

Lexden History Group



Summer BBQ 2019

- **Legal Settlement in Lexden 1772 – 1790**
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LEGAL SETTLEMENT IN LEXDEN 1772-1790

Moving to another town or village today is comparatively easy especially as registering to vote, paying council tax, etc, can now be done online. National benefits can also be claimed from anywhere in the country. In the 18th century it was not so straightforward for under the "Settlement Act" - the Relief of the Poor Act of 1662 - each person 'belonged' to a parish but if they wanted to move they had to fulfil the regulations to gain settlement elsewhere, particularly if they wished to benefit from parish relief.

Claiming legal settlement in Lexden was one of the main reasons for court appearances in Colchester and was often attended by one of the Overseers of the Poor for Lexden. These court reports give a brief insight into the examination of those applying for settlement in the parish and, to fulfil settlement conditions, searching questions were asked about the applicant's family,



financial circumstances and residence history. If settlement was granted it would make it easier to claim relief should the individual or family later become chargeable to Lexden parish. Once parish relief had been paid to a claimant there was no further examination as legal settlement had already been determined. However, if the applicant failed to satisfy the examiners that they qualified for settlement they would be returned to the parish of their birth or the parish that had issued their original Certificate of Settlement, but if the family were a liability, they would not be welcomed back. (left: Lexden Parish Church at the time of the court records)

The Overseers of the Poor were usually "substantial householders", ie, local rate payers, and sometimes churchwardens *ex-officio*. Overseers were appointed annually at Easter by each parish and the honorary positions approved by local Justices of the Peace (JP) or magistrates. To finance parish relief all properties were rated for annual rental value and rate payers were charged at several pence in the pound, determined by the Vestry meeting in each parish. The Poor Rate was set by the Overseers who also administered its collection and distribution and the parish had a legal responsibility to support its people even if it was the parish of their birth. Overseers were eager to ensure that only those who could prove they had legal settlement were granted relief and if it was thought that someone could become a financial burden through illness, illegitimacy, vagrancy, etc, a settlement examination was held where a JP, with evidence from an Overseer, would determine the right to parish help. Petty constables could also give evidence at settlement examinations. Every parish had one or two constables selected from the local parish but they were unpaid and their service could be somewhat erratic as they only had their free time to perform their policing duties. Alternatively they might pay another man to police for them. If a person without settlement was found guilty of a minor crime he could be served a removal order and had to leave the parish or was sent on his way forcibly. This conviction could, of course, disqualify him from applying for legal settlement.

Money for parish relief was not only raised from the Poor Rate but also from legacies or local charities some of which provided bread or beer on specific days, eg, Love's Charity, and it was not always financial help but sometimes practical help. Parishes often had almshouses for the old or destitute, or houses could be rented when necessary, clothes given and medical care provided by local people. An orphan without other relatives could be boarded out to local families. Applicants for parish relief might also have to assist in repairing local roads and ratepayers would be encouraged to employ applicants as temporary workers. This was cheap labour but if the worker was reliable it could lead to more permanent employment.

The right of settlement, and thus a legal claim to financial help, was determined by certain criteria. The most important was being born of legally settled and married parents in that parish. A child born in another parish usually took the father's settlement. Illegitimate children took the parish of their birth unless the father was successfully cited. Many young girls went into service in another parish but were quickly returned if they became pregnant as parish relief for a mother "at nurse" could be for up to three years. If she died in childbirth, claims on the parish would be made for the orphan, so it was imperative to establish paternity and issue an order for the cost of the child's delivery and another for maintenance (bastardy bond). This was usually a fixed sum (minimum of £40) or, more usually, a weekly allowance of between 2s and 3s 6d (10p and 18p) according to the father's means until the child was 14 years old and could be apprenticed.

Another important condition of settlement was apprenticeship as a man who had served a full seven years could become a "legally settled man". Orphans, widow's children and children from poor families could also be legally apprenticed, at the parish's expense and often in another parish to minimise any future problems. Girls were apprenticed to the age of 21 and if married she would take her husband's settlement. Boys were often apprenticed until the age of 24, giving their master a longer period of cheap labour, but the master was bound to teach his trade and feed and clothe his apprentice. Such arrangements were often very successful with the apprentice happy to settle in the new parish. A further condition was when someone planned to move to the parish, 40 days' notice had to be given. Another was that a claimant inheriting an "estate of land" should have lived there more than 40 days. A married man renting a property at a minimum of £10 annually or paying taxes on a smallholding or farm could claim settlement if he had stayed for 12 months and also paid parish rates. Anyone holding a Parish office could claim settlement.

Settlement was carefully managed. It was common for labourers to be hired after the harvest season, ie, from the end of Michaelmas week (Michaelmas Day 29th September) until, crucially, the beginning of the next Michaelmas week thus preventing their claiming settlement as a man had to be "legally settled" for 365 days continuously, but a good worker would always be rehired and could then qualify for settlement. Servants who were paid for a full year would also qualify.

Lexden's settlement examination reports are fascinating with magistrates or JPs, all eminent Colchester men, taking the chair to hear the evidence. It is clear that most applicants for settlement were servants or husbandmen (*right*). The Oxford Dictionary defines a husbandman as "a person who cultivates the land; a farmer", and one would assume from the context of the reports that the term today would be "agricultural worker". The reports clearly demonstrate the importance of a man's length of service and that wages were fairly standard, usually between £6 and £7 per annum, with some including a bonus of "livery" or clothes. They also indicate that wages were paid at the end of the contracted period, unless there was a special arrangement. So it would appear that families had to husband their resources very carefully and failure to do this could make them resort to parish relief. It is, however, disappointing that the decisions of the JPs were not always recorded on the documents being researched.



From these documents, the first Settlement case for Lexden was in November 1772 when JPs Thomas Bayles and Thomas Clamtree heard the case of a member of the Shearcroft family, John, who had occupied a farm in Lexden at an annual rent of £56 and had lived there for 10 years. He stated that he had taken no action to gain settlement in the parish - a phrase repeated time and again throughout these cases - with the apparently crucial additional factor that he had a wife, Hannah, and a five year old daughter, also called Hannah. This was the first of many cases without a recorded result. A month later George Stigbee stated that at the age of 23 or 24 he had occupied a farm at Aldham at an annual rent of £120. The farm failed and he "went about the Country" until eight or nine years before the court appearance when he hired a house in Little Horkesley from his wife's father, William Sadler, for 2gns (£2 10p) per annum. Stigbee said he paid no rates and worked as a labourer for his father-in-law who died leaving the farm to his son, Cleere, a minor, and Stigbee worked for him for two years. He was offered a cottage and land in Lexden, Squirrels, and after two years paid a rent of £10. Later he left Squirrels to rent a cottage in Lexden at 3gns per annum. He declared he had never paid Poor Rates or attempted to gain settlement in the parish. "Orders" is written on the court document which could signify that he and his family were ordered to return to another parish, which demonstrates how unwilling the parish was to grant settlement when another parish could be charged!

The applications for single mothers for settlement, which would entitle them to parish relief, were never ending. A mother was held responsible for her child's support until it was seven but she was encouraged to obtain support from the father. In July 1774 Elizabeth Miller cited Edward Shave, a servantman, as father of her child and he was again cited in 1778 this time by Elizabeth Brown.



Five years later in May 1784 she reappeared in court before William Seaber to say that having had that child on 1st February 1779 she now had a "female bastard" in Lexden also fathered by Thomas Redgrave. At this hearing Redgrave was recorded as "late of Colchester" and a peruke maker, suggesting he had completed his apprenticeship. Apparently the JP received a payment, for what and from whom we do not know. (left: 1761 William Hogarth - *The Five Orders of Perriwigs*). Records do not show whether Lexden paid relief to such women or whether responsibility was successfully passed to other parishes.

In April 1780 a Lexden resident, Harvey Man, was named as the father of the child that Ann Williams was carrying and James Raisin, labourer, was named as the "only real and true father" of the child that Phoebe Snell was carrying. It also becomes clear that an unmarried mother could claim relief at any time, for at the end of 1782 Stephen Betts heard that Elizabeth Everett had given birth to a "Male Bastard" three years earlier in Great Bentley but was likely to

become chargeable to the Parish of Lexden. It is quite frustrating not to have further details of these cases especially as Elizabeth Everett signed the court document and would have been literate. Most of those appearing before the court were illiterate and just gave their mark - a cross - and that obviously written with difficulty. Another putative Lexden father, Benjamin Page the younger, was cited by Deborah Bloyce in November 1783. He was recorded as a miller "now or late of Fingringhoe" but 2s (10p) was received by the court.

Hannah Fairhead, another single woman, also signed the court document and in June 1785 stood before Stephen Ennew and Thomas Boggis to declare that her female child, although delivered in and chargeable to St Mary-at-the-Walls parish, was fathered by the victualler, George Bentley, of the King's Head, Lexden (right: later a *Temperance Hotel*). Mary Warren came before Edmund Lilley JP in March 1787 claiming that she was a widow living in Lexden but was pregnant by a labourer, William Miller. The next day, Edmund Lilley and William Argent heard from William Miller, described as a husbandman living in Lexden, who said he had been born in Stanway under his father's settlement, and that he was never apprenticed or a yearly hired servant, nor sought settlement. He also said he had a wife named Mary. Were these the same people hoping that claiming settlement and parish relief could be made easier by marriage?



It was not only pregnant women who claimed settlement or parish relief. Under the jurisdiction of Thomas Bayles in February 1773 Rebecca Curtis declared that five years earlier "about last Lady Day" (29th March) she "let herself" at £2 16s (£2.80) per year to Mary, the wife of victualler William Parker of Marks Tey and after the first year she stayed another 3½ years at 1s (5p) per week. During this time she had made no claim for settlement. "Orders" was scrawled on that document and presumably she was removed from Lexden.

Pleas for settlement and possible parish relief in Lexden continued unabated. Samuel Bunton, who was born in Lexden, the place of his father's settlement, said in court in February 1774 that eleven years earlier he had worked for a Mrs Morley in Lexden for 8s (40p) a month. He reported that she had told him that after one year he would have livery. Three months into his service she moved to St Mary-at-the-Walls parish and he went with her staying for several years. However, he had made no attempt to claim settlement and now had a wife, Elizabeth. It is not known what JPs Thomas Bayles and Thomas Clamtree made of this and whether he qualified for settlement.

In October 1778 John Fossgate stated before JPs Thomas Clamtree and John King that in about 1760 he had worked for Lexden farmer John Wilson for £7 a year from Michaelmas Day (29th September) and then went to John Brunwin in Berechurch as a steward for John Pearson, a farmer in Layer-de-la-Haye, for £7 10s (£7.50).

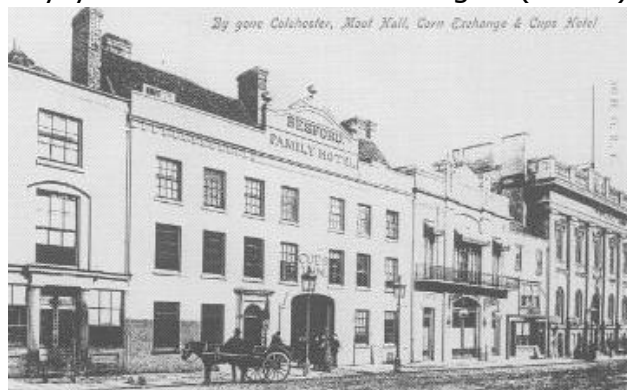
Since then he had not been a yearly servant nor tried to gain settlement but now "hath a house his own property" (on the site of Crouched Friars) in St Mary-at-the-Walls parish, with a yearly value of £2.10s (£2.50). His plea for settlement included the argument that he had two children, James aged "about" 14 years and Sarah "about" 12 years, but no wife is mentioned. No decision is recorded.

By virtue of a pair of Orders from West Bergholt parish, John Francis was brought to Lexden in June 1779 and Thomas Boggis JP heard the case. On the Sunday before the previous Michaelmas Day he was "let" for a fortnight to Lexden farmer, Nathaniel Grubb, and then he entered his service on the Wednesday following. He stayed and agreed to continue till the next Michaelmas Day for 2gns for the whole time, receiving payment of ½gn (55p) and the rest when he left. It should again be noted that Michaelmas Day was crucial for recording employment but it is clear in this case that he started before that day and continued so would have qualified for settlement in Lexden with more than 365 consecutive days working in the parish.

At the end of November 1781 JPs John King and Thomas Boggis heard from Frances Lappage that her husband "late a private soldier in East Essex Militia" had died three weeks earlier and told her that his legal place of settlement was Alresford, apparently obtained by living with a Mrs Blyth as a yearly hired servant. At the same session John Marchant, Lexden Overseer, reported that Frances Lappage had "lately obtruded herself" into the parish of Lexden with no legal settlement or certificate from another place. She was "likely to be chargeable to Parish of Lexden".

In late December 1782 Thomas Boggis was sitting on the case of Elizabeth Death who declared that in 1748 officers of Parish of Lexden gave her late husband's father, George Death, a certificate of settlement stating that his children would be regarded as inhabitants of Lexden. Eighteen years earlier in 1764 her husband had been bound apprentice for 7 years, possibly as a shoemaker, to William Smith of St Runwald's parish. She often heard her husband say he did not lodge in St Runwald's for 40 days during this apprenticeship, but lived on board his master's vessel moored in St Leonard's parish (Hythe). She was trying to claim settlement from her late father-in-law's certificate and stated that her late husband had done nothing to gain settlement, adding that she had one child, Elizabeth, aged about 8 months. It would be interesting to know if she succeeded.

In late December 1782 JPs Stephen Betts and Thomas Boggis heard that James Everett, a husbandman from Hadleigh, Suffolk, had been hired twenty years earlier for £6 or 6 gns (£6.30) by a farmer, Mr Warren, of Watfield in Suffolk,. He served from the day after Michaelmas Day until the next Michaelmas Day, which would not qualify him for settlement. In May two years later he moved to Mr Henry Bevan of Lexden for about £6 and stayed for two years. He next lived with his brother-in-law, John Nunn of the Three Cups Inn (*right c1880*) in St Peter's parish, but there was no agreement or wages only board and lodging and some "wearing apparel". He stayed for about three years but did not try to gain settlement. He now had a wife, Elizabeth, and one child, John Clark aged 3 years. Enigmatically crossed out against the child's name is "by a former husband". Henry Bevan (1705-1766) had occupied the old Lexden Park at a yearly rent of £55 from an apothecary, John Richardson. Bevan, who was childless, was generous in his will to the men and maids who worked for him, but as this will was written in 1757 and not proved until 1791, it is not clear whether Everett was one of the twelve unnamed "Workmen to carrey me to the grave".



In December 1783 JPs William Seaber and Stephen Betts heard the case of single woman, Mary Green, who had been born in Lexden, where her father had settlement, and about eight years earlier had "let herself" to brickmaker Daniel Blyth of St Peter's parish for £3 per annum. After nine months they agreed to part and then she served two years with Mr Peter Rogers, grocer of St James's parish, again for £3 but she never tried to gain settlement in that parish.

Another husbandman, John Bugg, was in court before William Mayhew and Thomas Boggis in November 1784. He had been born in Wormingford, under his father's legal settlement, and he then recalled that from the age of 13 he had worked for different local farmers, whom he named, for about £3 a year "as far as he could recollect".

A fortnight after Michaelmas in 1784 he was employed for a yearly pay of 7gns by Lexden farmer, Samuel Taylor, probably at Wegg's Land - later the site of Magazine Farm - and now had a wife, Eleanor. The following month one of the Lexden Overseers, Robert Hewes, gave evidence before the same JPs that John and Eleanor Bugg had "lately come to inhabit in Lexden" without gaining legal settlement or producing a certificate from elsewhere. He added that they were likely to become chargeable to the parish of Lexden.

William Rudland came before JPs Edmund Lilley and William Argent in early 1787 to ask the Copford Overseers for financial help to bury his wife, Elizabeth, a local Copford woman, and where his father "resided by virtue of Certificate" (of Settlement). They told him to "bespeak a coffin" from Mr Cobb, a carpenter. This was never paid for and Rudland also owed money for the lettering on the coffin. He had now married again and had a 12 week old daughter, Hannah. Orders for the removal of the family were issued, but at the same court Lexden's Overseer of the Poor, farmer Samuel Taylor, said that the family had come to Lexden having neither gained settlement here nor with a certificate from elsewhere. They would now become chargeable to Lexden parish.

In March 1787 John Tillet, a husbandman living in Lexden, came before William Argent and William Mayhew stating that he had been born in St Mary-at-the-Walls parish under his father's settlement and four years earlier had "let himself to Thomas Boggis of All Saints (one of the JPs) for one month "upon liking" and it was then agreed that he should continue for year at 6gns and suit of clothes". He served another year with Boggis at 6½gns and received two suits of clothes and then continued for another five months. He had never sought settlement but now had a wife, Elizabeth, and a three week old daughter called Charlotte. He had worked for four years for Barker Holton, a carpenter of St Runwald's (right: *St Runwald's Church, High Street*) and was paid £3 annually for two years and £4 for the last two years. He had received his four years wages at different times, when he wanted it which was an unusual arrangement. In the summer of 1770 he rented and occupied a tenement shop in Tolleshunt Darcy for more than six years at 10gns (£10.50) per annum, paying both Land tax and parish rates and other assessments. He did not seek settlement but now had a wife, Ann and three children, James Lawrence about 13, Ann about 10 and John 8.



In November 1788 Daniel Chapman and his wife and family of three children, Mary aged 14½, Charles 12 and Samuel 3, were ordered by JPs Bezalial Angier and Edward Capstack to be removed back to Lexden from St Giles parish where they were living. Chapman had a certificate from Lexden and had not gained settlement elsewhere but he had been forced to ask for relief from the churchwardens and Overseers of St Giles.

That same month blacksmith John Lay was also residing in St Giles parish with his wife, Mary. He had been born in Lexden under his father's settlement but had never been an apprentice or a yearly hired servant. He also had not sought settlement in his own right. However, he had the previous month paid the Collectors of Land Tax 10s 6d (56p) for his house and premises. He had also further paid window tax, house duty, commutation tax and duty on Michaelmas Day. This would entitle him to live in St Giles but it appears he was applying for confirmed settlement in Lexden. No decision has been recorded in either case.

Another person wanting settlement in Lexden was Jabez Hailes who in April 1790 declared before JPs Edmund Lilley and Bezalial Angier that he had been born in Willand, Suffolk, where his father had lived with a certificate from St Mary-of-the-Elms in Ipswich. About ten years earlier he had been bound apprentice by Indentures for seven years to Robert Leach of that parish and had already served two years when Leach died. From Lady Day (25th March) the previous year he had also hired for £5 a year a cottage in Lexden from Mr Turner and had agreed to pay all taxes and parish charges "that might be assessed on premises" except Land Tax which Mr Turner contracted to pay. Last Christmas he hired a piece of land in Great Tey from Nathaniel White at £2 per annum clear of all charges and at the same time a cottage in Lexden from Nathaniel Polley at an annual rent of £2.10s (£2.50) again clear of all charges.

The family, including his wife Rachael and two children, Ann about 1½ years and Elizabeth about 3 months, had occupied the cottage to the present time. Hailes stated he had never sought to gain settlement and the reports do not include a decision. Nathaniel Polley (1746-1810) lived all his life in Lexden and is buried with his wife, Mary, in Lexden Churchyard. Mr Turner also lived at some time in the earlier Lexden Park and was married to the sister of Henry Bevan. She nearly lost her substantial inheritance when Francis Smythies (a recorder, attorney and magistrate) rewrote Bevan's unconscious brother's will making himself the principal legatee - but more of that story another time!

A shoemaker living in Lexden, William White, had been born in Framlingham under his father's settlement, and in May 1790 was seeking settlement in Lexden with his wife, Mary. (It is interesting to note that in the late 18th century Lexden could support a shoemaker.) The final case of settlement from these documents was on the same day as that of William White when husbandman Edward Burnby came before JPs Edmund Lilley, then the Mayor of Colchester, and Bezaliel Angier. Burnby was living in Lexden where he had been born but his father had a certificate from St Giles. Some 26 years earlier he had "let himself" to Thomas Potter of Stanway for 25s (£1.25) per annum and continued there for 5½ years "under separate yearly hirings". He received his wages and then went to Robin Heard of West Bergholt at 4½gns (£4.70) yearly where he stayed for another three years. After that he was employed three days after Michaelmas Day by Thomas Hallow, a farmer of Fordham for 7½gns (£7.85) a year. He left with permission and full wages on the following Michaelmas Day but had never sought to gain settlement in these villages. He was married and his wife was called Margaret.

As can be appreciated, each case was similar in form, but also remarkably different in detail. The records clearly demonstrate the importance of working men being hired before Michaelmas Day to qualify for settlement the following year. Wives are mentioned almost in passing, as are the children but with their names and ages, for a married man could have some bearing on the decision of the JP. The wages seem minimal for the amount of work required and it can be seen that rents and the hiring of land would have been out of the question for many people. It is interesting to note that although the majority of those appearing before the courts were unable to sign their names, their recollections of where they worked, for whom, for how long and for how much are clear and unquestioned. However, it is disappointing not to see many of the decisions taken but one would assume that settlement in Lexden was usually granted except. It is also patently obvious that wealthy owners and tenants would have no difficulty with settlement as they could easily fulfill the requirements and that they would not be requiring parish relief!

PHILIP CARDY - A FARMING LAD

Phillip Cardy was born on 21st July 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 which is understandable as he talked frankly about the people he knew from an early age! (Editor's additions in brackets)

myself kneeling in the far corner of this huge room and looking back to the door and wondering how long it would take me to scrub my way out of it. However, I managed to finish the whole school and refilled the ink-wells (*right*) on the Thursday morning before we started school the following Tuesday. In the July of 1917 Mother (*Eliza born 1863*) had been very ill and she had to have a spell in hospital. She came home in the July and was very worried about the school (*where she worked as cleaner*) as in August it had to have its annual spring clean. All the girls were at work and Polly could not manage it as she had another job. So I said, "Well, I will have to do it alone." Mother said I could not do it but I insisted that if I failed we would have tried. When the children went out of school on the Thursday to start the summer holiday I set about it. The whole school had to be done - floors scrubbed, stoves polished, ink-wells cleaned and refilled, windows cleaned inside and out.



The infant school (now 195 Lexden Road) was 60 feet by 30 feet and it had to be scrubbed. We did not have the luxury of carpets in those days. We sat on desk seats (*left*) and the floors were deal boards - nice things to scrub if you did not watch where you put your knuckles. In my mind's

eye I can still see myself kneeling in the far corner of this huge room and looking back to the door and wondering how long it would take me to scrub my way out of it. However, I managed to finish the whole school and refilled the ink-wells (*right*) on the Thursday morning before we started school the following Tuesday.



I went home to dinner that day for the first time in a month. That afternoon Dad (*Frederick born 1866*) said, "Where are you going this afternoon?" I said, "Fishing." He said, "You had better come and pick up some potatoes for me." But Mother would not have it. She pointed out that I had been working hard all the holiday and I had only got 3 days left, so this time he would have to pick them up himself. Well, I went fishing. Then on Friday I saw him getting ready to go on the allotment. I thought, "Poor old Dad, he does work hard." So I put the rods away and went and helped him.

I had one more year to go to school and that seemed an age going by; but at last the last Thursday in July came round - and only a half-day tomorrow. That was the only day I wanted to go to school. I wanted to be there at the finish so that I could shake off the dust of the place and leave it for good, but no! On Thursday morning Mother said, "You don't want to go back to school. You can go to town and do some shopping for me." So that was what I did. My Aunt Rose, (*possibly wife of Eliza's brother, Matthew Skelt*) who lived in Ipswich, had always promised me that when I left school she would have me down there for a fortnight's holiday before I started work. I was looking forward to this. I went and did the shopping and went with Mother to clean the school. While we were there a man named Major came to the school and said, "You have left school today, haven't you?" I said, "Yes." By this time Mother was there and she agreed that I should go to work for him for 8s (*40p*) a week, starting at 8.00 in the morning till 6.00 at night. I think it worked out at 1¼d (*½p*) per hour. (*Horatio Nelson Major, born in 1874, was a corn merchant in London Road. He had taken over the business from his father, Horatio, after his death in 1907. The family lived in Trevethnan, Colne Road - now Halstead Road.*)



Next to Major's shop, on the other side of Back Lane, was the bakery and sweet shop (*left*) kept by the Garlings. He was known as the midnight baker, the reason being that he baked in the day and delivered the bread at night.

So, instead of a fortnight's holiday in Ipswich, I was walking to work at 8am and, apart from Bank Holidays and Christmas, I never had another day off for 7 years, when I left his employment. At that time I was driving two horses for £1 per week. There was a depression on then and the sight of long queues of men waiting to sign on the dole made you frightened to let go of the job you had got - even if it was underpaid. He was not a good man to work for. He was a religious man and would stand in the road when Percy White was leading a funeral to church and would recite, "Be ye therefore ready." He went to Lion Walk church twice on Sundays, but he would rob anyone of a shilling as quick as lightning. Three or four years after I left I wondered if he was ready. He went to Villa Road to borrow the use of a circular saw. He started it up, picked up the piece of wood he wanted to cut, and dropped down dead on the saw (*actually in 1941*).

Not long after the war Stanway barracks were empty and the farms began to get back to normal, although some of the young men did not return. I expect they learnt there were better jobs going in the towns (*or had they been killed?*). The farm labourers' wages had gone up to 53s (£2.65) a week under the Wage Tribunal, but a month after the war stopped the then Government did away with all Wage Boards and Tribunals and allowed employers to fix their own prices. As a result of this, when Dad went for his wages he was presented with 25s (£1.25) and told to take it or leave it - whichever he liked. He was in a tied house and if he left they would want the house empty by the end of the week. So he had no option as there were no empty houses anywhere.

When I left Major my job was taken over by a boy named John Wicks. I went to work for Craig (*Alexander Craig of Moat Farm, Lexden*) as third horseman. I had a couple of Percherons - great big babies they were, but they knew exactly where your waistcoat pocket was.

Around that time (*about 1925*) the R33 and R34 (*opposite*) were based at Pulham in Norfolk and

every Thursday, weather permitting, one or the other would fly from Pulham to London and back. They usually came back about 12 o'clock so I used to get a good view of them. One Thursday I saw one of the crew come out of the small gondola underneath the balloon and go up a short ladder into the main balloon. I can also remember the first aeroplane which flew over Essex. Some newspaper paid for it as no-one had seen one. It came over not much above the trees. The pilot sat in a sort of chair in front of the wings. The engine was behind the wings, pushing him along. He turned round over the Rectory and went straight back over the valley to land, so I was told, on Braiswick golf links.



Looking back over my lifetime, I may be wrong, but I do not think there will ever be another generation to come that will see the tremendous alterations that have taken place since my first memories of the place. First of all, the ploughing was done by horse power and the harvest was cut with a scythe, tied by hand, gathered in, stacked and thatched. Then followed the self-binder, drawn by 3 horses. It cut and tied a seven foot swathe. It was killing work for the horses and, if you had a 15 acre field to cut, it would take two days and you would want 6 horses. Then the



stacks had to be threshed and this was done by a steam tackle. For a very long time this was the only piece of self-propelled machinery that was in use. The only other thing driven by steam was the trains. When the First World War came we saw our first tractors - little Fords pulling two farrow ploughs (*left: Fordson Model F*). These were dangerous tools to use. If you were crossing a field and both of the hind wheels dropped into a water farrow the front would rear up and it would turn right over.

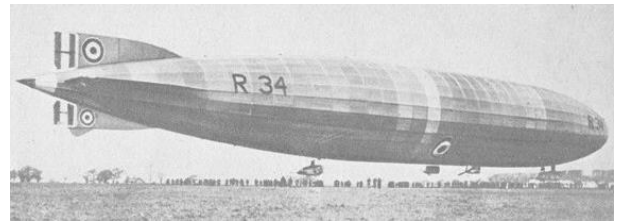
Many a good man ended his days under one of them. One great advantage the tractors had over the horses was that the flies did not bite them. We youngsters used to have a great time when the corn was cut. As soon as the machine began to get to the middle of the field the rabbits began to bolt and we were allowed to keep what we caught. When the corn was carted a "policeman" was always left in the field - this was one trave of eight sheaves and gleaning was not allowed till that was removed. (*Trave - term used mainly in South Suffolk, known as stook elsewhere; six or eight sheaves in opposing pairs formed a tunnel to let wind through but keep out rain. By tradition a trave should hear three church bells, ie, stand for three weeks before collection.*)

When Mr Papillon took over the farms in 1918 we saw another wonderful thing. A firm of the name of Alfa Laval had invented a machine which milked the cows. Such a thing had never been heard of before and there was much discussion about it. Most of the men said it would never be any good. These machines were very primitive. The compressed air was driven by a small oil engine and, on cold mornings, there was sometimes some strange language flying round. They did not milk the cows completely dry and that had to be done, otherwise the cows got what was known as mastitis. That meant that one man had to follow the machines to what we called "strip them out". (*Gustaf de Laval (1845-1913) developed machines for the dairy industry from the 1870s and his first milking machine in 1894.*) We used to start work at 5am and we had to milk 40 cows. Then I had to be up at Magdalen Church with the milk at 7.30am. The cow houses had to be cleared during the day ready for afternoon milking. Then about 8pm we had to go back and milk out 8 or 9 calvers, as these had to be milked 3 times a day. This was 7 days a week - wages 43s (£2.15) per week. I wonder what they would think of it today.

Next was the sugar beet. We used to take that on to do piece work at around 45s (£2.25) per acre to hoe and single. Next, when the crop came off, Fred Eddy (*possibly Fred Eady b1875, farm labourer, of Halstead Road*) used to ease them with a special plough and we had to take them up. We had to shake them to get all the earth off them, then go over them and cut the tops off and leave them in heaps covered by their tops. The pay was 50s (£2.50) per acre. If you started about 5.30 in the morning, allowed three-quarters of an hour for meals, kept stuck into it till you could not see and the weather kept fine, you would get about 1¼ acres done in a week.

By the time we had to leave the Glen (*Glen Farm, Cut Throat Lane - now Glen Avenue*) and go

down to Red Brick Cottage in Spring Lane and work got more scarce, I found that the winter was the best. If it kept fine you could get work by following the threshing tackle. If you knew a bit about stacking you were pretty sure of a job provided it was not raining - pay 5s (25p) per day. Plenty of times I have left home at 5.30am and hiked 9 or 10 miles only for it to be pouring with rain when I got there. Then you waited 2 or 3 hours to see if it would leave off and then the farmer would say, "I'm not opening the stack today. We'll see what tomorrow is like." So you turned round and biked home with your pocket just as empty as when you started. You could do that 2 or 3 days before you earnt a shilling (5p).



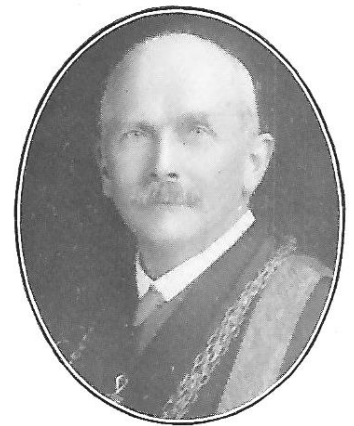
To be continued

COLCHESTER ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

- Bernard Polley

Have you ever wondered what it was like living in the town 100 years ago? Browsing through 'Benham's Almanac and Street Directory for 1919' there is a wealth of information to peruse.

Colchester Borough Council consisted of eight aldermen and twenty four councillors, all elected for various periods of time. Several prominent names appear on that list including Gurney Benham, Alec Blaxill, Wilson Marriage, Percy Sanders and others, all of whom gave great service to the town by their various expertise in business. The 1918/19 Mayor of Colchester was Councillor George Wright (*right*), a member of the Wright Brothers, a catering and restaurant business. During his period of tenure he hosted many events for sick and wounded soldiers, such as an evening concert held at the Hippodrome, the proceeds going towards a Christmas comforts fund for injured servicemen. Officers of the Council included Mr HC Wanklyn, Town Clerk, and Major NAC de H Tufnell, Borough Treasurer. High Steward was Rt Hon Viscount Cowdray and Member of Parliament Sir Worthington Evans (Unionist Coalition).



Two emergency services, Police and Fire, both under control of the corporation are mentioned in the Directory. The Police Station was situated in the basement of the Town Hall, with the entrance in West Stockwell Street. It contained offices, a charge room and seven cells, with staircases leading up to two law courts on the next floor. Lt Col H C Stockwell was the Chief Constable with a staff of six inspectors, eight sergeants and fifty one constables. Apart from any serious cases which were passed on to higher authority, most of the offences dealt with by the station were larceny and house-breaking. New recruits were instructed: "You must be forceful yet patient, convincing and tactful, and all the time quietly observant".



Colchester Fire Brigade was formed in 1896 and shortly after this a horse-drawn fire engine was acquired (*left*) and was still in use in 1919. Two years later the first petrol-driven motor fire engine was purchased capable of throwing 350 gallons of water a minute. Also available were a 50ft escape ladder and 3,500 feet of canvas hose. The Chief Fire Officer was Captain J Cocker with a compliment of nineteen firemen. A weekly fire drill was held each

Wednesday at the depot in Stanwell Street. Daytime calls were given by the siren at the Electricity Supply Works next door in Osborne Street, and those firemen on night-call duty had alarm bells connected to their homes, operated from the police station.

The General Post Office in Head Street (now the Odeon Cinema) was built in the early Victorian age and lasted until 1936 when a new post office was opened on the south side of the original building. Mr D R Goodyear was head postmaster in 1919 and the postal services offered included weekday opening hours between 8am and 7pm and Sundays and bank holidays between 8.30am and 10am, including Christmas Day!

Deliveries of mail in Colchester on weekdays were at 7am and 10.40am and for business premises in the town centre there was a delivery at 3.30pm. On Sundays there was one morning delivery. Postcards required a half-penny stamp and sealed letters 1d. If you required a postage stamp when the post office was closed, a stamp machine (*right*) was available on the outside wall - insert a one penny coin (1d) in the machine to dispense the stamp. You'd have problems today if you needed a second class stamp at 61p!



On 28th July 1904 the Corporation Tramway System opened to the public with great ceremony when the Mayoress, Mrs Barritt, drove the first car from the Town Hall to Lexden. In spite of heavy rain a large crowd was present when tram number 13 was decked out with flags and bunting leading the procession of four cars along the tram line for two miles to the terminus at Straight Road. The general manager, Mr R C Bullough, controlled all five routes from the tram shed in Magdalen Street. Fifteen



years on, the route to Lexden was still providing a service for passengers. There was a single tram line running along Lexden Road, with four passing double tracks, one opposite the Essex County hospital and others by Norman Way, St Clare Road and the Crown Inn on Lexden Hill (*left*). The fare was one penny (1d) for a single trip, with a service provided weekdays every 15 minutes, slightly fewer for Sundays. A ride on the tramcar was somewhat noisy, not too comfortable and the upper deck was open to the elements, but it was a useful service for passengers rather than having to

walk or cycle.

By 1919 there were seven Anglican churches within the Roman Wall - All Saints, Holy Trinity, St James, St Martin's, St Mary's, St Peter's and St Nicholas (*right*), as well as four non-conformist chapels, - Baptist, Methodist and two Congregational - all with well attended Sunday services each having their own rector/vicar/minister. 100 years later only two Anglican churches and three non-conformists remain for worship. Stockwell Congregational closed in 1966.



Entertainment: the Theatre Royal in Queen Street had burnt down in September 1918, so all pre-planned productions moved to the Corn Exchange in High Street. The Hippodrome was finishing a run of stage shows, mostly musicals and variety, for in 1920 the theatre was converted into a cinema, but retained the stage for the occasional live show. The Headgate Electric and Vaudeville (later Empire) cinemas were showing silent films, usually accompanied by a pianist playing suitable music to match what was happening on the screen.

Perhaps 1919 will be best remembered for the celebration of Peace Day on July 19th. There was a Triumphal March through the town of uniformed and ex-servicemen led by a military band. The parade halted at the Town Hall for Mayor George Wright to address the crowd. Later in the day an athletic meeting was held in Land Lane, and a fete on the Abbey Field, concluding with a display of military flares throwing light across the town and lighting a giant bonfire with fireworks - thankful that World War One had come to an end.

Benham's Almanac and Street Directory 1919, price sixpence. A new issue was produced each year from 1885 until 1965 containing local information and a complete list of streets and roads in Colchester with names of occupants at each address.

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.

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FORTHCOMING SPEAKERS

Wednesday 9th October 2019

**The Gunpowder Plot
Richard Thomas**

Wednesday 13th November 2019

**Tracing Your Family History
Liz White**

Friday 13th December 2019

Christmas Party

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