

Ongar Millennium History Society Newsletter

August 2009

Well the summer is passing quickly, but don't worry because we have a packed programme for you coming up this autumn, and we also need willing volunteers to join in with various projects and to help at our exhibition on October 10th at the URC. So get reading and see what takes your fancy.

I am always pleased to receive contributions for the newsletter from members, so if you have any memories to share or snippets of information that may be of interest to our members please send them to me.

Don't forget to buy your Ongar 2010 calendars!!

Jenny Main, Editor

ONGAR MILLENNIUM HISTORY SOCIETY

**Annual General Meeting – Wednesday 23rd September 2009, 8 pm
at Ongar Library, High St., Ongar**

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of AGM 2008
4. Chairman's Annual Report
5. Receipt & consideration for approval, the accounts for the financial year ending 31st July 2009
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 a talk by **Jem Barnecutt** on "**The Boodle Connection**"

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

Website+: Keith Snow

Nomination form

I wish to stand for election to the OHMS committee:

Proposed Seconded

Signed

Name

Visit to Hylands House

On 5th July nearly thirty members enjoyed a most informative visit which neatly followed on from our talk by Wendy Hibbitt on "Life Below Stairs at Hylands House" earlier this year.

Our guide, Diane, kept us amused and interested with tales of the nine private owners since the building was constructed around 1730. They came from a variety of backgrounds and needed considerable wealth to buy, extend and maintain the property with its extensive servant quarters (and staff), and estate which in its heyday covered 4,300 acres. Alas, some owners got into difficulties with family squabbles, gambling, bankruptcy, etc. Then came the World Wars when Hylands was used as a military hospital and for training purposes. It fell into disrepair following the death in 1966 of the last private owner, Mrs Hanbury, and was left abandoned and open to vandalism.

Now lavishly and accurately restored to its former glory by Chelmsford Borough Council, we ascended the Grand Staircase and were led through each opulent room and with Diane's descriptions we were able to relive the past. Several portraits put faces to names. Unfortunately there isn't much left of the area "below stairs" as most of it has been modernised and is now used for courses, administration and the like.

There were very large landscaped gardens to explore but by then most of us were too tired, hot and thirsty! Should any member wish to contact Hylands House about visiting times or events, the telephone no. is 01245 605500

John Winslow

Help sought

In the diaries of Susan Gilbert, the first wife of Josiah Gilbert of Marden Ash (Essex Record Office, D/DU 1545/1-18), there are numerous references during the 1840s to Josiah's spending time, always apparently on his own, at a house in the vicinity referred to as "the Manse". Although it is not stated, it seems likely from both the frequency and the duration of these visits that they were not social calls, but connected with Josiah's business concerns, either as a portrait painter or, more likely, in the development, in partnership with his uncle, Isaac Taylor of Stanford Rivers, of the latter's mechanical engraving device – the reason that Josiah and Susan moved to Marden Ash in September 1843. It seems possible that someone with more detailed local knowledge than I have of Ongar and the surrounding area may be able to identify "the Manse", which would in turn help greatly in establishing who lived there. The name perhaps suggests a religious connection, but, although both Josiah Gilbert and Isaac Taylor were friendly with the Rector of Greensted, the Revd Philip Ray, explicit mentions in the diaries to visits to him seem to be described in different terms. The same is true of the many visits paid by both Josiah and Susan to the houses of the Revd Richard Cecil, the Pastor of the Independent congregation at Ongar, and of the Revd Henry John Earle, the Rector of High Ongar. I should be very grateful for any suggestions.

Robin Gilbert

Ed's note: Any ideas to me please and I will pass them on. Thanks

Ongar Millennium History Society
presents...

Scenes from Ongar's Past
Calendar 2010

Includes old Ongar postcard views

Available now
from Senner's newsagent £5.99

OMHS members will be able to buy a copy at
the AGM for £5.00

Was the Alexander monument moved?

The earliest eye-witness description of the interior of St Martin's was compiled in the early 1700s by Rev. William Holman, one of Essex's pioneer antiquarians. His notes were never published, but were extensively used by later county historians, and are now in the Essex Record Office. He recorded detailed descriptions of church monuments that he had seen throughout the county, as well as coats of arms and other historical matters. All the monuments that he described in St Martin's are still there, though there are two reasons for thinking that one of them - Nicholas Alexander's marble monument (now positioned at the west end of the south chancel wall) - might have originally been in a different position.

The first reason is that Holman (whose descriptions are usually very accurate) recorded that the monument was on the north wall of the chancel. There is, of course, always the possibility that Holman had made a mistake when transcribing his notes. Unfortunately later antiquarians, such as Nathaniel Salmon (in 1741) and Philip Morant (in 1768), are unhelpful, as they do not mention the position of the monument. In his 1835 *History*, Thomas Wright (not the most reliable of witnesses) describes the Alexander monument as being in 'the south aisle'. The south aisle, of course, was not built till half a century later, so perhaps he meant the south side of the chancel, but it is difficult to know how much significance to attach to his evidence.

The second reason is that Holman gave details of a painted board which recorded in detail the ten provisions of the will of Joseph King. In Holman's time, this board was placed on the south chancel wall near the door - in other words, on or near the position now occupied by the Alexander monument, though it is possible that there might have been room for both. The south chancel door is no longer visible from the inside of the church, but presumably was apparent and in use in Holman's time. The regularity of the

hard gritty plaster which now covers this wall suggests that it was applied after the doorway had been blocked up, perhaps in the 'harsh and ignorant' restoration of 1860. The original internal finish would have been a soft smooth lime plaster.

However, the south chancel doorway, with one of its hinge pintles, is still clearly visible on the outside of the church, blocked by a thin skin of flint infill. The top courses of the infill are missing and, through the gap, it is possible to see the higher internal arch of the original door opening (still lined with soft lime plaster) as well as the brickwork that was inserted to close the opening into the chancel on the inside. The bricks of this inner wall look regular and well-fired, suggesting a later C18 or C19 date for the blocking of the doorway. Careful measurements show that the Alexander monument, in its present position, would have definitely intruded into the upper part of the original door opening. Careful re-examination of the internal plastered wall in an oblique light clearly reveals the faint 'ghost' of the blocked doorway can be seen, and its profile confirms that the monument would indeed have protruded from above into the door opening

Nicholas Alexander died in 1714 and it is reasonable to assume that his monument was erected soon after. There is no doubt that it could not have been placed in its present position if the doorway had still been in use at that time, as anyone walking through it would have hit their head on the lower part of the monument. This means that either the door had already been blocked up by (or soon after) 1714, or that the monument was moved at a later date after the door had been blocked, possibly during the 1860 restoration. If the monument had originally been on the north chancel wall, it is possible that it had had to be moved in 1861 when the north chancel door was heightened to provide access to the newly built vestry. The blocked south chancel doorway would have provided a convenient place to re-site it.

The strongest evidence comes from Holman, usually a reliable witness, and from the brickwork used to block the south chancel door. These bricks appear to be of a significantly later date than 1714, strongly suggesting that the south chancel wall could not have been the original position of his monument. It is a surprising fact that many monuments, found to be in an inconvenient position, were thrown out during church restorations. However, in this case, the descendants of the Alexander family were still living in Ongar in the C19 and it is likely that, if so threatened, their influence would have ensured that the monument was re-positioned rather than discarded. It is a reminder of the power that important local families wielded at that time over the internal ordering of their parish churches.

Michael Leach

**Visit to Essex Police Museum
at Police HQ Chelmsford**

**Wednesday 2nd September 2009
Meet at Museum at 7.15pm**

**Names to John please 01277 362461
(See diary page for directions)**

The OMHS was recently given permission to enter the building and roam at large to make a photographic and video record of the interior before being demolished. John Root took about 150 still photographs and David Welford had his close up and wide angle video cameras. The building was largely empty with most of the rooms deserted except for a few bedside cabinets and ceiling pulleys. We feel that as far as we can, we have now made a permanent record of the War Memorial Hospital which can be used for future reference, display and exhibition.

In addition, and with the authority of NHS West Essex, we were given permission to remove all the commemorative plaques throughout the building to add to our own collection of Ongar memorabilia.

About a dozen or so items of all shapes and sizes are now in our store, some of which we hope to display in the forthcoming exhibition "ONGAR'S HIDDEN SECRETS" to be held on Saturday 13th October in the United Reformed Church.

The painting of Budworth Hall being used as a WW1 military hospital, which appeared in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1916, has now been presented by the NHS to the Community Association for display in that building. The only item of community interest remaining in the hospital is the WW1 Scroll of Honour which we understand is to be removed shortly for safekeeping.

Thanks are due to Mrs. Sheila Jackman MBE for using her good offices to enable us to complete the task.

John Winslow

ONGAR'S HIDDEN SECRETS

A joint exhibition by Ongar Flower Club,
Ongar Millennium History Society
and Ongar United Reformed Church

on Saturday 13th October, 10-4,
at Ongar United Reformed Church.

HISTORY DISPLAYS * FLOWER DISPLAYS *
URC CHURCH HISTORY * OLD PHOTOS *
*** LIGHT REFRESHMENTS ***

Volunteers to help on the day are required. We will have a
rota

Why Navestock?

It is usual for earthly remains to be interred, if not in the vicinity of the home of the deceased or of the place of death (if different), then at a location with which he or she was in some way closely connected. Martin Taylor (1788-1867), one of the sons of the Revd Isaac Taylor and his wife Ann (née Martin), died at his home in Fortis Green, Middlesex, on 30 May 1867¹, but was buried six days later in the churchyard of St Thomas the Apostle, Navestock, by his nephew the Revd Isaac Taylor (the fourth Isaac), at that time Vicar of St Matthias, Bethnal Green². Martin had left home for a career in publishing in London in 1809 while the family was still living in Colchester³ and was thus the only one of the children of Isaac and Ann who survived to adulthood never to have lived in Ongar or the surrounding area. The connection with Navestock is revealed on the very last page (320) of *The Autobiography and Other Memorials of Mrs Gilbert (formerly Ann Taylor)* (1874), edited by Josiah Gilbert, where Josiah writes "...the secluded Church of Navestock... here, close to the church porch, lie Martin Taylor and his wife". Since Martin's second wife Sarah (née Carlill) survived him by over fifteen years⁴, it is clear that the wife beside whom he was buried was his first wife Elizabeth, and, sure enough, as Michael Leach first kindly established for me, the Burial Registers of St Thomas, Navestock, record the burial on 22 March 1828 of one Elizabeth Taylor of London, aged 36. Since Martin was almost certainly living in London at that time and since there is good evidence that he married Sarah Carlill in 1836⁵, it seems virtually certain that this is the same Elizabeth Taylor: the date and other details fit very well. The question, however, remains: "Why was *Elizabeth* buried at Navestock?"

Elizabeth's maiden name was apparently Venn, though the only evidence for this of which I am aware is the statement to that effect in the brief paragraph on her daughter Helen appended to the original *DNB* article on the Revd Isaac Taylor (1759-1829): "Helen Taylor (1818-1885), the daughter of Martin Taylor of Ongar (1788-1867), by his first wife, Elizabeth Venn, made a few contributions to 'Missionary Hymns' and the 'Teacher's Treasury,' and, besides a small devotional work, 'Sabbath Bells,' was author of 'The Child's Books of Homilies' (London, 1850, 18mo). She died in 1885, and was buried at Parkstone, Dorset." That article was written in 1898 by Thomas Seccombe, a member of the editorial staff of the *DNB*, who contributed no less than 654 articles to the Dictionary⁶. It is pretty clear from that last fact (and from his description – blindly followed by the late Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg in her *ODNB* article on Helen - of Martin Taylor as "of Ongar"!) that he had no

¹ Death certificate; Bishop's Transcript of the Burial Registers of St Thomas the Apostle, Navestock

² Bishop's Transcript of the Burial Registers of St Thomas the Apostle, Navestock

³ *The Autobiography and Other Memorials of Mrs Gilbert (formerly Ann Taylor)* – AOMMG - Vol i, p.187

⁴ She died on 4 May 1883 - death certificate.

⁵ Boyd's marriage index of Marriage Licence Allegations - Faculty Office 1701-1850 lists the following: 22 Jun 1836 TAYLOR Martin CARLILL Sarah. I am indebted to my cousin Fiona Martin for this reference.

⁶ Gillian Fenwick, *The Contributors' Index to the Dictionary of National Biography 1885-1901*

special knowledge of the Taylors and was simply responsible for producing articles on people for whom a more authoritative author could not be found. Of the sources he cites at the foot of the article, I have consulted all I can trace, and none of these makes any mention of Elizabeth Venn. It is thus impossible to say where he obtained the information about her maiden name. He is, however, unlikely simply to have made it up. Unfortunately, no record has yet been found of the marriage of Martin and Elizabeth or of the baptism of Helen; the IGI is silent on both counts and there is no mention of either event in *AOMMG* or, as far as I am aware, in other surviving Taylor or Gilbert writings. Both Helen's age at death (67) and those given for her on census returns suggest, however, that she was probably born in 1818 as stated in the *DNB* article.

There being no obvious reason to connect Martin Taylor with Navestock other than his first wife's being buried in the churchyard of St Thomas's, it seemed reasonable to speculate that it was Elizabeth who had family connections there. Was she perhaps born in Navestock? And might her marriage to Martin have taken place at St Thomas's?

Frustratingly, not only is there nothing in the surviving Navestock registers to support this theory, but it can't even be completely ruled out because of the incompleteness of those registers. Not only were a lot of them (including the records of marriages for several years up to and including 1812) rendered illegible by water damage during the winter of 1947, but there is a note in the Baptismal Register by the Curate of the time recording that the Parish Clerk had failed to record most of the baptisms (and burials) that occurred between 20 September 1789 and 18 November 1791 and had then tiresomely died before his memory could be tapped on the subject. In case Elizabeth Venn was a widow when she married Martin, I checked the (incomplete) Navestock baptismal records for 1791-1793 for girls named Elizabeth, but there is no trace in the IGI of any of the three of them having married a Mr Venn between 1809 and 1817 (or indeed at all). The only Elizabeth Venn I can find in the IGI baptised in England between 1791 and 1793 was the daughter of a man in Slinfold, Sussex, who was, or by 1797 became, a pauper⁷. Not impossible, but nothing to suggest any obvious association. Then there is the frustrating IGI entry for a Martin Taylor "of London" married on 31 May 1811, but with no indication of the bride's name or the place that the marriage took place. The date is not impossible for our Martin, but it is much earlier than one would have expected, especially as Helen (apparently Martin's and Elizabeth's only child) was not born until 1818.

So we end as we began, with the question: "Why Navestock?" And with two others, posed by my cousin, Fiona Martin: "Why is it that, in all the numerous memoirs and letters left by the Taylors, there is not a single reference to Elizabeth Venn or to Martin's first marriage? Was there something about her that offended even their deep sense of the importance of family ties?"

Robin Gilbert

⁷ <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/A2A/records.aspx?cat=182-pldb6&cid=-1&Gsm=2008-06-18#-1> West Sussex Poor Law Records, part 6 Slinfold: Removal order: Charles VENN Par/176/32/3/1 9 Dec 1797

The BOO quiz – new and improved version!

The OMHS team hope to repeat last year's success by winning the 2009 revamped competition being held on Saturday 24th October. Watch this space! If you want to join our team, please contact John Winslow.

Cemetery recorders needed

In order to make further progress in our recording of the memorial inscriptions in Ongar cemetery and local churchyards, we need volunteers to join our team. If you would be willing to give up a couple of hours per week to help with this project, please contact Felicitie or Jenny.

We would like to thank Bob Macdonald for all his hard work on the project, which has helped us to make big strides forward.

Jenny Main

Dates for your diary

**Wed 2nd Sept
Meet 7.15pm**

**Visit to Essex Police Museum
Chelmsford (Directions follow)**

From the Army and Navy roundabout, take the Chelmer Road (A138) exit towards Chelmer Village and bear left at the next roundabout. At the traffic lights, turn left into Sandford Road. Take the fourth turning on the right (just before Lionmede Park) into the Essex Police HQ approach road. Pass Gainsborough Crescent on the right and the museum is before the car park on the left.

**Wed 23rd Sept
8pm**

**OMHS AGM at Ongar Library
followed by a talk by Jem Barnecutt on
"The Boodle Connection"**

**Thurs 8th Oct
8pm**

**A talk on house history
by Jennifer Butler from ERO
Great Stony**

**Saturday 10th Oct
10-4**

**"Ongar's Hidden Secrets"
at United Reformed Church,
High Street, Ongar
Joint exhibition by OMHS, URC
and Ongar Flower Club**

Contributions for next newsletter please!

The next newsletter will be produced in November 2009, so any articles to Jenny by 20th October please. Thank you!