen Nettles.



It is interesting that Lexden five hundred years ago was a place of enterprise and charity and some of those charities survive today, as do many buildings. What a treat it would be to be able to visit and experience the Lexden of those days – time travel here we come!

You have probably read "The History of Mr. Polly" or seen the film starring John Mills and know it was written by H G Wells. It is widely assumed to be set in Kent but there is a possible, if tenuous, connection with Colchester.

In the famous book Alfred Polly lives in the imaginary town of Fishbourne in Kent, thought to be based on Sandgate, Kent, where H G Wells lived for several years. The novel begins with a miserable Mr. Polly: "He hated Fishbourne, he hated Fishbourne High Street, he hated his shop and his wife and his neighbours – every blessed neighbour – and with indescribable bitterness he hated himself". One day while walking in the country, he decides to commit suicide and set his shop ablaze hoping that the insurance will assure his wife's prosperity but he botches the arson job and, instead of killing himself, rescues an elderly neighbour and becomes a minor local celebrity



However at the time of writing this book H G Wells was living near Dunmow at Easton Glebe on Easton Lodge estate owned by the Countess of Warwick. He was a regular visitor to Colchester and the town is mentioned in "The Wars of the World". It is thought that "The History of Mr Polly" is partly autobiographical. He was from the lower middle class and was brought up in his father's failing shop. He worked in a clothing shop for a while, as did the novel's hero, and he hated it. H G Wells and Mr. Polly also both married their cousins. At the time of writing in 1909/1910 there was a clothing shop in St Botolph's Street run by a Mr Polley. Is this too much of a coincidence?

Furthermore, in the book Mr. Polly fakes his suicide and sets fire to his shop. In 1893 a fire took place in a tailor's shop at No 1 St Botolph's Street and the badly charred body of the owner, a tailor called Alfred Welch, was found in the burnt remains of his shop. A rope was found around his head giving the impression that he had committed suicide by hanging after setting fire to the premises. It was later discovered that he had been murdered by a blow to the head and left to look as if he had hung himself. The main suspect was an Arthur Blatch, who worked for Welch as a porter but he had vanished. Almost seven years later, a man identified as Blatch but known as Lillywhite was arrested in New Zealand. A Colchester policeman and a keeper from the Town Hall went out there and escorted him back to Colchester to face trial. Eventually the man was acquitted despite being identified by the two men who brought him back to the UK.



Near to Mr. Polly's shop in the novel is a shop owned by a Mr Clamp and coincidentally in St Botolph's Street close to Mr Polley's shop was also another run by a Mr. Clamp - again suggesting that perhaps "The History of Mr. Polly" could have been set in Colchester. The 1911 census shows us that the surnames of Polley and Clamp were rare and to have occurred in such close proximity in two different towns at this time seems highly improbable.

Was Fishbourne High Street really St Botolph's Street? St Botolph's Street was busy with the small shops (above c1912) just like Fishbourne High Street described in "The History of Mr Polly". Two of

THE HISTORY OF MR POLLY – IN COLCHESTER - continued

the fictional shop keepers are Mr Clamp (toy shop) and Mr Polly (tailor) who, of course, are found in St Botolph's in 1909. The real Mr Clamp's shop (Mr J H Clamp, Furnisher, Jeweller, Pawnbroker, etc) was described at the time as "a noted trading concern in Colchester". It was prominently situated on the corner of Vineyard Street and St Botolph's Street which had grown over the years to be "one of the busiest centres of industry in the town".



St Botolph's Street - Mr Clamp's shop on extreme right of picture

The case at the time was big news and HG Wells must have read about it. Did he use this in his plot for Mr Polly? Alfred Welch died in his shop not far from Mr Polley's on the opposite side of Vineyard Street. Alfred was a tailor as was the real Mr Polley. Mr Welch and HG Wells' Mr Polly were both called Alfred. His body was found in the ashes of his shop just as HG Wells described the death of his Mr Polly. Welch appeared to have committed suicide just as his shop went up in flames. Mr Polly died in his shop as it too went up in flames except his death was a suicide disguised as an accident. The owner of the rebuilt shop was – Mr Clamp!



No 1 (left) and No 3(right) St Botolph's Street today

LEXDEN POST OFFICE



In 1516 Henry VIII established a "Master of the Posts" which two centuries later was renamed "Postmaster General". It is recorded that in 1591 eight post horses were funded by Colchester and 34 years later the government required the town to set up a postal stage, appointing a postmaster in 1628. These early postal stages were often inns, but in 1664-5 a specific post house was built in St Mary's parish, but this could be unpredictable as much depended on the integrity of

individuals and in 1677 the local postmaster was alleged to supply the worst horses on the road! Security was not guaranteed and coaches risked attack, eg, in 1687 a haul of uncut diamonds was stolen from the Holland mail between Colchester and Harwich. By 1767 there were regular collections and deliveries at Mr Manning's post office at the King's Head (*below*) in the town centre. Mail coaches were introduced in the late 1700s, to provide a faster and more cost effective system. The previous system, using post boys (often elderly), was so unreliable with frequent mail thefts and other problems that it suffered declining revenues.

In the early 19th century Colchester remained an important staging post for coaches travelling to and from London, many of which carried mail. A Colchester penny post was established in 1815, with three mail carts serving outlying villages and after the railway arrived in 1843 some mail went by train. In 1840 the Penny Black - the first adhesive postage stamp - was available, establishing the national Penny Post. In 1848 a postmaster, two assistants, and two deliverers were based at an office in Head Street, with receiving houses at East Hill, Hythe Street, and Lexden. 1852 saw the first pillar box erected in Jersey and the following year they were erected throughout the country and thirty years later a total of 18 pillar and wall post boxes were recorded in Colchester. Motor vans finally replaced the horse drawn mail coaches in 1909 and by 1937 there were 15 sub post offices in the borough.



Although there was a constant flow of mail coaches passing back and forth through the village from London to the major towns in Norfolk and Suffolk and through to the continent, Lexden was not the centre of the postal world. According to Pigot's Directory of September 1839 the population of Lexden in 1831 was 1184 but it was clear that it might merit one post office if not two. Lexden Post Office was opened before 8th June 1844 as a date stamp (UDC) an inch in diameter was sent from London to Colchester Post Office for issue to the Lexden sub-office. By December 1847 the office was attracting a salary of £8 a year and the following year, according to White's Directory, John



Appleby was running it. (The only man of that name at that time living in Lexden Street was the National Schoolmaster. As he was an educated man perhaps he doubled as sub-post master.) In 1848 letters were arriving at the office at 8am direct from Colchester and were quickly dispatched. The Colchester Establishment Books shows him as "Letter Receiver" in 1855 but by 1878 a "box" was being cleared at 11.10am and 7.15pm. Further communication developments included the opening in 1856 of a Colchester station of the Electric and International Telegraph Company.

On 20 Jan 1859 a Rural Messenger Route from Colchester was established. Several delivery routes operated at various times from Lexden to Fordham Heath, Eight Ash Green Post Office and Lexden Viaduct Farm. There is no information as to when they stopped but it was before 1969!

Post Office life would have been very busy. The Post Office launched its Telegraph Service in 1870,

LEXDEN POST OFFICE- continued

the same year as the first postcards appeared costing ½d to send, as did newspapers in wrappers. Postal Orders were introduced in 1881 and parcel post in 1883. In 1886 Peter James Ladbroke was at Lexden Heath sub-post office in London Road opposite Halstead Road on the corner of Back Lane. By 1891 Sarah Ann Vincent, a widow aged 46, was there as the sub postmistress and grocer, and nearby lived Walter Baines aged 17 of Straight Road - a Post Office Telegraph Messenger. Three years later Edgar James Garling, a local baker, had taken over (*picture above with Edgar Garling at gate*) and on 21 June 1896 a Yorkshire man, Isaac Stonehouse, another baker and grocer, joined him at the then huge salary of £77 12s a year.

When Sarah Vincent became post mistress in 1891 Peter Ladbroke, by now a widower aged 62, moved to the Post Office at 31 Lexden Street opposite the Sun Inn. In the 1891 Census he is recorded as Sub Post Master with his boarder, Mary Ann Loyd aged 32, the Assistant Postmistress. Living nearby was Frank Motum, the son of the local schoolmaster, Frederick Motum, and who at 14 years old was a Post Office Telegraph Messenger. By 1901 Isaac Stonehouse was at No 31 as sub postmaster and baker from where he resigned on 30 Sept 1912, moving to Greenway, Chapel Road, Stanway. He died in April 1936. His son, William, also became a post office official. In 1906 the office issued and paid both Ordinary and Telegraph Money Orders (introduced in 1838) and the telegraph code for the office was LEC. This service continued until at least July 1941.

Cecil George Keeping, born 1880 in Lambeth, was appointed as the next Sub Post Master on 1st October 1912 at a salary of £73 16s. During WW1 he was listed in the 1917 Kelly's Directory but must have soon joined the Royal Garrison Artillery (Service No 169859). He was sadly killed in action aged 38 on 21 Oct 1918 in Cambrai and is buried at Quienvy Communal Cemetery. His widow, Emily Mary, became Acting Sub postmaster from the following day. Her salary was at a reduced



rate of £69 16s but this was increased the following July to £78 16s. She died in Colchester in 1979.

By 1921 the office was recorded as "on Lexden Hill, opposite the Sun Inn" and when Mrs Keeping resigned on 30 Jun 1925 she was replaced by Charles Brown at the lower rate of £71 16s. The street name changed to Lexden Road in the early years of the 20th century and prior to 1945 the Post Office is recorded as being at 213 Lexden Hill (*extreme left c1930*) moving to 211 during 1945. Mr Fowler took over in 1948 and was succeeded by his wife in

the early 1950s. She remained until the Post Office was closed in early May 1973.

During the Second World War the young boys of Lexden had newspaper rounds from the Newsagents' shop in the Post Office. James Mayes from Trafalgar Road had one as did Fred Hagon of Heath Road. Peter Tweed (1928-2011) who also lived in Heath Road and did a newspaper round remembered that he had a savings account at the Post Office "opposite the Church in Lexden Road" and had 4s 6d in his savings book. He remembered two ladies "who looked like witches" that used to work there but in 2008 he wondered if the money was still there as he never withdrew it!

Today the Post Office is still in turmoil. A petition was launched in June 2016 to save the delivery office in London Road, Stanway, as without it residents and postmen would have to travel across Colchester to the nearest delivery office at Eastgates. It had been there for more than 40 years with the gradual closing of the usual post office facilities but was still a sorting office and collection point.

Former Sub Postmaster Graham Baxter said: "It is a great shame for the residents of Stanway to lose a facility which is at such a convenient location." - t'was ever thus!!!

FORTHCOMING SPEAKERS/EVENTS

January 11th 2017

Geoff Pettit Memorial Lecture

Andrew Phillips - The Rise of Modern Colchester 1940 - 2000

February 8th

John Miners - Horsehair Tales

March 8th

Alan Skinner - The History of the Greyfriars Site

Christmas on The Farm - 1940s Style

Sonia Lewis



Christmas was special in spite of shortages. We children would spend all day in the sitting room in front of the fire playing with our gifts, mostly second hand books and knitted soft toys. Mother and Auntie would un-pull old jumpers, wind the wool into hanks, wash it, stretch it, dry it on the back of a chair and then roll it into balls and knit.

The House was decorated with masses of holly. The meat was cooked in Norfolk's, the baker's oven, where on Christmas Eve most families in the village took their joints or birds. Lunch depended on when your meat was ready but this was no problem as the men would wait in The King's Arms opposite!

The difference was tea time when we had sandwiches, which were a treat, and cake. Cake would be rock buns, as they required less fat, or Almond Tart made with semolina and Almond flavour, but best of all was bread pudding. The recipe included carrots and apples. Mother also added grated apple to mincemeat before spooning it into pies.

Bread Pudding.

Ingredients

8oz stale bread, 2oz brown sugar, 3 oz mixed dried fruit, ½ teaspoon mixed spice, 2oz finely grated suet and milk, 1 beaten egg (if using dried eggs follow the instructions on the tin). Grated or chopped dried apple* may be included with the dried fruit.

Method

Soak the bread for at least 1 hour, squeeze out the water, place bread in a basin and beat out the lumps with a fork. Add fruit, suet, sugar, spice and mix well. Stir in beaten egg and some milk.

Place in a greased tin and bake in a warm oven for about an hour.



*** To make dried apple rings**

Peel and slice apples, place slices on wire cooling trays in a low oven.

We had a coal range and Mother would dry the apple rings overnight.