

Ongar Millennium History Society Newsletter

May 2018

Hello and welcome to the OMHS May 2018 newsletter. We are now nearing our next visit to the RAF Museum which we have arranged to celebrate this centenary year for the RAF. We hope you are able to join us for the visit which is free to members.

The poster features the Royal Air Force Museum logo at the top left, the text 'Royal Air Force Centenary Exhibition' in the top center, and the 'RAF 100' logo at the top right. The main title is 'Coach trip to RAF Museum' with the date '5th July 2018' below it. Departure times are listed as 'Departing Ongar 9.30am' and 'Departing Hendon 4.30pm'. A central photograph shows a biplane in flight. The pricing is 'Entrance Free + Coach £16.00 + Guide £2.50', with a note 'Coach free for members of Ongar Millennium History Society'. Contact information at the bottom reads 'Details & Tickets from Lorna 07943 812444'.

We need your help

Ongar Millennium History Society has been running for 18 years, since the millennium and how pleasing it has been to see that the society has had a new lease of life since the AGM and that the committee has invigorated it by putting on a more active programme. However, it will become necessary to cut back on these activities as some committee members who have done a sterling job, now find that other commitments and health reasons mean they cannot give the time. Therefore, all members are asked to consider giving a bit of time to keep the society functioning by becoming a committee member. There are just 6 committee meetings held during the year. If any of you would consider making a commitment it would be on your terms and the committee would be glad to accommodate you.

Felicite Barnes President of the OMHS.

Committee members

Chair	Vacancy	Venues Sec.	Vacancy
President	Felicite Barnes	Membership+Speaker Sec.	Lorna Vaux
Secretary	Sandra Dear	Committee Member	Lawrence Mendoza
Treasurer	Kathleen Jenkins	Archive	Vacancy
		Newsletter	Jenny Main

Road traffic offences

There is a temptation to think that the modern world is hedged round with regulations, though any glimpse through past legislation immediately gives the lie to this notion! Here is an extract from the *St James Chronicle* of 13 September 1794, indicating a very substantial fine for endangering passengers on a stage coach:

"The driver of the Rumford Stage-Coach was convicted before the Magistrates at the Public Office, Whitechapel, on Mr Gammon's Act in the penalty of £12 for carrying more than 6 persons on the roof of his Coach; as were the Drivers of the Chipping Ongar, Bishop Stortford and Coggeshall Stage-Coaches, in penalties of £8 each for the same Offence"

Mr Gammon's Act must have been the quite detailed legislation which was passed between 1787 and 1790 to regulate (amongst other matters) the number of passengers that stage coaches were permitted to carry, the fines to be levied for exceeding this number, and the payments to be made to members of the public for reporting infringements. The intention of the legislation must have been to reduce the risks of a top-heavy coach overturning. Even so, riding on the roof must have been dangerous, though the fare was cheaper to compensate for the hazard and the discomfort. Part of the 1790 act stipulated that the proprietor's name was to be prominently painted on each coach, an obligation which still applies today for all public and private motor coaches. One wonders if the fine of 20 shillings for discharging a gun "otherwise than for the defence of such coach" is still in force!

Michael Leach

Henry Gibson and the Church Rooms in Castle Street

Henry Gibson was born at Rainsford Lodge, Chelmsford on 27 July 1831. He was the son of William and Eliza Gibson, both of whom are buried in St. Martin's Churchyard. Henry moved to Ongar as a child, attending Brentwood Grammar School and later Cheltenham College. He became an articled clerk in his father's law firm and qualified as a solicitor in 1852, aged just 21. Four years later in 1856 he was made Deputy Clerk of the Peace and, on the death of his father in 1860, was appointed Clerk of the Peace for Essex. He also practised as a solicitor in Ongar together with his son as H. & H.W. Gibson.

In May 1856, Henry married Ellen Elizabeth Nottidge in her home town of Tunbridge Wells, and by 1871 Henry and Ellen were living at the *White House*, Chipping Ongar with their son, three daughters and several servants. The *White House* is shown on the map close to St. Martin's Church. In 1863 they were living in High Ongar, so moved to the *White House* between 1863 and 1871.

Henry Gibson provided Chipping Ongar with a Lecture Room, sometimes referred to as a Lecture Hall, in Castle Street which accommodated 120-150 people. Apart from lectures, Sunday services were conducted there for the next thirty years. The first lecture was held on Thursday 24th March 1870, the subject being the physical, geographical, tribal and religious nature of the continent of South America. The meeting was chaired by Henry Gibson who introduced the proceedings by saying that the aim of the lectures "was to elevate, interest, instruct and profit those who may attend them".

He continued, "I had the opportunity of purchasing [from William Coe, the younger in 1869 for £120] what many of you may remember was an old and dilapidated building, and which I thought with alteration and additions would make a good room". A charge of one shilling was made to attend

the talk, proceeds rounded up by Henry to ten guineas and donated to the South American Missionary Society.

Reference to a Lecture Hall in Chipping Ongar was made in the 1894 and 1902 editions of *Kelly's Directory of Essex* but the 1914 directory referred to the building as the Church Room, which led us to explore further.

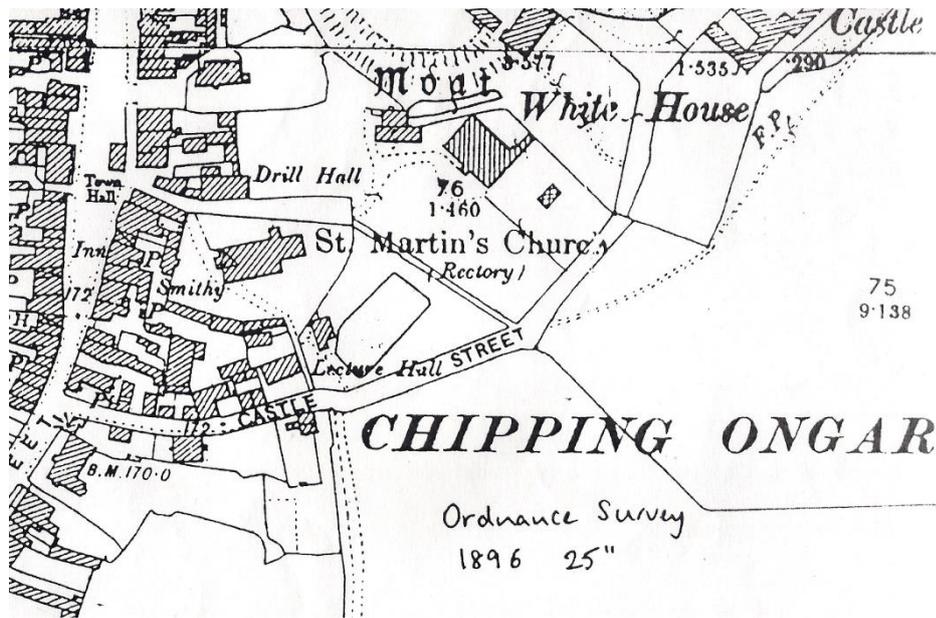
Originally, St. Martin's Church used a nearby cottage for meetings, but articles published in the *Chelmsford Chronicle* show that in December 1901 there was a fundraising event to adapt the Lecture Room for use as a Church Room, and in February 1902 a concert was held at the Budworth Hall to raise funds for the conversion.

A further event, a bazaar, was held in May 1903 to finance alterations to the building. At this event, Rev. James Tanner explained that Henry Gibson had very generously provided alternative accommodation to the little cottage used as a Church Room, but "now sold over their heads", with the offer of the joint use of his Castle Street Lecture Room. Rev. Tanner continued by saying that a Church room was absolutely necessary to the work, and he was glad to see that such favourable terms had been obtained. Certain modifications were required, for which £200 needed to be raised. The alterations were partly paid for but they were anxious to clear the balance and were holding a bazaar. So it would appear that the building served as both a Lecture Room and a Church Room for a number of years but, in 1902, Henry Gibson made over the property to Thomas Edward Rose and Thomas Cowee Junior as trustees for use solely as a Church Room. Currently the Church Rooms are still held in Trust by the Rector and Church Wardens of St. Martin's Church.

The Churchwarden of St. Martin's in the early 1900s was Thomas Edward Rose and he played a major role in adapting the building. While Thomas Rose was serving as a Churchwarden, Henry Gibson was the Church Treasurer and so the two men worked closely together.

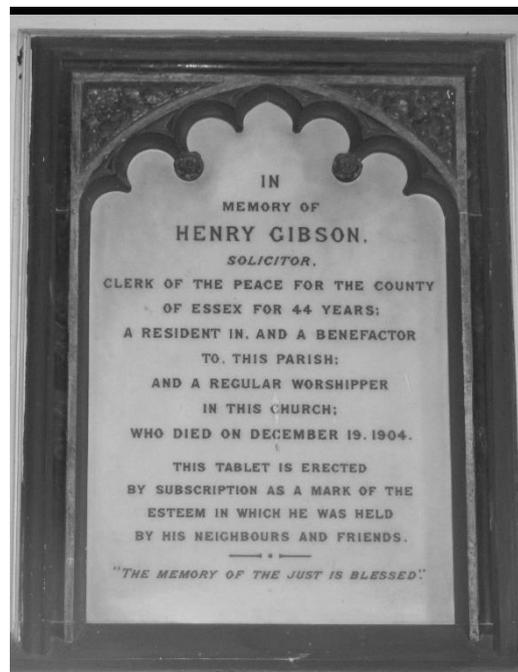
Henry Gibson was public spirited as shown by his involvement with the Budworth Hall, built as a memorial to Captain Philip Budworth. This was despite the fact that he was Captain Budworth's old adversary, clashing over the holding of the annual Ongar Fair which Henry considered to be a serious cause of drunkenness and immorality. At a public meeting in 1885, with Henry Gibson in the chair, proposals for a memorial were made and a coffee room was suggested as an antidote to the evils of alcohol. However, it was decided to build a large room for public meetings, reading, recreation and lectures, activities that would have been favoured by Henry. Financial problems beset the Hall from the beginning as donations were insufficient, and it appears that Henry personally made up the deficit as well as paying for the furniture and fittings. Although the opening of the Budworth Hall in 1886 reduced the importance of the Lecture Room in the village, Henry Gibson favoured the Castle Street venue as it was so close to his home.

The Lecture Hall (later the Church Room) is recorded on a map surveyed 1873-1874 and published in 1881. It is also marked on the 1896 Ordnance Survey map shown below, above "TLE" in CASTLE Street.



Henry retired in 1896 owing to deafness and failing sight and died in 1904, aged 73 at the *White House*. His funeral was conducted jointly by Rev. Tanner and Rev. Bond of High Ongar, and organised by Thomas Rose. Henry's wife, Ellen had died over twenty years earlier on 5th November 1882, aged 53. Henry, Ellen, their children and other members of the family are buried in the cemetery in Ongar.

Henry is commemorated in St. Martin's Church. A carved tablet reads "In memory of Henry Gibson, solicitor, Clerk of the Peace for the county of Essex for 44 years; a resident in, and a benefactor to, this Parish; and a regular worshipper in this Church; who died on 19 December 1904. This tablet is erected by subscription as a mark of the esteem in which he was held by his neighbours and friends. The memory of the just is blessed". The tablet was made in 1908 by John Underwood & Son of Baker Street, London at a cost of £28.15.0.



Keith Snow and Kathy Wenborne

Random occupations in Chipping Ongar

Newspaper publication expanded considerably in the eighteenth century and, particularly in the later decades of that century, provided much detail which is now of interest to local historians. Some newspapers from that period are searchable online, and reveal individual occupations before trade directories become available. Doubtless more can be found, particularly in the *Chelmsford Chronicle* which this particular database did not cover. This note, which provides the name, the source and its date, and the occupation of Chipping Ongar residents, shows the potential for collecting this sort of information.

- i) Traherne Brown, *London Gazette* 28/5/1734, bankrupt innholder, victualler and chapman.
- ii) Vey Green, *General Advertiser* 21/2/1749, bankrupt dealer and chapman
- iii) John Thorogood, *Public Advertiser* 16/7/1753, peruke maker
- iv) Susanna Graves, *Daily Advertiser* 28/1/1761, boarding school proprietor
- v) Abraham Wilkinson, *London Gazette* 17/8/1762, butcher and fugitive bankrupt
- vi) William Dore, *Middlesex Journal* 12/11/1771, attorney at law
- vii) Richard Dore, *Daily Advertiser* 5/2/1777, bankrupt money scrivener
- viii) Charles Hillyard, *Public Advertiser* 7/11/1778, cooper
- ix) Thomas Halbury, *St James Chronicle* 4/5/1784, draper
- x) Dorothy Bringlow, *London Gazette* 11/2/1786, bankrupt shopkeeper
- xi) James Crompton, *London Gazette* 26/1/1788, bankrupt money scrivener

- xii) William Rice, *New Daily Advertiser* 8/11/1791, groom and deserter from 16th Queen's Light Dragoons
- xiii) Joseph Brockes, *St James Chronicle* 31/8/1793, bankrupt linen draper
- xiv) Francis Sadler, *Oracle & Public Advertiser* 7/12/1796, 'a considerable cornfactor'
- xv) Mrs Eve and son, *Ipswich Journal* 4/4/1801, stay & corset makers
- xvi) George Williams, *Ipswich Journal* 24/12/1802, brewer

Some of this information is gleaned from announcements and small advertisements. Much comes from bankruptcy proceedings, and includes the unfortunate Abraham Wilkinson who had caught the attention of the press when he surrendered to the Wood Street Compter after going on the run to try to avoid the unpleasant consequences of his financial condition. Bankruptcy at that time often led to loss of liberty, either in a 'sponging house' or in a debtors' prison with accommodation charges (sometimes at an extortionate rate) being added to the outstanding debt. Wood Street Compter was one such debtor's prison in the City of London

Most of the occupations given are self-explanatory. Chapmen were itinerant pedlars, but the two Ongar representatives were running businesses in the town as well as taking their wares door to door in the surrounding countryside, either on foot or on horseback. Money scriveners were what we might now call loan sharks who could make substantial amounts of money by lending at high rates of interest. But equally they were very vulnerable to bad debts, and James Crompton's fall from considerable affluence has been described in an earlier OMHS newsletter.

Widows, particularly if unable to remarry expeditiously, were left in a very vulnerable position, with few ways of supporting themselves and their dependents. Running a school or a shop were two options, and working at home for an entrepreneur who provided the raw materials was another possibility. Home work such as corset making was an important source of work for lone women well into the nineteenth century, though it is possible that Mrs Eve (assisted by her son) was in business in her own right in Ongar. It is difficult to identify her with certainty, but she might be Mary, the widow of Benjamin Eve, who baptised several sons in the 1760s and 1770s.

Mr Williams the brewer may have worked at the Marden Ash brewery, or possibly at one of the larger Ongar public houses which, at that time, would have brewed their own beer. The cooper was obviously an essential part of any local brewing activity. The etymology of Coopers Hill is not known, though is not derived from the so-named house which was called Landview House until relatively recently. It is tempting to think that its name was derived from the local brewery nearby.

Michael Leach

[The Burney Collection of 17th and 18th century newspapers is available online on subscription through the British Library]

Visit to Ongar 1881

On 21 July 1881 the Essex Archaeological Society held its annual general meeting in the King's Trust schoolroom in Ongar. After the formal business of the meeting, members had lunch at the King's Head and then walked to St Martin's church. This visit was after the first restoration in the 1860s, but before the second phase which involved the addition of the south aisle.

A member of the Society acted as guide and explained that the earlier restoration had left as much as possible of the Norman windows and *most* (my italics) of the monuments inside the church. He mentioned the 'modern' east window, the Jacobean pulpit, and the place where the timber support of the belfry had been cut away when the gallery was installed. (This damage seems to have caused

subsequent structural problems which necessitated the rebuilding of the upper part of the SW gable end of the church, repairs which are still visible today).

A great deal of interest was shown in a 'small niche in the north chancel wall'. Nothing was visible externally, as the plaster covering the church was not removed until the restoration a few years later. A local member reported that it was known locally as 'the leper's gate' and there was speculation that it might have been the window of an anchorhold (or hermit's cell), or a 'low side window' (the cause of much Victorian antiquarian speculation), or an opening through which the sacristan could ring a bell at the moment of the elevation of the host during mass. When the plaster was stripped off a few years later a large defect was revealed in the corresponding point in the external wall, confirming that it was almost certainly the opening through which the hermit in his cell could observe the eucharist.

The party then went outside to admire the south Norman door, but no further details are given. This door was lost when the south aisle was added, though the architect, Clapton Rolfe, undertook to incorporate its fragments within the wall of the new build. It is impossible to say if this promise was carried out.

A short walk took the party to Ongar castle where information was supplied by Captain Budworth and the tenant of Castle Farm, Mr T W Lambert. Some crossed the moat by boat and climbed to the top of the mound to see the remnants of the brickwork of the 'embattled summer house' built in 1744 by William Alexander. Captain Budworth remarked that there was 'very little history to the castle' but to 'enliven a rather dry discourse' he mentioned that in the eighteenth century an old lady in possession of the castle, 'having had a tiff with the people of Ongar', opened the sluices of the moat and put the town under water!

They then walked along 'the noble avenue of elms' (the Long Walk which perished in the Dutch elm disease in the 1970s) to Greensted church, duly described by Captain Budworth and the rector. 'A fine panel painting of St Edmund with an arrow piercing his breast' was noted – presumably the one that was recently stolen from the church. The site of the original north door was noted, as well as a 'curious orifice' cut into the timber, assumed to be a holy water stoup. The sexton confirmed that it had had a drainage hole till recently when it had been filled with plaster. He also reported that a tiled path had led to this door until the churchyard was lowered in a recent restoration. The last object examined was the 'reservoir of a holy water well' from Woolpit, Suffolk, rescued by Captain Budworth from 'the degrading office of a trough for horses, or from being broken up to mend the roads with.' It was finely carved (in a similar form to the Perpendicular decorations at Woolpit church) and had been put in a place of honour in the gardens of Greensted Hall where the party was served tea on the lawn. Has this object survived in the grounds of the hall?

Michael Leach

Sources: *Transactions of Essex Archaeological Society*, new series, 1884, ii, p.391 et seq.
Essex Standard, 30 July 1881, p.9

Future Events

5th July we are running a coach trip to the RAF Museum at Hendon to celebrate the RAF Centenary. The coach will depart Ongar at 9.30 am and for the return leg will depart Hendon at 4.30pm. The trip is free for members and £16.00 for non-members. Entrance to the museum is free and guide costs £2.50. Further detail & tickets are available from Lorna 07943 812444.

Further events will be announced in future newsletters and on the website as they arise. 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 search OMHS.

Newsletter Contributions

We need your help with articles for the newsletter. If you have anything that you would like to contribute no matter how small or large, please submit to the editor or through the website before the end of July 2018 to be in time for included in the next edition of the newsletter