

Lexden History Group



22 Fitzwalter Road. Lexden



Straight Road, Lexden



- Lexden and the Great Storm of 1987
- Plaque Stories from the Avenue of Remembrance - Mr John J C Turner, Dr Alexander Wallace and The Brunwin-Hales Family
- Life in Lexden in the 50's and 60's

Newsletter No 46 – September 2017
Website www.lexdenhistory.org.uk

Your Committee

Chairman

Dick Barton 01206 573999
dickbartonlex@gail.com

Secretary

Liz White 01206 522713
alangwhite187444@hotmail.com

Treasurer

Melvin White 01206 575351
melvin.s.white@btinternet.com

Membership Secretary

Jackie Bowis 01206561528
jbowis@hotmail.com

Social Secretary

SusanMcCarthy 01206 366865
susan.mccarthy@yahoo.co.uk

Magazine Joint Editors

Liz White / Jackie Bowis
alangwhite187444@hotmail.com
jbowis@hotmail.com

Archivist

Bernard Polley 01206 572460
heath86end@aol.com

General Members

Sonia Lewis 01206 579950 sonialewis@waitrose.com

Peter McCarthy 01206 366865

Ian Bowis 01206 561528 jbowis@hotmail.com

Carol Holding 01206 576149 carol@cholding.orangehome.co.uk

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.

Chairman's Message

The Summer Barbecue, held in Lexden Road in the garden of Alan and Liz White, was much enjoyed in very fine weather.

The Group continues to flourish with about 130 members (the precise number changes regularly!), but if you have new neighbours please tell them about us, or our website www.lexdenhistory.org.uk

Our Secretary, Liz, has been busy researching the personal details of those who are commemorated by a tree planted along the Avenue of Remembrance, which opened in 1933. Whilst many were casualties in World War One, by no means all of them were. Some were normal civilian deaths commemorated by their families. Liz hopes to have the book published in 2018, and the Group is hoping to obtain sponsorship to meet the printing costs.

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
- *Essex People 1750-1900 from their diaries, memoirs and letters* AFJ Brown
 - *Essex 'full of profitable thinges'* edited by Kenneth Neale
 - *Steam and the Road to Glory – The Paxman Story* Andrew Phillips
 - *History of the Essex County Hospital 1820-1948* John B Penfold
- *Essex and the Great Revolt of 1381* edited by W H Liddell and R G Wood
 - *First Reports – Extracts from the Chelmsford Chronicle 1764-99* Thora Broughton
- *Secrets of the grave – Excavation of Roman church and two cemeteries in Colchester*
 - *The Essex Weather Book* Ian Currie, Mark Davison and Bob Ogley
 - *An East Anglian's Life 1913-1990* Cyril Meadows
 - *An Essex and Suffolk Alphabet* Basil Slaughter
 - *Memories of a Bygone Age (Colchester)* Edward Newman
 - *Essex at War* edited by Hervey Benham
 - *Chartism in Essex and Suffolk* A F J Brown

And many more!

Plaque Stories from the Avenue of Remembrance

Mr John J C Turner

John Joseph Candler Turner was born in Marks Tey near Colchester in 1849, one of three children of John, a builder, and Jane. By 1871 he was living with his widowed mother at 6 Abbeygate Terrace in Colchester and employed as Assistant Secretary at Essex Hall Asylum (right). Later that year he married Elizabeth Brown and they lived near Essex Hall at St John's Cottage 118(?) Station Road and by 1874 John was Secretary of the Asylum. They had four children, three survived including Arthur, born in 1876, who later became assistant to his father. In 1891 the family was living at Essex Hall and John was recorded as "Secretary and Superintendent of Asylum" and Elizabeth as Matron. Frank, born in 1872, became a physician and surgeon and moved to Huddersfield with his family. Their only daughter, Edith, born in 1875, appeared to have no occupation until in the 1911 Census she was recorded as Assistant Matron. Arthur by this time had moved to live in Cherries, Beaconsfield Road, Great Clacton with his wife and daughter but remained "Assistant Secretary to an Imbecile Asylum", possibly at Essex Hall with his father. John J C Turner died at Essex Hall on Christmas Eve 1913.



In the early to mid 1800s local young patients with learning disabilities, were sent to Brentwood and other asylums. Essex Hall, the hotel built in 1843 to serve the new railway from London, was closed in 1850 and the owner, S M Peto, helped convert it into a branch of the Park House Asylum in Highgate and by 1855 Essex Hall had 150 patients. Three years later they had all been transferred to another new asylum, the Royal Earlswood Hospital in Surrey but in 1859 Essex Hall was established as a separate "East Anglian Asylum for Idiots and Imbeciles". It was only the second one in England and was partly supported by voluntary subscriptions and contributions from some patients and their home counties. The patients, mainly children, were admitted by subscribers' votes, but no paupers were allowed. Numbers gradually increased from 66 in 1862 to 245 in 1897 and at first patients were only taken for five years, but after 1865 about a fifth could be readmitted to give them a permanent home.

Under the Turner family it appeared to be a benevolent and comparatively kindly regime, focussing on training and teaching. More able patients were taught to read, write and understand basic arithmetic whilst others were taught tailoring, housework, carpentry and gardening, and after 1863 some also worked in the newly established laundry. Recreation was varied and included cricket, football, croquet, keeping animals, and watching magic lantern shows. In 1862 a cottage was built in the grounds to provide special care for about 20 children and in 1867 another was built for infectious patients. More building included a new laundry in 1882 and a new recreation hall in 1883. By the 1890s patients were employed making staff uniforms, mats and mattresses and repairing shoes, clothing, and bedding. A small farm opposite Essex Hall, Poplar Hall, (now Wick's) was leased in 1892 and bought in 1895 enabling the men and boys to work with livestock.

Essex Hall became part of the National Health Service in 1948 but was closed and demolished in 1985, its 12 acre site sold for development in 1988. Turner Village in Mile End was named in memory of the Turner family who had spent their lives helping people with learning disabilities.

Plaque Stories from the Avenue of Remembrance

Dr Alexander Wallace

Alexander Wallace was an English physician, botanist, and entomologist. He was born in St Pancras, London, on 23rd March 1829 the son of Alexander John, a barrister at Middle Temple, and Louisa. By 1851 Alexander, a student at Oxford, was living in Yoxford, Suffolk with Louisa, a widow for 20 years, and his older sister, Julia. He attended Trinity College where he was awarded an MA in 1858 and an MD in 1861 and where he also played first class cricket for the university club. After qualifying he lived in Bloomsbury with his mother and worked as a physician at the Middlesex Free Hospital. He married Annie and in the summer of 1962 they moved, with Louisa and their increasing family, to East Hill in Colchester and later to Beverley House, Lexden Road. By 1870 the family had moved again, this time to Trinity House in Lion Walk, Colchester, where his mother, Louisa, died in April 1878. The family moved once more, to 3 St John's Street, Colchester, but when Trinity House was sold in July 1887 it was described in the sales account as having extensive grounds, a tennis lawn, racquet court, large glasshouses and more.



Alexander's life in Colchester was a busy one. He had always been interested in entomology and two of his essays won prizes from the Entomological Society of London in 1865-66. He wrote a report on the culture of the Japanese Silkworm, *Bombyx Cynthia* (left), which he bred in 1863 'from eggs given me by Lady Dorothy Nevill and from others obtained from Paris'. He had a large cultivation of *B. Cynthia* on a 'bank of the branch line of Great Eastern

Railway' at Colchester! He often showed his silk worm cocoons and silk samples of "remarkably fine texture" to interested people and was even mentioned by Charles Darwin in his "Descent of Man".

He was a member of several learned societies and over the years wrote many articles printed in the Lancet. His far-reaching investment interests probably mirrored those of other professional and business men, acquiring brochures about photographic apparatus in Britain and Italy, timber in Australia, gold mining in Canada, and the development of the Chinese imperial railway. In August 1867 "through (his) indefatigable and untiring exertions" he helped to organise the Colchester Art Exhibition. He was also a well-known cricketer and lawn tennis player, even though tennis had only been introduced in 1874 and was a great forecaster of the weather frequently writing to local newspapers saying how accurate his last prediction had been and giving another forecast for the next few days!

William's interests extended to growing bulbs, particularly Japanese lilies and had "Notes on lilies and their culture" published in 1873 with a second edition following in 1879. He

Plaque Stories from the Avenue of Remembrance **Dr Alexander Wallace** *continued*

was an agent for introducing new lilies and orchids and his company, The New Plant and Bulb Company, started in 1874 and based in Lion Walk, Colchester, supplied lilies to Gertrude Jekyll, the influential horticulturalist and garden designer.

Annie and William had nine children in quick succession; six sons and one daughter survived. Their eldest son, Edward, was not such a credit to his father, appearing in court for embezzlement and also in bankruptcy courts. However, Alexander himself had been in the bankruptcy court in 1888 after the failure of the New Plant and Bulb Company. Their second son, William Henry, was posted as missing in Hong Kong in a dispatch received at the Colonial Office in 1892 and the outcome is not known. The third son, George, emigrated in 1881 to Victoria, Australia where he married and had a family. Herbert, their fourth son, was in the last compartment of the Ipswich express train when in dense fog on 7th January 1886 it was run into by a local train 200 yards north of Manor Park Station on the Great Eastern Railway. Herbert was "a good deal cut" and had a broken ankle and but his travelling companion, Mr F Horsman, also a bulb merchant, of Belle View Road, Colchester, was more badly injured. They were attended to at the station and then travelled by train to Colchester and taken home by cabs. By May Herbert had received £300 compensation and Mr Horsman, £750! Their last sons, Frank and Robert (father of Capt Dudley Wallace - Military Plaques qv), had their own large and prosperous nursery at Kilnfield Gardens, Colchester, possibly bought when their father went bankrupt in 1888. Robert married Margaret Attwood (daughter of George E Attwood - Civilian Plaques qv) in July 1896. Annie and William's last child and only daughter, Margaret, lived with her mother at 158 Maldon Road until Annie's death in January 1914.

In 1884 William became a consulting Physician at Essex and Colchester Hospital in 1884 but by February 1898 the hospital was trying to save money and when Alexander's "term of service as a salaried official" expired he was appointed an honorary physician for twelve months. He became seriously ill in September the following year and died at home at No 3 St John's Street, Colchester, on 7th October 1899 - "A well-known and respected resident of the Borough".

Plaque Stories from the Avenue of Remembrance **Family Tragedy in the First World War**

The Brunwin-Hales family lost both their sons, Greville and Henry in the First World War. They were the sons of Canon Greville Turner and Mrs. Eva Brunwin-Hales, vicar of St-Marys-at-the-Walls, and until his death in 1932, the Rural Dean of Colchester. He held other posts including Vicar of Ardleigh, Berechurch, and Honorary Canon of Chelmsford and also St Albans. The tragic loss was felt for the rest of their lives and the Canon never seemed to recover. They had been a very happy family, together with Elsie, their daughter, and lived for many years at St. Mary's Rectory. It was there for a couple of years that Agnes Bruce (later Grigg), the grandmother of a member of LHG, was housemaid. She remained in touch with Mrs Brunwin-Hales for many years and felt her loss keenly. At an early age he went to From there he studied Agriculture at Jesus College, Cambridge, and became a land agent.

Plaque Stories from the Avenue of Remembrance

Capt Grenville Oxley Brunwin-Hales, RFC

Their elder son, Greville Oxley, was born in Bradwell (near Braintree), Essex, on 21st November 1889 and his brother, Henry Tooke, was born three years later at Ardleigh on 12th November 1892. They both attended Rev HR Browne's school in Barley Road at Eastbourne and later went to Winchester College (boarding at Chernocke House) as did his father and five uncles. Greville, known as Oxley, became an Agricultural student and was commissioned in 1914 into 2/8th (Cyclist) Battalion Essex Regiment, serving with the British Expeditionary Force in Flanders. Later he was attached to 13th Squadron Royal Flying Corps, flying BE2c aircraft on bombing and reconnaissance missions. One such was on the night of 10th October 1916 when he dropped 12 twenty pound bombs on a train at Vitry Station. He was promoted to Flight Commander in December 1916.

On one occasion he sent a telegram to his Essex Cyclist Battalion saying "Cheerio, here's a go! My hat! You priceless boys! Love to all. Just off."



On March 9th 1917 he was flying a BE2c (*left*), armed with two Lewis guns, at 4000 feet on an aerial photography and reconnaissance mission over Bailleul. He and his observer had just observed for an artillery shoot against a German heavy battery when three German Albatross fighters appeared at 5000 feet and dived on the British plane. Brunwin-Hales wrote afterwards: "I saw I could not engage the three

machines at once, so I did a very steep spiral, my observer firing a double drum at intervals as best he could. The enemy machines followed us down to seven hundred feet over the trenches, firing the whole time. One machine dived beside us on our left and turned back as he crossed the lines. Two de Havilland scouts who had escorted us very well during the shoot were, at the moment of attack, escorting another BE."

He was on patrol work at the beginning of the Battle of Arras with his observer, Lt Ayton Richey Leggo, a Canadian, when they were shot down by flak and both killed on March 24th 1917.

A letter was printed in the Wykehamist of June 1917: "Dear Sir, I notice that in the latest Roll of Honour no mention is made of the prowess as a fighter of Captain G.O. Brunwin-Hales, RFC. I believe I am right in stating that he had brought down more enemy aeroplanes than any other British pilot, except Captain Ball. In any case, his victims numbered well over twenty – a total which speaks for itself. I think this information will probably be of interest to many Wykehamists. I am, yours, etc., L.E. Bath."

Oxley was 27 when he was killed on 24th March 1917 and is buried at Aubigny Communal Cemetery Extension, grave reference VA40

Plaque Stories from the Avenue of Remembrance **Capt Grenville Oxley Brunwin-Hales, RFC - continued**

When Henry Tooke Brunwin-Hales was at Winchester College he was a Private in the School Contingent of the Officers' Training Corps Contingent, Junior Division. In the 1911 Census he had returned home to St Mary's Rectory and was "learning to be clerk in office" working in the office of the General Manager of the Great Eastern Railway Company.

On 13th October 1914 the London Gazette records his commission into the 4th Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment, a unit of the Territorial Force and part of the Lincoln and Leicester Brigade, North Midland Division. They landed at Le Havre on 1st March 1915, joining the British Expeditionary Force in the Ypres salient - the first complete Territorial Division to arrive in the theatre of war. They were renamed the 138th Brigade 46th (North Midland) Division and saw action near Bellewaarde Wood and Hooge where they witnessed the first German liquid fire (flamethrowers). The action became known as the Battle of Loos and took place in the industrial heartland of north-east France. The area was geographically flat but dominated by the slagheaps (fosse) of the coal mines in the district and these, together with the mining villages, collieries and associated industrial buildings, caused problems for both sides of the conflict.

The fighting had begun on 15th September 1915 but on 13th October the 46th Division had only arrived that morning from Ypres and were not familiar with the area. It was a beautiful day with a light wind blowing towards the enemy - ideal for a gas attack. The heavy British bombardment started at noon but insufficient to greatly damage the enemy trenches. 46th Division discharged gas and smoke near the Hohenzollern Redoubt warning the enemy of an attack but they received heavy return fire. 138th Brigade attacked at 2.05pm, Henry leading his bombers "over the top" and succeeded partly in taking the Hohenzollern Redoubt, quarries and securing the Fosse 8 Corons (fortified cottages). The shortage of bombs was decisive and within ten minutes the Division suffered huge casualties - 180 officers and 3,583 men - without achieving anything significant. Over 61,000 men were lost overall, a large number of whom were experienced regular soldiers.

Henry was fatally wounded during the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt but as he was being carried off the field he continued to urge his men to keep up the attack. His uncle, the Rev J Percy Hales, who was a Chaplain to the Forces, happened to meet the stretcher party which was carrying Henry, and laid his body to rest. He died soon after and is buried at Vermelles British Cemetery, grave reference IH 12.

They were both posthumously awarded the British War and Victory medals and Henry was also awarded the 1915 Star.

(Medals pictured right: Star, British War and Victory)



Lexden and the Great Storm of 1987 - Bernard Polley



At the time, this storm was the strongest seen in the UK in over 280 years. While it is often referred to as 'hurricane' it did not meet the meteorological criteria set out for this category of storm. The winds did not reach hurricane force and it was the winds that caused most of the damage. Thousands of trees were blown down causing devastation to properties, tiles ripped off roofs, power lines down, roads blocked and railways delayed. The storm will always be remembered for TV weatherman Michael Fish's (left) infamous

forecast, "If you are watching, don't worry, there is no hurricane coming!"

The Evening Gazette reported: "Thousands of pounds of damage was caused to two detached houses in Tapwoods, by trees falling on them, leaving both families homeless. A shocked Mrs Powell said, 'We estimate that half the house will have to be rebuilt - we are thinking in terms of months before we can move back; we just don't know where to start'. But friends rallied round to find the Powells somewhere to stay. Mr and Mrs Tudor and their 16 year old son were forced to evacuate their home when a fallen tree demolished the water tank and released 200 gallons. In the days that followed they stayed in an hotel with no idea when they would be able to move back home after extensive rebuilding."

Several homes in Acland Avenue had damage caused by falling trees (picture right.) Mrs Sonia Lewis went out with her camera to record the affects of the storm.



Another Lexden resident, Grahame Page of Fitzwalter Road recorded the storm damage in his garden. A large beech tree was brought down, just avoiding his garden shed. After the storm the beech tree was sawn up the wood providing logs for the fireplace for many years ahead.

The garden of 86 Straight Road backs on to Heath Road where there is a small spinney with a mixture of trees. About twenty of the smaller ones were knocked down in the storm and a Wellingtonia lost several of its large branches by falling across the road, landing on a neighbour's car, but fortunately not caused too much damage.



A gentleman from Clairmont Road arrived with his chain saw and quickly got to work on the branches, clearing the roadway so traffic could pass.

Straight Road also saw a large oak in the front garden of a house opposite Hunter's Corner, have heavy branches fall across this busy road. The Council provided a lifting crane to make sure the rest of the tree was made safe. (left: another tree down in Straight Road) Clearing up after the storm landscaper Mark Brumpton

scaled a pine tree in Glen Avenue which was in danger of toppling across neighbouring houses. The delicate operation involved sawing through the tree in sections and lowering them to the ground one at a time for safety reasons. All this occurred thirty years ago next month but the oak tree in Straight Road is still in good health!

Life in Prettygate in the 1950s and 1960s

As an only child growing up in All Saints Avenue, I was rarely without other children for company. Unlike today, virtually every household included children. There were always games being played in the road and I just went out and joined in, with the occasional shout that a car was coming. There was, of course, masses of open farm land to play on and for years, unfarmed land and building sites, which were completely open and unfenced and were a wonderful, if dangerous, location for play.

There was much more interaction between families at that time. People seemed to be continually borrowing sugar or eggs from each other which involved much chatter. Kids were looked after by neighbours and the few televisions shared. As a child, I could never quite understand the reverence for the "front room". It was only used and heated on Sunday and Bank Holidays but it did also provide a space, albeit cold, for doing homework! All the parents seemed to have the front bedroom as their own although I thought the rear bedroom much preferable being away from the road and, on our side of the road, sunnier. The front bedroom, however, had a bay which seemed to be its major

advantage, and in nearly everyone was the fading ply-back of the Utility dressing table.

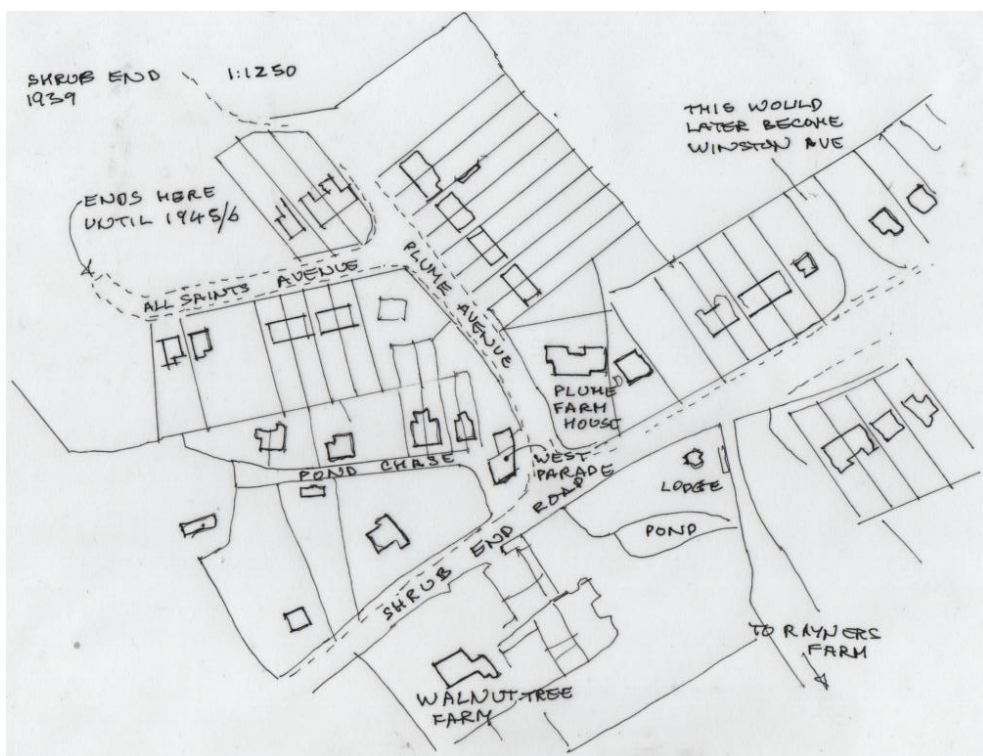
The death of Prettygate Farm was a sad and drawn out affair. I remember that beyond the farm, the lane was sunken into the land with high hedges and a completely rural feel despite the onward march of suburbia. Before the houses were built there, what seemed to me huge drains and manholes were installed right next to the lane, dwarfing its scale and threatening its future but it survived for a while after their installation.

I found the destruction of the farm most upsetting at age 11 and can recall trying, unsuccessfully, to remove the pipes and pumps that were draining the romantic duck pond (left). Strangely after the



complete farm buildings had gone Mr Blake, the farmer (who was no relation), set up some temporary sheds on the boundary of the two fields, half way from the lane to Bluebottle Grove and carried on farming on a reduced land area. It wasn't long however before this endangered species was finally eradicated with a sad looking sale of farm equipment in that same location.

The parents in the Avenue were also appalled at this new building, although of course their own homes had been part of the gradual urbanisation of the area.



Life in Prettygate in the 1950s and 1960s - continued

By the late 1940's the countryside around Prettygate Farm was surrounded on every side by housing.

Didn't they foresee all the massive further development coming? For instance the gaps in the ribbon development where the Commons is now, presumably anticipated, what I think had been proposed as a ring road and the entrance to what became Winston Avenue in about 1954, is clearly shown on the 1939 plan (*bottom left page 7*). The unfinished Plume Avenue again, surely threatened to eat up Prettygate Farm from 1939?



It was a great place to grow up in but I have never forgotten the wilful destruction wrought upon the area by the suburbanisation. If only Prettygate Farm (*left*) had become the Prettygate pub instead of the rather characterless building that bears that name. When it was first built it had the full sized gate from the farm, although it was at the side. All that remains now is the rather forlorn gate inn sign. The memorial to the farm is that Prettygate has become the area and ward of that name which, of

course, it never was before the 1960s and yet all trace of the farm was eradicated. If all those vanished farm houses and buildings had been retained alongside all the new homes, they would have been so appreciated today within a suburban area, having an 18,000 population. It was perverse that the 1930's houses often had a superficial reference to "half timber" and that the first house on the right in Shrub End Road (No 45) after Norman Way was built in a convincing "Tudor" style, apparently employing old materials and acting as a bookend to the typical suburbia beyond.

Strangely that very destruction probably helped to generate my interest in period buildings, not just because of their age but because they offer so much when inspected whereas most modern buildings lack surprise or emotion.

I would be delighted if any readers could fill in the gaps in my very superficial recollections, either via this newsletter or to me directly at:

nblakecreatesdesign@hotmail.com

Many thanks to Nick for three very interesting articles in recent Newsletters. This is the last but perhaps we can persuade him to write to us again!

Forthcoming Events

Speakers

Wednesday 11th October

**James Smith – History of Colchester
Park**

Wednesday 8th November

**Claire Driver and Laura Davison –
Mercury Theatre Voices Archive Project**

Friday 15th December

Christmas Party

With

Surprise Special Guest Singer

***Tickets £10 per person will be
available at our October & November
meetings***

Wednesday 10th January 2018

Geoff Pettit Memorial Lecture

Liz White

**Plaque Stories from the Avenue of
Remembrance**