

Ongar Millennium History Society Newsletter

August 2010

Well summer is nearly over and today the weather is giving me a sneak preview of what is to come being cold and wet! But fear not we have put together a sparkling programme for this coming year including talks and visits. However we are proposing to raise our subscription this year to cover rising costs, but it will be the first rise since we began over 10 years ago! (See page 2 for details).

We hope you will come along to the AGM on 22nd September to give your views and to join in the discussion about a possible museum for Ongar.

Jenny Main, Editor

ONGAR MILLENNIUM HISTORY SOCIETY

**Annual General Meeting – Wednesday 22nd September 2010,
7.45 for 8 pm at Ongar Library, High St., Ongar**

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of AGM 2009
4. Chairman's Annual Report
5. Receipt & consideration for approval, the accounts for the financial year ending 31st July 2010
6. Proposal for OMHS subscription increase.
7. Election of committee and officers of the Society
8. Appointment of auditors

Interval

for refreshments

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

Followed by a discussion on '**The way forward with a museum in Ongar**'
Judith Cook, Deputy Town Clerk will update us on the town council's plans and indicate where we and other organisations come into those plans. Plus Frank Knights will bring some of his coins to show there is a need for a museum to house these finds.

Committee Members 2009-2010

Chairman: Felicitie Barnes
Treasurer: John Winslow
Minute Sec: Elisabeth Barrett
Website+: Keith Snow

Vice Chair: Jenny Main
Speaker Sec.: Carol Barber
Bookings Sec: Wendy Thomas
Cttee member: Olive Glassington

OMHS visit to Chartwell

Following the talk early this year given by John Whaler on Chartwell and the Churchill Family, a group of OMHS members boarded a coach and headed off for the long awaited visit to Chartwell, the home of Sir Winston and Lady Clementine Churchill.

For those of us who hadn't visited the house previously, it lived up to all expectations as a home with a lovely family ambience, delightfully furnished, and set in such quiet secluded grounds with beautiful views of surrounding countryside.

Pre 1939 the Churchills' hosted countless gatherings and dinner parties not only with their own family but with politicians, stars of show business, members of the art and literary worlds and visiting foreign presidents and royalty. The house contains hundreds of souvenirs and mementos from Sir Winston's long military and political career but particularly relating with gratitude from the war years 1939-1945.

We were able to stroll through the water gardens with mini waterfalls, Clementine's Rose Garden, Kitchen garden and lots more. Also on show were dozens of Sir Winston's paintings.

An exhausting but wonderful trip.

John Winslow

OMHS subscriptions 10 years on!

After 10 years of OMHS subscriptions being held at £5 per annum, the committee are proposing to increase our rates this year to a more realistic level. After much debate, the committee is proposing to raise the level of subscription per year to £10 for a single member and £18 for a couple.

We realise this appears to be a big jump, but it will bring us into line with other Ongar clubs and societies, and will help with increasing costs, particularly for hiring venues, speakers and printing costs.

For your annual subscription you get:

- 4 newsletters per year , plus occasional 'noticeboards'
- Free Christmas social including wine and buffet
- Wine and nibbles at the AGM
- Some free talks and meetings
- Plus a hardworking committee putting a varied programme together each year!

We still think that OMHS will be good value for money and hope that you agree. This subscription increase will be voted on at the September AGM.

Obituaries

It is with much regret that we announce that our member DUDLEY GOLDSWORTHY of Fyfield has passed away. We offer our sincere condolences to his wife Vera and family.

It is with much regret that we announce the passing of VICTOR LODGE, who did sterling work auditing the OMHS year end accounts for many years. We offer our condolences to his wife, Moyna, and family.

Get involved!!

We are starting to record the memorial inscriptions in Shelley Churchyard every Monday morning at 10am, starting on 6th September.

All welcome. Instructions will be given.

If you would like to get involved but can't make the first meeting please contact

Keith Snow 366791 or Felicitie Barnes 362597

OMHS trip to the National Archives

The members of OMHS who went to the National Archives at Kew on May 22nd certainly enjoyed the experience of being able to access such a wealth of information. It was the first time for the majority, but will not be the last, judging by the comments on the way home.

It was a privilege to discover the accessibility of original documents relating to ancestors. With snippets of knowledge already gained by family folklore, members were able to verify facts about the trades and professions of their great grandparents and other members of their families. All, who wanted to, were able to follow genealogical lines with assistance from the most helpful staff.

One of our members knew her grandfather was on the first ship to be sunk in World War One. He survived the explosion on the Amphion on August 6th 1914, as it was laying mines, and blew itself up. He was a stoker and was fortunate to survive. His name was, of course, not on the casualty list. Information about this accident is now available but it was secret until the 1970s. She now knows personal details, e.g. height and colouring, of her grandfather, as well as those of her great grandfather who she managed to trace back to 1881 when he was also in the navy.

Another member looked at records of railway employees of the London and North Western Railway in the 1850s, because his great grandfather had worked at Euston. He needed extra time to search the two big volumes of records, which will have to come out again at a future date.

Whatever we were looking for, we got leads as to where to look. In my case it was looking for my grandfather born in the workhouse, and missing from Census records until he was fourteen and in the army. Workhouse records indicated a variety of places where he could have been brought up, and opened up a wealth of research options. One member vowed he had discovered that his great grandfather had been hanged at Chelmsford Jail. He has to return to discover the truth of that one!

Felicitie Barnes

Visit to Essex Record Office, 26th April

A small group of OMHS members were made very welcome at the Essex Record Office in Chelmsford and the archivists had gone to a lot of trouble to produce many documents of particular relevance to the Ongar area. However I found the method of storing - and storing safely – the incredible number of documents in the care of the record office even more interesting.

The building is situated between the River Chelmer and the canal, and is in the middle of a car park – judging by the puddles remaining in the car park from the wet winter, the site must be vulnerable to water. There is a nationwide authority which has overall sanction on the siting of record offices and their criteria have to be met. The building itself stands on concrete walls which go down several feet into the ground, hopefully to guard against flooding.

The area in which the records are stored is kept at a specific temperature (rather cold to work in!) and the humidity is maintained to ensure that parchment documents do not dry out. The 'sprinkler' system to guard against fire, instead of using water, works by extracting the oxygen from the atmosphere and suffocating the fire.

Not very romantically, but practically, the records are stored in what looks like the sort of shoe boxes that used to be on the shelves in shoe shops – rows and rows of them in racks about ten feet high, boxes and racks all carefully numbered.. The boxes are of a material that should preserve the contents for several days in water! The numbering system is, of course, to keep track of documents in today's computer world, but is entirely dependent on the records being correctly numbered in the first place, so there is no room for human error.

Having looked at the storage area we then returned to the real world and were taken to a very light and comfortable room with the library and desks where you could look at the records retrieved from the storage area. We saw a selection of Ordnance Survey maps of the Ongar area going back through the years and showing many changes. Afterwards we sat round a large table on which there were records of interest to our group. We could have spent many fruitful hours looking at these records which included a Manorial Roll of a rent which included a cockerel t where the Ongar Fire station used to be.

We were made very welcome and the staff had obviously gone to a lot of trouble to find such fascinating records for us to look at, and they were speaking to the converted when they hoped that we would take advantage of the Essex Record Office in the future.

Barbara Williams

Ed's note: Thanks to Barbara for this article which gives a flavour of life behind the scenes at ERO. If other members would like to submit articles on OMHS events or any other topic of interest, your editor would be delighted to hear from you!

The Stratford Martyrs

The Stratford Martyrs first came to my notice when I was listening to "Making History" on Radio 4 on a Tuesday afternoon in November. I pricked up my ears when they mentioned that one came from Chipping Ongar, and I thought it would be of interest to find more about them, and which one was from our home town. His name was Ralph Jackson, aged 33 and a serving man. There were 12 others, 10 men and 2 women They were burnt on Stratford Green on the 27 of June 1556. The men were tied to stakes, but the women where allowed to walk about in the fire. Most of them came from Essex, and were executed for being Protestants, as this was in the reign of Queen Mary (Bloody Mary).

The other Martyrs were Henry Adington from Grinstead, Sussex, Laurence Pernam (Smith) from Hoddesdon within the parish of Amwell, Herts, Henry Wye from Stanford le Hope, William Halliwell from Waltham Holy Cross Thomas Bowyer from Great Dunmow, George Searles from White Notley, Edmund Hurst from St James parish, Colchester, Lyon Crowen from Flanders living in the city of London, John Drifall from Rettendon, John Routh from Wicks Essex(?), Elizabeth Pepper from the parish of St James Colchester, who was 11 weeks pregnant, and Agnes George from Great Bardfield .

The burning probably took place on Stratford Green, once called Gallows Green, where the University of East London now stands . The only remains of the green is a small churchyard belonging to the church, that is now in the middle of the very busy Stratford Broadway. In 1879 an 85 foot Gothic-style terracotta memorial was erected in the churchyard. It is a six sided monumental version of John Fox's Book of Martyrs written 400 years earlier. A wood cut from Fox's Book of Martyrs is reproduced in stone on the memorial together with the names of the Martyrs. I visited the memorial the last time I was in Stratford , and there were still flowers placed there . It was thought that around 20,000 people came to watch the burning, many from the city of London. The last burning in Britain was in 1612 in the reign of King James I

Richard Thompson

Ed's note: This article originally appeared in our newsletter dated February 2005, but as it is topical with the Olympics coming to Stratford in 2012 we thought it was worth another airing.

Treat yourself to an OMHS postcard pack!

12 views of Historic Ongar for £2.00

Contact John, Wendy or Jenny

The Normans – BBC Hands on History

Have you been watching the BBC's Norman Season on BBC2 and BBC4 this summer? There has been a 3 part series tracing the roots of our conquerors, examining their influence and their strategy of integration. In addition there has been a series about Norman walks and a programme dedicated to the Domesday Book. If you are quick you may be able to catch them on BBC iPlayer! We were hoping that our very own motte and bailey might be featured, but Castle Hedingham stole the show

The Norman conquest changed the political and cultural landscape of the United Kingdom, setting out the basis of life today. However it was not an easy relationship between the rulers and the ruled. The Norman nobles and bishops started building motte and bailey castles, and then gradually changed them to stone keeps. The keep of Colchester Castle is the largest keep in Europe and was a way of intimidating the local population. The Normans built their castles to assert power as opposed to the Anglo-Saxon defensive encampments. All the Anglo-Saxon bishops and lords were usurped by the Normans making a ruling elite of 10,000.

The Domesday Book listing all the manors was completed in six months, and it showed that the king owned 20% of the land, the Church 25% and the Norman barons 50%, leaving 5% of land for the old English nobles. As a result Normandy became increasingly powerful, and the Normans went on to capture Jerusalem during the Crusades and colonised southern Italy and Sicily. See www.bbc.co.uk/history/handsonhistory for details of walks and activities

In partnership with Ongar library, as part of the BBC's Hands on History project, we applied to be one of the historical town centres with a shopfront presence on our high street. Unfortunately we were not successful with this, but will instead be helping with a "local history memory wall" project with the library between 6th to 19th November. This will be a photographic display of the High Street, asking individuals to share their memories of Ongar and link it to the display.

We have been asked to be present at the Ongar launch of this project on 6th November between 10-2 to support the project and to promote our own activities. Volunteers will be needed please!

Jenny Main

What happened in August?

Stun your family and friends with these facts!

1st August 1740 – first public performance of "Rule Britannia"

7th August 1840 – an act made it illegal for anyone under 16 to be apprenticed as a chimney sweep.

12th August 1960 – Launch of Echo 1A, NASA's first communications satellite

16th August 1960 – Cyprus gained independence from British rule.

21st August 1940 – Death of Leon Trotsky

31st August 1900 – Coca Cola first sold in Britain

On the move (again)

Most members will already be aware that we possess numerous photographs, newspaper clippings, books, plaques, silver plated cups, letters, files and the famous straw hat just to mention a few. And that is not to mention our collection of wine glasses, other party paraphernalia and the odd bottle or three of wine. Over the years this bulky collection has been growing and growing in number and volume. Originally they were kept in our various homes and later in the wonderful King's Trust building.

You will recall that due to the King's Trust premises being let on a commercial basis, we had to find alternative storage space. Ongar Town Council kindly offered the unused chapel in the cemetery which we were pleased to accept. However, although dry and secure, it is in a pretty dirty state and despite our attempts at tidying and cleaning we found we were sharing it with some Ongar wildlife. A cat had made its home there, and a spider was spotted running across one of our shelves and very recently, something has definitely died in there!

The United Reformed Church has taken pity on us and has offered some space on their upper floor. As you read this we are in the process of finding a local light removal outfit and organising the move.

John Winslow

A Wright mystery to be unravelled

Elisabeth Barrett, in her chapter on trade and commerce in 'Aspects of the History of Ongar', refers to John Wright junior leaving Ongar in about 1665 to establish a factory in Birmingham for the manufacture of gas burners. He was probably part of the Wright family who had been ironmongers in the High Street since the early part of the century.

I was recently sent a copy of the introduction to a catalogue of English watercolours and drawings in the J. Leslie Wright Bequest in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. A common enough name, you might say. However the extremely scanty biographical detail caught my eye. J. Leslie Wright was born in Ongar in 1862 and moved with his family to Birmingham in 1866. He spent his working life in manufacturing industry in the Midlands, but devoted much time and expense in acquiring a formidable collection of watercolours and drawings by many famous English artists working between 1700 and 1900. He bequeathed his collection to the city of Birmingham in 1953, near the end of his long life.

Could J. Leslie Wright have been the son of Elisabeth Barrett's John Wright who migrated to Birmingham in 'about 1865'?

Michael Leach

Dates for your diary

**Wed Sept 22nd
7.45 for 8pm** **Annual General Meeting**
at Ongar Library
plus a discussion on the way forward regarding a
museum for Ongar

**Wed Nov 3rd
8pm** **Historic Houses in Ongar High Street**
- a talk by Ann Padfield
at Great Stony Hall

**Wed Dec 8th
8pm** **OMHS Christmas Social**
at Ongar Town council offices

**Wed Jan 19th
8pm** **The railway at Ongar since 1865**
-a talk by Edwyn Gilmour
at Church Rooms , Castle Street

Coming later in the year....

- **Historic Finds in the Ongar Hundred**
- **Who actually saved Epping Forest in the 19th Century**
- **A walk in Epping Forest**
- **Visit to Hill Hall**

Contributions for next newsletter please!

**The next newsletter will be produced in November 2010, so any
articles to Jenny please by 23rd October. Thank you!**