

Ongar Millennium History Society Newsletter

August 2008

Hello – I hope you are all having a good summer, despite the great British summer weather! August for OMHS means time to finalise the programme with which to keep you all informed and entertained over the next 12 months. We always start with the inevitable blank piece of paper - and blank faces! However gradually the ideas form and the programme takes shape, and hopefully this year will prove to be a full and interesting mix. Any suggestions for 2009/10 will be gratefully received!

Jenny Main, Editor

ONGAR MILLENNIUM HISTORY SOCIETY

**Annual General Meeting – Wednesday 24th September 2008, 8 pm
at Ongar Library, High St., Ongar**

Chaired by Society President, Dr Michael Leach

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of AGM 2007
4. Chairman's Annual Report
5. Receipt & consideration for approval, the accounts for the financial year ending 31st July 2008
6. Election of committee and officers of the Society
7. Appointment of auditors

Interval

for refreshments

(Next year's subscription of £5 is payable during the interval.)

Followed by **"Essex from a Police Car" – a film circa 1947**

Committee Members 2007-2008

Chairman: Felicitie Barnes

Vice Chair: Jenny Main

Treasurer: John Winslow

Secretary: Barbara MacDonald

Minute Sec: Elisabeth Barrett

Bookings Sec: Wendy Thomas

Nomination form

I wish to stand for election to the OHMS committee:

Proposed Seconded

Signed

Name

Memorial Inscriptions project update

Thanks to the continuing hard work by our inscription veterans (Felicite Memorial Inscriptions project update Barnes, Rosemary Tait, Jenny Main and Elisabeth Barrett) and our new volunteers (Keith Snow, David Thomas and Dave Thompson) work on transcribing and checking the gravestones and kerbstones in the Ongar Parish Cemetery at Love Lane has taken on a new lease of life, if that is not too contradictory a statement, and hopes are now high that this particular OMHS project will be completed this year. The results will be lodged with Essex Records Office and Ongar Town Council and will, hopefully, also be available, in published form, for family members and family historians. Part of the projects remit has always been to research 'the story behind the inscription' in certain cases , for example Harry Cecil Matthews and Victor John Surridge, and in that context it has been discovered that a number of men who lost their lives in the First and Second World Wars are commemorated on gravestones in the Ongar cemetery. Perhaps it might be appropriate for the OMHS to remember and mark the 'story behind their inscriptions' on, for example Remembrance Day, each year as part of our ongoing history. Just a thought.

Bob MacDonald

Whitehall and Westminster walk

On a wonderful sunny Sunday morning in May, about 18 of our members met an old friend of OMHS, Peter Lawrence in his role as a London guide, at Charing Cross Station for a walking tour around this most interesting part of London. Our tour was full of surprises, starting with Peter mentioning that the village of Charing was originally on the site now occupied by Trafalgar Square and when St. Martins-in-the-Fields really was in the countryside. We went on to see how the Met. Police horses are stabled on several floors just like a multi-storey car park. There is simply no room to stable them in the traditional way. They seem quite happy. Then there was the clock tower overlooking Horse Guards Parade, where the number 2 is highlighted in black as it was the time of day when Charles I was beheaded just across the road in Banqueting House in 1649. There was lots more besides. Peter has dozens of London walks in his repertoire including one UNDER London. Now there's a thought!

John Winslow

Library displays

OMHS has taken over the display cabinet in Ongar Library for the summer months, and together with the use of some display boards, we have mounted small exhibitions on Ongar Grammar School, the Kneeler Project, Ongar's Cromwell connection, and Ongar Wheelers and Shelley Speedway. This last display has been extremely popular and well received, causing lots of comment and debate! This month we will be showing the development of Ongar over the years, together with a fantastic collection of Roman coins and artefacts found in the fields around Ongar by OMHS member, Frank Knights. So why not call in to Ongar Library and have a look?

Jenny Main

Have you filled in your nomination form for the OMHS committee yet?

See the form on the front page!

A parochial dispute

Letters to and from the archdeacon of Essex shed some light on a dispute between the Rev. W M Oliver (rector of Bobbingworth from 1838 to 1899) and his churchwarden, Mr Cure of Blake Hall. The archdeacon employed the rector of Stondon Massey to act as an intermediary, and seems to have dealt with what was obviously a troublesome affair entirely by letter.

The difficulties seem to have been triggered by the chronic structural problems of the parish church. The vestry minutes reveal numerous repairs, and the underpinning of the nave in 1842. The two tiered timber framed bell tower at the west end was also in very poor condition; in 1818 a decision was made to pull it down, but it was still standing 20 years later when there were plans to encase it in brick and to cover the spire in copper. Mr Oliver intervened at this point and presented the vestry with the design for a new brick tower designed by 'Mr Burton' (probably Decimus Burton who was designing a new rectory in the neighbouring parish of Greensted) and he advanced £150 towards its construction. As a result, a new battlemented tower in yellow brick was completed in 1840 and the mediaeval timber structure was removed. It is possible that his early dealings with his dilatory vestry coloured his later views about the parish's reluctance to update the church. In August 1863, he wrote to the archdeacon about the plans for restoring the chancel, which were in Mr Chancellor's office in Chelmsford. This was completed later in the year. Further correspondence indicated that the parish had made some sort of undertaking to rebuild the red brick nave with its timber tracery windows to the standard that he had established in the chancel. Red brick was very unfashionable for churches at this date.

The storm broke just before Christmas 1863 with a complaint from Mr Oliver to the archdeacon that Mr Cure was making considerable alterations without consulting him or the vestry. On Boxing Day the archdeacon wrote nervously to Mr Reeve, his local intermediary, mentioning the need for a faculty but asking him not to do anything 'which may aggravate any heat'. Mr Reeve's report was not encouraging. Mr Cure had taken down the vestry within the nave and built a new one in red brick, on the site of the former timber bell tower, as well as dismantling and reordering the pews without consulting the rector. It was clear that Mr Oliver wanted the nave to be brought up to the standard of his re-built chancel, and had a strong objection to the red brick vestry, about which he had not been consulted. A fellow clergyman had rubbed salt into the wound by commenting 'Well, Oliver, Mr Cure has built you a pig sty'. The archdeacon conceded to Mr Oliver that he had the law on his side, and that he should have been consulted by his churchwarden, but added 'I venture to say to a brother clergyman (that) when peace is so desirable, much may be conceded'. His letter to Mr Reeve was more direct; 'our great object must be to smooth over the difficulties and prevent a permanent breach between the two'.

For a while, all went well. Mr Cure apologised to his rector and plans were submitted for the proposed changes in the nave. However, it was not long before his churchwarden brought up another grievance. Mr Oliver's 'ornamental works' to the chancel had taken place over Christmas – ceilings were pulled down, and pews were uprooted, including his own, part of which was taken by the new chancel arch. His new pew was too small for his family.

There had been serious disruption of public worship at an important time of year, with a significant shortage of seats.

The archdeacon tried to mollify the rector by indicating that, though he felt that the pews were too high, he had no objection to the plans for the re-ordered nave, but it was too late. At the beginning of February, Mr Cure wrote to the archdeacon to complain that the rector had preached a condemnatory sermon, aimed pointedly at himself. He had read the 'awful denunciations from the 1st and 2nd chapter of the prophet Haggai' while nodding meaningfully in his direction. [This book, at the end of the Old Testament, opens with Haggai reproving the people for not rebuilding the temple]. Members of the congregation had 'felt their flesh creep'. The parish was in a ferment and, more ominously, the wives of the two aggrieved men had had a meeting and made promises which their husbands could not possibly keep. Towards the end of February, in spite of the apprehensions of the wives, they had a stormy meeting in Mr Cure's house about the height of the pews, but it seems that neither dared to mention the grievance over the sermon.

Some subsequent letters must be missing, but in early March Mr Oliver sent a copy of his sermon to the archdeacon. It has to be said that his attitude was not very conciliatory. He had been anxious for Mr Cure to hear his sermon which was 'preached for his good and benefit, for his instruction and edification'. He intended 'to teach him Bible notions on church building, a subject in which I fear he is lamentably ignorant'. He had agreed with Mr Cure five or six years earlier that they would rebuild the whole church, and share the expense; though he had set his own part of the church in order, little had been done to improve the nave. Frederick Chancellor's letter of the previous year was quoted to underline the ignorance of his churchwarden. The archdeacon's reply was emollient – the rector was within his rights to preach as he had, and Mr Cure had not followed proper ecclesiastical procedures.

At this point the correspondence ends and presumably the storm had blown itself out. All that remains is the testimony of the building itself. The nave is still encased in late C18 or early C19 red brick, and the heavily battlemented vestry ('the pig sty') still stands at the west end. Part of the north nave wall collapsed at the end of the C19, but was repaired in red brick to match the rest. The only improvement of which Mr Oliver would have approved was the replacement of the timber traceried windows with stone ones to match those in the chancel – but this was paid for by Mr Oliver himself. The truth was, perhaps, that though Mr Cure lived in a grand house, the parish was poor, rural and sparsely populated, and was simply unable to afford what the rector would have wished.

A drawing of 1862 shows Mr Oliver at the reading desk of the three decker pulpit in the body of the nave. The huge Cure family pew (later to be curtailed by the new chancel arch) is visible. Many of the congregation are standing, and within a couple of years the nave became even more crowded with the navvies who were extending the railway from Epping. Overcrowding, as well as structural problems, must have been a challenge, and it was unfortunate that the solution was in the hands of two men who were temperamentally unable to work together.

Michael Leach

Who do you think you are?

Ongar Millennium History Society members got a head start over the new BBC TV series investigating the family histories of some celebrities with a family history workshop session held locally last month.

Fifteen budding family historians with differing level of expertise came along to the IT room at Great Stony for a morning of discovery. It was a very informal session and everyone was helping everybody else with their own particular hunts for elusive ancestors. A lot was discovered and new websites were investigated.

Luckily one of our group had a subscription to the Ancestry website which gave us free access to birth, marriage and death records and all the census returns from 1841 to 1901. Another wealth of information was found by others on the Free BMD website (www.freebmd.org) as well as other websites which were looked at.

It was an enjoyable morning and very fruitful for some people who found some missing links in their family trees. Many thanks to the Great Stony staff for making us feel so welcome. Requests have already been put in for another session in the autumn!

NB Essex Libraries have a subscription to the Ancestry website which means anyone with a library card can search for their own ancestors in their local library for free (- just a charge for printouts)

Jenny Main

Find out who you are?

Due to the success of the last family history workshop, we are planning to run another session for members at Great Stony on a Friday morning in the autumn.

Please let Jenny (01277 362684) know if you are interested, whether you came along last time or not.

The Queen Visits Ongar

The Queen visited the Mary Macarthur Holiday Home at Ongar on Saturday afternoon to receive purses for the endowment of the Home so as to put it on a sound financial basis. About £1,270 was subscribed, in addition to a legacy of £1,000 from the late Mr. Teichmann, and of this apart from several substantial cheques, a great part was subscribed by working women belonging to the various organizations, in which Miss Macarthur was interested in her life time.

Women in various walks of life, who had known and loved Mary Macarthur, assembled to greet the Queen, and it was as one of their number that the Queen came among them. From the moment of her arrival she made that quite clear, and the afternoon was spent as a friendly party and not as a formal gathering. The Queen was wearing a long white cloky silk wrap

trimmed with white marabout; her gown was of pale mauve embroidered in crystal, with touches of blue on the bodice, and she had a swathed toque in mauve colourings. In attendance were Lady Ampthill, Lady Cynthia Colville, and Sir Edward Wallington. Lord Lambourne, Lord- Lieutenant of the County

of Essex, met them outside the Home and inside Her Majesty was received by:

Lady Crewe (Chairman) and members of the committee. Lady Roxburgh. Miss Gertrude Tuckwell, Mrs. H. S. Tennant, Miss Madeleine Symons, Dr. Marion Phillips, Miss I. M. Cowell, Miss R. E. Lawrence, Miss Michelmores, Miss Rose E. Squire, Mrs. Sanderson Furniss, and Mrs. Westley, (Miss Macarthur's sister).

A bouquet of pink and mauve malmaisons grown in Mrs. Tennant's gardens at Maythem was presented by NANCY ANDERSON, Mary Macarthur's small daughter.

Miss GERTRUDE TUCKWELL, in a short address of welcome, said it was a great happiness to welcome the Queen to this Home, knowing the interest and sympathy she had given to the work of the woman whom it commemorated. Again and again Mary Macarthur had used as her text the verse of the Koran: *"Let any of you having a loaf of bread sell half and buy with it the flowers of the narcissus, for as bread nourisheth the body, so do the flowers of the narcissus nourish the soul,"* and she would dwell upon the need of bringing the flowers of the narcissus within the reach of those who had nothing with which to buy all that made for true life, for knowledge and for joy. This idea had been at the-back of her fight for better conditions, fair wages and room to live. Her short life burnt itself out because she denied herself the rest and leisure, she tried to obtain for others - she had died before their eyes of the work she had done for working women.

"From early days," Miss Tuckwell continued, *"Your Majesty was associated with this work. when, as Princess of Wales, you came back from India, tired and, needing rest yourself, you graciously came to the Exhibition of Sweated Industries which Mary Macarthur had worked hard to promote, in order to show your interest and sympathy in the toil of the poorest of your people. Then when there was grave danger of unemployment for working women in the early days of the war, Mary Macarthur was associated with many others with your Majesty in the work of the Queen's Fund and the Central Committee for Women's Employment. From then until the end she experienced your gracious friendship and deeply valued it. You by your presence to-day have shown that the three years which have elapsed since her death have not blurred her memory and that faithful public service has its undying record."*

Purses presented

The short ceremony of presenting the purses, of which there were 50, took place in the garden. The first was Miss Nancy Anderson, followed by the Hon. Michael Astor (who presented £100 from his mother, Lady Astor). There were many purses from Labour representatives and working women. Mrs. Bramley (wife of the secretary to the General Council of the Trades Union Congress) presented a purse of £50 collected from the Half Circle Club. Miss Flowers, who formerly worked at Eley's, Edmonton, and one of the original members of the National Federation of Women Workers organized by Mary Macarthur,

presented a purse from the head office staff and former colleagues of Miss Macarthur. Miss Rose Squire (Home Office) presented a purse including contributions from a large number of women factory inspectors. Others presenting- purses were:-

Miss Gertrude Tuckwell, J.P. (from London women magistrates, of whom Miss Macarthur was one of the first); Miss Constance Smith (purse collected by the staff of the International

Labour Office Geneva); Miss Gardner (purse collected by the Ministry of Labour), Lady Roxburgh Mrs. Tennant. Miss R. E. Lawrence, Mrs. A. Christy, Miss Lilian Barker, Miss Betty Barker, Miss Tyas (from the Central Committee on Women's Training and Employment): Mrs. Samuel Courtauld (£100) Lady Ryan (from girls of Birklands Girls' School, St. Albans), Miss E. Towler, Miss K. Hunt, Mrs. Joan Calver, Miss Mead, Miss Brenda Ashdown, Mrs. Dodd, Mrs. G. Fane, Miss Frances W. Head, Miss Lavender, Mrs. Sankins. Mrs. Baker, Miss Craig, Mrs. W. Nelson Wyles, Miss Capel Cure, Miss Silley, Miss Newell, Mrs. Barker, Miss Noble, Mrs. Bingley, Master Peter Wild, Miss Jackson, Miss Audrey Child, Mrs. Furse, Mrs. Padfield, Mrs. Alfred Arnold, and Miss Hilda Giblett.

Lady Crewe, who introduced those presenting purses, had a further promise of an additional subscription from Lord Derby; and Lord Beaverbrook had sent £100. The house, which is an attractive old country house, pleased the Queen. In particular the vistas from the windows, the lawn in front, the grounds of about 41 acres with kitchen garden supplying all vegetables, chicken run, and tennis courts, and the bed rooms with bright coloured walls and little balconies, attracted the Queen's attention, especially the room which bears the name of Mary Macarthur and is kept for some girl or woman connected with one of the associations with which Mary Macarthur was specially interested. In going over the house the Queen was looking for some want which she could supply and noticed that bedroom mats were needed. Later she asked how they were off for pictures, and before leaving said she would not forget to send both. The bedrooms are quite large and there is accommodation for about 25 guests.

The Queen and women workers

The Queen had tea with the members of the committee, and with them were also Mr. and Mrs. Fred Bramley. Later all those who had presented purses came in and were presented and talked with the Queen. The cook was among them, and all the women and girls staying in the house came in, at the Queen's special request, and told her something of their work' and lives. There was a cigar-maker from Houndsditch, a tired old office cleaner, a trouser finisher from Hackney convalescing for four weeks, a girl clerk, a laundry worker, a machinist, a warehouse forewoman, and some domestic workers, and all were enjoying to the full the kindly atmosphere of the place. Mrs. Burrell, hostess and "house-mother," was present also and was specially complimented by the Queen on the way in which the house was managed. When the Queen left she was greeted along the country roads by people from Ongar and the neighbouring villages, and both coming and going she met many signs of appreciation both of herself and of the nature of her visit.

Martyn Lockwood (from **The Times, July 28, 1924**)

OMHS visit to Cressing Temple

On Sunday 29th July eighteen members took the opportunity to visit Cressing Temple together. The visit started with a very informative guided walk led by Graham Betts which provided an overview of the history of the site and in particular a fascinating insight into the construction of the two 13th century barns built by the Knights Templar (or as one of our members put it more colloquially - the militant monks of Cressing). By noon the morning cloud had lifted to provide a beautiful, if somewhat breezy, backdrop against which to enjoy 'the gentle contours, trees and moats and buildings made of the traditional materials of these clay lands - timber (mainly oak), red brick and peg tiles and thatch.' The Tudor Walled garden provided a delightful retreat for a picnic or a stroll whilst taking in the evocative smells once so commonly

an everyday part of life in a Tudor household whether it be for use in connection with the preparation of food, for medicinal purposes or for sanitation and hygiene. I have been able to establish that the large shrub bearing striking yellow flowers which a number of members took a particular interest in is in fact Cytisus and that the variety on display at Cressing is known as Dyers Broom on account of it being much favoured for both its scent and colour when dyeing cloth. To round off a most enjoyable visit we were treated to a display of falconry with Mike Simmons, Cressing Temple's Falconer who not only so passionately and caringly introduced us to the birds but was also able to give an account of the history of and techniques used in Falconry. The sight of three Black Kites Parsley, Sage and Thyme - soaring against a background of blue and cumulus over such an historic site will long linger on the memory. So thanks very much to the OMHS Committee for arranging yet another successful and enjoyable visit. Perhaps we can look forward to a return visit in 2009 for one of Cressing Temple's special events.

Bob MacDonald

Future programme – advance notice!

The OMHS committee have been busy scratching their heads again to put together a varied programme for next year. We hope you like our selections. Here are some highlights planned so far.... a talk on Essex mills followed by a visit to a mill next summer; our famous Christmas social; a talk about SPAB, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings; the Marion Slade lecture on life at Hylands House by Wendy Hibbert, followed by a visit in the summer.

So if you want to be able to come along to all these events, remember to renew your subscription at the AGM on 24th September 2008!

SPAB - the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings was founded in 1877 by William Morris, as a reaction against the 'restoration' of medieval buildings practised by Victorian architects. Today it acts as a pressure group which fights to save old buildings from decay and demolition and advises on how old buildings should be repaired. Today, thanks to SPAB, thousands of buildings have survived which would otherwise have been lost.

Dates for your diary

Sept 24th, 8pm **OMHS Annual General Meeting**
Ongar Library. High Street, Ongar
With a film of Essex from a police car, c.1947

Oct 25th, 7.30pm **BOO Quiz**
Great Stony. Are you in a team yet?

Nov. 6th, 8pm **Talk on Essex Mills**
Great Stony

Contributions for next newsletter please!

The next newsletter will be produced in November 2008, so any articles to Jenny by 25th October please. Thank you!