



AGM Notes

Our first AGM on July 12th. attracted a large turnout and several encouraging ideas were put forward - but first the formal bit. The LHG Constitution was discussed and approved and Committee Officers formally elected.

Auditor needed

One post remains unfilled, that of Auditor. Not an onerous job but simply a volunteer, who need not even be a member, is required to examine the books once a year and certify them correct, which they certainly will be with Robert Thornhill as Treasurer. If anyone can help in this respect please contact Robert on Col. 523767.

Issue No 2 August 2006

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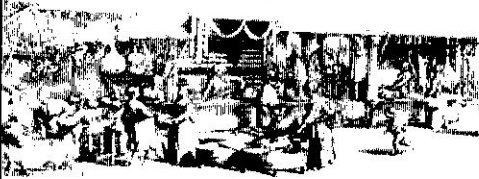
- AGM Report.
- Colchester Oyster Fayre report.
- Mill walkers meet up.
- Did Lexden ever have a brass band?
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- Christmas Gift Ideas

After the formal part of the evening Chairman Geoff showed two very interesting films he made on the visit of HM Queen Mother and also 'A year in the life of Colchester in 1987'.

Special thanks must go to Maureen and Pat who so cheerfully provided some excellent refreshments.

Thanks also to all who attended.

The Oyster fayre 2006



Merchant

The Colchester Oyster Fayre 2006 held in Castle Park on June 10/11th was the first publicity outing for the History Group. It was also an opportunity to recruit more members and the volunteers on the stand seized that opportunity with both hands. Leaflets and membership forms were given out and a lot of interest was shown in the superb photographs enlarged and printed specially for the exhibition by Colchester Colour Imaging.

Volunteers offering to 'man' the stand were Bob and Jane Thornhill, Maureen Yeats, Mary Jones, Tim and Carol Holding, Bernard Polley, David Cawdell and Geoff Pettit.

The very warm weather brought out the crowds despite the World Cup and the British Motor Racing Grand Prix being on the 'telly'.

The Fayre attracted a huge number of mediaeval craftsmen and historical re-enactors, who

staged sword fights and skill at arms, sweltering under a blazing hot sun in full armour.

There seemed to be fewer local historical organisations there this year such as the Essex Record Office, Colchester Museums Service and the Central Library. This worked to our advantage as we were one of just a few local groups taking part.

Those who missed visiting the Group's stand at this event will have a chance to see the display at our own Lexden History Day, September 23rd.

THANKS

The very professional looking display was provided free of charge by Colchester Colour Imaging of Heckworth Close Severalls Industrial Estate (01206 754630) to whom we are extremely grateful. They loaned the display panels and processed dozens of archive photographs in an attractive sepia finish.



Among the visitors to the stand were the Mayor and Mayoress accompanied by Andrew Phillips, our President, and the Town Crier Robert Needham.



*Two Bob (In old money)
Bob Thornhill and Bob Russell MP chatting
about the model of Lexden Mill.*

NATIONAL LOCAL HISTORY MONTH

We will be arranging an exhibition of pictures, maps, exhibits, bygones etc. in the Church Hall on Saturday September 23rd. 10.30 — 4pm.

Any suggestions or offers of help, loan of artefacts etc. will be very welcome. The September 13th meeting will be a 'working meeting' given over to receiving, recording and sorting out contributions from members.

This will require a great deal of planning and preparation and all members are asked to help make this Showcase event a success.

If you are doing research on your own house or family please bring along any documents, pictures, artefacts, relics, maps (or copies). Please also caption them and include some information about your research that could be displayed. Tables can be provided.

All items will be safely cared for and returned after the event.

Please ring
Geoff Pettit Col. 579819 or
David Cawdell Col. 540403
if you can help us or require
further details.

Elected Committee

Andrew Phillips President

Geoff Pettit Chairman

Jane Thornhill Secretary

Sonia Lewis Social Sec.

Bob Thornhill Treasurer &
Membership Secretary

David Cawdell Publicity

Brian Barton

Tim Holding

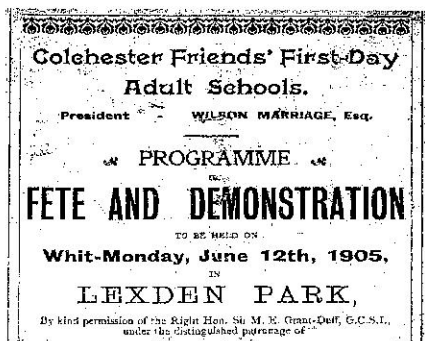
Bernard Polley Group
Archivist
(ex officio)



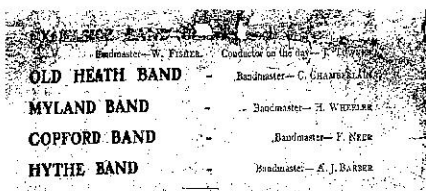
TIMELY TOPIC

According to Mr S. F. Hurnard, who lived in Hill House, Lexden Street in 1896, the average yearly rainfall in Lexden was 23 inches.

Did Lexden ever have a Brass band?



This programme for a huge Fete and Demonstration organised by the Colchester Friends' First Day School was found in the Church archives. Members came from all over Colchester and the surrounding areas, with banners waving, lead by their own local brass band. The bands taking part are listed below in the same programme.



The first Band, The Excelsior band did not march but sat under the trees entertaining the guests while the others marched from Old Heath,

Hythe and even from Myland and Copford.

In the period between 1880 and 1914 nearly every village and hamlet had a brass band. There were an estimated 40,000 bands in the United Kingdom. Now there are only about 3,000 so somewhere there must be an awful lot of old instruments and uniforms tucked away in cupboards and attics.

Which brings us back to the main question, did Lexden have its own band? Many bands were attached to the Methodist church - Copford and Myland were two, Old Heath may have been connected with the Congregational 'Tin Tabernacle' still up in Old Heath. Boxted Methodist Band was started in 1860 and still exists today, the oldest Methodist band in the Country.

This one small document has raised several questions but one more remains—what other important events took place in Lexden Park? Methinks that acre or two could tell some real tales of Lexden merrymaking.

Has anyone got any information on brass bands or Lexden Park please?

THE CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

The first meeting the group held last April was an overwhelming success. This has given us so much enthusiasm to proceed with getting the Lexden History Group up and running.

We have been very fortunate in having the services of Jane & Bob Thornhill, as Secretary and Treasurer. I for one was most pleased, and relieved, when they volunteered.

We have an interesting programme lined up until the new year, and are working on booking future interesting speakers.

The group meetings however, are not just about coming along and listening to speakers. At most meetings we will have time, after the speaker, to exchange information, or hear about members' projects.

If you have any suggestions for speakers or ideas you would like to put forward, please let me, David or Jane know.

Thanks for your interest & support.

Geoff Pettit

PROGRAMME

AUGUST No Meeting

SEPTEMBER 13th 7.45

Preparing for -

Lexden History Day
Lexden Church Sept 23rd
10.30am—4.00pm.

Our big 'showcase' event and membership drive The September meeting will be to receive items from members for display and finalise arrangements.

OCTOBER 11th 7.45pm

Illustrated talk on the History of Lexden Mill by David Cawdell.

NOVEMBER 8th 7.45pm

Films of old Lexden
Bernard Polley—Member of Colchester Film Makers Club.

DECEMBER 13th

Seasonal Social event.
"How well do you know Lexden"?

OF EVENTS

JANUARY 10th—7.45pm

Revd Keith Lovell, illustrated talk on 'Village Signs'.

FEBRUARY 14th—7.45pm

Patrick Denney, illustrated talk 'Life on the Home Front in WW2'.

MARCH 14th—7.45pm

Richard Shackle, Senior Librarian, Colchester Local Studies Library, illustrated talk 'Timber Framed Buildings in Colchester and Lexden'.

APRIL 10TH - 7.45pm AGM

SPEAKERS

If any member knows of an interesting speaker who would be suitable for the History Group, or can offer to give a talk themselves, please let me know on;

01206 540403 or email
d.cawdell@btinternet.com

Did You Know ?

Further to the information in the last issue about the many free online data facilities offered by Essex Libraries, another important database has been added which will be very useful for family history researchers.

Essex Libraries are corporate subscribers and residents with a library ticket can now access the popular **Ancestry.com** website completely free of charge.

This website has censuses from 1841-1901 for the whole of England and Wales and also the birth, marriage and death indexes from 1837 for England and Wales.

For more details call 08456037628 or visit www.essexcc.gov.uk/libraries

Did you know ?

The famous wartime songs "We'll meet again" and "There'll Always be an England" were written in Colchester. The composer Ross Parker was stationed in Colchester and used to find peace and quiet in one of the pillboxes near the barracks so that he could concentrate on writing his music.

Standing room only

It now seems like ages ago but the first meeting of the LHG was launched in fine style with well over 100 people attending to hear the Group's President, Andrew Phillips, give an illustrated talk on "The Making of Modern Colchester".

The numbers surprised and delighted the Committee and membership forms were snapped up so quickly that stocks ran out.

Chairman Geoff Pettit, who earlier that day had been on holiday in Italy, flew back to welcome everyone and explain about the Group and its objectives.

Andrew Phillips' talk built up a picture of the housing, political and social scene of Colchester in the last century.

His obvious deep and broad knowledge of the town's history was very much appreciated by those present.

We are extremely fortunate to welcome him as our Founder President.

LHG stand out again

The LHG exhibition stand was again in action at the St. Botolph's Victorian History Fair on Saturday June 22nd. This successful annual event is organised by St Botolph's Church in conjunction with the Colchester Museums Service and each year attracts hundreds of visitors to the Priory grounds.

The LHG stand was in good company sharing the large exhibition room with The Colchester Museums Service, Colchester Recalled and the Colne Valley Railway, all of whom have kindly agreed to support the Lexden History Day on September 23rd.

LEXDEN HISTORY DAY

Saturday September 23rd

10.30am—4.0pm

St Leonard's Church Hall

Discover Lexden's Past

Organisations taking part include;

Colchester Museums Service
Colne Valley Railway
Colchester Recalled
and others

Guided tours of the Church
Coffee and tea
Admission Free

Lexden Park in the 1900's



Another Tragic accident at Lexden Park

During Christmas week 1832 there was a spate of burglaries in Lexden. Thieves had already broken into the Rectory in Spring Lane and Mr Mills of Lexden Park, thinking that they may be lurking in his parklands, brought out a pair of old pistols intending to give them to his butler James Marriage to clean in case they were needed. One of the locks was stiff from misuse and in trying to ease it the pistol went off and hit the servant just as he was leaving the room. Mr Mills fainted from the shock but the servant staggered into the kitchen with blood pouring from bullet wounds in his arm, the bone of which was in splinters. Despite being attended by Mr Mill's private doctors James Marriage died that evening and with his last breath exonerated his master for a pure freak accident.

During the funeral at Lexden Church Mills was distraught and undertook to educate James Marriage's ten year old daughter as his own and to make a handsome provision for her future.

James Marriage was the second of three servants to die at Lexden Park in three successive years and is buried in a trimorial grave erected by Mr Mills facing his old master's house just across Church Lane.



*David pointing out an area
First Summer Walk*

The Group held its first summer walk meeting on a fairly overcast but warmish June evening. Numbers were limited as it was a joint walk with members of the West Bergholt History Group, a well established club.

The route took us down Spring lane to look at the site of the now demolished Lexden Mill. It was pulled down around 1970 to link Spring Lane to the (then) newly constructed Avenue of Remembrance roundabout.

We then were taken into a private garden where the beautifully landscaped mill pool still exists and then on to the second mill just across the river. A little way along Spring lane we turned into The Chaseway, an ancient track leading up to Lexden Lodge which was the Manorial Court in medieval

times. Round behind the Lodge we stepped back in time some 2,000 years to stand in the Iron Age earthworks that were dug in a huge arc stretching from Braiswick right through Lexden Park to join up with Grimesdyke in Straight road.

It is believed that these earthworks in Lexden were also the site of the encampment for the Parliamentarian soldiers during the Siege of Colchester in 1648. Certainly all the windmills and watermills in the area were badly damaged by Fairfax's troops as they thought they could be Royalist look-out posts.

Returning down Chaseway we were hosted by David and Elaine Cawdell in their beautiful riverside garden with wine and salmon sandwiches, a perfect end to a perfect walk—roll on the next one.

Editor's note.

The members of the West Bergholt History Group also enjoyed the walk and meeting the new Lexden members and have suggested a return walk around their village next summer.

Order now for Christmas

Having passed the longest day we are already planning for Christmas. Fund-raising is an on-going headache for small groups and we are no exception.

In order to supplement Group finances we are offering two gift ideas specially for LHG members.

A large A4 wall calendar featuring twelve scenes of old Lexden produced by Group Chairman Geoff Pettit. The price will probably be around £5 each complete with envelope for posting to friends.

Secondly, Jane Thornhill has found a company making beautiful limited edition ceramic mugs with a scene of Lexden Street around 1900's. These are available in an attractive packaging for £10 each.

Calendars and mugs will be on sale at the Lexden History Day on September 23rd but provisional orders can be given to Jane for both items now to ensure you get yours.



AGM Suggestions

Village sign

It was suggested at the AGM that we investigate the possibility of erecting a village sign (many villages have one, we don't). Local sculptor, artist and new Committee member Tim Holding has offered to form a small group to design and produce a sign and Sonia Lewis said that grants are available through the County Council for such projects, she will investigate further.

Press cuttings archive

Also Liz White from Weavers in Lexden Road said that we should be thinking about future researchers as well as delving into Lexden's past. To this end she suggested that all press cuttings from local papers with anything about Lexden should be cut out and archived. Some people may be doing this in their own particular area of interest but give Liz a ring on 522713 to discuss.

2007 Calendar

Geoff Pettit is producing a Lexden pictorial calendar for sale at the History Day. If you want more details ring him on Col. 579819.

**SALES WANTS
AND
MEMBERS' NOTICES**

WANTED

Items, articles (300 words max), letters, photographs from members to put in this magazine. Email me at d.cawdell@btinternet.com

WANTED

Local businesses to support the magazine by placing adverts, either using existing artwork or I can produce new artwork free of charge. Very reasonable rates can be negotiated—small ads as cheap as £5 per year.

We're on the web

The group now has a website that can be accessed from anywhere in the world.

The site has 8 pages at present and includes pictures of the village and details of all the forthcoming History Group events.

To get all the latest news just go online and type in;

www.lexdenhistory.org.uk

Jane Thornhill NDD, ATD

*Portrait Artist & Art Tutor
Portrait commissions accepted -
people, pets, houses, boats, etc.
Booking now for Christmas*

Demonstrations, workshops, individual tuition.

For further details contact Jane on:

Tel: 01206 523767

www.jane-thornhill.com

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