

Lexden History Group



No 3 Cherry Row

- The Member for Mexico
- First 150 years of Lexden School
- Cherry Row, Lexden Heath

Newsletter No 70 September 2023
Website
www.lexdenhistory.org.uk

Earlier this year I joined the Lexden History Group and heard an interesting talk on Lexden Church graveyards given by our Secretary Liz White, and recently Liz gave a talk to u3a Stanway members about Coronation services from time immemorial to the present. At one point in her talk, she spoke of Sir Weetman Pearson at which point I said out loud "Ah, the Member for Mexico". This baffled her at first, but when I explained my comment at a later date she approached me at the Lexden History Group in June and asked me if I would write a short article for a future Newsletter explaining what I had told her. This story may already be known by some of our members and it doesn't really concern Lexden, but I think it may be of interest to some of us so here is the story as I told it to Liz (most information sourced from Wikipedia):



Sir Weetman Pearson (*left*) was born in July 1856 in West Yorkshire. He was a British engineer, oil industrialist, benefactor and Liberal politician. In 1880, aged 24, he took over the family construction business founded by his grandfather and later moved its headquarters to London where, in 1900, the company took over the construction of the Great Northern and City Railway. This was completed in 1904 and run by Pearson for the next four years.

In 1889 President Porfirio Diaz of Mexico invited Pearson to his country to build a railroad, the Tehuantepec Railway, from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. On a trip to Mexico Pearson missed a rail connection in Laredo, Texas, and was forced to overnight there which he described as "wild with the oil craze". He himself drilled for oil in Texas, hoping that having his own oil well would fuel the Mexican Railway he was building.

President Diaz was not happy with the American Standard Oil's monopoly on oil production so he encouraged Pearson to help establish a home-grown competitor called Eagle Oil which built its first refinery in 1908. The following year Pearson founded the *Compañía Mexicana de Petróleo El Aguila SA* ("Mexican Eagle Oil Company") in Mexico. In 1911 President Diaz was overthrown in a revolution which had a bad effect on foreign investors so in 1918 Pearson sold most of his Eagle Oil shares, thus becoming a very wealthy man.

Right: Rail tank car of the Eagle Oil Company Mexico 1914



Aged 38, he stood as the Liberal candidate in the February 1895 bye-election in Colchester and won, retaining his seat in the General Election later that year until 1910 when he was raised to the peerage as a Baronet. Because during his time as an MP (1895 to 1910) he spent most of his time in Mexico overseeing his railway and Eagle Oil interests, he became popularly known in both Westminster and Colchester as "the member for Mexico".

In 1917 he was sworn of the Privy Council and made the 1st Viscount Cowdray. Asked by Lloyd George to become President of the Air Board, he agreed provided he received no salary. After the war, the 1st Viscount Cowdray was noted for his philanthropy. Lord Cowdray died in his sleep at his residence in Aberdeen in 1927 aged 70, and left a fortune of £400 million (some £25 billion in today's money). A remarkable life led by a remarkable man.

EDUCATION AND THE FIRST 150 YEARS OF LEXDEN SCHOOL



I noticed recently that No 195 Lexden Road (*left*), originally Lexden School, was up for sale and started thinking about who had lived there and its history. By the beginning of the 19th century the Church of England was keen that children should be educated in the 3Rs. For centuries education for the poor had been irrelevant to most people. In fact any young man trying to 'improve his condition' was considered not to understand his position in society and was therefore a troublemaker. This gradually changed and many schools, often run by non-denominational or nonconformist charities, were also attended by the children of wealthy families.

Religious instruction was considered paramount especially by Hannah Moore, who started the first known Sunday School in Cheddar in 1790. She thought that writing was an 'unnecessary accomplishment for the poor' and didn't encourage the teaching of arithmetic or 'more dangerous subjects'. Despite this by 1820 many children were attending Sunday Schools most of which taught reading and writing as well as religion. Some children attended for several years, keen to become literate and it was so popular that some Sunday schools even opened on weekday evenings.

Lexden Sunday School had been established in 1801 after Thomas Kilner, the heir of a former rector of Lexden, Rev James Kilner, gave land for the "express purpose" of providing a Sunday School "to instruct the poor children of the parish". Also provided was a house for a master and mistress. In 1808 the Lexden Rector, Rev George Preston, mentioned "school houses" - probably the Sunday school and two Dame Schools, all of which were run by him. By 1817 there were two Dame schools in Lexden, which taught about 40 local children to read and write, although the women running them were not trained and may have undertaken washing or sewing at the same time. It is not surprising that national standards varied although some did give a good foundation in the 3Rs. Two Dame schools (*right*) were operating in Lexden in 1833, teaching about 60 children, who paid weekly fees of 3 or 4 pence and were supported by a few subscriptions. Whether these were the same schools as those recorded in 1817 is not known.



In 1798 Joseph Lancaster (*left*) was determined to address the general lack of education, often caused by the cost of teachers' salaries. In Southwark he appointed just one schoolmaster to oversee more than 300 boys (no girls) in a large schoolroom. The crucial factor was that younger children, grouped each side of the schoolroom, were taught by older and more able pupils – monitors - who had been instructed earlier. This method was quickly adopted by schools across the country. In 1808 the Royal British Society opened to promote the Lancasterian system and in 1814 its name was changed to the British and Foreign School Society and established many non-denominational British schools. Aspiring teachers from all over the country attended the British and Foreign School Society House and Training College for Schoolmasters in Borough Road, Southwark.

The Church of England in 1811 set up National Schools to provide education in every parish with the support of local clergy. The curriculum included the 'three Rs' and religion to try to combat 'the influence on the working classes of nonconformity and the consequences of Catholic emancipation and Irish immigration'. As children of non-conformists were not allowed to attend these schools

many British Schools were started in direct competition. The rivalry was often vicious. The Bishop of London, for example, proclaimed in 1814 that 'Every populous village unprovided with a National School must be regarded as a stronghold abandoned to the enemy (ie, the nonconformists)'. A vicar described British schools as 'dreadful machines ... fraught with moral and religious evil to Church and Country'. The National Society insisted that only the Authorised bible be taught, that all pupils were to attend an Anglican Church on Sundays and that all teachers had to be members of the Church of England. There were also many rules which had to be adhered to by the school, pupils and their parents.

“Parents are earnestly requested to read the following Rules, and the Address which is appended to them, once a month and to call the attention of their children to the PRECEPTS and ADVICE contained in them.” Some rules are given below:

- I. Parents, who wish their children to be admitted into these (National) Schools, must apply to one of the committee, at the school, on some Monday morning, by nine o'clock. No child can be admitted who has any infectious disease.
 - II. When children are first admitted, their parents shall receive a copy of the rules and address, for which they shall pay 1d.
 - III. The payment for one child shall be two pence per week, but if two or more children are sent from the same family, only a penny shall be required for each additional child. Those who write with pen and ink must pay a penny per week extra, and find their own copy books.
 - IV. The children are to come with their hands and faces well washed, and their hair clean and neat, and never to be without pocket handkerchiefs.
 - X. Every Saturday is a whole holiday, and there will be vacations in harvest and at Christmas and at any other time when the managing committee shall think proper.
 - XVI. Though these schools are intended principally for the children of the poorer classes, yet small tradesmen and small occupiers of land may send their children on payment in addition to the usual weekly charge of 2s 6d quarterly, or Such Sum that may seem reasonable to the committee, and the visiting committee shall determine what parents shall be allowed this privilege.
 - XVII. One half of the money, paid by the children, shall be returned to them at the beginning of every quarter, in useful articles of clothing and rewards in books, &c, shall occasionally be given, but no boy or girl will be entitled to any of the rewards who does not carefully observe the following **Precepts** to regulate behaviour and thought
1. To behave respectfully to the mistresses, managers, and visitors and to be “lowly and reverent to all their betters,” both in the school, and whenever they meet them elsewhere.
 2. To be kind to their school fellows and to all other children, and to avoid all quarrelling.
 3. Never to cheat any one, nor to take another person's property, even in play; and never to play for money.
 4. To use no bad language.
 5. Never to mock cripples or infirm persons, not to be rude to the old.
 6. Never to be cruel to animals, nor unkind to any living creature.
 7. To be dutiful and respectful to their parents and friends, endeavouring to assist them as far as they can.
 8. To keep holy the Sabbath, and to behave with seriousness, attention and reverence in all places of public worship.

9. On all occasions to speak the TRUTH.
10. To come to, and go from school in an orderly manner, never to throw stones, or to loiter by the way.
11. To be quiet in the school, not to use any play things in school time, to keep their books neat and free from dog's ears, and not to climb upon the desks not to scrawl upon or in any other way to damage the desks, forms or walls of the school-house.

Village schools often became National schools, supported by the parish or subscription but used Lancaster's monitorial system. Education for the local 'lower classes' in Lexden was increased when the Lexden National school was established in 1817 in Spring Lane (*right - arrowed*) for 100 poor parish children. Many of these children received charity clothing and by 1819 all the poor children in the parish between 6 and 12 years old attended the school. The schoolroom measured approx 25ft x 35ft and at that time held about 70



children. The Rev George Preston provided much financial support, together with subscriptions, and most other costs were underwritten by the legacy from Ann Rawstorn of Lexden Manor. However, this was insufficient to pay both a master and a mistress, so the daily attendance of the rector and his wife, Jane, was vital for the school to survive. By 1833 Lexden School had 84 children. That year the Government gave annual grants to both British and National schools and the argument over biased religious instruction was eased by a non-sectarian syllabus developed by Rev J W Irvine, Rector of St Mary-at-the-Walls Church in Colchester. Although financial support at Lexden had increased it was still insufficient and a further £20 was received from the will of Rev John Rawstorn Papillon in 1837. Two years later there were 70 children at the school and about 40 of them still received charity clothes.

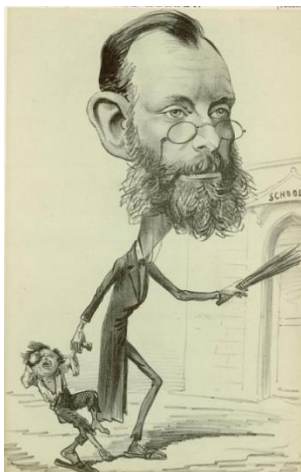
Churches and philanthropists continued to fund and run schools but a fee was still charged. In 1844 a new law required children working in factories to have six-half-days per week at school, little understanding that these children were often needed at home, or in work, to help support the family. School subscriptions and equipment costs were often unaffordable and this only encouraged the continuation of 'ragged' and dame schools which essentially ended up as day care. In the 1861 Census Elizabeth Warner, aged 40, is recorded as living in Cherry Row and working as a Dame Schoolmistress. It is not clear whether the school was in her home.

Rev George Preston died in 1841 but successive rectors regularly helped at the school and dealt with exam reports, inspections and sanitary arrangements. HMIs were first appointed in 1840 to ensure that the government's money was being well spent and for years the same inspector would attend the school. Every March he examined each child who handed him his slate to mark the arithmetic and writing and at the same time he listened to reading from two different pages of a book. The school's results were entered into the school log. There were also annual Diocesan inspections on religious instruction.

In 1842 when Jeremiah Burrell was the schoolmaster, a new larger school and teacher's house nearer Lexden Road replaced the original building and when he died in 1844 John Appleby, who was also the local postmaster, became the schoolmaster. He was helped by Jeremy Burrell's widow,

Emma, who John married in 1847. By 1850 the monitorial system was being replaced by certificated and pupil teachers. In 1861 the rector, Rev John Papillon, “made himself responsible” for raising the funds for an extra classroom, and his wife organised a bazaar that year at Lexden Manor with military bands, stalls and entertainment. Over £127 was raised which helped to fund the enlargement of the school to take 140 children. John Appleby was school master for 30 years and lived for some years at 6 Lexden Road, next to the Sun Inn. He died in 1879 and is buried in Lexden Churchyard.

The Newcastle Commission in 1862 introduced a grant for every child regularly attending school but only if they passed examinations in reading, writing and arithmetic to one of six standards. This was often referred to as 'Lowe's Code', after Robert Lowe (*right*), Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education. He opposed religious influence and grants were not awarded for religious instruction, nor drawing or PT. A good pass in two subjects earned 4s per child and only 3s if a fair pass was obtained. This, of course, led to teaching to the exam as happens today. Even ill children were ‘encouraged’ to attend the exams to raise the school results and the Lexden School log book often records ‘good attendance this week as it is the week of the yearly inspection.’ The system was discontinued after 1896.



Although annual government grants were given from 1866, the state took no responsibility for education until 1870 when William Forster’s Education Act laid down that all children should attend school. (*left: William Edward Forster MP 1818-86 - cartoon from ‘The Hornet’ 1872 entitled The Popular Educator.*) It also proposed 50% maintenance grants but encouraged the continuance of private contributions. The annual grant was determined by attendance - a constant challenge for the headmaster. Additional donations were encouraged and records show that the Egerton Greens, the Erringtons and the Papillons were amongst the Lexden donors. The number of children attending rose to 120 in 1886 and in 1893 with numbers increasing to 210 Lexden school was enlarged again but even so each child only had 8 square feet - not making any allowance for furniture.

The Lexden School HMI report of 1894 acknowledges that “the children have passed a fairly good examination” but notes that more desks are needed, better lighting and heating and also “a cupboard for objects”. These problems were not resolved immediately but in 1896 it was noted that overcrowding caused difficulties in maintaining order. By 1898 school inspections gave constructive help rather than just criticism with extra grants being awarded but even by 1920 the earlier problems of lighting and heating had not been resolved. There is no report on the cupboard!

The curriculum now included lessons in writing, reading, grammar and recitation - children in each school year learnt a prescribed poem. Other subjects taught included arithmetic, history, geography, science observation and music, Concerts were occasionally given to parents. Needlework was taught to the girls and laundry and mothercare courses were attended at other schools. As Lexden was a church school Religious Instruction was given from 9 to 9.45am, but it was noted that children were indistinguishable in the examination papers and “that the words were the same”!

Teaching was changing and by the end of the nineteenth century ‘Monitresses’ - often ex-pupils – were examined after one year and if suitable would have a written agreement to work as a pupil teacher. After four years they would take the Queen’s (or King’s) Scholarship exam and were inspected ‘on the job’. Having passed they became certificated but had to attend a training college

for two or three years, to become fully trained teachers. The school also had to be certified 'as fit for training them'. One Lexden pupil teacher in 1892 was Kate Isom, aged 14, who by 1901 was qualified and teaching in Suffolk. Another was 15 year old Ada Denton in 1899 and was recorded in the 1901 Census as a pupil teacher. Both girls lived in Cherry Row (*see article on page 9*). In 1893 amidst much local gossip, Kate Isom's sister, Alice, married the headmaster, Frederick Motum who was 15 years older. He had been appointed as a young teacher to Lexden school in 1881. Lucy Currell, who lived at No 10 Cherry Row, was particularly vehement about the marriage.. Her husband, John, is recorded as saying "... my old dear is one of the worst. She will argue nine men and a horse to death in about twenty minutes, give her half a chance." There were calls for Mr Motum's resignation, also for his dismissal, and threats to keep the children away from school. The situation did blow over after the rector had said something at the church wedding!

Other local assistants were Miss Kate Theobald born in 1880 and living at 97 Lexden Street, and Miss Wistanley (sister of the district nurse). In July 1906, Kate Isom's sister, Lucy, was appointed Assistant Needlewoman and Mrs Jessie Colvin took singing and music theory. She was the daughter-in-law of Bazett Colvin who lived for some years at Lexden Manor. Mr Motum took woodwork and in 1920 Mr Laurocby organised physical exercises. Teachers' salaries varied according to their training and school numbers and in 1904 the national average was £85 15s 6½d. The Lexden Headmaster Mr Motum received £150 reaching the top scale of £220 by 1912. A trained assistant initially received £70 and a pupil teacher (female) £15 12s.



Children sat at desks with attached seats (*left*) and integral inkwell holders and worked on wooden framed slates with a special marker, frequently sharpened on nearby walls. They could bring a damp cloth or sponge to "wipe the slate clean", but often they would just spit and rub with their sleeve! Philip Cardy recalls the school in Spring Lane being 60 by 30 feet, with deal floors. His mother, Eliza, was the school cleaner for many years but in July 1917 when she was ill in hospital Philip, all of 11 years old, scrubbed the floors, cleaned the windows, polished the stoves and cleaned and filled the inkwells. Eliza received 7/6 a week for keeping the

school clean. Was Philip given this?

Measles closed the school from 13th January to 3rd February 1896. and in 1906 a new teacher, Miss Stannard, was concerned at the poor health of the children. Some did not attend as "they had no shoes or boots", or they had sores on their faces or filthy heads. Illnesses prevalent at the time were the usual colds, measles, chickenpox, whooping cough and mumps, but also recorded in the school log was scarlet fever, diphtheria, pneumonia and bronchitis. Cramped conditions at home and at school helped infections to quickly spread. An Act of Parliament in 1907 initiated regular school medical inspections, attended by the child's parents.

Punishments were meted out sparingly at Lexden, unlike much of the country. Disobedience earned two strokes to the hand or several on the 'lower back' (bottom!). Boys were punished for stone throwing, bullying, swearing, etc, illustrating that children are no different now! A later headmaster, Mr Mirrington, always prefaced his caning with "This will hurt me more than you" and one boy records that the caning did not hurt that much but having it administered in front of the girls did.

School was compulsory in 1880 for 5 to 10-year-olds and only free for the poorest children. Fees were abolished 1891 but parents could be fined for their child's non-attendance. Truancy was not uncommon and Inspectors visited homes threatening fines or court and in 1901 Lily Doe's attendance improved after a court appearance. However, it was seldom appreciated that a girl would be taken off school to look after younger children if her mother became ill or had left home

unexpectedly. Finding money for fees or fines could be hard if fathers were unemployed or on seasonal work or when illegitimate children living with other family members had to be funded. Medals encouraged attendance as did school photographs.



(Left: 1927 School photograph at the Tin Hut, photo courtesy Gordon Blake)

Back Row L-R: Stan Cook. Gordon Blake, NK. Ernest Jones, Doug Payne.

2nd Row from back L-R: Betty Johnson, ...Edwards, Peter Buck, ...Wilson, George Nelson, Ernest Bell, NK, Ted Smith, Doug Beaumont, NK.

3rd Row from back L-R: Mary Tweed, ... Jones, NK, M Bailey, ... Wicks, NK, NK, Mary Edwards.

Front Row L-R: NK, ...Bates, Jack Philpot, ...Mills, Reg, ...Spurgeon, NK, ...Rhodes.

The school leaving age was raised to 11 in 1893, in 1899 to 12 and in 1918 to 14 years. Children usually went into full time work on leaving school but further education especially after 1920 was encouraged. In 1920 seven Lexden children, having taken the admission exam, then attended Hamilton Road Central School. Others went to the Technical School and also the Grammar School.

Colchester Borough Council took over Lexden National School on 1st April 1904. Its 10 managers included the Rector, Canon Lester, Charles Gurney Hoare of Lexden House, the Borough Treasurer, Charles Everett Page, and Samuel Hurnard of Hill House in Lexden Road who had been a manager for years. School holidays were fixed by the Borough Council but half days were granted locally for sports events and special occasions, eg, 1911 Coronation or the induction of the new rector.

Mr Motum retired as head in February 1916 and Lancelot Cook was appointed. In 1925 the school, still rented from the Papillon family for £6 5s a quarter, became Lexden Council School - an all-standard school. With increasing numbers the infant school

and first junior year were forced to move in 1928 to the "Tin Hut"



(right) in Straight Road whilst a new school for 360 children was built in Collingwood Road to help alleviate the large influx of children from the new Lexden Garden Village estate. It was opened in March 1930 (left) with new headmaster Tom Mirrington replacing Lancelot Cook.



There were 8 classes for 8 to 13 year olds with about

50 children in each class. In 1933 a house system was established - Livingstone, Stanley, Cook and Scott. What would today's cancel culture make of that? A few years later there were 465 children attending but numbers dropped when senior schools were set up, ie, St Helena's in 1938.



The start of the Second World War forced the school to close for a couple of months from September 1939 until the air raid shelters were built, but there was continual disruption. In September 1940 many children were evacuated to the Midlands - apparently a safer place - but the school in Rushden was bombed and three children from Colchester were killed including Cecilia Chase aged 8 (*left*) from Lexden School.

On Tom Mirrington's retirement in 1941 Mr Walter R Orrin became head serving for 21 years and was replaced by Mr EA Barber. In the 1950s and 1960s a local Church Hall and temporary classrooms were used but the pressure was finally relieved by the opening of Prettygate and Home Farm schools and in 1970 the buildings of the former Shrub End school in Straight Road were annexed to Lexden school.

One famous ex pupil is Richard Stone - the royal portrait painter (*right*). Another is actress Amanda Root, broadcaster Liz Mullen and Leonard Woodrow became mayor of Colchester in 1977. 195 Lexden Road was later lived in by two local artists, Henry Collins and his wife, Joyce Pallot, who created many concrete murals both in Colchester and throughout the country.



CHERRY ROW, LEXDEN HEATH



Ordnance Survey map 1876

Ten cottages were built in a narrow cul-de-sac off Cross Road (now Heath Road) in the 1820s and this little unmade lane later became known as Cherry Row possibly because of the cherry trees nearby. Cherry Row is marked on the 1876 OS map (*above*), close to Burghsted House in Straight Road, and this house was later called Cherrywood House. In 1875 Burghsted was owned and lived in by local builder and developer, Henry Hammond Haywood. The site of the old house is now

Cherrywood Drive and Cherrywood Court. In 1891 and 1901 a young widow, Frances A Crosbie (nee Kays), who had been born in India, was living in Cherry Wood House with her young son Dudley Stuart Kays Crosbie.

Cherry Row (*right*) may well have also once been known as Pleasant Row as Thomas Isom, was recorded as being born there in 1841. The houses were semi-detached with their front doors side by side which led immediately into rooms measuring about 10ft 6in by 10ft with smaller rooms behind. There were also two rooms upstairs. These houses sometimes accommodated as many as seven children of varying ages, the older ones often working. There were outside privies and water was fetched from wells in neighbouring Heath Lodge. Each



house appeared to have a good sized garden which, no doubt, was well cultivated to provide food for the large families living. The houses would have been rented but it is not always clear who owned them, although the Morton family, and later the Beatties, of Heath Lodge did own several. In the early census records Cherry Row is not recorded as a separate lane but included in the general Lexden Heath area which makes it difficult to determine exactly where each family lived. By 1861 Cherry Row is mentioned but the house numbers were only recorded from 1891. However, some families were neighbours for many years.

The men who lived in Cherry Row had a variety of occupations but mainly to do with the land, eg, agricultural labourer, stockman, thresher engine driver, etc. This work was, of course, seasonal but there were many small farms in the area where they would have worked. Heath Farm was just on the corner of Straight Road and Cross (Heath) Road and Parsons Hill Farm, also known as Home Farm, was just down the road. Magazine Farm was not far away, nor was Prettygate, Squirrells or Plume Farm. Motts, Lexden Lodge and West House Farm were over the Lexden Road and it was quite possible that the men regularly moved between these farms as work became available during the year. In 1851 the average weekly pay for a farm worker was 9s 2½d, rising to 11s 1d ten years later. In 1871 it was 12s 1d, in 1881 13s 7½d, 1891 13s 9½d and in 1901 14s 11d. At the beginning of the First World War the rate was 16s 9d.

Other jobs recorded in Cherry Row included bricklayer, blacksmith, sawyer, groom, shoemaker, backmaker (cooper), carpenter, rural postman, grocer's assistant, and gardener. By the late 1800s a bricklayer could earn just under £2 a week in summer but less in winter. The average annual wage for all male workers in the United Kingdom was £42 14s. Such low rates did not necessarily provide a safe and happy existence and almost without exception the wives, and often the daughters, would work to augment the family income.

A woman, married, widowed or single, often worked from home as a laundress or washerwoman (a lesser job) for the wealthier families in Lexden. Such work was hard, hot and exhausting and although payment was poor - just a few pence an hour - it brought much needed extra money into the household. These women were generally poorly educated but of necessity very strong as from lighting the fire under the copper in the early morning, soaking, washing, drying and ironing, it could take all day or, depending on the weather, the work could take several days. It also meant that the house was often cold and damp. Children would help with carrying buckets - there was no piped water - turning the handle of the mangle and hanging up the wet clothes. Several heavy flat irons would be heated on the stove to enable ironing to continue without stopping often until late in the evening. Other female occupations in Cherry Row included domestic servant, dressmaker, milliner, tailoress and even a dame school mistress. A couple of the girls were pupil teachers.

The extended Currell family, prominent in Cherry Row for three generations, were generally agricultural labourers. They came originally from nearby West Bergholt and by the 1841 Census Thomas, born in 1795, and his wife Elizabeth were recorded as living in Lexden Heath. They were the first generation of Currells to live in Cherry Row, as was his younger brother, William. William's wife, Sophia née Lilley, whom he married in 1824, came from Great Horkesley. All their nine children were born in Lexden and their first child, also William, was born in 1828, and by 1851 was living in Cherry Row with his wife, Sarah, and their growing family, one of whom was grandly named Sheheradach. Another son of William and Sarah, Edward Currell, and his wife Emma, had their house in the Row in 1881. By 1851 Thomas Currell was a widower and was living in the Row with his daughter Ann and her son, James, but by 1861 and for the next 20 years he was lodging with the family of Alfred Case in nearby Cross Road (Heath Road). Thomas died in 1880. Another son of Thomas and Elizabeth, John, was born in 1823. He was the only Currell who did not work on the land but became a shoemaker, and he and his wife Lucy, with their six children lived at No 10 from about 1850. Lucy, was the daughter of William and Mary Tracey, also from West Bergholt, and who lived in Cherry Row. When William died in 1861 Mary went to live with John and Lucy and their growing family. By 1861 William and Sophia's girls, Elizabeth aged 26, Hannah 21 and Eliza 16, worked from home as tailoresses, as did many daughters in the Row.



In 1891 and William and Sarah Currell lived at No 8 next door to their son Edward at No 7. Edward was a gardener, his wife a laundress and their daughter, Esther now 35, was working as a dressmaker. By 1901 the only member of the Currell family left in Cherry Row was William, still at No 8, who was now 74 years old and “living on own means” so he had managed to save enough to look after himself without having to work.
(right: Lexden gravestone of Edward, Emma and Kate Currell)

The Isoms were another large extended family who lived in the area for many years. In the 1841 census, John Isom an agricultural labourer born 1806, and his wife, Susannah née Brown, were recorded as living in Lexden Heath with their four children, Sarah 12, William 8, Joseph 5 and Elijah aged 2. Their neighbours were Thomas Currell and William Clayden.



(above: Lexden Parish entry for the baptism of Elijah Isom in 1839)

The Isom family was still in Cherry Row in 1861, having been joined by their nephew Thomas Brown aged 17, an agricultural labourer, and Sarah Shelton 8, their granddaughter, daughter of Sarah who had married William Shelton in Lexden Church in 1849. Young Sarah remained with them for some years, moving with them to Fordham Heath where John found employment as a Farm Bailiff. She married William Stutter in 1871, but both Susannah and Sarah died in 1880 and John Isom, back to being a Farm Labourer, was living with Elijah next to the Crown Inn in Lexden Street together with young Sarah's son William. Members of the Isom family lived in Lexden Street for many years and John died there in 1886. Elijah's daughter, (Mahala) Kate, became a



pupil teacher at Lexden School as did her sister, Alice, who in 1893 married the headmaster Frederick Motum, causing a great stir of gossip in the parish! Elijah died in 1901 and is buried in Lexden Churchyard. Sisters Lucy and Mahala share the same grave in Lexden Churchyard (left: *Lucy and Mahala Isom headstone*).

Another close neighbour of the Currells and Isoms in the 1841 census was William Wagstaff, aged 40, his wife, Elizabeth born in Copford, and their four children. They, too, had begun life together in West Bergholt. William was an agricultural labourer but he died in 1844 leaving Elizabeth to look after the family. In 1851 she was working as a washerwoman to make ends meet and her son, William, was a bricklayer. She was also caring for the children of her unmarried daughter, Amelia. Amelia had another two sons and by 1861 they were all living with her mother at No 4 Cherry Row. Elizabeth died that year aged 63. Amelia eventually married David Clayton, a jobbing gardener, in Kensington in 1864. He was her cousin, 15 years her junior, and the son of her younger sister, Tamar. They lived nearby in Cross Road, (Heath Road) and in 1901 were back at No 4 Cherry Row. Amelia was widowed in 1910 and in the 1911 Census was living at 36 Straight Road with her widowed daughter, Sarah Nevard. Amelia died in 1916.

The closeness and long friendships of those in Cross/Heath Road and Cherry Row is demonstrated by the intermarriage of many of the families. The Nevard family lived in the area for many years and Samuel, a carpenter, and his wife, Elizabeth, a laundress, were recorded in the 1841 Census, living next door to her parents, William and Mary Tracey who were also the parents of Lucy wife of John Currell. Samuel and Elizabeth's son, Arthur (who married Sarah Wagstaff), sang in Lexden Church Choir and is recorded on the Choristers' Board behind the organ. Samuel was born in Boxted in 1816 and after Elizabeth's death in 1880 his daughter Ellen and her illegitimate son, Albert, were living with him in Cherry Row. By 1891 he was recorded in Church Lane visiting his married daughter Ann, and her husband John Middleton, a whitesmith. Their domestic servant was Esther Tracey, sister of Lucy and Elizabeth. Samuel died in 1897.

Another family name which appears regularly in the Census details for Cross Road/Cherry Row is Poole. John Poole, a gardener, was born in 1821 and in 1841 he is living with his widowed mother, Maria, a laundress, two brothers, Henry aged 15 an agricultural labourer, George 9, a sister, Eleanor 5 and a lodger, Anthony Pamplin 20, also an agricultural labourer. Maria died in 1856. John and his wife, Phoebe, moved to Bottle End and in 1861 were in Squirrell Lane. In the 1871 Census he is temporarily a patient in the Essex and Colchester Hospital, but with no details given. John is not seen again in Lexden until 1891 when he is recorded as a widowed gardener of 70 years, living at No 3 Cherry Row (*see front cover*) with his daughters, Mary aged 40 and Phoebe 30, both laundresses. His daughters lived at No 3 Cherry Row for many years and in the 1901 Census, Ada Poole aged 6 months is recorded as the daughter of Phoebe and ten years later as a scholar living at No 4 with Mary Ann and Phoebe. In the 1924 Benham's Directory Phoebe, is living at No 4 Cherry Row. Ada died in 1935 and is buried at Lexden with Phoebe who died aged 80 in 1941.

Meanwhile William John Poole born in 1882 is living in 1891 with his parents Samuel and Sarah Ann (nee Clayden) at nearby 8 Church Lane. He was also the grandson of William Clayden and Tamar Wagstaff. In the 1924 Benham's Directory William is living at No 7 Cherry Row. Although there does not appear to be a direct family link between Samuel b1848 and John Poole b1821 but it can now be appreciated that family lives in Lexden were very complicated!

A surname that cropped up regularly in the Lexden Heath/Cherry Row censuses was Boyden. In 1841 William Boyden, a bricklayer, and his wife Ruth were living in Lexden Street with three sons, William born in 1823 and already working as a bricklayer, Henry, and George and a daughter Emma. Ruth's husband died in 1843 and by 1851 she was living with William in Cherry Row where she remained for many years, probably in No 2 and later in No 4 with William, his wife Emma (née Beaumont – another good Lexden name!) and their growing family. Ruth worked as a sempstress, making and mending dresses, until she died in 1884 and is remembered on William and Emma's gravestone in Lexden Churchyard (*right*). Four of William and Emma's sons were bricklayers but Alfred, was a stonemason. Not long after Ruth died Emma and her son William, now a gardener's labourer, moved to Albert Villa, 101 London Road, where he died in 1895. Emma then lived with her son, George and family at 5 Colne Bank Road, until her death in 1913. (When the Avenue of Remembrance was built it was redeveloped and became Colne Bank Avenue.)



Another long term resident in the area was James Booth, born in Lexden in 1805, who married Sarah Springett, a Suffolk girl, in Lexden Church in 1829. In 1851 he was working as an agricultural labourer and they were living next door to Ruth Boyden Sarah was a tailoress and they had two children, Sarah and Benjamin. By 1881 she has been widowed but is living in Cherry Row.

There seemed to be a quicker turnover of residents of Cherry Row after about 1900. The children of families that had lived there for decades had moved on and their parents had died. Those who took their places did not stay over generations, rarely for 10 years, except perhaps for William John Knight. In 1901 William Knight, 34, a dairyman and stockman at Home Farm, was lodging with widow Alice Wade, a laundress, and her 10 year old son, (Alfred) Stannard - his mother's maiden name - at No 5. She had been living in Church Lane but moved after the death of her husband, Charles, in 1893. William married her in 1904 and continued living at No 5 and is still listed there in the 1924 Benham's Directory. He died in 1927 and Alice ten years later.

After the Second World War residents did stay in the area longer. Walter James Woodrow, now the occupant of No 5, is one of the two residents of Cherry Row whose entry in the 1939 Register is legible for many of the records and addresses in this generally useful document have been "officially closed" by over zealous clerks possibly because the children recorded may still be alive.

Walter Woodrow was born in 1900 and was working as a "Navy heavy worker". His childhood was spent in Shrub End with his Lexden born father, John, a shoemaker, his mother Annie and five siblings.. By 1911 his father was working as a cab proprietor. Walter was probably not old enough to serve in WW1 but may have joined the Territorials after the war. He married Caroline Elizabeth Sapsford in 1928 but they had no children and it is not clear whether they remained together as she died in Braintree in 1971 but William continued living at 5 Cherry Row until his death in 1981.

The 1924 Benham's Street Directory records Mrs Stork, at No 3 Cherry Row. This was Miss Clara Ada Stork whose mother, Mary (nee Fisher), was a Colchester woman and had married a soldier, Allen Stork, in Lexden Church in 1876. In 1891 Clara, aged 12, was living with her widowed uncle, his son and sister-in-law in Maldon Road, Shrub End. In 1911 Clara was a Parlour Maid with the Corse Scott Family at Glebe House, Spring Lane – the old Rectory. She continued to live in Cherry Row probably until her death in 1968.



No 1 Cherry Row, often called The Cottage, was owned for some time by Colonel Henry Hazlett Beattie (*left*) whose parents-in-law lived next door at Heath Lodge. Mary, his young daughter, (*right with her mother*) recalled that “As there was not room there (No 1) for me, I ate there and I used to sleep at Heath Lodge. There was a real old fashioned copper at the back door of The Cottage for all the hot water – it was very primitive. There are four more cottages along there that belonged to my grandfather. The rent was probably about 5s a year. There were a further two, and one was rented by Mr Cardy, the greengrocer, who had a cart and went round with vegetables.”



In 1956 The Cottage was being lived in by Mrs Grace Isobel Denney (née Dumbrell) born in 1890. She was the daughter of a cleric and had married Owen Lindsey Denney, an engineer, in 1912. He died in 1937 in Bury St Edmunds and in the 1939 Register she is a nursing auxiliary at Colindale hospital in Hendon. She died in North Walsham in 1973.

Philip Cardy was a member of the very well known large Cardy family and lived at No 9 Cherry Row, probably remaining there until his death in 1996. He recorded his memories of Lexden and these often feature in the Lexden History Group quarterly Newsletter. Alan Herbert Tweed lived at No 6 Cherry Row from the mid-1950s until the later 1960s when he moved to Walsingham Road, Colchester. He died in 1970. He was a brother of former LHG Member Peter, part of the large Tweed family of Heath Road. Edward James Fincham and his wife, Edith, lived at No 8 Cherry Row from the late 1930. He was born in Stanway in 1891 the fifth of seven children, and lived his early life in the Bottle End/Gosbecks area. He worked for some time as a coal carter and then as a general labourer. He died in 1963.

Many of the Cherry Row families lived all their lives in Lexden and would have attended St Leonard's Church.. Several of the Isom family were buried there over the years, as were the Currell family. However, many of the occupants of Cherry Row would have been buried there without a headstone as the cost would have been prohibitive but their burials would have been recorded in the parish records. Sadly the churchyard is now so overgrown that even many of the recorded headstones cannot be found.

Today Cherry Row has changed from being a working class area to a more up market lane. Many of the original houses have been demolished and replaced with modern buildings. Only one appears to have some hint of its former look and that is No 3. Two houses, Nos 3 and 4, have been combined and one front door has been removed. The basic structure is reminiscent of the original but with extensions to the back. An interesting feature is that to the right of the current front door is an engraved brick (*right*) with the inscription “R Boyden 1863 May 22”. From at least 1851 Ruth Boyden lived in Cherry Row, and perhaps the engraving is proof that in 1863 she was living in No 3. This house was also known for some years as “Storks” probably after Clara Ada Stork who lived there until her death in 1968.



Cherry Row is still an unmade road and now the houses numbered 2 and 4 no longer exist. Most houses were demolished and rebuilt after the 1970s.. Cherry Row has illustrated the changing lives of families over two centuries. Many of the names live on in Colchester and no doubt some of their descendants still live in the area. The churchyard holds many family members and let's hope the current occupants of the Row can give an equally interesting history in years to come!

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Forthcoming meetings

Wednesday 11th October 2023

**Dr Jane Pearson
Victorian Doctors**

Wednesday 8th November 2023

**Wendy Shepherd
Fordham and World War II**

Wednesday 13th December 2023

Christmas Party

Meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 2.30pm in St Leonard's Church Hall, Lexden.

DICK BARTON AND MELVIN WHITE



The Lexden History Group has sadly lost two stalwart Committee members, Melvin White and Dick Barton.

It is said "There are some people in life that make you laugh a little louder, smile a little bigger and just live a little better." Melvin White was one of those rare people. When you saw his impish grin, you knew that something amusing was about to happen - and it did! You left his company feeling very cheerful indeed.

Melvin, was always willing to help anyone. His life was one of kindly deeds, a helping hand for others' needs. If you required something done, simple or complicated, Melvin was the first to volunteer. He threw himself into whatever task was required and finished saying "What's next."

Dick Barton, was indeed a very special agent, unrivalled and inspirational, with his teaching background, and renowned for his knowledge of local history, especially Lexden. He was in his element, when dressed in a splendid 18th century garment, conducting a tour of Colchester in his role as a Town Guide.

We will remember Dick in many positive ways. With his big smile, great sense of humour and infectious laughter. His eyes would light up as he told an amusing historical story. "Did I tell you about my search for the Essex & Suffolk Fire Office War Memorial" was one of his classic stories. Dick lived life to the fullest.