

Lexden History Group



Lexden Park c1905 (*see page 6*)

- 20 Years of Lexden History Group
- Lexden Park in the 20th Century
- Church Lane, Lexden, Part 3 – Home Farm
- Tales from the Churchyard – Eade Family

Newsletter No 80 March 2026
Website: www.lexdenhistory.org.uk

How did Lexden History Group come into being?

David Cawdell, in a conversation with Sonia Lewis and the late Geoff Pettit, thought there was enough local interest to form a History Group for Lexden and, with the co-operation of the Rev Stephen Carter, a meeting was held in the Lady Chapel of Lexden Church on 20th March 2006 for anyone interested. Following a notice in the *"In Touch"* magazine inviting people interested in local history and the forming of a local history group, 18 Lexden residents attended. After agreeing to disagree as to where Lexden actually was, citing parish, political, postal and estate agents versions, one thing was certain – such a group was needed. Eight members offered to form a steering committee to take the project forward.

They met seven days later and each member undertook to develop tasks such as Chairman, Archivist and Social Secretary, etc. We were without a Treasurer and Secretary until the husband and wife team of Bob and Jane Thornhill stepped in, joining Geoff Pettitt as Chairman, and Sonia Lewis as Social Secretary. David Cawdell agreed to do publicity, Bernard Polley became Archivist and Brian (Dick) Barton took the position of vice-chairman. Jane Thornhill took on the editorship of the Newsletter and Liz White became Secretary in July 2007 when David Cawdell moved into the depths of Suffolk.

It was agreed that the membership subscription would be for individuals £10 and for families £15 per year. The venue would be Lexden Church Hall which would be hired on the second Wednesday evening of each month.

On Wednesday 10th May 2006 Andrew Phillips, the local historian and author, gave the inaugural talk (*right*) on 'The Rise of Modern Colchester' which was illustrated with slides.



Andrew also agreed to become Honorary Present of Lexden History Group.

The first AGM held on 12th July that year attracted a large turnout and several encouraging ideas were considered. The LHG Constitution was discussed and approved and the Committee Officers were formally elected. Our first event was an Open Day on 23rd September 2006 (*left*) when members were asked to bring along any memorabilia that they had on Lexden. It was a great success,

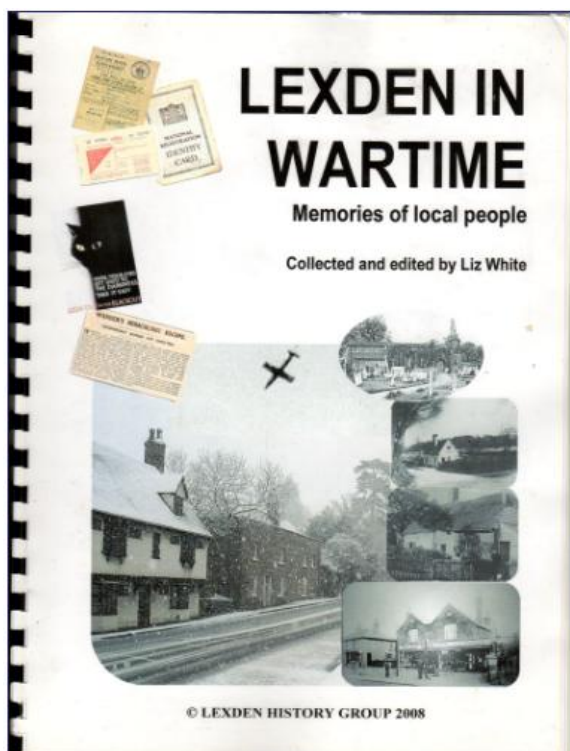
THE HISTORY OF LEXDEN HISTORY GROUP continued

filling the church hall with many exhibits, some of which were donated to us to help build our own archive collection.

Lexden History Day was held on Saturday 23rd September 2010 and organised in conjunction with St Leonard's Church, Lexden. Apart from items brought along by our own members, the exhibitors included Colne Valley Railway, West Bergholt History Group and Colchester Recalled, as well as archive collections from several local schools (*right*).



Liz White was keen to start a project asking people who had lived in Lexden throughout WW2 to let her record their childhood memories of living in wartime Lexden. Within a few weeks she had collected and edited sufficient material and photographs to produce an A4 publication (*left*) which was rapidly sold out at £10 each. The following year with many coming forward with their memories she produced Volume 2 of Lexden in Wartime which again quickly sold out. A total of 600 copies were sold!



On 17th January 2008 our first Chairman, Geoff Pettitt, died after a long illness. Dick Barton took his place and saw Lexden History Group through the next important event – the unveiling of the new Lexden Village Sign.

One of our members, and also Member of the Committee,

was artist and sculptor, Tim Holding, who started work on the design in early 2007. It depicted the main elements of the village, ie, the Sun Inn, the mill and a butterfly representing the Papillon family who had been Lords of the Manor of Lexden in days gone by. He made a detailed polystyrene model, encased it in a box with special sand and then at a party (of course!) in his garden at Little Glebe in Spring Lane he proceeded, with members help, to pour melted aluminium into the case. The completed design (*right*) was erected on a circular brick base with a time capsule containing relevant documents and ephemera of LHG.



THE HISTORY OF LEXDEN HISTORY GROUP continued

This impressive village sign can be seen, when not covered with overgrown shrubs, at the junction of Lexden Road, London Road and Cymbeline Way.

To celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2013, the Town Council allocated £2,000 to



each Ward for the representatives to find a good way to spend the money. The Lexden councillors decided on a sculpture of four geese (*left*), again designed by Tim Holding, to be placed in Lexden Park near the lake. The unveiling took place in September that year with the four geese - Lexi, Joseph, Pebbles and Quackers - named by school children.

Our most successful, and remarkable, exhibition was on World War One held in the Church Hall on 25th and 27th September 2014. After many months of preparation and planning the two-day exhibition was opened by historian John Ashdown Hill who, after many years of research, had been able to locate the grave of Richard I – in a Leicester car park. Ten

display stands covered many aspects of the war, eg, how it started, maps, local men who served and died, official leaflets produced by Colchester Council, the Military Hospital, Peace Movement, Conscientious Objectors and the Home Front. In other words, how life carried on was the main theme, rather than the horrendous fighting. There were displays of relevant books, newspapers and



magazines from 1914-18, scrapbooks and photo albums. The whole of the stage was taken up with a remarkable display of items brought by Martin Daniell from his small museum on Canvey Island and included weaponry, uniforms, and even German helmets. There was a display from the Stow Maries WW1 Airfield museum, and a re-enactor army Padre (John Hogan). Heather Johnson loaned her research files on WW1 Hospitals and Nurse Bilby was in attendance with her medical supplies as used in Wartime days. Sonia Lewis provided WW1 food – delicious corned beef sandwiches, bread and butter pudding and trench cake (which was not always enjoyed!). Children from the local primary schools attended on the Friday afternoon and the whole event was declared a great success – to be repeated again in the future for WW2, perhaps?

THE HISTORY OF LEXDEN HISTORY GROUP continued

Smaller versions of this WW1 exhibition were taken on request to other sites including Chapel Railway Museum and a fete at Earls Colne.

Our last exhibition was in 2019 when Lexden History Group archives were put on display with additional research into them. This was further augmented by a display of Victorian items requested by one of the local schools as that was the topic they were studying!

Until the cost of coaches became too pricey, Jackie Bowis organised trips to such places as the Shuttleworth Museum, Duxford, Cambridge, Munnings House, etc, and were a highlight of the year. We have also regularly had a summer barbecue (right) (now replaced with a garden party) and a Christmas Party, all of which have been much enjoyed by the members.



The Lexden History Group newsletter has been issued to members every quarter since our inauguration and this one is Number 80! This colourful A5, 12 page publication by editor Liz White (since March 2014) is full of interesting stories of Lexden people, places and events in the past and present. The Group has also provided, for the last eleven years, a monthly article for the Look magazine and this, we have learnt, has been much appreciated by people throughout Colchester. (See paragraph at bottom of this page.)

As a result of Covid sweeping the country in 2020, it was decided that we would no longer meet in the evenings but change to afternoons. This was greatly welcomed by most, but our younger members, who were still working, found this difficult. However, we have continued with afternoon meetings but our numbers are reducing because our members are getting older and are finding it increasingly difficult to climb the steep slope to the Church Hall. However, we hope to continue as long as we can if younger members will come forward and help with the running of our very successful Lexden History Group.

LOOK MAGAZINE Anthea Harris, a reader of the LHG article in the recent Look Magazine, has written with her memories of Maldon Road shops. “I am the daughter of Fred and Edna King who owned the grocery shop in Maldon Road. They bought it when I was three so I went there every day and played in the garden or spoke with customers. Most provisions were weighed; butter, cheese, lard and even biscuits. Syrup and vinegar were delivered in barrels and measured out into customers’ containers. I went to the butcher’s for bones, and a joint of meat was 10s (50p). When I was five I went to Burghfield House School, also in Maldon Road, and every afternoon I caught the bus back to the shop where I stayed until closing time. My mother would take me home leaving my father to make his customer deliveries. He was president of the Grocers Association. I loved to see my mother in her ballgown and father in his dinner suit.” (See also LHG Newsletter No 52 March 2019)

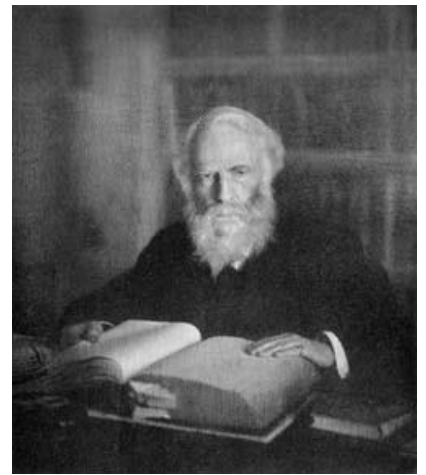
LEXDEN PARK IN THE 20TH CENTURY



Lexden parkland was originally acquired sometime before 1598 by William Mott, who was Bailiff of Colchester in 1622. The family retained it until 1714 when it was sold with adjacent land to Charles Richardson, an apothecary. The Trustees of his nephew, John, sold it to Isaac Bevan, a local attorney, and it later passed to his son, Henry Ennew Bevan, and daughter, Sally, Mrs William Turner.

(left: Lexden Park c2000)

John Fletcher Mills (b1762), a banker, bought the estate in about 1821 and it left to his daughter, Fanny, for her lifetime. On her death in 1861 it passed to her widower, George Henry Errington (b1803) also a banker. He died in 1883, and in 1889 the house and the remaining 90 acres were sold to Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant Duff (b1828) (right), a notable Scottish politician, statesman and author, who entertained many distinguished people at weekend parties in Lexden Park.



After his death in 1906 more land was sold for building but the house and park were bought by Edwin J Sanders, several times Mayor of Colchester (See LHG Newsletter No 79 December 2025). His son, Sir Percy Sanders, also several times Mayor of Colchester, inherited the property. He had no children and it was sold in 1954 to James Williams who, with his wife, Evelyn, was the joint head of Endsleigh House School. New premises were much needed for their 650 pupils, boys and girls, to continue the reputation of academic excellence they had built up for this increasingly popular school.

The School had been at various sites over the years including Wellesley Road, Creffield Road, Kingswood Hoe and lastly The Grange in Lexden Road, but before they could finally



move to Lexden Park substantial extensions (left) had to be built to the west of the site. These included a large new hall and more classrooms which were completed by September 1956. At this time the school only housed the

kindergarten and primary children but when The Grange and other properties were taken over by the Borough Council in 1961, senior school children also had to be housed in Lexden Park where science laboratories, craft rooms and more classrooms had to be built to accommodate them. Many trees to the front of Lexden Park were removed to make easier

LEXDEN PARK IN THE 20TH CENTURY continued

access to the school and later to create more parking. The Staff and pupils of the Art and Metalwork departments constructed the necessary fire escapes, producing impressive wrought iron rails incorporating the Endsleigh School badge in the design. What happened to these?

Not long after the move to Lexden Park, Essex County Council made radical changes in their support of private schools and withdrew the financial support of children who had passed the 11+ and this was a time when 50% of the Endsleigh pupils qualified for places at state grammar schools. By 1965 pupil numbers had declined and Essex County Council took the building over making Endsleigh school the nucleus of a new comprehensive school to be built ultimately in Greenstead. In 1968 it merged with East Ward School and became Sir Charles Lucas School housed in new buildings for 900 pupils in Hawthorn Avenue, Greenstead. Lexden Park building was then used until 1990 as the “Endsleigh



Annex” for North East Essex Technical College, soon to become Colchester Institute. (above: 1989 aerial picture showing modern classrooms either side of the old house)

The courses held at Endsleigh Annex were mainly for trades, ie, plumbing, car maintenance, etc. After it closed, the old building (right) remained empty and derelict; dry rot was rife, and it was comprehensively vandalised. Developers had hoped to raise money by using much of the remaining land for more housing but after a huge public outcry the Borough Council bought 25 acres and declared that it was to be a public recreation area and local nature reserve, opening it in 1991 for “the people of the town to enjoy in perpetuity”. The flat rectangular meadow area was, of course, the school’s football field.

Lexden Restorations bought the site, demolished the classrooms and built twelve town houses, eighteen flats and a house at either end of Lucas House. The main house was converted into five large flats, the ground floor flat retaining the original principal rooms. Residents can enjoy what remains of the original parkland, ie, the lake and nature reserve.



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It is interesting to note that each of the four developed blocks of Lexden Park is named after one of the Endsleigh school houses and the front doors retain the original colours of the houses, ie, Lucas (Green) and Lisle (Yellow) – both prominent Royalist commanders during Siege of Colchester, Wilbye – famous madrigal composer (Red) and Gilbert – Physician to Elizabeth I (Blue).

Over the years the farm in Church Lane was had various names, ie, Parsonage Farm, Home Farm and in the 1841 Census it was called Parson's Hill Farm. May Lambert is recorded as the farmer there with her servant, local girl Ann Cardy, aged 16, who married a local labourer, William Everitt, the following year. The photograph (*right*) was taken before the Prettygate development was built – note the fields behind the house!



It is not clear who, if anyone, was living at the Farm when the 1851 Census was recorded and several other houses in Church Lane are also noted as being unoccupied, but by 1861



Sarah Davies, a London artist's wife, was living there with her four young children. There were three young lodgers and one older charwoman with her daughter and illegitimate granddaughter. Sarah's artist husband was Arthur Alfred Davis, 1824-1893, well known for his paintings of dogs (*left*). The three lodgers were the sons of Hannah Horne, a widow who lived in a nearby cottage with five more children and an illegitimate grandson, James, born to her daughter, Hannah,

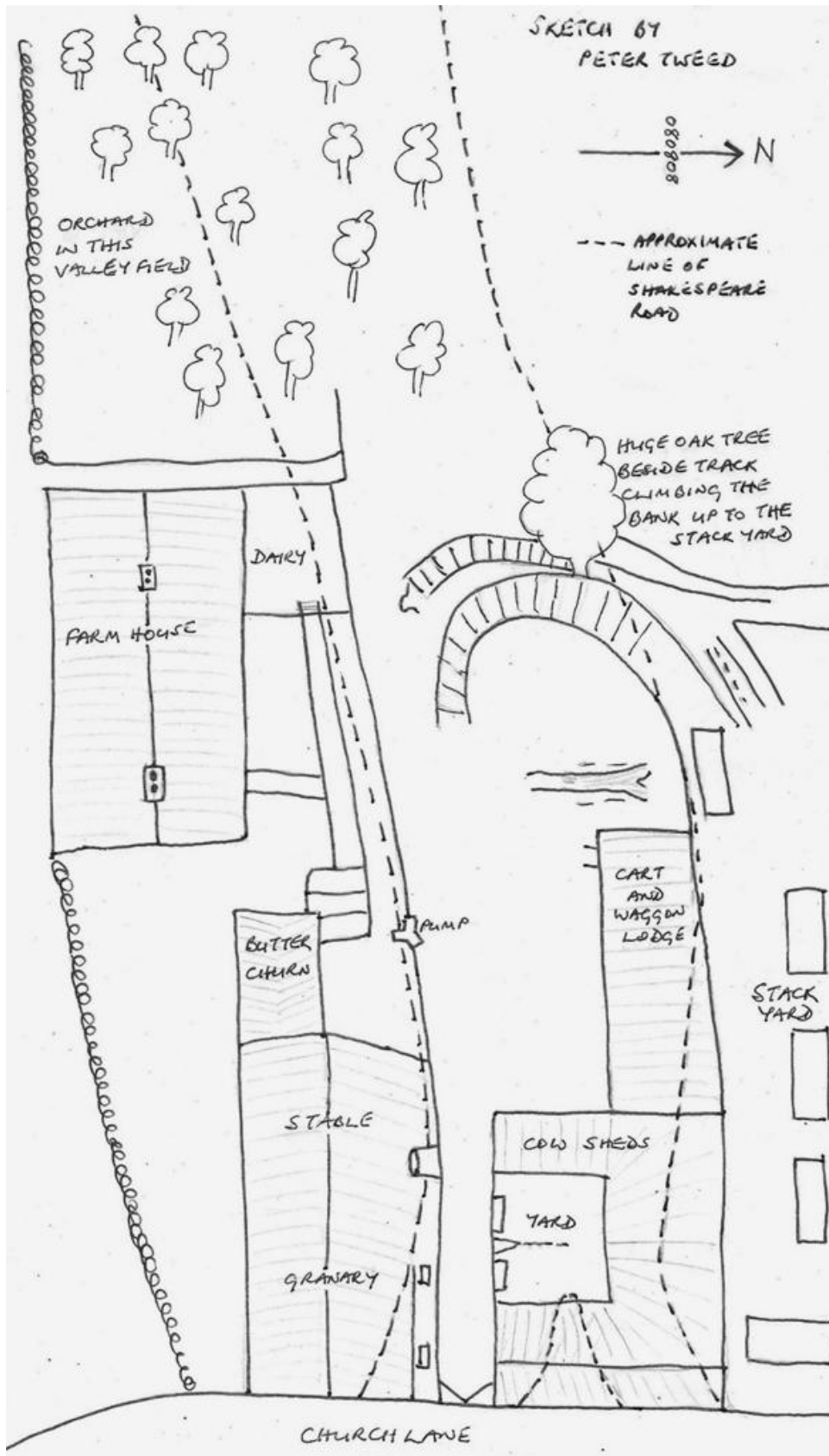
six months earlier. Hannah senior worked as a laundress to support her large family and several younger children attended Lexden School. In 1872 her son, William, moved with his wife and growing family to Fulham to work as a bricklayer in the rapidly developing suburbs of London.

By 1871 Hannah senior is still working as a laundress and living in Magazine Farm, (opposite the top of Beech Hill today) with another daughter Emma, now 20. Ten years later she is living in Horseshoe House, Layer Road, Berechurch, with Emma and her husband, William Baker, a butler (later to become a grocer), and their two small children. Hannah died in 1888 and is buried in Lexden Churchyard with her husband, William. The head and footstones are leaning against the east end of the church (*right*) and can be seen from Church Lane. They were probably moved there when the church was extended in 1893.



The farm was recorded officially as Parson's Hill or Parsonage Farm until 1920 when it became known as Home Farm, but in Benham's 1893 Directory it was recorded as Home Farm with William Bird as tenant. William Bird had been living in Spring Lane in 1871 and during the 1880s moved to Parson's Hill farm. "Home Farm" is also mentioned on the 1898 Ordnance Survey Map. To confuse matters further, it also became known locally as Bird's

farm and they even had their own half pint churns marked "W Bird" which residents could use to collect their milk. It was also recorded that in the dairy there were enormous panniers



of milk standing waiting for the cream to rise and be skimmed off. In the 1921 Census, Home Farm had the address of No 10 Church Lane. William Bird's wife, Mary Ann, died aged 46 in September 1891. William had been the tenant farmer for some 40 years, when he died in September 1930 aged 84. His two daughters, Florence and Lilian, carried on running the farm after their father's death. William and Mary are buried together with an infant son in Lexden Churchyard. Their two daughters, Ethel who died in 1943 and Florence in 1951, are buried nearby. William was also a founder member of Lexden, Stanway and Shrub End Horticultural Society. The farm land amounting to just over 53 acres, comprised pasture and arable fields with frontages to Church Lane, Heath Road, Straight Road and London Road. (left: drawn by Peter Tweed for Lexden in Wartime in 2008), As well as the farmhouse. the outside buildings included a dairy and churn house

for making butter, a thatched barn, mixing house, cow sheds for 7 cows, a yard with an open shed, a cart shed with loft, a stable for four horses, pigsty, meal house, coal and wood sheds and a granary. All but the farmhouse were lost when Prettygate Estate was developed during the 1960s and 1970s.

To be continued

TALES FROM THE CHURCHYARD – EADE FAMILY



Under a dense canopy of bushes above Church Lane lies a simple grave (*left*), with no headstone but engraved kerbs which were fortunately recorded in the 1990s by a dedicated group of local people. The the south kerb reads “In loving memory of Arthur D Eade died 20th September 1940 aged 59; the north kerb “Also his wife Florence Julia, died 4th Dec 1972 aged 88” and the east kerb simply says “At rest”. This neglected grave remembers a married couple who, although never reaching great heights, had interesting and useful lives.

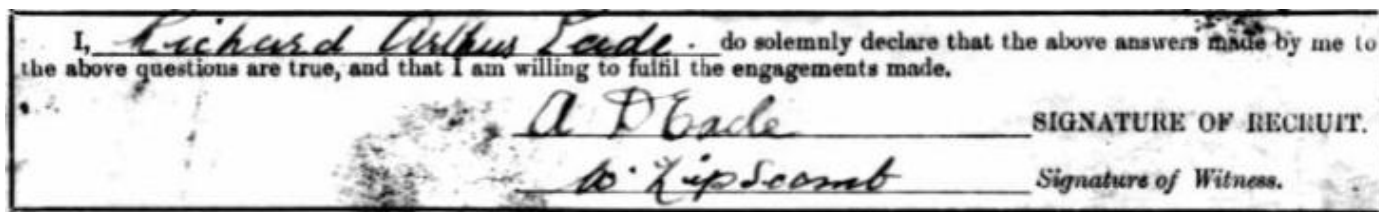
In the 1850s the Eade family came to Colchester from Great Bromley, where John Eade (b1805) had been a sawyer, and by 1861 his third son, James, Arthur’s father, was apprenticed to Thomas Everitt, a carpenter in Lexden Street. In 1871 the family was living in Straight Road. Arthur Dick Eade was born to James and Emma on 24th May 1881 and baptised at Lexden Church on 8th July that year.

In 1891 James and Emma Eade were living in one of Colne Cottages in Cottage Road, off Colne Road (now Halstead Road), with their five Lexden born sons, Robert 20, James 15, John 12, Arthur 9 and Herbert 7 and their two year old grandson, Evelyn Richmond Eade, the illegitimate son of their daughter, Jane b 1865. Jane at this time was working as a servant to the Shafto family at Delaval Lodge in Colne Road, as was her sister, Elizabeth Mary b1872, James was a dentist’s assistant and Robert a carpenter/joiner like his father, but he sadly died in 1899. The younger children, including Arthur, were at school. By 1901 they had moved to 99a Lexden Street by which time John was a printer’s compositor, Arthur followed the family trade of carpenter and Herbert was a greengrocer’s assistant. By 1911 James, a dental mechanic had moved to Bristol and was living with his growing family and Evelyn, now an insurance agent, recorded as James’s brother, not nephew. James died in Bristol in 1954 and Evelyn in Cardiff in 1931. Jane married cabman Arthur Hill in 1893 in Norwich and had four more children but he appeared to leave her to go to Canada in 1907 where he died in 1936. She died in Kensington in 1934.

Returning to the family in Lexden, on 17th February 1907 Arthur married Florence Mills at St Albright’s Church in Stanway and in the 1911 Census they were living in Florence Cottages, London Road, with Alan Arthur aged 3 and Muriel 10 months. Arthur was a joiner with local builders, Hutton, working on the Round Estate at Birch (*see LHG Newsletter No 79 December 2025*). Arthur and Florence had two more children, Roy Alfred b1913 and Edna May b1916. It is impossible to identify the exact cottages where the family lived as many of the identifying plaques have now been removed or obliterated.

When older men were called to serve in the Great War, Arthur enlisted in the Army Reserve on 9th December 1915, and was given the regimental number 20261. With the introduction of conscription he was mobilised on 6th June 1916 and another form was completed at Warley, Essex, where his name is recorded as Richard Arthur Eade, his address as Holmwood, Lexden Road, Stanway, (near King Cole Road) and his trade as joiner. He was recorded as 5ft 5ins tall, 114 lbs, a 33½in chest measurement and was declared fit for general service at home or abroad. Florence and his three children are also listed. His fourth child, Edna, was born later and added to this record. Interestingly he signed the document (*below*)

TALES FROM THE CHURCHYARD – EADE FAMILY continued



AD Eade, not RA Eade. One wonders if any questions were asked at the time about this discrepancy. Arthur was posted to the 28th Middlesex Regiment on the 8th June 1916, then went to Aldershot and was given various vaccinations. He was transferred to the 30th Middlesex in September and to the 29th Middlesex a couple of weeks later. He was finally transferred to the 338th Labour Corps (Home Service) and given the new regimental number 180124 on 4th May 1917. On 22nd February 1917 an Army Order had created the Labour Corps from Labour companies and battalions, including the Middlesex Regiment. He was demobilised on 8th February 1919 and this document recorded his name as AR Eade!

Arthur's younger brother, Herbert, joined the Royal Garrison Artillery and received the regimental number 291146. He was posted to 127 Heavy Battery and then to 136 Siege Battery (which fired Howitzers). At the end of June 1917 the British were drawing German attention away from their preparations for other battles, eg, 3rd Battle of Ypres and Passchendaele, and Herbert was killed south east of Bethune on 1st July 1917 aged 34. Behind the battle lines in the Loos Salient, Mazingarbe was used by the British for field ambulances, artillery units, etc, and Herbert was buried at Mazingarbe Communal Cemetery Extension, Pas-de-Calais, France. His grave carries the inscription "Thy will be done". He is mentioned on Lexden War Memorial and also the Colchester War Memorial which incorrectly records 136 Signal Battalion, not 136 Siege Battery.

The family later received his British War and Victory Medals (*right*) and his bronze memorial plaque. Two years after the war his brothers, James, John and Arthur and sisters, Mrs Emma Boyns and Mrs Elizabeth Mary Mills, were each paid £1 16s 9d - possibly from pay still due to him. Emma, b1862, had married ironmoulder George Isaac Boyns, in Lexden Church on 7th August 1899. (See LHG Newsletter March 2023 *Boyns and Flux*)



After his war service, Arthur returned to family life at Holm(e)wood Cottage, London Road, where he died on 28th September 1940. He was never a rich man but his estate amounted to £330. Daughter Muriel married Eric Goldsmith in July 1939 and later moved to Margaret Road, Colchester. In the 1939 register, recorded on National Registration Day 29th September, the family is still at Holmwood Cottage with Allan and his new wife, Constance Minnie (nee Abbott). He married her in early 1939 and is recorded as a Provisions Shop Assistant and Constance is undertaking "unpaid domestic duties". They had a child, Sheila, in 1939. Arthur's son Roy is now a Boot and shoe repairer and daughter Edna a Draper's shop assistant.

In December 1939 Edna married Bernard Wilkins and they eventually moved to Woodside, Chitts Hill. It appears that Allan's marriage was not a success and they separated for in the 1939 Register "Rose" is written above Constance's name, implying she remarried at a later date. Allan married Sylvia Calver in October 1966, but he died in 1970. Sylvia over the years lived at 4 London Road, 102a Collingwood Road and 2 Magazine Farm Way. She died in 2014. No further research has been done as their families may still be in the area.

Your Committee

Chairman

Position vacant

Secretary and Newsletter Editor

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Val Asker 01206 853046

Forthcoming Meetings

Wednesday 8th April 2026

Christopher Thompson

Essex in the Sixteenth Century

Wednesday 13th May 2026

Annual General Meeting

Colchester Carnival

**Did you take part in this parade
or watch it go by?**

Wednesday 10th June 2026

Wendy Shepherd

Women's Land Army

"The Land Army fights in the fields!"

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