

Ongar Millennium History Society Newsletter

August 2014

It seems that times are changing in OMHS. We are losing some valuable people from the committee in the next few months. Most of us have been on the committee since we started in 1996! You will see references to this in the newsletter. We will be in a different format by the AGM in September. Please put yourself forward to help if you can. We don't want to go under but it might happen if we don't get any new blood.

Jenny Main, Editor

ONGAR MILLENNIUM HISTORY SOCIETY

**Annual General Meeting – Wednesday 17th September 2014,
7.45 for 8 pm at Ongar Library, High St., Ongar**

NB Note change of date

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of AGM 2013
4. Chairman's Annual Report
5. Receipt & consideration for approval, the accounts for the financial year ending 31st July 2014
6. Election of committee and officers of the Society
7. Appointment of auditors

Interval

for refreshments

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

Committee Members 2012-2013

Chairman:	Felicite Barnes	bwthynbach.flis@btinternet.com
Vice Chair/Newsletter:	Jenny Main	jenny.main@ntlworld.com
Treasurer:	Vacancy	
Speaker Sec.:	Lorna Vaux	lornavaux5@gmail.com
Bookings Sec	Wendy Thomas	wthomas545@aol.com
Minute Sec:	Vacancy	
Archive:	Olive Glassington	oliveglass@tiscali.co.uk
	Ron Huish	

NB Committee phone numbers can be found on the membership cards

Time for a change

This Society was founded in 1996 and in the intervening years the committee has brought the history of Ongar to a very large number of local residents. Some of the committee have been in situ for all of that time.

Losing our Treasurer, John Winslow, imminently and other committee members in the near future, it is now time for some new blood with fresh thinking and new ideas.

We are proud of our achievements over the years including the publication of our award winning book "Aspects of the History of Ongar", the Ongar Time Line and several other publications, calendars for 2010 and 2014, the Millennium Walk, School Resource Boxes, outings to historic London and numerous trips to places of local interest. A large collection of photographs and other items has been amassed. The successful springtime Marion Slade Lecture and Brains of Ongar (BOO) contest held every autumn have also become part of the Ongar social scene.

We have become a high prestige and well respected organisation and it is necessary for other people pick up the strands to keep it alive.

IT'S UP TO YOU....

OMHS Subscriptions

To enable us to meet the large increase in venue hire charges and it becoming necessary to purchase Public Liability Insurance, it is regretted that the annual subscriptions will have to be increased to £12 for a single membership and £22 per household, commencing with the renewals for the year 2014/15.

PS to Afternoon Tea at the Ongar Ritz

Here is an extract from a letter received from **Combat Stress** (Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society) :

"I am writing to thank you for your kind donation of £86 as a result of the 'Afternoon Tea at the Ongar Ritz' event. It must have been a lovely day and I am most grateful that Combat Stress was nominated to receive the proceeds. Please pass on our warmest thanks to everyone involved in raising this sum.

"As you are aware, Combat Stress provides its unique services free of charge to Veterans and is reliant on the generosity to volunteer fundraisers."

Josephine Grace

Head of Events, Volunteering and Regional Fundraising

Contributions for the OMHS newsletter

I have come to the end of my reserve articles for the OMHS newsletter, so please get your thinking caps on and put pen to paper, otherwise there will be nothing to read in November!

Please send contributions to jenny.main@ntlworld.com

Thank you

From our postbag

Dear Ms Main

I recently came across your interesting web site. I spent quite a bit of time in Ongar during and after World War 2 as my Grandparents lived in Shelley. I used to go to Sunday school and well remember Miss Storkey the teacher who lived in the round thatched cottage at the top of the gravel road way to the big house and St Peters Church. I was living in Loughton and we used to travel by the pull and push train from Epping and walk up to their house. I also remember the USAAF Liberators taking off across their house from RAF Chipping Ongar.

I have written a small piece centred on World War 1 which I hope you might think suitable for the Newsletter. It is attached below and if you feel it not appropriate I shall understand.

I had some great times in Ongar

Tom Gilbert

What were your relatives doing 100 years ago?

My Grandfather Thomas Percy Gilbert had been a serving member of the Royal Engineers for 7 years. After demobilisation he obtained a post at the Barracks in Bury St Edmunds ensuring that heating and water supply was provided to the Barracks. In 1906 a decision was taken that water should be supplied from the town and there would be no need for the post of engineer. Thomas Percy was to be made redundant through modern technology!

He set about finding alternative employment and in 1907 obtained employment at the Hackney Homes in Ongar that had only recently been opened. The Hackney Homes was a residential school for children who required residential education from Hackney in London. Thomas Percy became the engineer to the school looking after the water and heating services. He stayed in this post until he retired in 1931. The Gilbert family lived in two addresses in Shelley. One was the Brambles, between what was known as the Four Wantz crossroads and the Moreton Road. They later moved to a larger house, Roselea in the Fyfield Road, (close to Ongar Memorial Hospital). The house had been built in 1926 and bought as a new build. This house had a long rear garden attached and Thomas Percy started a rose growing business in his spare time and on retirement became more fully involved. The house itself was lit only by gaslight and continued so up until the late 1940s. He was also much involved in community activities being manager of a local football team and a special constable.

Thomas Percy died on the 3rd October 1943, in the Memorial Hospital and is buried in St Peters Churchyard, Shelley. He was aged 77 years.

Percy Charles, his son and my father, was 11 years old when the family moved to Ongar and he won a scholarship to Ongar Grammar School. For some reason, probably shortage of money he did not go on to higher education but started work as a trainee clerk with the London North Eastern Railway (LNER) at Ongar station. He was a member of the local scout group and as the First World War threatened, many of those scouts joined the Essex Regiment Territorial or Volunteer Army.

In 1915 Percy Charles was 18 years old and was called up for military service. He joined the 1/4 Battalion Essex Regt that became part of the 54th East Anglia

Division. Whilst with the 54th Division he transferred to the Army Service Corps and was attached to Divisional HQ. This Division, which included the 4 Battalion Essex Regt, was posted to Gallipoli and landed at Sulva Bay in August 1915 as part of the notorious and ill-fated Gallipoli campaign, which had commenced on the 25th April 1915. The 54th were reinforcements following heavy losses sustained by the initial troops. A month later he met up with a Capt Joe Hailes of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, the husband of his aunt, who was also attached to 54th Division and while moving the HQ, Capt Hailes was killed a few yards in front of Percy Charles on the 1st September 1915 aged 43. He is buried at Embarkation Pier Cemetery Canakkale, Turkey,

The 54th were later transferred to Egypt and Percy Charles went on to fight his way through Palestine, Gaza, and on to Jerusalem. He never spoke much about his experiences but received a Meritorious Service Medal and two Mentions in Despatches. He ended his service as a Staff Sergeant.

After demobilisation Percy Charles returned to work for the LNER at Ongar Station. He lived back with his parents and threw himself into social activity. He played cricket, tennis and was Treasurer of the Ongar Horticultural Society and had a large circle of friends some of whom he kept in touch with long after he was married.

Tom Gilbert



Picture 1: Percy Charles Gilbert in 1915

We welcome any other contributions and memories to the newsletter. Please email anything that you think may be of interest to other members to jenny.main@ntlworld.com



Picture 2: The Brambles

Picture 3: Roselea



A glimpse of Ongar in 1770

In the first half of the eighteenth century, brief printed descriptions of Ongar appeared in Richard Newcourt's *Repertorium* (1711) and Thomas Cox's *Magna Britannia* (1716), and more detailed accounts were published in Nicolas Salmon's *History of Essex* (1740) and Philip Morant's *History of Essex* (1768). All drew on the information provided by their predecessors, as well as the unpublished manuscripts of a number of Essex antiquaries, of which the most assiduous was probably Rev William Holman who collected a considerable amount of material for a county history. Reading the various accounts it is clear that most writers worked from printed or manuscript sources, and had never visited Ongar. The exception is William Holman who not only transcribed the monumental inscriptions in St Martin's, but provided details about the monuments which could only have been obtained first hand. Nevertheless, he and his successors focussed largely on church history and manorial descents, and provided little or no detail about the town itself.

The first eye witness account of Chipping Ongar is found in volume 3 of the Gentleman's *History of Essex* (1770). The identity of the 'gentleman' is uncertain; though Peter Muilman's name has long been associated with this work, he was the promoter and financier, but not the author of this work. But whoever provided the text for Ongar was obviously familiar with the vicinity. After giving the mileages to the nearest towns he noted that Ongar 'consists chiefly of one street of pretty good houses, of which those belonging to Mr. Dore, Mr. Lenham and Mr. Boodle are the principal, but a house near the church, belonging to Richard Bull esq., is superior to either (sic) of them.' All four men can be identified, the first being an attorney, the second and third were surgeons, and the fourth a bibliophile book collector living on an inherited fortune as well as a wealthy wife. It is possible to identify two of these houses – John Boodle lived in a house on the site of what is now Greylands, and Richard Bull lived in the White House behind the church. The other two must have lived in one of the more substantial houses in the High Street.

The writer mentioned some good inns, without providing any details, and the weekly market held on Saturdays. He detailed two market houses, one of which still exists as an Indian restaurant; this was used for trading corn and, at that date, would have been open at ground floor level. The other market house was demolished in the 1890s but stood on the other side of the High Street, well forward from the other buildings, just north of the alley to St Martin's. The writer noted that 'butter, eggs, poultry and the like' were sold here, and that the upper floor was a school house (this was the eighteenth century home of the King's Trust school). He added 'the traffic of this town, except on market days, is very trifling, and indeed at those times not to be boasted of, the neighbouring markets of Romford, Epping and Chelmsford engaging the principal business of this part of the county.' By traffic, of course, he meant trade, and he was painting a picture of a weak local economy which was not flourishing in the face of outside competition. Though not mentioned in the Gentleman's *History*, livestock would have been penned and sold in the High Street. An unusual transaction took place in the cattle market in December 1823 when a man was reported to have sold his wife for 10 shillings, paying the customary market toll of one penny per head.

He then referred to two annual fairs, held on Easter Tuesday and the day after the feast of St Michael (i.e. 30 September). Both fairs were 'for toys and hiring of servants.'

The second function is clear enough; farm workers were hired on short contracts, and those without work presented themselves at hiring fairs, hoping to be chosen by one

of the attending farmers. The first function might seem more obscure. A rather poor rural town would not have much demand for children's toys, but the word was used here in its broader sense, referring to any small item of little value.

These are the only eyewitness descriptions of Ongar in the eighteenth century that have come to light, though a little more can be gleaned about events in the town, and the occupations of some of its inhabitants, from the pages of the weekly *Chelmsford Chronicle* newspaper. It would be rewarding to find a cache of personal letters, or a diary, but so far nothing relevant has been found.

Michael Leach

Changing Ongar

In the last 100 years Ongar has changed from sleepy rural parishes to a bustling and noisy town on route to the local motorways. However in the early part of the 20th century Ongar consisted of a ribbon development along the High Street, Fyfield Road, Cooper's Hill and Greensted Road with some big houses and cottages scattered along the minor roads in Shelley, Greensted and Marden Ash. The railway gave Ongar an entrance into the outside world. There was a grammar School. There were shops and businesses, with plenty of pubs, but no big housing estates such as Shelley, Mayflower Way, Longfields, Kettlebury Way, Fairfield Road and Shakletons over a 100 years ago.

A hundred years ago World War1 started and in the OMHS archives we have some stories from the lips of some Ongarians who were children during those years of war. Marie Korf was born in 1903 in a cottage along Ongar High Street. Her father was of German extraction, but her mother was from the well known Ongar family of the Laceys. Marie's father was a tailor who had his own business making riding habits for ladies and his customers came from a long distance, Marie remembered hearing the horses' hoofs pounding up the High Street and the coaches pulling up outside their front door. The ladies had to model the dress sitting on a wooden horse so that their father could see that it hung correctly. She remembered very clearly when the war started because her father had to be interned, and a policeman came to take him away to the Isle of Wight. She and her mother had a terrible time trying to visit him.

Fred Powell was born in 1913 in a cottage along Bushey Lee. He was one of 4 boys and 9 girls. For work they were all sent into service. Fred had memories of zeppelins over Ongar, with searchlights on them. As a boy they visited the local villages in a horse and cart.

Phyllis Searle was born in 1912 and her father was a market gardener in Ongar. In the war he was a Red Cross worker based at the Budworth Hall, which was a hospital, and he went up to London to get the wounded and bring them back to Ongar. Her uncle ran the nursery and he sent the produce, such as strawberries, up to London by train. She remembers going into the fields behind their house in Fyfield

Road to go gleaning. This was a source of food for the chickens they kept in their garden.

Rene Getgood also remembered playing in the in the same fields, after her father moved to Ongar to be a gardener at the Hackney Children's Homes in 1913. She used to go with her father to the Homes when he went to look at the furnace in the greenhouses at the weekend.

Fred Barker's father was in the coach building business at the bottom of Ongar, making carriages for the gentry and any horse-drawn vehicles. Fred was born in 1907. He joined St Martin's Church choir with his father when it became a robed choir.

Felicite Barnes

Anyone for BOO?

As you will read elsewhere in the Newsletter, this is the **Grand Finale** for the OMHS sponsorship. Our Society has contested this annual event for every year of its existence and will be doing so again this year.

Can any member be encouraged to collect some friends together and enter a second OMHS team? It will be held on Saturday 25th October commencing 7.30pm at the High Ongar Villlage Hall. The only cost is £20 table fee and maybe a pound or three for your raffle tickets. In the first instance, contact John on 362461 for more information. GO FOR IT !!

John Winslow

Heritage Open Days – local properties open 11th-14th September

There are some properties open over the weekend of 11th-14th September, which are close to home if anyone fancies a trip out.

St George the Martyr Church, Costead Manor Rd, Brentwood CM14 4XU

Open Thursday 11th 10-12 and Friday 12th 10-12

Saturday 13th 10-17.00 and Sunday 14th 14.00-17.00

Petre Chapel, Thorndon Park, Ingrave, Brentwood CM13 3SA

Open Sunday 14th 13.30-16.30

Essex at War Day 1 at Essex Regiment Museum, Moulsham St, CM2 9AQ

Open Saturday 13th 10.00-17.00 Life for the British "Tommy"

Essex at War Day 2 at Hylands House London Rd, Chelmsford CM4 8WQ

Open Sunday 14th 10.00-16.00 Re-enactors,, working horses, stories of Essex people, researching your WW1 ancestors, life in a military hospital, children's activities.

Dates for your diary

**Wed 17th September
7.45 for 8pm**

AGM, Ongar library

**Sat 25th October
7.30pm**

**BOO Grande Finale
High Ongar Village Hall**

**Mon 9th November
8pm**

**Talk on George Rose
Given by Michael Leach
At Zinc, Classroom 1**

**Wed 3rd December
8pm**

**Christmas Party
OTC offices tbc**

**Mon 9th February
8pm**

**Bygone Treasures
A talk by Frank Knights**

**Fri 20th March
7.45 for 8pm**

**2015 Marion Slade Lecture
"The Medieval Essex Town of Chipping
Ongar" given by Maria Medlycott.
Budworth Hall, High Street, Ongar**

**Contributions for next newsletter please! The next
newsletter will be produced in November 2014, so any articles to Jenny
please by 22nd October. Thank you!**