

# Ongar Millennium History Society Newsletter

**November 2013**

Well, seeing the holly leaf lower down on this page has given me a wake-up call that Christmas is not far away. I hope you have all got your copies of our **Ongar Now and Then Calendar 2014** – ideal for a presents for friends and relations! We are pleased to welcome David Green to our committee and we are sure he will come up with some new ideas.

We have had another busy year as a society with all of our projects, meetings and outings, so all that is left to say is, "Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2014".

**Jenny Main. Editor**

Come and join us at the OMHS



Christmas Social

Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013

at 8pm

Ongar Town Council Offices

Banson's Way, Ongar

Refreshments

Raffle

Members only please!

Sorry - very limited parking

## **Committee Members 2013-2014**

Chairman: Felicitie Barnes  
Vice Chair/Newsletter: Jenny Main  
Treasurer: John Winslow  
Speaker Sec.: Lorna Vaux  
Bookings Sec: Wendy Thomas  
Minute Sec: Gemma O'Donnell

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Cttee member: David Green

*NB Committee phone numbers can be found on the membership cards*

### **David Thompson (1937-2013)**

David died peacefully at home on the night of 2<sup>nd</sup> November, aged 76. He will be greatly missed by his many friends and his family, and by the history society. He lived at Wren House in the centre of Ongar which was built in the seventeenth century adjacent to the eleventh century St. Martin's Church. It is therefore no surprise that he became interested in local history. He had an enquiring mind and over the five years that I knew him was a leading light in reading and recording gravestones and memorials at all locations in Ongar, from the public cemetery to the many churches including, of course, St. Martin's.

At St. Martin's he was particularly fascinated by the gravestones commemorating Jane Cromwell, the cousin of Oliver Cromwell, and her son Horatio and contributed to an article regarding them that appeared in an edition of this newsletter. A painted panel that hangs in the church, called a hatchment, also intrigued him and the article that he jointly researched was also recently printed in this newsletter and a second article containing further findings will be published soon.

Appearing about now will be an OMHS occasional publication in the form of a booklet called "*Ongar through the Centuries. 40 Little Known Facts*" for which David was an editor and major contributor. I am so pleased that he saw and approved the proofs of the booklet but, sadly, missed its launch by just a few weeks.

David's wife, Val, died several years ago but he leaves two daughters, Holly and Justine, and Steve his son. They were a close family and they will miss him so much. I will miss my weekly meetings with David when we pursued our common interest in researching aspects of local history and put the world to rights over lunch at his favourite meeting place, Café 154 on the Fyfield Road. With a lifetime spent in advertising, marketing and new product design, David had a sound knowledge of business which he expressed eloquently and persuasively. In addition he was an active member of UKIP and had informed views on all aspects of politics as well as life in general.

David, you were a keen and competent local historian but most of all a good friend.

**Keith Snow**

### **David Thompson - an appreciation**

When David moved to Ongar, into Wren House in the very centre of the town, he brought with him a curiosity about the place he had moved into. He soon became a member of OMHS, and started his research on topics in the town. He made friends easily and loved to chat and therefore got the feel of the heartbeat of the town. He very generously gave his time to his and others' interests.

He worked on St Martin's and St Peter's graveyards, and recorded the monuments inside the Churches with Keith Snow. He was interested and researched into the history of the houses along the High Street, including his own. And he and Keith, compiled the new booklet 'Ongar Through the Centuries – 40 Little Known Facts'. Thank you David for helping us to record the history of Ongar for future generations.

**Felicite Barnes**

### **A Boodle tomb postscript**

At his London home in July 1835, Robert Mitford, a former judge in the Bengal civil service, wrote out his will in his own hand, apparently without the advice of a solicitor. The preamble did not follow the normal form but started by explaining that his last will had been destroyed because 'circumstances in my family' had completely changed his attitude to how he wished to bequeath his estate. In the eighth clause of his will, he directed his executors to construct a 'suitable, handsome and durable monument' for his interment on top of the Ongar castle mound. He further directed that the remains of his parents and his sister 'now lying interred in a vault in the churchyard of Chipping Ongar' should be moved to this new mausoleum, and that the sides of the castle mound should be planted with 'cedar or cypress trees in a manner that may render it ornamental to the town'. While acknowledging that the ground was not consecrated, he failed to make it clear that he did not own the castle mound. Not surprisingly this added to the difficulties and delays of executing the will, and in the end Mitford's intentions were never carried out due to the absolute refusal of the owner of the castle to allow the construction of a mausoleum on his property.

In 1784, Mitford's mother, Mary, died at the age of 27 soon after, and possibly as a result of, his birth. Though she was not related in any way to the Chipping Ongar family, she was interred in the Boodle vault in the churchyard. The same vault contained the body of his father's first wife, Sarah (née Boodle) who had died in 1776, as well as various other members of the family. However there is no evidence that either Mitford's unnamed sister or his father (who died in Richmond, Surrey, in 1806) were buried there, so he must have been mistaken. Anyone who has struggled through the five closely written pages of his rambling will, bristling with hostility to various members of his family, would sense that it was written in a highly charged emotional state. It is certainly not in the measured and judicial language that might be expected of a retired judge. What was behind this unseemly outburst?

Mitford's father, John, was a commander in the East India Company's China division, wealthy enough in 1776 to describe himself as a gentleman. Mitford's older brother (also John) was educated at Tonbridge grammar school, Kent and Oriel College, Oxford before taking holy orders, acquiring a comfortable Suffolk living at Benhall, and embarking on a distinguished literary career. Mitford himself was sent to the same grammar school but left two years before his older brother and went (or perhaps was sent) to Bengal at the age of 16. He spent his working life there, rising through the ranks of the civil service to the rank of second judge in the provincial court of appeal at Dhaka. It is possible that he resented the softer, more privileged, life of his brother, as service in India was tough and carried a significant risk of illness and early death. The two brothers also had equal shares of various properties in Yorkshire, Walthamstow, Surrey and London, probably inherited from their father. This too could have led to tensions between the two brothers, particularly as

Mitford's absence in India would have left their management solely in his brother's hands.

Mitford's will reveals a third – and perhaps most likely – reason for his bitter resentment. He had made loans, amounting to some £10,000, for the education of his brother's son. According to the account given in the will, these loans had been used neither for their intended purpose, nor had they been repaid. He referred to his brother's 'evil habits and propensities' as well as referring to his illegitimate offspring – a serious charge to level at a clergyman. In the second clause of his will, he emphasized at length, and in the most emphatic language, his intention to exclude his brother from any claim to his estate.

Mitford died on 21 April 1836 in Paris and it is not surprising that his unconventional will, with its two unwitnessed codicils and a completely erased sixth clause, created difficulties for his executors. It was not proved until 18 months later in the Probate Court of Canterbury, after the examination of two witnesses who were sworn to confirm that the will, and its erasures and codicils were in the handwriting of the testator.

Law reports in The Times newspaper give an incomplete account of what happened next. Mitford's widow and other relatives initiated a suit to have the clause relating to the bequest to the government of Bengal declared void, and that relating to the mausoleum illegal. When it became clear that the mausoleum at Ongar could not be built, there was a lengthy dispute about the residue of Mitford's estate which he had left to 'the Government of Bengal for charitable beneficial and public works for the benefit of the native inhabitants of Dacca' (now Dhaka in Bangladesh). The plaintiff's arguments hinged on whether there was a proper party to receive this bequest, how its benefits could be confined only to the 'native inhabitants', and what was meant by 'charitable beneficial and public works? Could it be used, for example, for 'building an idolatrous temple'?

In 1841 the Lord Chancellor ruled that it was a good and charitable bequest and that it should be paid to the Governor General who was answerable to the Supreme Court at Calcutta for its proper application. But before this could happen there was another legal claim against Mitford's estate from his niece (too convoluted to explain here) and this was not dismissed until 1848. It was not until 1854, some 18 years after Mitford's death, that his bequest was finally used to build a hospital in Dhaka. This still exists and bears the name of the Mitford Hospital.

So, in the end, both the castle mound and the Boodle tomb were left undisturbed,

### Help!!

My reserve of articles for the newsletter has come to an end, so if you have an inclination to see your name in print, please email any contributions to me at [jenny.main@ntlworld.com](mailto:jenny.main@ntlworld.com) Thank you.

### **Sally Lunn Buns**

On a recent visit to Bath, I came across the Sally Lunn Cafe and Museum. This brought to mind that Ongar had a Sally Lunn Cafe at one time which, anecdotally, is said to be named after the bun of that name.

Ongar's cafe was in a detached building situated at what is now the entrance to Stanley Place, in fact the estate is sometimes referred to as the 'Sally Lunn estate'. (OMHS has a picture of the cafe in its archive).

Sally Lunn (the anglicised version of her French name Soli Luyon) was a young Huguenot refugee who, in 1680, found employment with a baker close to the Abbey Church in the Spa City of Bath. She introduced the baker to the French brioche type breads, or buns that were later on to become famous and forever associated with her name, the building and indeed the City of Bath. The breads were light and delicious and were served at the Public Breakfasts and Afternoon Teas that were part of Bath's tradition. The recipe for the bun was rediscovered in the old building in the 1930's, in a secret cupboard over the ground floor corner fireplace, and is used today to make the buns served in the Bath cafe.\*

The High Street research project may be able to find out if the cafe owner in Ongar chose the name of her business around this time or perhaps later after a visit to Bath! For those of you who have not tried the Sally Lunn bun, it looks like a large tea cake but is very light and can have savoury or sweet toppings. We chose the cinnamon butter topping and it was really delicious!

**Elisabeth Barrett** from her Wiltshire outpost!

\* Information from 'The Story of Sally Lunn's House' issued by the museum. For the full story go to [www.sallylunns.co.uk/history/intro.htm](http://www.sallylunns.co.uk/history/intro.htm)

Have you bought your  
**Ongar Now and Then 2014 Calendar?**  
Price to members - £7.00 each  
Ideal Christmas present for friends and  
family!

### **Ongar Town Council grant**

OMHS wishes to acknowledge with grateful thanks the grant of £200 received from Ongar Town Council towards the cost of replacing, improving and maintaining the Society's website. The new website will be launched soon.

## John Winslow

### Why Navestock?

It is usual for earthly remains to be interred, if not in the vicinity of the home of the deceased or of the place of death (if different), then at a location with which he or she was in some way closely connected. Martin Taylor (1788-1867), one of the sons of the Revd Isaac Taylor and his wife Ann (née Martin), died at his home in Fortis Green, Middlesex, on 30 May 1867<sup>1</sup>, but was buried six days later in the churchyard of St Thomas the Apostle, Navestock, by his nephew the Revd Isaac Taylor (the fourth Isaac), at that time Vicar of St Matthias, Bethnal Green<sup>2</sup>. Martin had left home for a career in publishing in London in 1809 while the family was still living in Colchester<sup>3</sup> and was thus the only one of the children of Isaac and Ann who survived to adulthood never to have lived in Ongar or the surrounding area. The connection with Navestock is revealed on the very last page (320) of *The Autobiography and Other Memorials of Mrs Gilbert (formerly Ann Taylor)* (1874), edited by Josiah Gilbert, where Josiah writes "...the secluded Church of Navestock... here, close to the church porch, lie Martin Taylor and his wife". Since Martin's second wife Sarah (née Carlill) survived him by over fifteen years<sup>4</sup>, it is clear that the wife beside whom he was buried was his first wife Elizabeth, and, sure enough, as Michael Leach first kindly established for me, the Burial Registers of St Thomas, Navestock, record the burial on 22 March 1828 of one Elizabeth Taylor of London, aged 36. Since Martin was almost certainly living in London at that time and since there is good evidence that he married Sarah Carlill in 1836<sup>5</sup>, it seems virtually certain that this is the same Elizabeth Taylor: the date and other details fit very well. The question, however, remains: "Why was *Elizabeth* buried at Navestock?"

Elizabeth's maiden name was apparently Venn, though the only evidence for this of which I am aware is the statement to that effect in the brief paragraph on her daughter Helen appended to the original *DNB* article on the Revd Isaac Taylor (1759-1829): "Helen Taylor (1818-1885), the daughter of Martin Taylor of Ongar (1788-1867), by his first wife, Elizabeth Venn, made a few contributions to 'Missionary Hymns' and the 'Teacher's Treasury,' and, besides a small devotional work, 'Sabbath Bells,' was author of 'The Child's Books of Homilies' (London, 1850, 18mo). She died in 1885, and was buried at Parkstone, Dorset." That article was written in 1898 by Thomas Seccombe, a member of the editorial staff of the *DNB*, who contributed no less than 654 articles to the Dictionary<sup>6</sup>. It is pretty clear from that last fact (and from his description – blindly followed by the late Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg in her *ODNB* article on Helen - of Martin Taylor as "of Ongar"!)) that he had no special knowledge of the Taylors and was simply

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<sup>1</sup> Death certificate; Bishop's Transcript of the Burial Registers of St Thomas the Apostle, Navestock

<sup>2</sup> Bishop's Transcript of the Burial Registers of St Thomas the Apostle, Navestock

<sup>3</sup> *The Autobiography and Other Memorials of Mrs Gilbert (formerly Ann Taylor)* – AOMMG - Vol i, p.187

<sup>4</sup> She died on 4 May 1883 - death certificate.

<sup>5</sup> Boyd's marriage index of Marriage Licence Allegations - Faculty Office 1701-1850 lists the following: 22 Jun 1836 TAYLOR Martin CARLILL Sarah. I am indebted to my cousin Fiona Martin for this reference.

<sup>6</sup> Gillian Fenwick, *The Contributors' Index to the Dictionary of National Biography 1885-1901*

responsible for producing articles on people for whom a more authoritative author could not be found. Of the sources he cites at the foot of the article, I have consulted all I can trace, and none of these makes any mention of Elizabeth Venn.

It is thus impossible to say where he obtained the information about her maiden name. He is, however, unlikely simply to have made it up. Unfortunately, no record has yet been found of the marriage of Martin and Elizabeth or of the baptism of Helen; the IGI is silent on both counts and there is no mention of either event in *AOMMG* or, as far as I am aware, in other surviving Taylor or Gilbert writings. Both Helen's age at death (67) and those given for her on census returns suggest, however, that she was probably born in 1818 as stated in the *DNB* article.

There being no obvious reason to connect Martin Taylor with Navestock other than his first wife's being buried in the churchyard of St Thomas's, it seemed reasonable to speculate that it was Elizabeth who had family connections there. Was she perhaps born in Navestock? And might her marriage to Martin have taken place at St Thomas's?

Frustratingly, not only is there nothing in the surviving Navestock registers to support this theory, but it can't even be completely ruled out because of the incompleteness of those registers. Not only were a lot of them (including the records of marriages for several years up to and including 1812) rendered illegible by water damage during the winter of 1947, but there is a note in the Baptismal Register by the Curate of the time recording that the Parish Clerk had failed to record most of the baptisms (and burials) that occurred between 20 September 1789 and 18 November 1791 and had then tiresomely died before his memory could be tapped on the subject. In case Elizabeth Venn was a widow when she married Martin, I checked the (incomplete) Navestock baptismal records for 1791-1793 for girls named Elizabeth, but there is no trace in the IGI of any of the three of them having married a Mr Venn between 1809 and 1817 (or indeed at all). The only Elizabeth Venn I can find in the IGI baptised in England between 1791 and 1793 was the daughter of a man in Slinfold, Sussex, who was, or by 1797 became, a pauper<sup>7</sup>. Not impossible, but nothing to suggest any obvious association. Then there is the frustrating IGI entry for a Martin Taylor "of London" married on 31 May 1811, but with no indication of the bride's name or the place that the marriage took place. The date is not impossible for our Martin, but it is much earlier than one would have expected, especially as Helen (apparently Martin's and Elizabeth's only child) was not born until 1818.

So we end as we began, with the question: "Why Navestock?" And with two others, posed by my cousin, Fiona Martin: "Why is it that, in all the numerous memoirs and letters left by the Taylors, there is not a single reference to Elizabeth Venn or to Martin's first marriage? Was there something about her that offended even their deep sense of the importance of family ties?"

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/A2A/records.aspx?cat=182-pldb6&cid=-1&Gsm=2008-06-18#-1> West Sussex Poor Law Records, part 6 Slinfold: Removal order: Charles VENN Par/176/32/3/1 9 Dec 1797

**Robin Gilbert**

### **Vacancy for Membership Secretary**

After 17 years as Membership Secretary for our Society I have decided to retire. Having given up driving I have found it rather difficult to give the task my full attention. As a result a vacancy has arisen.

It is a happy post as one gets to know all the 90 or so members. The records are computerised and it is not an onerous job. Quite the opposite in fact. Basically it is merely copying membership details from one year to the next.

Should anyone be interested in considering taking over, I will be happy to talk through the routines, explain the set up and act as guide for the next few months if needs be.

Please contact John Winslow on 362461 or [johnwinslow@live.co.uk](mailto:johnwinslow@live.co.uk)

**John Winslow**

### **Stop Press!**

**A new publication from OMHS has just arrived from the printers - "Ongar through the Ages – 40 Little Known Facts" Ideal stocking filler at £2 per copy from Felicitie or Jenny.**

### **Dates for your diary**

December 4<sup>th</sup> Christmas Social at Ongar Town Council Offices  
8pm with thanks to Frank + Carol Knights  
Members only please

February 6<sup>th</sup> The History of Poulton's by Martin Shaw  
7.45 for 8pm Zinc Arts Centre  
Free to members

March 28<sup>th</sup> The 2014 Marion Slade Lecture  
7.45 for 8pm A talk by Ann Padfield, topic tbc  
Budworth Hall, Ongar.  
Admission by ticket – details soon.  
Followed by wine and cheese.

Apologies the 2<sup>nd</sup> London walk has had to be postponed due to engineering works on the Central Line.

**Contributions for next newsletter please!**



**The next newsletter will be produced in February 2014, so any articles to Jenny please by 22<sup>nd</sup> January. Thank you!**