



Closed despite fierce opposition

Despite appeals by many organisations, including the Lexden History Group, petitions containing several thousand signatures, dozens of letters in the local papers and support from Colchester MP Bob Russell, the Essex Record Office in Stanwell Street, home to all the history of Colchester and surrounding area, looks likely to close and most, if not all, material moved to Chelmsford.

This is seen by the County Council as a cost saving exercise but they have assured Colcestrians that many of the records will be digitised and will eventually be available on the internet (the cost of

Issue No 4 February 2007

- Colchester to lose its local records office.*
- Fancy Fish and Chips on the move?*
- Colchester through the Lens.*
- The village sign takes shape.*

this project is not yet known nor how many years it will take). What is known is that only the ERO catalogue is available at present on the internet so you can at least look to see what you want before making the long trek over to Chelmsford.

Local historians can access the catalogue by typing in seax.essexcc.gov.uk via the internet but you will need a Reader's Ticket to do so.

According to the Essex County Standard our local council 'champion', Portfolio Holder for Culture, Kevin Bentley said it would be difficult to find a suitable replacement for the temperature controlled, fireproof rooms of the present Records Office. This begs the question, why not leave it where it is then!

LHG President Andrew Phillips fears that the unique Colchester collection may be broken up because many of the records belong to such organisations as the Mercury Theatre and 67 local businesses including the Co-op who could ask for them back rather than see them go to Chelmsford. He also questions the amount of time needed to 'digitise' and is thinking in terms of many years. Some may never see the light of day as they are too fragile to be scanned.

The loss of the actual records also means the loss of the very helpful staff at Stanwell Street as well. Andrew Phillips fears, quite rightly, that less will be written about our town once all the historical records go.

It is important that we as the Lexden History Group should record these facts for future Lexden researchers. The Essex

Records include information from:

- * 99 local and parish churches and 100 non conformist churches and chapels.

- * Shipping registers with details of all ships built and operating out of the Hythe

- * Records of more than 200 local schools and organisations like the Mercury Theatre and the Scouts.

- * Minutes of local council meetings

- * All national census information.

- * Records of local workhouses

- * Records of 67 local businesses including Paxmans, Spottiswodes and the Co-op.

According to the County Standard no one from Essex County Council was available to talk about the closure of the Colchester Records Office.

However, County Councillor Jeremy Lucas, Executive Member for Heritage Culture and the Arts, announced that sometime this year the rules will be changed to allow members of the public to use their own digital cameras to photograph records.

Wow!

A very sociable Christmas Social

Christmas in Lexden started on Wednesday December 13th when the History Group held its first Christmas social, and an excellent social it was too.

Over sixty members were welcomed with a glass of mulled wine and an invitation to pit their wits in the picture quiz arranged by Chairman Geoff. Out of 25 not very difficult pictures around the village the highest score was surprisingly only 16. The winner was Richard Cooper.

President Andrew Phillips gave a short but very encouraging speech. He talked about the amazing developments over the first few months and, in praising the work of the Committee, he urged everyone to get more involved in the future of History Group by sharing their research and even giving a talk to members on it.

"Dick 'n Dave" aka Brian Barton and David Cawdell took us back 200 years to the deck of Nelson's flagship "Victory" for a spoof lampooning of the current 'Elf 'n Safety' politically correct brigade.

Then came the highlight of the evening—an extremely attractive and scrummy buffet arranged by Sonia Lewis. The fact that there were no leftovers was a testament to its scrumminess. Thank you very much Sonia.

Tim and Carol Holding then set about an assault on our general knowledge with a five round table quiz which was eventually won by the table calling itself Five Gold Rings.

Time was against us at this point and one round was only half completed so for the benefit of those present who were racking their brains trying to work out the meaning of SLT8MA14STRTE the answers to the Diltoids round are published later in this magazine.

In closing, Geoff thanked everyone for making this first social evening a success especially Sonia and her team of helpers in the kitchen as this was the second large function she had catered for that day.

Help Please

A member of the Group recently emailed Geoff Pettit with some information about the blacksmiths opposite the church in Lexden Street.

Due to the wonders of modern technology Geoff's email has disappeared. So could whoever it was email the information to him again please.

Flash Bang wallop what a picture !

Once again it was proved that the old ones are always the best when the November meeting was devoted to films about old Lexden. The audience packed into the Church Hall and 'just kept coming' said Chairman Geoff Pettit as he was putting out more and more chairs.

Bernard Polley, who organised the evening, a member of the Colchester Film Makers Group, and also a member of our group, has been recording the history of this area on film for many years and has a vast knowledge of the subject. That's why we chose him as our archivist.

The five films he showed, with the help of Colin Noon a fellow filmmaker, included rare footage of wartime fire drill at the old Horse Showground, The Centenary Celebrations at Lexden Bridge and the first meeting of our history group as we walked around the two mills in Spring Lane and up to Lexden Lodge.

Christmas cards, tickets for the Christmas social and LHG mugs, 'useful for putting your false teeth in' quipped Geoff, all sold quickly.

The November Magazines, timed to be ready for the meeting, were collected by members thus saving the Group additional postage. The idea worked well and the next Magazine will be ready in the same way for the February meeting.

Leafy Lexden

Leafy Lexden has long since been known as a very desirable place to live—one of the prime areas in the town, you ask any estate agent. The prestigious CO3 postcode can add thousands to the value of a house.

This can lead to accusations of exclusivity, "we don't want any old Tom Dick or Harry" - well, actually that isn't strictly true because the speakers for our Autumn meetings are, in fact, Tom Dick and Harry, but not necessarily in that order.

In September we are pleased to welcome Tom Hodgson, Curator of Social History at the Castle Museum who will be talking about all the work that goes on behind the scenes at the Museum including their massive collection of old photographs and artefacts.

Harry Royle was, until his retirement, the manager of the Odeon Cinema in Crouch Street who will be telling us about the very interesting history of cinema in Colchester. Finally our own Dick Barton with a few tricks up his Civil War sleeve will be taking us back to the year 1648 when Royalists and Roundheads marched down Lexden Street to begin the twelve week Siege of Colchester.

A Tom Dick and Harry you must not miss.



Taking Shape

The Lexden village sign, originally the idea of the Lexden Conservation Group and carried forward by the Lexden History Group is taking shape rapidly.

The superb 3D polystyrene model (above) is the work of Tim and Carol Holding from Little Glebe, Spring Lane. It depicts the main elements of the village, the Sun Inn, the church, the mill and includes a butterfly representing the Papillon family who were, one time, the Lords of the Manor.

The sign will be cast in

aluminium sections by an ingenious technique akin to the 'lost wax process' but the molten aluminium will actually melt the polystyrene instead of the wax.

The siting of the sign has yet to be finally decided. Current options are on the Lexden meadows near Lexden Road or near the roundabout by the Crown Inn.

Although the Committee has pledged £500, a grant needs to be sought to raise the remaining costs of the project and anyone with experience of preparing a grant application should contact Tim on Colchester 576149.

THE CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Thanks to all who worked hard to put on our Christmas social evening, especially to Sonia for the great refreshments. We underestimated not only how many would come, but also how long some of the activities would take, but it was a very good evening.

David has arranged an interesting programme for future meetings. An extra meeting on June 27th which will be of a social nature with a Fish & Chip supper on the Colne Valley Railway in the evening. We can only have a maximum of 70 people, so if you wish to come please obtain your tickets early £22.00 each from Bob & Jane Thornhill.

Bernard Polley our Archivist has received some interesting contributions, one on the memories of the Giles Orpen-Smellie and his family during the last war, we need more to go into this year's project on Lexden during war time, any wars that is not just the last one.

I have a confession to make to the person who sent me an Email regarding the blacksmiths that was once where Evans Garage is. When I received that Email I was in the process of changing computers and did something wrong, or pushed the wrong button and it was lost to I know not where! So if you could send it to me again, or maybe safer still, give it to me I would be most obliged.

PROGRAM

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

There will be a speaker after the AGM.

MAY 9th—7.45pm

An illustrated talk by John Appleby on the famous 1909 Colchester Pageant in which 3,000 local performers took part.

JUNE 13th

Speaker Chris Dobrowolski, more details later.

JUNE 27TH

Note special date
See separate news item on the page opposite.

E OF EVENTS

JULY 4th & 11th—7.45pm

Guided Walk around historic Lexden by Lexden History Group member and Blue Badge Guide Dick Barton.

Maximum 20 people each evening, the walk is identical both evenings.

No meeting in August.

September 12th—7.45pm

'Behind the Scenes at Colchester Museum' - an illustrated talk by Tom Hodgson, Curator of Social History, Colchester Museum.

October 10th - 7.45pm

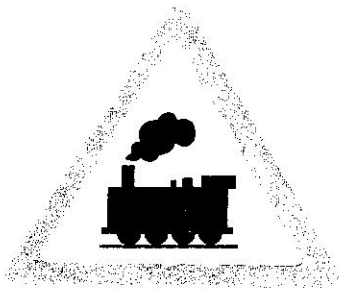
'The History of Cinema in Colchester' an illustrated talk by Harry Royle. One-time Cinema Manager at the Odeon.

November 14th—7.45pm

'The Siege of Colchester', an illustrated talk by Dick Barton.

December 12th

Christmas Social



Additional meeting in June

We have arranged an evening visit to the Stour Valley Railway near Sible Hedingham which will include a ***Traditional Fish and Chip Supper*** aboard the Pullman restaurant car travelling on the Colne Valley Railway, £22 per person (Numbers limited).

The date is June 27th and car sharing can be arranged nearer the time. The Colne Valley Railway is situated between Sible Hedingham and Great Yeldham.

For those who want to have a sneak preview visit the Colne Valley website at ; www.colnevalleyrailway.co.uk

Talking of websites our own at www.lexdenhistory.org.uk has had nearly 400 visitors (hits) since it was set up last Autumn. It is updated every month with details of events and news etc.

Speaker and village sign expert Keith Lovell talks to our own village sign expert Tim Holding after an extremely interesting and varied evening.



Village Signs and more

Our speaker at the January meeting was a 'man from the Ministry'. In addition to being Rector of Tollesbury, the Revd. Keith Lovell could easily be described as the Man from the Ministry - of Trivial Information.

His talk on village signs covered many local areas but, such was his vast knowledge of 'all things trivial' (his words) the large audience of around 70 members also learned about post boxes in Scotland, the origins of a costermonger, the history of Scouting and how Marks Tey helped in the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire of

1666.

Our tour of the villages included **Aldham** where the Roman river has nothing to do with the Romans; **Ardleigh** where the reservoir (normally) holds 485 million gallons of water; **Copford** where cartwheels were soaked in the village pond overnight to swell them and make them fit the iron rims; **Stanway** whose sign features an elephant and a London Plane tree; **Marks Tey** whose brickworks were kept busy making bricks after Great Fire of London in 1666.

A thoroughly interesting evening enjoyed by all with a speaker who is already on the list to be invited again.

A New initiative by LHG

A suggestion made and approved at the recent Committee meeting aims to raise the profile of the Lexden History Group and create links with other similar groups in North East Essex.

The idea came to David Cawdell after he accepted invitations to give talks to several local history groups in the area. It struck him that, obviously because of the nature of local history, each group rarely communicated with other history groups. His suggestion was for Lexden History Group to organise a 'Saturday Seminar' when Committee members of the eight or ten groups in this area could meet each other, discuss common issues and give short presentations about their own research projects. Another bonus spin-off will be an interchange of details about good speakers etc.

It is hoped that the event will take place in Lexden Church Hall sometime in October, depending upon availability, two well-known local historians will probably also be invited to give 'keynote speeches'.

If any member has ideas or views on the project, please contact David on Colchester 540403.

Recent additions to Lexden History Group Archives

Thanks to the generosity of members, Group Archivist, Bernard Polley, has received some interesting items recently.

These include;

A collection of photographs of Lexden trams.

A scrapbook compiled by the Lexden Parish Players with press cuttings, programmes and pictures etc.

Letters and photographs of the Lexden Tumulus, kindly donated by Mrs Tinson on whose land in Fitzwalter Road the tumulus stands.

A DVD copy of the films shown by Bernard at the November meeting (see report elsewhere in this issue).

Plan of the building plots available in Fitzwalter Road before development.

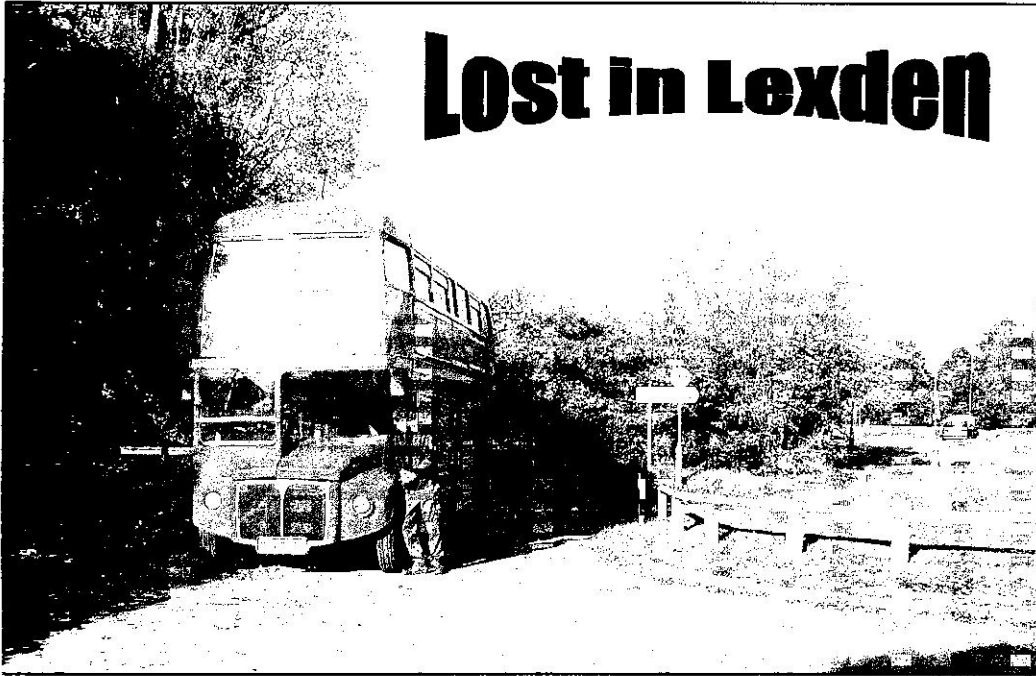
The first LHG mug sold, purchased by Sonia Lewis and donated to the archives.

Article in Essex Life and Countryside on Lexden Mill.

The will of William Baines (1832) owner of Baines Farm.

Many other items for which we are very grateful to donors.

Lost in Lexden



What's a 40 year old red London Routemaster bus doing in Spring Lane ? All will be revealed at our June 13th meeting when Spring Lane resident Chris Dobrowolski (that's him leaning on the bus) takes us on a journey of discovery.

COLCHESTER THROUGH THE LENS

This is the title of a very interesting exhibition in the gallery at Colchester Castle Museum which you all must visit. The National Monuments Register offered their travelling exhibition to the Castle Museum and this has been greatly augmented and enhanced by dozens of superb local pictures and artefacts from the Colchester Museum's Resource Centre in Ryegate Road.

The exhibition is on until April 27th and is a fascinating insight into daily life, transport, entertainment, wartime and Colchester businesses, giving a nostalgic peek at the past. There is even a seaside end-of-the-pier panel with holes that you can stick your head through to have your photograph taken in Edwardian costume and a touchy-feely hands-on display for younger visitors.

In the background you can listen to contemporary interviews with Colchester people about the items on display, recorded by courtesy of Colchester Recalled, together with music and sound effects of the 1900's. It's a must-see experience. Do go.

Tim's Diltoids

- 3BM *Three Blind Mice.*
- T10C *The ten Commandments.*
- 6WOHTE *Six wives of Henry the Eighth.*
- T7WOTW *The seven wonders of the world.*
- N10DS *Number ten Downing Street.*
- 12SOTZ *Twelve signs of the Zodiac.*
- 13IABD *Thirteen in a baker's dozen.*
- 10GBHOTW *Ten green bottles hanging on the wall.*
- 20,000LUTS *Twenty thousand leagues under the sea.*
- 24HAD *Twenty four hours a day.*
- 6POTSOD *Six points on the Star of David.*
- 400MAAAT *Four hundred metres around an athletics track.*
- 8TOAO *Eight tentacles on an octopus.*
- 8FA2TOAPOH *8 fingers and 2 thumbs on a pair of hands.*
- 17ITCRO4913 *17 is the cube root of 4913.*
- SLT8MA14STRTE *Sun light takes 8 minutes and 14 seconds to reach the earth.*
- TRNI4145ML *The River Nile is 4145 miles long.*
- 206BITHB *206 bones in the human body.*
- Grrrrrr.—*simple when you have the answers.* Ed.

Here's another one

- DFTBYIFLIW *Don't forget to bring your items for Lexden in Wartime !*

Change of Address.



LHG Secretary and Treasurer
Jane and Bob Thornhill, have
moved to:

23 Roddam Close, CO3 3UN

Their telephone number and
email addresses remain
unchanged.

Tel: 01206 523767

Email:

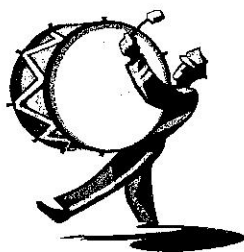
Bob.thornhill@ntlworld.com

We wish them well in their new
home.

Your business here?

In order to defray the costs of
printing this magazine we would
welcome local businesses to
advertise with us. Rates are
extremely low and a quarter
page for one year (four issues)
would be £25. Details from Bob
or Jane Thornhill.

150 magazines are printed and
members are encouraged to
support the local businesses
that support us.



**Banging the drum for
local businesses**

Chairman
Geoff Pettit

Tel: 01206 579819

geoffpettit5@aol.com

Secretary
Jane Thornhill

Tel: 01206 523767

J.jane.thornhill@ntlworld.com

Social Secretary
Sonia Lewis

Tel: 01206 579950

sonialewis@waitrose.com

Treasurer/Membership
Bob Thornhill

Tel: 01206 523767

Bob.thornhill@ntlworld.com

Magazine/Publicity
David Cawdell

Tel: 01206 540403

d.cawdell@btinternet.com

Archivist
Bernard Polley

Tel: 01206 572460

heath86end@aol.com