

Ongar Millennium History Society Newsletter

May 2014

Well, first come, first served for our afternoon tea at the Ongar Ritz. Last time was a great success, so you need to reserve your place to guarantee an enjoyable afternoon with delicious cakes and cups of tea. Names to John Winslow please.

Jenny Main, Editor

Tea at the Ongar Ritz*

Following the successful event last year, a further luxury afternoon with the delight of tea and the best cakes ever will take place on **Wednesday 9th July at 2.30pm** with a World War 1 (The Great War) theme. We may have heard stories or experiences from our parents or grandparents either overseas - usually across the Channel - or at home with food shortages and Zeppelin raids. This was the first aerial bombardment in history. Maybe some photographs too? The plan is to display whatever artefacts and photos we can collect, have a chat, and see an excellent one hour video of the atmosphere in this country immediately before, and in the earliest days of the war. **"It will be over by Christmas"**.

* Otherwise known as the Sports and Social Club, Love Lane. Members free, but a £3 donation towards the cost of refreshments would be appreciated.

Non- members £3 plus £3 donation.

Space is likely to be limited, so please call John on 362461 to reserve your place .

Committee Members 2013-2014

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NB Committee phone numbers can be found on the membership cards

An Ongar conventicle in the 1590s

The following case was brought to the Archdeaconry Court of Essex on 9 September 1616:

'We, the churchwarden and sidemen of Shelley, have presented Elizabeth Ramsie, the wife of John Ramsie, and Richard Palmer, sometime servant to the said John, to be suspected by common fame and report, to have committed adulterie; and nowe are enjoined by the 117 cannon to explaine the said presentment, doe now againe, having heard further of the offensive behaviour of the said Elizabeth in former tyme; as namely when she was first marryed, she using to goe to conventicles in the night at Chipinge Ongar, her husband beinge at that tyme fast asleepe, she was ordinarilye brought home by one yonge man or other, and had then been presented by the churchwarden, but that our minister diswaded him; this is to be proved yf neede be; since which tyme she hath sundrye tymes ridd abroad; sometyme with one man and sometyme with another, and have been knowen to lie in chamber with some that hath ridd forth with her, neither coulde she denye it, being urged in the matter: and especially with one Andrew Warmsley of Chipinge Ongar, who was one, when she was a mayde, that woulde have marryed her, and when she was newly marryed was her servant; at which tyme it was observed by many she was more kinde to hym then to her husband; as indeed she hath been to all her men servants from tyme to tyme, which hath been offensive to many and mucche talke hath bene of it, and she hath bene reproved of it by our minister: upon which circumstances we doe by there presents confirm our former presentment, in these words following: That is – We doe present upon a common fame and report, Elizabeth Ramsie and Richard Palmer some tyme servant to John Ramsie, and now servant to Christopher Wilkin of Highe Ongar, to have committed adulterie.'

This rather breathless deposition raises a number of interesting points.

Firstly there are a few fragments of additional information from other sources about some of those named in this citation. Andrew Wamsley, a labourer of Shelley, appeared at the Quarter Sessions in 1622 for not scouring the 22 rods of his ditch which abutted the highway and was probably the same Andrew Wamsley who was married in Chipping Ongar church in September 1597. St Martin's had also seen the marriage of John Ramsey and Elizabeth Burton four years earlier. In spite of the variations in spelling, these are almost certainly the individuals who were named in the Archdeaconry court deposition.

Secondly it was entirely normal at this time for moral offences to appear before church courts, and adultery was seen as a particularly serious as it threatened the sanctity of the family, as well as the principles of property inheritance. However court action was often seen as a last resort after local mediation had failed, and in this case it is clear that the rector of Shelley had intervned previously and successfully blocked a move to bring the parties to court ('our minister diswaded him', in other words he had dissuaded the churchwarden responsible for referring the case to court). However the rector's attempts to make the offenders alter their ways had clearly failed to produced

the intended result and the village rumour mill was now in full spate ('muche talke hath bene of it'). The point had been reached where more had to be done.

Thirdly, and much more surprisingly, is the reference to nocturnal conventicles in Ongar at the end of the sixteenth century, soon after Elizabeth Ramsey's marriage. These were secret meetings of disaffected puritans gathered in a private house to discuss religious matters, to read the Bible and to pray, and were made illegal in 1593. Such activities were strongly disapproved of by both church and civil authorities and resulted in the periodic prosecution, and the imposition of fines or imprisonment of the participants. It is particularly interesting to find such a conventicle in Ongar at this time, as the rector, Rev. Hugh Ince, had strong puritan credentials, and was described as a 'sufficient and diligent preacher'.

As far as I am aware there are no other references to such puritan meetings in the town at that time. It is no coincidence that the self-righteous churchwarden of Shelley strengthened his case by linking Elizabeth's suspicious nocturnal activities ('her husband beinge at that tyme fast asleepe') with what would have been seen as the very suspicious behaviour of an unaccompanied married woman attending a conventicle after dark. Nothing more is known of the outcome of this case, or of the individuals involved, but they give a glimpse of an age that is both very different and surprisingly similar to our own.

Michael Leach

Source: Hale, W (ed) 1847 *A Series of Precedents and Proceedings in Criminal Cases from the Act Books of the Courts of the Diocese of London*, Edinburgh

A successful visit to Ongar

I would like it passed to the appropriate person how well our group Essex Society For Family History were looked after by Heather Ancient and her colleagues. We booked family history days at 3 Libraries in our area - Harlow Town Centre, Ongar and Epping. The staff there were all very supportive and had displayed our posters beforehand and prepared stands of relevant books to display near to our table. Can I say how nice it was to see the two smaller libraries being so busy, with such a lot going on - really a hub of the local community and so nice to see. Our society gained some new members and we helped quite a few people to find out a bit more about their backgrounds, so three very successful days.

Thank you

Sue Spiller, Secretary Harlow Branch, Essex Society for Family History

Samuel's House? Help!!

Does anyone know why the shop next to the Royal Mail sorting office has a plaque on the first floor giving the name of Samuel's House? If anyone knows about this please let us know!

Jenny Main

The Lacey family of Chipping Ongar

The Lacey family have been traced back to Thaxted in 1778. Peter Lacey, born March 1828, came to Ongar and married Mary Woodward from Layer de La Haye in 1853. Peter was a boot and shoemaker (cordwainer) and Mary was a schoolmaster's daughter. They had 8 children - 5 boys and 3 girls.

William was the youngest boy, born 1886. He travelled the world working on passenger liners until his own family came along. He had married Jessie Julia Foster from Cold Hall farm, North Weald and they also had 8 children. William was persuaded to join his father in the business and they all lived in the family home in the High Street. The workshop was a separate brick building at the bottom of the yard.

Peter Lacey junior, born 1861, was also working in the business and he expected to take over from his father, but he had willed it to William on the understanding that William and Julia looked after his wife until after her death. This caused a family rift and Peter set up his own business further down the road on the bend by past the Bell public house.

In the 1880s William was having a drink one evening and became acquainted with Herman Korf who had moved down from London to work with a Mr Rose who needed a tailor to make clothes for the ladies in the area as Mr Rose did the menswear. As he didn't know anyone in Ongar, feeling sorry for him, William invited him home for a meal with the family, which became a regular occurrence and Herman later married William's sister Ellen in 1890.

William and Jesse had 4 boys and 4 girls.

John, the eldest born in 1899, served in the First World War in the Infantry and was badly wounded in the latter part of the war. Gwendoline, born 1900, was a cashier/book-keeper for her husband, a manager for the International Stores. Hilda, born 1902, went to Loughton High School and College, and went on to become a schoolteacher in Upminster and Colchester.

Montague, born 1903, was a journalist starting with the Ilford Recorder and ending up as shipping correspondent for the Daily Express until he retired. Like his father he saw the world as he went on several maiden voyages when new liners were launched. During the Second World War, he was assigned to the American forces and soon after D-Day he went to Normandy and was attached to General Omar Bradley. In the War Museum at Bayeux there are several front pages of the Daily Express on display, written not by a foreign correspondent, but by Montague Lacey. He was given a very special award by the Americans for his hard work. See news article at the end of this piece.

Ernest, born 1904, started training as a chemist with the neighbour, Mr Baugh, as his daughters had gone to university and were not interested in running a chemist's shop. However this wasn't the case as the girls took over the business, so Ernest and John set up next door in competition. They also had a motorbike and sidecar providing a service

for people in outlying villages who could not get into town easily. Ernest was not fully qualified to dispense prescriptions but could sell proprietary medicines and specialised in developing films. Later Ernest worked for Ilford Films and during the war helped to invent a type of film which was used in reconnaissance aircraft when taking pictures of bombed targets.

Charlotte, known as Jean born 1906, started her career as a pupil teacher under Fred Barker at Ongar Junior School, as unlike Hilda, the family could not afford to send her to college. She took over Hilda's post at Upminster Junior School, as in the 1930s female teachers were not allowed to continue working after they married. She later returned to Ongar and was one of the first teachers at the newly built school at Fyfield. As well as teaching general subjects, she was responsible for the country dancing and was an excellent needlewoman like the rest of the girls in the family. She married the Rev. Robert Marles, the Minister from the Congregational church, now the United Reformed Church. She moved with him to Wickford and Aylesbury until his death when she took up full-time teaching again, but eventually returned home to Ongar in the 1980s.

Frank was born in 1908 and also became a teacher and for many years before his retirement had been headmaster of the largest junior in the county. He started the idea of taking school children on holidays, including cruises.

Elsie, known as Molly, the youngest born in 1912, lived in the family home with John, who never married, and they cared for their father in his old age as he had suffered several strokes. Working for Hockings, the butcher's, she was able to see to his needs and work fulltime. A few years after he died she married her childhood sweetheart, David Thomas, the proprietor of Crownlands Garage, High Ongar and John went to live with them in their newly built bungalow "Orenda".

All four girls survived into their nineties and their cousin, Nellie Korf, died aged 99 having played the organ for the United Reformed Church from the age of 18, a total of 80 years. Nellie was one of the founding members of the Ongar Music Society

Mary Cowling

Ed's note: Many thanks to Mary for allowing us to include this item in our newsletter.

New Ongar Information Boards

Have you seen the new information boards around Ongar High Street? They are very colourful and full of information about what Ongar has to offer, both in terms of visitor attractions and historic buildings, together with a list of businesses and their locations. They are outside Ongar Library, Budworth Hall and by the railway entrance.

Marion Slade Lecture 2014

This year our lecture was given by Anne Padfield, who has spoken to us as a society many times. We had a good turnout, so much so that we had to put out more chairs! Anne was talking about buildings close to home in our High Street.

Anne started by talking about the shape of the town, with the pinch points at either end of the town which marked the area of the entrance to the outer bailey of the castle. These "narrows" are still in evidence.

Anne took a chronological approach to the buildings and she commented on the 12th century activity around the visit of royalty, after which building went quiet in the town. Then Anne spoke about the building now occupied by Poulton's as being a mediaeval house, which requires us to look up and behind. It also sits back from the building line as all the older buildings do. This is a good indication of the age of the building. The carpentry can also help to date the buildings by certain joints and markings, many of which were heavy. Beams tend to be wider than deep with shaved away corners.

The Market House (Previously known as the Kismet, now Spice Masala)

The ground floor was open with arches The upstairs of the Market House acted as the admin office for the market and weights and measures office. It was jettied both back and front. A similar jettied house dated 1600 is still standing in Horndon-on-the-Hill. There were stables behind.

1642 shop (Ongar Discount Store)

Elizabethan or earlier, with a late jetty on the street side. Window and door dead straight. Chimneys rebuilt. Inside utility and plain beams.

Wren House

Wedged shape, squeezed into manorial waste, with ahay and straw roof. The facade has been changed. Best to look at it from the side. It has a lobby entrance to the house with two rooms to the front and one to the back. There are 17th century cellars are evident under the shops.

The Old House (next to Pipkins Opticians, going up the hill)

2 bays then chimney and another bay. Evidence suggests the house was shortened. It echoes the curve of the outer bailey. It appears a carpenter and artisans lived here due to evidence of DIY alterations.

Baugh's (the large three gabled building – now KoKo Couture)

Prestigious building – only one other with 8 chimney shafts in Feering. The octagonal shape of the shaft allowed for fire places in 3 ways. The first floor is just one room., and the cellar runs all the way along with an opening for the bread oven. There is lots of ribbon work in the plaster work.

Kings Head c.1697

Purpose built coaching inn and arch. Sash windows widened below. Decorated with chequerboard brickwork, plus a possible love token built into the brickwork, together with a fire insurance plaque. At the back there is a gallery leading to the rooms. The family lived on the attic floor.

Jenny Main plus grateful input from Michael Leach

A Golden Childhood

Ongar was a receiving point for child evacuees from London in 1939/40. Ongar was at the end of the underground and so the transport of these children was easy to arrange. They came in school groups from Leytonstone and other East End boroughs and were housed with local families. Many of them returned after a few weeks, but some stayed on. Of those that stayed, many have happy memories.

I was approached on the Internet a few months ago by the family of one such girl and was able to help with maps and local knowledge. She had been an evacuee, billeted in the High Ongar and her daughter told me that the happiest memories of her mother's long life were of those in High Ongar in the war. She had often spoken to her children about her experiences of the countryside and of the freedom to play out on the neighbouring fields.

This daughter told me that it had been such a precious time in her mother's childhood and as her mother had recently died, the family wished to sprinkle some of her ashes on the those same fields. They came on the mother's birthday, arriving on one of the steam trains. I have been told they will return with their grandchildren this summer for another celebration of a young girl's happy childhood memories.

Felicite Barnes

London Walk part 2

Earlier this month a group of members made their way to perhaps the finest jewel in the capital - the Guildhall in the City of London. Steeped in 2,000 years of golden history, members saw the well preserved Roman amphitheatre. No-one was aware of its existence until 1988 when it was discovered during excavations for a modern extension. Visual presentations brought its gory history to life. It is one of London's best kept secrets.

We also visited the Great Hall where numerous heads of state have enjoyed a glittering banquet at the invitation of the City of London's Lord Mayor. In earlier days it was a court where countless trials for treason were held against some senior royals and other well known individuals, found guilty, and taken away for a public execution. Other attractions we visited in the Guildhall included the Clock and Watch Museum, the art galleries, and library which had a small exhibition on William Shakespeare. At this point we paused for a welcome lunch.

In the afternoon there was a brief visit to the Postman's Park just a few yards from St. Paul's Cathedral, but the main party continued across the Millennium Bridge on to the South Bank then across Tower Bridge towards St Katherine's Dock which was well worth a visit and allowed for more refreshment before returning to Liverpool Street and home.

John Winslow and Jenny Main

Poppy seeds planted to commemorate the First World War anniversary



Poppy seeds were planted by members of Ongar Millennium History Society, the Forces Friends Group and Ongar Town Council on the bank outside Ongar Cemetery, and also the OTC offices and the Cerizay Garden. We hope for a grand show later in the year.

Jenny Main

Leach

Dates for your diary

Sat 21st June **History Day with EFDC Museum – exhibits and bring in your pictures and artefacts**
10-4pm Budworth Hall, High Street Ongar

Wed 9th July **Tea at the Ongar Ritz**
2.30pm Ongar Sports + Social Club (see details on front page)
Names to John Winslow 362461 please

Wed 24th Sept **AGM at Ongar Library – advance notice!**
7.45 for 8pm

Contributions for next newsletter please!

The next newsletter will be produced in August 2014, so any articles to Jenny please by 22nd July. Thank you!