

Ongar Millennium History Society Newsletter

November 2007

So another year is speeding to a close and what a busy one it has been! For those of you who were unable to attend the AGM, we have included Felicitie's chairman's report here so you can read for yourselves how much we have achieved this year. Also it is time to remind you about our Christmas Social on 5th December – an event not to be missed. (Details below).

Looking forward to 2008, it promises to be another exciting year: the church kneelers are nearing completion; we hope to have a family history workshop session; we are looking for information on the Shelley Speedway and Ongar Wheelers – can you help? Also we have our Marion Slade Lecture in March which will be given by Jon Stokes on trees in our historic landscape. Due to the increasing interest in our annual lecture, this year we are moving to the larger venue of Great Stony Hall, so we hope you will all be able to come along. In the meantime, may I be the first to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Jenny Main, Editor

OMHS Christmas Social

*Wednesday 5th December 2007 at 8pm
at the King's Trust Centre, High Street, Ongar*

*Join us for Christmas drinks and nibbles
and a pleasant evening of chat.*

Members only please.

Raffle

Refreshments

Committee Members

Chairman: Felicitie Barnes

Treasurer: John Winslow

Minute Sec: Elisabeth Barrett

Vice Chair: Jenny Main

Secretary: Barbara MacDonald

Bookings Sec: Wendy Thomas

Chairman's report to AGM, September 26th 2007

Thank you for giving me the privilege of being the chairman of the OMHS, and I would like to go through our last year with you.

2006 was our 10th Anniversary year. We celebrated in style, with a visit to County Hall in Chelmsford on the invitation of Cllr. Gerard McEwan, our County Councillor and present Chairman of Essex County Council, and at Christmas we had a celebratory party. We believe that we have achieved much in the ten years, in making the people of Ongar aware of their local history and heritage. This year saw the erection of the second blue plaque, on the old Grammar School building to complement the first one on the Budworth Hall.

Of course any organisation is only as good as its members, and we pride ourselves on the support we get. Many members are actively involved in OMHS projects – from sewing the church kneelers, recording in the cemetery, taking photographs, metal detecting and putting together the wonderful DVD, which we will hear about and see later. The High Street Essay, has now been finished, with thanks to Elizabeth and Rob Barrett, and should soon be in the library. It is here for you to see tonight. Elizabeth and Rob are now making copies, one of which will go to the planning department at Epping Forest District Council as a tool of reference. Some of our members are also on the 'talk' circuit, and are able to share their interests and anecdotes with other organisations.

There have been some concerns during the last year, which we have tried to address. They prove that we all need to be vigilant in preserving the past. It's no good grumbling later! Snowy Evans, a member, alerted us and Cllr McEwan to the destruction of the hedge along the A414 during the road widening. It was demolished with speed, with little care for the wildlife and also any historical connections. The hedge has since been replaced. In the High Street, Michael Leach noticed one day that builders were demolishing the interior and some outside features of the 'Keen Parts' shop, formerly Surridge's cycle shop. He made a quick phone call to the EFDC, who immediately put a stop on it. It is a protected building. We have also been in correspondence with the Town Forum, over the incorrect information on the Town Notice Board. They have allowed us to put in a card with details as to where the Millennium Walk leaflets can be picked up. Recently a problem has arisen over the Millennium Walk paving stones. ECC have had personal injury claims laid against them, because people have said that they have slipped on two of the stones. The ten stones were laid at the Millennium and paid for by local organisations. OMHS were the sponsors, and when they were laid, we had stringent slip-ability tests carried out on them to ensure they were safe. We now await results of further tests with apprehension.

During the past year we have visited Copped Hall, and the Post Office Museum Store, as well as the exhibition at Great Stony – 'Tales from the Boarders'. We have had talks from Carien Kremer from the EFDC Museum, Brian Creasey from Little Easton and Dr Jane Pearson from Essex University at the Marion Slade Memorial Lecture.

We participated in the Rotary Activities Day, the Town Council AGM and submitted our choice of favourite trees to EFDC.

The society has been given several artefacts from the old Ongar Grammar School, and also some books with relevant stories of local history. The cupboard is beginning to get full! People from outside the area have contacted us about their forebears and research students have wanted information about the Pallavicini family and Mr Edgar Spencer Burdett, who was among many things, an organist at St Martin's church in the early 1930s.

A big problem we have had this year, is to find appropriate venues for our meetings. Cost, size and availability don't usually come together, and so we have been very pleased to have been able to use the library for two meetings. We are delighted that we have this venue for tonight, and thanks must go to Sandra Dear and Jenny Main. I understand that you are invited to use the facilities while you are here.

I would like to give my thanks to all the committee members – Michael, John, Jenny, Elizabeth, Wendy and Barbara. They have worked very hard again this year. We have had 9 committee meetings, plus extra ones because of the editing of the DVD. We have put together the programme for 2007-2008, and you will receive a copy shortly. Please let me give you a brief outline. (programme outlined) The Marion Slade lecture will again be very special, as we have been able to book Jon Stokes from the Tree Council as the speaker. His lecture will be entitled 'Our Heritage of Trees'. He is nationally recognised as an expert. Details of extra activities and reminders, will be sent out to you during the year, on the 4 newsletters produced by Jenny and the Noticeboards produced by John. As well as the printed programme for next year we are thinking of holding a 'hands on' day on computers and family history, and in the Spring a get together for the 'Shelley Wheelers' (Have you heard of them?) As I said at the beginning, this society is for you to participate in. Therefore if there is anything that any of you would like us to include on the programme, or if you would like us to help with a project, please let us know. We are open to suggestions.

I have pleasure in submitting this report. Thank you for your attention and time.
Felicite Barnes

Shelley Speedway + Ongar Wheelers

**Do you know anything about either of these groups?
Do you know anyone who belonged either group?**

**We are hoping to have a get-together to collect all the
information and knowledge that exists.
Please contact Jenny so we can arrange a date for a meeting
early next year. Thank you.**

Ongar & Countess Walterstorff

Some time ago, OMHS was given a letter which was dated 30 October 1838, and addressed to an unidentifiable countess at Marden Ash Cottage, Ongar. The letter, from Susan M. Beatty of 23 Upper Berkeley Street, London, was long, and very difficult to read; unfortunately it was not of great interest, consisting principally of excuses, details of family troubles, and news of mutual acquaintances. But who was the countess, what was she doing in Ongar and where was Marden Ash Cottage?

Historical puzzles sometimes unravel in an unexpected way. I returned from holiday recently to find an interesting message on my phone; some unwanted deeds in a local solicitor's office would be shredded unless they were of some use to OMHS. To my surprise and delight, they related to Marden Ash Cottage. The earliest document was an Abstract of Title dated June 1853. This comprised (amongst other things) a recitation of the various owners and occupiers since 1800, one of whom was Sarah Heyliger Walterstorff, Countess de Walterstorff (note that even here there are two different spellings; the Danish Biographical Dictionary favours Walterstorff, but I need a Danish speaker to translate the lengthy entry!) We can now, with certainty, identify the countess whose name was impossible to read on the cover of the 1838 letter. The Abstract also locates Marden Ash Cottage; it was later called The Slate House and is now known as The White House. The building still exists, just beyond the Stag PH on the Brentwood Road but, even in 1853, it was hardly a cottage, but a substantial house with outhouses, stables and about 11 acres of grounds running in a linear strip along the Brentwood Road, nearly as far as Langford Bridge. Since the mid C20, most of this land has been combined with the adjacent arable field but, from the road, the house appears little changed.

The countess's unusual second name (Heyliger), together with the Danish Biographical Dictionary, show that she was the daughter of Cornelius Kortright, a wealthy Dutch merchant who purchased Hylands Park in Chelmsford in 1797. It was he who employed the famous Humphry Repton to bring house and park to the peak of the current fashion. The old red brick house was extended and covered with cream stucco, and the park redesigned in accordance with one of Repton's famous Red Books, which contained watercolours with fold-over flaps to show the park before and after the proposed improvements. The Hylands Red Book has been lost, but several other watercolours have survived, and these have provided sufficient evidence for the current Lottery-funded improvements which will return the park to its Repton appearance. It is well worth a visit for those who don't know it, quite apart from its newly discovered Ongar connection.

On 11 May 1787, Sarah Heyliger Kortright married Governor-General Ernst Frederik Walterstorff who was governor (from 1787-94 and 1802-1803) of the island of St Croix, then part of the Danish East Indies (but part of the US Virgin Islands since 1917). The island was besieged and taken by the British in 1801, but appears to have been handed back to the Danes in the following year, when Walterstorff was reappointed governor for a short time, presumably accompanied by his wife. It is not clear when he was elevated to count and indeed the Danish Biographical Dictionary does not give him this title, so perhaps it was an honorific. However the connection with St Croix throws some light on two illegible words in the letter which reads "I

never was more frightened except once in C..... during the infant hurricane that I experienced there in 1818." This suggests that the writer of the letter had her alarming experience in St Croix, and it was there, perhaps, that she met the countess. Clearly storms are nothing new in the Caribbean!

Count Walterstorff died in Paris in 1820 at the age of 65, and presumably his widow returned to England after this date to settle in Ongar, not far from her childhood home at Hylands Park. Perhaps there were still Kortright relatives in the area, though her father had sold Hylands by 1815. The countess herself died in 1839.

Michael Leach

Brains of Ongar quiz 2007

The ninth annual BOO quiz, sponsored by OMHS, was held in October. Our team did somewhat better this year by coming in fourth out of eleven teams. About 100 people took part in the event.

The winner of the BOO Shield for the second year running was Booktalk who were just one point ahead of the Theatre Resource team. Proceeds of around £280 were raised during the evening with the winner retaining half and donating the other half to Ongar Hospital.

Members with long memories may recall that OMHS won the shield in 2000. We really must try harder!!

The engraved shield is displayed in the cabinet in Ongar Library for all to see.

John Winslow

DVD "Bygone Ongar 1940s - 1960s"

At the time of writing, sales of the DVD and VHS Video are going very well with about half of the stock now sold after only three weeks. There are several outlets in Chipping Ongar together with High Ongar PO, Fyfield PO, Kelvedon Hatch PO and Epping Bookshop. Other interested societies/groups have also had some copies.

This project was a major expenditure for OMHS and we are anxious that the DVD sells well so that we can develop some of our future plans.

Copies of the DVD/Video are available to members at the reduced price of £7.50. Available from John Winslow (362461) or any committee member. They will also be available at the Christmas Social on 5th December.

John Winslow

50 Favourite Trees, Ongar Tree Strategy and the Veteran Tree Hunt – Update

In the last edition of the OMHS Newsletter (August 2007) I was able to report a memorable year for the treescape of Ongar. The publication of the Ongar Tree Strategy, planned for November, has been delayed due in part to the sudden and very sad death of Paul Moxey, one of the most knowledgeable and experienced members of the steering committee. However the 50 Favourite Trees exhibition has now opened at the EFDC Museum, Sun Street, Waltham Abbey where it will run until January 2008.

At the opening preview, OMHS secretary, Barbara MacDonald was presented with large, professionally produced colour photographs of the two trees nominated by OMHS. Hopefully these will soon be displayed in the EFDC Museum showcase in Ongar Library. A wooden plaque was also presented to Mr Paul Buxton and his wife Margaret, our Patron, in respect of the chestnut tree sited on their land at Castle Farm near the scout hut.

It is planned to launch the Ongar Tree Strategy in February of next year, and discussions are now taking place to see whether it will be feasible to transfer the 50 Trees exhibition to Great Stony to coincide with the launch. It is also planned to announce details of a number of tree related activities, including guided walks to visit and update our landmark trees, a series of Ancient tree hunts, hedgerow surveys, plus activities for local school children.

2007 was the year Ongar's tree heritage was put on the map; 2008 will prove to be the year that we all get to know our individual landmark, ancient and veteran trees and hedgerows as well as we know our historic buildings.

Bob MacDonald

Ed's note: A big thank you to Bob and Barbara for all their work on the 50 Favourite Trees project on behalf of OMHS, and of course for securing our speaker for next year's Marion Slade lecture, Jon Stokes from the UK Tree Council, which will fit in well with all the tree activity in 2008.

Family History Workshop

We are hoping to plan a workshop on practical aspects of family history research using computers and the Internet. It will be a one-day course with a tutor, hopefully in Ongar.

There will be a charge for this event, but before we go ahead with the arrangements, we need to know if there is enough interest to make it worthwhile. Please let Jenny know if you would like to take part.

Vestry jottings

Here is a cutting from the letters page of the local Guardian and Gazette newspaper from August 26th 1993, plus an extract from the Vestry Minutes of 1767:

"At a vestry held in the Parish Church of Chipping Ongar on this 9th day of June 1767. It is agreed by the Rector, Overseer and the Principle Inhabitants of the Town, to Prosecute any person or persons that shall take in, Bring or Cause to be Brought into the said parish any person or persons with the Small Pox, Either in the Natural way or by inoculation at the Expenche of the Parish as witness our hands....."[sic]

At this time vaccination was being undertaken by using exudate from sores of relatively mild cases of smallpox. Jenner's experiment using cowpox to inoculate against smallpox was recorded in 1796.

Stan Ball

Ongar Millennium History Society Bygone Ongar 1940s to 1960s

DVD and VHS
£10

See Ongar as it used to be!

Available now from
local outlets

Members discount copies
from John 362461

Historic note on town's criminal past

IN view of the occasional reports in the Gazette of vandalism in Chipping Ongar, I thought readers might be interested in a document found in the back of an old book recording Vestry meetings, from April 14, 1749 to April 25 1774.

The document has kindly been lent by the Essex Record Office, Chelmsford, for display at the forthcoming Festival of Flowers at St Martin's Church, this coming weekend.

Suspicious

The document is a double page of foolscap and unfortunately is undated, but the water mark reads R. Munn & Co, 1828. It is headed "Proposed Night Watch at the Town of Ongar" and reads as follows:

In consequence of depredations recently committed in the town of Ongar and the numerous vagrants and suspicious characters which are seen about it at night, it is suggested as a measure conducive to check the progress and return of such proceedings, that the inhabitants of Ongar appoint a young and respectable man as night watchman, who will likewise be appointed special constable.

The expense probably would not exceed a guinea weekly, which if 60 householders in Ongar would contribute four pence each weekly would meet the demand."

Then follows 72 subscribers' names.

on

Chemist, 283/284 High
Thurs/Fri 8.30am-6pm.

205 High Street, Weds
Tues/Thurs/Fri, open to

North Weald Chemist,
Sat Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri,

Daniels, 12 Chase Cross
6pm, Sun 10.30am-1pm,
Fri, open to 7.30pm.

Essex Tesco Instore Phar-
macy Centre, Chestnut, Sat
10am-4pm, Tues/Wed-
pm.

Chemist, 12 Downs
hurst Road, London E8.
; Sunday, open to 6pm;
Fri, open to 9pm.

Shipps Chemist, 197 High
12noon, Tues/Wed/
3.30pm.

the Chemist, 169 Man-
11.30am-12.30pm,
Fri open to 6.30pm.

MONDAY

BEY: Stephen Collins,
am-12noon.

Pharmacies, 146d
1pm.

North Weald Chemist,
1pm.

Daniels, 12 Chase Cross

What we do best--- we make things happen

The OMHS has a lot to be happy and proud about.

Ten years ago at the Millennium, we inaugurated the Millennium Walk, published our 'Aspects of Ongar' book and made project materials and a CD for schools covering Ongar's history. Since then we have modernised the Budworth Hall clock, initiated the BOO quiz, put a display cabinet in the library for the museum, printed the Ongar Timeline, made a photographic essay of the High Street and put up two blue plaques. We have interviewed and made living history recordings of many of the 'old' Ongar residents and personalities, in conjunction with EFDC Museum.

The St Martin's Church kneelers, illustrating the history of Ongar, are almost finished and should be in the church in the Spring, and the recording of the memorial inscriptions from Ongar cemetery is underway, and currently, of course the DVD of Bygone Ongar is selling well in the local shops.

What else can we do ?

We need some suggestions and feedback.

I'm sure that you, the members, will have some ideas.

We have thought of creating some museum space, with artefacts and illustrated pamphlets - but where and how? What are your suggestions ?

Felicite Barnes - on behalf of the committee

Dates for your diary

3rd Nov -11 Dec **50 Favourite Trees exhibition**
EFDC Museum, Sun Street Watlham Abbey

Wed 5th Dec **Christmas Social**
8pm **King's Trust Centre, High Street, Ongar**

Thurs 21st Feb **Talk on Copped Hall**
7.45 for 8pm **given by Trevor Roberts of Copped Hall Trust**
at Great Stony

Fri 28th Mar **2008 Marion Slade Lecture**
Jon Stokes (Director of Rural Programmes at the Tree
Council, UK) on Ancient Trees in Essex
at Great Stony

**Thank you to all the contributors to this issue of the
newsletter.**

**Any items for inclusion in the next newsletter to Jenny
please by the end of January 2008.**