

# Ongar Millennium History Society Newsletter

## February 2016

We hope that you all had a very good Christmas and New Year and now it's time for our February newsletter. We are bringing our membership records up to date and noticed that there are a number of members for whom we do not currently have email addresses. It may well be that those members don't have email access, or just that we have not got your email address. If you did not receive an email on the 10<sup>th</sup> January about the forthcoming Local History talk then we do not have your email address. Email enables us to communicate with our membership much more dynamically, provide reminders and updates. So if you have email access and would like to be added to our distribution list please email [info@omhs.org.uk](mailto:info@omhs.org.uk) with your name and request to be added.

Don't forget to visit our web site [www.omhs.org.uk](http://www.omhs.org.uk) which is regularly updated with new events as details become available. It has a lot of local information and archived newsletters dating back to November 2007.

**Jenny Main**

### Up and Coming Events

- **16th February** Family History short talks by local residents, 8.00 pm at Zinc, members free, visitors £5.00
- **18th March** Marion Slade Lecture History of Brewing 7.45 for 8.00 Budworth Hall. The talk will be given by Andy Skene from Moreton Brewery. Entrance by ticket £8.00 which includes wine and cheese refreshments.

### Committee members

Chair	Vacancy	Vice Chair + Newsletter	Jenny Main
Treasurer	Kathleen Jenkins	Venues Sec.	Wendy Thomas
Secretary	Sandra Dear	Membership+Speaker Sec.	Lorna Vaux
Archive	Ron Huish/Derek Birch		

### The faceless bedstead clock at St. Martin's Church

Within the 15<sup>th</sup> century spire of St. Martin's Church are two bells, the larger one dating from 1672 and the smaller one from 1737, together with a clock that has no face or hands and is built in a wrought iron frame, reminiscent of the framework of a bed, mounted on a wooden trestle. Hence the name bedstead clock. It is thought that the clock was installed in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The first mechanical clocks that were built in the 13th century in Europe were striking clocks without faces, designed for people to listen to a ringing bell(s) that indicated the time. It was not until the 14th century that clock faces were designed for people to "see" the time by means of a clock face with numbers (hours) on a dial with a rotating pointer.

The clock was a valuable asset to the people of the town, especially workers in the fields, who could hear the clock strike the hour wherever they were and whatever they were doing. It matched the number of strikes with the hour of the day and so careful listening was important and a quiet place an advantage. In addition to being a timepiece, it is likely that its bell was also the curfew bell, manually sounded in the evening to tell the people that it was bedtime and to extinguish or cover their fires to avoid the risk of the accidental spread of fire. The bell may also have been used in the early morning as a rising bell.

The bedstead clock is powered by two sets of weights, one driving the clock mechanism (escapement) and the other to provide the chime. Both are wound by a crank handle accessed via a ladder, and once fully wound the clock should run for a week. However, the spire has moved due to settlement over the years and the weights now foul part of the structure and the clock mechanism requires rewinding more frequently.

Each swing of the pendulum releases a tooth in a wheel in the escapement allowing advancement by a fixed amount. This regular periodic advancement moves the clock forward at a steady rate. The sudden stopping of the escapement's tooth gives the characteristic ticking sound.

Over the years several modifications have been carried out. The most noticeable being that the striking mechanism has been changed from its original mechanical linkage (although the original links, levers and hammer have been kept) and an electric solenoid fitted to enable a lead hammer to strike the bell. This is triggered by a micro-switch with a timer connected to silence the clock during the night-time. The original wooden pulleys have been replaced by metal ball-bearing pulleys and the ropes have been replaced by wires.

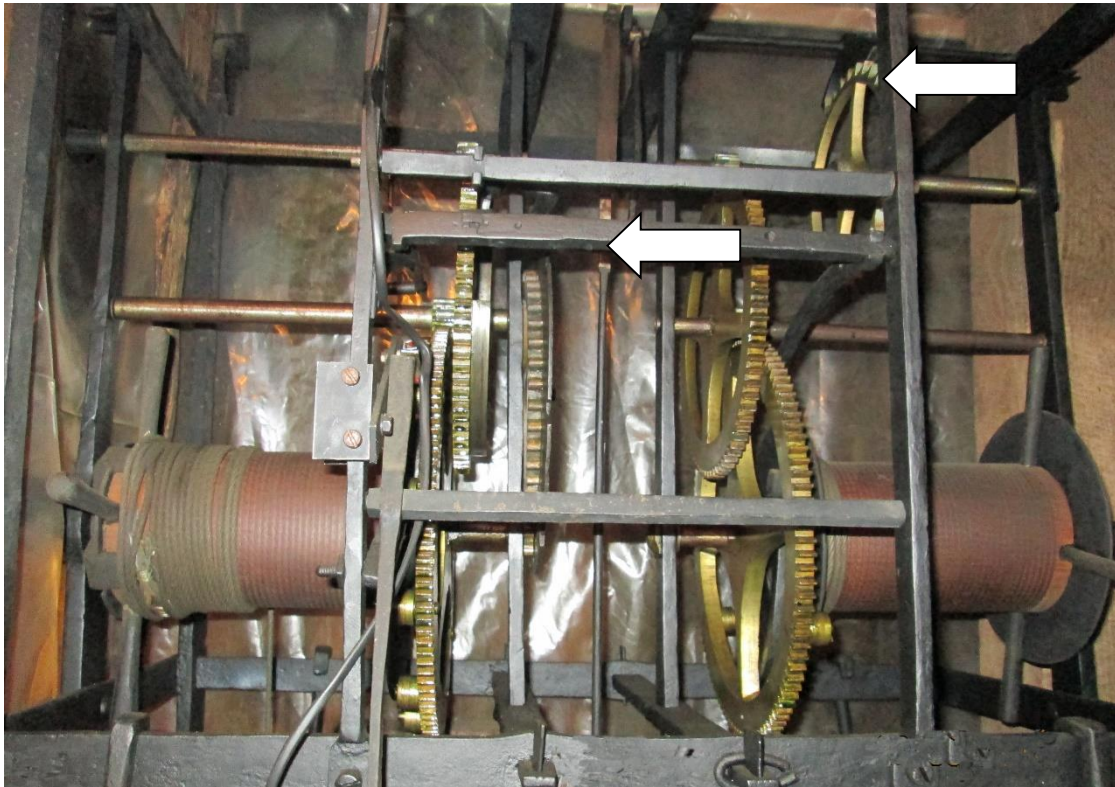
The clock is not currently in use but the bell is rung manually, using a rope from the Nave, as a call to worship, signalling the start of a service and to announce other events in the Church.

The clock bell is the larger bell in the tower and was made by Anthony Bartlet in 1672 who was Master Founder of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry from 1640-1675. The foundry originated in 1570 and is the oldest manufacturing company in [Great Britain](#). The foundry's main business is the manufacture of [church bells](#) and their fittings and accessories and is famous for being the original manufacturer of the [Liberty Bell](#), a symbol of U.S. [independence](#).

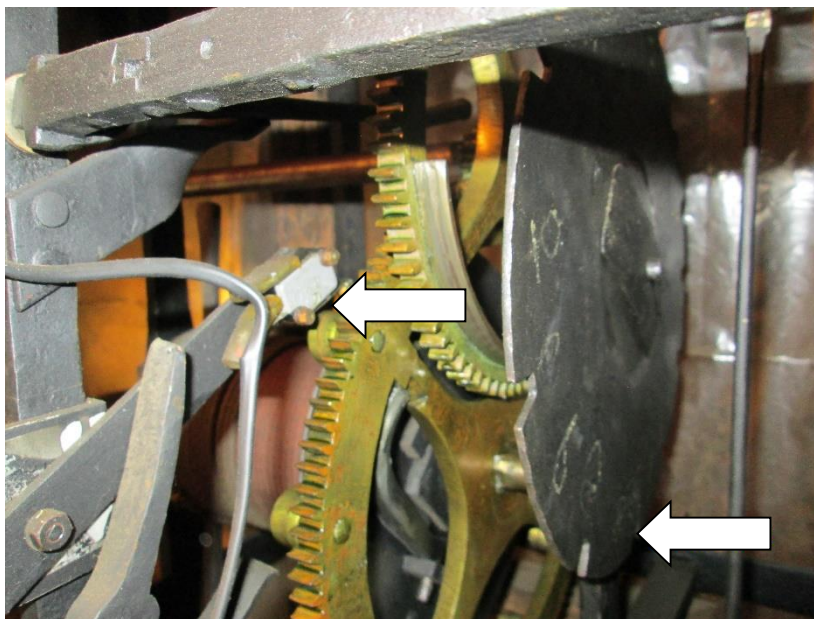
The smaller bell, cast in 1737 by Richard Phelps, was last used in the late 1980s when it was suggested that it may be suitable to call people to church, but it was considered too high a note and too quiet. It was rung on only three or four Sundays and has been quiet ever since. It was rung by pulling the bell rope with short strokes very quickly. This made the clapper swing and hit both sides of the bell making a near continuous sound. Richard Phelps was Master Founder of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry from 1701-1738 and is best known for his bell, Great Tom, in the steeple of [St Paul's Cathedral](#).

The workings of the faceless clock are explained in the captions to the photographs below which show the clock mechanism, the strikers, the weights and the bell.

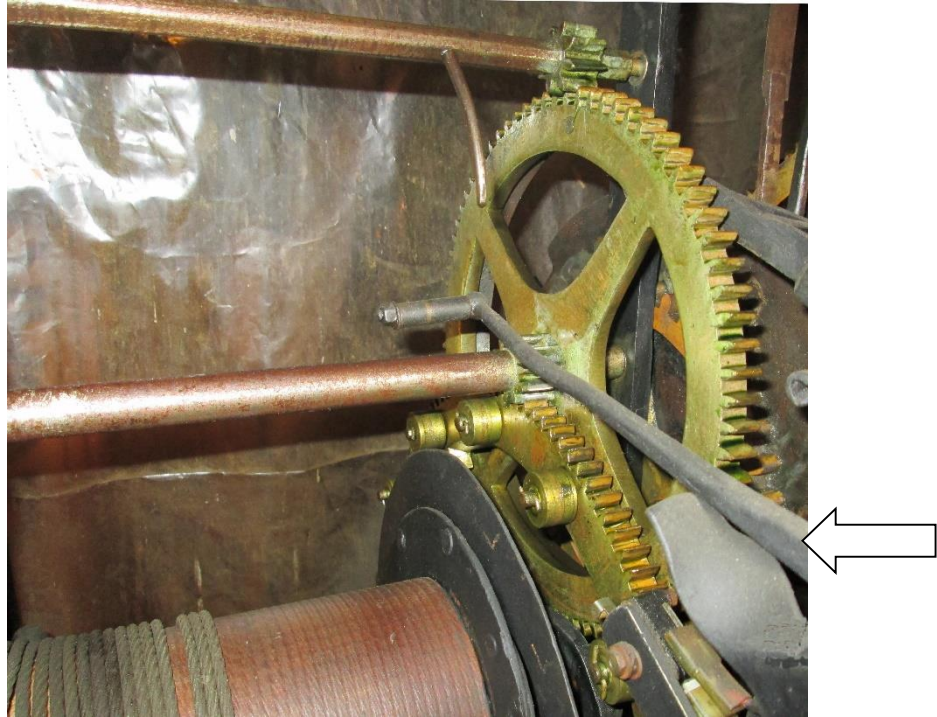
**Roger King, Keith Snow and Stan Ball**



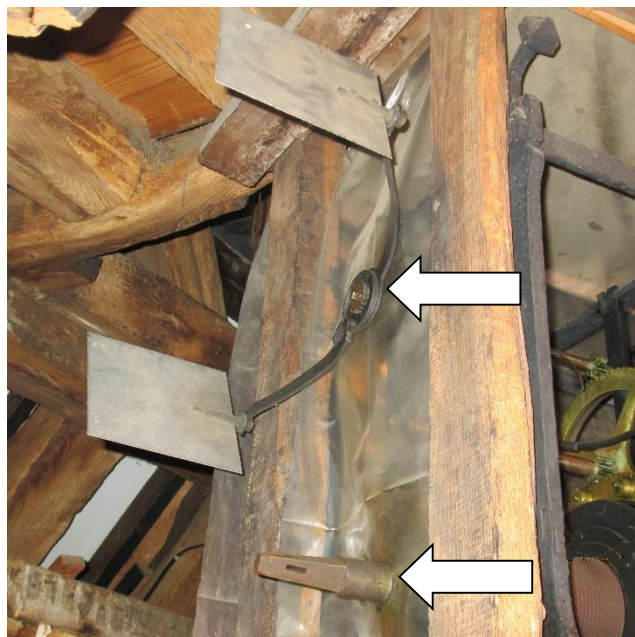
**Picture 1.** Clock showing the 'Strike barrel' and gears on left hand side which powers the 'Strike Train' and which rotate to cause a micro switch to operate the solenoid powered hammer onto the bell. The 'Time' or 'Going' barrel is on the right which powers the 'Going Train'. The escapement wheel is clearly seen at the top right hand side (upper arrow). This rotates slowly in equal steps or 'Ticks' regulated by the pendulum hanging beneath the clock (only the pendulum rod is visible here; lower arrow). This type of escapement is known as a 'Dead Beat Escapement'. The number of times the switch is activated is controlled by the slotted iron disc shown in Picture 2.



**Picture 2.** The micro switch being activated by one of the rollers (upper arrow). The black Iron disc to the right (and mentioned above; lower arrow) has twelve slots cut into it allowing the operating lever for the 'Strike' to slip into a slot to disengage the striking mechanism. The slots are spaced at increasing distances around the circumference of the black disc; each space adding one more strike. ('12' in all then back to '1' again.) The clock only 'tells' the hours not the minutes.



**Picture 3.** The brass drive wheel with one of the strike rollers about to activate the micro-switch. The black iron rod seen at an angle (arrowed) stops the strike mechanism after the required number of strikes.



**Picture 4.** The strike speed controller. This is an arm with two adjustable paddles (known as the 'Fly') (upper arrow) which rotate at speed with the paddles using the surrounding air to control their speed of rotation and hence the speed of the strike drum and the time-span between strikes. The squared end of a shaft protruding from beneath the fan (lower arrow) is where a handle can be fitted to wind the Strike side of the clock (called the 'Winding Square'). A similar shaft protrudes on the 'Going' side of the clock to wind up that set of weights.



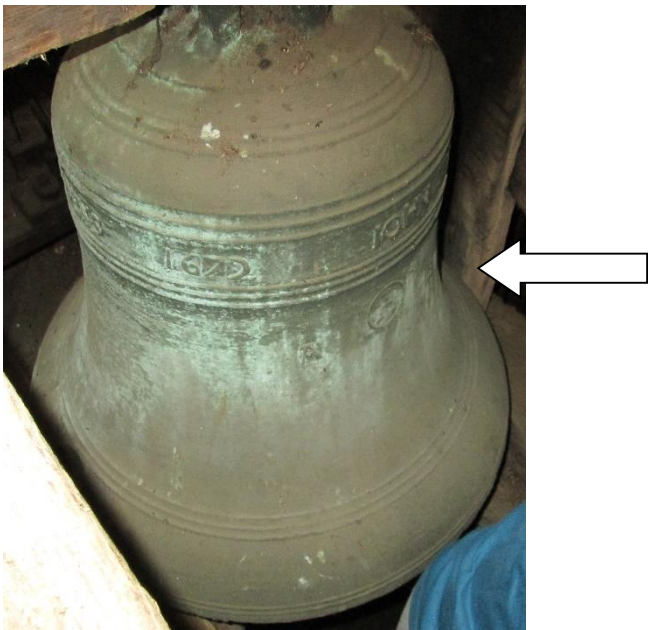
**Picture 5.** One of two weight blocks suspended by wire and pulley wheels; this block powers the 'Strike Train' and is made from cast iron and has an extra weight (arrowed) of lead probably to overcome increased friction in the weight system due to age. The other weight block powers the 'Going (Time) Train' and is cylindrical and made of lead, also with an added lead weight.



**Picture 6.** The solenoid hammer (made of lead) that strikes the bell.



**Picture 7.** The manual striker used by the church when the rope is pulled from the sidesman area.



**Picture 8.** The larger bell showing the date 1672.



**Picture 9.** The lead pendulum showing the adjustment screw (arrowed).

**An Email from Australia** - *The following is an email received from a former local resident who emigrated to Australia in 1968 and her memories after watching the Bygone Ongar DVD*

My schooling was at the Secondary School between 1962 & 1967; I was actually a Fyfield kid (bred, but not born).

It was quite a memory lane watching the DVD. I would like to share some of the memories and thoughts invoked.

As Jean Easter got married in the mid-1950's her flower girl would be similar age to myself and I wonder if you could provide an identity?

Dr. Hatfield was our Doctor. I think my earliest memory was when my mother was visiting him when pregnant with my brother, who was born in the local hospital in August 1955. I recall him using the instrument to listen to the baby in mum's tummy! Another memory is of the surgery, was the electric train set that ran at the press of a button.

At the end of the DVD Dr. Milnethorpe (spelling??) is briefly referred to. Am sure he visited us once, perhaps when Dr Hatfield not available.

Surridges I also remember as I had a bicycle from there for what must have been my 12<sup>th</sup> birthday. My family was rather disadvantaged and I know that even 2<sup>nd</sup> hand it cost Stg.6.00, and I paid half from saved pocket money. I rode it all the way home after school; it seemed a long way then. Jill Surridge actually married one of my classmates, John Skinner.

In early years I recall going to Matthews for dog biscuits for our Golden Labrador. It probably seems shocking, but my sister and I used to try and eat the dog biscuits which were in huge sacks!. Garry Matthews was another classmate.

Great Lawns I remember as my best friend's parents, Alan and Rose Tankard, bought No.32 (pretty sure that is correct number).

Worleys Real Estate I remember as the family lived in Fyfield.

Other shops vaguely remembered are the Chemist (smelled nice), the Bakery and Carters the butchers. Carters delivered meat orders to Fyfield on Tuesdays (Lena) and Thursdays (Cliff Cole). On the rare occasions we went in there we found the cashier system endlessly fascinating.

Places sadly not on DVD are the Secondary School, the Hospital, and the Dr. Livingstone house. A family called Marshall lived in that during that time.

I also had a look at the Then & Now photos.

The 5<sup>th</sup> one down shows a shop that seems to be a Tearoom?? Sure this was a jeweller in my recollection, and perhaps the dentist had room above. The little shop a bit further back was a toy shop that sold really nice greeting cards. I still have some bought for me as a child!. They also sold little "music boxes", tin and you turned a handle – we used to take them apart to see how the music was made.

The Co-op I think was opposite the Chemists?

Near Budworth Hall was a nice shop that sold handbags etc. It may have been called Godfreys?

Then there is the Station which I have very clear memories of as my father worked there as a booking clerk. His name was Bill Harwood. Dad also worked at other stations towards London. We had actually come from London in 1953 and he gradually got work closer and closer to home. Dad retired from there in 1968. My sister visited there a few months ago and from photos not a lot has changed. I definitely remember the waiting room that had a (pathetic) gas heater that seem to have no effect on the ambient temperature! Two of dad's colleagues I remember are Charlie Atkins and Fred Pepper. When I visited the station in the mid 1970's I was asking the booking clerk about Fred and was stunned that he was one of Fred's sons-in-law; I had known both of Fred's daughters.

Looking up on Wikipedia the station seems it was the setting for an interesting film recently!!

The Residential School must be the one almost to Fyfield. We used to know it as the Open Air School as I seem to recall it was for London kids (with health probs like T.B. perhaps).

The friend who sent me the DVD had closer connections with Ongar as his father was a local police officer, Sgt. George Cant who would have been there during the 1960's at least.

I hope there is something of interest here and not just waffling. My family migrated to Australia in May 1968 and was featured in some of the local papers.

Thanking you for the memories.

**Joan Johnstone** (nee Harwood)  
Australia.

P.S. If you know of anyone who was at Ongar School same time as me I would be interested to hear from them. - *If you wish to contact Joan please mail <mailto:info@omhs.org.uk> and we will pass on your details.*

## Upcoming Events

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- Further events will be announced in future newsletters and on the web site. Have you looked at our website? The site is regularly updated with future events so this is where you will hear the news first. The address is <http://www.omhs.org.uk/> or just type OMHS into a search engine.

### Newsletter Contributions

We always welcome articles for the newsletter. If you have anything that you would like to contribute, please submit to the editor or through the web site before the end of April 2016 to be in time for included in the next edition of the newsletter