

Ongar Millennium History Society Newsletter

May 2009

Well it looks as though summer is nearly with us – sunny days seem to be prevalent for our events as both the visit to Aythorpe Roding windmill and the guided walk around the High Street were blessed with dry weather - so let's hope it continues.

We have another visit planned to follow up our Marion Slade Lecture on Hylands House by Wendy Hibbitt. This will take place on Sunday 5th July, so fingers crossed for good weather then too. Barbara has been working hard to get this trip organised and to get a guide we need 25+ people to sign up to come, so please support this event.

In September we have planned an evening visit to the Essex Police Museum, plus it will be AGM time again too in Ongar Library. All dates can be found on the back page, and more details will be available in the August newsletter.

Thank you to all newsletter contributors. Have a good summer!

Jenny Main, Editor

A group visit and tour of

Hylands House

Sunday 5th July at 11 am

Approx cost £3.80 per person
(Sorry no concessions)

Names to Barbara on 01277 363722

Committee Members 2008-2009

Chairman: Felicitie Barnes

Treasurer: John Winslow

Minute Sec: Elisabeth Barrett

Website+: Keith Snow

Vice Chair: Jenny Main

Secretary: Barbara MacDonald

Bookings Sec: Wendy Thomas

Paul Buxton – a brief obituary

Many members will remember Paul Buxton, who died after a short illness in January, as the owner of Ongar Castle. On numerous occasions, he kindly welcomed those interested in its history – my own first trip onto the motte in a leaky boat dates back to the 1970s. He and his wife Margaret also generously hosted the highly successful Ongar Medieval Fair in the inner bailey, which many members will remember with great pleasure.

He was born in 1925 and his father purchased the Castle Farm estate (which included the castle itself) in 1931. After military service towards the end of World War II, the majority of his career was spent in the diplomatic service abroad, and in the Northern Ireland Office in Belfast during the 'troubles'. He had a wide range of knowledge and interests, and took great pride in his family, particularly in the 'Great Liberator', Thomas Fowell Buxton (1786-1845), who - though now no longer well known - was William Wilberforce's right hand man in the fight for the abolition of slavery. He continued the family tradition through his own involvement in various charitable foundations for the oppressed and the underprivileged. His shy exterior hid a wry and self-deprecating sense of humour, and he was quietly and unassuming generous to many causes. He took a keen interest in Ongar's history and was proud to be the custodian of its castle. His enthusiasm for tree planting (including that neglected giant of the countryside, the black poplar) will enhance Ongar's surroundings for decades to come, and will provide a fitting tribute to one who was deeply committed to the place where he lived.

Michael Leach

Ed's note: We have printed this piece in this edition, as the sad news of Mr Buxton's death reached us after the February newsletter had gone to print.

Lou Appleby

It is with regret that we note the passing of Lou Appleby, one of our original members, who was a regular at our meetings and other events.

He was born 82 years ago in a cottage in Fyfield Road and apart from the war years remained in the Ongar area. He always had interesting tales to tell of his early days and the characters he knew.

I enjoyed talking with him and listening to his reminiscences. He will be missed.

John Winslow

The Borough

I was interested in Bob MacDonald's article in the last Newsletter about the Borough, with its accompanying photograph showing Ongar Bridge in the distance. The whole area has seen many changes but the bridge, and the ability of the Cripsey Brook to flood, have had a major influence.

The original bridge, like so many in Essex, was a timber structure, though we have no indication when it was first built. The first documentary evidence is from a will of 1503, bequeathing money for its upkeep. It is clear that, being of timber, it was repaired on numerous occasions, usually only after it had got into a perilous condition and the town was presented at the Quarter Sessions for the serious neglect of its responsibilities. Locals took the view that the bridge should not be their responsibility, as much of the traffic it carried was not local but passing through from London to mid Essex, and beyond.

It is very likely that there was always a ford immediately to the west of the bridge, both for very heavy wagons which might have exceeded its safe load, as well as for use as a cart wash. Though no images of the timber bridge have survived, the ford is clearly visible in an early nineteenth century print, and was certainly in use at the end of the century for filling the water bowser which was employed to lay the dust in the High Street during dry weather. Examination of the site of this ford today shows how much the profile of the ground has been changed – even a four wheel drive would be severely challenged to follow the route today!

Eventually the town's arguments were accepted. The county council accepted responsibility for the bridge and, in 1797, paid for the construction of the present three-arched brick structure was designed by the county surveyor John Johnson. It seems likely that the raised causeway (clearly visible in the photograph in Bob MacDonald's article) which runs from near the Two Brewers to the bridge itself was constructed at the same time, as even today the original land level is prone to flood. It must have been widened when the bridge itself was widened in the 1950s by the removal of the parapet of John Johnson's bridge, and the addition of concrete slab extensions on either side to provide a pavement. The original brick arches of 1797 still survive and carry all the weight of today's traffic.

The car park itself has been considerably raised in height, as can be seen from its substantial bank running in a westerly direction parallel with the Cripsey Brook. The fill appears to be rubble but I have no idea when this was done – possibly before World War II when London Transport had plans to build a Greenline bus depot here. Was the line of poplars planted at the same time to screen the site from the High Street? The question of what should be done with the site now is a challenging one but, if it is to continue as a car park, serious thought will need to be given to landscaping to improve its amenity value.

Michael Leach

Talkin' Essex by Martin Newell

They don't talk Essex here n'more
The jigsaw coast and Saxon shore
That framed the flatlands and its farms
Have fallen into London arms
Scythed and stacked in stooks, the accent
Disappeared, the sounds moved on
Rabbits flushed from fields, forgotten
Now the good old boys have gone

"Alroight then, buoy? Yep, that'll dew"
Reckon? Yeahp ! Moind how yer goo.
North ter Toozy, south to Leighs
Whatever are you growen? Peas."
Good old boys who sat on settles
As their dads had done before
Stillage, flags and copper kettles
Spit and sawdust on the floor

Housing sprawled beside the barleys
East End Brendas, West End Charlies
Limehouse Lennies, Wapping Dockers
Romford Teds, then mods and rockers,
Now? Their kids in souped up motors
Daz and Shaz, the Eighties voters
Estuary Nation's birth:
"Ere - Gues 'ow much my 'ouse is worf?"

"Or-wight then? I'll tell you wot;
Get yer wedge aht. Mutchchoo got?
I'm 'Ank Marvin. Ahhjoo fiwl?
Less go'n'ave 'n Indian miwl.
Uvver nigh' righ? Daniella
Tiffany and and Shayne - 'er fella?
Drinkin' Aftershocks and Stella
Got frown aht this Bierkella"

The above 'pome', written by Martin Newell, songwriter, rock musician and resident poet for the Independent on Sunday, introduced the launch of Essex Records Office's new CD 'How to Speak Essex.' The CD produced by Martin Astell, Sound Archivist for Essex Records Office, contains a wealth of examples of the ways in which the ordinary people of Essex spoke throughout most of the twentieth century. The examples on the disc illustrate the variety of accents within Essex from the north of the county bordering Suffolk to the south west of the county approaching London. OMHS has obtained a copy of the CD which members can borrow for their own personal listening.

The poem 'Talkin' Essex' has been reproduced by kind permission of Martin Newell and the Jardine Press, Wivenhoe. Martin Newell, who is said to be the most published living English poet, has collaborated with James Dodds, a shipwright, artist and publisher, to produce a number of beautiful books evoking East Anglia and in particular the coastal area of North East Essex. As Ronald Blythe writes in the introduction to Late Autumn Sunlight, a collection of East Anglian Verses written by Martin Newell and superbly illustrated with linocuts by James Dodds 'There cannot be many parts of Britain where a local scene is so well caught by poet and artist together'

Further details of Martin Newell, James Dodds and Jardine Press can be obtained on line at www.martinnewell.co.uk and www.jardinepress.co.uk or from Jardine Press Ltd, 20 St Johns Road. Wivenhoe. Essex. C07 9DR (01206 827798). Copies of the CD 'How to Speak Essex' can be obtained from the Essex Records Office. Chelmsford. Price £9.99.

Bob MacDonald.

Stop Press: Bob has a copy of an article from The East Anglian Daily Press from Saturday 23rd May 2009 on Talkin' Essex which he can loan to members.

The Marion Slade Memorial Lecture 2009

Wendy Hibbitt, the well known local speaker, kept the large audience informed and amused at this year's lecture at the Ongar Arts Centre talking about "Life Below Stairs at Hylands House". She illustrated her talk with numerous slides including many "up to the minute" labour saving gadgets used in the kitchen for cleaning, cooking or simply keeping the house warm in the colder months. Of course this was long before electricity, so despite all the new brushes, scrapers, cookers, polishes etc the work was backbreaking and the hours long. And then there were the gardens to be attended to as well!

We learnt about the families who lived there in its heyday until the World War 2 when army personnel were billeted in the house and its subsequent sad deterioration and neglect in the post war years.

Now owned by Chelmsford Borough Council and restored to its former grandeur and elegance, the house and grounds are open to the public. The film and TV industry have made use of the period feel of the property. Several major events of all kinds are held there on a regular basis. The evening closed with an excellent cheese and wine buffet. Many thanks to the ladies who shopped and prepared all the food - and they DID have the use of electricity and some labour saving gadgets!

John Winslow

Launch of the OMHS library

We have recently been given two very interesting books to add to our collection. They are all stored in our cupboard in the King's Trust Centre where unfortunately no-one ever sees them. We thought our members should be made aware of the volumes we are holding and invited to borrow them. In no particular order they are:

1. A HISTORY OF THE ONGAR RESEARCH STATION DURING THE 20TH CENTURY by SNOWY EVANS. Snowy has kindly given us a hardback copy of his book which is full of information and memories of this slice of Ongar's history. Published 2008
2. DOWN BUSHEY by ROY SMITH. This is the other latest addition to our collection. Memories of an Ongar childhood. Roy grew up in Ongar in the 1950's and when his pals met up they used to meet "down Bushey (Lea)". 70 pages. Published 2008.
3. LIVINGSTONE by TIM JEAL. 27 pages Published 1973..
4. A HISTORY OF NORTH WEALD BASSETT AND ITS PEOPLE by ARTHUR NEWENS. Well illustrated. 364 pages. Published 1985
5. VICTORIAN LIFE IN PHOTOGRAPHS intro by WILLIAM SANSOM. 181 illustrations. Published 1974
6. VICTORIAN AND EDWARDIAN ESSEX FROM OLD PHOTOGRAPHS Intro and commentary by Stan Jarvis 152 illustrations. Published 1973
7. ESSEX CHURCHES by K. DIXON BOX Well illustrated. 131 pages. Published 1970
8. ESSEX CURIOSITIES - A HISTORY OF THE OLD, ODD, AND UNUSUAL IN ESSEX by DEREK JOHNSON Well illustrated. 156 pages. Published 1973
9. A HISTORY OF ESSEX by A. C. EDWARDS. 128 pages. Published 1978
10. ESSEX WORTHIES - A BIOGRAPHICAL COMPANION TO THE COUNTY by WILLIAM ADDISON. 212 pages. Published 1973
11. AN ILLUSTRATED BOOK OF HERALDRY by STEPHEN SLATER. Very well illustrated in full colour. Published 2006

In addition there are numerous booklets and pamphlets:

WINSTON CHURCHILL - HIS POLITICS AND WRITING by DAVID HATTER. 30 pages. Published 2004

A WOMAN OF IMPORTANCE by TERENCE ADAMS. "A short and lovely description of Abigail, a woman of the bedchamber to Queen Anne."
35 pages Published 2003

JOHN LOCKE AND THE MASHAMS AT OATES by MARK GOLDIE .
44 pages

PICTORIAL REVUE OF THE LAVERS by THE LAVERS HISTORY GROUP

A series of ESSEX POLICE HISTORY NOTEBOOKS

ST. MARY MAGDALEN CHURCH, MAGDALEN LAVER leaflet
ALL SAINTS CHURCH, HIGH LAVER leaflet

A COUNTY MEMOIR by ALLEN LEWIS. This is centred around The Lavers, Matching, etc.

AN OLD POCKET EDITION OF AN EARLY LONDON UNDERGROUND MAP.

A "GEM" MAP OF LONDON AND SUBURBS.

LONDON BUS MAPS OF 1936 AND 1957.

For further information, or to borrow a book, please contact John on 362461

Ed's note: I hope you are not trying to put me out of a job!!

Aythorpe Roding Windmill

About twenty members visited Aythorpe Roding on a glorious sunny April afternoon. A guide was on hand to explain the workings of this 250 year old mill and most of our visitors climbed the first outer stairs to the first floor. There was a collection of artefacts on show and another inner staircase up to the second floor. On arrival there was a further inner staircase, very narrow, up to the third floor. By now the number of brave souls facing this final act of endurance had diminished, no doubt thinking of the cream tea that was waiting for them!

They were not disappointed. Just a hundred yard walk across the adjacent field and laid out before us in the village hall was a selection of cakes with lots of cream and very acceptable cups of tea.

The hall was packed, but the spooky thing was that our OMHS members seemed to know so many of the other visitors and even worse they seemed to know us and everyone else we mentioned!!

John Winslow

Help!!

Can anyone explain the existence of the gas lamps by the bridge over the Roding in the Mill Lane field? It has been troubling one of my library colleagues for a while now! Thank you!

Jenny Main

Dates for your diary

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| 1 st May -30th June | Silks of Life: an Exhibition of Chinese Costume
EFDC Museum, Waltham Abbey. |
| Sunday 5th July
11am | Visit and tour of Hylands House, Chelmsford
Approx £3.80 per person
We need at least 25 people to cover the cost of a
tour guide for our visit.
Names to Barbara on 01277 363722 please. |
| 18 th July - 22 nd September | The Great War. An exhibition to celebrate the 90 th
Anniversary of the Treaty of Versailles.
EFDC Museum, Waltham Abbey. |
| Wed 2nd September | Visit to Essex Police Museum, Chelmsford
(more details to follow) |
| Wed 23rd September
7.45pm for 8pm | OMHS AGM (more details to follow)
Ongar Library |
| Thursday 8th October
8pm | House History - a talk by Jennifer Butler
from Essex Records Office.
Great Stony, Rm 1. |
| Saturday 10th October | Joint OMHS/ URC exhibition
at United Reformed Church, Ongar |
| Monday 19 th October
2.30-4.30pm | House History Workshop at ERO
£7 per ticket. Enquiries to ERO 01245 244620 |

Contributions for next newsletter please!

**The next newsletter will be produced in August 2009, so any articles
to Jenny by 7th August please. Thank you.**