

Lexden History Group



Past views of Maldon Road

- **Memories of Maldon Road Shops**
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Fifty years ago in 1969 Southway was being constructed with the idea of relieving traffic from having to pass through the town centre. In order to do this many properties had to be demolished to make way for the new road, which included the terrace of thirteen shops on the east side of Maldon Road (*left*) abutting Crouch Street. These small late Victorian shops (and some of earlier age) occupied by private owners, gave a personal service to customers, almost everything from a fishmonger to a butcher - all before the days of the supermarket.

For those folk over a certain age, see if you can remember some of these shopkeepers from just after World War One through to the days of closure in the late 1960s.



Vogue

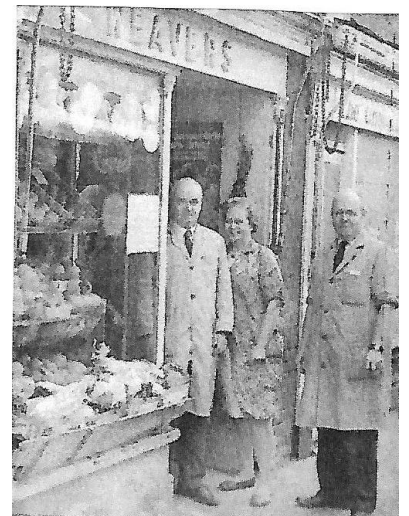
TWO MALDON ROAD, COLCHESTER

The first shop, No 2 Maldon Road, was occupied for some forty years by Ernie Sheppard, a fishmonger. He was a tall upright gentleman who wore a striped apron, had a hard straw hat and wore a pince-nez. Ernie was a friendly man always ready to chat to his customers. The fish for sale was laid out in regimental fashion on a marble slab and he would look at them affectionately as if he was reluctant to part with them. After the fishmonger's retirement the shop was acquired by Mrs Golightly of Braintree to sell ladies fashionable clothing under the name "Vogue" (*left*): this enterprise proved so successful that she bought the shop (*right*) next door to display 'outsized fittings'. When the proprietress had to vacate the shops, new premises were acquired in High Street, next to the Town Hall.



Two doors from No 2 William Weaver opened a greengrocery business in 1924, and remained there until he was forced to close in 1968 when the shop was on the list for demolition. William traded as 'Weavers' (*right*) for his wife and son joined him to sell the vast array of locally-grown produce. 'Potatoes freshly dug' was often displayed when the vegetables were in season. After retirement of the senior Weavers and closure of the shop, young Len Weaver became greengrocery manager at the new Fiveways Co-op store.

Stock's the chemist was at No 8 in the early 1930s before moving to Crouch Street corner later on. Looking through the window there was a row of glass bottles containing liquid of various colours, a standard type of display with most chemists at this time. Mr J R Stock was a dispensing chemist. He made up all prescriptions either into ribbed glass bottles if liquid, or tablets/pills placed in small round boxes or specially-made ointments in larger cardboard tubs. It is interesting to note that some sixty years



ago there were a dozen or so chemists in the town centre, now there are only two, Boots and Crouch End Pharmacy.

There had been a grocer at No 18 for many years and when John Elsdon retired in 1950 the grocery was taken over by Fred King (former manager of Colchester Gas Company showroom in Head Street) who was keen to expand the shop. As No 16 was empty at the time Fred was able to rent the shop and thereby double the size of his business. Many of his regular customers would call into the shop to leave an order which, in turn, was made up and delivered to the customer's home the next day. The successful business had to cease due to the coming of Southway.

Moving along to No 20 James Gregory, boot and shoe repairer, was in business from 1924 till 1957. On entering the shop there was a strong smell of leather and glue. Mrs Florence Gregory was at the counter ready to serve customers and in the background James worked away restoring footwear by fixing new soles and heels. He wore leather overalls and spoke to customers from across the room. Mrs Gregory also took in paying guests, often actors or actresses appearing with Colchester Repertory Company. One of these was young Dora Bryan (*right*) on her first professional engagement. Some years later Dora was the subject of the television programme "This is your Life" which featured well-known people as the subject with family and friends coming along to speak of their past memories of the star, and Florence Gregory was there in person to remind Dora of her early days in Colchester.



William Bayes sweet shop, next to Gregory's had the smell of chocolate and sugar with bottles of delicious looking sweets lining the shelves, bon-bons, liquorice allsorts, pear drops, etc. Youngsters always found it difficult to decide which variety to have when offered some as a treat.

Mr Bayes would take down a selected jar and place the sweets on the scales, a brass weight would balance out the sweets and then he would slip them into a cone-shaped paper bag. This for probably all of one penny! Another delight from Bayes was the delicious home-made ice cream scooped up into a cornet. This was in the days before freezers. How was the ice cream kept so cool? In the hot summer months it was not unknown for a long queue of customers to form outside the shop awaiting their turn to be served.



The last shop on the terrace was the butcher, which had various owners over the years but perhaps one of the best-known was London Central Meat Company Ltd. It had large shuttered windows, sawdust floor and heavy wooden counter for the butcher to cut up joints of meat to customers' requirements. Note the 1936 photograph (*above*) showing the cycle ridden by the butcher's boy for personal deliveries.

Beyond the shops was a large house "The Firs" (*right*) with an extensive rear garden, for many years the home of Major and Mrs Bullock before it was pulled down to create a public car park which remained until the new road was constructed. This became the first "Pay and Display" car park in the town and was instigated by the Borough Treasurer, Mr Ernest Bailey. Machines were set up for payment issuing small tickets which included the cyclostyled signature of Mr Bailey.



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MODERN EQUIPAGE CHAPEL OF REST

Finally on the corner of Burlington Road was S W Edwards Ltd, funeral furnishers (left). Stanley and Ruby Edwards lived on the premises and were on hand 24 hours a day to give personal service when required. The chapel-of-rest and hearse were at the rear of the premises.

Before leaving this east side of Maldon Road, take a

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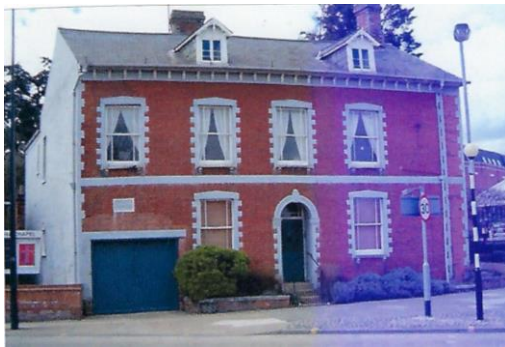
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brief look at the properties on the opposite side of the road. From the Crouch Street end there was a small motor garage run by Julian Naylor, later acquired by Page & Scott's Garage in Crouch Street; next the All Kin Hall, an evangelistic chapel, and then a row of four private houses, the first one owned by Howe & Son, house estate agents and valuers (right). Next door was Frederick Uff, who gave piano lessons and was organist for a time at St Leonard's Church, Lexden. All these properties were demolished for the sake of Southway.



The only survivor was No 11, a detached house 'Diamond Place' (left), the home and surgery of Dr John Steeds. This was replaced by what was supposed to be an 'iconic' block of flats in 2006! Across the road, opposite Burlington Road, was the Assembly Hall non-conformist chapel, which was not demolished and is still a place of worship today.

Looking at the Maldon Road roundabout in 2019, it is hard to believe only fifty years ago the scene was completely different - "time and tide wait for no-one"!

Tales from the Churchyard - Reverend Thomas Stamford Raffles

Strictly speaking this is a tale from Lexden church as the Reverend Thomas Stamford Raffles has no grave in the churchyard. However there are several memorials to him and his wife, Cecil, in the church. The first is a brass plaque on the floor left of the altar with another for his wife. There is also a plaque in the middle of the wall on the south aisle "erected by the parishioners and friends" with a smaller one below commemorating his wife. He is also mentioned on the Rectors of Lexden board on the west wall of the church.

Rev Thomas Stamford Raffles (right) was the grandson of Rev Thomas Raffles, an eminent Independent minister, who had inherited the fortune of Sir Thomas Stamford Bingley Raffles, the founder in 1819 of Singapore. Although only indirectly descended from Sir Stamford, the first Rev Raffles became his heir because all his sons had predeceased him.



Raffles was rector of Lexden Church from May 1914 until his death in March 1926. He had been born in Liverpool on 11th July 1853, the only son of Thomas Stamford Raffles a practising Barrister-at-Law, and Maria Cearn. They also had three daughters, Maria, Ada Mary, Annie. As a stipendiary magistrate Raffles senior had a reputation for being firm and fair, with sympathy in harrowing cases. He was ruthless when necessary, but in his personal life he was kind and genial.

Having matriculated from Rugby school Thomas Stamford Raffles was admitted to Clare College, Cambridge on 6th December 1876 becoming a Freemason there in 1877. He was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1880 and an MA in 1883. He trained at Cuddeston College near Ripon, the Oxford Diocesan Seminary for graduates from Oxford and Cambridge. He was ordained, becoming deacon in 1880 and then priest at St Albans in 1881, curate of Whittington, Shropshire 1880-82, the home town of wife-to-be, curate of Ashton-on-Mersey, Cheshire, 1882-3 and rector of Owsby, Lincs 1883-7. He was "presented by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to the Rectory of Langham" where he served from 1887 to 1914 when he accepted from a "private patron" (Pelham Rawstorn Papillon, Lord of Lexden Manor) the rectory of Lexden.

Raffles married Cecil Helen Lovett on 6th November 1884 and when they moved to Lexden the family lived in the new Rectory in Glen Avenue as the old rectory in Spring Lane, built by Rev George Preston in 1814, had been sold in 1910. They had two sons, Stamford Cecil born in 1885 and Reginald Lovett Stamford born in 1888. It is not known where they went to school but in



1906 Stamford joined the 3rd Battalion of The King's (Shropshire Light Infantry), formerly the Shropshire Militia, as a Lieutenant and gained his Aeronaut's Certificate in the 3rd Royal Welsh Fusiliers in September 1915 becoming a Balloon Officer serving in France. On his marriage certificate to Edith Needham in 1916 his occupation was given as Colonial Civil Servant. He joined the Royal Flying Corps and was later promoted to Major in the Royal Air Force. He served in the Malay States Government Service and then as Deputy to the States of Guernsey and was later awarded the OBE. He died in hospital in Jersey in 1942 after an operation. The photograph (left) is either of Stamford or his brother Reginald - sources vary in their designations!

In October 1909 Reginald was appointed 2nd Lieutenant with 3rd Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers Special Reserve, serving in WW1 from 1914 and becoming a Balloon Officer, as did his brother. He also transferred to the Royal Flying Corps and reached the rank of Major. He married Johanna Maria Elisabeth Trost in 1933 in Rotterdam, South Holland, Netherlands and worked as a manager of the Pyrites Company. In 1947 he leased a barn from Southwold Council. It had been requisitioned in 1940 to manufacture parachutes and camouflage netting during WW2. With his wife and three daughters, Angie, Sylvia and Olivia, he established an upmarket restaurant, the "Dutch Barn" and although it was very badly damaged in the 1953 floods it was rebuilt. The family was there for many years, living above the restaurant, and Reginald died in Blythburgh, Suffolk, in 1974.

A report in the Chelmsford Chronicle of 14th November 1924 records the celebration of Holy Communion conducted by Rev T S Raffles when the names of 39 local men who had died in the Great War were read out. The two minute silence was observed at the new war memorial and wreaths placed upon the steps. He was fortunate that both his sons survived the war.



Rev Thomas Stamford Raffles died after an operation on 1st March 1926 in a Nursing Home for Colonial Officers at 29 Wimpole Street,

London run by Miss Bertha Lancaster. He was 72 years old. His funeral (above) took place at Lexden Church but it is not known where he was buried. His wife, Cecil Helen, was living at the Cups Hotel in High Street Colchester when she died in March 1938.

On being a Colchester Tourist Guide - a Brief History of Colchester

Dick Barton



My early retirement from full time employment coincided with the setting up of a training course for those wanting to become a Tourist Guide.

(Dick Barton - right)

The British Guild of Tourist Guides was founded in 1950 by seven guides who met at the historic George Inn in Southwark, close to the present headquarters of the British Guild. They were trained by the British Travel and Holidays Association to interpret a war-ravaged London to interested visitors. Trained Tourist



Guides started all over England as a result of the 1951 Festival of Britain when it was realized that there were no Guides to show visitors around London.

Since then the Guild has become the national body for Guides working throughout the UK. Its blue badge is recognized worldwide as the qualification of excellence of site and heritage interpretation and is only awarded after extensive training and a vigorous examination. For several years I was Colchester's representative on its UK Committee. In East Anglia, Guide training was monitored and validated by the East Anglia Tourist Board. This Board ceased to exist when the Government carried out a purge of its quangos which left Guiding in limbo. This led to the formation of the Institute of Tourist Guiding which now watches over standards and accredits training courses run by other providers. It also provides examination for all levels of Guiding. It trains examiners and represents Guides at Government level.

Having been born in Colchester it gives me particular pleasure to be one of the Town Guides and show off Colchester – Britain's oldest recorded town and, since the end of the Crimean War in 1856, a significant garrison for the British Army, which remains an important base today. I take groups of up to 30 people, from various parts of this country and from overseas and tell them about Colchester's long, varied and fascinating history, for there is much to see in the town's streets and buildings. A brief resumé is below!

The Romans invaded in 43AD and built a wall around the town as a defence against foreign intruders. Outside the wall was a ditch as a further barrier to attackers - this was also the town's sewer! In 2005 a Roman Circus, a chariot racing stadium, was discovered - the only one found in Britain and northern Europe.



Colchester was invaded again in the 5th century by the Anglo-Saxons who established the Kingdom of the East Saxons (Essex). They built mainly wooden houses but, using the remains of Roman buildings, they built Holy Trinity Church of which the only original part remaining is the Saxon tower. Colchester was a well-established Saxon town when the hated Normans invaded in the 11th century, building the Castle as a safe haven for their soldiers. They established St Botolph's Augustinian Priory *(right)* in 1099 and as no building stone was available locally, they also used the bricks and stone from Roman buildings for their churches. The Normans established the Benedictine St John's Abbey, the Gatehouse of which still remains.



During this period the production of woollen cloth was the main industry and Colchester became a centre of the wool trade. In the 16th Century the town became home to Dutch Protestant weavers who arrived in England to escape persecution from Roman Catholics, settling in the area now known as the Dutch Quarter. Bourne Mill *(left)*, originally a fishing lodge, became a textile mill,

another part of Colchester's thriving cloth industry. The Mill is now owned by the National Trust and open to the public.

During the Civil War in the 17th century Colchester was occupied by a Royalist Army. A Parliamentary force, commanded by Sir Thomas Fairfax, surrounded and bombarded the town with cannon for eleven weeks, destroying many properties, and the towers of St Martin's and St Mary-at-the-Walls churches were also badly damaged (Siege of Colchester). Food was scarce and townspeople were forced to eat dogs and rats to stay alive and in desperation some of the soldiers even ate their horses. When the Royalists surrendered two of their Commanders, Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle, were executed by firing squad and this site is marked by an obelisk in the Castle Park.



In the 19th Century Colchester was home to Jane and Ann Taylor, authors of children's poems, who lived in West Stockwell Street. Jane wrote the well known nursery rhyme, "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star", which was later set to music. In 1843 the railway from London reached Colchester encouraging new businesses to start in the town which became more prosperous. The Water Tower, known as Jumbo, was built as was a new Town Hall and the Grand Theatre was opened.

Colchester has three important Museums, the Castle and Hollytrees telling the story of the town and a Natural History Museum in All Saints Church.

GEORGIAN LEXDEN

Queen Anne, who reigned from 1702 to 1714, was the second daughter of James II and last of the Stuart line. She had married Prince George of Denmark and endured many pregnancies but



her only surviving child died aged 11 so on her death the British throne passed to a distant protestant cousin, George, Elector of Hanover. Although there were dozens of closer relatives, they were Roman Catholic and the 1701 Act of Settlement prohibited Catholics from taking the throne. This was the beginning of the Georgian period. George I (*left*) was 53 years old when he ascended the British throne and had been born and raised in northern Germany. His son, also George, became king in 1727 until his death in 1760 when his son, "mad" King George III, became monarch. The final George, who had acted as Prince Regent during his father's mental illness, assumed the throne in 1820 until 1830 when William, the third son of George III, became king. Victoria, the daughter of Prince Edward, the fourth son of George III, was the last of the Hanoverian monarchs when she became Queen of England in 1837.

The Georgian period is renowned for its classical architecture, furniture, art, music and literature, with the squalor, brutality, gin drinking and debauchery seldom being mentioned. Lexden was neither a centre of fashionable life nor of the immorality and depravity of the times, at least it is not recorded as such! The gap between rich and poor did cause some disputes but the peace of the village was not often disturbed and generally work was plentiful on the farms and in the large houses and the recorded occupations of the time included millers, farmers, butchers, bakers, bricklayers, thatchers, a tanner, cordwainer, horsemen, shoemsmiths, blacksmith, wheelwrights, local constable, etc. A few weavers were also recorded in the parish in the 17th and early 18th century, and a tannery was operating in Lexden in the 18th century.

The village was on the road between London, Harwich and the Continent and benefitted from its proximity to Colchester which was developing successfully despite the reducing bay trade. A local traveller, Rev William Cooper, Curate of Thaxted, noted in 1759 that Lexden was a "very pretty Country Town" and that nearby in 1744 had been a great Camp. Later, during the

Napoleonic Wars a temporary garrison had also helped the town's economy and Hythe port, although several miles inland, attracted some foreign trade but was only important locally.



Lexden Street was turnpiked in the 18th century with a toll house half way up the hill to the west and another on the corner of Church Lane which was later demolished. Towards the end of the 18th century four ale houses were either taken down or converted into dwellings and more houses were built on the Street. Cresseners (*left - also known as Little Hayne*) in Church Lane was built as an extension to an older cottage in about 1750 possibly named after the Cressnor family who may have owned the property "copyhold" from the Manor estates. Hill House on Lexden Hill was also built at about this time. Lexden Park house was remodelled and in the 1820s was rebuilt to D Laing's design by John Fletcher Mills who also enlarged the estate. On his death in 1840 it passed to his wife and then G H Errington.

In 1766 a Stanway brickmaker made white or grey 'Gault' bricks which William Phillips used when he built No 107 Crouch Street (Crouched Friars). These were also used in the late 18th and early 19th century for fashionable houses in the town's main streets and on large plots along Lexden Road as well as the Essex and Colchester Hospital which opened in 1820. Meanwhile in the less important streets houses of timber frame and plaster continued to be built throughout the 18th century. The castellated style of The Turrets (*right*) at No 89 Lexden Road was built in 1818 for Francis Smythies and thought to be by the Colchester-born architect Robert Lugar.

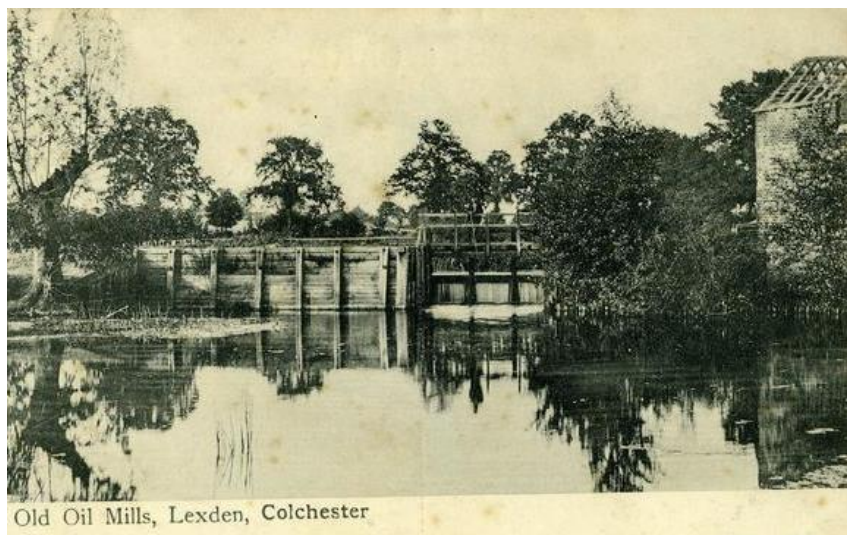


According to Rev Philip Morant (1700-70), the country surrounding Colchester was "perfectly well adapted to turnip culture". It was dry, gravelly loam and in Lexden particularly there was a deep layer of light sand above the loam. This "excellent land" produced good harvests of grain in wet seasons and Lexden gardeners supplied the town with vegetables. They also produced garden seeds for local use and the London market.

There were five farms between 100-200 acres in Lexden in 1729. The lady of Lexden Manor, Mrs Sarah Rawstorn, (née Papillon) owned three of them, with Nicholas Corsellis, a local lawyer and parliamentary candidate owning another and Charles Chamberlain Rebow, the fifth - Motts. This was a farm south of Lexden Street and had been inherited by Sir Isaac Rebow's son. It became known as Newbridge Farm and in 1821 it belonged to Thomas Wood and was later known as Viaduct or Seven Arches Farm, on account of the railway nearby, but it was soon bought by John Fletcher Mills to become part of the Lexden Park estate.

Farmers at this time were using chalk and town manure to improve the land. The Rawstorn farms were leased but tenants were not always allowed to live in the farmhouses. It was also laid down that there would be two corn crops, then fallow and clover, and tenant farmers had to get the landowner's permission to plough pastureland. Wheat, barley and oats were the main crops locally with much smaller amounts of rye and hops being grown. A malt house had been established on Maltings Farm by 1729 and was apparently in use until the mid Victorian period. By 1838 there were three farms over 200 acres, three between 100 and 200 acres, another three between 50 and 100 acres. There were also some smaller holdings. In the next few years, however, land was lost to the new railway.

In the 1720s the Lexden fulling mill was converted to crush seed for oil (*opposite*) and the Stow brothers leased it from about 1740 for thirty years. It became a bay mill in 1775 when it was



leased to Colchester Baymakers John Tabor and Isaac Boggis, with Peter Devall taking it over in 1821, concentrating on the preparation of yarn. Ten years later it was in ruins and it is then recorded as a corn mill in use until the end of the century.

Lexden remained prosperous, although some families required parish help, often as a result of injury, childbirth and illnesses such as smallpox, typhus, diphtheria and dysentery. The annual cost of Lexden parish relief in the 1780s was about £360 which was more than in other areas. By 1813 it had

risen to £1,036, but then dropped for several years. In 1821 it fell to £759 partly because the overseers had taken a 21 year lease on land that had been newly enclosed, for "spade husbandry" (allotments). Positive assistance was also given to deserving parishioners, for example, in 1823 the parish helped Samuel Durrant to build a cottage on its land at Bottle End, granting him life tenancy at a token rent. The parish workhouse was recorded in Spring Lane in 1751 but was sold when Lexden became part of the Colchester Union in 1835.

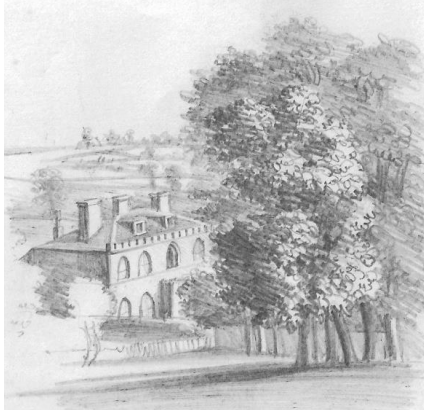
A friendly society, the Aldham and United Parishes Insurance Society, was founded in 1826 by Rev Hugh C Jones, rector of Aldham, and his curate. It was a contributory insurance system to assist local workers and was open to workers in Lexden between the ages of 14 and 50. By 1848 there were 122 members which included agricultural labourers, farmers, servants and artisans. There were several different levels of payment and benefit, eg, the monthly payment for an 18 year old male was 1s 9½d until the age of 65.

A weekly benefit of 7s was paid if the member was confined to bed by the surgeon or, if he could walk and was able to do a few hours work a day, the weekly payment was 3s 6d. In the event of a death, £2 was paid for funeral expenses and £3 to the spouse and children. A member was also entitled to "medical attendance, advice, medicines at his own house" for which he paid 4s annually "during harvest" and the rest was paid by the Society. Women could also enrol but the contributions were higher, eg, 2s 2½d per month, as "a greater number will continue alive, and become claimants longer". The benefits for women also included "lying-in" payments at the discretion of the Directors. Contributions were made on the last Saturday of each month between 5 and 8pm in summer and 4 and 7pm in winter months.

Lexden Church elected two church wardens and two overseers, usually local farmers or landed gentry, who met quarterly at Vestry meetings to determine the parish business and approve the poor rate. In 1830 it was recorded that the Easter meeting was attended by only seven men but 19 parishioners enjoyed the dinner that followed! In 1834 many more attended a meeting to elect a new parish surgeon to assist the local apothecary.

Lexden rectors lived in the parish from the early 1700s, taking two Sunday services and communion about 6 times a year. They occasionally gave lectures in the winter evenings. Colchester's mayor, James Lawrence, wanted the rector of Lexden, Richard Skingle, to preach at the oath-giving ceremony in 1711 but for some reason the town clergy refused to let him. Four years later Skingle preached at the ceremony in Lexden church and Colchester corporation returned the following year to give thanks for the surrender of the Jacobites in their latest rebellion. Skingle was again in the news in 1717 when he successfully challenged the borough's claim to poor rates being charged on the rectory. Samuel Sandys was rector from 1769 to 1804, when his nephew, George Preston, replaced him.

Rev George Preston, rector until 1841, was instrumental in the rebuilding of the dilapidated mediaeval church, with a loan from Henry Hayward, a local builder. The new church, opened in

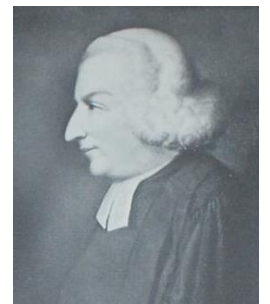


1822, was built several yards south of the old building in the Early English style to the designs of M G Thompson. The Rev Preston had also rebuilt his own timber and plaster rectory in Spring Lane in 1814, replacing it with a large Gothic style house (*left - artist unknown*). It was approached from Lexden Street through an avenue of yew trees.

Encouraged by the church, both Anglican and Protestant, Sunday Schools and day schools were established by 1793 and a house in Mill Lane provided for the master. Two Dame Schools had been set up by 1817 and a National Day and Sunday School was built in spring that year with a legacy from Ann Rawstorn who had died the previous year. This was for 100 poor children of the parish

between the ages of 6 and 12 years to attend school, and was also by subscriptions. Rev Preston and his wife went in daily to help the master as there was insufficient funding to pay a master and mistress. By 1833 there were four more Dame Schools and the National School had 84 pupils but in 1839 more than half the 70 pupils were wearing charity clothes.

The Rev Philip Morant, MA, FSA, (*right by Charles Head*) was rector of St. Mary's-at-the-Walls parish and Aldham between 1737 and 1770. Born in Jersey in 1700 he was described as an "amiable portly gentleman" and married Anne Stebbing of Great Tey in 1739.



During his time in Colchester he wrote extensively about the local area publishing *The History and Antiquities of Colchester* in 1748 and two volumes of *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex* in the 1760s, which included Lexden. Unfortunately for us today he wrote little about his contemporary time, concentrating on earlier history, but he does describe an interesting family tree for Samuel Rawstorn who had bought Lexden Manor in 1701 and died in 1720. Of his seven children by his first wife, Sarah Papillon, the daughter of Thomas Papillon of Acrise in Kent, their five daughters all married clergymen. Elizabeth married Rev James Kelner, who was not only the rector of Lexden for some time but also "one of his majesty's chaplains in ordinary". Susannah married John Eldred of Oliver's in Stanway and Hester married Rev William Bree, rector of Marks Tey. His last child, Thomas, was the father of Anne Rawstorn who ultimately inherited Lexden Manor and, in turn, left it to John Rawston Papillon, vicar of Chawton (home of Jane Austen). John was buried at Lexden in the Rawstorn family grave in 1837 and bequeathed his lands to his sister, Elizabeth, and ultimately to his nephew Philip Oxenden Papillon.



Rev Morant also mentions the three crosses that had been erected centuries earlier but he particularly mentions the one at the top of Lexden Hill opposite "Horsee or Stone Crouch Lane". This is now Glen Avenue and the position of the cross is marked by a small stone (*left*) outside No 100 Lexden Road with the inscription: "Near this spot formerly stood Stone Cross described by Morant in his History of Colchester".

He describes the old Lexden Church as being "always appendant to the manor, though several presentations have been made by persons other than the lords". He obviously did not approve of livings being in the gift of landowners! After his wife's death, Morant lived with his daughter in Battersea, working in the House of Lords but retained his livings in Colchester and Aldham. He died in 1770 and is buried at Aldham.

A bowling green in Lexden Street had become a garden by 1726 and it is recorded that men enjoyed playing cricket on Lexden Heath, but it was also reported that after a cricket match in 1785 a horse race with betting took place! John Crosier, a miller from Maldon, records that on Monday 2nd May 1754 he and a party of others went to Lexden to the review of the North British Dragoons (now part of the Royal Regiment of Scots Dragoons), commanded by Major General

Preston. The "men and horses were very noble and went thro their exercises very well" much to the satisfaction of the spectators. Afterwards his party went to dine at the White Hart in Colchester (entrance at Bank Passage) and to see Porter's Garden in High Street where they admired a "most beautiful shew of auriculars, part of the stock of Mr Stow of Lexden".



Henry Stow and his brother, John, were fulling millers, the tenants of Lexden Mill for about 30 years until 1772. Henry was a prosperous tradesman and famous for growing ornamental plants but he was best known for his auriculars (*left*) and he recorded that some plants produced 133 blossoms on one stem! He also grew tulips and in 1763 he advertised his usual annual display: "Any Gentlemen or Ladies that are fond of the TULIP are very welcome to feast their Eyes with such as are at Lexden Mill, near Colchester, Essex. The best Time for seeing the Tulip is about Eleven O'Clock in the Day. From their humble servant Henry Stow". There was a footnote: "I would not be understood by this to give a general Invitation to all the meaner Sort of People; but only to such of them as love Flowers, can behave civilly, and come without Dogs."

Another nurseryman was Isaac Bunting, whose flower nursery in Lexden Road was founded in 1819.

The two main local landowners, John Fletcher Mills and John Papillon were responsible for much of the legal enclosing (purchase) of local common land, including Lexden Heath, after which the Papillon family owned 1,216 acres and Mills a mere 296 acres out of the total of 2,312 acres in the parish. This was land which had been regularly used by the local population for grazing, horse racing and also for military camps. There was much dissatisfaction following the enclosures and by 1830 the church raised a subscription for 10 special constables to patrol at night. They worked in two shifts of five and were paid half-a-crown each night. This arrangement did not last long and by 1841 the borough paid two full-time constables to patrol the area.

The population of Lexden in 1821 was 457 men and 475 females and the village at this time was the largest parish west of Colchester with houses such the "elegant mansion house of John Fletcher Mills" - Lexden Park with its extensive grounds, plantations, some noble trees and a "fine sheet of water". Opposite was the house of John de Horne - Hill House.

By 1837, at the end of the Georgian period, farms still provided much of the employment in Lexden, but farm workers were outnumbered by tradesmen and craftsmen. Many of these worked in the town but lived in Lexden which was becoming a rich suburb of Colchester. With improved roads and transport to the rest of the country changes to supplies and fashions were more rapid. Newspapers told of events elsewhere, including national affairs, parliamentary debates and the French Revolution. Coaching inns grew in number and further changes would take place with the coming of the railways to Colchester in 1843.

HELP! - LHG ARCHIVIST - HELP!

Bernard Polley has been our Lexden History Group archivist for ever! As a nonagenarian he now feels that a younger person should take it over and we are asking for volunteers.

He has done a wonderful job keeping up-to-date with all the new items which have been found and donated to the archives. It is a fascinating job and as Bernard has kept it all in such good order it would not be difficult to take it over.

Please could we have a willing member who would talk to Bernard and find out exactly what being our archivist would entail? Some space for storage would be required but everything is contained in plastic boxes.

If you feel you could help us, please contact Bernard direct or any member of the committee.

Your Committee

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FORTHCOMING SPEAKERS

Wednesday 10th April 2019

'The Early Days of Clacton'

George Hardwick

Wednesday 8th May 2019

AGM

'Fenwick Jewels'

Adam Wightman

Wednesday 12th June 2019

'Giles'

John Field

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Renewal of Membership Subscriptions

April/May Meetings

Lexden History Group BBQ

Saturday 17th August

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.