

# Lexden History Group



- Meeting your Committee
- When the Railway came to Colchester
  - Abberton Reservoir
- Tales from the Churchyard - the Tillett Family
  - More from Phillip Cardy

**Newsletter No 59 – December 2020**

**Website [www.lexdenhistory.org.uk](http://www.lexdenhistory.org.uk)**



# Meeting Your Committee

**President - Andrew Philips** I am a 'newcomer' to Colchester but after 50 years have got to know Lexden quite well. It was a real privilege to be asked to be President and what a success the Society has been. This has been due to a loyal, longstanding membership and an outstanding Committee of tried and capable individuals, who love their history too. And here we all are living in historic times, which our predecessors would scarcely have believed. Take care, stay safe, and keep in touch. Phones (of all sorts) are a great invention.



**Chairman - Stan Kordys** What a year we are having! Six months ago, if you entered a shop or bank wearing a mask you would be looked at very suspiciously followed by a phone call to the local police station. Today, you are reprimanded and verbally abused if you don't wear one! It is not all bad mask news. A woman's letter in a national newspaper read as follows "wearing a mask out shopping, an attractive man passed by and said, 'nice eyes'. It made my day as I have just turned 80!" We can but hope that 2021 will see a return to some sort of normality, along with a resumption of our much missed Lexden History Group meetings. We moved to Colchester in 1971 from Tyneside via Didcot, to work until retirement at the Ministry of Defence Stores and Clothing Research and Development Establishment (SCRDE) in Flagstaff Road. I was involved with the research, design and development of a wide range of specialised items of clothing and textiles worn by men and women of the Navy, Army and the RAF. I am interested in all history, particularly military.



**Vice Chairman - Dick Barton.** I have lived in Colchester most of my life. After "A" levels I did two years national service as an instructor in the Army. Having completed my service time, I trained at Brunel University, joining the staff at St Helena school as a History teacher (where I taught Bob Russell). After three years I moved to Primary Schools eventually becoming a Head Teacher, firstly at Messing and then Stanway. I have always been interested in History and Colchester and I am a trained Town Guide. I enjoy my involvement with the History Group.



**Secretary and Newsletter Editor - Liz White.** I have always enjoyed researching and writing even when I was at Junior School. This continued through Grammar School and even when we lived in the USA. More recently Lexden History Group has enabled me to concentrate on local history. The research I did for three of our exhibitions, the two volumes of "Lexden in Wartime" and the most recent book about the Avenue of Remembrance was fascinating. Researching for and editing our quarterly newsletters confirms how closely connected the local inhabitants were as their names constantly reappear. It is all a great interest for me - and I know I will never tire of it!



**Treasurer - Melvin White.** When I was asked to become the History Group treasurer, and as I enjoy both cooking and baking, I could not resist the opportunity to Cook the Books. I arrived in Colchester in 1988 whilst still serving in HM Forces, one of my many jobs being a Service Fund Accountant. Since retiring from the services in 1996 I have been involved in many community-based organisations. In my day I was an active sportsman (Rugby, Football, Cricket, Squash and sub-aqua), supporting many great teams from my home of Leicester! I also look after our Lexden History Group website and digital media.



**Membership and Speaker Secretary**

**Jackie Bowis.** I joined the group in 2007 and took on the role of Membership secretary. Although over the years membership numbers have decreased, we still have over 80 active members registered with on average 45 members attending each meeting. We always welcome new members and hope that when we return to some normality we can build upon this number.



I took on the Speaker Secretary role when I retired from work. I try to arrange speakers with a wide range of subjects to cover local history and areas of interest. It is always difficult, unless somebody has already heard their presentation, to know whether a speaker is suitable or not but generally they are well received. I always welcome members' suggestions of speakers for future meetings. All the speakers who I had booked for this year have agreed to rearrange their talk for when the club resumes its monthly meetings.



**Committee Member - Ian Bowis**



I joined the group in 2007 and became a committee member in 2016. My responsibility is to ensure that the speaker can be clearly heard from any position within the hall. As we all know we sometimes have problems with speakers talking to their presentation slides rather than to the audience.

**Committee Member and Refreshments - Sonia Lewis**

I am a Colcestrian, born in The Beverley Road Nursing Home, a farming type from Elmstead Market. I feel the books compiled by Liz White and our group meetings are an important part of our living history. I enjoy my community involvement and look forward to putting on the urn and sharing a cup coffee with you all.



**Lockdown.**

*Wash your hands night and day, wash all the germs away.*

*Make the suds do their stuff, from finger tips up to cuff.*

*Make the most of your time, sit back enjoy the rhyme.*

*When you go out to shop and play, make others stay away.*

*Remember hands, face, track and trace, always keeping within your social space.*

*Enjoy every day, think and wonder when all will me meet again.*

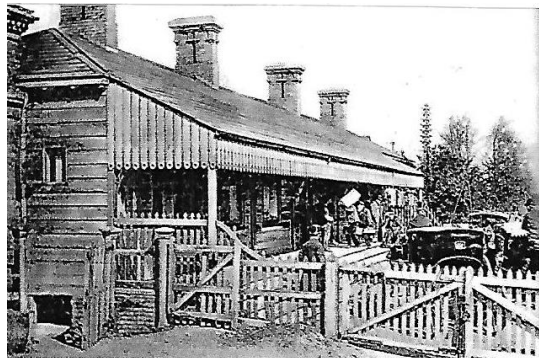
Sonia

# WHEN THE RAILWAY CAME TO COLCHESTER - Bernard Polley

In September 1825 the first railroad in Britain ran from Stockton to Darlington with wagons of coal collected from the collieries and hauled by a George Stephenson steam locomotive. This was to be the start of the growth of railroads throughout the country.

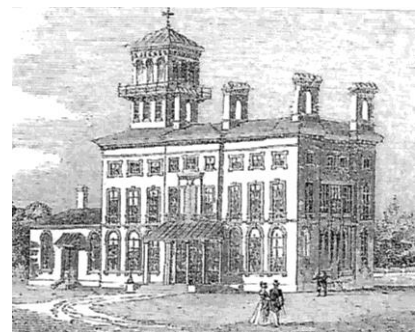
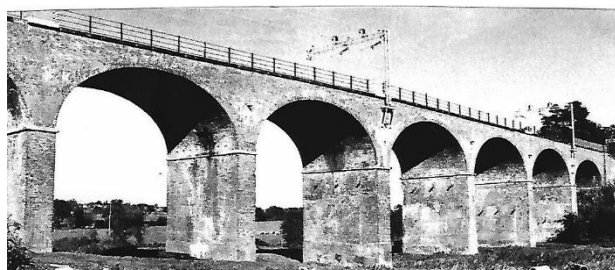
Down in East Anglia the Eastern Counties Railway (ECR) was incorporated in 1836 intending to run a railway between London and Norwich, with intermediate stations at Colchester and Ipswich. Many wealthy investors were ready to raise the majority of required capital and when the ECR Bill was passed by Parliament, the Company was in a position to go ahead with the project, but little did they realise the many problems ahead.

In 1837 construction began but after a year only nine miles of the fifty-one to Colchester was under way. Much trouble was experienced with unsurveyed marshlands and the need to build many bridges over roads and rivers. The company creditors became alarmed and, since many were from Ipswich and looked forward to the income the railway would bring when it reached them, they kept up the pressure. Due to the well-over budget cost of the railway the project was truncated at Colchester, much to the annoyance of Ipswich. ECR



could only afford to build a small wooden station (*left*) at the terminus but it did contain booking office, waiting room, telegraph facilities and a tea room. It took over six years for the railway to creep towards Colchester.

One outstanding feature on the railroad was the Seven Arch Viaduct (*right*) over the River Colne at Lexden. It was made of red brick, each arch with a 50ft span and a height of 55 ft. It was covered in a pitch-like substance to prevent damp penetrating the brick work and down each arch was a funnel taking away the surface water to the river. When the first steam locomotive passed over the top of the viaduct, one ECR director stood below making sure that it would be safe to take the weight!



Next to Colchester station was built the Victoria Station Hotel (*left*), lavishly designed and well equipped, but it could not compete with the Cups (*right*), George and Red Lion hotels in the town centre for they sent carriages to meet trains to bring passengers up North Hill and into the town.

The Victoria only last until 1850 before it was taken over by the Metropolitan Idiot Asylum and then in 1859 it re-opened under a local board as the Eastern Counties Institution. After several trial runs the first train with passengers was due to arrive from London on February 27<sup>th</sup> 1843. William Wire (a distant ancestor of Bernard Polley) watchmaker and amateur archaeologist recorded in his diary that day: "The town was in great excitement and



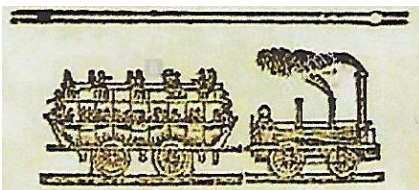
# WHEN THE RAILWAY CAME TO COLCHESTER - continued

the bells ringing in consequence of a report that the Railway Directors and Shareholders are coming by rail in four coaches drawn by an engine. Went to the station and after there waiting for two hours finding they did not make their appearance, came home after which it was reported that a bridge at Mountnessing was not considered safe to cross, Daresay there were two thousand people collected to witness their arrival, and much disappointment their non-appearance"

Undeterred by this unfortunate occurrence, the Mountnessing bridge was repaired and two days later on March 1<sup>st</sup> the steam locomotive drawing four carriages of VIPs arrived at Colchester station to be met by a military band who escorted the ECR directors and their guests along North Station Road to the Cups hotel in High Street. Mr Henry Bosanquet, chairman of the Company and his colleagues were received by the Major of Colchester, Dr Roger Nunn, (*right*) who invited them to sit down to enjoy a cold salad lunch.



The official opening of Colchester Station (later North Station) took place on Wednesday March 29<sup>th</sup> 1843. There were to be four trains in both directions each weekday and three on Sunday. The coaches (*left*) were classed 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, all according to the amount of comfort for passengers, strong padded seats down to wooden benches. The ECR table of fares for passengers to and from London covered the three classes, i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> - 12/6 (60p), 2<sup>nd</sup> - 9/6 (45p) and 3<sup>rd</sup> - 7/- (35p)



Here is a **Railroad Car**, filled with people going twenty or thirty miles in an hour. Some of these cars will hold fifty people. You

In 1854 the station was enlarged with a new brick building at a cost of £1,012, which also included extensive sidings for goods traffic. The Ipswich problem was solved in 1846 when the Eastern Union Railway, who had the rail link between the Suffolk town and Norwich, agreed to extend the line southwards to Colchester thus complete the whole railway line London to Norwich. In 1862 both the ECR and the Eastern Union Railway merged with a number of other companies to form the Great Eastern Railway.

Over the years there have been one or two accidents on the railway at Colchester. Probably most remembered was on July 12<sup>th</sup> 1913 when the *Norfolk Coast Express* was involved in a crash (*right*) caused by a signalling error when the express train moving at great speed through the station collided with the tender of a light engine which was on the same line. Three railway employees on the express train were killed - driver William Barnard, fireman Ernest Keeble and guard George Burdett and several passengers were injured. (See *LHG Newsletter June 2020 - Phillip Cardy*)



It is now over 175 years since that first passenger train arrived at Colchester North Station. Over the years many changes have taken place in running the line, until today it is Great Anglia who now operate the railway through East Anglia.

**MORE ABOUT ABBERTON RESERVOIR - Jane Osborne**

Abberton Reservoir is 5 miles south-west of Colchester near the village of Layer-de-Haye and was originally formed by damming a shallow river valley. It was built in 1939 and just a few years later in May 1943 it was used by the RAF's 617 Squadron ("The Dam Busters") for practice runs for the bombing of German dams in the Ruhr during World War II (Operation Chastise).

Plans were later made to increase its capacity by raising the bank height and in 2015 Essex and Suffolk Water did a You Tube update 'Abberton Reservoir Completed Construction' which gives fantastic aerial views over the reservoir. I particularly enjoyed this, perhaps because I was born in Aylesbury and this was an Aylesbury duck flying experience!

The enlarged Reservoir now holds 15 billion litres more, 40 km new hedgerows, 54 hectares of woodland with 59,000 trees, and an extra 12 km of public access. The enhancement project removed concrete edges with a lot of re-profiling work leaving shallow muddy margins and large areas of rough grassland and a selection of Dog Rose, Dog Wood, Guelder Rose, Spindle and Hawthorn planted.



My husband, Geoff, and I returned recently to the reservoir as I was determined to see the Abberton side which had been locked from the Layer Road but was now open. We went to Abberton Church and found wonderful views and as I was now getting slightly obsessed with the reservoir, we went on to visit the churches at Great Wigborough, Peldon (*above left*) and Layer-de-la-Haye (*above right*) but only the latter had a good view of the reservoir.

In the spring there is the unusual sight of cormorants nesting in the trees. It started in 1981 and this is one of the few places in Britain where they do this. Then in the late summer it is the Swan and Duck Spectacle, when large numbers of swans and ducks proceed to moult. They are replacing worn out feathers in preparation for migration, covering the reservoir in feathers!

With a 19.5 km loop trail, Abberton has been considered the single best reservoir in the country for birdwatching, walking past open water, reedbeds, scrapes and lagoons, wood, rough grassland, scrub, pasture and arable farmland. There are other walks with wheelchair access offering stunning panoramic views across the reservoir and surrounding villages.

I had not realized how important Abberton Reservoir is and in lockdown we have discovered and learnt about things of interest right on our doorstep.

## **Tales from the Churchyard - the Tillett Family**

On the left, half way up the path to the main door of Lexden church, is an impressive monument (*right*) to the Tillett Family. The engraving on the top records that James Tillett of Braiswick (then part of Lexden Parish) died on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1856 aged 65 years. His wife, Hannah, and their seven children are also there remembered.



James Tillett was a well respected man, a farmer and local conservative councillor, who was involved in many other committees supporting the local area. He was born on 7<sup>th</sup> June 1789, the son of William and Susan (née Watts) who attended St Mary-at-the-Walls Church where many family baptisms had taken place. James married Hannah Walford in Elmstead on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1813 and lived for many years in Braiswick House where in 1841 he was recorded as a Yeoman and in December of that year it was reported that "raspberries in good condition (were) gathered from the garden". In the 1851 census he was recorded as a freehold farmer of 80 acres, employing five men.

In October 1835 James was elected to represent Lexden as a Poor Law Guardian when Colchester's twelve parishes and the four outlying parishes (including Lexden) combined to form the town's new Poor Law Union and work started on designs by John Brown to build St Mary's Workhouse. The 21 guardians were unhappy that their efforts were secondary to the poor law commissioners as they (the guardians) felt that payments should be made to families rather than forcing them into the workhouse just because an able-bodied breadwinner was temporarily and involuntarily unemployed. This general situation is interesting considering a court case brought by James Tillett in April 1836 when two young labourers, Isaac Claydon and William Lock, were indicted for stealing four tame rabbits from his land. Evidence was somewhat circumstantial, eg, shoe prints "in the place where the rabbits were kept" matching those of one of the men. Both had also been seen that night at the Cross Keys pub in Culver Street (now demolished) and their clothes, but not their faces, were identified by a female servant of James who saw them on the road to Braiswick House. Damning evidence appeared to be that in the pocket of one man's jacket was found "some fleck" the same colour as one of the rabbits stolen. However, both men were acquitted by the jury but, perhaps, these men were only trying to keep their families from the workhouse!

James was a member of the Chelmsford and Essex Agricultural Society and also for many years Superintendent of the Lexden Allotments, where he was known as the father of the Allotment Association. There were about 80 allotments in Lexden Heath and the lessees enjoyed an annual supper in Lexden village school room.

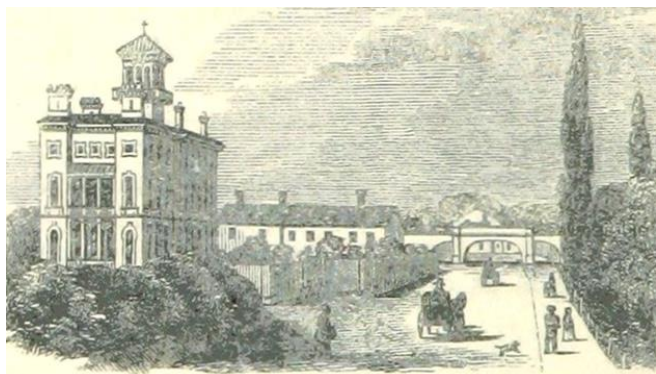


Another large gathering took place at the Rectory in Spring Lane on Christmas Day 1846 when James, who had been churchwarden of Lexden for many years, was presented with a mahogany box containing a "handsome silver teapot, sugar basin and cream ewer with an appropriate tea tray furnished by Mr Banister of Colchester" (*left - Joseph Banister, silversmith and jeweller, 18 High Street*). The Rev John Papillon thanked him for "his zealous and valuable services in parochial matters both towards rich and poor" and hoped he would

**Tales from the Churchyard - the Tillett Family - continued**

accept the gift "which might be shown to his family as a token of his public worth".

James Tillett also served as a committee member for the Essex Hall Asylum for Idiots, as it was originally called, when it was founded in 1850 after Sir Morton Peto realised that the Italianate Victoria hotel he had built in 1843 to profit from the new railway was not successful.



James had been involved in many altercations with Eastern Counties Railway (ECR) from the early days when they were trying to secure land to enable the railway to reach Colchester. (left: Essex Hall and railway bridge) In July 1840 ECR stated its case in court for acquiring about 3 acres of land in the parish of St Michael of Mile End next to the property of James Tillett.

Mr John Stuck Barnes on James' behalf presented a paper protesting the legality of this claim as the land "and a barn stood thereon" were not on the Company's map. Mr J Copland of Chelmsford contended that this could not be an objection referring them to the map passed by the House of Commons.

By this time it was becoming obvious that with the many bridges, embankments, cuttings, etc, being constructed, more funding was needed to finish the railway line to Colchester and, although more government capital was made available, a bad winter in 1841 delayed further work. That year, however, a Yorkshireman and well-known railway contractor, Mark Faviell Junior (1813-1876), had very quickly employed 300 men with 21 horses to work on an embankment superintended by his brother, William, who in 1847 married a local Colchester girl, Sarah Carr.

Eventually on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1843 a special inspection train left Shoreditch (renamed Bishopsgate in 1846) for Colchester but was stopped at Brentwood as a timber viaduct at Mountnessing had subsided. (See Bernard Polley's article on page 4) Then just a few weeks later, on 7<sup>th</sup> March, goods trains to Colchester were started, quickly followed by passenger services on 29<sup>th</sup> March. (right - passenger train at Bishopsgate 1851)



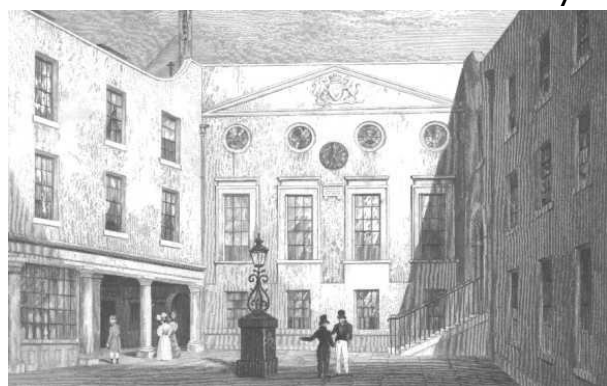
James Tillett brought two further cases against ECR before the court. On 1<sup>st</sup> August 1843 he said that a piece of land at the junction of the Nayland and West Bergholt roads at Mile End near the railway terminus resulted in "the loss of direct communication between the portions of his land separated by the railway". ECR argued that he had already received payment for this but on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1844 James charged ECR with trespass for having unlawfully taken possession of this land. ECR counterclaimed that they had paid £11 into the court and had to eject Mr Tillett by force, adding that they would now retain possession of the land until the action had been determined. This was supposed to take place at the Ipswich Assizes but was deferred to Bury as the judge was ill. Unfortunately, nothing has been found about the outcome!

**Tales from the Churchyard - the Tillett Family - continued**



It has already been established that James and his family lived at Braiswick House but in 1846 Mark Faviell was recorded in the Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons (Vol 38) as a Railway Subscriber to the value of £15,625 with his "place of abode" given as Braiswick House. Faviell may have 'used' the Braiswick address to appear to be a local supporter for the railway but this begs the question - had James and Faviell become friends or was James even aware that his property was being used in this way?

The family life of the Tilletts was tragic. Hannah and James had seven children, five sons and two daughters, but only one daughter enjoyed a long life, the other children dying comparatively young. Their first son, James Walford Tillett, was born in 1815 and when he was 14 he applied for an apprenticeship with Mr Drury, the Apothecary at Essex County Hospital, and in 1829 was interviewed by a board of doctors. One qualification was that apprentices would have a classical education and it was also expected that a premium would be paid. This premium, established in 1823, was originally £150 but was increased in 1827 to £200 - an enormous sum in those days - of which £50 went to Mr Drury. All apprentices lived in the hospital but James had



"delicate health" and was allowed to live at home only attending when he was well enough. On 13<sup>th</sup> October 1836, at the age of 21, he received his certificate as a member of the Royal College of Surgeons at Apothecaries' Hall, Blackfriars. (left: *Courtyard of Apothecaries' Hall 1831*). James Walford died on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1840 aged 25 and the family grave proudly records his membership of the RCS.

James Walford was not their first child to die. Henry William died aged only 14 in March 1832 and Thomas died aged 15 after a long illness in April 1837. Charles was only 16 (although Parish records say 18 years) when he died in April 1840 just three days before James. Hannah, their second daughter, died from pulmonary consumption in December 1845 aged 25. It is possible that all the family suffered from tuberculosis, for this litany of sadness continues with the death of the youngest son, Arthur William, in September 1852 aged 22. He was recorded in 1850 as the Surveyor of the Highways for parish of Lexden, an appointment made by the Parish meeting which consisted of local farmers, and occasionally gentry, who also appointed the churchwardens and overseers.

James Tillett was again involved in a court case, reported in the Essex Standard of 19<sup>th</sup> November 1852, which also gives a fascinating insight into some funeral practices of the time! William Norman claimed that his wife had not been paid 18s for nursing Arthur when he was dying some weeks earlier but Mr Goody, representing James, said that the non-payment was because she was so intoxicated on the day of the funeral that someone else had to be called in. Mrs Norman told the court that she was frequently taken with sickness when she worked for eight days at Mr Tillett's and that on the morning of the funeral spent one and a half hours cleaning the room in which the deceased lay, but then felt sick and faint. She said she only had one glass of wine and was not intoxicated. She had mourning (a gown given by the family) for the funeral but left the others at Lexden as she was upset by

**Tales from the Churchyard - the Tillett Family - continued**

being told she was drunk. His Honour, the judge, said "it was very absurd" for nurses to have mourning but Mr Goody countered that it was customary as nurses performed duties at the graveside. He also believed they could claim the sheets "upon which the party had died" and in some cases everything upon the bed. His Honour remarked that "such practices did not prevail in the higher walks of life and that persons should be properly remunerated and not paid in those absurdities. The next thing would be that they would claim the bedstead!" He persisted that people should follow the excellent example set at the funeral in 1849 of the Queen Dowager (Adelaide, widow of William IV - *left*) and do away with much of the form observed on these occasions.



His Honour considered, rather ambiguously, that no proper defence was offered and that Mrs Norman had been sufficiently paid by the mourning especially as another woman was called, but that if she had done her work she should be paid and not by a possibly unwanted gown. This should not affect her right to claim. Further incriminating evidence ensued when Mr (William?) Beason of Lexden said he had been in a room at Braiswick with two other tradesmen before the funeral and each had a glass of sherry but the woman took the remainder. She had then asked Mr Tillett for another bottle which he brought and they each took a glass but the nurse again had the remainder after which she was very drunk. On the way to the church - probably along Baker's Lane from Braiswick - they paid Mr Chaplin's man one shilling to lock her up in a place adjoining the oil mill (the Chaplin family owned the mill). His Honour thought it was only "due to the respectable part of the population that they should be made acquainted with the character of the woman" and in giving judgment for Tillett added that he hoped her "disgraceful conduct in future would be known".

Following the family tragedies, James continued with public service. After the death of Arthur in 1852 he replaced his son as Surveyor of Lexden and in 1854 there were questions raised about the resurfacing of Lexden Road (is nothing new?) and James insisted that it only needed scraping and that the Commissioners should have done it (Improvement Commissioners were appointed from rate payers and were often local politicians). In October of that year he was active in securing donations for the Royal Patriotic Fund Corporation, whose president was Prince Albert. This charitable organisation had been set up by Royal Warrant to collect and distribute public donations to dependants of soldiers killed in the Crimean war (1853-56).

James' health had deteriorated over the years and in early 1856 he gave up the post of Guardian of the Parish which he had "long and worthily filled" and resigned as Vice Chairman of the Board of Union in Colchester. It was recorded that the Board "deeply sympathised with him in his present ill state of health and trust better health is in store for him".

James Tillett died on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1856 and it appears that Braiswick House was sold soon after to Charles Josselyn, a land agent, farmer and North Hill solicitor who was also connected with the Norwich brewers, Steward, Patteson and Co. It is unclear what happened to Hannah as the only record found was of a widowed Hannah of the right age and place of birth who was living as a boarder with an agricultural labourer and his family in nearby West Bergholt. There were no sons to look after her and

## **Tales from the Churchyard - the Tillett Family - continued**

her daughter, Sarah, cannot be found, but perhaps this man had worked for years on

the farm at Braiswick and she knew him well. She died in November 1861 aged 69. It seems that no money remained for there is no probate record for Hannah and James had died before probate records was started in 1858.

Sarah Tillett, the second child of Hannah and James was born in 1816 and until her father died in 1856 she lived with the family at Braiswick House. She was unmarried and it is not known where she lived for some years but on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1884 aged 68 she married widower Joseph Dennis Salmon, a retired brewer and wine merchant, at St Mary-at-the-Walls church. Joseph's first wife, Charlotte, had died in 1876 and was the daughter of local developer Henry Hammond Hayward (LHG Newsletter 2016). Sarah and Joseph lived at Sarah's house, 5 St Mary's Terrace, Lexden Road (now No 29 Lexden Road). Joseph died in April 1890 and Sarah died a year later aged 75 and was buried in the family grave at Lexden.

## **MORE FROM PHILLIP CARDY 1906-1996**

### **Accounts of the people he knew in Lexden Road**

*Phillip Cardy was born on 21<sup>st</sup> 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 italics/brackets: I have again found that some of Phillip Cardy's memories are slightly inaccurate so I have added my corrections.) Continuing from LHG Lewsletter June 2020.*



We come to Deoban (*left - now 171 Lexden Road*). This was built by Mr Mcarthur-Moir who had been an Indian Forester. He was a Scot and loved to make you think of Scottish carefulness, but he was a grand old gentleman. The highlight of his year was the Oyster Feast; he never missed one. He had two daughters. The older one was married to a Doctor before I remember much about them. The second married Doctor MacFee when I was at school and the old gentleman

gave a tea to every child in the village. There were about 120 of us then and we all had a tea - we had never seen such a spread in our lives. At that time we used to be dressed in blue jerseys and celluloid collars. When we had our tea these two great big Scotsmen stood there beside boxes and boxes of bananas and they stuffed them up our jerseys and into the collars round our necks. We were nearly blue in the face. I forgot to mention that they marched up and down between the tables playing the pipes. We kids thought it was grand. There was a rumour went round the village that a cab had to be sent from the town some time during the night to convey the two pipers back to barracks. (*see Tales from the Churchyard, Edward Mcarthur Moir - LHG Newsletter September 2015*)

Moving on down the hill we come to Mr (*Samuel Fennell*) Hurnard (*Hill House*). Mrs (*Rose*) Hurnard was a very nice lady. She was a member of the Mazawattee tea

**MORE FROM PHILLIP CARDY 1906-1996 - continued**



family. She had five children - four girls and a boy (*actually three daughters, Hannah, Ruth, Naomi (left) and son Bracey*). She died in the early twenties (1925) and left each of those children one hundred and twenty-five thousand - but Mr Hurnard got nothing. Mr Hurnard was totally different. He was a short man, always wore a hard hat, walked very upright and never smiled. He was not well liked in the village, I think mainly because of his unsmiling, unbending manner. He always had a fox terrier dog called Traddles. After a time he married again (*in 1936 to Marjorie Eady, a younger lady - right*), but that is another story.



He kept two Gardeners and an Odd Job Man. The Head Gardener, prior to the 1914 war, was Mr Bilner whose daughter still lives in Heath Road. She was born in that house and has never lived anywhere else. (*Frederick Bilner, Royal West Kent Regiment, born 1878, died of wounds in France on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1917, remembered on Lexden War Memorial. He lived at 2 Cherry Cottages in Cross Road later 41 Heath Road (right) with his wife, Charlotte, who died in 1952, but unmarried daughters Kathleen and Freda remained there. Every Sunday they donned their hats and together walked up to the Methodist Church until Kathleen died in 1988 and Freda in 1997*).



In the next house going to Spring Lane (*No 3 Lexden Street, now Jacqueline Court*) lived a family called Mansfield, but I cannot talk of them as I was too young to know anything about them except their name. (*Hon Lt Col Henry W Mansfield, born 1861 in Poona, India, served with 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars, wife, Katherine Rachel, and daughter, Katherine Rose, and lived at No 3 from about 1912.*) Long before my time it was a boys' boarding and day school. I do not know how many boys went to the school but there were thirty-six boarders and for some years my Aunt Polly held the well paid post of Bed-Maker - 7 days a week, 5 shillings per week. The Headmaster and owner was a Mr (*Frederick*) Richardson. Richardson Walk is named after him and the old boys of the school erected the fountain by the church in his memory. When he took the boarders for a walk he always rode a white pony. So now you know the reason for the fountain. (*see LHG Newsletter June 2016 - Frederick Richardson and Lexden School*)

Next to follow the Mansfields was Mr Jefferson (*from about 1916*). He was a very tall man with very long legs and when I tell you he was a Cambridge one mile and three mile Blue you know that he could go. Unfortunately he liked a pint and as the house he occupied belonged to Hurnard if you wanted to hire it you had to sign a document that you would not smoke or drink. Jeff used to walk up to the Post Office, then turn and look to see if all was clear. That being so, about three of his long lopes and he was in the Sun. On August Monday the Flower Show was held on the Mount and in this particular year Jeff took charge of the cutting down of the ham. The parcel which was supposed to be the ham was hung on a line suspended between two posts. The lady was then blindfolded and handed the stick. She was then turned round three times and told to hit out. A very formidable lady from

**MORE FROM PHILLIP CARDY 1906-1996 - continued**

Stanway stepped up. She was blindfolded, turned round three times and told to hit out. She hit out once, missed, went to hit again and caught Jeff right in the eye. They kept him in hospital for the night and, as my Uncle Bill said, "That settled he." Jeff dodged the ham cutting after that. (*Frederick Leslie Jefferson, born 1854 in Bombay, was awarded an Athletics 3 mile blue in 1875 and a BA from Trinity Hall in 1876. He was a member of the London Stock Exchange but was made bankrupt in 1902. "A gentleman with no profession" he moved from the Cross House in Layer-*



*de-la-Haye to 3 Lexden Road in about 1916. He died in February 1936 with his address given as the Old School House, Lexden. He and his wife, Belinda, are buried in Lexden Churchyard.)*

Next we come to Mrs and Miss O'Grady (*left - 5 Lexden Street, now 187 Lexden Road, and No 3*). They were mother and daughter; Colonel O'Grady died before they came here. They were a funny old couple but very good to the village, helping in all good causes. They kept three maids; my sister Gertrude (*b1887*) was Cook, Ruth Chamberlain was Between Maid and there was also a Parlour Maid, but I never knew her name. Miss O'Grady had queer ways of testing the maids' honesty and to do this she would leave a half-sovereign under the edge of the carpet. Ruth found the first one and put it on the mantelpiece. A few days later she found another one which she put on the mantelpiece. About a week later, when the old ladies had gone away for a few days she found another. So this had got to stop. She picked up the half-sovereign, put it in her pocket, put on her coat and went up the street to see Bill Hutley the Blacksmith. He said, "What can I do for you, my gall?" Ruth produced the half-sovereign and said, "I want you to drill a hole through this." Bill looked at it, then at her and said, "Do you really mean this?" Ruth said, "I do," and told him why. So Bill swept the bench clean, put a piece of paper under the drill and drilled the hole through the coin. Ruth took it back, went down to the garden shed got a hammer and a nail and nailed it down to the floor. Nothing was said about it and at some time it was removed and it never happened again.

The Parlour Maid threatened to leave because there were so many mice in the kitchens, so the old lady pulled me up in the street and said, "I understand you have a very nice cat. I wonder if you could bring it down here in the evening and come and take it home in the morning. I will give you tuppence a night, payable when the cat has killed all the mice." I took the job on because, you see, with my sister being Cook she usually had a nice lump of treacle pudding or something which she wanted attended to and I was as a rule able to oblige. So the cat and I both got fat and satisfied. That was a nice little job, although not quite as good cash-wise as I hoped. I thought it would take about five weeks, but Bunch the cat finished the job in just under four. I tried to explain to her that she should slow up but it was no good.

One thing the old ladies could do was to teach children how to act, and while Mr Motum was Headmaster they always put on a show once a year - Friday night and Saturday night. The school was packed with parents each night. I was never in them as I was too young and when Mr Motum retired Mr Cook would not allow it

**MORE FROM PHILLIP CARDY 1906-1996 - continued**

but I distinctly remember my sister Grace (*b1899*) being in it. A boy by the name of

Bennet and Grace were on the stage together. I forget what it was all about, but Grace had a wig which ended in a plaited pigtail. Bennet was singing a song and after all these years I still remember it:

Mary Anne she's after me, full of love she seems to be.

My mother says it's plain to see she wants me for her young man.

Father says, "If that be true, John my boy, be thankful do,

There's one bigger fool in the world than you and that's Mary-Anne".

*(Kathleen O'Grady was born in Edinburgh in 1863 to Emily (nee Papillon) and Carew, an officer in the Royal Engineers, who died a few months after Kathleen's birth. Emily died in 1917 but Kathleen continued to live in the house. Kathleen was secretary of the Colchester Archaeological Society and also travelled widely. When the house was "restored" in 1923 she moved to East Hill. She died in 1958.)*

The next house to the O'Gradys was a thatched house (*now replaced by Chichester Court*) where the Head Gardener at Lexden Park lived. I forget what his name was but he left to take the job as Head Gardener at the Castle Park (*possibly Alfred W Oliver*). Then the next house was lived in by the Phillips. Mrs Phillips and her two daughters were very nice people, but Mr Phillips was not. He did nothing in the way of work and his one hobby was to watch people and get them into trouble - even little children he would report to the police. My mother was Caretaker of the school and church from 1906 to 1922. She got seven shillings and six pence a week for the school and five shillings for the church. I remember being in the churchyard with Mr Middleton when he was digging Mrs Lambert's grave. Up came Mr Phillips and Mr Middleton was one of his prize targets. He stood and watched him for a minute or two, then said, "How deep do you put them down, Middleton?" "That all depend," said Mr Middleton. "All depend!" "That's nonsense, my man. I thought there was a regulation depth." Mr Middleton placed his foot on the spade and said, "I mostly puts them down five foot. But they as I don't like I puts they down an extra couple of foot so they are late for the Resurrection."



The Phillips family lived in that house (*right*) from when I was big enough to remember anything. They never had a holiday, never went for a day out anywhere. The old man always walked around in a black alpaca overcoat and a hard hat (*bowler*). The two girls never dressed in anything except a navy blue costume and white blouse. I suppose they helped in the house. In the afternoon they took the dog for a walk up the Loop over Hilly Fields to the Lodge Farm and home by Spring Lane. Mrs Phillips was in a wheelchair but if she went out at all it was the girls that took her, not him. The younger of the two girls had a badly twisted face. My Aunt Polly told me as was the result of a bad attack of scarlet fever. I never knew the house to be empty for more than a day from the time until they took the last Miss Phillips to hospital about ten days before she died.

*(Walter Phillips was born in Lexden in 1859. He married Emily McKeon in 1887 in Hobart, Tasmania. Their first daughter Eileen was born in 1890 in Fairfax, Australia and Elsie in 1894 in Lexden. They lived with Walter's parents, Alfred and Emma, at*

## **MORE FROM PHILLIP CARDY 1906-1996 - continued**

*9 Lexden Street, 191 Lexden Road. Alfred had farmed at Lexden Lodge for many*

years but retired with Emma, to No 9. Walter and Emily had returned to Lexden by 1894 and when his father died in 1902 they stayed there and Walter worked as an accountant's clerk. Walter died in 1936 at the Essex County Nursing Home, Emily died in 1948, Eileen in 1959 and Elsie in Hill House in May 1983). All the Phillips family are buried in Lexden Churchyard and there is/was a kneeler in the Lady Chapel in memory of Elsie.)

(Chelsea Pensioner Sgt Maj Edgar Middleton of 1 Spring Lane was Parish Clerk at St Leonard's and married Ann Nevard in 1880. Phillip Cardy's memory of him could be a family story as Edgar was buried in Lexden churchyard in 1913 when Phillip was only 7 years old. The only Mrs Lamberts - Mary Jane - was buried in Lexden in August 1916 and Edgar was childless, ie, no son to dig graves.)



We now come to the church (left in 1898) and school. I remember John Currell (Frederick John b1874) saying to Dad, "I fancy there's going to be an upset about here before long. Parson just read the schoolmaster's bans of marriage and that don't seem to please they women at all. They got faces as red as a overripe beetroot." Dad said, "I expect it will soon blow over, you know what women are - they like an argument." "You're telling me," said Currell, "and my old dear is one of the worst for that. She will argue nine men and a horse to death in about twenty minutes, give her half a chance." Well, the storm raged on for a week. There were calls for Mr Motum's resignation, also for his dismissal, and threats to keep the children away from school. We children thought that was a grand idea - Mother didn't. Then came the Sunday morning service and it was noticed that the school governors were in the front seat. So an announcement was expected.

The Rev Evans did not disappoint them. He walked up the aisle behind the choir and, when he got to the top of the chancel steps, he stopped and, instead of going into his stall, he turned and faced the congregation, held up his hand and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I have a few words to say before we commence the service. I am given to understand that there has been a lot of discussion going on in the village this week concerning a wedding which is shortly to be solemnized in this church. The future bridegroom is Mr Motum, the very highly respected Headmaster of the school and also organist of this church. The future bride, while several years younger, is a person who knows her own mind and what she wants of life. As she is not quite twenty-one years of age unfortunately she is still regarded as a minor. Permission of her parents had to be asked for and was readily given in writing, which I have here in my hand. Every requirement regarding this wedding has been properly fulfilled and the wedding will take place as arranged. So my advice to you all, and particularly the ladies, is that after this service you go home to look after your families and your own business and leave Mr Motum and the future Mrs Motum to attend to theirs. And now, ladies and gentlemen, with your permission we will commence the service." And as Mr Middleton said, "That put a stopper on they, sharpish." (Fredrick James Motum b1856 married Alice Mary Isom b1871 in August 1892 - another Cardy family story as Phillip was born in 1906!)

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

**From our Chairman - Stan Kordys**

Welcome to our Lexden History Group December Newsletter. The Committee decided to include a "Meeting your Committee" page and later a Members' page. All members are encouraged to make comments/views and send them along with articles for inclusion in future Newsletters to the Editor – Liz White.

In a hundred years time, how will future generations remember Covid-19 of 2020? Might it hardly be remembered at all, or just seen as a small blip in difficult times? We shall just have to wait and read all about it in Andrew Phillips history column in the Essex County Standard in 2120!

We look forward to sometime in the New Year, when we can restart our much missed Lexden History Group Meetings.

Best wishes to all members for a safe and healthy Christmas and New Year.

## Your Committee

**Chairman**

Stan Kordys 01206 502282  
[s.kordys@ntlworld.com](mailto:s.kordys@ntlworld.com)

**Vice Chairman**

Dick Barton 01206 573999  
[dickbartonlex@gmail.com](mailto:dickbartonlex@gmail.com)

**Treasurer**

Melvin White 01206 575351  
[melvin.s.white@btinternet.com](mailto:melvin.s.white@btinternet.com)

**Secretary**

Liz White 01206 522713  
[alangwhite187444@hotmail.com](mailto:alangwhite187444@hotmail.com)

**Membership Secretary**

Jackie Bowis 01206 579950  
[jebowis50@gmail.com](mailto:jebowis50@gmail.com)

**Magazine Joint Editors**

Liz White / Jackie Bowis  
[alangwhite187444@hotmail.com](mailto:alangwhite187444@hotmail.com)

**Refreshments**

Sonia Lewis 01206 572460  
[sonialewis@waitrose.com](mailto:sonialewis@waitrose.com)

**Archivist**

Bernard Polley 01206 572460  
[heath86end@aol.com](mailto:heath86end@aol.com)

**General Member**

Ian Bowis 01206 561528

**A VERY MERRY  
CHRISTMAS  
and Happy New Year!**

