

Ongar Millennium History Society Newsletter


November 2009


I always know that Christmas is just around the corner once I start putting this newsletter together, and it is time for our Christmas social. That is really the start of the Christmas season in Ongar! Please note the change of venue this year - we are new and modern this year so hopefully no bumped heads.

Thanks to all our 100+ members for getting involved again this year. We have been as busy as ever and already have lots of things planned for 2010. However we are always happy to have new ideas and input...and there is a not to be missed offer inside this edition!! Please give it some consideration.

I just have space now to wish you all a Happy Christmas and healthy New Year!

Jenny Main, Editor



Come and join us at the OMHS
Christmas Social 
Wednesday 9th December 2009
at 8pm
Banson's, Ongar Town Council,
Banson's Way, Ongar
Refreshments Raffle
Members only please!
Sorry - very limited car parking.

Committee Members 2009-2010

Chairman: Felicitie Barnes
Treasurer: John Winslow
Minute Sec: Elisabeth Barrett
Website+: Keith Snow

Vice Chair: Jenny Main
Speaker Sec.: Vacancy
Bookings Sec: Wendy Thomas

Ongar's hidden secrets

Combining the efforts of the United Reformed Church, Ongar Flower Club and OMHS, this 2 day event certainly pulled in the crowds. BBC Essex gave much publicity and recorded interviews at the exhibition.

When entering the church, visitors were greeted by the 2 colourful OMHS banners which led on to floral displays commemorating the life of Jane Taylor with portraits and the recently commissioned blue plaque, also David Livingstone's time in Ongar, and to Marie Korf with photographs and memorabilia of her long association with the church.

In the hall, there were several contemporary records of the life of David Livingstone. There was great interest in Bob Jenkins' collection of photographs of old Ongar, and similarly with the spectacular collection of old coins found locally by Frank Knights. Our display of "Now and Then" photographs is always popular and for the first time we were able to display the rescued plaques from the Ongar War Memorial Hospital.

The children's competition for writing an additional verse for Twinkle, Twinkle was won by Henry Bowerfield (under 8 years) and Joseph Laws (over 8 years) who each received a book prize, and had their verses read out on BBC Essex.

After so much to see, many visitors relaxed with a cuppa and a bite to eat. We must thank our hosts, the URC, who made the whole thing possible and say a big "Thank You" to our many members who rallied to our call with stewarding which really helped to make this a hugely successful event.

John Winslow

Ed's note: I must echo John's thanks to our members who put themselves forward as stewards over the weekend, and especially to Frank Knights and Bob Jenkins who gave up virtually the whole weekend and added so much to the weekend exhibits.

Brains of Ongar 2009

Nine enthusiastic local societies competed in this revitalised hi-tech competition at the end of October to become the holder of the BOO Shield and to win around £220 prize money. The winner was the Ongar Labour Party who share their prize on a 50/50 basis with the charity of their choice - St. Clare's Hospice.

Unfortunately the OMHS team could not repeat their 2008 winning success and only just missed the wooden spoon position by a hairsbreadth. Our little grey cells were just not very active.

Much positive feedback has been received on the new format which was basically designed by Jenny Main and to whom a big "thank you" is due. Thanks are also due to John and Jan Turnbull who were question master and scorer, and to David Welford who pressed all the right buttons on the night ensuring that everything ran smoothly.

John Winslow

Chair Report at OMHS AGM 2009

I have great pleasure in submitting this report as Chair of the OMHS. We have had a very productive and interesting year and I would like to begin by paying my respects to the hard working committee, on your behalf. We have had 7 full Committee Meetings during this year, and several sub committee meetings, to deal with our website which is in the offing, the contents of the calendar, and a meeting about the Cemetery recordings with Yvonne Tunstill from the Essex Family History Society. But as you will all know, the hard work goes on between these meetings, with letter writing, phone calls, booking rooms, paying accounts, writing minutes, putting together the newsletter etc so thank you all very much. Credit must also be paid to our president for his advice and for being there to monitor our decisions, and when necessary to curb our expenditure.

During the year we have had activities for members, and some to which non members are welcomed. Of these open meetings the highlight is always the Marion Slade Lecture. This year we were not disappointed when Wendy Hibbitt told us about 'Below stairs at Hylands House' and this was followed up later by a visit. Geoff Wood, the Mills Officer from ECC, gave a very informative talk and again we followed this up with a visit to Aythorpe Roding Mill (this time including a cream tea!) Unfortunately our other visiting speaker, Jim Boutwood, had to cancel because of the weather, but he will be coming to talk to us about the role of SPAB (Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) in March at our next Marion Slade Lecture. The family history workshop was well received, and we are running another one soon. Visits this year have also been made to the Essex Police Museum, David Livingstone's cottage in Ongar, and Michael Leach has led a walk along the High Street. We enjoyed them all.

On October 10th and 11th this year we are joining with the URC and the Flower Club in running an historical exhibition at the URC called 'Ongar's Hidden Secrets'. The committee would be very grateful if any of you could help us with the stewarding during that weekend. Jenny will take your names and the times you will be available.

The money in our Project Account, or Deposit Account, is monitored carefully. It is not a limitless amount, and we try to manage this as best we can, so that we will have adequate money to finance special projects. You will see in the Treasurer's Accounts for the year that we have received income from the selling of the DVD. However we have spent money on an audio typist to transcribe recorded war memories, a blue plaque, the display banners, and in financing the calendar of Old Ongar. Thanks must go to Gerry Reeves, for the use of his postcards and photographs on both the banners and the calendars. The calendar is a one off and unique, so can I make a plea – buy now, here today and also at Senners. Then maybe we will be able to reimburse the Deposit Account for still further projects. At Senners the calendars are £5.99, but we are letting members buy copies at £5 each.

It is now 13 years since OMHS started and I don't believe that any of us have lost our enthusiasm, or inquisitiveness. There is so much to discover and learn

about the way local people have lived and behaved, and to put this on record. We are still working on the recording of the inscriptions in the cemetery, and the local churchyards. Thanks to all who have participated but particularly to Bob MacDonald who has been the coordinator. We are working now over at Shelley Church, and are hoping to continue work at St Martins, on the monuments both inside and outside the church.

During this past year, we hope we have been able to stimulate you, our members, by providing a varied programme. Our quarterly newsletter is always packed with interesting articles of things you have done and the research you have carried out. However, let me remind you that some of our old projects are still running on, and we would be happy for any of you to get involved with recording in the cemetery, metal detecting or family history. Our initiative this year is going to centre on House History. We have a talk by Jenny Butler from the ERO in October, the first meeting of our new year, and we hope to encourage any of you to help us to further this theme. For our other talk next year, in February, we have invited local historian John Whaler, to tell us about Winston Churchill and Chartwell, which will hopefully be followed by a visit.

It is important that we, as OMHS, give a lead, and spread the word about not throwing things away, and to watch out in preserving the past. John Winslow, John Root and David Welford were invited to the hospital site to take photographs and remove plaques to keep them for our archives. Keith Snow and Stan Ball have been putting the archives in some kind of order, and we can now let members use our (quite small) library. With our new website we hope that we can share the knowledge we are accumulating with all interested people.

We try to advertise our activities in the Ongar News to encourage new members, and to participate in community events, such as the Rotary Activity Day and the Town Council AGM. Of course, you our members are our best advertisement. You will all have the year's programme on your membership cards, so if you can spread the word and encourage your friends and neighbours to join, we will welcome them. Don't forget, we are very happy to accommodate any ideas or themes for a future programme. Just try us!

Before I finish I would like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to a member of the committee, Barbara MacDonald, who is standing down from being our secretary. She has done this for 9 years in a most competent and good humoured way. We will miss you Barbara, but are glad that you will still be around. Please accept these flowers with our affection and thanks.

Thank you for your time and patience.

Felicite Barnes

NEW!!! Visit our own website at:

www.omhs.org.uk

Thanks to Russell Ball for all his hard work!

Great, great aunt ?

When I first started to trace my Thompson family I found my great, great grandfather on the 1881 census living at 124 High Street, Shadwell, London, Middlesex. He was William Thompson, aged 43, a tailor, born in Thirsk, Yorkshire. His wife was Sarah, aged 42, and born in Ireland. They had two sons, Harry aged 9, born in Leeds, Yorkshire and Edward, aged 4, born in Ratcliff, London, Middlesex. There was also a daughter, Lipha, aged 9, born in Bingley Yorkshire. I thought that was a name I had never heard before.

I then looked for the family on the 1891 census and found them living at 59 Tredegar Square, Mile End Old Town, London, Middlesex. My great, great grandfather then gave his name as Charles W Thompson, aged 52, tailor and cutter to the trade (employer), born in Yorkshire; wife Sarah, aged 51, tailor and cutter to the trade, and two sons, Harry aged 16, single, assistant to his father, and Edward, 14, single, earned boy (Post). They shared the house with a family called Saunders, James Saunders, born Devonshire, and Hilpha Saunders, born Yorkshire. This is Charles's daughter known as Lipha in the 1881 census.

I visited the Family History Centre (now closed) and asked them to look up the two censuses to check my great, great aunt's name as it was all a bit strange. After they had enlarged the original census they told me her name was Zilpha. My next job was to find her marriage certificate. Zilpha married Henry Saunders, born 25th May, 1867 Barnstable, Devon, at Trinity Church Stepney on the 2nd December 1890.

I recently visited 59 Tredegar Square and had my photo taken on my great, great, grandfather's doorstep. I also visited Trinity Church, which unfortunately is now closed. I have not found a record of a divorce or Henry's death so it looks as if her last two marriages were bigamous. Zilpha and James had a daughter Doris Margaret born 7th October, 1891 at Mile End Old Town. Zilpha left James Henry Sanders and their daughter, and in September quarter 1895 married Francis Newington Harris at Richmond Surrey.

Francis Newington Harris was born in Exeter, September quarter 1876 and died June quarter 1897 in Lambeth. She later married for a third time, to Morley Lewin in Southampton, March quarter 1902. He died in Southampton June quarter 1909, aged 43. She didn't have much luck!!!

According to the 1901 census Zilpha Harris was living with her parents, William and Sarah Thompson at 69 East Street, Chichester, Sussex. Her daughter Doris Margaret Sanders married John Elliott Craven, born 10th February, 1888 at Haggerston, Shoreditch, at Hackney Registry Office on the 2nd March 1910.

Her great, great, grandson, James Edward Craven, passed some of this information on to me. I think the name Zilpha comes from the Old Testament; Zilpha was the hand maiden to the Queen of Sheba.

Richard Thompson

Dating St Martin's

In January 2008 we were contacted by Ms Sophie Blain, a PhD student with the Department of Archaeology at the Universities of Durham and Bordeaux, who is researching the date of materials used in the building of medieval churches. The PCC agreed that Sophie should take two or three small samples of the ceramic building materials from St Martin's (i.e. the red bricks) in order to establish when they were made.

These bricks have often (wrongly) been described as 'reused Roman' based on the assumption that, because Roman remains were found in the graveyard in the 18th century, Roman building materials would have been available for the building of the church. Although they are the wrong size for Roman bricks, previous academic studies have been unable to link our bricks with any other known type from Essex and we have been looking forward to Sophie's report in the hope that she would be able to throw some light on this matter, and might perhaps also be able to provide a more accurate dating for the building of the church.

Using a procedure called Optically Stimulated Luminescence, Sophie has ascertained that the bricks were manufactured somewhere between 947 and 1134 AD, with a mean date of 1038 +/- 32 AD. This ties in very well with the date usually given of 1070 AD for the building of St Martins.

The fact that the bricks cannot be identified with any known type in Essex, and given the fact that they are in a fragmentary state and of different sizes, Sophie suggests that the bricks were not made in the first instance with the aim of building the church but might perhaps have been brought from Europe for the construction of another building

From 1086 the castle of Ongar was in the hands of the Norman Eustace Count of Boulogne so it doesn't seem impossible that he might have imported bricks from France or Germany to carry out some building project in the castle. Of course, that's something we will probably never know! The date of the building material does however help to confirm that our church has stood since late Saxon/early Norman times, and although it bears little resemblance to that first building, it has served the people of this place for nearly 1000 years.

Snowy Evans submitted this item from St Martin's website.

New year....new experience?

Why not come along to an OMHS committee meeting and see how we work! You would be able to put forward any suggestions you may have about events, projects or visits.

We need a new voice and would be pleased if anyone would like to come along. No obligation!

Contact Jenny on 01277 362684

New Blue Plaque

JANE TAYLOR (1783-1824)
AUTHOR OF
TWINKLE TWINKLE LITTLE STAR
LIVED HERE

Members will be aware that we had commissioned our third blue plaque and had it on show for the first time at the AGM on 23rd September. It was again on show at the "Ongar's Hidden Secrets" exhibition, when it was placed below the portrait of Jane in the United Reformed Church, surrounded by flowers arranged by the Ongar Flower Club.

Subsequently, it has been placed on the outer wall of 10, Castle Street, which is on the right hand side about 50 yards walking up from the High Street. It is well placed as it is illuminated by a street light during the hours of darkness. Many thanks to the owner, Mr Griggs, for his co-operation.

John Winslow

When Tommy came marching home.

A review of the recently published book 'The Great Silence 1918 – 1920' by Juliet Nicolson, in the Observer newspaper contained a copy of a photograph taken from the Getty collection showing a demobbed soldier with his family outside a hut in Ongar, Essex, in 1920.



A demobbed soldier with his family outside a hut in Ongar, Essex, 1920. Getty

Post 1914 -1918 great hardship was experienced by thousands of soldiers returning home after the end of the Great War not only as a result of injuries received and a major outbreak of Spanish Flu which claimed the lives of between 40 and 50 million people worldwide but also because of the very poor employment opportunities and almost complete lack of welfare that existed in the 1920's.

Judging by the demobbed soldier and his family standing outside the hut, even in green and pleasant Ongar, they had not returned to 'a land fit for heroes'. I would be interested to hear from anyone who might be able to throw some light on the location of such a hut or huts in Ongar and more particularly details of the occupants as I feel that the records of their lives should be documented in the local social history of Ongar.

Bob MacDonald

ONGAR 2010 CALENDARS

Have you got yours yet?

Members' price £5 from Jenny or John

Visit to The National Archives at Kew

OMHS are proposing to arrange a visit to The National Archives at Kew in May 2010. However before we go too far we need to know if enough people are interested. We would arrange a coach (subsidised by our BOO quiz winnings from last year) and we would probably go on a Saturday.

This link will give you lots of information about visiting:
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/visit/>

If you are interested please let Jenny know on 01277 362684

Dates for your diary

**Wed 9th December
8pm**

**OMHS Christmas Social
Banson's (Council Offices)
Banson's Way, Ongar
Members only. Limited parking**

**Thurs 11th February
8pm**

**Churchill, Chartwell and Essex
A talk by John Whaler
Room 1, Great Stony**

**Fri 26th March
7.45 for 8pm**

**Marion Slade Lecture 2010
John Boutwood on the work of the
Society for the Protection of
Ancient Buildings.
Great Stony**

Mon 26th April

**Visit to Essex Record Office
Details to follow**

May tbc

**Visit to National Archives, Kew
Contact Jenny to register interest
01277 362684 Members only**

Details of summer visits and events will be in the February newsletter

Contributions for next newsletter please!

The next newsletter will be produced in February 2010, so any articles to Jenny please by 25th January. Thank you!