

Issue No 9 June 2008



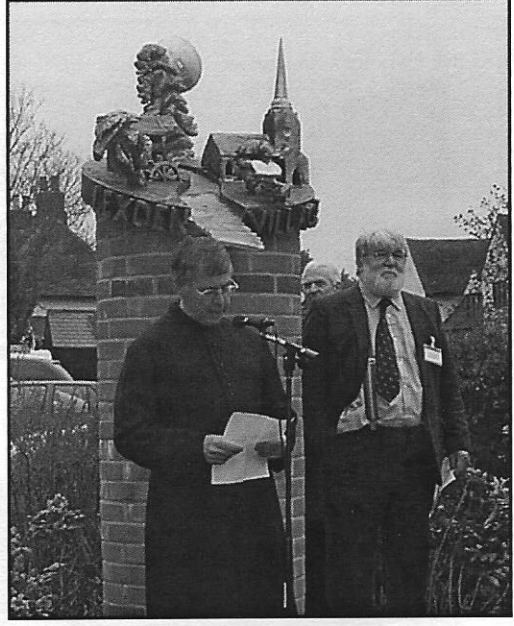
Village Sign unveiling

Despite a very cold morning and the threat of rain over 100 Group members and residents gathered near the Crown pub for the unveiling of the long-awaited village sign. Its denouement was delayed because planning and health and safety problems.

- ***Village Sign Unveiled***
- ***AGM Report***
- ***Bricks are Boring***
- ***Lincoln Kennedy Saga***
- ***The Lexden Beauty***
- ***Kiosk conundrum***

The Town Crier, Robert Needham, was Master of ceremonies and introduced Andrew Phillips, History Group President, who thanked everyone concerned with the project and especially Tim Holding, designer and creator of the sign.

The sign depicts some important buildings in the village including the Church, Lexden Mill and the trees for which 'leafy Lexden' is famous.



The Town Crier then invited Colchester Mayor, Ray Gamble, assisted by Tim Holding, to unveil the sign. This was followed by the traditional 'three cheers' led by the Town Crier

In his speech the Mayor spoke of the sense of heightened identity that the sign would bring to the village.

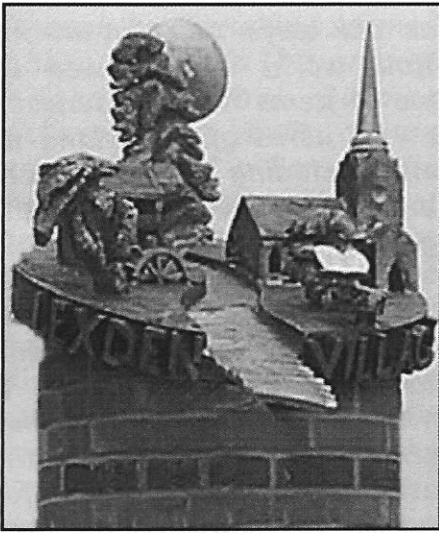
Also present was the long standing MP for Colchester, Bob Russell, who is always extremely active in promoting the identity of this constituency at every opportunity.

County Cllr. John Jowers explained the scheme that has been able to make the £2,000 donation and which has

benefited hundreds of other local projects throughout Essex.

The sign was dedicated by the Reverend Canon Stephen Carter, Rector of St Leonard's Church Lexden. In his prayers he included everyone in the village of Lexden, the young and old, active and infirm, newcomers and those born in the village. We all share in this sense of togetherness. He urged us all to look after one another even by a simple word to each other as we pass.

Tim Holding, the last speaker, reinforced the Rectors words and reminded the gathering of the real sense of community that is present at every History Group meeting. He asked us to



and Mayoress David and Marie Holt were unable to be present due to ill health but they were the winners of the special prize draw for 'brick donors' the prize for which was a dinner for two at the Crown. Reports back from our two gourmet members was that it was excellent and could be the start of many more members booking meals at this very hospitable inn.

pause for a moment to remember Geoff Pettit our recent Chairman who died just three months ago and who, Tim is sure, is looking down and smiling on today's events.

After the formalities of a press photo shoot for VIPs, the Group members and guests retired to the specially erected marquee in the gardens of the Crown pub for a simply splendid buffet arranged by the landlord Jim Errington.

It must come as something of a surprise to many Lexden folk to find out that we still have a 'brewery' in the village. Jim had brewed a special draught beer for the occasion and called it Lexden Ale. Former Mayor



Finally thanks to the local police who put up road signs and directed traffic so that we could enjoy the event in comfort and safety.



A Master Craftsman

"Bricks are boring". I bet that's what many of you thought before the History Group's March meeting. How wrong could you be. An absolutely fascinating talk given by Peter Minter, probably the country's top expert on brick making, quickly dispelled any fears that the evening would drag.

As Managing Director of the Bulmer Brick and Tile Company Peter explained the age-old method of choosing and preparing the various 40 million

year old clays dug out at his Suffolk works and showed us some of items he has found on the 160 acres of farmland he owns including sharks teeth from when Suffolk was on the edge of the Thames estuary.

His company turns out approximately 400,000 hand made bricks a year, employs 15 workmen of all ages and has recently won every class in the prestigious Brick Awards for services to conservation and preservation of historic buildings. Their most recent success has been the restoration of London's St Pancras Station, the new Eurostar terminal. Over 40,000 specially carved bricks were handmade for that project and one man made them all. Other contracts include ongoing restorations of Hampton Court and its 350 chimneys, Lambeth Palace and Layer Marney Towers.

The company also reproduce terracotta tiles and have over 100 different hand-carved original wooden moulds from all periods of architectural history despite many earlier ones being destroyed during a fire several years ago. All the bricks at Bulmer are hand-made as opposed to the machine made bricks mass produced in the Midlands for canals and mills.

Although brick making seemed to have started in this area at Coggeshall the Bulmer Brickworks are built on an earlier site and a Roman kiln was uncovered beneath one of the two present kilns. Incidentally the kilns have names; they are called Frank and Tom after two of the company's oldest brick makers, now both in their nineties (the men not the kilns).

A well-presented and interesting talk is always evidenced by the large number of questions afterwards and these ranged from "Why do so many roads in the area refer to kilns"? Peter explained that there were also more lime kilns for fertiliser than brick kilns. "Why is the indentation in a brick called a frog"? Probably from the indentation in a horse's hoof also called a frog was Peter's reply.

In summary, again an excellent talk from an acknowledged expert in his subject and one which continued the very high standard of speakers this year.

Joe Firmin - raconteur extraordinaire.

Joe Firmin's recollections of his boyhood in Lexden held the large audience of 80 members spellbound, and he could have carried on talking for another hour.

Born in Fordham but soon moved to Lexden when his father became the manager at the 52 acre Buntings Nurseries between Lexden Road and the Avenue of Remembrance.

The nurseries started in 1820 and were soon importing rare lilies from Japan as well as trialling all sorts of flower and vegetable seeds as well as developing a species of chrysanthemum called 'Lexden Beauty'

Joe joined the Essex Regiment in 1944 and took part in the Rhine crossing. He is currently President of the Colchester Natural History Society and did much to help stop the Lexden Park development some years ago.

He was a newspaper reporter with the Essex County Standard and their countryside nature writer for about thirty years.

Chairman's Column

Many thanks to all those who contributed to the very successful unveiling of the new Lexden Village sign on 19th April, and a special thank you to Tim Holding, our Vice-Chairman, who masterminded the whole event, as well as being responsible for the final design and casting of the sign.

At its first meeting the new Committee re-appointed Tim Holding as Vice-Chairman, Jackie Bowis as Membership Secretary, Jane Thornhill as Editor of the Newsletter, and Bob Thornhill (Treasurer) as Webmaster for our website. www.lexdenhistory.org.uk

After my talk on the Siege of Colchester last November, I was reminded by the Rev. Stephen Carter that St. Leonard's Church was presented with a silver chalice by Charles Lucas, Baron Shenfield and Lord of Lexden Manor. He was a kinsman of the Royalist Officer, Sir Charles Lucas, who was executed after the Siege. The silver chalice is so valuable that St. Leonard's has to keep it in store at its bank.

Dick Barton

PROGRAMME

July 9th

Colchester Siege Walks, two identical walks led by Blue Badge Guide Dick Barton. Step back in time 360 years to experience Colchester under siege.

The town would actually have been under siege in July 1648.

Walks start at 2.30pm and 6.30pm.

No meeting in August

September 10th

"Arsenic and Olde Essex"

An illustrated talk by Fred Feather, retired Curator of the Essex Police Museum contrasting the way crimes are investigated before and after the formation of the County Constabulary.

E OF EVENTS

October 8th

"The Archaeology of Essex"

*Dr. Mark Curteis
Heritage Learning and
Access Officer Essex Record
Office.*

November 12th

*Special showing of the
locally produced film
'Witchfinder' with an
introduction by a member of
the production team.*

December 10th

*Christmas Social Event
Food, Fun and Frolics*

January 14th 2009

*The Inaugural Geoff Pettit
Memorial Lecture
More details later*

"Fish, Chips and Steam



*Another fish and chip
supper evening aboard the
Pullman cars on the Colne
Valley Railway has been
organised for Wednesday
July 16th*

*We need 30 members in the
party then we can have the
train to ourselves. Cost will
be the same as last year,
around £22 per person.*

*First come first served -
early bookings please to Bob
Thornhill.*



Number Please?

It is thought that the first telephone kiosk in Colchester was installed at the old Lexden Horse Showground on February 6th 1925.

Does anyone have any information about this please?

We know that the first telephone exchange in Colchester was opened by the National Telephone Company and was situated where the café is now on the corner of St John's Street and St John's Avenue.

AGM Follow up.

At the AGM a suggestion was made for Lexden History Group to explore the possibility of amalgamating with the Lexden Conservation Group. It was agreed that this idea would be discussed by the new Committee. It was and the Committee have unanimously agreed not to proceed with the suggestion.

Briefly the aims and objects of the two groups are not compatible as one looks at the history of the Lexden area and the other is concerned to protect the future identity of the village. The Lexden Conservation Group have been a real force in stopping the development of Lexden Park some years ago and more recently the proposal to locate a travellers site near the caravan park, and later a 72 bedroom hotel on the same site. They will also be involved we are sure, in the current planning application for flats on Parsons Hill.

I am sure that the History Group will support the Conservation Group either corporately or individually in any future projects.

2008 AGM

The Annual General Meeting held on April 9th turned out to be an 'extraordinary' meeting and certainly far from the usual perception of AGM's.

Over 80 members turned up, and there was a real willingness to 'get involved' with members volunteering for vacant committee positions.

Following the death of Chairman Geoff Pettit the responsibility was handed to Vice Chair Tim Holding to continue temporarily until this meeting. Our new Chairman is now Dick Barton who was elected unopposed.

David Cawdell has asked to step down from the Committee because of an impending house move to Saffron Walden and the husband and wife team of Peter and Susan McArthy were nominated and elected to join the Committee in his stead.

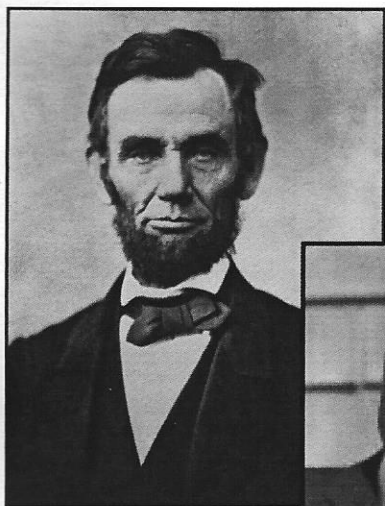
Jane Thornhill has offered to take over David's job as Magazine Editor and Publicity Officer; the role of Speaker Finder can be deferred as speakers have already been booked until the start of 2009 when, in January, we shall

have the first of the Geoff Pettit Memorial Lectures.

Once the 'business of the evening' (very expertly managed by President Andrew Phillips and Acting Chairman Tim Holding) had been completed and members had partaken of Sonia's excellent refreshments we were treated to a superb presentation of the 2007/8 Group project "Lexden in Wartime".

Secretary Liz White had persuaded Peter Tweed to record some of his childhood memories of the war. Peter's effortless and amusing recall of experiences prompted other members to share their memories with Liz. This was followed by an excellent film by Bernard Polley on Wartime Lexden which merits a copy being placed in the archives if not in the village sign time capsule.

In summary, the formal part of the evening was helped along by an interested audience who put forward many useful suggestions but the excellent meeting was made all the more extraordinary because of the great camaraderie that exists among the enthusiastic members of this very successful History Group



Who said history was boring?

Abraham Lincoln was elected to Congress in 1846.

John F. Kennedy was elected to Congress in 1946.

Abraham Lincoln was elected President in 1860.

John F. Kennedy was elected President in 1960.

Both Presidents were shot on a Friday.

Both Presidents were shot in the head

Lincoln 's secretary was named Kennedy.

Kennedy's Secretary was named Lincoln .

Both were assassinated by Southerners.



Both were succeeded by Southerners named Johnson.

Andrew Johnson, who succeeded Lincoln , was born in 1808.

Lyndon Johnson, who succeeded Kennedy, was born in 1908.

John Wilkes Booth, who assassinated Lincoln , was born in 1839.

Lee Harvey Oswald, who assassinated Kennedy, was born in 1939.

Now hang on to your seat.

Lincoln was shot at the theatre named 'Ford.'

Kennedy was shot in a car called ' Lincoln ' made by 'Ford.'

Lincoln was shot in a theatre and his assassin ran and hid in a warehouse.

Kennedy was shot from a warehouse and his assassin ran and hid in a theatre.

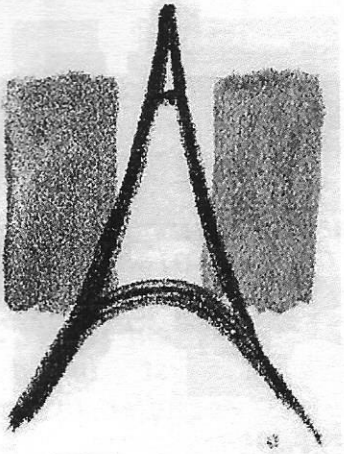
Booth and Oswald were both assassinated before their trials.

*A week before Lincoln was shot, he was in Monroe , Maryland
A week before Kennedy was shot, he was with Marilyn Monroe.*

Spooooky.

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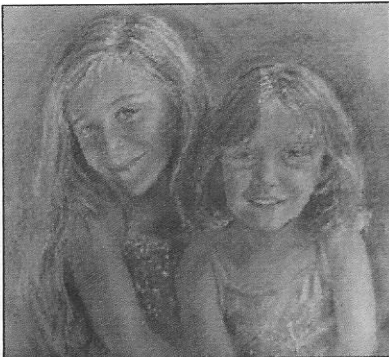
Jane Thornhill NDD ATD

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from photographs / sittings from £100.

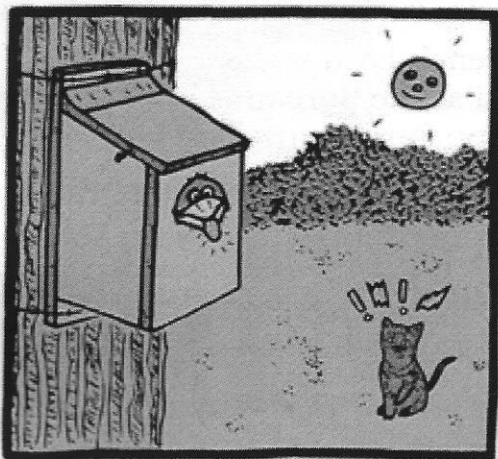
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Bird boxes for sale



Peter Tweed, who gave us such an interesting mini-talk at the April AGM about his wartime experiences, has demonstrated another of his skills—as a woodworker.

He brought along to the May meeting several different types

of bird boxes he has made and which are offered for sale. They cost £10 each, £1 of which goes to History Group funds.

The boxes got the thumbs up from local naturalist and nature writer Joe Firmin.

To order give Peter Tweed a ring on 01206 250140

According to a recent report, giving birds just bread crumbs does not offer them much nutrition; adding left over cheese, breakfast cereal, cake, pasta or lentils makes a feast fit for a—well, a bird.

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