

Lexden History Group



LHG Members first get together since lockdown in March
- enjoying our 'socially distanced' picnic

- **Tales from the Churchyard – Lexden Manor**
 - **Interesting Facts About Food**
 - **The Turrets and the Smythies Family**
 - **Abberton Reservoir**
 - **The Tonic of Good Clothes**

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Tales from the Churchyard - Lexden Manor



A headstone (*left*) set against the east end of the Lexden church records the death on 19th April 1851 of Harriet Hobbs "for 23 years the Confidential Servant of Mrs Elizabeth Papillon" and that she died in the house of Mrs Papillon (Lexden Manor).

Another headstone now broken and lost under the impenetrable growth of laurel on the western path of the churchyard, recorded the death of James Head on 12th January 1884. The death of his wife, Elizabeth, aged 53 on 28th October 1861, is also mentioned.

Inscribed on the headstone - recorded in the 1990s as "now in two pieces lying flat" - is that "JH passed the last sixty years of active life at Lexden Manor as gardener in the service of Mr Papillon and his predecessors faithful and respected". Also on that headstone is their son, David Head, who died in December 1925 aged 78 years.

Harriett Hobbs and James Head were two of the many servants who served the Papillon family over many years at Lexden Manor (now 134 Lexden Road).

The ownership of Lexden Manor is somewhat complicated. In the early 17th century the ruined tenter house in Lexden Street was bought by Sir Thomas Lucas, replaced by a new house and the land over the road (Lexden Springs) was landscaped with ornamental water and plantations. In 1701 the manor was sold to Samuel Rawstorn of London. His son and heir, Thomas Rawstorn, inherited it in 1720 and on his death it was devised to his widow, Sophia, with the remainder to his daughter, Ann. On her death in 1816 Lexden Manor (*right*) was inherited by a distant cousin, Rev John Rawstorn Papillon, Rector of Chawton in Hampshire, from where he regularly travelled to his newly acquired estate in Lexden.



John Papillon had been given first refusal of the Rectory at Chawton (Jane Austen's village) as early as 1794, a living which would have gone to Jane Austen's brother, Henry, if it had been refused. When it became vacant in 1802 John accepted it and remained rector until 1836. His sister, Elizabeth, went with him and they often called on and regularly dined with the Austens but records suggest that the Austens did not always think highly of them and it was a Austen family joke that Jane would marry John Papillon. In a letter to her sister, Cassandra, in September 1816 Jane wrote that the servants in Chawton had been "hurried off into Essex to take possession of a large estate left them by an uncle(?)". The estate was already sizeable and in 1821 when Lexden Heath was enclosed by Act of Parliament, John Papillon acquired another 151 acres by allotment and bought common rights on a further 18 acres. By 1838 the Papillon family owned 1,216 acres out of 2,312 acres in the parish.



Rev Papillon died on 4th April 1837 and is buried in the Rawstorn family vault in Lexden Churchyard. He left Lexden Manor to his sister, Elizabeth, for her lifetime with the remainder to his great-nephew, Philip Oxenden Papillon, (*left*) who was MP for Colchester from 1859 to 1865 and twice mayor of the town. He then left it to his son, Pelham, and in 1931

Tales from the Churchyard - continued

the estate was sold and a new Lexden Manor was built in Colvin Close.

Returning to the headstones - the name of Harriett Hobbs has become a great puzzle. It is presumed that she was in Elizabeth Papillon's employment from about 1828 and could have been born in the Chawton area where Elizabeth was living from 1802 but Elizabeth could also have employed servants from the family village of Acrise in Kent. Harriet accompanied Elizabeth when she inherited Lexden Manor in 1837 and these timings would reflect the 23 years as a "Confidential Servant". It is possible that she was also born in Acrise for there is record of a birth of a Harriet Hobbs in 1800 and in the censuses of 1841 and 1851 Harriet is mentioned as being 40 and 50 respectively but not being born in Essex. However, the inscription on her gravestone in 1851 states that she was 79 years old which would give her birth as 1771 or 1772 and no births can be found in Acrise or Chawton to support this. Could the inscription have been mis-transcribed later as the condition of the stone was not good?

In 1841 Harriet is described as a female servant in the household of spinster Elizabeth Papillon, a woman of independent means, at Lexden Manor. With them is Elizabeth's nephew, Thomas Papillon, aged 39, also of independent means and two servants Rachel Benham and Maria Fiske. Ten years later Harriet's place of birth is still "Unknown" as is Elizabeth Papillon's who was actually born in Acrise. Elizabeth's occupation is given as "Lady of the Manor of Lexden" and as well as two female servants, both Harriet, and another woman, Alice Fox, are recorded as "Inmate" - a term usually applied to people in a workhouse or asylum. Perhaps the term "inmate" was an error (twice?) on the part of the enumerator or were they actually in need of being looked after for Harriet died a fortnight after the census was taken? Was Harriet a widow when she was employed by Elizabeth Papillon? But on the censuses of that time married status was not always recorded for servants.

Elizabeth was born on 12th May 1755 and died on 1st April 1854 but she is recorded erroneously on the Rawstorn family vault (*right*) in Lexden Churchyard as being "Mrs". The house next passed to her nephew, Philip O Papillon, but in 1861 although the House was recorded as being the property of PO Papillon MP in London, it was occupied by two servants, John and Maria Scutcher, farm labourer and housekeeper. Philip Papillon at this time was living in Cheriton, Kent, near the family estate at Acrise only moving to Lexden some years later, possibly 1865, when he is named on the Electoral Register and confirmed by his second child, Muriel, being born in Lexden in 1866.



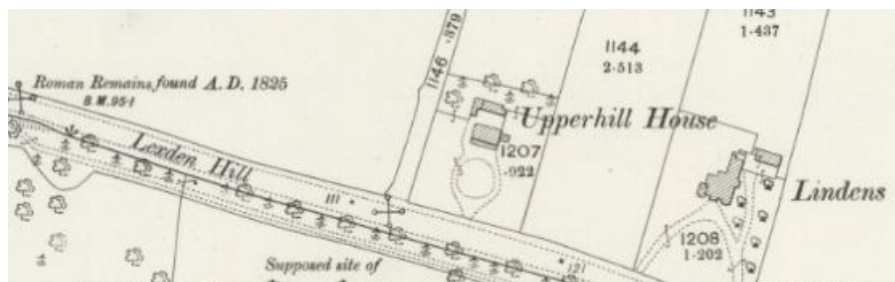
At the same time James Head was the gardener at Lexden Manor, so he would have known all these people and what stories could he tell? He was born in Wymondham, Norfolk, on 7th December 1798. He married Elizabeth Durrant from Mount Bures on 21st November 1826 and in 1841 they were living in Lexden Street near the Manor, with two sons and five daughters. Ten years later James and Elizabeth were living next to the Manor, possibly in the same cottage, with three sons and four daughters. They had a total of eleven children, only one of whom died in infancy, and in 1861

Tales from the Churchyard - continued

they were apparently living in the Manor House Gardener's Cottage, possibly the same cottage! Only two of their children were with them, David, a gardener's assistant and Eliza, a house servant.

Elizabeth Head died on 28th October 1861 and James continued to live in the Manor House cottage with his son, David, both gardeners, but by 1881 he is living alone in Lexden Street still working as a gardener at the Manor where PO Papillon is in residence with his family.

David Head, James and Elizabeth's last child, was born on 6th April 1847. He was probably trained by his father and worked as a jobbing gardener in different Lexden houses. By 1881 he was no longer with his widowed father but working as an occasional gardener and living on Lexden Hill, on the site of Upper Hill House now West Acre Court, with housekeeper Elizabeth Kemping aged 63. This was close to



the Irwins at the Lindens (see LHG Newsletter June 2020, Philip Cardy article) where he may also have been employed. In 1891 he was still in the same place, (map left), but the head of the house was Esther Taylor

aged 63 from Boxted and he remained there as her boarder. David married Esther in 1902 and by 1911 they had moved to 53 Lexden Street a reasonably spacious house with four rooms, not including kitchen and bathroom, just west of the Crown Inn, and part of the Lexden Manor estate. In 1902 both he and Esther were left £30 in the will of Thomas Grimwood, a flour miller of Weeley, although it is not clear why both of them were left a generous legacy, but his sister, Ann, was living in Lexden Street and may well have requested this.

In 1841 Esther Taylor was living in Boxted with her father, Samuel, an agricultural labourer, her mother and four siblings and remained there until 1871 when she was with her sister, Mary, and family in Boxted, working as a tailoress. Also there was Esther's illegitimate son, Hercules, aged 4. Moving on ten years she was still with Mary and as well as Hercules, she had an illegitimate daughter, Beaufrey, born in Stanway in 1877 but Beaufrey died in 1885 in Lexden. The fathers of the children are unknown but it would be interesting to know if they had some say in the naming of the children! Although her sister died, Esther remained as a sick nurse with her widowed brother-in-law, George Peachey, in Boxted Heath, until she moved to Lexden sometime in the late 1880s or early 1890s.

David Head died in 1925 and is buried with his parents in Lexden churchyard. Esther died two years later and was possibly buried in Boxted with her family.

Esther's older brother, William, married Emma Webber and their daughter, Emma, with her husband Edward Grimes, became well-known in Colchester in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as the tramps Marmalade Emma and Teddy Grimes (*right*). One wonders what the rest of the family thought about this, or if they even knew that David was married to Emma's aunt!



Interesting Facts About Food (Part 1) – Trish Terry

This year because of Lockdown and restricted social activities we have probably thought more about food even if we can't get to the shops! Have you ever wondered where some items of food get their name?

Beef Wellington

The dish of meat in pastry was named after the Duke of Wellington, possibly because the ingredients' different shades of brown resembled those of the polished leather boot favoured by the Duke (he thought they offered more protection in battle). This of course is also the origin of the Wellington boot.



Croissant



According to stories repeated about several different battles, for example, the Battle of Tours in 732 or the Siege of Vienna in 1683 the croissant was invented to commemorate the defeat of Islamic forces by their opponents. The word obviously denotes the pastry's shape as it is the French for "crescent" which is one of the symbols of Islam.

Tarte Tatin

In the 1880s Stephanie Tatin and her sister, Caroline, ran the Hotel Tatin in the French town of Lamotte-Beuvron. One day, while making an apple pie, Stephanie forgot about the fruit she had left cooking in butter and sugar. She tried to rescue the dish by placing pastry on top and putting it in the oven. She then turned the resulting tart upside down and it was such a success that it became synonymous with the hotel.

Pavlova



This dessert was named after the Russian ballerina, Anna Pavlova, the lightness of the meringue a tribute to her grace as a dancer. It is believed to have been created either during or after one of her tours to Australia and New Zealand in the 1920s but the nationality of its creator has been a source of argument between the



two nations for years. It is now popular throughout the world but in both Australia and New Zealand it is frequently served at celebratory and holiday meals particularly in the summer and at Christmas.

Peach Melba and Melba Toast

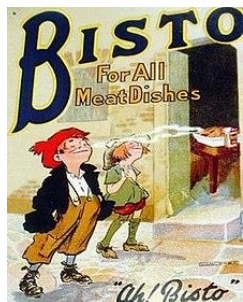


The dessert of peaches and raspberry sauce with vanilla ice cream was invented in 1892 or 1893 by French chef, Auguste Escoffier, at the Savoy Hotel to honour Australian soprano, Nellie Melba. She was performing at Covent Garden in Wagner's Lohengrin and the Duke of Orleans gave a dinner party to celebrate her triumph and Escoffier created this dessert. It should be noted that Melba was an assumed name taken from her home town of Melbourne. She was born Helen Porter Mitchell. The same chef also created a toast in her honor - a thin, dry, crunchy bread cooked under low heat until golden brown.

Interesting Facts About Food (Part 1) - continued

HP Sauce

This spicy condiment was produced in small batches by Frederick Gibson Garton, a Nottingham shopkeeper in 1895. When he heard that restaurants in the Houses of Parliament were serving it, he started using the initials "HP" to cash in on the publicity. The famous picture of the Elizabeth Tower on the label currently shows scaffolding to reflect its ongoing restoration. It is now made in the Netherlands and owned by HJ Heinz.



Bisto

The powder was invented in 1908 by Messrs Roberts and Patterson of Cheshire whose wives had asked for an easy way to make gravy. The name is short for "browns, seasons and thickens in one".

King Edward

This potato variety was introduced in 1902, the year of Edward VII's coronation. It is well known that he was a great fan of eating and as a result started the fashion of leaving the bottom button of a waist coat undone after a meal - in his case it was necessary! He also began weighing his guests when they arrived at Sandringham and again when they left to make sure they had been fed sufficiently.

Granny Smith Apple



This variety of apple was cultivated from a chance seedling in 1868 in Australia by Maria Ann Smith. She had been born in Peasmarch, Sussex, in 1799 and emigrated with her husband in 1839 to New South Wales where they bought an orchard. It is a remarkable coincidence that Paul McCartney owns a farmhouse in the village and, of course, with the other Beatles started the Apple record label whose logo was a Granny Smith!

Caesar Salad

On July 4 1924 Caesar Cardini, the owner of a restaurant in Tijuana, Mexico, had his kitchen stocks depleted by a rush of visitors from over the border in the US who had wanted to celebrate Independence Day. All the chef had left was lettuce, eggs, olive oil, croutons and Worcestershire sauce, so when he had more customers he threw all the ingredients together at the table and created the famous Caesar salad.

Avocado

The name comes from *ahuacati*, an Aztec word for "testicle" (because of the shape). The French for avocado is avocat, which is also the word for a lawyer (advocate) and this is why a poorly translated menu in Switzerland once offered "half a lawyer with prawns".



Chop Suey

This tasty dish has various contested origins but is generally considered to be an American/Chinese dish of meat or fish quickly stir fried with mixed vegetables, bean sprouts and celery. However delicious it is the name suggests something less appetising - it comes from *tsapseui* Cantonese for miscellaneous leftovers.

Biscuit

There is a long etymological history for this but it derives from the Latin *bis* (twice) and *coctue* (cooked) as the biscuits were originally baked twice, once to cook them and again to dry them out. The hard Italian *biscotti* are still made in this way.

Bovril

This meaty drink was developed by Scotsman John Lawson Johnston, after he won a contract to supply one million cans of beef to the French army in the 1870s. However, Britain was had insufficient meat and Johnson produced a beef extract - Johnston's Fluid Beef - which by 1888 was being sold by over 3,000 pubs and grocers. The name is a combination of "bovine" as in cows and "vril" a mysterious strength - mentioned in Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 1870 science fiction novel "The Coming Race".



Sirloin Steak

According to a document of dishes from 1617 James I found the meat so delicious that he knighted it "Sir Loin". I was always led to believe that it was Henry VIII who gave this cut of meat its title. However, there are historians who maintain that it comes from the French *sur-la-longe* meaning a cut of meat from "above the loin".

Pizza Margherita

The pizza's toppings of red tomato and green basil give it the same colours of the Italian flag. This was why the owner of a restaurant in Naples served it to Margherita of Savoy, the Queen of Italy, when she visited his restaurant in 1889.



Marmite



In the late 19th century a German scientist, Justus von Liebigbe, found that brewer's yeast could be made into a substance that could be eaten and Marmite was born. The Marmite Food Extract Company was set up in Burton upon Trent in Staffordshire in 1902 with the yeast product being supplied by the Bass Brewery. By 1907, another factory opened at Camberwell Green in London. enough for a second factory to open at Camberwell Green in London. The discovery of vitamins in 1912 was a advanced to boom for Marmite, as it was a rich source of Vitamin B helping to counter the deficiency disease beri-beri during WW1. The spread became very popular and it became part of th e rations issued to British troops. The large cooking pot illustrated on the front of the jar is a French *marmite* - a large covered pot. Originally Marmite was sold in earthenware pots but glass jars superceded these in the 1920s.

Nachos

In 1943 a few wives of US soldiers in Texas went on a shopping trip to Piedras Negras, just across the Mexican border. They wanted lunch and called in at Ignacio "Nacho" Garcia's restaurant and even though he had just closed for the day, he agreed to make a snack from the few leftover breakfast ingredients. He cut tortillas into triangles and fried them with cheese and jalapeno peppers. The very satisfied women asked what the dish was called and he quickly replied "Nacho's specials".

Pumpernickel loaf

Pumpern is a German word which as well as meaning "thump" can also mean "flatulent", and nickel denoted "Old Nick" or the Devil. The heavy German rye bread was so hard to digest that it would even make the devil break wind!



Interesting Facts About Food (part 1) - continued

Ciabatta

This very recent creation dating from 1982 was invented by a baker in Verona, who thought the shape of the loaf resembled his wife's slipper –or *ciabatta* in Italian.

Eggs Benedict

In 1894 a fashionable Wall Street stockbroker, Lemuel Benedict, was suffering from a hangover and staggered in the Waldorf Hotel for breakfast. Hoping to ease his pain he ordered items from the à la carte menu - poached eggs, buttered toast and bacon accompanied by Hollandaise Sauce. The Maître D was so impressed he added it to the menu but replaced the bacon with ham and the toast with English muffins.

Crêpes Suzette

The origin of this dessert is disputed but the most frequently quoted is that in 1895 Henri Charpentier, then a 14 year old assistant chef, was employed at the Café de Paris in Monte Carlo and asked to prepare a dessert for the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII. Charpentier was very nervous and the dessert caught fire, but too afraid to keep HRH waiting he tasted it and found it to be delicious. He suggested to the prince that it should be called Crêpes Princesse but the prince asked that it be named after his companion, Suzette. The following day the prince sent Charpentier a jewelled ring, a panama hat and a cane.

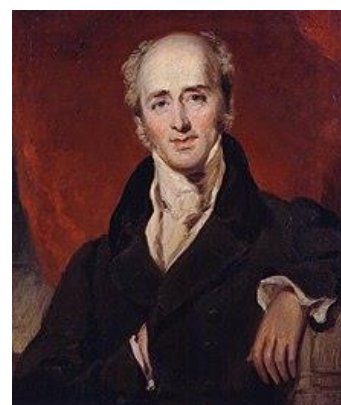
Battenberg



While the cake originates in England, its exact origins are unclear, with early recipes using the alternative names "Domino Cake, Neapolitan Roll or Church Window Cake". The cake was purportedly named in honour of the marriage of Princess Victoria, a granddaughter of Queen Victoria, to Prince Louis of Battenberg in 1884. The Princess was the grandmother of Prince Philip. The name refers to the German town of Battenberg, Hesse. The name in Britain since 1917 is known as Mountbatten.

Earl Grey Tea

Earl Grey tea is given its unique flavour by the addition of bergamot oil. It is possibly named after Charles Grey (*right*), 2nd Earl Grey, who was Prime Minister from 1830 to 1834 and received a diplomatic gift of the tea. It was known as "Grey's Tea" as early as the 1850s, but references to "Earl Grey" tea are found in 1880s in advertisements by Charlton & Co of Jermyn Street, London. In contradiction Jacksons of Piccadilly claim they originated the blend after Lord Grey gave the recipe to a partner in the company, George Charlton, in 1830 and that it has been in continuous production but never shared. The Grey family insist that the tea was specially blended for the Howick Hall water, their seat in Northumberland. The Chinese mandarin responsible for the recipe used bergamot in order to reduce the effect of lime in the area. When Lady Grey entertained in London the blend became very popular and Twinings then started to market it.



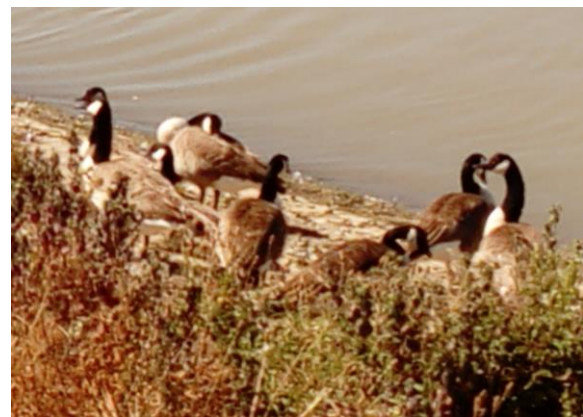
Lord Grey, a Whig, was famous for introducing the Reform Act of 1832. He also oversaw the abolition of slavery in nearly all the British colonies, enabling more than 800,000 enslaved people to be freed in the Caribbean, and Canada. Rather appropriate to mention this in light of recent events!

Now that the coronavirus lockdown has been relaxed and we can drive to do exercise, Geoff and I have been exploring Abberton Reservoir. For many years I have known about the views from Church Road, Layer de la Haye (*right*) and the now closed Visitors Centre, but Geoff has recently discovered that you can also view the reservoir from Layer Breton, where we discovered swans with their cygnets



(*left*) and many different types of duck. We did also attempt to view the reservoir from the Layer Road near the Abberton Manor Care Home, but this is unfortunately locked up and has warning signs, "Deep Cold Water Risk of Drowning" and "No Fishing - currently suspended".

I thought maybe if I looked online I may find out something interesting that I never knew about the reservoir. I quote 'The Reservoir was used by the RAF's 617 Squadron ("The Dam Busters") for practice runs for the bombing of the German dams in the Ruhr during World War II (Operation Chastise). Wing Commander Guy Gibson, the leader of the raid, referred to it as "Colchester Lake" in his auto-biography "Enemy Coast Ahead". The reservoir was similar in shape to that of the Eder Dam in Germany which was attacked after the Möhne Dam had been breached. The Layer Causeway, from which the photograph above was taken, was used as a substitute for the Eder Dam. Military police closed the causeway whilst the practice runs took place. Lancaster bombers fitted with special bouncing bombs designed by Barnes Wallis were



used. On the night of May 14th 1943 the final practice flight to Abberton was a full dress rehearsal for the attack on the dams in Germany which took place two nights later'.

After reading this I shall historically always think differently about Essex and Suffolk Water Abberton Reservoir. However the reservoir has the reputation of being the fourth largest in England and covers an area

of 4.9 square kilometres and water is pumped from the rivers Chelmer, Blackwater and Stour to fill it, rather than simply relying on limited rainfall. It is recognised as one of Europe's top wet land sites and is of international importance as a safe haven for wild ducks, swans and other water birds (*above*). It lies close to east coast migration routes and it is a welcome sight to tired birds with its surrounding pasture and tree plantations. The top seven species found are Teal,



Wigeon, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Coot and Black-headed Gull and also hundreds of Shoveler, Gadwall, Goldeneye, Pintail and Great Crested Grebe visit the site, whether resident, passing through on migration or over-wintering. Fortunately Abberton Reservoir (*above*) is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Wetland of International Importance under the terms of the Ramsar Convention. A Wild Birds Sanctuary order was placed in 1967 and its designation as a Protection of Birds Act 1954 for unauthorised entry will enforce a penalty of £25, so hopefully there will be many birds safely living and visiting at Abberton Reservoir for years to come.

The Turrets and the Smythies Family

The Turrets, (*right*) now 89 Lexden Road, was described by Pevsner as a "plastered fantasy with battlements and turrets". It was built on an extensive area of land, part of which is now Ashley Gardens. Originally called Villa Franca it is a two-storey house in plastered brick with the then popular Gothic pointed windows and 'castle' doors. Inside it had elaborate ceilings, attics and a cellar. It was built for Francis Smythies II (1779-1840), son of Francis Smythies, the 'honest' Colchester lawyer, (see LHG Newsletter June 2020) and various members of the family lived there for another 100 years.



The house was built in 1817 to the design of Robert Lugar renowned as an architect and garden designer who became well known for his castles, mansions, cottages and parks throughout England and Scotland and is generally considered responsible for the Gothic revival, favouring castellated mansions. He was born in Ardleigh in 1773, the son of a Colchester carpenter, practised in London from 1799, and exhibited at the Royal Academy for twenty years. In 1812 he was appointed County Surveyor of Essex, a post he held for four years. He described his more domestic designs as "cottages, rural dwellings, and villas, in the Grecian, Gothic, and fancy styles with plans suitable to persons of genteel life and moderate fortune."

The architectural historian Sir Howard Colvin (1919-2007) wrote that Lugar "was a skilful practitioner of the picturesque, exploiting the fashion for cottages ornés and castellated Gothic mansions in the manner of John Nash. His two Dumbartonshire castles were among the first to introduce the picturesque formula into Scotland". Archibald Simpson, the Scottish architect and one of the designers of Aberdeen, worked for Lugar in his Holborn office in 1810. Several leading industrialists employed Lugar to design grand houses such as Balloch Castle (1808), Cyfarthfa Castle (1824) and, more locally, the Rectory in Yaxham in Norfolk, now known as Yaxham House. Robert Lugar, together with J Burrell, also submitted an entry for the rebuilding of the Houses of Parliament following the disastrous fire of 1834. It was announced in June 1835 that the style of the buildings should be in the Elizabethan or Gothic style which embodied conservative values - ideal for Lugar but they were not successful, the contract going to Charles Barry with AWN Pugin. Robert Lugar died in Pembroke Square, in London on 23rd June 1855 aged 82.

Francis Smythies II (*opposite*) was born in 1779 the son of Francis Smythies (1742-1798), the controversial town clerk of Colchester who led the Tory faction. Francis,

The Turrets and the Smythies Family - continued



like his father, also took a leading part in Colchester affairs and was a lawyer whose practice was similarly viewed with suspicion of self-interest.

Over the years the Smythies family lived at Headgate House which remained in the family for several generations, but later the younger Smythies also had a house in London at No 20 Hereford Street, Park Lane. He owned many other properties, many inherited from his father, and these included Hill House in Lexden, the Manor of Overhall and Netherhall in Dedham together with farms at Boxted, St Osyth (Braziers) and Ardleigh. He married

Caroline Dale on 14th November 1809 in Greenwich and they had four children, Francis (III) born in 1811, Charles Norfolk in 1812, Caroline Elizabeth 1814 and Jane Harriet 1820. In 1817 he engaged Robert Lugar to build The Turrets.

Francis Smythies' legal business was continued by his son, Francis Smythies II, and later his son Francis III, taking into partnership Henry Goody. By 1835 the company was called Smythies Goody & Goody as Henry Goody was joined by his son, Clifford. Two other Goodys, Neville and Sidney, also joined the firm in the late 1800s.

Continuing his father's doubtful reputation, Francis Smythies II failed to pay Rev Nicholas Corsellis, a landed gentleman of Wivenhoe, the money he owed over a partnership collecting stamp duties. In 1807, because Smythies had been misusing Borough Charters, the Borough Chamberlain, Benjamin Strutt, ordered "a substantial Oak Chest for the purpose of depositing the Common Seal, Charters and other matters" with four keys held by different individuals, the Borough Claviers. This was also partly as a result of his father's questionable financial matters, one of which was not resolved until as late as 1822.

Francis Smythies II was elected Mayor of Colchester in 1811 and in the late afternoon of 11th May 1812 the British Prime Minister, Spencer Perceval (*right*), was shot in the lobby of the House of Commons. His assassin, John Bellingham, was taken to the gallows a week later. Smythies asked to hold a meeting "of the inhabitants to pass an address to the Prince Regent regarding the murder of Mr Perceval".



It read: *"We, the Undersigned, beg leave to submit to you the Propriety of convening a Meeting of the Corporate Ronly (?) and of the Inhabitants of the said Borough for the purpose of expressing by an ADDRESS (to) the Prince Regent their Abhorrence and Detestation at the late atrocious Murder committed upon the Person of the Right Honorable Spencer Perceval, First Commissioner of His Majesty's Treasury and Chancellor of Exchequer within the Walls of the Honorable the Commons House of Parliament in the Discharge of his Public Duties."*

"In compliance with the above Requisition, so perfectly in accordance with my own feelings, and subscribed by the County Magistrates resident in the Town, the Borough Magistrates, and other respectable Persons I hereby appoint a General Meeting of the Inhabitants of this Town and Neighbourhood, at the Moothall, in this Borough, on Wednesday, the 20th May inst. at Eleven o'clock in the forenoon."

Signed F. Smythies, - North Hill, Mayor.

The Turrets and the Smythies Family - continued

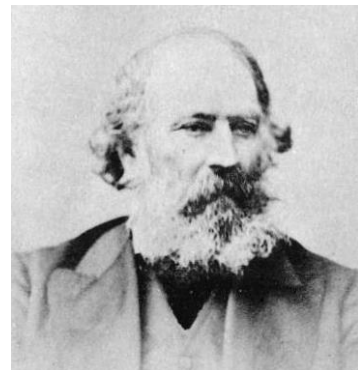
For over twenty years until 1835, Colchester was renowned for its many lawsuits regarding internal political struggles, many of which Francis Smythies II was involved in for there was little improvement on his father's record. In 1812/3 he was associated with the questionable installation of his mayoral successor, John Bridge. Of the three freemen's nominations for Mayor, John Bridge only received about an eighth of the votes but Town Clerk Alderman Smythies rejected the votes of brewers who had voted for William Sparling, who had come second, and disqualified him on the grounds of not taking the Church of England communion! After many altercations Bridge was elected Mayor but ousted after yet another court case and William Smith who had secured the most original votes was rightly proclaimed mayor.

In October 1816 Colchester Corporation applied for a new charter as further litigation was attempting to remove council members from office. The new charter, granted in 1818, was similar to the one in 1763 and seventeen of the former aldermen, who had detached themselves from earlier disputes, were reappointed but over half of them refused to accept their appointments. These were eventually filled. However, John Bridge and Francis Smythies were not reappointed and although Smythies was among the nominations he was constantly opposed in his bid to serve as "common councilman, assistant, and alderman". He was not made an alderman but was reappointed as town clerk in 1818.

There were still ongoing problems with Colchester Council and in 1834 after six days of inquiry by the Royal Commission on Municipal Corporations, mostly on financial matters, the mayor withdrew when the corporation had been called 'flagitious'. Much of the criticism questioned the integrity of the town clerk, Francis Smythies. There were, however, problems on both sides but as fewer than 500 freemen were represented rather than the general population of 16,000, the Colchester people petitioned parliament in favour of the new proposed Reform Bill, which the local council, mostly Tories and churchman, were strongly against. Under the 1835 Act the new borough council was formed but only one earlier member was elected and Francis Smythies was not reappointed as town clerk. He was offered a knighthood by King George IV but for some reason declined the honour.

Francis Smythies II died aged 60 on 13th May 1840 at his house in London. He was buried in the family vault at St Mary-at-the Walls in Colchester.

His interests in politics and the law were continued by his son, Francis (III) (*right*), born on 7th April 1811 and who was Mayor of Colchester three times in 1852/3, 1860/61, 1868/9. He was also a lawyer but did not earn the reputation of manipulation of his father and grandfather. On 16th December 1841 Francis III married Harriet Jane Gardiner in Remenham, Berkshire. They had a son, Frank Borthwick, and three daughters and in 1851 they were living in St Mary's Terrace, Lexden Road, opposite the site of the new Grammar School. During his first term as Mayor Francis Smythies III attended the opening of these new Grammar School buildings on 4th August 1853. The headmaster, Rev Dr William Wright, received the key from Charles Gray Round and a procession, with a band, walked from the Town Hall to the new school for a special inaugural service. The procession included the Mayor and



The Turrets and the Smythies Family - continued

the two Members of Parliament for Colchester, Lord John Manners and W W Hawkins. Dr William Wright and his family then moved into the schoolmaster's house in the new building. In 1861 Francis and his family were living at Hill House in Lexden with a footman, cook, housemaid and lady's maid. Meanwhile, Christian Bishop, a widowed landed proprietor and fundholder was living at the Turrets with her three daughters, four older grandchildren and five servants. In June 1873 Hill House was sold to James Hurnard who moved in with his wife and young son, Samuel.

Charles, the eldest son of Francis Smythies II, was born in 1812. He took holy orders, becoming curate at the family church, St Mary-at-the-Walls. Charles married Isabella Travers in Yarmouth on 29th June 1842 but after his death five years later Isabella lived at 2 Shrub End with their three sons. The first, Henry, was born in 1843 but died aged only 11; Charles Alan, born in 1844, took Holy Orders as had many of the family and later became the Bishop of Zanzibar, spending much of his energy trying to end the continuing slave trade. He died of malaria in 1884 on board a ship taking him to safety.



Their third son, Palmer Kingsmill (*left*) was born in 1847 and became a naval cadet on *Britannia* in Portsmouth in 1861. He commanded the *Albacore* in 1884 and took part in the Egyptian campaign, assisting in the defence of Suakin against the Mahdists. He was promoted Commander in 1885 and Captain in 1896. He served in the Zulu war in 1879, was Naval Transport Officer in Natal during operations against the Boers in 1881, and served in the Sudan Campaign 1884/5. During his naval career he was awarded the Zulu Medal with clasp, in 1866 the Naval Medal, the South Africa clasp whilst serving on the *Boudicea* in 1879, the Nile clasp in 1886 whilst serving on the *Albacore* and during the Sudan campaign he was mentioned in dispatches, receiving the medal and star.

His first wife, Margaret Holland died after the birth of their son, Lancelot Alan, in 1882. He later married Elizabeth Fosbrooke in 1890 and they lived in Cheriton, Kent, where Palmer also served at a Justice of the Peace. In 1891 they were staying at the King's Arms in Berwick upon Tweed. Their first son died in infancy in 1892 and later they returned to Cheriton with their second son, Francis Palmer, born in 1900. Both sons served in the Navy during World War 1 and Lancelot was selected by the Navy to become a Russian interpreter.

Captain Palmer Kingsmill Smythies, RN, JP, is recorded as living at the Turrets between 1913 until his death on 20th January 1927. His grave is in Lexden Churchyard (Plot G41) although many of the family, even if they died away from Colchester, were buried in the family vault at St Mary-at-the-Walls Church.

The Turrets was converted into flats during the 20th Century and was listed Grade II in 1971. St Mary's School, wanting to expand the school to include senior girls, bought it in 1973. By that time the Turrets needed much restoration as all the lead had been removed from the roof but fortunately no interior fittings had been damaged or lost and the building, with its ornate plasterwork ceilings and castle-style doors, still provides on-going accommodation for the growing school.

Silas K Hocking - The Tonic of Good Clothes



Our chairman, **Stan Kordys**, has brought to our attention a Cornish novelist and Methodist preacher, Silas Kitto Hocking, who was born in March 1850 at St Stephen-in-Brannel in Cornwall. His father, a part owner of a tin mine and his wife, Elizabeth, brought up their children to enjoy literature - indeed Silas's two brothers and sister also became novelists. Silas wrote many books including the best seller "Her Benny" and books for children, but was also edited different magazines, eg, Family Circle. He gave up the Methodist ministry in 1896 to concentrate on his writing but he was also interested in politics, working for the Liberal party, and contested two general elections.

Stan thought that over this period of Covid-19 many of our entrenched habits have changed due to the restrictions imposed. He cites not being allowed to have a hair cut as one such irritant. He read that

over the years many people no longer bother to have a change of attire for different social and recreational functions, but are content to wear more or less the same garments all day and every day regardless of function. He has yet to see someone wearing pyjamas shopping in our local Sainsbury's (although I have heard reports of this recently!)

The following extract is taken from Hocking's "The Lost Lode" written in 1923 for inclusion in "The Science of Pattern Construction for Garment Makers" written by BW Poole and published in 1927. The Poole family business is still in Saville Row.

The Tonic of Good Clothes

A fortnight later he donned the first of his tailor made suits, and when he surveyed himself in the tall mirror of his wardrobe he received something of a shock. Not only did he look different, but he felt different. For the first time he was conscious of fitting into the picture - his appearance harmonized with his surroundings. It might be vanity or it might be "swank" or it might be something else equally contemptible, but there was no doubt about the fact - he did feel different.

For the first time in his life, he considered seriously the philosophy of clothes. Did the outward sign contribute to the inward grace? Would a man, if he were dirty and ragged, lose his self-respect? Did good and well-fitting clothes assist a man in his upward endeavour? He gave up the problem at length as being beyond him, and went out to interview the new gardener he had engaged. Then he went on to the kitchen garden to have a look at Jonas and Billy. Was it mere fancy, he wondered, or did Jonas and Billy treat him with more deference than they had hitherto done?

That he was conscious of his new clothes was an undoubted fact. He liked the "feel of them". They sat on him comfortably and easily. He had less disposition to slouch, and to hunch his shoulders. "Good lord, I shall be putting on 'side' next," he said to himself contemptuously. "I'm behaving like a child with a new frock. I'd better go on wearing my reach-me-downs."

On the following morning he donned his old clothes again and then surveyed himself in the mirror. "Well, I'm jiggered," he said to himself at length. "I not only look mean in these rags, but I feel mean - that is" but he did not complete the sentence. For a while he hesitated, and then hurriedly stripped off the old clothes and threw them into a corner with as much haste as possible, and got into another of his new suits, and hastened down to breakfast.

Perhaps we can all learn from this - I know I can!

Lexden History Group

**Due to the continuation of
Covid-19 regulations
we are currently still not permitted to
hold indoor Group Meetings
with a speaker**

Your Committee

Chairman

Stan Kordys 01206 502282
s.kordys@ntlworld.com

Secretary

Liz White 01206 522713
alangwhite187444@hotmail.com

Treasurer

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

Membership Secretary

jebowis50@gmail.com

Refreshments

Sonia Lewis 01206 579950
sonialewis@waitrose.com

Magazine Joint Editors

Liz White / Jackie Bowis
alangwhite187444@hotmail.com

Archivist

Bernard Polley 01206 572460
heath86end@aol.com

General Members

Dick Barton 01206 573999 dickbartonlex@gmail.com,
Ian Bowis 01206 561528



More Memories from our
“Socially-Distanced” Picnic!
Tuesday 11th August 2020
Lexden Springs

