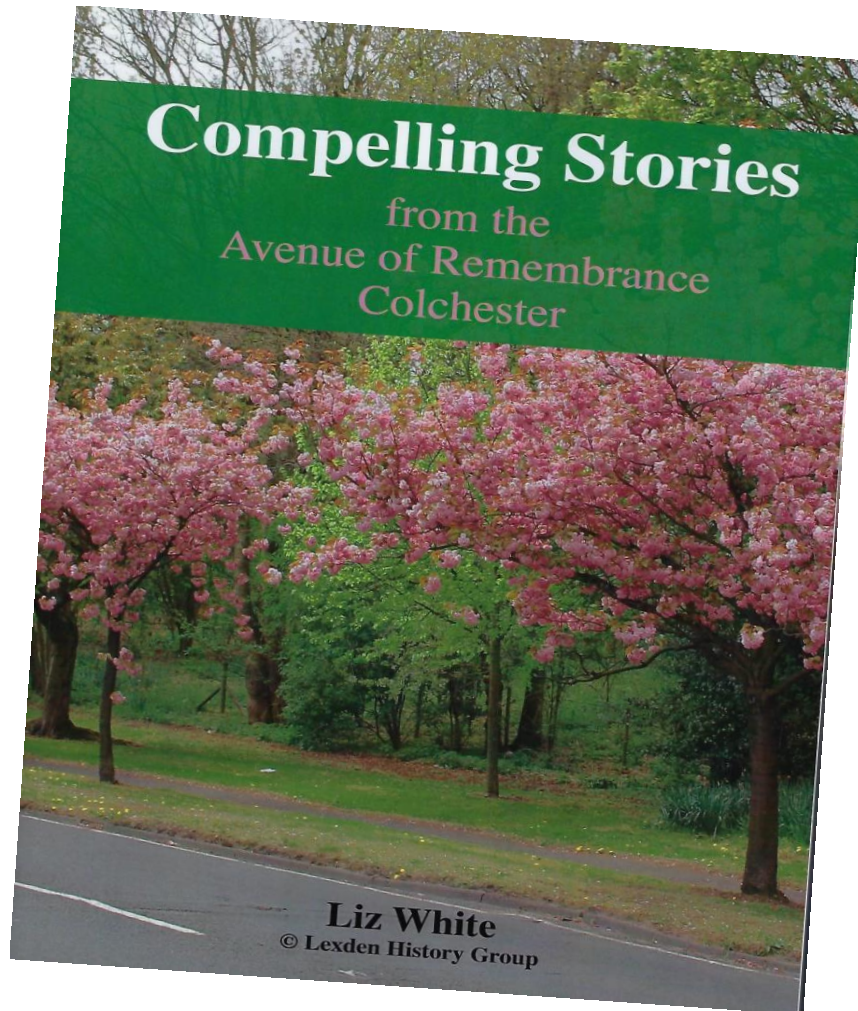


# Lexden History Group



- **“COMPELLING STORIES FROM THE AVENUE OF REMEMBRANCE”**
  - **PRE-WAR CARNIVALS TO SUPPORT THE HOSPITAL**
  - **EXTREME WEATHER CONDITIONS - HEAT and DROUGHT**
    - **INTRODUCING PHILLIP CARDY**

**Newsletter No 50 – September 2018**  
**Website [www.lexdenhistory.org.uk](http://www.lexdenhistory.org.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.**

# "COMPELLING STORIES FROM THE AVENUE OF REMEMBRANCE"

## Our new book about Colchester people dedicated on the Avenue of Remembrance

Lexden History Group was looking for another project after the success of three exhibitions held in Lexden Church Hall and two books by Liz White on Lexden in Wartime. For these books local residents were interviewed and their childhood recollections of the Second World War recorded. Over 600 copies were sold, some of which went abroad. This project stirred a great deal of interest in local history and events.

Two of the exhibitions, in 2006 and 2010, were on local Lexden history and the one in 2014 commemorated the centenary of the start of the First World War. These exhibitions were all incredibly well supported and attended by many local people and children from our local schools.

After the success of the 2014 exhibition the committee felt that another project was needed. Sonia Lewis, who had been working on the much-needed restoration of the Avenue of Remembrance Commemorative wall at North Station Road roundabout, thought that we could, possibly, print a brochure or small booklet recording the history of the Avenue. Most of the 280 bronze plaques, originally placed on iron railings around trees along the newly built Colchester by-pass in 1933, were missing. Many had been removed, lost and even stolen for resale as scrap metal. One community-minded man saw some for sale, realised what they were and brought the matter to the attention of Colchester Borough Council. The Council recovered the remaining ones, put them in store and appealed for the families of people commemorated on the plaques (*right*) to come forward to claim them. Any that were not claimed were put on sale at a minimum donation of £10 each to raise funds to pay for the planned Memorial Wall. Although some plaques were recovered, out of the many plaques originally made, the council now holds just over thirty.



In 1996 Cllr Christopher Arnold, supported by Cllr Sonia Lewis, had proposed the restoration of the Avenue of Remembrance with the hope of replacing and displaying the memorial plaques. Cllr Arnold 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 20<sup>th</sup> century and we should do our utmost to ensure that their memorial is spruced up so that the 21st century remembers them too." After much discussion it was decided to build the Memorial Wall (*left*) and, with local help from Colchester Civic Society, Collier and Catchpole and students from Colchester Institute, it was opened in October 1998. More landscaping continued over the next few months to further enhance the area.





# COMPELLING STORIES FROM THE AVENUE OF REMEMBRANCE" - continued

The Memorial Wall and its small garden lies to the south-west of the roundabout at the junction of North Station Road and Cowdray Avenue and, sadly, it is seldom noticed by locals or visitors as they rush across the roundabout. On a series of large plaques it lists all those who had individual plaques dedicated to them on the Avenue of Remembrance when it was opened in June 1933 as a much needed bypass to the traffic congested town. However, the large plaques on the Wall have now deteriorated and in need of restoration.

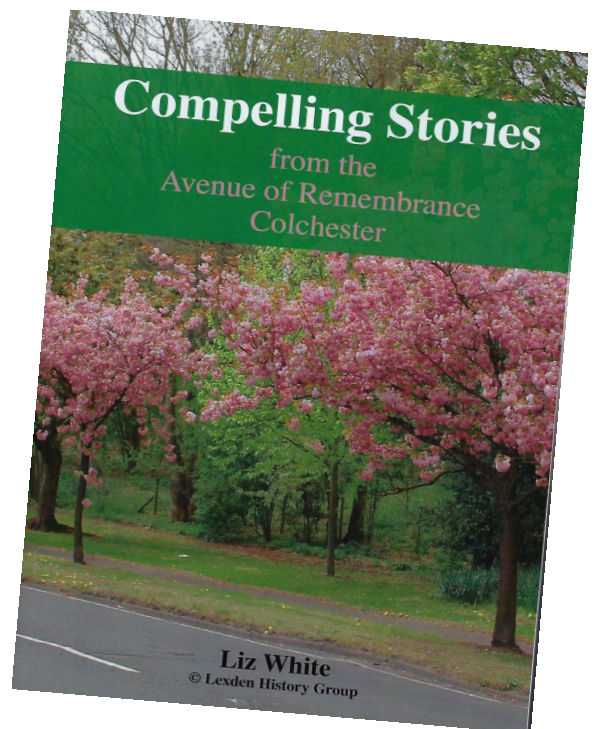
In 2016 Lexden History Group was keen to start another project. Sonia Lewis thought that the Group could enhance the understanding of the Avenue of Remembrance and, possibly, stir interest in it, by producing the explanatory booklet. The committee agreed especially as the commemorations of the end of the First World War were looming. This was the first misconception - most people assumed that the Avenue of Remembrance was a First World War memorial but as so little was known about it this had become the accepted belief. Few realised that only about half the plaques commemorated local men who had been killed in the War. The other plaques were dedicated to children, Girl Guides in Colchester and the many "great and good" of the town. This mistaken belief had to be addressed!

A huge book describing the building of the by-pass was presented to Alderman E Alec Blaxill, Chairman of the Highways Committee in the 1930s. This had been displayed at our 2010 Lexden exhibition and was a source of great interest. Simon Blaxill of Kent Blaxill was asked if Liz White could look at it again. She spent hours pouring over the detailed newspaper reports, correspondence and photographs included in it, together with minutes of council meetings discussing the restoration of the Memorial Wall. She realised that this was a far bigger project than just writing a brochure and the committee agreed that she should embark on "the book".

Liz researched each person or group who had a dedicated plaque and the result is a fascinating glimpse into the lives of many Colchester people during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Interesting snippets of information have emerged and photographs for inclusion in the book have been loaned from all over the country by families and interested people. Some excerpts from the book have already been published in our quarterly newsletter. It has taken Liz over two years to complete this mammoth task and the result of her work was published this month.

The launch of her book "Compelling Stories from the Avenue of Remembrance" (*right*) took place on the evening of 5<sup>th</sup> September at Colchester Arts Centre - St Mary-at-the-Walls Church. It was hosted by Anthony Roberts, Director of the Arts Centre, and attended by many people - local VIPs, members of Lexden History Group, families descended from those included in the book, today's "great and good" and others who had been of great assistance in producing the book. Short talks were given by Andrew Phillips, President of LHG and well-known local historian, Stan Kordys, Chairman of LHG and Liz White herself, who gave some insight into the highs and lows of researching and writing the book. A small display was mounted to illustrate the content of the book and Liz signed copies of the book.

This 250 page illustrated book "Compelling Stories from the Avenue of Remembrance" can be purchased (£15) from Lexden History Group by calling Liz on 01206 522713. They will also be available at our Group meetings.



## PRE-WAR CARNIVALS TO SUPPORT THE HOSPITAL - Bernard Polley

With the Essex County Hospital (*right in 1936*) due to close in September this year, let's take a look how it was funded before the introduction of the National Health Service in 1948. The hospital opened in 1820 and since that time had relied on voluntary subscriptions and donations to keep running.

In 1926 a group of businessmen formed a committee to organise a 'Hospitals' Carnival Day' to support the Essex County Hospital as well as the Cottage Hospital at Clacton.



The event took place on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> August with a street procession and events held in the Castle Park. 16 classes were open for the parade including decorated tradesmen's horse or car vehicles as well as motor bikes and sidecars, and fancy dress for children. The manager of the Vaudeville cinema offered a prize for anyone dressed as Charlie Chaplin which would support the showing of Chaplin's film "The Gold Rush" which was being screened that week at the picture house in Mersea Road

(*left*). Assembly was on the Abbey Field where judging took place before the procession set off round the town led by King Carnival.



A charge of one shilling (5p) was made for the events in Castle Park which included a boxing tournament between the Garrison and Borough Police; wrestling on horse-back by military personnel; wet drill

display by the Colchester Fire Brigade; Miss Harley's pupils dancing display; Silver Drums of the Essex Regiment; clowns, sideshows, tea tents and much else, concluding with a Military Searchlight Tattoo and firework display.

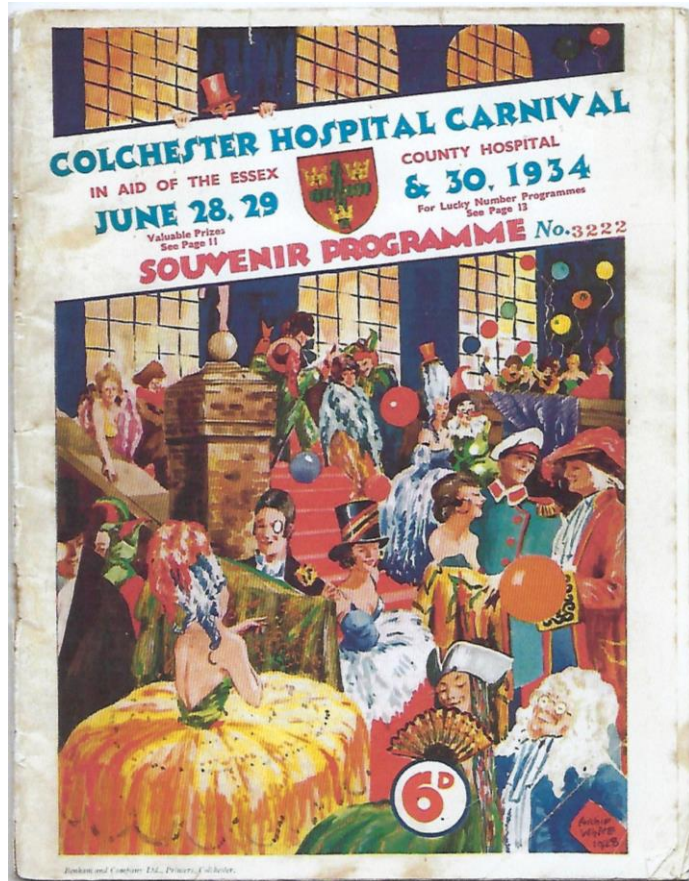
The day was declared a great success and raised £1,100 (about £65,000 in today's money) for the Hospitals. Because of the support 'Carnival Day' had received, it was repeated each year raising money for the Essex County Hospital until the start of the Second World War in 1939.

On Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> August 1927 the Hospital 'Carnival Day' was run by the newly formed Colchester Carnival Society with Viscount Byng of Vimy as president. He was a retired British officer who had a distinguished career in the First World War, including at Vimy Ridge. After serving as Governor General of Canada he retired to Thorpe hall in Thorpe-le-Soken. To launch the event a Public Luncheon was held in the Moot Hall on the previous Monday, with a selection of guest speakers - publicity consultant Sir Charles Higham, advertising editor Stuart Hirst and author St Clare Grondona.



The midday procession followed the procedure as in previous year making sure the route passed the Essex County Hospital and finishing at Lower Castle Park for the presentation of prizes.

The procession was led by the Mounted Band of his Imperial Majesty Louis XVith Brigade of Guards with King Carnival, in the personage of Mr Thomas Gray, in attendance to present himself to Mayor Councillor Smallwood as the parade passed the Town Hall.



From 3 o'clock in the afternoon events took place in the Castle Park including motor cycle sports; sword, lance and revolver competitions; music by military bands concluding with a fireworks display to bring the day to a close. The programme gave a detailed list of all the 79 fireworks to be let off: - *"This extraordinary and unsurpassable display of pyrotechnic art has been specially prepared by that ingenious and up-to-date firm Joseph Wells & Sons of Colchester"*.

Of the twenty local businesses taking advertising space in the 1927 programme only one is still trading today - C H Lindsey & Son, Heating Engineers.

By 1929 there was a large executive committee running the Colchester Carnival Society, chaired by Lt Col RA Cockburn OBE. Most of the battalions stationed in the Garrison took part in the evening's entertainment, including 'A Cavalier Sortie in the Siege of Colchester' by a detachment of the Essex Regiment:- *"Attempt of the Royalists under Charles Lucas and George Lisle to cut away through the enemy's lines on the night of 15<sup>th</sup> July 1648. It will be noted this scene is being enacted*

*on the very ground on which it actually took place"*.

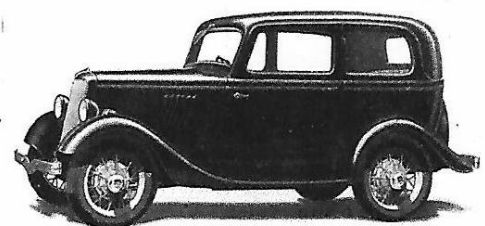
July 4<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> 1930 was Carnival Week combined with the Colchester Civic Empire Exhibition. On Friday 4<sup>th</sup> an Empire Luncheon was held in the Moot Hall presided over by Mr Oswald Lewis MP for Colchester from 1928 to 1945. Records show that after the meal there were seven toasts proposed and seconded with fifteen speakers - hope the diners were comfortably seated! 'Carnival Day' was held on the Thursday with the procession assembling on the parade ground at Meeanee Barracks before parading round the town on a shorter route. A formation of three fighter aircraft from the Royal Air Force gave a display of aerobatics, with coloured smoke, and started the procession on its way led by King and Queen Carnival, Mr and Mrs R Green. Mr Green was Manager of Percy King, Drapers, of Crouch Street. In the evening a Torchlight Tournament and Empire Pageant was staged in the Lower Castle Park arena.

In 1934 (*programme above*) 25,000 people attended over three days and lucky numbered tickets (*right*) were issued at one shilling each for entry into the Castle Park.

**I/- LUCKY NUMBER RE-ADMISSION TICKETS**

AN 8 H.P. SALOON CAR FREE  
to purchasers of Lucky Tickets

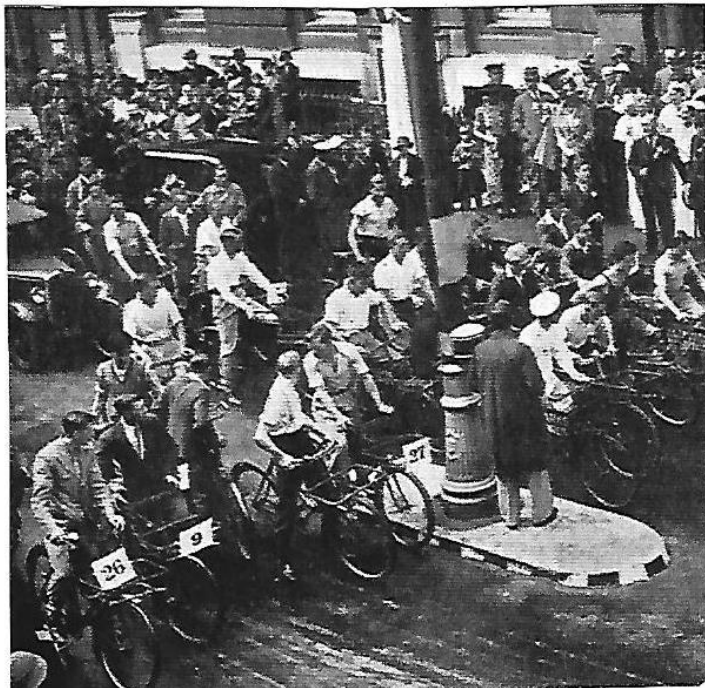
A brand new 8 h.p. Ford Saloon Motor Car is being offered as the first prize for the Lucky Number Tickets





## PRE-WAR CARNIVALS TO SUPPORT THE HOSPITAL - continued

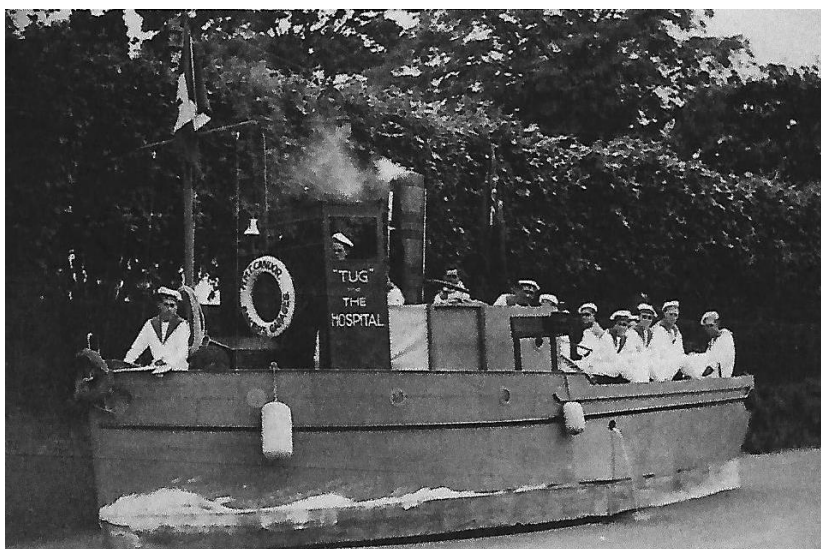
The first prize was a new Ford saloon 8hp motor car and the 28<sup>th</sup> and last prize was free shaves and haircuts for three months donated by Mr Tom Webb, barber, of 3 Pelham's Lane. A cheque for £1,511 5s was presented to the Hospital.



For several years Mr Ed Gaines, Manager of the Hippodrome, organised a Carnival Queen Beauty competition for one young lady to be appointed to head the procession supported by four maids-of-honour. In 1935 Miss Betty Clark was elected with maids the Misses K Cooke, Eva Butcher, Elsie Frost and Evelyn Barrell in attendance.

1935 was the Silver Jubilee of King George V with a series of special events: Sunday, a drumhead service in the Park; Monday, a motor car treasure hunt; Thursday, errand boys' cycle derby (*left*) and the procession; Friday, carnival masked ball in the Moot Hall; Saturday, bazaar, stalls and sideshows on Holly Trees lawn. It was noted that the charge for parking was 3d a wheel!

A notable entry in the procession was Baker's Garages "Tug for the Hospital" float - a plywood structure built over an open-topped car (*right*). How did the driver manage to see where he was going?



The Carnival celebrations continued every year until the last one in 1939 when on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 'Old King Cole' (Mr Harold Cousins, the Borough Accountant) (*below*) was greeted at the Town Hall by Mayor Handy Fisher, accompanied by his wife and young son. The noble King was awarded the Freedom of the Borough of Colchester.



In the evening 'Colchester Through the Ages Pageant' was performed on the Lower Castle Park with several performers who had been in the original Pageant in 1909.

As the Second World War loomed ahead in September, the 1939 Hospital Carnival was the last one but almost £14,000 (approx £900,000 today) had been collected over the fourteen years in support of the Essex County Hospital.

What would today's Health and Safety officials have to say about these events?!



## Extreme Weather Conditions - Heat and Drought - Trish Terry

As we have been experiencing very high temperatures and drought conditions recently, I thought it be interesting to see if our ancestors met similar conditions and if they did, how they coped. I have selected the most interesting accounts I could find and added a few from recent times that we will all remember.

As early as the 10<sup>th</sup> Century there were reports of regular heat waves and extended droughts with summers lasting half a year. In London and the South the summer of 1252, and possibly the spring, was outstandingly dry and hot causing ruined crops and many people dying from the excessive heat. The following year was the same and it is considered by some to be the driest consecutive years on record. During the 14<sup>th</sup> century there were 10 years of hot summers with drought and 1324 is recorded as the worst.

About 90% of the British population lived in farming communities with most of their income from either livestock or arable farming. Sheep were important for their wool, meat and milk, which was used more than cows' milk. Pigs were also kept by most rural families. Bread was the staple diet as today's staple, the potato, had yet to arrive from America. Wheat was vital and if the harvest failed people went hungry, or even starved (*Harvest time -right*). Barley was grown for ale as no one drank water as, although houses were built by water, river, spring, lake or pond, this was mainly for domestic use and the animals.



In 1540 and 1541 Britain and Europe suffered the cataclysmic two-year "Great Tudor Drought". From February 1540 rainfall virtually ceased; March was exceptionally warm and April and May were hot and dry. Wells, aquifers, streams and rivers started to dry out and, between February and September, rain fell only six times in London. Fresh water in the River Thames shrank to such an unprecedented low that sea water extended past London Bridge, polluting the water supply. The resulting dysentery and cholera killed thousands. Unlike many of England's drought summers, rain did not return to save the day in 1540. Weak winter rains failed to replenish water supplies and the crisis deepened.



was the year Henry VIII married Catherine Howard and Thomas Cromwell was executed.

The weather also had a profound effect on trees which were so important in all aspects of Tudor life. They were used not only for their nuts and berries but for building, furniture, carts, carriages, tools, ship building and repair, fencing, household equipment - plates, spoons, baskets, warmth, charcoal, etc.

On the continent Switzerland and France saw grapes wither on the vine as early as July; harvests were lost, fruit died and rotted on trees that had already shed their leaves; and rivers and streams vanished. One Alsace farmer reported it was possible "for a man (to) dangle his legs in

the great fissures" that formed on empty riverbeds. In Rome not a drop of rain fell for nine months; the Rhine dried up in places and in Paris the Seine ran dry.

Another hot dry spring evolved into a blistering summer in 1541. Europe had almost turned to desert by July and it was so hot in Britain that forests began to die from drought. The River Trent, already a "runnel" or brook, ran totally dry. Disease and hunger followed like a plague and parishes across the country prayed in vain for rain. Even the deepest wells were dry for months and, with animal feed impossible to find, huge numbers of livestock died. Only in October 1541 did the weather finally break followed in 1542 with widespread flooding across Britain.

After 1550 Britain and Europe's climate cooled significantly, illustrated by the continuous growth of Europe's glaciers until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and was known as the Little Ice Age. This was as destructive as the blisteringly hot weather and drought but there were recurring hot periods. For example every month from November 1665 to September 1666 was dry. The heat and long drought added to a heightened risk of fire in populated areas and the lack of rain and hot temperatures helped spark the Great Fire of London in 1666. However, this year also saw an end to the Great Plague of London which had killed over 100,000 people - a fifth of London's population.

The Little Ice Age was receding by the mid-nineteenth century and in 1858 the population of London again suffered from high temperatures and the "Great Stink". Temperatures in excess of 30° C (86° F) were reported by the middle of June and it remained hot for weeks. It was hard to keep food fresh as there was no refrigeration although wealthier families had their ice houses. At this time also there was no managed sewerage system so everything ended up in the Thames and ultimately found its way out to sea. This included the contents of chamber pots and the new flush lavatories, dead dogs, rotting food and industrial waste, eg, animal parts from abattoirs or chemicals from leather tanning factories along the river. It is perhaps worth mentioning that the term "sewer" derives from "seaward" in Old English.

The embankment on the Thames had yet to be built and in addition to all this rotting debris, here were also bodies in the river either from accidental drownings or suicides as the river was so accessible.



To intensify the problem everything was horse drawn causing piles of manure to accumulate. The foetid smell, poisonous air or "miasma" from the effluent was thought to transmit contagious diseases but it was, in fact, the clouds of flies which aided the easy and rapid transmission of diarrhoea, cholera and typhoid (left: "The Silent Highwayman" - Death rows on the Thames, claiming the lives of victims who have not paid to have the river cleaned up. Cartoon from *Punch Magazine* 10<sup>th</sup> July 1858)

This problem had been going on for several years but the heat of this particular summer and the fact that Parliament was sitting during this unpleasant spell produced results. Benjamin Disraeli, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, proposed a bill to rectify the problem which was debated and passed within 18 days! The Metropolitan Board of Works was quickly given the authority and finance to build new embankments holding a system of interconnecting sewers to catch the waste before it reached the Thames.

Throughout the next century Britain suffered from regular heatwaves. The one in 1911 lasted from early June to mid-September and newspapers ran "death by heat" columns. Another was reported in 1955 and the one many of us remember was in 1976.

The winter of 1974/75 was the mildest in England and Wales since 1869 but during the first few



days of June 1975 snow and sleet was recorded in and around London. Some of you may remember the cricket match at Castle Park between Essex and Kent on 2<sup>nd</sup> June that year when the teams played for two hours in wretchedly cold conditions. During the next week maximum temperatures of 27° C (81° F) were recorded each day across the country. The memorable summer of 1976 brought five days of temperatures exceeding 35° C (95° F) in various places in the UK and between 23<sup>rd</sup> June and 7<sup>th</sup> July temperatures in London and other parts of Southern England reached above 32° C (90° F) for fifteen consecutive days. The country suffered forest fires, grass fires and water shortages. There then followed an extremely unsettled autumn.

More recently it is thought that over 2,000 people may have died in the UK alone in 2003 as a result of the hottest summer recorded in Europe since 1540. Temperatures remained above 30° C (86° F) for ten days between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> August. The highest temperature ever recorded was at Faversham in Kent on 10<sup>th</sup> August when it reached 38.5° C (101.3° F).

This year, 2018, is also record breaker and is already down as one of the hottest summers in the UK and Europe. Is this a manifestation of the threatened global warming and climate change? Only time will tell.

### INTRODUCING PHILLIP CARDY

Phillip Cardy was born in 1906 and lived in Lexden all his life. He recorded his memories but gave strict instructions that they should not be published until after his death. This is understandable as he talked frankly about the people he had known from an early age. The family first lived off London Road in Back Lane (opposite Halstead Road) and then by 1901 had moved to Glen Farm, Cut Throat Lane. The lane is now Glen Avenue and the house was demolished recently (after we fought to keep it) being replaced by a large modern construction. Phillip married Margaret Whelan in the early summer of 1935 and in the 1939 register they are recorded as living at 9 Cherry Row with Phillip working as a concrete worker in road construction. He died in 1996. Below are the first of his often humorous memories. (Editor's additions in brackets)

"Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July (1906) was hot and steamy - at least so my mother told me and she should know. (In the 1939 Register his birth is erroneously recorded as 21<sup>st</sup> February.) The time was about four o'clock and the family were all up and about and the reason for this early rising was the fact that I was about to make my entry into this world. I do not think that when it came it was the cause of much excitement because mother (Eliza born 1864) had had thirteen before me - so everyone was fairly well up to the drill. Father (Frederick born 1866) went to work. On that day he left the water mill and had to take over the one on the other side of the bridge - John Bird's Grist Mill. Two of my brothers went to work. Three of my sisters went out to play and Gertie, the oldest (born 1887), took charge of the house. Fred (born 1893) stood by to go for the doctor. I arrived at 6am - just in time to start work, and you know the saying about Saturday's child who works hard for a living - believe me, it proved true in my case.

"Young Dr Laver (born 1866) arrived in his car (from his house at 3 Church Street in the centre of Colchester and later 3 St Clare Road), the first to grace the streets of Colchester. It was a De Dion-Bouton (*right*). It had a single cylinder engine and on the flat along Lexden Road it could attain the unheard of speed of 20 miles an hour. It was just a seat between four wheels. It had a windscreen but nothing else - you took the weather as you found it. Old Dr Laver, his father (Henry born 1827 lived 43 Head Street) had a carriage drawn by a smart pair of bays driven by Harry Kettle. The father was a grumpy



old man and his son was not a lot better. On my arrival he took one look at me and said, 'There, I told you not to have any more and you did. Look at the thing - it won't last for two hours. Get the Parson.' So Fred had to go down to the Rectory on the corner of Spring Lane and fetch Canon Lester (John Henry born 1843) out to come and christen me.

"While this was going on Mother was racking her brains for a name for me. I expect by the time she got to me she must have pretty well run out of names. Suddenly she thought of the Doctor again. 'Ah,' says Mother, 'Phillip Guy Laver - yes, that will do for him.' By this time the Parson was there so there was no time to change it. I duly became Phillip Guy Cardy. (The Doctor's name was Guyon, not Guy.) I wonder if the Doctor was flattered or not - I don't suppose so. Well, time went on and one cold November Mother had me down at the church while she cleaned it and who should come into the church but Canon Lester. 'Ah,' he said, 'so that baby did live then. Let me see, he was not properly christened, was he? You must bring him down to the church on Sunday week when there are some more to be baptised'. And so it came about that on a horrible cold November Sunday I was fetched out of my comfortable cot, togged up in a lot of starched things which did not keep the cold out and carted down to the church for no other purpose than for Mr Briggs to pour another load of water on my head. I am told my objections were very clearly heard and understood.

"I do not know much about the next two years except that I always had the idea that I had been very ill. All I could remember was someone in a blue dress who was always there when I woke up. When I got older I asked Mother and she said it was not a dream but very real as I had got measles and mumps and the doctor did not like the look of things at all. The person in the blue frock was my eldest sister, Maud, the nurse. She got her holiday put forward and came to help mother look after me. Mother said she did not think I would have got over it if Maud had not been there. When I choked with phlegm Maud was the only one who could clear it.

"I suppose I am one of the few people who cannot remember their first day at school. It appears it happened like this. One morning or afternoon, after my three sisters had gone to school, Mother gave me my meal and left me to get on with it while she was doing something else. When she came back to the kitchen I was not there. She searched everywhere but could not find me. Then the Rector said he had passed me going down the path to Spring Lane. So Mother came hotfoot to the school and, sure enough, she found me interviewing Miss Posford with a view to starting school. (Clara Posford born 1877, lived with parents at Godbolts Farm, MarksTey and later at 92 Straight Road, Colchester) Miss Posford and Mother had a little talk about it and Mother said she would take me back home; but Miss Posford said, 'Why not let him stay here? After all he can come back and forth with his sisters.' And so it was agreed. Mother took my dinner apron off and I was found a seat in the classroom and my education started.



"When I got a year or so older, Mrs Ruck-Keene (Jessie born 1866), who lived in the house next to the school (*left* - now No 197), asked me if I would like to work for her as kitchen boy. The work was to go in after school and clean the knives and forks and her shoes and sweep the pavement on Saturday mornings. Then I was given a pair of scissors and sent up to the churchyard to clip Mr Ruck-Keene's grave (George died 1913). Once Mrs Ruck-Keene let the house, and

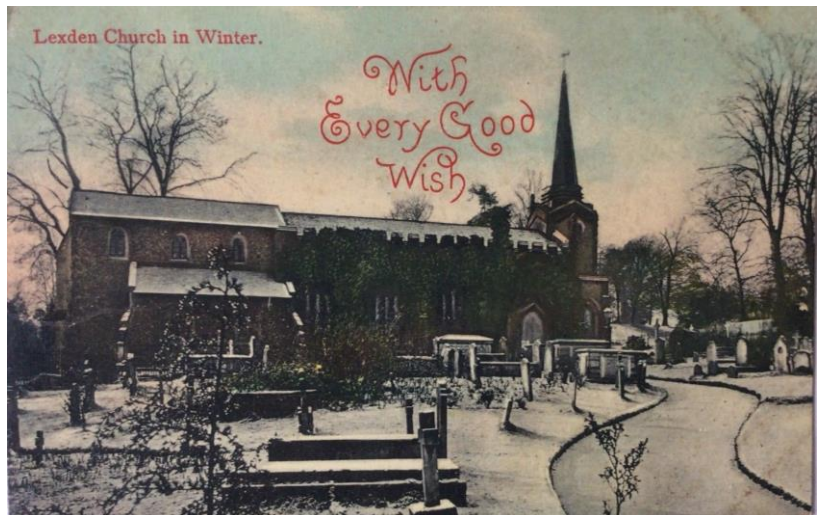
the maids, to a man named Mr Backhouse. The servants did not like him and they told Mother



not to let me come after Saturday as they would not be there. As I was sweeping the path in front of the house that morning a cab came down town hill, went past the house, turned round and stopped in front of the front door. Two very large men got out and were admitted. After a time they came out with Mr Backhouse between them, got into the cab and went off to town and that was the last I saw or heard of Mr Backhouse. He still owes me one and sixpence.

"By this time Fred (born 1893) and Jim (Henry James born 1887) had gone to Canada (in 1909) and Arthur (born 1890) had a job as a gardener at Halstead - much to my mother's disgust. She gave him strict orders that on no account was he to bring any Halstead girls home to Lexden. She pointed out to him that girls at Halstead were all factory girls and no good for a working man's wife. He was to wait until he could find a girl who had been in good service and would know how to run a house properly. He carried out these instructions to the letter. Sidney (born 1896) went to work at Magazine farm as a cowman and Grace (born 1899) packed her little tin box and went as in-between maid at Mrs Corse-Scott's (Emily born 1868 lived at The Rectory/Glebe House in Spring Lane and later at 5 Fitzwalter Road). She was paid £12 a year and live in, 2 hours off on one Sunday and the afternoon and evening off on the next. That left Ruth (born 1898), Alice (born 1900) and myself at home. So Alice had to take Grace's place and help mother dust the school in the morning and I had to take Alice's place and see Miss Bird and get a pint of skimmed milk 1d and a pint of new milk 1½d. (This was from William Bird's Home Farm in Church Lane.) Miss Lily Bird (John Bird's daughter born 1877) was a dear to us kids. If you fell over or spilt your milk and went back and told her she would always fill the cans again and nobody was any wiser. This went on for some time and then a milkman started to deliver round and so Mother decided to have him deliver and, for a time, I had no regular job.

"My holiday did not last long. Rector of Lexden Church, The Rev (Thomas Stanford) Raffles, needed a kitchen boy from 7 to 8 in the morning, 4.30 to 5.30 in the afternoon and all day Saturday helping John Currell the gardener - pay 2s 6d per week (12½p). That was if all the boots and shoes were cleaned to Mrs Raffles' satisfaction. If they did not pass, which was often, I had tuppence (2d) stopped from my wages and put in the Poor Box - and on one occasion there was 4d less in the Poor Box than I had stopped from my wages! (The Rectory, built in 1904, was now in Glen Avenue and Rev Raffles was Rector from 1914 - 1926. He was a distant relative of Sir Thomas Stamford Bingley Raffles 1781-1826 who founded Singapore.) Our Parson's son was the Governor of the Seychelles Islands in the South Pacific. He came home on leave and brought his wife (Edith), little girl (Diana) and her nurse with him. (Stamford Cecil Raffles was never Governor but did work for the Malay States Government.) Mrs Raffles senior told us they were coming and said that, on no account, were the house-maid and I to clean the nurse-maid's shoes. If I did, both of us would be dismissed at a minute's notice. Well the nursery window was over the back door and the nurse used to put her shoes on a string and let them down out of the window. When I had cleaned them she pulled them up, and she used to put 6d (2½p) in one of them every Saturday morning. All went well till one morning Mrs Raffles walked round there just as the nurse was pulling them up. She went in, called the nurse down and gave her notice. Then she came to the shed and told me to go home and not come back. Well the upshot of it was that young Mr Raffles reinstated the nurse and told his mother off. I lost my job and Mother always thought I had done something very wrong until she met Bessie, the cook, who told her the tale."



There are many more fascinating memories recorded by Phillip Cardy - the series will continue!

# Your Committee

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS/SPEAKERS

### Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> October

**Neil Catchpole**

**A Few Tales and Songs of the Countryside**

### Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> November

**Liz White & Jackie Bowis**

**The First World War and how it changed the Local  
Community**

### Friday 14th December

**Christmas Party**

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