



We're in the Money!

Thanks to the efforts of Committee members Dick Barton and Sonia Lewis and Essex County Councillor Jeremy Lucas the Lexden History Group have been awarded a grant of £2000 towards the cost of the village sign.

This, plus the amounts donated by local businesses and LHG members, brings us much nearer to our target figure of £4,000

The news came on the same day that sculptor member Tim Holding began the casting of the remaining aluminium parts of the sign after our successful barbecue on St. George's Day earlier this year.

Now the final parts of the

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- ***Village Sign Grant OK!***
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- ***Fish and chips report.***
- ***New Book.***
- ***Talks and Walks reports.***
- ***LHG joins BALH.***

planning application just need to be confirmed and the dream of a village sign for Lexden looks like becoming a reality.

We really are very grateful to Dick, Sonia, Tim and the Village Sign Committee for all the hard work they have put in over the past few months.



Some of the town's businessmen dressed as Royalist Cavaliers

Pageant Par Excellence

The sixty or so members who braved the rain for the May meeting were amply rewarded by an excellent and informative talk by Revd. John Appleby on the Colchester Pageant of 1909.

Such was John's depth of knowledge about the event and its 3,000 plus performers it seemed that nearly everyone taking part was either a relative or a close friend of a friend.

The Pageant took two years to plan and was held in Lower Castle Park in June 1909. Covered grandstands were erected that would not be out of place at Colchester United

football ground. These kept the audience dry but the performers get soaked nearly every night by the constant rain that week turning the arena into a quagmire made worse by the 160 horses that also took part.

Boadicea's chariot was purchased from the carnival committee at Lowestoft for £10, long brass Roman trumpets were made by clock collector Bernard Mason, and a Roman Temple was constructed 'onstage' each night by an army of slaves. A few of the principal roles were taken by professional or experienced actors, local schoolchildren and churches were recruited for the crowd scenes.

LHG joins British Association

Lexden History Group has applied to become members of the British Association for Local History (BALH), a UK wide organisation that brings together local history groups from all over the country.

Founded in 1982 the Association offers many benefits including an extensive research website, (www.balh.co.uk) an events programme, quarterly magazine but perhaps the most important of all, insurance cover for local society members when on organised events as well as cover for collections of local archive material.

There are also opportunities to compete for individual and group awards which bring promotional benefits to successful Groups.

The BALH magazine "Local Historian" includes articles on best practice in many subjects such as family history research, methodology and book reviews.

New Secretary

The Committee is pleased, and very relieved, to announce that Liz White has agreed to be the new LHG Secretary.

Liz and her husband Alan are founder members of the Group and live in one of the oldest houses in the village, Weavers, in Lexden Road nearly opposite the Church.

Liz is a keen local historian and has been keeping an archive of all Lexden events mentioned in our local papers, stressing that recent news may not be history to us but will be invaluable to future historians.

She is also a keen musician and sings in the Royal Choral Society as well as the Essex University Choir.

Her contact details are 'Weavers' 187 Lexden Road Colchester CO3 3TE.
Tel: 01206 522713

Liz's Email address is; alangwhite187444@hotmail.com



"Thomas" and "Ivor" rarin' to go



The "Railway Children" rarin' to go

The Great Train Fish and Chip Supper

From our roving gourmet reporter Bob Thornhill

That aroma of steam and coal smoke, the sigh of the locomotive - we were back in the golden age of steam. However this was not 1950s Britain, but the Colne Valley Railway in the 21st century, with a genuine steam train of unusual composition. The locomotive was an ex War Department saddle tank complete with a Royal Engineers' regimental badge and with what a rake of coaches! Besides a genuine 1930s Pullman dining car with original Art Deco fittings there was a post World War 2 car which formed part of the Royal train and which amongst other duties was despatched to Southampton to collect visiting statesmen and other dignitaries from Southampton in that era before air travel became the norm.

Where and what was all this? It was a gathering of 30 Lexden History Group members at the Colne Valley Railway where we met on

27th June 2007 on board this unusual train to enjoy a meal (cooked on board), a few drinks and remind ourselves of what it was like to travel in the age of steam.

The drinks were reasonably priced and over an excellently cooked fish and chip supper the conversation flowed.

The waiting staff were efficient, attentive and charming and even offered more chips to those who had room for them.

All the while the train chugged up and down the short track with a wait at either end as the locomotive was uncoupled and steamed to the opposite end of the train for the return journey. This gave the true steam enthusiasts the opportunity to watch the locomotive as it passed from one end to the other.

Everyone agreed that this had been a most enjoyable and unusual evening. It certainly took your writer back to that long lost innocent world of 1950s train spotting.

*Thanks Bob
Ed.*

THE CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

I hope everyone had an enjoyable summer and so here we are back to our monthly meetings with a good programme of speakers lined up. Thanks David for all your hard work.

It is also with grateful thanks to Liz White for agreeing to become our new Secretary, your offer is very much appreciated.

On June 27th we spent an enjoyable evening on the Colne Valley railway eating fish and chips. Thanks to Bob and Jane for organising that.

Things are now really beginning to happen with our village sign. Anglia TV phoned me the other day, they want to film the unveiling next year; more good publicity for LHG.

After our AGM next year we will be hearing about members' experiences of Lexden during the War. If you wish to give a short talk at the AGM or any other meeting during the year please speak to me.

So here's to another interesting and exciting season.

Geoff Pettit

PROGRAM

September 12th.

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

October 10th.

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

November 14th.

'The Siege of Colchester', an illustrated talk (in costume) by Dick Barton.

December 12th. 8pm

Christmas Social.
Please note change of time.
Tickets available soon.

2008

January 9th.

'The Great Eastern Railway in 1905'. An illustrated talk by David Possey (member of Braintree Local History Society).

IE OF EVENTS

February 13th.

'The Roman Chariot Track'
An illustrated talk by Philip
Crummy Director of
Colchester Archaeological
Trust.

March 12th.

Bulmer Bricks
Peter Minter MD of Bulmer
Brick and Tile Co. will give a
fascinating talk on bricks in
the conservation of old
buildings.

April 9th.

Annual General Meeting.
After the meeting an
illustrated presentation by
members on the Group's
2007 project "**Lexden in
Wartime**".

May 14th.

"To Fetch a pail of Water"
An illustrated talk by Patrick
Denney. Not to be missed.

June 11th.

"Hilly Fields" – Joe Firmin,
More details later

Meeting Fees

I am sorry but I gave some
wrong information in the last
magazine about the charges for
our monthly meetings. These
cover the cost of hiring the Hall
and the speaker's fee etc.

The correct fees should be;
Members £2
Non members £4

As proposed at this year's AGM
the annual cost for family
membership will be reviewed by
the Committee before the next
AGM

LHG Website

Keep up to date with all the
LHG news, visit our website at
www.lexdenhistory.org.uk
which is updated with details of
forthcoming events and
speakers.
We have had over 1,000 visitors

THANKS

Many members have
commented on the excellent
barbecue and refreshments laid
on for the village sign casting
evening and we would publicly
like to thank Tim and Carole for
their hospitality as well as to all
the members who contributed
to such a splendid evening.



**A history of brass bands in
North East Essex**
by
David Cawdell

New Book By LHG member

As well as an keen interest in local history David Cawdell has been a life-long brass bandsman and conductor. After two years of research David has self-published a book on the subject that is bound to interest anyone whose relatives once played in a local band. In the early 1900's over thirty villages around Colchester had their own band and David's book traces the history of each with over 100 photographs of the long-lost bands and names of bandsmen. Also included are chapters on identifying old band photographs, the histories of local bandstands and band

contesting.

The book is available at Red Lion Books, High Street Colchester price £6.95 or direct from David at d.cawdell@btinternet.com A copy has already been donated to the Lexden History Group archives.

You will remember his interesting talk on the history of Lexden Mill and David has prepared an illustrated talk on brass bands complete with recordings and he is being 'persuaded' to include this in the 2008 programme.

The growth of the village brass band was the greatest example of amateur mass music making the world has ever seen. They played at fetes, harvest festivals and all other village events and at one time there were estimated to be around 40,000 bands in the country. Now there are about 3,000 so somewhere there are an awful lot of old instruments, uniforms and memories tucked away in attics and cupboards.

This important aspect of Victorian and Edwardian social history has now been recorded for future researchers at least in the Colchester area.

'WITCHFINDER'

We have been kindly given a copy, for the archives, of the new DVD 'Witchfinder' by the Headgate Theatre and plan to have a showing to the History Group some time in the Autumn of next year.

The film tells the story of Matthew Hopkins the infamous Witchfinder General who terrorised the area mainly around Manningtree in his search for suspected witches. Dozens of women were brought to trial on the flimsiest of evidence resulting in many hangings of innocent villagers.

The Headgate Theatre film was produced with financial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The HLF support, as part of the funding conditions, made possible the distribution of free copies of the video to local history groups and other organisations.

Nearly everyone taking part (as in the 1909 Colchester Pageant) were local actors and extras including some members of Lexden History Group—see if you can spot them.

Magazine production dates

There is to be a slight change in the issue dates for the Magazine. It will now be available in September, December, March and June and be ready for distribution at the meetings in those months.

Previously they were a month earlier which meant that the August issue had to be mailed out to all members incurring unwanted costs as we did not meet in August.

Thanks to all the contributors to the magazine this quarter. Can we have more articles, moans and groans, questions or funny stories from members please. It doesn't have to be typed even, I can easily transcribe handwriting into magazine articles, but is your magazine and we would all like to read your contributions.



Summer walks

On Wednesdays, 4th. and 11th. July, two groups of members, about 20 in each, were led on a tour of parts of historic Lexden, by member Dick Barton, who is a Colchester Blue Badge Guide.

The first part of the tour concentrated on Lexden Road (formerly Lexden Street), looking at Hill House (former home of Quaker and Colchester brewer James Hurnard, who spent nearly two years writing a long narrative poem called 'The Setting Sun', published in 1870).

Other buildings looked at were Jacqueline Court, (former home of a Quaker School, which when it was sold in 1917 became the Boys' High School. Its Headmaster Frederick Richardson is remembered in Richardson Walk and the drinking fountain outside the Church is a memorial to his son), the National School built in 1842, the blacksmith's (now Evans Garage), and the two inns The Sun and The Crown and two former inns the Angel and the King's Head.

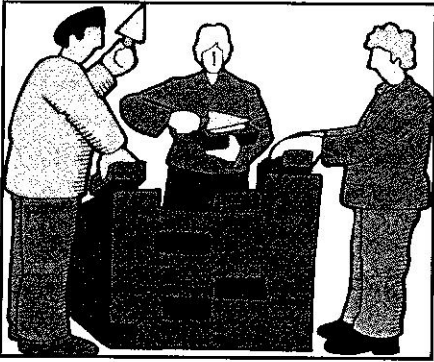
There are several 15th and 16th century buildings between the Manor House and the London Road roundabout. But was there ever a tollgate at Toll House?

Lexden Manor House, now nos.134 and 136, and its vast grounds now the Home Farm Estate was of particular interest, and the walkers looked at the many mature trees surviving from the manor, together with the tumulus at The Mount. Lexden Park was viewed from a distance and its owners and servants recalled.

The tours finished in Heath Road, looking at the former Dog and Pheasant beerhouse, the pair of houses built by the Royal Artillery, and the five pairs of cottages known as Cherry Row. Apart from some rain in the early part of the first tour, the weather was kind.

Thanks Dick for organising the tours and for writing up the report
Ed.

The Village Sign Update



This was written before the marvellous news about the grant, but we still need to keep fundraising for a little while longer to reach our target which includes an ongoing sum for maintenance and any contingencies.

Donations have been received from St Mary's School, to celebrate their Centenary Year in 2008, Enterprise Heritage Limited who are undertaking the conversion of Lexden Grange into luxury apartments, Lexden Restorations and Panther Security. We are most grateful to them all in our efforts to raise £4,000 for the production and ongoing maintenance of the village sign. Did you know it will cost around £150 just to get planning permission?

Cadmans Builders have kindly agreed to help with concrete to make the supporting plinth and provide a security fence while building work is in progress and the Crown public house has offered to provide electric power for the cement mixers etc. when building starts .

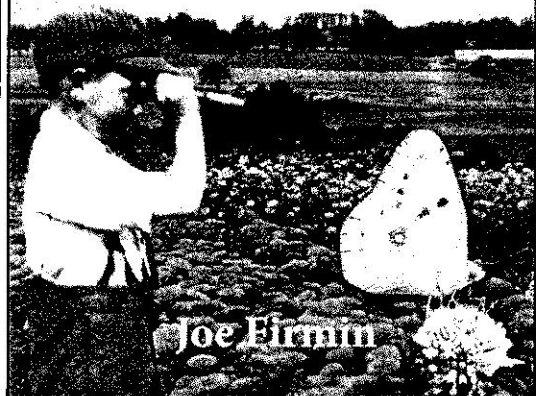
The really good news is that Colliers, the Marks Tey brick makers have kindly donated all the bricks for the pillar free of charge. That does not mean that the 'Buy a brick' appeal is now redundant. The idea was to capture people's imaginations to assist with meeting the target of £4,000. All those who donate will have their names recorded in a 'time capsule' to be placed inside the brick pillar when the big day comes around for the unveiling.

Anglia Television has already made contact with a view to filming the unveiling ceremony early next year.

NATURE BOY

IN THE FLOWER FIELDS

Memories of a vanished tradition



We have been kindly given a copy by Joe Firmin of his book "Nature Boy in the Flower Fields".

This delightful book about his growing up at Buntings Nurseries on Hilly Fields has been donated to our History Group archives.

Joe will be talking to the Group in June next year but if you want to get an early copy of his book (£7.50) please send a cheque to;

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