

Lexden History Group



Summer BBQ 2019

- War Time Memories on the Farm
 - Wormingford Airfield
- Phillip Cardy 1906-1996 Part 3
- Diary of a Colchester Lady 1885

Newsletter No 61 – June 2021
Website www.lexdenhistory.org.uk

It must be taken into account that these are the memories of a child so may not be 100% correct. Grove Farm was in Elmstead Market where we had an underground shelter - "the dugout". The entrance was down steps to an area which contained three double beds and two bunk-beds with a section on the floor for storage. When we got undressed in the farm at night we always put our clean clothes ready for the morning in a rabbit net. This was so we could grab them quickly and take them to the shelter if the air raid warning sounded and we had to sleep there. (A rabbit net was a circle of string netting with a draw string round the edge which would be pulled up to make a pouch for carrying the rabbit's home after a shoot.)



I recall the night the whole village was a bright light, when incendiary bombs were dropped all around. That night when Elmstead Hall (*left*) was bombed, we could hear the noise of the fire and my Dad joined the other village men to help out. Fortunately the out-buildings, barns, cattle yard and sheds took the direct hit and burnt out, not the Hall. I understand all the cattle were destroyed and being children we walked down to have a look!

My brothers had a Billiard room, a large purpose-built shed with a Billiard table, tortoise stove and chairs, etc. One day the shed was cleared and trestle tables set out and late that night people arrived from the village with some pig carcasses. I do not know how many pigs but more than three and I can only think they were slaughtered at the local abattoir. Together with other children we spent hours rubbing salt into the meat which was cut into joints and some went away to be cured into bacon - I think at the local butcher's shop. My Mother and Aunty prepared meat and made brawn. I can only assume this was a village event which was carried out after dark and say no more, but I know the Village Policeman was there!

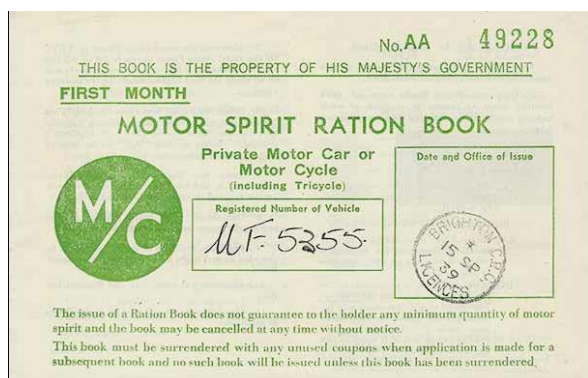
Under normal circumstances we would walk the farm along the ditches to keep out of sight of any German planes but one came down somewhere towards Frating (our land connected with Frating) and the bodies of the crew members were found except one. The Army immediately took over the farm and made the Billiard room their HQ and family and labourers had to use the main lane to the farm - no short cuts across fields. They all had official papers and we children were sent away to an Aunt's but we crept back. The troops would give us enamel mugs of corned beef stew - delicious - and when the German's body was found everything went back to normal.

All the village children had to knock on doors collecting jam jars for the WI (Women's Institute) and picked blackberries and windfall apples for jam. I understand the WI had a sugar allocation. We also collected steel pots and pans for the war effort and another task for us children was to pick up acorns for Mr Harvey's pigs. We were paid a ship's halfpenny (*right*) which were given out on Monday morning at Prayers. Later the same day a collection would be made of halfpennies for the war effort - we all gave up our money willingly. Word would get out that a boat had docked at a local point, I cannot remember which dock, and my Dad would collect bags of potatoes, cabbages, etc, and sometimes pork/bacon.



Then he would go and exchange these items for tins of apricots, melon and ginger jam, etc. I do not consider this was the black market but more of a community effort and every time some tins would be dented!! My Dad would also exchange produce when he took his vegetables to market in London, coming home with baskets of fresh fruit in exchange for vegetables. Families in the village were encouraged to glean the headland of cornfields at harvest to pick up the loose corn and straw, taking it home for their fowls. The headland was always cut by hand with a scythe. The same happened in the evenings after potato picking and there was always the odd spud left in the earth.

Mr Norfolk, the village baker (*Ernest 1875-1949*), would let his ovens out on Christmas Eve and as they took hours to cool down, he would open his bakery and people would take their Christmas dinner in a tray ready to be cooked. My Dad always took ours, collecting it lunch time on Christmas day. Everyone had to wait their turn but this did



not matter as the Bakery was next to the Kings Arms!

I don't know how but my Dad had a car throughout the war, maybe because he was conscripted to manage additional land outside the village. He had a fuel allowance in the form of coupons for the car (*left*) and also for the tractors; the tractor fuel was red and the car fuel was colourless. He understood that if you put moth balls in the red fuel it would

take out the colour and we children would be taken to Woolworths to buy moth balls by weight which would be dropped in to the car fuel tank. At some time the car had to go into the garage and Mr Bretton, the engineer, questioned my Dad on the fuel used. On that occasion my Dad should have been awarded an Oscar, I quote "how dare you suggest such a thing, I will take my business elsewhere." There was no elsewhere and I think they agreed on a way forward (*Bretton brothers Harvey 1896-1982 and Hedley 1902-86 ran the garage*).

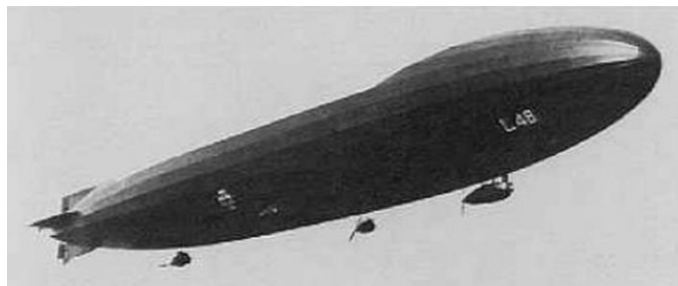
There was nothing my Mother could not do with left over potatoes - fish cakes, bubble and squeak, fried mash with crispy bits of bacon/off cuts from the pork. She could make a little portion of fish, chopped bacon, and mixed vegetables go a long way. With nine at the table, she would always cook a lot of potatoes at lunch time and everything not served then was mashed or chopped, mixed and fried. I do not know how she did it day after day giving us a variety. We had a coal range and after lunch house bricks would be placed in the oven and at bed time these would be covered in clean rags and placed half way down our beds so we always got into a warm bed. Mother would always come and remove the bricks after a little while.

A brewery burnt out in London and four heavy dray horses were brought out to Wivenhoe by train and spent days resting in our meadow. We children sat up a tree and watched as the horses, smelling of smoke, were put into the meadow where they jumped, they galloped and went round and round for ages. My Dad and a horseman from a neighbouring farm spent a lot of time checking up on them.

In conclusion, Elmstead was a small community of country people who, I know, looked after each other including the Women's Institute who were at the front line working for the war effort, organising events and involving children.

It was during World War One that the Royal Flying Corps acquired an expanse of agricultural land at Wormingford to be used as a landing ground for the 37th Home Defence Squadron whose responsibility was to monitor German Zeppelin airships passing over on their way for bombing raids on London.

During the early hours of 17th June 1917 2nd Lt Watkins was in charge of the squadron and credited with firing at Zeppelin L48 (*right*) which eventually crash landed and caught fire at Theberton in Suffolk; this was the last enemy airship brought down in Great Britain during the war.



Shortly after this the Royal Flying Corps became the Royal Air Force, and the squadron moved to Stow Maries Airfield near Maldon. The Royal Air Force retained the landing ground at Wormingford and the rest was rented out for agricultural use.

In April 1937 the squadron was reformed as No 37 (Bomber) Squadron from a nucleus provided by No 214 Squadron RAF. At the outbreak of World War II had Vickers Wellington Bombers. The landing ground on the south-west of the village of Wormingford was acquired in 1942 for redevelopment as a wartime airfield passing from the Royal Air Force to the United States Army Air Force.

There was a 2,000 yard main runway on an east/west axis with two intersecting runways of 1,400 yards each and fifty hardstanding parking spaces with domestic and administration accommodation for some 2,900 personnel. The contractors were Richard Costain Ltd with support from a number of sub-contractors and the work carried on through to late summer 1943.

The station was prepared for the 9th American Air Force whose 362nd Fighter Group arrived in November 1943 with Thunderbolts, and they commenced operations the following February escorting bombers to the V1 rocket "*doodlebug*" launch sites in the Pas de Calais area of France. The Group remained at Wormingford until the middle of April 1944.



The 362nd were replaced by the 55th Fighter Group arriving from a base in Hertfordshire under the command of Colonel George Crowell, flying Lockheed P38 Lightnings (*left*). They were the first P-38 Lightning Group to go fully operational from England. The pilots flew long-range escort missions for bombers flying over occupied Europe and racked up 'kills' of their own by destroying enemy aircraft in aerial combat or by

strafing them on the ground. During their flying missions they lost many aircraft in combat, but received two Distinguished Unit Citations, one for destroying 106 Luftwaffe aircraft over a period of ten days in September 1944 and then for a ground attack mission a few months later. Although many of the young Americans put on a brave face, they were greatly affected by the loss of their comrades and were glad of the comfort they got from the padres on the base.

On 23rd February 1945 Colonel Crowell handed command over to Colonel Elwyn Righetti and intensive ground attacks were made on enemy territory. On 17th April that year Elwyn was celebrating his 30th birthday by leading an attack, 4 days before the end of hostilities but his engine failed and he had to ditch his aircraft near Riesa, Germany. He radioed that he was fine, apart from a broken nose, but never returned to his family or the party that had been planned for him back at the Officers' Mess. He was declared killed in action in 1946.

In mid-summer 1944 the Lightnings were exchanged for P51 Mustangs (*right - IWM*) to be involved in airborne action over Arnhem and Nijmegen. In September the 3rd Scouting Force under Colonel Vincent Masters flew combinations of fighters on classified missions such as reporting meteorology conditions.

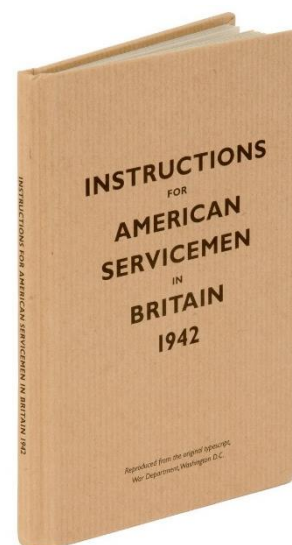


(left IWM: Lt Col Righetti, Col Crowell and Arthur Piper, Mayor of Colchester)

As the war drew to a close, the final flying operation was in April 1945 when there were 96 aircraft based at Wormingford with almost 2,000 personnel. In July the Americans left Wormingford for Kufbueren in Germany and the base was taken back by the Royal Air Force with personnel

moved from the nearby Boreham airfield. Now in peacetime the station was used by RAF Training and Technical Commands using Dakotas and gliders.

Whilst the Americans were in occupation at Wormingford all personnel were issued with a booklet (*right*) "Instructions for American Servicemen in Britain in 1942" pointing out the differences between our two cultures and customs, ie, "Don't make fun of British speech or accents. You sound just as funny to them but they will be too polite to show it". The airmen made good use of the social facilities that had been set up for them in the town centre of Colchester. The American Red Cross had a club over Marks and Spencer's store in Culver Street, overnight dormitories were available at the Oak Hall at the rear of the restaurant in High Street and there was an officers' club in St Nicholas Street. Light refreshments of sandwiches and coffee was always on hand at Lion Walk Congregational Church Hall and an Allies Club opened up at John Wilbye House in Trinity Street.



Keen to return the hospitality they received from the people of Colchester, the Americans gave Christmas parties for local children. Transport was laid on to pickup the youngsters taking them to a large hangar on the base which had been decorated overall with Christmas trees and trimmings. A scrumptious tea was provided

including many goodies that British children had not seen since before the war even bananas, ice cream, candies and lots of chocolate. Some of the GIs, who were able to perform acts such as conjuring and ventriloquism, provided entertainment, and music for games was played by the station band. Before the children were taken home, Father Christmas landed by aeroplane to give each child a gift.



With the end of military control, Wormingford was largely returned to agriculture and much of the concrete was broken up and used as foundation for the new Stanway Bypass. There is a memorial (*left - Clive Regis*) erected in front of Jenkins Farm naming the airmen who lost their lives whilst serving on the airfield during the war and some of the old airfield is now used for more peaceful and quiet activities - by gliders of the Essex and Suffolk Gliding Club.

PHILLIP CARDY 1906-1996 People he knew in Lexden Road Part 3

Phillip Cardy lived in Lexden all his life. He recorded his memories but gave strict instructions that they should not be published until after his death. This is understandable as he talked frankly about the people he had known from an early age! (Editor's additions in italics/brackets: whilst researching, I have again found that a few of Phillip Cardy's memories are slightly inaccurate so I have added my amendments. It is also not clear exactly the years that he is describing and many events must have been remembered from his parents, so it is very difficult to identify some of those he mentions.)



One of the highlights for the church (*left*) was that the Confirmation Service was for many years held there and all the churches around sent their parties. The reason the church was chosen was mainly because the girls could get there easily by tram. Then their mothers came with them into the school and changed them into their Confirmation finery. Then they walked across the road to the church in file and there used to be quite a crowd of people waiting to see them.

The school (*right*) was also the polling booth for the village and I well remember my father going to vote in one election. In the house where I live now (*in 1969 - 9 Cherry Row*) there lived the village cobbler and his wife, by the name of Pointer. He also kept a donkey and a couple of pigs in the garden. When Dad got himself ready to go and vote he said I could go with him. We walked down to the school, Dad went in to vote and I waited outside. When he came out Mr Pointer arrived riding his donkey and all dressed up in blue with the donkey in yellow. Father looked at it and then said, "Funny idea how it should be. You see my donkey is an ass but I am a man." I did not think anything



about it then but in later years I often wondered what Dad thought of that because he was a rank Liberal.

Going up the hill we pass the Blacksmith's shop, at that time kept by Mr Hutley (*Arthur b1859*). Then there was a set of steps at the top of which lived Billy White. He was what was known as a Higgler. He dealt in chickens, rabbits and anything else in that line. He also farmed the land between London Road, King Coel Road and Halstead Road (*Flower Vents Farm*). In his young days he was a great athlete and my Dad often spoke of the day when he and the army champion raced a mile from the telephone box at Vint Crescent to the milestone at the King's Head. They came down Town Hill; Billy was about a foot or so behind the army man. When they got to Church Lane Billy White jumped half-way across the road and was away. He passed the milestone at the King's Head when the army champion was coming past the Crown. The actual race took place before my time but some years later I told Billy what my Father had told me. He said they ran for £10, but the race took place just one day before the army man was discharged. So when he did not come as promised to pay, Billy went to find him only to find he had left the army a week or more. So Billy had



to be satisfied with winning and beating a champion because he never got his £10. (*left - gap where bungalow No 21 was sited. Billy White was born in 1857 and died in 1953. His wife was Elizabeth; see LHG Newsletter No 10 Sept 2008 for their story.*)

Next door to him No 23 (*now No 203 - left*) lived Mrs Taylor. She was a widow and a foster mother. She was a dear old lady and she took on a family of three - Alec Grange and his two sisters. I do not know when she

started with them as I don't remember any time when they weren't there. They went to school with me all the time we were there and Alec continued to live with her till he had to go into the army. (*In the 1911 Census Mrs Sophie Taylor b1849 was living with her daughter and widowed son and had five "boarders" living with her: Thomas Allen aged 20, chauffeur, born in Woolverstone, Suffolk, Archie Ainsworth aged 14, Ruby 8, Lily 7 and Alex Grange 5. They were born in Colchester. Alec returned to Colchester, married and died in 1979.*)

There was a small bungalow joining on to the Blacksmith's shop. There lived a widow who married a soldier out of the German army as we had a regiment of them based here for a few years. (Bill Shaffles' father was another of them; he was a travelling watch and clock repairer). I do not know what Mrs Humerston's husband did as he died before I was born. When she had to go into St Mary's in 1909 she gave her few odds and ends to my mother and I still have in my possession a large wooden blanket box which she bought when she married. She was 91 when she died in 1912 so I wonder how old the box is. It is still good and has not got a blemish and is still used for the purpose it was made - a blanket box. (*Miss Julia Hummerstone was born in Edmonton, Middlesex and in 1911 lived alone at No 19 Lexden Street, next to the Blacksmith's. In 1861 she was working as a cook in Kensington where*

the housemaid was Amy Ainsworth (1811-1902) from Lexden. Julia was visiting Amy in 1891 and in 1901 they were living together at 27 Lexden Street but later moved to No 19. Julia died aged 90 in 1918 and was buried at Lexden. Bill Shaffles was born in



Lexden Street/Road in early 1930. From left: No 33/213, Stedman's shop, 31/211 Post Office, 29/209 the Misses Hawes sweet shop.

1879 in Lexden. His father was Matthias b1843 and his mother, Caroline, was born in Stanway. In the 1911 Census, the first time the form was completed by the head of house, Billy spells his name Schäfle.)

Over the road (at No 4) lived Mr Hutley who kept the blacksmith's shop and next to him was Mrs Lark. I did not

know Mr Lark, he died before I was born, but

my mother told me that, before she married, Mrs Lark was Miss Robins. Next to her was the Sun, kept by Ike Garrard who was also an undercover bookmaker. (John William Lark was born in 1858 and worked as a plumber until his death in 1911. He married Maria Robbins in her home town of Lowestoft on 3rd January 1880. In 1891 they were living at 6 Church Lane and in 1911 at 6 Lexden Street. Maria died in 1942.)

Over the road (No 25 now 205) lived Mr Lambert. He worked for Blake at Magazine Farm and he was one of those men who had the gift of being able to do anything with horses. (Henry Lambert b1849). Next to him, between him and Hawes' shop was a house (No27?) lived in by two maiden ladies but I never knew them. (1924 Benham's Directory gives residents' names as a Miss King and a Miss Maskell for No 29 not No 27 although Miss Elizabeth Maskell, a retired farmer of Thorogoods Farm, had died in 1920.) In Mr Hawes' time there was a flourishing business done at his shop. He had a large market garden on Parsons Hill - all built on now. But after he died (1915) things were different. The two girls - you could not say they were silly, but there were certainly not bright and Cliff Kerry, (right) the man who worked for them, was not either. The whole thing gradually went down. The two girls gave up the milk round and the paper round and when one of the ladies in the house next door died they gave the big shop up, moved next door and kept that as a sweet shop. (1917 Kelly's directory - Shop at No 29 Lexden Street. Edward Hawes b1843 had four daughters, Maud (1874-1955) Lucy b1876, Harriet (1878-1950) and Edith



b1880 who died young. Lucy, a schoolteacher, moved away. Birth dates of Maud and Harriet are inconsistent but in the 1939 Register the sisters are General Shop Proprietors at 209 Lexden Road. Maud's birthday is given as 22nd April 1874 and Harriet's as 31st December 1879 but there is an interesting note in the Register "the year of birth is unknown - believed?" Clifford Kerry (right) born in 1885 later worked as a labourer in a local nursery and lived at 58 Straight Road. He and his wife, Emily, both died in 1968.)



The big shop (arrowed left - No 33, now No 213) they let to Mr Stedman. He was an auctioneer's porter and he opened half the shop as a second-hand furniture shop and the other half as a fish shop. That was a bad move from his point of view. He was one of those people who could keep sober while the drink kept way from them - and in this case he was living

almost next door to it. He could stand in the bar (*Sun Inn on left of picture*) and indulge his hobby and keep an eye on his shop through the window. (*In 1911 William Stedman b1862 was living with his family at 46 London Road and the census details give his occupation as "Commission Agent"*)

And now back to our tale. Stedman was in the bar of the Sun one morning when through the window he saw Schemer Butcher coming down the hill with his old dog. When he got to the fish side of the shop he stopped and looked in the window. He stood there some time. After a time Mr Stedman went out to see if he wanted anything. He said, "Not particularly; I was just wondering what that black thing there was". "Oh," said Stedman, "that is a lobster." Schemer said, "What do you want to tell me that lie for? I know different to that. I seen plenty of lobsters in the shops and they are all red." "I know" said Stedman, "but, you see, they have been cooked and that is when they turn red when they are dead." "You tell somebody else that yarn, Stedman. I seen a lot of dead things in my time but I ain't seen one turn a different colour yet and I don't believe it." Well argument got fast and furious and at last Stedman said "Well, if you don't believe me I will tell you what I will do. I will cut that string and you put your finger in that claw and that will tell you that it is alive." Schemer said, "I ain't putting my finger in there, I know." "Well", said Stedman, "if you won't, how else can I prove to you that it is alive?" "I tell you what you can do," said Schemer, "you can put the old dog's tail in." "All right," said Stedman. So that is what they did and no sooner had they got the dog's tail in the claw than it was off up Lexden Hill heading for home with the lobster firmly anchored on its tail. Stedman looked at this, then said, "Here Schemer, whistle your dog; it's got my lobster." Schemer said, "What are you talking about Stedman? Do you whistle your lobster; that's got my dog. We never did hear what happened to the lobster but I think most of us had shrewd ideas. (*Unfortunately Schemer Butcher cannot be traced!*)



"F in bed with bad cold. Mr Worts called to see him." This is the first entry in a diary of 1885 that was given recently to Sonia Lewis by Alexandra Scott whose daughter, Victoria Morley, had moved to the old Lexden Manor in Lexden Road. In the early 1960s this was divided into two properties (134 and 136). *(left - old postcard of Lexden Manor, found with the diary)*. The diary had been left on the mantelpiece by the family of the previous owner, Mr Arthur C Hume, FRCS, Consultant

Orthopaedic Surgeon and President of Colchester Medical Society in 1989. He sadly died in 2017 after living in the house for 50 years. The new house owners discussed what should happen to this piece of history and felt it should be shared with the people of Lexden. Alex thought that Sonia "would know what to do with it" and Sonia passed it on to me.

The small diary, bound in green Roan Tuck by NJ Powell & Co, had a small pocket and each page was interleaved with blotting paper and in 1885 it cost 1/6 (7½p). There were four days on the left hand side (Sunday to Wednesday) and on the other side of the interleaved blotting paper was Thursday to Saturday. At the back were monthly pages for accounts and memoranda. Useful information for the time was given at the front, eg, 15th January 1759 British Museum opened and 21st October 1805 The Battle of Trafalgar. Details were also given of London cab fares and high water at London Bridge. It also included information about the General Post Office, eg, a first class letter to Germany weighing less than ½oz was 2½d (1p).

There was a great deal of information of use to the owner of the diary but no page for personal details. This meant that a name could not be given to the writer who had recorded in pencil an average of a dozen words per day. The first entry mentioned Mr Worts, who could be identified as a Colchester physician, and it could be assumed that the writer lived in Colchester, but who was F? Other entries mentioned that Mrs X called or the writer called on Mrs Y. Church was often attended twice on a Sunday and occasionally the church was mentioned, ie, Trinity and Lexden. Carriages and horses were regularly recorded so the writer had to live in a fairly large establishment, sufficient to house a Victoria, brougham, pony-cart, dray and possibly a coach, together with the necessary horses. There would also have to be accommodation for a coachman and/or a groom to look after the animals and prepare the carriages for use and drive them.

Having accepted from the daily entries that the writer was probably a woman and lived to the west of Colchester, as she mentioned walking to town or to Lexden. Detective work was extensive but eventually having trawled through many pages of the 1881 Census several possible families were revealed. Lexden House, at the top of Lexden Hill to the west of Colchester, was occupied by Frederick Ord, a retired Army Colonel, and his wife, Clarke. They had a coachman, a groom, a butler and

other staff and by 1891 they had moved to Beverley Lodge, 10 Lexden Road, and Clarke was recorded as Clarice.

It was now the time to research Frederick and Clarice Ord and others mentioned in the diary. Bearing in mind that at that time the use of a Christian name was limited to close family, very close friends and sometimes servants, it was noted that Isabel, Tommy, Maggie, Fred, Alice, Carter, Marion, etc, were frequently mentioned. It was then established that Isabel and Fred were children of F's first marriage and that Fred had married Alice. Carter was Clarice's lady's maid, Marion (Mott) was a close friend and Tommy, it turned out, was a horse as later in the diary F is riding him! Maggie was also a horse. Later entries record visits to Idsworth in Hampshire which, from the family history, confirmed that this was where Clarice had been brought up.

It could now be firmly established that the writer of the diary was Clarice Clarke Ord (*right*) who was born on 23rd May 1849, the fourth daughter and sixth child of Sir Jervoise Clarke-Jervoise and Lady Georgiana (née Thompson). The diary could now be researched with a view to finding out the lifestyle of a lady living in Colchester nearly 140 years ago.



Having established who had written the diary, the story of her life could now be investigated and recorded. Her father, born in 1804, was the second Baronet and his grandfather, Jervoise Clarke (1734-1808), had to adopt in 1777 the surname Jervoise (pronounced Jarvis) under the terms of the will of his maternal grandfather, Thomas Jervoise. Writing a diary was a common occupation in those days especially for the landed classes, so Clarice was no stranger to them, as both her father, Sir Jervoise, and her mother, Lady Georgiana, kept them, giving an insight into the life of the aristocracy in the 19th century: hunting, shooting, management of the family estate at Idsworth and entertaining whilst there and spending much of the summer season at their house in London.



Clarice's husband, Frederick William Craven Ord ('F' in the diary), was born on 29th June 1825 at Greenstead near Ongar in Essex, the fifth of ten children of Harry Gough Ord (1792-1845) and the grandson of Craven Ord, a renowned antiquarian of Greenstead Hall in Essex (*left*).

Clarice and F were married on 22nd April 1869 at St Michael's Church, Chester

Square in Pimlico. He was 43 years old and she was only 19 and would have needed her parents' agreement to the marriage. Clarice and F returned to his army accommodation at Hilsea but by 1874 F was posted to Colchester as the Inspector of Reserve Artillery and he and Clarice lived at Donyland Hall (*over*). In 1878 they were living in Lexden House and F retired in 1880. By October 1882 they had moved to Beverley Lodge, 10 Lexden Road having answered advertisements in the



Essex Standard of 26th May or 2nd June 1882 stating that the Lodge was available to let furnished and described it as a "good residence with capital stabling, greenhouses and gardens, situate on the Lexden Road in the best part of Colchester. Also if desired a large Kitchen Garden adjoining well stocked with fruit trees and an extensive range of Orchard Houses. Apply to Messrs Turner, Deane & Co Solicitors"

Both Clarice and F were very 'horsey'. F had been in the Horse Brigade of the Royal Artillery and Clarice's diary regularly records that he was hunting with one of the local hunts, often the Essex and Suffolk, or he would just ride one of their several horses. Clarice also rode but seemed to prefer driving one of the carriages they owned with one of their several horses Pincher was a favourite, as was Maggie. Other horses included Tommy, Peter (both not to be confused with friends!), Doctor and Banker. Carriages mentioned in the diary included a brougham (pronounced "broom" or "brohm") - a light closed four-wheeled vehicle; a Victoria, which was open, a pony-cart, a dray and possibly a coach.

When Clarice wrote her diary in 1885 she was only 36 years old and it is clear that she did not write everyday but caught up several days at a time as there are some crossings out with the phrase repeated another day. It is also clear that her spelling of names and places was usually quite accurate. She seemed very young at heart, enjoying herself with friends and varied activities. On 6th January she records the first of many concerts in which she and her friends performed at Lexden National School Hall. Clarice was quite musical, playing the piano and singing, often performing popular songs of the day such as "Robin Redbreast", sometimes with a chorus of little girls and accompanied by Miss Hutley on the violin. She would also recite poetry or read entertaining passages. If she was not performing with friends, Clarice would act as prompt for short one act plays such as "Ici on Parle Français" a popular English farce by Thomas John Williams (1824-1874), first performed at the Adelphi Theatre, London in 1859. Clarice and her friends, including Mrs Everitt, Mrs Thacher, Mrs Donaldson, Mrs D Bawtree, Capt Mott, Miss Turner and Miss Williams would rehearse for hours!

On Saturday 21st March 1885 Clarice records that F left home at 10.40am with Maggie and the brougham. She left with her lady's maid, (Rosa) Carter, at 2.10pm probably from Colchester North station. It appears that on the same train was Pincher, the horse, and the unmentioned coachman, and they all arrived together at 7.30pm at her family home, Idsworth (*right*). F's daughter, Isabel, was also there and she and her father went hunting nearly every day. Many people called and Clarice visited her old acquaintances.



Her sister, Rachel, and daughter, Kathleen, came to stay for a few days as did another sister, Janet, her husband, Jamie, and Henry, her brother. She records that they attended morning church at Chalton where she sang, accompanied by Isabel. She and Isabel also decorated the church for Easter (5th April), helped by Carter. They went down again to Idsworth in July. F's son from his first marriage, Frederick Cusac Ord, visited Colchester twice in 1885 with his wife, Alice, and son, another Frederick. Interestingly, although Clarice loved her friends' children and willingly played with them she always called F's grandson "the boy"!

Clarice was very kind to her many friends - over 220 people are mentioned in this one diary alone - and they would regularly call on each other. She would take them for rides in one of the carriages and have them to tea or to dine in the evening. Children, especially the six children of the Worts family and four of the Mott family, often came to the house and she would give them tea and play games. She seemed to enjoy the company of children but never had her own. She loved gardening and must have had conservatories as she would give or send peaches, roses and other flowers to her friends at all times of the year. She even gave her servants flowers to send away - and pay for them to be sent. Many of her friends lived in Lexden and generally came from the upper middle class, clerics, those of independent means, etc, but she treated them the same as she did the young military families who may only have stayed in Colchester for a short while. Christmas for Clarice included having all the household in to breakfast, lunch and tea, when they all swapped presents. Her coachman, Arnold Dunicliffe, his wife and family also came on Boxing Day for tea and games.

She was a young woman and probably followed the fashion of the day. The bustle had returned, but was much smaller than it had been in earlier years. It necessitated a separate structure fitted around the waist, or consisted of pads attached to the waistband or incorporated into a petticoat. Rich fabrics were popular with much



trimming, flouncing, bows, etc, and there were tight bodices and sleeves and high necklines, reduced for evening wear. Fur was popular for warmth and style and Clarice had a fur tippet - a stole or scarf-like wrap - worn over her shoulders. She lost it in November but it was found by Mrs Donaldson, her near neighbour at No 12 Lexden Road. Hair styles (*left*) were close to the head with curls on the top which encouraged much smaller hats. When winter approached her purchases reflected this as she

bought merino vests, white bodices, black kid gloves, a felt petticoat and night dresses from Swan and Edgar, totalling £4 3s 11d. Further winter clothes were bought in November and included black crape, trimming, lining and lace for the bodice of a new dress. She also had her muff altered. December recorded the purchase of black velvet and a wing to decorate a black straw hat and spotted net for veils.

The accounts that she kept at the back of the diary recorded an interesting split between 'self' and 'extras' and her total spend for 1885 is carefully recorded as £68 11s 4d. An approximate evaluation of her spending would be £1 in 1885, worth

about £100 today. Many of the 'self' entries were about the purchase of clothing, material, trimmings, etc. The 'extras' included a Doctor's bill, oranges for one of the concerts, buying gifts for her servants, or tickets for local entertainments. She also travelled to London fairly regularly and some of the shops she visited are familiar today. In February 1885 she bought square collars for 1/- and in March she spent £3 18s 6d on a black dress from Gorrings and a fur cloak from Hoadleys at 3gns. Also that month she bought a chenille wrap, a net veil, astrakhan, bones and wadding, high buttoned boots, stockings and collars for a total of £14 18s 8d. That visit to London also included buying bananas and a vase for Miss Kathleen O'Grady of 5 Lexden Street (now 187 Lexden Road) who was ill with diphtheria.

Clarice's staff benefitted from her kindness and generosity and one wonders how much she actually paid them. The average wages at the time were very low as accommodation, food and lodging were included. On her staff was her Lady's Maid, Rosa Carter, a cook and a maid. There was also a coachman and groom and "Young Freddie", a kitchen boy of about 14 years. These staff members "lived in" but later, having married, some may have continued working for her on a daily basis.

After the death of her husband's brother in August 1885 at a spa in Homburg, Germany, Clarice travelled by train with Carter, her Lady's Maid, to help with his sister who was very ill. She sat up most of the night with her and the nurse, whom she helped after her sister-in-law's death. She appeared to take control of what had to be done, going to the consulate, arranging for the coffin and flowers, etc. She was very thoughtful and when the coffin left for England she took the bereaved husband out of the house. They all left at 3pm, stopping at Cologne for "supplies", arriving at Brussels at 5am, crossing from Calais at 1am and ensuring that all the staff were dropped off at their appropriate railway stations in London. She then arranged with local Colchester stonemason, Lent Watts, for the tombstones.

F died on 6th February 1894 whilst out hunting - his favourite pastime. He was buried a few days later in the Ord family grave at Fornham St Martin, Suffolk, with many family members attending and many floral tributes from friends and family including one "From his two loving ones at Beverley Lodge." This would indicate that his niece, Lina - Henrietta Selina Ord, (the daughter of his brother, Alfred) was already living in Colchester with them. She was born in Ireland in 1861 and seemed to be rather a character.

SUDDEN DEATH OF MAJOR-GENERAL ORD.

Major-General F. W. C. Ord of Beverley Lodge, Colchester, died while hunting with the Essex and Suffolk foxhounds yesterday. The general, who was over seventy, was heard to say that the pace was too much for him, but apparently did not pull up, and, suddenly throwing up his arms, slipped from the saddle, and was found to be dead. Death is believed to be due to heart disease, from which General Ord is known to have suffered. Deceased was a keen, all-round sportsman, and was especially fond of coaching.

The church Clarice regularly attended was St Mary-at-the-Walls, where she sang in the choir, although she did attend Holy Trinity and Lexden, where she also sang in the choir. She was very friendly with Rev Early, the rector of Holy Trinity and Rev

John and Mrs Papillon at Lexden, but apparently not with Rev Irvine at St Mary's. With friends of the parish she would pay for certain Christmas events and helped to serve an annual tea in the Assembly rooms in Colchester to about 40 people in the Holy Trinity parish. Then they would put on an entertainment, finishing with country dancing. She records that "All took away Xmas cards". For Christmas that year, her share of the "old women's tea" was 14/6 and an extra 6d for more Christmas cards for them, plus another 1/6. For an earlier entertainment that year she had paid £1 to help with the costs and 1/8 for oranges.

Clarice Ord continued to live at Beverley Lodge until her death there on 17th August 1927. She was buried on 22nd August at St Andrew's Church, Greensted-juxta-Ongar, the village where F was born. She remembered in her will such people as



her gardener, to whom she left £30, £5 to St Mary-at-the-Walls church for the choir and organ fund and even £2 to Mark Peggs, the organ blower. Lina Ord stayed in the house until her death on 1st September 1932 and the house was later sold to the Colchester Royal Grammar School. It was renamed Gurney Benham House (*left c1955 - CRGS Library*).

On the face of it Clarice's diary does not make exciting reading and the daily entries are somewhat routine but the interest lies in the mentioning of well-known local families, their connections and inter-marriages, the groups that hold the entertainments and those who visit and are visited regularly. She was very kind and generous to friends, visiting actresses and servants, giving them flowers and peaches, taking them for rides in one of the carriages or even just easing their journey to the railway station. The diary also opens up interesting digressions on the wider family on their visits to Idsworth and Fornham St Martin and the hastily arranged trip to Homburg in Germany when F's brother and sister died. It also reveals how thoughtful and kind she was to her sister-in-law's widower in Germany.

One wonders what would have been recorded in her other diaries. It is remarkable that this one survived especially as it was found in a house nearly 140 years after it was written. 134 /136 Lexden Road (Lexden Manor) had been the home of the Papillon family with whom she was friendly, but that doesn't explain how it got there. However, just the one diary has opened up the life and times of a very interesting lady in Colchester in the middle of the reign of Victoria.

The research of Clarice Ord's diary with the complete transcription, accounts, the identification of many of the people named and additional notes is available to anyone who is interested at a cost yet to be confirmed but about £7.50 per copy, when publication can be arranged.



SUMMER BBQ 2021
Saturday 7th August

**in Liz & Alan's Garden,
Lexden Road
12.30pm – 3.00pm
£10 per person**



**To book your place
please contact any committee Member.**

Your Committee

Chairman

Stan Kordys 01206 502282
s.kordys@ntlworld.com

Vice Chairman

Dick Barton 01206 573999
dickbartonlex@gmail.com

Treasurer

Melvin White 01206 575351
melvin.s.white@btinternet.com

Secretary

Liz White 01206 522713
alangwhite187444@hotmail.com

Membership Secretary

Jackie Bowis 01206 561528
jebowis50@gmail.com

Magazine Joint Editors

Liz White / Jackie Bowis
alangwhite187444@hotmail.com

Archivist

Bernard Polley 01206 572460
heath86end@aol.com

Refreshments

Vacant

General Members

Ian Bowis 01206 561528
Sonia Lewis 01206 579950
sonialewis@waitrose.com

**Due to the continuation of Covid-19 regulations
we are currently still not permitted to
hold Indoor Group Meetings but will let you know as soon
as we are able to arrange an event.**