

Ongar Millennium History Society Newsletter

May 2011

Well it seems as though summer is with us – with plenty of sunshine and strawberries! Also a good time to go for a walk in our local countryside. We have some summer walks arranged for you in the next few months, although we have had to postpone Michael's walk around Shelley until the autumn due to Michael's busy diary! Please remember to book your place if you want to go on any of the walks.

The committee is currently in the middle of drawing up the programme for next year's meetings and events. If we get all the proposed speakers it looks like a bumper year ahead! If you fancy joining the committee, you will get your chance to put your nomination forward at the AGM in September. Have a think over the summer and join our merry band!

Enjoy the summer!

Jenny Main, Editor

Interesting Summer Walks!

Apologies - Michael is unable to conduct his walk around Shelley until the autumn, but we have some other summer walks for you to enjoy.

I hope those of you who went on the 2 mile walk in Epping Forest led by Tricia Moxey on May 22nd had an enjoyable time.

June 15th An accessible stroll through Epping Forest with Tricia.
Meet at High Beach Visitor Centre at 7pm.

July 1st A walk to Greensted and tour of the church with Anne Brooks
Meet at Budworth Hall at 7pm or at the church at 7.30pm.
Followed by drinks in Gill Adams' garden at the Church Barns.

Please book your places with Jenny on 01277 362684

Committee Members 2010-2011

Chairman: Felicitie Barnes

Treasurer: John Winslow

Minute Sec: Elisabeth Barrett

Website+: Keith Snow

Vice Chair: Jenny Main

Speaker Sec.: Vacancy

Bookings Sec: Wendy Thomas

Cttee member: Olive Glassington

OMHS Newsletter logistics

Have you ever wondered how the quarterly Newsletter is prepared and delivered to your door? How many people are involved? How many processes?

We analysed the last issue as follows:

1. There were 13 separate items supplied by 5 contributors.
2. The editor has the task of putting it all together, making it thoroughly readable, all of which takes up much time - say two days.
3. Then it is checked for correct information and proof read.
4. Next it is sent to the printer by email. This is a new innovation for us as until the end of last year it was hand delivered to the printers - AK Printers of Stondon Massey.
5. Usually within 24 hours (often the same day) we receive a call telling us the print run of about 90 copies is complete.
6. They are collected straight away.
7. Then they are sorted into area batches and each copy is named and/or addressed.
8. Delivery is made to the "area reps".
9. He/she takes them to your front door.

Each copy costs around 45-50 pence, plus postage on those members who live outside the immediate Ongar area.

We really need more helpers, contact John on 362461, and especially more contributions of general interest from members, or any ideas, for inclusion in future issues. Contact Jenny on 362684 or email jenny.main@ntlworld.com

Then there is the occasional "Noticeboard", but that is another story.

John Winslow

Women War Artists

Margaret Abbess, who was a member of OMHS for many years, features in an exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in London called *Women War Artists*. We have been privileged to use some of her drawings in our book *Ongar Remembers* with permission from the Imperial War Museum, and also have been able to tell the story of her life in WW2. One of her drawings is on the cover of the book and another two are inside.

Margaret who was a founder member of the Art Society in Ongar was the designer of the altar kneelers in St Martin's Church, which were sewn by members of OMHS. We remember her very fondly and thank her for the legacy she has left for us and future generations.

Felicite Barnes

We were sorry to hear of the deaths of two OMHS members since our last newsletter.

Sheila Matthews, who was responsible for stitching a large part of our church kneeler so beautifully, and

Harold Weiland, a well-known Ongar businessman and OMHS supporter.

They will both be sadly missed.

Marion Slade Lecture 2011: Who saved Epping Forest in the 19th century? by Richard Morris , Verderer of Epping Forest

Many of us are lucky enough to drive or walk through parts of Epping Forest on a regular basis as it is right on our doorstep, but do any of us know about its origins and history? Richard Morris delivered this year's OMHS Marion Slade Lecture at High Ongar Village Hall on 26th March 2011. Richard explained the medieval role of Verderer of the forest, overseeing the 'vert' and venison of the forest and, since Victorian times, an additional administrative role representing the people on an elected Corporation of London committee looking after the forest.

Epping Forest is one of the largest natural forests in the world, and probably one of the oldest with evidence of Mesolithic activity in some of the forest bogs. William the Conqueror and his successors were responsible for planting around 60 Royal forests which gave the Monarch exclusive rights to hunt deer, and limited grazing rights to local people who held a licence. There were special forest courts to deal with regular misdemeanours against the forest laws and a book, entitled "Laws of the Forest" was published in 1598.

Epping Forest had become a Royal Forest in 1130. Between the 12th and 17th centuries the Royal Forest was at its height. The Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge was built in 1543, but after the end of the 17th century the kings began to lose interest and the Royal Forests went into a decline. By 1805 the forest commissioners were offering Crown rights for sale to hunt in the forest. The lords of the manor were keen to buy as it allowed them to enclose and develop the land. In 1851 parts of Hainault Forest were enclosed, sold and ploughed as agricultural land. Epping Forest was safe as it was owned by 19 Lords of the Manor. However illegal enclosures took place and halved the size of the forest area and Commissions of Inquiry were set up to investigate these enclosures.

The arguments against enclosure were the protection of the commoners' rights to graze cattle with no fences between Epping and Wanstead, the right to lop trees to use wood for building and fuel, and the right of people to use the forest for recreation. The 1878 Epping Forest Act helped reinstate the enclosed lands as all claimed land since 1851 had to be put to arbitration.

Certain local figures were important in saving the forest from being parcelled up and sold off. These included: George Palmer, the Willingale family, Lord Everson and his Commons Preservation Society, Sir Thomas Powell Buxton and Edward North Buxton, John Bedford and Henry Ibbotson. Many of these names are significant locally and feature as local road names.

Queen Victoria made a short visit to Epping Forest in 1882 and dedicated the forest to the people. There is a mural in Essex County Hall to commemorate her visit. Epping Forest is still very important to local people and is seen as the "lung" of East London. Work continues to maintain the forest for grazing cattle, re-planting and recreation.

Jenny Main

Information required

We have been asked for information, pictures and plans of Banson's Yard, behind Central House.

Does anyone have anything relevant we could copy and pass on please?

Please contact Jenny on 01277 362684

Why Navestock? - Now we know

In an article entitled "Why Navestock?" in the August 2009 issue of the OMHS Newsletter, I posed two principal questions. Why should Martin Taylor, the only one of the Revd Isaac Taylor's sons never to have lived in Ongar, have been buried in the churchyard at Navestock? Or, if, as seems overwhelmingly likely, that was because his first wife, Elizabeth, was buried there, what was her connection with Navestock that caused Martin to bring her body from London, where she died, to rural Essex for burial? Perhaps the chief obstacle to solving this conundrum was the apparent absence of any record of Martin's and Elizabeth's marriage and indeed of their daughter Helen's baptism. It was also striking that, in the whole extensive canon of surviving Taylor letters, biographical sketches and other documents, there is, as far as I know, only one direct reference to Martin's first wife having existed at all: the statement by Josiah Gilbert in the final pages of *The Autobiography and Other Memorials of Mrs Gilbert (formerly Ann Taylor)* that Martin was buried beside his wife "close to the church porch" in the churchyard of Navestock¹.

Last summer, Ancestry.com made available to subscribers images of the registers of a large number of additional churches in London and the surrounding area. My cousin, Fiona Martin, a descendant of Isaac Taylor of Stanford Rivers, quickly found a tantalizing record of a marriage, by licence, on 9 August 1823 in Ashted, Surrey, of Martin Taylor, bachelor of St Andrew's, Holborn, to one Elizabeth Killingback, spinster of Ashted. The witnesses were, it seems, respectable inhabitants of Ashted with no known connection with the Taylor family, perhaps suggesting that Elizabeth was genuinely living in Ashted. The signature of the groom was not unlike surviving examples of our Martin Taylor's signature, but not so like as to be a certain match. What's more, according to the brief Dictionary of National Biography (DNB) article on Martin's and Elizabeth's daughter, Helen Taylor, Elizabeth's surname when she married Martin was Venn, while Helen herself was born in 1818, a date consistent with both census return entries and her death certificate. It just didn't seem to add up.

Oh, my ageing memory! A few weeks ago, I had reason to look back on the notes I made in the Essex Record Office in 2009 when consulting the surviving Navestock registers in an attempt to discover Elizabeth's connection with Navestock - and what should be there, among my transcriptions of Navestock baptisms in the 1790s, but

1 July 1792 Elizabeth d. of John & Sarah [??Th]illingback

Of course, at that time, I was looking for Elizabeth Venn, and the name Killingback held no significance for me at all. Now, however, there can surely be no doubt that this is the same Elizabeth Killingback who married (our) Martin Taylor in Ashted in 1823, that she was also the Elizabeth Taylor buried in Navestock, aged 36, in 1828² and that Martin brought her to Navestock for burial because that was her home village³.

So far, so good. But what of Helen? As noted above, such sources as there are seem to be unanimous that she was born c.1818. It was thus difficult to avoid the conclusion that she was

¹ *AOMMG* Vol 2, p.320. This book was published in 1874, nearly a decade before the death of Martin's second wife Sarah, so it is clear, although she is not named, that it is his first wife to whom Josiah Gilbert is referring.

² This is now confirmed by Leda Tarabay, a Killingback descendant, who tells me that there is, *inside* the church of St Thomas the Apostle at Navestock (which has always been locked at the time of my own visits), a plan of the burials in the churchyard, which shows that this Elizabeth Taylor and Martin and indeed Martin's second wife Sarah were all buried in the same plot.

³ The Killingback family had a long association with Navestock stretching from at least the 1780s to the 1960s. Elizabeth's father, John Killingback, who died in 1847 aged about 90, appears in the 1841 census returns as an agricultural labourer living in Hall Cottage, Navestock, but it seems that he had at one time been a farm bailiff (as Elizabeth's brother John certainly was) and what he left in his will was thought substantial enough to be worth a (no doubt expensive) legal wrangle. Elizabeth's unmarried younger sister Ann (1796-1847) left "stock in the public funds, money in the Savings Bank", and her sole executrix and residuary legatee, one Martha Roberts - who complicated matters by predeceasing her (as she herself predeceased her father) - lived, according to Ann's will, at the surprisingly upmarket address of No 54 Margaret Street, Cavendish Square, London.

illegitimate. But whose child was she? Ostensibly, the simplest answer was that her mother was Elizabeth Killingback and that her father was either Martin Taylor or A.N. Other unidentified and possibly, at this distance in time, unidentifiable. This would certainly help to explain the absence in surviving Taylor sources of any mention of Elizabeth Killingback, especially if Martin was in fact the father. In those days, illegitimacy was a considerable stigma. (Not that Helen herself was allowed to suffer for it; it is clear that she was fully accepted as a well-loved member of the family and that she got on particularly well with her step-mother Sarah, Martin's second wife, living with her after Martin's death until Sarah herself died.) However, if Martin was the father, he took a culpably long time to "make an honest woman" of Elizabeth. Also, if he was the father of a baby girl in 1819, his frivolity (recorded in a surviving letter of his mother's⁴) in messing about with velocipedes to the exclusion of almost all else would be equally hard to excuse; the letter in question gives not the slightest hint that Mrs Taylor had any idea that Martin had a child at that time.

The conclusion thus began to emerge that Helen was the illegitimate child of Elizabeth Killingback and an unknown father; that Elizabeth either came to London (where census returns say that Helen was born) to have her child away from wagging tongues in Navestock or moved to London for other reasons (as one of her nephews certainly did a little later) and there entered into the liaison that led to Helen; and that Martin adopted Helen, whether formally or not, when he married Elizabeth. Alas, such a neat conclusion turns out to be too easy!

Martin's sister, Ann Gilbert, writes in her autobiography⁵ "...many years afterwards [sc. after 1809], a touching proof was given of the tenacity of his affections when the house of business he then occupied being burnt down, his first care was to save his little girl, his favourite cat, and the box containing the letters from his family!" The "little girl" cannot be anyone else but Helen, yet the ever resourceful Fiona Martin has managed to date this fire - surely there cannot have been more than one? - to the night of 23 November 1822⁶, ie, the year before Martin and Elizabeth were married. It thus appears that Helen was regarded as Martin's little girl before he married Elizabeth. It is also remarkable that nothing at all is said in this brief account of the fire about Martin's taking action to save Helen's mother or to suggest that she was even present. This suggests the further possibility that Helen was Martin's child, but not Elizabeth's, that Helen's mother had either died or absconded and that one of the reasons for Martin's marrying was to provide a mother-figure for Helen. Yet that hypothesis requires one to conclude not only that Martin did indeed take a very irresponsible attitude towards fatherhood in 1819, but also that Josiah Taylor, Martin's uncle and employer, was content to allow his nephew to live on his business premises with an illegitimate daughter, something that might have been hard to explain away to his respectable clients.

⁴ Letter from Mrs Taylor to Ann Gilbert in Hull, dated 4 May 1819 (Osborne Collection, Toronto Public Library): "...we had a visit from Martin who is so full of the velocipede that he can scarcely talk of anything else - he says he considers it as a new area in his life! We are in constant expectation of seeing him and his breathless animal stop at ye garden gate, for he intends to purchase one as soon as he is sufficiently practised - This is done in a large room it is a shilling admittance - Jemima went while in London and a droll sight it is...". The velocipede was a contraption invented by one Baron Drais and patented in England by a coachmaker named Denis Johnson, and the subject of some scorn from John Keats ("the nothing of the day" - Letters (1895) no. 300). It was nearer to a wheeled hobby-horse than to a bicycle; there were no pedals and no means of propulsion other than the rider's pushing with his feet on the ground. Unlike the skate-board or roller-blades in our own day, it does not seem to have caught on as a practical means of transport. There is a velocipede of 1820, together with a print showing gentlemen at practice on the contraption in a room such as that referred to by Mrs Taylor, in the collection at Snowhill Manor, near Broadway.

⁵ *AOMMG*, Vol 1, p.187. This passage was written late in Ann's life, probably in the late 1850s or early 1860s.

⁶ Preface to Volume 2 of the 1895 edition of *Examples of Gothic Architecture* by Augustus Pugin, many unsold copies of the first edition of which (published by Martin's uncle, Josiah Taylor, whose premises these were) were destroyed in the fire. Cf. Thomas Rees & John Britton: *Reminiscences of literary London from 1779-1853* (1896), p.125

Another take on the facts might be that Helen was after all Elizabeth's child by another man, that Elizabeth was also employed, as a live-in servant, on Josiah Taylor's premises, that Martin, perhaps because he was already sweet on Elizabeth or simply out of common humanity, saved the young Helen from the fire and that the description "his little girl" was simply a projection backwards in time from what Helen became when, a little later, Martin married her mother and effectively adopted her; Elizabeth may have been away when the fire broke out or was perhaps regarded as dispensable to the story at a time she was not yet married to Martin. But then again how did she then apparently become a genuine resident of Ashted by August 1823?

If only one could find a record of Helen's baptism! Only that (saving the emergence of some lost piece of Taylor evidence such as Ann Gilbert's pocket-books or the diaries of Isaac Taylor of Stanford Rivers for the years in question) seems likely to be able to resolve these remaining questions. Nor shall we probably ever know where the name Venn came from in this connection, though the author of the DNB article almost certainly got it from Henry Taylor, whose Pedigree of the Taylors of Ongar, produced in 1895, also gives Elizabeth Venn as the name of Martin's first wife.

Robin Gilbert

The origin of Ongar Cemetery Chapels

Robin Gilbert has sent in this extract from the *Nottinghamshire Guardian* 12th January 1866:

"We are glad to see that a Gothic design sent in conjointly by Mr J. C. Gilbert and Mr Fothergill Watson, architects, of this town, has been chosen in competition for the new Cemetery chapels at Ongar, Essex. The erection of the buildings is to be proceeded with immediately."

Robin then goes on to explain that Fothergill Watson was later known as Watson Fothergill - he of the Budworth Hall - and also a rather more distinguished architect than my great-great-grandfather, whose apprentice & then junior partner he briefly was. Also note that Charles Gilbert's first initial was, of course I (for Isaac), not J, as printed in the *Notts Guardian*

Michael Leach comments that it is quite interesting in that the report states that it was designed jointly by Gilbert and Watson, whatever that means on such a small project! Perhaps Gilbert did a rough draft and told his junior to flesh out the details. It is perhaps of relevance that the window arches, in two different coloured bricks, are very similar to those on what remains of the original Sunday school behind the Congregational chapel which we believe Gilbert did design. So perhaps Watson was firmly under his master's thumb at this stage in his career.

Ed's note: Thanks to Robin and Michael for this information.

Wanted!

Have you any photos of old Ongar that we could copy to add to our OMHS archive and/or website?

Also any maps, plans, artefacts that you no longer require?

If so please contact Jenny on 01277 362684

The McCorquodales of Forest Hall

We have been contacted by Graham Fleuty from Yateley in Hampshire about a book he is writing about their war memorial. He has been told that he should mention Major Angus McCorquodale and his wife, who both lived in Yateley in 1939. He was killed in 1940.

He has recently discovered that Major McCorquodale is mentioned on the High Ongar memorial. With Florrie Cracknell's help (and some hurried research by your editor) we were able to confirm that the McCorquodale family lived in Forest Hall, High Ongar. The house was used by USAF personnel during the war, but it was pulled down around 50/60 years ago, having been occupied by Harold McCorquodale from 1902 until his death in 1943.

Mr Fleuty was very pleased with the information we provided and was surprised to learn that the family had lived in the area. If anyone knows anymore on this, please contact Jenny.

John Winslow, Florrie Cracknell and Jenny Main (combined effort)

Some information from: 'High Ongar: Manors', A History of the County of Essex: Volume 4: Ongar Hundred (1956), pp. 175-182. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=15639> Date accessed: 08 May 2011.

Ongar House History

A small group of OMHS members are looking at the history of some of the houses in Ongar High Street.

We meet every couple of months to exchange information and discoveries. We are hoping to contact householders in the High Street to increase the scope of the project.

Our next meeting is on June 2nd at 2pm.

Please contact Jenny on 01277 362684 for more details if you would like to come along and get involved

Domesday Reloaded

The BBC's Domesday Project was originally launched in 1986, 900 years after William the Conqueror's original Domesday Book, to record a snapshot of everyday life in the UK. People were asked to record what they thought would be of interest in 1000 years time.

However all of the data was recorded onto a Laser-Disc, a now obsolete medium, so the BBC has transferred all of the information to the BBC website. It can be accessed online at:

www.bbc.co.uk/domesday it can be searched by place name or postcard. Ongar resources are available, and the BBC is asking for people to update the information. Why not have a look?

Jenny Main

St Peter's Churchyard at Shelley

A team of people from OMHS has just finished recording the inscriptions on the tombstones in Shelley churchyard and inside the church. The information will be sent on to the Essex Family History Society, who will add it to their database, locally and nationally.

It has been a pleasure to go up to Shelley on some of the beautiful spring mornings and to be surrounded by a mass of spring flowers. However it can be bleak on some winter mornings.

The team has been flexible, but most of the work has been recorded by Keith Snow, David Thompson, Gemma O'Donnell, Kathy Wenbourne, Rosemary Tait, Ron Huish and Felicitie Barnes. We are now moving on to record at St Martin's.

The building of St Peter's Church only dates back to the 19th century, but some of the stones in the churchyard date back to the 1770s. These old stones had to have some TLC, but who cannot be affected when an inscription such as this is deciphered:

SARAH WRIGHT wife of MR THOS WRIGHT of Great Russell Street in the Parish of St George Bloomsbury London. Who departed this life in the hour of nature's sorrow and also her infant on the 28 of February in the year of our Lord 1777 aged 34 years being married only 12 months & 5 days to a loving & affectionate husband who caused this stone to be erected to her memory. Here lieth the body of SARAH WRIGHTSON Feb 12th 1777.

When you see us working at St Martin's you can come and lend us a hand.

Felicitie Barnes

Dates for your Diary

May 22nd [Apologies if this date has passed before you read this!]
A 2 mile walk in Epping Forest led by Tricia Moxey.
Meet at Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge, Chingford. 10am

June 15th An accessible stroll through Epping Forest with Tricia.
Meet at High Beach Visitor Centre at 6.30pm

July 1st A walk to Greensted and tour of the church with Ann Brooks
Meet at Budworth Hall at 7pm or at the church at 7.30pm
Plus an invitation to drinks afterwards in Gill Adams' garden
at Church Barn, next to the church.

Sept 28th Annual General Meeting at Ongar Library. Details next time

Contributions for next newsletter please!

The next newsletter will be produced in August 2011, so any articles to Jenny please by 22nd July. Thank you!