

## *Happy Birthday LHG*

*Issue No 5 May 2007*

*It was on Monday March 20th 2006 when 18 Lexden residents met in the Lady Chapel of Lexden Church, following a notice in the "In Touch" magazine, to explore the possible interest in local history and the forming of a local history group.*

*After agreeing to disagree as to where Lexden actually was, citing parish, political, postal and estate agents versions one thing was certain—such a group was needed.*

*Eight members offered to form a steering committee to take the project forward.*

*They met seven days later and each member undertook to develop tasks such as Chairman,*

- *Happy Birthday LHG*
- *Casting the V sign*
- *Colchester characters*
- *AGM Notes*
- *Wartime memories*
- *Wanted—Secretary*

*Archivist and Social Secretary etc. We were without a Treasurer and Secretary until husband and wife team of Bob and Jane Thornhill stepped in.*

*160 people attended that first public meeting at which President Elect Andrew Phillips was the speaker. and so Lexden History Group was launched big time.*

*All the rest, as they say, is history.*



**Tim and Sonia casting the Village Sign**

Around 50 members, including the Mayor of Colchester Cllr. Richard Gower and the Mayoress Cllr. Jackie Gower, attended one of the most unusual History Group events of the year when they were invited to witness the casting of the proposed village sign. Hosts Tim and Carole Holding of Little Glebe plus other helpers laid on a feast of a barbecue while Tim and his helper Chris Dobrowolski spent all afternoon melting heavy bars of pure aluminium in a furnace ready for the pouring 'ceremony' at 5 o'clock

The sign designed by Tim included Lexden Church, Lexden Mill, the Sun pub and a small butterfly representing the Papillon family, one time Lords of the Manor of Lexden.

The Rev Stephen Carter, Rector of Lexden was invited to help Tim cast the Church, David Cawdell helped Tim pour the molten aluminium into the mould of Lexden Mill. The Mayor was invited to cast the Sun but owing to another engagement in Chelmsford had to leave early so his place was taken by Cllr. Sonia Lewis.

Casting molten metal is a very dangerous and tricky business and two minor elements did not meet Tim's exacting creative eye and may have to be recast but he thoroughly deserved the well-earned round of applause.

As a fund-raising exercise members are invited to 'buy a brick' at £5 each for the pillar on which the sign will stand. Names of donors will be recorded in a 'time capsule' hidden inside the pillar when complete.



## **What did you do in the War Daddy (or Mummy)?"**

Patrick Denney is one of the best-known and most popular speakers in Colchester and his St Valentines Day talk on Life on the Home Front in World War II lived up to all our expectations.

Illustrated by very interesting graphics, and recorded interviews with Colcestrians who had been there at the time, he described every aspect from Anderson shelters to hilarious accounts of rocket firing by the Home Guard on the Abbeyfield ranges.

The large audience (I lost count after 85) was transported back to the days of austerity and belt tightening and this was very evident by their frequent nods of recognition at what Patrick was saying.

A really enjoyable evening.

## **Special 'Wartime' Notice for Internet Users**

A new website featuring films of life on the home front in Britain during the Second World War has just been launched.

[http://  
www.movinghistory.ac.uk/  
homefront](http://www.movinghistory.ac.uk/homefront)

Screen Archive South East, at the University of Brighton, in partnership with six other English Regional Film Archives, is launching the site as part of a £225,000 film archive project which forms part of the Big Lottery Fund's £10 million Their Past Your Future (TPYF) programme, and was created with funding distributed by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

The site is organised into major themes, which explore issues characterising life during the war. These include: Children in War-time, Civil Defence, Community Life, Displaced People, Home and Family Life, Women's Role on the Home Front and Victory Celebrations in 1945.

Do take a look at this site, and while you are on the internet visit our own site at [lexdenhistory.org.uk](http://lexdenhistory.org.uk)

## **Can anyone remember?**

### **More information required please**

The Colchester Model Railway Society had a track in Straight Road Lexden. Where?

Chapman's Circus visiting Colchester and elephants being paraded down Lexden Street.

Fireman Tony Smith who was a Wall of Death rider from Southend and was stationed at Lexden during the war. He was sent away on a month's course to become..... a despatch rider!

Firemen from Manchester, Bradford and Coventry being stationed in Lexden along with 30 fire engines and pumps etc. They even had a mobile canteen (complete with chocolates, tea and sugar) which was regularly broken into during the night. One day the canteen had to feed 40 men quickly and boiled up enough potatoes plus a bar of soap that looked suspiciously like a potato. The names of Firemen Coulson, Otley and Farrer were somehow connected.

Were any of these Colchester characters ever seen in Lexden?

**Freddie Bird** who kept the Plough pub and a shoe shop in St Botolph's St. He would give a pair of shoes away free each Guy Fawkes Day to any person who arrived at his shop riding a donkey.

**Emma and Grimes**, evidently they were more famous than the Mayor.

**Captain Splasher** who sold paraffin from a barrow.

**Two Gun Pete** who had a moustache and used to dress as a cowboy. He would shout "stick 'em up" and pretend to shoot people with a cap gun.

**Cottee**, a lady who used to smoke a pipe who lived in East Street

**"Yehudi Menhuin"** an itinerant violinist who used to busk outside cinemas. It is thought he used to live in a 'doss house' down Hythe Hill.

A couple who used to live in Ayloft Road, White City. He was always immaculately dressed in blazer and cricket flannels, she was 'less smart'.

**The Silly Hannahs** two sisters (?) One would act as an Indian Princess and the other her maid who would walk some distance behind her.

information on any of the subjects on this page would be welcome.

David Cawdell 01206 540403

## **AGM Notes**

The first Annual General Meeting of the History Group took place on April 10th in Lexden Church Hall. Approximately eighty members attended.

The meeting was chaired by the President Andrew Phillips, who later gave an excellent talk on Lord Fitzwalter, Lord of the Manor in the 13th Century.

At the meeting the appeal for funds to produce the village sign was launched and members were invited to 'buy a brick' at £5 each for the supporting pillar.

Following a suggestion at the meeting the Committee will review the meeting charges for members and non-members and recommend changes at the 2008 AGM.

Nearly all officers were re-elected but there is a vacancy for the post of Secretary. Anyone willing to take on this (job share considered) please contact Geoff Pettit on 01206 579819.

Treasurer Bob has asked that members have the right money (members £1, non-members £2) to avoid queues at the table before the meeting starts.

## **A new Advertiser**

As part of our service to new advertisers we are happy to write a few lines about the company and the services it offers. This month we welcome Allen Turner of Garden Wood Design. Allen has vast experience of garden and landscape design having been the Head Greenkeeper at Lexden Wood Golf Club ever since it opened in the 1990's He has now exchanged his lawnmower for a hammer and spirit level and is available for all types of garden woodworking projects. He comes very well recommended having already undertaken several projects in the Lexden area for satisfied customers.

**Allen Turner**

**Garden Wood Design**

2 School Lane Bromeswell

Woodbridge Suffolk IP12 2PZ

Tel: 07909 751405 (daytime)  
01394 460523 (evening)

### **PLEASE NOTE**

**Some members have not yet renewed their subscription (£10 single, £15 Family membership). Please do so promptly or this may be the last magazine you'll get!**

## THE CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Our first A G M was held on April 10th when our President, Andrew Phillips, not only chaired the meeting, but also gave a very interesting talk on the Fitzwalter family from the 14th Century and how Lexden, being owned and run by Fitzwalter, tried to become independent from Colchester. I think I have got it right; Andrew will correct me if I am wrong. Apart from the normal business of electing officers, a great deal of the AGM was spent in thanking those who had worked hard in getting the group off the ground. I thanked Jane & Bob Thornhill, who as Secretary and Treasurer had done most in getting it under way, and dealing with membership, setting up our bank account and many other tasks. We were sorry that Jane now felt that having done that task she would not be able to commit so much time in future, so offered her resignation. We are now desperately seeking Jane's replacement. Thanks was also given to David Cawdell, Sonia Lewis, Dick Barton, and Tim Holding for their contributions to the success of our first year.

I would like to also thank Tim & Carol when we gathered for the casting of the village sign which Tim had designed, and prepared for the Mayor to make the first casting followed by other members of the Lexden History Group. Thanks too for those who ran the barbecue and all who provided food and drink. It was a wonderful and unique experience.

## PROGRAM

### 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.**

### 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.**

## **E OF EVENTS**

**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](http://www.colnevalleyrailway.co.uk)

***Nearly all sold out***

Nearly all the tickets were snapped up as soon as they went on sale at recent meetings. If you still want to enjoy fish and chips on the move contact Bob and Jane Thornhill 01206 523767 quickly.

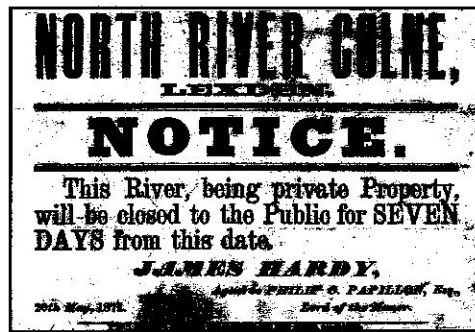
Our speaker for the March meeting was Richard Shackle, senior librarian in the Local Studies section of Colchester Library, who spoke on "Timber framed buildings in Colchester and Lexden".

In a very detailed explanation using pictures and sketches Richard outlined the development of timber houses, the various types of timber used and the points to look out for when dating old buildings.

He had recently carried out a very comprehensive survey of the "Charlie Brown's" shop near East Gates and illustrated the various ages of each part of this old building before its modernisation and conversion into residential properties.

We are very grateful to Richard for fitting in the LHG meeting as he had only finished work at the library at 7.30pm and came straight to ours at 7.45.

Members were reminded about the forthcoming AGM when Andrew Philips will be speaking after the formal part of the evening and also tickets were available for the Fish and Chip Supper on the steam train in June.



### *Can anyone help please?*

I have obtained copies of two notices put up by P.O.Papillon Lord of the Manor of Lexden in 1870. The first, issued on July 30th 1870 stated that "no person has any right to use the River Colne as it is private property". The only concession was to pleasure boats which may use the stretch up to **Cooper's Sluice** until further notice, but not on Sundays. The following year on May 20th 1871 P.O.Papillon closed the river entirely to all traffic. (see above)

But where was Cooper's Sluice and why did POP Papillon close the river? Can any reader help please?

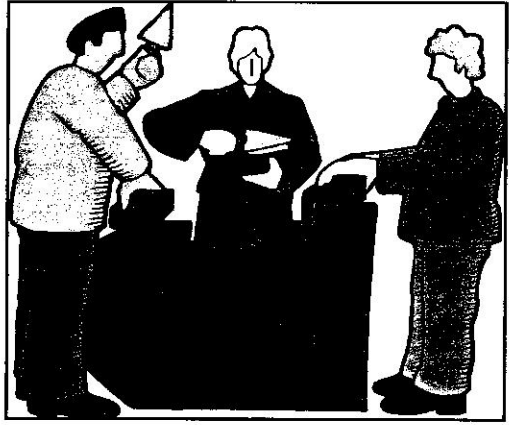
Incidentally the poster was produced by Benham & Harrison, Steam Printers, 15 High Street Colchester.

David Cawdell 01206 540403



## **Honour for two LHG members**

Two LHG members, Richard Cooper and David Cawdell have been elected President and Vice President respectively of the Colchester Probus Club at their recent AGM. They follow in the footsteps of town guide Dick Barton who was President a couple of years ago.



## **Buy a Brick Appeal**

The site has been chosen, the casting is underway, the enthusiasm is there, all we need now are a couple of hundred bricks to build the pillar on which the sign is to stand.

That's where members can help by buying a brick at £5 each. Brick buyers will have their names recorded in the History Group archives and also on a special document that will be hidden in the brick pillar when it is built.

Other donations are being given by local businesses. Panther Security have pledged £50 and Lexden Restorations £25

St Mary's Girls School have also promised a donation to celebrate their Centenary next year.

No one can say that the Lexden History Group is under-represented as three more of our members, Colin Noon, Stewart Holden and Paul Jasper, are also in the Probus Club.

*The following letter has been received by the editor (anonymously) which was circulated to designated persons during WW2.*

CIVIL DEFENCE PROGRAMME

Under the direction of the Civil Defence programme we are entering into extensive planning to organise both civilian and industrial corps for the purpose of fire-fighting in the event of air-raids becoming imminent.

As a citizen whose loyalty is unquestioned we believe that we may count on your 100% co-operation. We have therefore taken the liberty of appointing you Air Raid Warden for your street.

Enclosed is a list of equipment to be issued to each Warden and we suggest that all possible haste is exercised in commencing training your volunteer force.

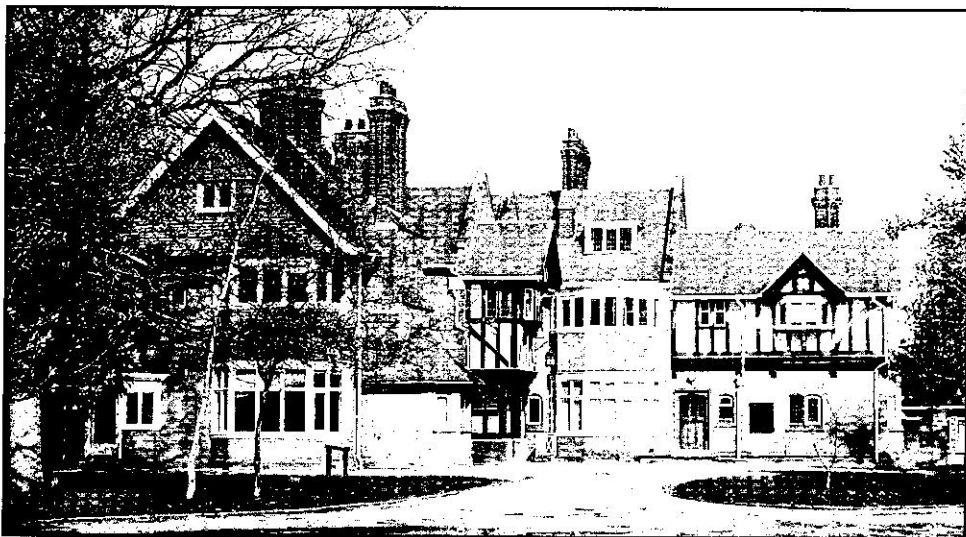
Thank you for your courtesy in this matter and please accept the thanks of the Council for your part in this enterprise which we feel is vital in the defence of us all.

R.U.Sampson  
p.p. CIVIL DEFENCE COUNCIL

LIST OF NECESSARY EQUIPMENT FOR ALL WARDENS

**One** Respirator.  
**One** Axe (to be carried in belt).  
**One** Stirrup Pump (to be carried over right shoulder).  
**One** Extension Ladder (to be carried over left shoulder).  
**One** Long-Handled Shovel (to be carried under left arm).  
**One** Rake (to be carried in left hand)  
One scoop (to be carried under right arm).  
**One** Whistle (to be carried in mouth) fixed with lanyard.

**One** belt to be worn round waist, with ten hooks for carrying six bags of sand and four pails of water.  
**Two** wet Blankets (to be carried round neck).  
**One** flash light, carried round neck (on top of blankets).  
**One** tin helmet with brim turned up to carry extra water (for drinking purposes only).  
**One** box of matches to light incendiary bombs which fail to ignite.  
**One** broom fixed to Warden's back for sweeping up when it is all over.



### ***History Group help in the launch of Lexden Grange development***

*Lexden History Group were contacted to provide historical background information on one of Lexden's foremost buildings prior to its development as a complex of 24 superior apartments and houses.*

*The public relations company, Property Publicity, working on behalf of developers, Enterprise Heritage, planned a launch event for all ex-pupils of Endsleigh School which existed there for about thirty years prior to its being bought by Lexden and Winstree Council as their planning office. It later became the Colchester Borough Council planning office in 1974 following Local Government Reorganisation.*

*Lexden Grange was built in 1904 for twice Mayor of Colchester, William Coates Hutton. It originally stood in grounds of over six acres containing many trees, a rhododendron lined driveway and large lily pond. During further landscaping a year later, pre-Roman Celtic mirrors and urns were found which are now in Colchester Castle Museum.*

*In the early 1930's it was bought by the Misses Willet and Turner to house the expanding Endsleigh private school, catering for nearly 200 pupils, having outgrown its previous premises in Wellesley Road.*

*It currently covers 1.5 acres, much of the original gardens were developed to form Sanders Drive, Round Close and Piper Road, all named after former Mayors of Colchester.*

## **An Apology**

*I am sorry about the poor quality of the pictures in the February magazine. Despite lengthy conversations with the printers we can still find no explanation and have to put it down to technical gremlins in the printing thereof. In future I have asked to see a proof copy so that it can be checked before bulk printing begins.*


*David Cawdell  
Magazine Editor.*

## **Allen Turner Garden Wood Design**

**2 School Lane Bromeswell  
Woodbridge  
Suffolk IP12 2PZ**

Tel: 07909 751405 (daytime)  
01394 460523 (evening)

If you need a job done and don't have the time or the skills yourself please give me a call. I am always happy to help with anything from fixing the fence to building wardrobes. All house, garden and commercial premises maintenance undertaken.



*We have had over 600  
visitors to our website at  
[www.lexdenhistory.org.uk](http://www.lexdenhistory.org.uk)*

### **Chairman Geoff Pettit**

Tel: 01206 579819  
[geoffpettit5@aol.com](mailto:geoffpettit5@aol.com)

### **Secretary VACANT**

### **Social Secretary**

**Sonia Lewis**  
Tel: 01206 579950  
[sonialewis@waitrose.com](mailto:sonialewis@waitrose.com)

### **Treasurer/Membership Bob Thornhill**

Tel: 01206 523767  
[Bob.thornhill@ntlworld.com](mailto:Bob.thornhill@ntlworld.com)

### **Magazine/Publicity David Cawdell**

Tel: 01206 540403  
[d.cawdell@btinternet.com](mailto:d.cawdell@btinternet.com)

### **Archivist**

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