

# Ongar Millennium History Society Newsletter

**February 2010**

Well here we are, February already and another newsletter for you to enjoy. We have a packed programme of events and outings coming up, many of which are limited in terms of numbers, so you need to make sure you get your names down quickly for anything you are interested in.

Also we are meeting in a different venue for the Marion Slade lecture this year, due to the hall at Great Stony Arts Centre being unavailable because of the building works. Instead we will be at the new High Ongar Village Hall in Mill Lane. If anyone needs a lift to get there, please contact any committee member so we can arrange lifts.

We are still looking for new ideas on the committee so if you are interested in joining our happy band, please let one of us know. Thank you all for your support

**Jenny Main, Editor**

## **OMHS next event:**

**Churchill, a Local MP and Chartwell  
A talk by John Whaler**

**Followed by OMHS Projects Update**

Find out what we are currently working on and  
a chance for you to have your say or get involved

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2010 at 8pm**

**The Great Stony Arts Centre, Room 1**

**Admission free to members, £2 non-members**

### **Committee Members 2009-2010**

Chairman: Felicitie Barnes

Treasurer: John Winslow

Minute Sec: Elisabeth Barrett

Website+: Keith Snow

Vice Chair: Jenny Main

Speaker Sec.: Vacancy

Bookings Sec: Wendy Thomas

## **Our New Website**

The Ongar Millennium History Society now has its own website so you can access a range of information about the history of Ongar. You can read past newsletters, view a collection of photographs relating to the area in the past, including the *Then and Now* series and the High Street photographic survey. There is also a section containing maps of the town, although at present only the 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century map of Chipping Ongar and the 1870s Ordnance Survey map are available on the site. More photographs, maps, magazine and newspaper articles relating to Ongar's past will be added in the future.

Everyone can access the website and this will allow us to publicise the Society and attract new members. It will also make people aware of the projects we have undertaken, including the designing and crafting of the church kneelers, the publication of the book *Aspects of the History of Ongar* and the production of the DVD *Bygone Ongar 1940s to 1960s*. The website includes video excerpts from the DVD which will bring back memories and encourage viewers to purchase a copy if they don't already have one.

Russell Ball designed and created the website and will continue to be associated with the project as webmaster. He will maintain the site and update it regularly, adding items as they become available. This is where all members can help, by making suggestions and submitting photographs and documents that can be added to the site. If you are able to help by providing additional material, I shall be grateful if you will contact me or any other member of the committee. We shall need to scan your photographs and articles, taking the greatest of care and returning them without delay. Also, if you have any artefacts relating to Ongar's past that you think are better shared than locked away, they can be placed in our archive and made available to other interested people. We are in the process of cataloguing the material currently archived and this will appear on the website at a future date.

There is also a *Links* facility that, at the press of a button, will take you to other relevant websites. At present there are only two: the Epping Forest District Council parish profile on Ongar and an encyclopaedia entry on Chipping Ongar. We need more – so suggestions please.

Please look at the website and let us know what you think and, if you like it, tell your friends. Just enter <http://omhs.org.uk/> and select an option from the menu bar under the heading. Why not start with **Publications** and when the drop-down menu appears click on **DVDs** and choose a video clip.

**Keith Snow**

### **Come and Join Us!!!**

Your OMHS committee is in need of new ideas.

Why not come along and see how the committee works and contribute any ideas you may have? Our next meeting is on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March at 7.30pm at 13 Onslow Gardens.

Please phone Jenny if you would like to come along. Thank you.

## **OMHS Christmas Social 2009**

Due to the King's Trust Centre becoming unavailable for our Christmas Reception, we changed the venue to the new and stylish Chambers of the Ongar Town Council. Being rather larger, bright and warm it turned out to be a most successful evening comfortably holding the fifty or so members with plenty of room to mingle and for the preparation and serving the buffet and wine.

Thanks must go to Felicitie, Jenny, Wendy and Elisabeth for making sure there was enough to eat and drink. And for the first time in many years no-one complained of bumping their head on a low beam!!

**John Winslow**

**OMHS presents**

## **The Marion Slade Lecture 2010**

**Jim Boutwood will talk on**

**The Work of the Society for the  
Protection of Ancient Buildings,  
particularly in Essex.**

**Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2010, 7.45 for 8pm**

**at High Ongar Village Hall  
Mill Lane, High Ongar CM5 9RN**

**Cheese and wine buffet to follow**

**Tickets priced £6 from John 362461 or  
Elisabeth 362468**

**NB Please note the change of venue!!**

**Please contact any committee member  
if lifts are required.**

## **A Land Fit for Heroes**

In the last edition of OMHS Newsletter a short article entitled 'When Tommy came marching home' highlighted the plight of many of the soldiers returning home from the Great War and their families. One such family was pictured outside a hut in Ongar. In an attempt to try and discover more about this particular aspect of our local social history I visited the Essex Records Office to view the Minute Book for Ongar Parish Council for the years immediately following the end of the 1914 - 1918 conflict. I could find no reference to the hut or huts. However what I did find whilst waiting for my name to come up was a book entitled 'The Impact of Catastrophe' by Paul Rusiecki and in the chapter entitled 'A land fit for heroes' the following report:

*"A few highly publicised incidents of homelessness highlighted the scarcity of houses. In September 1919 Sgt George Bachelor, a recently demobbed soldier, his wife and six children aged between one and eighteen had to be temporarily housed by the Vicar of Southchurch after they wandered for a month sleeping rough in a railway carriage, a bell tent and a tennis pavilion. Homelessness was so acute in the Chelmsford area that the Essex County Chronicle suggested using the town's prison, which was empty at the time, as a hostel. The council inspected the prison but decided it was unsuitable to be used as a boarding house."*

Following up the reference to the Essex County Chronicle, back copies of which are held on micro-fiche at the Central Library, Chelmsford, I came across the following report for February 19th 1920:

*Ex - SOLDIERS PLIGHT Ongar Council's Criticism*

*At Ongar Rural Council on Tuesday Mr. T. Atkins JP. CC. presiding, the Clerk read a letter from Dr. G.R. Wilson calling attention to the case of a man, his wife and three children, aged 8, 6 and 4 living in a small canvas covered hut in a grass meadow at Lodge Farm, Greensted Road. He (Dr Wilson) had been called in to attend to one of the children. The man was in receipt of out of work pay because although he could obtain work, he could not obtain accommodation for his family where the work was. He was a discharged soldier. The premises were quite inadequate and he asked that immediate attention be given to the matter. He had suggested to the Surveyor that he could make investigations as to one of the huts at the Searchlight station. Mr F. C. Phillips, the Surveyor, said he was doing everything he could to assist this man to get one of the huts and if some resolution came from the Council it might help. The mother was expecting another baby.*

*Mr R.C. Garner said there were four empty cottages within a stone's throw occupied by two people. He understood that one man had two cottages and went from one to the other. He thought that this was not right and they should see whether they could do anything in the matter.*

*The Chairman: We can't stop it.*

*Mr Garner: We might approach the owners.*

*The Chairman: The Searchlight huts are nearby and there is nobody in them, while the Government are leaving their own men by the side of the road. It is only on a par with other things they do. I do not think we can do too much to get this thing altered.*

*On the proposition of the Rev. G.P. White it was resolved to support the Surveyor in trying to get the huts.*

The reference to Westminster is interesting. As Andrew Marr in his eminently readable 'The Making of Modern Britain' writes. "Lloyd George had run out of political road. His 1918 promise to make Britain 'a land fit for heroes to live in' was contradicted by the surrender of almost every mechanism of government he would have needed for economic transformation. By 1923 the shortage of new homes, a gap of more than 800,000, was worse than at the end of the war". In respect of the local situation the questions still remain. Where were the Searchlight huts located? How many of them were there? Who were they occupied by and for how long? Were the family depicted in the photograph reproduced in the last edition of this newsletter the same family Dr Wilson was trying to help? Assuming that the searchlight was in place to detect Zeppelins and perhaps later Gotha Bombers and according to the Chairman of the Council were 'near by' some local records or photographs, I feel, must exist. Any suggestions?

**Bob MacDonald**

**OMHS members' outing to  
The National Archives at Kew**

**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2010**

**Coach pick up 8.30am:  
Two Brewers bus stop  
Budworth Hall bus stop  
Great Stony bus stop**

**Leave Kew at 3.30pm**

**Cost: c.£11.50pp**

**ID/Readers' tickets**

You only need a reader's ticket to look at original documents, not copies of documents. If you do not have a valid reader's ticket and want to consult original documents, please bring two forms of identification (one with signature, one with name and address) so we can issue you with a reader's ticket. Further information available at:

**<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>**

**Please confirm your place with Jenny (01277 362684) now that the date has been decided.**

## **Richard Bull of the White House, Ongar**

The Bull family originated in the Isle of Wight but, in the mid C17, the splendidly named John Bull (d. 1715) came to London to seek his fortune. His son, also John Bull (d.1742), became a wealthy Turkey merchant in London – not a dealer in Christmas poultry but a member of the Levant Company which had the monopoly of trade with Turkey until 1825. He was knighted in 1717 and, in the same year, married Elizabeth, daughter of Richard Turner, a wealthy London advocate who lived in Chipping Ongar. This marriage resulted in the connection of Ongar with the Bull family for nearly a century.

By 1722 Sir John Bull had a country residence in Ongar when his infant son was buried in the churchyard. It seems certain that his business required a residence in the City as well, because his son, Richard (the main focus of this article), was baptised on 15 November 1721 at the church of St Peter-le-Poor in London. Though most of his children were baptised elsewhere (presumably in London), at least seven were buried at Chipping Ongar. The White House was Richard Bull's home from childhood and became his family home on his marriage in 1747 to a rich Ongar widow, Mary Alexander (née Ash). They remained in Ongar until about 1783 when they moved permanently to the Isle of Wight, though they continued to own the White House which was let to tenants for another 14 years.

A considerable amount is known about Richard Bull (1721-1805) who was described by a near contemporary as 'a veritable virtuoso of Grangerising'. This term was derived from the Rev. James Granger (1723-1776) who, in 1769, published a book entitled *A Biographical History of England from Egbert the Great to the Revolution.....adapted to a Methodical Catalogue of Engraved British Heads*. This was an extensive catalogue of 'heads' or engraved portraits (of which Granger himself was an enthusiastic collector), each entry enlivened by a short biographical sketch. The work, to which a third volume was added in 1774, fuelled a frenzy for collecting engraved portraits. Though Granger himself kept his large print collection as loose sheets, his followers had them bound into printed books, even breaking up other books in order to obtain the required 'head'. The process of adding additional material (particularly illustrations) to an existing printed book came to be known as 'grangerisation', even though it had never been practised by Granger himself. However some of the second (1775) and third (1779) editions of his work were issued interleaved with blank pages and distributed to the most eminent collectors, with the aim of soliciting information about portraits that might be in their possession.

A near contemporary described Richard Bull as the 'veritable virtuoso of grangerising' and he and another collector (Joseph Gulston) were blamed by Horace Walpole for inflating the market price of engravings (from a few shillings apiece to several guineas). Bull himself blamed Gulston. Though it is not known how many engravings Richard Bull collected, he grangerised some 250 books with about 20,000 additional illustrations. One of his larger projects was the Holy Bible, expanded with the added engravings from 7 to 25 folio volumes.

His three daughters at Ongar shared his enthusiasm and provided practical assistance with the mounting of new acquisitions, and by providing each one with an elegant ruled and hand-coloured border. One daughter, Elizabeth

(died 1809), became a collector in her own right, specialising in religious works. Dismantled books were collated with the necessary illustrations and finally despatched to a London bookbinder. If the engraving was larger than the printed page of the book in which it was to be inserted, pages were inset in larger sheets with hand-drawn margins, or single sided pages were specially obtained from the printer and suitably mounted. If no suitable engraving was available, one would be commissioned from a contemporary artist or engraver. Amongst numerous other works, Richard Bull grangerised Granger's own *Biographical History*, and this work (expanded with the added portraits to some 36 folio volumes!) was sold to Lord Mountstuart in 1774 for the princely sum of £1000. It is now in the Huntington Library in the USA. A whole room must have been set aside at the White House for dismantling books, mounting and decorating engravings, and finally for collating the newly assembled work prior to its despatch to the bookbinder.

Richard Bull became a great authority on engraved portraits and was widely consulted by fellow collectors. He only occasionally made mistakes, and maintained a humorous scepticism which is shown, for example, in his comments on the provenance of a portrait of the biblical Adam. He noted "Mrs Adam gave it to young Abel, from whom Mr Cain took it by force .... it was subsequently hung up in Noah's cabin in the Ark .... and a pigeon brought it to England." He travelled abroad in search of prints, as well as employing friends in the quest and exchanging material with fellow collectors. Something of a hypochondriac, he also travelled in search of cures for his various ailments, though he wryly noted that travel was 'a Panacea for all manner of disorders, except that terrible disease, call'd Pocket Consumption, which sooner or later is bound to seize all persons who take long journies'. Though he was MP for Newport in Cornwall from 1756 to 1780, it is not surprising to find that he rarely found time, or the inclination, to attend the House of Commons and there is no record that he ever made a speech there. However he used his influence to obtain a useful sinecure in the form of a Secret Service pension, which paid him £600 per annum from 1761 to 1780.

Though much of his collecting and grangerising was done during his time in Ongar, he moved permanently to North Court, Shorwell, Isle of Wight in 1783 where both his humour and his lavish entertainment were recorded in letters and diaries. At his death, his library contained about 3000 volumes, including most of the printed works on engraving, and a volume containing some 10,000 title pages from books published before 1749. One wonders if some of these title pages came from books that were destroyed by the frenzied collection of engravings. Such was the destruction of books for this reason that, by the end of the eighteenth century, it was unusual to find a volume of Dugdale's *Monasticon* that retained any of its original illustrations. By that time even grangerised volumes were being broken up and sold piecemeal to collectors.

### **Michael Leach**

#### Sources

Crisp, F.A. (ed), 1886 *The Registers of Ongar, Essex*

Meyer, A., 1988 'Sir William Musgrave's Lists of Portraits' in *Transactions of Walpole Society*, 54, 469-70

Peltz, L., 2004 'James Granger' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

Pinkerton J.M., 1978 'Richard Bull of Ongar' in *The Book Collector*, 27, i, 40-59

Watkins, J., 1826 *The Universal Biographical Dictionary*

## Dates for your diary

- Feb 11<sup>th</sup>**  
**8pm**                    **Churchill, a local MP and Chartwell**  
A talk by John Whaler.  
followed by Projects Update  
Great Stony Arts Centre, Room 1  
NB We are hoping to have a trip to Chartwell in  
the summer.
- March 26<sup>th</sup>**  
**7.45 for 8pm**        **Marion Slade Lecture 2010**  
**The Work of the Society for the Protection**  
**of Ancient Buildings, especially in Essex.**  
**By Jim Boutwood**  
**at High Ongar Village Hall**  
Followed by cheese and wine buffet  
Tickets £6 from John 362461 or Elisabeth 362468  
**NB Change of venue!**
- April 26<sup>th</sup>**  
**6.30-8pm**            **Visit to Essex Record Office**  
Members only. Limited numbers – names to  
Jenny please. Meet in foyer of ERO at 6.15pm
- May 5<sup>th</sup>**  
**7pm**                    **Another High Street Walk looking at**  
**Familiar and Unfamiliar Features**  
Led by Michael Leach  
Meet at Ongar Library at 7pm  
Places limited – booking essential.  
Phone Jenny on 362684
- May 22<sup>nd</sup>**  
**8.30am to**  
**5.30pm approx**     **Visit to The National Archives, Kew**  
Confirm your place with Jenny now that the date  
has been decided

### **Contributions for next newsletter please!**

**The next newsletter will be produced in May 2010, so any articles to  
Jenny please by 25<sup>th</sup> April. Thank you!**