

Ongar Millennium History Society Newsletter

February 2012

Well, here we are well into Olympic year 2012, and what a cold one it has been so far! This month's newsletter will hopefully give you plenty of interesting articles to read indoors in the warm. We have decided the newsletter would be a good place to update you all on our ongoing projects, so you will find reports on all of our current endeavours. We are always looking for more people to share the load, so if you feel inspired, please contact any of the committee members listed below. In addition, if you have any new ideas for future projects please get in touch.

Jenny Main, Editor

Ongar Millennium History Society 2012 Marion Slade Lecture The Buxtons - an old Essex family by Georgina Green

Friday 30th March, 7.45 for 8pm
High Ongar Village Hall

Admission by ticket £6
incl wine and cheese

Tickets: John 01277 362461
Jenny 01277 362684

Committee Members 2011-2012

Chairman: Felicitie Barnes
Vice Chair/Newsletter: Jenny Main
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NB Committee phone numbers can be found on the membership cards

Geoff Tebbot

Members will be saddened to learn that Geoff Tebbot passed peacefully away on Christmas morning, aged 95. He was one of our earliest members and was very supportive by attending many of our talks and other events and was always very interested in our activities. At one time he allowed us to use his garage as a storage space for our more cumbersome equipment!! With Elisabeth and Rob's impending move away from Ongar, about eighteen months ago he moved from Ongar to be near his other daughter in Surrey. There is a chapter about Geoff in the OMHS publication "Ongar People Remember – WW2" in which he relates his wartime military experiences.

John Winslow

From Riches to Rags in the Regency Period

My father Geoff Tebbot's middle name was Marsh, his grandmother's maiden name. When I was investigating the Tebbot family history, my father said he was curious about the Marsh family because he recalled his father saying they were interesting.

My research told me that my great-grandmother, Emily Lewis Tebbot nee Marsh was born in 1833 in Deptford and her parents were Mary and Charles. Charles' occupation is referred to in documents as a 'translator of languages' and of 'India House' both of which seemed quite odd. He died in 1835 leaving two children and his widow working as a laundress. When old enough Emily found work in a drapery store in Clapham and her elder brother became a carpenter. Her mother died in 1849 when Emily was 16.

I put the family tree on Ancestry website and immediately got a link to other descendants of the Marsh family. From them an interesting story emerged of the decline of a wealthy-born man to poverty in the first thirty years of the 19th century.

Charles Marsh was born in about 1774, into a wealthy Norwich cloth manufacturing and trading family. He was educated at Norwich Cathedral grammar school and went to Cambridge but did not finish his studies. He then trained at Lincoln's Inn in London and became a lawyer on the Norfolk circuit. Charles was one of the leading figures in Georgian Norwich in the 1790's and there is a lot of material written about him. He was involved in writing and publishing a political 'magazine' called Cabinet, and was a supporter of the Jacobite cause. In fact Charles was a very close friend of the influential Sir John Hippisley who successfully got the English government to pay a pension to the the last representative in the male line of the Royal House of Stuart, the Cardinal Duke of York who was living ill and penniless in France. Charles was also a staunch sympathiser of the French revolution for which open agreement could be treated as treason. He clearly enjoyed political debate and took full part in Norwich society.

Charles' legal career took off when he was successful in getting a post in the East India Company. He went off to India but not before losing his heart to a girl called Mary Hale Lewin. She joined him in India and became his first wife. They had four children although only the first, Hippisley was born in India. As a barrister, Charles was an assiduous defender of the British soldiers court-marshalled for the 1809 White Mutiny in Madras.

After his return to England, Charles became an MP in 1812 for the rotten borough of East Retford, Nottinghamshire. As an MP he championed the rights of the Indian people to not be forced to become Christians and his maiden speech was well received. He also

supported Catholic emancipation. He only served one term in parliament having failed to get elected at two further attempts one of which was to stand for the Sudbury seat left vacant by the retirement of Sir John Hippisley.

Charles' life seems to have fallen apart in about 1825 with the death of his first wife. The circumstances are a bit confusing but there is mention of him abandoning his children in France and relations being asked to fund his debts. In 1827 his servant Mary Audsley gave birth to a son by Charles and she became his second wife when they married in 1829.

Charles had fallen on hard times. He had written for some of the London magazines and also wrote two books on the Clubs of London. He was writing the definitive history of the East India Company though this never seems to have seen publication. He was clearly hard up as he asked for money from the Royal Literary Fund in 1833. He said that he was frequently ill and this incurred him in expenses. He also hinted he had lost a lot of money in some scam relating to the East India Company. The fund did make him a payment of £40. He wrote other begging letters to former friends and acquaintances, some of whom were famous and powerful, including Sir Robert Peel and Lord William Bentinck.

Charles died in January 1835 and this obituary appeared in the Asiatic Journal: *27th Suddenly, Charles Marsh Esq. formerly on the Norfolk Circuit, subsequently a barrister in the Supreme Court at Madras, and on his return to England, a Member of Parliament. Though occupying such a station in society, and being moreover a man of learning, taste, observation, and polished manners, the latter years of his life were nevertheless passed under a cloud and to many who knew him when he moved in the highest ranks of political and literary life, this notice may be the first announcement they have seen or heard of his death. Whether his straightened circumstances and the obscurity to which in spite of his many shining qualities, Mr Marsh has lately been condemned, were the result of his own conduct or of misfortunes properly called, it is difficult to say, and would be uncharitable to inquire. He has left a young family completely unprovided for.'*

In a period when gambling was a favoured pastime of gentlemen in London, and with Charles' intimate knowledge of the clubs, it can be speculated that gambling debts might also have been significant in his straightened circumstances. Mary Marsh applied for help from the Literary Fund after Charles' death and was successful in gaining another £20. But with two children aged 8 and 2 to support she had to earn their keep by washing other people's linen!

Elisabeth Barrett

Projects Update

We have decided to give you, the members, regular updates on all the projects our members are working on in and around Ongar by way of the newsletter.

There are a number of articles in this issue which will give you an idea of the sort of projects we are working on. If any of you would like to get involved then please contact any committee member as listed on the front page.

1. Blue Plaques

OMHS put up their fourth Blue Plaque in Ongar in December, on the old Great Stony School building, now known as Zinc. The plaque was unveiled by Jeff Banks, CEO of Zinc and Ron Barnes, former headmaster of Great Stony School. They represented the future and

the past. About 30 people were present, among them ex Great Stony staff, members of the Friends of Great Stony and OMHS members. The other Blue Plaques are on the former Grammar School, the Budworth Hall and the house where Jane Taylor lived in Castle Street. We are now looking for the next site. Any ideas?

Felicite Barnes

2. Archive

Someone once said to me that it makes you feel old when they start pulling down buildings you remember being built. It has probably happened to most of us and to this effect for some time now, John Root our "star" photographer has been taking his camera and recording on a weekly basis the building of the new Medical Centre. These will be linked to photographs of the Ongar War Memorial Hospital (which was built well within living memory of many Ongarians) and this will be of interest to future generations. A similar regular photographic record is being made of the new MacCarthy and Stone development in the High Street.

John Winslow

3. OMHS website

Don't forget to look at our OMHS website from time to time at www.omhs.org.uk We try to get useful information added regularly, plus reports, photos and dates for your diary. Please let us have any items you think might be interesting to share with other members.

Keith Snow

4. Memorial inscriptions

The recording of the memorial inscriptions in Ongar cemetery, St Peter's and St Martin's, both inside and out, are now complete. They are in the process of being typed up and put into a booklet. In addition the team have been researching some of the stories behind the names and we will publish the articles in our newsletter over the coming issues. We hope to work next on the memorials at Ongar United Reform Church

Keith Snow

5. House history

We are undertaking some research into some of the houses in the High Street. We started by obtaining images from Google Earth Street View so that we all knew which houses we were talking about.

We have so far made contact with a number of house owners and have started investigations on St Martin's Cottage, Jessamine House and Cottage, Holmlea, The Old House, The Presbytery, The Old Rectory, Wren House, plus ongoing research by Anne Padfield on The Market House and, possibly, The Manor House.

Gemma O'Donnell

Ed's note: See Gemma's article below on The Old Rectory which came out of the work on St Martin's inscriptions.

House History: The Old Rectory

Work on the building in Ongar that we now know as The Old Rectory started in the 17th c and continued into the 18th c indicating that even in those days builders found it difficult to complete their work on time! The timber framed and rendered house was originally owned by William and Susan Atwood and at that time it was called "Lovings" an appropriate name as the couple probably moved in immediately after their marriage at St Andrew's church in Greensted in 1720.

In 1723 they sold their home to the parish of St Martin's who used it as a replacement for the previous rectory which was adjacent to the church and remained there uninhabited until it was demolished in 1784. After the sale, the Lovings name was changed to the more business like "Rectory House" although its original title lives on in the nearby area of Love Lane. At the same time as its purchase, additional parcels of land, meadow and pasture were also sold to Godfrey Jones, the Rector, using Queen Anne's Bounty, a loan system enabling the vicar to erect or purchase a new rectory. At that time the pasture and meadow was known as 'Stacklands' or 'Stackletons' and would have been an important part of the vicar's income. The house was now surrounded by five acres of Glebe or meadow land later named Great and Little Shackletons and had its own pond. Some of this land has now been built on and the area is known simply as Shakletons.

In 1748 there is also mention of a Poorhouse standing next to Rectory House and it is to be hoped that this indicates the parish treated its paupers well.

Several of the monuments and slabs which we have been reading in St.Martin's Church contain references to vicars and their families who lived in one or other of the rectories. Some had resided there for 28 years or more.

Names we found include:

Revd Mr John Campe d. 1720; Godfrey Jones d. 1733; Thomas Velley d. 1750; Edmund Fisher d.1881; James Tanner d.1914

The first of these to inhabit the then new, but now old, Rectory was the purchaser Godfrey Jones who became rector in 1720. He is commemorated as 'Rector and schoolmaster of Ongar' who died in 1733. His wife Jane is also buried in the church.

Thomas Velley had many children buried in the church. His son Thomas became a well known botanist, no doubt learning much from his beautiful surroundings.

The Reverend Edmund Fisher kept a merry establishment at the rectory. It consisted of his wife and three children, the eldest of whom became an archdeacon at Southwark Cathedral, and at least two other families.

James Tanner shared the house with his wife, daughter, sister-in-law, boarders, cook and servants, a real Victorian household!

During the 19th century the Old Rectory continued to be home to the rectors of Ongar but after the First World War large rectories began to go out of fashion as families became smaller and fewer people had servants. The cost of maintaining these old houses was so great that in 1972 Parsonage Boards were formed to take responsibility for them. As a result many old rectories were sold to become private homes and, as was the case at Chipping Ongar, and a modern vicarage was built nearby. So the Old Rectory has gone full circle and is now in private ownership again.

I have enjoyed researching its history and would love to find out more, so if you have any information please do let me know.

Gemma O'Donnell

One hundred years ago

There will be much comment during 2012 in this centenary year of the sinking of R.M.S. TITANIC. The following extract taken from the OMHS book "Aspects of the History of Ongar" is a reminder of that tragic event, especially so when a prominent resident of Ongar was on board.

"In 1905 Father Thomas Byles, a diocesan missionary priest was appointed (to St. Helens Catholic Church). He was a learned man and a good preacher and a caring pastor to his people. Some Ongar boys, wanting to learn to box, had reason to remember him for the rest of their lives. He took on their instruction, using a large shed behind the church. In 1912 he was invited to assist at his brother's marriage in New York, and booked his ill-fated passage on the Titanic leaving Southampton on Easter Wednesday. The three priests on board (the other two being Austrian and Lithuanian) celebrated Mass the following Sunday, using Father Byles' portable altar and accessories. The sermon was given by Father Byles in English and French.

After the sinking of the Titanic, a lady survivor said "After the Titanic was struck, Father Byles was active in getting women and children into the lifeboats. He then returned to other passengers who had become excited. He went about giving absolutions and blessings which calmed the people. He then began the recitation of the Rosary, and regardless of creed, the responses were loud and strong". More women and children were helped into a boat, a sailor pleaded several times for Father Byles to board and he refused". As the last boat left, a passenger said that she could still hear distinctly the voice of the priest and the responses of the prayers. Then came the faint singing of "Nearer my God to Thee".

The congregation of St. Helen's were deeply distressed at the loss of their greatly loved pastor. Many were at the requiem Mass addressed by Monsignor Watson who said of him "He was a man great learning, great zeal and had a love for the poor and great humility" A beautiful stained glass window dedicated to him is in St Helen's Church.

FOOTNOTE: OMHS was recently contacted by a pupil in Burlington WA, USA who is writing a children's book on Father Byles. She was seeking information and photographs and certainly seemed to know much about Ongar as she specifically asked about the shed behind the church. We supplied as much detail as we had available and put her in touch with father Andrew Hurley who also sent her much information.

John Winslow

Ed's note: I am hoping to put up an exhibition about the Titanic in Ongar library during April.

Ongar Diaries

George Rose (1882-1956) was an accomplished amateur watercolour artist and engraver whose life was briefly described by me in an earlier OMHS newsletter. He was born in Ongar and lived his early life here before moving to London in the early years of the century. However he maintained close contact with his family in the town, and the list of paintings that he exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1913 and 1946 shows that he continued to paint the Ongar landscape for the rest of his life. I have known for some time

that he made almost daily entries from 1900 till the end of his life, written in a tiny hand in diminutive Letts annual diaries. These are in the Essex Record Office, though public access is only allowed up to the volume for 1914.

I have made a start on the Herculean task of transcribing the early diaries, partly to look for interesting Ongar material, partly to glean broader biographical information about his development as an artist. By curious coincidence, he was a friend of my wife's grandparents, and the family still own a number of his paintings and engravings. The first few volumes of the diaries contain much about the minutiae of Ongar social life and the aspirations of a young man in his late teens. At this time he had no notion of being an artist and was working hard composing church choral music, and trying to master harmony and composition on his own from books. He was envious of his friend Richard Hayward who was receiving music lessons from the organist, Dr Lewis, "in exchange, I suppose, for services at the organ". However it is clear that his mother also played for St Martin's as he often sat behind her and "pulled the stops." Both his mother and his sister Millie (Mildred) were critical of his attempts to compose a hymn tune in A flat, considering the key too advanced for his capabilities. Mr Riding, to whom he sent his composition, was more encouraging, commenting that "there were lots of mistakes, but some of it is very good". Miss Tanner also acted as organist, with unhappy results; she "played and the reeds were flat – what a combination!" When he could get hold of the keys to the organ, he took the opportunity to play but this required the help of a friend to pump the bellows. There were a number of other critical comments about this organ which had been installed in the chancel only four years earlier. In 1919 it was moved to the gallery at the west end of the church and, though reconstructed and repaired at various times, it is essentially the same instrument.

In 1900 he was working in the drapery shop of Harry Childs at 192-4 High Street but detested the work. One entry noted "measuring all day. Those imbecile shop girls are maddening. I thought school boys were bad enough". Above the shop was an office from which the business of the Ongar Gas and Waterworks companies was conducted, and this provided George Rose with a welcome escape as he was responsible for the book keeping for both. This necessitated periodic trips to the gas works in the Greensted road, including one to "see Price change the retorts". Takings from pre-payment gas meters had to be accounted for, as well as the sales of tar and coke, by-products from the gas works. It appears that water was metered as well, and that he was responsible for reading them ("went out all morning taking the water meters"). Though he repeatedly complained in his diary about the dreary nature of his work in the draper's shop, he was clearly very upset when Harry Childs died on June 16 or 17, 1900, leaving several living children as well as an unborn baby. (The Childs family chapter in *Aspects* states, presumably incorrectly, that it was William who died.)

He saw a lot of his cousin Edwin Cowee with whom he shared an interest in photography. They took pictures of the "new aisle" in the church and, on going home for another plate for the camera, they spotted Mr and Mrs Dawson leaving their house. This provided them with an opportunity to sneak into their garden and take some photographs. In the days before broadcast entertainment, there were games, socialising, music making, walks and outings on bicycles to fill his limited spare time. Sometimes he had to chaperone his sisters when they went out on bicycles. One expedition was to Navestock church "where they are repairing – the church is a ruin and the memorials are fine." Though George Rose's working day seems to have been somewhat variable, it was essentially six days a week and often ended at 7.30 or later in the evening.

There are hints of an amour, which came to nothing, with one of the Eves daughters. In various places pages have been torn out, but enough remains to show that there had been written entries, doubtless something felt to be too embarrassing on later reflection. He was critical of the war in South Africa and (echoes of the recent conflict in oil-rich Iraq) believed that the British army was only there to protect our gold and diamond interests – “Injustice! Oppression! Crime!” he expostulated. His doubts about the motives of perfidious Albion did not, however, prevent him from joining the local volunteers and attending regularly for drill and bayonet practice.

This note provides a very brief taste of life in Ongar for a young man a century ago. Though my main interest is his development as an artist, more Ongar material will doubtless emerge.

Michael Leach

Christmas party time

It was cold outside but warm and cheerful inside when members got together for our Christmas party. With a table laid with more than enough seasonal treats to satisfy everyone together with a noggin or two, and Christmas music and lights, the time simply flew by. We had to fit in the Christmas game that Jenny had devised to make sure we were all still able to think straight as well as imbibe and of course there was the raffle with some generous prizes. Somehow winning that 2 week holiday in Bermuda still eludes me! Many thanks to all the committee ladies for planning, shopping, preparing, barmaiding and generally making sure everything was alright on the night thus ensuring this festive evening worked so well.

John Winslow

David Livingstone talk – a report will follow next time.

Dates for your diary

**Thursday 23rd Feb
8pm**

Round About Ongar – film from the Ongar archive, 1930 to present
by David Welford
Church Rooms, Castle Street, Ongar

**Friday 30th March
7.45 for 8pm**

**2012 Marion Slade Lecture
The Buxtons – an old Essex family**
by Georgina Green
Admission by ticket £6 incl wine + cheese

April visit

Copped Hall visit to see progress
Details to follow

Contributions for next newsletter please!

The next newsletter will be produced in May 2012, so any articles to Jenny please by 22nd April. Thank you!